Modernism, Satire, and the “Men of 1914”: Eliot, Joyce, Lewis, and Pound

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Department of English
School of Arts and Sciences
Of The Catholic University of America
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

By
Kevin Rulo

Washington, D.C.

2012
This dissertation considers the relationship between literary modernism and modern culture. Building from the impetuses of the “new” modernist studies of the past decade and more which has begun to consider the possibilities for a modernism of cultural and social engagement, the present study seeks to explore the ways in which modernism should be seen as a movement that affects its world largely through the impulses and resources of the satirical. The first chapter surveys the history of modernist scholarship, particularly the dominant readings of modernism’s ahistoricity and autonomy, in order to provide established views of modernism that are complicated, qualified, and developed by the modernism/satire interface. The second chapter attempts to develop a typology of the modernist period and then to apply those theoretical formulations to two specific examples: James Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Wyndham Lewis’ fragment, “Joint.” The third chapter is concerned with reconciling modernist poetics with the theory of modernism as satire. It includes a comparative analysis of Robert C. Elliott’s theories of satire’s origins in magic and ritual with the situation of modernism, along with a consideration of Wyndham Lewis’ journal *Blast* and modernist uses of the term “classicism.” The concluding chapter utilizes the satirical theory of Michael Seidel and of George Test and Dustin Griffin to consider modernist form in the terms of ludic satire and crisis rhetoric in four major works of the “Men of 1914”: Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, Pound’s *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, and Lewis’ *The Apes of God*. 
This dissertation by Kevin Rulo fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in English approved by Virgil Nemoianu, Ph.D, as Director, and by Joseph Sendry, Ph.D, and Pamela Ward, Ph.D, as Readers.

_______________________________
Virgil Nemoianu, Ph.D, Director

_______________________________
Joseph M. Sendry, Ph.D, Reader

_______________________________
Pamela S. Ward, Ph.D, Reader
Acknowledgements

Above all, I would like to thank Virgil Nemoianu, for his teaching, his direction, and his works – all of which I have benefited from in ways bigger than words. I would also like to thank Joseph Sendry and Pamela Ward for their helpful comments and criticisms, both of the initial proposal and of the manuscript. Beyond the committee, Taryn Okuma made thoughtful suggestions regarding the secondary literature. Paul Edwards mercifully pointed to mistakes in my quotations related to Wyndham Lewis’ “Joint” manuscripts. My wife, Jennifer, provided various kinds of assistance throughout this process, without which the project simply would not have been possible. For this help, I am very indebted and very grateful.

Quotations from Wyndham Lewis, “Joint,” are reprinted by permission of the Wyndham Lewis Memorial Trust (a registered charity).
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dissertation Introduction ................................................................. 1

Chapter I: Modernism (and Modernisms)

Prolegomena .................................................................................. 11

1. Modernism and its Periodization .............................................. 13

2. “What Was Modernism?” ......................................................... 20
   2.1 Modernism as Aesthetic Isolationism ............................... 21
   2.2 Modernism as Paradoxical Aesthetic Isolationism .......... 42
   2.3 Modernism as Epistemological Isolationism ................. 47
   2.4 Modernism as Temporal Isolationism ............................ 54
   2.5 The “New” Modernist Studies ......................................... 56
   2.6 Post-Script on the Two Modernities .............................. 66

3. Modernism and Satire ................................................................. 68

4. The History of the “Men of 1914” .......................................... 70

5. Coda ....................................................................................... 79
Chapter II: Literary History and Modernism as Satire: A Typology

Table of Contents

Part I.

Introduction..................................................................................................................81

1. Modern and Anti-Modern......................................................................................83

2. Typologies, Diachronic and Synchronic.................................................................91

3. The Modernist Type..............................................................................................108

  3.1 Modernity as Total Decadence..........................................................................109

  3.2 Modernity as Hell................................................................................................112

  3.3 Modernity as Hollow.........................................................................................118

4. Satire and the Literature of Modernism.................................................................125

5. Modernism and the Satiric Tradition..................................................................127

Part II.

1. Leopold Bloom: Hollow Man?..............................................................................131

   1.1 Joyce and Modernity.......................................................................................132

   1.2 Bloom, Odysseus, and Modernity..................................................................134

   1.3 Leopold Bloom, Heroic or Hollow..................................................................139

   1.4 Bloom and the Modernist Type......................................................................142

   1.5 Leopold Bloom: Hollow Man as Great Man................................................152

2. Wyndham Lewis’ Joint and the Modernist Type..................................................155

   2.1 Wyndham Lewis, Modernism, and the “Men of 1914”..................................156

   2.2 The Contexts of Joint......................................................................................162
Chapter III: “To Save the World from Suicide”: Satire and the Poetics of Modernism

Table of Contents

Introduction.............................................................................................................182

1. Preludes: Poetics of Modernism Today.............................................................183

2. Modernism and the Origins of Satire..............................................................188


4. Classicism and the Poetics of Modernism.......................................................197
   4.1 Classicism and Modernism.........................................................................198
   4.2 Classicism and L’Action française...............................................................199
   4.3 Classicism and T.E. Hulme.................................................................207
   4.4 Classicism and Irving Babbitt.................................................................223
   4.5 Classicism and T.S. Eliot........................................................................226
   4.6 Wyndham Lewis and the Satire of Classicism.......................................239
   4.7 Classicism, Pound, and Joyce.................................................................257

5. Classicism and the “Men of 1914”...............................................................260

6. By Way of Conclusion: Modernism, Classicism, and Romanticism..............264

vi
# Chapter IV: Modernism and Satiric Form

Table of Contents

1. The “Hollow Man” Model and Modernist Form .................................................. 269

2.1 Modernism, Intentionality, and Satire .......................................................... 277

2.2 Modernism, Form, and Satire ....................................................................... 279

2.3 Satiric Form and Pound’s *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* ................................... 282

2.4 Satiric Form and Eliot’s *The Waste Land* ................................................... 292

2.5 Satiric Form and James Joyce’s *Ulysses* ..................................................... 301

2.6 Satiric Form and Wyndham Lewis’ *The Apes of God* ................................. 312

3. Modernist Form and Ludic Satire .................................................................. 323

3.1 Modernism and Fascism ................................................................................ 323

3.2 Modernism as (Ludic) Satire ........................................................................ 326

3.3 The Politics of Modernist Form ..................................................................... 332

Bibliography ........................................................................................................... 335
Introduction

As its title suggests, this dissertation concerns three interrelated subjects: the phenomenon of “modernism”; satire as an aesthetic option; and the literary group signified by the term, the “Men of 1914” (comprising T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, Wyndham Lewis, and Ezra Pound). It seeks to investigate modernism as a literary-historical reality, specifically the extent to which “modernism” intersects with the satirical. And in so doing, it utilizes the “Men of 1914” as representative specimens.

A few secondary issues generated by this approach will also be of some concern. These include the usefulness of the grouping signified by the term “Men of 1914” and the relationship between that grouping and what is meant by “modernism.”

The history of critical scholarship on modernism is vast and varied. “Modernism” has been studied from a great many angles and approaches, within a multitude of methodological traditions and with focus on a large area of temporal-spatial materials. At the same time, there are today broad areas of agreement both in terms of historical periodization (with unanimous sentiment that the years 1910-1930 form the core of modernism, at least in its Anglophone variety) and in terms of the general character of modernism as a literary-historical phenomenon.

There is wide-ranging consensus that literary and aesthetic modernism was at odds with much of its socio-cultural milieu and that this situation of rupture resulted in an attitude of entrenchment or withdrawal with regard to the lived world. Some regard this isolative posture as genuine while others question its sincerity – viewing
modernism’s relation to sociality as paradoxical, ambivalent, or contradictory – but most everyone accepts it as a starting point for understanding what is generally called “canonical modernism.”

It is only very recently with the advent of the so-called “new” modernist studies that the possibility for a true modernist engagement has begun to be fully considered. And yet, much of this important recent work has had the paradoxical effect of reinforcing established views of high-modernism. What the “new” modernism has meant in many cases is an expansion of the canon or a shift of temporal emphasis. In such cases, high-modernism is often defined as the “old” against which the “new” constructs its identity. When high-modernism (i.e., canonical modernist works of the late 1910s and the 1920s) is considered within the framework of the new modernist studies, the poststructuralist/ Marxist hermeneutic continues to dominate. Lawrence Rainey’s study of the institutional structures of modernism, for example, is a clear ideological descendent of Terry Eagleton’s reading of modernism as a self-complicating or paradoxical aesthetic isolationism. Few authors – one may mention Michael Tratner and Gerald Gillespie as such recent exceptions – seek to revise the high-modernist period in terms of a conscious, active, and interested aesthetic of socio-cultural engagement.

---

1 The term “canonical modernism,” though often employed, is certainly a loaded one. It has been used to signify traditional conceptions of modernism often challenged in current scholarship. The “Men of 1914” would no doubt fit into its categorical boundaries, with the possible exception of Wyndham Lewis. For a representative example of its use, see Tim Armstrong, Modernism: A Cultural History (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2005), 26.

2 For a detailed discussion of these works, see Chapter One. Lawrence Rainey, Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1998); Terry Eagleton, “Capitalism, Modernism and Postmodernism,” Against the Grain: Essays 1975-1985 (London: Verso,
About satire, much work has been done concerning specific texts by modernists and even on the larger oeuvre of particular modernist authors. More often than not, however, the satire in modernist works is considered incidental or even antithetical to the works’ modernism. The poem, play, story, or novel is often regarded as modernist despite the fact that it has a prominent satirical dimension. Such an attitude can be attributed in many ways to the triumph of modernism – or of what are taken to be modernist values – in our academic and artistic institutions. In the wake of this ascendancy, satire is often viewed as a second-class literary citizen, as an activity beneath the purview of serious art, as simplistic, petty, ephemeral, lacking in ambiguity and aesthetic refinement. All of these sentiments, so far as they can be found among us, cannot be conceived of without the assimilation into the common consciousness of what is generally thought of as modernist poetics, e.g., the exaltation of high art; the aesthetic values of complexity and ambiguity; the vocation of the poet as above the social and the political. And although some recent work has shown at least a certain willingness to re-conceive the relationship between modernism and satire, the established perceived dichotomy between the two remains paradigmatic. Even those few works which do seek the most active revision of thought about modernism and satire often do so with recourse to the same tactics mentioned above concerning modernism and engagement more generally: focusing on new authors or on early or late modernism, attempting to construct alternative modernisms, arguing

for high-modernist hypocrisy, etc. As a result little has been done to alter the
perception that high-modernism and satire are two mutually exclusive categories.

In light of the current situation, this dissertation will seek to contribute to the
“revisionary”\(^3\) project of contemporary modernist studies by reconsidering the
question of modernist engagement specifically as it relates to the high-modernism of
the “Men of 1914.” In doing so, the present study attempts to develop a theory of
modernism as satire whereby the long-acknowledged rupture between modernism and
the reigning bourgeois/industrial culture is seen not in terms of entrenchment or
ambivalence but in terms of substantive social engagement. The argument will be
made that satire, far from being opposed or even incidental to what could be called
modernist, is actually a fundamental expression of the spirit of modernism. Rather
than seeing satire as a kind of “low” phase residual that enters into the picture only
when the dramatic aesthetic heroism of high-modernism has petered out, the theory of
modernism as satire conceives of satire as constitutive of modernism in all its phases
but as particularly important to the period of high-modernism.

In order to understand fully how satire functions within the ambit of modernism,
it is necessary to interrogate the relationship between “modernism” and “modernity.”
Though related, the two terms have rightly been particularized by scholars. While
“modernism” generally refers to a relatively short period in Western culture (less than
one hundred years even in the broadest periodizations and usually not more than a
half-century), “modernity” has signified a much larger swath of temporal geography.

In some cases, modernity represents the period from what was habitually called the “Renaissance” (now dubbed the “Early Modern Period”) to the post-World War II era. According to this narrative, the values of European humanism – optimism, human-centeredness over God-centeredness, liberality – are seen as cultural forerunners of the Enlightenment. For others, modernity begins chiefly with the scientific rationalism of the Royal Society. For still others, it is the acceleration of industrialism, with its various consequences, that ushers in the modern age.

Theoreticians and practitioners of sociology have referred to these consequences in different ways. They include the separation and fragmentation of human life and society, the de-personalization and secularization of civilization, and the increasing rationalization of work. These differences in the study of modernity, however, should be seen as the expression of a robust interdisciplinary complementarity, rather than as marking rival narratives of the modern.

But if there is agreement about the necessity to distinguish between modernism and modernity, scholars are somewhat divided about the exact nature of that distinction. There are critics who see modernism in terms of order and reason, and for

---

them modernism is an outgrowth or development of modernity. Other critics tend to emphasize the ways in which modernism seems to oppose traditional modernity, in its anti-rationalism and anti-bourgeois cultural posture.

Some have employed the notion of the “anti-modern” to describe a variety of cultural activities and attitudes related to modernity, including modernism. The present study conceives of modernism as a particular kind of anti-modernity, a conscious, engaged, and active cultural project aimed at altering the world. This anti-modern orientation of modernism, especially as found in the “Men of 1914,” should be regarded as serious and total in terms of its social self-conception. Peter V. Zima has referred to “literarische Modernismus” as a “spätmoderne Selbstkritik der Moderne.” Writing about the anti-modern, Antoine Compagnon has said that “les antimodernes sont le sel du moderne.” For Zima and Compagnon, then, modernism and the anti-modern respectively are both realities of modernity no matter the extent

---


8 Peter V. Zima, Moderne/ Postmoderne: Gesellschaft, Philosophie, Literatur (Tübingen, Basel: Francke, 1997), xi.

9 Compagnon, 448.
to which they are also against modernity. For my part, I will argue that modernism is a concomitant reality with modernity surely, but that its anti-modern stance is outside of and apart from modernity itself.\(^\text{10}\) This rather delicate point is crucial for a proper understanding of the satirical element of modernism, and it will be taken up in full in Chapter Two.

It is not unimportant to ask how modernism may have affected modernity and whether that effect was positive in the end, as Compagnon perhaps suggests about his “les antimodernes.” But it is important to acknowledge that such an inquiry really concerns historical effects (and perhaps unintentional or incidental effects) more than anything else. What follows here is not a consideration of the historical reception of modernism, and from this perspective in any event one should be wary of assigning to modernism a direct sense of the value of modernity. The critique and criticism of modernity that modernism offers should not be seen as offered constructively – as if modernism were doing it for modernity’s own good. Just the opposite, modernism’s raison d’être (as much as post-modernism’s) is the defeat of the modern. Among the distinguishing marks of modernism and post-modernism, and perhaps there is less to distinguish than one might at first imagine, is the temporal direction from which the attack on modernity takes place. While post-modernism relates negatively to modernity by moving beyond it, modernism represents the anti-modern that is concomitant with modernity.

\(^{10}\) In this way, modernism is related closely to post-modernism, which also offers a critique of modernity from “outside” of modernity.
It would not necessarily be accurate, however, to suggest that modernism offered some well-thought-out alternative to or a logical series of rational criticisms of modernity. Though the satirical in modernism can take many forms – from naked disgust to gentler, dryer forms of the ironic – it often manifests itself in the direction of modernity as sheer invective or blind hatred or, somewhat less unpleasant, unguarded annoyance. In short, modernism’s opposition to modernity is often on the order of simple dislike. Modernity for the modernists was often nothing more than “a botched civilization,” an “old bitch gone in the teeth.”

At the same time, it is not difficult to see deeper motives and purposes behind modernism’s satirical attitude to modern society. Modernity’s sense of progress, of optimism, of the possibilities of humanity in technological, industrial society can be contrasted starkly with modernism’s sense of ubiquitous decline, of human limitations and failures, and of the deadening experience of rational development. These have been well chronicled. Within this framework, modernism’s satirical spirit can be understood to be a lamentation of cultural, spiritual, and social decadence and crisis. But not merely negative or excoriating, modernist satire can also be seen as a strategy for or technique to bring about regeneration in the midst of decadence. The result is a form of satire particular to modernism, not only in terms of its objects of vituperation and its temporal concerns but also in its self-reflexivity and its peculiar conception of the satirist as outsider.

---

Because the argument here is made within the context of and with reference to scholarship on modernism, both in its diachronic evolution as well as in the synchronic moment of the present, it will be especially important to present both established and current views of modernism that will be complicated, qualified, and/or developed by the modernism/satire interface. To this end, the first chapter will provide a critical survey of relevant scholarship in the field of modernist studies, with special attention paid to conceptions of modernism as a period term.

With the scholarly context of the argument in place, the second chapter will draw on the work of Wilhelm Dilthey, Max Weber, and Virgil Nemoianu, as well as the historical and archetypal theories of Northrop Frye concerning satire and cyclical processes, in order to develop a typology of modernism grounded in modernism’s satirical orientation to cultural reality. Chapter Two has two parts. The first part is more general, sketching the typological landscape of modernism with several brief examples from modernist works, especially those of the “Men of 1914.” The second part considers more specifically how the modernist type-model can be employed with interesting variations in two texts, one well-known and one known hardly at all: Joyce’s Ulysses and Lewis’ unfinished and unpublished novel, Joint.

Chapter Three will be concerned with reconciling modernist poetics and the theory of modernism as satire. Here, theoretical and critical texts primarily by Eliot, Lewis, and Pound (with some attention also to T.E. Hulme) will be of greatest interest. A portion of the chapter will include a comparative analysis of modernist
aesthetic intentionality and thematics with the contextual origins of Greek satire in fertility ritual, where certain surprising similarities of circumstance exist.

Returning to typology, this time emphasizing particularly literary form, Chapter Four will consider modernist strategies of macro-textual organization (the penchant for loose, fragmented structures, disconnection, mélange), in light of Michael Seidel’s theories of satire and crisis rhetoric and George Test’s and Dustin Griffin’s theories of ludic satire. Considered texts include Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, Pound’s *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, and Lewis’ *The Apes of God*. In relating modernist form to the satirical, the discussion will also seek to refute theories of modernist “totalitarian” form.

The work that follows represents an attempt to enrich and thicken current understanding of modernism as a period in literary history by considering the role of satire in some of Anglophone high-modernism’s most representative figures: the “Men of 1914.” In conceiving of these figures in terms of the satirical, in recognizing the prominence and function of satire in their work, a more complete picture of their cultural and social orientations, and of their literary work both as a group and individually, can emerge. Areas of particular concern to modernist studies at the present moment – such as modernism’s relation to culture and to modernity – can be clarified and better comprehended, if not fully disambiguated, through the reading of modernism as satire. In addition, this study of modernist satire can contribute to a fuller appreciation of satire as a diverse, dynamic mode in literary history.
CHAPTER I: MODERNISM (AND MODERNISMS)

The “modernisms,” if so they may be termed, are innumerable. The word “crisis” occurs more than once, – a word, we will boldly affirm, never used by Shakespeare.

– Lady's Magazine, April 149/2 (1796)¹

A period is always a period of something, never a period of everything.

– Marshall Brown²

Prolegomena

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a context with which to consider the primary claim of this study: that modernism, and particularly as found in the “Men of 1914,” can be understood as a satiric force in the West of the late nineteenth and, especially, early twentieth century. As such, unlike the subsequent chapters, it will proceed more along expository rather than argumentative lines. Even so, a few implicit claims are made. One significant conclusion that will emerge from the following overview is the idea that scholarship on modernism, from its beginnings, has tended to emphasize modernism’s posture of “disengagement,” whether straightforward or contradictory, often to the exclusion or neglect of other possibilities.

However, I have not conceded the pretension of surveying the breadth of work on modernism over the many decades. One cannot hope, of course, to cover the totality of

¹ “Modernism.” OED Online, draft revision March 2010.

the truly insurmountable bibliography of secondary literature on modernism. I therefore beg the reader’s pardon for the inevitable but regrettable omissions, which include many insightful and important works of modernist scholarship, and I hope that enough of the significant and influential material has been presented to give the reader an accurate, if partial, picture of modernist scholarship.

Some pardon must be granted as well for the inevitably narrow scope of the present study. Modernism is a truly multicultural phenomenon encompassing all the countries and peoples of Europe and North America, and, as is becoming all the more evident by means of more recent scholarship, even many postcolonial and non-Western cultures. From Proust to Kafka, Apollinaire to Mandelstam, Marinetti to Trackl, Lorca to Lagerkvist, the geographic range of modernism is near to ubiquitous. The same could be said for the non-literary arts, where modernism is no less significant. Whether in the music of Stravinsky and Schoenberg or in the art of Picasso and Dali or in the film of Eisenstein and Lang, modernism was strongly felt across the aesthetic spectrum. Only a very narrow sliver of these intricate multicultural currents can be covered here. All the same, it is my hope that what is studied here will be relevant to other literatures and arts – and allusions or references to these will be made where appropriate (however unjustly brief they will surely be).

A short outline of the chapter will be helpful here. It is fitting to begin with a brief look at the origins and usage of the term “modernism,” with its rather peculiar history, and to follow that with a broad overview of how periodizers have conceived of modernism in history. The second section will be concerned with prevalent ideas
throughout the history of modernist scholarship that could serve as answers to Harry Levin’s long-echoing question “What Was Modernism?” Sections three and four deal with scholarship on the other major terms of this study, in conjunction with the concept of modernism: satire and the term the “Men of 1914.”

Regarding the periodization of modernism, my findings are that 1) there is a general scholarly consensus that the phase of high-modernism lasted from late 1910s to the end of the 1920s; 2) that the period of late or low modernism followed in the 1930s; and 3) that one significant distinguishing characteristic between “high” and “late” modernism is that the former is relatively disengaged and non-satirical while the latter is marked by greater engagement, including by frequent recourse to the satirical. It will be the task of the chapters that follow to re-order this prevailing picture so that satire and cultural engagement more generally can be seen as constitutive just as much of high as of late modernism (even if manifested differently in each phase of modernism).

1. “Modernism” and its Periodization

The word “modernism” has had an interesting history. The word was first used in print, so far as we know, by Jonathan Swift, a writer with some intriguing connections to the authors that would one day be called “modernist.” It was Swift, after all, who endeavored to throw his hat into the ring and join the Quarrell of the Ancients and Moderns. And the context for Swift's coinage is not insignificant by any means. Repulsed by the proliferation of the printed word in his day, by the Grub Street publishing industry and its mass productions and readership, fed up with what he regarded as the scientism
and will to novelty so prevalent in his time, Swift refers in a letter to Alexander Pope in 1737 to “[t]he corruption of English by those Scribblers who send us over their trash in Prose and Verse, with abominable curtailings and quaint modernisms.” The impoverishment and banalization of language, the usurpation of the literary sphere by hacks, the decay brought about by the vulgarization of print culture, ersatz innovation – these are themes familiar to writers like Eliot and Joyce, Pound and Lewis. It is a profound historical irony, and one that would interest greatly the post-structuralist, who sees in language the ever-present possibility that the signifier/ signified relation will turn on itself, that a word is always on the cusp of disseminating into absorption by its opposite, that the word “modernism” would be coined by Swift and cultivated by others (like Dr. Johnson) who would make use of it as a term of opprobrium to the end of thwarting those very cultural trends that would achieve their consummation in the modernist period and that the modernists would in large measure define themselves against.

But despite its relatively early coinage and use, “modernism” would not make much of an impact until it became a Roman Catholic heresy. Around the turn of the nineteenth into the twentieth century, Alfred Loisy, George Tyrell, and Friedrich von Hügel, among others, sought a synthesis of modern rationalist sensibility and the revealed doctrines and teachings of the Church. Suffice it to say, their attempt at renewal and renovation did not meet the approval of ecclesiastical authority. Pope Pius X even composed an obligatory Oath Against Modernism which remained in effect into the

3 “Modernism.” OED Online, draft revision March 2010.
second half of the century. But this “modernism” has little, if any, relationship to the literary and cultural movement that is the subject of this study.\(^4\) In fact, for the “Men of 1914” and many other modernists, traditionalist religion, including traditional Roman Catholicism, was an ally rather than an adversary.

“Modernism” as literary studies understands it would not be labeled as such by scholarly consensus for some time. Contemporaneously with the period, the word was utilized on occasion to describe literary phenomena. There is the journal of 1919 *The Modernist: A Monthly Magazine of Arts and Letters*, and John Crowe Ransom would use the word in the 1920s in terms close to what later scholarship would understand, and Robert Graves and Laura Riding would write *A Survey of Modernist Poetry* in 1927 – but all of this occurred without any subsequent accrual of common usage or meaning.\(^5\) Critics in fact tried out several possibilities which did not take before settling on “modernism.”

\(^4\) A few scholars, Calinescu and Gamache for example, have attempted to connect ecclesiastical or theological modernism with the literary and aesthetic movement of the early twentieth century. See Lawrence B. Gamache, “Toward a Definition of ‘Modernism’,” in *The Modernists: Studies in a Literary Phenomenon*, ed. Lawrence B. Gamache and Ian S. MacNiven, (Rutherford, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson UP, 1987), 32-45; and Matei Calinescu, “Modernity, Modernisme, Modernization: Variations on Modern Themes,” *The Turn of the Century: Le Tournant du Siècle*, ed. Christian Berg, Frank Durieux, and Geert Lernout (Walter de Gruyter, 1995). They note the innovatory and radical aspects of both movements, their similar attempts to reconcile old and new, etc. What is overlooked in such characterizations, in my view, are the intimate historical and ideological relations between literary modernism and traditional Roman Catholicism. To cite only a few examples, one could look to T.E. Hulme’s and T.S. Eliot’s connections with Charles Maurras’ *L’Action française*, which had a formative effect on both men’s poetical doctrines. It is not insignificant in this regard that Maurras held close ties with Marcel Lefebvre, Archbishop of Dakar, Africa (1955-1962), irrepressible opponent of theological modernism and eventual critic of the Second Vatican Council, which he regarded as a capitulation to modernism. See Marcel Lefebvre, *Un évêque parle* (Jarzé: D.M. Morin, 1976). Other indispensable intersections occur in the work of James Joyce, whose modernist aesthetics in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* could be described as a transference of Catholic orthodox theological models; Wyndham Lewis, who appeals heavily to traditional Thomism and to the early work of Fulton J. Sheen in *Time and Western Man*; and T.S. Eliot, again, whose conception of tradition and the individual has strong Catholic and Anglican antecedents (and much of whose work would not be possible without traditional Catholic and Christian culture). See Aidan Nichols, “T.S. Eliot and Yves Congar on the Nature of Tradition,” *Angelicum* 61 (1984), 473-485.

\(^5\) The history of the word “modernism” has been told many times. Among the most distinguished accounts is that of Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham: Duke UP, 1987), 68-85.
Most familiar, and very close etymologically, is the term “modern,” which one sees in Cleanth Brooks, who refers to “modern poetry,” Joseph Frank, who speaks of “modern literature,” Stephen Spender, who refers to the “struggle of the modern,” and Cyril Connolly, who speaks of the Modern Movement (a term used by Pound, incidentally). Edmund Wilson calls it “Symbolism,” as does René Wellek (though Wellek reserves the name “modernist” for the avant-garde movements, which he sees as initiating a new period in literary history). For R.P. Blackmur it was “Expressionism.” Graham Hough in 1960 noted that “whatever was happening in those years has not yet acquired a name” – he expressly did not like Blackmur’s suggestion – but thought “Imagism” might be suitable. Hugh Kenner offered “Vortex,” and even as late as 1978 that seemed a possibility at least for a certain cohort of authors.6

By 1960 Harry Levin could already ask his now oft-heard question, “What Was Modernism?”7 and certainly since then, the term has enjoyed ever-increasing standardization as the singular nomination signifying the period of early twentieth-century literature. It has, however, been revised in recent years by a substantial number of

---


nominalist literary historians who insist, as Lovejoy once insisted with respect to Romanticism, that we cannot speak of modernism, only “modernisms.” It remains to be seen whether or not the term will undergo further revision. Many have noted the absurdity of referring to a by-gone cultural event in terms of the contemporaneous. If “modern” means “current,” they ask, how can “modernism” remain “modernism” beyond its historical moment and even now into the twenty-first century? But nonetheless, with or without the “s,” “modernism” for the moment at least seems firmly entrenched in the institutional and intellectual frameworks of academic reflection.

If the term for the period has been tentatively settled only after a long stretch of uncertainty, much the same can be said for the dating and periodization proper of modernism. Though there are general lines of agreement, the critical literature on modernism attests to vibrant diversity with regard to fixing dates for its beginning and ending (with some critics seeming to say that it could still be ongoing!). This variety of periodizations can be attributed in part to the variety with which the term is employed among and between disciplines. Modernism, if it ever was an appellation strictly confined

---


10 In the introduction to their double-volume article collection on modernism, the editors Astradur Eysteinsson and Vivian Liska ask whether or not modernism has in fact concluded, answering that “there are several indications in the present volumes that modernism is alive and kicking.” “Introduction: Approaching Modernism,” Modernism vol. 1-2 (Amsterdam/ Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2007), 1-8. 1.
to the aesthetic disciplines of art, music, and literature, is utilized now in many disparate fields, sometimes with quite different purposes and ends. There is no doubt that such practice has impacted the periodization of modernism, usually with the effect of broadening the temporal scope of the term’s signification.¹¹

A random sampling of scholarship that utilizes the term and sets fixed dates for a period of “modernism” reveals the basic contours of the periodization of modernism.¹² Scholars have gone as far back as the 1860s and up to the 1960s in outlining the beginnings and endings of the period. For some, the period is a deeply felt, and quite long, event in cultural and intellectual history, with various mutations and stages, seventy, eighty, even in some accounts close to ninety years in duration.¹³ For others, modernism is a violent explosion that dissipates as rapidly as it comes into being, lasting only two or so decades.¹⁴ For still others, the picture is somewhere in between. There is unanimous opinion that the decades of the 1910s and the 1920s belong to the period of

¹¹ Roger Griffin, Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning Under Mussolini and Hitler (New York: Palgrave Macillan, 2007); David Luban, Legal Modernism (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997); and Peter V. Zima, Moderne/Postmoderne: Gesellschaft, Philosophie, Literatur (Tübingen, Basel: Francke, 1997) are good representative examples of the variety and breadth of interdisciplinary study of modernism.

¹² I have sampled, somewhat at random, thirty-nine articles and/or monographs that offer well-defined dates for a periodization of modernism. For the sake of space, I will include in this footnote only the last names of the authors considered. Full entries for these works can be found in the bibliography at the conclusion of this chapter. The works included are as follows: Alexander, Armstrong, Baldick, Baym, Beebe, Bergonzi, Bradbury and McFarlane, R.D. Brown, Collecott, Dasenbrock, DiBattista, Dowson, Faulkner, Fokkema and Ibsch, Gillies, Goldman, Griffin (2007), Hough, Kiely and Hildebidle, Levenson, Micale, Ousby, Poplawski, Quinones, Roston, Schwarz, Shiach, Smart, Spears, Stead, Symons, Thormählen, Travers, Wade, Whitworth, Wilson, Witemeyer, Wolf, Zima.

¹³ Roger Griffin: (1860s-WWII); Monroe K. Spears: (1870-1957); Maurice Beebe: (1875-1945); Peter V. Zima: (1880-1950); M. Travers, (1868-1939); R.D. Brown: (1900-1960); Mark S. Micale: (1880-1940); Robert Kiely and John Hildebidle, (1880s-WWII); Edmund Wilson: (1870-1930).

¹⁴ Michael Alexander: (1914-1927); Peter Faulkner: (1910-1930); Bernard Bergonzi: (1910-1930); Marianne Thormählen: (1910-1930s).
modernism. Beyond that, significant support exists for the 1930s, and still significant but somewhat less support for the 1900s and for the 1940s. Even further out from the core of 1910-1930, there are advocates for modernism in the decades of 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s, as well as for the 1950s, though the farther back (and the farther forward) from the core one goes the more sparse and more idiosyncratic the picture becomes.\footnote{The raw data can be broken down by surveying the number of scholars (in my informal study of thirty-nine) who include each decade from 1860-1960 in their periodization of modernism. The results are as follows: 1860-70: 2; 1870-80: 5; 1880-90: 9; 1890-1900: 18; 1900-10: 25; 1910-20: 39; 1920-30: 39; 1930-40: 32; 1940-50: 14; 1950-60: 2.} Most frequently, the year 1922, which saw the publication of such major modernist works as Eliot’s *The Waste Land* and Joyce’s *Ulysses* among others, is considered to be the apogee of modernism.\footnote{One often hears of 1922 as the *annus mirabilis* of modernism. See Marianne Thormählen, “Introduction,” in *Rethinking Modernism*, Ed., Marianne Thormählen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 3; and Michael North, *Reading 1922: A Return to the Scene of the Modern* (New York: Oxford UP, 2002), 46. The prevalence of this periodization does bring an important issue to the fore, namely that of national and linguistic boundaries with regard to what was a truly international phenomenon. While 1922 may seem the logical high-point of Anglophone modernism, other temporal moments may seem more relevant from the standpoint of non-English language literatures. For example, for German language literature, 1924, which saw the death of Kafka as well as the publication of Mann’s *Der Zauberberg*, Musil’s *Drei Frauen*, and the final version of Brecht’s *Im Dickicht der Städte*, would perhaps be a better choice, while in France a case could be made for 1920 (Apollinaire, *La Femme assise*; Montherlant, *La Relève du matin*; Valéry, *Le Cimetière marin* and *Odes*) or perhaps 1921 (Breton, *Les Champs magnétiques*; Proust, *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, published between 1921 and 1922 in two volumes). For literatures like those of Italy, Spain, or Russia, the possibilities are even more various and much more difficult to relate to what Anglophone critics consider the standard historical arc of the modernist period. With its focus on the “Men of 1914,” the present study will speak primarily to Anglophone modernist studies. But a recognition is made of the limitations and idiosyncrasies of a national and unilingual approach with respect to modernism, which ultimately and in the final analysis requires the kind of cultural interfacing that is the purview of the field of comparative literature. Some attempt has been made, however, at least at an acknowledgement of the broader work on modernism in comparative and other national literatures and of how that work may generate different results (and necessarily so) with regard to modernism than those of this study.}
modernism as a cultural and aesthetic phenomenon which undergoes several mutations and transformations, while still retaining its fundamental, constitutive characteristics. The form, duration, and quality of these changes are regarded variously by scholars, but these almost always involve a sense of an early gestational period, followed by a “high” moment, and concluding with a “late” period which serves as a kind of cultural denouement. Oftentimes, the first phase is regarded as avant-gardist, the second as elitist and aloof, and the third as engaged and political.\textsuperscript{17} During the pre-war period, modernism is defined by Imagism and Vorticism; in the twenties, by grand works of aesthetic virtuosity; and in the thirties, by less aesthetic radicalism and more socio-political persuasion. Though this periodization is complicated by more recent emphases on multicultural and more marginalized forms of modernism, whose work represents a significant challenge to the established picture, it must be said that this tripartite period structure still remains a touchstone from which most contemporary scholarly innovation begins.

2.0 “What Was Modernism?”

Harry Levin now a half-century ago dared to ask a question that has amazingly lost none of its relevance: just what is (or was) modernism?\textsuperscript{18} Several answers have

\textsuperscript{17} This established view can be found in numerous studies and discourse on the period. It will manifest itself throughout this chapter as we consider major trends in modernist scholarship. See Marjorie Perloff, \textit{21st Century Modernism: The “New” Poetics} (London: Blackwell, 2002) for particular emphasis on the first phase leading into the second; for a representative example of the conventional view of the second versus the third phase, see Monroe K. Spears, \textit{Dionysius and the City: Modernism in Twentieth-Century Poetry} (New York: Oxford UP, 1970), 61-2; and also Tyrus Miller, \textit{Late Modernism: Politics, Fiction, and the Arts between the World Wars} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

garnered significant scholarly allegiance, some of the most important of which are surveyed here.

Above all, modernism has been understood to be a kind of escape, a withdrawal from the lived-world. The extent and nature of that withdrawal has been regarded variously by scholars. Some have seen modernism as a kind of aesthetic isolationism, with a certain degree of disagreement forming about whether the entrenchment is genuine or inherently contradictory. Others have couched modernism’s escapist posture in the terms of epistemology rather than aesthetics, seeing in modernism a preoccupation with interiority. Still others have understood modernism’s flight as a temporal separation, a radical break with all that came before. Though one critic may emphasize one of these elements more than another, one should note that these various readings of modernism often exist in combination.

While modernism as a strategy of disengagement certainly represents the overwhelming consensus of much scholarship over the decades, new answers and fresh perspectives on modernism have been offered in recent years, some of which in many ways reinforce, while others of which radically challenge, conventional views. In light of this “new” modernist studies, the prospects for a robust, socially engaged modernism emerging within critical reflection on the period seem more promising than ever, even as these innovative approaches bring new problems and new questions.

2.1 Modernism as Aesthetic Isolationism
One of the most common beliefs about modernism within the scholarly tradition is the sense that modernism represents a kind of withdrawal from the lived-world into the safety of an idealized aesthetic. This view has many incarnations. It remains even now a critical commonplace, but can already be found in the earliest work on the period.

Edmund Wilson’s *Axel’s Castle* represents the first substantial, book-length attempt at presenting a macro-scale vision of the modernist period. Wilson, of course, did not call it that, but the subtitle is revealing enough of his intentions: “A Study of the Imaginative Literature of 1870-1930.” For Wilson, this literature is Symbolism. It manifests itself as a continuation and metamorphosis of Romanticism and contains two distinct periods, an early primarily French phase and a later Anglo-French moment. The study concerns itself primarily with this later development of Symbolism, as found in the work of Yeats, Valéry, Eliot, Proust, Joyce, and Stein. The central characteristic of the movement is its preference for social disengagement, its world-weariness and self-entrenchment.

As Wilson has it,

Symbolism corresponds to Romanticism, and is in fact an outgrowth from it. But whereas it was characteristic of the Romantics to seek experience for its own sake – love, travel, politics – to try the possibilities of life; the Symbolists, though they also hate formulas, though they also discard conventions, carry on their experimentation in the field of literature alone; and though they, too, are essentially explorers, explore only the possibilities of imagination and thought. And whereas the Romantic, in his individualism, had usually revolted against or defied that society with which he felt himself at odds, the Symbolist has detached himself from society and schools himself in indifference to it.19

---

The Symbolist shift from Romanticism is one from an “objective to a subjective world, from an experience shared with society to an experience savored in solitude.”20 Among the reasons for this shift, Wilson emphasizes sociological changes (the rise of industrialism and the bourgeois classes, and the cultural and social isolation of the poet-artists resulting from it).21 Symbolism takes hold when the poet finds himself no longer able (or caring) to engage his new antagonists: “For Gautier’s generation, the bourgeois had already become the enemy; but one took a lively satisfaction in fighting him. By the end of the century, however, the bourgeois’s world was going so strong that, from the point of view of the poet, it had come to seem hopeless to oppose it.”22

Some writers who felt the Romantic sense of social possibility like H.G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw remained committed to the world outside of themselves, “[b]ut if one had no sociological interest and no satirical bent and so no way of turning society to account [and Wilson’s implication is that his Symbolists had none of the above], one did not try to struggle with it or to attract attention by publishing one’s grievances against it: one simply did one’s best to ignore it, to keep one’s imagination free of it altogether.”23 For those “writers who are unable to interest themselves in [society] either by studying it scientifically, by attempting to reform it or by satirizing it, only two alternative courses” are available: the way of Axel (the Ivory Tower) and the way of

20 Wilson, 300.
21 Wilson, 303.
22 Wilson, 303.
23 Wilson, 303-4.
Rimbaud (the physical abandonment of modern society for the pre-industrial). Here again the path of Symbolism is clearly outlined as one markedly different form engaged expressions like the satirical.

Wilson does concede that the movement’s second phase is less inveterately hermetic. It has produced, after all, some important “social criticism,” but such criticism turns out to be nothing more than a mere “exercise.” And when writers of the second wave of “Symbolism” do happen to express an inclination toward an alternative social or cultural condition, it is often couched in terms of some idealized past society, so that even here what we find is a kind of escapism.

His best conjecture is that the 1930s will likely represent the end of “Symbolism” and its hyper-individualism. Wilson’s cyclical literary-historical mapping of oscillating emphasis on the subjective and the objective has the “Symbolist” period in 1930 at its point of exhaustion, with an inevitable return to the “objective” imminent. This return will include a renewed interest in the possibilities for social betterment and perhaps an attitude quite hostile to the writers of what will be the defunct Symbolist paradigm.

Wilson’s emphasis on the subjective and Romantic aspects of later Symbolism was challenged almost immediately by the just-burgeoning New Criticism. Though Allen Tate in 1936 had already begun to sketch the line of attack, it was Cleanth Brooks’ _Modern Poetry and the Tradition_ in 1939 that offered the first thoroughly developed case

---

24 Wilson, 324.
25 Wilson, 327.
26 Wilson, 327-8
27 Wilson, 330-2.
against Wilson’s book from the New Critical perspective.²⁸ Brooks notes that Wilson makes a distinction between the “serious-aesthetic” (e.g., Verlaine) and the “conversational-ironic” (Laforgue, Corbière) branches of Symbolism, but believes that Wilson inadequately observes his own distinction, attributing “romantic escapism” to Symbolism as a whole, even to those of the latter branch like Eliot, whose work Brooks considers wholly “antiromantic” in orientation.²⁹ Like Metaphysical poetry, the “conversational-ironic” branch of Symbolism exhibits “irony, realistic diction, wit,” the bringing together of discordant materials and linguistic registers.³⁰ These characteristics can be contrasted with the private thoughts and “unique personal feelings” of the escapist Romantic branch.³¹ Echoing Tate’s earlier arguments against Wilson, Brooks claims that “privacy and obscurity” are integral to poetry itself and cannot therefore be isolated as unique to one kind or type of poem.³² He laments that great contemporary poetry would be labeled “escapist” when it is the public not the poet who is the true escapist.³³

[I]t is the public which inhabits the Ivory Tower, separating its emotional life – at least that which it is willing to contemplate in poetry – from the actual world, and most of all from its intellectual activities; and . . . the poetry which it does


²⁹ Brooks, 54-55.

³⁰ Brooks, 60-1.

³¹ Brooks, 54.

³² Brooks, 60.

³³ Brooks, 67.
appreciate presents certain conventional emotional responses, uncontaminated by the actual world and untroubled by the play of the mind.

If modern poetry is isolated, contends Brooks, it is because its complexity and richness of experience cannot be appreciated or comprehended by the disassociated sensibility of a modern public that has isolated itself from such experience.\(^{34}\)

Even with Brooks’ antiromantic reading of Symbolism, a reading conceived in conscious opposition to Wilson, the fact that both he and Wilson conceive of writers who have come to be called modernists (such as Eliot and Joyce) in terms of Symbolism and of a Symbolist movement betrays the more fundamental agreement between the two critics. And even if we grant Brooks’ distinction between “romantic escapism” and “conversational-ironic” Symbolism, within New Critical readings of modernism (and within the modernist aesthetics of New Criticism itself) there is a view of the work of art which stresses its isolation from both author and reader, its ontological integrity and autonomy, which (if not “escapist”) does lend itself to notions of disengagement and aestheticist aloofness. Furthermore, New Critical interpretations of modernism have had great impact in solidifying modernism as a flight into timeless myth or into the spatialized aesthetic object.

A prototypical reading of this sort is Joseph Frank’s well-known essay on “Spatial Form in Modern Literature.” Like Wilson and Brooks, Frank sees modern literature as a development of French Symbolism, though he emphasizes Mallarmé rather than Verlaine or Laforgue. Just as Mallarmé called for a poetry of “absence,” so too do modern works (e.g., poems like Pound’s *Cantos* and Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, novels like Joyce’s

\(^{34}\) Brooks, 67-8.
*Ulysses* and Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu* seek reflexive self-reference and non-linear organizational patterns which require attention to the work as a whole, as one moment or experience, rather than as a sequence of moments or experiences. The advent of this “spatial form” Frank traces in Worringerian terms to humanity’s sense of discord with the inhabited world and its reality. He relates modern literature’s shift to spatial form as a corollary of modern experimentation in the plastic arts, seeing formal innovation in modern literature in ways familiar to Wilson’s work: “Now time is the very condition of that flux and change from which, as we have seen, man wishes to *escape* when he is in a relation of disequilibrium with the cosmos [my emphasis].” The escape from time is realized in the spatial form of modern literature. And this is so even when the use of spatial form includes – as it does in works of Eliot, Joyce, and Pound – recourse to the past because, in such instances, the past in its juxtaposition with the present undergoes a process of detemporalization. According to Frank, “modern literature has been engaged in transmuting the time world of history into the timeless world of myth. And it is this timeless world of myth. . .that finds its appropriate aesthetic expression in spatial form.” Frank’s modern literature can be seen therefore in much the same terms as Wilson’s Symbolism – as a flight from the world – even as their emphases may differ somewhat.

The thesis that modern literature represents a withdrawal or disengagement was solidified evermore by Frank Kermode’s *Romantic Image*. This book reinforces and

---


36 Frank, 60.
elevates to a new level Wilson’s narrative of Symbolism as an outgrowth of Romanticism. But where Wilson sought to distinguish the two, Kermode is at pains to sketch a large-scale periodization of Romanticism stretching from Coleridge to the book’s present around the notion of the “Image as a radiant truth out of space and time” and its derivation, “the necessary isolation or estrangement of men who can perceive it.” The socio-cultural factors behind these developments (though this is not the issue for Kermode) are the same as those offered by Wilson, the emergence of the “modern industrial state and modern middle class,” even if Kermode locates the aesthetic paradigm shift much earlier.

Kermode’s Image can be related in interesting ways to Frank’s concept of spatial form. In fact, one might say that Frank’s work is also an effort to periodize using the idea of the Image, which he finds in Pound’s formulations, though his project is much more narrowly conceived than is Kermode’s (confining itself to “modern” – we would say modernist – literature). The critical task for Frank is to find a conceptual framework for understanding how the idea of the discrete, instantaneous aesthetic event can be an adequate description for a novel like Ulysses of several hundred pages and eighteen highly variant episodes or, even more problematic, for a novel like Proust’s La recherche of equally gargantuan portions and released in separate volumes over a period of several years. His solution, of course, is the theory of spatial form.

---


38 Kermode, Romantic Image, 7.
And Frank’s reading of modern literature as an escape from the flux of time in the spatial aesthetic has much in common as well with Kermode’s understanding of the Image as an “aesthetic monad” isolated unto itself and outside of time.\(^{39}\) And whether the figure is the Image, the spatialized aesthetic object, the Ivory Tower, or Axel’s Castle, much of the most significant early thinking about modernism and its place in literary history tried to articulate what was taken to be the clear boundaries between the artist and the world as between art and life that the literature expressed.

Of course, the literary-historical course of events is bound to differ according to the particular attentions and interests of each critic. Where a totalizing critic like Kermode draws together, for example, a scholar like Graham Hough is eager to differentiate. In a series of lectures given in 1959 and published the following year in book form, *Reflections on a Literary Revolution*, Hough (like Kermode) finds the idea of the Image central to the period, in the movement of Imagism specifically, but (unlike Kermode) he is eager to contrast the revolution that is Imagism and its corollaries from the Romantic revolution before it.\(^{40}\) Hough’s model of Romanticism-Symbolism-Imagism emphasizes, much like Wilson’s approach, the ways in which “Symbolism moves in the direction of autonomous art, severed from life and experience by an impassable gulf.”\(^{41}\) But Symbolism is primarily a French or Continental phenomenon,

---


\(^{41}\) Hough, 11.
with “transcendental” overtones. It is not until the early years of the twentieth century that Symbolism had a tangible effect on Anglophone poetry, but even then such poetry cannot be called Symbolism proper because the new interface altered its character significantly. The otherworldly transcendentalism of Symbolism is lost – “Revelation becomes technique, incantation becomes a code of prohibitions” – and Imagism, or “Symbolism without the magic,” is born. Though Imagism strictly speaking is but a small movement in the history of literature, its ideas and doctrines became foundational for the period and can be found in various expressions of the distinctive writers of the time, including Joyce’s epiphanies and Eliot’s objective correlative. Even if Imagism could be said to shed the more mystical or spiritualist tendencies of Symbolism, for Hough (as for Kermode and Wilson before him) the poetry of the modern period is anti-discursive and anti-rational, is in fact another form of truth or knowing. This divergence in knowledge sets the poet off against mechanical rationalist society and against bourgeois culture more generally. The result is a poetry without communication, without a “natural community of understanding between poet and reader.”

The rupture can be found in the cosmopolitanism of modernism, a “rootless character” which extends to modernist works themselves: “many of the great works of modern literature seem to exist in a vacuum, to spring from no particular society and to

42 Hough, 12-3.
43 Hough 14-5.
44 Hough, 20-1.
45 Hough, 23-6.
46 Hough, 65.
address no particular audience.” In support of this claim, Hough cites the mythical-religious universalism of *The Waste Land* and the archetypal dream world of *Finnegans Wake*, founded on the “universal resurrection myth.” Hough’s remarks in this connection on Eliot, Joyce, and Lewis are of some interest:

The smaller forms need a more precise focus. Eliot’s early quasi-satirical poems and the satirical pieces in Pound’s *Ripostes* and *Lustra* both suffer from lack of it… Satire needs a firm social base. The violently energetic, cruelly trenchant pamphleteering of Wyndham Lewis, locally so powerful that one begins to think of a comparison with Swift, never makes its full effect as a whole because it has no consistent standpoint, no basis in society or intellectual tradition.

For Hough, then, any expression of the modernists that could be called satirical will be doomed to failure, precisely because what satire requires is the rootedness that modernism lacks.

The vacuity of modern literature is a feature emphasized also by Frank Kermode in his series of lectures compiled as *The Sense of an Ending*, which takes up or initiates several lines of inquiry that will have significant impacts upon subsequent scholarship, including the emphasis on the role of crisis in modernism so central to our current understanding of the movement. Another is the related discriminations or “modernisms,” which for Kermode include what current critical vocabulary would call avant-gardism, modernism, and postmodernism. And yet another is the linking of Kermode’s early or

---

47 Hough, 105.

48 Hough, 105-6.
“traditionalist” modernism (Eliot, Pound, Joyce, Lewis, Yeats, Lawrence) with fascistic impulses and sympathies.\textsuperscript{49}

While modernism describes the entire period from the beginning of the twentieth century to Kermode’s contemporary moment as one defined by its sense of crisis, traditionalist and schismatic modernism, or palaeo- and neo-modernism as he refers to them elsewhere, can be distinguished in their ways of being in crisis: “one reconstructs, the other abolishes, one decreates and the other destroys the indispensable and relevant past.”\textsuperscript{50} While the early modernism of traditionalists reveres the past and sees in it a “source of order,” later modernism finds the past something “which ought to be ignored.”\textsuperscript{51} But Kermode introduces a third term, “anti-traditionalist modernism,” nearly concomitant with its traditionalist counterpart, of which Apollinaire and the Dadaists are exemplars and which is the precursor to the later schismatic modernism of Kermode’s own day.\textsuperscript{52} Albeit with the names changed somewhat, this triadic model has proven quite useful to scholars of twentieth century literature, and it continues to provide the dominant and constitutive framework for discussions of modernism, avant-gardism, and postmodernism.\textsuperscript{53}


\textsuperscript{50} Kermode, \textit{The Sense of an Ending}, 123. For his use of the terms “palaeo-modernism” and “neo-modernism,” see Frank Kermode, \textit{Continuities} (New York: Random House, 1968), 8-10.

\textsuperscript{51} Kermode, \textit{The Sense of an Ending}, 115.

\textsuperscript{52} Kermode, \textit{The Sense of an Ending}, 103-4.

\textsuperscript{53} Among many possible examples, see Andreas Hyussen, \textit{After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism} (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986).
The continuing discussion of fascism and modernism is also a partial legacy of Kermode’s work.\textsuperscript{54} It is a consideration that connects in interesting ways with earlier criticism on modernism already mentioned. Early modernism’s totalitarian poetics can be related, sometimes directly sometimes not, to the totalitarian political models and ideologies of the time. In fact, one can see rather clearly in the lives of the modernists themselves this connection, whether in Pound’s radio addresses or Yeats’ war cry.\textsuperscript{55} Modernism’s attraction to the “formal elegance of fascism”\textsuperscript{56} can be expressed in an aesthetics of order just as well as in politics. And it is here that Kermode’s analysis gestures toward a convergence of modernism’s aesthetic escapism and the fascistic. The Image now becomes a metaphor for the totalitarian state, with its hard boundaries and discrete wholeness. The spatial, mythic aesthetic serves a proxy for Hitlerian fixations.

Kermode’s summative comments on early, traditionalist modernism are familiar: “what we feel about these men at times is perhaps that they retreated into some paradigm, into a timeless and unreal vacuum from which all reality had been pumped.”\textsuperscript{57} Hough spoke also of the “vacuum” from which modern(ist) literature springs.\textsuperscript{58} And all of the critics whose lines of inquiry about modernism we have been tracing have, in one way or

\textsuperscript{54} The literature on the subject of modernism and fascism has grown substantially in recent years. See the special issue on fascism of \textit{modernism/modernity} vol. 15 no. 1 (January, 2008).

\textsuperscript{55} Kermode, \textit{The Sense of an Ending}, 104-109.

\textsuperscript{56} Kermode, \textit{The Sense of an Ending}, 114.

\textsuperscript{57} Kermode, \textit{The Sense of an Ending}, 113.

\textsuperscript{58} Hough, 105.
another, affirmed this aesthetic isolationism as indicative of modernism as a category term.

Many of these aspects of modernism sketched in *The Sense of an Ending* still find sway in current critical discussions. A significant example in this regard is the work of historian Roger Griffin, who has attempted to establish a broader cultural potentiality for the term modernism and who has acknowledged (and whose work betrays) Kermode’s influence. Griffin defines modernism in “maximalist” terms as an attempt to recapture transcendence amidst the demise of cultural uniformity. This radical effort of regeneration, often involving the appropriation of mythical structures or cultural tradition, can take two forms: programmatic modernism, “in which the rejection of Modernity expresses itself as a mission to change society, to inaugurate a new epoch, to start time anew,” and epiphanic modernism, where “the modernist rejection of Modernity” occurs in “the cultivation of special moments in which there is Aufbruch of a purely inner, spiritual kind with no revolutionary, epoch-making designs on ‘creating a new world’.” These two modernisms can be related to Kermode’s traditionalist and anti-traditionalist modernisms and even to some extent to delineations such as those of Peter Bürger concerning modernism and the avant-garde. Thus, for the unquestioned importance of

---


60 Griffin, “Modernity, Modernism, Fascism,” 14-5.


62 Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* Trans. by Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984). In point of fact, it is quite difficult to determine with absolute certainty what
Griffin’s work, his “epiphanic” modernism can be characterized as yet another incarnation of modernism as aesthetic isolationism, this time in the escape from or transcendence of decadence.

But between Kermode’s *The Sense of an Ending* in 1967 and Griffin’s recent work many voices have weighed along similar lines of inquiry, including Monroe K. Spears’ *Dionysius and the City*, a work which owes much to Kermode’s reading of modernism as late or revitalized Romanticism. Spears’ modernism is epitomized by the image of Dionysius, exemplifying the “dynamic energy” and the “profound disruptive force of the revolution” constitutive of the movement. The mythical structures of Frazer, the irrational and radical vitality of Nietzsche, the unconscious of Freud – which represent the foundations of modernism – are aptly expressed for Spears in the image of the ancient Greek God. Spears places his modernist image, Dionysius, in the topological milieu of the City, and it is in this relation that Spears speaks of modernism’s orientation as that “beyond civilization.”

Bürger believes the relationship of modernism and avant-gardism to be precisely. His study lacks clear demarcations in this regard. Jochen Schulte-Sasse, in his forward to the English translation of the book, argues that Bürger does wish to distinguish modernism (as an outgrowth of Aestheticism) and avant-gardism. See Schulte-Sasse, xiv-xv. But other critics, Eysteinsson for one, have pointed out that it is not clear just who would qualify as modernist (Eliot? Joyce?, etc). See Eysteinsson (1990), 166. Nonetheless, Bürger’s “Aestheticism,” which would at least seem to accord with what the Wilsonian tradition might think of as early “modernism,” is clearly considered by Bürger to be a condition of art which does not to seek to achieve (and does not achieve) social impact, while the avant-garde project is to “reintegrate art into the praxis of life.” Bürger, 22.

---


64 Spears, 39-40.

65 Spears, 53-7.
The concern of modern artists is characteristically apocalyptic and eschatological, even when they are atheistic and anti-clerical: they have little interest in keeping the ship afloat, seeing that life goes on in the City; instead they are obsessively concerned with the ultimate questions, the Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven, Hell – or secular equivalents for the last three.\textsuperscript{66}

Spears demarcates “two primary impulses in modern literature, both always present but one or the other dominating.” The first of these is the “drive toward aestheticism” where “there is a tendency for the art-world to become separate and independent from life.” The second, “opposing impulse” is that which attempts to “break through art, [and] destroy any possibility of escape to illusion.” Though both are present at all times, Spears considers that there are two main phases, one where the aestheticist impulse “dominated” followed by a later “movement” after mid-century, where the impulse “toward ‘life,’ ‘reality,’ naturalism, against form and illusion. . .dominated.”\textsuperscript{67} For Spears, therefore, the period of high-modernism is a period marked by the separation of art and life, the isolation of the aesthetic from “reality.”

Another major event around this time was the publication of René Wellek’s landmark article in 1970 on the “The Term and Concept of Symbolism in Literary History” published in \textit{New Literary History} in a special issue on periodization. What is of chief interest in Wellek’s account is the degree to which he seeks to solidify Wilson’s initial reading in \textit{Axel’s Castle} – he mentions this specifically – his overall intent being to demonstrate how the Wilsonian model could be applied to the literature of Europe as a

\textsuperscript{66} Spears, 54.

\textsuperscript{67} Spears, 62.
Wellek, however, does wish to distinguish Symbolism from the avant-garde movements that followed it and from Romanticism which preceded it. Among his chief characteristics of Symbolism are that “the utterance is divorced …from the situation: time and place, history and society are played down,” which corroborates the familiar reading from Wilson on. Though Romanticism and Symbolism share much, the latter shows a “distrust of inspiration,” as well as an “enmity to nature” which clearly differentiate it from the earlier movement. Further, “the symbolists beginning with Baudelaire believe in the fall of man or if they do not use the religious phraseology, know that man is limited and is not, as Novalis believed, the Messiah of nature.”

On the other temporal side, Symbolism can be distinguished from the avant-garde groups in that for the latter “the faith in language has crumbled completely while in Mallarmé and Valéry language preserves it cognitive and even magic power.”

Wellek’s work synthesizes and brings together both the lines of convergence in criticism of modern literature which had been developing up to that point. But if Wellek’s periodization represents the culmination of criticism at that particular historical moment, there was a newly developing critical approach which viewed modernism from the opposite direction; that is, from the standpoint of the present or future. This “post-

---


69 Wellek, 264.

70 Wellek, 268.

71 Wellek, 269.
modernist” orientation would form its own identity largely through its construction of and non-identification with “modernism.”

This process of identity-making can occur with or without the terminology. In some cases, it is a matter of the dynamics of poetics and literary history, such as the American “confessional” school’s attempts to distance itself from the established regime or the similar maneuvering of “Projectivist” verse in the post-War period. In other cases, the matter cannot be so narrowly defined. The work of William V. Spanos, for example, offers a critique of modernist literary criticism and theory from an “existentialist” orientation. An important assumption of Spanos’ argument is that the New Criticism and Imagist-modernist poetics represent a basically unified aesthetic tradition and that this tradition can be defined by its promulgation of the disengaged, anti-temporal aesthetic object, with “its tendency to assume the form of a sophisticated escapism unbecoming to the humanity of man.”

His rendering follows in its essentials the work of Frank in particular in associating modernism with the aesthetics of Wilhelm Worringer (through Hulme) and in the spatialized aesthetic, although he does stress the connection between modernist literature and New Criticism in a way that Frank does not (these connections were already noted by Kermode and Abrams, among others). More important is Spanos’s orientation to this large-scale modernist poetics. The isolating, spatialized aesthetic of

---


modernism severs the connection between art and life and therefore deprives literature of its true function and uniqueness: not aesthetic contemplation or refined enjoyment, but

[E]xistential knowledge, the only kind of knowledge capable of breathing life into an appallingly dehumanized world in which contempt for or, what is worse, indifference to other men has become so radical that it is becoming part of the ordinary to experience – indeed, to participate in – the wholesale slaughter of human beings in the name of statistical necessity.\textsuperscript{74}

A “dialogic” or existential approach of this kind also is able to do better justice to the literary work of art itself, which is, in contrast to the plastic arts, a temporal art, an art of becoming rather than being, of process rather than product, time rather than eternity.\textsuperscript{75}

With this approach, Spanos offers his own canon of works that engage the world and man-in-the-world, including postmodern authors like Beckett, Ionesco, and Brecht, but also earlier writers like Shakespeare, Dickens, Doestoevksy, Faulkner, even the author of the Book of Job.\textsuperscript{76} He is even willing to incorporate writers like Eliot on the basis of his later development in a more engaged direction and Joyce because he was somewhat ambivalent about Stephen’s modernist aesthetic in \textit{A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man}.\textsuperscript{77}

The binaries that Spanos’ work suggests would be codified in more formal and absolute ways by Ihab Hassan, who may be the critic most responsible for initiating the

\textsuperscript{74} Spanos, 88.

\textsuperscript{75} Spanos, 88-91.

\textsuperscript{76} Spanos, 100, 95.

\textsuperscript{77} Spanos, 94-97.
definition of “post-modernism” in its contemporaneous period. While modernism is seen by Hassan in terms of form, design, hierarchy, totalization, and the like, post-modernism expresses the counter-characteristics of antiform, chance, anarchy, deconstruction, among others. These categories fit well with the essence/ existence opposition which Spanos sees as definitive. They also reflect the attitude of later post-modern scholars’ understanding of modernism, like Linda Hutcheon, whose view of modernism centers on its “assumptions about closure, distance, artistic autonomy, and the apolitical nature of representation” which postmodernism sets out to undermine and expose. The “ahistorical purism of modernism” is contrasted with the more historical and socially engaged, and more politically complicating, postmodern aesthetic.

Another central binary by now conventionally invoked in discussions of modernism and post-modernism is the high culture/ low culture opposition or, as Andreas Huyssen has described it, the Great Divide. This great divide is a modernist dichotomy that reads high culture and artistic autonomy over and against low culture or kitsch, a dichotomy which, according to Huyssen, post-modernism dissolves and collapses.

Huyssen’s orientation is cultural rather than purely aesthetic. He adopts the triadic model (modernism, avant-gardism, post-modernism) utilized also by Kermode at a more incipient stage and argues for a distinction between the three in terms of cultural posture, rather than aesthetical practice (though the two certainly overlap). While high-modernism

---


80 Hutcheon, 11, 1-29.
is represented by its construction and defense of the Great Divide between cultural spheres, post-modernism and avant-gardism reject this distinction, if in different ways.\(^{81}\)

For Huyssen, then, post-modernism represents a new “paradigm,” though in debt to the paradigm of the Great Divide, a paradigm *After the Great Divide*, as his title would have it, where “modernism, avantgarde, and mass culture have entered into a new set of mutual relations and discursive configurations.”\(^{82}\)

Though Huyssen outlines more fully and brings to bear in more substantial and systematic ways the triadic model developed as early as Kermode, his conception of “high-modernism” as the oppositional retreat away from mass culture into the aesthetic space of “high art” reinforces the established norms of isolation and autonomy, hermeticism and escapism that have been so important to hermeneutic strategies for deciphering modernism.

If post-modern readings of modernism can be palpably felt in the later half of the twentieth century, the work of Marjorie Perloff distinguishes itself by its avant-gardist advocacy.\(^{83}\) In her “manifesto” *21st Century Modernism*, Perloff argues that early modernism was avant-gardist (early Eliot, Stein, Russian Futurism) but that its radicalism was already dissipating by the time of the movement’s landmark works (*The Waste Land* et al.) and that post-modern (or perhaps late-modernist), conventional lyric poetry is

---


82 Huyssen, x.

83 In this connection, Anna Balakian enjoys a similar perspective of modernism. See Anna Balakian, “Problems of Modernism,” *The Snowflake on the Belfry: Dogma and Disquietude in the Critical Arena* (Bloomington, Ind: Indian UP, 1994), 24-43.
derivative and inconsequential. Only the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century represent a return to the radical avant-gardist impulse which is definitive of modernism.\(^{84}\) Yet for all its radicalism, the characterization that Perloff gives us of the philosophy of art espoused by modernism seems rather traditional in its strong Kantian dimensions: “Art is by definition not earning anything, which is to say, disinterested. From Baudelaire and Mallarmé to Pound and Joyce, the rejection of instrumental value [as opposed to aesthetic value] is a cornerstone of modernism.”\(^{85}\) Thus, even from this avant-gardist perspective, and into the present century, the isolating aesthetic remains among the central points of critical emphasis.

### 2.2 Modernism as Paradoxical Aesthetic Isolationism

If the notion that modernism is a movement that disengages social reality in favor of aesthetic experience has been a prevailing hermeneutic for reading modernism, a great many critics, often Marxist or cultural materialist in orientation, have accepted that premise only with an important caveat. In myriad ways, they have contended that modernist autonomy is really a covert or unacknowledged engagement.

An early variant of this position can be found in the work of Theodor Adorno, whose “dual essence of art” – and for Adorno art is modernist art\(^{86}\) – encompasses both

---


\(^{85}\) Perloff, 50 [her italics].

\(^{86}\) For a good discussion of Adorno and modernism, a discussion to which my understanding of both is much indebted, see Astradur Eysteinsson, *The Concept of Modernism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1990), particularly the chapter “The Making of Modernist Paradigms,” 8-49.
art’s unavoidable social existence and its autonomy, an autonomy that negates its sociality:

While art is always a social fact because it is a product of the social labour of spirit, this factual quality is being accentuated as art becomes bourgeoisified. Bourgeois art focuses directly on the relation between itself as an artefact and empirical society…Art, however, is not social only because it is brought about in such a way that it embodies the dialectic of forces and relations of production. Nor is art social only because it derives its material content from society. Rather, it is social primarily because it stands opposed to society. Now this opposition art can mount only when it becomes autonomous. By congealing into an entity unto itself – rather than obeying existing social norms and thus proving itself to be ‘socially useful’ – art criticizes society just by being there. 87

Autonomous art, therefore, represents a “tacit critique” of society, and enacts a “social deviance” that places its own essence (being for itself) against the essence of the “total-exchange society where everything is a for-other.” 88 This is not to say that art does not contain social aspects, but its inevitable social dimension turns out to be another level of disengagement: “[r]adical modernism preserves the immanence of art by letting society into its precincts but only in dimmed form, as though it were a dream. If it refused to do so, it would dig its own grave.” 89 The social element is nullified in its dream-like condition. Art negates social reality, even when representing such reality.

But ultimately, the dual essence of art shows itself to be contradictory, since art’s disengagement with society is itself engagement:


88 Adorno, 321.

89 Adorno 321-2.
What is social about art is not its political stance, but its immanent dynamic in opposition to society. Its historical posture repulses empirical reality, the fact that art works *qua* things are part of that reality notwithstanding. If any social function can be ascribed to art at all, it is the function to have no function...The mystery of art is its demystifying power.  

This paradoxical or self-complicating aspect of art that Adorno uncovers will be continually reconsidered and mined by later scholars and critics of modernism. Here Adorno acknowledges the isolative character of modernism (i.e. autonomous art), but also recognizes the ways in which that autonomy is complicated by its own status in relation to society.  

English Marxist critic Terry Eagleton argues more explicitly for a similar relationship between modernism and society:

Modernism is among other things a strategy whereby the work of art resists commodification….To this extent, modernist works are in contradiction with their own material status, self-divided phenomena which deny in their discursive forms their own shabby economic reality. To fend off such reduction to commodity status, the modernist work brackets off the referent or real historical world, thickens its textures and deranges its forms to forestall instant consumability, and draws its own language protectively around it to become a mysteriously autotelic object, free of all contaminating truck with the real….But the most devastating irony of all is that in doing this the modernist work escapes from one form of commodification only to fall prey to another. If it avoids the humiliation of becoming an abstract, serialized, instantly exchangeable thing, it does so only by virtue of reproducing that other side of the commodity which is its fetishism. The autonomous, self-regarding, impenetrable modernist artefact, in all its isolated splendour, is the commodity as fetish resisting the commodity as exchange, its solution to reification part of that very problem.  

---

90 Adorno, 322.

Like Adorno’s, Eagleton’s reading of modernist aesthetic strategies is similar to those offered by the tradition of modernist criticism outlined in the previous section.

Modernism “brackets off” reality, constructing self-referential “autotelic object[s],” cut off from “all contaminating truck with the real.” The modernist work is an “artefact,” “isolated” and “autonomous.” But its status as such is tenuous at best, for its rejecting of “commodification” entails commodification by a different route.

Eagleton’s position, however, seems to put him more in the camp of Bürger than Adorno.

It is on the rock of such contradictions that the whole modernist project will finally founder. In bracketing off the real social world, establishing a critical, negating distance between itself and the ruling social order, modernism must simultaneously bracket off the political forces which seek to transform that order….Moreover, by removing itself from society into its own impermeable space, the modernist work paradoxically reproduces – indeed intensifies – the very illusion of aesthetic autonomy which marks the bourgeois humanist order it also protests against. Modernist works are after all ‘works,’ discrete and bounded entities..., which is just what the bourgeois art institution understands.  

While for both Adorno and Eagleton modernism’s engagement is a condition of its disengagement, the nature of modernism’s contradictory relation to society is for them quite different. Adorno’s autonomous modernism allows for contact with society that may ambiguates its autonomy but that destabilizes or affects the social order in the process. For Eagleton (as for Bürger), the opposite is true. The modernist effort at aesthetic autonomy reinforces rather than destabilizes the social order by affirming the bourgeois construction of art as institution.

---

92 Eagleton, 140.
Modernism’s orientation to the social order has also been a central concern for those critics who foreground the materiality of literary production and the cultural dynamics of institutionalization. A preeminent example of such an approach is Lawrence Rainey’s *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture*. According to Rainey,

modernism, among other things, is a strategy whereby the work of art invites and solicits its commodification, but does so in such a way that it becomes a commodity of a special sort, one that is temporarily exempted from the exigencies of immediate consumption prevalent within the larger cultural economy, and instead is integrated into a different economic circuit of patronage, collecting, speculation, and investment – activities that precisely in this period begin to encroach upon and merge into one another in unexpected ways. Modernism marks neither a straightforward resistance nor an outright capitulation to commodification but a momentary equivocation that incorporates elements of both in a brief, necessarily unstable synthesis.  

There are notable elements of interest in this reading of modernism, particularly as it relates to the work of Adorno and of Eagleton. Like them, Rainey sees modernism’s relation to culture as tensional. For Adorno, modernist art is a social reality that negates social reality. And for Eagleton, modernist rejection of commodification amounts only to commodification by another name. So, too, for Rainey is modernism marked by a certain contradiction – or “momentary equivocation” – in regard to the social and aesthetic spheres.

---

Much recent scholarship has emphasized this “strategic illusion”\(^\text{94}\) of modernist autonomy. Often such accounts contrast modernism’s claims (for an autonomous integral art) with the reality of modernist practice (in some cases this “reality” is presented as a cooptation of mass markets, in others as the construction of quasi-oppositional niche markets or some other variant).\(^\text{95}\)

### 2.3 Modernism as Epistemological Isolationism

Modernism has often been described in terms of its epistemological outlook, as a particular brand of epistemological inquiry or supposition. This approach also has important connections to the view of modernism as an aesthetic isolationism. Modernism’s concern with perception and consciousness turns out to be an attempt to negotiate between the solipsistic subject and its other (in contrast to the unifying and/or world-integrating epistemologies typically considered Romantic), and between various relative “perspectives,” of which none can claim an absolutizing function. Here, consciousness becomes an Ivory Tower; perception, the thinking subject’s Castle.

---


Frederic Jameson has said that “[t]he most influential formal impulses of canonical modernism have been strategies of inwardness, which set out to reappropriate an alienated universe by transforming it into personal styles and private languages: such wills to style have seemed in retrospect to reconfirm the very privatization and fragmentation of social life against which they meant to protest.” With its focus on style, Jameson’s position can be said to take its place within the long tradition of criticism that sees modernism as an aesthetic entrenchment. The notion of “inwardness,” however, inflects another aspect of modernism, namely its preoccupation with consciousness and with the perceiving subject’s (as opposed to the aesthetic object’s) relation to the world.

Jameson’s “inwardness” has resonances, as does much of Jameson’s work, with the earlier thought of Georg Lukács on modernism’s “ideology.” Many of the various strands of modernist criticism come together in the work of the Hungarian Marxist. The decisive point, however, upon which his treatment of modernism turns concerns modernism’s “solitary” or “asocial” quality. The modernist flight has many dimensions for Lukács, including in characterization and narrative technique (two elements that he

---

96 Frederic Jameson, Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 2. Jameson’s comments are given as contrast to what he regards the externalist impulses of Wyndham Lewis. The question of Lewis’s relation to modernism, which Jameson foregrounds in the quoted passage, will be considered in its turn in the following chapters.

97 The epistemological and the aesthetic are brought together explicitly in the concern with narrative technique and point of view that was so central a point for the New Critics, who were following the lead of the later Henry James. See Caroline Gordon Tate and Allen Tate, eds, The House of Fiction: An Anthology of the Short Story, with Commentary (New York: Scribner, 1960).


sees as interconnected). Lukács echoes contemporaneous critics from much different
perspectives, such as Joseph Frank, when he speaks of modernism’s “static character of
events” and form (opposed by Lukács to the dynamic and developmental character of
realism). But whereas for a critic like Frank the mythological strategies of modernism
constitute the matter of modernism’s ahistoricism, or where for the perhaps much more
amenable Adorno asociality is an issue of aesthetics, for Lukács modernism’s “negation
of history” is epistemological:

[T]he hero is strictly confined within the limits of his own experience. There is
not for him – and apparently not for his creator – any pre-existent reality beyond
his own self, acting upon him or being acted upon by him. Secondly, the hero
himself is without personal history. He is “thrown-into-the-world”:
meaninglessly, unfathomably. He does not develop through contact with the
world; he neither forms nor is formed by it.101

But along with the thematic or characterized epistemological solipsism, there is also, and
just as important, the “loss of narrative objectivity, the surrender to subjectivity” which
takes many shapes but includes techniques like stream of consciousness.102 Both in form
and content, then, and mutually so, the literature of modernism is the literature of
isolation, and the isolation itself is chiefly epistemological.

The “solitary” or “inward” nature of modernism, particularly as an
epistemological phenomenon, has continued to be explored and developed, nowhere
more strikingly than in the pan-European model articulated by Douwe Fokkema and

100 Lukács, 18.
101 Lukács, 21.
102 Lukács, 24, 17-8.
Elrud Ibsch. Their wide-ranging study of the modernist paradigm includes within its scope much of the variety and complexity associated with the period, so that it would be wrong to present their work as narrowly defined or as attempting to define modernism in terms of one fundamental expressive value or aesthetic tendency, but they do stress, in terms of the modernist code, “epistemological uncertainty” and overall concern with “semantic fields” such as “awareness, detachment and observation” as the distinguishing features of modernism in literature.\(^{103}\)

With this emphasis, there is much in Fokkema and Ibsch’s account that is of interest, at least in part because their conclusions offer in certain areas an interesting counter to prevailing opinions and conventional viewpoints. As they say,

> The hierarchical order of the Modernist semantic universe can be further elucidated by comparison with Expressionism and Surrealism. The Modernist emphasis on consciousness and on detached, intellectual observation appears to be unique. The semantic universe of Expressionism is structured by the visual perception of objects in their spatial dimensions…Surrealism provides a semantic universe which is Modernism upside-down. Not consciousness but the subconscious, not reason but the dream, not reflection but chance prevail in the Surrealist semantic hierarchy.\(^{104}\)

Several points bear mentioning. First, Fokkema and Ibsch present modernism — somewhat in the same way as an early critic like Harry Levin — in terms of “reason” and “intellect,” what we might refer to as the terms of the Enlightenment, rather than that of the irrational and the anti-intellectual, as critics as various as Spears and Kermode have


\(^{104}\) Fokkema and Ibsch, 46-7.
done, who have tended to view modernism more as an expression, development, or mutation of anti-Enlightenment Romanticism.\textsuperscript{105} Second, modernism in this reading appears in its epistemological dimensions as concerned with interiority and discrete agency (Jameson’s “inwardness”), but this element, no doubt a marshalling of centripetal forces, ultimately is contrasted with the Surrealist “dream,” which is a more fundamental and committed position of disengagement. And if one takes Surrealism and Expressionism as synecdochical place-holders for the avant-garde – perhaps a liberty – then one finds that, while for Bürger and Eagleton the avant-garde is contrasted with modernism on the basis of modernism’s aesthetic autonomy and avant-garde’s integrated art-life, for Fokkema and Ibsch just the opposite state of affairs holds true. Modernism, while itself detached, can be differentiated from avant-gardism on the basis of its greater relative engagement.

Even so, modernism’s relation to the world is characterized by Fokkema and Ibsch ultimately as detachment with an attitude of indifference (even if that detachment involves a certain analytical engagement with the world). And given the accent they place on doubt, uncertainty, and the like, such emphasis is only appropriate.

At the centre of the Modernist semantic universe is the individual consciousness, which tries to make itself immune from external influences in order to observe the world from an independent position….The individual consciousness is at the top of

the hierarchy….The writer is not an intermediary, as in Symbolism, but at the centre of the world he describes.\textsuperscript{106}

Perhaps the modernist writer is in the midst of his world, but he or she is thus situated with a manner of cold detachment:

This quasi-indifference, which results from the tendency to investigate and criticize any established value, and which coincides with a disavowal of social commitment, is characteristic of all Modernist texts.\textsuperscript{107}

There is here, this time on the semiotic level, something of the same spirit as found in Marxism’s and cultural materialism’s reflection on modernism, although it must be said that Fokkema and Ibsch do not foreground the dialectic of modernism and sociality. Nonetheless, for them modernism is in the world but not of it. The modernist author or text is both isolated from the world and yet seeks to be an observer (and at times a critic) of the world. The extent of the critical capacity, however, is itself problematized by modernism’s indifference: “At the centre of the world he describes,” the modernist author maintains a “disavowal of social commitment.”\textsuperscript{108}

Epistemology is also central in Ricardo J. Quinones’ conception of modernism. With earlier critics like Peter Faulkner, Quinones sees modernism as a cultivation of intellectual and cultural richness, of complexity and variety. The lasting mark of modernism is its development of a new “complex central consciousness,” able to

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{106} Fokkema and Ibsch, 43-4. \\
\textsuperscript{107} Fokkema and Ibsch, 44. \\
\textsuperscript{108} Fokkema and Ibsch, 43, 44.
\end{flushright}
express the new varieties and experiences of the twentieth century. This modernist legacy has provided, according to Quinones, the models and expressions with which our culture has thought, imagined, and conceived. And like Fokkema and Ibsch, Quinones sees in modernism’s epistemological center a dialectical synergy of interiorizing and exteriorizing forces: “Paradoxically,…the internalization of experience that seems so dominant in Modernist literature is a device for liberation outwards, permitting an opening out onto the many facets of the world.”

Analysis of modernism and of the shifts, the placements and replacements, of literary and cultural history in terms of the epistemological has extended to attempts to define post-modernism over and against modernism. Among the most prominent of such approaches is Brian McHale’s *Postmodernist Fiction*. In that work, McHale defines postmodernism, or postmodern fiction at least, as a period where the “dominant” is characterized by “ontology” to be differentiated from modernism, the preceding period, where the “dominant” constituted “epistemology.” For McHale, then, modernist fiction is conditioned by its concern about knowledge of the world and whether and to what extent that knowledge is available and/or reliable. In contrast, postmodern fiction considers the ontological, world-making possibilities of fiction, and the status of world-makers, rather

---


110 Quinones, 95-6.

111 Quinones, 105.
than accepting the world as an ontological given, whose epistemological possibilities are problematized, as is the case in modernism.112

2.4 Modernism as Temporal Isolationism

In 1959 already Harold Rosenberg remarked how “the famous ‘modern break with tradition’ has lasted long enough to have produced its own tradition,” a comment from the opening of his book, The Tradition of the New, which suggests that the idea of modernism’s temporal radicalism was not only firmly fixed but had by then become commonplace.113 As academic research and reflection on modernism has since proliferated, so too has that commonplace grown evermore solidified. It can also be understood as another of modernist criticism’s attempts to read the style of the period as separatist (here, away from the old and into the wholly new).

Stephen Spender’s The Struggle of the Modern configures this by-now familiar narrative of a world fundamentally and forever changed by modern science, technology, and experience, and the modern artist’s attempt to respond to and fashion an art capable of expressing such changes:

The moderns are therefore those who start off by thinking that human nature has changed; or if not human nature, then the relationship of the individual to the environment, forever being metamorphosized by science, which has altered so completely that there is an effective illusion of change which in fact causes human

beings to behave as though they were different. This change, recorded by the seismographic senses of the artist, has also to change all the relations within arrangements of words or marks on canvas which make a poem or novel, or a painting.\footnote{Stephen Spender, \textit{The Struggle of the Modern} (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1963), xiii.}

The modernity of modern literature is deeply felt in such a reading. The newness of modern literature, its innovation and radically dissonant aesthetic strategies, are groundbreaking and epoch-forming. Modernism is defined by its separation and break from what preceded it; its total engagement with the now, subsuming past and future.

The book \textit{Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930} edited by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, which originated as a series of papers given at the University of East Anglia in the mid-1970s, exemplifies a truly international approach to modernism and is noteworthy for the breadth of its essay topics, ranging as it does over the broad spectrum of European modernism. The first essay, “The Name and Nature of Modernism,” written by the editors themselves, serves as a kind of a statement of purpose for the whole volume. And at the outset of that initial chapter, modernism is characterized as a cultural disturbance of epic proportions, belonging to that “category” reserved for those overwhelming dislocations, those cataclysmic upheavals of culture, those fundamental convulsions of the creative human spirit that seem to topple even the most solid and substantial of our beliefs and assumptions, leave great areas of the past in ruins (noble ruins, we tell ourselves for reassurance), question an entire civilization or culture, and stimulate frenzied rebuilding.\footnote{Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, “The Name and Nature of Modernism,” \textit{Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930} eds., Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, (London: Penguin Books, 1976), 19.}
It would be difficult to characterize the revolutionary and radical character of modernism in starker and more absolute terms than those chosen by McFarlane and Bradbury (and to a large extent recapitulated and elaborated throughout the course of the book in its various essays). A modernism in this vein is aptly named, for it is an ultra-modernity.

More recent considerations of modernism have also acknowledged the radical and the revolutionary as key features of the term’s meaning. In his 1990 book, *The Concept of Modernism*, Astradur Eysteinsson wrote that “there is rapidly spreading agreement that ‘modernism’ is a legitimate concept broadly signifying a paradigmatic shift, a major revolt, beginning in the mid- and late nineteenth century, against the prevalent literary and aesthetic traditions of the Western world.” If consensus was thus formed, the central question of the moment, according to Eysteinsson, upon which great disagreement persisted, was about the “nature of the revolt.”

The notion of modernism as revolt will likely remain a central component of modernism as a period term and aesthetic and cultural marker. Recent scholarship, however, has testified to the increasing diversity of opinion about modernism, including about the extent to which it can be considered truly “revolutionary.”

### 2.5 The “New” Modernist Studies

116 See David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1990); Bernard Yack, *The Fetishism of Modernities* (Nortre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame, 1997). Harvey regards modernism not simply as a “ruthless break with any or all preceding historical conditions” but, even more, as a “never-ending process of internal ruptures and fragmentations within itself.” See Harvey, 10-2; meanwhile, Bernard Yack has considered the possibility that modernity – whether philosophical, sociological, political, or aesthetic – can be couched in terms of “innovation and challenge to traditional authority.” See Yack, 35.

Given the fact that modernism is often understood as a kind of accelerated cultivation of novelty and of the “new,” it is somewhat ironic that today we are in the midst of the “new” modernist studies. Coinciding at least in part with the emergence of the Modernist Studies Association (MSA) and its official journal modernism/modernity, the new modernist studies has been described as “revisionary” in intent, seeking as it does to read modernism critically and contextually, with attention to ascendant methodological approaches, and from markedly interdisciplinary and multicultural perspectives. The results of the new modernist studies include an expansion of the canon, as well as of the geographical boundaries, of modernism; a concomitant proliferation of meanings for the signifier “modernism,” or the multiplication of “modernisms”; a greater sense for the “post-modernity of modernism,” for the ways in which modernism displays practices, attitudes, or values that were once thought to be antithetical to its constitution, such as an interest in low culture or in mass politics; and a richer

---


119 See, for example, Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz eds, Bad Modernisms (Durham, Duke UP, 2006); Peter Nicholls, Modernisms: A Literary Guide 2nd Ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, eds, Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, Cultures, Spaces (London: Routledge, 2005).

understanding of modernism’s relationship to sexuality, gender, and race, as well as the
nature of its institutional and professional structures.\(^\text{121}\)

Of particular interest to the present study are those scholarly works that seek to
interrogate more fully the links between modernist poetics and practice, and between
aesthetic modernism and the socio-cultural zone. If earlier work on modernism was
content to see it as a cultural expression of negation or erasure, current criticism seems
much more open to the possibilities for conceiving of a peculiarly modernist engagement
with sociality, one that is much more open and direct than previous readings would have
it. Rather than a modernism of aesthetic isolation or subterraneous commodification,
certain elements of present research have sought to uncover the modernism of a viable
social project.

Still, much of the work on modernist engagement retains many of the same
assumptions and concerns of earlier study. Most prominently, what is sometimes referred
to as “cultural studies” often manifests itself within modernist studies, particularly in its
work on canonical modernism, as a critique of modernist pretensions to aesthetic
autonomy, as an attempt to show, over and against modernism’s claims, that the aesthetic
is always interested, engaged, and political. This approach can be seen as operating
within the larger framework of Marxian readings of modernism from mid-century and to
the more recent post-modern efforts to deconstruct modernist paradigms of language,
power, and culture. This broader application of cultural and social contexts situates in

\(^{121}\) Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel, eds, Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity
(Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana UP, 2005); Ann L. Ardis, Modernism and Cultural Conflict, 1880-1922
(New York: Cambridge UP, 2002); Lawrence Rainey, Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public
new and striking ways the embeddedness of modernism, its full-blooded vitality and inescapably material presence. At the same, however, in much work of this kind modernism’s – or at least certain modernisms’ – cultural presence remains something of an absence in the face of what is considered to be its poetical strategies of disengagement.122

Other recent work stresses modernist engagement, but shifts focus away from the “high” period, where modernism’s isolationism has always been thought to be at its peak. This is partly the case with Jed Esty’s *A Shrinking Island*, a work which offers fresh insights into modernism’s relationship with culture and nation but does so largely with recourse to the period of late modernism, a period generally considered to be more “engaged,” marked by the political 30s, the Second World War, and its aftermath. Esty argues for a periodization of late modernism as an anthropological and cultural “turn” away from the strictly (or more strictly) aesthetic emphasis of high-modernism.123 Because Esty’s mapping of late modernism emphasizes this “shifting emphasis from aesthetic to cultural totality,”124 it is difficult to see how his study is not an (enriching certainly) reaffirmation of the established high-low paradigm. But Esty rejects at least certain implications of this view:

High modernism is sometimes thought by its detractors to have been ahistorical in its flights of aestheticism, mythicism, or subjectivism. In this view, the thirties are

122 See the discussion of Lawrence Rainey’s work in section 2.2 of this chapter.


124 Esty, 51.
commonly understood as the decade in which History or Politics invaded the cloistered realm of Art and won the field. But thirties modernism, as defined here, like even the more conspicuously engaged kinds of thirties writing, always entails aesthetic experimentation; likewise, high modernist experimentalism was always an attempt to come to terms with contemporary history. In this sense, there is no such thing as an ‘ahistorical’ literary aesthetic, just different languages and techniques for addressing history.\textsuperscript{125}

The elimination of the possibility of actualized ahistorical aestheticism would not require any abolition, it would seem, of attempted or approximate or relative aestheticism, which is the point that most such critics (not all of them detractors, surely) make with regard to modernism. What many scholars seem to be saying, and what Esty seems to be saying as well in fact, is that the “languages and techniques for addressing history” found in “high” modernism are resistant to what is perhaps an inevitable and unavoidable historical address.

But if Esty’s position, even despite his assertions to the contrary, can be allied at least to some extent with the dominant periodization of modernism in literary and cultural history, his analysis is nonetheless able to yield intriguing insights about modernism as a whole that deserve attention in and of themselves, such as the following:

[H]igh modernist texts like \textit{The Waste Land} tended to reflect a direct and unpalliated engagement with the brute facts of global modernization and its shapeless temporality. High modernism’s heroic streak lies precisely in its avowedly hopeless struggle with modernity, but real history also includes the invented traditions, especially nationalism, that have been invoked collectively and

\textsuperscript{125} Esty, 52. This argument acquires even greater interest when placed within the context of Brooks’ and Wilson’s work discussed in this chapter. Put simply, it seems to be Brooks’ argument against Wilson in reverse. Whereas Brooks argues that modernism (modern poetry) is not isolationist because poetry itself is inherently isolationist, Esty argues that modernism is not isolationist because literature is inherently social or historical.
subjectively to give shape to the passage of time….high modernism was more historically engaged with the uncut facts of ceaseless modernization but in a socially limited way, whereas late modernism is more socially and anthropologically engaged but has a more limited (i.e., national and organicist) concept of history.\textsuperscript{126}

While here again Esty seems to uphold, with important qualifications, traditional periodization, his consideration of high modernism’s direct engagement (even if he still affirms its “socially limited” status) should be noted for its willingness to explore new avenues in the conceptualization of modernism.

While scholars like Esty reconsider the possibilities for modernist engagement by focusing on later modernism, others have sought to redefine modernism’s relationship to the social and cultural dimensions through a canonical and temporal expansion of “modernism” or through advocacy of a plurality of “modernisms.” This approach often runs the risk of achieving a credible articulation of modernist engagement only by changing in fundamental ways the semantic geography of “modernism” as a period term. To speak, for example, of “geomodernisms,” encompassing the totality of world literatures and their particular milieux, societies, and environments, within the context of social engagement may be a stimulating heuristic toward better understanding certain marginalized texts, authors, or nations, or indeed toward a more complete picture of “modernism” itself, and certainly may speak to the particular elements of sociality in the

\textsuperscript{126} Esty, 52.
works involved, but its relevance to high-modernism’s cultural and social orientation seems only indirect, at best.\footnote{127} But if there has been a tendency to re-conceive the parameters of modernist engagement by redefining what (or when or who) modernism may mean (or be), that inclination has certainly not been unanimous. The works of Michael Tratner, Rebecca Walkowitz, Charles Ferrall, and Gerald Gillespie are important (though certainly not the only) examples of the ways in which recent study of modernist literature has reconstituted the social engagement of modernism as a central force within the movement and within the culture or cultures of which it is a part.

Michael Tratner’s \textit{Modernism and Mass Politics} argues that modernism, first of all, has a politics and that its politics are collectivist (broadly conceived). Against those who would contend that modernism is a rejection of the political or even a dialectic of engagement and detachment, Tratner outlines a modernism that lives and breathes within the life of its social and political context and does so in an effort of rapprochement: “[i]f we place modernism in the context of such mainstream political debates [about “[t]he dismantling of the individual”], we can see surprising relationships between literary innovations and real parties and policies.”\footnote{128} What we find, according to Tratner, is not that modernism sought an anti-communicative aesthetic realm, but quite to the contrary:

\begin{footnotesize}

\end{footnotesize}
“What appears as the undoing of discourse – modernism – was rather a new form of discourse, a new medium in which to continue some very old political debates.”\textsuperscript{129}

Although somewhat more problematic from the standpoint of modernist engagement, Rebecca Walkowitz’s \textit{Cosmopolitan Style} presents the work of Conrad, Joyce, and Woolf in terms of what she calls “critical cosmopolitanism,” the critique of societal, political, and cultural conditions toward the advancement of values such as “democratic individualism,” “antifascism,” and “anti-imperialism.”\textsuperscript{130} In connecting various narrative strategies of modernism with social and political interest, Walkowitz adds depth of insight and thickness to our understanding of modernist works and their socio-political orbits. That she also includes in her study later twentieth-century authors like W. G. Sebald, Salman Rushdie, and Kazuo Ishiguro does, however, complicate her usage of the term “modernist” in describing her specimens (and she admits that her use of modernism is as a stylistic or formal category rather than as a period term).\textsuperscript{131} Important also is the fact that her critical cosmopolitan model adopts a dialectical relation to culture, rather than the more directly engaged model of Tratner’s. For Walkowitz, modernism’s engagement is marked by “ambivalence” and “uncertainty.”\textsuperscript{132} And it is significant that she invokes the tradition of critical theory and the members of the Frankfurt School.\textsuperscript{133}

\textsuperscript{129} Tratner, 18.

\textsuperscript{130} Rebecca Walkowitz, \textit{Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation} (New York: Columbia UP, 2006), 4-5.

\textsuperscript{131} Walkowitz, 5.

\textsuperscript{132} Walkowitz, 4-5.

\textsuperscript{133} Walkowitz, 4.
given that the dialectics of modernist engagement were formulated inchoately in Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory* (see section 2.2).

Another significant monograph published recently is *Modernist Writing and Reactionary Politics* by Charles Ferrall. This work considers Yeats, Pound, Eliot, Lawrence, and Wyndham Lewis and the manner in which their oeuvres relate to the political in European society of the early twentieth century. Ferrall notes how these writers “combined a radical aesthetic modernity with an almost outright rejection of even the emancipatory aspects of bourgeois modernity” and that “[a]ll five writers were … attracted towards various fascist ideologies (although some finally rejected them), because such ideologies provided a kind of parody of ‘revolution’ which reflected their own ambivalence towards modernity.”

Kermode’s original gesturing at the correlation between modernism and fascism looms large here. But whereas Kermode linked modernism’s “attraction” to totalitarianism with its formalist concerns for unity and wholeness, Ferrall situates modernism’s fascistic flirtation more in the cultural realm, as a repudiation of the bourgeois paradigm, with its Enlightenment offspring “liberalism,” “democracy,” “industrialism,” “progress,” although he does recognize that much of fascism’s cachet lies in its appropriation of the aesthetic. For Ferrall, then, the kind of modernism represented by figures like Lewis, Eliot, Pound, and Lawrence incorporates and is in fact deeply attracted to the political both in and for its aesthetic qualities. The

134 Charles Ferrall, *Modernist Writing and Reactionary Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), 2. It should be said that there was also an attraction to Communism within modernism, though this tends to receive far less attention.

135 Ferrall, 2, 4-8.
aesthetic is therefore political, and the political aesthetic. If Ferrall’s reading of what Kermode would call “traditionalist” modernism is able to integrate modernist authors more seamlessly into the socio-political, to see it not as a “retreat” into a “timeless vacuum”\(^\text{136}\) but as an attempt to meet and change the world, Ferrall would still distinguish “reactionary modernism” from fascism on the basis of the former’s “assertions of aesthetic autonomy.”\(^\text{137}\) It is somewhat unclear from Ferrall’s analysis just how he regards this state of affairs. If modernism rejects Enlightenment values, and if as he himself points out fascism seeks the collapse of those boundaries so central to the Enlightenment project, and if again modernism ultimately rejects fascism in favor of aesthetic autonomy, then to what extent are the “reactionary” politics of reactionary modernism compromised? That is, to what extent does reactionary modernism uphold the paradigm of modernity, the critique or rejection of which is supposed to be its defining characteristic? This question represents one of the true aporias of modernist scholarship, and it is one that the present study attempts to address in some detail (see Chapters Two and Three particularly).

A much different, but no less stimulating, recent work is the comparativist Gerald Gillespie’s tour de force *Proust, Mann, Joyce in the Modernist Context*. Here, Gillespie recounts post-modernism’s attempts to redefine modernism according to its own interests, with particular attention paid to the charge of “inner metaphysical crime”


\(^{137}\) Ferrall, 9.
leveled at modernism for its alleged ahistoricism and/or “betrayal of Being.”\textsuperscript{138} Far from “escapist,” Gillespie sees in the three modernists writers who are the subject of his study a “keen eye for particular human phenomena, genuine concern for humane values, and large-minded historical vision.”\textsuperscript{139} In fact, he believes that the lasting impact of modernist authors’ reflections on cultural conceptions of time and “psychohistorical sensibility” may be just as significant as the thought of their (not insignificant) contemporaries in the sciences.\textsuperscript{140} Gillespie’s modernism is therefore an unapologetically engaged modernism, at home in (fascinated by and in love with) the world.

In much recent work, then, there is a developing appreciation for the centrifugal forces of modernism, for its extrinsic trajectories and social investments. Together with those who would see modernism as a conflicted social agent, but a social agent nonetheless, there has emerged since the turn of this new century most especially, a common sense for the power of modernism as a historical force, beyond the realm of the purely aesthetic. In this vein, Michael Tratner has observed astutely that “the view of modernists as leisure-class aesthetes is slowly being revised.”\textsuperscript{141}

\textbf{2.6 A Post-Script on the Two Modernities}


\textsuperscript{139} Gillespie, 5, 14.

\textsuperscript{140} Gillespie, 15.

\textsuperscript{141} Tratner, 5.
A word should be said here about what is often called the “two modernities.” The gifted scholar Matei Calinescu wrote persuasively on the matter some time ago, and the concept of two modernities has been widely accepted in academic discourse about modernity and modernism. As he puts it,

What is certain is that an irreversible split occurred between modernity as a stage in the history of Western civilization – a product of scientific and technological progress, of the industrial revolution, of the sweeping economic and social changes brought about by capitalism – and modernity as an aesthetic concept. Since then, the relations between the two modernities have been irreducibly hostile, but not without allowing and even stimulating a variety of mutual influences in their rage for each other’s destruction.142

The idea that aesthetic modernity is at odds with societal modernity is a point made as early as Edmund Wilson’s *Axel’s Castle* in 1931. True to Wilsonian readings of aesthetic modernity, Calinescu’s “two modernities” really presupposes the kind of aesthetic isolationism that so much of scholarship has seen in modernism from the beginning. The very idea of an aesthetic modernity is the idea of aesthetics isolated from the axis of socio-cultural relations, an aesthetic realm set apart. What is so interesting about this idea is that it is related closely to the notion of the separation (whether art/ life, faith/ reason, public/ private, etc) which are central to traditional theories of modernity. While it is nonetheless true to say that traditional accounts of modernity posit a single modernity composed of discrete components and not “two modernities,” it is still worthwhile to ask whether the idea of “two modernities” is not really an idea of traditional modernity itself. If this is so, the value of the concept would have to be called into question, since it would

ideologically belong to the socio-cultural modernity that modernism, according to Calinescu, sets itself against. To speak of “two modernities,” then, would be to speak in the terms of modernity rather than of modernism. This problem has already reared its head, in a somewhat altered form, in the discussion of Charles Ferrall’s work in the last section. It is a point of great importance for modernist studies, and one that cannot be left unconsidered. It will in fact be addressed in the next chapter in some detail. For now, it is enough to emphasize the discussion of two modernities in terms of modernism seen as the cultivation of isolative aesthetics.

3. Modernism and Satire

Modernism and satire are two literary categories not normally thought to be intimately related. Modernism is generally thought to be the author and original evanglist of the exalted view of literature as “verbal art,” and this view would seem to be the antithesis of satire as it is usually conceived. For these reasons, any assertion of an intimate connection between the two would no doubt be met with some hostility.

But no one doubts that the modernists wrote satire. It is a fact of literary history. Likewise, it would be wrong to say that literary criticism has somehow failed to take note of this fact. To the contrary, there has been significant critical consideration of modernism’s more overtly satirical literature. But even if scholars recognize and have

---

considered satirical elements within the work of modernist authors, and even though there have most surely been a great many articles and books written on modernist poems, plays, and prose that either contain strong dimensions of satire or in some cases could be called “satire” out and out, there has been little attempt to connect the satire of modernism with the possibility of modernism as satire. In this regard, the verdict of Lyndall Gordon with respect to some of Eliot’s stronger satire can serve as a kind of a synecdoche for all of modernist scholarship when he says that “the witty, satiric poems Eliot wrote between 1917 and 1919 seem like a digression from his poetic career.” In other words, the modernist critic might be expected to say with Gordon, yes, there is satire in the oeuvre of modernism, but it is not what makes an oeuvre modernist.

Still, recent developments within the so-called “new” modernist studies have perhaps created conditions where a consideration of modernism and satire might be a less startling coupling than may have previously been the case. In 1971 the noted scholar of

---


---


145 The views of Wilson and Hough have already been noted in the discussion of modernism as aesthetic isolation. It was Wilson who argued that Symbolism was the path chosen by those “writers who are unable to interest themselves in [society] either by studying it scientifically, by attempting to reform it or by satirizing it” [my italics]. Edmund Wilson, *Axel’s Castle*, 324. For Hough, “Satire needs a firm social base,” which modernism by definition lacks. Graham Hough, *Reflections on a Literary Revolution*, 105-6.
Looking back on the 1920s, Wyndham Lewis … gave a much broader interpretation of satire’s importance. What he meant by “satire” was not too different from T.E. Hulme’s “classicism”; its value, aesthetic not moral, is as a critical, ironic, coolly surgical instrument which is contrasted to the Romantic poet’s beautician-work on experience. If we apply Lewis’ definition, a kind of satiric climate can be discerned in the works of the post-Flaubertians from Joyce and Eliot to Lewis himself. The Victorian sensibility is, explicitly or implicitly, the butt of a satiric way of regarding experience.¹⁴⁶

Though long forgotten, Paulson’s reading of what could be called “modernism” (though it is true that he does not use the term), and a “modernism” of the 1920s, which is to say of its “high” period, as exuding or operating within a “satiric climate” may finally be ripe for further consideration and more elaborate examination. Certainly, a consequence of the more recent emphasis on modernism’s rapprochements and relations with myriad socio-cultural contexts has put the satirical dimensions much more in play, as the satirical in literature resides often at the social-aesthetic interface. And in this vein, echoes of Paulson’s insight can be seen in certain recent work on the period. The connection between modernist “classicism” and satire has been made again recently, if in passing, by Tim Armstrong. And Robert S. Lehman, while to some extent reading The Waste Land as

the triumph of high-modernism over and against satire, has also situated modernism, and particularly the “Men of 1914,” more comfortably in relation to the satirical.147

Chris Baldick’s recent contribution to The Oxford English Literary History series also deserves consideration. His observation that the entire modern period could be considered as “satiric” in character – that there was a “pervasion of the satirical impulse across the range of literary genres, movements, and schools” – harkens back to Paulson’s gloss noted above.148 At the same time, that these summations are made within the context of Baldick’s larger attempt to dismantle the hegemony of modernism (the reason for his use of the term “modern” rather than modernism) as a determinative category in the literary-historical overlay of (at least) English literary history must soften their impact, if our concern is a deeper understanding of how modernism might be animated by and constituted in the “satirical impulse.” What is more, the ways in which various personalities or movements may have utilized satire, or the context for their satirical purposes, are somewhat muted by the more general conflation of all literatures under the heading of “modern.” In Baldick’s rendering, “modern satire” gestures at some very interesting possibilities, but is ultimately grounded in established models. By the aims of his critical endeavor, it would seem fair to say that if Baldick has convinced us of modernism’s satire it would be by convincing us that the modernists weren’t modernist


all. For his category of “modern satire” includes, with typically modernist authors (Eliot and Lewis) the likes of Sassoon, Hardy, Waugh, Huxley, and Orwell.¹⁴⁹

Rebecca Beasley has written of “modernist satire,” a term which she employs in her consideration of the work of Wyndham Lewis. It is interesting to note, however, that for Beasley – and it should be said for many others – Lewis develops an “alternative modernism.”¹⁵⁰ This judgment has the consequence of making the modernist satire of Lewis somehow tertiary to modernism proper. Nonetheless, the notion of “modernist satire” indubitably brings modernist studies closer to the possibility of conceiving not just of a satire that could be called modernist but of a modernism that could be called satire.

Encouraging as these developments are, they constitute a partial treatment, or an isolated article on a single author or a passing reference in a lengthy study of the period. What the present study hopes to provide is a much more sharply directed consideration of modernism and satire than has yet been attempted.

4. The History of the “Men of 1914”

The term “Men of 1914” was coined, at least in its reference to Anglophone modernism and in particular denoting himself, Eliot, Pound, and Joyce, by Wyndham Lewis in 1937. The appellation resonated with critics from an early stage in modernist

¹⁴⁹ Baldick, 234-52.

criticism and its use has only increased in recent years. The usage of the term registers important changes and developments in modernist studies over time.

Lewis’ autobiographical *Blasting and Bombardiering* is, as he says in the book’s introduction, about war.151 The fifth and final part of the book, however, takes the war story to the field of literature, to tell of Lewis, Pound, Joyce, and Eliot, their relations with each other, their times and lives in and after the War.

We were all in the post-war, but that period produced nothing but a lot of sub-Sitwells and sheep in Woolfe’s [sic] clothing, and we were not of it. I call us here ‘the Men of 1914’. Nothing occurred in England, the highbrow line to put a challenge for the supreme highbrow laurel until Auden came along. He and his school (which was mixed up at first with T.S. Eliot’s school) were the key men of the Depression, just as we were the big noises of the War and the ‘waste’ it left in its wake.152

Lewis’ periodization of the “Men of 1914” as of the War and post-War period is familiar to periodizers of modernism as that which is often called “high-modernism,” and many of the connotations of Lewisite modernism still remain emblematic of what that term signifies to this day.

Here is Lewis’ feeling for the legacy and lasting significance of the “Men of 1914”:

What I think history will say about the “Men of 1914” is that they represent an attempt to get away from romantic art into classical art, away from political propaganda back into the detachment of true literature.

---


152 Lewis, 249-50.
Lewis goes on to lament that the project of the “Men of 1914” has failed and that “as a result of the War,…artistic expression has slipped back again into political propaganda and romance, which go together.”\footnote{Lewis, 250.} The notion of high- and late modernism that Lewis presents here, while influential and certainly perceptive, is not without difficulty. Not the least of such difficulty could be said to reside in the fact that Lewis at points makes the War the central and decisive moment, the true break in European culture and the arts of the period, while at other points, in fact only pages later, he refers to “The Period of ‘Ulysses’, ‘Blast’, ‘The Wasteland’,” thereby conflating the (at least in part) pre-War \textit{Blast} with post-War works.\footnote{Lewis, 252. The first issue, of two, of \textit{Blast} was published July 2, 1914, only three days after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria and a little more than a month before major hostilities began. \textit{Blast} is generally regarded as belonging to, if it is not the culmination of, the pre-War period in England. As Lewis himself would often acknowledge, avant-garde excitement and energy in England was wiped out by the Great War, never to return.} At times, for Lewis, the War seems to be the cause of the “Men of 1914”’s demise, while at others the War is its occasion for existing.

Not that one should demand too much on the order of precision from Lewis. His characterization of the “Men of 1914” has to be taken within the context of the circumstances of 1937 as much as those of 1914. Lewis’ construction of the “Men of 1914” was for him part of an important narrative configuration about the changing political landscape of Europe, the impact of the Great War and its aftermath, and his contemporaneous attempts to deal with the meaning of the rise of Fascism and Communism in the 30s. Just as important, the “Men of 1914” served for Lewis as an indispensable trope in his on-going process of identity-formation, both as a literary figure of the present and a shaping force within literary and cultural history.
And yet whatever its origins, the term was utilized by critics from very early on, in a fashion, it must be said, largely independent of those origins. Graham Hough, writing in 1960, for example, speaks of “the men of 1914” as “the central revolutionary quartet” in the literary revolution of the early twentieth century.\textsuperscript{155} Hough’s comments would soon come to represent what John Harwood has called the “orthodox history of ‘modernism’,” that story of modernism’s “decisive break with the past, centered on the literary revolution led by the ‘men of 1914’.”\textsuperscript{156} By the early twentieth-first century, these revolutionaries would be transformed by majority critical opinion into anti-revolutionary reactionaries.

In between, there were three important monographs published in the late 80s and early 90s which used the term for the first time as part of the conceptual framework of book-length studies, beginning with Julian Symons’ \textit{Makers of the New} in 1987. Symons’ effort is to draw together and consider more fully the ways in which the four writers who make up the “Men of 1914” relate to each other – to what extent, in other words, it is useful to talk about them together as anything more than four writers of the modernist period. As Symons says,

They did not form a group or cabal, and were never all four in one room at the same time, yet the links were strong and lasting. Their ideas and practice, and those of the mostly American writers who followed them, changed the nature of British and American literature in the first half of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{157}

\textsuperscript{155} Hough, 3-4.


These links were explored around the same time by Erik Svarny and Dennis Brown respectively. Erik Svarny’s “The men of 1914”: T.S. Eliot and Early Modernism considers the early poetry of Eliot within the context of the “Men of 1914,” a context which represents for Svarny the antagonistic nature of early modernism:

The immediate and obvious reference of “the Men of 1914”, to those who fought in the First World War, is not inadvertent; nor do I think Lewis merely wishes to suggest a contingent historical conjunction. This military metaphor captures the antagonistic, often rebarbative, cultural posture of these writers, all of whom except Joyce, adopted anti-democratic and anti-humanist cultural stances; it indicates that Eliot’s work can be sited within a context of oppositional avant-garde literature prevalent in the years during and immediately after the First World War.\(^{158}\)

The focus of Dennis Brown’s work, as the title of his volume might suggest, are the “literary work-group” dynamics of the four authors, whom Brown sees as influencing each other stylistically in profound ways.\(^ {159}\) Brown’s work is foundational in its attempts to see the “Men of 1914” as a literary network central to the formation and constitution of modernism as we know it. The “predominant assumption of their work,” according to Brown, is their common “project of literary renaissance.”\(^ {160}\) But more than common cause, Brown is able to show the intertextual and internal influences between members of the “Men of 1914,” so that the work of Eliot, Joyce, Lewis, and Pound can be thought of


\(^{160}\) Brown, 3.
in tangible literary terms as forming a cohesive literary whole. With Brown, the
recognized general affinity between the four authors that make up the “Men of 1914” is
given the full-blooded corroboration of detailed and exhaustive literary analysis. In this
way, mere affinity becomes aesthetic influence.

In recent criticism, the “Men of 1914” are no longer representative of modernism
per se, but only of a particular, establishment brand of modernism (“high-modernism”).
What is constitutive of the “Men of 1914” is also regarded as typical of high-modernism
as a whole. Ann L. Ardis, for example, defines the “Men of 1914” as that “coterie of
writers and artists centered around James Joyce, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, and Wyndham
Lewis who credentialed themselves, each other, and the literary field through reference to
the scientific precision of poetic observation, the a-politicization of aesthetics, and the
elevation of individual consciousness over social action/interaction.”

Ardis’s description here could stand as a concise summation of several decades of modernist
scholarship (see Sections 2.0-2.6 of this chapter).

The new modernist studies, therefore, both retains very traditional categories and
ways of thinking about the “Men of 1914,” even as those traditional categories are put to
radically new uses. Once thought revolutionary, the “Men of 1914” are now often
couched in terms of conservative social categories, mores, and attitudes, or as preservers
of tradition. Above all, though the use of term “Men of 1914” has greatly increased in

---


162 See Ann L. Ardis, Modernism and Cultural Conflict: 1880-1922; Peter Nicholls, Modernisms: A Literary Guide, and works discussed below.
scholarly work of the past two or so decades, it has largely been to the effect of 
emphasizing notions of gender most evident in the term. As David Trotter has put it, 
following Peter Nicholls, “one speaks advisedly of the ‘men of 1914’. The men of 1914 
tended to characterize the mess and the mimesis their will-to-abstraction had pitted itself 
against as feminine. To avoid or to overcome entanglement in the world was to confirm 
one’self as at once fully masculine and fully Modernist.”

Here the conventional reading of modernism as escape is re-read in terms of the masculine/feminine binary.

Other critical projects have contributed to similar emphases with respect to the 
term and the grouping it represents. Bonnie Kime Scott’s *Refiguring Modernism* attempts 
to reconsider the possibilities for modernism when shifting the lens of privileged writers 
from traditional male to female authors, such as Woolf, West, and Barnes (and 
particularly when reading their work from a post-modern perspective). Her alternative 
history of modernism is a conscious deviation from established readings, and accordingly 
she refers to 1928 in lieu of 1914. For her the “men of 1914” are “traditionally accepted 
as the framers of modernism” that her study seeks to challenge.

Likewise, more 
recently Miranda Hickman has seen the “Men of 1914” as above all the marker for “male 
modernity” and one that has enjoyed a kind of official legitimacy. Similarly, Lesley

---

163 David Trotter, *Paranoid Modernism: Literary Experiment, Psychosis, and the 


165 Miranda Hickman, *The Geometry of Modernism: the Vorticist Idiom in Lewis, Pound, H.D., 
Higgins has sought to investigate the “Men of 1914”’s sexual politics and the exclusionary masculinity of their “cult of ugliness.”

What is of interest in the development of the term is the way in which the “Men of 1914” have often been seen as a representational base upon which to posit alternative modernisms. In this way, the revisions and reconsiderations of the new modernist studies have largely been achieved at the expense of the “Men of 1914.” It would be beneficial, and would surely not endanger the kind of growth and development of modernist scholarship in recent years, if fresh approaches to modernism could not also be applied to, as opposed to merely against, the signification, the “Men of 1914.”

5. Coda

Our rather lengthy tour of modernist scholarship has, hopefully, been able to convey the general contours and contexts of the subjects related to the triadic matrix of this study: modernism, satire, and the “Men of 1914.” With the necessary backgrounds in place, we can now review our main claims and their relation to the material covered. To begin with, as I hope has been shown, the prevailing periodization of modernism includes the notion of a “high” phase in the post war period (1918-1930) marked by aestheticist withdrawal and flight into the isolated aesthetic realm, followed by a more engaged “late” period from the 1930s leading up to the Second World War. Generally speaking, satire has been thought to be natural to this “late” period – the period of Waugh, Orwell, and

---

Huxley, as well as Auden and the later Lewis – but in many ways the antithesis of exalted and refined high-modernism, which is above the political and any pretension to social concern, which is in fact an escape from sociality through its opposition to the reigning bourgeois paradigm. And, says much modernist scholarship, nowhere is this more so than in the “Men of 1914,” who represent the archetypical example of high-modernist affectation and pomp.

The claims of this study would alter this picture in several ways. Most significant, the argument here contends that there is no opposition between “high-modernism” and satire, that satire is in fact a major mode of expression for high-modernism. In this way, the period of 1920s looks just as, if not more, satirical than the 1930s, if in very different ways. Rather than aesthetic isolation, therefore, high-modernism shows itself to be a conscious effort of social and cultural engagement, expressed often and at times in the most signatory way through the myriad tonalities and attitudinal inflections of the satirical. It is to these expressions that the remaining chapters will attend.
CHAPTER II:

LITERARY HISTORY AND MODERNISM AS SATIRE: A TYPOLOGY

Difficile est saturam non scribere.
—Juvenal\(^1\)

We are the hollow men,
We are the stuffed men;
....
Shape without form, shade without colour,
Paralysed force, gesture without motion
—T.S. Eliot, “The Hollow Men”\(^2\)

Introduction

This chapter considers modernism in relation to literary and socio-cultural history. The “Men of 1914” will be utilized as representative specimens, and the assertion will be made that in their work we find a central, and underappreciated, impulse of modernism (and one that shapes the period of modernism in paradigmatic ways): namely, the satirical.

It is perhaps dangerous to suggest that these four authors, or any four authors, could serve as test-cases for hypotheses about something as illusive and polysemantic as “modernism.” Even so, the implicit presumption of this study – shared by the majority of scholarship on modernism (and acknowledged as an historical principle by periodizers almost uniformly) – is that “high-modernism” represents a kind of “center” for the

---


modernist period and that such “centers” are by their nature representative. Saying this does not discount, and is not intended to discount, the value of various “marginalia” or even the possibility of constructing alternative centers for modernism.

In fact, to some extent, as I tried to articulate in the previous chapter, my own reading of modernism might be considered as an attempt at re-conceiving the center via the margins. What is offered here is a somewhat different picture of high-modernism than the one often drawn by contemporary critics and scholars. Whereas for many such critics and scholars high-modernism embraces modernity’s universalism and rage for order, high-modernism as it will be presented in these remaining chapters is more about free play, variety, particularity, inculturated difference and multiculturalism, history, context, sociality, the anti-individualist as much as the purely individualist spirit, the collapsing of autonomous spheres, the marginalized, and about low-cultural satisfactions like satirical invective and general orneriness. It is itself a kind of marginalia against the modern center of progress, rationalization, radical autonomy, and mechanization.

This chapter will be divided into two parts: the first part will be a broader look at modernism, while the second deals with two specific texts from the period of high-modernism. In order to demonstrate how modernism relates (satirically) to the modern center, it will be necessary to investigate more closely a schema of terms connected with Western cultural history: the modern and the anti-modern. This will be done in the next section and will serve as a kind of foundation for the historical considerations that will follow. It will be argued there that the concept of the anti-modern can serve as a mediating device in negotiating the relationship between modernism and modernity and that modernism, to some extent like Romanticism before it and Post-modernism after it,
is a form of the anti-modern.

The next sections will consider, as a theoretical bulwark for what follows, the typologies of Max Weber and Wilhelm Dilthey and especially Northrop Frye and Virgil Nemoianu. From such a framework it will be possible to construct a modernist type which will be sketched with recourse to a broad sampling of work from the modernist period. The literature of the “Men of 1914” will always be given a privileged position, and exclusively so in a portion at the close of part one that will attempt to relate their work to the rich literary traditions of the satirical. Part two will be concerned with how this modernist type manifests itself in two works, both of significant interest to the questions raised by our inquiry: James Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Wyndham Lewis’ novel fragment, *Joint*.

1. Modern and Anti-Modern

The terms modern (and its variant, modernity), modernism, and anti-modern have been important tools for thinking about how Western culture has developed and about the ways in which various aspects of that culture have related to each other in recent centuries. While modernity – the long cultural process inaugurated incipiently in the Renaissance (the Early Modern Period) and only recently brought to its (definitive?) end – has been and will be the constant background of this study, “modernism” remains the foreground and the question of modernism’s status in relation to modernity is the broader

---

3 The present study concerns itself primarily with modernism in its Anglophone variant. And yet, as I pointed out in the previous chapter, it is somewhat artificial and ultimately not possible to discuss modernism without at least some recourse to the multiple literatures and cultures that exhibit “modernist” characteristics. Therefore, with an eye toward keeping such references to a minimum, I have nonetheless included several here.
concern overlaying the inquiry of the remaining chapters. The notion of the “anti-modern” is an important concept for mediating that relationship and it will therefore be of some use to consider briefly its implications and broader currency among scholars.

At the moment, the use of terms such as “anti-modern,” “anti-modernism,” “anti-modernist,” and the like do more to confuse than they do to clarify (if only because they are used so differently by scholars and their use is not usually not well-defined or elaborated). Often, one comes across passing references to the “anti-modern” elements of modernism, for example, but rare is the work which offers a systematic accounting of what that might actually mean. And what we can infer it means, we notice, depends on who is utilizing the term and for what purposes.

For David Lodge and Frederic Jameson, for example, “antimodernism” and “anti-modernist” are terms used to distinguish those writers who espouse an aesthetic realism or conventionality in the face of modernist experimentation.\(^4\) For Arthur Verslius, on the other hand, antimodernism denotes opposition to modernity broadly conceived.\(^5\) For Weldon Thornton, antimodernism refers to a rejection of various modern “dichotomies” including but not limited to “‘inner’ and ‘outer,’ personal and cultural, conscious and

---


unconscious.” For T. J. Jackson Lears, antimodernism represents an attempt to found and conceive alternatives to modern industrialism and rationality that include the values of sensibility, feeling, and authentic experience. For Elizabeth A. Flynn the antimodern is one expression of feminism, opposed to modernist and post-modernist feminisms and in the tradition of Romanticism. The difficulty in this state of affairs is clearly evident. In some cases, antimodernism means the rejection of modernity, while in other cases antimodernism means the rejection of modernism. The ambiguity in itself points to the larger question concerning the relationship of modernism to modernity.

It is the view of this study that modernism is an expression of the anti-modern stance conceived as an exterior critique of modernity (that is, a critique of modernity that is outside of modernity). This assertion differs from the majority of developed theories of anti-modernity, which tend to see the anti-modern as a phenomenon of modernity. Peter V. Zima, for example, while not mentioning the “anti-modern” specifically, sees “literarische Modernismus” in the terms of “eine spätmoderne Selbstkritik der

---

6 Weldon Thornton, Voices and Values in Joyce’s Ulysses (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000), 1. See also, Weldon Thornton, The Antimodernism of Joyce’s Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse UP, 1994). Thornton’s analysis is helpful in showing how modernist literature can resist modernity, and the present study is indebted to his work in that regard. However, Thornton unnecessarily conflates “modernism” and “modernity” so that Joyce’s rejection of modernity becomes also a rejection of modernism.


8 Elizabeth A. Flynn, Feminism Beyond Modernism (Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), 4. Flynn’s triadic model of feminisms sees in postmodern feminism a critical posture toward modernism (rather than outright rejection). Such rejection is the purview of “antimodern” feminism, a more extreme form with affinities with Romantic values (i.e., “nature, spirituality, and irrationality,” etc).
The noted scholar of “les antiparisiens” in France, Antoine Compagnon, conceives of that movement as “le sel de la modernité.” Arthur Verslius for his part contends that “antimodernism is fundamental to the creative impulse in modernity.” And according to Marshall Berman, “to be fully modern is to be anti-modern.” For all these critics, as for others, the anti-modern is a phenomenon that is somehow within modernity itself.

Which is not to say that other views have not been advanced. The Israeli scholar Zeev Sternhell has written of “two modernities”: an Enlightenment modernity dedicated to rationality, individualism, and universal values; and an anti-Enlightenment modernity.

espousing collectivism, custom, tradition, intuition, authority, and the like. For Sternhell, the former tradition has as its logical conclusion democratic liberalism, while the latter reaches its apotheosis in totalitarian fascism. This larger historical narrative teleology is controversial and does not concern us here. What is quite relevant in Sternhell’s analysis, however, is his positing of “two modernities,” which implies something that I want to underline and something that I want to jettison: with Sternhell, I would like to contend that certain forces against modernity have been operating outside rather than as a part of modernity as traditionally conceived; unlike Sternhell, I would not want to suggest that their opposition constitutes a second “modernity.” Such opposition is in fact “anti-modern” in the truest sense of the word, rather than counter-modern or alternatively modern. This anti-modernity anticipates and perhaps even contains the seeds which will sprout up to become the flowers of post-modernity (another historical movement outside of modernity). Both modernism and post-modernism, then, are forms of the anti-modern, with the essential difference that modernism is prior to post-modernism and concomitant with modernity.

\[\text{14} \text{ Zeev Sternhell, } \textit{The Anti-Enlightenment Tradition} \text{ Trans. David Maisel (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2010), 8-9.}\]

\[\text{15} \text{ See Zeev Sternhell, } \textit{The Anti-Enlightenment Tradition}; \text{ and more specifically, for a cultural genealogy of French fascism, see Zeev Sternhell, } \textit{La droite révolutionnaire: les origines françaises du fascisme} \text{ (Paris: Fayard, 2000). Contrary to Sternhell’s arguments, many scholars have in fact seen the Enlightenment as the proto-fascist (or proto-totalitarian) phenomenon. See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, } \textit{Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments} \text{ Ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr Trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, Cali: Stanford UP, 2002); Jacob Talmon, } \textit{The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy} \text{ (London: Secker and Warburg, 1952); Lawrence Birken, } \textit{Hitler as Philosophe: Remnants of the Enlightenment in National Socialism} \text{ (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995).}\]

\[\text{16} \text{ As discussed in the previous chapter (section 2.6), Matei Calinescu has also used the phrase “two modernities,” } \textit{Five Faces of Modernity}, 41. \text{ However, it should be noted that Sternhell’s “two modernities” (Enlightenment and Anti-Enlightenment) are quite different from Calinescu’s (Aesthetic and Cultural).}\]
But if the concept of the anti-modern can mediate the relationship between modernism and modernity, is there any distinction to be made between modernism and the anti-modern? As the work of a great many scholars bears witness, the anti-modern should be understood to be an abiding reality which is as old as modernity and which persists even into our own day. Modernism, therefore, on the reading of it presented here should be considered one stage and/or particular expression of the anti-modern. There have been other manifestations of the anti-modern, and it will be helpful to review those historical currents now.

Any genealogy of the anti-modern must begin with the modern. While modernity is recognized as having roots as early as the Renaissance, generally its full flowering is understood to take place in the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment or, as Foucault periodizes it, *l’âge classique*. And at this stage, already an anti-modern opposition is evident. One thinks, first of all, of the Quarrell of the Ancients and the Moderns. And of course, against the Enlightenment there is what has been called the Counter-Enlightenment. These early anti-modern impulses would reach something of an apogee

---

17 Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972). The distinction between the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment is helpful and necessary in accounting for the origins and processes of particular cultural developments. Foucault’s *l’âge classique* is slightly broader and accounts for the common commitments of the two periods.

18 To speak of Jonathan Swift, a pivotal figure in the quarrel, if modernism can be viewed as a satire of modernity, Swift may be in some way the first modernist. See Frank Boyle, *Swift as Nemesis: Modernity and its Satirist* (Stanford, Cali.: Stanford UP, 2000).

19 A diverse body of scholarship exists which would suggest that the Counter-Enlightenment was a pan-European phenomenon, despite particular arguments to the contrary. In Italy, one could point to G.B. Vico. See Mark Lilla, *G.B. Vico: the Making of an Anti-Modern* (Harvard UP, 1993). In France, in addition to well-known authors like Rivarol, de Maistre, and Bonald, there was a more popular, low-brow flood of literature against the philosophes. See Darrin M. McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (New York: Oxford UP, 2001). In England, one
in the broad European movement known as Romanticism.\textsuperscript{20} Krishan Kumar has described Romanticism’s opposition to Enlightenment modernity in the following way:

\begin{quote}
[Enlightenment] Reason was opposed by [Romantic] imagination, artifice by the natural, objectivity by subjectivity, calculation by spontaneity, the mundane by the visionary, the world-view of science by the appeal to the uncanny and the supernatural.\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

Modernism will continue in many respects Romanticism’s critique of modernity, particularly of the latter’s hyper-rationality and deadening automatization of human life. But if modernism can be said to inaugurate another stage of opposition to modernity, it must be said also that its opposition additionally includes a critique of Romanticism, both in its opposition to and in its unacknowledged sympathies with Enlightenment modernity. The critique extends in multiple directions. Modernism often sees in Romanticism a preoccupation with emotion, personality, and feeling that is immature and undesirable.

As for affinities between Romanticism and Enlightenment, both contain essentially progressive views of history, though they are very different kinds of progressivism, while modernism upholds at times a cyclical historical model and at others an historical points principally to Edmund Burke (and, to some extent, Carlyle). And in Germany, Hamann, Herder, and Möser have been claimed for the Counter or Anti-Enlightenment. See Zeev Sternhell, \textit{The Anti-Enlightenment Tradition}; Klaus Epstein, \textit{The Genesis of German Conservatism} (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1966).

\textsuperscript{20} For connections between Romanticism and Counter-Enlightenment, see Graeme Garrad, \textit{Counter-Enlightenments: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present} (New York: Routledge, 2006), 55-73.

\textsuperscript{21} Krishan Kumar, \textit{From Post-Industrial to Post-Modern Society: New Theories of the Contemporary World} (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1995), 86. One should always maintain due regard for the complexities and multiplicities of history in discussions of broad historical movements. There is much to be said for the continuation and preservation of Enlightenment models even in high-, but especially in later, European Romanticism. For more on this see, Virgil Nemoianu, \textit{The Taming of Romanticism: European Literature and the Age of Biedermeier} (Harvard UP, 1984), and Virgil Nemoianu, \textit{The Triumph of Imperfection: The Silver Age of Sociocultural Moderation in Europe, 1815-1848} (University of South Carolina Press, 2006).
narrative of total decline or decay. Likewise, both the Enlightenment and Romanticism stress (on very different grounds) an optimism and belief in human potential (an optimism really born in the Early Modern Period). They generally do not see in human nature the intrinsic limitations of “original sin.” For modernism, on the other hand, humankind is nothing if not limited; optimism is naïveté; and there are always grounds for expecting the worst in humanity and in life.

But ultimately, modernism’s anti-modern stance rests on its rejection not of rationality or progress or any particular modern value, but on the very foundations of modernity itself. The separation and autonomy of spheres could be said to be a central and animating characteristic of modernity. It is a separation based not on achieving in the end a greater integration; rather, it is an autonomous separation, for its own sake. Faith and Reason are separated, for example, in modernity not for a dialectical amelioration of both, still less for any kind of Hegelian synthesis, but so that the integrity of one may not be contaminated by the other. This same condition abides also in the case of modern methodologies like empiricism, which isolates the realm of sense phenomena into a totality, or in the Cartesian ego, with its discrete and self-sufficient evidentiary status. It is from this standpoint that the overwhelming majority of criticism about literary

---

22 The practical result of modernist cyclical historical theories is always to conceive of the present as a situation of ubiquitous decay and decline. See, for a representative example, W.B. Yeats’ famous poem, “The Second Coming.”

modernism can be said to affirm what it believes to be modernism’s modern status (and thereby its contrast with post-modernism). To conceive of modernism as a form of isolationism – whether aesthetic or epistemological, whether straightforward or paradoxical (see Chapter One) – is to understand it as an expression of modernity. And even if one takes the line of a distinguished critic like Matei Calinescu and posits “two modernities” (social and aesthetic) which are against each other, one must still confront the fact that the separation or isolation of sociality and aesthetics is nothing but the affirmation of this central tenet of modernity itself. For modernism to be thoroughly anti-modern, it would have to upset this first plank of the modern project. It is the view of this study that modernism does exactly that. For modernism (as in many ways for post-modernism), the ultimate critique of modernity is a position against the separations, the dualities, of modern life.

2. Typologies, Diachronic and Synchronic

The aim of what follows is to develop a typology of modernism grounded in what I believe to be modernism’s satirical orientation to the cultural reality of modernity. In order to do so, I will make use of theories from a few different (but related) perspectives. Aspects of the work of Wilhelm Dilthey and Max Weber will be utilized more generally,

24 Calinescu, 41-6.

while certain theoretical insights of Northrop Frye and Virgil Nemoianu will be employed with greater specificity.

The German historian and philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey has impacted Western thought in several different areas, including hermeneutics, phenomenology, historical studies, biography, and sociology, among others.\footnote{His impact on the study of literary history has been felt perhaps most as a result of his influence on the \textit{Geistesgeschichte} school, although some scholars have argued for a wider Dilthean presence today than is usually acknowledged. Cf. Michael Holquist, “The Last European: Erich Auerbach as Precursor in the History of Cultural Criticism.” \textit{MLQ} 54.3 (September 1993): 371-92. For Holquist, Auerbach is the literary-critical descendent \textit{par excellence} of Dilthey.} Perhaps his greatest achievement is in developing the notion of the human or cultural sciences (\textit{Geisteswissenschaften}) as a field of inquiry in its own right, with its own character and methods apart from the natural sciences (\textit{Naturwissenschaften}). Among these manifold contributions, we can also count his \textit{Weltanschauunglehre} or \textit{Wissenschaft der Weltanschauung}, which attempts to study how human beings and cultures make sense of the “enigma of life.”\footnote{Wilhelm Dilthey, \textit{Selected Writings} Ed. H.P. Rickman (New York: Cambridge UP, 1976), 136. Dilthey’s corpus in English on \textit{Weltanschauung} can be found primarily in \textit{Collected Writings} vol. 5, 378-416, “The Essence of Philosophy”; and \textit{Collected Writings} vol. 8. See also, Dilthey, \textit{Selected Writings}, 35-77, which includes excerpts from Dilthey’s biography of Schleiermacher, containing illuminating applications of \textit{Weltanschauunglehre}. Rickman’s edition also contains abridged essays from the \textit{Collected Works} relevant to this topic, see in particular, 133-54. Dilthey has been called the “father of worldview theory,” a field that can claim quite a long and distinguished pedigree, from Hegel to Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Husserl, and Foucault, to name just a few. David K. Naugle, \textit{Worldview: The History of a Concept} (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002), 84.} A key component of Dilthey’s approach is his emphasis, as throughout his work, on context and on the role of historical situation in helping to shape cultural realities. The \textit{Weltanschauung} for Dilthey is a multiple, highly varied phenomenon, formed out of individual and collective epistemologies, alive and evolving within particular cultures and spaces and within a variety of social and intellectual spheres. This process of \textit{Weltanschauung}-formation is...
conditioned in part by individual temperaments and dispositions, or “moods” [Lebensstimmung], such as optimism and pessimism and all the possible variants thereof, which provide a framework for the reception of knowledge about the world and further development of that knowledge into material for understanding life and thinking about human values in relation to life.28

Not unrelated to Dilthey’s is the thought of fellow-German, Max Weber, whose influence has been even greater and more widely dispersed. A pivotal figure in the birth of modern sociology, Weber’s work remains today a source of intellectual stimulation and debate in a variety of disciplines. And although his rationalization thesis provides a compelling explanation for modernization and its effects (one more variegated and multidimensional than that of the other predominant sociological theory to date, that of Karl Marx), Weber’s methodological innovations are no less interesting and worthwhile. His typological framework, for example, enables understanding of and stimulating thought about large-scale social and historical developments without positing an essentialist absolutism, so that speaking of “the ‘Spirit’ of Capitalism” for Weber is not (as it might be taken to be oftentimes by Anglo critics) to make a positivistic assertion or to configure a grand recit postulated as total truth.29 Of particular and inspirational

---

28 Dilthey’s Weltanschauunglehre also includes a differentiation between various expressions of Weltanschauung (religious, poetical, and metaphysical), as well as a typology including naturalism, the idealism of freedom, and objective idealism. The present study, however, will not pursue these in detail.

29 As Weber himself has pointed out, “only in the course of the discussion and as the essential outcome will it be shown how that which we understand as the ‘spirit’ of capitalism should best – that is, most satisfactorily for the points of view which interest us here – be formulated. These ‘points of view’ (to which we shall come in due course) are, in turn, not at all the only ones possible with which to analyze the historical phenomena we are considering. … It follows that what we understand by the ‘spirit’ of capitalism in terms of what we deem ‘essential’ from our point of view, is by no means the only possible way of understanding it. This is in the nature of ‘historical concept-formation’.” Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic
interest to the present study is the concept of the “ideal type,” which is able to offer a richer account of how historical facts are organized rationally and analytically by those who undertake to arrive at some higher-order knowledge of such phenomena. The heuristic import of Weber’s concept lies in its ability to demonstrate the necessity of “idealized” or abstract cognition in any historical formulation which seeks to go beyond the stratum of concrete fact (as most do). For Weber, the ideal type is not an empirical reality, nor is it an “average” of the sum total of certain historical phenomena. Rather, it is, as Weber says, a “utopia,” a “synthesis” or “one-sided accentuation” of various particular realities, “which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct (Gedankenbild).”

For our purposes, Dilthey and Weber offer a general orientation or approach to cultural and social reality that is typological and heuristic, while at the same time being sensitive to contingency and to historical process. Together, their work offers the possibility of conceiving of modernism in terms of Weltanschauung and typology, without fear of oversimplification or reductionism. And from such a methodological backdrop, provocative and important questions arise. Does modernism have its own particular way or ways of seeing the world? Is there a modernist type distinct from earlier and later historical periods? And of what qualities might such a type consist?

If the work of Dilthey and Weber provides an initial impetus for broaching such questions and for feeling unashamed about the possibilities of obtaining answers

---

(however provisional and contingent), it is in theoretical elements drawn out by the
Canadian Northrop Frye and the Romanian-American Virgil Nemoianu that there can be
found theoretical frameworks supple enough for providing the kind of nuanced response
that such questions demand and that the answers will inevitably entail.

To begin with Frye, the title of his *Anatomy of Criticism* is carefully chosen. In
that book, Frye refers to Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy* as “the most comprehensive
survey of human life in one book that English literature had seen since Chaucer” and
more specifically he writes that “the word ‘anatomy’ in Burton’s title means a dissection
or analysis.”31 These words are apt descriptions as well for Frye’s own *Anatomy*,
undergirded as it is by the “assumption of total coherence.” As he says,

Criticism seems to be badly in need of a coordinating principle, a central
hypothesis which, like the theory of evolution in biology, will see the phenomena
it deals with as parts of a whole.32 The “whole” for Frye is nothing short of the whole of literature. This “totalizing
gesture,”33 as some have called it, inherent in Frye’s approach has been criticized by
some for being too narrow and by others for being too all encompassing.34 Still others,

published, 1957), 311.

32 Frye, 16.

33 Richard Lane, “Northrop Frye,” in *Fifty Key Literary Thinkers* (London: Routledge, 2006), 111-
116. 112. For a good discussion of criticism of Frye, see Robert Denham, “Pity the Northrop Frye Scholar?:
*Anatomy of Criticism* Fifty Years After,” in *Northrop Frye: New Directions from Old* Ed. David Rampton
(University of Ottawa Press, 2009), 15-34.

34 While critics like Lane have censured Frye for his “totalizing” method, William K. Wimsatt
takes him to task for his supposedly indiscriminating and anti-evaluative principles of canon-formation.
W.K. Wimsatt, “Northrop Frye: Criticism as Myth,” in *Northrop Frye in Modern Criticism* Ed. Murray
Krieger (New York: Columbia UP, 1966), 75-107. On the other hand, William Kerrigan has commented
that Frye has been “buried” by the various post-structuralist critical camps “in a mass grave marked White
however, have argued for a reconsideration of Frye’s method and have sought to emphasize the more flexible and open-ended aspects of his literary theory. Caterina Nella Cotrupi, for example, wishes to underline the value of the “heuristic” in Frye and the “hospitable nature of Frye’s critical enterprise,” its more “dynamic” qualities, including “process” and “multidirectional movement.” Cotrupi’s more postmodern Frye is a helpful counterweight to what has become a caricatured and inaccurate view of even the unifying aspects of his thought.

In its four essays, Anatomy of Criticism seeks to provide a variety of perspectives on the literary work and its whole, literature. These criticisms (historical, ethical, archetypal, and rhetorical) pursue their own immediate ends, but are ultimately compatible. Frye in fact encourages their interpenetration. In this spirit, I will consider the possibilities here for mapping the process-oriented aspects of archetypal criticism onto Frye’s model of historical criticism. Frye himself has already hinted at this approach in his conclusion to Anatomy:

It is not in itself unreasonable that human culture would unconsciously assume the rhythms of an organism. Artists tend to imitate their predecessors in a slightly more sophisticated way, thus producing a tradition of cultural aging [his emphasis] which goes on until some large change interrupts the process and it starts over again. Hence the containing form of historical criticism may well be

---


36 The reference and context of Vico that Cotrupi provides is particularly illuminating in this regard. See in particular, Cotrupi, 50-75.

37 As he says, “The [present] book attacks no methods of criticism, once that subject has been defined: what it attacks are the barriers between the methods.” Frye, 341.
some quasi-organic rhythm of cultural aging, such as it postulated in one form or another by most of the philosophical historians of our time, most explicitly by Spengler….The progression of modes traced in the first essay seems to have some analogy to this view of cultural history.\textsuperscript{38}

Here the cyclical (and seasonal) patterns of the “pregeneric elements of literature” interrogated through archetypal criticism are brought into relation with the “progression of modes” found in historical criticism.\textsuperscript{39} In this way, a historicizing of these various \textit{mythoi}, these ante-generic “structure[s] and mood[s],” \textsuperscript{40} becomes possible, and cultural history simultaneously finds itself grounded more firmly in archetypal patterns. As the above quotation suggests, Frye himself seems to be moving in this direction in \textit{Anatomy}, if only through implication and juxtaposition.

The book’s first essay, “Historical Criticism: Theory of Modes,” outlines a taxonomy of “fictional modes,” each being defined by the hero’s relation to his environment and to the universe he inhabits. It is schematized in the chart below.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{38} Frye, 343. Frye suggests as part of his discussion of fictional modes that the next epoch of literature will reinitiate the cycle (he sees the mythical aspects of Kafka and the later Joyce as proof of this turn, Frye, 42). Certainly, there is ample material for a reading of post-modernism along such lines.

\textsuperscript{39} Frye, 162, 343. By archetypal and historical criticisms, I mean what Frye defines and elaborates in the First and Third Essays respectively.

\textsuperscript{40} Frye, 162.

\textsuperscript{41} Frye, 33-4.
As Frye immediately points out, these modes roughly correspond to the history of Western literature. Pre-medieval literature is mythological in structure but is followed by the romance of the medieval period, which ends only with the “cult of the prince and the courtier” ushering in the Renaissance and the “high mimetic mode.” Subsequently, the “low mimetic mode” arises and is prevalent until the twentieth century when the “ironic mode” becomes paradigmatic.  

When considering this scheme, it is important not to overlook the fact that these fictional modes are for Frye very much also historical modes. His work has been criticized for being too detached from contextual factors, and perhaps rightly so, but his discussion of modes clearly contains a paralleling of the literary with the cultural. Developments in court life (i.e., the transition from the medieval to the Renaissance court) are related to the move from the romantic mode to the high-mimetic mode, for example. The mutation of the high-mimetic mode into the low-mimetic is attributed in part to the advent of “a new kind of middle-class culture.” The preference in Classical

---

42 Frye, 34-5.
cultures for mythical, romantic, and high-mimetic hybrids, and for the much less mature or prolonged phases of the low-mimetic and ironic modes, is related to Classical religious and theological models (plurality of deities, etc.). Similarly, monotheistic religion is taken to be a possible explanation for the more clearly defined separations between mythic and romantic modes (and for the greater subsequent development of mimetic and ironic modes) in post-Classical Western and Islamic cultures. All of this is not to say that fictional modes are historically determined, but that they can be connected to historical process and to cultural history more generally.

When it comes to the definition of *mythoi* in the essay on archetypal criticism, a similar situation obtains: that is, we can acknowledge the morphological contours of what might otherwise be thought of as static components. Frye underscores this when he speaks of *mythoi*, those “narrative categories broader than, or logically prior to, the ordinary literary genres,” in terms of the four seasons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Mythos of Spring: Comedy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Mythos of Summer: Romance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mythos of Autumn: Tragedy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mythos of Winter: Irony and Satire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2

---

43 Frye, 34-5.

44 Frye, 162.
Although these mythoi are certainly proposed as existing throughout various literary-historical periods (and indeed as experiencing their own processes of development through time), the larger schema proposed in the first essay of the Anatomy together with the seasonality of these ante-generic structures invite us to think also of the possibility that the schema of mythoi might be organized as itself a kind of cultural history of Western literature.

This point of confluence is, as I have said, suggested by implication through the various essays themselves and through Frye’s insistence that there should be no arbitrary boundaries set up between the approaches. But even more directly, on more than one occasion, Frye himself refers to the whole of post-Classical Western literature as if it were one cycle.45

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fictional Mode:</th>
<th>Myth</th>
<th>Romance</th>
<th>(High→Low Mimetic)</th>
<th>Ironic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mythos:</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>Romance</td>
<td>Tragedy</td>
<td>Irony/ Satire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Spring)</td>
<td>(Summer)</td>
<td>(Autumn)</td>
<td>(Winter)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3

Above is a representation of the archetypal and historical methods interfaced. As one can see, the two are easily yoked together. Here what one finds in Frye’s work is, to borrow and redeploy a phrase of Cotrupi’s, a “poetics of process”: a study of poetic practice as

45 Frye, 42, 343.
cultural process. In this way, both the particular expressions of a given historical moment and the larger course of moments – as well as their interrelation – can be accounted for and better understood.

As one can tell from the schema above, the periodization that can be derived from Frye’s work immediately illuminates and makes more intelligible the notion that modernism could be understood to be a kind of satire, or a satirical period or force in itself. The whole period of “modernism” could be described adequately in the terms of a cultural “winter” and its literature very much fits into the model that Frye categorizes “irony and satire” broadly speaking, although it is not Frye’s particular ideas of either irony or satire that are of concern here but rather his larger framework for understanding cultural and literary development. And along these same lines Dilthey’s notion of “life moods” or “Lebensstimmung” becomes paramount here. Modernism’s Lebensstimmung is a “mood” of winter. The interconnection between this cultural condition and the literary expression of the satirical which Frye’s work makes clear is an important element necessary to the development of a modernist typology.

Just as important is Frye’s assignment of an “archetypal theme” to each mythos, of which the mythos of winter’s is sparagmos: “the sense that heroism and effective

---

46 Cotrupi refers to Frye’s “poetics of process” as a Longinian valuation of the sublimity and the dynamic over the inert. Cotrupi, 19-49.

47 Frye’s distinction between irony and satire seems somewhat problematic. In the course of his discussion, we are first told that the “chief distinction between irony and satire is that satire is militant irony.” This makes satire a form of irony. But just a sentence later, we are informed that “invective” is a kind of satire, one with “relatively little irony.” This seems to imply that satire and irony are two independent phenomena that can interpenetrate. A paragraph or so later we find that “satire is irony which is structurally close to the comic,” which seems to imply another set of relations altogether. Frye, 223-4. These reservations about the particularities of Frye’s treatment of satire (a difficult subject in its theoretical particularities, after all) do not, I think, impugn what is the true value of his insights into literary-historical development and particularly the “mythos of winter.”
action are absent, disorganized or foredoomed to defeat, and that confusion and anarchy reign over the world.”\textsuperscript{48} This is in many ways a fair description of modernist thematics. But more than mere explanation, it is the idea that \textit{sparagmos} as a kind of \textit{Weltanschauung} should be couched within the overarching framework of the seasonal \textit{mythoi} conceived as the larger temporal geography of Western literature which makes Frye’s work here truly fruitful for understanding modernism, its socio-historical origins, as well as its cultural and aesthetic impulses (and the prominent place of satire among them).

These insights will be truly optimized, however, only when complemented by the theory of societal and human models articulated by Virgil Nemoianu, for here one finds greater attention to the various interfaces of culture, diachronic and synchronic, including as they relate to literary creation, than is evident in the \textit{Anatomy} of Northrop Frye.\textsuperscript{49} The initial question with which Nemoianu’s reflection on models begins centers on the relation of the literary work to reality. Much literary theory, both ancient and modern, assigns an essentially passive role to literature in society. The literary work is often seen as the mere effect of economic or social factors (usually one particular factor is emphasized). The same is true for traditional theories of mimesis, for which the work is a

\textsuperscript{48} Frye, 192.

\textsuperscript{49} Virgil Nemoianu, \textit{A Theory of the Secondary: Literature, Progress, and Reaction} (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1989). Nemoianu’s work shares much with Frye, as well as with Dilthey and Weber. Both Frye and Nemoianu conceive of literary creation as a kind of re-creation involving various mediations and conceptualizations recombined or restructured (whether archetypal, topological, or otherwise). One could mention as well that there is much in Frye (even openly acknowledged by him) of the “unifying morphology” of Spengler that Nemoianu connects to his own study of the human model, even if in the case of Frye it is perhaps more narrowly focused on the literary. Nemoianu, 124. And Nemoianu’s formulation of societal models can be related to Weber’s \textit{Idealtypus}, particularly in that both concepts refer to cognitive channels which buffer reality, but also act heuristically as thought experiments about reality.
passive entity, only reflective of reality. For Nemoianu, however, literature cannot be said to “imitate” reality. Rather, the relation between the literary work and reality is mediated by “societal models”:

The societal model [is] a stylized version of an existing society....immediately recognized by members of a society. It is an extended topos, a large image, an aesthetic construct consciously chosen to serve one purpose or another by an author exercising his free will; it is a frozen mass of content sufficiently well known that reference or allusion to one of its parts will instantly recall the whole. Historically, such a macroimage is constituted by the combination of several topoi and motifs with different intellectual themes and pieces of world views.50

The presence of such mediating models enables a much more dynamic conception of how literature functions in relation to the world. Model-theory opens a pathway for a literature which tests out various cultural hypotheses (and invents its own), reflects upon rather than merely reflecting the multiplicities of a given historical situation, considers and reconceives the plausibility of social forms, and much else.51

Closely related to the societal model is what Nemoianu calls, following Paul Hazard, Tudor Vianu, and Alexandru Duțu, the “human model”: “a human type prevalent in a period of time and often encountered in its literary works.”52 It is a “buried macroimage...[,] a configuration of values sketchily present as a background for a great

50 Nemoianu, A Theory of the Secondary, 128.

51 Nemoianu’s book as a whole is an attempt to consider the ways in which literature (and other forms of the secondary) relate to what he terms the principal (the streamlining and in some ways necessarily simplifying dominant discourses and forces of cultural and social life, i.e. rationalizing, progressive technologies, mass opinion, prevailing views, etc). For Nemoianu, literature’s role is one of mediation and often moderation, as it often serves a “reactionary” function, privileging what the principal subordinates.

52 Nemoianu, A Theory of the Secondary, 123.
variety of texts,” that functions across the cultural spectrum, literary and extra-literary, and helps to form the general character of a given historical period. Indeed,

[these ‘human models’ serve as a focus for the social aspirations of large or decisive segments of society and in turn shape the cultural manifestations of a society, as well as other areas. They are central figures whose attitudes and values may inform the painting and the music, the sociology and politics, the religiosity and the manners of an entire epoch.

And the idea of the “human model” particularly as a periodizing tool is by no means an obscure concept. Nemoianu shows well how this concept functions under different nominations within a variety of theoretical and critical frameworks of recent memory, including in the “homologies” of neo-Marxists like Goldmann, Jameson, and Williams, or in the “unifying morphology” of Spengler (all themselves reminiscent of the Geistesgeschichte tradition), or in the search for an epoch’s “qualité maitresse” in Taine, or in the typologies of Cysarz. Here Nemoianu brings together, synthesizes, and enriches a critical orientation transcending the various theoretical factions and trends. It should also be said, in light of the methodological framework presented here, that some of the same concerns can even be attributed to Northrop Frye, especially when we view his mythoi of pre-generic structures in historical terms (as I tried to do above).

Taking to heart the methodological utilities of this approach, one can sketch a broad cultural and literary history using the concept of the human model. In the Middle Ages, there is the figure of the Knight; and in the Renaissance, the courtier. The period

54 Nemoianu, A Theory of the Secondary, 123.
that we might call the Age of Reason broadly speaking has the human model in Addison’s “Mr. Spectator” as its typological signifier. The human type of Romanticism, whether we wish to refer to it in the terms of the “Romantic hero” or not, can be characterized by extreme and total values connected with “expanded consciousness” in all spheres of cultural and social life.\footnote{Nemoianu, A Theory of the Secondary, 123-7. Nemoianu points to the difficulties (and ultimate futility) of searching for the unifying essence of the “Romantic hero,” 125.} It is of course important to keep in mind that, as Nemoianu points out, the human model is not to be taken as a sort of character template for reproduction throughout an historical period. Rather, it is a manifold depository of values, ideas, images, that is made use of widely and often, perhaps, subconsciously. Very often, it functions in a subterraneous manner in literary texts.

The question of course arises, if the human model can be connected with historical epochs, what is the human model functioning within modernism? Nemoianu himself offers an important clue to a possible answer with the societal model contemporaneous (at least in part) with modernism that he refers to as the “motley society,” which he defines as “a social space in which the mixture of types (social, ethnic, psychological) is complete and ostentatious, in which randomness shadows morality, nature is absent or evil, the present devours the past as well as the future, individuals are passive and do not claim control over themselves or over society, spurts of energy alternate jerkily with bouts of sullen inertia, and cultural syncretism provides a general background for the action.”\footnote{Nemoianu, A Theory of the Secondary, 127.} If we compare this description with Frye’s notion of \textit{sparagmos}, the “archetypal theme” of the “\textit{mythos} of winter,” – “the sense that heroism
and effective action are absent, disorganized or foredoomed to defeat, and that confusion and anarchy reign over the world” – there is, we find, much commonality.58

And it is here, at the intersection of Nemoianu’s reflections on human and societal models and Frye’s historical-mythical outlines, that an answer to the question regarding the human model of modernism begins to manifest itself. For, as both Nemoianu’s “motley society” model and Frye’s historical mapping (where the satirical and ironical “mythos of winter” coincides broadly with the modernist period) could be said to imply (and all the more so when brought into relation with each other), the human typology of modernism offers a unique historical situation, one where the human model itself functions in an inverse manner from usual conditions.

As Nemoianu shows, the normal occurrence is for the human model to embody the “social aspirations” of a period. A model is presented during the formation and heightening of a given historical epoch. Later, as the period develops, the problematic aspects of the model become more evident and the model is further altered, other possibilities within the framework of the model are considered, etc.59 These qualities of how models operate within given historical periods are also true of the modernist period. A key difference, however, is that usually one of the ways that later uses of the model make alterations is through ironical treatments of certain aspects of the model (or perhaps of the model itself). With modernism, the feeling of decadence, of cultural and social sickness, has become so pervasive, so complete, that no true human type, in the sense of


58 Frye, 162.

“social aspirations,” can be offered. What is offered is a kind of inverted human model, an already ironical human type which has so digested and incorporated the Lebensstimmung of cultural pessimism that it is only able to be conceived as an anti-model, a model of that which is not to be the focus of our social ideals. In other words, a satirical or satirized human model.⁶⁰

This human model I would term the “hollow man,” though other significations may conceivably work just as well. It is from the “anti-modern” orientation surveyed in section one that the main impulses and inspirations for the model originate (sense of spiritual, cultural, social decadence; rejection of modern dualities and the resulting -isms of modern isolations, e.g., rationalism, individualism; disregard for modern ideological motifs like progress, technocracy, the masses, etc.) Its central features begin to come together into a collection of shared images in the late-nineteenth century, just as the Romantic heritage is breaking up and reformulating into Symbolism and the movements of Aestheticism and Decadence. However, these movements are in some ways just as much Romantic as modernist, and it is only in the 1910s and 1920s that a clearer picture begins to emerge. Beyond these years, the model continues to hold sway and in some ways can be said to continue even to our own time in the currents usually called “post-modern.”

These are the model’s general historical contours. I would like now to sketch

---

⁶⁰ There is broader, historical and socio-cultural support for this development. Charles Taylor, for example, sees in the rise of “commercial society” anxieties about the end of “greatness” and “heroism,” anxieties to which the anti-modern philosophy of Nietzsche responds. Charles Taylor, Modern Social Imaginaries (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2004), 81-2. This is not to say that this model isn’t itself developed in many of the same ways as earlier models. Much of postmodernism, for example, can be thought of as an ironical treatment of modernism’s ironical model (one thinks here of metafiction, which serves as the only strategy of irony left in some cases, given that one is faced with a model that has irony integrated into itself.)
more thoroughly, if still somewhat incompletely, the typology of modernism as it develops in its temporal geography.

3. The Modernist Type

The human model of the “hollow man” like other human models encompasses a variety of images, values, scenes, situations, themes, motifs, etc. In part two of the present chapter, two specific mobilizations of the model will be considered. Here, a more general sense of the landscape of the modernist model-type will be conveyed.

Central features of the “hollow man” model include inertia, indecision, impotency, softness, lethargy, numbness, lifelessness, malaise, hollowness (hence the name). All of these qualities can perhaps be grouped under the broad heading of “sterility.”\(^{61}\) This figuration has its own milieu, usually the city. But no matter where, there is quite often a satirical relation of setting to “hell,” metaphorical or actual. And the backdrop is nearly always decadence, decay, waste land. This decay is ubiquitous, affecting every level of society (aristocratic, bourgeois, proletariat) and every sector (industrial, rural, professional, artistic). Its decadence is total and complete. In all ways, the model stylizes modern society as a hellish nightmare.

In this brief sketch, certain aspects of the model (roughly backgrounds and foregrounds) will be divided and dealt with separately for the sake of space and for fuller and more direct illumination. Justified as such an approach is, it cannot be allowed to

\(^{61}\) The debt to the “motley societal” model is clearly seen here, as is the relevance of *sparagmos.*
obscure the fact that the general thrust of the model itself militates against bifurcation
(the hollow man is one who fails to resist and therefore becomes a part of his inanimate
environment).

The three sub-sections that follow can be schematized broadly thus. First, I will
consider a central prerequisite to and backdrop of the model, the sense and enactment of
decadence, as found widely in the literature of the period. Second, I will look at one
specific example of how decadence is put to use aesthetically within the framework of the
model (namely, the topoi of “hell”). Third, the foregrounds of the model will be
investigated in light of the first two sections.

3.1 Modernity as Total Decadence

The pessimistic attitude or Lebensstimmung that is so forcefully felt in the model
begins to manifest itself in the nineteenth century (it can already be seen to some extent
as early as de Maistre). The phenomenon does not restrict itself to literature either. In
philosophy the work of Schopenauer and Nietzsche is predicated upon darker colorations
of the human condition, and decadence is the accepted state of affairs from which one
begins. The same can be said also for Marx, except that the trajectory of his philosophy
of history is more Hegelian and therefore ultimately more optimistic. From the standpoint
of psychology, Sigmund Freud was formulating a vision of the human being that included

---

62 The central images of Nietzsche’s philosophical universe rely heavily on and serve to found
many of the major motifs and themes of the modernist type. These can be found easily enough in his
references to the “herd,” to “slave morality,” and the like, as well as to the countervailing “übermensch.”
For a good discussion of Nietzsche’s relation to modernism (though one from which I would at times
diverge considerably), see Michael Bell, Literature, Modernism, and Myth: Belief and Responsibility in the
the dark and bestial inner drives of the subconscious and the irrational side of humanity. All of these individuals represent collectively an historical counterweight to the optimisms of many earlier late-eighteenth and nineteenth century views of humanity and something of a shift in cultural consciousness.

The same can be said for literature. One thinks here immediately of the movement named *la décadence*, featuring such authors as J.K. Huysmans and, in the English incarnation, Wilde, Johnson, and Dowson. Often naturalism in its various guises also depicted the world, and often the city, in despairing terms. In France, Zola’s *Le Bête humaine* is a good representative example of darkness and madness, while Gissing’s and Hardy’s novels in England, John Davidson’s poetry in Scotland, Dreiser’s work in America, Isben’s in Norway, and Hauptmann’s in Germany all contain considerably dimmer and less hopeful pictures of humanity. The Swedish Strindberg’s drama ranged from the more naturalistic (*Miss Julie*) to the more expressionistic (*To Damascus*) but always endeavored to explore the darker aspects of human existence. In this way, the sense of decadence can be said to be a bridge which connects Symbolism and Naturalism.

Into the twentieth century, Edgar Lee Masters offered a somewhat muted scene of decay in both rural and, to a lesser extent, industrial America (in *The Spoon River Anthology* and *The New Spoon River* respectively), as did his contemporary E.A. Robinson. Small town American life would also be explored as a scene of repression and isolation in the work of Sherwood Anderson. The American theme of pastoral decadence would be picked up again in the period of high-modernism by William Faulkner. It is important to underscore that in the work of these writers rural life is never cut off from modernity. The situation of decadence is always connected to modern developments (i.e. 
technology, breakdown of community, isolationism, loss of shared values, moral disorder or in some cases a seemingly arbitrary and rigid moral order, l’ennui, etc).

As this American anti-pastoral modernism makes clear, the decadence decried by modernism is total and absolute in its reach and effects. No area of human life is safe from modern corrosion. In addition to the various classes and communities, particular ways of life are shown to be in states of decay. The modernist movement of The Harlem Renaissance often sought to expose the corruptions of American social and political structures. Several modernists, including Rebecca West, Virginia Woolf, and Mina Loy, explore the decay and/or futilities of marriage and family life, gender roles and expectations. The art world is shown to be populated by those hollow men, The Apes of God, by Wyndham Lewis. Both James Joyce’s A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and some of T.S. Eliot’s quatrain poems show the hollowness of clerics and religious institutions. James Joyce in Ulysses and Ezra Pound in the “Hell” Cantos offer satirical critiques of modern mass journalism. Pound’s Hugh Selwyn Mauberley depicts writers like his fictional Mr. Nixon (based probably on Arnold Bennett) who bow to the commercialism and mass-market orientation of the modern publishing industry and exhibit ersatz literary refinement. And as we know, several modernist authors have occasionally made hollow men out of entire races and cultures.

The “Men of 1914” and modernism more generally also extend their satirical critique to the institution of modernized language itself. There is a widespread sense amongst the modernists that language has been corroded by the sloganeering and standardization of market forces and mass literacy. Such sentiments can be seen most clearly in Joyce’s satirical parody of various discourses of modern culture in Ulysses. In
addition, the “Oxen of the Sun” chapter traces the history of the English language and ends with, as Joyce himself described it, the “frightful jumble of [various kinds of] slang and broken doggerel” of contemporary discourse.\footnote{See Richard Ellmann, ed., Joyce’s Selected Letters (New York: Viking Press, 1975), 252, Letter to Frank Budgen, 20 March, 1920, Trieste.} The same situation of linguistic chaos could be at least one implication of the polyphony and dizzying heteroglossic tendencies in works like Eliot’s \textit{The Waste Land} and Pound’s \textit{Cantos}, and could be taken as the depiction of a kind of new Babel. Wyndham Lewis’s use of clichés in a novel like \textit{The Childermass} is similarly an employment of eroded language “against itself,” as Frederic Jameson has put it.\footnote{Frederic Jameson, \textit{Fables of Agression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist} (Berkely, CA: University of California Press, 1979), 73. Jameson argues in part that in devising his stylistic originality via a collage of clichés (visual, verbal, and otherwise), Lewis has “voluntarily renounced the twin vocation of the greatest modern writing: to forge a new language, and with it to convey some hitherto unexperienced of an unfamiliar external world,” 75. By “modern writing” it is perhaps not clear that Jameson intends to refer to modernists, but it should be said that the use of collage, and often as a kind of satirical parody of “ready-made” language, is a favored device of the “Men of 1914.” George Steiner has argued for collage as constitutive of modernism on other grounds (primarily as a means of cultural conservation). See George Steiner, \textit{After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation} (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1975), 465-6.}

3.2 Modernity as Hell

If modernist literature operates utilizing a model of reality as decadence, there are, as one can imagine, innumerable strategies and motifs available to individual authors in their efforts at dramatizing and depicting that sense of decay and decline. One strategy that can be found quite often in modernism, and one which gives a fuller sense of just how the decadence of modern society is perceived by modernism, is the corresponding of images of hell to contemporary life. This is done in a variety of ways and with varying
degrees of relation to the “hollow man” model. I will outline some of the uses and methods briefly.

Interestingly, the hell *topos* has often been one of the favorite weapons of the satirist. Critics have long observed that much satire functions by way of unflattering or incongruent comparison (certainly such is the case with the more strictly literary techniques of burlesque, travesty, and the like). This is nowhere truer than in the satirical mobilization of the images of hell and its offshoots. As far back as Menippus himself and in early practitioners of the so-called Menippean satirical tradition like Lucian, the motif of the “descent into hell” has been in wide use.65 Among the “Men of 1914,” Wyndham Lewis’ novel *The Childermass*, and even more so the fragment “The Infernal Fair,” the creative germ of that novel, is structured entirely around that topological framework, although the afterworld depicted there is not so much a place of punishment (as it is in the Dantine tradition), as it is simply an abode of the dead. Certainly, Joyce’s “Hades” and “Circe” episodes in *Ulysses* could be described in somewhat similar terms, despite their many Dantine allusions. Even T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, also of interest for its allusions to Dante, could be said to make use of the classical Menippean “descent into hell,” if one can consider Tiresias’ function in the poem as that of netherworldly guide.

More punitive or horror-inducing conceptions of hell have also been central to the strategy of satirical comparison (from the indispensable Dante, whose enemies inhabit the inferno, to later renditions like those of William Combe, Jonathan Swift, Clément Marot, 65 Sophie Duval and Marc Martinez, *La Satire: littératures française et anglaise* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2000), 174-6. As Duval and Martinez point out, the *topos* of the “descent into hell” was already prevalent by the time of Mennipus and can be found in the likes of Homer, Plato, and Aristophanes.
and even Victor Hugo.) Such motifs are utilized liberally by modernist authors. The figure who provides the foundational inspiration for hell motifs in modernism is obviously the Frenchman Charles Baudelaire, who offers something of a paradox (taken up by Eliot and one which is quite central to the notion of the hollow man) in that, for all the talk of hell, modern humanity is deemed not good enough for it, not “man enough for damnation,” as it were. Baudelaire’s influence in this regard within the Francophone tradition alone is great as it is elsewhere and one can see it bear fruit in the likes of Barbey-d’Aurevilly (Les Diaboliques) as well as Rimbaud (Une Saison de l’enfer) and Lautremont (Les Chants de Maladomor), to name only a few.

Although certain notes of this primarily French body of work can be noticed in late-nineteenth century English literature, it is not until the turn of the century that the relations become more overt and intense (and more clearly and consistently relatable to

---

66 Duval and Martinez, 71-3, 75-8, 113, 159.

67 T.S. Eliot, “Baudelaire,” in Selected Essays 1917-1932 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1932 1st Ed.), 335-45. The full passage conveys some considerable insight into key modernist understandings of the hollow man condition: “So far as we are human, what we do must be either evil or good; so far as we do evil or good, we are human; and it is better, in a paradoxical way, to do evil than to do nothing: at least, we exist. It is true to say that the glory of man is his capacity for salvation; it is also true to say that his glory is his capacity for damnation. The worst that can be said of most of our malefactors, from statesmen to thieves, is that they are not men enough to be damned. Baudelaire was man enough for damnation: whether he is damned is, of course, another question, and we are not prevented from praying for his repose. In all his humiliating traffic with other beings, he walked secure in this high vocation, that he was capable of a damnation denied to the politicians and the newspaper editors of Paris,” 344. Eliot’s poetry dramatized these hollow men in The Waste Land at the close of “Part I: The Burial of the Dead,” (60-66), where a connection is made between the “crowd” of the Unreal City “flow[ing] over London Bridge” (60-2) and those lost souls in the vestibule of hell in Dante’s Inferno who are in neither heaven nor hell, who are, as Dante’s poem says, “the nearly soulless/ whose lives concluded neither praise nor blame” (Canto III: 32-3). Dante Alighieri, The Inferno Trans. John Ciardi (New York: Signet Classics, 2001); T.S. Eliot, “The Waste Land,” in The Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1952), 37-55.

robustly satiric impulses). Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, a sustained elucidation of modern decadence and barbarity, is not without its allusions to the demonic. Conrad’s friend, Ford Madox Ford penned the modernist novel *The Good Soldier*, which is full of (often seemingly incidental) references by characters to the “devil” and to “this sweltering hell of ours.”\(^{69}\) H.D.’s eponymous hero of “Eurydice” comments from hell that “hell is no worse than your earth.”\(^{70}\) The modernist poet Edith Sitwell used hell as a setting and reference in her poetry on more than a few different occasions, as did Mina Loy.\(^{71}\) And one should not forget the American modernist William Carlos Williams and his experimental novel, *Kora in Hell*.\(^{72}\)

To return to the Continent, Marcel Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu* draws on “hell” in a variety of ways, including the signatory metaphorical relation to (in this case, high) society. The Prague-born Kafka’s aesthetic world could well be described as making generous use of hellish imagery. And in Germany one could mention, among

---


\(^{72}\) Neither should we overlook the other arts. Just two examples: the early sculpture of August Rodin, *La Porte de l’enfer* (1880-1917) and the paintings of Wyndham Lewis, “Inferno,” which came somewhat later in the 30s.
Among the “Men of 1914,” the inferno is a continually referred to set of images, utilized in most cases for satirical comparison to the modern industrialized city populated by hollow men. T.S. Eliot’s perhaps two most accomplished early poems utilized the inferno in substantial ways. The epigraph to “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” situates that poem within the context of Dante’s *Inferno* (and the rest of the poem follows suit). *The Waste Land* utilizes a whole complex of motifs, themes, and myths connected with the inferno (including the waste land myth itself), all to the purpose of relating the “Unreal City” to hell. Ezra Pound for his part has spoken of the “hell” in the Cantos (XIV-XV) as “a portrait of contemporary England.” Wyndham Lewis referred to his treatise, *The Art of Being Ruled*, as “an account…of the decadence occupying the trough between the two world-wars [that] introduces us to a moronic inferno of insipidity and decay (which is likewise the inferno of ‘The Apes of God’).” As mentioned above, James Joyce organizes a chapter of *Ulysses* around “Hades” and in another it is a major motif (“Circe”). One should not overlook the fact that allusions to Dante in the novel are

---

73 For more on modernism and hell, see Gillespie, 216-42. This wide-ranging handling of the subject brings to light two ways of dealing with hell. There is satirical comparison, but there is also the more Orphic strand, which as Gillespie shows focuses on interiority, consciousness, awakening, development, and other such themes. In my view, however, even this more “Orphic” inflection can be seen as an indirect form of the satirical hell of modernism: i.e., the solipsism and isolation of modern life.


second only to the Homeric epic after which it is titled. Finally, Joyce’s earlier novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, contains an Ignatian meditation on hell which serves as a central context for the story of Stephen in modern Ireland.

It should not be forgotten that all of this recourse to the topological framework of hell occurs within a period that is often enough presented as undergoing a process of rapid and complete “secularization” and loss of transcendence. This, it seems to me, is all the more reason to regard such usage as satirical in nature. “Hell” is useful not so much as a strictly theological reality but as a metaphor of extreme satirical potency, employed to describe modern life. Surely many who make use of the images do not wish to convey such a wholesale condemnation, but it is surprising just how many seem to imply something vaguely along such lines. And even if particular writers seem to focus on “micro-hells” in modern society, their uses in the aggregate result in the relation of nearly everything in their world at one point or another to hell.

---

76 So significant are the references that some scholars believe the Dante motif to be as important as the Homeric. See Mary T. Reynolds, *Joyce and Dante: The Shaping Imagination* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1981). References to Dante are telling as well for Joyce’s novel when we recall that Dante’s work also features Ulysses, who is suffering in the Inferno. This point has interesting implications for the thesis that I will present in part two of the present chapter that Bloom is a figure modeled on Ulysses surely but a figure viewed satirically by Joyce most especially in what he shares with the ancient Greek protagonist.

77 The concept and exact nature of “secularization” in the West has become a point of spirited debate, with some tending to view the idea of “secularization” as a transferring of Judeo-Christian models to newly conceived non-religious intellectual and social frameworks (e.g., progress, the modern state, this-worldly asceticism) and others understanding it as a kind of de-Christianization of culture (e.g., the advent of a theoretical “curiosity” hostile to Christianity, as in Blumenberg). For a good general discussion covering the full scope of the debate since Hegel, see Jean-Claude Monod, *La querelle de la sécularisation: de Hegel à Blumenberg* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2002).
3.3 Modernity as Hollow

Within this situation of total decadence, whether social, cultural, professional, linguistic, the hollow man is one who is a part of rather than apart from his milieu. Indeed, the sterility of the environment is really only a figure for the sterility of the hollow men who inhabit it. A good early example of the type is J. Alfred Prufrock, who embodies much of the signature characters of the model: he is passive, impotent, unable to affect his world (a world which shares these same characteristics). It is fitting that Prufrock has often been mistaken for a much older man, for in his world even youth is lacking in vitality. Even his consciousness is so malleable as to be without a hardened center of identity. He is hollow through and through.

This type plays itself out again and again in Eliot’s early poetry. The gallery of characters that one finds there, whether it is Aunt Helen or Cousin Nancy or Mr. Apollinax or Bleistein or Burbank, are all elucidations of and variations on the hollow man type. They are all personifications of stasis and sterility, aptly (self) described by Gerontion as possessing a “dry brain in a dry season,” unable to become subjects of

---


79 Cf. Marjorie Perloff, 21st-Century Modernism: The “New” Poetics (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002). Perloff considers this much discussed topic on the way to making her argument for an avant-gardist early Eliot: “For the poem’s perspective, like the Cubist paintings Eliot later claimed not to like, is always unstable, repeatedly shifting, giving us multiple and conflicting views of the subject. Even without the epigraph from Inferno XXVII, the mode of ‘Prufrock’ is one of instability and dislocation – an instability as notable on the aural and visual as on the semantic level,” 24.

action in their world. And they are all precursors to the hollow men of all classes and
types presented to us in *The Waste Land*, whether in the communicative sterility of the
wealthy-classes, as in the adorned room, or the induced physical sterility spoken of
among the working classes in the London pub, or the purely mechanical duties of the
“young man carbuncular” and the typist, who is “glad [when] it’s over.”81 Additionally,
the mythical aspects of the poem invoke a situation of spiritual sterility. On the occasion
in Eliot’s early work where there is a figure of vitality, such as Sweeney, he is depicted in
terms of the grotesque as an animal.82

Ezra Pound is more prodigious in output than is Eliot and, as a result, his poetry
(especially before the Great War) is more varied in styles and themes. Nonetheless,
within this great torrent of verse, there is a substantial amount of material which takes up
and seeks to develop the “hollow man” type. It is rare in fact, even in Pound’s very early
verse, not to find some sense of “hollowness.”83 The various elements of the model begin
to come together in poems from “Ripostes” like “Portrait d’un Femme” and “Silet” (the
latter a poem of greatest inaction where the poet dramatizes his inability to bring himself
to write a poem on his just-occurred tryst). The unflinching satirical invective one finds in
“Salutation the Second,” as well as in its sequel “Salutation the Third,” is directed against
(and addressed to) the multiplicity of hollow men in every nook and cranny of modern

---


82 The ape is a persistent motif in early twentieth century literature, including Eliot’s Sweeney,
Lewis’ *The Apes of God*, O’Neill’s *The Hairy Ape*.

83 It is even possible to see Pound’s translations of the troubadour poets as a kind of satiric
counterpoint to the stale conventionalities of modern amorous relationship depicted in “Moeurs
Contemporaines” and other poems.
society, including “reporters,” “professors,” and “pretty ladies” (“the grave and the stodgy”).

By the end of the 1910s, Pound had produced a collection of featured hollow men similar to that produced by Eliot. Here comes to mind the figures of “Moeurs Contemporaines” like Mr. Hecatomb Styrax, Clara, and others unnamed, or the speaker of “L’Homme Moyen Sensuel,” or those literary types of Hugh Selwyn Mauberely:

Monsieur Verog, Brennbaum, Mr. Nixon, and of course Mauberley himself. What makes them so condemnable, and this is also true for Eliot’s types if in different ways, is their inability to resist their world, so dead and old and lifeless as it is, whether from lack of trying or sheer ineffectuality, so that they therefore represent and perpetuate that world.

Part two of this chapter will take up in a more specific way the manner in which Wyndham Lewis developed the “hollow man” model in his abandoned novel, Joint.

Much earlier, however, Lewis’ literary magazine Blast was targeting the modern society of hollow men with its venomous invective. The early stories set among the locals of French Brittany, later revised and collected into The Wild Body, could be read as adventures in ersatz primitivism, just as Tarr could be said to depict ersatz Bohemia.

Both of these works therefore depict attempts at rejecting bourgeois society, attempts

---

84 Ezra Pound, “Salutation the Second,” lines 6-8, 17, Ezra Pound: Poems & Translations ed. Richard Sieburth (New York: The Library of American, 2003), 266. While “Salutation the Third” is addressed directly to “reviewers” and even “Jews and Jobbery,” this poem is actually addressed to Pound’s poetic œuvre, his “books.” Ezra Pound, “Salutation the Third,” lines 3, 14, Modernism: An Anthology ed. Lawrence Rainey (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 43. “Salutation the Second” is of interest, therefore, in gauging Pound’s sense of poetic intent. What effect, in other words, did he wish his poetry to have? “Salute them with your thumbs at your noses” is one command, 18. It is interesting as well that Pound speaks in terms of the Greek satyr on this matter: “Dance and make people blush,/ Dance the dance of the phallus/ and tell anecdotes of Cybele!/ Speak of the indecorous conduct of the Gods!” 23-4. The next chapter of this dissertation will explore interesting connections between the origins of Greek satire and modernism.

85 We have already considered Pound’s poem “Salutation the Third,” which was published in the first issue of Blast and which was very much in keeping with the rest of the magazine.
which only recapitulate the rejected so that even those who recognize the hollow men of modern society and try to stand apart from them cannot help but become them.\textsuperscript{86} In his later post-war journals, \textit{The Tyro} and \textit{The Enemy}, Lewis further established his own sense that he could in fact take up the adversarial posture against mainstream culture and remain untainted. Throughout the 20s he would reflect on the situation of Europe after the war, and in the latter half of that decade and into the next he was speaking of adversary culture in the terms of satire.\textsuperscript{87} Certainly, \textit{The Apes of God} is full of hollow men, Dan Boleyn chief among them. Zagreus, too, is only an “ape” of the mysterious Pierpoint, who is “hollow” himself in the sense of being an absence more than a presence in the book. In \textit{The Childermass}, the Bailiff is an example of how the model can be mapped onto the socio-political stage, the “hollow man” as leader and constructor of reality (of, as one would expect, a very hollow reality). While the Hyperideans and their leader Hyperides have often been regarded as semi-protagonists in the novel (and expressing at least in part Lewis’ view), the intimations of homosexuality as a constituent trait of the Hyperideans also signal in Lewis’ universe a certain impotency and lack of vigor.

The last member of the quartet, James Joyce, has often been regarded as more accommodating of the modern spirit than Eliot, Pound, or Lewis. At the same time, no one would deny that he was anti (or pre) modern in philosophical outlook, embracing

\textsuperscript{86} For more on this, see Paul Edwards, \textit{Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer} (New Haven, Conn.: Yale UP, 2000), 39-40. As will be seen in part two of the present chapter, this theme is an integral part of Lewis’ novel fragment, \textit{Joint}.

such characters as Aristotle, Thomas, and G.B. Vico. And in the vein of many other modernists, his idea of radical innovation was rewriting the Ur-story of the West. Similarly, his work develops themes in continuity with much of that produced by the other “Men of 1914.” One might not think there is much of Blast in Joyce, yet his early broadside of Irish literary revivalists such as Yeats, Synge, Gogarty, and Russell, among others, and the continued personal attacks buried in his fiction show something of a different side to his character. His first published book, Dubliners, is more faithful to naturalism than Eliot or Pound, but it is a survey of the modern city and its types that belongs in much the same category as their early work. If the satirical edge is muted to a great extent by this purer realism, the same general circumstances of the “hollow man” model can be uncovered in Dublin as in Eliot’s Unreal City or Pound’s London. And like Lewis’ The Apes of God, the only figure in the collection who seems to stand apart from the scene never takes the scene. With A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Joyce presents a similar picture of a society as stifling as it is stale. The “artist” Stephen Dedalus attempts to stand apart. But like the decadents of Pound’s Hugh Selwyn Mauberely there is a recognition of hollowness even within the artist. At best, Stephen is a highly ambiguous character, not least for his inability actually to effect a change in his situation (the “artist” is not at all so prolific or impressive in output). The same could be said for Leopold Bloom, as will be further considered in the next part of the present chapter.

---

89 See the short story “Ivy in the Committee Room” with its use of the New Testament motifs of the upper-room and Parnell, the Christ-figure, who is never present but is nonetheless ever present in his absence.
But as much of the above remarks have hopefully made clear, the “hollow man” model is not the sole purview of the “Men of 1914.” Its influence can be discerned in a great variety of works of modernism and from many different contexts. As early as the work of Henry James one can detect elements of the “hollow man” type (James was, after all, an inspirational figure for the early work of Eliot and Pound). During the height of European modernism in the 20s, the model was being employed in America by writers (beside those already mentioned) such as Wallace Stevens (“The Snow Man,” “A High-Toned Christian Woman,” “The Emperor of Ice Cream”), whose humorous jocularity befits more playful considerations of the model, F. Scott Fitzgerald (above all in Jay Gatsby), and in dramatists like Arthur Miller (Death of a Salesman) and Eugene O’Neill (The Iceman Cometh, Hairy Ape). In the case of Miller, his depiction of the life of Willy Loman is a good example of how the model can be deployed for more sympathetic and tragic purposes. Even a novel like Ralph Ellison’s The Invisible Man could be seen as a later attempt at exploring the possibilities of the model within the context of the African-American experience in the early-twentieth century.

Anglophone Europe also engaged the “hollow man” type to a great extent during this same time period. Poets like Sigfried Sasoon, Isaac Rosenberg, and Wilfred Owen showed how the “hollow man” could be applied to the war situation (how the war itself was hollow, and especially hollow were those who would romanticize it or minimize its costs). Richard Aldington’s partly autobiographical war novel, Death of a Hero, should also be mentioned in this connection. Virginia Woolf dealt with the war and its hollowing effects in novels like Jacob’s Room and Mrs. Dalloway (the eponymous character of which is an example of woman as hollow man). In later modernism the model persists, in
some cases even intensifies (the novels of Evelyn Waugh offer the prototypical example).\textsuperscript{90}

Of course, modernism is a pan-European phenomenon and one can view the model just as well in pan-European terms, as has already been outlined above. In addition to the examples already given, one could mention two works of Austrian provenance, Hermann Broch’s \textit{The Sleepwalkers} and Robert Musil’s \textit{The Man Without Qualities}, as particularly interesting attempts at working with the model.\textsuperscript{91} Further continental authors include the signatory work of Franz Kafka, as well as that of Alfred Döblin (particularly \textit{Berlin Alexanderplatz}).

Larger congruities could likewise be brought into relation with the literature of this period. The likes of Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Marx, and Freud have already been mentioned, specifically with regard to decadence, an indispensible element of the model. One could also point to the theory and talk of the “masses” or the “crowd” that one sees in the sociology of the period, including most prominently in the work of Georges Sorel, George Simmel, Gustave Le Bon (and later in the work of Jose y Ortega).\textsuperscript{92} In this


\textsuperscript{91} Mention should be made here of Hermann Broch’s emphasis on the primacy of satire. According to Peter Nicholls, “[c]ertainly, Broch’s view that ‘Satire is ethical art par excellence’ seems out of joint with the main lines of Anglo-American modernism, as does his talk of ‘the new absolute satire that may have been predestined to become the central art of the twentieth century’,” quoted in \textit{Modernisms: A Literary Guide} (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 295. The view of the present study is that Broch, like Lewis, is much closer to the relative center of the various “modernisms” than is now commonly believed. The next chapter will concern itself specifically with the poetics of modernist literature and its relationship to the satirical.

category as well could be placed Weber’s famous formulation concerning those “specialists without spirit, hedonists without a heart” at the forefront of the modern capitalist order. 93 The lived political realities and ideals of democracy, particularly as experienced in Europe, in connection with these concepts should also been seen in terms of the (anti) model’s extensions into the political and social realms.

4. Satire and the Literature of Modernism

This general typology of modernism brings to mind just how much literature that we call “modernist” contains strong elements of satire or simply could be called satire. 94 Works as firmly established in the canon of high-modernism as Pound’s Hugh Selwyn Mauberley as well as certain of the Cantos, Eliot’s “Love Song” and The Waste Land, Joyce’s Portrait and Ulysses all have highly satirical characteristics. It would not be out of bounds, either, to say that the intentionality of such works could be called satirical. And it is not just a matter of isolated works. Satire plays a major role in the entire oeuvres of these and other authors (including, most especially, Wyndham Lewis). So strong was Eliot’s satirical faculty that in 1920 he could worry that he would be too narrowly conceived “as a Wit or satirist.” 95

93 Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the “Spirit” of Capitalism, 121.

94 It is of course true to say that, although in my view the human model of modernism is satirical in nature (making the period itself one of satire), this pervasive mythos or Lebensstimmung of satire does not require that every work of modernism be explicitly a satire or even expressive of the satirical.

One could go on indefinitely. Few books of Virginia Woolf – perhaps in some sense, *The Waves* – lack a satirical dimension. Marcel Proust’s foundational modernist achievement, the nine volumes of *La recherche*, can and has been described in the terms of satire. Hermann Broch articulated a theory of literary practice that centered on satire. Another theorist-practioner of satire was W.H. Auden. The larger point, however, is not that there were many authors in the early twentieth century, including modernists, whose work contains elements of satire. The real issue is that, to use the phrasing of Cyril Connolly (in the spirit of Frye’s *mythoi*), this period – the modernist period, encapsulated best by the high-phase of 1910-1930 – should be seen as a “satirical age.”⁹⁶

The nature of the satire changes no doubt between, say, the 20s and the 30s. But nonetheless, the animating spirit of the entire period, with its multifarious expressions, is the sense of opposition to modernity (whether the opposition is complete as is more likely the case in early and high-modernism or mitigated and partial as in late-modernism). The literature of modernism concerns itself with the world and particularly with the felt need to oppose and attack the decay and dissolution within society brought about as a result of several complex changes, be they social, cultural, political, philosophical, or economic.

Perhaps insufficient appreciation of satire itself, something that may be conditioned by what are supposed to be “modernist” values (see chapter 1, section 3), has insulated critics and scholars from the idea that the “high” phase of modernism could be described as inherently satirical. Theorists of satire, however, have increasingly grown

---

appreciative of satire’s enormous capacity for textual complexity and indeterminacy, for
the ways in which satire is able to mobilize several layers of discursiveness toward a
multiplicity of ends, with sometimes competing semantic objectives, how the ludic
elements of literariness can be optimized by the varied textual strategies of satire. These
insights into the possibilities of satire should serve to guide our considerations of the
satirical in high-modernism.

5. Modernism and the Satiric Tradition

For the unmistakable originality of modernist literature, several aspects of satire
in modernism can be seen as one part of the whole satiric tradition, as diverse as it is,
stretching across myriad cultures and times. I will confine my comments in this regard
for the sake of space to the “Men of 1914.”

One cannot help but notice the presence in their work of scatology, a favorite
subject of the satirist traditionally from Juvenal to Swift and beyond. Eliot’s early poetry,
with its seedy scenes, and Pound’s “Hell” Cantos are prominent examples. But one
could also mention with respect to Eliot, the “King Bolo” and “Columbo” poems, which are full
of scatological and bawdy imagery.⁹⁷ A strong scatological bent can also be found in the

⁹⁷ The “King Bolo” and “Columbo” poems have vexed critics for some time, with Christopher
Ricks expressing some measure of relief that they have not garnered “the wrong amount of attention,”
Christopher Ricks, ed, “Introduction,” in Inventions of the March Hare: Poems 1909-1917 (New York:
Harcourt and Brace, 1996), xvi. A sensible conclusion would be that they are mere juvenilia but for the fact
that Eliot was writing them throughout his life and concomitant with more
noteworthy output. What is
more, Eliot attempted to publish some of these scatological poems in Wyndham Lewis’ modernist journal
Blast, at one point even expressing the fear that “King Bolo and his Big Black Kween will never burst into
86. Perhaps one reason why these poems have been so unsettling to critics – apart from their rather
untoward nature – is precisely because it is so difficult to conceive of Eliot the modernist writing them. The
theory of modernism as satire, however, may go a long way toward making the poems, if not exactly
palatable, at least plausible as works of a modernist poet.
work of Wyndham Lewis, as has often been acknowledged. And of course Joyce’s novel *Ulysses* contains rather famous scenes of bowel movements and urination, among other bodily realities. These scatological elements are given differing accents by each author, often their presence approaches what might be called a quasi-Gnostic resentment of the body, but in all cases (even in Joyce’s) the effect is one of diminishment to the characters or parties involved.

And as the above observations have hopefully been able to make clear, in the work of all four authors there is continuous recourse to social types as a design of characterization, one which is familiar and essential to satire as an investigation of society. This is true not only of, say, Eliot’s or Pound’s early poetry, where one meets various types from all areas of society, but also of Joyce’s parodying of various kinds of specialized discourse and jargon in *Ulysses*, which is another avenue into the satire of social types (and a favorite technique of Swift, for example in *A Tale of a Tub*).

The movement of Imagism can only be related to the satirical indirectly, especially since at least part of the satirical impulse within modernism springs from the urge to abstraction rather than realism, but even so, one consistent plea of satirists going back to Archilochus has been toward greater realism in representation as a deflationary

---

98 Cf. Keith Fort, “Satire and Gnosticism.” *Religion & Literature* 24.1 (Summer 1988): 1-18. As Fort says, “satire reflects a soul poised between choosing to live in and through this world or fleeing from it. The satirist walks a tightrope between the outer brightness of Gnosticism, with its total renunciation of this world, and orthodoxy, which urges participation in that world with faith, reason and love,” 1-2. As I hope the previous chapter has made clear, it is my view that modernism, while it may well hesitate and equivocate in the face of these options, ultimately is a choice for the world.
tactic against epic discourse. This context can serve as at least a partial explanation for the effort to return to more authentic forms of diction (at times gritty, harsh) that is so much a part of the modernist turn from what it regarded as “Romanticism.” In this way, such strategies were very important to developing the “hollow man” model, where the lofty cannot exist (except in ironic debasement). In these inclinations the source for many traditional forms of satire such as travesty and burlesque, such as that of Joyce’s *Ulysses*, can be found.

Invective has already been mentioned here and will be dealt with further in the next chapter in connection with the origins of Greek satire and fertility rituals. Likewise, decadence has been discussed above at length. Perhaps it bears reminding how pervasive the theme of decadence has been in the satirical tradition going back to Juvenal.

And further worth recalling are the ways in which many characteristics considered typical of (and even considered by some to be originating with!) modernism have in fact been part of satirical literature in some cases from the beginning. I am thinking here of textual features like intertextuality, reflexivity, ambiguity, paradox, and others.

---

99 The other possibility, of course, is inflationary tactics and modernism is full of these as well (e.g., the grotesque, the abstract, etc). It is of some interest that Eliot in *The Waste Land* attempted to employ Pope’s favorite inflationary satirical strategy – the heroic couplet – but found it not suitable for his more Juvenalian purposes.

100 The irony is of course that Romanticism itself was (in part) a return to linguistic realism (as seen in Wordsworth’s Romantic manifesto in his preface to *Lyrical Ballads*).

101 Duval and Martinez, 23, 155.

102 Duval and Martinez, 83, 137-8.
There is one more element of satire, particularly in relation to the notion of human models, that should be considered. One way of thinking of the human model is as a kind of “implied reader” or addressee of the text. From this standpoint as well, the satirical nature of the “hollow man” model is on display. Surely, the satirical aspects of modernist literature are to be found in the social types presented and in the general cultural and social realities which the various characters and the texts themselves represent and enact. Additionally, and perhaps most profoundly, the satire can be of the common or general reader, who will not get the Greek epigraphs or the obscure references, who will not be able to cope with the elliptical organization and lack of context. Ultimately, the butt of the joke if you will, the object of the satire, is the confounded reader, who is the literature’s true subject in any event. After all, who would be more at a loss in the face of such texts but these hollow men (and women)? And who are these hollow men and women for modernism but the common man of modern life (the “illiterate and uncritical mob” as Eliot once called them)?

Part II.

Now that the “hollow man” type’s function within the general landscape of modernist literature has been sketched roughly, the second part of this chapter will consider more specifically two particular utilizations of the model from two high-

---


modernist texts, one quite well-known and one known not well at all: James Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Wyndham Lewis’ novel fragment, *Joint*. These two works evidence the flexibility and diversity of the model, and of the aesthetic expressions of high-modernism more generally, while at the same time pointing to common purposes and orientations within the modernism of the “Men of 1914.”

**1. Leopold Bloom: Hollow Man?**

Majorities of Joyceans may be taken aback by the suggestion that the human type of the “hollow man” is behind both the novel *Ulysses* and its central figure. Nonetheless, the following sections will attempt to show just that – hopefully in a manner that does justice to the insights even of those whose readings have engendered assumptions or attitudes toward Bloom which the present study would seek to supplement or, in some cases, supplant. In our investigation of the model in *Ulysses*, three issues will be continually before us. First, there is the question of the nature of Joyce’s modernism. A second interest is the issue of Bloom’s relationship to Odysseus, the protagonist of Homer’s epic poem. Finally, and connected intimately to this second matter, is the status of Leopold Bloom within the novel, particularly the question of his “heroism.” These three issues are interdependent. The first is important in establishing the relation of Joyce to modernity; the second in coming to understand better modernity’s relation to the novel and to Bloom; and the third in realizing fully the relation of Bloom to the “hollow man” model.
1.1 Joyce and Modernity

The question of Joyce’s relationship to modernity is no less important than that of the more general relation between modernism and modernity. And as in the case of that latter doublet, it is quite interesting to observe the myriad possibilities that have been exercised by critics, old and new. For Joyce has been conceived of in all terms imaginable, from pre-modern to half-modern to anti-modern to post-modern, even enthusiastically modern.

On this last point, many critics have taken to seeing Joyce as a definite contrast to the other “Men of 1914.” According to Jeffrey Perl, for example, “modernism would appear to come in two basic kinds: one that contemns bourgeois modernity and one that (by and large) affirms it.” Joyce is placed in the latter group as seeing at least a certain “modernity” as “affirmable.” The idea that Joyce is an expositor of bourgeois values is of course anathema to a great many Joyceans who see Joyce as working to undermine such values and discourses in his work. For these critics, Joyce is an essentially post-

---


modern figure, offering a radical re-conception of reality in the areas of language, aesthetics, culture, gender, politics, and the like.

A critic like Weldon Thornton would agree that Joyce militates against modernity, but not necessarily in a post-modern direction. For Thornton, Joyce critiques various modern ideas – particularly the dichotomous intellectual structures of modernity which would posit separations between values like ‘inner’ and ‘outer,’ personal and cultural, conscious and unconscious.”

In this way, as Thornton himself has said, Joyce can be classified as an “antimodernist.”

Still another orientation has been proposed to conceive of Joyce’s relation to modernity. In his essay “Joyce the modernist” Christopher Butler argues that “Joyce’s extraordinary fidelity to past time thus means that the ideas he presents in his books are not those of the modernist avant-garde. It is through his style that modernism is implied.”

In Butler’s eyes, then, Joyce is a mere half-modernist. Like Thornton’s, this position betrays an ambiguous usage (does modernist mean modern?). Because Joyce is seen by Butler as being anti-modernist (to borrow Thornton’s phrasing) in matters of philosophy, he can only claim for Joyce partial status as a modernist.

---


109 Weldon Thornton, *Antimodernism in Joyce’s A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Cf. n. 6 above.

As the case of Butler’s essay shows, all of these varieties of conceiving the Joyce/modern interface are complicated by idiosyncratic definitions of key terms like *modernity* and *modernism*. What they show nonetheless in the aggregate is the (at best) ambivalences and hesitations of Joyce’s positioning vis-à-vis modernity. In this way, they can be said to corroborate loosely the picture of Joyce presented here: that of a ludic satirist of modernity.

### 1.2 Bloom, Odysseus, and Modernity

If Joyce’s *Ulysses* is a ludic satire on modernity, what is one to make of the book’s protagonist, Leopold Bloom? Is there any way in which his character and/or the novel foreground the modernity that, I claim, Joyce satirizes? I believe there are good grounds for answering this question affirmatively and to illustrate why it will be important to consider the relationship between Bloom and the ancient hero whose name serves as the title for Joyce’s modern novel, *Ulysses*. Attitudes to Bloom have been quite varied over the years, but even so it is perhaps surprising to consider that early on in the history of criticism of the novel Bloom was compared to Odysseus and the comparison was thought to be satirical, while contemporary criticism regards Bloom as comparable to Odysseus but the comparison is viewed as favorable and even invokes a common “heroism” between them.\(^{11}\)

For those who see the novel in the terms of travesty, Bloom is a satirical figure because his comparison with Odysseus (Ulysses) is so out of measure, so laughable, as to be of a mocking sort. But for those who see a common bond of heroism in Bloom and Odysseus, the comparison underlines both men’s heroic ordinariness, as well as common qualities like “self-restraint” and “patience and perspicacity.” Between this Scylla and Charybdis of critical binarism (a satirically contrastive Bloom-Ulysses vs. a heroically comparative Bloom-Ulysses), the smoothest path (and the one that I will argue for here) may very well be the idea of a satirized Bloom based on the commonalities, rather than the divergences, among the two. But how would one arrive at such a reading?

Bloom as Christian Hero,” in *Joyce’s Modernist Allegory: Ulysses and the History of the Novel* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 165-92; Peter Francis Mackey, “Chaos Theory and the Heroism of Leopold Bloom,” in *Joyce through the Ages: A Nonlinear View* ed. Michael Patrick Gillespie (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1999), 46-68. As will be seen, Ezra Pound’s review of the book emphasized the satirical aspects of Bloom’s character (and of the novel in toto). This hermeneutic basically persisted in various early works on the novel, including Harry Levin’s *James Joyce: A Critical Introduction* (New York, NY: New Directions, 1941; 2nd ed. 1960), where Bloom is “a sorrier exile. A mute inglorious Shakespeare, a rejected Messiah, [who has] nothing to offer Stephen but a pathetic object lesson,” 131-33. See also Robert Humphrey, *Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1954), “It is obvious...that *Ulysses* is, fundamentally, a satirical comment on modern man’s life. Joyce could never have shown this convincingly with any subject other than man’s life on the level of consciousness, where the ideal can be reached for, even by the everyman Leopold Bloom, whose very next act or thought will show how far he actually is from it,” 16-7. And also Richard M. Kain, *Fabulous Voyager: A Study of James Joyce’s “Ulysses”* (New York, NY: Viking Press, 1947), which tends to emphasize the satirical nature of the novel (though admittedly in Kain’s case perhaps not as much of Bloom). In considering early criticism of the novel, particularly with respect to the question of the relation between Bloom and Odysseus, one cannot exclude T.S. Eliot’s early review essay, “*Ulysses, Order, and Myth,*” which argued that Joyce was employing what Eliot termed the “mythical method” in bringing the two worlds – ancient and modern – into relation (though of course Eliot does not say whether the mythical method brings the two figures together in heroic or satiric (or other) terms. See T.S. Eliot, “*Ulysses, Order, and Myth,*” *Critiques and Essays on Modern Fiction 1920-1951* Selected by John W. Aldridge (New York: The Ronald Press Company), 424-6.


The beginnings of an answer can be found in the idea that the figure of Odysseus, when viewed in light of modernity as a paradigmatic concept, can be seen as a figure eminently disposed to be the object of modernist satire (and therefore a natural choice for Joyce’s ludic satire on modernity). The suggestion may sound improbable, but in fact we already have just such a sharply drawn (if not strictly satirical) portrait of Odysseus given toward the close of the modernist era in the work of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, one which centers (and critically so) on Odysseus’ status as the Ur-modern.114

_Dialectic of Enlightenment_ presents the character of Odysseus as the “prototype of the bourgeois individual,” marked by the rationalistic, pragmatic spirit.115 The qualities and characteristics evidenced by the Greek hero include “unwavering self-assertion,”116 “deception, cunning, and rationality,”117 “self-consciousness,”118 “sobriety,”119

---

114 The very incisive work of Franco Moretti on the novel has come to my attention only at the final stages of drafting and formulating my analysis for this chapter. Moretti also connects Bloom with Horkheimer and Adorno’s Odysseus in ways that are illuminating for the novel and that converge at least to some extent with my argument. With Moretti’s assertions that Bloom is a bourgeois figure satirized by Joyce, I wholeheartedly agree. We differ primarily in that Moretti, with his Marxist orientation, is focused primarily on economic and material relations, specifically Bloom and Odysseus’ common identity as “tradesmen.” Nonetheless, Moretti sees the relationship between the two tradesmen in an ultimately contrastive light (Odysseus initiates what Bloom brings to a close, the liberal capitalist order). My reading is concerned with modernity more broadly understood as an axial system of relations that includes but is not limited to the economic-materialist order, and my focus is more directly on qualities of the model like inaction or mediated action, rationality, hesitations, stasis, hyper-moderation. Cf. Franco Moretti, “The Long Goodbye: Ulysses and the End of Liberal Capitalism,” in _Signs Taken for Wonders: On the Sociology of Literary Forms_ (New York: Verso, 2005, first ed., 1983), 182-208.


116 Horkheimer and Adorno, 35.

117 Horkheimer and Adorno, 40.

118 Horkheimer and Adorno, 40.
“calculation,” — self-preserving guile — all of which are proposed as emblematic of a nascent “bourgeois enlightenment.” As Nigel Gibson and Andrew Rubin have observed, “[t]racing the Enlightenment concept of reason to Homer’s Odysseus, Horkheimer and Adorno saw Odysseus’ cunning as the emergence of an instrumental, administrative, and dominating form of reason that was expressed in the ideology of the cultural industry.”

119 Horkheimer and Adorno, 44.

120 Horkheimer and Adorno, 45.

121 Horkheimer and Adorno, 46.

122 Horkheimer and Adorno, 44. Also of great interest is Horkheimer’s and Adorno’s contention that nominalism is “the prototype of bourgeois thinking,” 47. Many other critics and scholars in modernity studies have considered nominalism to be central in modernity’s growth and development, even foundational of modernity. Cf. Richard M. Weaver, Ideas Have Consequences (Chicago, Ill: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), 1-17; Louis Dupré, The Enlightenment and the Intellectual Foundations of Modern Culture (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2004), 3-4. M.A. Gillespie, The Theological Origins of Modernity (University of Chicago Press, 2008); Egon Friedell, A Cultural History of the Modern Age Trans. C.F. Atkinson (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1930-2), see Vol. III: Epilogue: The Collapse of Reality. See also, Wyndham Lewis’ unpublished manuscript, “The Infernal Fair,” where Occam is referred to as the “first man ever called MODERN.” The Wyndham Lewis Collection, Cornell University, Boxes 16-17. The question of modernism’s relationship to nominalism is an interesting one indeed (but one which is of course much too weighty to undertake a thorough consideration of here). Some, like religious scholar Catherine Pickstock, have claimed that modernism — above all in movements like Imagism — betrays the nominalizing tendencies of modernity, but her presupposition appears to be that the doctrines of Imagism are predicated upon a preoccupation with the “real.” Catherine Pickstock, After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998), 88-100. The next chapter will take up the issue of the poetics of modernism, particularly the extent to which the “Men of 1914” could be said to hold such doctrines as fidelity to the “real,” but it is perhaps enough on the question of nominalism to cite the circumstantial evidence that is often overlooked with regard to my four authors. Father Martin D’Arcy referred to Lewis’ Time and Western Man in anti-nominalist terms in The Nature of Belief (New York: Longmans, Green, 1931), 20-6. (One might also mention Lewis’ regard, evident in that book, for Fulton Sheen’s realist Thomism). James Joyce’s intellectual heritage of Aristotle, Thomas, and Vico has already been noted. We might mention as well Eliot’s philosophical formation in the school of Bradley. And as for the perhaps more ambiguous case of Ezra Pound, it must be remembered that Imagism, to the extent to which it can even be grouped with other nominalizing linguistic movements like Futurism, remains only a brief moment in Pound’s long and various career.

What is true of Odysseus, according to the Horkeheimer-Adorno hermeneutic, is true all that much more of Bloom. What is implicit or incipient in Homer’s protagonist is explicit in Joyce’s, who is, after all, very much “the prototype of bourgeois individualism.” Bloom is rationalistic, pragmatic, sober, cunning, calculating, self-preserving, but is so in a more definitive way than is the original Ulysses, who is still after all a warrior, a legend, a truly epic figure in every sense. Thus, the seeds sown in Odysseus come to full flower in Bloom.

If Ulysses is the first modern, Bloom is in some ways among the last. But in the being among the last he is a more complete modern, the total modern, the typological modern. His modernity includes elements that necessarily escape his Greek predecessor. Bloom has dreams and ideals, great emotions (though often misplaced and naïve). Here, I believe, one finds the modernist critique not only of Enlightenment rationality, but also of the Romantic revolt against rationality. Bloom is a modern both as rationalist and romantic.

Reading Joyce’s Ulysses (Leopold Bloom) through Horkheimer and Adorno’s Ulysses (Odysseus) reveals the manner in which Odysseus’ function as a scaffold for Bloom can be seen as a recapitulation of the cultural narrative of modernity, thereby enacting within the text an imaginative reflection on the crisis of modernity (or of modernity as crisis) as profound and multidimensional as that which can be found in other great modernist works of the Anglophone tradition. It can also help to point us to

---

the related context of modernist literature and specifically to the “hollow man” model, which seems present both in Horkheimer-Adorno’s Odysseus and in Joyce’s Bloom. In *Ulysses*, Joyce employs and makes use of the “hollow man” model, the human type of modernism, so that even where so many critics have found a “hero” – and not unjustly – even here, the “buried macroimage”\(^{125}\) of the hollow man model can be found in the text.

### 1.3 Leopold Bloom, Heroic or Hollow?

Few would quarrel with the idea that the Dublin of *Ulysses* is at least in some sense a kind of waste land not unlike Eliot’s “Unreal City” or Pound’s London, that decadence is the backdrop.\(^{126}\) Even the handful of sympathetic characters in the book are depicted as afflicted and suffering (largely because of their surroundings, in fact). Without question, Dublin is populated by hollow men and women, whether it be the Citizen or Gerty MacDowell or Buck Mulligan or Deasy. Each is certainly hollow in his or her own way, but hollow just the same. And this is no less true of Stephen, who is treated even more sharply in this sequel as the ersatz artist, the poseur. But the satirical strategy is not always aimed at the characters themselves. It is for this reason that the notion of the satire of modernity can serve a useful function beyond its benefits with regard to broader contextualizations. If it is not Gerty MacDowell herself who is attacked, it is the cultural and social reality – in her case the reality of mass consumer

---


\(^{126}\) For a good discussion of the wasteland myth and the novel, see Michael Beausang, “Seeds for the Planting of Bloom.” *Mosaic* 6, no. 1 (Fall 1971): 11-22.
print culture, hack writing, the shallowness and stereotypical machinations of kitsch – which have helped to forge the character and person of Gerty.¹²⁷

But while many might agree to the (partial or total) hollowness of *Ulysses*’ Dublin, Leopold Bloom’s relation to Dublin and his function in the text is another matter altogether. Is Bloom a part of or a part from his environment? The question brings us back to the set of concerns considered in the previous section: Bloom, Odysseus, and modernity. Of chief interest is the fact that the Horkheimer-Adorno critical reading of Odysseus and the contemporary “heroic” reading of Bloom base themselves largely on the same set of characteristics. The point of debate turns out to be not whether rationality or restraint or ordinariness are qualities attributable to Bloom and Odysseus, but whether they are qualities belonging to the category “heroic.” What is striking therefore is the fact that what Adorno and Horkheimer find problematic (or, one could say, “hollow”), many others find heroic. What of this impasse?

The hermeneutic key so to speak that can account for these incongruities is, I believe, to be found in the human model of the “hollow man.” Joyce made use of this model, which was a human type beyond and prior to his own work, a model which is essentially satiric in nature – but he employed and developed the model in ways that emphasized his perhaps more ambivalent outlooks and dispositions. What one finds in *Ulysses* is constant experimentation with the human type of the hollow man, much of it fairly conventional in fact. In the case of Leopold Bloom, however, Joyce recombines central features of the model in unusual and innovative ways, so that Bloom is not simply a reflection of the hollow men in his midst but is able to contrast certain components of

¹²⁷ See the “Nausicaa” episode, chapter 13.
the type with others, in the service of wider exploration of the possibilities of the model provided by its multitudinous networks.

One way of explaining the results would be to adapt and give wider application to Stanley Sultan’s formulation (referring more strictly to Bloom and Jewishness in the Cyclops episode) that Joyce’s treatment generally tends to be satirical: Juvenalian towards the general scene and the types inhabiting it, and Horatian towards Bloom.128

Another way might be to adapt the phrasings and style of Eliot’s reflections on Ulysses and say that, in the novel, Joyce makes the hollow man “possible” for responses and reactions beyond the merely pitiful or derisive.129

But in this making possible, one inevitable result – one which is not a problem for Joyce, but is perhaps one for those who wish to study his work at this later date – is that the human type at work within the novel, the mediating model at the center of the work, more deeply embeds in the aesthetic structures of the text and is therefore more difficult to discern. When we are able to so discern, however, a much clearer picture of Bloom and of the nature of the ambiguities surrounding his character becomes evident.


129 Eliot has famously spoke of the use of myth in Ulysses as a method “of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history,” a way of “making the modern world possible for art,” “Ulysses, Order and Myth,” 426.
1.4 Bloom and the Modernist Type

Ezra Pound’s 1922 review of *Ulysses* has often been dismissed for being shortsighted. It is often depicted as an attempt at appropriating the novel for Pound’s own ends or, perhaps more generously, as a misreading based on a genuine (though imperfect) notion of the book’s author and its contexts.\(^{130}\) Without endeavoring to refute such accusations, all of which may be in some way true, I would say that it may well be that Pound, with the same keen eye with which he criticized *The Waste Land* and with his unique position within high-modernism, was able to apply perspectives and understandings to the novel that have long since evaporated or become unintelligible.

He places the novel – an “epoch-making report on the state of the human mind in the twentieth century” – in the tradition of Flaubert, Rabelais, and Swift, as a comprehensive satire on the society of the time.\(^{131}\) What is achieved comprehensively is likewise achieved particularly in the character of Bloom, whom Pound describes thus,

> Messers Bouvard and Pécuchet are the basis of democracy; Bloom also is the basis of democracy; he is the man in the street, the next man, the public, not our public, but Mr. Wells’ public;... he is l’homme moyen sensuel; he is also Shakespeare, Ulysses, The Wandering Jew, the Daily Mail reader, the man who believes what he sees in the papers, Everyman, and ‘the goat’.\(^{132}\)

\(^{130}\) Particularly with respect to the former, see Joseph Brooker, *Joyce’s Critics: Transitions in Reading and Culture* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 39.


\(^{132}\) Pound, 403.
The accuracy of this description may be disputed. No doubt, many contemporary critics of *Ulysses* would dismiss it as hopelessly narrow. Nonetheless, I would venture to argue that Pound’s insight into the novel’s characterization of Bloom is profound, and needs to be rediscovered again for today. This can be said without any contention that Pound’s description is necessarily complete or entirely just. What Pound has unearthed is not “Bloom” himself but the model which lies in the deep structure of the text: the human model of the “hollow man.”

A close look reveals that all of the basic elements of the model are at work in Bloom. Most prominently, he exhibits in diverse ways a variety of traits that could be grouped under the category of “sterility,” a central component of the hollow man type. Since the tragic death of his young son Rudy ten years or so before the day of the novel’s action, Bloom has lived a sterile conjugal life with his wife, Molly. Sexual sterility also extends to his behavior with other women. With Martha, he is intent on keeping activities strictly epistolary in nature. In response to Martha’s proposal to meet for the first time, Bloom thinks to himself, “Thank you: not having any.” Resolved never to have a meeting, he still wishes to advance things in a more provocative direction, but in typically Bloomian fashion, “A bit at a time.” And to mention Gerty MacDowell once more, she is for Bloom a mere erotic device. Beyond these unfruitful encounters with women,

---

133 James Joyce, *Ulysses*, 5. 270-1.

134 Joyce, *Ulysses*, 5. 274.

135 Joyce, *Ulysses*, 13. 616-13, 820. Bloom himself acknowledges momentarily the nature of his behavior, thinking (through Joyce’s free indirect narration) “What a brute he had been!” and again, “An utter cad he had been!” 13. 745-6, 747.
notions of sterility can even be given a genealogical dimension, Bloom being the last of his male bloodline and therefore also of his namesake.\textsuperscript{136}

Bloom is a man of great inaction (and here again one could point to his general disposition toward voyeurism and fantasy in sexual life).\textsuperscript{137} His role as cuckold defines his position rather well. Throughout the novel, Bloom is done to. This – that is, Bloom’s inaction – defines the structural principle of the novel’s enplotment.\textsuperscript{138} He does nothing to stop Boylan’s rendez-vous (at his house, no less; in his bed). When confronted with Boylan’s presence on Kildare Street (fittingly named), Bloom takes great pains to flee rather than be spotted.\textsuperscript{139} He passively follows the commands of his wife in domestic life (“the missus is master” in Bloom’s household).\textsuperscript{140} And as in the private sphere, survival seems the order of much of his public life (one thinks here of the “Hades” episode and of the conversation and scene in the cab on the way to Paddy Dignam’s funeral with Bloom and Mr. Power, Martin Cunningham, and Simon Dedalus).\textsuperscript{141} Even in his most assertive moment, in the pub facing the Citizen, he seems ever much more the victim.\textsuperscript{142} There is

\textsuperscript{136} Joyce, \textit{Ulysses}, 11. 1063-6.

\textsuperscript{137} Bloom also exhibits certain pathologies, including a (sexual) preoccupation with human waste (U 15. 1070-73; 15. 2842; 15. 3032-4), which gesture at the larger state of the world of the novel as a whole.

\textsuperscript{138} Matters of form and macro-textual organization in the novel will be taken up in their turn in Chapter Four.

\textsuperscript{139} Joyce, \textit{Ulysses}, 8. 1167-1193.

\textsuperscript{140} Joyce, \textit{Ulysses}, 15. 2759. See also the Blooms’ opening scene in “Calypso.”

\textsuperscript{141} Joyce, \textit{Ulysses}, 6. 1-497.

as well a softness, an effeminacy, to Bloom (one recalls Dr. Dixon’s reference to Bloom in the “Circe” chapter as an “example of the new womanly man” and the whole complex of characteristics that this reference evokes). And more generally, critics have observed notes of “pacifism” in his views and proclivities.

Like his culture and milieu, and as the model presupposes, Bloom can be seen as a man in decline, for whom the vitality of youth has given way to the various muddles mentioned above. His once happy marriage has entered a dry season (he refers to his marriage at one point as “black slave labour” and at another says to himself “I was happier then,” referring to the earlier days of his life with Molly, before the tragic death of Rudy). Since then, he has retreated toward various kinds of insulating behaviors. His communicative capacities have degraded, as has his social life. He is an isolated individual, in an isolating world.

---

143 Joyce, *Ulysses*, 15. 1798-9. See also, the larger event, connected with Dr. Dixon’s statement, of Bloom’s surrealistically giving birth to eight male children, Joyce, *Ulysses*, 15. 1798-1834.


146 “I was happier then. Or was that I? Or am I now I? Twentyeight I was. She twentythree when we left Lombard street west something changed. Could never like it again after Rudy,” Joyce, *Ulysses*, 8. 608-10.

147 There is some evidence that some of Bloom’s oddities (such as voyeurism) might have their provenance in Bloom’s youth (see, for example, U 15. 3353-9). Nonetheless, the early years of his marriage, prior to Rudy’s death, seem to be free of the various clandestine activities of later times. See John Henry Raleigh on “The Secret Life of Leopold Bloom 1893-1894 to 1904,” in *The Chronicle of Leopold and Molly Bloom: Ulysses as Narrative* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977), 154-61.

148 Though Bloom once had a group of (Jewish) friends – the Citrons, Mastiansky, and Moisel (U 4. 201-10) – in “Penelope” Molly complains, “they have friends they can talk to [Bloom and I] weve none,” (U 18. 1457-8).
On the socio-cultural level, Bloom also exhibits certain defining characteristics of the “hollow man” type. He is, as has been said, bourgeois in a great many ways, a thoroughly domestic figure, anxious to be thought “respectable.” As a cultural bourgeois, Bloom is something of a dilettante, middle-brow in his (somewhat defective) tastes, against snobbery but yet eager to be up-to-date and relevant, not of unsound mind but only partially informed on matters upon which he is quick to expound. Whether it is the matter of Röntgen’s invention of the x-ray or the question of the origins of Shakespeare’s plays, Bloom has an ostentatious desire to share his inexpert opinions. At the same time, he is rather ungenerous toward the pretensions of “literary etherial people” like A.E. and his female companion, whom he catches sight of in “Lestrygonians,” (even as he is eager to claim for himself a “literary occupation.”) The musical tastes of Bloom provide a window into his character as well. He regards Wagner, in the popular vein of the time, as “a bit too heavy” and does not like that his music is “hard to follow at the first go-off” (one wonders what he would think of Joyce’s work!). Though he appears to enjoy having somewhat refined tastes, Bloom’s knowledge of high-cultural music seems to be deficient. He incorrectly attributes Mercadante’s

149 With regard to Martha, Bloom thinks, “a girl of good family like me, respectable character,” Joyce, Ulysses, 5. 269-70. It should be said that Bloom’s bourgeois respectability accounts for much of his cautious behavior. He opens Martha’s letter “within the newspaper” so that no one could see, for example, Joyce, Ulysses, 5. 237-8.

150 Joyce, Ulysses, 16. 768-9; 16. 783-4. See also, Joyce, Ulysses, 8. 1029-30, where Bloom ponders whether X-rays might be used to track the journey of “[s]omething green” perhaps “spinach” through the human body, a use that Gifford sees as having its provenance in “popular journalistic accounts” that were not grounded in scientific realities. See Gifford’s annotation for these lines, Don Gifford (with Robert J. Seidman), Ulysses Annotated: Notes for James Joyce’s Ulysses (Revised and Expanded 2nd Edition; Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989), 185.

151 Joyce, Ulysses, 8. 527-48. The reference to “literary occupation” occurs in “Circe”: 15. 802.
Seven Last Words on the Cross to Meyerbeer and Meyerbeer’s Hugenots to Mercadante. His classification of Don Giovanni as “light opera” represents a popular, though dubious, reading of the work, while the notion that the soft romanticism of Felix Mendelssohn could be called “severe classical” seems a dubious claim at least.152

One must think again of Horkheimer and Adorno’s bourgeois individual, that technocratic rationalist, Odysseus. Bloom’s inactions are, after all, intertwined with his reflective sensibility, one given to Odyssean calculations and rationality. Bloom is forever calculating costs and finances, business matters, opportunities for greater efficiencies, for reductions of costs or output (or, in the case of the Mrs. Purefoy’s of the world, pain and suffering).153 Modernization is a Bloomian endeavor. And yet, for all his intellectual machinations, Bloom is unable to bear fruit, unable to mobilize any action.

Two somewhat extended examples can be illuminating. The first has to do with Bloom’s response to death and human mythologizing or ritualizing of death; the second with his risk-management oriented response to prostitution. In the “Hades” episode, as the coffin of Paddy Dignam is lowered into the ground, Bloom thinks,

Poor Dignam! His last lie on the earth in his box. When you think of them all it does seem a waste of wood. All gnawed through. They could invent a handsome bier with a kind of panel sliding let it down that way. Ay but they might object to be buried out of another fellow’s. They’re so particular. Lay me in my native earth. Bit of clay from the holy land….The Irishman’s house is his coffin. Enbalming in catacombs, mummies, the same idea.154

---

152 Joyce, Ulysses, 16. 539-40, 1733-69. See also the notes for these pages in Gifford.

153 On Mrs. Purefoy, see Joyce, Ulysses, 8. 373-90.

154 Joyce, Ulysses, 6. 815-23.
It would not be too out of bounds to invoke in relation to this passage Weber’s notion of “disenchantment” in the face of the onset of rationalization.\textsuperscript{155} For here the mythological is deconstructed and replaced by the logical. The technocrat’s concern for the quantitative is in full force, ever concerned with “waste” (especially when it occurs in conjunction with the mysterious), superseded not a moment later by rationalizing “solutions.” The moment repeats itself when Bloom is among the gravestones, where he wonders if it wouldn’t be “[m]ore sensible to spend the money on some charity for the living” and where he reflects on the inefficiency of burials: “Plant him and have done with him. Like down a coalshoot. Then lump them together to save time.”\textsuperscript{156} Perhaps most telling, Bloom opines to himself that it would be “more interesting if,” rather than the usual texts of tombstones, “they told you what they were. So and so, wheelwright. I travelled for cork lino. I paid five shillings in the pound. Or a woman with a saucepan. I cooked Irish stew.”\textsuperscript{157} Here the modern valuation of functionality and identity formation in work come to a head.\textsuperscript{158}

The second case concerns Bloom’s remarks to Stephen in “Eumaeus” as Bloom catches sight of a certain prostitute:

\begin{flushright}

\textsuperscript{156} Joyce, \textit{Ulysses}, 6, 932-3.

\textsuperscript{157} Joyce, \textit{Ulysses}, 6, 937-40.

\textsuperscript{158} Cf. Weber, \textit{The Protestant Ethic and the “Spirit” of Capitalism and Other Writings}, 105-22.
\end{flushright}
It beats me, Mr. Bloom confided to Stephen, medically I am speaking, how a wretched creature like that from the Lock Hospital, reeking with disease, can be barefaced enough to solicit or how any man in his sober sense, if he values his health in the least. Unfortunate creature! Of course, I suppose some man is ultimately responsible for her condition. Still no matter what the cause is from….

The passive, rationalizing aspects of Bloom’s character are on full display here. Action and irrationality are censured. A full appraisal of the situation is attempted, including an investigation of causality, and proper sympathies are awarded accordingly and in their due proportion.

Another important element of the model that can be found in the character of Leopold Bloom concerns his professional life as an advertising canvasser. The job connects so many aspects of the “hollow man” type. It contains bureaucratic aspects, as well as those of market economies and “salesmanship.” It is an organ of the mass print culture so often castigated by modernists (including Joyce in Ulysses); it is an agent of the sloganeering and debasement and manipulation of language and culture at the heart of consumerist society (also despised by the modernists and derided in the novel). On several occasions in the course of the day, the reader finds Bloom, connoisseur of the “gentle art of advertising,” studying carefully various advertisements. He has a great interest in the rhetoric of the medium, and he even could be called a theorist of sorts. In

159 Joyce, Ulysses, 16. 728-33.

160 Bloom has held various jobs in the past, most immediately (perhaps even only a few years before Bloomsday) an insurance salesman. Bloom’s disposition is one of a salesman, savvy to marketing strategies and rhetorical tactics. See Raleigh, Appendix B, 274-5.

161 See in particular, the “Lotus-Eaters,” “Aeolus,” and the end of “Oxen of the Sun” for critical views of mass market rhetorics.

162 Joyce, Ulysses, 7. 608. These words of Professor MacHugh are offered in jest.
“Ithaca,” with reference to Bloom’s “cogitations,” the narrator speaks of “the infinite possibilities hitherto unexploited of the modern art of advertisement.”¹⁶³ This untapped potential can be utilized if certain Trinitarian conditions are adhered to:

if condensed in trilateral monoideal symbols, vertically of maximum visibility (divined), horizontally of maximum legibility (deciphered) and of magnetising efficacy to arrest involuntary attention, to interest, to convince, to decide.¹⁶⁴

Examples of two exemplary ads are given, the Kino’s Trousers ad and the Keyes ad, both encountered earlier in the narrative. The strategy of the Keyes ad is explained by Bloom and includes attention-grabbing icons and (totally unrelated) evocations of “home rule,” presumably to associate the product with positive sentiments or feelings in the viewer (even if irrelevant to the product itself).¹⁶⁵ The same could be said of the “transparent showcart with two smart girls sitting inside writing letters…” that Bloom wanted to use as a promotion for Wisdom Hely’s stationer business, which also rested upon similar interest-grabbing and sensationalist tactics, irrelevant to the marketed product (including, in this case, sex appeal).¹⁶⁶ Such is the stuff of modern advertising (of Bloom’s day as of our own) so frequently the object of modernism’s satirical attacks.

One might also mention certain ersatz qualities of Bloom. He could be called a Jew, or not. A Catholic, or not. An Irishman, or not.¹⁶⁷ Authenticity is an open question


¹⁶⁵ Joyce, *Ulysses*, 7. 149-51.


¹⁶⁷ The subject of Bloom and Jewishness has garnered a great deal of attention, especially recently. See, for example, Ira Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews: Culture and Texts* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press,
with Bloom.\textsuperscript{168} To the extent that he is Jewish, this aspect of his figure is also a frequent component of the “hollow man” model (most prominently in Eliot, Pound, and Lewis, but also in others, like the American Fitzgerald) and this fact should not be dismissed too hastily. To make just one – perhaps unnerving – connection, one can see certain shared characteristics between the admittedly very different characters, Bloom and Bleistein (not the least of which being the phonetic parallels of the beginnings of their names). Both are essentially passive figures, who observe statically rather than being men of action (Bleistein of course with his “lusterless protrusive eye” looking on in the fixed posture of the squat; Bloom, in ways explored in detail here but with definite perceptive capacities drawn out in the point of view techniques utilized in the novel).\textsuperscript{169}

\textsuperscript{168} As it is a major question within the scope of modernity, see T.J. Jackson Lears, \textit{No Place of Grace}, and Charles Taylor, \textit{The Ethics of Authenticity} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1991).

1.5 Leopold Bloom: Hollow Man as Great Man

If the preceding observations can give us a more intelligible portrait of the macro-image behind the figure of Leopold Bloom and of that image’s essentially satirical character, it would not at all be fair to end our considerations of Bloom without also taking some account of how the model is employed with the particular innovations and developments that Joyce is able to effect. The evidence that this is the case – that Bloom is not a “mere” hollow man – can be clearly felt in current scholarship on the topic, which is almost universally positive toward Joyce’s protagonist. A perhaps more unlikely source for beginning a reflection on this subject is the very critic who served to open and found our considerations of Bloom as an archetype of hollowness: that man of 1914, Ezra Pound.

It was Pound, after all, who, in addition to sketching the points of the model laid out above in relation to Bloom, also referred to him at another time as a “great man.”\(^{170}\) As I say, this particular comment of Pound would surely fit more comfortably in contemporary critical discourse, a good example of which is Morton P. Levitt, who refers to Bloom as having “without question been the most powerful and influential character in twentieth century fiction.”\(^{171}\) That one can group Levitt and Pound together in this way is all the more ironic, given that for Levitt it is precisely Bloom’s Jewish identity that makes


\(^{171}\) Levitt, 152.
him so appealing as a modernist hero, while Pound’s anti-Semitism is of course notorious.\textsuperscript{172} What is one to make of this congruity? And of Pound’s seeming duplicity about Bloom? It is my contention that what Pound, a most perceptive critic, saw in Bloom was exactly what was there: namely, the basic features and elements that are to be found in many of Pound’s (and Eliot’s and Lewis’) own satirical portraits, but also something more, something which was not merely a satirical swipe, something more tentative and yet more convincing. For in Leopold Bloom we do in fact find that most stunning modernist paradox, the hollow man as great man.

Many of the values that Bloom embodies, values which are directly related to the human type of the hollow man, are offered in the spirit of what I have called “ludic satire,”\textsuperscript{173} a phrase which under the rubric of modernism can mean a variety of things but which here points to the way in which the values of Bloom’s character are presented simultaneously as positive and negative values. For example, the softness of Bloom, so typical of the model, is brought under some scrutiny for its censurable lack of virility and dynamism (in so many ways, Bloom seems “not man enough for damnation” to return to Eliot’s formulation).\textsuperscript{174} And yet, it is that same softness which opens up the possibility for plurality and elasticity within society, including such marginalized values as love, peace, and fraternal concern. Even the very cornerstones of modernity that the novel calls into

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{172} As Levitt says, “For Joyce [and embodied in Bloom]…the Jews, who had for so long been reviled outsiders but who had managed somehow to retain their traditions and beliefs, served as the perfect, positive metaphor for the modern condition, offering an ongoing promise that humanity might not just endure but could even prevail in a time when everyone might seem an outsider,” 151.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{173} The notion of “ludic satire” will be considered at length in Chapter Four.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{174} T.S. Eliot, “Baudelaire,” 344.
\end{flushright}
question, such as the opposing extremes of rationality and sentimentalism, are nonetheless presented with regard to Bloom in the terms of genuine (or at least well-intentioned) human concern and interest for others. And one might say as well that the isolationist aspects of modernity that are criticized, such as the epistemological, are also the basis for psychological complexity and diversified experience. Bloom is therefore the object of satire, even as the suppler and more forgiving satire directed towards him is itself evidence of his enduring virtues.

In *Ulysses*, therefore, Joyce takes up the general condition of the modern world as found in much of the literature of modernism (*sparagmos*), but he does so partly in order to ask whether, even within the confines of a situation so dire and apparently hopeless, there might also be the possibility for “heroism” there as well, for a positive view of life. It is to this extent that Joyce may be said to posses, according to Jeffrey Perl’s formulation referred to earlier, some “affirmable” posture towards modernity.\(^{175}\)

Nonetheless, neither the characterization of Bloom nor the world of the novel as a whole could said to be unambiguously enthusiastic about the state of the Western world and, in fact, as the above has hopefully shown, the novel, including in the treatment of its protagonist, must be regarded as satirical in orientation and outlook (however mitigating, playful, and self-reflexive that satire turns out to be).

\(^{175}\) Perl, 142.
Joyce’s rendering of the heroic is therefore, as some have pointed out, a reconception of heroism, but only insofar as his answer to the question of the possibility of modern heroism is both a definitive “no” and “yes” at the same time. It is a heroism ambivalent with respect to the “heroic” and one that takes part in the modernist project of satirizing the human type of its time, and is in this way a “hollowing” out of the very idea of heroism itself.

2. Wyndham Lewis’ *Joint* and the Modernist Type

The second text to be considered, largely forgotten for both justified and unjustified reasons, is Wyndham Lewis’ novel fragment, *Joint*. To be sure, the work deserves to be better known, because it helps us to understand better both Lewis and modernism: Lewis, because it alters our sense of his career and fills out the creative backgrounds of his late-20s’ work; modernism, because it represents Lewis’ contribution in large measure to early 20s modernism comparable (in intent if not in result) with other major works of that very modernist moment, and of that very modernist quartet, the “Men of 1914.” It does so mainly in the ways in which it takes up and attempts to employ the human type of the modernist period.

To begin, it will be necessary to consider Lewis’ relation to two of the three key concepts of this study (modernism and the “Men of 1914”), relations the nature of which has been contested by critics. And because of *Joint’s* relative obscurity, even largely

among Lewis scholars, it will be helpful and necessary to provide ample context as to the circumstances and provenance of the work as prologue to textual analysis.

2.1 Wyndham Lewis, Modernism, and the “Men of 1914”

Like Joyce, though for very different reasons, Wyndham Lewis has been thought by some to be an outlier in the “Men of 1914” (this despite the fact that he coined the term) and, beyond that, even in modernism as a whole. The reasons for rejecting Lewis as a modernist, or for arguing that he represents an “alternative” brand of modernism, are largely three-fold. First, the arc of Lewis’ career is thought to fit uncomfortably into the usual periodization of modernism. Second, the nature of his work and aesthetic seems oppositional to certain aspects of modernism. And third, Lewis directly criticized several standard-bearers of modernism (among them, the other three of the “Men of 1914”) allegedly on the grounds of their modernism. Let us investigate each of these charges more closely.

A significant aspect of the argument from chronology concerns the fact that Lewis’ work seems to contain no “high” modernist climax in the 1920s but instead a gap of relative silence resumed only in the last few years of the 20s with work that seems to belong more to the “late” modernism of the 1930s. Lewis himself has written that he

---


178 Beasley, 126-8.
spent the early 20s “underground.” Partly due to his participation (unlike other high-modernists) in the War, Lewis was not able to follow his well-received 1918 novel, *Tarr*, with works of equal or greater power in the way that Joyce (from *Portrait* to *Ulysses*), Eliot (from “Prufrock” to *The Waste Land*), and Pound (from *Hugh Selwyn Maubereley* to the *Cantos*) were able to do and instead he released only a few numbers of his journal *The Tyro* in 1921-2 along with a story or essay published sporadically until the latter half of the decade when the floodgates opened.

But even when they did, and this brings us to the second thesis presented above, the creative work that Lewis was producing seems to many not in the same tradition as that which was coming from the pens of other modernists. While the novels of Joyce and Woolf were configured by what Jameson has called “strategies of inwardness,” by an interest in consciousness as a method of organization and a principle of inquiry in poetics, Lewis was advocating (and supposedly practicing) an “externalist” poetics, one

---


which was devoted to “surfaces” rather than to interiority. So striking are the differences that Lewis scholar Mark Perrino can say that Lewis’ 1930 *The Apes of God* should be grouped together with “Huxley’s and Waugh’s social satires *of the same period* [my emphasis],” thereby placing it in a category generally thought to be diametrically opposed to what is often thought of as “high-modernism.” And for Tyrus Miller, Lewis’ work more broadly should be seen in the terms of “late” modernism as a more socially and culturally engaged aesthetic, fundamentally different from the more isolating aesthetics of 20s.

One cannot fault scholars for coming to such conclusions. For even if the implicit evidence of the creative texts is not glaring, the differences between Lewis and his modernist contemporaries extend in the most overt ways to the area of literary criticism, where Wyndham Lewis exercised a consistent campaign against modernists like Gertrude Stein and James Joyce and sometime friends Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot. In *Time and Western Man* particularly, Lewis argued that contemporary authors were beholden to a “Time Cult” which ravaged all of society with few exceptions. Pound, Joyce, and Stein he singled out and grouped together with philosophers like Whitehead, Bergson, and

---


183 Mark Perrino, *The Poetics of Mockery: Wyndham Lewis’ ‘The Apes of God and the Popularization of Modernism* (London, UK: W.S. Maney and Son Ltd., 1995), 11. Perrino also includes among the novel’s “influences” the work of Joyce and Proust: “Like Proust’s *La recherche*, Lewis’s novel exposes the treachery and machinations underlying high culture, and like *Ulysses*, it depicts a city in cross-section with a strong element of naturalism and experiments in verbal parody.” However, he goes on to say that “Lewis’s response to these writers was largely oppositional,” 12.

Alexander as those personages overtaken by “time fanaticism,” “revolutionary simpleton[s],” groveling in their adoration of the flux, at once ambling after sheer novelty for its own sake and yet romantically obsessed with the past.”

The case against Lewis as (high) modernist, then, would seem to be compelling. And yet, it would not be accurate to suggest that there have not been substantive critical challenges to these arguments. As early as 1957, Geoffrey Wagner was making the case—which incidentally was made often contemporaneously with the production of Lewis’ oeuvre—that Wyndham Lewis belonged to a school of “neoclassicism” largely French in inspiration but certainly including modernists like T.S. Eliot and T.E. Hulme within its scope. More recently, several critics have argued for Lewis’ inclusion in the modernist canon, whether as a “central figure of the movement” or as someone who “reveals a different configuration of Modernism and deepens our sense of it.” And any discussion of Lewis and modernism should make itself continually aware of the fact that even those for whom Lewis’ status as modernist is problematic usually end up referring to him as


186 Geoffrey Wagner, *Wyndham Lewis: A Portrait of the Artist as Enemy* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale UP, 1957). Wagner’s neoclassic canon includes the likes of Benda, Lasserre, and Massis as well as Babbit in America. Wagner even goes so far as to place the “Men of 1914” more generally in the neoclassic school, 12. For an example of a similar reading at the height of Lewis’ career, see R. P. Blackmur, “The Enemy.” *The Hound and Horn* 1.3 (March 1928).


such, by way of specifications like the “Modernist as Fascist”\(^{189}\) or adjectival qualifications such as alleged exhibition of “visionary Modernism.”\(^{190}\) What is more, it should not be forgotten that the “Men of 1914” has itself served as a category for one of the modernisms proposed by critics.\(^{191}\)

Conceiving of the “Men of 1914” in these terms, and particularly as purveyor of a discourse type of modernism which underlines one of its chief animating characteristics (satire), will do much, I believe, to integrate Lewis more fully into modernism. In fact, looked at in this way, Lewis becomes one of the chief reference points for modernism and perhaps the most determinative author within the “Men of 1914.” After all, the satirical Lewis is most unabashedly the “Enemy” of the Zeitgeist and embodies the modernist impulses of critique and lamentation most unreservedly. And, as we shall see in the next chapter, it may be Lewis, rather than Eliot, Pound, or Joyce, who offers the best starting point for a window into the true nature of high-modernist poetics.

In fact, it is from this perspective, that of Lewis as Enemy, that one is best off considering his disputes with modernist contemporaries. As has been said many times, Lewis’ response to his aesthetic and intellectual influences was often to attack them. But even beyond this, it is because Lewis is so thoroughly the Enemy, so thoroughly oppositional and excoriating of his cultural situation, so thoroughly modernist in other words, that he must not refrain from attacking even those who appear to be in his “camp,”

\(^{189}\) Frederic Jameson, *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist.*


so to speak. It is not that the criticisms expressed by Lewis of his modernist contemporaries are simple fabrications – in fact, they are quite perceptive even when not completely accurate\(^{192}\) – but that, when placed within the total context of modernism, they do not seem of such a kind that would warrant excluding Lewis from “modernism.” Rather, they serve as *demonstrations of* his modernism.

In much the same way, from the perspective of modernism as satire, Lewis’ creative work can be regarded much more easily as a part of the larger oeuvre of the “Men of 1914.” While there are certainly significant differences between his work and, say, that of James Joyce, as several critics have recognized, there is also a great deal of commonality and even of common influence between them, particularly on Lewis’ part.\(^{193}\) To make just one, and purely generic, connection, several observers have pointed out the impulse toward Menippean (and in the case of Joyce and Lewis, Rabelaisian) satire among members of the “Men of 1914.”\(^{194}\) And one may conceive of Lewis’ *The Apes of God* as taking the notion of Menippean Satire one step further in innovation by including in the mélange both visual and written text-types.\(^{195}\)

\(^{192}\) For an account of Lewis’ simultaneously ingenious and flawed criticisms, specifically in this case with regard to Joyce, see Hugh Kenner, *Joyce’s Voices* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), 16-7, 69.


\(^{195}\) And this in a novel which is often considered to lack the necessary experimentations to claim the name “modernist.”
And rather than regarding works like *The Childermass*, published in 1928, and *The Apes of God*, published in 1930, as somehow belonging to the “late” modernism of the 30s, I would suggest that a more complete picture of Lewis’ activities in the 20s would lead one to conclude that these works should be seen as culminations of the high-modernist 20s rather than preludes to the low modernist 30s. For, as Lewis himself points out, he was not “idle” in the early 20s.\(^\text{196}\) When Joyce and Eliot were finishing and publishing their masterworks of high-modernism, Lewis was equally hard at work on books that would ultimately be abandoned only to be later reconstituted as *The Childermass* and *The Apes of God* at decade’s end. These published works should therefore be understood as long labors of the high-modernist decade, and the original materials from which they eventually developed should be seen in their own turn as Lewis’ contribution to the *anni mirabiles* of modernism. For these reasons, a closer inspection of their contents is deserved.

### 2.2 The Contexts of *Joint*

Lewis published two numbers of his magazine, *The Tyro*, in 1921 and 1922, and roughly during that same period was at work on a novel of sorts entitled *Hoodopip*, which was to be a “life of a Tyro.” Set several thousand years in the future, it was to chronicle the happenings of the kingdom of O, established on an alien planet settled by Brits who left their homeland in 1921 (a society which not accidentally greatly resembled that of

\(^{196}\) Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, 230.
Lewis’ contemporary milieu). Hoodopip is the name of the protagonist – Hugh Kenner has remarked that the character served as the basis for Dan Boelyn of The Apes of God\(^{197}\) – but the manuscript in its still largely undeveloped form could be considered a broader portrait of a society of hollow men, animated by the “child cult” so despised by Lewis.\(^{198}\)

Hoodopip, for example, is slavishly adored by his subservient schoolmaster, who is something of a student’s pet. As a child, he is hounded by the press (among others by the Nursery News) in a world in love with the small, with the present as present, with ersatz life.\(^{199}\)

At some point, Lewis began to work on another project with related themes and eventually Hoodopip was set aside permanently. The new project was to be called Joint or perhaps Joint! and was conceived, in much the same terms and at much the same time as the great works of high-modernism, as a grand project, sprawling and all-encompassing.\(^{200}\) Lewis’ notes envision seven or eight parts, which could have been


\(^{198}\) The manuscript “Hoodopip” is available in the Wyndham Lewis Collection at Cornell University’s Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Box 9. The journal Agenda published, as part of a Special Issue series on Wyndham Lewis, excerpts from the manuscripts. See Agenda 8.1 (Winter 1970): 185-96.


\(^{200}\) The manuscripts of Joint are available as part of the Wyndham Lewis Collection in the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections at Cornell University, Boxes 16-17. Manuscripts pages are generally unnumbered or are not numbered in systematic fashion. To give some indication of their place in the manuscripts, my references will cite chapter numbers (when available), though several chapters and passages have multiple variants. Portions of Joint were also published in an Agenda special issue on Wyndham Lewis, selected, edited, and briefly introduced by Hugh Kenner. When cited materials are also available in print in this issue (or excerpted in academic publications), those references will be provided additionally. The critical literature on Joint is modest to say the least. Lewis himself only makes one explicit mention of it in published materials (where he refers to it as Joint!), Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, 230. The timeline for Joint’s creation is, as Paul Edwards has said, “probably impossible to reconstruct,” 321. Edwards believes that the project was begun in 1921-2, and was still perhaps ongoing in the form of “The Infernal Fair” in 1926, Edwards 317-21. Geoff Gilbert cites evidence that suggests the
published as one book or separately (the notes offer both possibilities), with titles in French and English such as “War,” “School,” “Death and Marriage,” “Children,” “Life,” and others.\(^{201}\) “The central VOL,” according to the notes, “could be named MASTER JOINT, or some other title.” Lewis’ notes also conceive of the possibility of an “expurgated edition.”

The contents of these materials could be summarized briefly as follows. The action centers primarily on and around Thomas Patrick Cinder, also known as “Joint,” a thirty (or so) year-old Irish schoolmaster and head of Cinderhouse Preparatory school, (“for the sons of gentleman…[and with] a strong science bias.”)\(^{202}\) Joint has a wife, “Plateglass,” and a maidservant named Acushla (both of whom he has intimate relations with) and among his students is a Jewish boy named Archie, whose parents Moise and Anna Hetman (anti-Semitically depicted) are the subjects, along with their son, of several chapters. A mentor to his student Archie, Joint himself is an apprentice to the aptly named “Bully,” whose relationship with Joint is “parasitic” or “Boswellizing” as Bully

---

\(^{201}\) The schema is available in published form in Edwards, 317, and Gilbert, 3. Lewis had planned a part entitled “Jews” but in the notes this title is crossed out. It is probable that the material on Moise Hetman, his wife, Anna, and son, Archie, is intended for that section.

\(^{202}\) Wyndham Lewis, Joint, Chapter V.
himself says at one point. Joint relates his adventures to Bully in the form of notes, which Bully later redistributes to him in analytical verses and proverbial instructions (which Joint receives in some manner of frustration). There is some suggestion in Lewis’ notes that Bully is himself an apprentice to “X” or the Hindu “Brahma” and that the three thereby form a kind of parasitic “trinity,” although this latter figure never appears in the drafts. The nature of literary creation, however, is a main theme in the text, and there are striking meta-fictional moments – as when Joint begins addressing the fact that he is “a character in Fiction” and not at all real and commenting that “should Mr. Lewis kill my wife…I shall have a dry eye” – which anticipate later twentieth-century literature’s self-reflexive, radical response to aesthetic mimesis.

As for the narrative itself, Joint ventures via bus-ride out to the suburbs of London or “Nature” as the text at one point refers to it. He feeds the sturgeon of a municipal pond, goes to a park (where he has a failed amorous hunt for “female prey” that he encounters there), and visits a local saloon, before returning to the school (where he also lives). Back on the grounds, we are shown Joint’s home life, including his relations with his wife and maidservant, and with his students. In addition to these events, there are several more fragmentary sections, such as those that depict a conversation between Joint

203 Lewis, Joint, unmarked fragment. And Joint relates himself to Dr. Johnson at another point (an ambiguously marked Chapter, IX or XI).

204 Lewis, Joint, Chapter X. Joint writes to Bully at one point, “‘Here are some notes of a strange adventure I have had’…..This account Bully returned him a week later in the form of a poem,” Chapter IV (variant). At another juncture, Joint is depicted having several files of Bully’s writings of this kind (Chapter X).

205 The Trinitarian schematization appears in Edwards, 319, and Gilbert, 7.


207 Lewis, Joint, Chapter I.
and Bully and Joint’s reading and recalling of Bully’s communications. There is also a
long, fairly autonomous section entitled “The Infernal Fair,” though onetime entitled
(perhaps subtitled) “An Infernal Personae: A Human Prolegomena (for any future story
of modern life).” In this long piece, Joint dreams that he receives as a birthday gift a
manuscript from Bully, featuring Joint as the main protagonist. In what follows
(presumably the contents of the manuscript), Joint has Socrates, Dr. Johnson, and
Cézanne for his guides as they explore the “fair” of this infernal (though not particularly
tortuous) afterlife, where philosophers from various periods have their own “booths” in
which they expound their doctrines for all eternity. Along with this material centered on
Joint, there are also some chapters featuring Moise and Anne Hetman and their son,
Archie, including a few chapters concerning Moise’s apparently inexplicable contraction
of a venereal disease and his trips to two different doctors in search of treatment.

Such are the basic contours, the who and what, of Joint. As it is, it cannot be
called a “novel” in the strict sense. It is too incomplete, too fragmentary. There are
hundreds of pages in manuscript, including many notes and jottings, plans and strategies,
both cursive and type-written. As Hugh Kenner has noted, several chapters and openings
of sections have been written and rewritten in myriad variation “as though getting first
pages just right would establish coordinates for later use…. [as if Lewis was] testing in
how many directions the material might be elaborated.”

It is then best understood as a
collection of fragments, sketches, narrative nodes, explorations on a theme or
sequence, a setting or thesis.

It would not remain in this still nascent form, however. Eventually, the project was both abandoned and reconceived, so that it would later become finished works of much different elaboration. Already in an early notebook entry on Joint, the name of “Mr. Zagreus,” a central character in *The Apes of God*, appears as the name of “Bully.” And along these lines several similarities of circumstance and theme are shared by the early manuscript and the later work. The most obvious example is the idea of a parasitic hierarchy of apprenticeship, where Joint, Bully, and X (or Brahma) can be seen as early versions of Dan Boelyn, Horace Zagreus, and Pierpoint.\(^{209}\) Among other clear connections, as Paul Edwards has suggested, there is that between the segment of the “Infernal Fair” and *The Childermass*, Lewis’ 1928 fantasy set in the afterlife.\(^{210}\)

Important as these similarities are, especially in showing the creative process and the origins of Lewis’ two great aesthetic works of the period, it would be a grave misjudgment to suggest that there is nothing distinctive or unique about *Joint* as a manuscript or to imply that it has nothing to say to us beyond its relation to Lewis’ published oeuvre. Quite the contrary is true on both counts. The differences outweigh the similarities between these materials and any published texts, in all areas (plotting, character, theme, etc). Like *The Childermass* “The Infernal Fair,” for example, takes place in the afterlife – and Edwards is right in my view in seeing the latter piece as the genesis of the former – but *The Childermass* contains a much different set of characters, an entirely new storyline, and different themes and concerns (what is more, it takes place

\(^{209}\) There is, however, no simple one-to-one correlation. Pierpoint, like “X,” never appears in the text, but like Bully, he does write magisterial texts for his apprentice.

\(^{210}\) Edwards, 321.
not in the infernal region but in a kind of limbo or purgatory-like setting). As for *The Apes of God*, it is a work primarily concerned with the London art and literary scene, a different setting and focus altogether from *Joint*.

What *Joint* does shares with Lewis’ published work of that decade is to be found in the area of aim and purpose, intentions and orientations. *Joint* is a work that has been called “long and painful.” It is so for aesthetic reasons, surely, but also for many of the reasons why *Ulysses* or *The Waste Land* can be called “long and painful.” Even in some ways more so than those works, it is disgusting and disgusted, full of disease and waste and the inhuman – a (failed) work of high-modernism it is, and a work which leads us to new conceptions of what it might mean to be “high”-modernist. Lewis wrote retrospectively of *The Apes of God* that it dealt with the “social decay of the insanitary trough between the two great wars.” The same could be said of that work’s initial impetus, *Joint*, as it could be said of the late 1910s and early 20s work of the “Men of 1914.”

---

211 Gilbert, 3. Judging from his article, Gilbert thinks Joint “long and painful” probably because it can be monotonous and dry (many of the scenes are simply not developed) but above all because it is “willfully obscene,” not least on account of its naked anti-Semitism, Gilbert, 2.

2.3 “Cinderjoint” / Hollow Joint

To those critics who wish to distinguish Lewis’ “modernism” as somehow different from others like Joyce on the basis of his criticisms of Joyce in *Time and Western Man*, one must point to the many parallels and convergences in the work of the two men, and nowhere are these more striking than in the manuscripts of *Joint*. Lewis’ work, especially in the 20s, very much bears the influence of Joyce. One could say, in line with the triadic creative relationships represented in *Joint* and *Apes*, that Lewis was attempting to forge a parasitic relationship of aesthetic inspiration with Joyce. Often, the influence is antagonistic, as when Joint himself refers to Leopold Bloom in the manuscript (and in a fashion we recognize from Pound’s observations):

If I lie here drivelining like this and allow the author to snap-shot this mechanical reminiscent rubbish I shall find myself mixed up in people’s minds with Mr. and Mrs. Bloom, that obnoxious couple over the road, or rather over there in Ireland. And I know that Mr. Lewis doesn’t mean me to be a L’homme moyen sensuel. – Dear, dear, I wish sometimes I weren’t a character in fiction, but a real person.

---

213 Lewis, *Joint*, Chapter V. This seems to be the only instance of this moniker for Joint, and it is perhaps a good instance of Lewis’ experimentation with the character’s possibilities. It helpfully represents Joint’s position as a weak “link.”


215 For the nature of that relationship see Gilbert, 2-7.

216 Lewis, *Joint*, Chapter IV; Lewis, “From Joint,” 201. In *Time and Western Man*, Lewis criticizes Joyce’s characterization of Bloom as being hollow and inauthentic. Bloom is a “stage Jew,” “not even a Jew most of the time” because he is more a reflection of his Irish author than of Jews. And neither is Bloom “a great homme moyen sensuel of fiction. That side of Bloom would have never existed had it not been for the Bouvard and Pécuchet of Flaubert,” 96, 101, 104. One notes the similarities to Pound’s references of context for Bloom. Here the insinuation is made that Bloom is an ersatz copy of Bouvard and Pécuchet, a bourgeoisification of bourgeois satire.
The reference is not as arbitrary as it might at first seem. So related are *Joint* and *Ulysses* that Geoff Gilbert has characterized the former work as a “reaction” to the latter.\(^{217}\) Among the evidences for his assertion, Gilbert lists commonalities in both works such as the fact that in Joint “the two central characters are a middle-aged Jewish man and an Irish schoolteacher” as well as the “echoes of particular scenes” in both works, including “embarrassment in bars, a scene of voyeurism….restricted timescale….internal monologue.”\(^{218}\) And there is more, both in terms of parallel scenes (the journey out from and return to domesticity, Joint bathing lazily) and motifs (preoccupation with feces, backsides, bodily fluids).

For all these similarities, however, there are also great differences. And if *Joint* is a “response”\(^{219}\) to *Ulysses*, it can justly be considered a negative one, a kind of anti-*Ulysses*. The same is true for the protagonists. Bloom and Joint are ultimately quite different characters. Joint exhibits an aggression and fury completely foreign to Bloom; he is a much more physically impressive figure (and has a sexual capacity more reminiscent of Blazes Boylan than Leopold Bloom).\(^{220}\) They are both comic figures, but of a much different kind. Bloom is compassionate, humoring. Joint is aware of his status as fictional character, bitterly ironical, and comically anti-humanist.

---

\(^{217}\) Gilbert, 3.

\(^{218}\) Gilbert, 5. It is not clear, however, if Lewis intended for the action of the work to be in one day or not (there are some scenes and fragments which seem to lie outside the scope of the “one morning.”). Internal monologue is present, but not to the degree or emphasis of *Ulysses*.

\(^{219}\) Gilbert, 4.

But if Joint stands on his own as a character, the two personages do ultimately share another, quite important feature: namely, the modernist type. It is a testimony to the flexibility and multivalent potentialities of the model to consider that certain values inherent in it that Joyce cultivates toward more ambiguous ends are the very things which Lewis hated about Joyce’s work and which are conceptualized by Lewis under very different premises and orientations. Whereas Joyce seeks to re-conceive the model as a possibility for modern life, Lewis toys with his character as a self-consciously enacted expression of the type, so that Joint is almost aware of his “hollowness” in a way that would negate it, but is ultimately doomed to the prison of his creator’s choosing. In Joint, therefore, the opposite condition obtains from Ulysses. Where in the latter case the signatory images of the model were pushed to their near inversion, in the former case, the manuscript of Joint, the material of the model remains inert and un- or half-shaped.

2.4 Textual Joints

One draft has Joint beginning with the protagonist jumping ill-advisedly out of the bus that is taking him to the London suburbs. Joint is reprimanded by the conductor and the passengers, who exhort him to “safety first!” In the midst of this, the conductor mentions to Joint that he believed that Joint had said “NEVERMIND!” To which Joint replies, “That is what I said….But I always make that remark. I make it on all occasions. To everybody.” It is an apt beginning, mirrored in the narrator’s closing remark at
chapter’s end that “as there is fate for Dont Care, so there is a fate for Never Mind. This book traces with great accuracy, then, the destiny of Never Mind.”

“Never Mind” is Joint’s response to nearly everything and the constant mantra of the drafts. In the text, it is able to take on a variety of meanings and, I want to suggest, all of these meanings – and indeed, Joint himself as a character embodied by the “Never Mind” approach to life – reflect Lewis’ use of the “hollow man” model, as does the environment and atmosphere of the world of the text more generally.

As for that world, I have already referred to the general sense of disgust that pervades the text, both among the characters and between the author and his creation. Human waste, insects, bodily degradation and disease, these constants endow the world of the text with a marked inhumanity. In citing the “love” scene between Joint and his wife, Plateglass, Paul Edwards has observed that it is “remarkable for the way it divorces sexual activity from any of the cultural, spiritual, and humane traditions by which it has become something more than mere appetite.”

The same could be said for any number of other scenes, whether those related to sexuality or other human activities. Like many works within the corpus of the “Men of 1914,” there is an attempt to convey the inability of individuals to experience interpersonal communion and a general debasement of human life (and often, as in this case, through recourse to the satirical relation of the human to the inhuman and/or the realm of the scatological).

221 Lewis, Joint, Chapter I.

222 Edwards, 318.
But while Eliot’s and Pound’s satirical laments can often carry the deepest seriousness and can be contrasted with Joyce’s gentler satirical light-heartedness, Lewis in some ways combines the two by offering the most malicious portraits in the spirit of ludic ribaldry. Despite the anti-humanism of Joint and his relation with others, the truly comic is never wholly effaced. And Joint’s slogan of “Never Mind” rings again and again in humorous fashion.

The meanings of “Never Mind” unfold in multitudinous, though ultimately semiotically compatible, directions. We are told, for example, that Joint’s fingernails grow rapidly whenever “anything caused him to cogitate…so rapidly that he had to deal with them several times in the course of an hour. He did not mind: Never Mind, he would remark, as he put the clippers away.”

At another point, an exposition of Cinderhouse prep school is given, including a few representative “testimonials,” among them one by John Bannerman Esq, who testifies that

there is an air of “NeverMind Tenderness” … about the whole of this establishment …. From Mrs. Cinder downwards a refrain of NeverMind appears to pervade the atmosphere of this well- aired, roomy, uptodate institution. The pampered rosy faces … of its small inhabitants bear witness to … what I may describe as this NEVERMIND point of view in education.

The semantic fields of “Never Mind” encompass the attitude of “Dont Care” already referenced in the text as well as the idea of abortive intent, malaise, and (as the “testimonial” ironically suggests at least in part) elements of anti-intellectualism: all of

---

223 Lewis, Joint, Chapter I.

224 Lewis, Joint, Chapter V. Here the same themes of the “child cult” evidenced in Hoodopip come to the fore again.
which, it must be said, suggest the impotencies and values of the ineffectual to be found in the “hollow man” model.

Two somewhat similar events illustrate well Joint’s character, both of which involve the schoolmaster’s cane, directed first at his wife and then, more conventionally, at one of his students. As Joint returns from his “outpop” to the suburbs, we are shown his domestic life, including his interactions with his wife, Plateglass. And quite unlike the domestic scene Joyce treats us to in “Calypso,” Lewis shows us Joint in a dominant relation with his wife.

[Plateglass says] “I wish you wouldn’t go off without telling me like that. I am so anxious about you, you don’t know, when I don’t know where you’ve gone. And I’m always afraid you’ll get drinking.”

“No I wont.”
Plateglass shakes her head.
“I was reading about a dreadful accident in the paper.”
“How often have I told you not to read those dreadful accidents?” Joint shouted. “The next time I find you doing it, I will cane you. And for two pins I would do it now. When shall I succeed in making you understand –”
Plateglass slowly puckered, and at last howled with a doglike breakdown of her smooth daily face. The cane already whirled, for her, on her bottom. As she sat helplessly discharging water into her lap, a silly-faced helpless bottom, puggy and red, lashed with a mad schoolmaster’s cane, alternated in Joint’s eyes with her face, ...
[...]
Joint bobbed about as though attacked by a popping covey of bluebottles, blown in at the window in search of insect carrion. He twisted, his face slightly distorted with annoyance.

“Nevermind.” – — — – “NEVERMIND.”
The words fell on her like two thunderbolts as he made his outpop from the hot room. 225

---

225 Lewis, Joint, Chapter VIII; Lewis, “From Joint,” 205.
The scene demonstrates a few important elements of Joint’s character. First, that he is, unlike so many “hollow men,” an aggressive figure, a figure capable of action and vitality, but also, and in this way so central to the model, ultimately a man of futility, a man whose final word is the “Nevermind” of retraction or disinterest or failure.

The second event concerns a meeting between Joint and one of his students, Bryant major. In his study, having sent for the boy, Joint interrogates him about the nature of the pus on his, Joint’s, thumb (“And how…would you explain that abstruse phenomenon?” “The pus, sir, is the dead phagocytes –” “And what, may I ask, is a phagocyte?”, etc) then, after threatening him with his cane, Joint abruptly settles down and moves on to the real business of the meeting. Joint wants to know if Bryant major thinks him at all like Dr. Johnson. The life of Dr. Johnson was read as part of the curriculum but was withdrawn when a friend “mentioned that he had been struck with [Joint’s] resemblance to Doctor Johnson.” When Bryant major says that he does not think that Joint resembled Dr. Johnson, Joint reads a couple of passages referring to certain similar traits between them. At the end of the seemingly unproductive discussion, Joint catches sight of the cane and remembers that he “shall have to punish” Bryant, though the reason why is not entirely clear (there is some suggestion that Bryant was ill-informed of the nature of phagocytes at an earlier date).

Bryant major advanced into the room and kicking a ridge of carpet and chair in his road, doubled over the chairback. Joint pulled up his jacket, and with reluctance swung his cane. It fell without force on the strained buttock.

---

226 The event occurs in Lewis, Joint, Chapter IX (or XI). The chapter is ambiguously marked. It seems to follow from the action of Chapter VIII, however.
Further strokes confirmed the impotence of the first. After five he replaced the cane on the table.

“NEVER MIND” came under the breath.

“That will do for today, Bryant major. Return to your class.”

Joint’s meeting with his pupil underlines again his potential for both seemingly misplaced or random aggression and ultimate impotency. Joint can be stirred to action, he can be stirred to anger, but in the end his intentions, understanding, and actions are inefficacious and moot. In this case, his discipline seems a formality but one that he is unable to carry out despite his best attempts. In the face of his failure, Joint is forced to articulate the familiar refrain, “NEVERMIND.”

What both examples make clear is what the text describes elsewhere as Joint’s “impotent abhorrence.” Lewis’ debts to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche have been well established, and it is almost as if Joint is made aware of and made to partake in their disdain for hollow man life and to know that he, too, if he is to live at all, must be something more than what he is, that he must be alive, an Übermensch, a man of the will to power (“I will cane you!” he says to Plateglass), but despite this, in the face of it even, he is doomed to the “Nevermind” of that very hollow man which he is aware enough to be able to despise.228

For all his seeming vivacity, Joint is like Bloom a character notably done to.

Among the traits alleged to be in likeness with Dr. Johnson is the fact that his pupils do

---

227 Lewis, Joint, unnumbered chapter; Lewis, “From Joint,” 206. Here Joint is in dramatic conflict with “large buff and black flies.”

not greatly respect him. They seem to treat him, at least at times, rather dismissively. The origin of his nickname is illuminating enough in this regard. One day in class, Joint is referring to his wedding and in doing so imitates the priest who married his wife and him.

with his voice reverting to an almost forgotten Irish peculiarity “Whom God hath joint”–. They [his students] all laughed with great enjoyment, and called him commonly Joint next week, and until now.

His name, which he will later consider in relation to his self (referring to himself as we shall see as a “Joint” or “Link”), as somehow determinative of his person, is given to him, something he has received, and by schoolchildren, his schoolchildren no less, those who are supposed to be entrusted to his care and charge, and over whom he has authority. What is more, the name is given if not in mockery at least with an air of flippant lack of regard.

Lewis’ favorite verb for Joint is the reflexive construction “flung himself,” which conveys the notion of being done to (if only by one’s self). At certain points this passivity is depicted in naturalistic terms, as in the third chapter when Joint enters a park and spots a “female form.” The entire episode is couched in terms of a predator hunting his prey in the woods, expect that Joint is depicted as being impelled by “Nature” rather than his own accord. With “martyred obedience to Nature,” Joint turns his attentions away from a deer toward the woman (often referred to in the text as “it,” who is herself metaphorically

---

229 Lewis, Joint, Chapter IX (XI).

230 Lewis, Joint, Chapter V.
related to the deer as “prey” for the hunter Joint). “Nature had thrown [her] upon the screen.” “That Nature had placed [his emphasis] this person there he accepted as quite likely.” “He concluded that reciprocally this figure might imagine that Nature was moving him nearer to her [his emphasis].”

Just as he is about to pounce, “she rose slowly and walked away without interest or haste.” Joint greets his failure with relief, “He was free! The absurd magnet had walked itself off.” By events outside of his control, Joint is liberated from the “magnet” of nature which impelled him to this woman. As if to punctuate, he adds his refrain, “‘Never Mind’ …. But the woman had vanished.” Here one might be tempted to consider recourse to that most repeated phrase as a kind of effort at agency of some kind, as if Joint were pronouncing his own lack of interest as being prior to the woman’s decision to exit, except that we recall his words to the bus driver that he “always” says that, “on all occasions. To everybody.” His uniqueness and greatest mark of distinction, the “Never Mind” response, is itself only an involuntary reflex.

Joint’s vacuum of agency, his done-to-ness, extends even to his name (which, we are told, is related to his nature). As mentioned above, the origin of Thomas Patrick Cinder’s nickname has to do with the fact that he is married, that is, “joint” to his wife by God, according to the phrasing of traditional marriage ceremony. At one point, pondering his place in the world, he thinks to himself, “Only fit to be a missing link. I am a LINK.

---

231 Lewis, Joint, Chapter III; Lewis, “From ‘Joint,’” 199.
232 Lewis, Joint, Chapter III; Lewis, “From ‘Joint,’” 200.
233 Lewis, Joint, Chapter I.
That’s it. A Joint aha. – A master-Joint!" To be a “joint” in this way perhaps can be rationalized so at to emphasize the essential aspects of one’s position, as Joint seems to do here, but ultimately there is recognition of contingency in being “only” a link as opposed to that which is linked (which is presumably always of greater kind and significance). Even his surname, Cinder, conveys important qualities of Joint’s “nature”: namely, belatedness, decline, enervation, tepidity.

But perhaps nowhere is Joint’s character more clearly set forth than in his relations with “Bully,” relations which bear forth Joint’s own identity as a link. Joint is both “joint” to and a joint (a link) to Bully. In this way, he receives from Bully his sense of purpose and self, so that his own existence is contingent on Bully, without whom he would neither be Joint nor “joint.” And the nature of that relationship only serves to reinforce the point; for Joint is not simply dependent upon Bully, he is also very much bullied by Bully (whose name is also connected intimately to his “nature”). This chief and most pivotal relation of the text therefore reveals the typical aspects of the model: passivity, impotency, the subject as object of action, etc.

2.5 End Joints

Anyone who attempts to navigate the mass of leafs and notebooks that I have been referring to as Joint will readily come to understand that speaking of Joint the

---

234 Lewis, Joint, unnumbered chapter; Edwards, 319.

235 The same could be said, to a lesser though more literal extent, of his relationship with Plateglass, to whom he is also “joint,” a relationship he finds somewhat degrading of him.
character, as of *Joint* the mass of materials, as a developed entity is no doubt perilous.

There are many possible avenues of characterization and interest with respect to Thomas Patrick Cinder that are being tried out in the manuscripts. As a result, the characterization of this protagonist lacks at several points the kind of cohesive authorial vision that one would expect from fully fleshed out fictional personages. When it comes to investigating the human model in the text, however, this fact may be of some benefit. For, with the still nascent text and characterizations, one can more clearly see some of the thematic and topological scaffolding that is often rounded off in more polished work. What one sees here undoubtedly is Lewis experimenting with his characters and material, and in large measure with the model itself. In his book on Shakespeare, Lewis comments on *Troilus and Cressida*, a work that can be anachronistically placed very much in the tradition of modernist satire, saying “Nothing more disillusioned has ever been written about the traditional heroisms of the world …. This is the pure intellect’s true account of life.”

Lewis fancied himself a “pure intellect” and the observation was almost certainly intended to apply to his own works as well. It could provide apt commentary for the modernism of the “Men of 1914,” for their attraction to and use of the human type that has been our concern here, a type embodied by a “disillusioned” attitude to the “traditional heroisms of the world” (which are represented by the various human types of prior periods discussed in part one).

Ultimately, however, the materials of *Joint* proved themselves not viable in the form in which Lewis had configured them, though they would reemerge in other

---

conceptualizations of the “hollow man” model later in the decade. The character of Joint, it turns out, was unable to furnish the set of relations which would make for the dramatic potential either of Lewis’ earlier work or of a character like Leopold Bloom, whom we considered in the previous section. In the final summation, it was the creative process itself that proved to be the most “hollow” aspect of the Joint project, and the author’s final verdict on the work in his cessation was an actualized “never mind.”
CHAPTER III

“TO SAVE THE WORLD FROM SUICIDE”¹: SATIRE AND THE POETICS OF MODERNISM

The artist has at last been aroused to the fact that the war between him and the world is a war without a truce. That his only remedy is slaughter. This is a mild way to say it. . .

Modern civilization has bred a race with brains like those of rabbits and we who are heirs of the witch-doctor and the voodoo, we artists who have been for so long despised are about to take over control.

And the public will do well to resent these ‘new’ kinds of art.

--Ezra Pound, “The New Sculpture” (1914)²

Introduction

The juxtaposition of the two quotes above, one from Eliot in the Chapter title and Pound’s remarks in the epigraph, is intended to bring to the foreground the basic argument that will concern us in the following pages: namely, that what has been said in the previous chapter about modernist literature can be said no less about modernist poetics. While the aesthetics of modernism (just as with its literature) are still often seen in the terms of ahistoricity, isolation, and autonomy, the argument here will be that modernism did actually conceive of itself through the lens of a relational model to cultural reality and that the nature of that relationality is satire.


Elucidating this thesis, the present chapter will make use of diverse analytical methods. The early portions of this chapter offer a comparative analysis of Robert C. Elliott’s theories of satire in relation to Greek fertility rituals and the situation of modernism, where certain surprising and illuminating similarities of circumstance exist. Such an interface is heuristically productive above all in showing the many ways in which modernism revisits the primordially satirical in its strategies for cultural lamentation and renewal.

Recognizing this state of affairs clears the way for a poetics of modernism grounded in satire, and such a poetics can be found as early as modernism itself. The modernist journal *Blast* will provide an early metric for evaluating the emergence of this aesthetic (and *Blast* is all the more helpful for the ways in which it recapitulates the imprecatory elements of satire found in Greek ritual). From there, we will proceed to a lengthy consideration of the idea of “classicism” in modernist prose writings, read as an aesthetic interface for modernism’s satirical orientation to cultural reality. In “classicism,” I will argue, modernism finds a conceptual framework for its relational model to culture, one so useful in part because (as with the aesthetic of *Blast*) it offers a clear opening to the satirical and to the intersection of the poetics of modernism and the poetics of satire.

1. Preludes: Poetics of Modernism Today

Because Chapter One considered in some detail the history of scholarly and critical views of modernism both in terms of its poetics and practice, I will offer here
only a few examples and will not treat the matter exhaustively. As I discussed in that chapter, modernism was from the beginning viewed as a movement that espoused isolating tendencies in its conception of literature and aesthetics. And although the New Critical formalism that supposedly buttressed such a reading of modernism has long since fallen out of favor, and though the rise of Marxist and cultural materialist approaches has completely reconceived modernism particularly in terms of its cultural dynamics, surprisingly this autonomist reading remains quite resilient and still very much a dominant hermeneutic in modernist studies.³

To speak now specifically in terms of modernist poetics, one can cite the distinguished critic of modernism Marjorie Perloff and her book 21st Century Modernism: The “New” Poetics, where she takes up the task of outlining the “modernist aesthetic,” an aesthetic which is “shared by Eliot and Stein, even as it was shared by Pound and Joyce, and the other central figures of the period.”⁴ What is the nature of this aesthetic? It is essentially a rather traditional brand of Kantianism (a somewhat peculiar fact in a book dedicated to recovering the supposedly radically avant-gardist aesthetics of modernism). Kantian autonomy turns out to be its sine qua non. As Perloff says, “Art is

---

³ The connections between modernism and the New Criticism have been interrogated evermore in recent years, with the result that the relationship between the two seems now more problematic than once was the case. See, for example, Jeffrey M. Perl, “Passing the Time: Modernism Versus New Criticism,” in The Future of Modernism ed. Hugh Witemeyer (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), 33-48. My own view is that many critics like Cleanth Brooks who have come to embody the New Criticism wrote quite perceptive essays about modernism as a cultural project (in other words, essays; centered as they were on cultural context, biography, intertextuality; which did not adhere to the principles that scholars, fairly or unfairly, associate with New Critical doctrines). In this way, I would argue that, particularly with regard to the modernism of the “Men of 1914,” certain critics like Brooks and Tate should be seen as privileged observers and quasi-participants in this kind of modernism, although not necessarily in the way that our traditional readings of New Critical dogmas would condition us to believe.

by definition not earning anything, which is to say, *disinterested*. From Baudelaire and Mallarmé to Pound and Joyce, the rejection of instrumental value is a cornerstone of modernism.” The value of the “purity” of art is a first principle in Perloff’s poetics of modernism.$^5$

One might be tempted to assert that the “new” modernist studies has been able to slough off such readings, but as I say this does not seem to be the case. What we often get from Marxist, neo-Marxist, and other brands or hybrids of post-structuralism is not a different picture of the modernist aesthetic of the “Men of 1914” but one of a series of re-readings which ultimately leave that aesthetic substantially intact. Having outlined the possibilities at length in chapter one, I will only mention them here briefly.

The manner and methods of these re-readings take a few different paths. The easiest option for a scholar wanting to re-conceive the modernist aesthetic is to simply focus one’s attention on “alternative” authors of some kind: that is, to direct focus away from authors like Eliot, Woolf, Pound, et al. and toward those who have been neglected or who have not previously been regarded as central to “modernism” (conceived in decidedly canonical terms).$^6$ Although such a strategy will certainly in some way impact our understandings of the more traditional authors, nonetheless in a much more obvious way it leaves them altogether untouched and therefore basically unaffected. “Modernist

---

$^5$ Perloff, 50.

aesthetics” becomes something different not by a re-conception of traditional authors but by a consideration of previously unconsidered authors.⁷

Another set of possibilities employed variously by contemporary critics entails reading modernist poetics against the grain of modernist practice, including not only literary but also publishing networks and other practices having to do with business, economics, politics, etc. While in some cases this approach comes much closer to a true revision of modernist poetics, more usually the “dialectics” of modernism utilized here presupposes a traditional reading of the modernist aesthetic.⁸ Typical results would show how, for example, autonomy is promulgated in modernism’s self-conceptions but is an altogether non-reality in the productions and activities of modernism (and the emphasis here can be on the material, the social, or the economic, as well as the political). And in this respect the readings are often of a modernism that is ultimately paradoxical, contradictory, or otherwise Janus-faced (e.g., possessing a simultaneously autonomous, political aesthetic).⁹

In contradistinction to these readings which conceive of modernist poetics in the terms of modern autonomy or isolation, the argument of the present chapter will contend

---

⁷ The statement of this fact should not be somehow construed as support for the idea of neglecting the wide variety of authors writing in the modernist period. To the contrary, such a widening of critical and scholarly perspective can only help to build a more complete picture of modernism as a period in literary history.


that the aesthetic theory of modernism can be couched in just the terms proposed by this dissertation for modernist literature: cultural engagement, satire, heteronomy. That is, just as I tried to show in Chapter Two that modernist literature represents a relational rather than an isolational posture toward sociality, I will attempt in the following chapter to argue that modernist poetics is best understood not as an attempt at formulating an aesthetic of autonomy and ahistoricity but rather at understanding literature to be a medium for socio-cultural activities and significance.\textsuperscript{10} And as this dissertation argues more generally, I will seek further to show that the character of modernism’s heteronomy lies to a great extent in the realm of the satirical.

In order to draw out both the fact of modernism’s relational orientation and the satirical character of that heteronomy, it will be helpful to consider the cultural matrix of modernism in comparative analysis with the cultural situation and circumstances of the origins of satire in early Greece, as articulated by the noted theorist and scholar of satire, Robert C. Elliott. The perhaps surprising results of such analysis can help uncover the extent to which modernism represents and returns to in many ways the primordially satirical.

\textsuperscript{10} These assertions could be formulated more strictly in terms of the literary history of form, though with slightly different emphases. Another way of putting it might be to say that modernism’s aesthetic territory occupies less the ground of a total “crisis” or negation of representation, which may very well be the space for the Post-Modern, and more the frontier where the representational and the anti-representational meet and interact. As will be argued in detail below, the poetics of modernism as satire really concerns a willful distortion of representation rather than its negation. For a good discussion of the complexities of modernism’s relationship to mimesis, see Manfred Engel, “Forms and Functions of Anti-Realism in the Literature of High-Modernism (Woolf, Proust, Kafka),” in \textit{Realism/ Anti-Realism in 20\textsuperscript{th} Century Literature} eds. Christine Baron and Manfred Engel (New York: Rodopi, 2010), 67-82, a splendid collection with many stimulating contributions. It is my view that, although Engel’s insights particularly into the various gradations often involved in modernism’s aesthetic of anti-representation are quite helpful and illuminating, perhaps modernism is there conceived too much along a “post-modern” trajectory of anti-mimesis and the total disseminative play of signification.
This comparative analysis is indispensable in providing the proper backgrounds and contexts for understanding the aesthetic intentionalities of modernist literature, for understanding how those intentionalities are bound up with the socio-cultural situations in which modernism finds itself, and for understanding the way in which satire provides in this matrix a particularly attractive (and tried and true) option. Once these pathways have been illuminated, we will be able then to see more clearly the extent to which modernism’s self-conception entails a cultural project or program for regeneration utilizing the satirical. As a result, we will be in a much better position to analyze and evaluate the possibilities for reconstructing a poetics of modernism.

2. Modernism and the Origins of Satire

Perhaps the greatest work of theoretical reflection on satire in our time, Robert C. Elliott’s *The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art* argues that the origins of satire lay in primitive forms of ceremony and ancient rite. Satire began in Elliott’s view as a form of the curse, as retaliation against one’s enemies, and, most intriguingly for our concerns, as a form of cultural regeneration connected with magic and ritual. In the *Poetics* Aristotle had already commented on comedy’s beginnings in “improvisations,” an apparent reference to Greek fertility ritual, which Elliott evinces with the help of the scholarship of Hellenists like Francis M. Cornford, E.R. Dodds, and others. The Greek Phallus Songs had two components: incantation or summons of good (fertilizing) powers (i.e., Phalles) and imprecatory warding off or expulsion of bad (sterilizing) powers. This latter element Elliott takes to be the foundation for what would become literary satire. For example,
Archilochus and other Greek iambic poets offered their invective verse as a magical banishment of personal foes. In the words of Elliott, “The word could kill; and in popular belief it did kill. This is the essence of Archilochus’ story.”

All of this may seem rather unrelated or remote from modernism, but there are nonetheless stimulating convergences between the primitive origins of satire and the situation and practice of modernist literature, not the least of which is modernism’s own constant recognition of and appeal to primitivism as an analogue and reservoir for modern experience. What is more, Elliott’s assertion that early magical satire is the result of “[p]rimitive man’s wishes to control his hostile environment, his impulses of fear, hatred, longing, etc.” sounds very similar to certain modernist discussions of the aesthetic (one thinks first and foremost of Hulme’s Worringerian considerations of the urge to “abstraction,” which, as I will argue below can be read as a satirically oriented relation to art, one picked up and made explicit by Wyndham Lewis). Indeed, Elliott’s conclusion that proto-satirical ritual, from whence comes the fundamentally satirical spirit, “spring[s] from one primordial demand – a demand that out of the fears and confusions engendered by a hostile world man shall be able to impose some kind of

---


12 Elliott, 56.

13 Cf. sections 5-6 of this chapter. “The necessary presupposition of the tendency to abstraction,” argues Hulme, “is the idea of disharmony or separation between man and nature.” In the case of “primitive people… [t]hey live in a world whose lack of order and seeming arbitrariness must inspire them with a certain fear….In art this state of mind results in a desire to create a certain abstract geometrical shape, which, being durable and permanent shall be a refuge from the flux and impermanence of outside nature,” T.E. Hulme, “Modern Art and Its Philosophy,” in *The Collected Writings of T.E. Hulme* ed. Karen Csengeri (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994), 268-85. 274, 273-4.
order” seems, rather surprisingly, like a fairly straightforward gloss on the aims and intentions of high-modernism as traditionally conceived. The situation of originary satire, in other words, seems to be a plausible analogue (at least in some ways) to the situation of modernism.

And there is more. As Elliott makes clear, the basis for Greek Phallus processions, from which the use of magical imprecation that is the foundation for what will become literary satire originates, is precisely the need for, and therefore a lack of, fertility. To quote Elliott once more and to bring two of his most important points in closer relation,

Satire was believed to be magically efficacious…. [and] Clearly, the motivation behind the whole ceremony is a wish of great intensity, a demand that life shall burgeon throughout nature.\textsuperscript{15}

What we have, then, is a situation of sterility, signified most preeminently by the sterility of nature, and against the backdrop of that situation of sterility – to which we could add, in addition to sterility, crisis and decadence, just as well – satirical invective is employed as at least a partial remedy. And it is a remedy because satire here is offered as a kind of strategy of regeneration; it is employed in order to achieve fertility where sterility now reigns.

Again, the previous paragraph, though a recounting of Greek ritual, could serve in many ways as a useful description of modernism as a cultural matrix. The discussion of the “hollow man” model in Chapter Two has prepared us, I hope, to see all the more clearly how modernism is in some ways defined by the situation of decadence in which it

\textsuperscript{14} Elliott, 58.

\textsuperscript{15} Elliott, 58.
is so convinced of finding itself. The very prerequisite for the modernist type is, as I attempted to show, the recognition of cultural, social, and spiritual decadence. And again as was said, the most pervasive topos utilized by modernism for signifying and/or dramatizing this decadence was that of “sterility.”

And just as in Greek ritual, the recognition of sterility in modernism was accompanied by a strategy of revivification that included satire as a central component. The early Greek use – and Elliott almost goes so far as to say, “invention” – of satire as a strategy of cultural rejuvenation provides an indispensible hermeneutical lens with which to view both satire and modernism. What it allows us to see most clearly is that the impulses and situations indicative of primal satire, as we might put it, are also of great importance to modernism. For modernism employed satire in essentially the same manner as did the Greek rituals and their offspring: as a tool for stimulating fertility. To invoke the opening lines of T.S. Eliot’s anatomy of cultural sterility, for modernism “April is the cruellest month” indeed, for the “cruelty” of satire can give rise to a season of rebirth.

In considering modernism and the origins of satire, then, this brief investigation has hopefully been able to clarify both the situation of modernism that makes possible its

---

16 Elliott’s use of the term satire is, as he says, “pragmatic rather than normative,” ix. This pragmatic interest focuses satire on its origins in invective, with attention paid to corollaries such as mockery, denunciation, and the like. As for the satire of modernism, it too is various and varied, as I have tried to outline sketchily in the previous chapter, encompassing subtle ironies as well as invective and condemnation or lamentation of cultural decadence.

satirical posture; the true depth, purpose, and intentions of that posture; and how these aspects and orientations relate to satire as an aesthetic option, its character and driving force. The comparison allows us to say that modernism is in some ways an archetypal example of satire: that in modernism satire finds again its original cultural positioning.

But if this is so, if modernism can be understood to be in some sense recapitulating the originary moment of the satirical, then we are left all the more with the burning question of how these strategies relate to the poetics developed by modernists. We ask with ever greater intensity on the heels of this analysis, where is the satire in modernist poetics? How, if modernism indeed so embodies the satirical, does that not seem to be so consciously felt in self-articulations and theorizations of modernist aesthetic practice?

Here we see how the interfacing of modernism and the origins of early Greek satire in fertility rituals and magic has opened up new horizons and ways of grasping modernism while at the same time seeming to widen or deepen the chasm that the present chapter seeks to close. Still, what we have obtained from this analysis is something of a reference point that will be helpful in considering much of the non-fictional prose writings of modernism. What we have obtained, in other words, is a socio-cultural context that includes the satirical as a situational reality. And the manner in which modernism could be said to be a project within the situation of Western culture – and the extent to which it could be defined as a satirical project or at the very least a project of critique or opposition that includes the satirical as a central component – can be more deeply felt as a result.
3. *Blast, Satire, and the Origins of Modernism*

Having outlined the cultural matrix of modernism and its relation to archetypal satirical schematics, I would like now to consider how those dynamics are already present in the formation and foundations of early modernism. For it is a matter of some importance that at the very first constellations and solidifications of the period, at those moments when we can first begin to speak of “modernism” with some confidence, the cultural-satirical matrix outlined in the previous section can already be found at work. Put another way, it is perhaps *only* when these conditions have formed in the manner described above that we begin to see the sketchy historical form of modernism emerge.

One could look to a variety of individual touchstones for these beginnings. The concern here is not with attempting to determine the exact moment of the inception of modernism, but rather with formulating a clear picture of modernism in its early phase. A second concern is with showing how this period of early modernism emerges in relative continuity with the periods of high and late modernism that will follow it. In achieving these ends, Wyndham Lewis’ 1914 journal *Blast* offers us a profitable means. The publication of its first number is not only a prominent moment of that perennial year of the “Men of 1914.” It also brings to culmination in many ways the manifold wavelengths
and forces of early modernism, including the aesthetics of Pound and of Hulme.\textsuperscript{18} And along these lines, it is a work well fit for a discussion of modernist poetics, given its programmatic posturing and its function as a kind of assemblage of early modernist theory-practice.

There has been considerable discussion about \textit{Blast}, a journal which only produced two numbers before being interrupted definitively by the war, discussion particularly related to the larger arc of modernism in literary history.\textsuperscript{19} Much of these discussions serve as particular instances of a larger debate about the relationship between early and high-modernism.\textsuperscript{20} As these exchanges show clearly, it is quite difficult to capture \textit{Blast}’s allegiances. Do the journal’s manifesto materials hold to an individualist


\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Blast: The Review of the Great English Vortex} no.1 (June 1914)- no.2 (July 1915) ed. Wyndham Lewis (London: John Lane, 1914-5). In addition to stories by Rebecca West and Ford Madox Hueffer, as well as poetry by Pound and drama by Lewis himself, \textit{Blast no. 1} contains a “Great Preliminary Vortex” as a kind of a preface and opening salvo, a section which comprises the two leading manifestos (I and II). There are also several “Vortices and Notes” later in the issue. These materials take on the programmatic style typical of the manifesto, a style that particularly lends itself to the meta-aesthetic positioning and orientation of poetics. For an informative look at the literary movement of Vorticism and the writing and reception of \textit{Blast} in that context, see William C. Wees, \textit{Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde} (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1972). Wees includes a detailed biographical list and discussion of the personages and personalities who are blasted and blessed. See Appendix B, 217-228. His discussion also helpfully locates the Continental heritage of the blast/bless discourse in Apollinaire’s manifesto, “L’Antitradition Futuriste: Manifeste-Synthèse.” See Wees, 161.

\textsuperscript{20} Michael Levenson believes the Vorticism evidenced in \textit{Blast} to be markedly different from what would become high-modernism. Like Levenson’s early modernism, \textit{Blast} is “individualist” while later high-modernism is “anti-individualist,” “anti-traditional” as opposed to high-modernism’s “traditional” orientation, and “inclined to anarchism” rather than to the “authoritarianism” of high-modernism, Michael Levenson, \textit{A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine, 1908-1922} (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1984), 79. For Edward P. Comentale, by contrast, Lewis’ \textit{Blast} represents a greater sophistication with regard to modern subjectivity. There, “Lewis laments the impossibility of attaining true individuality in a cultural market that consistently appropriates all difference…. In \textit{Blast} and elsewhere, Lewis’s solution is to undermine the oppositional logic that defines modern identities and assert a constitutive, intersubjective unity,” Edward P. Comentale, \textit{Modernism, Cultural Production, and the British Avant-Garde} (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2004), 9-10.
or anti-individualist line? Or can we speak of a dialectics of the individualist/
collectivist binary? And what of aestheticism? On any number of issues the same
questions could be posed. To give one example of the journal’s protean discourse, one
pointed out by Martin Puchner: while the manifestos section seems at times to exalt at
least a certain individualism, it is signed by several authors and is written largely in
service to the movement of Vorticism.21 And we could go further and mention that in
“Manifesto – II” in particular, several statements begin with the collective “We.”22 A far
less subtle example of the lack of consistency is the appearance of various entities
(England and France, to name just two) in both the “BLAST” and “BLESS” categories.

However, what is of chief interest in my view is not whether a particular position
articulated in the journal coincides with this or that current of intellectual history. These
are important questions, surely. But they are rendered less significant than they otherwise
would be by the fact that Blast, and the first number of July 1914 in particular, establishes
a fairly stable positioning vis-à-vis the cultural matrix of its time (a matrix inlaid with the
satirical dynamics of modernism as articulated in the previous section). The nature of this
relation can be well understood simply by the title of the journal itself. Blast is not just a
journal, but a cultural program, a methodology, an imperative.

The cultural strategy of satire common to both modernism and Greek ritual
applies fully to this early modernist journal. The journal arises within a situation of

21 Martin Puchner, “The Aftershocks of Blast: Manifestos, Satire and the Rear-Guard of
Modernism,” in Bad Modernisms ed. Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz (Durham, N.C.: Duke UP,
2006), 44-67. 55. Puchner argues here that Lewis utilizes satire in a “rear-guard” relation to modernist
aesthetics.

22 Despite its several signatures and collective voice, the Blast manifestos are generally regarded
as being written by Lewis – he himself claims this, Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, 37 – with some
input from others, for example, on the question of who should be “Blasted” and “Blessed.” See William
Wees, 157-64.
decadence – Edward P. Comentale refers to the way in which Lewis in the journal
“depicts London as a decadent city overrun by a rampant cult of the new and exotic”\(^\text{23}\) – and the remedy for this decadence is not so much this or that particular value or doctrine as it is the very act of blasting itself. The satire of \textit{Blast}, and this is a fact about \textit{Blast} already noted by Robert C. Elliott in his book on satire quoted above,\(^\text{24}\) is a particularly strong iteration of the magical imprecatory uses of satire found in its early manifestations in Greek ritual and Irish and Arabic folklore, a fact made all the more glaring by the way in which “CURSE” is used alternatively with “BLAST” in “Manifesto – I” in the litany of imprecation and invective.\(^\text{25}\) Just as in early Greek satire, the word that kills is mobilized against decadence to regenerate and renew.

It is also of some interest to note that Lewis’ blasting and blessing is not confined to a particular sphere of human concern. Whole countries and cultures, social and professional types, individuals, elements of nature, attitudes, ideas, corporate and personal actions of various kinds, various products, temporal periods (i.e., 1837 to 1900) – all of these items and more are objects of attack.\(^\text{26}\) \textit{Blast} as a journal and an activity of modernism is pan-cultural in nature, precisely because the decadence is ubiquitous. The pervasiveness of this widespread decay can be related to the already mentioned evasiveness of Manifestos I and II. An intellectually coherent program advanced logically and discursively would be beside the point. It would indeed be against the point. In this

\(^{23}\) Comentale, 9.

\(^{24}\) Elliott, 224.

\(^{25}\) \textit{Blast}, 12.

way the internal contradictions of Blast’s discourse point beyond those contradictions to the discourse itself. What is foregrounded and emphasized is not the object of the blast but the blast itself. The journal, or at least its manifesto materials, explores therefore the strategies, uses, and potentialities of blasting as cultural weaponry in the situation of decadence.

The ethos of Blast is closer perhaps than any other modernist work to the satire of Greek ritual. To some extent, the journal could be taken for a kind of a “magna carta” of modernism, which modernism will take up in its various ways and means (including expressions of the satirical that vary greatly from this original model). But even if one were skeptical of this last point, there can be no doubt that Blast reflects the originary impulse of both modernism and satire (and of modernism’s satire). The blast of satirical imprecation that is Blast attacks macro-cultural instillations and the widespread decadence therein for the purposes of regeneration and revivification.

4. Classicism and the Poetics of Modernism

If Blast can be said to be a key site in early modernism for those signature characteristics related to the satirical, it remains nonetheless only a “moment.”27 Larger points of intersection began developing before the journal’s inception and would continue long after its cessation. Within the carrefour of influences and personalities that was Blast’s conception, configuration, and reception, a particularly important connection is that between Wyndham Lewis, Jacob Epstein, and Vorticism more generally, and the

writings of T.E. Hulme. Without question, T.E. Hulme is the greatest single influence on the aesthetics of the “Men of 1914” among those who were not members of Lewis’ four-author grouping. Hulme’s work represents in itself an important point of confluence with a variety of intellectual and artistic currents important to modernism. He would continue to influence Lewis and Eliot long after his death in the war at West Flanders in 1917. And as I will argue here, the aesthetic that he helped to forge from a variety of materials –what can be loosely called “classicism” – would become the basis for what I believe we can legitimately call modernism’s poetics of satire.

But, just as important to my argument, it would not have become such a basis, or rather what it based itself on would not have been able to emerge, had it not been for the fact that a broader intellectual foundation existed that was sympathetic to ideas like “classicism” and was in some sense advocating such ideas parallel to and even beyond Hulme’s efforts.

### 4.1 Classicism and Modernism

Among students of modernism, it is perhaps T.E. Hulme who is most closely associated with the idea of “classicism.” The association is justified. Hulme called for or perhaps predicted as early as 1911 a “classical revival.”[^28] This in a talk entitled

[^28]: T.E. Hulme, “Romanticism and Classicism,” in *The Collected Writings of T.E. Hulme*, 59-73. 59. Karen Csengeri concludes that the piece was written in “late 1911 or early 1912.” According to Csengeri, “[t]he essay is very possibly the lecture Hulme delivered on 15 July 1912, at Clifford’s Inn Hall, London,” 59.
“Romanticism and Classicism” that severely maligned the former and exalted the latter. That said, it is certainly not unknown that Hulme’s ideas of “classicism” were largely borrowed or at the very least derived from other sources, primarily to be found in France.\textsuperscript{29} Equally understood and appreciated is the degree to which modernism after Hulme took up these ideas and gave them new inflections and significations. And one could even say that there is sufficient knowledge concerning the ways in which the program of “classicism” even in its French origins made inroads in modernism via diverse pathways, some unrelated to Hulme. In revisiting these networks of modernist aesthetics, therefore, I seek greater and deepened understanding of what “classicism” broadly conceived could mean for modernism, particularly as it relates to the aesthetic strategies of satire. My conclusion and overall contention will be that in “classicism” (again broadly understood as a complex of values sometimes loosely connected) modernism found the critical and aesthetic framework properly suited to its satirical orientation to cultural reality (i.e., that orientation which we encountered in our comparative analysis of satire and early Greek ritual) and one capable of expressing that orientation most adequately.

\section*{4.2 Classicism and \textit{L’Action française}}

While the word “classic” with its corresponding adjective “classical” has a long history from the Renaissance, “classicism” is a comparatively new coinage and one that

\textsuperscript{29} To cite just two of many examples: Michael Levenson, \textit{A Genealogy of Modernism}; Helen Carr, “T.E. Hulme and the ‘Spiritual Dread of Space’,” in \textit{T.E. Hulme and the Question of Modernism} eds. Edward P. Comentale and Andrzej Gasiorek (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 93-112.
is directly related to the rise of Romanticism in the late eighteenth and early
tenineteenth centuries. Already in France in 1548 we have reference to first-rate medieval
authors as “classique.” The idea of the classic or the classical as the best or as the
authorial elite is one of the major definitions of the terms even into our own day. To this
we should add the idea of a “model” or “standard” to be followed in literary practice,
which would be increasingly applied to authors of Greek and Latin antiquity. Eventually,
after reflection on the general values and qualities of the work of these ancient authors
the “classical” came to be associated with balance, harmony, order, universality, which
were thought to be canons of classical antiquity itself. Earliest uses of “classicism” in
English seem to be connected with efforts to reassert these classical values in the face of
the rising Romanticism, which exalted contrary values of spontaneity, authenticity,
feeling, and the like. The extent to which this early “classicism” has a relationship to the
satirical is of some interest. Traditional canons of “classical” vernacular authors have

30 The most comprehensive study of “classicism” from a lexical perspective is René Wellek, “The
Term and Concept of Classicism in Literary History,” in Discriminations: Further Concepts of Criticism
(New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1970), 55-89; see also W.J. Bate’s indispensable Lowell Institute Lectures
published as Walter Jackson Bate, From Classic to Romantic: Premises of Taste in Eighteenth Century
England (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1946). And for a good discussion of classicism in light of
romanticism and modernism, see Jeffrey Perl, The Tradition of Return: The Implicit History of Modern

31 Wellek, “The Term and Concept of Classicism in Literary History,” 64.

32 See entries for “Classicism” and “Classical” in OED Online, third edition, August 2010. See
also, Bate, 7-12. One should not neglect German Romanticism’s contribution in this regard, particularly
the work of Friedrich Schlegel, who was probably the first to formulate the classicism/romanticism dichotomy
in his 1795 “On the study of Greek poetry,” and other Germans such as Jean Paul and later Goethe (with
his famous assertion, picked up by Wyndham Lewis, that Romanticism was sickness and Classicism,
health). For more on these German authors in relation the romantic-classic debate, see David Perkins,
“Literary history and historicism,” in The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: Volume V:
Romanticism (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2000), 338-61. For a good discussion of the Frenchman
Stendhal and his famous formulations with regard to Romanticism and Classicism, see Matei Calinescu,
Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism (Durham: NC:
always included strong satirists such as Boileau, Pope, Dr. Johnson, Swift, among others, so that from the beginning the idea of the classicism and the satirical have been closely related.

A decisive moment in the history of “classicism” came in France beginning in the late 1890s with the writings of Charles Maurras, who would alter, revive, and extend prior notions of what it means to be a “classicist.” Maurras’ influence would reach a significant swath of the French literary and political spheres; he would become a key member in the neo-royalist movement *L’Action française* and would find himself a mentor to a great many French authors of the period. His impact, and those of his coterie, would be felt directly on T.E. Hulme, T.S. Eliot, and Irving Babbitt, and somewhat more indirectly on Wyndham Lewis and Ezra Pound.33 Maurras and his group, in their advocacy of “classicism,” would exercise a decisive influence on Anglophone modernism.

These French authors called for a “rénaissance classique”34 in the face of the chaos and decay that had been wrought by Romanticism. Just what comprised Romanticism and classicism was elaborated in various and sometimes conflicting ways by Maurras and associates such as Pierre Lassere, Ernest Seillière, and Léon Daudet.

---


Elucidation of classicism and Romanticism always included an historical narrative of Western culture. In his influential *L’Avenir de l’intelligence*, Maurras explicitly took issue with Taine’s contention that the Revolution was a classical phenomenon; quite the contrary for Maurras, “Romantisme est Révolution.” Ultimately, however, the spirit of the revolution and of Romanticism is to be found for Maurras in Protestantism and in Judaism, the Germanic and Oriental founts of barbarism. For Maurras-ally Baron Ernest Seillière, the historiography is somewhat different, if ultimately to the same end. Seillière’s Romanticism is actually born of Plato and can be seen operative in Neo-Platonist strands of Christianity such as that espoused by Pseudo-Dionysius. The spirit of mysticism that is Romanticism will manifest itself in the Middle Ages in courtly love and romance, in the troubadours and the Arthur legends, and later in Quietism, the precursor to Rousseau and to the birth of Romanticism proper.

For both Maurras and Seilière, as for others of the school of *L’Action française*, classicism often abides throughout history in this same kind of manner (if at times outflanked by the romantic or mystical impulse). The golden age for Maurras is as much the period of Louis XIV as it is ancient Greece and Rome. Seillière, for his part, sees

---


38 Maurras retained a “romantic” devotion to Mistral and to the culture of Provence, seeing it as both indigenous to French and to the Latin heritage of Europe. As Wellek points out, Maurras did not at all appreciate the degree to which the literature and culture of Provence embodied “Romantic” characteristics, Wellek, “French ‘Classical’ Criticism in the Twentieth Century,” 49-50. This view can be contrasted at least to some extent with that of Baron Seillière, who was sensitive to the degree to which the romantic
throughout history rational (though not rationalist) counterpoints to mysticism in figures like Aristotle (against Plato) and Thomas (against Platonizing romance and courtly love). The promise of their present moment is a resurgence of counter-revolutionary, counter-romantic principles – “l’esprit classique” – and the possible restoration of those principles in a new French monarchy. France is heir to Greece and Rome in modern Europe. Only France can stave off the advance of Germanic barbarism that is Romanticism, democracy, chaos, and disorder and return her (and through her, Europe) to former and future glory.

The doctrine of classicism in Maurras and his companions includes longtime “classical” values such as order, authority, and discipline along with some new inflections. For example, in an appendix note to his Trois idées politiques of 1898, Maurras describes “l’esprit classique” as “l’esprit d’autorité et d’aristocratie.”

Undergirding this spirit of classicism is the inter-affiliations among the political and the aesthetic. It would be going much too far to say, as is sometimes said, that Maurras conflated the two. Far from it, he actually went out of his way to distinguish the aesthetic from the political; in his mind Romanticism was guilty of such absorptions. Nonetheless,

---

39 Ernest Seillière, Pour le centenaire du romantisme: un examen de conscience (Paris: Librarie Ancienne, Edouard Champion, 1927), 15-51. In his Clark Lectures on metaphysical poetry delivered in 1926, T.S. Eliot offers a similar approach to Seillière’s. For example, the Spanish mystics of the Counter-Reformation such as Ignatius of Loyola and Teresa of Avila are considered “Romantic,” having “nothing to do with classicism,” and in the case of Ignatian spirituality in particular, as “non-Aristotelian” and infected with the Islamic spiritualities prevalent in Spain at the time. Ignatius was, Eliot reminds us, a voracious consumer of romances in his early days. As for St. Teresa, Eliot thinks that her mysticism “would in an earlier and less dangerous period have been subjected to closer scrutiny, and been less quickly accepted by the Church,” T.S. Eliot, The Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry: The Clark Lectures and the Turnbull Lectures, Edited and Introduced by Ronald Schuchard (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company), 75-8.

40 Charles Maurras, Les Trois idées politiques, in Romantisme et révolution, 270.
the trajectory of Maurras’ career – moving as he did from literary critic and poet to
journalist and activist – and the general character of his thought constantly draw into
relation the political, the social, the religious, and the aesthetic.

Comme la décadence des lettres avait incliné à admettre la décadence de la patrie,
la belle technique renaissante faisait aspirer à d’autres reconstructions que celles
de la langue et de l’art. La langue outragée, le rythme torturé, ce royaume des
mots où la subversion engendrait l’ataxie faisaient penser aux subversion nées
d’autres divisions cruelles. Soeur légitime de ce que les philologues appellent “le
langage individuel,” une littérature individualiste tendait à supprimer toute autre
lecteur que l’auteur: comment n’eut-elle pas attiré l’attention sur le système social
qui oppose le citoyen à l’État et, au nom d’un État meurtrier de lui-même,
provoque tour à tour aux fureurs de l’insurrection et aux torpeurs de l’indifférence
civique?41

Here the logic of Maurras’ thought is clear. Qualities of political and social
decadence are connected to literary decadence; the individualistic, disordered spirit of
Romanticism is seen as both political and aesthetic. The dangers of this aesthetic
therefore go well beyond the realm of the aesthetic. For Maurras, as for Pierre Lasserre,
perhaps L’Action française’s most sophisticated critic of Romanticism, the Romantic is
dangerously in love with the individual as individual, with originality for originality’s
sake, with indiscriminate equality and lack of differentiation (whether in terms of politics,
aesthetics, religion, or gender), with freedom and general anarchy over order and
harmony.42


42 Cf. Pierre Lasserre, Le romantisme français; essai sur la révolution dans les sentiments et dans
Maurras’ more specific articulations concerning the poet’s artistry are illuminating in this regard. Romanticism’s notion of liberty, insists Maurras, is revolutionary and anarchical, but this does not imply that liberty is an illegitimate aesthetic category.43 For Maurras, it is legitimate to speak of “la liberté en art”44 but only with essential nuances. The liberty of the artist is legitimately expressed only within the framework of the order of art, both because the artist’s activity is by its nature an ordering reality (“Chanter, c’est ordonner les cadences, régler les rythmes par lesquels délivrer son âme et sa voix,”45) and because the liberty of art “est bornée par les lois de son succès ou de son échec.”46 Here Maurras is solidly in the classical tradition. The freedom of art is only truly free within the context of the order and nature of the particular art. True freedom is therefore to be understood against the backdrop of nature and truth, as well as the particularities of craft. In this way, Maurras shows himself sensitive as well to traditional neoclassical concern for decorum and genre.47

According to Maurras, the poet “n’a pas inventé les prescriptions de sa technique, elles ne précèdent pas de sa volonté, mais, pour une part, de sa nature, qu’il n’a pas faite, pour une part plus vaste, de la nature de l’esprit et du monde qu’il n’a pas créés.”48 The error of Romanticism is in part a matter of denying these truths about the poet and his or

---

43 And therefore might we conclude it to be a legitimate political category as well?
her relation to the world and to art. At this point, Maurras, writing in 1922, echoes Eliot’s “Tradition and Individual Talent” when he says that the poet receives his language, his milieu, his genius, his sense of tradition from outside of himself.⁴⁹ These facts which limit the poet in one sense also make him what he is in another sense. And to do away with all this in the name of individuality and “liberté” would be to betray not only one’s self, but one’s craft and vocation: “A les aliéner tous pour de la liberté, il sacrifierait plus encore que ce qu’il a: tout ce qu’il est. Il y perdrait ce qu’il a la mission de faire.”⁵⁰

But this aesthetic of impersonality that Maurras accords to the poet is, unlike at least certain strands of modernism, wholly compatible with humanist values. Indeed, for Maurras “l’esprit classique, c’est proprement l’essence des doctrines de la haute humanité.”⁵¹ Classicism here is very much a matter of the Graeco-Roman tradition and of the traditional humanism associated with that tradition. And it is this cultural fount of classical humanism whose existence Maurras feels is threatened by the barbarisms of Judeo-Protestant Europe.


⁵⁰ Maurras, L’Avenir de l’intelligence (definitive edition, 1922), in Romantisme et révolution, 15. Eliot’s essay asserts that “the poet has, not a ‘personality’ to express, but a particular medium,” 9. Eliot also suggests that the act of writing poetry is a “continual surrender of [the poet] as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is … a continual extinction of personality,” “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” in Selected Essays: 1917-1932, 6-7.

⁵¹ Maurras, Les Trois idées politiques, in Romantisme et révolution, 270.
4.3 Classicism and T. E. Hulme

The influence of the school of Maurras was widely felt in Europe and was surprisingly strong in Anglophone circles central to the emergence and development of modernism. T.S. Eliot’s stay in Paris in 1910-1911 included his purchasing and reading of Charles Maurras’ *L’Avenir de l’intelligence*, a book and an author which would exercise a continual influence over his intellectual and aesthetic development (Eliot would later refer to Maurras as “a kind of Virgil who led us to the gates of the temples.”52) Eliot’s teacher at Harvard during this time, Irving Babbitt, published in 1912 his *Masters of Modern French Criticism*, which showed an interest in the ideas of Pierre Lasserre and French anti-Romanticism, an intellectual association that Babbitt would further develop and refine in later works.53 And it was in 1911 that T.E. Hulme met Pierre Lasserre and began his assimilation of the politics and aesthetics of *L’Action française*.54

---


T.E. Hulme’s intellectual history, particularly regarding his French connections, has been recounted on several occasions. The basis for his turn toward “classicism” after early Bergsonian enthusiasms has perhaps been too narrowly conceived in the terms of these Parisian currents. As Rebecca Beasley has pointed out, there is very much a German heritage of neoclassicism roughly contemporary with the French incarnation and by which Hulme was affected. In fact, Beasley reminds us that Hulme’s initial encounter with the aesthetic of Wilhelm Worringer was likely through the work of Paul Ernst, a fact which would have to alter our conceptions of Hulme’s development and of the relationship between his so-called “classical” and “abstract” phases. It would perhaps suggest a stronger interrelation between those stages or positions than some have wanted to grant.

The “classicism,” after all, that Hulme adopted from *L’Action française* was utilized in idiosyncratic ways. The kind of “classical revival” that Hulme called for was far more innovative and experimental in intent than what was envisioned by Maurras’ “rénai ssance classique,” for which Jean Moréas and Anatole France were important

---

55 Rebecca Beasley, “‘A Definite Meaning’: The Art Criticism of T.E. Hulme,” in *T.E. Hulme and the Question of Modernism* eds. Edward P. Comentale and Andrzej Gasiorek (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 57-72. 65. As Hulme himself says, “At that time, in an essay by Paul Ernst on Byzantine art, I came across a reference to the work of Riegl and Woringer,” T.E. Hulme, “Modern Art and Its Philsophy,” in *The Collected Writings of T.E. Hulme*, 268-85. 271. Here we have, on Hulme’s own account, a direct connection between “classicism” and the “geometric,” abstractionist aesthetic. For more on this German neoclassicism and for a good treatment of “classicism” in general, see Geoffrey Wagner, *Wyndham Lewis: A Portrait of the Artist as Enemy* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1957), 189-201. Wagner is particularly helpful in his discussions of the differentiating elements of French versus Germans classicisms, the former more nationalistic, more congenial to establishment religion, 197-201.

56 See, for example, Paul Ernst’s statement that “Die chinesische Novelle hat die höchste Kultur,” quoted in Wagner, 198, which brings into relation classicism and orientalism in a way similar to Hulme (and later Lewis – and even to some extent, Pound; but certainly in a way that would have been repugnant to Maurras). For Michael Levenson, Hulme’s shift from classicism to abstraction represents an about-face from humanism to anti-humanism, of two mutually exclusive positions, see Levenson, 80-102.
models. Hulme observed that the new classicism would not resemble Pope precisely because what it means to be classical must be different in Hulme’s very different moment. Such historicism Maurras would no doubt condemn as itself anti-classical Romanticism. But that Hulme thinks of Pope as a classical standard, Pope the figure of great satire, is important for understanding the character of Hulme’s “classical revival” vis-à-vis the satirical. Hulme’s “classical revival” is satirical in spirit.

However, for the very real innovations in Hulme’s “classicism,” there are nonetheless several core ideas taken almost directly from the writers associated with \(L’\text{Action française}\). One of the most important of these is their penchant for interrelating politics and aesthetics. Like Maurras, Hulme will connect the Revolution with Romanticism, as the bastard offspring of Rousseau. As he says at one point in his lecture on “Romanticism and Classicism,” “I make no apology for dragging in politics here.” No apology, because the aesthetic cannot be explained except with reference to the political.

---

57 T.E. Hulme, “Romanticism and Classicism,” in \(The\ Collected\ Writings\ of\ T.E.\ Hulme\), 59-73. 59; Maurras, \(Le\ Romanisme féminin\) (1904) in \(Romantisme et révolution\) (Paris: Nouvelle Librairie Nationale, 1922), 183. Several, particularly younger, members of \(L’\text{Action française}\) would often chafe at the rather narrow literary tastes of Maurras, see Weber, 77-8.


59 Hulme, “Romanticism and Classicism,” 60. Elsewhere, Hulme speaks of classicism in the following terms: “I am trying to maintain, then, that behind the opposed attitudes, and one can take up a great many different subjects, from politics to art, lie two contrasted sets of prejudices and sentiments, two different points of view as to the nature of man, which I am calling the romantic and the classical,” T. E. Hulme, “A Tory Philosophy,” in \(The\ Collected\ Works\ of\ T.E.\ Hulme\), 232-45. 234. “Classicism,” therefore, is not an aesthetic position but a worldview that has implications for all of life, including the aesthetic.

60 And just as with Maurras and company, Hulme cannot be accused of conflation with regard to religion, politics, and aesthetics. His rebuke of Romanticism as “split religion” is in fact a critique of what Hulme regards as Romanticism’s itch to “mess up, falsify and blur the clear outlines of human experience,” 62.
And like his French contemporaries, Hulme founds his “classicism” on an anthropology of the finite (which he uniquely labels Original Sin). The French Revolution was founded upon the Romantic notion of Rousseau that “man was by nature good” and that “man, the individual, is an infinite reservoir of possibilities; and if you can so rearrange society by the destruction of oppressive order then these possibilities will have a chance and you will get Progress.” Against this, the classical view is that “man is an extraordinarily fixed and limited animal whose nature is absolutely constant. It is only by tradition and organisation that anything decent can be got out of him.”

Beyond politics and anthropology, Hulme also found the ideas of L’Action française helpful more practically in their advocacy for localism and poetic humility, in their disdain for the emotional and the ostentatiously personal, as well as in their broad communitarian orientations. Hulme’s advocacy for a “dry, hard, classical verse” includes with it the idea that “it is essential to prove that beauty may be in small, dry things.” Hulme goes further in aligning himself with fancy over the imagination, a move no doubt made in conscious reversal of Coleridge’s ordering.

---

61 The idea of “Original Sin” in relation to classicism is in some ways particular to Hulme, at least in terms of overall emphasis and inflection. Maurras, Lasserre, and Seilliére all share various concerns about Romanticism’s anthropology but nonetheless the theological notion of original sin does not play an equivalent role in French classicism (though, one should not forget that it was an important component of Joseph de Maistre’s thought, which is connected in many ways with that of L’Action française). For a good genealogical grounding of Maurras’ thought in this regard, see Tony Kunter, Charles Maurras, la Contre-Révolution pour héritage (Paris: Nouvelle editions latines, 2009).


63 On the matter of poetic humility specifically, here is a very Maurrasian sentence from the pen of Hulme: “The root of classicism is this, that if the rules are of no value without genius, yet there is in them more of genius than there is in any great genius himself,” “A Tory Philosophy,” 235.

64 Hulme, “Romanticism and Classicism,” 68-9.
The “dry” and “hard” qualities of this “coming” classicism carry the same connotations antagonistic to the emotional and the cult of personality associated with the Romantic movement. Just as important, they also signify a certain distance, emotional and otherwise, that will be a formative element of modernist aesthetics, and one essential to the satirist’s stance. Finally, in Hulme’s recognition that language is a “communal thing” one can see a further connection to *L’Action française* in that the supposed subjectivity and solipsism of Romanticism are rejected. Even so, Hulme’s classicism was not, as it was for his French counterparts, a matter of reestablishing an aesthetic rapport with the greater public, but nonetheless it continued and developed certain anti-individualist themes from *L’Action française* (and to a certain extent of the neoclassic school more generally) such as objectivity, craft, tradition, and the like.

As we know, Hulme’s advocacy for “classicism” would soon be replaced by other paradigms and aesthetic models. The “classic-romantic” binary in Hulme’s writing would be succeeded by the “geometric-vital” binary which would itself be superseded or at least supplemented by a “humanist-religious” binary. These changes do represent substantial shifts in emphasis and influence (out with *L’Action française*, for example, in with the Germans, Worringen, Ernst, Riegl, et al.), and scholars like Michael Levenson are owed a debt of gratitude for unearthing and foregrounding those differences to the fullest extent possible; however, especially when we consider that the German aestheticians were themselves classicists of some kind, it is important to underline that the various
alterations in Hulme’s position occur amidst a basic overarching continuity of purpose and attitude.\textsuperscript{65}

The continuous values include a privileging of permanence, hardness, original sin, intellect, and public over private considerations (the communitarian ideal) – all of which, it should be noted, are central values of any true satirical aesthetics worthy of the name. Modifications in Hulme’s terminology were really the result of reconsiderations on the level of practice rather than principle, as we will have occasion to observe below. But even more than these constants of value, there is in all of Hulme’s mutations the persistent understanding that we are in a situation of decadence and that revitalization is essential, necessary, and urgently needed. In fact, one might define Hulme’s intellectual life as a series of attempts to correctly diagnose the nature of the sickness affecting his cultural world (Western civilization, we might call it) and to formulate a strategy for the renewal of culture and society. In short, what we find in Hulme is what we find in modernism more generally.

Hulme’s adoption of “classicism” was a first touchstone in that process. From \textit{L’Action française} he inherited a narrative about Romanticism as decadence\textsuperscript{66} that

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item This is also the view of Karen Csengeri. Cf. Karen Csengeri, “Introduction,” xxxiii-xxxiv, n.17. As she points out, Hulme already in “Romanticism and Classicism” connects the latter with the “religious attitude,” cf. Hulme, 61.
\item Hulme seems to include the French Enlightenment in his definition of Romanticism, so that it would not be at all improper to speak of Hulme’s narrative as one of modernity as decadence, and in this way he differentiates himself from Maurras and company, who were slightly more ambivalent concerning the philosophes. Like Maurras, Hulme rejects Taine’s “classical” French Revolution, but on much different grounds. Whereas Maurras argued that the Revolution was not classical because it was the brainchild of Rousseau (rather than, say, Voltaire), Hulme argues that “What Taine called the classical spirit of the early eighteenth century was not classical, because it used ‘reason’ in a romantic way. Diderot and the encyclopaedists generally were romantics, in my sense of the word, because, like the modern political romantic, they despised tradition and thought that man in ‘reason’ possessed a kind of divine faculty which would enable him to alter his own nature into something better than had yet ever existed,” T.E. Hulme, “A Tory Philosophy,” 236.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
included a plan for regeneration: the “classical revival,” which encompassed religious, political, and aesthetic dimensions. The particulars of this narrative have already been outlined above in the case of Maurras and his coterie. Although Seillière would eventually forge a typology of the romantic impulse that finds its root in Plato, for Maurras and Lasserre the narrative embedded in classicism was focused more modestly in two directions. First, there was the primary narrative of classicism-romanticism-revival, a very simple Aristotelian plot configuration which has its exposition in the period of Louis XIV followed by the complication that is the decadent revolution of Romanticism which must be resolved by the return of the classical spirit. The secondary narrative is broader and more theoretical. It is also more international in character; it concerns the rise of Germanic power, with its Judaizing, anti-pagan Protestantism. The resolution here comes from France and the Catholic Church, with its heritage of Greco-Latinity. Hulme in his borrowings seems to have only really adopted the barest outlines of the primary narrative (he had little interest, after all, in the prerogatives of French nationalism). But Hulme never simply borrows. His classicism is very aware of its Anglophone traditions (as his references to Pope and the Elizabethans make clear). And in this way Hulme’s additions further strengthen the satirical character of classicism as an ideal.

As has been discussed above, Maurras’ “classicism” is essentially humanist in character. It centers on Romanticism as the controlling problematic of contemporary

---

67 Hulme, “Romanticism and Classicism,” 59. Maurras, baptized a Catholic in infancy, was an atheist until his deathbed, but cultivated the Catholic Church as a positive cultural force for France and as part of the heritage of Greco-Latin Europe. The Church, for her part, condemned L’Action française in 1926.
Western culture and courses of action for response are calibrated accordingly. It would not take long for Hulme to recognize what Eliot would recognize and what a great many historians and scholars of intellectual history have since recognized: that Maurras and his classicism, precisely in its humanistic dimensions, are very “Romantic” indeed. As Hulme would come to believe, the summit of humanism, the Renaissance, was a kind of “classical revival” and yet it was also the seedbed for the individualism and optimism of Romanticism. “Classicism,” therefore, at least in its Maurrasian mold, was a very complicated and conflicted animal.

Realizing this, Hulme knew he would need a new narrative of decadence. The new narrative that he would adopt would differentiate itself from Maurrasian classicism primarily in being more thoroughly anti-modern than was Maurras. What Hulme came to understand was that the dogma of Original Sin and its corollary doctrines (the necessary acceptance of human imperfection; the need for tradition and order; belief in absolutism and objectivity, etc.) were not perfectly accepted and advocated by “classicism” as it was traditionally understood, that in fact this classicism was only a “partial reaction” and was therefore in some ways complicit in the very Romanticism that it abhorred and sought to overturn.

Hulme came to this realization through his interest in Byzantine and other non-Western forms of art, and through German thinkers who developed theories about the

---

68 Some may find it hard to believe that Maurras – neo-royalist, eventual colluder with the Vichy government, rabid Anti-Semite – could be outdone in his rejection of modernity. And yet, from the perspective of Hulme’s mature thought, Maurras’ path is only a “partial reaction” against modernity. T.E. Hulme, “A Notebook,” 451.

69 Hulme, “A Notebook,” 451. The extent to which Hulme was actually able to extricate himself from Romanticism as a paradigm has been a matter of much debate (cf. Frank Kermode, *Romantic Image* (London: Routledge, 2002 (1957), 141-63).
nature of such art. The greatest influence among these figures on Hulme was Wilhelm Worringer, and particularly his monograph *Abstraktion und Einfühlung*, published in 1907 but not familiar to Hulme until late 1912 or early 1913.\textsuperscript{70} From Worringer, Hulme received a new set of binary relations, the geometrical and the vital, that he could apply in much the same manner as he had done with romanticism and classicism. This new polarity was taken from Worringer’s view that primitive art could be differentiated from modern art on the basis of its way of relating to the viewer. The following is Hulme’s characterization of this difference:

[Vital art] can be broadly described as naturalism or realism…..The source of the pleasure felt by the spectator before the products of art of this kind is a feeling of increased vitality, a process which German writers on aesthetics call empathy (Einfühlung)…. [In this case,] any work of art we find beautiful is an objectification of our own pleasure in activity, and our own vitality…[I]n this art there is always a feeling of liking for, and pleasure in, the forms and movements to be found in nature…. [Geometric art, on the other hand,] most obviously exhibits no delight in nature and no striving after vitality. Its forms are always what can be described as stiff and lifeless….This is what Worringer calls the tendency to abstraction….It can be described more generally as a feeling of separation in the face of outside nature.\textsuperscript{71}

As the last sentence above hints at, for Hulme these two forms of art ultimately spring from two very different human situations and worldviews: as he says, “the art of a people. . .will run parallel to its philosophy and general world outlook.” When there is a “disharmony or separation between man and nature,” the urge will be to an abstract, geometrical art that “being durable and permanent shall be a refuge from the flux and the


\textsuperscript{71} T.E. Hulme, “Modern Art and Its Philosophy,” 273.
impermanence of outside nature.” Conversely, when there is a “happy pantheistic relation between man and the outside world,” when “man feels himself one with nature and not separate from it,” the result is a “naturalistic,” vital art. To the people in disharmony with nature, art which is abstract is pleasurable, while for the people in harmony with nature art which represents nature is pleasurable.\(^72\)

Just as with classicism, Hulme’s interest in Worringer’s history of art is not disinterested. Just as he utilized his intellectual acquaintance with the French to announce an impending “classical revival,” Hulme will find in the aesthetics of the Germans occasion to prophesy a return to the geometric art of oriental, primitive, and other ancient societies. At least for a time he thought he had found such an art in the work of artists like Jacob Epstein, Wyndham Lewis, and Henri Gaudier-Brzeska.\(^73\)

By Hulme’s own account, such a new art could only arise within the context of the formation of a new “period” within Western culture. Hulme’s work from 1913 until his death in 1917 will increasingly devote its attention to articulating the nature of the coming, or at least achievable (and certainly desirable), period shift. With Worringer’s typology in hand, Hulme’s new narrative of modern decadence located its origins not in Romanticism, which was only a later manifestation of the rot, but in the Renaissance.


\(^73\) T.E. Hulme, “Mr. Epstein and the Critics,” 255-62; “Modern Art: the Grafton Group,” 263-7. In pieces published originally in 1915-6, Hulme speaks of the end of the humanist age in much less certain, or absolute, terms. For example, he says that “in the same way, then, it may be possible that the humanist period we live in, may also come to an end, to be followed by a revival of the anti-humanist attitude.” He says also that the end of humanism may be coming “for individuals here and there, at any rate,” 448. These pieces are collected in T.E. Hulme, “A Notebook,” 419-56. No mention is made in these writings of modern artists like Epstein and Lewis. Their absence, and the seeming projection of the anti-humanist age still further into the future, begs the question of whether or not Hulme had at least partially revised his views of particular artists and movements and the degree to which they could be said to embody the advent of anti-humanist abstraction.
Although he is careful to disavow a deterministically cyclical view of history, Hulme nonetheless sees in Western history a period of early Greek abstract art, which is followed by the naturalistic art of “classical” Greece (and here we see how much Hulme has indeed revised his early view of classicism), which is in turn followed by a medieval period of the geometric, which is in turn followed by the modern period.\(^\text{74}\)

In part these periods can be marked, as was said above, by the relation of human communities to the world around them, oscillating as it does from a feeling of affinity for and mastery of nature to a feeling of fear and dread in the face of an uncontrollable or antagonistic environment. More specifically, Hulme argues for a medieval/modern periodization based on a kind of Foucauldian \textit{episteme} (avant la lettre) of the medieval “religious attitude” followed by its antithesis, the modern “humanist attitude.”\(^\text{75}\) The religious attitude, which forms a period beginning with Augustine,\(^\text{76}\) is defined largely in the same terms that Hulme used for the classical view: Original Sin, human limitations, and the “order” and “discipline” needed if humans are to do anything positive. Consider

\(^{74}\) Although Hulme does not mention them, it is worth noting that the period of the Greek Phallus Songs would be that of early Greek culture and therefore very much in the camp of the geometric, as I mentioned earlier in the discussion of Robert C. Elliott.

\(^{75}\) Hulme speaks of these “attitudes” as dominant thought forms of a given period. In particular he speaks of the need at his present moment to show, in very post-modern terms, the ways in which what we regard simply as thought or fact is really a construction. He differs, however, from Foucault and other post-moderns in that for him the matter is not relative. The “religious attitude” is the “right” attitude and its categories are “the true categories,” Hulme, “A Notebook,” 455.

\(^{76}\) Hulme is ever careful in his distinctions. The two types can and do live side by side within the various “periods.” He mentions that Pelagius, contemporary of Augustine, continued “the classical conception of man,” T.E. Hulme, “A Notebook,” 448. For anyone familiar with Anthony Burgess’ novel \textit{The Wanting Seed}, it is interesting to note that Hulme’s histiography of Western civilization post-antiquity can be summed up as one long “Gus-phase” ending with the “Pel-phase” of modernity that ensues in the Renaissance, with the hope of a still nascent Gus-phase on the horizon.
the very Maurrasian remark: “Order is thus not merely negative, but creative and liberating. Institutions are necessary.”  

The opposing, modern “humanist attitude” is likewise very similar to what was once described by Hulme in the terms of “Romanticism.” According to Hulme, a relativization occurred whereby ethical absolutism faded from consciousness, which lead to a belief in the possibilities for human perfection, the exaltation of individuality, the loss of “sin” as a meaningful concept, and faith in “Progress.” In politics, the new “attitude” leads to the notion that the lack of perfection can be attributed to external constraints on “personality,” while the removal of such constraints becomes the goal of progressive political action.  

In economics, Hulme cites Weber in support of his belief that capitalism is the logical result of the humanist attitude. If previous periods were not “industrial,” it was not for want of ingenuity or resources or ability; “they did not desire to be industrial, because they lacked this particular ‘spirit.’”  

In art as well, Hulme returns to Worringer’s aesthetic to show that a “religious” culture creates a geometric art based upon its “disgust with the trivial and accidental characteristics of living shapes” and its preference for a “perfection and rigidity which vital things can never have.” The “human form” in this art is “distorted to fit into the

77 Hulme, “A Notebook,” 444.
78 Hulme, “A Notebook,” 444-5.
79 Hulme, “A Notebook,” 447.
80 Hulme’s use of the term “religious” is somewhat idiosyncratic and, he admits, potentially confusing. “It would perhaps have been better to have avoided the word religious,” observes Hulme, “as that to the ‘emancipated’ man at once suggests something exotic, or mystical, or some sentimental reaction. I am not, however, concerned so much with religion, as with the attitude, the ‘way of thinking,’ the categories, from which a religion springs, and which often survive it,” Hulme, “A Notebook,” 444.
more abstract forms which convey an intense religious emotion.” A humanist culture, on the other hand, “in all its varying forms of pantheism, rationalism, idealism, really constitutes a complete anthropomorphisation of the world, and leads naturally to art which is founded on the pleasure derived from vital forms.”

It is important to note, however, that Hulme also maintains the sense, which he expressed with regard to the “classical revival” in relation to Romanticism, that should a new “religious” attitude emerge and form the categories for knowledge and understanding for the West, it would neither be a simple return to earlier manifestations of that attitude nor would it be totally unaffected by humanism.

I do not in the least imagine that humanism is breaking up merely to make place for a new mediaevalism. The only thing the new period will have in common with mediaevalism will be the subordination of man to certain absolute values. The analogy of art may again help us here. Both Byzantine and Egyptian art spring from an attitude towards life which made it impossible to use the accidental shapes of living things as symbols of the divine. Both consequently are geometrical in character; but with this very general quality the resemblance ends….In the same way, a new anti-humanist ideology could not be a mere revival of medievalism. The humanist period has developed an honesty in science and a certain conception of freedom of thought and action which will remain.

This recognition that the humanist legacy would persist at least in some form even in the midst of a new anti-humanism is also accompanied, as the quote above hints, by the idea that the new geometric art of this anti-humanist society would also not be a mere

---

81 Hulme, “A Notebook,” 447. This argument is very similar to Wyndham Lewis’ rejection of Romanticism, found throughout his writings but most especially in *Time and Western Man*. Lewis formulates the idea of the necessary integrities of the Self and the Not-Self, and he will speak of the world as necessarily “dead” and therefore distinguishable from the human subject (over and against the Bergsonian Flux). Wyndham Lewis, “The Physics of the Not-Self,” *The Chapbook (A Year Miscellany)* ed. Harold Munro, no. 40 (London: Cape, 1925); Lewis, *Time and Western Man*, especially 151-82.

82 Hulme, “A Notebook,” 449.
return to earlier forms but something new and all its own. In “Modern Art and Its Philosophy,” Hulme compares and contrasts two forms of geometric art and then considers them in relation to the new art that he thinks is now beginning to burgeon:

There is a certain likeness and a certain unlikeness in relation to man and the outside world [in primitive and Byzantine art]. The primitive springs from what we have called a kind of mental space-shyness, which is really an attitude of fear before the world; the Byzantine from what may be called, inaccurately, a kind of contempt for the world. Though these attitudes differ very much, yet there is a common element in the idea of separation as opposed to the more intimate feeling towards the world in classical and renaissance thought. In comparison with the flat and insipid optimism of the belief in progress, the new attitude may be in a certain sense inhuman, pessimistic. Yet its pessimism will not be world-rejecting in the sense in which the Byzantine was.  

Hulme’s point here is of special significance not only because in predicting an art of “pessimism” he seems to have lucidly periodized (albeit before the fact) modernism in just the form that we encountered in our theoretically based observations in the previous chapter (cf. Frye’s mythos of irony and satire, etc) but also, and primarily, because what is offered here is an essential and sometimes overlooked component of the Hulmean aesthetic, one intimately connected to the larger thesis of modernism’s relational orientation to cultural reality.

So often Hulme’s aesthetic has been couched in terms of the supposed “spatial form” of modernism. Given the atemporal inflections of Hulme’s remarks concerning

---

84 See Chapter 2, sections 2-3.
geometric art, such conclusions cannot be considered baseless. However, here Hulme makes clear, as he does elsewhere, that the new art “will not be world-rejecting in the sense in which the Byzantine was.” What Hulme may mean here can be further outlined with reference to his view concerning Romanticism. The Romantic, says Hulme, is “somebody who is always just about to escape from something. Always ‘escaping,’ that is it!” For Hulme, then, the “refuge” that certain incarnations of geometric art have taken on in the past cannot be considered a basis for confusing abstraction with an isolationist aesthetic of escape. An escapist aesthetic would be humanist (i.e., modern) in orientation.

This point is of particular significance if only because it is able to found the considerations of Chapter Two not simply in a theory of modernism but in the actual theoretical reflections of modernist authors themselves. For T.E. Hulme’s influence would be wide-ranging and formative, particularly over authors like those of the “Men of

---

87 Hulme, “Modern Art and Its Philosophy,” 274.
1914.” The nature of that influence is manifold, several aspects of which will be traced carefully in subsequent sections of this chapter. What is important to underscore here is first of all the manner in which Hulme continually works within a narrative of modernity as decadence; second, the way in which his various models of how one should relate to modernity – whether “classical” or “religious” – are founded upon certain common postures which stress opposition but within a framework of relationality; and third, the degree to which Hulme’s use of Worringer’s polarities of abstraction and empathy serve as a basis, along with the “classicism” of French and Anglophone traditions, for a theory of art and anti-modernity grounded in the satirical.

Hulme’s aesthetic values the hard, the objective, the anti-human in the sense of recognizing human limitations and therefore human folly but also in the sense of anti-realism or of the stylization of reality. Tradition, order, the communitarian impulse are also of great concern to him. Additionally, in aligning himself with Worringer’s concept of abstraction as opposed to empathy, Hulme sketches an aesthetics of reception which focuses on the need for a lack of sentimental or affective attachment to the mimesis of art. All of these features of Hulme’s aesthetic can be broadly considered to be part of, or at least necessary preconditions for, satirical aesthetics.

Let us think for only a moment of the anti-humanism of Swift and Lewis, or of the manner in which all satire requires what Frye calls “at least a token fantasy”89 but which we may refer to simply as a kind of stylization or an exaggeration of some kind, or the way in which satire requires a communitarian ideal to even be understood, or the manner in which it deflects mimetic identifications which would be inimical to its

---

projects of criticism. The aesthetic of T.E. Hulme is therefore one which includes at least within the scope of its possibilities central tenets of an aesthetic of satire. It would be up to the modernists that followed him to explore the avenues and pathways available to this aesthetic.

4.4 Classicism and Irving Babbitt

As I will discuss in greater detail in the next section, T.S. Eliot included in his canon of “classicism” in 1926 his former professor at Harvard, Irving Babbitt. Like Hulme’s, and concomitant with him, Babbitt’s work was influenced by *L’Action française* and shared its diagnosis of contemporary culture: that it was decadent and that this decadence could be blamed on Rousseau’s Romanticism. Babbitt, however, would also make known his reservations about certain aspects of French neoclassicism, particularly its penchant for mixing religion and politics with criticism. What is more, as Eliot himself will observe at points, Babbitt’s “classicism” is more individualistic than is Maurras’ and Lasserre’s and the extent to which it could be said to subscribe to Hulmean notions of Original Sin is not at all certain.


91 In this regard, see especially, Irving Babbitt, *Rousseau and Romanticism* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1977; originally published 1919).

92 Irving Babbitt, *Masters of Modern French Criticism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1940; originally published, 1912). “The Frenchman has a way,” insists Babbitt, “partly as a result of his logical stringency, of connecting the literary problem with the religious problem and then running the religious problem in turn into the political problem,” 381.

Babbitt’s 1912 volume, *Masters of Modern French Criticism*, is especially important and would certainly become well-known in modernist circles. There, Babbitt would argue that French criticism represents an important site for modern philosophical matters of the greatest concern to culture. Casting his contemporary situation as a replay of Greek sophistry versus Socratic philosophy, Babbitt decries the uncritical valuation of the flux of experience and of intuition in Bergson and William James and instead calls for a more balanced and nuanced understanding of the role of intuition and for greater appreciation for stable and permanent values within the intellectual community of the time. For Babbitt, the central issue is the age-old “problem of the One and the Many” – that is, of the unifying relations of difference.

The problem when it comes more specifically to criticism (though keeping in mind the manner in which for Babbitt criticism at this time forms an interface with the varieties of cultural activity) is in large measure one of “judgment.” And like Hulme, Babbitt is eager to play the prophet. His sense of “what is most needed” at his present moment is of some interest to the larger argument presented here.

What is most needed just now is not great doctors of relativity like Renan and Sainte-Beuve, but rather a critic who, without being at all rigid or reactionary, can yet carry into his work the sense of standards that are set above individual caprice

---

*Essays 1917-1932*, 393-402. For a discussion of Babbitt in relation to Bergson, Hulme, and Lasserre, see Levenson, 81-4; and also, Asher, 31-3.

94 Its larger argument concerning the need to provide a metaphysic of stability amidst Bergsonian flux would stand as a good synopsis of Wyndham Lewis’ 1927 treatise, *Time and Western Man*. Eliot includes Babbitt’s book in a section of additional readings on his syllabus for his 1916 Oxford extension lectures.

and the flux of phenomena; who can, in short, oppose a genuine humanism to the pseudo-humanism of the pragmatists.\textsuperscript{96}

One can safely assume that Eliot was familiar with these lines. And the same could probably be said of Wyndham Lewis. Certainly, there is something in the criticism of both these men, as well as in their creative work, so very different though they may be, which seems a conscious attempt to live out this messianic description.

With this in mind, the matter becomes all the more intriguing when we read the next sentences in Babbitt’s text:

A critic of this kind might be counted on to proclaim a philosophy, not of vital impulse, like M. Bergson, but of vital unity and vital restraint – restraint felt as an inner living law and not merely as a dead and mechanical outer rule. We may venture the paradox that criticism would derive less benefit from another Sainte-Beuve than from a second Boileau, that is, from a man who should work as effectively for the right kind of concentration in our own day as Boileau did in the seventeenth century….A modern Boileau, if he were to be effective, would have to take up in himself the main results of the great expansion of the last century, but he would be primarily concerned, not with embracing the universe in the vast affirmation of love, but with making keen and crisp discriminations between degrees of merit or demerit. He would also feel in his own way that hatred with which Boileau said he had been inspired from the age of fifteen – the hatred of the stupid book; and he would not lack material on which to exercise it. \textit{In others words, the age offers an opening for satire}; but it must be constructive satire….Nothing could be more inspiriting than some twentieth-century equivalent for those first satires of Boileau when the bad authors went down before his epigrams like the suitors before the shafts of Odysseus. [emphasis added]\textsuperscript{97}

Babbitt’s insight into the possibilities – and the need – for satire in his time is connected very much with his “classical” orientation. Even after one acknowledges that Babbitt here

\textsuperscript{96} Babbitt, \textit{Masters of Modern French Criticism}, 379.

\textsuperscript{97} Babbitt, \textit{Masters of Modern French Criticism}, 379-80.
refers specifically to literary criticism, his diagnosis is no less powerful and prescient.

For it is the view of this dissertation that Babbitt would in fact get what he asks for here, not only in the area of literary criticism but also in the imaginative literature and cultural critiques of modernism. The modern Boileaus would in fact arrive in those four horsemen of the apocolyspe: the “Men of 1914.”

4.5 Classicism and T.S. Eliot

The work of T.S. Eliot evidences a similar continuing preoccupation with, and development with regard to, the concept of “classicism” as can be found in T.E. Hulme, a writer whom Eliot greatly admired. Additionally, Eliot shared with Hulme, and quite apart from Hulme, an interest in *L’Action française* and other advocates of classicism like Irving Babbitt. In this way, there is in Eliot’s intellectual history a complex pedigree that includes Hulme and therefore incorporates all of Hulme’s influences but that also includes Eliot’s own direct familiarity with many of those same influences, which were in most cases prior to his first acquaintances with the work of Hulme.

As mentioned above, Eliot enjoyed several relations early on which predisposed him to the networks of “classicism” prevalent in Western culture at the time. The mentorship of Irving Babbitt was certainly formative, and it was Babbitt who was likely responsible for Eliot’s early interest already in 1910 or 1911 with Charles Maurras. Eliot’s Oxford University Extension Lectures on modern French literature delivered in 1916 show the degree to which he was familiar with the French authors and with French notions of “classicism.”
The first lecture (of six) situates modern French literature within the context of Romanticism, and particularly (à la Maurras and Babbitt) in the founding figure of Rousseau.98 The second lecture, entitled “The Reaction against Romanticism,” opens with the statement that “[t]he beginning of the twentieth century has witnessed a return to the ideals of classicism.”

These may be roughly characterized as form and restraint in art, discipline and authority in religion, centralization in government (either in socialism or monarchy). The classicist point of view has been defined as essentially a belief in Original Sin – the necessity for austere discipline.99

As Louis Menand rightly points out, if Eliot is attempting here to summarize the Maurrasian perspective, the notion of “centralization in government” is not appropriate, as Maurras held to a localist approach to royal governance.100 The definition itself seems in any event to have Hulmean echoes (the emphasis on Original Sin, for example, is particularly pronounced in Hulme, as is the consistent capitalization of the term).101 With

---

98 A facsimile of the extension lectures can be found in A. David Moody, Thomas Stearns Eliot: Poet 2nd Ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1994), 41-9. Eliot’s descriptions of Rousseau and Romanticism are standard. He does refer to Romanticism at one point as “excess in any direction. It splits up into two directions: escape from the world of fact, and devotion to brute fact,” 43. Here, as for Hulme and the French, escapism is a particularly Romantic phenomenon.

99 Quoted in A. David Moody, 44. Although Eliot would perhaps move closer to Maurras and company in the 1910s and 1920s, his later long essays on the sociology of culture, such as “The Idea of a Christian Society” and “Notes Toward the Definition of Culture,” show both Eliot’s debts to Maurras (and, for that matter, to Babbitt) as well as significant divergences. From Maurras, he received an appreciation for order; from Babbitt, a love of culture. But Eliot is more flexible, less tendentious, than both, and more open to the possibilities of transcendence as an interface of culture.


101 Louis Menand remarks that “the identification of classicism with the doctrine of original sin is very likely from Hulme,” 48. The question of when Eliot became acquainted with the ideas of T.E. Hulme and if he ever actually knew Hulme personally has been long debated. On the basis of recently discovered letters, Ronald Schuchard has concluded that the two did in fact meet (and that Eliot was familiar with portions of Hulme’s work, including his emphasis on Original Sin, from at least 1916). See Ronald
Maurras and also Hulme (and perhaps thinking of them), Eliot explicitly connects the political with the religious and the literary, contending (in striking anticipation of his 1927 declaration that he was a “classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion”) that “a classicist in art and literature will therefore be likely to adhere to a monarchical form of government, and to the Catholic Church.”

As for Eliot’s own relation to Lasserre and Maurras, he tells us in the lecture that “their reaction [is] fundamentally sound, but marked by extreme violence and intolerance.”

“Classical” French criticism would have much impact on Eliot’s writings, much more than is perhaps often understood. General themes like the necessity for aesthetic order, artistic discipline and self-sacrifice, and the value of tradition all have at least their basic origins in French “classicism.” What is more, these are not ideas of Eliot’s “later” period, after his turn toward what some may regard as cultural imperialism and religious conservatism. They are instead the ideas of his most read and discussed essays, including and most especially “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” a document which is indebted to Maurras in many ways.

Advocacy for “classicism” in more explicit terms began to emerge in Eliot’s work of the early 1920s, most prominently with the lengthy romanticism-classicism debates between Eliot and John Middleton Murry. Around the same time of that exchange, Eliot


---


103 Quoted in A. David Moody, 47.

104 Cf. n. 43 above.
wrote his now-famed review article of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, which praised the book’s use of what Eliot called the “mythical method” but which also classified the book in terms of “classicism.” In so doing, Eliot offers something of a typology of classicism, something that Hulme had already before discussed in his own way here and there. Eliot speaks of two classicisms, one that is essentially conservative and one that is innovative but always toward the end of “order and form” and “discipline.” The classicism of Joyce belongs to the latter type.

Eliot is defending Joyce from the criticisms of Richard Aldington, who sees Joyce’s work in terms of “chaos” rather than classical “order.” In so defending, Eliot is upholding traditional “classical” values but, like Hulme before him, is carving out space, as his earlier essays on tradition had done also, for a particularly modernist form of classicism, so that classicism can be simply “doing the best one can with the materials at hand” and it can be found in innovative techniques like the “mythical method” which serve the ends of order and form.

And it is at this point that one can see the nature of Eliot’s connections to Maurras and others. Eliot and Hulme both owe a great debt to the French school of “classicism,” without question. But their debts were not mere transcriptions. Rather, they borrowed


106 Hulme speaks in “A Tory Philosophy” of dynamic and static kinds of classicism. As mentioned above, he also speaks of the need for the new classicism to be different from the old in “Romanticism and Classicism.”


principles of order, narratives of decadence, aesthetic values and satiric postures, and injected them with their own, more innovatory sensibilities, so that the principles of “classicism” outlined by Maurras or Lasserre could be applied not to the conventionalities of Anatole France or Jean Moréas but to the fresh approaches of Eliot’s *The Waste Land* or Joyce’s *Ulysses*.

But of course not everyone, then as now, has been convinced that such a dialectic of tradition and innovation is possible or, if possible, is truly “classical.” And herein lies the crux in many ways of the debate between Eliot and John Middleton Murry which ensued in earnest in September of 1923.¹¹⁰ The many aspects of the debate have been covered from a variety of angles by scholars and critics, and the full nature of the back-and-forth will be discussed here only in insufficient detail.¹¹¹ Our focus is of course Eliot’s articulations of classicism.

Eliot’s first salvo, “The Function of Criticism,” written in response to Murry’s critique of classicism, characterizes his earlier essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent” as dealing basically with “the problem of order.” Here Eliot shows clearly its relationship to the “classicism” he will discuss in this essay on criticism, for criticism, too, is “essentially a problem of order.”¹¹² Both essays therefore display the “classical”

---

¹¹⁰ In one of the exchanges of that debate, Murry said that Eliot was guilty of having “classicism for his wife and romanticism for his mistress,” John Middleton Murry, “The ‘Classical’ Revival (II).” *Adelphi* (Mar. 1926): 648.


spirit. In seeing literature as “organic wholes” which the poet must necessarily compose “in relation” to, Eliot offers a view of art as inextricably connected to and as living from its heritage. While he has none of, say, Scaliger’s rigidity and lack of imagination with regard to the now-then dialectic, Eliot argues, in line with general neoclassical tenets, that good art is aware of, and related to, the past.

Eliot speaks, again, in Maurrasian tones about the need for the poet or artist to “surrender and sacrifice himself” in awareness that there is “something outside of the artist to which he owes allegiance.” The word “outside” and its corollaries will have particular significance at least for a time in the debate with Murry and will extend in several directions. The “outside” that the artist must recognize can be the artistic tradition that he enters into, as we have seen. But it can also be the “unconscious community” of “the true artists of any time.” More dramatically, this “outside” quality is in fact the determinative element of difference between Murry and Eliot, Romanticism and Classicism: “Those of us who find ourselves supporting what Mr. Murry calls Classicism believe that men cannot get on without giving allegiance to something outside themselves,” the implication of course being that those who support Murry’s Romanticism can get on without giving such “allegiance.”

For Eliot, exteriority in art and criticism is so necessary because on it rests a common standard for judgment, a prerequisite for art and criticism: “those who obey the

---

inner voice….will not be interested in the attempt to find any common principles for the pursuit of criticism.”

But Eliot goes further and connects, much as Maurras surely would (and as Hulme himself did), the “Inner Voice” to the political, labeling that voice the voice of “Whiggery.” Here exteriority becomes not simply a matter of aesthetics but of politics, and to be in favor of exteriority or interiority in aesthetics is to be in favor of it in politics.

The ways in which Eliot’s discussion of Classicism and Romanticism incorporate extra-aesthetic dimensions are clear enough in the set of binary oppositions that he proposes as embodying the essential “difference” between the two: “the complete and the fragmentary, the adult and the immature, the orderly and the chaotic.” Here we find a recapitulation of the tripartite form-discipline-order schema that undergirded his discussion of Joyce around this same time.

The publication in 1924 of T.E. Hulme’s *Speculations* edited by Herbert Read marked a further occasion to discuss the romantic-classic opposition, with Eliot introducing another set of binaries to characterize Hulme and his thought. Hulme is presented as the “forerunner of a new attitude of mind…. Hulme is classical, reactionary, and revolutionary; he is the antipodes [sic] of the eclectic, tolerant, and democratic mind.

---

117 Eliot, “The Function of Criticism,” 17. This statement is more than reminiscent of Babbitt’s call for standards of judgment in criticism. It is somewhat ironic, then, that Murry’s phrasing “inner voice” is itself somewhat reminiscent of Babbitt’s “inner check.” In his later essay on Babbitt, Eliot will conclude that Babbitt’s humanism actually partakes of the kind of Humanism that Hulme would reject (and reject it he would, one remembers, on the grounds of it being the true root of Romanticism). For Murry’s use of “inner voice,” see John Middleton Murry, “On Fear; and Romanticism.” *Aldephi* (Sept. 1923): 277.


of the end of last century.” The inclusion of the “revolutionary” with the “classical” is an additional reminder of the degree to which modernist classicism can be differentiated from the rhetoric of *L’Action française*, which associated the “revolutionary” almost exclusively with Romanticism (seen as it was as the simultaneous cause and effect of the Revolution).

A noticeable shift in the debate, and in Eliot’s formulations, can be discerned by the time of Eliot’s programmatic manifesto on “The Idea of a Literary Review” in the January 1926 issue of the *New Criterion*. Here Eliot offers a canon of “classicism” that includes works by, among others, Charles Maurras, Julien Benda, Irving Babbitt, T.E. Hulme, and Jacques Maritain. In the piece Eliot declares “the modern tendency” as being toward classicism, though he stresses once again that this cannot be construed as the classicism of “dead laws of order.”

Yet there is a tendency – discernible even in art – toward a higher and clearer conception of Reason, and a more severe and serene control of the emotions by Reason. If this approaches or even suggests the Greek ideal, so much the better: but it must inevitably be very different.

Now “Reason” becomes the defining characteristic of classicism, and “Reason” related to the “Greek ideal.” Although without question antecedents of such emphasis can be found in many authors of Eliot’s classical canon, previously Eliot (as well as Hulme and, I

---


would argue, Maurras\textsuperscript{122}) tended to oppose Romantic emotion with notions of exteriority like order and discipline, tradition, and the like, rather than with great stress on rationality.\textsuperscript{123} This development toward the rational as a preeminent classical value, though itself temporary, can be seen as reflective of the larger debate with Murry. It can be evidenced, for example, in Herbert Read’s book, also of 1926, entitled not Classicism and Romanticism, but \textit{Reason and Romanticism}.\textsuperscript{124}

Although the Eliot-Murry debate, which extended by the time of its cessation in much wider directions than simply those two individuals, was in some ways derivative and marked just as much by non-intellectual as by intellectual concerns, it does afford us some important points of contrast to which we might not otherwise be privy. For example, at one point Murry configures a narrative of Romanticism quite similar to Hulme’s, although his is one of progress rather than decadence. For Murry as for Hulme, the Renaissance (and the Reformation) mark a period of decisive break with the external

\textsuperscript{122} In the case of Maurras, a variety of accents are possible. Some scholars stress the rationalistic elements of Maurrassian neoclassicism, although in my view these can be easily exaggerated. In some ways, it is a matter of how one chooses to view Maurras’ allegiance to Comte and his relationship to Voltaire. It is important in my view to recall always that Maurras’ appeals to reason come within the context of tradition and order and therefore can be sharply differentiated from Enlightenment rationality. Cf. Tony Kunter, \textit{Charles Maurras, la Contre-Révolution pour héritage} (Paris: Nouvelle editions latines, 2009). For a discussion of Maurras as heir to a kind of classicism as rationalism, see Ronald N. Stromberg, \textit{An Intellectual History of Modern Europe} (Prentice-Hall, 1975), 412.

\textsuperscript{123} It should be said, however, that Eliot’s notion of tradition was from the beginning never one of passive acceptance. And as he writes in \textit{After Strange Gods}, “a tradition without intelligence is not worth having,” T.S. Eliot, \textit{After Strange Gods} (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1934), 20.

\textsuperscript{124} Jason Harding traces the influence of “reason” at least in part to Eliot’s interest at the time in French neo-Thomism, Harding, \textit{The Criterion: Cultural Politics and Periodical Networks in Inter-War Britain}, 33-4.
spiritualities of the Middle Ages. This break allowed for the flourishing of the inner
voice so central to Romanticism.\textsuperscript{125}

Interestingly, Eliot does not subscribe to this narrative. “I do not understand,”
writes Eliot, “Mr. Murry’s attitude toward ‘faith,’ or his theory of ‘reason,’ ‘intelligence’
and ‘intuition,’ or his philosophy of history, with its sharp division between the Middle
Ages and the Renaissance. [emphasis added]”\textsuperscript{126} In this regard, Eliot seems more in line
with the Hulme of “classicism” strictly speaking than with the Hulme of the “religious
attitude.”\textsuperscript{127}

And yet, Eliot’s views related to classicism would continue to develop beyond his
debates with Murry and, in this respect much like Hulme, he would even find himself
settling on different and more radical terms of polarity. Jason Harding has shown the
degree to which Eliot sought to use the idea of “classicism” as a tool for forging a
culturally unified Europe in the post-World War I era.\textsuperscript{128} But by the early 30s, his
interests were unfolding in additional directions. His lectures given at the University of


\textsuperscript{126} T.S. Eliot, “Mr. Middleton Murry’s Synthesis.” \textit{Criterion} (Oct. 1927): 341. Eliot was probably
influenced in this view by the writings of the French neo-Thomist philosopher and intellectual historian
Etienne Gilson, whose view of the Middle Ages Eliot was favorable to and who argued for greater
continuity between the medieval and Renaissance periods than was accepted at the time (cf. Burckhardt’s
periodization, with which Gilson often did battle). For an example of Eliot’s positive appraisal of Gilson,

\textsuperscript{127} Several critics have argued that Eliot’s historical narrative of the “disassociation of sensibility”
could be considered (at least in part) a re-mapping of Maurras’ narrative about the fall of classical
monarchy and the rise of the Revolution. See Asher, 45-8; Beasley, \textit{Theorists of Modern Poetry}, 53-4;

\textsuperscript{128} See Jason Harding, “Defence of the West,” in \textit{The Criterion: Cultural Politics and Periodical
Networks in Inter-War Britain}, 202-26.
Virginia and published in 1934 under the title *After Strange Gods* testify to important changes, as well as continuities, in Eliot’s thought about “classicism.”

In these lectures Eliot endeavors to discuss contemporary literature “in the role of moralist.” Like Hulme, Eliot here moves beyond classicism and romanticism as terms inadequate for his purposes and replaces them with the religiously infused concepts of “orthodoxy” and “heresy.” Eliot himself acknowledges the affinities between the first and second set of binaries. Orthodoxy-heresy is for Eliot “more fundamental” than romanticism-classicism. And in implicit repudiation of much of his earlier writings connected with the Murry debate, Eliot argues that the romantic-classic paradigm is vague in one way and in another is too broadly multivalent, extending as it does beyond the aesthetic.

Romanticism and classicism are not matters with which creative writers can afford to bother overmuch, or with which they do, as a rule, in practice generally concern themselves….The danger of using terms like ‘romantic’ and ‘classic’…. does not spring so much from the confusion caused by those who use the terms about their own work, as from inevitable shifts of meaning in context….Finally – and this is the most important point – the differences represented by these two terms are not such as can be confined to a purely literary context. In using them, you are ultimately bringing in all human values, and according to your own scheme of valuation.

The transformation here is striking. In the 1920s, and even in some ways before, Eliot very often went out of his way to connect the values of classicism to broader “human values.”

---

129 For a thorough discussion of this transition in Eliot’s thought, see Asher, 35-84.


values” and, even more, so much of his back-and-forth with Murry had to do with Eliot’s insistence that classicism was concerned above else with something greater than one’s “own scheme of valuation,” that it relied not on an “Inner Voice” but on an “Outside Authority.” Now here we find Eliot saying just the opposite: that classicism is too broadly connected with “human values” (now a censurable quality) and that it is essentially subjectivist (subject as it is to “your own scheme of valuation”).

Additionally, Eliot directly addresses and ultimately revokes the tripartite confession for royalism, classicism, and Anglo-Catholicism that he made in his preface to *For Lancelot Andrewes*. Or, more precisely, he relativizes the relationship between the three, emphasizing that there is no necessary relation between them:

That there are connexions for me [between the three] I of course admit, but these illuminate my own mind rather than the external world; and I now see the danger of suggesting to outsiders that the Faith is a political principle or a literary fashion, and the sum of all a dramatic posture.\(^{133}\)

Whereas previously he had spent much of his early work drawing connections, in the Maurrasian, Hulmean fashion, between culture, aesthetic, society, and religion, now Eliot is at pains to make distinctions among these realities.

That said, the fact that Eliot in these very lectures wishes to view literature in the terms of orthodoxy and heresy should indicate that he is still very much willing to relate these distinct spheres and that now for him it is the religious element that determines the others. In other words, it would be wrong to suppose that Eliot has somehow now seen the error of his ways and adopted a radical autonomy of some sort. And these points can

be made all the more salient when we consider that this series of lectures is that in which Eliot’s most extreme theories of culture are elaborated.

Under the banner of “orthodoxy” Eliot makes many of the same points with regard to tradition and innovation that had preoccupied him previously. Heresy is connected with excessive “originality,” while excessive traditionalism is also censured. Interesting for our topic is Eliot’s echoing of Hulme in his comment that “you cannot write satire in the line of Pope or in the stanza of Byron,”134 a remark I take to be a kind of personal narrative of his drafting of The Waste Land but one which is also very relevant to the broader idea of modernist satire as something uniquely formed from its own context and bearing its own internal dynamic.135 One also comes across the following observation: “most of us would not recognise a classical writer if he appeared, so queer and horrifying he would seem even to those who clamour for him.”136 Which comes more than twenty years after Hulme said that “when [the classical revival] does come we may not even recognise it as classical.”137

Eliot’s consideration of classicism would continue beyond his University of Virginia lectures. In some ways, his lecture “What is a Classic?” can be seen as a

---


137 Hulme, “Romanticism and Classicism,” 65.
culmination of what was a lifetime of thought on the topic.\textsuperscript{138} But that essay stretches well beyond the moment of high-modernism and concerns itself more with “classic” in the sense of the exceptional than with the uses of classicism to which Eliot and his modernist contemporaries were concerned in the period of early and high modernism.

On the whole, it is true to say that Eliot’s considerations of “classicism” only prepare the ground for Lewis’ reflections concerning satire. Eliot’s “classicism” is satirical only incidentally at least in terms of the number of direct references that we find connecting the two ideas. Nonetheless, the general image created by Eliot’s “classicism” is one completely in line with the goals and motivations of satire (and of modernism as satire): i.e., against emotion, subjectivity, privatization of value, chaos, etc. It should also be noted – and this is a point that is true as well for Lewis and to some extent Pound – that during much of the period of Eliot’s reflections on “classicism” he was writing his most satirical poetry. Here the praxis of modernism becomes a raison d’être for its \textit{theoria}.

\textbf{4.6 Wyndham Lewis and the Satire of Classicism}

For Wyndham Lewis, the idea of “classicism” will also be important. And it is Lewis who in many ways draws out the myriad implications of classicism which are suggested by the work of Eliot and Hulme. In Lewis’ theoretical reflection on satire, the

\textsuperscript{138} There is, for example, the statement that “unless we are able to enjoy the work of Pope, we cannot arrive at a full understanding of English poetry,” T.S. Eliot \textit{What is a Classic?} (London, 1945), 17.
constellation of values associated with classicism that we have been considering come fully into the foreground of modernism. And the satirical potentialities within the modernist classicism developed by Hulme and Eliot are drawn out and actualized more explicitly. What we have in Lewis, in other words, is the maturation of a true poetics of modernism grounded in satire, and one which would not be possible without – and is indeed inseparably connected to – the “classicism” of Eliot and Hulme. This aesthetic, in fact – when it is seen (as I believe it should be) as the continuation of Lewis’ Enemy posture against modern society, begun at the outset of Lewis’ career with Blast as we have seen earlier in this chapter – really is inextricably connected with the origins of modernism and with the heart of modernism itself.

Although he is often regarded as an outlier within modernism, his connections with Eliot and Hulme in this regard, as well as his collaborations with Pound in the work of Blast, do not seem to warrant such a standing. From the beginning Wyndham Lewis was at the center of modernism. And his theoretical formulations are among the most compelling articulations of modernist aesthetic intentionality. The fact that he has suffered a marginalized status within modernist scholarship, an effect for which there are many causes, has resulted in a very different picture of modernism (and particularly of modernist poetics) than otherwise would have been the case. It is not simply a matter of making our understanding of “high-modernism” – the modernism of the “Men of 1914” – more complete; rather, more attention to Lewis’ primordial status within modernism will change in fundamental ways how we conceive of the nature of modernism. I hope some

of the reverberations of this have already been felt in the discussion of Blast as a foundational moment in modernism earlier in this chapter and that they will be felt all the more here as Lewis’ writings on the subjects of classicism and satire are considered.

From the beginning, Wyndham Lewis had a predilection for the classical impulse. In Blast, for example, Lewis blesses “the hairdresser” as a symbol of the classical ordering of nature. And Lewis’ associations with T.E. Hulme and his familiarity with Hulme’s classicism were, to a much greater extent than Eliot’s, concomitant with Hulme’s work. In many ways, Lewis’ artwork in particular can be taken as aesthetic actualizations of Hulme’s theories. This is certainly Lewis’ later assessment:

All the best things Hulme said about the theory of art were said about my art. This remark is altogether without conceit….We happened, that is all, to be made for each other, as critic and ‘creator.’ What he said should be done, I did. Or it would be more exact to say that I did it, and he said it.

This causal reversal reflects Lewis’ more general sense, evident throughout his discussion in Blasting and Bombardiering, that Hulme had gotten more attention than he had perhaps deserved (or perhaps simply more attention than Lewis for things that Lewis felt he had a hand in). And in that late volume, published in 1937, Lewis is remarkably

---

140 Wyndham Lewis, Blast, 25. Cf. Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, where he glosses the text in this way: “[The blessing of the hairdresser] exalts the formality and order, at the expense of the disorderly and the unkempt. It is merely a humorous way of stating the classical standpoint, as against the romantic,” 38.


candid about his “respectful” attitude toward Hulme, as well as the events of their stormy relationship.\textsuperscript{143}

If Lewis is perhaps too insistent on this point, it would not be accurate to say that he had no legitimate quarrel. Certainly, it would not be accurate to characterize either Lewis’ artwork or his later theoretical work in satire and classicism as somehow derivative of Hulme. They may have been like minds in many respects, but Lewis surely had his own.

Still, the nature of that like-mindedness Lewis does not shy away from expressing:

It would be quite out of the question for me to show you in such a context as this how all this sort of thinking resulted in Hulme and myself preferring something anti-naturalist and ‘abstract’ to Nineteenth Century naturalism, in picture and in statues. It much suffices for me to say that Man was not the hero of our universe. We thought he required a great deal of tyding-up before he became presentable; both he and I preferred to the fluxions in stone of an Auguste Rodin (following photographically the lines of nature) the more concentrated abstractions-from-nature of the Egyptians.\textsuperscript{144}

There are several points which this later text of 1937 summarizes and redacts for us. First among them is the notion that the abstract aesthetic is founded on the notion of “Original Sin,” that “stuffy old doctrine”\textsuperscript{145} which Hulme revived. Second, that the abstract aesthetic is anti-humanist or anti-heroic in character. And third, that it favors non-

\textsuperscript{143} Lewis, \textit{Blasting and Bombardiering}, 107-8.
\textsuperscript{144} Lewis, \textit{Blasting and Bombardiering}, 103.
\textsuperscript{145} Lewis, \textit{Blasting and Bombardiering}, 104.
Western art forms over Western art forms. All of these elements will be of central importance as we follow Lewis’ construction of a modernist poetic.

Beyond *Blast* and throughout the 1910s and 20s Lewis cultivated various models of his always oppositional posture, whether it be the blaster, the Tyro, the “Solitary Outlaw,” or the Enemy.\(^{146}\) And his abandoned, massive work, *The Man of the World*, can also be seen much along these lines, as is evident in the spate of books which came forth from that aborted project, all of which were critiques and salvoes in one way or another against current socio-political and cultural regimes.\(^{147}\) One of those works was a shorter essay from 1926, “Creatures of Habit and Creatures of Change.” There, Lewis balked, as Hulme did, at the idea of progress, referring to its origins in the “technique of advertisement.” For Lewis, the creative arts offer the most glaring evidence of the dubitable nature of progress, and his example in this regard is illustrative: “There is no possible ‘better’ than the productions of the great periods of chinese [sic] art. All the idea

\(^{146}\) The blaster of course can be taken to be the basic idea behind *Blast*, but Lewis would develop other, related personas, often like the blaster, connected with journals that he would publish. He edited and wrote the majority of the material for his journal *The Tyro* during its two-issue run in 1920-1. He would do the same for *The Enemy* during the years 1927-9. It was in a 1927 editorial of this latter magazine that he wrote on “The Solitary Outlaw.” The distinguished Lewis scholar Paul Edwards has emphasized the differences in these various personas, illustrating what he believes to be Lewis’ evolution from avant-gardist enthusiast to isolated reactionary, Paul Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer* (Yale UP, 2000), 286-7. Certainly, however, there are broad themes common to all of these images of the creator in his relation to society, including most especially themes related to the satirical.

\(^{147}\) Lewis began working on the project in the early 1920s, during the same period as his drafting of *Joint*, and by early 1925 he submitted a manuscript of *The Man of the World* for publication. It was rejected for obvious reasons. The “little treatise,” as Lewis called it, was nearly five-hundred-thousand words and his cover letter to the editor was as obnoxious in tone as Lewis could make it. The project was eventually divided into several smaller parts, which would become the following: “Creature of Habit and Creatures of Change,” April 1926 *Calendar of Modern Letters*, *The Art of Being Ruled* (1926), *The Lion and the Fox: the Role of the Hero in the Plays of Shakespeare* (1927), *Time and Western Man* (1927), and portions of *The Diabolical Principle and the Dithyrambic Spectator* (1931); cf. Edwards, 286.
of getting a definition of progress from the fine arts must then be abandoned.”

While Lewis would never abandon his admiration for the Renaissance as would Hulme, he nevertheless like Hulme regards the notion of progress and the “Big Business” apparatuses of that ideology as highly problematic – and, what is more, when offering proofs against such progress, he refers to an “oriental” art tradition along the same lines of the Hulmean aesthetic.

And in the essay Lewis makes use of the rhetoric of classicism precisely to undercut ideologies of progress:

A painting by Picasso, Chirico, Derain, sculpture by Brancusi, for instance, is better, if for any reason, because, precisely in the work of those artists, the ‘scientific’ engouement of the Nineteenth Century has been cast out of their minds and practice altogether. It is a progress backwards (if science-for-science is your criteria of progress) to the great, central, and stable canons of artistic expression, away from the atmospheric, impressionistic, molecular-pointilliste, vibratory-plein-air nineteenth century aesthetic. Classicist is the term commonly used to describe this return to the secular canons of art.

“Classicist” is invoked here as a “return,” as the basis for standards for aesthetic judgment, evaluation, and practice. And it is further seen as means for revitalizing the aesthetic against the decadence of current models. Many of the basic elements that we have seen in prior uses of classicism as a conceptual model are present here: as an anti-progressive force, as a return to standards, as a dialectic of return and renewal that can achieve a revitalization of art.

---


Lewis’ use of classicism would soon be extended in his most ambitious non-fiction work, the 1927 volume, *Time and Western Man*. The whole of the book can be read as a rejection, in great sympathy most especially with Irving Babbitt but also with Eliot and Hulme, of the “Romantic” worship of the “flux” cultivated by philosophers such as Bergson and Samuel Alexander and by literary authors such as Ezra Pound and James Joyce. What is offered in contrast is a vision of exteriority and objectivity that can be broadly classified under the heading of “classicism,” understood as the collection of intellectual trends and tendencies which we are tracing here.

That Lewis categorizes Joyce and Pound as “Romantics” should not trouble us. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Lewis was often condemning the writers with whom he shared the most and who most influenced him. And it is not as if the matter is as simple as “condemnation.” Pound, for example, was a very important early partner of Lewis in the project of Vorticism and in the work of *Blast*, to which Pound contributed not only poetry but also his critical and journalistic talents. Pound’s gruff satirical mode is well on display in the unique discourse of *Blast*. And we have already spoken of Joyce’s diverse influences on Lewis’ oeuvre in detail in the previous chapter. It is enough at this point simply to recognize perhaps Lewis’ most important non-fiction book of the 20s as a work very much a part of romantic-classic polemics.

There is a recognition in the book of semantic variety in the use of the word “romantic.” Lewis distinguishes between the “modern ‘classic-romantic’ opposition” – i.e., the “rational, aloof and aristocratic” versus the “popular, sensational and
‘cosmically’ confused”\textsuperscript{151} – and a more general usage of “romantic” connected with science: that is, “what is unreal or unlikely…in contrast to what is \textit{scientifically} true and accessible to the senses here and now.”\textsuperscript{152} The two uses are not mutually exclusive and encompass the wider range of attitudes connected with anti-romantic modernism that we have been considering.

And for a writer often stigmatized as a “fascist,”\textsuperscript{153} Lewis’ polemic against what he defines as “romantic” contains a noteworthy defense of a certain pluralism against modern uniformities. If Romanticism can be defined as “\textit{the opposite of the real},” a consequence of its widespread acceptance is the refusal to “realize [emphasis added] other people.”\textsuperscript{154} If Romanticism is the obsession of personality, it is for Lewis an axiom that “the more your particular personality will obsess you, the more dependent upon \textit{its} reality [emphasis added] you will be.” And therefore,

The more you will insist on [your particular personality] with a certain frenzy. And the more ‘individualist’ you are in this sense, the less ‘individualist’ you will be in the ordinary political sense. You will have achieved a fanatical hegemony with your unique feeling.

Political ‘individualism’ signifies the opposite of that. It expresses belief in the desirability of \textit{many} individuals instead of \textit{one}. Your “individualism” will be that mad one of the ‘one and only’ self, a sort of instinctive solipsism in practice. It will cause you to be, therefore, the most dangerous of madmen, that

\textsuperscript{151} Wyndham Lewis, \textit{Time and Western Man} (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1957; originally published 1927), 9.

\textsuperscript{152} Lewis, \textit{Time and Western Man}, 11.


\textsuperscript{154} Lewis, \textit{Time and Western Man}, 6, 8.
kind that has no scruples where other people are concerned, because he has an
imperfect belief in their existence.155

The emphasis on true “individualism” is reminiscent to some extent of the particular
brand of “classicism” cultivated by Irving Babbitt. And, more generally, Lewis prizes a
*trahison des clercs* approach to culture owing much to Julien Benda. But Lewis is
nothing if not idiosyncratic in his ideas as well as in his sources, as can be seen by his
simultaneous cooptation in the later pages of *Time and Western Man* of both the realism
of neo-Thomism (F. Sheen, rather than Maritain) and the idealism of Berkeley as
countering forces against the solipsisms and unreality advocated by promoters of the
romantic flux.

And in his book *Paleface*, published in 1929, Lewis refers even more specifically
to neo-Thomism and to Berkeley in relation to a “classicism” that he finds himself
advocating:

> I am on the side of commonsense, as against abstraction, as was Berkeley, as are
today the Thomist thinkers…and my position, inasmuch as it causes me to oppose
on all issues ‘the romantic,’ comes under the heading ‘classical.’156

Lewis then spends a bit of time elaborating these assertions with a quotation and
explication from a book on Thomas and intellectualism by the Jesuit father Pierre

---


Rousselot, careful as he is to separate himself from Thomism’s “historical prejudices” and its “dogma.”\(^\text{157}\)

Such considerations provide the preamble for Lewis’ further elucidations on the matter of the “classical”:

Classical is for me anything which is nobly defined and exact, as opposed to that which is fluid – of the Flux – without outline, romantically ‘dark,’ vague, ‘mysterious,’ stormy, uncertain. The Hellenic age has no monopoly of those qualities generally catalogued as ‘classical’; so, according to me, the term ‘classical’ is used in much too restricted, historical, a sense; in a word, too historically.\(^\text{158}\)

In the following section heading, Lewis speaks of the “Necessity for a New Conception of the ‘West,’ and of the ‘Classical.’”\(^\text{159}\) And the figure of T.E. Hulme here looms large in the background.

In his attempts to broaden or de-historicize the meaning of “classicism,” Lewis provides us with a historical narrative very much similar to Hulme’s. He speaks of Greece as the source of various “naturalist mistakes” that are opposed to true classicism. “I believe,” says Lewis, “that we should use the Classical Orient (using this distinction in the sense of Guénon) to rescue us at length from that far-reaching tradition.”\(^\text{160}\)

\(^\text{157}\) Lewis, *Paleface*, 255.

\(^\text{158}\) Lewis, *Paleface*, 255. The values of the “exact” against the “vague” are also advocated for by Hulme in “Romanticism and Classicism,” 66.

\(^\text{159}\) Lewis, *Paleface*, 255.

\(^\text{160}\) Lewis, *Paleface*, 255. The reference to René Guénon is somewhat unusual for Wyndham Lewis, but of some relevance and interest to the present context. Guénon, a leading figure in the Traditionalist movement in Europe, published *Orient et Occident* in 1924 and *La crise du monde moderne* in 1927. The former called for the regeneration of Western culture via the Orient. What is particularly striking in Guénon’s account is the historical narrative of decadence that he offers, where the depravity of
paradox of a “Classical Orient” may be owed to René Guénon in part, but for Lewis the idea would certainly not be possible without T.E. Hulme. And the inattentions to the phases of Hulme’s development that such a phrase betrays – it is a conflation of Hulme’s classicism with his Worringerian aesthetic – seem the logical result of a reading of Herbert Read’s edition of Hulme’s writings, which by its manner of presentation actively encouraged such misunderstandings.161

In a most interesting way, Lewis has – just as Eliot had – utilized the concept of classicism within the framework of envisioning the cultural regeneration of the West. But for Lewis, in contrast with Eliot, this can come about only from “a new West,” one that “can only become ‘the West’ at all, in fact, in that way, by an act of further creation.” But if Lewis’ vision is perhaps more focused on the need for cultural innovation, and perhaps for a West that makes use of the more broadly defined “Classical” impulses of non-Western cultures, he nonetheless would agree with Eliot that the West, in order to revivify itself, must overcome its internal divisions, it must become in the words of Lewis, “our local Melting-pot.”162

---

161 In 1924 Herbert Read published a posthumous collection of Hulme’s essays and writings entitled Speculations. Read’s ordering of the essays in the collection, however, was not chronological. This organization suppressed the diachronic aspects of Hulme’s thought and led to a general perception that Hulme was a sloppy, unsystematic thinker (who could, for example, advocate for Bergsonian vitalism and Worringerian anti-vitalism nearly in one breath). It was not until Michael Levenson’s researches were published that a clearer picture has begun to emerge.

162 Lewis, Paleface, 255-6.
And yet, just as we found with Hulme and Eliot, Lewis will jettison “classicism” and the possibility of a “classical revival” by the early 1930s, as being impossible (“All are ‘romantic’,” he will say). His long chapter in *Men Without Art* on “The Terms ‘Classical’ and ‘Romantic’” is both a careful and studied consideration of those concepts, as well as a recognition of their lack of ultimate feasibility for Lewis’ time. But the chapter is also able to provide the intellectual linkages between Lewis’ notion of “classicism” and his theory of satire and is therefore able to provide a good window into the heart of Lewis’ poetics of modernism.

The following is his most succinct formulation of the classical spirit.

The ‘classical’ has a physiognomy of sorts, then: it has a solid aspect rather than a gaseous: it is liable to incline rather to the side of Aristotle than to the side of Plato: to be of a public rather than of a private character: to be objective rather than subjective: to incline to action rather than to dream: to belong to the sensuous side rather than to the ascetic: to be redolent of common sense rather than of metaphysic: to be universal rather than idiomatic: to lean upon the intellect rather than upon the bowels and nerves.
And he adds, invoking Ben Jonson, that the classical is also represented by the “rational animal, man, against the forces of nature.” One could spend a great deal of time tracing the various lines of influence in this brief description – for example, the preference for classical Aristotle over romantic Plato in *L’Action française* or even going back to Scaliger for that matter; or the ways in which the doctrines of exteriority are found in Lewis’ taxonomy – but it suffices to say that Lewis here is redacting rather than innovating. And we see many resonances of his earlier discussions of the classical here as well (i.e., common sense, solidity, etc).

Satire and the satirical relation to modern society are at once enduring and ever-increasing concerns of Lewis’ work from its beginnings, as we have seen with *Blast*. The connections between the satirical and the classical are therefore in this regard not unimportant. A key feature of Lewis’ mature satirical theory is the notion of satire as an “externalist” form of art, which evokes the exteriority so central to modernist classicism. Additionally, Lewis regards “the objective world of common sense” to be the “philosophic field” of satire, objectivity and “common sense” being central to Lewis’ idea of classicism as something “real” (as opposed to the unreality of romanticism).

---


167 Wyndham Lewis, “The Satirist and the Physical World,” in *Creatures of Habit and Creatures of Change: Essays on Art, Literature and Society, 1914-1956* ed. Paul Edwards (Santa Rosa, CA : Black Sparrow Press, 1989), 207-10. While it is in my view correct to speak of stages of development in Lewis’ thinking about satire, I am in complete agreement with Lewis scholars like Bernard Lafourcade who see Lewis’ later satirical theory already present in his earliest stories (e.g., *The Wild Body*). This observation is of great significance in bringing to our attention the abiding concerns of Lewis’ work. If we understand this essential unity, it is very difficult to speak of the “mature” theory of the 1930s as somehow determined by the “late” modernism of that decade. See Bernard Lafourcade, “The Taming of the Wild Body,” in *Wyndham Lewis: A Revaluation* ed. Jeffrey Meyers (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s UP, 1980), 68-84. 78.
These lines of convergence between classicism and satire reach a crescendo in *Men Without Art*.\(^{168}\) There, Lewis endeavors to defend art (i.e., satire) on the one hand against those who would politicize it and on the other hand against those who would seek an aestheticist isolation of the aesthetic from life.\(^{169}\) The assertion made by Lewis that “all art is in fact satire today”\(^{170}\) comes close to expressing the thesis that I am attempting to expound in this study. In illustrating this, Lewis makes the rounds of writers like Eliot, Faulkner, Hemingway, and himself, in order to show that satire has not simply become a significant option for the artist of his time; rather more dramatically for Lewis, satire has itself become synonymous with art, so that the relationship between the two is so intimate that they can really no longer be distinguished.\(^{171}\)

---

\(^{168}\) For a good discussion Lewis’ theory of satire in relation to classicism, one that reads Lewis’ external theory of satire as a “logical corollary of classicism,” see Andrzej Gasiorek, “From Classicism to Satire,” in *Wyndham Lewis and Modernism* (Devon, UK: Northcote House, 2003), 58-76. 62.

\(^{169}\) Lewis, *Men Without Art*, 10. There are two issues of significance to Lewis’ discussion of satire in *Men Without Art* that there is simply not space enough for us to consider in these pages. The first is Lewis’ idea that his satire is “non-moral,” while the second has to do with his critique of Joyce’s *Ulysses* as an example of the internal method (as opposed to Lewis’ own externalist method). On the latter issue, it will hopefully suffice to reiterate what I have said on other occasions here: that Lewis’ criticisms of Joyce and others are never disinterested. The extent to which Lewis’ theory of satire necessarily excludes Joyce is an interesting question, but one that I must prescind from considering at the present time. I will simply note Hugh Kenner’s objection that Lewis did not even follow his own strictures in this regard, Hugh Kenner, *Wyndham Lewis* (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions Books, 1954), 102-4. For a discussion on the “non-moral” component of Lewis’ satirical theory, and of its inconsistencies, see the enlightening treatment of Lewis in Robert C. Elliott’s *The Power of Satire*, 223-237.


\(^{171}\) Here mention should be made of the aesthetic theory of Hermann Broch, who both represents a point of significant contrast with Wyndham Lewis (in Broch’s emphasis on the ethical dimensions of satire) and of striking agreement (as a modernist who sought to focus attention on the value and preeminence of satire in modern art), cf. Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 295.
In the course of his discussion concerning contemporary art as satire, Lewis again explicitly connects the externalist aspects of the satirical with the idea of the classical. Even more, the Hulmean aesthetic and narrative about Western art is employed here to bolster an aesthetic of satire (and as a result, the extent to which for Lewis satire and contemporary art are interconnected comes more clearly into the foreground).

At one point, Lewis considers Hazlitt’s contrasting of Shakespeare with Jonson, finding that Hazlitt misunderstood Jonson because he misunderstood satire. Here now is the quotation from Hazlitt’s *The English Comic Writers*.

Shakespeare’s characters are men; Ben Jonson’s are more like machines, governed by mere routine, or by the convenience of the poet, whose property they are. In reading the one, we are let into the minds of his characters, we see the play of their thoughts, how their humours flow and work….His humour (so to speak) bubbles, sparkles, and finds its way in all directions, like a natural spring. In Ben Jonson it is, as it were, confined in a leaden cistern, where it stagnates and corrupts; or directed only through certain artificial pipes and conduits to answer a given purpose. . . . Sheer ignorance, bare-faced impudence, or idiot imbecility, are his dramatic commonplaces – things that provoke pity or disgust, instead of laughter.

Lewis believes that Hazlitt has simply misconstrued what the art of the satirist (here Jonson) is attempting to achieve. He, Hazlitt, finds humanistic optimism a necessity for

---


good art, but this is not the way of the satirist.\textsuperscript{174} According to Lewis, Hazlitt is right to see the difference in Shakespeare’s men and Jonson’s machines, but wrong to believe that Jonson should be censured for this difference (as though it were unintended). Furthermore, Lewis sides with Jonson; he thinks most people are “machines.”\textsuperscript{175}

In order to illustrate further the difference, Lewis makes use of modernist visual art as an analogue. Hazlitt’s approach, argues Lewis, is undergirded by “humanist values,” values which are opposed to the effectively anti-humanist values of contemporary art. Just as he did in \textit{Blasting and Bombardiring}, Lewis references the work of Auguste Rodin as an example of the “humanist, the naturalist technique” which Lewis connects to his arch-enemy, Bergson and “the Flux.”\textsuperscript{176}

When it comes time to articulate his alternative to this Bergsonian, humanist, naturalist art of the flux, Lewis gives the following as an answer:

Neither the Greeks, nor yet the Renaissance masters (except here and there) afford a quite effective contrast. The naturalist stream started flowing in Hellas, and it has gone on flowing in the centre of the European consciousness ever since. Only now, at last, has it begun to dry up. I should direct you to Egypt, to China or Japan, to select the monumental counterblast to this last vulgar decadence of the original Hellenic mistake.\textsuperscript{177}

Everything is here, we might say. There is the narrative of cultural decadence rooted in the “Hellenic mistake” of naturalism responsible for the warping of the “European

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{174} Lewis, \textit{Men Without Art}, 111-4.
  \item \textsuperscript{175} Lewis, \textit{Men Without Art}, 115-6.
  \item \textsuperscript{176} Lewis, \textit{Men Without Art}, 116.
  \item \textsuperscript{177} Lewis, \textit{Men Without Art}, 117.
\end{itemize}
consciousness ever since.” There is the sense of a new moment the key to which can be found in the anti-naturalist, anti-humanist art of non-Western cultures such as the Egyptian, the Chinese, the Japanese, which can be the source for a cultural revitalization and staving off of decadence. We can recall here Lewis’ earlier comments in *Paleface* about configuring “a new West” by means of a “Classical Orient.”

While it is true that Lewis’ historical narrative is slightly different (there is no Golden Age of the Middle Ages), all of these points we saw in one way or another in the work of T.E. Hulme. Lewis’ new art is nothing other than the “geometric” art of which Hulme spoke. Lewis’ contribution comes in drawing out both some of the implications of Hulme’s thought and of that thought in relation to the literature of modernism that had developed since Hulme’s death.

To understand this contribution, one must understand that the context of Lewis’ discussion of the anti-humanist, geometric aesthetic is at least in part a justification for satire and specifically for his satirical novel, *Apes of God*. In this way, one can see that Lewis’ polemics in favor of the idea that “all art is in fact satire today” and for the idea of an externalist or classical art rooted in satire find their aesthetic foundations in the geometric, anti-humanist, anti-vitalist aesthetic first articulated by T.E. Hulme in the pre-War period. Again, it is important to acknowledge that Lewis, as the force behind *Blast* and as an early practitioner of the art that Hulme would first call “geometric,” was from the beginning on the “inside” of the development of this aesthetic. And it is important to

---


underline here as well the ways in which he brings the poetics of modernism to its fullest expression by relating the classical, the blasting, the geometrical models of modernist aesthetics to what I believe to be their common denominator: the satirical orientation to modernity as a cultural signifier.

It will be helpful to review here at the conclusion of this section just how, from what Lewis says, one can claim that modernist art— that is, the geometric art of Hulme— is satirical. How can we understand, in other words, Lewis’ claim that “All art is in fact satire today”? Two points are of special interest. First, both Hulme’s geometric art and satire operate on an aesthetics of exteriority. Second, that exteriority is anti-naturalist and anti-humanist in orientation. What Lewis has done is to formulate in an explicit way what was already present in the pre-War early period of modernism: the sense of cultural opposition and of the way that opposition could be translated into an art that challenged the very existential, theological, and political foundations of the society in which it found itself.

One of the elements common to most satire is an element of stylization. It can take several forms—the grotesque, the caricature, etc. But this stylization is always an exaggeration or distortion of some kind. The site for geometric art and satire that is modernism resides in this feature of stylization. While the Byzantine icon stylizes in the sense of a positive idealization, there can also be geometric stylization in the other direction: e.g., Picasso’s *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon*. In other words, the stylization can

---

180 In this regard, one could mention Hulme’s comment that in geometric art nature or reality is always “distorted” into abstract forms, “A Notebook,” 447.
also turn downwards toward the base, the brutal, the banal. Here we find the opening for the satirical in modernist literature.

And here also, the nature of modernist poetics vis-à-vis both other arts and the immediate history of literary forms comes into clearer focus. Although one often hears of a “crisis of representation” associated with modernism, the picture seems quite a bit more complicated that the catchphrase might imply. The present analysis would seem to yield evidence in favor of seeing the modernist aesthetic much more in terms of a dialectic or interfacing of mimesis and anti-mimesis, where sociality is never completely abrogated or negated (as it sometimes is certainly in Post-Modernism or in avant-gardism) but is instead merely stylized in various ways by distorting figurations.  

4.7 Classicism, Pound, and Joyce

I have mentioned only in passing the non-fictional prose of Ezra Pound and not at all the slim criticism of James Joyce. Without question, neither man was animated by the

---

181 See Manfred Engel, “Forms and Functions of Anti-Realism in the Literature of High-Modernism (Woolf, Proust, Kafka),” Realism/Anti-Realism in 20th Century Literature eds. Christine Baron and Manfred Engel (New York: Rodopi), 67-82. Engel makes useful connections and utilizes visual art as a hermeneutic window into modernist literature. What is more, Engel’s analyses draw helpful attention to the nuances of modernism in relation to representation, emphasizing as he does the manner in which realism and anti-realism are often not either/or phenomena but instead can exist in degrees or diverse combination. Some of his conclusions, however, seem to place modernism, in my view, too close to post-modernism with regard to its degree of anti-representation.
dynamics of “classicism” to the extent of Eliot, Hulme, and Lewis. In the case of Ezra Pound, his critical work – much like his poetry – is so diverse and variegated that a simple assessment is difficult to muster. And there is much in his criticism and theorizing that remains only tangentially (if at all) related to the idea of a poetics of satire. Despite this, the overall pose of Pound’s criticism, that “cheeky brusqueness” inherent in much of the tone and tenor of his work, embodies aptly those salient elements of modernism’s satirical relation to modernity. Additionally, Pound’s readings of key modernist works like Joyce’s *Ulysses* also provide important hermeneutic keys to the satire of modernism (as we saw in the previous chapter). Similarly, Pound’s historiographic configurations share much with Eliot and Hulme, arguing as he does for a golden age of culture prior to the late Renaissance when fragmentation set in.

---

182 Sarah Davidson has argued very interestingly for Pound’s long poem *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* in the terms of Pound’s attempt at a “classical revival,” see Sarah Davidson, “Ezra Pound’s Esteem for Edmund Waller: A New Source for *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley.*” *The Review of English Studies* vol. 60 no. 247 (2009): 785-99. Davidson’s article points to the poetic output of Pound, which also includes much satire, of varying tonalities and perspectives (cf. the *Blast* poems and “Potrait d’un Femme” for example). Regarding classicism, Hugh Kenner has shown well enough the extent of modernism’s attachment to “classical” culture and to the orientation of “renaissance,” in figures such as Pound, Joyce, and H.D., cf. Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era*, 41-75.

183 Nonetheless, there are also some interesting reflections on satire in Pound’s work, including his assertion that satire “draws one to consider time wasted,” in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* Ed. T.S. Eliot (New York: New Directions, 1968), 45. Cf. Ronald Bush, “‘It Draws One to Consider Time Wasted’: *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley.*” *American Literary History* 2.1 (Spring 1990): 56-78.


As for Joyce, historical events are similarly arranged, and on this basis it is instructive to review the commonalities among the “Men of 1914” with regard to the historical situation of modernity. In all cases, the narrative is one of decline and decadence, with the hope of some sort of cultural and aesthetic revival or renewal.

Joyce’s later Vichian historical model fits this anti-modern picture rather well, as do his Scholastic admirations. These factors present themselves in ways amenable to a kind of “classicism” in the modernist sense of the word, although the relative scarcity of criticism and poetics in Joyce’s oeuvre makes his contributions in this regard necessarily anecdotal.187

But, as Erik Svarny has pointed out, it is Joyce who in many ways anticipated Hulme and Hulme’s legacy in his early work of the years 1904-6 (a work, one might add, with definite satirical dimensions), *Stephen Hero*:

Classicism is not the manner of any fixed age or of any fixed country: it is a constant state of the artistic mind. It is a temper of security and satisfaction and patience. The romantic temper, so often and so grievously misinterpreted and not more so by others than by its own, is an insecure, unsatisfied, impatient temper which sees no fit abode here for its ideals and chooses therefore to behold them under insensible figures. As a result of this choice it comes to disregard certain limitations. Its figures are blown to wild adventures, lacking the gravity of solid bodies, and the mind that has conceived them ends by disowning them. The classical temper on the other hand, ever mindful of limitations, chooses rather to bend upon these present things and so to work upon them and fashion them that the quick intelligence may go beyond them to their meaning which is still unuttered.188

---

187 Mention should also be made of Joyce’s 1912 examination essay for Università degli Studi di Padua on “The Universal Literary Influence of the Renaissance,” a document which is highly ambivalent of the linear-progressive historical narrative promulgated by the Renaissance and later thought and also of the legacy of the Renaissance more generally, contending as it does that the “Renaissance has placed the journalist in the monk’s chair,” James Joyce, “The Universal Literary Influence of the Renaissance,” in *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing* (London: Oxford UP, 2000), 187-90. 188.

In addition to the notion of “limitations” which seems to have definite proto-Hulmean overtones, the idea of “solid bodies” seems anachronistically evocative of Lewis’ writings on what he regards as fundamental to the “classical” approach (from which, of course, he was adamant in excluding Joyce).

“Classicism” therefore can be regarded as a general “tendency,” to use Eliot’s term, of which all of the “Men of 1914” partake, if in their own ways, in the midst of their particular intellectual and aesthetic contexts, and to their own specific ends and aims.

5. Classicism and the “Men of 1914”

Now that we have surveyed the various texts connected with what can be loosely called “classicism,” it is possible to observe the basic shape of this orientation, seen above all as a cultural posture that comprises the aesthetic and that functions as a kind of choreographic framework for the deployment of satire. That is, classicism is not satire but is more a “para-satirical” conduit which makes modernism’s poetics of satire possible. We could also say that, from the purview of modernist literary criticism, classicism provides one of the essential backgrounds for the satirical human model of modernism. Here I will mention several general characteristics common to the classicism of the “Men of 1914” that can be observed from the materials analyzed.

The first is the narrative of decadence. In all cases, and this is even true of *L’Action française*, which although it is an important source for modernist ideas nonetheless in my view remains outside the scope of modernism proper, the present moment is defined as one of degeneration, decay, ossification, impotency, sterility, etc. We saw this well enough in the discussion of the human model of modernism in the previous chapter (as in our discussion of *Blast* at the outset of the present chapter). Within this situation of cultural sterility and depravity, classicism becomes a central component of the strategy for renewal.

My second characteristic refers to the cultural stance of classicism related to the narrative of depravity. In a general sense, the classicist operates in a position of cultural critique. Classicism is a flanking movement against the Zeitgeist. Because the situation of sterility is bound up with the cultural reality of modernity, the classicist as a result must take up ideological arms against the reigning paradigms and regimes. The result can be seen in Lewis’ “Solitary Outlaw” and similar images.\(^{190}\)

A third feature of “Men of 1914” classicism concerns the way in which this opposition can be defined as anti-modern, specifically as it relates to anthropology. Already implicit in the idea of cultural opposition is the anti-modern posture of classicism, but there is also the idea, which is very consciously a rejection of modern subjectivity and autonomy in one way and of modern epistemology and ethics in another, that the human being is marked by limitations and imperfections which are intrinsic to the

\(^{190}\) It is important to note, as I suggested in the previous chapter, that the imaginative literature of modernism seems in many ways one of negation in the sense that at its heart is the model/not-model of the hollow man. It is only in critical prose writings that modernists can allow themselves to consider models to which they can relate mimaetically (and here one can think of Lewis’ Outlaw or Enemy images, as well as of the many essays by Eliot on individual figures and authors, such as the Elizabethan dramatists or Lancelot Andrewes or Baudelaire, which serve as galleries of non-hollow men in counterpoint to the satirical hollow men galleries of his early poetry).
nature of the person as an acting agent. This anthropology – which itself opens onto
the plane of theology (i.e., Original Sin) – forms the basis for modernist classicism’s
_Weltanschauung_.

And my fourth characteristic flows quite naturally from this anthropology. It is
the idea of exteriority. This idea takes many forms within modernist classicism: we find it
in the argument that poetics must locate itself within a framework (whether that
framework be tradition or norms like order and discipline). We find it as well in the
notion that the human being must submit to Outside Authority rather than the Inner
Voice, as Eliot says. We find it in the theory of impersonal poetry (Hulme and Eliot). We
find it also in Wyndham Lewis’ theory of externalist satire.

A fifth attribute is connected intimately with exteriority. It is the aesthetics of
abstraction over and against empathy. This as well can take several forms: the idea of
“hard” and “dry” poetry; Hulme’s borrowings from Worringer; Lewis’ attempts to bring
the Hulmean aesthetic more explicitly in line with the overtly satirical. The origins of this
stylized aesthetic of abstraction are often disgust at the world, contempt, hatred, although
it can equally avail itself of more comic playfulness and/or more sober forms of
critique.¹⁹¹ Above all, the relational dynamics of this aesthetic tends to be adversarial or
impersonal, whereby a critical distance is created between reader and work, rather than a
dynamic of emotional identification. This dynamic is highly conducive to satire (is in

---

¹⁹¹ One can recall in this regard Hulme’s emphasis on “disgust” and “contempt” as motivating
factors for at least certain manifestations of the geometric aesthetic, Hulme, “A Notebook,” 447; “Modern
Art and Its Philosophy,” 277. And one could mention also Babbitt’s assertion that the “hatred” of
“constructive satire,” the model of Boileau, is desperately needed in his time, Babbitt, _Masters of Modern
French Criticism_, 379-80.
many ways a precondition for satirical aesthetics) and is often connected with anti-
humanism.

The sixth and final quality of this classicism has to do specifically with the
manner in which this classicism is truly modernist in literary terms. What is advocated is
certainly an emphasis on order, tradition, discipline, etc, but there is always a very careful
distinction made between a stultified classicism, one completely wedded to the past, and
a vibrant classicism that engages a dialectical relationship with the past and with radical
innovation. The element of innovation is central to the classical revival as a true revival
and not simply some hermetic retrenchment into the past.

These are the basic outlines of classicism as a kind of broad program of the
modernism of the “Men of 1914.” As this chapter has shown, these general
characteristics enjoy very different modulations and inflections in the particular authors
who advocated for it. And even more, the six characteristics in some ways experience
certain internal tensions. For example, as has been evident throughout the chapter, the
narrative of cultural decline and the anti-humanist position that such a narrative at least in
some cases seems to imply (in Hulme and Lewis in particular) seems somewhat difficult
to couch within a framework of “tradition” if that tradition is conceived as the “whole of
the literature of Europe,” given that for the later Hulme and for Lewis the “whole of
the literature of Europe” is in fact beholden to the “naturalist” and “Hellenic mistake.”

Such internal tensions are the mark of a broad program advanced by a variety of
individuals with their own specific contexts and attitudes in a very unsystematic way over

---

193 Lewis, Paleface, 255; Lewis, Men Without Art, 117.
a fairly significant stretch of time. They are evidence of a plurality even within the “Men of 1914” concerning the correct view of cultural dynamics vis-à-vis modernity. Yet these differences do not obviate the larger, overarching common vision within which they operate.

6. By Way of Conclusion: Modernism, Classicism, and Romanticism

The present consideration of modernism’s classicism raises the specter of the relationship between modernism and Romanticism as sketched briefly at the outset of the previous chapter. There, an argument was made, albeit elliptically, for seeing Romanticism and modernism (and even Post-Modernism) as at least in some ways part of one continuous development (roughly, anti-modern in character). If this be the case, then one must ask: How can modernism both spring from Romanticism and at the same time define itself so forcefully in the terms of Romanticism’s opposite, “classicism”? The standard answer, or one of them at any rate, that which involves an appeal to Bloomian anxieties of influence and similar models of literary-historical dynamics, seems to me in this case less than satisfying. The modernist adoption of “classicism” signals a

194 Cf. Chapter 2, section 1. For Romanticism and the anti-modern, see Antoine Compagnon, Les antimodernes: de Joseph de Maistre à Roland Barthes (Paris: Gallimard, 2005); Graeme Garrad, Counter-Enlightenments: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present (New York: Routledge, 2006); Zeev Sternhell, The Anti-Enlightenment Tradition Trans. David Maisel (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2010). Gerrad and Compagnon in particular also discuss the anti-modern postures of various figures associated with Post-Modernism, including Foucault and Barthes. This being said, one should nonetheless be wary of jettisoning the complexities of history in favor of easy systemization. There is much to be said, for example, for the continuation and preservation of Enlightenment and also classical models especially in later European Romanticism. On this point, see Virgil Nemoianu, The Taming of Romanticism: European Literature and the Age of Biedermeier (Harvard UP, 1984), and Virgil Nemoianu, The Triumph of Imperfection: The Silver Age of Sociocultural Moderation in Europe, 1815-1848 (University of South Carolina Press, 2006). In interesting and perhaps surprising ways, modernism could be said to have learnt from this period of later Romanticism and its lessons on imperfection.
new strategy within the situation of modernity, one which marks a break with certain aspects of Romanticism but also seeks more basic continuities. “Classicism” as an idea has always been closely associated with satire. It is only a matter of listing the great figures of the “neoclassical” tradition to convince us of this: Jonson, Dryden, Boileau, Swift, Pope, Dr. Johnson. In the wake of the failures of radical “high” Romanticism, modernism was inevitably more cynical, more frustrated, and more irascible even as it sought a re-invigoration of certain aspects of Romanticism as a cultural project. In such a position, modernism’s critique of modernity took on a significantly new tone and attitude, one where the satirical played a greater and more natural role. “Classicism” was therefore an important resource for modernism, precisely because it was not Romanticism (a different direction was deemed necessary) – and literary history had already come to view “classicism” as another term for “not-Romanticism” or “the antithesis of Romanticism” – and because classicism as a complex of values and aesthetic strategies offered a variety of approaches suitable to the situation (including above all the strategies of satire).

In other ways, however, modernism and its uses of “classicism” can be couched in terms of continuity with Romanticism. For example, despite modernism’s attempts to enfold Romanticism into modernity, thereby opening it to easy critique and condemnation (a phenomenon that could be witnessed all over again with Post-Modernism’s treatment of modernism), one could regard modernism paradoxically in its attempts at a “classical revival” to be acting to effect in actuality a Romantic revival; that is, an attempt to purify itself of the ossifications associated with what could be called (from the modernist perspective) the “compromised” Romanticism of the middle and
later nineteenth century and to return to the true core of Romanticism (particularly as that movement relates to modernity).  

But even more, when viewed in light of the “realism” with which modernism is often contrasted, larger points of convergence among classicism, Romanticism, and modernism become more intelligible. Christine Baron has traced carefully a genealogy of realism and has shown convincingly the manner in which realism can be connected to modern (Cartesian/Western) epistemological paradigms and the ways that the realist aesthetic can be contrasted with those of Romanticism, modernism, and even classicism. The treatment of modernism and classicism in this chapter confirms such an alignment. Although classicism has been often seen in terms of rationalism, when compared with Romanticism and modernism over and against realism, perhaps it becomes easier to comprehend how the various idealizations and abstracting impulses of classicism can be related to Romantic imagination or to modernist abstraction, for example. Certainly, these connections illumine classicism’s penchant for satire (a phenomenon which almost always utilizes at least partly techniques of anti-mimesis). If

---

195 And thus we have modernism’s classical “return” but in this case it is a return to Romanticism, paradoxically enough.

196 Christine Baron, “Réalisme et antirealisme: Une généalogie complexe,” in Realism/ Anti-Realism in 20th Century Literature eds. Christine Baron and Manfred Engel (New York: Rodopi, 2010), 25-40. Baron articulates with acumen the aporetics of the realism/anti-realism binary. To mention just one of the examples: Flaubert’s realism inspires him to write, in mallarméenne fashion, a “livre sur rien,” Baron, 33.

197 This point is a delicate one. Surely, the “classical” school could be said to be founded upon the idea of mimesis. But as W.J. Bate points out, classical mimesis is of a particular kind. The point I want to make is that this mimesis can be sharply differentiated from Realism and in ways that could align it with modernism and Romanticism. As Bate says, classicial mimesis is “an imitation of what is essential in nature” and as a result is “concerned with persisting, objective forms. Thus the classical theory of art as imitation by no means implies what we now call realism,” W. J. Bate, “The Classical Tradition: Introduction,” in Criticism: The Major Texts ed. Water Jackson Bate (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970), 3-12. 4.
aesthetics could be viewed as a continuum between mimesis and anti-mimesis, the Classical, the Romantic, and the modernist all fall considerably closer to the anti-mimetic pole (though themselves at different points on the ledger and with different ways of being there) than does the Realist.\(^{198}\)

As we have seen throughout this chapter, the poetics of modernism from the “moment of Blast”\(^{199}\) forward always acknowledged a situation of cultural decline and depravity in need of revivification. And in the general oppositional posture that this recognition demanded, satire became a natural aesthetic strategy for renewal, particularly when remobilized in its originary (early Greek) mode as a means of stimulating fertility amid cultural sterility, as an efficacious lament against the cultural, spiritual, and social depravity with which it found itself confronted. “Classicism” was thus able to provide a zone whereby the poetics of modernism and the cultural strategies of satirical aesthetics could be profitably interfaced, where against ubiquitous decadence the “only remedy is slaughter” (i.e., the satirical word that “kills”)\(^{200}\) and where culture could be both rejected and regenerated (and in one action) in order, in the words of Eliot, to “save the world from suicide.”\(^{201}\)

\(^{198}\) The matter is of indeterminable complexity, however, and one should be wary here of oversimplification. For example, as Baron points out, the neoclassical theater could be regarded as anti-realistic, or was regarded by the realist aesthetic as anti-realistic, on account of its conventionalism. Baron, 29. In this regard, one could appeal to that impulse of abstraction and generalization within neoclassicism and see this as analogous to a somewhat similar impulse in high-Romanticism or high-modernism. At the same time, however, if this rejection of conventionality by realism implies advocacy for an organic aesthetic, then realism would seem to be allied with Romanticism and modernism against classicism.

\(^{199}\) Svarny, 13.


\(^{201}\) T.S. Eliot, “Thoughts After Lambeth,” 332.
CHAPTER IV: MODERNISM AND SATIRIC FORM

You cannot write satire in the line of Pope or in the stanza of Byron.¹
--T.S. Eliot, After Strange Gods

This final chapter will return to the “hollow man” model of modernism but now with principal concern for the question of form. The overarching point that I want to make is that the various features of the model outlined in Chapter II can be seen to be enacted in the major modernist texts also on the level of form. This point will be explored in a few different ways. First, there will be a brief discussion of the “hollow man” model and the form of modernist texts, particularly in four major works of high-modernism (Joyce’s Ulysses, Lewis’ The Apes of God, Eliot’s The Waste Land, and Pound’s Hugh Selwyn Mauberley). The purpose here will be to round out the discussion of the model begun in Chapter II and to provide a general basis on which to found the latter two parts of the present chapter. The second part will analyze our texts in view of the theories of Michael Seidel with regard to crisis rhetoric and satiric plot. And finally, the chapter will conclude with a discussion of modernism’s macro-textual organizational preferences and the consequences with respect to certain favorite topics of modernist scholarship (for example, the idea of “spatial form,” the question of aesthetic totalitarianism, and the like). There, I will introduce briefly the work on satire of Dustin Griffin and George Test, both of whom are helpful in outlining the possibilities for a ludic model of satire. And it

is this view of ludic satire that can help us to arrive at what is in my view a more analytically sound understanding of modernist form.

1. The “Hollow Man” Model and Modernist Form

A quick look at our four works would be enough to note some broad similarities in terms of form. The structures are loose rather than tight. There is a great deal of mélange, with different languages, text types, and narrative sequences often jumbled together. A derivative of this feature includes what has often been referred to as a “fragmented” discourse and structure by which is meant that isolated images, scenes, or linguistic segments are often juxtaposed without cohesive ties (a kind of narrative or poetic asyndeton). What should be emphasized here is the manner in which these textual features foreground the basic elements of the modernist human type, particularly how they open the shapes of the model onto the plane of aesthetic form. For example, with their loose structures and weak plots the modernists enact the inertia, malaise, and stasis of the “hollow man” figuration. The aspects of mélange and of jagged sequencing work to create an aesthetic experience of chaos, crisis, and vertigo which can be mapped onto the model’s reservoir of similarly mimetic images. In this sense, the modernist text could be said to represent what it is (or, conversely, to be what it represents).

---


3 This particular characteristic of modernist texts is often referred to as “expressive or imitative form,” cf. Kevin J.H. Dettmar, Rereading the New: A Backward Glance at Modernism (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 279.
In James Joyce’s *Ulysses* we follow the activities of Leopold Bloom on a rather random June day in Dublin, 1904. After the briefer Part I chronicling Stephen Dedalus, we meet Bloom at breakfast in his kitchen. Through the course of the day, Bloom goes shopping, bathes, attends a friend’s funeral, engages in the duties of his profession (advertising canvasser), has lunch, frequents a hotel bar, a hospital, a pub, a house of prostitution, has an amorous auto-erotic encounter with a stranger, all before returning home with Stephen at day’s end. Interwoven in these movements is the drama of Bloom’s wife, Molly, an Irish soprano, and her relations with Blazes Boylan who endeavors to make Bloom a cuckold before his return. A significant element of the enplotment of the book concerns the variety of styles that Joyce chooses to employ in the various episodes. After the initial style of roughly the first half of the book, a style marked by free indirect discourse mostly from Stephen’s, then Bloom’s point of view, the reader is met with a panoply of discourses resembling the “frightful jumble of slang and broken doggerel” which ends the “Oxen of the Sun” chapter.

Wyndham Lewis’ *The Apes of God* shares consciously and purposively in the narrative patterns of Joyce’s *Ulysses*, but with its own specific emphases and ends. The scene is London on the eve of the General Strike in 1926, a decadent city with a particularly “hollow” artistic and cultural life (read: Bloomsbury), and we are led through this hollow (i.e., ape-filled) world in picaresque fashion via the movements of the young, attractive, Irish, innocent but inept Dan Boelyn, would-be artist and an apprentice to the albino jokester Horace Zagreus, who attempts to introduce his protégé into this pseudo-

---

aristocratic (and pseudo-artistic) world and who is himself an apprentice to a never-seen figure, Pierpoint, a philosopher-painter who communicates his aesthetic and worldly doctrines to Zagreus by means of “encyclicals.” Dan ventures into this world by several channels (visiting painters, publishers, and other “apes”), including a long scene in the book’s latter half recounting Lord Osmund Finnian-Shaw’s “Lenten Party” held at his estate in the countryside, where Dan flubs his minor part in a pantomime performed with Zagreus, who as a result becomes disenchanted with his apprentice and begins to shift his sentiments to another prospective “genius.” The plot is replete with layers and counter-currents, with little episodes and minor characters, so much so that it defies proper summary (and in this sense well resembles *Ulysses*). These “hodgepodge” qualities extend to the book’s varied use of text types, which includes artwork by Lewis at the beginning of each part. The novel concludes with Zagreus at the house of Sir James and Lady Fredigonde Follett, just as it had opened. As Paul Edwards says of the narrative, “it finishes where it began, at the Follett mansion (guarded by police), with Fredigonde still on the brink of death and England on the brink of ‘revolution’: history just will not happen.”

Edwards’ point is significant and provides a window into both Joyce’s and Lewis’ use of form. For in *Ulysses* as well, Bloom ends up where he began. In both cases, 

---

therefore, the narrative could be said to enact a kind of ineffectuality or stasis on the level of form that is mirrored or embodied in the images of the “hollow man” type. The inability to act, to achieve significance, which is so ever-present in the model, becomes a feature of the narrativity of the texts in themselves and as a result points to the model’s enactment even on the level of aesthetic structure and experience.

For the differences in genre, similar conclusions could be had for the major poetry of high-modernism as well. Ezra Pound’s *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, his last major work before turning complete attention to *The Cantos*, is a poem often considered to be a collection or “sequence” of poems or fragments as much as a poem in its own right. It operates, in typical modernist fashion, via juxtaposition and the verbal densities of image and allusion. Only with great effort can the reader find the structural patterns at work in the poem. And yet, a clear picture of London society is drawn both diachronically (from the period of the Nineties to the poem’s present) and synchronically (from the point of view of the poet to that of the general public), and a set of characters is set in motion starkly if not dramatically. We make the rounds from the fictional to the “real,” from E.P.

---

6 *Mauberley* has been included here on the basis of the fact that it is Pound’s only major finished work of the 1920s. Although perhaps *The Cantos* would seem in many ways the equivalent to Eliot’s *The Waste Land* and Joyce’s *Ulysses*, that work so clearly stretches beyond the period of high-modernism and so evidently lacks cohesion that its inclusion here would be problematic. Nonetheless, *Mauberley*’s stature cannot be overlooked. Here we have a poem that Peter Faulkner featured in his well-known short introduction to modernism, Peter Faulkner, *Modernism* (Methuen, 1977). Here is a poem that Hugh Kenner suggests was, along with *Homage to Sextus Propertius*, enough to “dispel any doubt of Pound’s being a major poet,” 164. Hugh Kenner, *The Poetry of Ezra Pound* (New York: Kraus Reprint, 1968; originally published, 1951).

on through the soldiers of the War, from Gladstone, Buchanan, Burne-Jones, Dowson, Lionel Johnson, and M. Verog to Brennbaum, Mr. Nixon, “The stylist,” and the eponymous Mauberely himself. A world of ubiquitous decadence is drawn in broad strokes, where even the aesthetically sensitive poet ultimately fails to impress.

Perhaps T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* contains a more continuous narrative thread in its use of the Fisher King or Parsifal myth, but this organizing principle is faint enough that it could be missed altogether by the casual reader. In fact, the figure of Tiresias, unconnected to the Arthurian Romance, was also claimed by Eliot in the footnotes as a kind of unifying device for the poem as a whole. Despite these loose strategies for unity, the poem nonetheless exhibits a fragmented, compartmentalized structure, with sudden shifts of situation and context, as of linguistic texture. The poem is a compilation of various discourses and genres, including many quotations and allusions to other texts. Beyond the mythical stratum, several events from contemporary society are depicted in short dramatic bits (as in the discussion in the adorned room or in the pub or with the young curbuncular man and the typist) or in imagistic depictions (e.g., the crowd making its way over London bridge). There is some attempt at aesthetic climax with the Hindu God Prajapati, i.e., “What the Thunder Said”; however, very little seems to be resolved and the poem ends ambiguously and ambivalently.

---

8 Even the fictional personages, however, have strong and thinly veiled referents from real life, giving Mauberley the same *poème à clef* feel as Lewis’ novel. For example, M. Verog is Victor Plarr; Brennbaum is Max Beerbohm; Mr. Nixon is Arnold Bennet; Ford Madox Ford is “the stylist,” cf. Hugh Kenner, *The Poetry of Ezra Pound*, 173-5.

These poems, perhaps the two greatest verse works of high-modernism to be completed in the 20s, share important characteristics. The more obvious among them would be the larger organizing structures of the two poems, which make use of what Eliot once referred to as the “abbreviation of method” whereby the poet opts for a “suppression of ‘links in the chain,’ of explanatory and connecting matter” in order to create “one intense impression” or “total effect.”

As long poems, both works maintain a semblance of narrative but one which is constantly thwarted by disjunction and discreteness among parts. Additionally, both utilize these compositional devices to the end of drawing writ-large images of society as a whole (so that there is something of a dialectic of unity and disunity). A major difference is of course Pound’s stricter quatrain form, which was abandoned by Eliot by the time of *The Waste Land* but not by Pound until the time of *The Cantos*.

Even with the obvious generic differences of poetry and prose, all four works share remarkable similarities of aesthetic structure. All four consistently stunt the narrative machinery of their organization, even while upholding a basic narrative organization. This happens differently in prose than in poetry – the novels could be

---

10 T.S. Eliot, “Preface,” in *Anabasis by St. John Perse* trans. T.S. Eliot (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich 1949), 10. One of the sentences quoted in part above could refer well to *The Waste Land* or, for that matter, to each of the four works considered in this chapter: “The justification of such abbreviation of method is that the sequence of images coincides and concentrates into one impression of barbaric civilization,” 10. Trying to create an intense impression of barbaric civilization is a programmatic statement fit for the aims and aesthetic intents of the “Men of 1914” in the period of high-modernism. These comments from Eliot resemble in many ways Joseph Frank’s theory of modernism’s “spatial form” (they may have themselves contributed to Frank’s thought in this direction). Frank contends that modernist texts conform to a “space-logic” rather than a “time-logic” and that the aim is to create an “instantaneous presentation” rather than one beholden to the temporality of narrative, cf. Joseph Frank, *The Widening Gyre: Crisis and Mastery in Modern Literature* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1963), 10-12. Despite the closeness between Frank and Eliot in this regard, there is some room for differentiating the two. Eliot’s formulation seems to imply that a narrative structure remains present but is lessened in its sharpness (the “links in the chain” of narrative are “suppressed” or minimized but not obviated altogether). “Time-logic,” although lessened in experiential effect, still seems operative.
described as “episodic” while the poems operate more along the lines of parataxis – but it happens just the same. Similarly, each work decenters or calls into question the idea of an individualized viewpoint. And all four texts include a variety of discourse types and even of languages. In Pound’s *Mauberley*, this takes the form of the poem “Medallion,” which is presumed to be a poem by the fictionalized Mauberely himself, as well as “Envoi,” a pastiche of Edmund Waller’s “Go, Lovely Rose” (to say nothing of the bits in French and Greek sprinkled here and there throughout the poem). The same occurs with Pierpoint’s Encyclical in Lewis’ *The Apes of God*. As for Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, it is sufficient to note the early title of the poem, “He Do the Police in Different Voices,” while for Joyce the single chapter “Oxen of the Sun” could serve as a synecdochal proxy for a phenomenon which pervades the entirety of his text from beginning to end.

What I wish to underline and reiterate here at the relative outset of our investigation into modernist form is the manner in which these features can be seen as attempts to actualize aesthetically in terms of form those central elements of the model that were outlined first in Chapter II. These features include not only the weak plot but also linguistic chaos, relative vertigo, the decentering of the modern subject, etc. They also include a broad use of intertextuality, paradox, ambiguity, irony, and other similar centrifugal and disorienting textual devices.

With these characteristics, and with the human model of modernism founded as it is on the “mythos of winter,” we find ourselves firmly on the ground of satire. A question may arise at this juncture concerning the relationship between the satire of

---

modernism and the genre of the Menippea. It is hoped that the preceding chapters have been able to show that what is meant by the theory of modernism as satire is surely something more than, and considerably different from, what is signified by the generic category of Menippean satire (which in itself has proved quite difficult to define). In this regard, one could say that the object of satire found here centers on the modalities of the satirical, although such a distinction is of course subject to ambiguities of its own. Nonetheless, the description of modernist form ventured here does evidence clear elements often found in descriptions of Menippean satire. Depiction of abnormal conditions, mixture of text types, genres, and discourses, variety in styles and tone, free play of language, the dialogia of differentiated parts – all of these apply to our texts and are often couched in terms of Menippean satire. Increasingly, however, theorists of satire have argued for the prevalence of these qualities in the modal as well as the generic aspects of satire. In this way, distinctions of genre versus mode become less important.

---

12 The reasons for my wishing to differentiate the notion of “modernism as satire” from the Mennipean tradition are many. To begin with, while many major texts of modernism (including the four considered in this chapter) are more than reminiscent of the genre, there are many other works of the “Men of 1914,” both in terms of imaginative literature and non-fictional prose, that do not fit into the generic boundaries prescribed for Mennipean satire but that do very much correspond to the kind of cultural satire or satire on modernity that I see as distinctive of modernism. Additionally, certain definitions of the genre (e.g., Northrop Frye’s) so stress the “anatomical” dimensions that satire becomes a far less determinative element in the genre.


from the point of view of literary-historical investigation (whatever interest they retain theoretically).

For our purposes, what is of chief importance is the degree to which the structural aspects of modernism can be related to the human type of modernism and also the ways in which this relation foregrounds qualities or characteristics belonging to the broad category of “satire” even beyond those central features of the model understood as an expression of the fundamentally satirical “mythos of winter.”

2.1 Modernism, Intentionality, and Satire

One might ask, why satire? What did recourse to the satirical do for modernism aesthetically? What did satire have to offer? We have already investigated this question in many ways throughout the previous chapters of this study. We have seen the manner in which satire was supremely attractive as an outlet for socio-cultural frustration and anxiety in the face of modernization and other developments. Additionally, the previous chapter has attempted to articulate how satire could be viewed as a potential means for regeneration and renewal. What is more, an attempt has been made to show how the historical realities of the period of modernism resulted in feelings and moods in profound sympathy with the sentiments and attitudes of satire. I would like here to add some further elaborations and explanations on this question of satire’s usefulness for modernism, particularly as it relates to the question of form that is our concern in this chapter.
We could put the matter this way. As we have seen, modernism sought to express
a crisis of decadence, the sheer ineffectuality of modern hollow men who were in fact
mere products of this decadence and therefore incapable of resisting it, and the general
chaos and paralysis that obtained as a result. Beyond what we have already considered,
certain aspects of form make satire a natural choice for achieving an aesthetic
communication of this kind. As several theorists and critics of satire have pointed out,
satiric texts often stand in sharp contrast to the traditional Aristotelian plots of comedy
and tragedy, where clear and coherent tensions are created and then resolved, mostly in
balanced, harmonious patterns. Satire, to quote Sophie Duval and Marc Martinez, is quite
different.

La satire viole donc la loi aristotélicienne de causalité.
L’esthétique de rupture et de morcellement de la satire produit des récits
cahoteux, succession d’anecdotes, de pérégrinations, de rencontres et de
symposiums, collections de tableaux, de vignettes et de portraits, arborescences
digressives et multiplication de listes, répertoires et catalogues. La fiction,
soumise à la discontinuité et à la dislocation, s’anime d’une sorte de mouvement
kaléidoscopique: le satiriste fait voler en éclats l’image de la réalité puis anime
ces fragments apparentement disjoints d’un mouvement tournoyant. La satire va
donc se complaire dans des formes épisodiques. Cette forme lâche et inventive du
non sequitur fournit un critère pour identifier comme satires des œuvres
déroutantes a priori difficiles à cerner.16

16 Sophie Duval and Marc Martinez, La satire, 231-2. Cf. Alvin Kernan, The Plot of Satire (New
Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1965). “Satire violates then the Aristotelian law of causality. Satire’s aesthetic of
rupture and partitioning produces uneven, irregular narratives, anecdotes in succession, displaced
migrations, juxtaposed confluences, and symposiums, collections of scenes, of vignettes and portraits,
digressive branchings, multiplications of lists, commonplaces, and catalogues. Fiction thus subjected to
discontinuity and dismemberment arouses a kind of kaleidoscopic movement: the satirist shatters the image
of reality then enlivens these apparently disconnected fragments in a whirling movement. Satire therefore
will surely delight in episodic forms. This loose and inventive form of the non sequitur provides a criterion
for identifying as satire those disconcerting works a priori difficult to categorize.” The translation is my
own.
As was seen in the previous chapter, the modernists were by nature innovators. They would never simply recapitulate the satirical tradition as it had existed in the past.\footnote{17 See Eliot’s comment that “you cannot write satire in the line of Pope or in the stanza of Byron,” in \textit{After Strange Gods} (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1934), 31. Cf. T.E. Hulme: “When I say there will be another classical revival I don’t necessarily anticipate a return to Pope,” “Romanticism and Classicism,” in \textit{The Collected Works of T.E. Hulme} (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994), 65.} But what it offered very clearly was a tradition of organizing texts that was useful given what they wanted to say and the way they wanted to say it. One can see, then, that no modernist text really has a “succession d’anecdotes” in perhaps the sense of much previous satire, but the way that brief scenes are structured synecdochically and piled on top of each other in, say, \textit{The Waste Land} or parts of \textit{Ulysses} comes to something of the same effect.

Given their purposes, one can see why satiric forms would be attractive to modernists. They wanted to convey dislocation, chaos, rupture, discontinuity, fragmentation, non-linearity, and the like. An aesthetics of satire had all of these textual moves available in its storehouse, so to speak. It is, one should note, no coincidence that this would be the case. The wedding of modernism and satire was not simply a marriage of convenience. The two were made for each other, for all of the reasons detailed in the previous two chapters.

\section*{2.2 Modernism, Form, and Satire}

As was said, modernism mobilizes the “hollow man” model not only on the level of content but also of form. In this way, a specific connection has been made with regard
to the various qualities of the foregrounds of the model (i.e., inertia, malaise, impotency, etc) and aesthetic form. But what of the essential backgrounds of the model, the situation of decadence, crisis, and decay? Its basic outlines are conveyed in typical fashion by W.B. Yeats, “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.” Or again with the “dry season” of Eliot’s early poetry. Can these elements of the model also be considered on the level of form? If so, how do they manifest themselves in the four long works before us?

In order to draw out the full implications of these queries and the answers that may be given, I will make use here of the theory of satiric structure and crisis rhetoric developed by Michael Seidel. What Seidel stresses is satire’s relationship to crisis (and crisis as an indispensable component of emplotment). “[W]hat satire best represents…,” according to Seidel, is “a place at home with itself in a state of permanent crisis.” While crisis is key to all plot, satire is unique in that it does not resolve crisis, just the opposite: “Satiric representation assumes as its norm the existence of a sustained, unresolved state of crisis…. What is essential in satiric representation is that the decisive moments of a crisis remain irresolute.” This quality of satire distinguishes it from tragedy and

---


22 Seidel, 165.
comedy, which are crisis-resolving patterns. Certainly, to anyone taking Aristotelian plot configurations as primary or antecedent to narrative action, Seidel’s concept of satiric plot may seem really to be a negation of plot. But Seidel insists that this is not the case. He does not mean to suggest that “satire has no plot, but … to say that satire subverts the resolving or ameliorating impulses of plot.”

More than merely making use of crisis itself as a constitutive feature of plot, satire, according to Seidel, focuses attention additionally on crisis rhetoric in the furtherance of its goals (the goals of deferral, elongation, and inaction): “Crisis rhetoric always supplies satiric needs, and, in turn, is mimicked by satiric voicings.”

The point is important because it says something more about satire beyond its use of crisis as a dimension of plot. Satire is not merely a different use of crisis in emplotment, different from tragedy and comedy, but an exploitation of crisis on the level of linguistic texture as well. If we can regard form as consisting of both stylistic (micro) and narrative (macro) elements, satire formalizes or brings about an aestheticization of crisis in both dimensions.

What is more, the formal and the rhetorical lead beyond the aesthetic into the realm of the temperamental, to the “moods” of Dilthey or the sparagmos of Frye that we considered in the second chapter. Now sketching something of a typology of the satirist, Seidel evokes this dimension when he says that “[i]t is precisely these crisis moments that

---


24 Seidel, 169.
satire seeks out modally; its practitioners are on the *qui vive* for them." No doubt this component of satirical intentionality manifests itself variously given the author, object, and audience of the satire. Nonetheless, this understanding of satirical temperament provides important insight into why the “Men of 1914” would be attracted to satire and why they themselves can be called “satirists.” Crisis, and particularly the crisis that is the socio-cultural situation of modernism, is the founding reality upon which the collective oeuvre of the “Men of 1914” is based.

### 2.3 Satiric Form and Pound’s *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*

Ezra Pound’s *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* has enjoyed such a great diversity of opinion regarding its character that it has simultaneously been viewed as having as no plot and as having been “an attempt to condense the James novel,” as Pound himself said

---

25 Seidel, 169.

26 The reading of modernist plot structures presented here has interesting implications for larger debates currently underway in modernist studies. For example, Peter Nicholls and David Trotter have tended to view the aesthetic praxes of the “Men of 1914” as fundamentally masculine, even masculinist, in character. Their reasons for doing so are not unfounded. However, the work of Susan Winnett connects the type of diffuse plot structures evidenced here as common to the “Men of 1914” with feminine impulses and ways of being in the world. Cf. Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); David Trotter, *Paranoid Modernism: Literary Experiment, Psychosis, Professionalization of English Society* (New York: Oxford UP, 2001); Susan Winnett, “Coming Unstrung: Women, Men, Narrative, and Principles of Pleasure.” *PMLA* 105.3 (May 1990): 505-18.

of it at one point, the James novel being a paragon of craftsmanship and artistry. The divergences among critics can hardly be unexpected, given Pound’s own comments on the work, which are many and often in disaccord with each other.

Amidst the plurality and ambiguity, however, the rhetoric of crisis, of which Seidel spoke as conducive to the satirical repertoire, remains on full display. The connections between the “Hell” Cantos (XIV-XV) and Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, specifically with regard to the literature of crisis, have been duly noted by critics. The world of the text is one that invokes allusively “hell” topoi of various kinds and with varying degrees of force. Beyond the direct reference to soldiers who “walked eye-deep in hell” (“Ode” 73) and the general mood of the “botched civilization” (“Ode” 91) which provides the backdrop for the textual universe before us, there is the identification in the opening “Ode” of E.P. with Capaneus (“Ode” 8), attacker of Thebes, rebel against the gods, and damned in Dante’s Inferno. And one might add here that “Hell” rhetoric in its metaphorical and satirical relation is always a crisis rhetoric.


30 Cf. Dante, Inferno, XIV, 49-72.
The same can be said for decadence, and we have already surveyed at length the ways in which the “hollow man” type contains within its structures images and features of decadence and decline. In this regard, *Mauberley* is no different. The poem has been regarded as Pound’s “best satire” and, as Pound himself has said, satire can be understood as a reflection upon “time wasted.” “Wasted” is a well-chosen epithet, especially given that Eliot’s *The Waste Land* has often been mentioned in tandem with *Mauberley*, and rightly so, as poems that seek to sketch in broad scale a society of waste and of “time wasted.”

The rhetoric of decline especially in the first half of the work is striking enough for Ronald Bush to suggest, not without corroborating evidence, a “Spenglerian vision of English culture” behind the poem. Sometimes, admittedly, this picture is drawn through mimetic action, i.e., the succession of anecdotes familiar to satirical structure, as in the case of the short scene on Mr. Nixon’s yacht. At other points, however, the sense of

---


33 Ronald Bush, “‘It Draws One to Consider Time Wasted’: Hugh Selwyn Mauberley,” 66-7. Bush points to Pound’s familiarity with and admiration of Spengler and suggests that Pound was influenced by Spengler’s reading of aestheticism as an outgrowth rather than rejection of consumerism. Spengler’s influence on *The Waste Land* has also been considered; see Marianne Thormählen, “The Waste Land”: *A Fragmentary Wholeness* (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1978), 133-40. Wyndham Lewis, for his part, offers a long-winded critique of Spengler in *Time and Western Man*, but one cannot help but think it is another case of Lewis biting the hand that feeds him. The reference to Spengler is an important one, if sometimes overlooked. What Spengler provided or at least shared with the modernists was a developed and compelling historiographic model of decline and decadence, with highly refined analyses, diagnoses, explanations of causality, etc.
crisis, decadence, and decline is put forth more through the perhaps more traditional means of rhetorical mood-setting. We are on this ground with “hell” topoi and with the references to a “botched civilization” (“Ode” 91) mentioned above, as well as in the statement that the “time” is “out of key” (“Ode” 1) or in the reference to the “accelerated grimace” of “[t]he age” (“Ode” 21-2). The rhetoric of irony and sarcasm is often frequently employed to the same effect (e.g., “Better mendacities/ Than the classics in paraphrase!” (“Ode” 27-8) or “What god, man, or hero/ Shall I place a tin wreath upon!” (“Ode” 59-60)).

The general atmospherics that this rhetoric helps to generate is particularized in the various characters, real or quasi-fictional, that are presented. The “hollow man” is here on wide and generous display, whether in the paralyzing malaise of 90s poets like Dowson or Johnson or in the market-driven and careerist advice of “Mr. Nixon,” or even in the situation of the “stylist” who, though he refuses the compromises of Mr. Nixon, nevertheless seeks a refuge that is neither available nor honorable.34 The hollow man in chief, however, is none other than the eponymous Mauberley, that “mere surface” as Pound called him, who fully embodies those background sketches of decadent London society that comprise the first half of the work.35 The fact that Mauberley sees himself as


35 Pound may have been referring to the poem as a whole here, but the reference is illustrative nonetheless. Ezra Pound, “Letter to Felix E. Schelling July 8, 1922,” 180. Elsewhere Pound has offered a compelling gloss on the poem and its hollow men with which few critics could compete in verve and insight: “Mauberley: sure, the picture of ANY young man in England. Eviscerated, VOID of ALL creative impulse. EP done a picture of what ANY young educated bloke wd [sic] have SEEN, and all he would have done about it IF he had no guts, balls, viscera, PREcisely [sic].” Unpublished letter to Basil Bunting, ca. May 1935, Yale Letters (Beinecke Collection) no. 1267, 1. Quoted in Peter Nicholls, “‘A Consciousness
somehow against his age only further emphasizes his true position within his milieu, not a part from but most decidedly a part of, in true hollow man fashion. As Daniel Albright has said, Pound thought that a “meaningless age could be best criticized by a meaningless intelligence, by a character who embodied the age’s grand nihil, even while he was disgusted by it.”

It is these characteristics of the model that one finds activated aesthetically beyond figural content and rhetorical texture also at the level of macro-textual organization and emplotment, in that “unresolved state of crisis” normative for satire, of which Seidel wrote. As mentioned above, there is little agreement among critics regarding the nature of the structural integrity of HSM. Interestingly, there is still some question (at least implicitly) whether the poem is a poem at all, with some choosing to view it as a “sequence” or “suite” of poems. For these readers, the basis or condition of its unity is left largely unexamined. Somewhat disconnected from this question, several theories have been proposed on various bases for constructing a structural hermeneutics


36 The connections with Lewis’ The Apes of God in this regard are striking. Both works concern decadent London and in particular the “art” scene therein (visual art primarily in the case of Lewis; poetry for Pound) and the ways that pseudo-artists and aesthetes have betrayed their culture and society (incurring the gravest responsibility for the rot in which they find themselves and their civilization as a whole).

37 Daniel Albright, Quantum Poetics: Yeats, Pound, Eliot, and the Science of Modernism (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1997), 187. Given the similarities mentioned in the preceding footnote between Lewis’ and Pound’s works, Albright’s characterization of Mauberley as an “artifact of monolinearity, a caricature of the consecutive,” 192, as a “time-bound…mind,” 190, is fascinating in that it seems a poetic illustration along similar lines as Lewis’ novel and larger oeuvre, including his similar excoriation of the time-mind in Time and Western Man (a work which includes among its targets of attack the supposed time-bound obsessions of Pound!).

38 Seidel, 165.

39 Cf. n.6 above. It is not clear, however, that referring to the poem as such entails refusing to accept it as one whole work, though the ambiguities are nevertheless present.
for Mauberley. I have already mentioned the two extremes: those who, though they seem to regard the work as a work, think it lacking a plot of any kind; and those who think it similar not to “large loose baggy monsters” but to a Jamesian novel, again on Pound’s prompting. Other sources and influences within Pound’s oeuvre have been mined to this same end; for example, Michael Coyle sees the work as a hybrid of “Flaubertian free indirect style” and “Browningesque dramatic monologue,” although he regards the work as being “not narrative based.”

Little discussion has been had about the possibility of considering HSM in light of satirical emplotment, although there has been much helpful criticism showing the connection between satire and the poem more generally. As we have seen, general descriptions of satirical structure could be easily transposed as descriptions of Mauberley, with its fragmentations, disjointedness, lack of causality, static figurations, linguistic medleys, pastiche, and the like. Likewise, the poem ends with some finality (i.e., the

---

40 “Large loose, baggy monsters” is of course James’ description of the structure of Tolstoy’s War and Peace, among other works. Henry James, Theory of Fiction: Henry James edited and introduced by James E. Miller, jr. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), 262.


42 See, for example, Jo Brantley Berryman, Circe’s Craft: Ezra Pound’s “Hugh Selwyn Mauberley” (UMI Research Press, 1983); Ronald Bush, “‘It Draws One to Consider Time Wasted’: Hugh Selwyn Mauberley.”; Rudolf Suhnel, “Ezra Pound’s Hugh Selwyn Mauberley und die Krise der europäischen Kultur.” Mention should also be made of Hugh Kenner’s early work on the poem, which was essential in reversing the autobiographical reading of F. R. Leavis and disentangling Mauberley from Pound, without which a satirical reading of the poem as we know it would not have been possible. Hugh Kenner, The Poetry of Ezra Pound; F.R. Leavis, New Bearings in English Poetry (London, 1959; originally published, 1932), 133-57.
demise of Mauberley) but without any real resolution of the conditions of crisis and decadence which provide the backdrop and raison d’être for the work (a fact explicable at least in part by virtue of its being Pound’s “farewell to London,” as he called it; that is, more an attempt at dismissal than resolution). In this way, the poem exhibits the basic features of satiric form outlined by Seidel and others.

_EHS_ is divided roughly into two asymmetrical parts, the first comprising twelve sections and the second, five. Pound’s later editorial decision in 1957 to reverse the subtitle of the poem from “Life and Contacts” to “Contacts and Life” and his explanation for doing so are reason enough to conclude what is in any event clear from the poem itself: that the initial part concerns the backgrounds of Mauberley’s existence while the concluding, shorter half is occupied with the life of the poet himself. The fact that Mauberley is represented by his milieu is one of the chief marks against him, we can conclude, given what that milieu is and what it represents.

Pound has given further clues to the poem’s structure in a letter to Frenchman Georges Herbiet,

Et puis il y a “Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, life and contacts” mon dernier petit livre, qui est le sujet modern [sic] avec le décor modern. Je crois que je vous ai explique l’architecture de cet libre. [sic]

Le jeun[e] homme
Les gens qu’il rencontre a Londres. [sic]

---


The reference to “le sujet modern [sic] avec le décor modern [sic]” should be related to Pound’s outline of the “architecture” of the work. Here Pound has given not only a sense for his satire on modernity but also for the manner in which the poem recapitulates its “sujet” in its “architecture.”

What one can also glean from these words is the inescapable fact that, first, and obviously enough, the poem is a poem, something that has been disputed at least implicitly, and, second, the poem has a narrative shape and unity, one which is surprisingly coherent, if not “neat and tidy.” That it is not neat and tidy in fact contributes to its coherence, since the form of the poem participates in its theme: dissolution, chaos, decadence. The point should not be overlooked. The poem does not at all seek to forgo narrative structure. But that narrative structure, or overall totality, is militated against by the action, or lack thereof, within the narrative itself. The result is narrative tending toward stasis. That is, not so much the plot that goes nowhere (which is arguably the case with Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Lewis’ *The Apes of God*) but the plot that does not “go” at all.

45 Quoted in Ronald Bush, ““It Draws One to Consider Time Wasted”: *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*,” 59-60; See also, John Alexander, “Parenthetical Paris, 1920-1925: Pound, Picabia, Brancusi, and Léger,” in *Pound’s Artists: Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts in London, Paris and Italy.* (London: The Tate Gallery, 1985), 81-120. According to Bush, “Le jeun[e] homme” refers to E.P., which begs the question of E.P.’s relationship to Pound and to the London scene before us in the poem. Bush concludes that this letter by Pound “raises the gravest difficulties for anyone who wishes in the future to attribute the voice of part one to Mauberley rather than Pound,” Bush, 60. Perhaps it does, but Bush’s statement overlooks the fact that Pound himself said on another occasion that “[t]he worst muddle they [critics] make is in failing to see that Mauberley buries E.P. in the first poem,” which implies that Mauberley is the voice or agency behind at least that section, Quoted in Thomas E. Connolly, “Further Notes on Mauberley,” 50-59. 59. For a good discussion of point of view and speakers in the poem, one which includes a good summary of the arguments, see Kevin Arthur Wong, “Blurring of Poet and Persona in Pound’s *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*.” *Paideuma* 29.3 (Winter 2000): 193-205.
This effect is achieved by the combination of thematic or linguistic continuities and discontinuities of various kinds. For example, it can occur via lexical repetition (e.g., the thematically salient verb “drifted” ("Mauberley" II 9, 14; IV 25)) at disparate points and in divergent contexts. Or various short scenes can be imaged elliptically, scenes which are unrelated in themselves but which are tied together by various converging thematic elements (as in the imagistic depictions of Mr. Nixon and the stylist which help to paint a picture of decadent modern society).

That *HSM*’s static aesthetic structure remains a unity and a true plot configuration can be corroborated easily enough by the fact that the narrative inertia of the work is accompanied not only by a sense of crisis but by a deepening awareness of that crisis, partly by the very fact of its irresolution but also partly by way of accumulation and intensification (the unity being therefore a unity of crisis). While no clear line of ascent can be drawn – which should not be hoped for in any event as, again, it would be against the world-picture being drawn in the poem – the multivalent irony of section I moves subtly toward sarcasm in sections II and III before the hot satirical rhetoric of sections IV and V bursts onto the scene, sections which approach most closely the imprecatory modalities of Pound’s “Hell” Cantos and of the early modernist rhetoric of *Blast* surveyed in the previous chapter. What follows from this is a survey, both diachronic and synchronic, of London society and its ubiquitous decadence, one which piles on despair as scene after scene ensures all the more conclusively that there is no escape from the rot. These elements find their consummation in the shorter second half, where the crisis of total decadence is crystallized most perfectly in the figure of Mauberley, his amorous
failures, his “final/ Exclusion from the world of letters” (“The Age Demanded” 60-1) and ultimate cessation.

But while there is attention paid to developing and maintaining and even in some sense fostering a sense of crisis and decadence in the poem, there is much less effort at resolving what has been generated. There has been some disagreement concerning the concluding lyric “Medallion,” particularly on the question of whether it is to be taken affirmatively or ironically.\textsuperscript{46} Whichever way one comes down on the matter, it must be admitted that the very nature of the dispute is itself evidence of the ambiguity, even ambivalence, of the poem’s ending. Pound’s world of hollow men, like Eliot’s, ends with a “whimper” rather than a “bang.”\textsuperscript{47}

Although Mauberley may “no more exist” (IV 23) at poem’s end, the crisis that the poem dramatizes, a crisis that includes the aesthetic and the artistic but that is ultimately much broader in scope and is really socio-cultural in character, is not at all touched by this event nor by the addendum that is the concluding lyric. If plot can be simplified into complication and resolution, in this poem we are shown as a complication total decadence and offered as a resolution only the expiration of a (quite marginal) poet. The crisis rhetoric capacities of the poem far outweigh its powers of or interest in crisis resolution.

\textsuperscript{46} A dominant view sees “Medallion” as presented ironically. For an interesting argument to the contrary, see Peter Nicholls, “‘A Consciousness Disjunct’: Sex and the Writer in Ezra Pound’s ‘Hugh Selwyn Mauberley.’” \textit{Journal of American Studies} 28.1 (April 1994): 61-75.

2.4 Satiric Form and Eliot’s *The Waste Land*

Few poems are so manifestly concerned with “crisis” as *The Waste Land*. It could be called the poem of crisis par excellence, with critics justly observing that the dimensions of crisis within the poem stem from the cultural as well as the personal.\(^{48}\) The crisis “rhetoric” of the poem, as Seidel notes, so rich a resource for satire\(^ {49}\), centers on the apocalyptic registers of death, decay, and despair. This rhetorical texture is evident enough both in the original and the official epigraphs to the work, which should be seen as contextualizing and conditioning our experience and understanding of the poem that follows.\(^ {50}\) Before Pound’s editorial interventions, the epigraph was selected from Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and evidenced the “horror” that the poem will dramatize.\(^ {51}\) “Horror” is in fact a good category term for the rhetoric that the poem will employ in the service of crisis-creation. The actual epigraph to the poem, from Petronius’ *Satyricon*, offers a satirical context in addition to its crisis rhetoric of the will to death and of


\(^{49}\) Seidel, 168-70.

\(^{50}\) For the early drafts, with the original epigraph, see Valerie Eliot, ed. *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1971).

underworld allusions.\textsuperscript{52} From that point on, of course, the crisis elements only multiply, from famine and drought (always the epitome of crisis) to death ritual to prophecy and onward.

And indeed, if the poem represents the “literature of crisis,”\textsuperscript{53} a quick survey of the intertextual library of its allusions reveals a veritable roll-call of the literature of crisis, decadence, and horror. From Dante’s\textit{Inferno} and the Biblical-apocalyptic (Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, etc.) to the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists, in all their violence and horror, from the funeral ceremonies of \textit{The Book of Common Prayer} to Baudelaire to the Grail myth itself – and this is only to mention the more obvious examples – Eliot places before us through allusion a rich anthology of literary crisis, one whose rhetorical praxes are near to infinitely diverse.

While the poem certainly problematizes aesthetic mimesis, it nonetheless, much in the manner of Eliot’s earlier quatrain poems and of Pound’s\textit{Mauberley}, as of many of Joyce’s and Lewis’ characterizations, attempts to draw images writ large of hollow men types, from all levels and milieux of the modern “Unreal City.”\textsuperscript{54} Again, the litany is by now familiar: Madame Sosostris, the “crowd flow[ing] over London Bridge” (I. 62), the aristocratic woman in “The Chair” and her dialogue partner (II. 1-138), the working-class

\textsuperscript{52} T.S. Eliot, \textit{The Annotated Waste Land with Eliot’s Contemporary Prose} edited, with annotations and introduction, by Lawrence Rainey (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2005), 57, cf. 75-6. Line and section numbers will be given in-text.


\textsuperscript{54} And in this I am saying that the poem’s aesthetic, like Pound’s, is broadly conformable to the geometric-satirical aesthetics most fully articulated by Wyndham Lewis and surveyed in the previous chapter. What we have here is only a partially abstract aesthetic, with human figuration distorted and exaggerated in a negative direction, to emphasize the debased and decadent human shapes of the modern metropolis.
women in the London Pub (II. 139-72), Sweeney, Mrs. Porter, Mr. Eugenides, the typist and the “young man carbuncular” (III. 231). They come from a variety of backgrounds and socio-economic statuses, and yet their diversity only underlines what they share: hollowness. The same could even be said for Tiresias who, though sometimes regarded as the poem’s “protagonist,” nonetheless is only a static observer, unable to affect the world he inhabits, an “old man with wrinkled dugs,” a “Geronion” of Greek mythology rather than of the modern urban world, still a hollow man/ woman no less.

And just as we observed with Pound’s *Mauberley* in the previous section, these features of the hollow man model can also be detected within the aesthetic structures of the poem. The question of form and *The Waste Land* has of course been a vexed one. The extent to which it is “a narrative” at all has been hotly debated, and there is today no consensus on even this most basic point. It is a particularly complicated problem, one inextricably bound up with the status of the endnotes and also with Eliot’s own formulations on the “mythical method” and on literary traditions. Recently, critical opinion has tended to value greatly neither the notes nor the mythical frameworks of the

---


poem. Lawrence Rainey, for example, suggests that Eliot’s appeal to the Grail myth was akin to Joyce’s rhetoric concerning *Ulysses* and Homer, both being belated attempts to impose structuring principles on works by their authors, who were anxious that their audiences might reject the works as formless and incoherent. Indeed, for Rainey, “*The Waste Land* doesn’t have a narrative; instead, it has the scent of a narrative, hovering in the air like a perfume after someone has left the room.”

Brian McHale, on the other hand, has argued that the poem has a “*quasi*-narrative” structure, calling it a “notoriously ‘gappy’ poem,” one that exhibits “weak narrativity.” For McHale, the notes are in fact central in offering a basic implied narrative base to the poem, one that could not be discerned, and that presumably would not exist, without them. The reading of *The Waste Land* in terms of satiric plot comes to much the same conclusions as McHale, i.e., weak narrative, but on somewhat different
grounds obviously and without so much attention to the notes as determinative for the final verdict on textual cohesion.

What is most useful in McHale’s analysis for our present purposes is his insight that the “gappy” quality to the narrative, the abrupt stops and starts of the poem, are ultimately at the service of the overarching narrative structure rather than being the negation of such a structure, as Rainey would have it.61 The “story” of *The Waste Land*, like Pound’s *Mauberley* but perhaps even more pronounced, is a “civilizational” story, and in this sense it is like Pound’s poem a Spenglerian effort. In this way, the narrative operates by way of synecdoche.62 The Mennipean idea of “anatomy” at this point also becomes somewhat useful.63 Each micro-narrative component serves as a “part” for the whole of civilization (represented in the modern metropolis as it exists at a particular point in its history). In this way, the various scenes of city life can be seen to operate on a fairly simple narrative “logic.” They are localized autopsies brought together by the larger and complete examination on the civilizational level that is the poem as a whole.

---

61 It should be said here that McHale’s position is at times heavily qualified: it is a “quasi-narrative poem,” Brian McHale, “Narrativity and Segementivity, or, Poetry in the Gutter,” 32.

62 Rick A. Eden, “Master Tropes in Satire.” *Style* 21.4 (Winter 1987): 589-606. I characterize the conditions here as a dialectic of Eden’s two-fold satiric synecdoche: “centrifugal synecdoche,” which “dissolves satiric plot into a chaotic scene, an image of the world dominated by forces of folly and vice,” and “centripetal synecdochic representation,” which is “the tendency of satire to deal not with individuals as such but in types or ‘humors’,” 597. Here these satiric dynamics of character and plot work in tandem.

The discontinuous nature of the narrative (McHale’s “gappiness”) in this sense only serves the synecdochal structural organization of the poem’s procedure as “anatomy.”

What is more, the “gappy” narrative can be further projected onto the plane of the “hollow man” model as an attempt, à la Pound’s *Mauberley*, to bring those qualities of the human type such as inertia, malaise, and ineffectuality to the level of form. This can be seen even more profoundly as a given of the “anatomy” genre, which treats the poem’s subjects as one subject (i.e., brings the various parts of civilization into one whole, the various human subjects into one whole subject).

The description of Duval and Martinez cited above concerning satiric structures would serve well as a characterization of *The Waste Land*, with its puzzling construction, its seeming use of *non sequitur* as an organizational premise, its catalogues of sterility and decadence, its fragmentation and lack of progression and causality. And with Seidel’s theories in mind, one can well see how these strategies are employed to the end of creating and perpetuating crisis, but with little sense or interest in the resolution of crisis. In this way, the tensions of the poem’s structure are on full display: that is, the paradox of the story as state of being (and also, the story *of* a state of being). Or, in this case, and even more sharply paradoxical, it may be truer to speak of it as a story as/of *non*-being.

---

64 Duval and Martinez, *La satire*, 231-2.

For these reasons, F.R. Leavis’ conclusion about the poem only ten years after its publication still seems quite sound: “It [the poem] exhibits no progression….the thunder brings no rain to revive the Waste Land, and the poem ends where it began.”66 Like the other three works which we are considering here, Eliot’s poem enacts stasis on the level of narrative form by setting the crisis measures of plot formation into motion, albeit a very slow motion, but refusing to “do anything” with the crisis. The poem narrativizes in effect “the existence of a sustained, unresolved state of crisis.”67

This is not to say, of course, that there is no plot, but only that the normal mechanics of resolution endemic to narrative structures are undermined or thwarted by the text. In this regard, the many attempts to find resolving patterns in the poem can be helpful in showing the ways in which the poem does in fact escape total stasis, and the complete narrative vacuum that this would entail, even while the flaws of such arguments show forth in my view all the more starkly the ultimate irresolution of the poem’s narrative action.68

Having said this, it is important to underscore that, to a greater degree than is the case with Pound’s Mauberley, The Waste Land does contain what might be called a

67 Seidel, 165.
68 See, for example, the reading of Amy Hume, who construes the work as an epic poem that places the reader in the role of epic hero. Hume’s reading pushes the possibilities for an optimistic reading to the limit. But in doing so, not even this most optimistic reading can actually posit a positive resolution within the text itself (we are left only with the idea that “there is hope of rain, life, and fecundity in the modern world, but that this hope lies within ourselves and our imaginations,” and therefore, presumably, not in the poem itself). Nonetheless, this kind of reading is able to establish the lines of narrative arc that do exist in the poem. Amy Hume, “Listening for the ‘Sound of Water over a Rock’: Heroism and the Role of the Reader in The Waste Land,” 2-13. 12.
narrative climax in Part V “What The Thunder Said,” one which is centered on the Grail myth and the ascent to the Perilous Chapel but that also includes other “mythical” texts such as the Passion narrative, the Road to Emmaus account, and the Hindu Sanskrit Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad. In my view, we must be modest in our attempts to streamline these elements into a unitary narrative action. The diverse allusions of Part V should not be subsumed into the Grail myth (even Eliot’s gloss in the notes refrains from doing so). And one must always keep in view the collapsing Unreal City in this final segment (V. 373). We are in the Himalayas or some idealized mountainous borderland region perhaps, but some consideration should be made of the extent to which the poem intends for us ever to leave the modern Unreal City or its rural outposts. The diffuseness of the situation, of the space-time complex, of even the presence of any protagonist or “quester” of any kind, must be kept in full view.

Still, the narrative alludes to the climax that is contained in the Grail myths, the climax of the Passion and Easter narratives, the climax of the Upanishad. And yet, while there is a certain kind of aesthetic gesturing toward these narrative resolutions, and therefore in some sense a true climax to Eliot’s poem (it does end, after all, with the three-fold call to shantih), nonetheless the curious reality of The Waste Land’s narrative,

---


70 Cf. Smith, 94.

71 The term is widely in use. Cf. Smith, 72-98.
like so much of the work itself, is that its climax is a kind of anti-climax, one that resolves nothing and leaves the conditions of crisis and despair largely intact. And this is no less so even if there are some “program[s]” or “road signs” being sketched out in the threefold commands of the Thunder, as some have suggested.72

As Michael Seidel has pointed out, satiric plots often include the traditional mechanisms of plot formation, such as those crisis-resolving patterns necessary for climax and denouement. But even when they do contain such features, the satiric action will co-opt and mobilize them toward the satiric ends of irresolution and the sustenance of crisis: “If crisis is positively imagined as a decisive step into new action, satire either makes that new action another crisis or it snuffs the potential that might accrue from crisis opportunity.”73 Such is the case with Eliot’s poem. It takes the climax of narrative and removes the truly crisis-resolving capacities from it, so that the climax fails to affect any kind of change upon the situation of crisis (and the ineffectuality of the model is thereby enacted aesthetically on the marco-structural plane).

Here Seidel’s account of the satiric weltanschauung is relevant: “Insofar as satire can be said to have an ideology at all, its tenets are located in absurd, skeptical, despairing, or even subversive assessments of human capacity where the powers necessary to resolve life’s crises are absent or concealed.”74 These comments remain applicable to Eliot’s satire on the modern world as waste land, its motivations (despair,
intense pessimism) and its “assessment” of the possibilities for future amelioration, or lack thereof.

2.5 Satiric Form and James Joyce’s *Ulysses*

James Joyce’s *Ulysses* can be contrasted in many ways with Eliot’s *The Waste Land* and Pound’s *Mauberley* on the issue of how, and the extent to which, the novel enacts crisis. The graver tonalities are in large measure absent from the Irishman’s novel. What is more, *Ulysses* is a book that has been seen, with some justification, as a hymn in praise of ordinariness. 75 Rather than a depiction of a world at the breaking point, writhing and railing in the midst of grotesque deformities, à la Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, *Ulysses*, it is said, presents us with a world at home with itself in the mundane and the everyday, and with the everyman. 76

But even if one grants a difference of inflection in the novel’s relationship with crisis, it would be another matter altogether to suggest that the novel is bereft of crisis. In fact the opposite is true. On several levels and in many similar ways to the satirically oriented crises of Eliot and Pound, Joyce’s text frames its action amidst crisis and through the tactics of the manifold rhetoric of crisis.

---

75 Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* Revised Ed. (New York: Oxford UP, 1982), 5: “Joyce’s discovery, so humanistic that he would have been embarrassed to disclose it out of context, was that the ordinary is the extraordinary.”

76 For a representative example on this theme, with particular emphasis on the everyman as outsider motif, see Morton P. Levitt, “‘The Greatest Jew of All’: James Joyce, Leopold Bloom and the Modernist Archetype.” *Papers on Joyce* 10.11 (2004-5): 143-62.
Similar to Eliot, there has been some suggestion that the origin or original impetuses of Joyce’s novel as well as of its completion are to be found in a personal (mid-life) crisis. In addition to this authorial context for crisis, several socio-cultural and political backgrounds have furnished elements of crisis pertinent to the novel. Although somewhat outside the strict boundaries of the mimetic action of the book (which of course takes place on June 16, 1904), many have wished to relate the work, as with the other works of high-modernism, to the crisis of the War and its aftermath. In partial response to this tendency, Franco Moretti has sought to redress the balance with the forceful argument that the (latent) crisis which provides the backdrop of the novel is in fact the crisis of liberal, democratic, free-market capitalism and the collapsing of its supposedly autonomous structures. Others have not failed to point out the political climate of the novel’s world, particularly the crisis regarding Home Rule and Ireland’s right of self-governance. This political crisis extended in obvious and not so obvious ways to the cultural and the social strata, to Ireland’s collective identity and sense of its self as a people, the effects of which are everywhere on display in the novel.

---


80 The literature in this regard is massive and encompasses both the field of Irish studies more generally as well as postcolonial theoretical viewpoints. For a few examples of the range of possibilities, see the following: Maria Tymoczko, The Irish Ulysses (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press,
More immediate to the action of the novel perhaps, Michael Beausang has shown interesting and important connections between Eliot’s poem and Joyce’s novel, particularly on their uses of myth. For Beausang, the setting for both works is the mythical wasteland. Of special interest to our concerns is Beausang’s emphasis on the often overlooked backdrop of crisis in the novel (one that is immediately evocative of Eliot’s poem): “June 16th is also a time of crisis. The country is in the grip of a devastating drought. Seeds won’t sprout, and fields are barren. An outbreak of foot and mouth disease threatens all, cattle are due to be slaughtered in great numbers.” More than for its mythical resonances, fascinating though they are, Beausang’s insight is important in drawing attention to the historical and to the situation of crisis in 1904 Ireland, one referenced on many occasions in the novel and always in mind (even related, via pun, to the sterile sleeping arrangement of Bloom and Molly and thereby to the larger thematic crises of the foregrounds of the book), one that threatened to endanger the food supply and the very well-being of the society.

And with Eliot and Pound, and as was discussed at length in Chapter II, Joyce presents the reader with a decadent society of hollow men no less derelict in its duties to


82 Direct references to foot and mouth disease include the following in James Joyce, Ulysses: The Gabler Edition ed. Hans Walter Gabler (New York: Vintage, 1986). As is usual practice, I cite chapter and line numbers: 2.332; 8.84-5; 12.834-5, 851, 862-4; 15. 1244-5.
human community and to reality than other, perhaps more ominous, modernist portraits. The vast array of characters presented from every level of Irish society evokes the generic categorization of the “anatomy” that was applied in the previous section to Eliot’s poem. And likewise in Joyce’s work, the variety is coupled with a striking line of continuity in the decadence, dysfunction, and decline of each strata and sector of the culture. With reference to the “Circe” chapter, Gerald Gillespie writes that “Joyce counts on our recognition of Dublin as Jerusalem’s shadow, as explicitly another Babylon ruled by its own scarlet whore.” Dublin, we might say, is a city cut from the same macroimage as Eliot’s Unreal City.

And while it is certainly true to say that *Ulysses* is less urgently apocalyptic in its presentation of decadence than *The Waste Land* or *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, nonetheless one would be remiss not to mention the thick texture of allusion and imagery devoted to this subject in the book, though often enough in parody. The Book of Revelation is alluded to or referenced on at least twenty-two occasions, including as a running motif in the “Circe” chapter. One of the many typological reference points for Bloom is Elijah, who comes as a herald for Doomsday. Intimately bound up with this image is the Reverend Dr. Alexander J Dowie, again a continuing mental citation for Bloom, whose evangelism provides the reference point for the mock-apocalyptic conclusion to “Oxen of

---

83 As a helpful counterpoint to contemporary tendencies, Brian Cosgrove is keen to remind us of Joyce’s unfailing distaste for Irish society and for Dublin. See Brian Cosgrove, *James Joyce’s Negation: Irony, Indeterminacy, and Nihilism in Ulysses and Other Writings* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2007), 1-2.


85 For the full listing of allusions and references to the Book of Revelation (Apocalypse), see the index entry in Don Gifford, *Ulysses Annotated: Notes for James Joyce’s Ulysses.*
the Sun.” In addition to these references, there are fainter allusions to figures such as Joachim of Fiore, who conjure up the mood of apocalypse in one way or another.

The conclusion to “Oxen of the Sun,” with its polyphonic chaos, could serve as a proxy for the rhetorical texture of the novel as a whole. Although there is a great deal of merit in the argument that the stylistic virtuosity of the novel is a sign of the free play of signification that the book exalts, this ludic dimension of the novel may be best understood as a satirical gesture with simultaneously innocent and insidious intentions. Either way, the fact remains that the linguistic whirlwind with which the novel confronts us is experienced by enough learned readers as disorientation to merit at least some consideration of the possibility that what Joyce is attempting to forge in the novel, and perhaps what he will continue to hone in his final book, *Finnegans Wake*, is nothing other than a rhetoric of chaos. And where there is chaos, crisis is not far behind.

Micro-level aspects of style have also been connected to the novel’s enactment of crisis. For example, Moretti’s reading of *Ulysses* in terms of the crisis of capitalism includes the idea that the technique of stream of consciousness represents “the linguistic expression of the loss of individual identity” essential to the liberal-capitalist order. The narrative device unearths the degree to which individual and environment mutually affect

---


88 Moretti, 194-5.
each other, thereby exposing the “illusion” of autonomy and calling into question the reigning world-picture. Another dimension to the novel’s stylistic discourse and crisis comes from the perhaps somewhat obscure Hungarian critic and protégé of Lukacs, Peter Ergi, who sees *Ulysses* within the context of “avant-garde art” and sees its role as particularly helpful in having “called attention to a social, historical crisis by disrupting the objective, plastic, dynamic and synthesizing view of the world of the realistic tradition.” Here the anti-mimetic elements of the novel unveil through aesthetics an already existing crisis in the socio-cultural sphere.

From the outset of the novel, events and circumstances establish elements of crisis. Stephen is wearing black and is in mourning for the death of his mother (under the most emotionally painful of circumstances). What is more, his living situation is in peril. As for Bloom, he faces the general crisis of his elective sterility in the face of his son’s death, as well as the more immediate crisis of the day itself, the looming cuckoldry to be perpetrated by Blazes Boylan, which can be understood more generally as a crisis of his marriage and of the disruption of his home and home life. These circumstances particular to the two main characters interact in various ways with the dimensions of crisis outlined above (and a mention has already been made of the foot and mouth disease’s connection with Bloom’s sleeping arrangement).

---

89 Moretti, 195.

And so if the novel lacks not the emphasis, in its rhetoric and backgrounds, on crisis that we saw in the work of Pound and Eliot, and which Michael Seidel has underlined as being central to the means and ways of satire, it must be said that *Ulysses* also seems to demonstrate that similar structural action which is so attentive to crisis as a mood and mimetic reality but so inattentive to the normal duties of its resolution proper to literary plot. The matter of plot in *Ulysses*, quite surprisingly for a text so often analyzed, has not been a significant concern of critics. Margot Norris, for example, in a recent survey essay of narratological approaches to the book notes that the interaction of plot and narrative remains a “particularly neglected aspect of the novel.” Which is not to say that there has not been a great deal of reflection on the central features or characteristics of the novel’s narrative shape: its diffuseness, its multifarious combination of styles and approaches, its uses of point of view, etc. And a cursory reading would be enough to establish the book’s similarities with Pound’s *Mauberley* and Eliot’s *The Waste Land* as narrative. Like those works, Joyce’s novel exhibits abrupt shifts of

---

91 Seidel, 165-86.


setting, style, and approach, with paratactic, fragmented organizational structures and rich allusive densities drawing from diverse cultural heritages, all amidst a polyphonic medley sometimes harmonious but more often dissonant.

Furthermore, as was mentioned briefly above, *Ulysses* also structures its characterizations in the fashion of satirical types quite similar to Eliot and Pound, operating by process of synecdochal signification, often with the form of literary style setting the mode of characterization (see, for example, the “Nausicaa” chapter and the depiction of Gerty MacDowell via the discourse of women’s magazines, or in “Aeolus” with journalistic discourse). In this way, Joyce’s work can also be easily couched in the terms of a cultural “anatomy,” as many critics have observed. And this is all the more the case given the Linati and Gilbert schemata and their structural analogy to the human body. What we have in *Ulysses* is an anatomical dissection of Dublin satirically imaged as Babylon, or the Unreal City of decadent modernity.

To consider for a moment the Linati schema: its presence, along with the Gilbert schema, is important for the sense it has given us (and needs to continually give us) for Joyce’s unifying designs. For the most significant critical problem that the novel poses

---

95 For a reading of the later styles as showing the flaws inherent in these modes of discourse, see Weldon Thornton, *Voices and Values in Joyce’s Ulysses* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2000).


97 The schemata are so named for their recipients. Joyce sent the first to Carlo Linati in 1920 and the second, produced in 1921, was eventually published in Stuart Gilbert’s guide to *Ulysses*. Both schemata, varying somewhat, outline both the correlations with Homer’s *Ulysses* and the anatomical structure of the novel in relation to the various “organs” of the human body. For more on the schemata, see Richard Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey* (New York: Oxford UP, 1986), 186-90; Stuart Gilbert, *James
is still very much the problem of what we might call *Ulysses as a whole*. This problem is made all the more acute by the current tendency to emphasize the (very real) differentiating forces at work in the book, its rejection of easy totalization, its multifarious directionality, its centrifugal trajectories. With such emphasis, unifying elements of the book may well be underappreciated. Timothy Martin in his essay on “*Ulysses as a Whole*” has helpfully drawn attention on a more micro-textual level to the presence of various kinds of repetition in the book (in a structural analogy to the operatic leitmotif), whether thematic, character-based, or phrasal. And on a more macro-textual level, Martin also brings to our attention the fact that Joyce’s novel actually conforms rather nicely to the neo-classical unities of time and place, as well as to a fairly straightforward (with some exceptions) linearity of action.

What I wish to emphasize, broadly within the framework of unity of plot, is the manner in which *Ulysses* exhibits a similar stasis of emplotment as that seen in *The Waste Land* and *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, with some important differences related to

---

*Joyce’s Ulysses: A Study* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955 (1930)). The schemata are often thought of as being an “after-the-fact-attempt to bring the increasingly willful novel under a rule,” Kevin J.H. Dettmar, *The Illicit Joyce of Postmodernism: Reading against the Grain* (Madison, Wisc: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 145. We observed a similar explanation for Eliot’s notes to *The Waste Land*, the anxious author’s attempt to impose retrospective order on an unruly text. Perhaps this so, but the very presence of the schemata in Joyce’s case is certainly evidence of his intentions and reflections about the need for a totalizing conceptualization for the novel. In other words, the schemata call into question the argument that Joyce’s intentions were a reveling in disorder or in an endless dissemination of signification. It shows, in other words, that Joyce himself was preoccupied with the problem of *Ulysses as a whole*.

98 A favorite reading of postructuralist approaches to Joyce surely, but a reading that has nonetheless become more widely regarded as simple fact. Cf. Michael Patrick Gillespie, “‘In the bugining is the woid’: Opening Lines and the Protocols of Reading,” in *Pedagogy, Praxis, Ulysses: Using Joyce’s Text to Transform the Classroom* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 9-20.


100 Martin, 212.
differences in genre (i.e., novel versus long poem) and that the oft-recounted refusal of closure that the novel enacts is best seen within the basic theoretical outlines of satiric plot articulated by Seidel and others. The structural action of Ulysses, in other words, depends upon the creation and prolongation of crisis.

Ulysses achieves this in ways not dissimilar from our other works. Like those works, Ulysses exhibits a weak plot structure. We might benefit from applying Brian McHale’s term to the book, for Ulysses too is a “notoriously gappy” work. By virtue of its being a long prose work, Ulysses can in some ways even more starkly foreground the discreteness of its various parts. The use of different styles for each of the later chapters, for example, creates an autonomous effect, as do the ways in which many of the repetitions or leitmotifs are confined to a single chapter (often with its own theme). The term “episode” is habitually used for a reason. On the other hand, the fact that the main characters remain continuous adds a unity between chapters that is not as easily achieved between the various parts of Eliot’s The Waste Land or Pound’s Mauberley, which do not exhibit such continuity of character.

That the book has a variety of structural possibilities – the two most obvious and prominent being the three-part structure encrypted into the typography of the text or the two-part model based on the differentiation of styles (early versus later) – only adds to

---


102 McHale, “Narrativity and Segementivity, or, Poetry in the Gutter,” 34.

103 For Joyce’s process of composition with regard to the early and later styles, see Michael Groden, Ulysses in Progress (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1977). Fludernik argues for an essential unity between the two styles, see Monika Fludernik, “Narrative and Its Development in Ulysses.” Journal of
its static structural effect, the “gaps” being in a sense detachable into multiple combinations only limited by the sequencing of the chapters and the logic that the individual reader can bring to bear for justifying his or her approach. Looking at the eighteen episodes in terms of narrative totality, one could argue that the weakness of the already weak plot only grows in intensity (or perhaps lack thereof) as the reader proceeds along. Because the later styles exhibit a greater discreteness on account of their uniqueness and difference from other chapters, the movement from chapter to chapter becomes all the more onerous for the reader and all the more discontinuous in its narrative activity. In this way, the “movement” of the narrative is slowed and the causal propulsion from episode to episode weakened.104 Additionally, the increasing emphasis on the free play of language, often in parody, leads to greater reliance on the ironic, which only militates against narrative resolution, even within the specific chapters. They become projects for (often satiric) stylization and play and the motivations and circumstances necessary for plot development are set aside or forgotten altogether.

The result is reminiscent of the works discussed above. In fact, Carl Jung applies to Ulysses what has become for us a familiar refrain when he says that in the novel “[i]n actual fact nothing happens, nothing comes of it at all.”105 Structurally, in its narrative dimensions, Ulysses actualizes the impotencies of modernism’s human model (which its

---

104 Margot Norris also discusses lack of cause and effect as an element foregrounded in the “simultaneous narration” of the novel, which suppresses after-the-fact recounting of the story and thereby leaves the cause and effect chain in doubt, Margot Norris, “Narratology and Ulysses,” 46-7.

mimetic action depicts). And to reiterate somewhat, this time utilizing the *langue* provided by structuralism, the statement is true both in terms of *fabula* and *sujzet*: that is, the non-resolving or static characteristics of the narrative (the idle movements of the “story,” we might say) are recapitulated in its “plot,” built as it is not just on Bloom’s return to his starting point (his home) but also on the lack of any resolving action within the events of the day.\(^{106}\)

It is true to say that many have argued for some real resolution in the plot, either with regard to Stephen and Bloom’s situation or to Molly and Bloom’s married life.\(^{107}\) The nature of the arguments – which often rely on conjecture about aftermaths or heavy reliance on rather minute points or on points of profound ambiguity in the text – illustrates at the very least the lack of a clear, unequivocal resolution to the problems and crises taken up and deepened by the book itself.

### 2.6 Satiric Form and Wyndham Lewis’ *The Apes of God*

Wyndham Lewis’ *The Apes of God* might at first seem like an outlier in our discussion (as Lewis himself has seemed to many with regard to his status as a modernist along the same lines as the other “Men of 1914”). It was only completed in 1930, for example, and has long been regarded by many as a work belonging more to “late” modernism than to


the high-modernism of the late 1910s and early 1920s.\textsuperscript{108} Even more, the style of the book seems to many not typically “modernist,” not least because it is so unabashedly satirical.\textsuperscript{109} In Chapter II, an attempt was made to dispel some of these arguments, particularly as they related to the work of Lewis in the 1920s and to the early provenance of \textit{The Apes of God} as a novel.\textsuperscript{110} Such arguments need not be rehearsed here. It will suffice to say that the context in which Lewis’ novel is being placed here – that is, the context of other major works of high-modernism – and the saliency of the comparisons and interfaces of this context, will be the determinative factor in whether or not the questions regarding the “modernism” of \textit{Apes} can be resolved in a satisfactory fashion.

It may be helpful to begin these comparisons with the observation that, while Lewis’ novel is certainly far less known than the other three works discussed in this chapter and (it must be admitted) far less well-received in critical circles, \textit{The Apes of God} is increasingly appreciated by critics as an under-estimated achievement. In 1980 Paul Edwards spoke for few when he said that claimed for \textit{Apes} the status of “neglected masterpiece.”\textsuperscript{111} By 2004, David Ayers was not alone in his assessment that the novel


\textsuperscript{110} See Part II, section 2.

“contains some of the most consistently brilliant writing of its period.” If it still could not be said to rank with Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, Joyce’s *Ulysses*, or Pound’s *Mauberley*, it nonetheless is no longer regarded as paling quite as much in comparison. And irrespective of evaluative judgments, few critics and scholars dispute that the relative importance of *Apes* within the literary-historical context of modernism is not much outweighed by these other, more well-known texts. That *Apes* is difficult and not easy to finish does not distinguish it from the other three works analyzed here.

Whatever its merits, it was written by Lewis to be a book that would recall (and, one assumes, surpass) Eliot’s *The Waste Land* and Joyce’s *Ulysses*. Its relationship to *Ulysses* specifically is complicated and significant. It at once constantly evokes Joyce and Joyce’s work while at the same time seeking to parody, deride, and outdo it. More generally, its relationship to the genre of Menippean satire and to the anatomical presentation of society clearly connects it to the works discussed above. Like these others, *The Apes of God* presents us with a decadent society in crisis, populated by hollow men.

And also like the other works, *Apes* provides the reader with a rich, dense textual evocation of crisis, crisis serving the ends of satire. Frederic Jameson, in his stimulating

---

monograph on Lewis, has emphasized (much as we saw with Franco Moretti’s reading of *Ulysses*) what might be called the crisis of bourgeois society as a key context for Lewis’ work, a crisis that extends to a whole complex of factors, including liberal, free-market economics, democratic political structures, and the “crisis of the subject” understood as consequences thereof. To these one could add the more immediate crises involving the situation of London and British society in the post-War period. In fact, as Andrzej Gasiorek has suggested, the War is itself a context of crisis for the book: “*Apes* is a belated war novel, which focuses not on the war itself but on its after-effects as seen in 1920s society.” Whether or not all of what Lewis decries is a direct result of the war, what is represented is a cultural crisis as ubiquitous and profound as those seen in the other post-War works covered in this chapter.

The main focus concerns the relationship between the art world and the moneyed classes of London society. We are presented with a world of “apes,” of people who have a taste for the art world rather than for true art. These apes of the true artist are also the well-to-do. The imbalance that Lewis’ novel suggests (never all that subtly) is that the social segments that are supposed to be supplying the patronage and audience for art are busy engaging in art as a kind of hobby. What results is both the hollowing out of art and the debasement of true artists within society. The world represented in *Apes*,

---


118 To cite just one example: Dick Whittingdon is a rather undistinguished amateurish painter who rents ten studios for himself, most of them empty, just because he can, while other artists go deprived. Cf. Wyndham Lewis, *The Apes of God* (New York: Robert McBride and Company, 1932), 188-9.
therefore, is one without true art or artists, one without true human beings in fact (only apes).

Debasement of art leads to or at the very least exists alongside of the wider decadence of society. Art is therefore not an autonomous realm but a measure for the general health and circumstances of culture. Nonetheless, the point that is made by the book (and that is evident in Lewis’ prose tracts of the time) is that while art possess an essential function within society it must however remain integral to itself in order to function as it should. Rather than autonomy, then, which may imply an isolative cultural functionality, Lewis here advocates for the necessary independence of art, if art is to escape an indifferent autonomy. In this regard, there are significant points of convergence with Pound’s Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, which is also a work focused on the decadence of art as a synecdochal marker for the decadence of society writ large.

Cultural crisis in Lewis’ Apes is evidenced nowhere more so than in the backdrop to the events of the book: the General Strike of 1926. The strike looms throughout the action of the novel and the novel ends as the Strike finally commences. Tryus Miller, for whom the use of the Strike as a reference point is strong evidence of the close relationship between politics and aesthetic in Lewis’ work as a whole, has described the Strike and its failure as a “key event of mass politics,” one that “exposed the moribund

---

119 Wyndham Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, (New York: Haskell House, 1972 (1926)), 121; Wyndham Lewis, Time and Western Man, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), 184, 198, 265-72, 367. It is the basic argument of these works, as of Pierpoint’s Encyclical and of the action of Apes in general, that various social developments have sought the absorption of discrete cultural spheres (be it science or art or religion) into other spheres. In this regard, Lewis remains close to T.E. Hulme. But like Hulme his position could not be called “modern” because his insistence on the necessary separation of spheres is complemented by the idea that art (and science, religion, etc) can and should affect society. Indeed, his argument is that in order for it to truly affect the totality of society, in order in other words for it to achieve a truly heteronomous status, it must remain independent and distinct as a cultural entity.
nature of British social institutions and revealed the unreadiness of labor to offer an alternative.” The fact that it failed must have been for Lewis a kind of tautology: as failure failing. The Strike was both a sign of inefficacy within society and was itself inefficacious. That this event is central in formulating the setting of the book shows well the mood that Lewis wished to create and the context he provides for interpreting the events of the novel. Whereas with Eliot’s *The Waste Land* the backgrounds are barren, stricken nature and its metaphorical relation to the Unreal City and with Joyce’s *Ulysses* it is foot and mouth disease and the political crisis of Home Rule, Lewis’ *Apes* gives us the General Strike as the looming and ever-present crisis itself signifying the larger structural and social crisis of post-War society.

This crisis includes other dimensions as well. *Apes* has been called “a satire on the High Bohemia of Bloomsbury,” and one of the features of this satire clearly evident is Lewis’ distaste for homosexuality and effeminacy, which are evident in the book’s many characters and in the atmosphere of the world of the text. A closely related feature is the anti-Semitism evident particularly in the portrayal of Julius Ratner (whose name recalls the “rats” of Eliot’s Bleistein figuration), “the split-man,” who is a bad writer and publisher and sometime protégé of Pierpoint. In the “protagonist,” Dan Boelyn, the consummate child and thoroughgoing idiot, there is most clearly evident Lewis’ thesis

---


that British society was effected by a “child cult” that sought to infantilize its citizenry and create a society in love with the small and the enervated.123 Like the other works discussed above, the society depicted exhibits much talk but little ability for true communication. Referring to a particular exchange between the Finnian Shaw family, but in comments applicable to the dialogue of the book as a whole, Tyrus Miller writes of a “chattering collective machine,” an apt phrasing indeed.124

If the novel can be likened to the other works of this chapter in its multivalent textures of crisis, it shares also their lopsided attention to crisis-formation at the expense of crisis resolution. Like them as well, the narrative of Apes could be said to enact the perpetuation of crisis but to do so via the de-narrativizing tactics typical of satire to which Seidel and others have called our attention. I have already cited Paul Edwards comment that in the novel “history just will not happen,” and to this should be added the much earlier observation of Timothy Materer that in Apes “virtually nothing happens,” a characterization that we found in one way or another made of the three works considered here.125 Apes, too, offers us a satirical weak plot. Some of the techniques it utilizes to achieve hollow-man stasis on the level of form are parallel to those used by the weak narratives of the other “Men of 1914”; others are quite different.

On the macro-scale what we find are similar qualities of disconnection and sharp edges between parts that we found in the work of Pound, Eliot, and Joyce. Apes

123 See especially, Wyndham Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled.

124 Miller, Late Modernism, 114.

comprises twelve parts, each with its own basic integrity, especially the long section entitled “Lord Osmund’s Lenten Party,” which takes up nearly half the book (evidencing the same asymmetry among parts as in the other three texts). Horace Zagreus, a sixty-year-old albino figure, takes the young Dan Boelyn under his wing as his apprentice (he has been singled out by Zagreus as a “genius” artist), and in his initiation Dan makes the rounds of London’s pseudo-art society and its socialites (and herein lies the novel’s picaresque-like structure). There is less discourse variation in Lewis’ novel. The narration is objective and stable in its style from part to part, although Lewis does employ the mixture of text types (if to a somewhat lesser extent) to the same effect of creating narrative dissonance.

Most prominently in this regard are the abstract ink drawings that precede each section. Their blending of natural shapes with abstract designs encourages reflection and lingering in the reader. Additionally, their relationship to the narrative is not always clear, which creates a further spatializing effect in the reader (i.e., forces the reader to think in a non-linear way). The hybrid textuality of Apes extends also to the “Encyclical” that is “broadcast” by the absent Pierpoint, who (as his name suggests) acts as a kind of absent center in the work as a whole. The genre of the encyclical is argumentative-didactic and therefore has the effect essentially of interrupting the narrative.

And as narratologist Seymour Chatman has pointed out, the same can be said for description. Chatman argues that description, narrative, and argument represent different

---

types of text with different aims, functions, and modalities. At pains to distinguish them, Chatman also spends a good deal of time discussing how they often interact with each other (how, for example, one text-type can make use of another, etc). One of the salient features of Lewis’ narrative is the degree to which it makes use of description. *The Apes of God* is a description-heavy novel. This can be explained at least in part by Lewis’ theoretical emphasis on satire as an “externalist” art. For Timothy Materer, this feature of the text actually represents one of its flaws: “the very vividness of [the novel’s] descriptions hampers the return to the narrative pace and the progression to the next description.” I would argue that the use of description within the narrative actually serves an important thematic function (i.e., stasis, ineffectuality, etc), even if it perhaps makes for awkward reading.

But it is not just the quantity of description. There is also a great variety of ways in which description functions in the text. Sometimes the narrative is interrupted by large portions of description. At other times, an individual sentence is derailed in its narrative progression by what seems an uncontrolled digressive pattern of description. In each of

---

128 Seymour Chatman, *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Film and Fiction* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1990). There are two essays in the volume which discuss description’s relation to narrative: “Narrative and Two Other Text-Types,” 6-21; “Description Is No Textual Handmaiden,” 22-37. A key difference between narrative as a text-type and description as a text-type for Chatman is that the former has temporality, while the latter does not, 31.

129 Timothy Materer, *Wyndham Lewis the Novelist*, 85. In his discussion, Materer interestingly relates Lewis’ use of description both to the films of Jean-Luc Godard and to the novels of Alain Robbe-Grillet.

130 A somewhat random example comes from the climatic final scene, where Horace and Lady Fredigonde embrace, a moment which a normal narrative would seize for its dramatic potential: “A dark spasm visited the corpse-like carcass beneath[Lady Fredigonde] – strapped into position, in the giant chair which might have been constructed to accommodate a circus-elephant, who had been taught to sit down to table and discuss a two-gallon tankard of ale, in imitation of humanity, as a compliment to the squatting audience,” Wyndham Lewis, *The Apes of God*, 624. Whether or not it is description in the strict sense (as it
these cases, however, the intrusion of description into the narrative has the effect of decelerating narrative tempo and of disrupting the temporality necessary to narrativity. The narrative stasis of *Apes*, therefore, is due in large measure to the interplay of narrative and non-narrative text-types (including most prominently, description).

While the use of description as a method of effecting narrative stasis is perhaps unique to *Apes* among our four works, the thick segmentation between parts allows for the satiric characterization techniques already discussed (those synecdochal figurations which emphasize by their formal presentation the stasis that they attempt to evoke thematically). We are shown in effect a parade of hollow men from a variety of sectors within society (although of course here the emphasis is more on the art and literary scenes) in similar fashion to the galleries of Eliot, Joyce, and Pound.

Perhaps more so than any of our other texts, *Apes* ends where it began. Lewis foregrounds quite elaborately the parallels between the book’s opening and closing scenes. On both occasions, Zagreus goes to the Follett mansion to visit Lady Fredigonde with her money on his mind (as well as a new apprentice). Beyond this, there are several thematic linkages with the Prologue and the final scene (in the thematic emphases of the depictions of Lady Fredigonde, in the motif of “Death-The-Drummer,” as well as in certain smaller details).\(^{(131)}\) Perhaps it could be argued that much has changed – Zagreus has dumped Dan and taken to Archie, Sir James Fredigonde is dead (killed by the

\(^{(131)}\) Paul Edwards, “*The Apes of God: Forma and Meaning,*” 134-6. According to Edwards, “Lewis draws attention to this pattern by frequent verbal echoes of the opening [and the final scene] and by situating some of the minor characters in the same parts of the Follett house in both sections of the book,” 135.
prattling of Lady Fredigonde), the General Strike has begun – and yet the narrative’s envelope structure seems to imply that the differences, however significant in themselves, have little or no real effect on the novel’s situation. Even the General Strike is somewhat ineffectual. As Michael, the Russian associate of Dan’s artist-friend Melanie Blackwell, comments to Dan, “What a bore this Strike is!” Here the crisis of the novel, so long in coming, has finally arrived. But it is crisis fit for a hollow man culture: the crisis, the apocalypse we could say, that bores.

Still, a true crisis is afoot as the novel draws to a close. Scott Klein reminds us that the failure of the General Strike may be known to the readers of Wyndham Lewis’ novel but it is not known to the characters at book’s end. The final scenes are of riots and unrest in Hammersmith and in the North, and outside the peaceful Follett mansion, the crashing cymbals and beating sounds of “Death the Drummer.” As Paul Edwards has said, however, what we get here is not so much the promised Apocalypse but rather an “End…deferred.” And the end that is deferred is not simply the Armageddon that the level of cultural decadence argued for by Lewis’ inflammatory rhetoric of crisis would seem to suggest is the logical and fitting result. It is also the more basic “end” of traditional plot structures. What Lewis defers above all is the resolution of that crisis which within the structure of the novel’s narrative he has worked so hard to create and sustain.

3. Modernist Form and Ludic Satire

Having considered form in four key works of high-modernism, I would like now to consider how the results of our analysis might be fruitfully applied to some long-standing conceptions of modernist aesthetic practice. The basic contention of this final section is that traditional readings of modernist form have led to “dead-ends” and misunderstandings that can be corrected by an understanding of modernist form as ludic satire, an understanding that opens us up to dimensions of the movement which are underappreciated at best at the present moment.

3.1 Modernist Form and Fascism

As was discussed in Chapter I, the dominant reading of modernist form was established very early on and certainly was fixed by the time of the writings of Joseph Frank.136 The core concept was “spatial form,” the idea that modernist texts operate on the basis of “space-logic” rather than the normal narrative-based “time-logic.”137 These

136 Cf. Chapter I, section 2.1.

works achieve their effect according to Frank not by sequential patterns but by an “instantaneous presentation.”\footnote{Frank, 10.} Although modernism has been subject to a great variety of approaches and orientations in the years since Frank’s initial essay, it is remarkable to note how influential his work has been in modernist studies. Still today the conclusions undergirding “spatial form” continue to be basic hermeneutic assumptions of many if not most scholars and critics of the period.\footnote{Frank Kermode, \textit{The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction with a New Epilogue} (London: Oxford UP, 2000; first published, 1967), 108.}

Almost as important is the conclusion that Frank Kermode drew in 1967 from the premise provided by Joseph Frank. Kermode’s basic move was to connect the aesthetics of “spatial form” with the politics of modernists like W.B. Yeats and the “Men of 1914.” As he put it, in these modernists we have “totalitarian theories of form matched or reflected by totalitarian politics.”\footnote{Frank Kermode, \textit{The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction with a New Epilogue} (London: Oxford UP, 2000; first published, 1967), 108.} These writers “retreated into some paradigm, into a timeless and unreal vacuum from which all reality had been pumped.”\footnote{Kermode, 113.} Their work exhibits the “formal elegance of fascism.”\footnote{Kermode, 114.} Kermode’s “traditionalist modernism” is born out of crisis no doubt, but the result is escape into “order as the modernist artist understands it: rigid, out of flux, the spatial order of the modern critic or the closed

\footnote{For two representative examples, see the introduction to modernist aesthetics and theory, Rebecca Beasley, \textit{Theorists of Modernist Poetry} (Taylor & Francis, 2007), 75-9. And also, Stephen Kern, \textit{The Modernist Novel: A Critical Introduction} (Cambridge UK: Cambridge UP, 2011), 61-3.}
autoritarian society.\textsuperscript{143} This gloss on modernist form proved to have staying power, not least because of the common (though meritless) critical supposition that there is an intrinsic connection between formalism in criticism and rightist views in politics.\textsuperscript{144}

Perhaps the most unfortunate consequence of these readings is that in winning such acceptance in critical circles they have led to endless machinations and gyrations concerning the fascism of modernism, its totalitarian tendencies, and overpowering toxicity.\textsuperscript{145} On the other side, the matter is not always helped by critics seeking to defend the modernists who nonetheless accept without much of a vetting the premises of spatial

\textsuperscript{143} Kermode, 111, 93-124.

\textsuperscript{144} For thorough debunking of this connection, including its historical merits, see Virgil Nemoianu, “Hating and Loving Aesthetic Formalism: Some Reasons.” \textit{MLQ} 61.1 (March 2000): 41-57.

form (Frank) and its connections to politics (Kermode). These basic readings, which in many ways go back all the way to Edmund Wilson and the practical founding of criticism on modernism, created the paradigm which was traced in detail in Chapter I whereby modernism is seen as espousing and attempting to enact an aesthetic of isolation, the only critical shift being in recent years a questioning of whether that isolative posture was genuine or not, and/or possible or not.146

In what remains, I would like to suggest that another course is possible. Rather than viewing modernist form in terms of totalitarianism and fascism, I will make use of the analysis of the earlier sections as well as of the satirical theories of George A. Test and Dustin Griffin to suggest that modernist form should well be considered under the quite different auspices of ludic satire. Furthermore, if we insist on a political reading of the form of modernism, the employment of ludic satire by the “Men of 1914” does in fact yield a critique of democracy (as is perhaps well-understood) but also, and no less, does it yield a thorough-going critique of fascism. We might even dare to say that modernist form considers the possibilities for fascist potentialities within democratic politics.

3.2 Modernism as (Ludic) Satire

Recent critical reflection on satire has seen some important shifts.147 What has been gained is a larger sense of and understanding for satire’s more centrifugal and

---

146 For this shift, see especially, Chapter I, section 2.2.
multivalent dimensions. This development in the theory of satire coincides well with the satire and poetics of modernism, and perhaps has even benefited directly from it. Let us therefore review some of the key authors responsible for these modifications in outlook.

In the early and mid 1990s George A. Test and Dustin Griffin published important monographs on satire.148 Both authors were surely influenced by the work of Mikhail Bakhtin on Mennipean satire, which stressed the carnivalesque and the dialogical dimensions of satire.149 Test and Griffin have their own specific purposes and contributions, but they shared a view of satire’s capacity for play and delight, for in other words the possibility of a ludic satire.150 Griffin in particular sought to supplement and correct settled understandings of satire by emphasizing its playfulness and open-endedness, the way in which it could cultivate paradox, unstable irony and ambiguity, exploration and inquiry.151 And, reminiscent of Wyndham Lewis, Griffin also looked to balance the recent emphasis on satire’s moral dimensions with other conceptualizations of how the satirist operates within society and in his art.

148 George A. Test, Satire: Spirit and Art; Dustin H. Griffin, Satire: A Critical Reintroduction.


151 Griffin, 1-6.
But in making these very stimulating arguments, neither Griffin nor Test makes much use of modernist literature. And even in his advocacy for a non-moral satire, Griffin makes only a passing reference to Lewis.¹⁵² The picture of modernism and its satire presented here provides a rich opportunity to make the most of the approach of Test and Griffin. For I have tried to explore in this study the ways in which modernism as a movement makes use of various marginalia against the modern center of progress, rationalization, and autonomy. Furthermore, the picture of modernist satirical form analyzed in the previous sections lends itself rather easily to the view of satire espoused by Test and Griffin.

At the same time, however, some important clarifications should be made. The argument of the previous sections that modernist form projects the “hollow man” model onto the plane of form needs to be further explored, in order to arrive at a more complete and thorough understanding of what such an aesthetic actually entails. If it were simply the case that the stasis of the modernist human type were mapped onto the texture and organization of modernist texts, there would still be a question about the extent to which such texts could truly be called either “anti-modern” or “ludically” satirical. In order for the satire of modernism to fall unequivocally into the latter two categories something more is needed.

The fact that the complex textual designs of high-modernism exhibit irony that is often unstable, parody (often satirical) that revels playfully in mimicry and imitation, a high tolerance for ambiguity, paradox, wordplay, and lack of closure is evidence enough of a deeper and more fundamental satire on the level of form: namely, a satire not just on

¹⁵² Griffin, 185.
the inertia and malaise of the modernist type but also on other dimensions of the model that we have seen at work, including those connected with the historical process of rationalization and progress in the period of modernity. That these two expressions of modernist satirical form – mimetic stasis and free play – are in some tension with each other is perhaps only a problem if we fail to accept the view of satire put forth by Test and Griffin (and largely inspired by Bakhtin and completely compatible with Lewis). To the extent that we as readers demand the kind of closure and rationalizing tendentiousness that the texts stubbornly refuse to give, we can consider ourselves satirized and lampooned by the texts themselves.

Just how do these ludic dimensions of the satire of modernist form play out in the four texts before us? Beyond the descriptions of the form of these texts already offered in this chapter, a few additional examples focused on specific aspects of the works will suffice in sketching some possible lines of direction. In Joyce’s *Ulysses*, there is utilization of certain discourses that could be called “modern” in the sense that they are intimately connected with modernization, such as those connected with mass literacy (e.g., newspaper, magazine, advertisement, popular novel, pop science, evangelistic), as well as other more traditional discursive modes (epic, platonic dialogue, drama, catechism). In many cases, Joyce adopts such discourse for the purpose of satirical parody. Examples include “Aeolus,” so full of journalistic, rhetorical hot air; “Nausicaa” and its send-up of women’s magazines and their consumers; “Oxen of the

---

153 Although he does not place his argument within the context of satire, Weldon Thornton analyzes the later styles in interesting ways as modern discourses that Joyce utilizes in order to show their limitations and ultimate inadequacy. See Weldon Thornton, *Voices and Values in Joyce’s Ulysses* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000).
Sun,” with its end in the chaos of modern discourse; and “Eumaeus,” with its diffuse verbosity and false erudition – and this, to name just a few salient points in the text.

This strategy, however, includes an inherent reflexivity given that by including these discourses in the text, the text risks asking us to take a critical view of itself. If rhetorical verbosity is to be censured on account of its lack of solidity and substance, then does not Joyce risk our saying the same thing of “Aeolus”? This is especially the case given that Joyce (as we saw in our earlier section) does not seek closure within the text itself but instead cultivates a rich ambiguity and delight in the very rhetoric that is being satirized. There is, therefore, a ludic playfulness with the variety of later styles in the book, including those that are employed most satirically.

The same could be said of Eliot’s adoption of “different voices” in *The Waste Land*. This quality of the text extends not only to the various registers of English that one finds throughout (juxtaposed perhaps most prominently in Section II) but also to the mixture of foreign languages scattered throughout. One cannot escape the thought of damning “chaos” and the imprecation of decadence in the face of these linguistic varieties and admixtures often presented with a startling lack of context. But at the same time, there is an equally strong sense of Eliot’s pleasure and joy in polyphonic medley and in the sounds and musicality of the spoken word, almost irrespective of referentiality. This quality of the text shines through despite the dower and at times despairing picture presented in the poem as a whole (ranging as it does from the nightmarish to the deeply ambivalent).
Hugh Selywn Mauberley also adopts different voices and textual allusion toward somewhat similar ends. A particularly striking example of reflexive parody is the final lyric with which the poem ends. Entitled “Medallion,” its role and purpose in the poem remains somewhat ambiguous. Most critics, however, tend to view the poem as written by the fictional Mauberley, his only testament to the world that has left him behind. The poem is clearly a pastiche of the decadent style. There is an overwrought, aestheticist flavor to the lyric, with its heavy alliteration, density of imagery, and delicately refined sensitivity to pictorial and linguistic ornament. But if Pound intends to show the limitations or failures of this isolative aesthetic posture, “Medallion” must then be criticized by the reader as an example of failed, enervated art. On the other hand, it is not difficult to recognize and appreciate the very qualities of the lyric that are supposed to come in for excoriation. By embedding the “failed” art of Mauberley in the successful poetry of Pound, does this make the failure de facto a success? Hugh Kenner alludes to the poem’s censuring of a society that has transformed beauty into a commodity, i.e., “the beautiful is what will sell.” The paradox for HSM, then, is that it presents us with the pure beauty of the aesthete to show us the limitations of such a vision – but does the beauty it presents us with become less beautiful as a result?

One might perhaps think that the ludic dimensions of satire would require the softer tonalities available to the satirist. But Wyndham Lewis’ The Apes of God demonstrates how the most malicious satirical portraits can be combined with linguistic

---

154 An exception to this majority opinion being the very interesting reading of Peter Nicholls: Peter Nicholls, “‘A Consciousness Disjunct’: Sex and the Writer in Ezra Pound’s Hugh Selwyn Mauberley.” *Journal of American Studies* 28.1 (1994): 61-75.

giddiness and delighted playfulness. The linguistic textures of Lewis’ novel are highly inventive and experimental, with at times heavy alliteration and spirited wordplay and lively imagery. Additionally, he engages in thematic and even linguistic parodies of Joyce’s work, with clear satirical intent. These satires on Joyce themselves betray Lewis’ constant attention to and imitation of the Joycean text. Beyond the linguistic levels, Lewis’ interest in and careful craft with regard to his (mis)characterizations evidence the paradoxical affinities and allegiances of the satirist who offers his objects for critique but nonetheless is interested enough in them to care about his creations aesthetically (and this same phenomenon is perhaps more deeply felt in the more ambiguous textual worlds of Eliot and Joyce, as also of Pound).

3.3 The Politics of Modernist Form

Against the prevailing idea of “spatial form,” the present study proposes a conceptualization of modernist form that focuses on its satirical dimensions. Some of the features observed and underlined in “spatial form” such as weak narrativity are couched in terms of modernism’s formal deployment of the modernist human model and of satiric macro-textual organization more generally. What is more, the specifically ludic character of modernist form has been investigated and elaborated.

Perhaps it goes without saying that I believe that this approach to modernist form is more useful because, especially at the present moment, it helps to unearth facets of modernism that have hitherto been underemphasized and underdeveloped. But the
doctrine of spatial form has not simply tended to focus on certain legitimate aspects of modernism. It has also, unwittingly of course, distorted our view of high-modernism. Among its distortions is the Kermodian reading of modernist form as fascistic or imbued with fascistic impulses and tendencies. By focusing on spatialization and escape, on order and unity, this reading of modernism privileges the alignments of modernism with political theories and attitudes that are only dubiously related to its aesthetic practice.

A satiric modernist form counters the idea of escape with engagement and of order with multiplicity and free play. Additionally, such a reading seems easier to reconcile with our experience of the texts themselves. For those conditioned by the idea of spatial form, *The Waste Land* or *Ulysses* may seem rather unified and ordered. The uninitiated first-time reader, however, usually finds them maddeningly diverse and open-ended. Words like “order” do not readily come to the first-time reader’s mind. Likewise, while the referentiality of modernist texts is certainly mediated by the human and societal models of modernism, the texts could hardly be considered attempts to escape into idealized, timeless realities. They could be just as well described as prophecies of the nightmarish future that their civilization will endure in the years subsequent to these masterworks (as well as imaginative recollections of the nightmare endured during the Great War).

Certainly, it must be conceded that high-modernist form calls into question mass society, including its democratic structures. But a careful reading of the implications would unveil its equally vicious critique of the fascistic. Indeed, the nature of

---

modernism’s dual critique may incline one to consider the possibility for border-crossings between fascism and democracy, the way in which democracy can deploy fascistic resources and the extent of fascism’s democratic ethos. Homogeneity and hierarchy are heard early in any listing of high-modernism’s fascistic inclinations. And yet, the texts themselves could hardly be described adequately by these concepts. Quite to the contrary, these works exhibit a marked tendency for loose structures, mélange, and the like.157

The formal qualities of modernist texts appreciate and cultivate differentiation, mixture, lack of regulation, spontaneity, asymmetry, relativity, reflexivity, play, erudition, subtlety, obscurity, critique, and open-endedness. It is an open question whether any political structure of the early twentieth century – be it fascist, democratic, or communist – could claim for itself these characteristics and values. And if one looks at particular cases, one can see easily that, for example, the “Men of 1914”’s critique of modern discourses are rooted in developments within democratic societies but could well enough apply to Communist Russia, Fascist Italy, or National Socialist Germany.

These essentials of modernist form are not well served by readings which focus disproportionately on concepts like “fascism” and “totalitarianism,” which, although they are not without interest (especially given the biographies of Pound and to a lesser extent Lewis), have nonetheless been over-represented in recent debates and have provided the

157 Such “centrifugal” readings of Joyce’s work, especially *Finnegans Wake*, are quite common. See Phillippe Sollers, “Joyce and Co.” *TriQuarterly* (Winter 1977): 67-121. I suggested somewhat indirectly in earlier discussions of Joyce’s work (cf. Chapter II, Part II Section 2) that modernist studies can perhaps provide a corrective to an over-insular Joyce studies. Here is an example where the opposite situation is the case.
basis for an imbalanced and distorted view of the “Men of 1914” and of the meaning and nature of modernist form.
Bibliography
Introduction and Chapter One


Bibliography: Chapter II


347


---. *Hoodopip*. The Wyndham Lewis Collection. Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Box 9.

---. *Joint*. The Wyndham Lewis Collection. Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Boxes 16-17.


---. “Mr. Zagreus and the Split-Man.” *The Criterion* 2.6 (Feb. 1924): 124-42;


---. *The Taming of Romanticism: European Literature and the Age of Biedermeier.*

---. *A Theory of the Secondary: Literature, Progress, and Reaction.* Baltimore, MD:

---. *The Triumph of Imperfection: The Silver Age of Sociocultural Moderation in


1977.


Perloff, Marjorie. *21st-Century Modernism: The “New” Poetics.* Malden, MA:

Perrino, Mark. *The Poetics of Mockery: Wyndham Lewis ’The Apes of God and the

Pickstock, Catherine. *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy.*

Potter, Rachel. *Modernism and Democracy: Literary Culture, 1900-1930.* New York:


---. “Salutation the Third.” In *Modernism: An Anthology,* edited by Lawrence Rainey,


Bibliography: Chapter Three


---. “Ulysses, Order, and Myth” *Dial* 75 (5) (Nov. 1923).


---. *What is a Classic?: An address delivered before the Virgil Society on the 16th of October, 1944*. London, Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1945.


---. “Prolgue to an Essay on Criticism I-II.” The Monthly Criterion 7.2-7.3 (Feb.-March 1928).


---. “On Fear; and Romanticism.” Aldephi (Sept. 1923).


Bibliography Chapter Four


Gillespie, Michael P. “‘In the bugining is the woid’: Opening Lines and the Protocols of Reading.” In *Pedagogy, Praxis, Ulysses: Using Joyce’s Text to Transform the Classroom*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1996.


