The Transformation of the English Novel, 1890–1930

Studies in Hardy, Conrad, Joyce, Lawrence, Forster and Woolf

Daniel R. Schwarz
Professor of English
Cornell University

Second Edition

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DISRAELI'S FICTION

CONRAD: *ALMAYER'S FOLLY* TO *UNDER WESTERN EYES*

CONRAD: THE LATER FICTION

THE HUMANISTIC HERITAGE: Critical Theories of the English Novel from James to Hillis Miller

READING JOYCE'S *ULYSSES* (*editor*)

THE CASE FOR A HUMANISTIC POETICS

NARRATIVE AND REPRESENTATION IN THE POETRY OF WALLACE STEVENS: 'A Tune Beyond us, yet Ourselves'

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For my sons, David and Jeffrey, and for my brother, Robert

Contents

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Preface to the Second Edition

I am pleased that the second edition of *The Transformation of the English Novel, 1890–1930* is being published in paperback. Since I still subscribe to its arguments, I shall confine myself to a few brief remarks. But I have made some corrections and added a number of crucial texts to the bibliography.

Originally published in 1989 when deconstruction was still a dominant position, *The Transformation of the English Novel, 1890–1930* now can be seen as part of widespread return to issues of representation, a return stimulated by most of the best feminist and minority critics for whom issues of mimesis – how women and blacks and Asians have been represented and misrepresented – have always been pivotal, as well as by Steven Greenblatt and the New Historicists, and by the revelations about Paul de Man's past.

It is a centrepiece of my ongoing project to define and defend a humanistic poetics that insists that books are by humans, for humans, and about humans. I work from a pluralistic methodology that respects diversity of theoretical perspectives and that assumes, following Aristotle, that aesthetics, ethics, and politics are inextricably linked. In this study I address canonical authors and writers whose work has made a difference to generations of readers: Hardy, Conrad, Joyce, Lawrence, Forster, and Woolf. Since *The Transformation of the English Novel, 1890–1930* was originally published, I have addressed the theoretical issues it raises more fully in *The Case for a Humanistic Poetics* (1991) and examined some of the assumptions for which I have been arguing in *Narrative and Representation in the Poetry of Wallace Stevens* (1993).

Let me state my credo. I believe that the close reading of texts – both from an authorial and resistant perspective – enables us to perceive more clearly. I believe in a continuity between reading texts and reading lives. I believe that the activity of critical thinking – not merely literary criticism – can be taught by the analysis of language. I believe in the place of the aesthetic. I believe that we can enter into imagined worlds and learn from them.

Literary meaning depends on a trialogue among 1) authorial intention and interest; 2) the formal text produced by the author for a specific historical audience; and 3) the responses of a particular reader in a specific time. Texts mediate and condense anterior

worlds and authors' psyches. The condensation is presented by words, words which are a web of signs but which signify something beyond themselves; within a text, words signify differently. Some words and phrases almost summon a visible presence; others are elusive or even may barely matter in the terms of representation – as in Joyce's encyclopedic catalogues in 'Cyclops'. The context of any discourse determines the meaning – or should we say the epistemological and semiological value of the word or sentence? And once we use the word *value*, are we not saying that words have an ethical quotient? Human agency – on the part of author, reader, or characters within real or imagined worlds – derives in part from will, from the idiosyncrasies of human psyche and, in part, on cultural forces beyond the control of the individual. That is another way of saying that language is constituted and constituting, although it gives subjective human agency to the act of constituting.

If self-awareness of oneself and one's relationship to family and community – including one's responsibilities, commitments, and values – is part of the ethical life, then reading contributes to greater self-understanding. Reading complements one's experience by enabling us to live lives beyond those we live, and experience emotions that are not ours; it heightens one's perspicacity by enabling us to watch *figures* – tropes, that is, personifications of our fellow humans – who are not ourselves, but like ourselves.

Introduction

The Transformation of the English Novel, 1890–1930 is part of a larger critical project that I began with *The Humanistic Heritage: Critical Theories of the English Novel from James to Hillis Miller* (1986), in which I defined the theory and method of Anglo-American novel criticism. In my next book, *Reading Joyce's 'Ulysses'* (1987), I used the principles of what I call humanistic formalism to create a dialogue between traditional and more recent theory and, most importantly, between theory and Joyce's great epic novel. My purpose is to reinvigorate the humanistic study of fiction by creating a dialogue between traditional and recent theory as well as between theory and texts. I have been called a progressive traditionalist and a pluralist, both of which terms I welcome. For me, theory is important only when it enables us to think conceptually about how works behave and cohere and what they mean and signify.

The Transformation of the English Novel, 1890–1930 is divided into two major parts. Originally published as essays from 1972 to 1983, Part One shows how historical and contextual material is essential for humanistic formalism. Thus the first chapter, entitled '"I Was the World in Which I Walked": The Transformation of the English Novel', calls into question such New Critical shibboleths as 'exit author' and the 'biographical fallacy' and discusses how the author becomes a formal presence within the text. I argue that the novels of Hardy, Lawrence, Conrad, Joyce, Forster, and Woolf represent a radical break from the past and require different critical programmes for discussing them than their predecessors. The changes in the novel reflect the authors' realization that the relative stability of the Victorian era give way to the anxiety and dubiety of the modern era. In the remaining five chapters of Part One, I discuss Hardy, Forster, and Lawrence in terms which show how these authors' struggles with their personal crises and social concerns determine their narrative techniques and modes of representation.

Changes in the novel's form and modes of representation relate to changing historical circumstances. But changes in our perception of the form of the novel also relate to changes in the way we read. Written recently, Part Two speaks of the transformation in the way we read and think about authors, readers, characters, and

form in the light of recent theory. In two polemical chapters – 'The Case for Humanistic Formalism' and 'Modes of Literary Inquiry: a Primer for Humanistic Formalism' – I offer an alternative to the way that the deconstructive and Marxist ethos have sought to transform literary studies. I discuss the following basic questions: How can we talk about the author as a formal presence in the work? How can thinking about a group of novels enable us to reach an understanding of literary culture? How does one speak of a period? Can one think about the 'development' or 'evolution' of the British novel and, if so, in what terms? How can one speak of the novels of this period in terms of cultural and literary history? My goal is to provide a map for the study of the English novel from Hardy through Woolf, a map that integrates critical theory, historical background, and powerful, close reading. But I also wish to demonstrate the theoretical and practical validity of a criticism that focuses on human authors, imagined worlds, and readers who think and feel.

The final three chapters of Part Two focus on the transformation of the role of the reader. I demonstrate how a pluralistic reader who is familiar with the various approaches in the critical mindscape responds to complex novels by Conrad (*Lord Jim*), Woolf (*Mrs. Dalloway, To the Lighthouse*), and Joyce (*Ulysses*). I imagine a reader whose knowledge of recent theory and awareness of traditional theory enables him to understand the theoretical implications of his reading experience. For reading the novel in a university setting has been transformed by new ways of reading and the surge of interest in 'Theory'. Yet even while acknowledging that novels contain the seeds of linguistic and deconstructive readings that deflect the reader from his efforts to discover one alternate meaning or significance, I shall contend that the transformed reader – the reader alert to new modes of reading – finally depends on what Stevens calls 'our rage for order' to make coherent patterns. Moreover, I shall be implicitly arguing that 'progressive' traditional criticism, too, has fresh stories of reading to tell.

Literary works, particularly novels, depend on readers who care about human characters and who respond to the human narrative voice which lives in the imagined world created by the author. The modern British novelists depend upon a reader who must create some of the patterns that were once provided by the omniscient narrator. Like the author and the major characters, the reader must

undergo his own quest for meaning. As he or she experiences a complex novel's tentative form and its putative values, does not the reader negotiate an odyssean journey? For example, as I have argued in my *Reading Joyce's 'Ulysses'* (1987), the odyssean reader of Joyce's *Ulysses* is often tempted by the novel's stylistic experimentation to abandon the quest for meaning, but the focus of *Ulysses* usually returns to its interest in character and plot. I will use the figure of the odyssean reader to focus on the process of reading as a journey with many adventures, including ones that treacherously challenge our understanding. The odyssean reader not only has to work his way through the difficulties provided by texts, but also those provided by recent critical approaches to literature. The reader must avoid temptations that deflect him from focusing on representation without ignoring the claims of recent theory that language does not signify absolutely. Without overlooking form and style, he needs to be attentive to theme. He should not lose sight of the historical reality implied by the imagined world of the literary and historical conditions that produced a work. He must be willing to allow the novel to change its emphasis as he reads.

The complex process by which works create readers needs to be more accurately described. Our stories of reading must include a self-conscious awareness of what makes each of us unique readers bringing something of her or his own experience to a text. But it must also include an awareness of how the novel's structure of effects and its rhetoric – conscious and unconscious – shapes an ideal reader both now and when it was written. When authors respond to other works, we need to assume that the author had in mind a reader with an intertextual perspective. Even as we engage in sophisticated discussions of narrators and narratees and of implied authors and implied readers, we should recall that the one figure that authors rarely forget is the actual reader; usually, the author conceives the reader as an historically grounded figure who exists in the community at large. While he is imported into the imagined ontology of the novel as a figure who will listen with sympathy to the telling and might undergo change, his values represent that of a large putative audience. Put another way, the reader is a metaphor for one aspect of a larger community.

The word 'transformation' in my title also refers to my conceiving that the form of a novel is not a static third-dimensional object, but an evolving process in which novels undergo metamorphoses as they are experienced by readers. For form, like

language, is always constituted and constituting. While Victorian novels transform their shape and meaning as we read, the transformation of the modern novel is more radical, open, inconclusive, contradictory, and paradoxical. I conceive the process of reading as a temporal event in which things happen to the reader. I stress how readers of novels – especially modern novels – must respond to the way a novel's narrative process proposes, tests, modifies, transforms, and discards interpretations of characters and events. My frequent focus on beginnings and on endings shows how major modern British novels simultaneously formally *urge* and *claim* a transformation of values, even while these novels fail to resolve the issues raised in the episodes prior to the conclusion.

The novelists of this period oscillate between what I call sacred and profane readings of the world. By a sacred reading of the world, I mean one in which most perceptions fit into *a priori* categories. A sacred reading implies a reading that mimes the unity and totality that man in earlier eras attributed to God's creation. While in this sense Lawrence's *The Rainbow* and *Jude the Obscure* are sacred texts, so are, for the most part, *Lord Jim* and *A Passage to India*. By contrast, one kind of profane reading of the world stresses momentary immersion in life and the nominalistic, disparate details of experience. Such a reading stresses the gratuitous, serendipitious, incongruous nature of life. (Do not Lawrence in *Sons and Lovers* and Forster in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and *A Room With A View* do this?) A very different kind of profane reading is interested in the free play of language as signifier rather than in its mimetic or signified potential. Joyce and, to a lesser extent, Woolf propose and test both kinds of profane reading before embracing their own version of sacred reading. The oscillation within complex novels between sacred and profane readings of the world urges similar responses in readers making their way through these novels.

Part One

1

'I Was the World in Which I Walked': the Transformation of the British Novel

I

In the Sculpture Garden of the Museum of Modern Art stands Rodin's large 1897 statue, *Monument to Balzac*. The imposing figure of Balzac is 10 feet tall, and it rests on a 5 foot-high slab. At first, the observer may wonder what this seemingly realistic piece is doing in the citadel of modernism. But gradually he realizes that the work is a crystallizing image of modernism, for it depicts the artist as outcast and hero. Towering above onlookers, Balzac is wearing the expression of scornful magisterial dignity. With back stiffly yet regally arched past a 90° angle, Balzac looks into the distance and the future as if oblivious and indifferent to the opinions of the Lilliputians observing him from below. The large moustache, massive brows, flowing hair, and enormous ears and nose all emphasize the immense physical stature of the figure. As observers we crane our necks to see the features of this commanding figure whose gigantic head is disproportionate to his body. His features are boldly outlined but not precisely modelled. His huge head dominates the massive form; the body enwrapped in a cloak is a taut cylinder; the only visible feature is the feet, which are in motion as if they were going to walk off the slab. Indeed, one foot actually overhangs the slab as if it were about to depart. In the geometric shape of an isosceles triangle, the intimidating figure asserts the dependence of content upon form.

In a number of ways this sculpture, I think, helps us to understand literary modernism. Rodin has presented the artist as an *Übermensch*, as a physical and moral giant who is indifferent to the opinions of his audience. He depicts Balzac the way Rodin

would have liked to see himself. 'I think of [Balzac's] intense labor,' he wrote, 'of the difficulty of his life, of his incessant battles and of his great courage. I would express all that.'[1] As Albert E. Elsen remarks, 'Rodin has transformed the embattled writer into a godlike visionary who belongs on a pedestal aloof from the crowd.'[2] Rodin's presence in the sculpture of Balzac speaks for art as self-expression and thus declares a new aesthetic that questions the impersonality and objectivity which Balzac sought in his role of moral and social historian of the human comedy. Rodin's Balzac is not someone who serves the community but someone who answers to the demands of his imagination and psyche; he does not imitate reality, but transforms what he sees into something original. He is more a visionary than a realist. His integrity derives from his genius and his independence. The sculpture shows, too, the inseparable relationship between subject and object – the poised tension between content (Balzac) and form (the original stone) – that is central to modernism. Finally, Rodin understands that art requires an audience to complete the hermeneutical circle, for he declared that the suggestiveness of his *Balzac* required the viewer to use 'the imagination to recompose the work when it is seen from close up'.[3]

I would like to take the Rodin statue as a point of departure for speaking of the great change in major British fiction from the realistic to the expressionist novel, a change that begins roughly in 1895, the year of Hardy's last novel, *Jude the Obscure*,[4] and reaches a climax with Woolf's major novels, *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927). That some or all of the great British modernists – Conrad, Joyce, Lawrence, Forster, and Woolf – withdraw from their work, eliminate the intrusive author, and move to objectivity and impersonality is still one of the shibboleths of literary history. In this chapter I shall argue that by making themselves their subject they have, in fact, created a more subjective, self-expressive novel than their predecessors, and that they *are* present in their works.

Influenced by English romanticism, developments in modern art, and a changing intellectual milieu that questioned the possibilities of universal values or objective truth, these novelists erased the boundaries between art and life. They no longer believed that they could or should recreate the real world in their art and they questioned the assumption that verisimilitude was the most important aesthetic value. They realized that each man

perceived a different reality and lived in what F. H. Bradley has called a 'closed circle'.[5] Thus, while mid-Victorian novelists believed in the efficacy of their art, twentieth-century writers have often despaired at the possibility of communication. They wrote not only to urge their perspectives upon their audience but to create their own identities and values. On the one hand, the artist doubts that he can change the world but, on the other, he tries to convince himself and his audience that he can.

Twentieth-century British writers invented ways of seeing the human psyche in a more subtle and complex manner. While the Victorian novel focused upon man in his social aspect, Conrad, Lawrence, Joyce, and Woolf isolate their characters from the social community by focusing on the perceiving psyche. As J. Hillis Miller has noted, there is little self-consciousness in most Victorian novels: 'the protagonist comes to know himself and to fulfill himself by way of other people'.[6] But the English novel from 1890 to 1930 made self-consciousness and self-awareness its subject, and the streams of consciousness within the soliloquy and interior monologue – both direct and indirect – became more prominent. Since characters are often versions of the author who either does not or cannot achieve the traditional distance between author and characters, the experience and self-consciousness of the characters reflect those of the author.

In traditional novels we are more conscious of the characters, actions, themes, and rhetoric and less conscious of what I shall call the author's presence. Patricia Meyer Spacks notes: 'Writers before the nineteenth century ... often insisted by implication on their *lack* of psychology, defining themselves in relation to their audiences or in terms of a historical tradition rather than by personal reactions or feelings.'[7] The conventions of editor or omniscient narrator deserve such a description. In *Moll Flanders* and *Clarissa* the presence of the author is often felt as an editor; in *Tom Jones* the author depicts himself as the reader's host. In Victorian fiction he becomes an omniscient voice. Yet because modern writers have written first for themselves, they have been more insistent on affirming their living presence in their works than on using rhetorical tools to shape their readers.

II

Twentieth-century novels are often songs of myself, and anxious

self-doubting ones at that. In varying degrees the later Hardy in *Jude*, Conrad, Forster, Woolf, and Joyce take their own imaginations as a major subject. In a sense their novels are about the process of transforming life into art. While reading *Emma* is the discovery of a finished three-dimensional imagined world, reading the major British novelists in the period 1890–1930 involves participating in their process of struggling to define their values and their concepts of the novel. It is the difference between a Constable or a Gainsborough and a Matisse or a Picasso. The novel depends on a continuing dialogue between the author's avowed subject and his efforts to discover the appropriate form and values for that subject. Writing of how the artist finally must discover the world in himself, Stevens defines in 'Tea at the Palaz of Hoon' (1921) the relationship between text and author that informs the writers under discussion:

> I was the world in which I walked, and what I saw
> Or heard or felt came not but from myself;
> And there I found myself more truly and more strange.

The author's struggle with his subject becomes a major determinant of novel form. In the 1898–1900 Marlow tales, *The Rainbow* (1915), *Ulysses* (1922), and *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), each author writes to define himself or herself. The writer does not strive for the rhetorical finish of prior novels but, rather like Rodin in his sculpture, instead invites the reader to perceive a relationship between the creator and the artistic work, and to experience the dialogue between the creative process and the raw material. While the Victorian novelist believed that he had a coherent self and that his characters could achieve coherence, the modernist is conscious of disunity in his own life and the world in which lives. The novelist becomes a divided self. He is both the creator and seeker, the prophet who would convert others and the agonizing doubter who would convince himself while engaging in introspective self-examination. Even while the writer stands detached, creating characters, we experience his or her urgent effort to create a self. Thus the reader must maintain a double vision. He must apprehend the narrative and the process of creating that narrative. In such diverse works as the Marlow tales, *The Rainbow* and *To the Lighthouse* (1927), the process of writing, of defining the subject, of evaluating character, of searching for truth, becomes part of the

novel. Yet, as Woolf writes in 'Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown' (1924), 'where so much strength is spent on finding a way of telling the truth, the truth itself is bound to reach us in rather an exhausted and chaotic condition'.[8] 'Finding a way' – the quest for values and the quest for aesthetic form – becomes the subject.

Telling becomes a central action in these novels. The reader experiences the author's engagement in defining his values as he writes. As the search for values often takes precedence over story and as the form of these novels enacts the author's quest, traditional chronology, linear narrative, and ordinary syntax are discarded. Sometimes, as in the Marlow tales, the author's quest for values is transferred to another character whose central activity becomes the search for meaning and for the appropriate language with which to tell the tale. Sometimes a character will become the spokesman for values that the omniscient voice articulates; this is the case in *Jude the Obscure*, *Sons and Lovers* (1913), and *Women in Love* (1920). But this kind of doubling – the protagonist (Jude, Paul, Birkin) and narrative voice saying much the same thing – is a function of the author's need to convince himself of the accuracy of his perceptions as well as of the difficulty of his achieving irony towards a version of himself. The structure of a novel is no longer a preconceived pattern in which characters move towards discovering values held by an omniscient voice who is a surrogate for the author. To read the novel is to participate in a process by which, through his characters, the novelist proposes, tests, examines, and discards moral and aesthetic values.

Thus it becomes increasingly difficult for writers to remove themselves from the text. In fact, the major modern British authors remain in their work in much the same way as some Renaissance painters who placed an image of themselves in a corner of their canvas watching the main spectacle. The stream of consciousness, which has been thought of as a movement towards objectivity, is actually often a disguise for authorial presence rather than a means for the author to absent himself. For example, do we not feel that Joyce is selecting and arranging the stream of consciousness, including mythic parallels and image patterns that help give the stream its meaning and significance? We know a great deal more about Joyce from *A Portrait* (1916) and *Ulysses* than we know about Austen from *Emma* and *Pride and Prejudice*, or about Fielding from *Tom Jones*, notwithstanding his host-narrator. Austen or even Fielding would hardly have asserted, as Conrad did in 1912:

> A novelist lives in his work. He stands there, the only reality in an invented world, among imaginary things, happenings, and people. Writing about them, he is only writing about himself. But the disclosure is not complete. He remains, to a certain extent, a figure behind the veil; a suspected rather than a seen presence – a movement and a voice behind the draperies of fiction.[9]

While there was always an autobiographical strain in the English novel (*Tristram Shandy*, *The Mill on the Floss*, *David Copperfield*), this was surely a minor motif in the history of the genre. *Jude the Obscure*, *Sons and Lovers*, and *A Portrait of the Artist* thinly disguise the presence of the author in their work. The quest of Stephen for artistic values, for self-recognition, and for the approval of others is Joyce's quest. The *agon* is the author's quest to understand himself. Hardy becomes a spokesman for *Jude* because he sees Jude as a version of himself – the outsider aspiring to be recognized by a more educated élite society. In *Sons and Lovers* the omniscient narrator of Part I gives way in Part II to a spokesman for Paul's perspective. He strains to justify Paul's (Lawrence's surrogate) role in his relationship with Miriam (Jessie Chambers). Our reading of Lawrence's dramatic scenes often belies the interpretation imposed by his narrative voice. For example, the voice does not recognize that Paul suffers from the very problems of frigidity and repression of which he accuses Miriam. Nor does he understand that he turns away from Miriam at the very time that she begins to respond sexually to Paul or that Paul discards Clara because his relationship with her threatens to succeed.[10] Paul's oedipal relationship with his mother requires that he find fault with Clara as soon as he consummates that relationship.

Once there is no longer agreement about values, an author cannot depend upon the reader to recognize the ironic disjunction between what a character thinks and what the author wants the reader to think. The omniscient narrator may be thorough and careful in establishing his point of view, but he has no special status. The novelist does not believe that any single perspective holds the entire truth. As we read modern novels told by an omniscient speaker, we realize that the novelist's commentary has imposed a perspective upon events, even while implying, through the dramatic actions and sometimes his pluralistic values, the possibility of another perspective. This is true not only for *Jude the Obscure* and *Sons and Lovers*, in each of which the omniscient narrator becomes more and more an empathetic spokesman and apologist for his major character, but even for *The Rainbow* and *Ulysses*. Thus the technical convention of omniscience survives, but not the concept of a shared value system which originally gave rise to the convention.

The recognition that self-expression and subjectivity are at the heart of the transformation of the British novel was long inhibited by the acceptance in fiction criticism of the New Critical credo that the best literature depends on the author's separating his personal life from the imagined world of his novels or, at the very least, on his repressing those aspects of his experience that do not have 'universal' interest. If we are to come to terms with the expressive aspect of fiction, we must develop an appropriate aesthetic. For example, can we separate the prophetic voice of *The Rainbow* from Lawrence's personal quest for self-realization or his quest for the appropriate grammar of passion with which to render sexual relationships, if we recall his writing, 'Now you will find [Frieda] and me in the novel, I think, and the work is of both of us'?[11] Nor can we ignore the parallels between Marlow's search for values and Conrad's.

Wayne Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961) still stands as the indispensable study of rhetoric and voice in fiction. Booth's reluctance to appreciate the ambiguous rhetoric of modern literature has often been criticized. But has anyone gone beyond his work and developed a rhetoric to describe the authorial presence within a novel that may be either narrator or character or both? Yet Booth's concept of implied author, while valuable, does not seem quite satisfactory to define the mask that the author wears within his works. In each of an author's novels this presence is somewhat different for each novel because its personality and character are functions of the words chosen and the events and characters described. Booth's implied author may be somewhat workable for a Fielding or Austen novel, where the narrative voice is an artifice controlled and manipulated by an objective author in full command of his rhetorical devices. But it does not do justice to the strong subjective authorial presence within much modern fiction. To approach the modern writers under discussion, we must reconcile fiction as rhetoric and as self-contained ontology with fiction as self-expression. For there are frequent moments in twentieth-century fiction when the subject is the author's quest to

define himself. In much of the work of Conrad, Joyce, Woolf, Forster, and Lawrence, the speaker is a thinly disguised version of the writer's actual self who is actively seeking moral and aesthetic values; this self, or presence, of the author is a dynamic evolving identity which is an intrinsic – not an implied – part of the novel's form. The presence that the novelist projects reflects the particular circumstances of the novelist's life when he wrote the novel and the *Zeitgeist* in which the novel was written. While we should begin with what a book is and what a book does, we should not ignore what the author does, particularly in novels where the subject is the author's self. The best way to locate the presence within the text is to know beforehand something about the historical figure. In other words, the text more readily yields its presence to those who know about the author's other works, his life, and his historical context.

As readers we respond to an *imitation* of the real creator of the text. The actual author is in the imagined world as a distortion – at times, a simplification, an obfuscation, an idealization, a clarification – of the creating psyche. In early periods, the words of a novel signify a human presence within the text; that presence may be urging the reader to a particular attitude, but in modern fiction the presence is also usually involved in affirming his identity and values. The reader, knowing that the presence mimes a historical figure who wrote the book, imagines that figure as a reality. As Spacks notes, 'if poets create themselves as figures in their poems, readers choose, consciously or unconsciously, to accept such figures as more or less appropriate to reality'.[12]

Since novels are written by people, it seems the antithesis of a humanistic approach to settle for a formalism – whether it be New Criticism or more recent varieties – that excludes authors from the text. The process of locating a human being within the text recognizes that reading is not merely a verbal game but a shared experience between writer and reader. It is another way of saying that we wish words to signify something beyond themselves. Because we desire coherence and meaning, we seek a tangible identity within the imagined world and respond to the energy of the author's creative imagination. We demand of words that they form connections to human experience, even though we make fewer demands of lines and shapes or musical notes. (Painting and sculpture, of course, have had a tradition of mimesis while music has not.)

The author's presence in the text usually serves the rhetorical purpose of reinforcing the meaning conveyed by the other elements: structure, narrator, language, characterization, and setting. But at times the presence is subversive in that it undermines the meaning that the author intended. In many modern novels that voice is divided into two or more aspects, each of which projects a different identity. Sometimes we can speak of a dominant and a secondary voice, or, as in *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* (1897), of a tension between competing voices. Conrad's effort to overcome writer's block by means of mastering the raw material of his narrative – the sea experience of his earlier life – is as much the subject of the novel as the journey of the *Narcissus*. For Conrad the sea voyage – with its clearly defined beginning and ending, its movement through time towards a destination, its separation from other experience, and explicit requirements that must be fulfilled by the crewmen and officers – provided the necessary model for completing a work. Since he had actually sailed on a ship named the *Narcissus* in 1884, he could draw upon romantic memories of an ordered and accomplished voyage at a time when his creative impulses were stifled by doubts. Thus the voyage of the *Narcissus* provided Conrad with an imaginative escape from his writing frustrations. *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* also reflects a reductive dichotomy within Conrad's psyche between the evil land, where he was terribly frustrated as he launched his new career, and the sea, where, as he remembered it, he had been fairly tested and had ultimately succeeded. This dichotomy explains the schism between the first-person speaker who is a part of the crew and the third-person speaker who strives to play the role of the traditional omniscient speaker.[13]

Ulysses is Joyce's attempt to resolve the Stephen and Bloom within his psyche and that effort is writ large on every page. Among other things, *Ulysses* is a search for values, a dialogue within Joyce's psyche between the intellectualism and abstraction of Stephen, the humanity and empiricism of Bloom, and the sensuality and spontaneity of Molly. The novel works its way through a panorama of values in modern life. It tests and discards patriotism, nationalism, piety, Platonism, and aestheticism, and affirms the family paradigm, affection, consideration, tolerance, and love. Beginning with 'Wandering Rocks', *Ulysses* examines not only ways of living but ways of telling. Joyce parodies romantic fiction in 'Nausicaa', examines whether fiction can be

patterned on musical composition in 'The Sirens', explores the possibilities of the scientific temperament in 'Ithaca', and tests the mock epic in 'Cyclops'. 'Eumaeus', narrated by Joyce's omniscient narrator in the style in which Bloom would have told it, is Joyce's love song for Bloom in the form of an affectionate parody and the author's sequel to the end of 'Hades' when Bloom affirms the value of life. In 'Ithaca' not only Bloom's humanity but the possibility of significant action in the form of personal relationships emerges despite the mechanical nature of the scientific catechism, a style that represents the indifference and coldness of the community to individuals. Thus *Ulysses* is Joyce's odyssey for moral values and aesthetic form. It is not only Bloom but Joyce who survives and triumphs over what he calls in 'Aeolus' 'grossbooted draymen' of the modern city. This kind of pastiche of former styles in the service of a quest for personal values is also very much a part of modern painting and sculpture. It is in this sense, in this profoundly humanistic sense, that modern painting is about painting and modern literature is about writing.

III

Virginia Woolf wrote that 'on or about December 10, 1910 human character changed',[14] because the first post-impressionist exhibition organized by Roger Fry and called 'Manet and the Post-Impressionists' ran in London from 8 November 1910 to 15 January 1911. According to Samuel Hynes, she 'chose that occasion as an appropriate symbol of the way European ideas forced themselves upon the insular English consciousness during the Edwardian years and so joined England to the Continent'.[15] The post-impressionists provide an example for the abandonment of realism and the movement of the artist to centre stage. The post-impressionists had discarded representation for form. For example, in his famous 'Card Players' Cézanne is less an observer of peasant life than a composer of formal harmony and disparate pictorial planes, while in his works Signac is concerned with the possibilities of objectively capturing light. These painters demonstrated that the artist could create his own order in a chaotic world. Thus they intentionally neglect some details, while they simplify, distort, exaggerate, and stress others to express their emotions, solve problems of pictorial space, and create effects. In a sense, the

artist's temperament and perspective become the subject in the work of Van Gogh, Derain, Matisse, and Picasso. We recall Van Gogh's insistence that 'what is eternally alive is in the first place the painter and in the second place the picture'.[16] It is quite possible that the abrupt cutting of figures, the elimination of traditional perspective, the foreshortening of images influenced the tendency of Woolf, Lawrence, Forster, and Joyce (who, of course, saw similar paintings in Paris) to move beyond realism to more expressive forms of art. Can one read *Ulysses* or *The Secret Agent* without realizing that something has happened to the visual imagination of nineteenth-century novels and that even Dickens did not continually create the kinds of illuminating distortions, cartoons, and grotesques that populate these modern urban novels? Novelists no longer wrote what they saw, but what they knew.

The 1978 London exhibition, *Great Victorian Pictures*, made clear, I think, the revolutionary character of Fry's exhibition. Victorian painting often told a story, either of history or of contemporary life. As Rosemary Treble wrote in the introduction to the catalogue for that exhibit: 'The constant refrain in all the writing of the period and the touchstone of every judgment was whether the work attained "truth" generally to nature and therefore, by implication, to God's creation, whether its sentiment was appropriate and whether it was morally healthy and therefore fit for consumption.'[17] And the values by which Victorian fiction writers were evaluated were not too different. A painting like William Powell Frith's *The Railroad Station* (1862) was considered a national epic because it included every class. William Edward Frost's allegorical women were thought to be uplifting, although to us they seem self-absorbed and repressed. The avant-garde in England, beginning with the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood and including Burne-Jones's precious symbolism, hardly affected the supremacy of conventional painting. To be sure, the works of Whistler and Walter Sickert were exceptions. But the fact remains that until Fry's exhibit fiction usually conformed to the existing theories of art, and those theories (most notably orthodox realism, often in the service of Victorian pieties) with few exceptions tended to serve conventional morality.

The English novel after Hardy was deeply affected by Russian art in a number of ways.[18] In the Edwardian years the Russian influence challenged British insularity. Dostoevsky, although

patronized by Conrad, now became popular, and the exuberant and flamboyant Russian Ballet appeared in 1911. In the pre-war years Russian music and painting made their mark on London. (Russians were included in the second show of post-impressionism.) In general, Russian art, more than British art, depended more upon energy than craft, more upon fantasy than realism, more upon the artist's vision than subjectivity, more upon flux than stasis, more upon experimentation than tradition, more upon mysticism than reason, and more upon the spiritual and psychological than the moral. As Woolf understood, these qualities inevitably questioned the conventions of the British novel: 'The novels of Dostoevsky are seething whirlpools, gyrating sand-storms, waterspouts which hiss and boil and suck us in. They are composed purely and wholly of the stuff of the soul.'[19] The violence of Dostoevsky's emotions influenced not only Conrad in *Under Western Eyes* (1911), but, in more subtle ways, Woolf, Lawrence, and Forster.[20] Indeed, Lawrence consciously imports this element into his imagined world in the person of the Slavic Lydia Lensky, who is the mysterious, libidinous, passionate soul-mate for Tom Brangwen, Lawrence's *Übermensch* of the passions, and the grandmother of Ursula, the novel's heroine, who, like Lawrence, must come to terms with twentieth-century life. Indeed, Lawrence used the Dostoevskian strain – the inchoate, urgent, uncontrolled 'stuff of the soul' – to fertilize the English novel of manners.

The novel also changed because artists increasingly felt that the modern world required different kinds of art. The search for innovation in form and technique is inseparable from the search for values in a world where the British empire had lost its sense of invulnerability, the political leadership had suffered a crisis of confidence, and industrialization had created worker unrest. We see the first two in *A Passage to India* (1924) and *Mrs. Dalloway*, and the effect of the third in the character of Verloc in *The Secret Agent*. The urbanization of England undermined the sense of continuity that had prevailed in England since Elizabethan times, a continuity that even the Revolution of 1640 did not entirely disrupt. The continuity derived from land passed down from generation to generation, from the rhythms of rural culture, from monarchical succession, from the strong sense of English family, and from the relatively stable role played by the clergy, the aristocracy, and Parliament. George Dangerfield has described how England had

become by 1914 'a liberal democracy whose parliament had practically ceased to function, whose Government was futile, and whose Opposition had said enough to put lesser men in the dock for treason'.[21] Modern writers are conscious of writing in a period of crisis and transition; certainly this sense of crisis gives *Nostromo*, *The Rainbow*, and *Ulysses* much of their intensity. It may be that the boldness and scope of these novels are a response to the ennui, cynicism, and solipsism of the *fin de siècle*, a response all the more violent because their writers felt threatened by these negative attitudes. The great modernists – Joyce, Lawrence, Conrad, Forster, Hardy, Woolf – have a clear and ordered sense of a past from which they felt permanently separated. Conrad realizes that traditional personal values are threatened by compulsive materialism, often in the guise of politics. For Hardy and Lawrence a pastoral vision of agrarian England is an alternative to present mechanism and utilitarianism. *Jude the Obscure* and *Howards End* (1910) are elegies for this rural civilization. For Joyce, like T. S. Eliot, it is European cultural tradition that has been debased by the meanness of the present. Joyce, Conrad, Woolf, and Forster long for a tradition of social customs and personal relationships that has become obsolete under the pressure of urbanization and materialism.

Noel Annan has written of the change in England between 1880 and 1910, a change which affected the subject matter of the novel:

> The restraints of religion and thrift and accepted class distinctions started to crumble and English society to rock under the flood of money. The class war, not merely between labour and owners, but between all social strata of the middle and upper classes began in earnest. . . . A new bitterness entered politics, a new rancour in foreign relations and a materialism of wealthy snobbery and aggressive philistinism arose far exceeding anything hitherto seen in England.[22]

Although often bourgeois in their impulses and unscathed by these factors, novelists began to write more frequently about class struggle (*Jude the Obscure*), the ethics and effects of imperialism (*A Passage to India*), the implications of politics on private lives (*The Secret Agent*), and the corrupting influence of industry and commerce (*Nostromo*).

If we compare *Mrs. Dalloway* with the novels of Austen, we see

how the sensibilities of Woolf's major characters have been deeply influenced by wars, empire, and commerce (although these play less of a role in the rather anachronistic life of Mrs. Dalloway than in the lives of Peter Walsh and Septimus Smith). The lack of community value is enacted in the fragmented form, in the lack of meaningful purpose in politically influential figures (Richard Dalloway, Lady Bruton), and finally in the crystallizing image of Septimus Smith, who, as he walks the streets of London, seems to epitomize the failure of Londoners to discover purpose or coherence in their city. The confrontation of traditional English values with those of other cultures is central to *A Passage to India*, *Heart of Darkness* (1898), and *Women in Love* (especially in the Bohemian and European sections). Yet even as novelists write about different value systems, they explore the importance of those systems for their own lives. They do not, like eighteenth-century novelists, simply measure the strange cultures against established values. The structure becomes a process, a process that mimes the author's quest for values. Thus even in *A Passage to India* – which we think of as an heir to the Victorian novel – the oscillation among Moslem, Hindu, and English and the shifts in narrative distance between the limited perspective and the geographic perspective reflect Forster's search. As Wilfred Stone has written, Forster's novels are 'dramatic installments in the story of his struggle for selfhood.... They tell of a man coming out in the world, painfully emerging from an encysted state of loneliness, fear, and insecurity'.[23] The same, I am arguing, could be said of Woolf, Joyce, Lawrence, and Conrad.

Comparing Wells, Bennett, and Galsworthy with their major predecessors, Woolf wrote:

> *Tristram Shandy* or *Pride and Prejudice* is complete in itself; it is self-contained; it leaves one with no desire to do anything, except indeed to read the book again, and to understand it better. The difference perhaps is that both Sterne and Jane Austen were interested in things in themselves; in character in itself; in the book in itself. Therefore everything was inside the book, nothing outside. But the Edwardians were never interested in character in itself; or in the book in itself. They were interested in something outside. Their books, then, were incomplete as books, and required that the reader should finish them, actively and practically, for himself.[24]

But I think the major British twentieth-century figures under discussion, including Woolf herself, were interested in both 'something inside' and 'something outside'. For these writers no longer accepted the traditional Christian beliefs that divine providence expresses itself in earthly matters or that this life is a necessary prelude to eternity. And the world outside could no longer be limited and contained by authors whose own moral vision was tentative, incomplete, and lacking in conviction. We should not be surprised that the movement of *Nostromo*, *Women in Love*, or *Ulysses* enacts kinds of uneasiness and turbulence that are absent in, say, an Austen novel. Because the writer is striving to discover his moral and aesthetic values, this uneasiness and turbulence at times reflect unresolved social issues, characters whose motives the novelist does not understand, and inchoate form.

The social and historical milieu in which an artist writes determines the artistic problems that he must solve. Thus Conrad, Lawrence, Joyce, Forster, and Woolf had to discover an appropriate form with which to show (if I may baldly list the striking characteristics of the period) that motives could not be fully understood, that the world was not created and shaped by divine providence, that chance might determine man's destiny, that man's desires and aspirations were not likely to be fulfilled, that social institutions were ineffectual, and that materialism and industrialization were destroying the fabric of life. Consequently, they invented plots that at times reflect disorder, flux, discontinuity, fragmentations, and disruption without themselves having those qualities; they needed to use the *Odyssey*, *Hamlet*, and the Bible, and even in *Ulysses* such Jewish legends as 'The Last of the Just', to give shape to seemingly random events. They had to invent means not only for rendering the inner life but for showing the unacknowledged private self that played such a large role in shaping behaviour. Thus Conrad shows that Jim is the victim of compulsions, obsessions, and fixations that he cannot understand. They needed syntax and language to reveal the secret recesses of each psyche and the impact made upon it by experience, especially the kind of ordinary daily experience that was once thought to be insignificant. The unpunctuated, effervescent stream of consciousness of Molly fertilizes that of both Stephen and Bloom by emphasizing, in form and content, fecundity, sexuality, spontaneity, passion, and indifference to history and morality.

IV

Let us think for a moment of some major Victorian novels – say *Bleak House*, *Vanity Fair*, or *Middlemarch*. Victorian fiction depends on the mastery of space and time in an unfolding narrative. It seeks to create an imagined world that both mirrors and exaggerates the external world. Its use of a omniscient, ubiquitous narrator implies the pre-eminence of the individual perceiver. Now let us think of *The Secret Agent* (like *Bleak House*, a novel of London), *Ulysses* (like *Vanity Fair*, a satirical examination of relatively recent times), and *The Rainbow* (like *Middlemarch*, a panoramic novel about provincial life). Do not these examples of modern British fiction undermine the idea that space and time can be mastered by anyone, including the author? Like the subject-matter, the setting resists the traditional patterns. The setting itself recoils from idealization, control, and order and expresses the turmoil and anxiety within the author's psyche. (By becoming foreground rather than background, setting plays a similar role in the post-impressionist works of Van Gogh, Matisse, and Picasso.) The setting – the physical conditions under which the imagined world functions – becomes not background but a moral labyrinth which the characters are unable to negotiate and which not only shapes their destiny but often subsumes them. Hardy's Wessex, Forster's India, Joyce's Dublin, and Conrad's London are manifestations of an amoral cosmos that pre-empts the characters' moral choices. By forging a web of social circumstances that encloses and limits characters, these settings displace the traditional role of individual will in shaping the lives of characters. Yet even as these settings often become coterminous with destiny and fate, they may also be a symptom or cause of a bankrupt social system, or a metaphor for the narrator's and his characters' own moral confusion.

In the nineteenth-century novel characters are defined in terms of their moral choices in social situations. Becky Sharp consciously chooses to seek wealth and status, although we do not watch the processes of her mind, and Esther Summerson's loyalty, sympathy, and integrity result mostly from conscious decisions. But Woolf, Joyce, Lawrence, Forster, and, quite frequently, Conrad perceive their characters in terms of the honesty and integrity of perceptions rather than in terms of the moral consequences of their behaviour. What they are is more important than what they do. The integrity and purity of their souls are standards by which they

are primarily judged. *Is-ness* (the quality and intensity of the soul and heart) replaces *does-ness* (the effects of behaviour) as norms for characters. Thus we value Bloom and Mrs. Ramsay for their uniqueness rather than their effectiveness. And this corresponds to the shift in emphasis in the art of the novel from traditional effects upon audience to self-dramatizing narrators in search of values and feelings.

The writers we are discussing saw that people no longer lived together bound by common values and social purposes. Each man is his own secular sect, and the interaction of these sects creates a social Babel. The order of art becomes a substitute for the disorder of life, and the novel mimes a momentary unity in the novelist's mind rather than in the external world. Thus in Woolf and Joyce, a novel's lack of form may seem to have a coherence that the subject of the novel lacks because the texture is reflexive and self-referential. Indeed, at times they try to replace, as Malcolm Bradbury puts it, 'the linear logic of story, psychological process, or history' with the 'logic of metaphor, form, or symbol'.[25] But do we not see that this effort has a compulsive quality, and that Woolf and Joyce are as much committed to transforming their lives into art as to creating a symbolic alternative to realistic fiction?

The great modernists wrote fiction to define themselves outside the social world and to confirm their special status as artists. They did not want to re-enter the social world but rather to leave it for islands (actual and imaginary) where life was more honest and true to the promptings of their hearts; these islands were often their novels.[26] They could look at a society from which they felt excluded and criticize its values. Woolf's moments of enlightenment, Joyce's epiphanies, and Lawrence's states of passionate intensity emphasize the individual's life as separate from the community. Novels move not to a comprehensive vision of society but to unity within a character's imagination and perception. In *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim* Marlow's experience and insight not only are his own, but leave him, like the Ancient Mariner, separate from his fellows. If in Victorian fiction the narrator is, as in *Our Mutual Friend* or *Vanity Fair*, a detached outsider observing characters who often function successfully within the community, in modern British fiction such as *Ulysses* and *Women in Love* he and the protagonists are both separate from the community, and the community itself is corrupt and morally bankrupt. Woolf saw the problem. On the one hand, she knew that her novels give credence