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Genre and Belonging in the Nineteenth-Century Novel

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in English

by

Christian Richard Reed

2015

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Genre and Belonging in the Nineteenth-Century Novel

by

Christian Richard Reed

Doctor of Philosophy in English

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Christopher J. Looby, Chair

Over the past thirty years, the expansion of the literary canon has enriched Americanist critics' sense for what sorts of stories make up the nineteenth-century novel. Our basic narrative about what happens to the novel over the span of the century, however, has remained staunchly in place: the novel rises. The terms of the rise vary, but the model abides, carried over from Cathy Davidson's *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (1986) into Philip F. Gura's *Truth's Ragged Edge: The Rise of the American Novel* (2013). This dissertation contends that it is time to replace the rise model. Thinking the nineteenth-century novel through its system of subgenres, it presents a broad and conceptually coherent account of the novel's midcentury flourishing.

Around 1840, the novel triumphs—over readers and writers alike. If the novel rises, it squashes too; new novels "drop down by millions all over our land," quips one critic, overwhelmed in 1847. At this moment, the novel must learn do for a mass audience what a master-reader no longer can: contextualize and conceptualize the ways its instances plummet, jostle, clump, and spread. Major subgenres of the novel develop themselves, I show, by

developing different techniques for attaching their instances to one another and detaching them from instances of other subgenres. Sentimental novels prosper by the conventionalisms of plot and character they share. The bildungsroman, a story of individual development, strives instead to appear in a condensed, paradigmatic instance. Gothic novels scatter into sub-subgenres (like city mysteries or detective fiction), improvised clusters that momentarily absorb and redirect the impulse to scatter further. And the novels of American literary realism emphasize the autonomy of each work, its simple difference from other stories in a world full of other stories. A system of love proclivities or erotic shapes subtends these subgenres. The place, I claim, where the generic dynamics that define nineteenth-century novels can be observed most clearly and creatively is the love plot.

The dissertation of Christian Richard Reed is approved.

Michael C. Cohen

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2015

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the gossips and concepts. Conversation and exchange with Jacquelyn Ardam, Jack Caughey, Will Clark, Alex Hernandez, Lisa Mendelman, Eric Newman, Jeremy Schmidt, and quite acutely Kevin Moore, have made imprints on the project. My endlessly generous graduate student mentor, Sam See, helped me work out, among other things, an early version of the formulation from which this project moves: a genre *is* how it longs to be belonged to. The eloquence cannot be extricated from the awkwardness of this phrase, and I'm glad, because the sheen and subtlety feels like Sam's and the stutters, mine.

For the opportunity to present and in discussion much refine some of the material that formed these chapters, I thank the William Dean Howells Society, UCLA's Eighteenth-Century/Romantics Reading Group and Americanist Research Colloquium, the Melville Society, and the organizers and attendees of the 2013 Urban Mysteries conference at UCSB. For the gift of time to research, think, and write, I thank UCLA's Department of English, Graduate Division, and Friends of English.

In the preface to a preface to one of his late novels, George Lippard writes a sentence that makes my pulse quicken and my eyes tighten: "It is a selfish thing to write for money, it is a base and mean thing to write for fame, but it is a good and holy thing to write for the approval of those whom we most intensely love." (I do not say that Lippard means it entirely, or I do, but what a sentence…) A bunch of individuals whom I love intently do not need to be told I did not do this for the money. Here I thank them profoundly and in a form I also love, the catalogue, for their all-sorted support of this project and its writer: Lisa Krutky, Cindy Shepherd, Lou Shepherd, Phil Reed (who gifted me the computer on which this whole thing happened), Kaylie, Evie, Rachel Reed, Caleb Reed (whose influence is felt especially in Chapter 3, footnote 12), Daniel Gallo, Valerie Gallo, Benjamin Gallo, Andrew Klein, Tim Hartin, Judy Krutky, Ken Krutky, Marguerite Clapham Reed, Joel Colwell, and Chris Lagarce. To them I say, this is for your approval.

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INTRODUCTION

LOVE IN THE AMERICAN FORM

"In a sense, art projects a society unable as yet to experience and describe itself adequately—especially in the nineteenth century." Niklas Luhmann, *Art as a Social System* (1995)

"I am the architect, not the builder." Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (1851)

This project proposes something that Americanists have not for some time: a large-scale but basically unified theory of the nineteenth-century novel. The project understands the nineteenth-century novel in America as a century-spanning, functionally differentiated cultural phenomenon, and advances an abstract model of its immanent organization. Little of this novel phenomenon's means of differentiation, as modeled, and only the rudiments of its internal reticulations were recognized by the men and women who built it up. (Life is short; the nineteenth-century novel is long.) This hardly inhibited their imaginative, mutual up-building. In the process of paving royal roads to unconsciouses individual and collective, personal and political, the nineteenth-century novel developed, and developed itself by, a formal unconscious of its own. How this can be the case and the literary critical stakes of thinking that it is, are the topics of the first part of this Introduction; my methods and main intervention are set out there in four sections. The second part begins the process proper, and advances an example of the kinds of textual engagements that this approach makes possible. The third motivates and synopsizes the three chapters and the conclusion that compose the project's full structure.

I Forms of Belonging

1. The Four Core Forms

My critical model regards its central object, the novel in nineteenth-century America, in terms of four core forms or elementary particles: the sentimental novel, the bildungsroman, the

gothic novel (with its spawn of sub-subgenres, so understood: the historical novel, the detective novel, the sundry forms of horror and science fiction), and the realist novel. Each of these four core forms functions as a special exfoliation of the novel's constitutive generic crisis, a crisis of self-relation: the challenge to be at once novel and *a* novel, the challenge of meaningful innovation as well as meaningful participation in, and even creative consolidation of, a tradition defined by prior instances of innovation.[1] As the novel in America becomes a cultural dominant (what Ian Watt would call "the logical literary vehicle of a culture" [13]) and a plausibly autonomous mode of cultural production—sometime around 1840, Americans enter "an age of novel-reading"[2]—, and particularly as the number of readable novels expands beyond the capacities of a coherent audience[3]—again, sometime around 1840—, each of the four forms I'll

[1] The novel's essential interest in newness, both within its system of subgenres and in its larger cultural situation, is a recurrent insight of nineteenth-century American novel critics. "The novel," claims Ian Watt, for instance, early in *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), "is the logical literary vehicle of a culture which, in the last few centuries, has set an unprecedented value on originality, on the novel; and it is therefore well-named" (13).

[2] "[A] novel-reading age" (*Knickerbocker* 1838); "an age of novel-reading" (*Christian Watchman* 1840): readers start to read about themselves reading novels, and experience their reading about what they're reading as an act of world-historical orientation. The *Knickerbocker* and the *Watchman*'s pronouncements have something of the "as somebody says of someone's writing" (*Lowell Offering* 1842) quality to them that distinguishes a modernity that observes itself in print. For such "moderns" as for those who read this sentence, historico-philosophical self-situation and reading about one's own reading habits and those of others (the observation of self- and other- observation) start to look like the same thing. Recognizing this—in the very form of these pronouncements—is how even I, who haven't read as widely as Nina Baym, can be as sure of my sociology as she is when she writes that, "[b]y 1840, to be sure, the novel had established itself as the most popular of literary forms" ("Concepts of the Romance" [1984] 430). Around 1840, the novel becomes a popular form in the technical sense: for a complex of reasons (mostly technological: presses, paper, transport), it can be mass produced, and is; and for a semi-overlapping complex of reasons (transport, leisure, aesthetic quality), it can be mass consumed, and is.

[3] Lucien Goldmann isolates the moment of the novel's rise to cultural prominence, a moment just identified as 1840 in America, as a moment in which "the entire social structure, the global character of interhuman relations, tends to disappear from the consciousness of individuals. Thus the sphere in which of their synthesizing activity can be manifested is considerably reduced; and an individualistic, atomized vision of men's relations with other men and with the universe is created. Community, positive values, the hope of transcendence and all qualitative structures tend to disappear from men's consciousness, yielding to the faculty of understanding and the quantitative. Reality loses all transparency and becomes opaque…" ("Possibilities of Cultural Action" [1971] 43).

discuss thrives, and allows its age-defining overform to do the same, by differentiating itself from the others. Each of these four core form of sentimentalism, the bildungsroman, gothicism, American literary realism, that is, organizes a successful and stable response to the novel's constitutive conceptual crisis, and hence enables further innovation within the space-of-forms that that crisis carves out.

Around 1840, the historico-conceptual dialectic of that cultural formation called "the novel," the innovation/regularity paradox, opens out into four discrete but intensely dependent compossibilities.[4] The sentimental novel invites its readers to take their primary pleasure from the individual text's participation *with* other texts, particularly (though not exclusively) with other sentimental novels. The bildungsroman, alternately, encourages the reader to experience the individual text as an excellent condensation of similar novels, to relate to it principally *in place of* others. Gothic novels facilitate readerly attachments of another and a still more assorted sort: constituent texts define themselves *against* consolidated genre conventions; they foreground readerly expectations only to fulfill them in unexpected ways, often in aggressive ways, and in ways that can be capable in turn of organizing alternate sets of sub-, sub-sub-, or pseudo-sub-genre conventions.[5] Finally, the realist novel evolves a genre-bearing that allocates meaningful autonomy to individual novels; a realist text can be, in a way that is both simple and the product of a complex morphological evolution, cleanly *other than* other realist texts. Sentimental,

[4] Compossibility is a concept used by philosopher Alain Badiou to describe collateral responses to a shared situation; see *Conditions* (1992).

[5] Think of the corridific architecture that the gothic novel seems to require: its ramification of spaces to temporarily house some present scandal—which is neither the first and only nor ever the last scandal to take place, we're given to feel, in just this space—, which also always make it possible to see further such spatial ramifications. Behind every trap door, always another; back of every scene of scandal, always another and a complexer one. The gothic and its ilk (even up to 1920s pulp detective novels, even up to highly refined and re-refined subgeneric field of contemporary horror flicks) are not simply unconventional in conventional ways, but unconventional in convention-creating ways.

bildungsroman, gothic, realist: with, in place of, against, other than. With a nod to queer theorist Elizabeth Freeman, we call these four "forms of belonging."

The conventional cautions of a convention-peddler are in effect. I don't mean to claim that *all* nineteenth-century novels fit into my fourfold, nor that *each* fits into only and exactly one of the four. Exclamation point. Gathering, exemplification, scattering, atomization:[6] these are forms of attachment (of texts to readers, and through readers to other texts); they are not inflexible classifications. We can say more about this process of double-attachment (text to readers, text to other texts) below. For now let's notice that it presents two moments at which the attachment process could go awry, and often does. But when there *is* a primary generic attachment—when, for instance, our reading compels us to punctuate a claim like "Melville's *Redburn is* a bildungsroman" with a fist upon our desk, a little wildness in one eye—, this primary attachment is felt by the reader as primary not by the easy exclusion of other possible attachments, but by active contest with them in the reader's experience.[7] In such contests, the coups of the classifier are never clean—think of *Redburn*'s indisputable invocation of the gothic in the spontaneous combustion scene or in the druggy bordello episode; think of the ludicrous sentimentalism of the "three adorable charmers" chapter or the robust bachelor sentimentalism of Old Redburn living in his mother's house with two doting sisters—; they can't be. The nineteenth-century American novel's subgeneric categories, as this project understands them, do

[6] A terminological note: I trope the processes of attachment of formal fourfold in two different ways: *gathering, exemplification, scattering, atomization* describes the way the texts relate to other texts in the same genre with emphasis on the experience of the reader; *with, in place of, against, other than* describes the same process, but with emphasis on the relations between texts (a sentimental novel attaches itself *primarily* "with" others, etc). More on how this works below, and especially in sub-section three below ("Genre-System as Social System").

[7] My insistence that the reader, by her attachments to texts, forges various sorts of generic attachments is a variation on Rita Felski's argument in *Uses of Literature* (2008). I've inflected her argument about readerly "attachment" with a concern with genre-attachment as it happens at the site of the reader.

not represent discrete entities but pliable processes of domination, ever contested and even catalyzed and progressively enhanced, pressed further and further into what they are or are becoming, by the contesting.[8]

By routing my description of the process of genre-participation[9] or genre-attachment through readers and their attachments to texts, this project finds a sticky issue. How can my description of these belonging-logics be objectively verified? Feelings, the fabric of attachment, are obnoxiously personal. Preferences and their strange self-insistences—especially when these preferences exert their force on acts of reading and writing, as Bartleby and Edwards on the Will make clear—are intensely enigmatic, often even to their subjects. Our attachments to texts, that is, often take their peculiar qualities from their felt untranslatability into common terms.

For now, I'll suggest two forms of provisional justification and gesture toward a third; this third, in turn, will be the one this project will take up at length. First, let's notice the corroboration of my classificatory categories by one of the nineteenth-century American novel's master-readers. Three of the four core forms this project proposes show up as the three component parts of Cathy Davidson's groundbreaking typology of the early American novel in *Revolution and the Word* (1986), a study for which Davidson read all known American novels written before 1820. Sentimentalism, the picaresque, the gothic: Davidson's exhaustive types, and ones that match mine nicely—with the provision that, in the fuller nineteenth century, the

[8] Generic attachments (of texts, of readers) are keyed to a special formal feature, called "the dominant" by Russian Formalists (and elaborated variously), by which such contests are won. For a general appraisal of the Formalist conceptualization of "the dominant" ("it was one of the most crucial, elaborated and productive concepts in Russian Formalist theory" [82]), see Jakobson, "The Dominant" (1935). In Jakobson's essay, the dominant is conceptualized cogently as "the focusing component of a work of art: it rules, determines, and transforms the remaining components" (82).

[9] "Genre-participation" is the description for the process by which an individual text attaches itself to a genre that is preferred in Jacques Derrida's "The Law of Genre" (1980): "Every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genreless text; there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging" (230).

picaresque tale is complexly transformed "into" the bildungsroman. (Davidson's genre-typology lacks my fourth category, of course, because the realist novel does not actualize itself as a novelistic subgenre until well after her survey ends.)

Secondly, Georg Lukács's *Theory of the Novel* (1916) teaches us that novels tend to "objectivize" themselves, that is to thematize their form on the level of content. Lo and behold: sentimental unearthings of unlikely kinships, which objectivize the *with*-ness that organizes this kind of literary kind; the bildungsroman's focus on representative individuality, which objectivizes the subgenre's own bid for representative individuality; and the gothic's incest motif, its to-be-exited institutional spaces, and its distress in the discovery of an unlikely likenesses, all of which objectivize these novels' scatter-prone relations. The subgeneric agreement of such motifs functions as a negative proof of the operation of a given subgenre's organizing principle.

Finally, drawing on—or drawing up—a critical tradition that forges affinities between thinkers as unlike as Leslie Fiedler and the philosopher Alain Badiou, we might proffer an even stronger description of the novel's tendencies toward objectivizaton: namely, that the subgeneric self-relations in which this project is most interested tend to get thematized in one particular way. Badiou finds that two of his four basic "truth procedures," art and love, "meet" in the novel. Fiedler, in his massive critical synthesis, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960, rev. 1966), claims that the proper project of the novel form is the delineation of modern couplehood ("The subject par excellence of the novel is love…" [25]).[10] The novel's thematizations of its formal relation, that is, can be thematized too: as erotic relations. And so each of the four genres

[10] A whole host of nineteenth-century writers and critics make similar claims (though, of course, another whole host actively disputes them, by which action they are kept steadily visible). We will sample claims from both sides, for it takes two to animate a debate, and the debate is our proper topic, in what follows.

fits with or rhymes to a certain erotic configuration: sentimental *familiarization*, Bildung-y *culmination*, gothic *complication*, and realist *non-rapport*.[11]

As the introduction of this project's theoretical apparatus continues, I'll make recourse to three terms that often overlap in critical discourse: form, genre, and style; and I'll introduce a fourth piece of terminology, sociopoetic rhyme, which may seem to cover some of the same ground. Each of these terms describes a particular aspect of, or a particular perspective on, the novel-system's functional differentiation, its achievement of "operative closure" in Luhmann's vocabulary, in a society that "refrains from imposing a pattern of difference on" the operatively closed subsystems that compose it (*Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft* qtd. Moeller 46). The terminology will be used like this: "genre" and "subgenre" will describe functional reflexivity viewed from within the novel-system; "style" and "stylization" will describe the same phenomenon viewed from outside the novel-system; I'll allow "form" to remain loose purposefully, able to cover, and mark correspondences between, disparate aesthetic and cultural phenomena; and "sociopoetic rhyme" will describe the capacity for mutual evocation that symmetrical stylizations of reflexivity have *across* functionally differentiated systems (the way, for instance, the genre-system I describe "fits with" the autonomously evolved erotic system I describe). "Sociopoetic rhyme" thus describes one way that, in a social system composed of functionally differentiated subsystems, one (that is) in which functional components are equally unequal, interfunctional affinities find their way into social experience. We *feel* these formal

[11] Notice that this erotic grammar is what this project understands to be its contribution to contemporary queer theory: an understanding of erotic possibilities in the pre-hetero/homo moment as rigorously structured but not around that binary. My proposal of this new erotic grammar for the nineteenth-century also registers and responds to queer theory's recent interest in phenomenology (for instance, Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* [2006]), that is, in historical systems (or, more generally, temporal systems or temporality itself, in the work of Elizabeth Freeman [*Time Binds* 2010]) as experienced, rather than as codified in disciplinary discourses.

affinities "dissolved into our practices" (as Raymond Williams would say), even though they are not explicitly part of articulate ideological structures.

Methodologically, this project will not only study these rhymelike intersystemic convergences, these homologies, but means to actively avail itself of them, to anchor purposively its theoretical framework in them. Rather than permitting myself a unitary "ultimate horizon" of interpretation (as Fredric Jameson enjoins in *The Political Unconscious* [1981]), or making random and simply unsystematic use of theoretical tools as it suits me or my target audience, I've actively chosen core terms that can function as conceptual puns: for instance, genre-system/social system, dominant (Formalists, Raymond Williams), astonishment and recognition (shared by Luhmann and Rita Felski), and closure (A.J. Greimas, Luhmann). These are terms within which independent analytical frameworks fortuitously conjugate and enrich—interilluminate, even—one another.

In the remainder of this Introduction's first part, I will keep my citation of novelistic examples to a minimum. This I do not because these examples are difficult to generate, but because this project is in part an investigation into different kinds or logics of novelistic exemplarity. Different ways, that is, in which individual phenomena relate to or reflect on the larger phenomena in which they participate. Only once we're clear on these styles of systematic self-relation and self-reflection can we fill them out with exemplary instances. The challenge for the time being is that of remaining sufficiently abstract, of refusing to slip back into a more comfortable literary critical specificity. In order to ward off this temptation, for the rest of this first part, my argument will rely instead on the discourse of nineteenth-century critics in order to keep itself moving forward. (And in the Introduction's second part, we will deal at length with a novelistic example, William Dean Howells's *A Chance Acquaintance* [1873].)

2. The Rise Model

The rise of the novel,[12] so called by contemporary critics (the phrase is rarely used in the nineteenth century, and exclusively in its last two decades),[13] is registered by readers of the time

[12] The metaphor of the "rise" of the novel is popularized in the twentieth century by Ian Watt's indispensible volume of the same name (1957). Watt's history-of-ideas argument is that the novel's form is not understandable except against the socio-political background that allowed its defining feature, "formal realism," a literary installation of Cartesian empiricism, to flourish. The rise metaphor, however, was already in play in the field of American Studies when Watt's groundbreaking study was published, having appeared in Alexander Cowie's *The Rise of the American Novel* (1948), a sweeping survey that defines realism largely in terms of its late-nineteenth-century market dominance and equates this dominance with the novel's rise. After Cowie, the rise model is incorporated, although much more implicitly, into Richard Chase's *The American Novel and Its Tradition* (1957), despite the fact that this book explicitly opposes Cowie's critical narrative and posits a different precursor, F.R. Leavis's *The Great Tradition* (1948). Chase's book famously understands the consistent aesthetic achievement of the American novel to be a recurrent refusal of Cowie's central categories, realist techniques and marketplace successfulness both: "the history of the American novel is not only the history of the rise of realism but also of the repeated rediscovery of the uses of the romance" (xii). While his "rise" is not keyed (like Cowie's) to realism, Chase insists that the American's novel's nineteenth-century thriving is a crescendo into achievement—a capacity to generate more and more "great" novels. That's still a *rise*, an internally stable entity's progressive self-betterment measured against a socio-political background: "the English novel, one might say, has been a kind of imperial enterprise, an appropriation of reality with the high purpose of brining order to disorder. By contrast," Chase argues, "the American novel has usually seemed content to explore, rather than to appropriate and civilize, the remarkable and in some way unexampled territories of life in the New World and to reflect its anomalies and dilemmas" (4-5); hence "the fact is that many of the best American novels achieve their very being, their energy and their form, from the perception and acceptance not of unities but of radical disunities" (6-7). The energy of disagreement that passes between Chase and Fiedler, in Chase's energetic review of *Love and Death* (1960, rev. 1966), gives its reader to feel that that in the moment these two share, the rise model reigns; its fine points require the administrations of the affects. I'll pick up the story at this junction in the essay's main text shortly, with Nina Baym's renovation of the Chase's white-guy rise in "Concepts of the Romance" (1984). By the time that one of Baym's inheritors, Cathy Davidson, explicitly recurs the metaphor in the title of her classic, *Revolution and the Word: the Rise of the Novel in Early America*, it has been purged of its reference to realism (which simply isn't a meaningful category in Davidson's appraisal of the novel's socio-political success) as well as its sense of an aesthetic crescendo keyed to the grand achievements of mostly white men. Latter-day inheritors of the unreconstructed Chase tradition, for example Michael Davitt Bell (*The Development of American Romance* [1980]) and Edgar Dryden (*The Form of American Romance* [1988]), avail themselves directly of the aesthetic crescendo version of the rise model; Dryden's book registers Baym's injunction to canon-bust by treating one-off books from major authors (Hawthorne's *Marble Faun* [1860], Melville's *Pierre* [1852]). But the point to underscore at present is that the rise model has gone through a crucial transformation in Americanist criticism before it meets Baym: from a close association with the epistemology proper to the modern subject and modern society, "formal realism" (Watt), and an appreciation of literary achievement that finds its culmination in the social realism of the late nineteenth-century (Cowie), to the distinctive and increasingly profound literary art America produced by its protomodern*ist* advocacy of an unreconstructed Cartesian epistemology (Chase: "radical skepticism about ultimate questions" [xi]). Throughout this process, *it has proven extremely difficult for critics to imagine what "happens" to the novel in nineteenth-century America*

as something more like something falling. In America, in the middle of the nineteenth century, the novel doesn't rise so much as its squashes: novels, that is, "drop down by millions all over our land" (*Ladies' Repository* [July 1847] qtd. *NRR* 27). They "swarm America as did the locusts in Egypt" (*Ladies' Repository* [May 1847] qtd. *NRR* 27)—a phrase that cites a sacred self-understanding of American culture (the typological identity with the exiled Jews) but toggles the site of identification (not God's chosen people, but the enemy Egyptians), and that mingles its sense of swarmed torment with the intuition that it is both heaven-sent and purposive. "Tens of thousands" of novels, writes another critic, "have been floating, in pamphlet form, thick as autumn leaves over the country" (*American Review* [1843] qtd. *NRR* 27), making a troubled display of his own cleanly accessible, his newly "professional,"[14] literariness as he renders a mixed appreciation of the novel's own massive, harassing capacity to be stunning as Fall. The augmented cultural presence of the novel, whether triumph or sign of moral turpitude (and often, as in the phrases I've cited, these seem profoundly inseparable, but also not exactly the point), is experienced as tremendous, a kind of deluge of the New. Just as the form acquires the necessary cultural authority to "manage" cultural anxieties and mass desires, on the Jamesonian model,[15] it must manage itself.

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except to think: it rises. What do we obscure by insisting on seeing this historical phenomenon in this way, as a "rise," as a self-consistent and stable entity's action against a socio-political background? What other models are possible, and what can we gain by testing them out?

[13] The bulk of the nineteenth century has several ways of talking about the late up-ramping of the novel form, but "rise" is not one of them. Interestingly, the hypothesis about the novel's rise is roughly coincident with that of its "decay": not the cultural decay that it instances or conspires in (the familiar ministerial complaint about the wickedness of novels), but that the form itself, having flourished, is already in decline (See Benjamin Swift, "The Decay of the Novel" [1903]).

[14] On the professionalization of literary criticism in the nineteenth century, see Bell.

[15] Prominent proponents of the Jameson method are Priscilla Wald's *Constituting Americans: Cultural Anxiety and Narrative Form* (1995), a book in Duke's New Americanist series (about which more shortly) Shelley Streeby's *American Sensations* (2002), and lately the "Slow Rise of the American Novel"

It is this sort of self-management, the novel's reinvention of itself and its endemic formal possibilities in the wake of its unprecedented (squash-making) success, that will be the topic of this study. This project means to trace out the truth and consequences of this squashed-by-books phenomenology. The historiographical story that I will tell is neither one of the novel's progressive "rise" nor the "decay" of public sphere discourse that its late explosion instances[16]—abstract models that, despite making for some strange critical bedfellowships, have proven difficult to displace—but one of the form's evolution of techniques of internal differentiation. It generates a system of sub-varieties, of discrete but systematically related forms.

Our model of what the Prague school formalists would call "the dynamism of the literary structure" will not be one of rise, which measures action against a steady background, but instead one of internal elaboration. Not development seen from without, but rather, strange as it sounds, something more like digestion.[17] We will focus our critical description on the workings of a system of immanent self-relations and the processes by which this system achieves organic self-consistency, coherence, and felt closure,—what marxists call "relative autonomy," or what Luhmann describes as "operative closure and self-organization."

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chapter of Dawn Coleman's *Preaching and the Rise of the American Novel* (2013). The Jameson method I'm thinking of is the one which attends to the art object's "management of desire" (from "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture" [1979]), an objective and an operation which implicitly requires its user to have attained something like a "risen," management-class social position.

[16] As in Michael Warner, *Letters of the Republic* (1990), Grantland S. Rice, *Transformation of Authorship in America* (1997). For a powerful history-of-ideas version of this framework, see Sennett. I am not sure that this provocative critical position, that the novel's rise should be told as declension, has a critical champion right now.

[17] I'm not contesting the rise model's critical sustainability (in any of its variations: Watt, Chase, Davidson,—or even Moretti's recent statistical version in the "Graphs" section of in *Graphs, Maps, Trees* [2005]), only its hegemony. And digestion, of course, and importantly, is an action related to external development, and not without vital relations to that which goes on without the internal system. But it is not concerned with these relations primarily. A certain sort of reader might take pleasure in re-reading the relationship between a development-emphasizing model and digestion-emphasizing model by reading against-the-grain the opening of Cowie's *Rise of the American Novel*: "A new nation, like a new-born baby, requires time before its special characteristics become discernible" (1).

Organic consistency! While the mood of this project, as it discloses itself in this funny nugget of critical vocabulary, borrows from the heady synthetic studies of Richard Chase, Leslie Fiedler, and Marius Bewley, my archive is decidedly post-eighties and my methods, rather more contemporary than that. This project has been energized by American criticism's recent "aesthetic turn,"[18] the cooperative reactivation of roomy questions about literary art and its systematic study. It wishes to be read as a kind of testing out of what's new (and what's not) about opportunities opened by such an approach. Further, Franco Moretti's recent methodological innovations, his interest in what he's called "distant reading" and abstract models (in *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900* [1999] and after), themselves serve as models for how critical abstraction might yield forms of historiographic knowledge not at all equal to sweeping generalization. How such abstraction, even, might return us anew to the specificities of individual texts, to devices and writerly techniques, motifs and topoi—what the formalist Tynyanov calls "literary facts."

This project differs strongly, however, and in a way that is worth foregrounding from the first, both from the novel studies of the novel that have taken their impetus from Moretti's methods (which find their culmination in his blockbuster collection, the two-volume *The Novel* [2004]), and from its nearer peers, other post-eighties book-length studies of the nineteenth-century novel by Americanists.[19] Both of these scholarly modes favor the same publication

[18] For instance, the innovative criticism hosted by Looby and Weinstein's *American Literature's Aesthetic Dimensions* (2012), and by Otter and Sanborn in *Melville and Aesthetics* (2011).

[19] On the American scene, the studies in question are: the Emory Elliott-edited *Columbia History of the American Novel* (1991); the excessively-exclusively priced (in stark contrast to the cheap paperback copies of Chase or Fiedler available at virtually any used bookstore) *Cambridge History of the American Novel* (2006); the big-wigs-only *Columbia History of American Literature*, which was the first venue for Jonathan Arac's *Emergence of American Literary Narrative* (1995; 2005), the only powerful recent contestation of the rise model, but which doesn't concern the novel form specifically; the overview-for-undergrads-y *Cambridge Introduction to the Nineteenth-Century American Novel* (2007); and massively

format, a circumstance of which I'm prepared to make much. This format is the capacious collection (typically priced for research libraries only) of pieces by previously established specialists writing at essay length about their exclusive specialties. My study doesn't work like this and doesn't have a conceptual framework that submits easily to essay-size redaction: this will make a difference in the sorts of insights that are available to it. Further, the criticism these big books vend tends to work bottom-up: local figures and discursive formations add up to, or pay into, or (oftenest of all) subvert our received sense of, the novel's cultural function. Mine instead works top-down, slowly amalgamating historical material into a theoretical model that from the first it boldly presumes: this too will make a difference. My unified theory is the effort of a relatively uninitiated critic, and is both comprehensive and the product of a single mind; and these qualities, I submit, make a major difference in the sorts of insights available to it and through it.

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collaborative *Oxford History of the Novel in English* in seven volumes, which features scattered essays on American trends, and the fifth volume of which concerns *The American Novel to 1870* (2014). These books all become the sort of critical treatments of their topic that they are—and they are, I avow, immensely useful in this capacity—by being purposefully non-synthetic. For example, in Leonard Cassuto's "General Introduction" to the *Cambridge History of the American Novel*, a back is patted by the hand attached to it because the collection demonstrates exactly this quality, lack of systematicity: the project "calls attention to its own internal conflicts and especially to the contingency—historical and otherwise—of its methodology and approach, and of the categories" of analysis it employs (2). The cantankerous reading of this would be that it represents a miserable commoditization of the Baym approach to the American novel as a historical phenomenon (she actively and provocatively refuses the systemtization of her insights: *Novels, Readers, and Reviewers* [1984] is "comprehensive… without attempting to devise an overall system" [24]; it vision is one of novels *comma*, not "the American novel").

As for the Moretti volumes, these seem to betray something endemic of novel studies as a critical discourse: despite paying *Moby-Dick* a certain amount of lip service (a trendy line-drawing of Ahab serves as the cover image for volume two), American texts and Americanist critics are significantly under-represented. Philip Fisher has an essay…about *Ulysses.* There's some light statistical work on "The Market for Novels" in American 1780-1850…that regularly misspells Cathy Davidson's name (Cathy Davidson, former general editor of *American Literature*). Particularly under-represented in these volumes are texts from the lately expanded American canon, the sort of novels in which the chapters of my project pronounce an interest.

Such capacious collections constitute the only book-length studies of the topic of the nineteenth-century American novel to be published in the twenty-five years between Fisher's *Hard Facts* (1985) and Dryden's *Form of the American Romance* (1988) and Philip F. Gura's rise-model revival, *Truth's Ragged Edge* (2013), an excellent book that could not be more deliberate about its anti-systematic, "ragged" thrust. These multiauthor works have a remarkably different texture than their fifties and sixties precursors—books by Chase, Fiedler, and Marius Bewley—, studies that we seem to be at the verge of forgetting were capable of sustaining vibrant, if very different, forms of critical knowledge.[20] By aspiring to their image, in the midst of a critical field in which there is no risk of my realizing that aspiration for real, my project becomes an aesthetic theory that is not just a kind of sixties throwback, a specimen of midcentury nostalgia, but one that is in synch with the best tendencies of its nineteenth-century object: one that foregrounds, as Poe meant to in his late collaborative project, the literary magazine *The Stylus*, the experience of individuality and coherence that can only issue when there is but one mind at the helm. A project so disposed can alone give the sense of "continuity, definitiveness, and…marked certainty of purpose" that defines the mid-nineteenth-century literary ideal. So doing, it might be both "more varied and more *unique*" than its more patently collaborative, but less comprehensive, peers ("Prospectus" [1843] 28-29).

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Borrowing another theoretical method from the mid-nineteenth century literary field's quest for self-cognition, let me clarify my intervention by an act of what a short fiction of 1839

[20] Nevertheless, I'm tempted to press the strange thesis that, unlike the sixties syntheses that are its forerunners (handily redacted in criticism as the Chase Thesis, the Fiedler Hypothesis, etc) this project isn't "thesis-driven"—doesn't even exactly "have" a thesis about the nineteenth-century novel—but model-driven. Or, to the extent it has a thesis, it is that you don't need a thesis in order to effectively organize and present critical knowledge. I have an accepted object (the nineteenth-century novel in America) and I offer an internally coherent understanding of that object.

calls "retroprogression"—and that this fiction, in typical 1839 fashion,[21] notices by noticing its strange rhyming appearance within functionally differentiated social systems (religious forms, political forms, networks of transportation)—: an attempt to "advance by moving backwards" (iv). In a sense, this project returns to a crucial moment in the history of Americanist literary criticism—a moment that made possible the expansion of the canon that has in turn made my project possible—in order to activate an alternate critical possibility that lies latent in it. The moment in question is Nina Baym's careful correction of Richard Chase's romance book in her 1984 article, "Concepts of the Romance in Hawthorne's America." Baym's intervention effectively exploded our sense that there might be "a self-conscious romance tradition" operating within, and as the best part of, the American novel, from Brockden Brown to Faulkner. "In fact," Baym writes, "the term romance turns out to have been used so broadly and so inconsistently in the era that in any given instance to fix its meaning the critic or writer was evidently indulging in a creative rather than a descriptive activity" (430).[22] However, Baym points out that this inconsistency is neither "total interchangeability of the terms" romance and novel nor "total definitional anarchy" (435-436). We see exactly two competing usages emerge:

[21] Mark Seltzer describes 1839 as "the annus mirabilis of the network of modern matter and message transport systems" ("Parlor Games" [2009] 110), the year that witnesses, suddenly, "*the emergence of comparable conditions in diverse systems, which is a defining attribute of modernity*" (100, original emphasis). His evidence for this claim: "The first commercial electric telegram, in 1839, constructed by Wheatstone and Cooke for the Great Western Railway; the first Baedeker guide (to the Rhine), 1839; and the first national railway timetable (Bradshaws), in 1839; the invention of photography—and its use in guidebooks, among other things—in 1839 (by Daguerre in France; and, in 1840, Fox Talbot in England); and the first national postal system, Rowland Hill's Penny Post (based on the invention of the prepaid stamp), in Britain, in 1840" (110-111). Seltzer continues: "What spreads throughout the social field, what makes up the infrastructure of the modernizing social field, is the intensified self-organization of a system of self-organizing systems…" (111). Accepting Seltzer's premise, the task of my project will be to pose the question of what 1839 means to literary artists and systems.

[22] Jordan Stein with bravura has repeated the feat with the term "novel" in "Are 'American Novels' Novels? *Mardi* and the Problem of Boring Books," a chapter in the Russ Castronovo edited collection, *The Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (2012).

> one of these definitions [of "romance"] incorporates a history of fiction (is diachronic), while the other schematizes existing fiction (is synchronic). In the diachronic mode of writing, the novel is seen as a modern form of romance, which is the overform, the generic name for narrative fiction over time. In the synchronic mode, the generic name for narrative fiction is the novel, and the romance is one type of the genre. If we put these two modes together, we come up with a discourse in which romance is a type of novel which is in turn a modern type of romance. (436)

The novel generates the constructive confusion that fires its creative activity by recourse to the flexible concept of the romance. But there's something more than this at work here. This is a system, the novel-system, working out its own modernity and its meaning. In its quest to know itself as a functionally differentiated, that is to say relatively autonomous, that is to say modern, social system the novel must have techniques for "reflecting on its own differentiation"—a problem that arises, Luhmann notices, because of "increasing tempo of change" sustains it. "This change requires the incorporation into the artwork of distinctions internal to the art system, distinctions that derive either from the history of art or from the formal repertoire available as art" (*Art* 299): and "romance" conveniently functions in both of these capacities (in Baym's diachronic and synchronic modes, respectively). The romance concept allows the novel-system to study both its place in the history of art forms as well as the techniques of reality-relation that are available for it; "romance," that is, is less a discrete precursor of or formal alternative to the novel—by 1840, at least—and more a rhetorical construction by which the novel presumes itself to be a coherent and autonomous cultural phenomenon ("a discourse in which romance is a type of novel which is in turn a modern type of romance") and then, on the basis of this presumption, explores what that state of affairs means and what that means it can do.

Baym's landmark essay, in effect, shows us how far the rise narrative can take us toward a model of the nineteenth-century novel: we can bear witness to the form's arrival at reflexive autonomy, and then we can take seriously the conceptual categories by which it reflects upon

that autonomy at the level of the individual practitioner (as Baym does effectively with Hawthorne) or we can try to string individual differentiators together according to certain critical patterns dictated by whatever selection biases we happen to harbor, or wish to cultivate (as do Chase and his inheritors). No wonder there haven't been many nineteenth-century American novel since the eighties: the rise model ran aground twenty-five years ago. Before completely bracketing the rise model, however, in order to move inside the functionally differentiated system and the stylizations of the reflexivity that it houses, let's glance at how Baym's insights were actually taken up, in order to bring our critical survey up to the present.

First, Baym's demonstration of the efficacy of back-to-the-archive historical work, and particularly the reading of literature in terms of its cognate discourses, would soon receive theoretical conjugation by the New Historicism and would, in this guise, give rise to a critical project I believe it does not entail, the New Americanists. This collaborative project explicitly and insistently opposes itself to Chase and "the Cold War consensus," but does so by substituting Baym's archive-based opposition and fidelity to historical sources for a rather easier *de facto* ideological antagonism (which has a significantly better cost-benefit ratio).[23] The New Americanist imprimatur stands, for us, as an instance of the academy's and the academic press's quick commoditization of a fresh idea. And secondly, the explosion of Chase's Few Great Men

[23] This transformation, which takes place between Baym and Donald Pease, is completely overlooked in the account of "the American romance controversy" given in Thompson and Link's *Neutral Ground* (1999)—a book that, despite fussing to nice effect about historico-conceptual distinctions in the nineteenth century, sloppily equates Baym and the New Americanists in the 1990s. For Baym, the unsustainability of the romance/novel distinction devolves upon individual works and individual literary situations: Hawthorne strategically deploys the distinction in one way at one historical moment, and other literary individuals might deploy it, and other historical concepts and other careful historico-conceptual distinctions like it, according to different situations and different needs…and should be attended to as such ("certainty must elude us" ["Concepts" 439]). The New Americanst line conducts business differently. Critical concepts tinged by the "cold war consensus" shows up, for them, as first and foremost ideological, to be stridently and *de facto* "debunked." Which in turn allows the debunking to be marketed stridently as quote-unquote New.

canon—an undertaking by no means the province of New Americanists only, or even primarily—, not to mention the collateral ramping-up of publish-or-perish professionalism and across-the-board teaching obligations, make sweeping studies of any sort more difficult to write by making responsible reading of the total canon of the nineteenth-century novel all but humanly impossible. Moretti's new critical methods, and others, however, make the expanded canon approachable in a synoptic way once again.

3. Genre-System as Social System

The novel is a form that thrives by a crisis of self-conceptualization—especially in the nineteenth century,—especially indeed in the center of that century. To be a novel, that is, is at once to aspire to innovation, to meaningful novelty, as well as to participation in, even consolidation of, a tradition uneasily consolidated because defined by previous instances of this kind of innovation. However, as Niklas Luhmann argues, all art, and particularly all modern art, "uses, enhances, and in a sense exploits" the human perceptual system's capacity to "present *astonishment and recognition* in *a single instance*" (*Art* 141). The work of art, and especially the one "felt" as modern,[24] as it exhibits itself via the art system, he claims, exhibits "the *unity of this distinction*" and so allows its constituents to intensify one another (*Art* 141). The novel rather than inventing the problem of invention (and regularity) functions as a special case of it. By beginning to function in this way, it takes over a special problem of the social system at large, the problem of meaningful newness,[25] and uses it to re-trope the art-system's fundamental, self-

[24] Novels are felt as "modern," from 1791: see "On Modern Novels and their Effects" (*Massachusetts Magazine*).

[25] The "rise" of the novel becomes possible in "a culture which, in the last few centuries, has set an unprecedented value on originality, on the novel," as Ian Watt posits (13), and more particularly an

intensifying paradox of astonishment and recognition as a dialectic of newness and regularity. The astonishment/recognition paradox could be re-understood in plenty of other ways (for example, as uncommon/common) that have little to do with newness/regularity conceptually. Thus the novel does not simply instance the art system's core paradox; it actively *interprets* it.

With this general understanding of the novel's functional differentiation as a social system in mind, let's turn again to the manner in which this cultural phenomenon translates itself into the phenomenal, into the domain of historical phenomenology. Let's turn again to those scenes of novelistic squashing. "The press is at this juncture so prolific in novels, romances, *et id genus omne*," writes one critic, "that to give each the time it deserves for perusal, would not only consume the entire day, but take largely from the hours usually devoted to sleep" (*Knickerbocker* [June 1836] qtd. *NRR* 197). Listening closely, we hear the transmutation of familiar pre-1840 complaints (the novel disrupts proper "devotions"; it controverts productive work days into orgies of "consumption"[26]), complaints that this pronouncement seems to be citing obliquely and sort of playfully in order to mark that while it has a problem with novels, these old problems aren't precisely it. The problem now is more like: too much of a good thing. Hello excess my new friend. This critic broaches a dilemma that remains recognizably our own: the novel "proliferates" on a scale incapable with human proliferation; there's something inhuman in the demands the novel-system imposes. What Franco Moretti has recently called "the slaughterhouse of literature"—heaps of unread novels go to the slaughterhouse, or hurry the reader that attempts all of them there—opens for business around 1840.

American culture that frequently and famously experiences itself as its capacity to yield up "new lands, new men, new thoughts" (Emerson, *Nature* [1836] 22).

[26] Compare the account of "injurious reading" in "Novels and Romances" (*The Guardian* 1820).

There is too much newness, that is, as well as too much regularity, to allow a responsible novel reader to sort one from the other in a meaningful way. "Creative vigor" and "tame imitation" are subject to such quick turn over, are so thoroughly intermixed, that no unitary, and not even a newly "professional," audience simply can tell them apart. A novel that one critic finds crammed with clichés (Augusta Jane Evans's *St. Elmo* [1866] reads "exactly as if its writer had kept a common-place book which she had well-stocked with striking excerpts in a various if not well-regulated reading, which were then packed into the mouths of characters and stuffed into the intermediate reflections, until, as the story proceeds, the collection is exhausted" [*The Round-Table* 1867]) another finds too strange and unfamiliar in its conceptual vocabulary (so that "ninety-nine out of a hundred [readers] must wade through much that is no better than incomprehensible jargon to them" [*Godey's* 1867]).[27]

If readers, even professional readers, can't be trusted to sort innovation from regularity in a consistent way, then the system must perform this task for itself. The novel "around 1840"—as we move into "an age of novel-reading"—can no longer count on its readers to explicitly cognize meaning-making differences within the forms of newness it puts forward.[28] What it needs is a

[27] *Round-Table* and *Godey's*, of course, cultivated different audiences with different sorts of expectations, and so catered to them. This is not the point. The point, instead, is that the novel can no longer expect an audience that holds coherent senses of what is novel (and what is commonplace)… but finds its own form of coherence as a cultural form anyway. The novel becomes a coherent social form capable of synchronizing, in surreptitious ways, the incoherences of its incoherent audience (the kind of internally incoherent audience that enables both *Round-Table* and *Godey's* to exist, that is). In such a circumstance, if the novel form is to continue to pursue its interest in cultural innovation, it must construct newness and its interest in newness in a new way. It must innovate in its construction of the concept of innovation.

[28] It is not that either of the quoted critics of *St. Elmo* is right or wrong (*St. Elmo* "really is" mundane or "really is" provocative). It's that they both are rightly, but differently, keyed to its innovations in the sentimental manner of the "creative *with*." *St. Elmo* is a sentimental novel, and so innovates in its joining-up with other sentimental novels, other novels, other books, other readers: whether this is experienced as its capacity to unite familiar but various sources (in the first complaint) or the readership in its bafflement (ninety-nine percent isn't bad, in the second), this novel makes for an interesting experience of gathering. (We might, to profit, set this example next to that of Melville's *Pierre*, which repeats *St. Elmo*'s stylistic indecision between exaggerated clichédness and the impulse to "gospelize the world anew" (*P* 273): the

self-schematization that, while preserving "operative closure," will allow it to isolate and insulate innovations in the field of innovation that it has constructed. Here we may profit by understanding "closure" in the terms of the French semiotician A.J. Greimas, whose famous square, as its prime explicator Fredric Jameson explains, not only "enjoins upon us the obligation to articulate any apparently static free-standing concept or term into that binary opposition which it structurally presupposes" (*P-H* 164)—here, the newness/regularity difference that "the novel" concept entails—but also allows that binary to open out so as to articulate itself as a "complete" four-part system. The novel in the nineteenth century organizes four competing logics of novelness, of the relationship between a new novel and the large subsystem to which it belongs: gathering, exemplarity, scattering, pluralism. The first two belonging-logics, gathering and exemplarity, are fundamentally formally conservative (on the regularity side of the binary); the other two, scattering and pluralism, are fundamentally formally radical (on the innovation side of the binary)—though, of course, they are all intensely linked with one another, and each arrives at its own special position only by its mutually intensifying interrelations with the others. Gathering and scattering share an emphasis on the generic formation (which gathering attempts to make more robust and dissemination attempts first to fragment and then redeploy); exemplarity and pluralism are united in the emphasis they set on the instance (which exemplarity casts as an excellent, progressive consolidation of the generic formation and pluralism asserts as simply separate, autonomous from other instances collected in the same formation). These are all styles of innovation; they are four mutually differentiating, mutually reinforcing innovations in the form of innovation.

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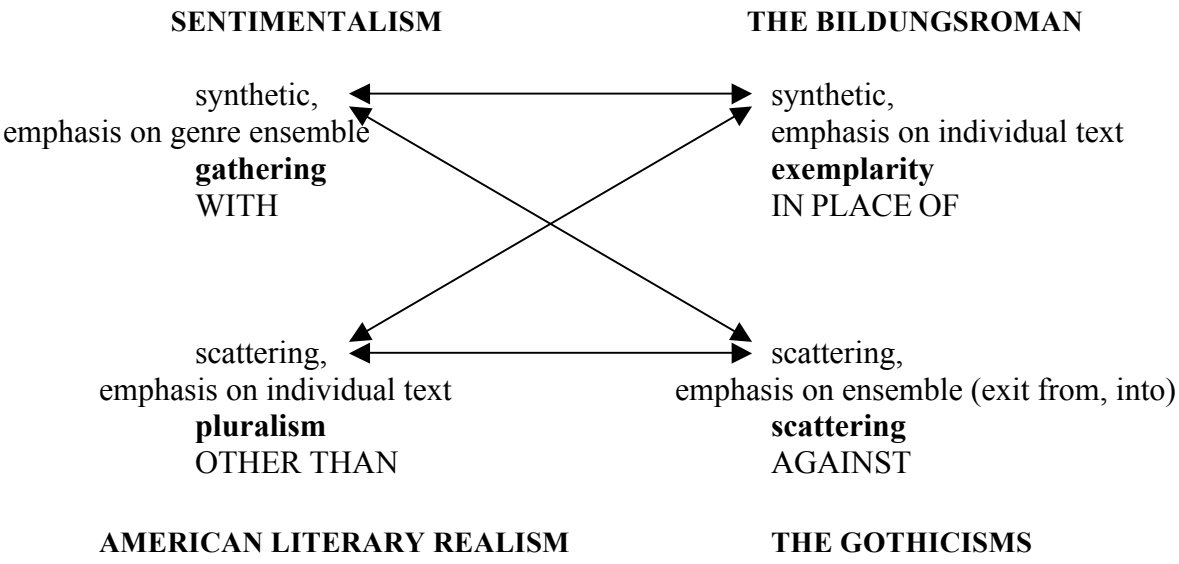
critical backlash against this book emphasizes, in the bildungsroman style, the too-extreme individuation of the book, and its testimony to a developmental process that's run off the rails: "Herman Melville Crazy" [the famous headline of *New York Day Book*'s 1852 review of that novel].)



Each of these logics of reflexive textual individuation constitutes the a priori formal basis—to which varied thematics, motifs, and other "literry facts" (stock characters and familiar dilemmas) can adhere and find meaningful configurations—of one of my four core forms: sentimentalism, the bildungsroman, the gothicisms, realism.

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The novel's intense reflexivity can be measured in myriad ways, but the one of primary interest to this study is this: in a novel, some kind of kind (even if it isn't nameable as such, but is simply some *sense for kind*), mediates immediate being. "Of its kind, [this novel] is excellent; but what is its kind?" wonders a nineteenth-century novel critic whose incomprehension is very keen (*Knickerbocker* 1835). Aesthetic experience (here, "excellence"), when it impresses itself upon the novel reader, tends not do so as such but *as kinded*, as conjugated by genre or subgenere. Such readerly experiences are patently different from those organized by the nineteenth-century lyric, for instance, a kind of a kind that means to abolish the experience of kind. Lyric poems thrust themselves before our eyes immediately: think Whitman's, or

Dickinson's very different,[29] conjuring-away of literary kinds. While the confession or lyric strives for immediacy, the novel is always reader-mediated by genre. The reader always pre-sorts the narrative into a kind.[30] A novel *is* its genre, just as a genre *is* how it is belonged to.

The domain of the reader's experience should be understood to be doing important work for this project. Namely, it helps counteract the relentlessly, perhaps polemically, passive verbs that spangle the systems theory I've been citing. Texts exactly don't sort themselves, even if even the culture's master-readers are no longer capable of sorting them ("the consequence" of the novel's greatly increased midcentury output "is a great increase of perplexity to us, whose vocation it is to write, not books but *of* books" [*Knickerbocker* 1835]). Novels are sorted into subgenres, I'll argue, or they sort themselves, by the sorts of attachments they inspire in their readers. The connections that readers feel to novels—the phenomenological arena,[31] about which Rita Felski has recently declared an interest, of "the affective attachments and cognitive

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[29] This conjuring-away of kind still drives major critical insights in Dickinson studies: for instance, in Virginia Jackson's *Dickinson's Misery* (2005).

[30] Whitman's model of the poet's task is commensurate with his "bardic" identity, which is a sort of premodern vision of the society he wishes to make himself capable of singing. Literary art is not, for him, a specialized field, unequal to other fields but equal to them in this inequality (functionally differentiated), but a social subsystem organized on a model that the systems theorist would call one of segmentary differentiation, one in which all social subsystems assign themselves and undertake the whole of the social task. This is another, and a very powerful, vision of how literary art might organize itself as a coherent mode of cultural production—but it is not the novel's. The texts it generates—we can think too of *Walden* (1854)—bear on the social system in a fundamentally different way than a nineteenth-century novel (it doesn't make its "sociopoetic rhymes" in the same sorts of ways). Some of the fun novels have with Emerson (and Thoreau)—see *Retroprogression* (1839) or Louisa May Alcott's early *Moods* (1864)—stems from the competition not between differentiated systems (philosophy and poetry, Culture in Arnold's sense, versus the novel) but between *logics* of differentiation (functional versus segmentary).

[31] This phenomenological domain has recently been be historically reconceived as that of "historical hermeneutics" (Machor, *Reading Fiction in Antebellum America* [2011]). I'm not emphasizing this, the historical horizon of expectation (what Machor calls "informed response"), however, mostly because the novel, in its emphasis on newness, is interested in transcending such merely historical categories/horizons. Interested in making *new* difference-making differences, that is, in communicating new "information"—even in making new kinds of informative processes—not simply drawing on existing "informed responses."

reorientations that characterize the experience of reading a book" (*Uses of Literature* [2008] 11)—are keyed to kind, to genre, even if the reader, like the one quoted above, can't quite bring that kind to discursive articulation. I wish to extend Felski's insight that "our attachments" to different texts "differ in degree and kind" (11): these attachments also organize the read text into kinds of their own, that is, into genres.

Nineteenth-century novels, particularly as they dispose themselves into genres, organize themselves according to a principle of double-attachment. It happens like this: both (1) the special, specific means by which the novel imagines its participation in a genre, the way it "stylizes" its modern obligation to self-reflexivity by routing it through genre, and (2) the kind of readerly intuitive, affective attachment the novel tends to inspire in its audience—which after all is the only means by which attachment (1) can be secured. Nineteenth-century novels, that is, have generic affects. They belong to genres by inducing certain sorts of moods, structuring certain configurations of feeling and experience, in their audiences. How such structuration happens, and happens differently in each of the four core forms I'll examine, will be the topic of this project's chapters. Each time it happens by some formal element felt by readers as "dominant" in its relation to other felt elements.[32] The attachment *of* novels (to genres, meaning to my four core forms) occurs in and as the attachments *to* novels (that readers, whether nineteenth-century or not, feel).

[32] Tynjanov formulates the concept of the dominant like this: "[t]he unity of a work is not a matter of a closed, symmetrical whole (*celost*) but of an evolving, dynamic integratedness (*celostnost*); between its elements there can be no static equal or plus signs, but there are always the dynamic signs of correlation and integration. The form of a literary work must be recognized as dynamic" (28). "It happens only rarely that the emotive factors of an aesthetic object"—what we might call the generic mood or affect, the novel's capacity to bring its reader's feelings in line with it, to "feel right" by it (and, for Stowe's radical vision, not only by it)—"participate equally in the effect of the whole. On the contrary, normally a single factor or configuration of them comes to the fore and assumes a leading role. All the other accompany the dominant, intensify it through their harmony, heighten it through contrast, and surround it with a play of variations" (104). This is in line with one of the masterpieces of nineteenth-century American literary criticism, George Allen's "Reproductive Criticism" (1839).

The texture of the insights offered by this project thus differs from that of other recent approaches to the similar topics, and differs particularly from those methodologically keyed to discourse analysis and close reading (necessarily centering on passages rather than "dominant" formal elements like devices and motifs), and affectively informed by "the hermeneutics of suspicion." Suspicion has taught us many things, and this study profits much by such lessons. But suspicion also, I wager, has kept us from "feeling right" by the text, in the rich nineteenth-century sense, that is, from evolving a fuller critical vocabulary for our attachments to texts and the mutually enriching attachments to other texts those felt attachments facilitate.[33] In the next section, we'll allow these novel attachments one further prepositional ramification: attachments not only *of* (intrageneric) and *to* (readerly), but also *in* (thematic) the nineteenth-century novel.

4. Sociopoetic Rhyme

Let us return, one final time, to the scene of our squashing. 1840 is the moment when modern literature arrives at itself by making the novel arrive: a novel-reading age, an epoch that knows itself incapable of the epic,[34] is one that understands its newness in the shape of a novel. Art's essential dialectic between astonishment and recognition migrates to the core of the new form, re-troped along the way as the dilemma of "newness": the challenge of being both meaningfully novel and meaningfully "a novel," a challenge to be artfully negotiated anew each time (at first) and (then eventually) through the mediation of the four core forms. This focus on meaningful "newness"—a peculiar kind of difference-making difference—that the novel form

[33] Here I quickly rehearse in a preferred idiom one of the central provocations of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading" (1995).

[34] Lukács and Bahktin repeat and elevate one of the nineteenth-century literary field's own recurrent self-observations, namely that the novel is the epic of the modern age. See, for instance, "Modern Fiction," *Southern Literary Messenger* (1842).

both serves to occasion and lends functional autonomy is simultaneously (1) a simple instancing of the essential artistic "unity of the difference" between astonishment and recognition and (2) this unity's autonomization, its achieved functional differentiation or relative autonomization as a mode of cultural production through its special interpretation of the astonishment/recognition paradox ("after all, the novel is well named. Its name embodies a prime essential" [*New Princeton Review* 1886]: that is, both *its* prime essential and the prime essential of the art-system, even the social system, as such). This is, as Luhmann would say, "how order emerges from self-irritation" (*Art* 147). It is how a genre-system can function as a social system. Can ascend to its social function, even: finding new forms of form, and of newness, and showing them to a society newly seeming to know the need of them.[35]

Something like this insight authorizes a remarkable critical speculation, byline 1839: "The creation of modern literature—that species of invention which alone could body forth the infinite variety of modern society—the novel—requires much peculiar to its period, and all that the mind has ever possessed of original power" (*New York Mirror*). Everything is exactly right, beginning with the inexactness of the writing. The critic's precise formulation synchs up, makes coincident, the sense that the novel is a product of modern literature (the novel is *a* creation of modern literature) and the sense that it is itself the inception of modern literature, the form that moves literature into modernity proper (the invention of "the species of invention" that is coextensive with the arrival of modern literature as such). Further, this form, as the critic understands it, throws creative writers and creative readers ("requires..." of writers, of readers: could be read either way) back both on their historicity (what's "peculiar to [one's] period") and

[35] The project of national innovation that Emerson calls the search for "new lands, new men, new thoughts." The possibility, that is, is that it is the novel's task to make graspable, of "grasp[ing] after the possible" in a stable and predicable way (Simms, "Preface" [1853] to *The Yemassee* [1835]). The novel thus takes over and re-presents a core problematic of the social system writ-large: the problem of isolating and interpreting newness (the search for new forms of newness, and of form).

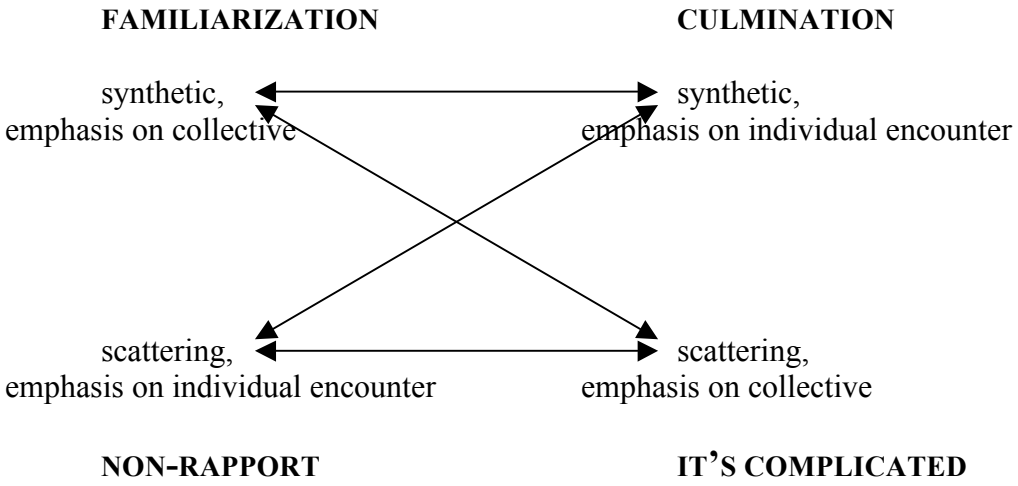
a fuller sense of their capacities ("all the mind ever possessed of original power"). It allows a historically situated individual to observe herself and others with an eye toward the difference-making difference that newness might make. Finally, the critic finds that the novel takes its special project from the special requirements of a functionally differentiated modernity (that is a society in which "every function system determines its own identity" [Luhmann *GG* qtd. Moeller 44]): from, that is, "modern society" understood as under the aspect of "infinite variety." A sufficiently slow-motion reading of this sentence might have been made to yield our entire conceptual apparatus.

This section will focus, if briefly (because this matter in particular will receive clarification through exemplification in the Introduction's next part, the reading of Howells), on the relationship between the modern novel and "modern society" that the critic suggestively calls "body[ing] forth." In my model, literary "bodying forth" will have a special relationship to historical bodies (and their thrusty movements to and fro). The nineteenth century's novel-system, and especially its system of genre-attachments, that is, will be seen to bear upon, and be borne upon in turn, by the nineteenth century's coevolving erotic system, its system of love attachments.[36]

Now we have the conceptual hardware in place to give a full explication of the idea of "sociopoetic rhyme" that I'll use to make the connection between the two functionally differentiated social systems that interest me, the novelistic and the erotic. As we've seen, the novel arrives at a sense of its operative closure and systematic self-organization by exfoliating its central paradox into four strategic—discrete, but systematically related—formal possibilities. I

[36] On social evolution of love attachments, see Luhmann, *Love as Passion* (1986) and Giddens, *Transformation of Intimacy* (1992). Their specific claims will be taken up in the chapters of this study.

submit, without here proving,[37] that we might observe the system of nineteenth-century erotic system (as emphatically different from, but also latent within, our own as the nineteenth-century's genre-system is from that of the contemporary novel) filling itself out in much the same way: an erotics of familiarization, an erotics of culmination, an erotics of transgression and complication, and an erotics of non-rapport.[38]



The possibility of the recurrence of a homologous conceptual structure across relatively autonomous subsystems, I believe, is meaningful. Such meaning is what I intend to indicate by the concept of sociopoetic rhyme: the way, that is, in a functionally differentiated social system (a "system that refrains from imposing a common pattern of difference on the subsystems" [Luhmann *GG* qtd. Moeller 46])—one in which function systems are "equal in regard to their inequality" (qtd. Moeller 45)—interfunctional affinities can be marked, can co-reinforce, and can

[37] Since, as we'll see, it's a matter of experience, of what Raymond Williams calls "structures of experience," the point has to be experienced, not just argued. We can set it up here but the proving-it-by-feeling-it will have to come in the chapters. In this way, we might regard my intervention as "experimental" in a double sense: (1) taking some chances, with a sort of sexual undertone, as well as (2) the slightly older sense of something that must be experienced (like Puritan talk of "experimental" religion: not simply abstract/dogmatic but spirituality as felt, as experienced).

[38] Non-rapport is a Lacanian term, intending to capture the disconnection that plagues all relationships—especially erotic ones—, and to mark the creative strategies of assuaging this inevitable disjunction that such relationships call into being. Lacan raises the notion to a pitch in Seminar XX.

open one another up for smart inspection. We feel such affinities in "dissolved in practice," though they are not much part of articulate ideological structures (what Raymond Williams dubs "structures of feeling," but that we, with Ed White [*Backcountry* 2005], might better name "feelings for structure," for the striations of the systems of that compose social life). This is a nonhierarchical mechanism of interaction amongst the systems. Neither subsystem is more primary than the other (as in dogmatic theoretical models, including that of a "political unconscious"), nor is the nineteenth-century political system (defined, perhaps, by its own fourfold: democracy, republicanism, anarchy, liberal individualism[39]) more primary.

The systematic production of sociopoetic rhymes of this sort, structural rhymes, is part of the modern world insofar as it is modern. It's the rhymes between the erotic and the novelistic to which this project will lend its ear, but not because they are the only ones singing duets. So lending, I'd like to consciously place myself in the tradition of Leslie Fiedler (himself, likely half-consciously, probably knowing but also provocatively forgetting, placeable in a tradition of novel criticism and novel theory that flourishes in the nineteenth century), who finds the delineation of "modern love," of amorous couplehood, to be the thematic center of the novel form. Or Leo Bersani, who rarely finds himself cohabiting a tradition with Fiedler, but who claims in *The Freudian Body* (1986) that "art interprets the sexual by repeating it as perceivable forms" (111), and who makes the point by reading realist novels. Or Alain Badiou, who locates the novel at the intersection of two of his four truth procedures: art and love. No accident, then, for a reader so keyed, that the novel evolves alongside, buttressing and being buttressed by, what one nineteenth-century reviewer calls "modern love, or love after Goethe" (*International Review*

[39] Here, communism is generated as a "compound" term. But there is no space for monarchy, for instance, or fascism, even as composite terms… because these are not in truth nineteenth-century political forms. From here we might float the notion that this dissertation is a kind of prequel to Jameson's study of "the modernist as fascist" (1979).

1878), and what the systems theorist Niklas Luhmann calls "love around 1800" in a book that reads a lot of novels (*Love as Passion* 43).

If novels (pace Lukács) tend to "objectivate" or "thematize" their form on the level of content (in order to reflect, and reflect on, their form and the dissonances that occasion it), our concern with the sorts of erotic renderings that different types of novels tend to give is a heuristic device. Something, that is, that allows the project a kind of internal coherence by thematizing the novel's own thematizations of its formal machinations. My four core forms thus find themselves thematized in four core erotics; each of these genres, in order to organize its observations of itself and its innovations, evolves an erotics. Sentimental familiarization; consummation in the bildungsroman; gothic incest and (more generally) transgressive and (more generally still) complicated sex; realist non-rapport. With this, we find ourselves to have arrived at a version of the Fiedler hypothesis for a post-seventies theoretical world and a post-eighties canon: one that finds the relationship between sex and form to be strange but vital for novelistic discourse in America across the nineteenth century.

If, however, we accept the premises of the concept of sociopoetic rhyme (admittedly, they are complex premises—namely, that an autopoietic society has an internal poetics of its own—and acceptance is not easy), this project's systemization of the nineteenth-century novel might not be felt to be built on the back of interesting and very queer relationships, but in fact to be a radical contribution to the history of sexuality (understood not simply as a history of categories and identities, but of shareable moods). This project tries out a vocabulary for the sexual system prior to its late-nineteenth-century transformation, a transformation that is keyed to the emergence of exclusive categories of sexual identity,—a vocabulary assembling itself out

of an alphabet of another sort.[40] Its elements are other than our contemporary structures of erotic identity; instead they are sexy sorts of moods, improvised principles of attachment. Nineteenth-century sex, unlike sex after 1890, is not a matter of antinormative versus normative, abnormal versus normal identities (normality is owed no place in our scheme). As in the case of the novel, critics can profit by allowing the binaries to "open out." For "queer," like "creative" or "novel," poses the challenge of opening and of holding open the space for unexpected sorts of difference-making differences, and for making their appreciation meaningful. Love and the novel form, in America, in the nineteenth century, find in one another rich resources for building meaning out of these differences, even if they don't do it explicitly.

II The Link Is a Curious Animal

"It would be far easier," explains Moses Coit Tyler, Professor of English at the University of Michigan and author of the first comprehensive history of American literature (*History of American Literature* [1878]), "to write a history of literature without illustrative quotations than with them." He continues:

> But in the service of his art, the true literary man can never think of his own ease as an offset to the pleasure of doing his work well; and for one, I do not see how a history of literature can be well done, or of much use, without the frequent verification and illustration of its statements by expertly chosen examples from the authors under study (viii).

This pronouncement supplies the impetus for the next section of this Introduction, which will treat a novel by one of Tyler's contemporaries, William Dean Howells, *A Chance Acquaintance* (1873). While there may be something more of the professional than the "true literary man"

[40] For two perceptive and provocative historicist approaches to the historiographical challenge of nineteenth-century sex, of sex before sexuality, which are both quite different from my homology-based theoretical model, see Stephen Shapiro's "Sexuality: An Early American Mystery" (2003) and Christopher Looby, "Strange Sensations" (2011).

about the professor's mandate (its basic images: a person who means to do his job well; a product that is to be used and useful; the bourgeois sacrifice of personal comfort to one's active capacity for expertise), in our attempt to model the nineteenth-century literary field according to its own distinctive if inexplicit critical impulses, we ought follow Tyler's lead. We too wish a market for our work.

The lack of examples to this point, however, has not been for reasons of personal ease or professional ineptitude, and least of all for those of avant-garde critical protest. What's now to be exemplified itself is a collection of kinds of exemplification, a coordinated set of coordinate relations between individual phenomena and more general phenomena (gathering, exemplarity, scattering, pluralism). Overhasty critical exemplification, too many illustrative instances before these different forms of literary instancing were themselves approximately understood, would have created obscurities rather than cured them.

The specific form of generic difference with which we'll deal in this part is the one peculiar to but one of the four core forms I've introduced, the realist novel. Why realism, now? Three reasons. First, because we've done the theoretical spade work already: realism's dominant form of difference, pluralism, *other-than*-ness, is quite like the theoretical form of difference we dealt with at length in the first part of Introduction, namely functional differentiation. Below we will define American literary realism as a local realization, as a subsystem of a subsystem of the social system, of the general logic of that system. Functional differentiation—a form of differentiation in which constituent parts are equal in their essential inequality to one another—and what I've called literary pluralism are thus two symmetrical forms of simple difference.[41] They reinforce, one might even say they co-realize, one another by their isomorphism. Second

[41] No accident then that the first real realist novelist and the first real sociologist on the American scene are practical contemporaries—nor that the dates of their births straddle that crucial year, 1839 (Howells: 1837; Lester Frank Ward: 1841).

reason: the literary-critical form that best suits an object like the realist novel—different forms, for reasons that the chapter summaries will make clear, will suit different novelistic objects—is the unitary treatment of a unitary text, the single-essay-length reading of a single text. The simplicity (for the writer) and the accessibility (for the reader) of this critical form is another reason that we'll exemplify first by turning to realism. Finally, the last reason for this choice is the substantiation that early realism will allow us to give to the configuration of erotic moods in which we've declared interest, and which might otherwise seem to be a puzzling or secondary concern. As we'll see, we can't read form in *Chance Acquaintance* without reading sex; and we can't read sex without reading it beside other forms of love and form in the nineteenth-century novel. Early realism thrives in—nearly as—a set of erotic concepts that immediately precede the strict fin-de-siècle sexualization of such concepts.[42] The sorts of love-relationships by which the early realist novel thematically reflects its form and reflects upon that form, by which it shows itself to itself and studies its own possibilities, which as the first part established are erotic concepts, carry a different kind of charge than they will after 1890. That charge can be felt only when one has learned to set beside it other, similarly charged concepts in the pre-1890s erotic schema. How does the sex system look before it is sexualized? What follows is a glimpse.

* *

"To Howells, who noticed everything and who seemed to be ubiquitous, this 'nothing' that happened for others was the best of all. That he made something out of this nothing was the marvel of his mind and art; and moreover the something in question was highly important. It was love, in its American phases, love in the American form; and what, for American readers, was more important?"

Van Wyck Brooks, *New England: Indian Summer* (1940)

"On the bathroom wall I wrote, 'I'd rather argue with you than to be with someone else' / I took a piss and dismissed it like fuck it and went and found somebody else."

Kanye West, "Blame Game" (2011)

[42] For a powerful account of this phenomenon, the sexualization of sex around 1890, by a historicist writing at the top of his powers, see Halperin.

Let's begin with a curious question, a question about which one of Howells's early novels seems to be curious. Might it be *as* queer for a novel to be about a man and woman trying hard but not falling in love *as* it is for a novel to be about two boys who get drunk at a wedding and, for the night at least, succeed in so falling? What if we found a novel interested in asking this question, in testing out this queer equivalence? What would this tell us about the kinds of formal, and the kinds of erotic, questions that the novel form, at a particularly historical moment, can host?

A Chance Acquaintance, let's imagine, is just such a curious novel. It's "curious" like a cultural curio, in a sense congenial to Nancy Bentley's treatment of American literary realism as "museum realism," but also "curious" like a staged (even a sort of stagey) self-exploration through sex. To say simply that Howells's novel tells a new story, however, one that is (for once) about the thrills and tediums of a temporary connection between flirty strangers that finally comes to nothing,[43] is to say way too little—for so saying registers rather poorly the opposite but equally compelling proposition that the story is nothing new, that it is intensely, even achingly, familiar. *Chance*'s calibrated pleasures inhere in part in the conflict it stages between innovation and regularity, between the unconventional and the conventional (which, as Howells himself saw the matter, and described it to Henry James, was something like the novel's motivating conflict: "I conceived the notion of confronting two extreme American types: the conventional and the unconventional" [*Letters* 17]). To notice this, however, is only to notice that the book is productively understood as a novel, according to the definition I gave in part one. That notice doesn't get us closer to the way this text asks its reader to understand its realism, to the way this curious yet careful novel arrives at its curious yet careful self by arriving at some special sense of

[43] This "literary fact" is presented for the reader's inspection when our novel-reading protagonist, Kitty Ellison, remarks that she's never read a story like her own.

the relation it has to other, similar novels. The enterprise of *A Chance Acquaintance*, a phrase we can understand in both artistic and commercial senses, is to organize a relation to other texts of the same incipient genre that is simultaneously a kind of non-relation. It arrives at, and invests with meaning, a nonhierarchical,[44] neutral autonomy that resides in the individual text (an in-itself-ness that is also, with respect to similar texts, an other-than-ness). A sort of liberal individualism of the literary sphere, as we'll see.

The readings that follow will examine the mechanisms by which *A Chance Acquaintance*, so to speak, realizes its realism in the reader's experience, by which it arrives at that in-itself-ness that is simultaneously an other-than-ness. We will watch this novel discover its own "curious" realism in two discrete ways. This we'll do to mark the fact that the realist genre will not be distinguished by a single formal "dominant," a unitary device, which facilitates the process of generic double-attachment. The *two* devices that this reading of *A Chance Acquaintance* will foreground are the novel's curious central symbol—a dog branded with a random, but undisclosed, number on its nose—, and its complex staging of what I'll call its structural dedidacticism—the charged noninstrumentality the book demonstrates by actively citing and just as actively evacuating the scenario of the seduction novel. These devices do not compete with one another in the world of this novel in the same way that this realist novel's uses of these devices flagrantly *do* compete with their functions in their "source" genres—the gothic and the sentimental, respectively—; instead, these devices, more or less independently, corealize the same end and provide the reader two unrelated paths to that end. Because there is no generic

[44] The association between formal realism and the form of democracy has a marked presence in Howells's exposition of the realist ethic and continues to structure critical accounts of realism, even those aware of the genre's complex and non-nonhierarchical relationship to the hegemonization of the bourgeoisie (for instance, Thomas's *American Literary Realism and the Failed Promise of Contract* [1997]).

"dominant," other realist novels will realize their realism, their simple individual in-itself-ness/other-than-ness, in other ways; there's no wrong way to be a realist.[45]

The novel finds a remarkable resource for the formalization of this formal logic in the couple at its core, for whom felt affinity ultimately devolves upon even more deeply felt non-affinity, fundamental non-affinity: what Lacan would call non-rapport. What they share is the discovery of a minimal, meaningless difference—"I do differ from him. I differ from him…" (*CA* 98)[46]—and its power to structure meaningful relationships for both modern lovers and modern novels.

* *

It's tempting to say that nothing happens in *A Chance Acquaintance*—or perhaps that nothing happens three times. Kitty Ellison, herself a "chance acquaintance" of the protagonists

[45] Realism, despite being an indispensible term in any literary-historical appraisal of the nineteenth-century American novel and its system of subforms, is notoriously difficult to define (see Donald Pizer, "The Problem of Definition" [1995]). If we take the realist novel's project to be "a relatively faithful reproduction of everyday life," problems pose themselves at each term: *whose* everyday life will count as "real"? And faithful relative to *what*—to other novelistic subgenres?—to "literary" conventions constructed in a more general way (the romance, say, an extremely broad term, or even more broadly the poetry understood under the sign of the "Romantic")?—to more obviously ideological forms of representation (political discourses, for instance, or religious discourses)? Yes, I think, is the answer to each of these questions; their shifting cultural locations, however, trouble the genre's conceptual coherence and differential functioning. In fact, such a situation could easily make a mockery of the kind of claim I'm pedaling, a claim that the novel, beginning around 1840, "codified" itself as an autonomous mode of cultural production. Not so, however. In fact, I believe it to be one of the recommending features of the critical model on offer to be that, in part because of the theoretical spade work already done, we can convert the slippery problem of realism's definition into a solution with relative ease. Realism becomes visible as a peculiar sort of location within a functionally differentiated social system, a location at which the logic of the social system as a whole reproduces itself or makes itself visible as a special moment within the system. What's real about realism is its *realization* of the logic of the social form as its local formal logic. A realist novel is one that, by configuring its realism however it wishes (by maintaining its own, if often largely implicit, theory of realism and its meaningful discursive differentiation), relates to realism itself and to other novels by a primary relation of "equal inequality." Politics and religion and art differ from one another, in modern life, in the same way, that is to say functionally, that *The Cliff-Dwellers* [1893] and *Leatherwood God* [1916] and *The Golden Bowl* [1905] do: simply they are different. Realism is the generic field in which they can relate to one another primarily via such simple differences.

[46] This line says minimal, meaningless difference, and also stages it: I *do* differ, I differ.

of Howells's first novel, Basil and Isabel March,[47] meets a boy on a boat; this is the story of the ways these two improvise feelings—and then improvise implications for those feelings—and then improvise an ending for feelings and implications—in three steps. First, the man that Kitty meets, *her* chance acquaintance, Miles Arbuton, breaks with his own over-refined attitude and hurls a rock at a distant cliff, impressing some witnesses and baffling himself. Even if the reader does, Arbuton draws no new conclusions about his motives or their meaning; nothing happened but the happening and its (psychological) negation. Second, strolling through a charming quarter of Quebec, Miles steps in front a dog that lunges at Kitty, experiencing for the first time explicitly the salience, but also the strangeness, of his passion for her. Again, a happening and its quick evacuation: by making nothing happen with the dog, Arbuton sees what didn't just then happen (he has already fallen in love). Third, having allowed his passion to wax into a proposal passingly made, Arbuton fails to introduce Kitty to two Boston socialites with whom they cross paths, former acquaintances of his upon whom they chance. On the verge of accepting his offered hand (less because she wants it and more because she can't say clearly why she doesn't), Kitty rejects Arbuton and they part. Another happening and another nothing, and the end. Kitty's chaperons, her cousin and his wife, discuss the affair, come to no conclusions but kiss one another anyway, and the curtain falls.

Nothing happens, then nothing happens, then nothing happens. The novel seems to signal its interest in form not, as formally experimental novels often do, by a kind of flagrance, but instead, negatively, by emptying itself of content. But the "nothing" that has happened in this

[47] In that novel, *Their Wedding Journey* (1872), Basil and Isabel first see Kitty and her cousins near a bridge at Niagara; they subsequently become fast friends, have several mild adventures of the Howells variety, and promise to remain in touch. When, twelve years later, Basil and Isabel return with their children the site of "their wedding journey" in "Niagara Revisited" (1883), the conversation turns to Kitty and her aleatory liaison. We will recur to both of these events, the initial encounter and the later conversation, at different points in what follows. "Niagara Revisted" will be treated at length in this study's Conclusion.

novel seems to bear the same conceptual charge that "boredom" does in the work of George Simmel: it's like overstimulation experienced at an affective distance, its dense emptiness full of shades and textures and indicating the elsewhere where something besides the place is taking place. (In *Chance*, this "elsewhere" has a powerful placeholder: the Kansas where Kitty's abolitionist father has been killed by border ruffians and her mother has died of the sorrow; this border drama, so palpably a Historical Event, and which insists in the reader's experience so strangely, exists in order to throw the nothing that happens into relief by being *not* nothing.) And "happens" too takes on a kind of profundity one is invited to feel in Van Wyck Brooks's perceptive description of the Howells style (quoted as my epigraph, and which features the phrase that this chapter has taken as its title, "love in the American form"). The world represented in *A Chance Acquaintance*, and perhaps "the Howells novel" as such, is a world of chance which accident animates and to which it gives meanings with both lighter ("a bold kind of accident" [*CA* 152]) and quite dark ("the helpless sport of a sinister chance" [*CA* 160]) tints. A world, that is to say, in which lovers and novels happen to "happen together," work out the truth of their contingent affiliations and the consequences of their occasional erotic persuasion, and then part—or sometimes don't.[48] The staying-together is not, in the chance-world, an outcome that is felt to be any less contingent.[49] Howells's is a world that keeps itself in motion by its

[48] When a relationship works out in Howells, it often has the flavor given the central relationship in *A Foregone Conclusion* (the novel that follows *Chance Acquaintance*, in 1875). Three lovers misunderstand one another and themselves together, then share a misunderstanding that forces them apart; years later, two of them find themselves together by pure chance (Howells makes a big point of this) and marry, scarcely able to recall the old third's name.

[49] There exists an opposed reading of Howells and his world, which we don't have time, space, or inclination to explicitly dispute; one finds its dutifully rehearsed in *The Cambridge Companion to the Nineteenth-Century American Novel* (the kind of dutiful rehearsal proper to large-scale critical generalization but not large-scale critical abstraction). This book claims that "Howells's portraits of determinate moral crisis tend toward a kind of transparency, and the problems posed by his narratives are resolved by the preexisting good nature of the character, a moral essence which like sacred text trumps or clarifies experience" (178). Such a reading seems to be nothing more than a generalization of one

recursive romantic glossing of the Luhmannian truth that, in modernity, "whatever happens, engagement has been reconstructed in the context of contingency" (*Observations* [1992] 44).

We can sample this nothing, and this happening, of lovers and novels in a world of chance, by dropping in to the middle of the scene I've invited us to understand as this novel's center: Kitty and Arbuton's stroll together through one of Quebec's charming Old-World streets. The lovers, who are at this moment struggling to know themselves as such, notice that the neighborhood about them is noticing something; they soon discover it is an artist noticing and sketching an improvised artistic structure. It is "a balcony, shut in with green blinds; yet, higher, a weather-worn, wood-colored gallery" topped with a tin dome (*CA* 97) and sitting atop an old roof (literally, he is rendering *stories*). The scene composes "a picturesque confusion of forms which had been, apparently, added from time to time without design, and yet were full of harmony" (*CA* 97). This "unreasonable succession of roofs" (and "stories," though Howells is not so vulgar as to insist upon the punning self-referent) (*CA* 97), collates surfaces on surfaces without depths: surfaces that mean only by their accumulation and their possible referral (not to depths, to the life within them, but) to other surfaces.[50] The roofs and their rendering begin to seem like an internal figure of The Novel, or even *this* novel, which is itself emphatically a "confusion of forms": part travel book, part epistolary novel, part collection of Howells-family anecdotes, part seduction narrative, part "great American novel" (according to one reviewer

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plausible gloss of *The Rise of Silas Lapham*; but, as the rest of this section will attempt to make clear, it doesn't speak in any useful way to a novel like *A Chance Acquaintance*, which features no one of either remarkably good or bad "nature"—excepting only Kitty's father, the abolitionist who dies spectacularly in Kansas before the novel begins, and whose death seems to "mean" vexingly little to the story—and whose characters' encounters, with one another and even with themselves, are marked by intractable opacity rather than transparency. The overwhelming experience of moral experience in *Chance* is of its radical indeterminacy ("So much was clear to him, but what he was to do was not so plain" [*CA* 15]); neither moral essence nor sacred text shows through.

[50] For a description of critical practices keyed to meaning-makings of this sort, see Best and Marcus.

[*Galaxy* 1873]), and so on. Such a straightforward "reflexive" reading of the figure, however, immediately undercuts itself. It would restore a referent to a model of reference without stable referent—of finely textured surfaces that refer to or involve *only* other finely textured surfaces.

As such, our novel must find some way to resituate this internal model of itself in order to siphon off the signified, or the significance, of this flagrant self-signifier. It does so simply by turning successful self-representation into a succession. For next Kitty remarks to Arbuton that the residents, curiously stepping out to have a peek at their artist, "all look as if they had stepped out of stories, and might step back any moment; and these queer little houses: they're just the very places for things to happen in!" (*CA* 98). This exclamation sparks a conversation about a popular novel about nothing—or about happening—, a conversation about novels in which the lovers are groping covertly toward a way to talk about their relationship and its meaning, about the novel state of their hearts. "I'll tell you a book after my own heart: '*Details*,'—just the history of a week in the life of some young people who happen together in an old New-England country-house; nothing extraordinary, little, every-day things told so exquisitely, and all fading naturally away without any particular result," Kitty recounts, "only the full meaning of everything brought out" (*CA* 98). This is an image of the power and the aesthetic appeal ("so exquisite") of a controlled demonstration of people, places, and feelings that simply happen to "happen together," of both beginnings and ends that chance realizes. This is the sort of novelized, eroticized happening that looks a lot like nothing, at least "nothing extraordinary," but that still modestly discovers some new literary-historical way to mean so as to feel "full."

But what is meant by this "full meaning"? Kitty can't rearticulate, in some other form of discourse, the "full meaning of everything" that *Details* carries for her… because this meaning is *in* her reading. It's immanent. It is a meaning that is "full" only for the reader of that novel, a

reader who can then go on to read other novels rich with other details and rich with other meanings that are equally "full" but simply different. Meanings that, using the systems-theoretical vocabulary we've been test-driving, are equal first or foremost in their inequality to one another, are functionally differentiated (that is), and thus can't be rearticulated in a metalanguage, a vocabulary for sharing.

It's tempting for me to stop here, as the conversation dissolves, secure with the model at which I have arrived: a model of the attachment of readers to books of a certain sort (in which they can find a "full" but immanent meaning) that conjugates and clarifies a sort of erotic procedure (temporary configurations of love-and/or-sex that, as Michael J. Colacurcio would say, "last as long as they last" with no particular result beyond their momentarily felt particularity). But to do so would be to miss the way in which the novel not only erects this model of meaning, but also in fact enacts it, doubly actually, once in the sentimental mode and once in the gothic.

As it happens, after the artist's "stories" and the Boston-authored *Details*, there is a third instance of obvious reflexivity in this chapter. Continuing their walk, the couple enters a slightly diceyer section of the neighborhood that features cooper shops and guard dogs and a "curious" little building the sign of which reads "*Academie commerciale et litteraire*"—a school of commerce and literature.[51] Just as Kitty tries out a witty comment on Arbuton—"What a curious place for a seat of learning! What do you suppose is the connection between cooper-shops and an academical education, Mr. Arbuton?" (*CA* 102)—she is attacked by a large dog that leaps out from an adjacent shop. Arbuton shields her and subdues the dog until its owner, a cooper, rushes out, brands the dog across the nose with a red-hot iron he'd been using to mark his casks with

[51] In fact, this is an actual Quebecoise institution that opens, incidentally, in 1840.

their volume, and curses the English sea-captain who cursed him with caring for the dog many years ago. The scene, it seems, can't help drifting toward the gothic in its rendering of the "hideous brute" and the fables of curses and foreign captains that attaches to it. It is as if the novel were, at this moment, allowing itself to be flooded (in the guise of the gothic) by the aura of those mass-market genres it has been violently repressing (genres born of the dark conjunction of the *litteraire* and the *commerciale*). Arbuton's lunge toward and tenacious hanging-on to Kitty to protect her against this sensational onslaught functions as a kind of literalizing of this repression. If we readers can, like Arbuton does, simply stick to Kitty and worry about keeping her inviolate, we will discover something powerfully new about ourselves and our potential, this novel whispers reassuringly to itself while the gothic barks.

The dog, branded on the nose with a number the novel never discovers, comes to function as a symbol without a signified, one that flaunts the fact that it bears some meaning without suggesting that meaning in any obvious way.[52] This dog is like the curious kind of word that has what Roman Jakobson calls "negative inner form." This class of words, as Jakobson suggests, "so to speak seek their meaning" (qtd. Steiner 156); they advertise a meaning and defer that meaning's apprehension simultaneously. Such realist symbols require realization, both in the plot and by the reader. Like the pine shaving by which Tom and Irene (mis)imagine together the meaning of their relations with one another in *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, the cooper's dog signals and symbolizes, for Kitty and Arbuton, but differently for each, the meaning of their curious link. The branded dog, like the pine shaving—because of the metaphorical vehicle's felt

[52] The flaunting without suggesting thing is typical of the realist symbol. Gothic symbolics *tend* not to work quite in this way (I'll advance without investing much in the proposition that they tend to suffer from, and thrive by, a kind of excessive literalization of the signified in the signifier [and vice versa]). And signal sentimental images—think of Little Eva's excised hair, or "the hidden hand" in the hand of Capitola Black—have a different kind of texture too; they tend, pace the form's emphasis on nonsubordinatory gathering, to metonymy, a "slippery" logic in which linkages beget linkages.

arbitrariness plus its felt evocativeness—, does this in a wholly immanent way, advertising not only its collation of incongruous meanings but its manifest inequality to anything like the meanings that it is made in the context of the story, and only there, to bear.

The branded dog is a fundamentally different way of representing for the reader the vagaries and vexations of the social link than the one found in Howells's previous book, *Their Wedding Journey* (1872). A brief glance in this direction will throw the matter into sharper relief. This novel tells the story of a recently married couple's honeymoon to Niagara; the couple is Basil and Isabel March, who will recur in several of Howells novels and stories, including *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1890). The Marches meet Kitty and her cousins on this journey. This meeting, itself a chance acquaintance, is staged in a way that shows to advantage the novelist's craftsmanship: it happens to happen at a rickety bridge. As such the scene takes its power from the pleasant legibility of its central symbol (the shaky bridge: a rendering of the thrill plus the anxiety of making chance acquaintances, of binding oneself to the friends that a contingent world can make).[53] *A Chance Acquaintance*'s branded dog, however, despite demonstrating its power to catalyze the imagination and the experience of situated meaning, both in the story and for the reader, signifies not by its artful alignment of vehicle and tenor, but because it provides a sort of "resonate" shorthand for all involved (including the reader) for the curious relations between densely emplotted characters and feelings and places.[54] Such a signifier, one possessed of such "negative inner form," finds its special mode of significance through its capacity to condense, in

[53] Indeed, it's tempting to read a wedding journey to Niagara in terms of the art of appropriateness as well: "taking the plunge" into marriage. The first recorded use of this phrase in this way is in 1876, but the phrase is likely to be in colloquial circulation before it makes its way into print, of course. Quebec, in *Chance*, however, while charmingly rendered, emanates no such obvious allegorical atmosphere.

[54] On the function sorts of "resonate" things in the "aesthetic economy" of *Silas Lapham*, see Browne.

a way that resists concise rearticulation, the "full meaning" that becomes possible in the intense emplotment of people and passions that just so happen to "happen together."

As this dog winds its separate ways through our lovers' minds, they are able to experience, and not exactly unpleasantly, their mutual enigmaticalness, their active non-rapport (he looks at her "with a glance which she knew not how to interpret" [*CA* 105]; she chuckles to herself—"a sudden, inexplicable laugh, interrupted and renewed as some ludicrous image seemed to come and go in her mind" [*CA* 105]). The novel has found a way to make immanently meaning*ful* without delegating a meaning *to* a phrase accidentally uttered near its beginning and since then providing characters and readers with a provisional orientation (after all, it's spoken by a driver): "The link is a curious animal, miss" (*CA* 28). As it turns out, in this later incident, a curious animal symbolically *is* the link, the social link: the unbinding tie that binds chance acquaintances. The creation of such "curious" symbols is one efficient way that the realist novel can organize for its reader an attachment of the in-itself and other-than variety. The realist symbol signifies only for its readers and only in the medium of their reading, the plot; it contains, like James's golden bowl (or Kanye's, of my second epigraph to this section), only what's been put into it.

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One of the remarkable features of this novel is that it arrives, before its reader's eyes, at its autonomy in two autonomous ways. The branded dog, this realist symbol, an object that resonates without quite resolving itself in either the world of the plot or the mind of the reader, is one. It is one that italicizes the "happens" of "nothing happens": an experience of the contingency of social life and the social link as it is animated by, as is Kitty's witticism preceding the attack, curiosity and contiguity. Further, this "hideous brute" and the texture of the

novel near him is tinged with the gothic (foreign sea-captains and violent curses), a genre that (as I've broached, and will elaborate) is one, not only in its themes and semes but also in its forms of genre-attachment, of rich irruption, of the constructive breaking-up larger structures; such is precisely the threat posed and overcome in the curious incident of the branded dog. The other device that we'll examine is keyed to the "nothing" of "nothing happens," as well as to realism's other proximate genre, the sentimental, one that tends toward sharing and stabilization. Despite *A Chance Acquaintance*'s above-cited emphasis on and interest in the novelty of its erotic predicament, the novel can also look a lot like yet another re-rehearsal of The Novel's primal scene of love and courtship. *A Chance Acquaintance* looks from a certain angle to be nothing more than a seduction novel with a Victorian twist: the coquette isn't quite one and neither is the rake a rake… and no one wants to fuck much anyway. The story, so seen, becomes what we can call a decommissioned didactic novel, a dedidactic novel, which teaches the lesson that a novel can teach no lessons and still be meaningful.[55] This second, postsentimental path to individual novelistic autonomy will be our topic now.

One way to begin to excavate the fossilized seduction novel buried in *A Chance Acquaintance* is to notice that Kitty, for all her unconventionality and all her unaccustomedness—part of the fun of reading the book is believing that Kitty verily is what Mrs. Ellison once exclaims, a pretty queer creature ("How queer you are, Kitty!" [*CA* 162])—, is not only a novel figure but also, paradoxically, a familiar one. The novel is as keen to present its novelness via Kitty as it is to qualify the same. The reader, I mean, takes a novel-spanning

[55] The lesson isn't even: don't take the plunge if you aren't really in love, as both the Ellison's conversation coda to the novel itself and the Marches' later reconsideration of Kitty's story in "Niagara Revisited" are at pains to demonstrate. Dedidactics, which teaches no lesson, is much different from the tradition of "negative instruction," as recently explored by Carrie Hyde, which does teach a positive moral lesson *via negativa*, and which plays a central but very different role in nineteenth-century American fiction.

pleasure from simultaneously endorsing Kitty's view of herself as "altogether irregular and unauthorized and unjustifiable" (*CA* 88), *and* half-indulging (but only half-…) the cynical appraisal to which he's been dared. Namely, that this is just the kind of thing a coquette, a heavily clichéd and intensely conventional figure, would say. And in fact, Kitty is a kind of coquette, at least in the technical, sociological sense of Georg Simmel: "The coquette," he writes, "brings her attractiveness to its climax by letting the man hang on the verge of getting what he wants without letting it become too serious for herself; her conduct swings between yes and no, without stopping at one or the other" ("Sociability" 134-135).

Hardly a swinger, Kitty nevertheless hesitates between a yes and a no to Arbuton's obvious affection, and Howells spins a novel story out of this hesitation. It is precisely Kitty's toggling yes-no that sustains the novel's rich nothing while it happens, animating not only Arbuton's interest but the reader's as well. The narrator collaborates with Kitty, who, to herself as well as to the reader, blackboxes her own inclinations and motivations. Kitty strings herself along no less than she does Arbuton, it seems. She is remarkably unwilling to acquaint herself with and inhabit the structure of her own desires, from the moment she takes Arbuton's arm "*as if* unconsciously" (we can't know whether she didn't know, the novel implies) to her vexed, electric admission to Mrs. Ellison about the opacity of her experience in love: "It's very hard to tell what has really happened the last two weeks… it isn't a story, and I don't know whether I like him" (*CA* 125-126). A significant measure of the pleasure of loving Kitty (for Arbuton), and reading the novel that watches him do so (for the reader), resides in its compelling testimony to the contingencies and opacities of another's desire, as well as its even more radical testimony to the fact that these contingencies and opacities are often felt as such by that other too.

We can quickly sketch something of *A Chance Acquaintance*'s sensitive and subversive engagement with the seduction tradition by noticing how Hannah Foster's *The Coquette* (1797), a monument of nineteenth-century seduction, operates as what Kristeva would call a "horizontal intertext." *The Coquette* (which is in print effectively until *Chance* is: 1870) tells the story of Eliza Wharton, left to her own devices to work out an erotic destiny by a fiance's early death as well as the absence of her parents. While under the care of a couple that seems to enjoy (much in the manner of *Chance*'s Ellisons) setting up their charge with suitors, Eliza dates pretty successfully (no surprise: like Kitty, she's well-read, pretty, and witty)… until she fucks a rake and dies. *The Coquette*'s post-conjugal world is encoded in *Chance* not only by its literal location in Howells's career and the novel-world that spawned it, after a *Wedding Journey*, but also in the novel's light allegorization of this career-location through the wedding procession featured in its first chapter.[56] Expanding our grammar of coquetry beyond that explicitly featured in *The Coquette*, we notice that Kitty is flashily adorned in fashionable garments tastefully altered for her—a circumstance forced recurrently upon the reader's attention because she must borrow her attire from Mrs. Ellison (and discuss this borrowing). And a circumstance our text, if playfully, calls "perpetual masquerade" with mock-coquettish overtones (*CA* 112). Kitty perhaps reads little like a coquette—though the reader can hardly help but notice how many of what Roland Barthes might call the semes of coquettery are accumulating to her. At a certain point, the reader almost feels she must insist that the text is getting itself wrong: this is no coquette! But such, of course, is exactly the exclamation *The Coquette* requires of its reader.

[56] A wedding that is marked (if gently) as somehow "primordial" by its Native American participants. In fact, it is while witnessing this procession that Kitty makes her accidental remark to Arbuton, which evokes *The Coquette* as well: she points out to drunk boys and calls them "disappointed lovers." "Disappointment" is the name of a poem by Eliza Wharton's real life prototype, Elizabeth Whitman.

The point I wish to score by this hurried rehearsal of intertextual correspondences is not that *A Chance Acquaintance* "really is" a nouveau seduction narrative. The point is that *Chance* rather sensitively departs formally from this tradition, particularly insofar as the tradition holds a didactic charge. Howells wishes not to teach innovative lessons or lessons in an innovative way, but to write a novel in which no lessons are offered so that other, immanent satisfactions can be felt to arrive in their place.[57]

A Chance Acquaintance studies the reader's experience of feeling herself near a novel of courtship and marriage by the character of Mrs. Ellison, who actively cultivates the romantic alliance of Kitty and Arbuton for the simple reason that this seems to be the only story she knows to make of their happening together. Fanny's dim intuition is that that this is the only course for events to run. When they really do so, however, she finds herself—and finds Kitty—incapable of the emotions she thought they had coming; she's confused and anxious when the proposal she's plotted and schemed for takes place for real. And as a result, Fanny learns to tell a new kind of story: one that recurs not to received narratives and their patterns of thought and experience, but that confronts her both with the truth of human desire (namely, that it bottoms-out not in rape and/or marriage [as in seduction fiction], but more basically in frustration, disappointment, and non-rapport), and also the dense opacity of her own self-experience. It's like this: "[t]he Ellisons had already been [to Lorette], but Mr. Arbuton had not, and it was from a dim motive of politeness towards him that Mrs. Ellison chose the excursion; this did not prevent her from wondering aloud afterwards, from time to time," as she retells Kitty's story (which ends in her dumping Arbuton at Lorette), "why she had chosen it" (*CA* 146).

[57] The novel thus neatly particularizes Winfried Flück's argument that the realist novel thrives by its displacement of parental guidelines for its readers; the realist novel is not a "guardian figure" but a "conversational partner." And the pleasures proper to good conversation, as opposed to sermons or gossips or talking-cures, are strictly immanent to conversation, this one or the next.

Kitty's story is less like a repurposed sentimental novel than a *de*purposed one.[58] Kitty neither profits (visibly: she doesn't die or, as reformed coquettes must, marry "the right one" later) nor loses by what happens with her "chance acquaintance," by the nothing that happens to happen with this man. Her story simply is a charming tale about a temporarily meaningful (meaningful because temporary) emotional co-propping that is neither good nor bad, exactly, but compelling nonetheless. Without *telos* but not without closure. Meaningless in a meaningful way. Once again, then, though very differently from the branded dog thing, the text has organized for its reader an experience of a "full meaning" that is, strictly speaking, an immanent meaning: a meaning that resides not in the lessons the novel can teach, the lesson (pace *Pamela* [1740]) that "virtue" is to be "rewarded," but rather the lesson that virtue is vexing and relationships more or less "happen" until they don't. The only lesson offered is that the story of

[58] One way to clarify what Miles and Kitty have is to clarify what it isn't: namely, a story like the one told in another beacon of early realism, John De Forest's *Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty* (1867). De Forest's novel, like Howells's, features neatly-realized regional characters, including the titular heroine, a southern lady transplanted in the bloom of youth to New England, who falls in love (contrary to her preference) with one (rather rakish) Union solider, Colonel Carter, and then another (chaste, emphatically wholesome, and yet made wise by war experiences), Captain Colburne. If, as we established in section four of part one above, one can plausibly take The Task of The Novel to be the delineation of a couple, De Forest intuits this and savvily puts his novel and its couple to the job of finding, though their sex organs, an "imaginary solution of a real problem"—namely, postbellum national reconsolidation. Howells is not only aware of De Forest's project, but is its most important contemporary critical champion; and at least one contemporary reviewer thought of the two side by side, citing *A Chance Acquaintance* as a major step toward the production of "the great American novel" (a phrase that De Forest popularized).

And *Chance*, like *Ravenel*, imagines couplehood to be the thematic heart of the novel, so to speak. However, this novel's is a couplehood without *telos*; its emphasis, against that of De Forest (whose war-"chastened" realist prose, in Edmund Wilson's famous characterization, nevertheless features a lot of talk about Providence and Progress, the only hope one has for making meaning out of fields full of dead soldiers and the human situations that produce them), is on the emergence of immanent meaning through contingent encounter. "The full meaning of everything," in *A Chance Acquaintance*, coalesces momentarily but then dissolves before codifying itself in extraliterary discourse. Not because it has to—clearly, a successful interregional courtship like the one it hosts could have borne an important politico-symbolical meaning, *Ravenel*-style—, but because this is how the heard under realism really is, and, by implication, how real realist novels really are. The power of realism done in the Howells manner lies in its capacity to be a genre in which texts can be about this kind of "curious" or immanently "interesting" but also aleatory event, this chance acquaintance, and nothing more. And other realist novels can be about other complex relationships, structured differently, rich with details of their very own (like *Details*).

these vexations and this happening must be, as it is "from time to time" for Fanny Ellison, its own only reward. This reward is to be shared spontaneously, conversationally, on occasion with new chance acquaintances, or old ones.

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We have now described two very different, indeed two independent, trajectories by which a realist novel arrives at its generic realism: a creative in-itself-ness that is also a creative other-than-ness. Multiform intergeneric affiliations and antagonisms remain possible and practically required; but as we've seen, such energies (toward the gothic, toward the sentimental) are directed at texts from proximate subgenres and with opposed protocols of attachment. The curious realist sort of generic double-attachment, of genre-belonging through specially configured readerly pleasures, tends to find itself ratified in what we might call the realist couple. These are lovers who, like the novels in which they thrive, take their meaning from the felt contingency of their coupling, from their happening to "happen together" and their capacity to feel themselves (soon, perhaps) happening apart.

This structure is never clearer than in Kitty and Arbuton's early moments together. Seeing two drunken boys trailing a wedding arm-in-arm, Kitty takes Arbuton's "as if unconsciously" and says, "Those are a pair of disappointed lovers, I suppose" (*CA* 14). "Those are a pair of disappointed lovers, I suppose": the line lurches toward an awkward rhyme: the sort of purely formal, neatly immanent, readerly pleasure that binds beginning to end.[59] There's

[59] And the novel likewise lurches toward this: what begins in "…disappointed lovers…" ends with disappointed lovers. This is no simple instance, I think, of novelistic "foreshadowing"—Howells's avowal of his art's capacity, and his commodity's, to turn accident into something meaningful by integrating it into a larger structure, to let it hold its randomly rung note until another happens to be stuck and harmonize. This is also a registering of the new electrical charge of the modern social form, and a registering of the source of that charge in thrills and disappointments of acquaintance, the chances daily opened to us by acquaintance.

something of what the formalist Shklovsky would call "the sweetness of verse on our lips" in Kitty's accidental wit and its relation to the contingent social world (qtd. Steiner 151),[60] the world of chance and non-relation, that sits back of it (witty conversation, after all, Simmel posits, is the purest distillation of the social link). Kitty's clever sally has a poetry that folds in upon itself and gives its pleasure by its improvised internal harmony. So doing, it makes lovely disappointment into something sweet and in itself complete, like the novel that it occasions.

III Getting Along

The task of this Introduction has been to motivate, in a way that would be equally accessible to Americanist critics and to theorists of the novel, the claim that some of the novel's nineteenth-century innovations of form and social function are made possible by its development of a certain shorthand for proven solutions to its central conceptual instability. The four core forms that that section highlighted are the rudiments of this shorthand system: the sentimental novel, the bildungsroman, the gothic novel, and the realist novel. A society newly synced to a news cycle and a fashion system begins to feels the historically new need for the serial production of novelties, the regular replacement of redundant information with new information. And because "no one knows where the novelty of the new comes from and how large a supply of it exists" (Luhmann *Reality* [1996] 21), the novel can come to function as a laboratory for the systematic experimentation with and evaluation of socially situated newness (new people, new

[60] "Sweetness at the lips": the appeal of this phrase is its subtle registering that sexual pleasure and aesthetic pleasure take place at the same place—or can at certain moments; such momentary and meaningful coincidence of autonomous processes, their cohappening independent of one another but not without bearing on one another meaningfully, is something like what I have been calling sociopoetic rhyme.

plots, new feelings, new tinctures and relations).[61] Its genre-system in turn becomes a cleared cultural space in which readers can observe, in an implicitly organized manner, what new sorts of difference-making make a difference, and what sorts don't. The novel in nineteenth-century America is animated by the impulse to explore new forms of newness and of form, and is defined by the diversity, the coherence, and the internal reticulation of its responses to that task.

This is an abstract claim and not a new one (for as we saw in part one above, the appropriateness of the novel's name has been a tenet of novel criticism since the nineteenth century). Nevertheless this claim is one that has not before been brought to bear on the problem of the novel's subforms, their special structures and the problem of their coordinate interrelations (the genre-system), on the scale or in the style of the present project: not by Americanists, not by novel critics. At a critical moment after the critic's image of the nineteenth-century novel has been remarkably enriched (the new canon) and our methods for processing it have enriched themselves in turn (improved and often electronic access to rare material; database methodologies; the impetus the aesthetic turn gives to our sampling of varied theoretical vocabularies), my project can look like an intervention in the novel form's own manner: both a lively consolidation of an ongoing critical dialogue and an early word in a novel conversation.

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As it adjusts to the technical conditions of popularity, around 1840, the market for novels starts to look to observers with a professional interest in its observation like a squasher and a mess.[62] To later ages of professional observers, the mess discloses the form of rise, a form that

[61] The novel thus represents the cultural location at which "the new" can exist in and for itself at a moment when it must, rather than as the mere sign of something else. This is an instance of what Althusser would call the "production of the concept."

[62] These technical conditions of popularity we might call, adapting Lewis Mumford, the "technics" of the best-seller: steam-presses and cheaper paper, first of all, but also and unevenly: the "new orientation"

has made a virtue of its adaptation,—from turn-of-the-century periodical critics to Cowie (1948), from Cowie to Davidson (1986), from Davidson to Coleman and Gura (2013). The forms of mess and rise will play their roles together with their opposites, respectively diffusion and the germ ("a mere floating particle" [James, Preface to *Poynton* 119]), in the expressive habits of the novels discussed in this project. None of those four terms, however, strike me as an apt metaphor for a general transformation. Yet I am not willing to concede what I believe Gura's recourse to the term "rise" seem to (*Truth's Ragged* xviii-ix), namely that the new, massive, canon-busted and irruptive real of literary history just runs our formal models "ragged." What I call apt instead is the notion after which Caroline Chesebro' titles her masterwork, a kind of model compendium of models, which it terms "illustrations": *Getting Along* (1855). Around 1840, the novel begins to get along. It manages to manage itself; and this it does by describing logics of belonging that, in a sense, share a subtle and synoptic awareness of their mutuality, their quadriplex reciprocity. Here I propose a new model of how the novel around 1840 models its endemic sensitivity to newness, and to how experimentally it might get along, or belong, with what is no longer new, that is to say with other novels, and other former novelties.

The three chapters that dispense that notion are not arranged chronologically (indeed by our treatment of Howells the discussion already has not been chronological). Nevertheless together they make what I consider an argument that is keyed to a definite moment of literary

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toward rail-transport (Taylor 398); the refinement of the reviewing apparatus (Cohen, *Fabrication of American Literature* [2012]), meaning its practical system of deceits; the intensification of urban life; the invention of comfort (Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort* [2001]), meaning factory-life's other side, leisure… not to speak of literature's content, which these factors, and others, and their other sides, also must prepare and supply! A jumble of categories, this is, on purpose. Many of them do not take place at the same level of reality, which does not inhibit their cooperation. We do well to see in them the snarled, the disorganized "environment" against which the systematicity of the novel "system" finds its relief (on the environment/system binary, see Borch). The first usage of the phrase "popular culture" recorded in the *OED* is 1854, by an Ohio newspaper,—precisely the scene we would imagine as particularly ripe for a keen amalgamation of these factors.

history, one which one writer in it finds others commonly calling "the *Era of the Novel*" (*Biblical Reparatory* [1869]). Analytically, my first allegiance is to the themes, cunning leagues, and indeed the freedoms of this moment, which stretches from roughly 1840 to roughly 1890.[63] Only secondarily does the project relish what it should not be doubted that it does indeed, the deployment of those theoretical terms as this moment demands, inspires, and in practice subjects to all sorts of tests. While this is a synthetic study (extensive, pervasive: I like words like those), it is not a survey, and it would not be responsible to claim that it is a detailed literary history. It aims at a mode of critical definition and appreciation that is not general, but grows more instead of less intense when irregular particulars, the sorts of things that Wai Chee Dimock classes as textual "quirks" (*Through* 80), are examined. Thus its general method is well termed synoptic dissection.[64] A narrator's habit of saying "oh!" and "pshaw," or the ambient negligence that's all about a bachelor's recollection of how an orphan version of himself once took one boyfriend and then another, or the tilt of a villain's grin at his approaching dissolution: it will be in details like these, we'll see, as we have seen with Kitty's *Details*, that the full meaning of everything, in a manner befitting an "old New" country-house (*CA* 98), roosts. I'll lack a lot of tact in the admiration of details like those. The chapters of this project have been structured in such a way that such admirable details and little particulars will emerge into view alongside the terms and conditions of their admiration, and those terms and conditions in turn alongside a knot of others, seeking and mostly finding their places in an embracing and internally braced totality. The

[63] What is invented may be: none of the subgenres of the novel ("Certainly," Fiedler asserts, "no single subgenre of the novel was invented in America" [24], and quibbling the point, though "certainly" possible, would be a distraction for us), but instead the sense of their dramatic interrelation.

[64] Thanks to Jonathan Grossman for this term in which rangy appreciation and detailed glosses collide. Grossman has explained the term to me with reference to the work of critic Christopher Ricks. Hence I draw on the keynote concept of Ricks's *Essays in Appreciation* (1996) in what follows. (And once again, Henry James is recalled: "To appreciate is to appropriate…" [qtd. Cook, Review of *Essays* 558].)

figures of bracing and embracing indeed are something more than a flourish. If "the subject of the novel proper is love and courtship" (*Littell's* [1870]), then it is by working out the permutations and repulsions of this topic, the dramas of getting along, and the finer details of those dramas, that the novel can be said to access the limits of its "proper" subjectivity, the art-form's inner life. Put another way, each of the chapters of this project describes the way in which one logic of love-belonging itself belongs to a logic of genre-belonging.

I have elected to explicate the system by beginning with an image of its end, the discovery of its fourth of four possibilities. The middle section of this Introduction represents the tick of the literary-realist moment, the tock of which will sound in our Conclusion, which mostly concerns the state of early-eighties realism as it declines into a movement anxious to announce its "rise." Certainly it is possible to understand the end of this study to be an end indeed. The whole thing moves from an appreciation of early realist aesthetics and early realist affections, through a host of other linked aesthetics and affections, which are each in their own way not-yet realist, each pining for and among themselves pointing up the place realism will come to fill, toward an enriched appreciation of a few more elaborate, middle-phase instances of the same.

Counteracting in a manner this reading of the project, however, is the rhythm of its build. From Chapter One, on sentimentalism, through the first section of the Conclusion, on James's *Portrait of a Lady* (1881), in which we meet our whole theory precisely narrativized, the reader should find that as she begins to get better at reading the project (more comfortable with its assumptions and what counts as their testing), the project itself becomes harder to read (in its textures more complex, in its hints about carpet-shapes more discreet). It impedes. One by one, the chapters get a just little longer, about five pages each time, and the incremental additions may be taken symbolically to indicate slight increases in intellectual demands they put on the reader.

The effect holds until the moment in which our theory has encountered its own image in its object, James's *Portrait*. This happens in the first section of the conclusion. And the encounter shakes free something. After it we can rush right on to one ending (with Howells), and then another (with Henry Blake Fuller's realist-post-realist gem, *Bertram Cope's Year* [1919]). If this arrangement is not purely perverse (and none but a poor perversity is a pure one), then what it strains to render is the tug of a cluster of fascinations arcing away from realism, a threefold of genre-procedures that enjoy themselves among themselves, and incomplete, that is, in a manner in which realism can enter only by way of a massive reduction, and one which seems to leave the reducer realism little enough in the end to say. Realism and non-rapport, the fourth possibility, is a little later that the other three. The meaning of that lateness expresses precisely a measure of inner distance, or a gulf of difference within itself: realism is equally the most and least consequential moment in the system of genres I describe. It is so that it can be felt as such that realism's treatment has been forked, Introduction and Conclusion.

The first of the three central chapters assesses the significance of the forms and facts of gathering that populate the blockbuster sentimentalism of midcentury. Most salient of these may be such a scene as earns this paraphrase: an orphan is being plighted. The marriage is not merely to the one other who trades her an "I do," but rather to a system of kinship in full exfoliation. As at the end of E.D.E.N. Southworth's novel *The Hidden Hand* (1859), one wedding itself weds other, a phenomenon that I propose to call a complex wedding, with a nod to Elizabeth Freeman. In paraphrase, indeed, one wedding-capped novel weds others, many others. Happy endings, ours jumble, all in, yes all. After amassing banns and like scenes, the chapter toggles to attend to the voice in which they are pitched, the formal device like what the critic Robyn Warhol calls the "engaging narrator," what Maria Sussana Cummins in *The Lamplighter* (1854) calls "the

comfort-carrying voice," and what I will call on occasion the sentimental voice and codependent narrator. Finally the chapter finds an inflection point for this voice in the second novel of the Southern writer Augusta Jane Evans, *Beulah* (1859), a story that craves to be found, in spite of itself, familiar. In it, an ugly orphan dabbles in eclectic philosophy and grows up to marry the town that used to tease her, in the body of the doctor who cares for the bodies that fill it full, indeed who gives its tongues in diagnosis to say, like our effusive narrator, "ah!" The example is not such a good one that it transgresses the code of the gather, the mess, and its device the swallowing voice, the one that is its own echo chamber, and yet I hope it is resonate enough.

The next chapter's gambit is that the formula for the classic bildungsroman is one in which the couple form, an especially nineteenth-century love-configuration, discovers itself coupled to the form of the career. Courtship in the bildungsroman, particularly when it can attain the minimal abstraction of a second go-round (as in Elizabeth Stoddard's *The Morgesons* [1862]), and apprenticeship bring one another to climax inside the individual, whose sense for personal integration ciphers the social disintegration around her. The form can be effectively observed in the negative way, I find: that is, in the various parries it is made to meet over the course of Herman Melville's career. The bildungsroman is twice refused by Melville, on two scales: punctually, in *Redburn* (1849), simultaneously a bildungsroman and its opposite, a break-up novel; and structurally, across the entire novelistic career. Melville absorbs the dilemma or crisis that structures the bildungsroman, a fiction of career coupled with a fiction of coupling, into his career, and resolves it into a constellation of other-than-answers. If the grand distraction of the whale-tale can be set aside, Melville's development as a novelist neatly recapitulates the generic development of the narrative of development, in brief, from captivity narrative (*Typee*) to picaresque (*Omoo*) to epic (*Mardi*) to bildungsroman (*Redburn*); and to this development, it

promptly abuts a set of fading shadow-forms, novels of de-development (*Pierre*), abandonment (the lost novel *The Isle of the Cross*), exile (*Israel Potter*), and existential inconstancy (*The Confidence-Man*). The force of my account moves from the canon of what I call minor Melville, especially *Omoo* (1847), *Redburn*, and *Israel Potter* (1855). What loved to jumble, what relished the gather, under sentimentalism, "the American *eros*" (Fiedler 29 fn), clings to its synthetic tendency in the bildungsroman. But this form renovates the penchant as one toward the exemplary in the strong sense: not messy but consummate execution. The desire for example-like examples expresses itself across Melville's career in the guise of a series of exemplary refusals.

Gothic, then, is the transformation of this synthetic tendency into an aesthetic of dissensus (the philosopher Rancière's term), that is, spunk and disagreement. Gothic too is the lure to think of a dissensus that does not often devolve on individuals. Scattering in its sense marks a snarl of sub-sub- and pseudo-sub- genres and ensembles. The prime interest of this chapter is the four radical iterations of this genre that I call radical: the frontier novel (which presupposes diffuse space); city-mysteries fiction (which presupposes dense space); the historical novel (dense time); and science fiction (diffuse time). The space between these, the scene of gothicisms, is filled by others that cluster about in willy-nilly ways: tales of terror; the regional gothics; the raw-head-and-bloody-bones school; and so on. Time heaves and space heaves, and the physics of the swelling, bursting genre-universe is set out, for one, in Poe's *Eureka* (1848). It is rehearsed at the scale of the room in the final scene from George Thompson's *City Crimes* (1849), where a villain named the Dead Man equals his name, that is to say becomes himself, by exploding. As in the previous two chapters, the belonging concept finds it has arrived only once it can float what a critic would recognize as a "reading," the gloss of a plot. George Lippard's New York trilogy imagines the gothic's will-to-dispersal in a plot that concerning the disbursal

of a massive last will, the scattering past reconstitution of one estate's gross capital; hence it imagines the clusters and schemes-counter-schemes, vexed and very uneven feats of willing, made concrete in oaths like "I do" or "I will," that attend such an intention. Across the trilogy, a motif of formlessness formalizes itself; then it dissolves itself back into merely another motif: formless indeed. The thrills and confusions of saying that "indeed" bind up with what it means to say the gothic scatters.

It is realism we get back to in the end, Howells and James. The realist novel is an end it self; it is the end toward which a system tends; realism finds itself split between these two alternatives, which eye one another like lovers in James across a gulf of difference. But in the very end, it will be a chapter in Henry Blake Fuller's late novel *Bertram Cope's Year* (1919) called "Cope on the Edge of Things," itself a sort of covert sequel to "Howells *or* James?," Fuller's small manifesto for realist non-rapport from 1885, and hence (what else) a repressed one, that takes our attention. Here is a moment that belongs but to itself, belongs at the edge of things. I will have long been striving to describe a system of four belonging-forms: a system that itself long strove and grew elaborate in the description of a form of belonging shared by four forms of belonging: the nineteenth-century novel, in other words. It is on the edge of things with Cope, we find, that our system has become elaborate enough to frame a moment in which it gets along without communication.

CHAPTER ONE

THE ECHO CHAMBER OF SENTIMENTALISM

The funniest thing that I ever saw, Maud Rittenhouse tells herself, is a novel named *Vashti*. "The main object of the writer seems to be to compose a book as entirely different from anything else ever written as possible and I think in that she succeeds" (26), Maud records in a diary entry composed in 1881.[1] The felt novelness of the novel she describes (we feel it in the flight of her superlatives, from the funniest thing in her life—she's sixteen—to the strangest thing ever written—"ever"), however, has little to do with the emphasis on originality and the innovation of new plots, persons, and relationships that literary critics have sometimes associate with the novel form.[2]

> Everybody in the book save one old maid is in love, not a person finds that love reciprocated, everybody dies but two, one the hero, whose 'true love' has died, the other a glorious girl, hopelessly in love with aforesaid hero, nobody gets married, and the book stops without really ending. (26)

The old maid, the true love, the glorious girl: every hero here feels highly aforesaid. Novelness, for the sentimental novel and for the sentimental reader, looks more like the art of novel combination, of creative citation and the repatterning circulation of familiar dilemmas and stock folk, than it does invention or innovation. Maud brings to bristling articulation the theory of sentimental innovation that the rest of this chapter will explore. Maud's theory, and mine, is this: sentimental novels gather. What they prefer is to belong together, to dwell in felt proximity to one another. Let's all have the same things, let's all want the same things: this, whispered, passes

[1] Her full name is Isabella Maud Rittenhouse. Her editor, with her blessing (viii), calls her Maud. Of this fascinating person, this chapter requires that you know no more than is contained in the character-sketch of her that begins Johnetta Jones's "The Cairo of Maud Rittenhouse": "Isabella Maud Rittenhouse was a petite, dark-haired, pug-nosed, vivacious, and artistically inclined member of one of Cairo, Illinois's socially and, at one time, financially prominent families…" (74).

[2] The appropriateness of the novel's name is a common theme of nineteenth-century readers, classic novel theorists, and contemporary critics.

between them. As such, they tell stories about the same—in which, for instance, in *Vashti*, first everyone first piles into love and then piles out of it, into death. The sentimental novel is the sort of thing that gathers, as it does for Maud: a life into a laugh; world history into a loose and confused mood;[3] crisis into montage; and everybody (and nobody) into a fate that they can share.

Such novels are as rich in kinships as they are in clichés; these facts are not only true, but true together. The sentimental novel emerges in the thick of a culture dedicated to "new lands, new men, new thoughts" (Emerson 22), as if to dispute this dedication and each of its objects in turn. It dawns in an age—called by itself "a novel-reading age"—in which, according to Lucien Goldmann, "the social structure, the global character of interhuman relations, tends to disappear from the consciousness of individuals" (43)—that is, an age that thinks itself by reading about its own reading habits. Still, the sentimental novel possesses something close to a conscious intent to conjure back a more capacious sense of interhuman relations, what Wai Chee Dimock calls "togetherness" ("*PR*"), to draw a heart around us all. The domestic novel is a radical reaction to its cultural situation, a vote in favor of the arts of arrangement, clustering, citation, and corroboration. And that, both in content—the orphan finds a family, or a few—and in form—in which styles and plotlines are cribbed and gleefully re-circulated.[4] In a culture struggling to sync itself to a news cycle and a fashion system, to replace the redundant with the new, sentimentalism works inside the novel-system to exploit the power of convention. Interested in gathering, in stocking up on the stock characters and familiar dilemmas of familial structures, in stylistic indiscriminateness no less than the politics of non-discrimination, the sentimental novel

[3] This is what Maud, pleasantly confused about world history and comparative mythology in Cairo, IL sounds like: "I suppose it did me good for it kept me running to the Dictionary or to an encyclopedia to see who Joubert is, or where the 'cheerless temple of Hestia' stands or stood, or to find what 'a wan Alcestis' and 'a desperate Cassandra he had seen at Rome,' indicated" (26).

[4] Here, perhaps, we find Lora Romero's insight into the formal affinity between domesticity and the avant-garde (4).

figures a conservative reaction to a progressive formation: the novel's search for new forms of newness, and of form.

This insight itself is not new, and should not be made to seem new. As Jane Tompkins taught us long ago, we should judge the genre by its own implicit criteria for efficacy rather than our own. And more recently, Heather Love has insisted that certain sorts of characters, queer characters, should be loved according to their desires, including the desire to be left out of our progressive literary histories, rather than the purposes to which we would put them. What follows will yoke these impulses. How might a formal mechanism, a logic of genre-belonging, a style of self-relation through other-relation, also be a love story? Sentimental novels describe and out-carve a space—what Greimas would call a "zone of entanglement"—in which they, instead of clamoring after newness, can gather and can mingle, can jumble and bundle. As if to explore and more fully inhabit these possibilities, they tell stories about lovers, many more lovers than two, doing that.[5]

The plot of *Vashti* will play a scant role in what follows. Its author, Augusta Jane Evans, whose intentions are exotic enough to nonplus Maud and yet intimate enough for her to detail to

[5] Henry James corroborates our insight. His early-career review of Harriet Prescott Spofford's *Azarian* has recently been mined for its keen perceptions, and winnowed of James's dwindling tone, by Dorri Beam in her study of the "highly wrought style" of midcentury women's fiction (154-155). The same might be done with the treatment that Harriet Beecher Stowe receives in James's late career memoir, *A Small Boy and Others* (1913). James recalls the experience of reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a communal rather than an individual one; Stowe's novel "was for no sort of reader as distinct from any other, save indeed for Northern as differing from Southern: it knew the large felicity of gathering in alike the small and the simple and the big and the wise…" James's verb is ours as well: sentimentalism "gathers in"; it makes "alike," both its own many instances and its many readers. Stowe's book exceeds itself as a book and becomes a medium "in which [readers] didn't sit and read and appraise and pass the time, but walked and talked and laughed and cried and, in the manner of which Mrs. Stowe was the irresistible cause, generally conducted themselves." This domestic novel is not remarkable for its ideal nor its realistic images of the home, but because "it simply sat down wherever it lighted upon and made itself, so to speak, at home." It depicts the home in order to make a home, for its reader, for its readers ("thither multitudes flocked afresh"). I'll have us shed James's smugness about the "simplicity" of this sentimental maneuver, and shed as well his sense that Stowe's is a special case, but my claims about the sentimental novel extend only in application his insight.

her diary, however, will play a major one. The third part of what follows will subject Evans's second novel, and her first bestseller, *Beulah* (1859), to ultraformalist examination.[6] This novel is useful to me not because it is distinctive or particularly representative; in fact, it is useful because it is not (Greif 24). *Beulah* is the story of a young orphan who grows into herself through atheism and eclectic philosophy; then she marries her town in the body of its dark and brooding doctor. The most interesting erotic relationship depicted in *Beulah*—indeed, the most erotic one—is the one that transpires between her erotic relationship, her philosophical method, and her bodily ugly. The love these concepts share is one based in structural parallelism, or what Leo Bersani calls "homo-ness" (or "nonidentitarian sameness" ["CLS" 13]). Central to this experience of belonging, which gives an image of its genre-belonging, is the phenomenon I will come to call, in the second section of this chapter, the sentimental voice—the "low, musical tones" that, overtaking what is said, can thrill a heart strangely (*B* 417). Sentimental novels, I'll argue, incant to convene.

Maud is crucial to the chapter for her method: the paraphrase. Paraphrase helps me in two ways. Efficiency is one thing: paraphrase makes many words into few words, many texts (and

[6] A formalist reading of sentimentalism perhaps should pause on its own threshold, in order to glance momentarily at the strange play of shadows that this second term casts across the first. Paradoxically, we can see that what keeps the formalists together, what sustains their allegiances to themselves and their science, and what makes formalism such an effective term, even a rallying cry, is the formlessness of its central term, form. Formalism is not a method but a preference, a kind of vague sense of solidarity, which, variously realizable, must be subsequently suited to its object. Form-ish-ism, is more like it. Formalism requires declension according to its object; in the case of sentimentalism, conformism functions as a formalism. We'll study this proposition, which emphasizes the process of conformity that is important (in different measure) to all genres, at length. Sentimentalism allows this process to migrate within the text itself and the story it tells. Sentimentalism, formalism: for the rest of this chapter, I will insist that these two terms clarify one another, but for just one moment, before they do that, I notice how they don't.

every one of them many-meaninged) transform to one.[7] The second reason is affective. It has to do with the felt charisma of sentimental books, which, like the prophecies of a horoscope column, must be swaddled in abstraction if they are to appear as they really should and really do (to hardcore consumers). Paraphrase lets me preserve some of the reading experience of the sentimental novel—the small, fine, endless and involving incitements that seem to on-lookers incapable of them to be something like delusion. Shamelessly, paraphrase and plot summary will be put to these ends in what follows: to keep it short; to make it shine.[8]

I Gatherings

Sentimentalism is chockablock with cliché. This is one of the most useful of the many clichés that this literature circulates through its criticism. Critical conversation about sentimentalism seems to exceed other conversations about cognate cultural formations, among other ways, in the favoritism it shows for the form of cliché, the familiar phrase that has become a unit of thought and a tool of analysis. Witness the prominence of the phrase "scribbling women," which one feels must be spoken at some early point in the discussion of midcentury sentimentalism, in spite of its tendency to tug the discussion back toward the highbrow/lowbrow framework that Nina Baym has shown to be of no use (*WF* 277).[9] Indeed, a useful way to trace

[7] One of the answers that June Howard gives to the question "What Is Sentimentality?" is: something that wishes to be spoken of in general rather than specific terms (63), which tempts the human inside the literary critic to chirp up.

[8] Fessenbecker is chiefly interested in the "philosophical content" that a paraphrase can make portable (121). I am, like Maud, more reliant on the narrative content a paraphrase can distill and express.

[9] Mine is a presentation of the structure of sentimentalism, of sentimental novels and the sentimental novel, in which intergeneric relations do not, as they often are made to do, slot it in between high-brow literary lit and the low-brow dime gothic: domestic is middle-brow. Economic concerns, of course, play through the sentimental novel, in its themes and styles. Indeed, the thing toward which this chapter will trend, a reading of the prose style of Augusta Jane Evans, admits economic description: it's something

the first major phrase of sentimentalist criticism lies in the shift from its limiting critical employment of the cliché form, for instance in Fred Lewis Pattee's description of the "feminine fifties" (1940), to the final sentence of Baym's *Woman's Fiction* (1978), where a bad cliché ("feminine fifties") is ousted by a more appropriate (because better appropriated) one. Woman's fiction matters, Baym concludes, because it "was important in the great nineteenth-century campaign to make women think better of themselves—a campaign whose object is still not fully achieved—to perceive themselves, in their own language, as beings with an 'immortal destiny'" (*WF* 299). The end, indeed: the form of Baym's insight reminds us that sometimes the most important words in an evolving insight belong to no one in the conversation—belong to no one, in fact, so much as they belong to everyone: "immortal destiny."[10] Such stereotypes and clichés seem to say: this insight is not mine any more than it is others, central as it may be to the story I tell, or the person I am. Sentimentalism hosts a criticism that seems to feel itself (more than most) in its trite-and-true phrases, in the phrases and spaces it primes for rampant circulation.

Second-wave sentimentalism has its gathering mechanisms too. The principle of these is the agreed-upon disagreement that is "the Douglas-Tompkins debate" (Wexler 9). As Laura Wexler demonstrates, the Douglas-Tompkins debate is remarkable not only because its opposition is a forceful one—and one that enforces afresh the fundamental task of the critic,

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like *nouveau riche* allusion addiction plus Southern belle leisure baroque. Nevertheless, the tiered descriptions are drawn from the economic domain, a domain from which the novel-system achieves autonomy and operational closure (if only so as to install a host of new intersystemic "resonances" or homologies, as in the work of Lucien Goldmann). That autonomy is compromised when it is debased into or dosed by the language of class-status stratification. Neither is the novel nor the economy more basic than the other, and understanding them in the same terms boggles the enterprise. Sentimental novels are not interesting because middle-class people read them in their leisure time, any more than *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is interesting because masochists read it while masturbating: surely it's a relevant fact, and one not easily forgotten, but probably not a definitive one.

[10] One thinks, too, of the blurb from the *New York Times Book Review* included on the back of *The Lamplighter*, by Baym or someone who learned her lessons well: "even when we have studied so new a canon as that of American literature, we have until now confronted a reserve room primarily assembled by 'vain man.'"

namely, the valuation of value judgments about art: how to make a negative judgment (as Douglas does, creatively [1977]), or a positive one (as Tompkins does [1985]), or how to query the question itself (as in the hardline historicist response, whose monument is *The Culture of Sentiment* [1992]). The Douglas-Tompkins debate is useful to sentimentalist critics precisely because its central opposition does not run too deep. The debate affirms, beneath its surface ruffles, a comprehensive "agreement" about what readers really read, as Wexler claims (13). In fact, I believe it to be one of the most profound accomplishments of sentimental criticism to have discovered and dwelled within this technique for stabilizing so many professional critics so proximate to the profession's fundamental task: the valuation of value judgment, the allocation of taste, the wide-open question of aesthetic quality. "But is it any good?"—this is a powerful question, and one that it's far harder to raise than sentimentalist critics make it seem.

Sentimental novels gather with one another, they make salient their stereotype swapping, in and as images of gathering. In this section, we will scurry through a sequence of concepts derived from four topoi of sentimental gathering. Doing so, we keep close to the primal scene of the "scribbling women," Maria Susanna Cummins's *The Lamplighter* (1854).

1. A foundational study of the domestic novel, Papashvily's *All the Happy Endings* (1956), presents its object by presenting how it gathers itself in scenes of gathering: spectacles of full-cast kinship, weddings mostly. The handle ("all the happy endings") is a happy one, ill-matched as it is to Papashvily's thesis—which is not that these books end happily, but that their angry middles study the structural injustices of women's social position[11]—, for it proposes that these scenes of wedded togetherness hold these novels together. It's a great title, not because it matches the argument but because it matches the way the books inside it match one another. This represents a significant intervention in a critical climate in which the man who had previously

[11] This is a dynamic more fully explored in Susan K. Harris, though beneath a blander title.

written the book on the sentimental novel (Brown [1940]) remarks, having first assured himself the obligatory reference to "the tribe of scribbling females," that "the only thing that holds most sentimental novels together is their binding" (124), and most other critics held themselves too aloof to test even this hypothesis. When a reader attends a wedding in a sentimental novel, the reader never simply attends *that* wedding. (Indeed, one might feel each moment in a sentimental novel to be married to each other one, all vowing together to end with a wedding, a wedding that weds the text to others of its kind.)

Cindy Weinstein insists that, "because sentimentalism demands that its novels conclude in marriage," "one of the most complex issues taken up by sentimental fiction is the marriage relation" ("S" 212)—a relation that remained very much in the flux of its modernization.[12] In a sentimental novel, marriage is simply not about two people and their precarious commitment to one another—other novelistic subgenres set a still stronger emphasis on that sort of insular couplehood, like the bildungsroman—but instead about the process of erotic familiarization, about integration into a system of kinship ("loving everyone, for Gerty, doesn't mean loving anyone less" [*FKS* 59]).[13] Desire in the sentimental novel is something massive.

This phenomenon, which is as much more about a novel marrying other novels than it is about two characters trading vows, may merit a name more redolent than "happy ending." I am not above pronouncing one. Drawing on the sentence from Weinstein cited just above, and drawing too on the early work of Elizabeth Freeman, let's refer to such ceremonies, these orgies of orphan integration and family-spanning multi-marriages, as "complex weddings." The truth that these affiliation-dramas tell is of the possible primacy of the wedding over the marriage, the

[12] The 1850s is a moment characterized by what one Foucaultian historian calls "multiple marriage regimes" (Regan).

[13] See also Dobson 286 fn 19

crowd over the couple, the communal ceremony over the plighting consummation. These ceremonies, and the stories that climax upon them, "dramatize ties altogether outside of, beyond, or even antithetical to couplehood itself" (Freeman 3); they "can call forth social possibility that do not necessarily reconcile with or reduce to the legal construction of marriage as (at various historical moments) heterosexual, adult, domestic, asymmetrically gendered, exogamous, property-based, racially pure, monogamous, and/or indissoluble" (210). *The Lamplighter*, for example, ends not simply with the marriage of its heroine, Gerty. The novel ends instead when that heroine's hyperpure moral guide, Emily, blinded in her youth by Gerty's father (who was once, and I guess still is, Emily's adopted brother), makes good on a life of loving him, and him loving her, by living together, but making no explicit marriage promises (420). This is a love that the entire plot has prepared Emily for, and deepened itself much in so doing—for Emily has heard her lover's voice in the back of Gerty's from their first encounter (54, 57). Being blind, Emily comes to the world through the voices of others. The body that she comes feel at home with is a composite of the world she built previously, beginning in a church that was emptied except for the music of Gerty's voice.

To the extent that reading sentimental novels has an erotics, it is not one anchored in dyadic fidelity, in feats of dual devotion, but the bliss of gregarious indulgence. (A contemporary analogue is the soap opera, which eroticizes the housewife's lonely afternoons, or whoever's, and then multiplies those erotic commitments: one loves to watch not one soap opera but several, not one of which is in truth aesthetically "superior" to any other) An erotics of familiarization—something like the opposite of the estrangement technique made famous by the Russian Formalists—casts the miracles of human interconnection, the most unlikely kinships and experiences (encounters at the limit of credulity), as the stuff of everyday life, the fabric of basic

experience. Instead of saying usual things in unusual ways (a phenomenon Shklovsky sights ceaselessly in a novel like *Tristram Shandy* [Erlich 176-177]), the sentimental novel says unusual things in excessively usual ways, that is, in clichés. Falling in love, facing death, colliding with lost or unimagined kin, being outrageously betrayed (including by oneself): these are not things that isolate and unsettle the individual, in sentimentalism. These are not things that show up as peculiar at all, in fact. This is the stuff of everyday life, everyday experience, or might be.

One thinks of the presentation of bourgeois marriage, before long dissolved into more capacious relations by the plot, made in *Ruth Hall* (1854), in which this formation is most erotic when it is glimpsed in the marriage of unlikely objects that it enables. Married life feels sexy here because, among other things, it admits the unlikely marriage of unlike things, like razors and lace:

> Ruth moved about her apartments in a sort of blissful dream. How odd it seemed, this new freedom, this being one's own mistress. How odd to see that shaving-brush and those razors lying on her toilet table! Then that saucy looking smoking-cap, those slippers and that dressing-gown, those fancy neckties, too, and vests and coats, in unrebuked proximity to her muslins, laces, silks and de laines! Ruth liked it. (*RH* 11)

Ruth likes the way these seem to like one another—"that saucy looking smoking-cap…"—without being like one another (until she comes to dislike that simple liking of the unlike, and wants something unlike it). Resemblance does what it can, and desire does the rest.

Baym intuits as much, and that lends her evocation of the contemporary reader's response to *The Lamplighter* its power: "The contemporary reader of *The Lamplighter* did not interpret the novel; she experienced it. If it worked for her, she put it down inspired—inspired, as our contemporary saying has it, to be all that she could be. But this is not all…" (xxxvi). In clichés that are wonderfully unlikely (in a moment of feminist blasphemy, Baym likens her readers to

none other than the US Army[14]), the reader becomes all she can. But this is not all that she can become: "She became, in the reading of *The Lamplighter*, a lover of reading. Or, if she loved to read, she was confirmed in that love" (xxxvi). Sentimentalism studies this possibility in the body of its typical heroine, who is a raging and a ranging reader.

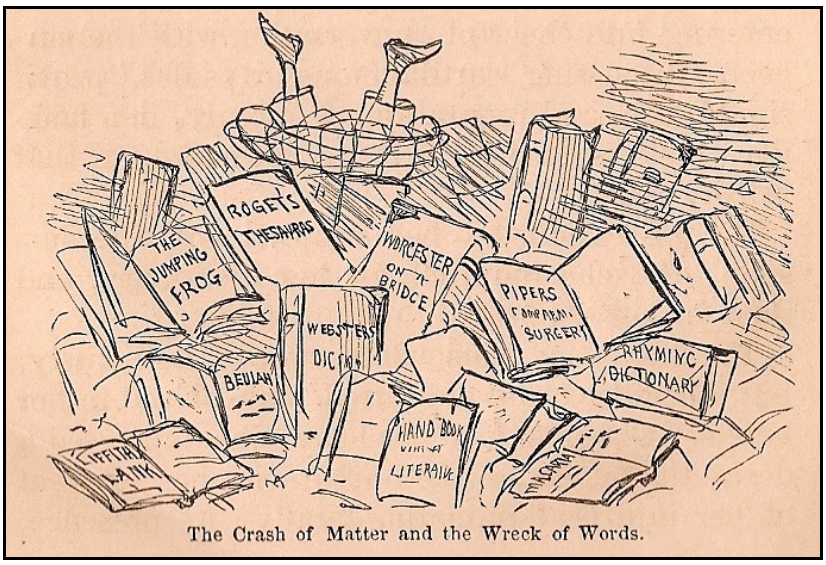
2. The coquette of early American novels reads with abandon, blissfully and indiscriminatingly. She tends to favor books like the one in which she features. As the trope of the readerly coquette moves toward midcentury, however, it transforms. Cassandra Morgeson, for instance, is never more sentimental than she is as a child before her sewing aunt and reading mother, in the opening pages of *The Morgesons* (1862), recounting the jumble that her reading has made her mind, her confusions of episode and persona. Cassy's involvement in the legacy of coquetry is complex,[15] I believe, except in this point. Buried even deeper is the coquette inside Edna Earle and Beulah Benton,[16] two heroines of Augusta Jane Evans, who bear no outward resemblance to her but nevertheless both say no to a suitor in order to say yes to him (the stylistic signature of coquettrey). In the needs and energies of figures like these, the sentimental sort of reflexivity arrives at a complex expression, gorgeously encoded and evolved: this is Edna, of *St. Elmo* (1866), synthesizing every obscure mythology she can set her hands on, in her novel about a novelist synthesizing the same, called *Shining Thorns of the Hearth*; this is Beulah, grown atheist in her lover's library and an adherent of the eclectical method of thought, combining

[14] Baym here seems to be fighting the war against "the war against cliché."

[15] As is every coquette's, which is the prime lesson of *The Coquette*. I'll not gainsay the claim, however, that one of Cassy's prime accomplishments is to love a married man and live to not regret it.

[16] The short parody *St. Twel'mo* (1867) blurts out the secret that Evans is too careful to spoil with explicitness: Edna's *coquetterie* takes the form of whispering big words to her lover, and having them whispered back (*ST* 45).

fragments of shattered systems into her own more capacious one. In the clarity of parody, it looks like this (from C. H. Webb's take-off *St. Twel'mo* [1867]):



The Crash of Matter and the Wreck of Words.

Or, in other words: "words, words, words." This is the summary Constance Fenimore Woolson gives of Evans's novels (qtd. Jones 52)—and, while getting everything right, it suggests how Evans can come to seem representative, in that special sentimental fashion, in this study. Woolson's summary sharpens our senses both of the proliferation and the repetition that underlie sentimentalist art. The motto of sentimentalism is: more sameness, more moreness. Conformity becomes interesting (as a formalism) only when it is allowed to enforce itself over a mass of uneven material. Only when more conventional forms of community (the empty churches, for instance, that dot the sentimental landscape, like the one in which Gerty and Emily find one another) have been divested of their gather-power can something like sentimental identification, be developed to do the work of consensus. Woolson's paraphrase suggests as well the drift of specifics into the general that characterizes both Evans' work (as we shall see) and the genre to which it belongs.

3. The gathering of images of gathering, images irradiated for a moment by the form-allegory they might be able to bear, is an instructive game.[17] It is not one I'll be able to let altogether go even when, in a moment, the time comes to move on (and so in the third section of this chapter, when we focus on *Beulah*, the heroine's bodily ugly, her eclectical philosophical practice, and her town-wedding wedding, each participates of this genre-marking jumble). The sentimental mode rounds certain objects (weddings, readings) into the form of the third-person plural, so as to study itself in them. The mode can be glimpsed not only in the objects but also in the rounding energy, in that peculiar form of time and verb tense that is the sentimental imperfect. The imperfect tense coordinates the past with itself: it pools experience, which it experiences as rich in repeated actions, rituals, habits. It prefers sameness in the relation of prior events to one another, and to the present, instead of prescriptive sequence (Jagose, *Inconsequence* ix), or "the chronopolitics of development" (Freeman "TB" 59); the means of its meaning is consolidated incident. Sentimentalism not only prefers groups and their shared experiences, but also groups *of* experience. The mood of the imperfect—a non-linear temporality—is allowed to tug quite hard on that sense of succession that the story demands.[18] Sentimentalism does well both in the instant that people are coordinated and in the instant when

[17] I think of Lynn Wardley's contribution to *The Culture of Sentiment*, "Relic, Fetish, Femmage," which begins a reading of Stowe's aesthetics of accumulation in Dinah's chaotic kitchen. It sees the raw meat there wrapped in lace and likes it—finds that this image tells the truth of Stowe's "sentimental practice" (204). The essay departs from this point into a Freudian inflected consideration of fetish objects in Stowe's book. In *Domestic Individualism*, Gillian Brown studies Dinah's mess as her own, as an expression of her "desire"; I'll insist that while it's that it's not that alone. It composes a larger mess of messes in the sentimental mode. That book posits that the domestic exists to fulfill the best potentials of individualism: to secure a space for the individual to fill with her love and her desire. Another possibility, though, is that the individual finds herself filled, within the domestic, or without it, with desires that make no sense or that she knows are not her own. Sentimentalism countenances, and even creates according to that imaginative possibility too.

[18] Karen Tracey, for instance, has studied the prevalence of double-proposal plots in these novels, when the same man proposes twice, a plot in which advancing and cycling-back comes to look like the same thing, hence its sense of "derailed or muffled" development (6).

instants are, when they shed their punctuality and dissolve into what Betty Schellenberg calls "a circular image of time that suggests stability as well as continuity in the form of recurrence" (17).

The Lamplighter invokes this temporal paradigm obsessively, often through the paragraph-opening use of the phrase "one day." This is a form of specifying one's refusal to specify things like days: every day is "one day." Each day, whatever its occurrences, however remarkable (or not), emerges into diurnality presoaked in some primordial sameness. "One day, when the children were assembled in the schoolyard, during recess…" (59): the phrase assembles days like these children, caring only to mark how time for it is not about order but about pooling and play. Readers are shown another such day fifteen pages later (74). Another paragraph on the same page begins (59), "One Saturday evening, when Willie was present, True broached the subject…" carefully situating the situation amongst a host of other Saturday evenings with Willie before it allows any words to be spoken into it. Yet another begins like "For two or three weeks all appeared to go on smoothly…": why "or three"? It is not possible for anyone to be a better expert on the diegetic world, with its internal calendar, than this omniscient narrator is. Still, she regularly equivocates about the passage of time (e.g., "A week or two passed away, and she…" [126]). Moments, in the sentimental mode, seem not to pass like tick-tock but to pulse altogether in a blob or an incandescent mass, sometimes emitting a discrete image, often not.[19]

The sentimental habitual, this spongy temporality, takes two forms, according to the count that one novel makes:

> Sometimes for a quarter of a century the sluggish stream of life oozes by, bearing no hint of deeds, or faces,—that perchance shed glory, or perhaps lent gloom to the far past,--a past well nigh forgotten and inurned in the gathering gray of time,—and suddenly without premonition, the slow monotonous current ripples and swells into waves that

[19] The sentimental novel is thus much illuminated by Ursula Le Guin's "carrier bag" theory of fiction.

> bear to our feet fateful countenances, unwelcome as grave-ghouls,—and the world grows garrulous of incident that once more galvanize the shrouded By-gone. (*Inf* 32)

Sometimes time oozes, so thick as to show neither face nor deed. Sometimes time swells so much it speaks, fast, furious, the sort of intoxicating nonsense that the end of this sentence exemplifies. Garrulous time like that, and its murmuring opposite, both represent declensions of the sentimental imperfect, its two modes, two shades of "the gathering gray of time."

Time like this is time in which days seems to commune with days with an openness and a sense of fellow-feeling that nineteenth-century reality, with its newspaper apriori, cannot countenance. This attitude toward time, I believe, is something like the antithesis of the "meanwhile" that Benedict Anderson associates with the imagined communities of the nineteenth century, a "meanwhile" in which the collective, in all their disparity, is synchronized, through novels and newspapers, in a definite day.[20] Sentimental-style temporality, instead, is spongey—a time from which instants and incidents can be wrung, a time in which not nothing happens (as in Howells) but everything *has* happened, a time in which every Saturday evening with Willie begins by being the same one.

4. Sarah Mesle keenly observes, with the offhandedness that often marks profundity, of two similarly named protagonists from Caroline Gilman that confusing them is sort of the point. We can profit by pausing here, to collect into our record one final concretion of sentimentalism's gathering propensity. If one sort of sentimental name—e.g., Trueman Flint, a helper-figure and guardian for orphaned Gerty, or Beulah's lover, the inimitable slash endless imitable Guy Hartwell—collapses a person into one of his attributes (Trueman will bring light Gerty's path) or sheers from him all but his narrative function (Guy well captures Beulah's heart), another logic

[20] See Southworth's *Deserted Wife*, for its chapter in which the narrator "daguerreotypes a set of pictures upon which the sun shone on Saturday, the 28th of September, 18—," taking place simultaneously in scattered locations: 232-235.

of denomination assures single ladies some pleasant measure of alliteration: Beulah Benton, Edna Earle, Patty Pace, Minnie Merle (aka Odille Orme).[21] There's a certain fitness here, a mutual suiting, that transpires between who you are (first name) and your place in what used to be a family (last). By their telltale alliteration, these names function like what Lacan would call an answer of the real, a response by the objective world to a subjective crisis.

The phenomenon that Mesle describes should be illustrated in a manner that allows its full bewildering power to descend upon us. Meet the main cast of *The Deserted Wife* (1850), the second novel of E.D.E.N. Southworth (and, for what it's worth, the only one of her sixty not to be serialized). The novel features a family named Withers and a family named Winters, two characters named Gusty, an Agatha and an Agnes and a Hagar (plus the Gustys are really Augustuses). Selfhood is simply not like discrete identity for people with names like these. It is something leaky and tongue-tying—something, that is, that is prone to accumulate a letter or two from a friend or enemy—and intensely relational. Confusingly and amusingly intersubjective.

* *

Questions linger. Whence comes that form of death that seems peculiar to the sentimental novel, an anti-Heideggerian death, like Little Eva's death, that installs a character in an intense relation not to her "ownmost" fate but her kind or her country's? The gathering impulse, I believe, which at its most profound gathers death toward Death and glimpses it in the form of afterlife communion it might enable.[22] Your death is not, under sentimentalism, what it means to

[21] Once again, parody clarifies: witness the subtitle of *St. Twel'mo*: "the Cuneiform Cyclopedist of Chattanooga," which uses alliteration to align the additional idiosyncrasies of profession and place. *Twel'mo*: good title, for it dissolves the fiery and idiosyncratic (for which Evans's Elmo is something like an emblem) into an iteration (eleven…twelve…). Further pause could be made over Odille's last name: Orme, which is secretly the last name of every sentimentalist.

[22] See Elizabeth Stuart Phelps *The Gates Ajar* (1868), in which one of the grand unknowable facts of life, the shape of eternity, is made to coincide with the daily experience of a middling person, minus its

you but what it means for myriad others. Whence comes that sentiment-specific sort of dream or daydream, the sort of fantasy into which, in *The Lamplighter*, Willie's mother flies in order that she can inspect his future life and inform Gerty of her fundamental role in it—a fantasy that refuses to respect the demands of the Freudians because it tells the secret not of her desire but of those of others? Again I say: the attachment to the principle of attachment I have called gathering. Whence, at last, the politics of sentimentalism, the urge to coordinate the individual body in a fit of tears and the national body in a "right" feeling? The prime reorientation a formalist reading of sentimentalism can offer is to say that this politics may not be simply a politics, but only an afterecho of a formal tendency. The sentimental novel is an art form before it is a political one. Its politics, like its erotics, are transcriptions of the form of its formalism—conformism.[23] What if sentimentalism were beautiful, massively beautiful, jumblingly beautiful, stunning in its assortments, before it was "ideological"?[24]

The version of the argument I didn't write is anchored in the twin consideration of the sorts of individual fantasy (anti-Heideggerean deaths, anti-Freudian desires) and collective fantasy (liberal politics) that appear within the sentimental novel. We could have spoken in symmetries, like the collective and the individual. The opposition between individual and

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occasions for humdrum complaints. Heaven looks like the pretty good life, there. Think, too, of Little Eva's death, which is about the community, as geographically as ideologically diverse, that it convenes.

[23] The same way one might argue, a neuro-psychologist for instance might, that one does not glimpse a situation in itself first and then apply a mood or feeling—your own or another's—to it, but dwells in the affect, floats in it more or less as a given, and perceives reality through its refracting lens. Indeed, the neuro perspective has more to teach us here: for the massivity of mass politics may be their true political weakness, as Keen shows in the *Empathy* book when discussing "the psychological response known as *diffusion of responsibility*: the assumption on the part of individuals, that because they are part of a crowd, that they need not take responsibility for acting" (117).

[24] To mark that I have said all that I ought, I notice that this would be the space to perform a purely formal defense for the cringing end of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, sending Eliza and George to Liberia, as if only the image of a community of communities, a multitude of national multitudes, rather than one representative one—the hill-city-style American ideal—provides an image expansive enough for the sentimental story to fade out upon. As if only the discovery of an image like that were enough to exhaust the sentimentalist, to seem to mean enough to get her (for a while, at least) to stop talking, to cease with fables and clichés…

collective fantasy would have been inflected so as to feel neat and complete: gathering pervades A and the opposite of A; hence gathering. This is not the discussion that has been produced, because this is not the discussion that sentimentalism deserves. There's been something of the contingent and something of the recycled to my examples and evidence, and I hope the reader has felt as much. The genre demands my analytic indirections, and will demand further ones in a moment. Gathering is a pervasive phenomenon in the sentimental text; it takes place according to overlapping patterns and on wildly different scales: this is the image I would have you have of it. Not the final image, for there remains other sections of this chapter to read, but the first one. (Hawthorne thus gets it right, in a sense: the point of the sentimental novel is to be legion, "innumerable" and each "neither better nor worse" than the others.)

The point of playing spot the jumble has been to reach the point we now have, where the inexhaustibility of potential examples appears and where the prospect of pacing through further examples piecemeal seems as interesting as it does boring. You will recognize that the examples need not stop here, though you might allow yourself some relief that they will. G.M. Goshgarian captures the situation neatly in his quip that "the most mysterious thing about bestsellerdom's underside is that it also isn't one" (9): sentimentalism is the sort of thing that tells its truth by telling it on the surface, all over the surface ("the scribblers manage to conceal their shadowy side in the blinding light of the sunny side… they make it disappear by putting it on view" [9]). Names and verb tenses: what could be more superficial, if not the ceremony in which they are both effaced, the complex wedding that climaxes in the exchange of "I do"s? My next section answers this question, and so grows still more superficial.

II The Comfort-Carrying Voice

A gathering of sentimental gatherings: each an attempt by the form to grasp and grapple with its form within its form; each attempt taking place at a different level of the content or the narrative "substance" (a knot or warp in that substance, shaped by its organic tendencies); each attempt succoring or anchoring a strangely-phased rhythm of reflexivity. That was one way that the semantic universe of the sentimental novel can be encountered. A new construction of the material can now be introduced that will allow us to talk in terms of a single formal phenomenon: what a Russian Formalist would call a single "literary fact," a unitary "device," or a stylistic "dominant."[25] Economy of explanation demands as much. I propose that the dominant of sentimentalism is the raucous, profuse voice: the third-person declarations that persist in something besides omniscience; the pyrotechnics of narratorial exclamation and direct address synced to intensely familiar plots that propels the reader through inches of sentiment, loosely-bound. The genre's co-dependent narrator, in short.

At last, dear reader, we have arrived at some form-truth that may be basic! *The Lamplighter* frames the matter cleanly: in a scenario in which several critics detect some considerable reflexivity, Gerty reads to Emily, many books, books of all sorts (70). All of what she reads is mediated in and through her voice, the grain of her voice, what the text calls her "comfort-carrying voice" (280), because Emily is blind. The novel itself, in fact, exists to convert so many visual sensations, the sort of things on which lit lamps shine, first into a common language and then into the sort of sounds that a voice can make. To spin within Emily a universe with her talk, her blurts and gurgles, is Gerty's goal, and that of the book in which she triumphs.

[25] Erlich defines "the dominant" like this: for the Formalists, each form of discourse or speech genre has its own integrated hierarchy of elements, and takes its identity from its capacity to bring one to the fore (212). See also Jameson *P-H* 92.

(No wonder Gerty's favorite is a book on astronomy, "a little work…, which puzzled her more than all the rest put together, and which delighted her in the same proportion" [71].[26])

The Formalists provide the construction we set upon those assorted gatherings of the previous section: these were so many "motivations of the device" (*motivirovka priëma*), that is, *secondary* content habitually generated so that the formal device might exercise itself according to its capacity (Erlich 194-197). Indeed, this is the construction I will set upon the politics of the sentimental novel, for example those of Stowe,—one that is parallel to that construction that Eichenbaum sets upon Tolstoy's religious conversion in "Tolstoy's Crises" (1924)—: an incidental effect of an aesthetic principle that seeks fresh material suited to its goals and special gifts.[27] It is upon such topics as politics that the Formalist reduction of content to form can seem to be most revelatory: "the force of the [Formalist] revelation," according to Fredric Jameson, "depends on your having previously believed in 'content,' and is gauged against your implicit shock at seeing the philosophical implications of Gogol, or *Don Quixote*"—for us, the inclusive politics of sentimentalism—"brutally discarded in favor of a purely artistic, artisanal model" (90).

The tenor of this insight expresses itself in a modification of my method in this section. The first part of this chapter sought its evidences by recycling a small set of scenes and features, most from one text: the primal scene of scribbledom, *The Lamplighter*. Moreover, it did not delve deeper so much as it obsessed (recurring to, reworking) the same material. The archive of

[26] If this is Poe's *Eureka* (1848), a work to which a later chapter of this project will turn, it is Gerty's literally enlightening response to domesticate this book as a stumper, a mingling of puzzle and delight, and that's all.

[27] Eikhenbaum writes: "At the core of all Tolstoy's crises lies the search for new artistic forms and for their new rationale" (99). See also *P-H* 84-85, 90. Of course, it is only meaningful to stop believing in the politics of sentimental politics if you have already held them very dear, as sentimentalism's critics have enabled us to.

this second section is shaped instead like what Roman Jakobson calls a "bundle": a "complex entity," a collation of objects, each one of which possesses distinctive features but also each one of which achieves an adequate meaning only by arriving altogether. The texts to be treated below appear at roughly the same historical moment (they possess what Jakobson calls "concurrence"), and tell roughly the same story, a story containing approximately the same semes in similar—never precisely the same, but never different enough to be neatly differentiated—sorts of combinations. These are, we could say, sister stories with no father: E.D.E.N. Southworth's *The Deserted Wife* (1850), Caroline Chesebro's *Isa* (1852), Cummins's *The Lamplighter* (1854), and, from Augusta Jane Evans, *Beulah* (1859), *St. Elmo* (1866), and *Infelice* (1875). The story they tell involves a young orphan, sometimes ugly, losing one lover to gain another, leaving her place, subjecting herself to the perils of adoption and the adoption of a career—often, she must be taught to be a teacher, or read widely so that she can write—, enduring the trials of international travel and (sometimes) of resort culture, whiling away leisure time, dabbling in atheism, and even relishing the thrill of real proximity to an actress (or an opera singer). Such an archive will yield evidence that is both anonymous enough to feel generic and yet peculiar enough to engage extrensively. Each novel that composes our bundle will be cited as haphazardly in what follows as *The Lamplighter* was recurrently in the previous section.

Sentimental plots of engagement, I argue, exist so that that entity that Robyn Warhol identifies as "the engaging narrator" has material that will allow her to explore and to exploit her own "potentialities" (812), that is, to "evoke sympathy and identification from the actual reader who is unknown to the author and therefore infinitely variable and unpredictable" (812). Evoke: the right verb. Engagement is a challenge Warhol throws into relief by distinguishing from the task of the "distancing narrator," who she associates with the masculine novel (813), like those

of Balzac, for whom character, narrator, and reader are each permitted and permeated by a subtle sense of their difference from one another. The engaging narrator, on the other hand, who Warhol associates with women writers,[28] relates readers to characters, plots, problems, and other readers through her "appealing attitude" (813), and her techniques of verbal appeal. This attitude is made explicit through concrete appeals, direct address, and exhortations. The engaging narrator does her work by constructing a shared mood in which readers can "feel right" by her, by her characters, by their fellow readers—and even, in Stowe's radical construction, by those structurally excluded from the bourgeois reading public.

Warhol subordinates the phenomenon she explicates to other conceptual considerations: gender, as we've seen, most obviously, but also politics of social justice. To this end, Stowe is trotted out. But Stowe is no better sentimentalist than Augusta Jane Evans, and in fact Nina Baym argues she's considerably worse a one (*WF* 15), for her failure to subscribe to the overplot of woman's fiction. In fact, I find myself more fully engaged by Evans, as the next section will make plain, and so I'd prefer to bracket these considerations so that the engaging narrator can seem to be a kind of end in itself, formally speaking. If free indirect discourse is the sense of social obligations making their descent into the individual, as it is in several of Franco Moretti's virtuosic explications,[29] then the engaging narrator seems to represent the obverse aesthetic possibility. Strong emotion, suffered first in the individual, might be a medium for massing, might make an atmosphere into which others (many others) can come.

Another way to conceptualize the sentimental voice, one that draws on the resources of its scene of historical emergence, is to refer to the codependent narrator. A name like this wears certain problems on its sleeve, but might wave us nearer nevertheless. First, "codependence" has

[28] It does not fall to this essay to contest this claim; it falls to a collection called *Sentimental Men* (1999).

[29] *Modern Epic* (1995); "Serious Century" (2004); "Graphs" in *GMT* (2005); *The Bourgeois* (2013)

seemed an adequate concept to the historian of intimacy Anthony Giddens, who employs the concept to describe a phenomenon very like what Niklas Luhman calls "interpersonal interpenetration" in *Love as Passion* (172-178). Both concepts describe a phenomenon in which the subject is subject to another: he comes into himself in a world shaped by another's desires (Giddens 89). Formally, this is explicitly at play in the "maternal narrator" of Stowe's major works (see Forcey, Hogan)—a persona who takes her organic identity not from herself, her private experience ("memories and attitudes" [*LP* 13]), but her relations to others, that is, from the ability of her identity to hold others within, though without exactly or explicitly cognizing them (the way a belly holds a baby: as an inner alien). Interpersonal interpenetration is a function of the "transformation" and "codification" of intimacy that both is and accompanies the emergence of a functionally differentiated and thus modern social system. A process that Mark Seltzer identifies with the year 1839, which is just right for the establishment of this sort of romantic love (Lystra). Codependence thus is a historical phenomenon, and one that is able (for world-historical reasons, as Luhmann and Giddens seek to persuade us) to knot one person into another, knot one addiction into another, one desire into another, one problem into another.[30] The reader of sentimental fiction feels himself to be an existential prop for this narrative entity, and feels too the propping power the voice might provide him. This makes the codependent narrator seem something like the "unreliable" narrator's opposite number. It could also be a ratcheting-up of that aspect of the reader-narrator relationship that Wayne Booth characterizes as "friendship" (119).

A final way to feel the centrality of the voice to sentimentalism, is to consider the remediation of Augusta Jane Evans, who has three of her books turned into eight movies in the

[30] Giddens keeps the concept close to the scene of its coinage, the support-group setting where it describes relations of addiction that piggyback on the addiction of an addict. Enablers are addicts too, and the concept of "codependence" meant to make that clear.

first quarter of the twentieth century… and zero since. Silent films: as if the story, to exist as it ought, had to float within a voice that was half the viewers': as if this style of engagement, in which the voice was there not to fill the audience but to be filled by them, were made impossible when the sentimental voice is forced to cede space to the actual voices of other characters and other narrators. In the first section of this chapter, the emphasis would have fallen on the fact of *eight* silent films, their sheer iterative bulk; in the second, it falls instead on the silence they share, a kind of apotheosis of the voice.[31]

The sentimental voice, or the codependent narrator, can be glimpsed in the "durable quirks" (Dimock "GWS" 89), the general tendencies of its saying. The standard diffractions of the shined surfaces that fill sentimental discourse. We will study three, in turn: (1) embodied exclamation; (2) social quotation; and (3) something we'll come to call invitational questioning

[31] This image is an interleaf between pages 184 and 185 of the 1923 Photoplay edition *St. Elmo*; the film, also 1923, starring John Gilbert, is now lost. Contemporary remediations of *St. Elmo* persist in silent mediums. Witness the kindle-market fan fiction—*The Prince in the Tower* (2011), in which *St. Elmo* and a generation-later film adaptation of the novel staring John Gilbert are, as it were, ontologically jumbled—and the blog—"John Gilbert, St. Elmo, & Me"—of Sheryl Wright Stinchcum.

as well as obscure concurrence. The degree to which these habits or patterns of domestic apperception, these tendencies of sentimental intelligence, themselves compose a pattern will remain to be seen.[32]

1. Many readers know the sentimental voice by its exclamations: vocables like "ah," "bah," "pshaw," "pish," or "o!" that skitter through nineteenth-century talk and, in sentimental fiction, the surface of the narration itself, the utterances of an omniscient narrator. "Ah" is not the preserve of sentimentalism alone, but a certain frequency and intensity of its use is, I believe, certifiably sentimental. These vocables represent something like direct address, one of the hallmarks of the engaging narrator (Warhol 813-814), but without the address. Like canned laughter (Žižek), in these purely phatic blurts the audience sees their reaction, distilled, sealed inside the text. They open opportunities for punctual sympathy, and sympathy so marshaled can spread into even more capacious, even more coordinated, sympathies. Sometimes these sympathies are made to move centripetally, from the discourse of the narrator into those of characters (as in the "pshaw" that first appears in the narrative voice and later those of characters, in *Deserted Wife* [349, 363]). Other times, it's centrifugal action, in which a character's "ah!" migrates into the narrator's stock of sayings (as in *Infelice* [20, 22]). This foreshortened form of direct address thus sheds explicit address but retains its interest in the flow of narrative force, in direction, able as it is to go both ways.

Sentimental exclamation is flexible in function. These not-words are often all that is required to excuse a stunning coincidence or plot twist. Alternately they can be used to excuse

[32] My reader is begged to bring to mind any mainstream instance of domestic sentimentalism, midcentury sentimentalism (after it has shed its reliance on the epistolary mode, which it does, totally), narrated in the first-person: it cannot be done. One of the most formally experimental novels of this genre I know, Chesebro's *Isa* is sort of about this: it begins in the first person (as diary entries), but soon becomes aware that it is unwilling or unable to keep this up and dissolves into the more comfortable third (the center of consciousness cannot hold).

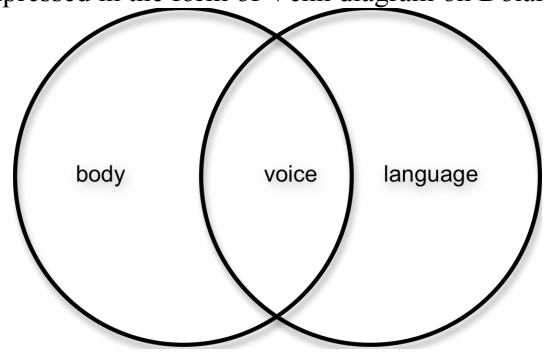
the repetition of redundant information, to allow the narrator or the narrative to say the same thing everyone knew and even saw coming, to say it one more time with feeling ("'you are my mother's friend, and whatever she wishes me to do, must be right.' Oh beautiful instinctive faith in maternal love and maternal wisdom!" [*Inf* 48]). The power of this might be glimpsed dialectically. A keyword in discussions of free indirect discourse is "embed": the character's special idiom seems as if it were embedded in the flow of narration (Pascal 74-75, 108). But, contrarily, these moments of exclamatory dis-embedding, of taking oneself out of one's discourse and of discourse altogether, emphasize the overlapping of emotions and perspectives that are less nested than themselves a nest.

Sentimental exclamation registers and redresses one of the forces that the subgenre forms itself in massive abreaction against: the modern preference that information present as new information, and be valued as such, before it can present as redundant information (Luhmann *RMM* 21). The tendency in the sentimental novel is to enrich one's sense of redundancy, to ground the new in the redundant, the familiar, the unchangeable. "Pshaw" is a good way to do this, for it tags the stunning new revelation, the fresh development, the unconditioned coincidence, the dire desire, with a phrase felt to be intensely familiar, a well-handled aside. Here's another new thing, new as any other one. Without drifting into irony, as in other voices these vocables might, such sentimental exclamations empty the new of its pure newness ("the terrible truth that had overwhelmed him" [*DW* 321]), and entangle it in the scene of perception, in the human sensory apparatus, so as to indicate the resemblances amongst our reactions to contingent events. Nothing is so new as to defeat the sighs that readers might make to meet it. These osmotic moments, instants of co-exclamation, when the new is assimilated to the redundant—and made to indicate along the way the universality of the assimilating apparatus,

the body and its senses—show the reader what is common to them is their capacity to react against surprise. The grammar of the sentimental community will bear you up and be with you in the moment the new confronts you—and that is something that, as Lauren Berlant informs us, "we know but never tire of hearing confirmed" (ix).

The site of that confirmation is the body, the vibrant and creative body, what Marianne Noble calls "embodied, affective person[s]" as opposed to the abstractions of "universal humanism," often set at the center of discussions of "the structure of sentimental experience" (Hendler). What we have, prior to the words we have for one another, are the squeaks and shivers we might make in "ecstatic" moments of pain or of pleasure (Noble). Sentimental exclamation marks this as well: the thick, reverberating body that the voice must pass through. "*What language and the body have in common is the voice*," pronounces the philosopher Mladen Dolar (73). The sentimental narrator expresses the same claim as emphatically and even more concisely when she says "oh!": "Dugganne, as well as Isa, had his temptation: *She was going forward, oh, how boldly! to meet hers; his fell upon him*" (*I* 176). The twin truths of such exclamations are: the conventionality of the unconventional and the materiality of the voice, its emplacement at the intersection of the body (felt in its temptations) and the abstract system of written (i.e., italicizable) language.[33] The noisy narrator shows her reader that she (the reader) has a body not only by making it gasp and leak tears, but also by taking over the noises that body

[33] This same proposition is expressed in the form of Venn diagram on Dolar 73:



might make when it is inhabited vigorously, exercised privately. The vocal body here is braided into the fabric of the story in the same way that one's own snores, overheard, but one's own, or another's, might be into a dream. Back of our reading, we have the same feelings. Back of our feelings, we have the same brain, composed of the same sort of cells. This insight, call it neural sentimentalism (or extreme sentimental materialism [Merish]), is extreme only in its explicitness when it finds utterance in Augusta Jane Evans's *At the Mercy of Tiberius*:

> Our grandest pictures, statues, poems, are not the canvas, the marble, the bronze, and the gilded vellum, that the world handles, criticizes, weights, buys and sells, accepts with praise, or rejects with anathema. Invisible and inviolate, imagination keeps our best, our ideals, locked in the cerebrum cells of 'grey matter,' which we are pleased to call our workshop.

The truth of the self is these cells, same as everyone else's, that art can show us that it can't show us.[34] The group can be apprehended through what they share, namely, embodiment. This is a philosophical justification for Maud's alacritous colloquialism: "every*body* is in love with every*body*" (and this time the italics are mine). (Indeed, it could be claimed that crying, to the sentimental reader, yields an experience very much like bass does in rap music: it exposes the body's inner multiplicity, it makes your internal organs bounce off one another [like the loose drops in the tear ducts of the sentimentalist]. Certain genres can be depended upon to move a body—emotionally, sure, a unitary self can be dissolved into a mass of moods, fine, but sometimes, and more profoundly, physiologically—as in Maud's reading, which moves her, if not to tears that she'll cop to then to the encyclopedia shelf and back.[35])

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[34] It is typical of sentimentalism that it treat a grand revelation, something that might have been aggrandized into the "neural sublime" (Richardson), into a mere matter of everyday speculation and conversation. On the sentimental tendency toward "domesticating the sublime," see Barker 40-41.

[35] And the parallel with contemporary rap need not end there: these genres seem to share the same fundamental attitude to convention, for in them a certain steady roster of topics exist, drug fables or threats of violence or a fantastic combinatory of sex moves, for instance, or orphan integration or the corruptions of European culture, and "pop" instances of the genre confine themselves strictly to these

Direct address indicates the engaging narrator by its frequency, according to Warhol, rather than by its structure. It insinuates itself into the smallest actions, providing a reliable mode of reflexivity, the means by which the reader can seize the medium itself and then shuffle back into the story: "He seized the letter—just as you seized *that* letter of yours, you know, reader. It—Raymond's letter, and not yours—was from Sophie…" (*DW* 167). A letter to you is something like a literalization of direct address. The reader who, in the eighteenth century, had to be beckoned at the top of the paragraph, cozened according to their class ("Gentle Reader"), now appears explicitly only as an afterthought, stripped even of the standard "dear." And that *that*: precision, in the sentimental mode, is a function of generalization: that letter is *that* letter, that unforgettable one that everyone reading, separately but sort of not, has received, just like you, just once. Moments like this abound, and mean according to their abundance. But they are not, in my estimation, quite so deeply—so structurally—sentimental, as the interjections we have been presently inspecting. In these little burst-words, the new and not new meet, as do the body and the system.

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topics, finding endless reserves of creativity within them. The body of this essay will be allowed to illustrate this proposition as it concerns sentimentalism, but we can pause for a moment in the footnotes to show that it holds for hip-hop. Think of three successive releases by the wildly prolific Gucci Mane, *Trap God 2* (February 2013)*, Trap Back 2* (March 2013)*,* and *Trap House 3* (May 2013)—followed in September 2013 by *Diary of a Trap God* (and exempted from even this list is the song "Trap God Trap God" and the triple-mixtape, *World War 3: Lean, Molly, Gas* [August 2013] that contains it): in such music, one feels oneself inside a closed universe, a cycling one. Songs frequently reappear on one release and then another, and so induce a genuine confusion in the listener, especially when under drug influence, about whether or not this track has been heard before. A moment in the first song of *Trap House 3* expresses this well: Gucci finds himself repeating the words "Trap house trap house trap house trap house…" until they sound like "I'm trapped, I'm trapped, I'm trapped." Which is a way of saying exactly the opposite: within a small number of motifs and styles, he sees endless possibilities; restless feats of creativity escape from him almost without trying, easily outstripping his intention… It would not be so outrageously far to seek a reading of rap music in which it flourishes in its search for excuses to intone "motherfucker," one of the most beautiful words (sonically regarded) in the language, in a certain mood; what sentimentalism announces is not so different in content from motherfucker, not is the genre's general vocal voice-based motivation… Of the central thematic overlap between sentimentalism and street rap, the topos of the kitchen, nothing further can be said in this context…

2. The Novel is full of words (excepting "ahs" and odd "pshaws," it is composed of nothing else), more words than any other major form; and those words have a special quality, according to one of the form's most influential readers, Mikhail Bakhtin: namely, they are full of other words, other lives, other ideas. The Novel exists as the discursive plane where other discourses intersect and contest each other (29-30).[36] Cathy Davidson's *Revolution and the Word* (1986) represents of the earliest and most effective engagements of this insight by Americanist literary criticism, published within five years of the translations of Bahktin's central works on the novel. Davidson capitalizes the political potential of the theory of polyvocality by connecting the "subversive" power of the novel (its capacity to outmaneuver and overcome other literary forms) to the "subversive" power of the radical democratic that the young American nation fancied itself to incarnate (13, 44-45).[37] The Novel's essential polyvocality has therefore been a conceptual reference point as well as a vital material insight for Americanist critics of the past thirty years. In that time, it has animated some remarkable critical efforts invested in the connection between novelistic form and liberal politics (e.g. Gura), and it has composed the philosophical underpinnings for the massive reprinting of previously neglected novels. An awareness that the novel is filled with other people's words, and should be, has put back into print the words of a lot of other people.

The reality that the sentimental novel feels full of the words and forms of others, that its voice is full of others' voices, that its "noising, rattling style" crackles and hums with other styles

[36] As in Benedict Anderson, the side-by-side layout of the newspaper page seems somehow to be determinate for Bakhtin (30).

[37] Indeed, Bahktin makes an second major appearance in sentimentalist criticism in Joanna Dobson's "Reclaiming Sentimental Literature" [1997], a piece in which polyvalence has its revenges, creatively: Dobson quotes him again and again on sentimentality and sentimental language, and applies his insights to good effect to midcentury mass sentimentalism, but the sentimentality to which he intends to refer is the rather different, the Schiller or the Henry Mackenzie, sort.

(N.P. Willis), in this critical context, cannot be put forward as an intellectual discovery. (We might have insisted upon its frequency and intensity in sentimental fiction, as Warhol does of direct address [813], but the way of quantity is not the way forward for us.) The ambient polyvocality of this novelistic mode, what Julia Stern calls its "generic polymorphousness" (250 fn 16), shows up, however, in midcentury sentimentalism in a distinctive way: in quotation marks. In the marked marking, in the narrator's speech ("Hannah set her stout arms akimbo,"—scare quotes incarnate—"and looked 'unutterable things' at the delicate fabric…" [*Inf* 27]), or by the narrator in the speech of others, of the borrowing of a phrase or commonplace, or the citation of another's word. For instance, notice the phrase "grey matter" in the passage above. Like that: "grey matter." A citation without a source. Why the quote marks? They seem as keen on the steady social circulation of a phrase, its capacity to appear as news or idle talk, in clever phrases or winking deflections, as to mark its origin in the discourse of the anatomist. This makes "grey matter" less a materialist discovery than simply another "matter" of the sort that bubbles up in chatter (or not). These quotations give the reader to feel that surplus pleasure with which an unpleasant conversation might be transmuted into a pleasant one: "He was in an unpleasant mood (as she told her niece afterwards, cross as a bear); but she contrived to conciliate rather than irritate him, avoided all discordant subjects, and was able the next morning to introduce to her friends an apparently affable and obliging host" (*Ll* 250). An unpleasant man is no longer a cross that a woman must bear (least of all bear in silence), but the sort of thing she can imagine talking about, spicily, in fresh-cribbed phrases, with nieces and girlfriends afterwards. The cliché or "pure quotation"[38]—"cross as a bear"—foregrounds that aspect of sentimental eloquence in which an utterance of mine is not felt merely to be *my* utterance.

[38] Cliché is referred to as "pure quotation" in Regier's typology of citation, *Quotology*. It's called this because it is a quote purified of an author and context ("a pure quotation is a subspecies of

In this, the reader feels the process that one sociologist calls "the supersedure of meaning by function" as a good thing.[39] The dull and dulling concept (a "grey matter" indeed) is experienced in its capacity to spice one's chit-chat, to enliven the small talk that one enjoys not the less for knowing that, like one's own comfortable place in the socioeconomic structure, it has been imposed upon one, in part by one's actions, but only in part. It is possible that a new world might be built from old phrases, recycled inventively. The sentimental voice modulates itself according to this possibility, though the use of scare quotes—it gives this possibility as it were in its grain. Indeed, this is one way in which the domestic obliquely secretes itself in the domestic novel: as a fantasy of household conversations, everyday talk, peppered with like phrases, different yet the same everywhere. A concurrent phenomenon can be set beside the sentimental novel, to profit: the first edition of Bartlett's *Quotations*, not for nothing called "familiar" (etymologically: composing a family), is published in 1855. Set inside sentimentalism, the cliché bears a secret promise inside itself: if something really bad, or really good, or whatever, happens, these words will be there and will make sense to others (as they now make sense to you). These tidbits of conversation pledge: you never know what you'll need to know in order to keep a conversation going, or to build a new world, or to content yourself with one you did not build; and so here are some phrases that might make you equal to "the demands of mutual exchange" (Young 27).

Napkin-sketch genealogy might be made to illuminate this particular quirk. In *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* (1682), often regarded as a paradigmatic captivity narrative,

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UNATTRIBUTED QUOTATION that lacks source, context, and quotee because it has no use for them" [22]).

[39] Anton C. Zijderveld, *On Clichés: The Supersedure of Meaning by Function in Modernity* (1979). The sentimentalist's approach to this book must begin with its Dedication, refreshingly saccharine, to "Thomas," whom Zijderveld (in high cliché-ist manner, as if all these clichés had been sifted in thought just so the right one could be applied this once) touts as "the definitive answer to all clichés."

and an early bestseller to boot, Mary Rowlandson scatters obscure bible verses through her story, as if to conjure back to her isolated self a familiar community that is bound to one another through their familiarity with certain words and the Word (Castiglia 49). Rowlandson makes idiosyncratic (often counterintuitive or radically superficial) sense of what seems to her a senseless experience through these citations, little memories of the familiar in the form of familiar phrases that carry some elsewhere in them (I am thinking of the famous scene in which she steals bear-meat from a baby, then cites a piece of scripture relevant only for its metaphor [96]). In early sentimentalism, for instance Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *A New-England Tale* (1822), the popular commonplace ("throw it to the dogs" [13]) and literary quotation (from Burns or Bryant or Edgeworth) vie with the bible verse or hymnal standards as the truth of an experience and the means by which that experience convenes a regional community. By the time one comes to *The Deserted Wife*, the citations, like the chapter epigraphs,[40] have taken on a new cluster of qualities: arbitrary of origin, scrubbed of context, supernumerary to the story, and nearly perfectly secular. The religious congregation persists in the plot, but only in order to gossip. Everyone is so anxious to tell a piece of news that each visits each without success for several days, until the all can convene in church (*DW* 419-420). In *Infelice* (1875), the vestigial church can be ditched: this book's deserted wife, transmuted into an actress, performs in Paris a play that she's composed, itself called *Infelice*, to a husband and a father-in-law that can only recognize her when she gives herself to them in such clichés as the play is stocked with.[41]

[40] This takes place within the narrative as well as above its each episode: Southworth's chapter epigraphs are brilliantly baffling, tending to bear only obliquely or refractingly on the action inside a given chapter, as if to indicate that any literary moment might explicate or extend any other equally well, "neither better nor worse" as in Hawthorne's redaction of sentimental aesthetics. The trick is perfected in *The Hidden Hand* (1859).

[41] According to a critical biographer of Evans, the title *Infelice*, shared by novel and play, "in general came into vogue in the nineteenth century to refer to a specific sadness upon someone primarily because

The most effective of the quotations that sentiment makes circulate across communities like these are those seem to be without origin, or to be circulated without reference to their origin—like the nameless "volume of miscellanies," yanked at random from her father's library, that become "the first intelligible 'open sesame' to life" for Isa (111-112). "Open sesame": the catchphrase that opens sundry secrets, every one but its own. Open sesame is the secret message of all sentimental clichés, what they say under their content is: here's how to unlock a new world, together. Cheesebro' dedicates *Isa* "to you, who are, as ISA was, workers true and noble, diligent seekers of a 'better country' that lies even in this toiling world" (3). Such feats of social quotation are something other than allusion: they are instead something like the building blocks for a conversation that has not yet happened and so could be about anything (one recalls the grand tradition of nineteenth-century "common place books," like Emerson's *Parnassus*). A conversation that has not found its forum (its own "better country") yet but will be able to wrap ready words about whatever topic bubbles up when it does. And here we insist that "whatever" receive the rich philosophical sense it knows in Giorgio Agamben's *The Coming Community* (1993)—as, that is, "a solidarity that in no way concerns an essence."

3. Whatever, whispers sentimentalism: these "universal formulas, so deep in meaning when they come from the heart" (*Ll* 148), these clichés, can find a home in whatever. No small assurance, in a newly confusing world, a world where "what is new obliterates *the recollection, even*, of the old" (*Ll* 209, original emphasis).[42] You are not alone in your desires and surprises,

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of foiled love" (Ayres 154). The traffic between the generality of the vogue and the pseudo-specificity of heartbreak is very rich.

[42] One thinks of Patty Pace, speaker of this last phrase, whose home is something like an internal allegory of the domestic novel as I understand it (*Ll* 115), who finds peace when she discovers her own name in a graveyard, in Latin though she doesn't know or care, "PACE." She keeps step, or pace, with modernity, with the obliterating tendency of modernity, by taking these familiar phrases, peculiar as her own name,

promises sentimentalism, by its shared exclamations, if you will just admit them a slightly vaguer construction ("oh! protean temptation…" [*B* 84]). These two promises are flanked by a familiar third, namely that the sentimental reader can feel another's pain, or have hers felt. Sentimental identification, in which an other can show up as *like* oneself.[43] Glenn Hendler defines "the identificatory structure" that defines sentimental feeling as "premised on the possibility of a perfect intersubjectivity of affect, an ability to experience another's anguish" or pleasure, fear or hope; further, this structure "is designed to elicit or incite the desire for such emotional transparency." The opposite of this promise, sentimentalism makes too: tangled in relations, one can show up to oneself as strange, as unaccountable and separate, and this too can build a basis for solidarity. Ready-to-hand is the case of Emily of *Lamplighter*, who "could not account to herself for the interest she felt in the little stranger," her new friend Gerty, "but the impulse too see and know more of her was irresistible" (57). Emily possesses inclinations she does not understand, and the lack of self-understanding that animates these inclinations becomes the basis of a story-sustaining attachment. One who sees nothing (Emily's blind) still can install herself in a new story by her desire to "see" a stranger often.

Such an insight has its steady inscription in sentimental speech patterns. The first name to give it is invitational questioning, a rhetorical device through which the narrator seem to align her own non-knowledge with the reader's. It is a manner of inhabiting a thought that is neither affirmed nor negated, a query to which there is no precise answer, as in the climax of the famous instance from Stowe, "how fast could *you* walk?" (*UTC* 46)—a question that stretches the imagination of the seated reader, but not toward an answer. That's a question that gives you to

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where she finds them. Sentimentalism, in general, always has another "alas" for "this age of new fashions and new-fashioned utensils" (*Inf* 175).

[43] "Occluding the other" is Saidaya Hartman's smart slogan for the skeptical view of the identificatory process.

feel the imprecision of any answer and to convene with other readers in that imprecision. Moments like that leave the reader not with the truth that everyone loves (though each in her own way: "oh! protean temptation…"), but that love, mover of a million tears, is a kind of mystery that is to be felt in lapses of self-knoweldge (how fast can I walk? am I the little woman who started this big war?). At the end of *The Deserted Wife*, Hagar, in the midst of her marriage, begins crying beside her husband, "her ringlets sweeping over him":

> wept! wept!—she, from whose proud eyes of fiery light, bitterest grief had never wrung one tear—wept!—as though the fountains of her life were broken up and gushing through her eyes! For joy, reader?—Not altogether; was not her king—her king, discrowned before her? and though she loved him! loved him! as only high hearts like hers can love—no worship mingled with that love. (433)

For joy, reader? Not exactly… and not exactly not… In a world where love is no longer equal to worship, readers share such indecisions and imprecisions.

At their most effective, invitational questions not only corroborate readers and speakers in a unitary imprecision, but also make imprecisions corroborate one another. That is to say: these questions cascade. When Willie and Gerty finally declare a love they have been incubating for four hundred pages, it is too much for two and they wish they could share it with those who loved them well but died along the way. "O, Gerty, it is too much happiness! Would that I could impart a share of it to those who loved us both so well!" A possibility to which the narrator responds:

> And who can say that they did not share it?—that the spirit of Uncle True was not there, to witness the completion of his many hopeful prophecies? that the old grandfather was not there, to see all his doubts and fears giving place to joyful certainties? and that the soul of the gentle mother, whose rapt slumbers had, even in life, foreshadowed such a meeting, and who, by the lessons she had given her child in his boyhood, the warnings spoken to his later years, and the ministering guidance of her disembodied spirit, had fitted him for the struggle with temptation, sustained him through its trials, and restored him triumphant to the sweet friend of his infancy,—who shall say that, even now, she hovered not over them with parted wings, realizing the joy prefigured in that dreamy vision which pictured to her sight the union between the son and daughter of her love,

> when the one, shielded by her fond care from every danger, and snatched from the power of temptation, should be restored to the arms of the other, who, by long and patient continuance in well-doing, had earned so full a recompense, so all-sufficient a reward? (410-411)

No sentimentalist will gainsay this stunning moment—in which, in the form of a ghost wedding, the sentimentalist tarries with its opposite, the gothic; and in which profound metaphysical questions are dosed with saccharine cliché and crude plot summary. None will gainsay it, but this scarcely inhibits it from asking the question. So doing, it clears a space where the possibility, thought explicitly by neither character, though near-thought and near-said by them both, can be shared as a possibility, that is, as an item in nearby non-knowledge. The same sort of non-knowledge that ends *The Lamplighter* begins *Isa*: "I can not date the time when love for Weare Dugganne became the passion of my soul. The love has been of gradual growth, and, therefore, is as strong as life. It may have begun in some state of pre-existence…" (5).

In one subclass of this phenomenon, the locked-room variant, a single character isolates herself within a close space and her thoughts, often the thoughts of a crisis or quandary, unobserved by others, are withheld in order to become the object of the narrator's inquiry. The point is not that the character has the answer to the questions she occasions, for crises like these are not resolved alone with the door closed, in sentimental fiction. Instead, the character, the narrator, and the reader are each made to participate the same sense of puzzlement. Such an exercise focuses for us the first night that Gerty spends in True's home. Once he goes to bed, she stares unspeakingly out her window, as

> her eyes glistened with the dew of a tear that stood in each. Was not each tear a prayer? She breathed no petition, but she longed for God and virtue. Was not that very wish a prayer? Her little uplifted heart throbbed vehemently. Was not each throb a prayer? And did not God in heaven, without whom not a sparrow falls to the ground, hear and accept that first homage of a little, untaught child; and did it not call a blessing down? (41)

The narrator's speculation about the content of Gerty's longing ("for God and virtue") obtrudes as if to highlight the pure physiology of her other observations, which concern uplifting hearts and declining birds. The narrator watches closely—but without, in the free indirect style, allowing her rhetoric to be colored by the unbreathing Gerty's. She shares Gerty's spiritual questions, as does the reader, without exactly presenting them as such. What is shared, between Gerty and the narrator, and between the narrator and reader, is the silence that follows the question mark. The abstracting thrust of sentimentalism ensures that the crisis is not experienced in its capacity to individuate, but rather to yield questions of the sort that can be shared, massively shared.

Beulah fills the technique with an utterly different kind of content, and so is instructively read into the record. Like this:

> The rain fell heavily as she reached her own home, and she went to her room with a heaviness of heart almost unendurable. She sat down on the rug before the fire, and threw her arms up over a chair, as she was wont to do in childhood, and as she remembered that the winter rain now beat pitilessly on the grave of one who had never known privation, nor aught of grief that wealth could shield her from, she moaned bitterly. What lamp had philosophy hung in the sable chamber of the tomb? The soul was impotent to explain its origin—how, then, could it possibly read the riddle of final destiny? Psychologists had wrangled for ages over the question of 'ideas.' Were infants born with or without them? Did ideas arise or develop themselves independently of experience? The affirmation or denial of this proposition alone distinguished the numerous schools which had so long wrestled with psychology; and if this were insolvable, how could human intellect question further? Could it bridge the gulf of Death, and explore the shores of Eternity?
>
> (*B* 323)

Enough cannot be said in favor of this passage, in which Beulah's inner sorrow and her private tears reappear in the real in the form of rain, and in which the "as" of formal homology coincides with the "as" of an imperfect temporality. The questions that unspool after that, which drift into questions about the limits of human quests and questions, thematize their inherent unanswerability, their perennial answerlessness. They mean to prolong rather than resolve a

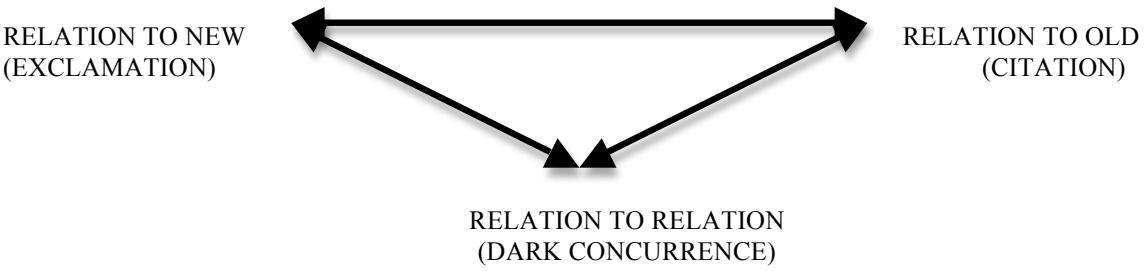
scene of shared non-knowledge, an experience that can be and has been refracted through ideas of all sorts (including ideas about "ideas"). The hesitations of a single character bloom, in moments like this, into something that the narrator and the reader are made to cohabit, not resolve (see also *B* 161-162, 204-205).

How to ask questions about the kinds of questions you can ask is one of the questions that sentimentalism poses, having first noticed how these questions arise in a thinking body, according (for example) to the disposition of one's limbs along a rug, or the disposition of one's rug before a fire. A second name for this vocal quirk can be suggested now: obscure concurrence. The fact that the same question, in different words (or not), can circulate through separate minds at the same time, or can connect them in spite of some time leg. It's the opposite of sentimental identification, in which the other is "transparently" collapsed into the self (Hendler). Here you seek your own other, the alien within—and, so doing, expose your likeness to other others, each after the same.

* *

This section defined three quirks of the sentimental voice: exclamation, social quotation, and a third in which certain questions impend. It now falls to us to ask: is there a logical relationship between these features, an interquirkal relation? An answer in the affirmative would assure this section a different teleology than the last, in which scenes of gathering were open-endedly gathered. A symmetrical formal structure might be made to emerge from these concepts, considered together. To this point, these quirks have been presented as if they were simply empirical observations, one reader's sense of how sentiment trends. Might they be seen to show logical necessity or impress us with a structure? The central features of the sentimental voice can

be modulated according to the conceptual dialectic that organizes its overform, the novel. They can be fanned-out in this way:



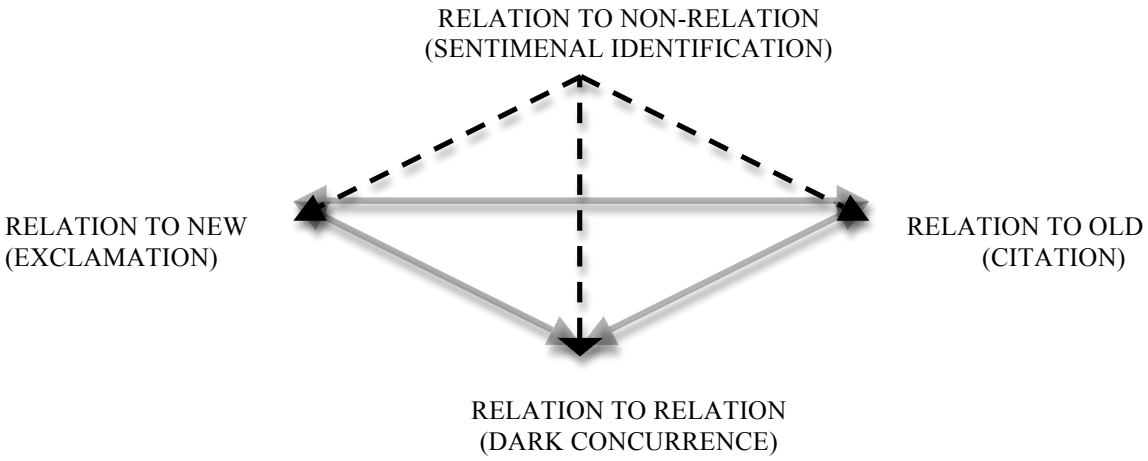
***QUIRKS OF SENTIMENTALISM,* V SCHEMA**

Each concept is dialecticized with respect to its others *and* the other of its others (that is, itself). The exclamation, typically the indicator of the immediate apprehension of the new, fresh past extant formulation, coincides, in sentiment, with the well-handled "pish" and back of that the basic equipment of sense perception. An emphasis on conventionality, the explicit citation in the thick of one's own words of the words of others, obliquely affirms the possibility that those words might be useful in a remade world, in an endlessly evolving world, a world full of novels and, eternally, novel situations—that domain that Isa calls "that other world of life which I had never entered" (11). The answerless questions in which the mentation of the reader, the narrator, and the character are not "embedded" but pulled up parallel compose moments in which the form indicates its limits (relates to itself as a technique of relation). This last is a layering, a kind of isomorphic presentation, of not-knowing.[44]

Exactly the opposite of the subsumption or "occlusion" of the other's experience that is sentimental identification, that last one is. Knowing that, these features, so schematized, can be grasped one final time: as compossible tactics. As, that is, an array of dialectically defined tactics

[44] The same way that, in structurally similar situations, one finds oneself thinking the same non-thought, baffled in the same way, stuttering out the same joke, without exactly recalling the fact that one has used that same joke or verbal duck before.

each of which solicits the others in order to negotiate a space, a sort of home, and a sense of itself. Sentimental identification is one of these tactics, but only one: call it a relation to non-relation, to the other's experience that can only be experienced by the other's other, or the self, in its overcoming. The vexations of sentimental identity, often registered (if not, via Levinas, as onto-ethical problematics: Faces, Others) as imperial politics, may be drained of some of their worst intensities when sentimental identification is displaced from the center of the genre and set instead beside others in a relationship of mutual definition.[45]



***TACTICS OF SENTIMENTALISM,* M SCHEMA**

The sentimental voice is a grand achievement of the nineteenth-century novel—a boisterous achievement, and not a haphazard one. Voice, in the sentimental novel, coincides with its opposite, an echo chamber. This inner affinity of opposites is sustained in and as the events that compose these novels; their stock characters and stock crises exist as if so as to call this voice into being and provide it the proper kinds of things to say: "How singularly alike, notwithstanding all dissimilarities, they were!" (*I* 221). The closed system described above gives

[45] Sympathetic identification is not strictly speaking a vocal procedure—though it *is* sometimes referred to as "interpellation" (Hendler: "the complex dynamics of sentimentalism's paradigmatic act of interpellation" [146]), a concept that has at its own core a scene of call and response (the policeperson's "hail").

the resonate effect that Gershom Scholem associates with the voice, "something unexpressed that reverberates behind every expression"—the sort of affecting melodiousness that can emerge from something as simple as syllabic prolongation (*I* 77).[46] It generates the content that we recognize as typical of the genre: an "erotics of talk"[47] that permeates all the familiar tropes and troping practices (Kaplan), the typical topos, the clichés—what the Formalist Zirmunskij calls "the elements of so-called content" (qtd. Erlich 187). This is what it means to motivate the device. We now turn to *Beulah* in order to see what it means to lay it bare.

III Three Messes: A Love Story

Beulah Benton is ugly: reader, please believe it. She's ugly, in fact, with an ugly that is not only her own, an ugly that presents as typical of her genre.[48] And while Beulah's ugly is not her own, she owns it, and bends it with her mind toward her own ends, like ontological speculation. Beulah often allows considerations of the weakness of the divinity, or its secret maleficence, to intrude into her reflections before her mirror reflection (28, 30, 75-76). In owning her ugly, Beulah finds a form of love in which virtue coincides with atheism, gossip coincides with truth, student coincides with teacher, father coincides with husband, doctor coincides with patient, and saying "yes, I do" is the renunciation of a renunciation. Beulah's story is one of jumble love—a messy, even (formally speaking) an ugly kind of love—and its

[46] In fact, the word is printed "syllabellic" in the book, so as to prolong it and beauty (*bella*) both.

[47] Kaplan: "The woman narrator who longs for an ideal respondent who never comes or who finds that respondent under only the most limited and temporary circumstances, holds a critical mirror up to the failures of her fictional world and the reader's world as well" (15). "As a utopian figuration of a better world, an erotics of talk is a kind of poetic justic, a 'political language' for personal and social equality" (15).

[48] For instance, as the first term of Alexander Cowie's playful redaction of the sentimental novel's overplot (*Rise* 413-415), or, more complexly, as a negative incarnation of the spiritualized cuteness one finds in Little Eva, in Dale Bauer's theory of domestic ugliness ("In the Blood" [1999/2000]).

ostensible object, Guy Hartwell, is not enough for it. (As his name suggests, he's just some guy.) The wedding that awaits us at this novel's end occurs, more or less, between Beulah and her town, unless it is between her ugly, her atheism, and her town-wedding wedding. True to its object, my insight will become no more penetrating than it is on first reading, though I promise to repeat it plenty: this is a story about three concepts, sharing the same shape and each in love with each other.

Beulah is ugly, just as others are, just as other others aren't: this is the insight with which *Beulah* begins, the sun at its zenith flaming over it (5), and one we understand must be dispatched into a marriage ceremony inside a predictable number of plot points. And so if this section baptizes *Beulah* a representative of sentimentalism, a type or prototype, it is only in the special sense that *The Lamplighter* gives to this term (85), that is, as a kind of non-exemplary example, the sort that fades into others. What follows will present the concepts and abstractions of this chapter's key claims refracted through the clarifying medium of a single plot and cast of characters. The plot is Beulah's, one in which ugliness and eclectic philosophy, complex weddings and the codependent narrator, interleave in that form of intimacy that we have called gathering. Beulah's face gives the image of the prose and the plot in which it appears.

Beulah's is the story of three well-matched messes—which is to say that it's a mess of messes.[49] It's a love plot in a literal sense: between a young girl and her hometown, who she marries in the body of the doctor who takes as his charge the bodies that fill it. Over this plot, presides the literary style of Augusta Jane Evans, its author. It is tempting to say that the plot exists in order to allow this style to stretch its legs, to sprint or to linger itself in exercise. Evans's

[49] See Trotter, who formally defines "mess" and historicizes it ways that comport with my argument. The content of Trotter's definition, which gets balled up with modernity and contingency (16-17), is less important than the reader's sense that the concept of "mess" has and will be employed here according to an art-technical sense.

style is moving in the same way that it we saw it move Maud: it animates itself with citations (sometimes pleasantly distorted or adapted), allusions (as likely to be mythological as historical, as likely to be theological as newsy), and the alluvium of expert or technical knowledges (botany, mostly[50]). These knowledge-bits find new forms of parity in her prose. The reader is given to feel as much by their tendency to fall in a subordinate clause inside a wrought, stuffed sentence. Erudition, in Evans, takes on the same qualities the category of "leisure" has in the work of Veblen:[51] it is capable of swallowing disparate duties of all sorts, as well as artisanal objects and craft techniques; it strips them of their ends and functionalities so that, equalized, they can float aside one another as something like ends-in-themselves. The truth is not the reference, in allusions like Evans's, but the heady sense one has of structures in which any one point might be made to refer to any other point (the nice term for these, in *Beulah*, is "odd compounds" [156]). In the same way a succession of subordinate clauses signals that a sentence may be about much more than the subject and verb that spine it, so might Evans's "quasi-exhibitionist displays of erudition" exhibit the truth by which (Fox-Genovese xviii), once one can afford an encyclopedia and the time to refer to it, almost any incident or event, historical, mythological, or botanical, might be made to explicate, echo, or shadow, another.[52]

Evans's, that is, is a voice that fills itself overfull of other voices. Like this:

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[50] Evans is renowned for her garden, which one observer calls the finest in the world, but also for her innovations as a flower cultivator, which include the developments of a scented camellia (Fidler 153-154).

[51] Leisure for Veblen: activity is severed from use, from community, from goal. Its function is to have no real function (leisure is the nonproductive consumption of time). See the "Conspicuous Leisure" chapter of *Theory of Leisure Class* (1899). Conspicuous consumption is not obvious consumption, but consumption in which meaningful goals or ends are obviated.

[52] One can compare the style of Melville, which is plenty hodgepodge but in which the sense of intrasentence or transphrasal connection is often affirmed through slant-rhyme, or sundry stranger echo effects, and the allusions, do not feel so arbitrary. Olson's *Call Me Ishmael*, for instance, makes the case that Melville's the allusions and phrasal quirks of Melville's grand-style are grounded in Shakespeare.

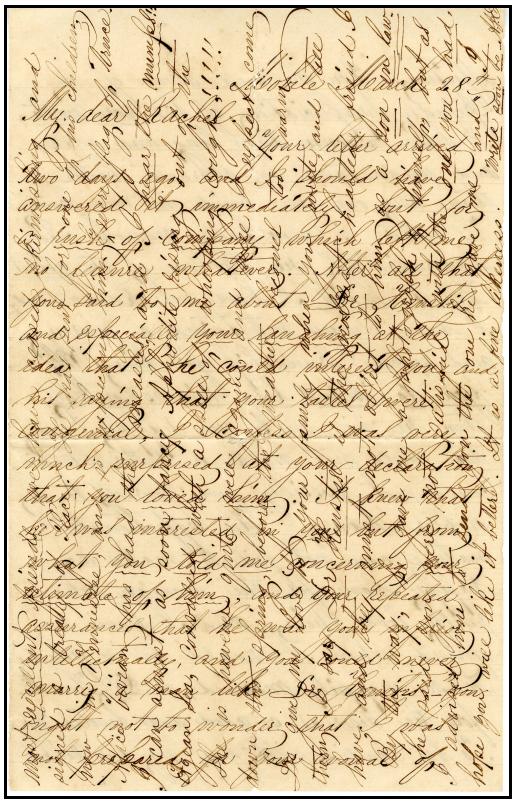
> A leaden sky lowered over the city, and as the torrents came down in whitening sheets the thunder rolled continuously overhead, and trailing wreaths of smoke from the dying fires, dropped like banners over the roofs of the houses. Not the shower which gathered and fell around sea-girt Carmel was more gratefully received. (169)

Each phrase has its flourish and impress until the next one does, as the storm has its gathering and then its falling, as Carmel has its location as well as its lore. The incident has not been exhausted until some allusion has been brought out (the biblical Mount Carmel), which also must be brought out beside some secondary reference or fact that shows itself for ornament (in this case, the fact the Carmel happens to sit near the Mediterranean: it's "sea-girt").[53] Things mean, in the Evans style, through these arbitrary adjacencies, like a mountain beside the sea, or the ripples of a blank banner.[54] The thing is glimpsed through the contingent things that it abides beside.

[53] The allusion (to 1 Kings 18:16-45) is more ornamental than anything, unless it might be taken to allegorize its own allusive emptiness. In it, the prophet Elijah (after a feat that seems to the modern reader to be part magic trick, part meteorology, and part mass murder) commands his servant to check for clouds over the sea; "There is nothing there," the servant replies six times, before a cloud the size of a man's hand appears, the seed-cloud of a storm; the end. Eventually, the cloud shows itself in *Beulah*: at the end of the chapter, when Beulah's ugly mug is made to betoken the religious doubt that has been seeded inside it: "…her brow was plowed by some troubled thought. The countenance told of a mind perplexed and questioning. The 'cloud no bigger than a man's hand,' had crept up from the horizon of faith, and now darkened her sky" (180).

[54] Or like this, a cross-hatch letter to Evans's friend Rachel Lyons, which one might be relieved to enjoy in a purely formal kind of way:

The plot of *Beulah* represents a movement like this: the process through which eloquence no longer appears only before the narrator as an explicit goal, but also unconsciously appears and the playful conjoining of characterological options, slant relations of concepts, and developmental possibilities. What's obvious, what obtrudes, in the story is this: Beulah's ugly, Beulah's eclectic method, Beulah's wedding (distinct from her marriage), each of which explicates, by its form, the others. *Beulah* is a story about three concepts in love with one another—each the same shape, each like one another and liking one another for that reason. These concepts do for the reader and for one another what nothing else can: explicate and satisfy one another.[55]



Thanks to Kevin Ray, Archival Technician in the University of Alabama's Special Collections Division, for his assistance in obtaining an image of this letter.

[55] This sentence riffs on and represses the reading of the novel offered by Henry Timrod, the "Laudreate of the Confederacy," in a letter to Evans's friend Rachel Lyons: "Beulah's transition from skepticism to

Beulah's history tells two ways. Two gossips, that should overlap but don't: that's the first way. Beulah's ugly passes as something other than a secret from the narrator into the diegetic world, a world in which everyone (friend and enemy alike) seem to be saying it. The fact of her ugly first appears in direct address, in a pleasant passage (let's read it later) in which a certain gossipy intimacy can be felt to inhere in the narrator-naratee relation—and further might be felt to enliven relations between naratees: this is precisely the kind of early-on passage that would be a nice one to recall at a book-circle meeting. Such sharing is modeled in the town of the story, where everyone is sharing Beulah's ugly with one another, for any purpose, on any occasion. Beulah's face is something that Beulah must face everywhere she goes, it seems. Until she stops hearing about it, and hears instead the other secret of her body, its desire: the second gossip. She hears that she loves Guy, or something like it, from the mouths of strangers and servants, and doubts it—until she becomes a better skeptic, and doubts her doubt. Which is something like loving Guy, whatever guy happens to be the one they said. The wedding that binds them is as much for the crowd whose congratulations weary the bride as it is about the married life, to which silence (so says our narrator) is to be preferred. The first paraphrase of *Beulah* is thus that Beulah's ugly prepares her to wed her town, and she does.

The second paraphrase is that Beulah's wedding weds her ugly to her skepticism and her speculations. The three-messes version of the story is not so different from the two-gossips one, but it requires the other to precede it because it is best told backwards. Guy's proposal, his second proposal, to Beulah, impresses by its strange abstractness: the way it traffics an intensely personal matter toward the impersonal, the objective: "Beulah Benton, do you belong to the tyrant Ambition, or do you belong to that tyrant Guy Hartwell?" (411). Beulah answers his

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Faith is left almost unaccounted for. How much I should like to have my own doubts settled in the same satisfactory, yet most inexplicable manner!" (qtd. Fidler 64).

question with a qualification, a stutter, and a question: "Well, if I am to have a tyrant, I believe I prefer belonging to you?" (411). After spending so long worrying about believing nothing, she now, if she must, believes she prefers not to use her own words but will use Guy's to say that she something like believes that she something like loves him: question mark. From inside Hartwell's proposal, it will be necessary for us to take but a half step further in order to say that Beulah's "Ambition," while not in love with Hartwell, *is* in love with something, namely, her ugly, and something else to boot, namely, the form of her love as such. To what does my ambition belong, since it prefers not to belong to you, Guy Hartwell?—this is the question that lurks behind the question Beulah proposes back to Guy.

Beulah Benton can go on and marry Guy Hartwell. She does, and the book says after that it's not worth talking about (417) (and I'm inclined to agree). But who or what does her Ambition marry? The novel has ways of talking about this, I think, and attending to them we will see that what it marries is the Wedding, the idea of wedding, from which it might supply itself a concept of belonging, and also it marries Beulah's Ugly. I like the vocabulary of wedding because sentimental novels like the vocabulary of wedding, but I should say my claim without it for clarity's sake. There is a stunning consonance, a formal correspondence, between Beulah's ugly, her atheism, and her town-wedding wedding, that is as well-characterized as what Greimas calls isomorphism as it is as what Bersani calls homo-ness. Messes each one, and altogether: each mess has a unique power to actively interpret each other mess. Of consequence, in this reading, is its capacity to pry the story from the sense of normative sequence that seems so obnoxious to it—or, to its readers, who wonder why ambition must be subordinated to some normal, normalizing Guy.

Beulah's first loss is her sister, whom she loses twice. (The cardinal rule of sentimental plotting is: whatever happens, let it happen in handfuls.[56]) First, when Lilly, who is beautiful in a rosy-cheeks-tiny-palms kind of way (5), is adopted by a moneyed couple called Grayson, who consider a blond daughter to be a status symbol equal to their aspiration. The second loss is when Beulah learns of Lillian's death by scarlet fever. The scene of adoption, the first of these losses, clarifies the dynamics of the voice in this novel. In it, Beulah's body acts on her body through the medium of another's talk: with torturous clarity, she overhears a wife whisper to her husband of her ugliness. Her body is both the topic and the medium on which this whisper acts: "It was said in a low voice, but Beulah heard every syllable, and a glow of shame for an instant bathed her brow" (21).

Beulah takes place inside the echo chamber of sentimentalism. In it, the voice within a voice whispers that "you are the one" (11): the one being talked about; the one moving the mouths of others; the one filling them of fodder for social speculation and self-reflection (or an exemption from the same). In coming pages, Beulah will hear other people utter an opinion of her ugliness (26, 28, 52, 62) as often as she hears herself utter one (32, 38, 45, 62). The lover of her youth will console her with poetry and a subtilized proposal (23), but not refutations. The text develops a peculiar variation on this, in fact, in which an authority figure, frequently a doctor, approaches Beulah with the question of how long she has been sick, to which she must reply that she's fine, this is just the way she looks: 8, 25, 37, 71. It's enough to ensure that the chatter-background of the town, the gossip in which this pseudo-city soaks, can show up as an object within it, a background hiss that can emit at the reader specific questions about the town

[56] From *Infelice*: "The universal observation of man, ages ago,—simmered down and crystallized into the adage,—'misfortunes never come singly;' and it is here respectfully submitted—that startling episodes, unexpected incidents quite as rarely travel alone. Do surprises gravitate into groups, or are certain facts binary?" (32).

(for example, about the socioeconomics of its space). As Beulah's sister is taken off, and she, for her ugliness, remains, "A foreboding dread hissed continually, 'Do you suppose the wealthy and fashionable Mrs. Grayson, who lives in that elegant house on —— Street, will suffer her adopted daughter to associate intimately with a hired nurse?" (22). At this moment, the reader is given to feel the *donnée* of sentimentalism as Weinstein presents it—namely, the multiform disruption of the patriarchal model of family, the discontinuities that riddle the traditional kinship system, and the opportunities for newer, stranger communities and continuities to emerge.[57] Often, that's like an affiliation, in filiation's stead. But, more abstractly, I'm claiming, as is this moment, that's the continuity of a continuous hiss, a strange drone, the din of questions that have no precise askers and no precise answers.

This hiss, the sense of ambient vocality, in sentimentalism, is often thematized as rumor. Two rumors about Beulah's body circulate through the two halves of this book, first that it is ugly and second that it is being groomed, along with her mind, for marriage to the doctor who adopted her. These two rumors have their interspace, opened and occupied by a verbal performance of another sort, silent and inexplicit, visible mostly in the stress it exerts on Beulah's body. This is her writing, her philosophical speculations, performed according to the eclectic school of Victor Cousin, in which no paradigm is adhered to, the truth is simply sought where it can be found, as often in the writings of a low writer as a high one, as often in the footnotes as the full-text, as often in a disparate discipline as in the back of one's own head. An overheard remark suggests that, in Guy's imagination, Beulah's intellect makes her equal to the town that once amused itself according to her ugly:

> For shame, Beulah! to envy me my poor estate of good looks! Why, I am all nose and eyes, curls, red lips and cheeks; but you have an additional amount of brains to balance

[57] Weinstein speaks of sentimental fiction's "experimentation with alternative to families based on consanguinity" (11).

> my gifts. Once I heard Uncle Guy say that you had more intellect than all the other women and children in town! (257)

A set piece in the *ut pictura poesis* style[58] shows Beulah sketching Sappho and illustrates the entangled erotics and aesthetic principles. Clara Sanders, girlfriend of our heroine, intrudes one Halloween to find Beulah describing a death head she once had dreamt of. The figure is winged and owl-eyed, with "pinions" black as night and hands extending (176). Beulah is frustrated, for she wishes she could make her figure worse, truer to her "ideal Mors" (176). Clara, whose blood the sketch has curdled, prefers her to focus her talents on another image, an adjacent one in her portfolio, soon seen to be "an unfinished head of Sappho" (176). Beulah's likeness of Sappho represents, in eyes that Beulah has intentionally bewildered ("Beulah, don't you think the eyes are [al]most too wild?" [177]), Sappho's own likeness for forms like her own, a liking for likeness rather than difference, which she makes over into an art. As much is acknowledged in the title Beulah gives her piece, "Lesbian Muse." Much in the portrait reflects *Beulah*, including the carping that it expects from critics and connoisseurs (176); much reflects Beulah, who is as "sparingly gifted with beauty" as a contemporary account gifts Sappho. Sappho, in Beulah's rendering, looks something like herself, and something like Beulah (especially as she can come to glimpse herself in Clara's objections to her study habits), and something like the god that Beulah no longer simply believes in (Sappho's "expression seemed the reflex of the divine afflatus" [177]), and nothing like an ideal (Beulah has purposefully depicted a face "antagonistic to all the ancient models of beauty" [177]). Further, Sappho's likeness, under Beulah's explication, explodes into further likenesses: poetry's likeness to madness, the body's likeness to the imagination, the artist's likeness to her object, the divine's likeness to the carnal, Cowper's likeness to Pope and to Shelley and to Coleridge (177), even the

[58] The sort of scene examined extensively by Barker, in which a performance of visual artistry is used to reflect and reflect upon the qualities of a "sister art," the verbal one.

frenzy of one historical Sappho's likeness to that of to another (178). The genius of this scene is to show that what seems most strange in the art or the artist, what Beulah quoting from nowhere calls "'poetic idiosyncrasies'" (177), in spite of the wildly differing content of these idiosyncrasies, share a formal structure that doubles as an erotic structure, a liking (like Sappho's) for likeness. This is how homology, a structural likeness, can shade into homo-ness, an eroticized attachment to the same.

Beulah supplements her ugly with something that it would be a travesty to call "inner beauty." Beulah's riven, conflicted interior is anything but beautified by virtue, in the sense that Gerty Flint's is made to seem when she nurses Nan Grant, the false caretaker who abused her and abandoned her.[59] Instead, the name the novel applies to what's inside Beulah is: ambition. Into Beulah's ambition pile all the books that it takes her to replace her family and friends, to fill herself with the society that society hasn't supplied: "Books," she tells her school-friend Clara, "are to me what family, and friends, and society, are to other people" (161)—or at least, what they seem to Beulah to be to others, based on books (154). Beulah's ugly has been intensified by her reading habits, Clara insists. These have furrowed her mind with "subterranean caverns, black and icy," though which she plunges and gropes alone (160). Indeed, Beulah has become something like an echo chamber to Clara, who requires her style to match her complaint: "I don't understand the half of what you have been saying," she tells her friend, "It sounds to me very much as if you had stumbled into a lumber-room of queer ideas; snatched up a handful, all on different subjects, and woven them into a speech as incongruous as Joseph's variegated coat" (160). The objection does not deny itself the "incongruous" style it critiques in its object, mixing a metaphor and concluding in a Biblical allusion and a five-syllable set piece. The point seems to be that one's own objections to vocal variegation need not inhibit one's indulgence of it. There is

[59] (not to mention cooked her cat)

an eclecticism of the plunge and "grope among subterranean caverns, black and icy," it appears, and one too for those who, as Clara says she does, prefer to "glide on the surface" (160).

Beulah's body becomes now something she can distort according to her studies and vexed speculations. Clara informs her that her melancholy intellections further contort her body: "You are even getting a weird, unearthly look" (160). Clara turns to go, and Beulah would rather lose her friend for the night than her place in a book:

> "Are you going so soon? I had hoped we should spend a profitable evening, but it has slipped away, and I have done nothing. Good night." She rose and gave the customary good-night kiss, and as Clara retired to her own room, Beulah turned up the wick of her lamp, and resumed her book… (161)

Beulah's outer ugly, "turned up" as her wick is, repeats itself inside as eclecticism, as a sense that the truth is something bejumbled and must be apprehended in that style, in the mingling of off-scale ideas drawn from disparate sources.

In Evans's *St. Elmo*, the heroine writes a book that synthesizes all mythologies with one another, and with Christianity. Its hardness is reflected in its title, *Shining Thorns on the Hearth*. Incredibly, it's a bestseller, and complaints like Clara's are voiced by the professional critics whom oppose *Thorns*'s "surplus paraded erudition" (the phrase, with its own small surplusness, is quoted in novel as if it came fresh from the critics' lips). In *Beulah*, however, the crosspollination of books yields no masterbook—only a mastering passion, an ambition expressed in periodical pieces.[60]

Ambition, which was first a reflexive thing, a desire of Beulah's to be taught how to teach, or to have time and a room in which to teach oneself how to teach—Guy, with his "extensive and select library" (119), provides this—, becomes something into which the most

[60] Two are mentioned explicitly: one on "Inner Life" (283-284) and one, untitled, on the virtues of uncoupled existence (331). This second matches, in sentiment, one of the fine set pieces of Evans's *Macaria* (1863), in which the single lady is celebrated: 238-239. There is also a precursor mentioned, a valedictory on "Female Heroism" (140).

disparate things pile and mutually modify. Beulah, we read, "did the very thing of all others best calculated to harass her mind and fill it with inexplicable mysteries. She constituted her own reason the sole judge; and then, dubious of the verdict, arraigned reason itself" (288-289). Beulah makes herself as complexly reflexive as that last sentence does, and as subjectless (is Beulah the subject of the last verb, or, as befits it, is "the sole judge," reason?): she possesses an emptiness that is full of all things, full of "history, essays, novels, poems, and reviews" (289, see also 120). This is one of sentimentalism's signal achievements: it is as full of other books as *Beulah* seems to be, indeed as full as Beulah of *Beulah*.

Thus Beulah's philosophical experimentation, her persistence in "studying herself into a mere shadow" (181), both transcribes and repeats (philosophically) and enhances (bodily) her ugly. The town's talk, having first transmuted her body into a topic, to be passed between families who are redundantly familiar with one another, appears alongside Beulah's compositional practices and philosophical sensibility. More materially, this experimentation causes her to innovate in ugliness, to discover other, queerer uglies, as her friend Clara points out ("There is no more color in your face and hands, than in that wall yonder. There is such a thing as studying too much" [161]), before kissing her and leaving her to burn more midnight oil. Clara's precept, which reads like something she has read before, makes it clear that there are more persons talking than Clara when she talks. But the town does not care to follow Beulah through the nice points of new uglies (hands that have grown a shade paler, eyes far-off and ceaselessly squinting [161]). In the second half of the book, they have a new topic for her, and that topic is love.[61]

[61] The topic, in fact dominates the silent film remediation of *Beulah* (1915), which its advertisers characterize, with a clunkiness that speaks truth, as a "heart interest novel"; the ugly appearance of Beulah is not mentioned in plot summaries of the film, nor is her philosophical activity (Jura 204).

The first character to sense the mutual interest of Guy and Beulah is Guy's frowning sister, May Chilton. She inhibits its circulation as a rumor, rather than promotes it: "Is he mad to dream of making that little outcast his heiress?" she mutters to herself (57). Later, after the reader has forgotten May with her "might-bes,"[62] the town wants to talk about the capacity of Beulah's body to bear Guy's desire and to return it. The rumor is everywhere and nowhere, without origin,

We notice that that ad features prominently the text "BIGGEST MONEY MAKER OF THE YEAR," not because *Beulah is* that big money-maker, but because in a possible-future world it *may* wear that phrase proudly: a sentimental-style deployment of cliché. Further, we notice that it is typical of sentimentalism to dissolve the real into "six reels," as in the phrase "BEULAH in Six Reels." Special thanks to Jean-Jacques Jura (Emeritus, California State University, Long Beach) for sharing this image and some speculations about Beulah in Long Beach with me via email.

[62] "May" indeed, the name suits her: "It cannot be possible that that miserable beggar…" (57). She seems to exist purely to bear such maybes. Her penchant for the hypothetical is out of sync with the sentimental imperfect as we discussed it.

without even an explicit exponent. It's simply there, in friends and enemies, soberly and playfully, confronted and then re-confronted.

> "No, not pretty, exactly; but there is something odd in her appearance. Her brow is magnificent, and I should judge she was intellectual. She is as colorless as a ghost. No accounting for Hartwell; ten to one he will marry her. I have heard it surmised that he was educating her for a wife—" Here the party who were in advance vanished… (136)

There's an overlap of topics, serviced by the narrator's assurances that development improved Beulah's appearance, but the point seems to be that the gossipers are the same gossipers, stuck still in the same mode, but now sussing out a new theme.

Add to this the advice of Harriet, a slave of the Hartwell family (though never explicitly called that in the text[63]). When Beulah prepares to move out of the Hartwell house ("I have always intended to leave here as soon as I was able to support myself" [149]), Harriet gives her some good advice: "if he chooses to give some of his fortune to you, it is nobody's business but his own; and you are mighty simple, I can tell you, if you don't stay here and take it" (149). And then, after a patronizing response from Beulah, Harriet gives her some more:

> I mean that the day is coming, when you will be glad enough to come back and let my master take care of you! That's what I mean. And see if it doesn't come to pass… It is no business of mine though. I have said my say: and I will be bound you will go your own gait. You are just about as hard-headed as he is himself. Anybody would almost believe you belonged to the Hartwell family. (149)

In Harriet's speech, this moment of separation is recast as one of intensified proximity. Beulah's potential structural identity with Harriet (mastered by the same man) appears before us, as does: Beulah's dispositional affinity with the Hartwell family and with Guy himself; saying one's say and going one's gait; one's business with another's; and speaking and meaning. Harriet speaks to Beulah with a wisdom that readers feel is more than her own: it is the wisdom of the subaltern,

[63] She's called a "servant" (see Trubey on Evans's aesthetic evasions of slavery). Harriet's speech patterns, while never directly in dialect, show a familiarity with the aesthetics of black speech that the narrator occasionally condescend to but pains herself not to corrupt rhythmically.

for one, with whom that first sentence identifies Beulah too; it is also the wisdom of the town; and it *also* is the wisdom of the reader who (we know) loves reading and is sad to see Beulah quit Guy's well-appointed library. My point is that Beulah first encounters the desire that she will own as her own and her inmost from without, in the "plain speech" of another that she (in the moment) contorts her affections to avoid identifying with.

After she has overhead it, Beulah hears the notion over and over. Every time she hates it. Until, in Guy's absence—he wanders, the Orient, as vaguely as Gerty's boyfriend and father do in *The Lamplighter*, after his first proposal to Beulah is rejected—a wander that the other doctors in town regard with annoyance ("A plague on Guy's peregrinating proclivities" [398]), because it busies them, but a wander that most others in town seem to tolerate, as if they knew it to be a mere motif, ("heathenating" [401])—until, that is, while caring for Guy's shaggy dog without him,[64] Beulah comes to hate not the rumor she's heard but her own first-blush hatred of that rumor. Which is kind of loving Guy. Loving him, sure, is what she does, or will do, will probably do, upon his return, she thinks. Given that, she ought to offer herself to him, ceding if necessary her ambition—predictably, Guy will insist, hypotheticals are sometimes so nasty—, if return he does, perhaps in some ineffable way cooled, from his wandering. Her hope of his return grows "pale" (408), just like her face so infamously did (181): her love and ugly assimilate.

Then Guy is back:

> "Beulah, do you cling to me because you love me? or because you pity me? or because you are grateful to me for past love and kindness? Answer me, Beulah."
> "Because you are my all."
> "How long have I been your all?"
> "Oh, longer than I knew myself!" was the evasive reply. (411-412)

Though this declaration is not all, here: previous lovers on both sides can be discussed, as can metaphysics (412-413). Hartwell is a father and a lover, not yet for Freudian reasons, but so

[64] Isa too falls hard for a kin-system, dog first: *I* 8.

these opposite roles might, taken together, be plausibly able to signal something closed, something complete, something "all." I love you sounds like that, in this novel. The reader has the sense that Beulah's unconscious has been collective: she was the last one to know her desire, which lived in the whispered exchange between neighbors at the picnic or the party before it did inside her. As if those "black and icy" caves within her had not been populated with monsters of desire, but were empty, and so a space in which an echo did echo. Beulah experiences the intensely personal first as something trivial and basely communal. In the same way that her ugly annoyed her, desire first does: from without.

And without, too, is that desire's direction. It jumbles; it's massive; it masses. The love Beulah feels for Guy is not exactly about him—she weds her town, her nameless, blabbing town, hothouse of her eros. True to her name, she marries the land, its soil aerated by the whispers of the town plotted upon it. By contrast, in *The Lamplighter*, gossip is the chatter-background against which the sentimental novel's love-plot, and the heroine at its center, can recognize one desire as its or her own (the desire to marry this particular man or that one). For *Beulah*, rumor has for her a different recognition: namely, that desire is something other than, or more than, one's own. Erotic desire may even be a means or medium of solidarity with others—with many others, even long obnoxious others.[65]

[65] Beulah's ugly may be a sexuality (at least: a sort of sexuality) though it is such in a rather different sense than has been recently described by Dale Bauer in an article that examines "sentiment, sex, and the ugly girl" (1999/2000). Bauer convincingly finds the ugly girls of a slightly later moment, the 1870s, to embody the sort of excessive embodiment, and the excesses of erotic desire ("the pleasure of intimate contact" [69]), that will later be universalized as sexuality. The uglies of the seventies, for Bauer, "render sentimentalization moot" (58), and persist in the subgeneric imaginary in order to index that which can neither be ignored nor actively identified, namely female desire. Which is itself, at this moment, in the process of being reunderstood as sexuality or sexual identity, the inner truth of an individual actualized through actions, and particularly through acts of consumption. This is a two-step process for Bauer: "culture," first, "sentimentalized sexuality by displacing sex on to unsentimental—i.e. ugly—bodies," *and then* "dissociated" sexuality from ugliness, "a change necessary to recuperate sexuality as a choice, one inevitably imbricated with consumer culture" (58-59). The medium of these magic transformations, for

Marriage does not interest the narrator of *Beulah*. Truth being where we agree to conclude, or so I've heard, this story has its truth in the wedding ceremony, into which the town piles, rather than the drudge of life-in-twos, the sort of life that repulses narrative. "Reader, marriage is not the end of life; it is but the beginning of a new course of duties; but I cannot now follow Beulah. Henceforth, her history is bound up with another's" (417). The other of that other's history—stories that are Beulah's without exactly being the sequel of this one—are sentimental novels. Beulah's wedding weds this story to other similar stories, stories that prefer wedding to marriage, confusion to coupledom, circulation to the individual's "course" of development.[66] Desire directs itself according to group solidarity in *Beulah*, instead of expressing to the individual her individuality.[67]

Beulah's ugly sits strangely in the story about her, unseen but deep-structural, like her unrepresented periodical essays and her unrepresentable wedding. Each of these is their own jumble, and assimilates its readers to its assimilation of incongruous features (Trotter 5,

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Bauer, is the blood: it converts sex to ugly and ugly to sexuality; hence blood's prominence in the sentimental and post-sentimental texts in which sex is updated into sexuality (Phelp's *The Silent Partner* [1871]; Pauline Hopkins's *Of One Blood* [1903]).

The bloody-sexy-ugly of the 1860s and 1870s predicts and enables the cultural arrival of the concept of sexuality; it exists, as such, in the nineteenth-century as what Raymond Williams would call an "emergent" formation. Beside it, but firmly outside it, sits Beulah's ugly, talky-groupy instead of bloody-sexy. We might describe this, in Williams's vocabulary, as "residual." Beulah's ugly does not, ultimately, divest her of our sentimental investment, nor does it expose her to her own surging inner/erotic truth. Instead, cribbing language the late Foucault uses for the best forms of sexuality, Beulah's ugly becomes the means by which she "arrive[s] at a multiplicity of relationships" ("Friendship as a Way of Life")—and even, tweaking Foucault, what we might recognize as an intimate relationship with the multiplicity.

[66] If this were a bildungsroman, Beulah would have married Reginald Lindsey. Think *The Morgesons* where this happens: you love the one who you find out there in the world, after putting yourself back together once.

[67] A catastrophe upon *Beulah*'s erotics, which (unfortunately) shares its formal structure, is the one that formats the marriages of the fundamentalists of America. In it, one's erotic modality is more about the community and its norms than the husband or wife one might be required to repress oneself wildly to endure.

Goldmann *SN* 21). Of these three messes, however, Beulah's ugly is the messiest, for it is structurally precluded from entering the reader's experience. Beulah's ugly does not exist, in the same sense that "woman" for the Lacan of Seminar XX, "does not exist." Which is to say that personal, palpable ugliness—the ugly mug qua mug—cannot be given as such in words. Words can describe but cannot mimetically reproduce the visual experience of an ugly face. Described, the ugly mug has the remarkable result of marking the limits of the verbal.

Each reader builds, then, her own Beulah, cognizant that each of legions of other readers does the same as well. As if to get the ball rolling, the text explicitly indicates the reader's careful and care-taking involvement during Beulah's introduction into it:

> At a first casual glance, one thought her rather homely, nay, decidedly ugly; yet, to the curious physiognomist, this face presented greater attractions than either of [her cuter companions]. Reader, I here paint you the portrait of that quiet little figure, whose history is contained in the following pages. A pair of large grey eyes set beneath an overhanging forehead, a boldly-projecting forehead, broad and smooth; a rather large but finely cut mouth, an irreproachable nose, of order furthest removed from the aquiline, and heavy black eyebrows, which, instead of arching, stretched straight across and nearly met. There was not a vestige of color in her cheeks; face, neck and hands wore a sickly pallor, and a mass of rippling, jetty hair drawn smoothly over the temples, rendered this marble-like whiteness more apparent. (6)

Beulah's ugly, like uncarved marble, or the unread pages that follow, is an experience that the reader must shape for herself. The narrator's stutters ("homely, nay, decidedly ugly"; "an overhanging forehead, a boldly-projecting forehead") and absurdity ("an irreproachable nose," a phrase that understands the reader's necessary silence as positive sponsorship, that is, as the suspension of reproach) signal the mess that reader must make herself equal to making. The narrator foregrounds also the limitations that inhere in verbal descriptions (what follows are pages, not a portrait) and the opportunity for imaginative engagement opened by those limitations (any portrait you paint, reader, is kind of your own, as well as many others). In this

context, we recall that Joan Copjec recuperates Lacan's enigmatic axiom ("la femme n'existe pas") for feminism by transforming it into an informal and collaborative injunction: "imagine there's no woman." The cuteness of Little Eva's body, in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, while just as imaginary as Beulah's, naturalizes the community it constructs. Beulah's ugly materializes the work of imaginative construction and the constructedness of the readerly community it convenes. Beulah's triumph is to make a mass public of her mess, of her messes.

Beulah's ugly, which materializes again as a topic immediately before the final chapter, tutors her as a lover. "She had been an ugly child," the narrator informs, "but certainly she was a noble-looking, if not handsome woman" (408): this sentence cedes Beulah's matured ugly to readers, allowing them to allow her to retain it if they please, and only if they please. Beulah looks noble, perhaps even handsome; Beulah looks noble, but without looking handsome—the sentence could be read either way. Sentimentalism, at its best, can do that: gather stories; gather readers; gather concepts; even messy ones. We can call it "queer," in that peculiar nineteenth-century sense that so frequently appears to be charged with its own semantic destiny.

Ugly… atheist… lover…: to the mid-nineteenth century, this is a story as familiar as unfamiliar, a story in which the unfamiliar becomes unfamiliar with its strangeness, in which the familiar discovers a "striking kinship" with the unusual. It's like Maud's *Vashti* in that way: one recognizes every sentimental plot in the paraphrase, and none. To persist in one's ugliness is not *per se* an erotics—though it must be admitted: that's a promising start—but to use your ugly to kickstart an interest in metaphysics, to ride that into an obsession with eclectic methods, and to wed somehow your town, with a tremble that indexes no hesitation (417). That, all that, *is* an erotics, I think: of homes and homologies.

CHAPTER TWO

MELVILLE'S MORPHOLOGY

Its critics sometimes refer to the bildungsroman as a "phantom genre":[1] a crucial term for critics of the nineteenth-century novel, it never seems quite to suit actually existing nineteenth-century novels. As the Germanist Frederick Amrine suggests, the form-term animates a "disturbing dialectic of everything and nothing" (122), a dialectic in which the plot of synthetic maturity seems both hypercentral to discussions of the nineteenth-century novel (Franco Moretti, for example, invigorates the bildungsroman's claim to be "the form which will dominate or, more precisely, make possible the Golden Century of Western narrative" [*WW* 3]) *and* hyperexclusive, so that the genre's ideal of education is too high for any of its positive aspirants to hit (as Marc Redfield notes, *Wilhelm Meister* is often "denied entry into the genre it is usually supposed to have founded or exemplified" [*PF* 41]).[2]

From such a situation, two lessons may be taken. One is that the bildungsroman is the victim of its own overpopularity: its misappropriation by members, for example, of English Departments, who inflate and confuse the concept. There's no dearth of critics willing to learn others this lesson: to learn it upon Jerome Buckley's *Season of Youth: The* Bildungsroman *from*

[1] Jeffrey Sammons, "The Mystery of the Missing *Bildungsroman*; or, What Happened to Wilhelm Meister's Legacy?" (1981): 243. See also Redfield, *Phantom Formations* (1996).

[2] The terms of Redfield's basic redescription of the genre are keen to us: the bildungsroman may be that generic space in which every example must also seem a founding act. In this way, it recapitulates in its form what Leslie Fielder and Fredric Jameson separately consider a definitive feature of the novel form; the imperative that each one gathers newness into itself. The American writer, for Fielder, "is forever *beginning*, say for the first time…" (*Love and Death* [1960, rev. 1966] 24); and each novel, for Jameson, along one zag of his argumentation at least, "is different, a leap into the void, an invention of content simultaneous with the invention of form" (*Prison-House* [1972] 73).

Dickens to Golding (1974), for instance, which uses but refuses explication to its central term.[3] But the situation's other moral may in fact be that the "everything or nothing" dialectic is part of the concept itself, part of the concept as it has come into proper codification. This strange dynamism is *in* the definition, is more visible in fact than any of the definition's concrete contents. What would this mean? Perhaps that the drama of the term is at one with that of its object: both make large, abstract system (Western narrative; the Golden Century; the contemporary Academy, confused with Departments) felt in the fingertips of the individual, who synthesizes himself in the discovery the system's synthesis. The term's quirks of academic usage reproduce the manner in which the genre stands in vital relation with its own negation, the "phantoms" that bedevil as they develop this novel form. This chapter will imagine that this quirk of genre-belonging—namely that it sometimes seems that, though everything depends on it, there are no texts belonging in this genre—gives away the game the genre plays. From the perspective of the reader of a given bildungsroman, it must seem that the existence of the genre depends on exactly *that* text's triumphant exemplification of it.

The bildungsroman projects itself through such possibilities by making them show up in or as scenes of reading. Reflexivity shows up, in the bildungsroman as in its criticism, or strives to, in terms of a supreme instance, condensed into *an exemplary example*. The father's guidebook, returned to and re-read, marked by the imprint of generations of readers, is one salient instance of this (from Herman's Melville's *Redburn* [1849]—a text we will return to, to re-read). Reflexivity tends differently, in different subgenres. In the realist case, we have seen, it's a matter of *Details*: small objects subsist beside one another, each enjoying its own eachness, each in-itself and each other-than, like realist novels. Sentimentalism tends to the clumping or

[3] This book becomes a whipping-boy—or, perhaps better to say, bad *Urbild*—throughout the collection of essays called *Reflection and Action* (1991).

massing expressed in Beulah's writerly eclecticism, sampled in the last chapter: value, for Beulah, is a function of the variety it is felt to shuffle together. And as its presents in Poe, as later we'll prove, the gothic prefers emblems of quirky dispersal: manuscripts tossed overboard and purloined letters, texts that arrive at their destination by seeming to have strayed from it. These four compossible modes of reflection reflect the innovation/regularity paradox they share, and to which they each compose a cognate response, that defines cultural production through the novel-system to the nineteenth century. The bildungsroman, therefore, comes to itself differentially, and the self it comes to is one for which the species seems to depend on or in the individual. It is the province of the bildungsroman to traffic typicality toward prototypicality, to prefer to speak not in merely instances but prototypes and paradigms: *the* representative, *the* exemplary.[4]

[4] A problem has migrated inside the novel and the novel's genre-system, by 1840. There are too many novels (in Melville's *Pierre*, this appears as an awareness of "the ever multiplying freshets of new books" [*P* 264]); there is too much that is new and too much that is not new in them. For example, reviewers find *Pierre* to be both excessively iconoclastic ("a torrent rhapsody uttered in defiance of taste and sense" [qtd. *P* "Historical Note" 382]) and excessively clichéd (*Pierre* is thick with "some of the most ancient and most repulsive inventions of the George Walker and Anne Radcliffe sort" [qtd. "HN" 380]). A plausibly "common" audience abides its own inexistence in the opposition of these opinions. The central solution to this problem is the evolution of a system of subgenres, a set of four related responses to a situation that has become too complex for responsible cognition and conscious response. Two of the responses are basically conservative, namely the gathering-aesthetic of sentimentalism and the aspirational representativity of the bildungsroman; two are basically progressive, namely those manifold sub- and sub-sub genres that floats inside the gothic and the premium that literary realism places on simple, individual difference. The Introduction of this project studied the realist's solution, in which a novel reflects upon itself, its historical situation, and its place in the novel-system, in a manner that discovers to that novel a simultaneous in-itself-ness and other-than-ness. This chapter will explore the opposite solution, it may be imagined a bolder one, or it may be imagined a more conservative one, hearkening to the epic or theodicy's conquest-y style genre-belonging, the bildungsroman's.

In this genre's morphospace, the cultural proliferation of the novel becomes something that *a* novel comes into itself by overcoming. The bildungsroman builds itself out of what seems the best of its predecessors, and hence bests them (and bests too, or so hopes, their other progeny). The most reactionary of what I have called the novel's four core forms, the bildungsroman aspires to triumph over "the triumph of the novel" (Baym *Novels, Readers, and Reviewers* [1984]), its overform's massification, by condensing the novel's best components into an exemplary novel. We can sharpen by perception through *Pierre*, again. Ironically, the aspiration to constrict cultural creation rebounds upon the aspirant in spectacular fashion. This novel makes it impossible, for a time, for one of the nineteenth-century's greatest novelists to publish any more novels.

If that is true, the Anglo-American tradition, and in particular the American one, sheds its seeming inappropriateness and acquires a kind of special aptitude for the study of the form. In no other literary tradition is this plot of ambition and achievement so omnipresent, so "everywhere"—massified in success manuals and culture-industry fictions (what Henry Nash Smith has called "the cosmic success story," a veritable "myth" to Irvin Wyllie); dignified and centralized in "the nineteenth century's idea of representative personality" (Breitwieser 1); foregrounded, even, in the plots of the novel-system's other subgenres, so as to be opposingly overcome in them (through adoption or perversion, for instance, in sentimental and gothic novels, respectively). And yet no other literary tradition is so paltry of instances of the bildungsroman tradition, classic hardcore *Bildung*, as the American one seems.[5] Nowhere, that

[5] In current Americanist criticism, there is no rigorous and sustained conversation about the bildungsroman, its place in the tradition or its social function. The concept seems to slip into the crack that opens between older critics' discussions of "the hero-quester theme" (or aggrandizements of "the tragedy of innocence," pace R.W.B. Lewis [*American Adam*]) and the "cosmic success story" of culture-industry fictions (Smith). The two extant, explicit studies illustrate certain impasses of the term's application; these are Eve G. Herold's Ohio State dissertation *A Study of the Bildungsroman in American Literature* (1973) and Joke Kardux's "The Politics of Genre, Gender, and Canon-Formation: The Early American *Bildungsroman* and Its Subversions" (1992). Both find Benjamin Franklin's so-called *Autobiography*, which is not a novel, to be the paradigm, the primary American instance. From there, one (Herald) shuffles into the Leatherstocking series (which is *also* not a novel, strictly speaking, but a sequence of novels); the other (Kardux) eyes the progressive and synthetic histories of George Bancroft as so many entries in a massive bildungsroman. Both conflate the bildungsroman, a prestige genre, with its cartoonish mass-culture iteration, the success fable, Horatio Alger sorts of stuff; and Lawrence Buell's chapter on "'Success' Stories from Franklin to the Dawn of Modernism" in *The Dream of the Great American Novel* (2014) indulges the same temptation. But being a "central" cultural form is different from being a "popular" one; and being a recognized as a "novel of development" is something other than succeeding in being a recognized as a "success story."

The dislocation of the bildungsroman from the morphospace of the novel, I wager, is traumatic to the concept. The term appears in other studies only to find itself negated in three compounding ways: (1) as the plot from which male protagonists flee ("wooing, marriage, and child-bearing" in Fiedler's redaction [*Love and Death* 25]) into an Elsewhere; (2) as the tendency of youthful ambition that "woman's fiction" exists to see renounced (think *Beulah*); and (3) as itself degraded into parody by the culture industry, which resolves its plots of individuation into a goofy excessiveness. Moreover, the opacity seems to present on both sides: critics concerned with the bildungsroman as such, even those concerned with its presence in Literatures in English (like Jerome Buckley), do not treat American texts. In *The Cambridge History of the American Novel* (2011), one of the critical compilations mentioned in our Introduction, the bildungsroman shows up only in its thriving in domains derived from political identities. Qualified—female (110), gay (551), West Indian (600)—are all the mentions it receives.

is, is the bildungsroman both as legion and as elusive as it is in midcentury America. And so, paradoxically, nowhere can we find so suitable a laboratory for its study.

The shape of Herman Melville's career as a novelist, a space in which the grand and ungraspable phantom is able to migrate to the midmost point, will be the proving ground for this approach. The "dialectic of everything and nothing" does not disturb Melville; in fact, it animates his creativity; it is something indeed seen in animals in it. And so Melville's career, in which progressive unfolding is staged and studied and sabotaged, thematized by his heroes and incessantly actualized in the author himself ("Lord, when shall we be done changing?" he asks Hawthorne [*C* 213], in the throes of his becoming), can come to look like a study in the thing that is not there: the standard, straight-up bildungsroman. The bildungsroman is both central and excluded in the morphospace of Melville's career, appearing to appear at the apex of his early novels, *Redburn*, and the again in the digest of his decline that is *Pierre*,[6] and in both cases in tellingly imperfect ways. In progressive, internal permutations, Melville studies the relationship between an integral society and an integral individual, as well as their opposites, in the first novels of his career (especially *Typee* and *Omoo*) and in his final ones (especially *Israel Potter* and *The Confidence-Man*). In the middle of his career, he examines the bildungsroman, in two contrary moods (*Redburn* and *Pierre*), that together upset, so as to observe, so as to erode, the sociopoetic rhyme of careering and coupling on which the bildungsroman seems to depend.[7]

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[6] It appears to appear to the experts, at least. Nina Baym, who takes care in the application of genre terms and concepts, refers to both *Redburn* and *Pierre* as bildungsromanae in her landmark study of his career, "Melville's Quarrel with Fiction" (1979). I require no expert to demonstrate more expertise than she does here. However, I note that Hershel Parker, who will appear often in what follows, and often himself as quarreler, disputes her argument (for instance, see *Melville: The Making of a Poet* [2008] 4).

[7] Sociopoetic rhyme between an economic structure and an intimate one, the career and the couple, each crucial (if new) normative forms in their own social system, and plausibly in the system of such systems that is society, indicated in a literary one, the novel and the bildungsroman in particular, the tendency of

Melville's morphology thus circumvents the bildungsroman at the same time it allocates to it a central position. [8]

The bildungsroman is defined by its capacity to respond, as an individual example, to a situation in which the existence of its kind has been called into question. That's the way I have provisionally defined the form. What follows will study the bildungsroman by isolating and slowly exfoliating two ways in which it fails to appear as such in Melville's oeuvre. For one, the bildungsroman first appears in *Redburn* only to be immediately opposed from within. *Redburn* thus is a text that builds itself out by both incarnating and internalizing an opposition to the logic of the classic bildungsroman. In addition to this, Melville's career constructs itself through what may seem a systematic study of alternatives to *Bildung*. It develops itself by developing the alternatives to development, alternatives to intimacy and (a term Melville will labor to load) to "occupation," from captivity (*Typee*) and roving (*Omoo*) to exile (*Israel Potter*) and existential inconsistency (*The Confidence-Man*). (This is the age not only of the novel, but also of the novelist, a new form of the literary career, with formal possibilities of its own to be tested.[9]) These bi-level evasions of the bildungsroman—Melville's opposition to it and his doctrine of alternate occupations—afford this chapter the means by which the bildungsroman, a "phantom

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which is to synthesize such alongside relations into mutually absorbing relations. The couple and the career are both structures, both modern structures, and their shape is homologous.

[8] "Morphology" itself is a term coined by Goethe, in his treatise on the study of plants, and often invoked in critical conversations about the bildungsroman (a concept which too is made to seek an origin in Goethe). One of the foundational studies of Russian Formalism, Propp's *Morphology of the Folk Tale* (1928), takes an epigraph from Goethe ("The study of forms is the study of transformations") that might also serve as a motto for the traditional bildungsroman.

[9] In *Culture, Genre, and Literary Vocation* (2000), Michael Davitt Bell spells out "a story of the changes in the social status and meaning of literary vocation" latent in the "story of changes in literary production and distribution—of changes in royalty arrangements, pricing, publishing, and transportation, and the like" (69-70). This chapter will study these stories inside the stories they make it possible for Melville to tell, and indeed *the story* these stories are each made possible in turn by *not* telling, that of the classic bildungsroman.

formation," might be grasped in its absence, instead of conjured-away by a putative feat of precision.

Melville queers and queries not only the impulse to individual synthesis, but also its typical object, the sociopoetic rhyme between the career form and the couple form that is best established and perhaps culturally centralized by the bildungsroman. The bildungsroman organizes the morphogenesis of Melville's career through its refusal of a place there; this refusal reverberates with a modulation in the erotics of these texts, their fundamental reconfiguration of the drift of their reader's desire. The two movements might be grasped like this: Melville first attaches the reader to an exploration of her propensities of attachment (to what might your inclinations tend, and how?), and then attaches these to a sequence of detached images, snapshots of detachment. The concept of the career, as it is thematized in *Pierre*, retreats from the substance of the fiction into the substance of fictionalist. It refers the reader back to the context composed by the career: Pierre's queer career throws the reader back onto the plane of Melville's. This career can bear a plethora of intimate possibilities, instead of (as in the classic bildungsroman, with its marital imperative) condensing them into one (the career and its other side, loving couplehood).[10]

[10] The bildungsroman shows itself a crucial category to discussions of the nineteenth-century novel for the specifying rehearsal it gives to that cultural form's central dilemma, what I have called the innovation/regularity paradox. A drama of bildung is, as its core term suggests, one both of free formation (*Bildung*), active self-shaping, and of reproduction based upon an extant model (*Urbild*)—a drama, that is, that brokers the dialectic of innovation and tradition into that of development and reproduction. The bildungsroman will study these formal possibilities in two of its core thematics, individual development (in a word: apprenticeship and career) and reproduction (that brand of reproduction secured in the new nineteenth-century ideal of romantic couplehood: childcraft). Indeed, the poetics of the bildungsroman, animated by the dilemmas of apprenticeship and concluded regularly in an act of sustained coupling, depend upon the form's keen perception of the seeming structural isomorphism, what I have been calling the sociopoetic rhyme, between two vital nineteenth-century formations (one belonging to the economic system, the other the intimate one). Glimpsed from a specific spot within a third social system, namely the position of the bildungsroman within the novel-system, these two disparate entities disclose their homology, their reciprocity of basic shape, and as paired quilt-points for the essentially excluded, that is to say modern, individual. The career confers on the individuality of the individual a legible shape.

If the function of the classic bildungsroman is to place the form always in the context of the process of its formation, its morphogenesis, then Melville applies this to the form of the form itself, studying the bildungsroman in its genetic becoming (*Typee, Omoo*), its dialectical flux *(Redburn*, *Pierre*), and its complex overcoming (*Israel Potter*, *Confidence-Man*). The form of formation, the bildungsroman, thus becomes the grist for what *Pierre* calls "the metamorphosing mill" (*P* 246). It is a bi-level evasion: it abides as two very different levels, it explores two different rhythms, simultaneously. We deny ourselves the phenomenon by glimpsing it in only one. And so this chapter has as its A-side a reading of *Redburn*, and, as its B-side, a collection of looser and longer riffs on Melville's career.

I The Bachelor and the Orphan

What is the opposite of the bildungsroman? A soundly formed theoretical concept should have an opposite, and surely this holds for the concept that stands for the principle of sound self-formation. But it is hard to say precisely. Antecedents abound, from spiritual autobiography to picaresque novels, as do historical overcomings, as in Naturalist plots of degeneration or twentieth-century fables about "growing sideways" (Stockton). Complements too: the sentimental novel and the gothic, white and black Romanticism in the terms of Leslie Fiedler (*Love and Death* 162-163), each of which relies on and revises the bildungsroman's basic plot of ambition and achievement to its own respective ends: the discovery of kinship in the former and its demolition in the latter. These two genres are not opposites of the bildungsroman, however, but of one another. The intimacy of opposition that binds sentimentalism to the gothic—visible in their respective cathexes of the family, sought supremely in one (sentiment novels often end in

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Insular couple-intimacy enriches and makes visible the shape's other side, maybe dark side, mold under the mold. This is not the only way the bildungsroman discloses it tendency toward synthesis, this breeding of career with love-couple, but it is one over which this chapter will linger.

multi-marriages) and fled as fervently in the other (think incest motif)—is harder to scout for the bildungsroman. Temperance novels and other midcentury fictions of the appetitive body flaunt the fun that mistakes can make, but lack the literary heft that entrenched opposition demands. And anyway they tend to confirm, if cartoonishly, the plot whose interest is centered in stable self-formation, not contest it.

What literary form might the opposition to literary self-formation take? I have an answer to this question: the break-up novel is my answer. Seeded in the same historical moment as its opposite, the bildungsroman, this novelistic subgenre matches the accomplishment of its rival. In America, in particular, it spawns several of the minor classics of the nineteenth century: Charles Brockden Brown's *Stephen Calvert* (1799-1800); Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* (1827); Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Blithedale Romance* (1852); Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Minister's Wooing* (1859); William Dean Howells's *A Chance Acquaintance* (1873); and Henry James's *The American* (1877). Novels of nonrapport study the same erotohistoriographical formation that stabilizes the bildungsroman—the insular, elective permacouple[11]—but foreground the structural instabilities and temporal infelicities of that formation.

The break-up novel's logic of genre-belonging presents the critic with difficulties. The bildungsroman—critics often refer to the genre in the singular, and no accident—loves to exemplify: to seek and explain (to others and themselves) exemplary individuals; to do so in instances that exemplify their genre-formation accurately, even excellently; and to symptomatically condense the monumental cultural formations they partake of (modernity, for instance, or modern literature [Moretti *WW* 5; Redfield 62]). A true, trenchant opposite-genre would contest not only themes and topoi, but above all the bildungsroman's formal emphasis on representative individuality. One has to imagine a genre in which instances shy away from their

[11] For an historian's account of this, see Lystra. On "erotohistoriography," see Freeman 59.

potent exemplarity, in which instances might be said to pursue their individuality in a halfhearted or half-turned-away way. Examples of a genre like that might flee an unenviable specificity into the resources of genre, its stock figures and familiar dilemmas. These ears, alas, for other notes repine. Why can't I turn off the radio?

Heather Love's *Feeling Backward* addresses this very difficulty: how should the reader respond to objects whose desire to be left alone, not to be touched, she wishes both to respect and to inspect? While the bildungsroman, a technology of exemplification, can be convincingly instanced and thereby have its deep structure laid bare—the genre seems to seek critical condensation, we could say—, the elucidation of the break-up novel will require the performance of what I call a conceptual fugue, a set of cascading critical descriptions of a single textual phenomenon. The text on the table will be Melville's fourth novel and what I'll seek to describe is that something in this text that binds event to event, character to character, chapter to chapter, and which is certainly not the story. *Redburn* "styles" itself after its broken heart, in the sense that Jordan Stein recently has given this word (2009). Its components turn away from one another, each liking each no more than former lovers, sometimes forgetting one another and sometimes unable to. The conceptual fugue that follows means less to grasp its object than to notice that object's consistent, creative refusal to grasp itself, and to involve all the resources of love-uncoupling in the process.

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What *is* the bildungsroman? Definitions vary, of course. In fact, definitions vary in a fashion that forces the critic to repeat the peculiar synthesis of raw material, the cumulative shaping-of-content, that is the central operation of the form itself. Critical engagement involves one in the performance of an act like the one being studied. "The bildungsroman seems to

constitute one of those quagmires of literary study in which increased rigor produces nothing more tangible than increased confusion," Marc Redfield observes (41). Talking about the novel of formation regularly inspires critics to perform and re-perform, each in their own way, the process of conceptual formation. This relay between the thematics of education and the process of readerly education has been part of the genre's operation from the first. In the first recorded use of the word, philologist Karl Moregenstern insists that a certain novel "would justly bear the name bildungsroman because it portrays the *Bildung* of a hero…and also secondly because it is by virtue of this portrayal that it furthers the reader's *Bildung* to a much greater extent than any other kind of novel" (qtd. Redfield 54). The hero finds himself by seeking a synthesis of heteroclite experiences. That task is for the bildungsroman's critic to perform, in his or her own way, too.

The situation that defines the bildungsroman, and that it defines for its reader, is that of the modern world in its manifest messiness, its contingency and the internal inconsistence of its institutions, which brokers a problem to be resolved inside the individual. Such an individual must, in or as his personality, discover a new form of satisfying synthesis, a form of integration to match and offset that salient disintegration he has witnessed in the world about him. The scene of the bildungsroman is evoked effectively in Niklas Luhmann's claim that the modern world is configured around the absence of a binding representation of society within society itself (Rasch 23). Hence the restlessness, the ceaseless self-revolution, that shuttles the individual from one representation to the next. Disintegration of the social order enables the individual to order himself, and then to re-order that self. The genre exists as if to exemplify Lukács's theory of the novel, in which "the contingent world" and "the problematic individual" seem to be "realities

which mutually determine one another" (78). For the bildungsroman, the cipher of the social, grasped in its disintegration, is the individual who integrates himself.

Preferring an economy of terms, we can describe the situation with this equation:

$$F_x(a) \cong F_{-x}(b)$$

in which *x* = disintegration, *a* = communal ideals, or the ideal community organized by the sharing of ideals, and *b* = the individual. The disintegration of an ideal community, the sense of which blows through the bildungsroman like an unwholesome wind through the graveyard (Dickens 42), discovers adequate recompense in the process by which the individual achieves his own inner integration, and his concomitant integration into the social order. The seal of this double integration is also double: career and couplehood.

David Copperfield (1850) illustrates the equation. David's sense that "there is no such thing as fulfillment on this earth" (606), that this world is a disenchanted one in which reactions cannot be predicted, desires err and pervert, and true purposes show themselves only in retrospection, is both indexed and fulfilled in his domestic joy with Agnes. Agnes's infamous up-turned finger, that novel's closing shot, may effectively indicate an empty heaven, a God who no longer makes himself felt and so who must be pointed to, a God that requires David to create and invest his own sacred sites in an abandoned world. That finger points to the reader too, who sits literally above the page, especially when at a desk (the primal scene of education). This reader, in which disintegration at one scale—the social—finds suitable compensation in integration at another—the individual—, and in which these two forms of integration are themselves artfully integrated, benefits from David's sacred investment as much as he does.

Marriage takes a central place in the classical bildungsroman because it centers and stabilizes the hero's development.[12] For an Anglo-American society that feels the disintegration of a stable social order in the shape and tendency of the individual's self-experience (the rise of self-reliance), romantic love emerges as the site for the consolidation of a personality that can exist apart from one's jumbling involvements in social systems. The insight is registered in Luhmann's chapter, in *Social Systems*, on the interaction between social systems, which he calls interpenetration, and the dilemma of the human who must, in modernity, straddle and toggle such systems—a chapter which cunningly, punningly, shuffles these problems into the problem of "interpersonal interpenetration," also called intimacy. Intimacy can thematize and sometimes resolve the structural impasses of the modern world: the bildungsroman exists in order to exemplify this truth.

Modern society makes its coherence concretely felt by its members, even if they cannot come to a stable image of it, according to Georg Simmel; this is why "the life of society," for him, is something to be regarded "phenomenologically" ("How" 20). The social form, for Simmel, seems to show the individual a place that is not simply for him but is really his own, that answers to his autonomous development: "The a priori of the individual's social existence is the fundamental correlation between his life and the society that surrounds him, the integrative function and the necessity of his specific character, as it is determined by his personal life, to the life of the whole" (21); "for every personality there exists a position and a function in society to which he is called and which he must seek and find" (21). For Simmel, this should feel like "a certain place" that one is certain is one's own, that seems to suit one by a sort of felt

[12] Moretti gives the definitive answer to the question of "why the classical *Bildungsroman* 'must' always conclude with marriages": "It is not only the foundation of the family that is at stake, but that 'pact' between the individual and the world, that reciprocal 'consent' which finds in the double 'I do' of the wedding ritual an unsurpassed symbolic condensation… One either marries or, in one way or another, must leave social life…" (*WW* 22-23).

predestination (20), a place one might seem to occupy and that one might do so through an occupation, a vocation. Vocation becomes the space in which "the structure and development of society" and "individual qualities and impulses" express the potential of their sometimes-felt "harmony, whatever its origin":

> On the one hand, society within itself produces and offers to the individual a place which—however different in content and delimitation it may be from other places—can be filled by many individuals, and which is, for this reason, something anonymous, as it were. One the other hand, this place, in spite of its general character, is nevertheless taken by the individual on the basis of an inner calling, a qualification felt to be intimately personal. (21)

The mystique of occupation, by which an anonymous place is felt in a specific person to be not only one's own but "intimately" so, is one of the crucial illusions of modern social forms.[13] To the extent that the bildungsroman or apprenticeship novel takes precisely this as its crucible, together with its other side, the intimate relationship that appears on the career's other side (its sometimes refuge, drain, motivation, and supplement), the bildungsroman seems indeed to be as central a "symbolic form" as Franco Moretti discovers it to be.

We can remark the everyday radiance that tends to invest commonplace objects in the bildungrsoman by one further turn of our equation. Preserving our economy of terms, we might refer to this as a kind of cognate function: $F_{-a}(y)$, shorthand for the co-idealization (F_{-a}) of the elements of education (y), the simple objects that appear as if lit from within, the way in which the meaning of life is curled inside everyday objects in this genre. "[P]recarious, mixed to the indifference of the world: but always also tenaciously *there*," in common stuff, transcendence is, says Moretti ("SC" 376, original emphasis). Such enchanted objects are called by Copperfield, "the oddest things": "the shape of the room, the cracks in the ceiling, the paper on the wall, the flaws in the window-glass making ripples and dimples in the prospect, the washing-stand being

[13] For a historian's take, see Hilkey.

rickety on its three legs" (44). The ideal hasn't simply disappeared from the world of the bildungsroman; it has been relocated. The ideal appears, in spurts, but with a new thing-like thickness. It invests everyday objects, accidental things, which can be encountered piecemeal in the process of education. In fact, I believe that it is possible to tell the story of a bildungs-hero through the enchanted objects that their narrative discovers. Cassandra Morgeson, for instance, feels her own education in a succession of such objects precisely: pink calico, butter with a floral imprint, soup stock, a scarred cheek, a dim wick, a ruby ring. The upshot of marrying, for Cassandra, is the leisure time it affords her to seek back through her past after spontaneous sites of the sacred. In *Redburn*, however, the first-person retrospective narrator is a bachelor, and lacks any obvious vocation. His story therefore must dispose itself according to different principles. To these we now turn.

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Redburn is not only a bildungsroman but also a study of the bildungsroman, a form that it deforms into overlaid processes of retrospection (in which form reflects upon its formation) and development (in which formation projects its proper form)—each process mirroring, invertingly, the other—. Or, in short: *Redburn* is the bildungsroman cohabiting with its opposite, living side-by-side, enduring one another but not mutually committed. The text formalizes a formative moment by establishing the felt congruence between the basic scenario of the forming experience (the first voyage of young Redburn) and the psyche, presented through its habits and rhythms, that it has formed (the bachelor retrospections of the narrator, old Redburn). The education process itself, individual development as glimpsed through its gradations and successive impulsions, is not depicted and only circumspectly implied, in this novel: *somehow* Redburn has come into leisure time for writing, and a room of his own, though neither the

specifics of his domestic arrangement—we know he lives with some sisters—or of his method of his employment (we glimpse it but negatively, in the leisure time it secures him and the library it stocks) are given. Nevertheless, the novel establishes a kind of symmetry, lately familiar to midcentury Americans, between a single, formative erotic episode and the soundly formed and self-sufficient personality built after it. It is a novel that overlaps two fundamental but disjunctive, scenarios: first, that of a boy's disappointment by his father *plus* the bungled roving that occasioned, and the fleeting, erotic episode that disappointment as well as that roving occasioned; second, that of a the narrator, who understands himself coherently through his incoherence (finding himself consistently mirrored back in the fragments of the glass ship that rumor tells fell on "the very day I left home to go to sea on this *my first voyage*" [9]), and tells his story in which elements and events seem often as if estranged from one another. Despite their experienced separation from one another, retrospection and development seem suited to or "coupled" with one another. The process of development is repressed in the narrative, but nevertheless felt in a manner I will formalize through the canonical formula of Lévi-Strauss, which is for Fredric Jameson a way to grasp the conceptual soundness and aesthetic satisfaction of a narrative construction ("VM" 327).

A father takes a financial loss, then dies; a teenage son, forced into the workforce, leaves his mother's home to go to sea. He misses the father, a worldly man to his memory, and calls the trip a "filial pilgrimage" (157). Redburn soon arrives in Liverpool, a city to which his father's outdated guidebook is unequal. He must discover how to fill the space for himself. He wanders. He meets another young boy, similar though not the same, and who too seems to have fallen in status (according to a subtle observer, the boy is a boy prostitute, whom Redburn inadvertently

picks up [Creech 105]).[14] The two escape to London together, dabble in vice and pleasure, experiment in self-improvisation, pass mysterious nights side-by-side, sing, ponder a future as artists, substantially impose, mutually annoy, swear, and invent pet names ("my zebra" [253, 278]). After a while, the love is over, and this overing takes place in propinquity to a new lover, and one taking scant interest in going steady but who masturbates very well. His name is Carlo. (He has no last name here.) Back in New York, the couple's disimbrication requires cruel things from Redburn; breaking up conjures from him a cruelty he did not know himself to be capable of (that is what breaking up does [Kipnis 65]). Without repenting his cruel behavior, though seeming to have forgotten some of it, he writes a book about the whole thing much later. Not a sad book, exactly. He writes it from within his mother's house, having established himself there comfortably with his sisters, and having acquired the habit of strolling on the beach and meditating: this single has found "shelter," in the sense of Michael Cobb. He feels himself now no longer an orphan, "a sort of Ishmael" (62), but a bachelor. His story invests such transient love as he once felt but now feels himself feeling no longer with a form of episodic coherence. *Redburn*, in a sentence, is a book about getting over the relationship that got you over your failed father. Redburn gives his father's name to something besides a wife: a book—a book, indeed, about how his father's book failed him, and how a love that his father would hardly approve both comes and goes.

The real story shows itself only in paraphrase. In a classic appreciation of Melville's "craft of fiction," R.P. Blackmur asserts that the author of *Moby-Dick* and *Pierre* is not exactly a sound storyteller, is only a captivating plotmaker "betimes, for illustrative or apologetic or

[14] In what follows, I bracket the gayness of this relationship in order to emphasize its queerness. Creech's concise reading, which demonstrates that these boys are lovers and have several erotic adventures, is completely compelling—responsibly historicized and playfully executed—and the truths it establishes are presumed by me.

evangelical purposes." Melville's novels, Blackmur indicates, once read, hold their own wild and digressive execution in tension with the powerful paraphrase of the plot that the reader is dared to make. The starkness and power of the story—Blackmur calls it "the dramatic action" or "dramatic form"—looks something like the lure by which *Moby-Dick* lands its reader, who then finds herself (or not) by finding her prior expectations confounded in the attention-scattering act of reading the book for herself (Doyle 3-4). *Redburn*, I believe, thrives by what Blackmur terms "putative statement," the paraphrase that strips the story, for a moment, of its top-heavy nonplots and simply says the thing that is too simple to be said directly by someone like Melville. *Redburn* is about the failure of a transitory relationship that issued from the death of a failed, loved father. No one learns much, and in fact it's possible to say that Redburn dumbs down. That's why Wai Chee Dimock claims that the novel is "the exact opposite of a bildungsroman" (85). Still, something remains, not to be dismissed, in the book, scattering what's said away from the story. This something is what half-masks this break-up novel when it is set in the company of others, what inhibits its self-exemplification, what seems to prevent it from understanding itself very well. It is also what scatters the story's composing elements—its characters, events, themes, chapters—away from one another, such that non-cordialness, that sense of shared separateness, is the truth not only of the love plot but also of the novel's form. There is something in this book that is what it is by refusing to grasp itself—elusive, except as a problem—, and that uses all the resources of heartbreak in order to enrich that problem. We will chase this device, in layered approximations, in what follows. We will allow ourselves to be scattered somewhat by this thing that would scatter us. The analytic arpeggios below, the broken-fugue music in which not the artist but the audience is composed, like Carlo's broken songs (250), approximates the process.

Interior picaresque, "roving in imagination." Redburn's story seems anything but a well-made plot to the reader whom critics often invite to find it to be that.[15] In experience, *Redburn* feels as far removed from a steady succession of events as Redburn himself feels from the family hearth he moves away from upon his father's death, and from which he re-removes himself in order to sail. The telling is torqued and recursive, emphasizing the fleeting connections by which it jolts forward: "And now that I have been speaking of the captain's old clothes, I may as well speak of mine" (72); "I must now run back a little, and tell of my first going aloft at sea" (77); "And now that I am talking of books, I must tell of Jack Blunt the sailor, and his Dream Book" (87). As much as their ostensible topics, these sentences speak of a mind that is presently reflecting on a past experience—"now" recurs in each—seeking a sensible path forward *other* than that of chronology. It is as if the logic of the picaresque, with its emphasis on haphazard connection, crucial to Melville's early adventures into the unknown, had been folded inward in this, a hither-thither adventure through identity and history, a kind of ingested picaresque. It's a process the novel calls "rov[ing] in imagination" (8). Events are emptied of something of their eventuality, their temporal quality, and are flattened into mental objects that jostle amongst others: "This Dream Book of Blunt's reminds me of a narrow escape we had, early one morning" (92). The temporal indicator situates the event in a day it does not situate ("one morning"), emphasizing instead its connections with other unsequenced objects inside a roving mind. This "narrow escape" allegorizes the mental process on display in this novel: Old Redburn's telling escapes into one topic after another.

Free association. What Blackmur refers to as "dramatic form," reduced to a minimum in this novel, feels less like a plot and more like a simple inversion of concepts—the embarrassment

[15] In a seminal reading, Merlin Bowen finds the novel to be the nearest Melville comes to "the pattern of the mid-nineteenth-century novel" (100); Jonathan L. Hall concurs (259).

of the Ideal, made concrete in the failure of the father's guidebook, and the irruption of the Real in the presentation of an unprecedented lover, Harry Bolton—over which a gnarled network of subjective associations can be grown. Old Redburn explicitly thematizes this at a moment late in the text, strolling a beach called Sailor's Snug Harbor on Staten Island, as if it were the limits of his own mind: "pallets and pillows, old pots and pans, bottles and baskets … numberless things of this sort … drift in through the Narrows, and are deposited on the shores of Staten Island; along whose eastern beach I have often walked, and speculated upon the broken jugs, torn pillows, and dilapidated baskets at my feet" (299). Rifted pillows drift, as does this sentence, from the past into the present. If an earlier model of Redburn's mentation had been the "narrow escape" of one topic into the unguessed next, here the Narrows is flooded with stuff, old stuff. Stuff-carriers so damaged they must themselves be carried by the tide (broken jugs, dilapidated baskets): markers of violated intimacy (torn pillows): occasions for Redburn's drifty speculation. Indeed, this whole moment is a piece of discovered junk unto itself, swept into the narration from another moment in Redburn's life, beyond the proper story of "his first voyage," after the Liverpool trip but prior to the telling of it, imperfect not only in its verb conjugation. Old Redburn is washed-up, though in a poetic kind of way. He stands on the shores of his identity, and sees the debris that meets him there: bits and pieces of other lives, torn from context and relation (the pillows take this tearing into themselves), but persisting within his own.

Bachelor drift. Another turn reveals that Old Redburn's idiosyncratic drift is not only his own. "Drift" typifies the movements of the mind of a bachelor, decoupled as it is from patterns of proper order enforced by sustained romantic commitment and the obligations of family life (Chudacoff 11). His freedom of association confronts him often: he takes his meals at taverns and shares a roof and a bathroom with other singles. And it vouchsafes another form of free

association, the mental sort, self-indulgent and sometimes affronting. Redburn has occasion to avow his bachelor drifting during an anecdote about drifting bodily through the English countryside: "to this day," he says, "I live a bachelor" (215). And then he drifts right on, in order to introduce Harry Bolton (216).

Here an excuse emerges for the lack of attention this reading pays to the anecdote about the glass ship that concludes the novel's first chapter, frequently an occasion for the critic's most energetic efforts. A memento gifted by Redburn's father to a great-uncle, the glass-ship has voyaged back, as Redburn one day will, to his mother's house. The ship is as intricately wrought as its readings often are. It is the object of the devilish impulses of Redburn's very early life; he wishes sometimes to smash it. It's called *La Reine*. It falls from the mantle, according to family lore, on the day Redburn departed for his first voyage. Redburn will not have the damage repaired until he feels some vague thing, broken in himself, to be put right: "We have her yet in the house, but many of her glass spars and ropes are now sadly shattered and broken,—but I will not have her mended; and her figure-head, a gallant warrior in a cocked-hat, lies pitching head-foremost down into the trough of a calamitous sea under the bows—but I will not have him put on his legs again, till I get on my own; for between him and me there is a secret sympathy" (9). A keenly encoded suggestion that this story will center on the shattered thing in which one can see oneself once one's queen has been lost.

Redburn submits a more appropriate emblem for his art in the middle of the novel, in an encounter with a salty bachelor. The man is the skipper of a salt-drogher, and the ship's sole inhabitant while it is docked near Redburn's own in Liverpool. Redburn calls, curious, one day, and the skipper invites him down into his "sanctum" to dine, where "we sat together like a couple in a box at an oyster-cellar" (167). "You see, Jack," the bachelor effuses, "I keep every

thing down here; and nice times I have by myself. Just before going to bed, it ain't bad to take a nightcap, you know; eh? Jack?—here now, smack your lips over that, my boy—have a pipe?" (167). He provides dinner on a board on his lap, "with a pitcher of beer in the center." Redburn improvises: "'Why that's but a two legged table,' said I, 'let's make it four.' So we divided the burthen, and supped merrily together on our knees." After supper, they share a smoke and think of sleeping together: "'And where may you sleep?' said I, looking around, and seeing no sign of a bed. 'Sleep?' says he, 'why I sleep in my jacket, that's the best counterpane; and I use my head for a pillow. He-he, funny, ain't it?' 'Very funny,' says I. 'Have some more ale?' says he; 'plenty more.' 'No more, thank you,' says I; 'I guess I'll go;' for what with the tobacco-smoke and the ale, I began to feel like breathing fresh-air" (168). "I guess I'll go": this is something like the refrain of this book—each composing object (character, event, theme, chapter) being united by Redburn's capacity to move on from them in turn.

This episode, from which Redburn departs into an equally inconsequential one, suggests still another concept for narrative rhythm: irregular coupling, that is, slant rhymes between objects, events, and characters. Redburn's telling tends toward twos, here and elsewhere: two knees need two more; to every "he" a second "he" responds, as in the skipper's nervous or knowing laugh. We'll return to this. First, we should notice that what Roland Barthes calls "the desire for two" is a material reality for the book (94), which appears in two volumes, at Melville's behest. For the reader with the book on his lap, very like the salty bachelor, "I guess I'll go" has an interesting, tangible resonance, situated as it is in the second chapter of the second volume of this two-volume text.[16] Redburn has literally left one volume, and has hardly settled into the second before promising to leave it too.

[16] Thanks to Lisa Schoblasky, Reference Librarian at the Newberry Library, Chicago, for verifying the Table of Contents for *Redburn*'s initial, two-volume British edition.

Text-internal typology, necessary duplicates. Critic Stephen Mathewson narrates the composition process of *Redburn* as one in which "chapters, characters and scenes already appearing in the first section of the book" are recycled in a subsequent one (312). The whole thing, Mathewson insists, is inflated by these repetitions. Seeking to publish in two volumes, Melville wrote fast and repetitively: leave-takings and sailings are repeated; one handsome brunette turns into two; even sympathetic effusions and incisive social sermons recapitulate one another. An old bachelor sailor named Max, keen on the voyage out to prepare Redburn to dance in sailor saloons and himself "very precise" (79), is later said to have two wives, Sally in Liverpool and Meg in New York (128-129).

Occasionally, these rhymed events have the regularity of a text-internal typology, matching the way out with the one back. A drunken sailor expires at the beginning of the voyage out, and another one does to inaugarate the trip homeward. The question of brotherhood and its dubious gifts begins and ends the novel (3, 312); two scenes, one comic and one tragic, of familial communion open and close the centering Liverpool section (Lancelott's Hey [180-185]; Adorable Charmers [213-215]). But just as often, the echo comes at some irregular instant: Carlo redacts Bolton, both on the homebound cruise; the cook and the steward commute to one another (80-84), as do Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* and Blunt's "Dream Book" (85-91), each in the space of a single chapter. In what reads as a send-up of the whole process, two sets of triplets (Redburn calls them "three twins" [267]) appear in a late chapter, each child repeating two others in appearance and attitude, as well as inversely repeating *another* other set of triplets (267-269). It looks like the literalization of Harrison Hayford's account of repetition in *Moby-Dick*, in which "duplicates breed duplicates" (129). *Redburn*'s shows itself to be a textual economy in which potential duplication feels necessary to the existence of any one element: every single thing that

is, in this book, feels as if it has been before or will be again. Each textual object has its secret truth not in itself, but in some other, conjugal object. Every "he" has his answering "he."[17]

Irregular Coupling. Redburn takes care to emphasize, by explicit parallelisms of phrase, these couple-patterns and their pliability. For instance, the anecdote about the glass ship that concludes the first chapter ends by consciously indicating the novel's subtitle, "his first voyage": "my sisters tell me, even yet, that he fell from his perch the very day I left home to go to sea on this *my first voyage*" (9). This reflexive self-indication seems to seal the deal for critics who train their attention on the ship as an emblem for the text, some kind of special allegory of reading. It is not the last word on "my first voyage," however. Once Redburn returns, he tours New York arm-in-arm with Harry and rehearses to him an expectation of payment: "Now, I did not expect to draw much of a salary from the ship; so as to retire for life on the profits of *my first voyage*; but nevertheless, I thought that a dollar or two might be coming" (305, original emphasis). The thought of one dollar that becomes one of two may be trivial, but the sense of this moment coupling with the prior one is not. By this later reduplication, the supreme self-reflexivity of the ship moment is diffused into the reader's sense that, in this text's special economy of meaning, the couple is the thing. A sense of textual coherence seems to be guaranteed by the appearance, once at the beginning and once at the end, of the same phrase.

The real point is not coupling, however, but *re*-coupling unexpectedly. For this reason it should not surprise us that the phrase appears again, in inverted form, at the end of the chapter. And not in Redburn's own mouth, but that of a total stranger, an anonymous minor character. Like this: after mooning the captain—"It was a touching scene" (309)—the sailors take leave of one another, drinking and then disappearing "in couples, though the [tavern's] several doorways"

[17] "I want two" (13), demands the fare-taker on young Redburn's first ferry to New York. It's a wish that the embarrassed and impoverished Redburn, with but a dollar in his pocket, must disappoint. The story that follows is bent on irregularly arousing this desire.

(309): "'Well, maties,' said one of them, at last—'I spose we shan't see each other again;—come, let's splice the main brace all around, and drink to *the last voyage*'" (309, original emphasis). What looked like an enduring coupling, binding beginning to end, is alternately read as an episodic one, simply binding the chapter to itself. Robert K. Martin refers to this sort of thing as the novel's "elaborate parallelism" (42), and John Sampson as "twinning" and "subversive juxtapositioning" (124-126). The reader has the sense that the formal logic of the text is reproducing a favored form of nonreproductive connection: irregular, fleeting, fraught. Queer. Minor. Fine.

The moment of Redburn and Harry's New York debut epitomizes an interest in parting and departure that plays through the novel's final section. Witness the remarkable, self-inverting metaphor that Redburn crafts for the *Highlander*'s arrival at the dock: "At sunrise, we *warped* into a berth at the foot of Wall-street, and knotted our old ship, stem and stern, to the pier. But that knotting of *her*, was the unknotting of the bonds of the sailors…" (301, original emphasis). Forms of human connection, communities of work and love, belonging meaningfully together for a while, until they don't. Behind our realization of this, way behind it, sits some awareness of the realities of capitalism (the scene takes place "at the foot of Wall-street"). This is the way Redburn feels about Harry, with whom he'll go ashore and share snacks but not a meal: "Little else that was eatable being for sale in the paltry shops along the warves, we bought several pies, some doughnuts, and a bottle of ginger-pop, and with these supplies we made merry" (302). They didn't marry, though Harry had once "popped the question" (280), but made merry, and that was enough: "those pieces and doughnuts were most delicious. And as for the ginger-pop, why, that ginger-pop was divine! I have reverenced ginger-pop ever since" (302).

Queer self-forgetting. This novel flaunts its capacity to contain disparate elements, and to bring these elements into irregular relations with one another. Each element seems to turn from each—except sometimes, for some weird span, some don't. We sense the education of the narrator, but not in the story of education he tells; instead, it's in the tossed-off allusions that pepper the story (for instance, the chapter about "three twins" begins by rote-quoting Livy). Alongside the educated self, however, a feeling of failure persists, as if the father's failure, which motivated the son's special self-formation, were somehow repeated in the son-self that was formed. That failure enables a form of self-forgetting, centered in Redburn's forgetting of what Harry meant to him, that is simultaneously the chance for impromptu self-creation. "The contingency of queer relations," writes Judith Halberstam, "their uncertainty, irregularity, and even perversity, disregards the so-called natural bonds between memory and futurity, and in the process make an implicit argument for forgetfulness" (75). A blissfully remembered, or spontaneously revised, moment in Old Redburn's storytelling captures this process perfectly. The boys' embarrassed visit to a male brothel and gambling house in London ends like this:

> He turned round upon me like lightning, and cried, "Redburn! You must swear another oath, and instantly."
> "And why?" said I, in alarm, "what more would you have me swear?"
> "Never to question me again about this infernal trip to London!" he shouted, with the foam at his lips—"never to breathe it! swear!"
> "I certainly shall not trouble you, Harry, with questions, if you do not desire it," said I, "but there's no need of swearing."
> "Swear it, I say, as you love me, Redburn," he added, imploringly.
> "Well, then, I solemnly do. Now lie down, and let us forget ourselves as soon as we can; for me, you have made me the most miserable dog alive." (235)

* *

Such self-forgetting is other than ignorance. It is other than bliss, too, though it has its pleasures. Redburn's sisters—the whole of his present household, as far as he tells it, mother and brother are silent—help him to preserve for himself the mythic identity between some

broken queen and his first voyage. They tell him "even yet" that *La Reine* fell from the mantle on the very day he left the home he left again and then returned to again to write (9). This sisters' myth solidifies the reader's sense that there is both less to say about Redburn's trip than he says, and more. Their fall-and-fragment fable paraphrases *Redburn* and preserves, in short form, the truth that makes Redburn's mind move as it does, the sense of something broken and something secret, something other than at one with itself, but making varied and refracting patterns of the mess that has become about him. Lacan would call this, cribbing a phrase from Lévi-Strauss, an "individual myth"; and he would insist that, in its structure, one can discover the conceptual play that can sustain a complex and coherent personhood and relation to the world.[18]

The sisters' "putative statement" urges us on to one final apprehension of *Redburn*, and perhaps a less fleeting one. I will push hard here, because it is here that we can see a break-up novel theorize—implicitly, necessarily, but thoroughly—its opposition to the bildungsroman. The discovery in oppositeness of a new openness, in fact, is what happens. Openness to new forms of self- and other- relation; openness to unexpected or forgettable encounters; openness to stories with new narrative rhythms and new principles of personal consistency. *Redburn* is a break-up novel has a theory of how to be a break-up novel, a theory that has as its basis the artful refusal to be content with the partial satisfactions of the bildungsroman. (It needs the bildungsroman, however, in order to build a usable, rather than overwhelming, sort of openness: this is why it should be conceived as an opposite genre.)

[18] See also Lacan's self-celebrating comments about his use of Lévi-Strauss's formula quoted in Roudinesco, 214. (The quoted comments refer to the canonical formula, and not, as Roudinesco suggests, Lévi-Strauss's discussion of Indian intermarriage patterns.)

I will now engage the canonical formula of Claude Lévi-Strauss.[19] This is one of high structuralism's most unwieldy tools, itself requiring more explanation than the explanation it offers to lay users. Nevertheless. The formula tracks how a basic matrix of concepts, composed of two different agents and two basic processes, placed in a situation of functional equivalence, is transformed in an aesthetically-satisfying and sound way into a second set of equivalences of terms and functions that feel as if they adequately "close" the first.

$$F_x(a) : F_y(b) \cong F_x(b) : F_{-a}(y)$$

Two terms, *a* and *b*, are given together with two functions felt to modify them, *x* and *y*. *x* and *y* represent irreconcilable oppositions, though not exact inversions of one another (as in integration and disintegration, *x* and *–x*, in the bildungsroman formula above). Such functions seek a specific embodiment through the two terms, *a* and *b*. The two scenes they define are felt to be in an enabling relationship of analogy with one another, figured in the colon: $F_x(a) : F_y(b)$. A changeover of some sort occurs, initiated by the *b* term, which mediates *x* and *y*. This restructuration is represented in the sign of equalization (≅). Fredric Jameson expounds: "the left-hand side of the equation must be felt to be a precarious unstable situation from which some type of sudden restructuration is bound to emerge" ("VM" 325). On the right side of that sign, *b* reassigns itself to the function *y* that opposed its original one *x*, an unexpected and enabling alliance. In a further "double twist" (Maranda), the term *a* is both inverted and converted to a function that comes to modify *y*, a former function that has itself been transformed into a term: $F_{-a}(y)$.

The reading of *Redburn* that issues from this algorithm is compelling, in this context. It allows us to cease with fuguing and admire the device. The functions and terms can be

[19] The formula famously appears in "The Structural Study of Myth" (1955), 228. Lévi-Strauss makes extended, illustrative use of it in *The Jealous Potter*.

distributed as follows: *x* = failure; *y* = education; *a* = father; *b* = son. And so, we read: the failure of the father [$F_x(a)$] is to the education of the son [$F_y(b)$], the definitive situation for the young Redburn, as the felt failure of the son [$F_x(b)$] is to what we might call the defamiliarization, or the estrangement, to be precise *the un-fathering*, of the elements of education, each separated from the process of education and from one another [$F_{-a}(y)$]. Redburn seeks self-improvement, in order to offset his father's loss and the status his father had lost. The son fails to fail precisely on the father's model, though he fails too. The way he finds to do so opens unto him an unexpected prospect. That double twist term fixes, I believe, the device we fugued after in the second section, that feature of the narration that flees and defamiliarizes not only what it touches but any critical attempt to touch it. The conceptualization of Redburn by the canonical formula places a kind of operative emphasis on the third term, in which the multiform, diffuse sense of failure that conjugates Redburn's character, his failure to feel much like fathering and his failure to feel sorry for failing Harry. What the canonical formula helps us think that nothing else I know can, except maybe the sisters' myth, in which the same truth reposes, is the fundamental consistency and continuity between Redburn's queer style (its strange, element-estranging style) and its queer motivation (the functionalization and negation of a failed father). The story of how a heart, opened then broken, is a thing that can consist with itself precisely by seeming not to.

The fundamental opposition that obtains between *Redburn* and the bildungsroman is a critique of the formation-story's proper formation. The form reconceives the structuring situation of the bildungsroman as a thing to be further built-out. Disintegration of the ideal [$F_x(a)$] into integration of the individual [$F_{-x}(b)$]: it's all a touch pat, says this break-up novel, though slyly, and poorly integrated with the correlative upshot, the idealization of the elements of education

$[F_{-a}(y)]$. I can find a trick to top it, it says, and does. Such a novel buries the fineness of its formation in a surface preference for broken promises, broken hearts, and broken words.

The break-up novel, a minor form, a hidden tradition, thus finds itself in its minor characters, like Carlo, the organ artist, the lover who teaches Redburn how to un-love Harry. Carlo "succeeds very well," he tells Harry and Redburn in words that are, like his melodies, "broken" but sweet (248). He makes money, he means, but we might also hear him saying that he, like the story in which he exists, has found a form of steady self-succession that is unlike progression or development. Carlo "carelessly endures" (247). When playing, he suits his song to his audience:

> I have tunes for the young and the old, the gay and the sad. I have marches for military young men, and love-airs for the ladies, and solemn sounds for the aged. I never draw a crowd, but I know from their faces what airs will best please them; I never stop before a house, but I judge from its portico for what tune they will soonest toss me some silver. And I ever play sad airs to the merry, and merry airs to the sad; and most always the rich best fancy the sad, and the poor the merry. (248)

Carlo's songs are composed of "broken" notes, mended only in the listener, and matching listeners to one another, making a mood for them to co-inhabit. Carlo has a tune for Redburn, by which he frees Redburn from a love that was right for a while, until it wasn't, and that's nobody's fault. "All this could Carlo do—make, unmake me; build me up; to pieces take me; and join me limb to limb" (250), forging new selves through the touchings of nameless appendages, doing that dashingly. Redburn can "reverence" the ginger pop he sipped with Harry (302), arm in arm, but also, on Carlo's account, the strange organ in the street as well ("Reverenced, then, be all street organs…" [250-251]), soon to be forgotten. Carlo impresses Redburn with an insight that is also an invitation to further development, a gray insight that nevertheless opens out into a kind of estrangement sublime:

> A skepticism regarding the intrinsic value of the relationship and its value for us adheres to the very thought that in this relation, after all, one is only fulfilling a general human destiny, that one has had an experience that has occurred a thousand times before, and that, if one had not accidentally met this precise person, someone else would have acquired the same meaning for us. (Simmel "Stranger" 147)

Carlo teaches Redburn that it's okay to displace other-relations with self-relations, in love and art, if you want: "I love my organ as I do myself, for it is my only friend, poor organ!" (248). Thanks be to Carlo, I say, for this re-writing of the golden rule. The "spiritual radiance" of the silly (247), the sloppy, the secret, the selfish, things that come and that then must go, things in which one discovers oneself in something opposite, a breaking up that is not a breaking down: these are the pleasures that broken art and broken hearts can offer.

II Falling to Mould

> "In Melville there were two images of the author: Redburn himself, who would survive and mature, and Harry Bolton, the homosexual youth who was doomed. But Harry Bolton lived on in Melville…"
>
> Richard Chase, *Herman Melville* (1949)

The character of Carlo, viewed through his lucrative successes and his ludicrous self-successions (his tending not to stay and build but come and go) predicts the second half of this chapter—a longer, looser B-side to the first half's fugue-ish single. Here is how Harry Bolton lives on, though not quite *with* Carlo, each one surviving and maturing, in the maturing Melville.

The remainder of this chapter studies in sequence the novels that compose Herman Melville's career as a novelist. It discerns in them something that it is not entirely apposite to call development, in the conventional sense of a series of positive, progressive changes: something, in fact, for which Melville himself comes to prefer other words. In a letter to Hawthorne, composed between *Moby-Dick* and *Pierre*, Melville summarizes his life by summarizing his novelistic career, begun at age twenty-five by *Typee*.

> I am like one of those seeds taken out of the Egyptian Pyramids, which, after being three thousand years a seed and nothing but a seed, being planted in English soil, it developed itself, grew to greenness, and then fell to mould. So I. Until I was twenty-five, I had no development at all. From my twenty-fifth year I date my life. Three weeks have scarcely passed, at any time between then and now, that I have not unfolded within myself. But I feel that I am now come to the inmost leaf of the bulb, and that shortly the flower must fall to the mould. (*C* 193)

Melville develops a concept of organic development in which the developmental process is experienced in its strange, extreme contingency on spatial and cultural transplantation (stark in the contrast between Egyptian and English empires), and its mute and massive latencies. The concept of development, as Melville develops it, is situated as but part of a process of which its positive appearance makes up only half.[20] The process of which Melville speaks comprises both development and devolution: growth and mould, bloom and rot.[21] One becomes until one has become unbecoming, a bare bulb, then one continues on, unbecoming by a series of reciprocal transformations.

The name Melville gives to this total process is "unfolding." Each stage decomposes itself in order to present the two halves of what may previously have seemed a unity. Each object seems to seed its opposite, or better *an* opposition, and seems itself to have previously been precisely so seeded. That Melville's novelistic career was an unfolding of generative oppositions,

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[20] A glimpse into the *OED* reveals that "development" is a concept that is itself development rapidly, accumulating senses and resonances, in the nineteenth century. See especially sense 3, "the growth and unfolding of what is in the germ; the condition of that which is developed," and double especially 3.c., "the bringing out of the latent capability (of anything); the fuller expansion (of any principle or activity)," which dates from 1865, and hence is latent in Melville's implicit deployment.

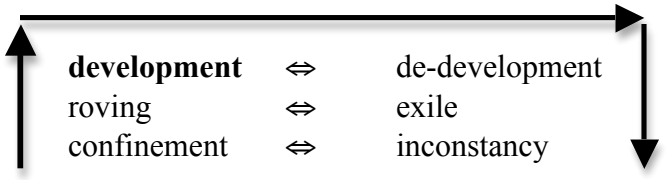
[21] Development, the capacity for progressive synthesis within the individual, allows Melville to assimilate to himself the contingencies of world history and the wondrous truths of natural science, their steady profundities (the Pyramids) as well as their random anecdotes (the seed story feels so like a "remarkable" news item), as metaphors for his own developing self. But development, in Melville, brokers its darkness: the truth that, like this passage, it is susceptible to retrogressive repetition (the statement evolved across those first two sentences is: I am like that seed that I am like), momentary lapses and inconsistencies of figure (the plant momentarily becomes the folded paper that it only could if it were chopped and processed, rather than rotting, as it does in the subsequent sentence), false starts in phase or phrase, awkwardness, pathos, commonplace.

in this sense, rather than a development, is the chief finding of what follows. And so the story of the steady, progressive assumption of a career, brilliantly repressed in the novels of Melville, reappears, equally brilliantly but differently, in the shape these novels compose when taken together.

One way of saying as much is to say that Herman Melville's career is not so much a development as a study of development, a process in which the concept of development paradoxically appears as *a* stage of the development of something else. Melville, glimpsed in his career, labors to situate development, and to do so inside a symmetrical scaffolding of cognate concepts and occupations. The shape of Melville's career will here be regarded as an aesthetic structure in itself: the career is a structure that centers upon the novel of career-formation, though the career does not oblige itself to include one such novel. The career first presents itself in a series of progressive pseudo-generic transformations, from captivity narrative to picaresque to epic, which culminate in the bildungsroman. After a brief interval, the books that follow have something of the flavor of refusal about them, dialectically unfolding a series of shadow-forms, stories of de-development, abandonment, exile, and existential inconstancy.

A yet more radical way of parsing Melville's unfolding may be to say that the most sustained and complex aesthetic achievement of his career as a novelist does not reside in any of his novels—including *Moby-Dick*—, but instead in the context that these novels provide for each other, the manner of their careful bearing, each on each. Melville's most beautiful and belabored form thus is not *Moby-Dick*; in fact, this form is obscured by *Moby-Dick,* insofar as that novel is a kind of exception in the career, the "once," according to Charles Olson, that Melville "rode his own space" (13). *Moby-Dick* elaborates itself by elaborating and appropriating to itself a concept

of autonomy that is autonomy from development: "Ahab is for ever Ahab, man" (*M-D* 418).[22] The career develops itself by developing that concept, and then developing past it. In the stages of that process, the relationship between place and inhabitant are varied artfully: confinement (*Typee*) becomes roving (*Omoo*), roving exaggerates itself into pursuit (*Mardi*), pursuit is transformed into development (*Redburn*), which experimentally opposes itself (*Redburn*) and then calls itself more deeply into question (*Pierre*). On the other side of the career, urbanization (*Pierre*) becomes desertion and desolation (the Agatha project), desertion becomes exile (*Israel Potter*), and exile becomes existential inconstancy (*Confidence-Man*). A slow pun on "occupation," all this is.[23] Melville converts his occupation into a series of shifting "occupations," sequenced styles of dwelling, each of which take their place from the space left open by the others. Preliminarily, these might be disposed as follows, so as to disclose their symmetries:



(*Mardi* and Agatha complicate the scheme. Let's hold in abeyance these two, pending preliminary comprehension.) As we shall see, these concepts seem to respond to and complement one another with striking reciprocity. *They compose a kind of conceptual morphology of development and a formal morphology of the bildungsroman*. This structure,

[22] In *Empire for Liberty* (1991), Dimock describes the operation of this utterance as "an institution of the discrete," a commitment to "the self-contained and self-sufficient" (110), here felt in the form of Ahab's tautology. But I think the "man" here should have its due. It is a necessary supplement to Ahab's proud autonomy. Other men, meaning other people, arrive at themselves in other ways, through other careers, or marriages if they must (Ahab had his too, after all), as Melville's career itself is keen to indicate.

[23] "You pun with ideas as another man may with words" (*C-M* 128). One's work can fill one, like a buzzing hive in a hollow tree in an untrammeled forest; alternately, one's work can leave one as empty as the same. The image and the insight come from a book Melville owned: see William Alger's *Solitudes of Nature and Man* [1866], 57.

however, is bloated and be-blubbered if the item that takes its being from the interruption of such ordered structures, that is *Moby-Dick*, is interjected into the structure. I distribute my emphases otherwise, in order to bring to attention the more delicate aesthetic achievement—what Schiller would call an "aesthetic education"—from which this exceptional novel takes its exception.

Melville's career entangles the concept of occupation, the job through which one lives one's proper maturity, with a pun upon itself, the way one fills a place that may or may not really be one's own ("occupation"). Each of the novels is keen to measure the pressure between who and where the protagonist is, the force these two forms exert on one another. In *Pierre*, Melville's word for that ambiance, created by the relationship between places (in the world, in a structure) and the persons or object that occupy those places, memorably is "gloom" (60) but more thoroughgoingly is "atmosphere" (35, 143, 165, 260, 290, 291, 330). Atmosphere is what seems to be supplied to the place by the person in it, and what appears to imbue the person a certain something through his emplacement.[24] It is through the antipodal evolutions of this category, its unfolding (that is)—from *Typee*'s emphasis on captivity to *Omoo*'s on a-purposive roaming, and then from that to the quest of *Mardi*, and so on—that we will seek the structure of

[24] A visual equivalent of this conceptual punning presents itself in certain paintings by the French realist Jules Breton, for example *The Weeders* (1868) or *The End of the Working Day* (1886-1887).

This painting is held by the Brooklyn Museum; can be viewed online here: https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/44489/

Melville's novelistic career.[25] Typical critical tools, like conceptual specification and "thick" historicization, are not quite right for this task (measuring the pressure of a form on a form), and so I am content to try another: impression. What follows, I'll own, are impressionistic readings, for impressionism is the best way to render an atmosphere.

* *

The narrator of *Typee*, Tommo, understands his situation in the Marquesas by understanding that it conjoins captivity and captivation, enforced confinement and felt enchantment. He is fixed there, much pampered but prevented from leaving by his hosts, though "hemmed in by hostile tribes" and hobbled by the mysterious lameness of his leg anyway (*T* 102); he is fascinated there, entertained and even educated by the "novel scenes" that Tahiti presents (*T* 97). He tells a tale that reproduces this uneasy conflation of captivity and captivation—a story that studies the correspondences between a closed, integral community, one in which each is known to each and in which each is bound to each, a community of shared intention (made visible, for instance, in "the capricious operations of the taboo" which are

[25] This project differs from the two major approaches to Melville's career typical of critics. We can measure that difference through two terms, taken from *Pierre*'s Plotinus Plinlimmon. One approach we call "horological": it studies the career for its involvements and shifting commitments within its own world, the politics of that world (*Empire for Liberty*; Samuel Otter's *Melville's Anatomies* [1999]) or its central categories of literary production (Edgar Dryden's *Melville's Thematics of Form* [1968]; Christopher Stein's *The Weaver-God*, *He Weaves* [1996]), or the biography of the author (Raymond Weaver [1921] through Arvin [1950] and Haviland Miller [1975], and on through Hershel Parker [1996, 2002]). The other approach we may call "chronometric," and which discovers a Concept with a unitary structure beneath the texts that compose the career (John Seelye's *Melville: The Ironic Diagram* [1970]; Martin's *Hero, Captain, and Stranger* [1986]; the "Quarrel" pieces on God [Thompson, 1952] or fiction [Baym, 1979]). While tremendously generative for me, I can't help but think that there is a very slight inelegance in these projects, which explicate the career in terms of some external term, horological or chronometric. What if the concept of career composed the basic substratum of meaning for the career's contents. That is my wager, in what follows. The two career accounts that are closest to my own are Dryden's (which examines "the internal morphology of Melville's fictional world" [viii]) and Baym's. It so happens, however, that each of these two precursors leaves out one of the minor masterpieces crucial to my morphology: Dryden does not read *Omoo*; Baym ignores *Israel Potter*.

nevertheless perfectly understood by every member of the tribe [*T* 222]), and the mystery of the individual, the self to whom body and impulse insist as enigmas.[26]

Both Tommo and the Typees, of course, are situated within a wider world of geopolitical and economic flux—a world in which "savages" clamor to be kept abreast of the latest news about the French (*T* 74-75). The prime-mover mystery of why a gifted talker like Tommo should be sent to sea to perform manual labor in the first place is no mystery to those familiar with the fluctuations of fortunes in the nineteenth century's second quarter.[27] But the world that comes into being between Tommo and the Typee consistently sidelines wider-world considerations in order to initiate into or to confirm the two, the individual and the social form, in a determinate relation. Adapting an equation given earlier, we might describe the atmosphere of this novel as one in which the integral community seems to correspond to the disintegration of the individual, his inability to know himself except through the mystery of his ailing leg. $F_{-x}(a) \cong F_x(b)$, where *x* = disintegration; a = the ideal community; and b = the individual. Paradise, as D.H. Lawrence insists, makes this narrator feel as if he were "decomposing" (*Studies* [1921] 146)—just the opposite of what he's doing as narrator when he knots these notions, leg and Eden, together.

Tommo binds the parts of his verbal performance to one another in such a manner that the audience will be bound together in their shared understanding of it, the vacillations of their wonder and relief. He offers his body, its pleasures and exposures, and the body of his strange experiences, for their consumption, a kind of mime-cannibalism that mocks and repurposes the cannibalism his tale hints of (down, even, to the detail of its consumption by "fire-side people"

[26] The story itself, in its texture, tends to resolve the attempt to escape into the compulsion to return: "But to return to my narrative…" (*T* 23); "But to return…" (*T* 27). *Typee* constitutes a drama in which an atmosphere of confinement pervades, layers of form and content, the object as well as the style of its expression.

[27] For instance, the Panic of 1837, which ruins Melville's father and sends Herman to sea. That process is thematized in *Redburn*.

[*T* 1]). Tommo breeds captivation of captivity not so much by explaining his experience of captivity as by suspending it in mystery, divesting it of explanation: "I was too familiar with the fickle disposition of savages not to feel anxious to withdraw from the valley, and put myself beyond the reach of that fearful death which, under all these smiling appearances, might yet menace us" (*T* 97). The answer to the riddle of the tribe's behavior—why do the savages lavish me so?—is never given, which is precisely how it serves its purpose: to suspend, within a shared question, a community of interested listeners.[28]

Moreover, a passage that explains the Typee explains *Typee*'s appeal by explaining what it lacks. The passage readies something like roll call for the mature novels, and the mature life, of Melville, which obviate its "there were" in *here come*:

> There were none of those thousand sources of irritation that the ingenuity of civilized man has created to mar his own felicity. There were no foreclosures of mortgages, no protested notes, no bills payable, no debts of honour in Typee; no unreasonable tailors and shoemakers perversely bent on being paid; no duns of any description and battery attorneys, to foment discord, backing clients up to a quarrel, and then knocking their heads together; no poor relations, everlastingly occupying the spare bed-chamber, and diminishing the elbow room at the family table; no destitute widows with their children starving on the cold charities of the world; no beggars; no debtors' prisons; no proud and hard-hearted nabobs in Typee; or to sum up all in one word—no Money!" (*T* 126)

Such figures and formations, bachelors and orphans, tailors and debtors, attorneys and bedmates, excluded from *Typee*, scatter themselves through the subsequent novels, in part as a way of sustaining an engagement with this primal scene. The final novel of the career, *The Confidence-Man*, is more or less a novelization of this list—and moreover *everything* in it is understood

[28] Walter Benjamin's "The Storyteller" (1936) imagines the storyteller's vocation as the institution of a community, the experience is one of "company" (100), while the novel-reader "seizes on this material more jealously than anyone else" (100), he's greedy and lonely. "[H]e swallows up the material as the fire devours logs in the fireplace" (100), or to extend the metaphor into an object of mock horror in *Typee*, as a cannibal devours flesh cooked over the fire that devours the logs. The novel's critique of missionaries, intensified in *Omoo*, might inhere in their failure to uphold the structures that the book prefers: the tribe rather than the catholic institution, the confused and enigmatic self over the Truth-assured one.

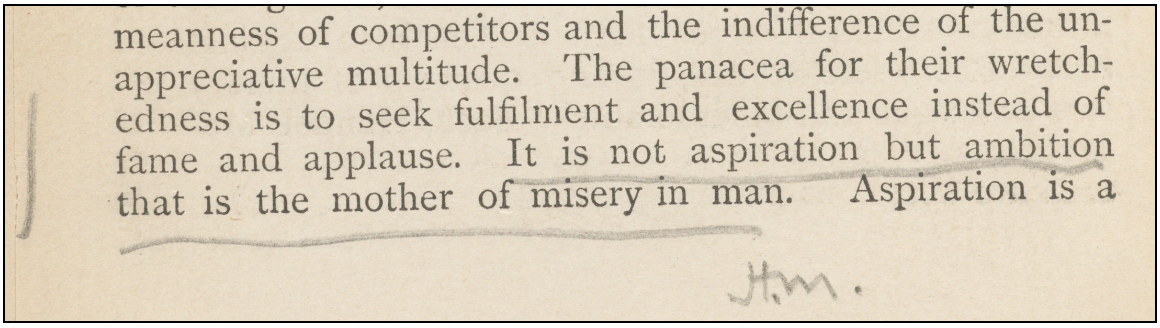
through money (Kamuf 175); as such, one could sum that novel up in the opposite negation: "NO TRUST" (*C-M* 12).

* *

This reading of *Typee* conducts us to a coign of vantage from which Melville's career-system can be more searchingly inspected. A parallax approach: let's look once speedily and for the structure (what in *Billy Budd* is called "the symmetry of forms" [*BB* 501]), and once so as to see the way in which each text creates itself out of the place that it takes from that structure. A breezy account of *Omoo* will dominate the first pass; a sustained reading of *Israel Potter* will center the second. Looking hard at *Omoo*, we can see how it structures the career-system; looking at *Israel Potter*, it is possible to see how the system's composing entities take their places. *Israel Potter* has been selected for our sustained attention for three reasons. One, the novel so infrequently receives such attention, in other readings of Melville's career; in fact, it must be brushed past, sometimes without mention, in such readings, insofar as they find Melville in protest to the literary marketplace, to fiction or to language, post-*Pierre*. For me, however, *Israel Potter* is telling for its reduplication of my central term—in it, Melville declines to decline, immediately, as it were. In a material way, its strong sales make possible Melville's contract for *The Confidence-Man* (a document on which that novel itself may be but a midrash: no trust). Two: *Israel Potter*, like *Redburn*, converts itself into its own opposite, a fable of exile that is also one of escape. Three: because it behooves me to make an example of some text, to show how my impressionist glossing might yield closer readings, and *this* is the one I choose.

Melville thinks about the career together with what Giancarlo Corsi has called "the dark side of a career": the loneliness that lives along its underbelly, the sustained misery that issues

from a self-sustaining ambition. He initials this line in Alger's *Solitudes*: "It is not aspiration but ambition that is the mother of misery in man."[29]


meanness of competitors and the indifference of the unappreciative multitude. The panacea for their wretchedness is to seek fulfilment and excellence instead of fame and applause. It is not aspiration but ambition that is the mother of misery in man. Aspiration is a

H.M.

Rather than aestheticizing the career-form, the progressive thrill of "making a career," Melville situates that, indeed submerges it, in a striking and symbiotic understanding composed of a host of parallel and opposing possibilities, a total pattern of development and decay.

In *Omoo*, "Typee" no longer refers to a place or a people but a single person, the protagonist, who takes his identity from his most recent adventure. He's addressed as "Typee, my king of the cannibals" by a musical old sailor, early in the story (*O* 7); he signs himself by this name on the sailors' remarkable "round-robin" declaration of grievances against their captain (*O* 77). When another adventure requires the assumption of another name, Paul (*O* 199), the narrator does so, making no big production of it, and is occasionally called by that name in the back half of the text.[30] "The interior," what's within, both geographically and psychologically, tends to be "dark and close" (*O* 285), "uninhabited" (*O* 114), and mysteriously violent (*O* 210), in this novel—an effect that comes to seem a lingering of the disintegrated self

[29] Thanks to Susan Halpert and Emilie Hardman at the Houghton Library for their assistance in obtaining this scan.

[30] Mostly, however, he contrives not to be mentioned by name at all. This is, I believe, an artful reversal of the punctual name-assumption that begins *Moby-Dick* ("Call me…"). The name "Paul," together with Long Ghost's assumed "Peter," predict the Apostles of *Pierre*.

of *Typee*, though this time this self bounces *between* integral communities, hopscotching from one to the next, like $F_{-x}(a'\ldots a''\ldots a'''\ldots) \cong F_x(b)$.[31]

"Omoo," the Preface informs, is a native word: it "signifies a rover, or rather, a person wandering from one island to another, like some of the natives, known among their countrymen as 'Taboo kannakers'" (*O* xiv). This sentence represents the verbal procedures that reign in this book: one entity, a word or person, bumps along until it bumps into another entity, which doesn't quite explicate it ("a rover, or rather…") but sustains it until they both can encounter a community of meaning (the way "countrymen" know each other). The process might be made to continue on: …taboo kannaker? …taboo? The book that travels under the name *Omoo* transforms the drama of confinement that saturates *Typee* into what might seem its opposite, a "rudderless and reckless" roving between communities (Lawrence 149). The title character and his companion take their pleasures without taking on a purpose, in the clever redaction of Alan Lebowitz; the whole thing is "picaresque in character" (41).

On this now-basic plot of roving, *Mardi* rigs an alteration: a concrete goal, an object of desire, Yillah. The protagonist now strings himself along the line of a single desire: for her. It builds about this figure, so understood, a whole mythology of the pursuit, of the quest. The love-plot-quest-plot is set off by a nonplot that quickly comes to dominate it: the scene of conversation between a philosopher, a poet, and a historian. This cosmic couplehood prepares the way, as it were, for *Redburn*'s investment in and then opposition of the same, its translation

[31] Doctor Long Ghost, the filler of the chum-function this time out, indicates his own dark interior, as well as his enduring desire to keep off the lights, through regular drug abuse, complex scheming, and prolific sex ("My long comrade was one of those who, from always thrusting forth the wrong foot foremost when they rise, or committing some other indiscretion of the limbs, are more or less crabbed or sullen before breakfast" [*O* 226]). In *Mardi*, this dark-within thing is called "the incomprehensible stranger in me" (*M* 457), and is theorized explicitly, instead of (as in *Omoo*) projected into archipelagean geography: "I seem not so much to live of myself, as to be a mere apprehension of the unaccountable being that is in me" (*M* 457).

into the ideology of development and the form of the bildungsroman, and then the internal refusal of that development (the "wicked end" that arches the eyebrows of certain readers [Franklin])—that is, *Redburn's* self-involved preference for brief task and break-up rather than of career and couple. The remarkable, and remarkably brief, Preface to *Mardi* clarifies that it was built through the creative opposition of what came before it:

> Not long ago, having published two narratives of voyages in the Pacific, which, in many quarters, were received with incredulity, the thought occurred to me, of indeed writing a romance of Polynesian adventure, and publishing it as such; to see whether, the fiction might not, possibly, be received for a verity: in some degree the reverse of my previous experience.
> This thought was the germ of others, which have resulted in Mardi. (*M* xvii)

We can receive the incredulity/verity and travelogue/romance binaries with their appropriate degree of incredulity, I believe, but the line of thought I have been tracing suggests that Melville frequently creates through such oppositions as are on display here. The career-system testifies to the power of opposition to seed further unexpected oppositions. Indeed, we might call Melville's early works *fictions of inclination*, for each seems to incline toward the next, and to point to something just larger than themselves. Each too seems to lay considerable faith in the encounter, in the next event, in the successive image, to detonate an impulse within the self; at the same time, that event or encounter preserves in darkness other inclinations, other impulses, other options. Intimacy causes something to explode the individual, to promise him a renewal that may even (in its strongest statement: *Mardi*) renew the social form.

White-Jacket, and its sequel, *Moby-Dick*, possess little interest from the point of view of this study. Let us hurry past them, as Ahab does the Rachel. Though not before noticing that *Moby-Dick* is not without its engagement with the logic of the bildungsroman. Ishmael discovers, after long exploring, the unfitness of Ahab as a model for himself, the central of the bildungsroman's dilemmas, and backs away by degrees. Other episodes from other "period[s]"

of "wild wandering" (*M-D* 451) crowd the margins: the Lima symposium of "The Town-Ho Story," and "A Bower in the Arsacides," which preserves the aesthetic ambitions of other moments—Ishmael has the dimensions of the whale tattooed upon him, he tells us in Arsacides, but leaves off the inches: "I was crowded for space, and wished the other parts of my body to remain a blank page for a poem I was then composing—at least, what untattooed parts might remain" (*M-D* 451)—and the others of those others: what untattooed parts *do* remain, and how did those that don't arrive at their ink? The evacuation of those questions, questions of Ishmael's ambition and fleshly expression, is precisely the point of this book: "Why tell the whole?" (*M-D* 485).

Such episodes bespeak a kind of mystical unity that is not the dynamic synthesis of development. Each refers vertically to one grand object, the eternal whale itself, the target of the discarded model's organizing desire, in a style that the Etymology and especially the Extracts section instructs its readers to read for. Meaning in *Moby* works kind of like this: "Whale ho!" or, as one innovative examination simplifies it further, *Whale!* (Evans). The Extracts do not evolve an insight, but simply indicate a variety which, having been "promiscuously said, thought, fancied, and sung," opens out into further varieties: "by many nations and generations, including my own" (*M-D* xvii). Ishmael grows a book that carefully attends to processes of growth by matching them to a grounding analogy ("out of the trunk, the branches grow; out of them, the twigs. So, in productive subjects, grow the chapters" [*M-D* 289]) in which he does not grow, in which he severs himself from his personal evolution, though certainly not by simply remaining the same, but in feeling the insistence of some speculative synthesis, capable of assimilating any incident. Ishmael's life comes to feel like one composed of simple intervals, different moments, which show their inner consistency when they disclose their reference to a

single, stable entity.[32] This novel of the interval builds itself so as to allow the organizing desire (it shows itself by purging first Ahab's couplehood—he "leaves but one dent in his marriage pillow" [*M-D* 544]—and then career—Starbuck exists to indicate that) of Another, a model, to echo through a bounded space. This is how *Moby-Dick* functions as the sort of thing that in *Pierre* is called a "comprehensive compacted work" (*P* 282).

With *Pierre* commences what we call the dark side of Melville's career (in which the "germ" from which *Mardi* sprang toggles to infection), the moment when the seeds and leaves of his development disclose a new development, and a new form of life: the mold.[33] Put another way, the novels that follow *Pierre* are *novels of the decline*: of saying no in thunder, of preferring not, of slighting sex, money, fame, refuge, and trust. Decline: it is a word that crops up amid small moments in Melville's letters of the period. The author finds himself "impelled to decline" the overtures of his British publisher when they accompany an unsatisfactory contract for *Pierre* (*C* 226), for instance; he "must respectfully beg to decline" the Pittsfield Fourth of July Committee's 1853 invitation to give an oration (*C* 245). It's a word that carries in itself the means of signaling the heavy negative presences, the unwritten and deformed books, which compose the back half of the career, the other side of a development that climaxed in the concept of development.

But no-saying is no simple negation of sense, in this sense. There is something systematic in Melville's decline: a reciprocal cycling-back, a retrograde movement through the happier half of the career. *Pierre* signals as much by explicitly returning to the problem of the bildungsroman,

[32] I owe this vocabulary of the "interval" to Stockton's *The Queer Child* (2009).

[33] Decay, in Melville, exposes the form of form itself, the mold. And this fact, this emphasis on form, is indicated purely *by the wordform itself*, the mold of the word "mold." This is what I mean when I claim that, in Melville's world, the other side of the other side of development is something like the form of the form.

and of *Redburn*: the felt compossibility of individual development and social disintegration. The modern predicament, as we've formalized it: $F_{-x}(a) \cong F_x(b)$, our entry into differential modernity, means that one must make himself in making a career of his own, or making love on his own, or both as David Copperfield and Cassandra Morgeson do. Pierre tries. However, the stable, rural world of Saddle Meadows disintegrates before Pierre, as he considers the possibility that his father may have fathered another, a sister, to an woman who was not Pierre's mother:

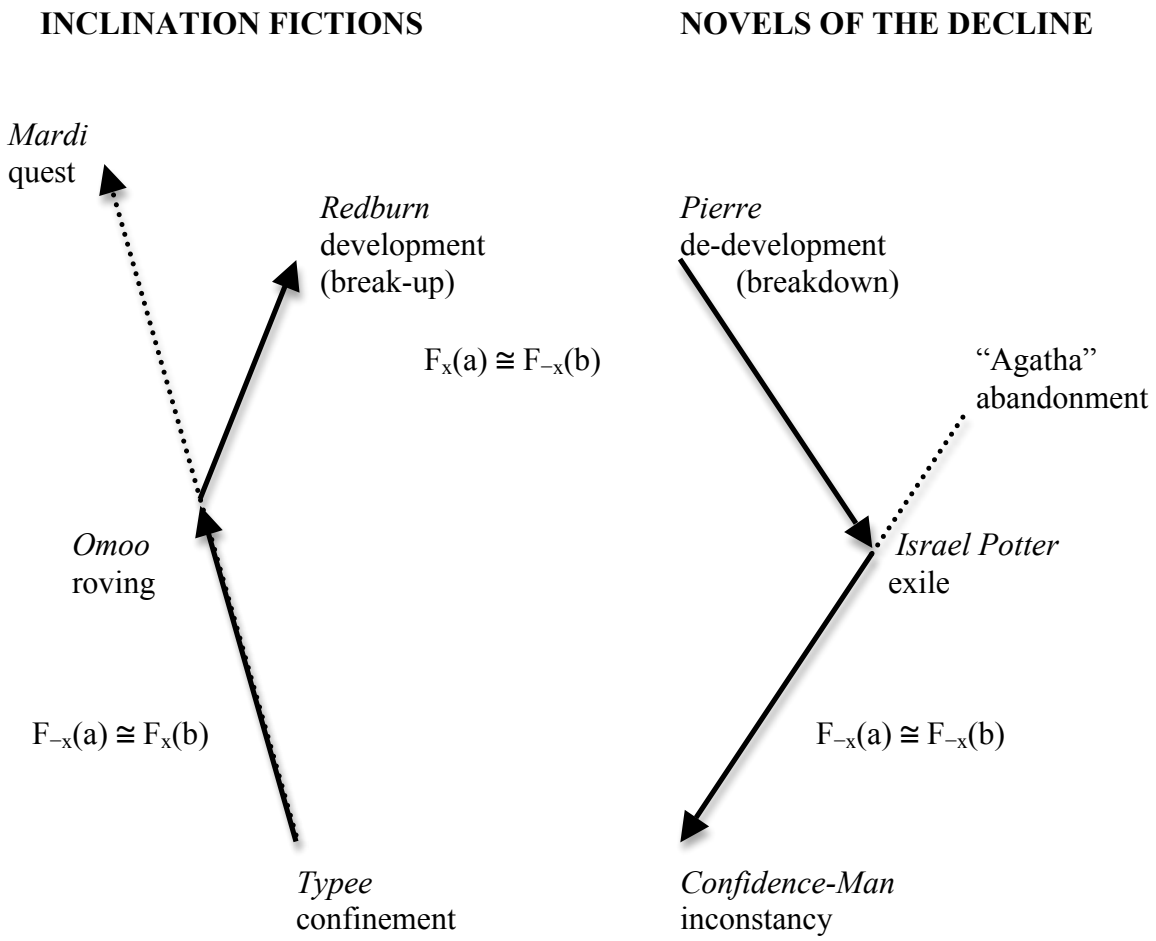
> On all sides, the physical world of solid objects now slidingly displaces itself from around him, and he floated into an ether of visions; and, starting to his feet with clenched hands and outstaring eyes at the transfixed face in the air [his sister's], he ejaculated that wonderful verse from Dante, descriptive of the two mutually absorbing shapes in the Inferno:
> "Ah! how dost thou change,
> Angello, See! thou art nor double now,
> Nor only one!" (*P* 85)

Objects, here, show not their inner luminosity, as in the standard bildungsroman (the function we indicated as $F_{-a}(y)$, where y = the elements of education), but the blank space beneath them. They disclose their atmosphere: ontology slides into aesthetics ("thou art…"), and a vision of individual alteration is clouded by double negation and the negation of a dyad ("nor double now, nor only one").

Pierre seems to float beside its own place in the career: a novel in which development and its radical opposite, not break-up but breakdown, absorb one another. It is a novel of catastrophe: the catastrophe of one's illusions, first, as in *Redburn*, but then the catastrophe of love, and then of relocation, and then of career. The hint for this is not only the failure of Pierre's education, but the terms in which it fails. Pierre writes the wrong kind of book, a book for which he has not yet prepared: he "immaturely attempts a mature work" (*P* 282).

Mardi and the proposed "Agatha" project (which the biographer Parker believes is completed, under the title *The Isle of the Cross*, on the heels of *Pierre*, in early 1853[34]) make an odd couple. They are bound, in fact, by the intimacy of shared oddity and of the logical opposition of those oddities: the one, *Mardi*, a drama of pursuit, of going-after; the other, "Agatha," a fable of desertion, being-gone-from. Indeed, these two secondary works play a crucial role in the structure of the career: hemming its limits, assuring its internal reciprocities, and introducing into its total shape the slightest of asymmetries. *Mardi* absorbs into its massive self that tendency in Melville that was veering upward but backward (back toward the epic) and away from the occupations that would draw from him his most robust oppositions. And "Agatha," in its turn, tweaks the line of decline upon which *Israel Potter* and *The Confidence-Man* can then appear, neatly facing their opposing numbers, *Omoo* and *Typee*, respectively.

[34] If *The Isle of the Cross* were not there, and it may not be, it would have to be invented, and so we thank Parker for the prosecution of that project. It begins with "Herman Melville's *The Isle of the Cross*: A Survey and Chronology" (1990).



x = disintegration
a = communal ideals, or the ideal community
b = individual

LINES OF FORCE IN MELVILLE'S DEVELOPMENT

Mardi is the most robust of Melville's fictions of inclination, in which he forbids himself nothing; "Agatha," an abandoned novel, is the most radically negated of his negativity fables (both a tale of, and in the noncollaboration its noncreation required of Hawthorne, an instance of, intimate no-saying[35]). The dark energy of "Agatha" generates first *Israel Potter*, the last of Melville's declensions of Being (*Is*hmael, *Is*abel, *Is*rael), and one in which life happens through

[35] See Wyn Kelley's contribution to the rewarding collection *Hawthorne and Melville: Writing a Relationship* (2008), "Hawthorne and Melville in the Shoals: 'Agatha,' the Trials of Authorship, and the Dream of Collaboration."

ceaseless escape. Fate pries Potter from friend after friend and task after task, until it strands him in London, in probation from the homeland he once rushed to defend. In this work, as we will see at length below, exile is made to coincide with its opposite, escape. *The Confidence-Man* radicalizes this, taking place in a place that will not "take," a riverboat moving on the Mississippi. Talk in this book is all negative dialogism, in which each statement further confuses those talking—the inverse of *Typee*'s captivating story of captivity. *The Confidence-Man*'s twinned interests in succession and deception are absorbed into its form, which is strongly successive, and which finishes, falsely, by promising that it has not finished ("Something further may follow of this Masquerade" [*C-M* 251]). The point I press is that this novel's critique of relations, its insistence on inconstancy, is in fact a manner of engagement perfectly consistent with the career's abiding concerns, its protocols of generative opposition and its interest in shadow occupations. From out of the novel's insistent emphasis on its own incompletion, and that of its central character, comes the felt completion of the career, its fine falling to mold and its molding of a neatly, beautifully-closed kind of context from its components. In these novels, I believe, we get something like the inverse impression we took from *Redburn,* where the device fled apprehension. Here, the dominant device saturates, puns upon itself in its expression.

* *

> "Strange wild work, and awfully symmetrical and reciprocal, was that now going on within the self-apparently chaotic breast of Pierre…"
>
> Herman Melville, *Pierre* (1852)

Let's now track back through the back-tracking back half of Melville's career—with an eye now less on the total structure these texts compose, and more on how placement inside such a structure is registered inside texts. The reader's experience frequently comes to be fixed to a fissure: Pierre breaks down, and the mood and method of his narrator (always suspect, suddenly) *ruptures*; Agatha finds herself in her abandonment, first by her lover Robertson and then by her

author; Israel Potter has his exile forbidden to him by his biography; the Confidence-Man keeps true to himself by betraying the promise of a sequel. Form beckons the reader back to the scene of formation, the literary career, which in its unfolding composes the real story.

Pierre suffuses several of the central semes of the bildungsroman—the problem of youth, the choice of career, the vexed confrontation with desire and stable couplehood (we take them from the *combinatoire* of Buckley [17-18])—in something very strange, with something we might call "style" instead of a psyche.[36] Retrospection recedes into narration and a narrator, and the principle of the narrative's composition is brought violently into line with the narrator's pleasure—"I write precisely as I please" (*P* 244)—with its tendency toward recursion, revision, intimation, latency, and explosion. Pierre's story is one in which a secret sister is discovered, and discovers unto her discoverer a professional ambition together with an erotic inclination, both of which drive him to the leave the country for the city (as if to counteract the motion staged in the novel's first sentence, in which a "a sojourner from the city" strides "wonder-smitten" into the summer world of the country [*P* 3]). Occupation thus becomes snarled in a kind of pun: *Pierre* is a novel in which initiation into an apprenticeship—an occupation—dissipates into the textures and sensations of atmosphere, the latent pervasions of the location by its object and the object by its location—"occupation"—. [37] *Pierre* presents the uncoupling of developmental projection and retrospective presentation: processes so neatly overlaid in *Redburn*, as the canonical formula was made to show. In *Pierre*, earlier chapters and characters are returned to and reread, contradicted

[36] In the *Bildung* manner, this maneuver is copied from a model, D.A. Miller's *Jane Austen, or The Secret of Style* (2003).

[37] In the margins of his Milton, Melville makes a note that records how the opacity of "childhood" to "the man," the fact that the former can neither predict nor even reliably inform the later, puts him in mind of atmospheric opacities, the inability of a "merry morn" to indicate the "dully & rainy" afternoon that will issue of it (Grey 173).

or expanded: "In the earlier chapters of this volume, it has somewhere been passingly intimated, that Pierre was not only a reader of the poets and other fine writers, but likewise—and what is a very different thing from the other—a thorough allegorical understander of them, a profound emotional sympathizer with them" (*P* 244). This is an unpredicted intimation ("what is a very different thing from the other") from which still another such escapes: "But it still remains to be said, that Pierre himself had written many a fugitive thing" (*P* 245). We re-read Pierre's reading, and so doing learn to read aright ourselves. The composition of the story—the small horizontal or associative impulsions that one word or phrase exerts toward another (the logic of "likewise—and"), indeed inspires the reader to re-reading. It encourages her to seek the earlier "somewhere" of the intimation, or some other fugitive thing, of many, instead of the moving simply forward. The enticement is especially strong when that forward way is thick with stutter and pleasant insistence ("an allegorical understander…, an emotional sympathethizer": emphasis falls on the comma and its capacity to deliver endless commas more, ceaseless descriptions of the same) anyway.[38] In the story of Pierre's composition, the tendency of one stage to ready one for another, falters instead, and trains the reader on the slot the novel fills in the career-system of the author.

Pierre is the tale of a development gone spectacularly wrong. In fact, it seeks to make a spectacle of itself so as to inspect a self who disintegrates. A travesty upon the bildungsroman, as I've given this form to be understood, and a provocation: career is spontaneously, and couplehood incestuously, chosen. *Pierre* is also a tale that seems to have gone spectacularly wrong in its own development, as Parker and Higgins argue famously in "The Flawed Grandeur of Melville's *Pierre*." The novel, rife with the motifs of "the cosmic success story" exaggerated

[38] Paul Metcalf is after the same thing when he describes how "in *Pierre*, the author, the story, the people of whom he wrote, all are one—gelatinous, subaquatic—the verbs become blobs of sound…" (*Genoa* [1965] 197, ellipses in original).

toward the absurd, hesitates and de-completes the complementary relationship on which that genre depends between a disintegrated, conflicted world (which Pierre's homestead becomes, under the shadow of his father's transgression) and a stable, profitable self. Sacvan Bercovitch refers to this process as a "surrealist regression" (262). Maturity hesitates youth, excess hesitates emptiness, style—which here seems to thicken before the reader's very eyes, as if to signal a pervasive concern of the novel's that will follow—hesitates self. Melville trains his reader to seek in the sequence of his minor styles, the dark energies and queered concepts that sustain the "late style" novels (Said *Late*), the recompense for his growing doubts, both psychological and political, about plots of sequential self-development, about success of any sort, and even about the irruptive force, mercurial evolutions, and creative power of interpersonal intimacy.

Pierre is not a break-up novel, but one of breakdown. This is a break-up novel that has broken faith with the capacity for breaking-up to hold together a single person. *If only* this were a break-up novel, wishes Pierre's mother:

> Pierre, Pierre, thou hast stabbed me with a poisoned point. I feel my blood chemically changing in me… What can this bode? But not a mere broken match…not a mere broken match can break my proud heart so. If that indeed be part, it is not all. But no, no, no, it can not, it can not be. (*P* 131)

Pivoting as it does upon one of the bildungsroman's typical tropes, the move from the country to the city (Buckley 20), *Pierre* explores what we might call a climax of de-development. (A process that reverberates in the world just beyond the novel itself, in typical biographical accounts of Melville's spiteful, sudden revision of the text.) The sense of this breakage, in *Pierre*, is the negative image of the revision that redeems *Moby-Dick*. This is revision not as introduction of meaning or Truth (the injection of Ahab[39]) but as its corruption, as destruction,

[39] Olson's *Call Me Ishmael*, for instance, advances this claim. It is part of the lore of the Melvilleans that *Moby-Dick*, prior to this revision, simply would have been something like "the non-epic bildungsroman of a shipmate called Ishmael" (Giraldi *LARB* [18 August 2014]).

the "disappointing sequel" (*P* 141)—as a single, strange infusion of narrative inconsistency. Something like the opposite of the sense the reader has of *The Confidence-Man*, which consists in its hero's inconsistency, in which each incident is consistently inconsistent with each other one. The central inconsistence on which *Pierre* pivots, is a question of pleasure, the narrator's pleasure, flaunted when he claims to write this history according precisely to his pleasure (*P* 244), to withhold the context that would motivate an understanding of Pierre's career choice and temper the reader's reproach of his incestuous coupling. In place of stable sense of selfhood, *Pierre* seems to find self-consistency in something like fulsome style,—seems even to represent the moment in which the exuberant mode in Melville comes into a kind of ecstatic apprehension of itself, as Michael Snediker has recently argued (2010). After this, the career will turn from this catastrophic style, a style encumbered by its excesses, into a cooled inexuberance, which will require new sorts of love-plots structured by experiences of what Melville in *Clarel* calls "non-cordialness" (*Clarel* 2.129), negatives of the heart, fictions in which sex is said no to, rather than inclined toward. The other side of one's bared bulb, is a world that feels deflowered.

Hershel Parker insists Melville drafts and abandons an eighth novel, called *The Isle of the Cross*, between *Pierre* and the period that sees the periodical publication of the tales and the serial publication of the novel *Israel Potter*. Whether or not Parker is correct about this (it is simply impossible to know), he sensitively intuits the shape of Melville's career by intuiting its need of something very like a novel of abandonment at precisely the point where he pines to place one. Indulging neither the bemused dismissal of Parker's hypothesis with which critics often favor it, nor Parker's own fanatic prosecution of the case for the novel's complete composition (if not continued existence: Melville is supposed to have romantically destroyed his

completed version),[40] we record certain facts and contexts. Melville, in *Pierre*'s immediate aftermath, did plan and then abandon a novel that is, remarkably, about planning (Agatha has formed what Melville calls "a young determination never to marry a sailor; which resolve in her, however, is afterwards overborne by the omnipotence of Love" [*C* 236]) and abandonment (Agatha abandons her resolution to marry a sailor in whose rescue she participates, and then in turn is herself abandoned by him). Indeed, Melville sketches two specific scenes for the novel in his letters to Hawthorne about the project: a scene of psychological reflection and reciprocal figuration, that is a scene of planning, and a scene of abandonment, in which a mailbox rots due to disuse. The story, in short, is this: Agatha swears never to marry a sailor, then saves one from a shipwreck and does; the sailor, Robertson, then leaves and breaks his promise to return (*just* the thing she knew and feared, though love made her forget it); Agatha raises the daughter who Robertson fathered but never knew, and waits, and waits. Meanwhile, elsewhere, he marries another woman, who dies, and then another, in Missouri; he does not apologize but remains always suspicious of strangers; at one point, he sends Agatha the shawls of the wife of his that died; she endures; the end.

Melville first hears the story of Agatha from a lawyer from New Bedford, who misrecognizes Melville's initial enthusiasm for the story for literary interest ("my first spontaneous interest in it arose from very different considerations," he confides to Hawthorne, seeking though failing to elicit some interest of his own from his correspondent [*C* 234]). Melville, in turn, transposes the "literary" interest he only fleetingly felt in the tale onto Hawthorne. He encourages Hawthorne to write the story "in its rounded & beautified & thoroughly developed state" (*C* 235): "Turn this over in your mind & see if it is right. If not—

[40] See "*The Isle of the Cross* and *Poems*: Lost Melville Books and the Indefinite Afterlife of Error" (2007), in which both Parker's zeal and his critics' bemused dismissals are exhibited.

make it so yourself," he says of one of his suggestions about it (*C* 240). Melville provides several hints about how such a "developed state" could be developed, including a pair of striking scenes. In the first, Agatha stares into the sea as a storm gathers: she stands in the shadow of "a high cliff overhanging the sea & crowned with a pasture for sheep" and notes there "a shadow moving along the shadow of the cliff," cast by a sheep who is "sending a mild innocent glance far out upon the water" (*C* 235). In the second, a mailbox, into which Robertson never sends a single love-letter, rots over seventeen years. Hawthorne passes on the story though does seem to have considered it, and even to have yammered the matter with Melville in early December. When Hawthorne sends the letters about the story back to Melville (something like the shawls of Robertson's second wife), Melville pledges to endure. He will write it, he writes to Hawthorne to say. "I wish I had come to this determination at Concord, for then we might have more fully and closely talked over the story, and so struck out new light. Make amends for this, though, as much as you conveniently can…" (*C* 242). There is no record of Hawthorne making amends.

The "Agatha" story is a story of abandonment, and as such a radicalization of the break-up novel that is *Redburn*, an exploration of the dark undertow of the dumped that might underlie the dumper's happy "drift." "Agatha" is also an abandoned novel. It reproduces its topic in its form, its absent form. Agatha's is a home that is too much with her: she lives and thinks inside its shadow. This makes it something very much the opposite of *Israel Potter*'s exploration of exile, the prohibition of home and homeland. Melville's abandonment of his abandonment tale signals the sort of strange reduplication of content in the form that will predominate in his fictions of the decline: in which Pierre's bad education is reduplicated in Melville's own active corruption; in which Israel Potter's London exile is itself exiled from its own novelization; and in

which *The Confidence-Man* suggests that it is but an episode in the career of its central character, about which nothing more can be said than that "something further may follow."

Israel Potter, Melville's eighth published novel, is published serially from July 1854 until March 1855,[41] when, to keep accord with popular demand,[42] it is published in book form. *Israel Potter* is a novel that is both seeded by its opposite (abandonment becomes exile), and one that seeds a new opposite within itself (exile coincides, here, with escape). Israel evades a unfair father by running, farming, loving, sailing, and finally fighting (in the Battle of Bunker Hill), before the energy of his flight, and the momentum of his revolutionary moment, takes over and itself carries him further and further beyond his father, his fatherland, and his earnest intention to settle (carries him on to: spying, hiding, joking, conning, and begging—before, most exilic and unintentional of all, marrying, fathering, and careering in the Center of the Nineteenth Century, London). He has three occupations in the special sense we are giving this term, each of them understood as a kind of unintentional escape, an exile, from the escape and exile. Living in the London, raising a family, and holding a job come to be felt as a kind of probation. They are activities that seem to be what they are, to Israel, by holding some else more meaningful at bay.

Crucial to the reader's sense of this is the felt changeover in the rhythms of the novel after the Bunker Hill battle: before this moment, the narrative telescoped events and conflicts toward the Battle (for instance, when Potter wields the harpoon in a whaler, the narrator notices that he is "unwittingly, preparing himself for the Bunker Hill rifle" [*IP* 10]); but the moment

[41] In keeping with its appearance in *Putnams*, it is narrative in the critical and analytic style, ironizing the American culture to which it is addressed. A hero of the Battle of Bunker Hill, Potter is nearly run by a parade for Bunker Hill heroes.

[42] In fact, *Israel Potter* is successful as a literary commodity. It sells well, and the contemporary reviews are strong (for this reason, it must be excluded from Baym's "Quarrel," which finds Melville self-righteous and sophisticatedly disdainful of his readership after *Pierre*). Indeed, *Potter* succeeds well enough that Melville can once again afford to narrate the appropriate end of his career as a novelist in a novel of ever-varying incoherences, a novel with a shatter-brain scheme, *The Confidence-Man*.

itself, however, comes to seem a touch ludicrous by its dross of associations (in that moment, the moment flees: the battle seems like clubbing seals to Israel, the narrator suspects [*IP* 13]); and afterward, the only constant is the feeling that Israel is not exactly occupying his proper place.[43]

The story of Israel Potter's exile comes to Melville much in the shape its protagonist often assumes, a "tattered" one: the cheaply printed and quickly out-of-print *Life and Adventures of Israel R. Potter* (1824). This text, which Melville correctly suspects has not been composed by Potter himself (it is in fact written by a hack named Henry Trumbull), despite being written in the first person, centers on Potter's exile in London, forty-five of the "fifty years" in Melville's subtitle, during which Potter survives in poverty, supporting his family by repairing old chairs. But in Melville's novel, Potter's exile, advertised in the subtitle, has been exiled from the body of the text. *Israel Potter* tells the tale of its titular character by telling of his adventures following the Bunker Hill battle up to the moment of he begins his residence in London. In order to tell five years of adventures, it exiles forty-five years of exile. These forty-five years pass in a single, late chapter (Chapter 25). The exile part of the story structures the story by its absence, turning it from a tale of stuckness, of being-away, into one of escape, of running-away: turning it into what we can call an escapade.

Escapade is a term to insist on, for I believe that it aptly condenses and expresses the principle by which this narrative builds. "Escape" comes from the Latin for shedding one's cloak, something that becomes a steady motif in *Israel Potter*. By insisting on this term, I mean to displace others that have been suggested, for this story. It is better to invent an imperfect formal descriptor than to abide the vexed application of an extant one: historical novel, progress, picaresque, biography, "anti-history," as critics often do (the narrative ducks from under these

[43] Arvin insists that this "is not a narrative with any profound unity or serious inner coherence of its own," but "a heap of sketches, some of them brilliant ones, for a masterpiece that never got composed" (245)

form-terms always: we can glimpse it, like Israel, only in escape). Even a concept as capacious as "personal narrative" seems relevant but still not quite right for this narrative that is anchored in the encounter of others, especially its triumvirate of representative men—Benjamin Franklin, John Paul Jones, and Ethan Allan—, so that it seems less a narrative of personal identity and more one of personal difference, of Potter's failure to seem such a man himself. In its yoking of escape and exile, two seemingly opposite concepts (one defined by flight-from and the other refuge-in), *Israel Potter* anticipates *The Confidence-Man*'s style of self-subsistence, in which the titular character consists in inconsistence; Heraclitus on a riverboat, he never steps into the same character twice. Exile, the first term, seeded by its opposite in "Agatha," abandonment,—this process, indeed, is staged within the novel itself, when the lover Israel leaves to escape his preventing father marries another while he is away—, generates its internal opposite, escape. It does so through a kind of reduplication or thickening of terms: the exile of exile from the plot creates a space for escape to present in its exigency.

The world of *Israel Potter* is one, indeed, that subsists by consistently escaping itself:

> A copse skirting the road was just bursting out into bud. Each unrolling leaf was in [the] very act of escaping its prison. Israel looked at the budding leaves, and round on the budding sod, and up at the budding dawn of the day. He was so sad, and these sights were so gay, that Israel sobbed like a child, while thoughts of his mountain home rushed like a wind on his heart. (*IP* 18)

Everything bursts, including Israel into tears: the landscape, its buds and suns, are rich with potential—including the potential to give way so that the subject at its center can come to feel himself fleetingly, tearfully, equal to his own younger self and that self's sense of potential. But, as in this passage, throughout the novel the reader feels that the sense of Israel's inequality to his surroundings, this affective disequilibrium (his sadness versus the gay sights)—that is, his politico-pathetic alienation—is the primary fact of his characterization, to be steadily shown only

in his flight. “That liquor he drank from the hand of his foe, has perhaps warmed his heart toward the rest of his enemies. Yet this may not be wholly so. We shall see. At any rate, he kept his eye on the main chance—escape” (*IP* 16). This is the novel’s exile style: the tendency of its meanings to be made at some felt distance from some larger, more original, more organic-seeming scene of meaning: a Meaning in which senses and sensations are experienced as taking some color from a still more primary sense of probation that pervades them, a strange insistent sense of estrangement that tints all other senses. Presence tends to be subtended by a sense of probation.

Potter’s affects are not only incommensurate with his surroundings, they are subject to the third-person narrator’s skepticism: this narrator allows the doubt about his motives and plans to lurk (“Yet this may not be wholly so.”). The index of Israel’s escape is his change of costume, the sense that in this story “the dress befits the fate” (*IP* 19); he flees with “tattered coat-tails streaming behind him” (*IP* 80), es-caping in the etymological sense, trading clothes with transients, scarecrows, and dead squires, and being outfitted by others with spy boots and the uniforms of sworn enemies. Potter’s is not a rags-to-riches story, but a rags-to-rags one.

The third-person narrator of this novel, Melville’s first sober attempt at this (we have studied already the special-case interruptive corruption of *Pierre*’s narrator), evolves a distinctive style, an exile style. Take for instance the following simple insistence that Benjamin Franklin, in spite of his exemplarity, has a body that stinks like everyone else: “There he sat, quite motionless among the restless flies” when Israel comes upon him, in his Paris apartment (*IP* 39). There is both activity and stillness here, each heighted not only by the presence of its opposite but by its explicit evocation and renunciation: rest is motionlessness; motion is restlessness. These adjectives describe through their negation, they mean much as Potter does, by being in some

manner dislocated from themselves. The narrator then spends three long paragraphs introducing Franklin, "wrapped in a rich dressing-gown—a fanciful present from an admiring Marchesa—curiously embroidered with algebraic figures like a conjuror's robe, and with a skull-cap of black satin on his hive of a head" and so on (*IP* 38), in fact, only to exile this rich description from Israel's experience. Here are a lot of things Potter could have seen but didn't, it suggests. Potter instead rushes into the room "hurried and heated with his recent run" and, in the fervor of his couriering, is "inadequately impressed" by the room or its occupant (*IP* 38). "Inadequacy," yes, inadequation: *this* is the truth of spaces and occupations in *Israel Potter*, for Potter will always be squeezed out of his present by being squeezed out of his present place.

Another quirk of the novel's peculiar style derives from its encounter with Franklin, understood as a kind of oracle for the exemplary self. This is its tendency to run roughshod over oxymoron, the manner in which it seems to force itself and its readers past the paradoxes that insist in Israel's existence but do not draw his notice. For instance: "condescending affability" (*IP* 52); "sagely mischievousness" (*IP* 58); "mysterious honesty" (*IP* 78); "honest confusion" (*IP* 80); "anonymous earnestness" (*IP* 90); "determined roving" (*IP* 95); "unprincipled chivalry" (*IP* 105); "honorable plunder" (*IP* 109); "muddy philosophy" (*IP* 155); "humble prosperity" (*IP* 162); "clumsy machinery" (*IP* 155); "bitter unconcern" (*IP* 155). The text attunes to the tendency of modern life to yield seeming contradictions and attunes equally to modern life's disinterested in solving such riddles, or even long pondering them. Social life, especially as supervened by commerce and politics, is rife with contradictions;[44] it produces them spontaneously, the style of this novel suggests, but that does not mean these contradictions have some point in them worth belaboring: "Sometimes, lading out his dough, Israel could not but

[44] The image of society is basically congruent with that of Adorno's "Society": "while the notion of society may not be deduced from any individual facts, there is nonetheless no social fact which is not determined by society as a whole" (145).

bethink him of what seemed enigmatic in his fate… But he drowned the thought by still more recklessly spattering with his ladle…'Kings as clowns are codgers—who ain't a nobody?' Splash!" (*IP* 157). Social life requires paradoxical and impossible things of us, on which we need not reflect, unless (as in the "muddy philosophers" chapter [*IP* 155], "Israel in Egypt," Chapter 23) we do so in the ridiculous mood.

The novel's major investment in models of representative personality and exemplary individuality—Franklin, the model of modern self-modeling, along with John Paul Jones, and Ethan Allen—is a complex testament to Melville's sustained engagement with the bildungsroman and its dramas of self-design. It is also a response to a world flooded by paradox. Each of the three model Americans, Franklin, Jones, and Allen, balance their personalities on a paradox of their own: Franklin has a kind of occult common sense, figured appropriately by the mathematic figures on his conjurer's robe; Jones, a kind of rakish bravado (for which the major figure is also sartorial: the savage wrapped in silk); and Ethan Allan, the hulking philosopher, the prophet who becomes a spectacle for his exaggerated body. Each has a moment when their successful self-sufficiency dissolves into a succession of identities, "a combination of apparent incompatibilities" (*IP* 99). For Franklin, it sounds like: "Printer, postmaster, almanac maker, essayist, chemist, orator, tinker, statesman, humorist, philosopher, parlor-man, political economist, professor of housewifery, ambassador, projector, maxim-monger, herb-doctor, wit" (*IP* 48). A similar list is given for Ethan Allan (*IP* 149). In each case, the contradictions of the model personality are exposed by an encounter with desire: Franklin's robe is the gift of a mistress (*IP* 38); in an extensive episode, Jones flirts with the wife of man he meant to kidnap (*IP* 110); Ethan Allan shows his sensitive side to a female admirer as Israel eavesdrops (*IP* 145). In a world in which representative men take their meaning from the structure of mutual

opposition they compose within themselves and between one another, Potter represents something like a negative representation. The proliferation of models indicates the proliferation of structural contradictions in modern social life, its disintegrated and obscure texture, and the potential to solve these contradictions by organizing oneself around one's eros, one's capacity for desire, an effect well-described in Clark Davis. The primary qualities of these figures are in sustained dialogue with one another: Franklin's obscure prudence seems to be opposed both to Jones's bravado and, even more strongly, Allen's righteous prophecy. Jones bombs and burns his hometown (*IP* 100-105); Potter, something like his undone opposite, organizes his life along the intention to return home safely.

Potter then is not a home-hated but a simple eccentric: "I am a simple sort of soul,—eccentric they call me,—and don't like my boots to go out of my sight. Ha! Ha!" (*IP* 66). Potter has been called a flawed, "inconstant" character as well as an innovative "deindividualized protagonist" (Reising 120), or even an exemplification of "the schizophrenic nature of identity formation under consumer capitalism" (Temple 13). A critique of the "great men" theory of history that secures for itself a complex aesthetic, and a nuanced emplacement of its penchant for de-completion, this novel and its exile stylistics depend upon narratives of successful self-modeling and nation-making even as they finds clever and fulfilling ways of cross-rigging and re-routing them. Israel Potter seems to be a kind of negative example of that form of negative exemplarity Carrie Hyde has detected in patriotic literature. Potter seems an example of non-exemplarity, someone who simply *is* instead of representing something else (sharing, as he does, these letters with Melville's two other midcareer conjugations of Being, Ishmael and Isabel, each of whom is defined by what Isabel calls their "unavoidable displacements and migrations" [*P* 153]).

Israel Potter, in its simple eccentricity, in its negation of the technique of negative exemplification, its undercutting of the great-men theory of history, absorbs and opposes much from the culture it occupies. F.O. Matthiessen, though not an appreciative reader of *Israel Potter*, nevertheless took it as evidence of something very like this proposition: it indicates "how much Melville had reflected on the American character, and on what it needed most to bring it to completion" (*AR* 493). We might understand this moment of Melville's career, and the style that it looses, as something of an inexuberant one. The inexuberant style makes itself felt especially in the late poetry, which is hyperformalist, heavily belabored, encumbered by the bulk and twist of its revisions on revisions (a kind of inversion of the all-pile-in, approach to revision of *Mardi* or *Moby*). The pleasures of late Melville are measured and muted. The sense for interpersonal encounters is skeptical, rather than charged with queer inclination.[45] The novel seems to acknowledge and revise the picaresque mode of, emptying it of its positive energy. Richard Chase calls this fiction written in "the mood of withdrawal" (152), a useful shorthand for these fictions in which the "NO! in thunder" of "Hawthorne and His Mosses" quickly becomes the passive of preferring not in "Bartleby, the Scrivener," of simply saying no to assistance and to solidarity, and desire and money and movement. But these novels do not withdrawal from one another, nor from their forebears; indeed, they compose a closed context for one another.

The Confidence-Man practices a kind of negative dialogism, in which conversation abstracts those who enter into it from their present sense of themselves, their best interest, and the workings of the world around them. It queries its characters with the same matter again and again (what Lucien Goldmann calls "the multiple and complex phenomenon of the relationship which each individual has with his fellows" [*Hidden God* 7]), and entertains itself in the absence

[45] Israel offers to share a bed with John Paul Jones, replaying the counterpane moment down to the peeping and exposed tattoos, but John Paul Jones simply declines.

of steady answers. The question "What is he?" becomes "What are you? What am I? Nobody knows who anybody is" (*C-M* 194). Such a literary mode is predicted in *Israel Potter*'s remarkable Chapter 14, in which Israel, having fallen off one ship into its foe, tries to pass himself off as a crewmember to one crewmember after another by spinning an identity out of what he has learned from the immediately previous encounter. Like "Typee" in *Omoo*, he takes his identity from the immediately previous adventure, though now the scene has the darkness of a midnight fight, rather than the bright Tahiti sun, about it:

> "Tell me," demanded the officer earnestly, "how long do you remember yourself? Do you remember yesterday morning? You must have come into existence by some sort of spontaneous combustion in the hold. Or were you fired aboard from the enemy, last night, in a cartridge? Do you remember yesterday?"
> "Oh yes, sir."
> "What was you doing yesterday?"'
> "Well, sir, for one thing, I believe I had the honor of a little talk with yourself."
> "With *me*?"
> "Yes sir; about nine o'clock in the morning—the sea being smooth and the ship running, as I should think, about seven knots—you came up into the main-top, where I belong, and was pleased to ask my opinion about the best way to set a top gallant stu'n'-sail."
> (*IP* 138)

Potter circulates through the crew in this manner, burying his claims to belong in subclauses ("the main-top, where I belong"), hinted expertise, and improvised humor. Soon he is adopted not because he is understood but because the group is sufficiently opaque to itself to allow the pleasures of personal humor to overcome general confusion and suspicion. The confused community of *The Confidence-Man*—the "many-minded" crowd assembled in St. Louis, or on the Mississippi riverboat itself ("though always full of strangers, she continually, in some degree, adds to, or replaces them with strangers still more strange" [*C-M* 15])—is even more opaque to itself. The talk about talk that traverses this novel does not synthesize in the style of Bakhtin's dialogism, but instead sustains, and indeed advances, a sense of creeping apartness.

"Hypothetical friends" is the novel's way of describing the suspended friendships it hosts (*C-M*

202), the sort of friends that a moment can make, before the succeeding moment sends the two it tangled together away with even less than they started with. The image of community here is one that functions in spite of its occurrence beneath the sign that reads "NO TRUST." This commuted and commuting—and ceaselessly mutable—community functions in spite of trust and the obscurity of individual identity—and in this sense is a masquerade in the technical sense of Terry Castle. *The Confidence-Man* imagines a community that communes in confusion. And therefore *The Confidence-Man* both concludes the series that composes Melville's career and recapitulates its basic rhythm: the career of the confidence man is the successive replacement of one occupation by its opposite,—by *an* opposite, *and* then another. The office of the confidence man is to preserve the community, in the wake literally, of its disintegration. The formula for the bildungsroman comes to feel to the reader as if inverted. The disintegrated community is as self-opaque as the would-be self-making individual is.

The masquerade, in this way, becomes the successor of the escapade. But *The Confidence-Man* is not so much devastating as it is, in its fickleness, fun. The confidence-man, a prophet of succession that is not development, succeeds himself like *Redburn*'s Carlo, we might say. Name that tune. The reader plays both confidence-man and victim, savoring the gnarled negations (which, by requiring second and third readings, consistently interrupt readerly absorption) that sinew the style. This novel knots itself together in a doctrine of self-succession (in which the body can no longer hold captive its occupant), negative dialogism (in which stories confuse rather that fuse the community), and hypothetical friendship. Here too we can perceive the concluding function of the doctrine of "originals" in this novel (Chapter 44), which is something like the answer to the *Typee*'s hypostasis of beginnings (not only my beginning, but mankind's, the image of Eden). Beginnings promise to carry something out to an ending, like an

entertainment or a career (Said *Beginnings* 6, 32). Originals, however, generate a new idea of generation: they do not enter an existing world, according to Branka Arsić, but make a world of whatever they enter [7]); they promise not to follow what follows, but, to paraphrase the closing sentence of the novel, and Melville's final failure of succession, only that "something" else may.

We can apprehend Melville's morphology once more in its afterecho. *Billy Budd, Sailor* is essentially a drama of reputation, of the transmission of a coherent image of an individual (hello Handsome Sailor) and its power to sustain a working group. This is the meaning of the work song, the modest sailor-ballad, which completes it. This song tests the power of moral ambiguity to sustain the "forms, measured forms" not only of naval penal code (*BB* 501), but also the rather more important and intricate ones of the ballad form, which can synchronize bodies in their efforts. It is an afterimage of the interest in creative de-formation, in the thrills of a-representativity, that animated the novels of the second half of the career. One step beyond *The Confidence-Man*'s incessant self-transformations is the commitment to allow oneself to be made and remade by others, "rudely circulated" like the foretopman's ballad of Billy—at intervals snatched from other work, to be what others built one out to be. To be the object, as is Billy's spar, of the "knowledges" of nameless laborers (*BB* 503); to endure carelessly like Carlo in song. It's Melville's faith in this form of self-making, in fact, the sort that takes place at the "tarry" hands of others, both sticky with tar and belatedly arrived (*BB* 504), that enables him to revive so well in the 1920s, when narratives of failure are fitter than ever to be told[46]—that is, to hold, across great distances and despite deep ideological and interpersonal differences, a group together in the task of telling.[47]

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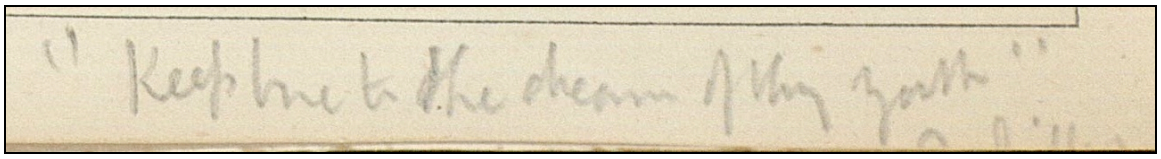
[46] See William Dusinberre, *Henry Adams: The Myth of Failure* (1980).

[47] A monument to this process is the correspondence montage that composes the section of the Appendix to Clare Spark's history of the Melville Revivial, *Hunting Captain Ahab* (2001) entitled "Melville

Melville, in the end, allows himself to be composed by the community that gives itself to that task, the sort of loose group that Deleuze calls "an *archipelago*" (86, original emphasis). *Billy Budd* pairs well with Melville's late-life letters, concerned too with reputation, its aesthetics and its aestheticization: "This impression of him was doubtless deepened by the fact that he was gone, and in a measure mysteriously gone" (*BB* 131). The truth that D.H. Lawrence extracts from Melville is: "Each soul *should* be alone" (151). The truth is there for the extracting (from *Redburn*, for instance, if one were to isolate the first half of this chapter), but is not itself Melville's final one, which is the gift of his own story to the community that might seek after new truths through it. "Keep true to the dreams of thy youth!" is a motto, cribbed from Schiller, that Melville takes to inscribing on things like his desk (according to his great-grandson, Paul Metcalf [128]) and his copy of Wordsworth in his old age: not only because he benefits from it, but also because he thinks, through him, others might.[48] Melville disappears into the stories others tell of him, the careers that even later others will build out of the career, or whatever, he built.

Scholars in Love—An Epistolary Romance: 'Tragic Ending Too Tough for a Small Child to Endure'": 470-562. This stunning document is composed completely of the prose of others, mostly major players in the Melville revival and mostly their private letters to one another. Sparks herself does not celebrate the early Melvilleans, though she is fascinated by them and includes in her montage an emblem of just the sort of "knowledges" that their manner of belonging invests with preciousness. Harrison Hayford communicated the following to her, in 1996, in conversation: "Don't you know that Herman showed his secret tattoo to his little granddaughter Frances? She wanted one too, so he tattooed a whale on the top of her hand; he used blue ink and it took three days." She appends, a half page later, this snatch of conversation with Donald Yannella, transcribed (like the Hayford snippet) "from memory": "I visited Mrs. Osborne in an old-age home sometime in the late 1970s. With my own eyes I saw the remains of that blue tattoo on the upper side of her right hand, mingled with the blue veins" (561). Everything is almost too perfect here, in this image of thought as an embodied operation, criticism as something through which one addresses the author in his first name: scandals of knowledge ("Don't you know…") and tidbits of sharing, first-hand testimony (and the hand literalized), and the final sign of the author mingled to the blue decay of the human body (blue as the waters that roll over the end of *Moby-Dick*).

[48] This can be viewed by way of Melville's Marginalia Online, a remarkable resource: http://melvillesmarginalia.org/tool.php?id=18&pageid=2966.

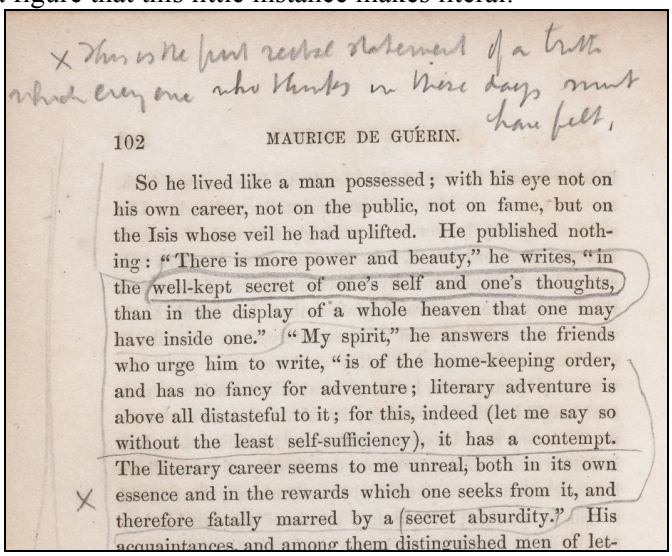


Melville's interest in the drama of *Bildung*, a young person's initiation into an adulthood they can own, transforms into one in the initiation of others into their youth. In *Billy Budd*, "the fresh young image of the Handsome Sailor" persists (*BB* 504), an image that came into Melville on his own first voyage to Liverpool, when he saw him in the flesh, an "intensely black" common sailor, surrounded by his admirers, "a symmetric figure much above the average height" (*BB* 430). Late in life, Melville is contacted by several English admirers, including a young Havelock Ellis, who would like to put his novels back into print (a proposition Melville does not forbid, though exerts himself only slightly to realize: he has read *Pierre*, in which a similar proposal proves a disaster to the hero, after all) and, more generally, who would like to encourage him into a few final ontological heroics and likely some wistful self-celebration; he is invited too to join the Authors Club of New York (Dillingham 14). Melville declines. "What little [vigor] is left I husband for certain matters as yet incomplete, and which indeed may never be completed" (*C* 519). Self-making cedes to the self that others can stitch together out of the traffic in anecdote, in primary research, book-borrowing, and contests of interpretation. 'Tis meet that Melville now has his Melvilleans: call them a Society. Hershel Parker incarnates, precisely, the image of Melville's ideal reader: the task of biography often, in his writing, returns him to the task of composing his own biography, recalling nights spent in Brentwood with Leon Howard, or sub-sub-ish toil, transcribing the letters of obscure family members and encountering therein his primary evidence for *The Isle of the Cross*.[49] Like Billy Budd, Melville submits himself to the songs that others will sing of him (anonymous others, like the one who composes

[49] See *Melville Biography: An Inside Narrative* 46, and "Lost Melville," footnote 20.

Billy's ballad).[50] He notices that they ignore the subtle facts of the tragedy, if these don't suit their rhyme scheme, and wishes them to supply their own title. The self, at last, becomes the residue of self-craft, out of which novel counterpublics—fatherless families, in which each is Ishmael—relations between bachelors and orphans, that is—can be improvised.

[50] The mechanism presents in Melville's reading of Arnold, where he marks a passage about double unreality of the literary career (it traffics in the unreal; its rewards too are unreal) and composes a kind of covert community in the margin: "This is the first verbal statement of a truth which everyone who thinks in these days must have felt." Melville makes his literary career a space for the communion of thinkers, including overthinkers, a figure that this little instance makes literal:



Several important pieces of the Houghton's holdings of books that belonged to Melville can be accessed online through their Open Collections program, including the image above (http://pds.lib.harvard.edu/pds/view/13908972?n=129).

CHAPTER THREE

WHAT IT MEANS TO SAY THE GOTHIC SCATTERS

"'What mean you?' said Frank raising her eyes and endeavoring, although vainly, to pierce the gloom which enshrouded the stranger…" George Lippard, *New York* (1853)

"The unity of what is to be asked with a 'What?' question is always the product of the system that asks the question."

Niklas Luhmann, "How Can the Mind Participate in Communication?" (1994)

The year 1847 is an "immemorial" one for Edgar Allan Poe, meaning he doesn't remember much of it.[1] But 1848 seems the start of something new. Poe sends his first letter of the year to George W. Eveleth, a medical student from Maine who he never meets in person. Poe confides this fact to Eveleth, a man who calls him "*my friend*" (*Letters from George* 8) and glories in his spunk (14): he feels a new life coming on. The commencement speech for this new life, or life within life, takes place the evening of 3 February 1848, a little more than a year since Poe's wife's death and a little less than one since a letter from Eveleth that Poe had left, like its successor, long unanswered. That evening, before a small audience, Poe gives a lecture on "The Universe" at the Society Library in New York City. A storm passes, and the newspaper people present note the bluster that accompanies Poe turning over new leaves. (Eveleth is absent; he'll receive a summary later, by letter.) Divine creation, Poe explains, means the creation of differences. Divinity fills every particle with its proper particularity. The cosmos takes its cues from a lurching flirting between the principles of Attraction and Repulsion; the courtship of Attraction and Repulsion reconciles some atom with some others, then other others; clustering's that habit's name. The shapes and operations of the universe—it's blowing in the library, the implications echo—rebound on the person who asks about them. Poe's grand question (why?) is its own answer, literally, that is letter-wise: the physical universe is shaped like the letter Y

[1] The term comes from the only piece Poe publishes that year, the ballad "Ulalume" (l. 5). Its canonical application to Poe's life occurs in Ostrom's edition of Poe's letters (1948, rev. 1966); a rather spare section in the second volume is headed, "The Immemorial Year," 309-342.

(*Eureka* 74), the same Y that sits sometimes in the center ("Respectfully yours" [8]) and sometimes on the outskirts ("Yours most respectfully" [12], later "Your truly" [22]) on the lines at the end of Eveleth's letters.

Revised and elaborated, Poe's cosmological lecture is published in July as *Eureka*. The book is a remarkable document in the long history of gothic genre theory because it mistakes its own genre, which is genre theory, for a faddish one in the 1840s, cosmography.[2] It concerns no universe, as I will show, but the gothic one. It sells poorly. Several keen pieces of literary criticism follow this one, including a fascinating work of prosody, "The Rationale of Verse" (1848),[3] but the failure of *Eureka* is bound up with Poe's prospects, and goes far to tank them. By the next summer, he is regressing, and has determined (why?) to return to the locality with the same name as his deceased wife, Virginia. Poe turns up in Philadelphia, wearing one shoe, at the office of friend and fellow gothic auteur George Lippard. The two gothicists share what they share that day. Whatever that is, no one really seems to get it; maybe the name for it is "joke"; Lippard tries out the term, "the joke of the thing," later (rpt. *Dodge's Literary Museum* [1854]). Poe leaves a copy of *Eureka* in the hand he stops holding when the two part at a railway terminal. Nothing comes to term; it's terminal; each leaves; ways vary; passengers pass, pass away. After Poe's death, Lippard writes an account of their last day together for a kind of *fait-divers* column he keeps, one with a title that redacts in friendship's idiom the folk physics of *Eureka*: "It Is a Queer World" (*Quaker City Weekly* [26 January 1850]).

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[2] For the first phase of gothic theory's documentary record, see *Gothic Documents: A Sourcebook, 1700-1820*. The midcentury rage for cosmography I notice is the topic of anonymous "Review of Cosmogonies" that appears in *The Western Quarterly Review* (April 1849): "Cosmogonies are common," of late; "Every one has a cosmogony of his own." The lengthy article mentions *Eureka* briefly, in its back half. For the contemporary record concerning "The Universe" and *Eureka*, see Pollin, "Contemporary Reviews of *Eureka*: A Checklist."

[3] See Roth, and also the distinctive monograph edition of the essay prepared by Greenwood.

Less intentional but no less benevolent is the redaction of *Eureka* we find in Harriet Prescott Spofford's underknown "In a Cellar," first published in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1859. The cosmos according to Poe exhibits the same whims and makeshift forms as the only spot in it worth residing, according to the narrator of Spofford's detective story, Paris namely, "the pivot on which the world revolves… such a world" (3, 36). The story begins where it ends, in a finely furnished room with a table in its center, and an ornament in the center of the table. Wine clusters about the ornament; dinner-guests flush and cluster according to the wine; it prevents them from falling into a formation with a name like that of Lippard's bride, rows. This little gothic universe is a scale model of *Eureka*'s. In the discourse of the nameless narrator, who by his namelessness seems to be the sort of man whose clustered capabilities can be reckoned only along a list—an ex-diplomat, reluctant detective, gem aficionado, above all devoted socialite—, a cosmic vocabulary persists. It persists, indeed, in ceding the cosmic and unseen, sentence by sentence, to such persons and problems as come to seem its truth, the cosmopolitan's, that is, the Paris scene. "The Antipodes," for instance, this man calls his butler (5). When he deduces that the same butler is the culprit that he is seeking, and deduces from that peculiar consequences for his heart and the hearts of others, having the whole thought feels like "Archimedes, as perhaps you have never heard," moving the world with a lever (35). Eureka.

What is in evidence in Paris, as much in the evidence the detective assembles as how this evidence suits itself for use in the "world of circumstances, of friends and enemies" (35)—to be precise, the narrator forces a worldly Baron to marry a woman whom he loves but would not wed ("to love one's own wife—it is ridiculous! ... All the world would suspect and laugh" [34])—, is this fact: "man evidently is gregarious" (2). Other observations tumble from this one, like facts falling from a great "fact" in cases (2). Evidently, "life" means nothing apart from in its "great

purpose," "society" (2); evidently, "we are nothing without our opposites, our fellows, our lights and shadows, colors, relations, combinations, our *point d'appui*, our angle of sight" (2); evidently, the lonely man is immeasurable, and in poor taste; and evidently, indeed, the human "race swings naturally to clusters" (3).[4] The case's solution expresses itself in terms of the prosecution not of a criminal but of a courtship: the Baron's with a wife who'll make him ridiculous in the only domain that matters, the social world, a world of mockers and banqueters, a world that enjoys as it intends its suspicions. The joke of the thing seems to be that no one cares to know whom the joke is on.

The point of such an introduction is to see that this set of moments is knotted up with itself in ways that would lure us without needing a name. These crossed examples may be anti-anecdotal. I believe they earn what they share in their minor elements: a sense of ulterior relation. These are images of love keeping loose, and themselves they keep loose, in the shows of love they are not bound to make, but anyway, or in a way, do. That procedure, call it clustering, is what I will describe as gothic, particularly midcentury or second-wave or revival gothic.[5] It will become evident soon that the evidence will accumulate to my claims in an

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[4] In *Queer Gothic*, George Haggerty associates what he, like Lippard, calls the "queer world" of the gothic both with "the world of desire" and "a world beyond" (2, 149, 150). A world beyond the world of desire is yet a world, and one that wants; among other things, as we will see, it wants to be called "world."

[5] The rigid designation of a historical period is not a primary concern of this discussion of the gothic and its logic. An array of phase-words for gothic will be employed: loosely coupled modifiers like "revival" gothic (see Spofford [1878], and Howe and Warren), second-wave gothic, "neo-gothic" (Hogle), "bourgeois" gothic (Punter, Moretti, Jackson), "imperial gothic" (Streeby, Smith and Hughes, Bremner), and midcentury gothic (by which we mean, of course, mid-nineteenth-century gothic). I value their assortment. Having something like the same status is the wobbly term "American gothic," the usage of which tends to suppose midcentury as an inflection point (see Ringe, Goddu, Savoy, Lloyd-Smith, Roberts). Less loose and therefore less useful to us, though pertinent, are David Anthony's coinages, "Jacksonian gothic" and "antebellum gothic" (721). The lack of a modifier for gothic should count as another item on the same list (Botting, Salomon); on-the-rocks gothic is just another conception of the gothic. Even swapping out or swapping back-and-forth between gothic and cognate categories—like "melodrama" (Chase, Fiedler, Brooks), "dark adventure" (Reynolds), "symbolic romance" (Bendixen),

uncouth manner. The model for this is the treatment of evidence and the treatment of adverbs ("evidently") by the nameless narrator of "In a Cellar."[6] For this observer, the solution is no less

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and "romantic exoticism" (Fiedler again)—terms which might seem to spurn the sense of a proper place in period genre-systems—is to be permitted, indeed depended upon.

In Ringe's terms, our period can be characterized as the third of three sub-phases of "the major phase of American Gothicism" (160): not the primitive gothicism of the Brockden Brown era, nor the secondary sort of Cooper and his contemporaries, but rather that of the moment that Poe and Hawthorne, taken together, mark. This moment may be marked still more suitably by the concurrence of the hale periods of certain sub-formations, which Alan Lloyd-Smith calls "different strains within the Gothic" (32), and which concur in turn with the dawn of the mass market for literature (Gilmore, Erickson). I am thinking, in particular, of crime fiction (Knight), the detective novel (Hartman, Thoms), city mysteries (Erickson, Knight), the urban gothic (Stout) or porno-gothic (Ridgeley), true crime (Seltzer), sensation fiction, the blood-and-thunder romance or "domestic horror" (Bernadi), science fiction (Beaver, Franklin), frontier (Howe) or prairie (Rowe) gothic, the provincial gothic (Brodhead), the raw-head-and-bloody-bones school of fiction, and tales of terror (Heller). The inner tendency of such forms suits them, I think, for recognition *in a list*. Loosely construed, the gothic is an intellectual formation, a style of belonging, which responds acutely to terms like "loosely construed." In the survey of the sub-sub and pseudo-sub -gothicisms, we may have a sense of what it means, for Poe, for Divine creation to be the creation of the differences, the creation of different forms of difference.

The first sentence of Ringe's path-breaking survey *American Gothic* (1982) emphasizes its own critical necessity: its object, this genre, the gothic, is often recognized in the cheap derision it receives from literary critics: "seldom…much respect" (v). By the book's twentieth sentence, however, it has spent one full one knocking the work of George Lippard ("so sleazy and sensational" [vi]). Seldom much respect, indeed! Lippard's output presents the genre in precisely the manner that seems crucial to it, like the tragedy of Euripides in Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), which causes a genre of noble decay itself to fall fallow, that is, to test or dose itself with its own proper plot. So sleazy, so be it. The debased instance of a debased, all-too-debased genre, Lippard's "sleazy" style seems as much like a bad example as an example of perfect badness, that is, a perfect example after all. This chapter builds to taking it as such. In its second section, it annexes "sleazy" to the literary manner of George Thompson, another city-mystery writer; in the third, it turns to the appreciation of Lippard's own exemplary style.

[6] In what follows, the plot and particulars of "In a Cellar" will operate in a manner we consider apt: submerged. We will be explicit about these in the space of this note only. In short, here is "the case" (7): the narrator, once a diplomat and now simply a Briton on permanent vacation in Paris, has a weakness, like "we all have" (7); his is for diamonds. When a really magnificent one goes missing from a not-really magnificent sort of aristocrat, the narrator involves himself in the investigation. He discovers the diamond after a while, but not because he deduces it. It so happens that he bumps into a man wearing the chain known to go with the diamond, then lets his thoughts quickly make a chain of themselves ("a fabric of sturdy probabilities" [10]). Then the narrator follows the man to his place of business, an arms dealership, where he is sure despite the dealer's lies that the diamond lies. He's right. Soon the gem slips again away, however, and the narrator must perform the task over. The second time he has the aid of "a clew?": by chance the narrator has overheard that the diamond is hidden "in a ——— cellar." He camps out in his own, his of the ten-thousands in the city ("I felt certain that something must transpire in that cellar. I don't know why I had pitched upon that one in particular…" [24]), where he witnesses insurrectionists plotting revolution, among them the Secretary of the Secret Service, then bores himself slightly with long waiting, but gives it up only when forced to endure the tete-a-tete of a pair of horribly conventional lovers ("this rehearsal of woes and blisses, this *ah mon Fernand*… too much!" [25]). It turns out that the cellar of the

mysterious than the mystery, the shape of which it takes, like Poe's Y-splayed cosmos. While the party swings like the race to clusters, "a sudden chain of events flashed through my mind, an instantaneous heat, like lightning, welded them into logic," and this as the Baron "stood smiling and expectant before me" (4). (A smile like that we'll learn to call catastrophe.) Our propositions too will be sustained along enchainments of evidence, flash-forged, communicating their heat with their light, mingling exchange and revelation, and logic with its opposite, on the spot. The manner of this argument is, then, atmospheric. It's loose, keyed to the communication among mere details, spooky action at a distance, cryptic if you wish it.[7] How this works will become clearer when we say by what means the gothic scatters.

The chapter falls out in three parts. The first surveys the field of the literary gothic at midcentury, where scattering and clustering relations obtain on a broad scope. The second means to know this mode of excess by an excessive shift of scale: from the generic space-of-forms to a single scene of crime and a peculiar symbol taken from George Thompson's city mystery, *City Crimes* (1849), a combusting man. The third explores of how relations between scattering and clustering combust and re-couple in the middle distance, on the standard scale, that is in the

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clue is a salt cellar, meaning tableware, and the table in question precisely that one at the dinner party that this lucky detective, on the right night precisely, attends. The revelation, which is not a deduction but simply a feat of ideational clustering, a "sudden chain" of pseudo-thoughts (4), is not put to legal use, except insofar as one of the responsible parties, an aristocrat in decline but still rather splendid, can be gamed to marry a woman the detective himself had lately fancied, for marriage is a legal affair. Hints from this story are rampant in the chapter that follows; what the story itself calls "slight variations" (34), prolific; explicit references and rehearsals of the sort that it calls "straight" (4), rare. For a reading of "In a Cellar" keyed to the manner in which its phrases and details study in themselves but refuse to resolve "that old, vexed, and singularly stubborn problem of Romance and Realism" (61), and thus portend much for Spofford's career arc, see Halbeisen 58-61. I believe Halbeisen's formulation a fine one, for it points up a notion about the nature of the gothic investment in the romance-realism thing, namely, that this investment may not be conceptual, immediately, but first, dynamic. The fascination of the gothic may be one with processes with qualities of oldness and stubbornness; the vex or curse may be the lure.

[7] This atmospheric quality might be felt in the wry relation between main text and footnotes in this chapter. Where typically the footnotes exist to abet the coherence of the body text, here the text proper is but a prop to preserve the footnoted notions in their separateness, Poe would say their "multiplicity."

shape of a plot or what Peter Brooks would call a narrative "intention," specifically in George Lippard's late-career trilogy on "New-York life," *Empire City* (1849-1850), *New York* (1853), and *The Midnight Queen* (1853).

I An Anatomy of Excess

D.H. Lawrence says that Edgar Allan Poe is a craver, a "terrible craver[]" (77). I say that he craves, among other things, opportunities to employ the prefix *sub* (Pollin *Creator* 37). Classically, *sub* means beneath and implies organization. But no sooner is this sense taken than others tousle or dishevel it. Also classically, *sub* means near or close to, as in "subantarctic"—an instance needful in the paraphrase of Arthur Gordon Pym's adventure—, or "suburban," or "sub-pornography."[8] Sometimes it means in place of, as in "substitute." Further, it can serve as a kind of qualifier, somewhat; the Latin *subabsurdus*, somewhat absurd, or *subobscūrus*, somewhat obscure, are both occasionally adapted to use in English; the latter, like "subequal," has an *OED* entry. Crowning its senses, *sub* has meant secretly or covertly, as in "suborn." With this sense, it is as if *sub* says without saying: look at all these other senses I have smuggled into myself, secretly or covertly. Poe "sub-entitled" *Eureka*, "A Prose Poem." He referred its Beauty to its Truth, and its Truth to its "*sub*-principle[s]" (*E* 48).

I begin in earnest with another subtitle, which I find *sub* in some of these ways. The subtitle of Peter Brooks's suggestive account of Victorian melodrama, *The Melodramatic Imagination* (1976), is "Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess." (Whenever I hear this title, I think, what a title.) That "the melodramatic imagination" concerns the historical category of melodrama surprises Brooks himself. In the Preface, he describes his path to nineteenth-century melodrama: he kept using the modifier "melodramatic" when teaching Balzac

[8] Witness Leslie Fiedler's claim that Lippard's novels are that precisely: "Male Novel," 81.

and James, and finally decided to see what it had meant. Turns out: more than a modifier, properly it's a mode, and that mode itself a mode of mores. That the book concerns Balzac and Henry James is blurted first, before it can surprise, and so the brilliance of the subtitle, I find, is how it ends, "the mode of excess," what a name. But what does it name? In the mode of excess, *what* exceeds *what*?

What's in excess, for one, is the excess. To claim that literary excess is about "heightened dramatization" is to make two claims simultaneously (*MI* ix): (1) that emotional content is heightened; the passions are ratcheted, both passions like lusting and passions like suffering; and (2) that the style, aesthetic expression, the "semantic field of force" (*MI* xiii), has been ruffled and rearranged.[9] "This," says Brooks significantly, even melodramatically, "is the mode of excess": "the postulation of a signified in excess of the possibilities of the signifier, which in turn produces an excessive signifier, making large but unsubstantiable claims on meaning" (*MI* 199). What's in excess is the signified, first, and then, in reaction, the signifier. I'm not sure this claim, in which begging the question appears like a stage direction, is any more stable than the one it purports to explain; I'm not sure, as such, it can count as an explanation exactly, though yes it's evocative, assuredly it is itself "large." Happily another option looms. Perhaps that excess of excesses becomes significant, rather than merely messy, efficient rather than simply effortful, and interesting, when it delivers itself unto an excess of modes, or models, as in the "dizzying

[9] The traffic between "a cultural discourse of sensibility that celebrates emotional excess" and a certain literary propensity ("overstylized to the point of flamboyant artificiality" [14]) is the concern of Ahern's recent *Affected Sensibilities: Romantic Excess and the Genealogy of the Novel* (2007), particularly the section on "Forms of Excess" (36-45). Historicity, like "linear [literary] history" [xiii], is a secondary, but only a secondary, concern for Brooks, who prefers indexicals like "near the start of the nineteenth century" [xi], "the period extending roughly from 1800 to 1830" (29), and, most often, "modern." For his reliance on this last one, Seltzer prosecutes the charge of "*no-longerism*" in *True Crime* (87-89 fn 48), meaning something like the deployment of a black-market or knock-off epistemological break; there is too much plentitude and self-presence in the operative notion of the old school here. A term without a significant scene of invention, excess is often reprised in gothic criticism: e.g. Halberstam, 2-3; Botting, 1-5; Crane, 94-102.

disarray" of sub-sub and pseudo-sub –genres that (Punter 18), in a coup of formal or conceptual peripety, not melodrama but the gothic mode discovers.

The gothic, I submit, is a mode wherein modes abide in excess: a mode in which a mode of excess and a excess of modes, indeed an excess of excesses and a mode made of modes, collide: and one in which, as here, formulation is coextensive with dissolution. Brooks does not articulate the possibility like this, but articulate it he does, subtly. On his account, the motor of excess is an antagonism between signifier and signified, an aggravation of form by content and vice versa. One way to see how this works is to see such a cardinal structure, intimate antagonism, a polar and indeed an antipodal form, in the gothic mode, exhibiting itself in categories that seem in turn to oppose themselves to one another, like psyche (e.g., "the agonizing duality imbedded deep in human personality" [Thompson *RGT* 7]) and society ("the two horrible faces of a single society" [Moretti "Fear" 83]),—or what appears opposed to both, the pure form of ornament that shows "above all no center" (Worringer 56),—or, opposite indeed of that, the "late riots" of real life and "history" (Otter 180, 179). Another way is to take the case of tragedy, which could be conceived in one moment as adjacent to melodrama (*sub* in one sense, proximate but "distinct" [*MI* 28]), in another moment as a surpassed ancestor (*sub* in another valence, in place of [*MI* 16, 108]), and perhaps finally as "only a special subset of melodrama" (*MI* xi) (*sub* as subordinate). The fate of tragedy, that genre of fate, is to have its own fate vexed and bungled, or "scattered" like the "ethical and psychic fragments of the Sacred" seem to Brooks in modernity (*MI* 21), within and without melodrama proper. Here's

what happens in "death" to the genre of death (*MI* 108); here's the "'fall' from" the genre of "the fall from…" (*MI* 15).[10]

If stately tragedy can be so treated, there may be no scandal when a genre-designator as slippery and permissive as "gothic" is handled in a similar manner. Gothic is the mode of excess only more so than melodrama: in excess. Unlike melodrama, it is easy to know it as a mode of modes; its themes and topoi provide the vocabulary. Ancestors pop up as companions: the ghost trope readies the mind for such an effect. What's within manifests, estranged and uncanny: on the outside, doubled in a double, or the inside, like a nightmare. By these motifs, and others like and unlike, the reader quickly learns the trick of abiding an expectation not merely of the unusual but of the unexpected. What defines melodrama's subbie morphospace is also what binds it to the gothic, from which it poaches (as on *MI* 30) or trades to-and-fro (as on *MI* 19) themes and problems. The situation of melodrama as a mode is an excessive one, and one that I believe it cannot easily describe without its own reliable access to the gothic's stock of motifs and themes. For it is the gothic in truth, not melodrama, that models in its motifs the possibility of "[a] new world, a new chronology, a new religion, a new morality" (*MI* 15), various and unevenly, in notions and notations like this one, that is, in lists.

It is in terms of this term, the list, "a nonsyntactic formation of items" (Vismann 5), that I stage this chapter's major confrontation with the field of gothic criticism, broadly construed. Gothic criticism has a sectarian character. It quibbles, it snickers, it slants, to sustain. It loves to lack and mock its lack of a grand theory, especially of the nineteenth century. Its objects and themes are legion, forbidding redaction. To make a good beginning on them is, in the gothic

[10] See the small section, also redundantly *sub*, in Chase's chapter in *The American Novel and Its Tradition* on Charles Brockden Brown, called "A Note on Melodrama." Here "gothic" is conceived as "a subdivision of melodrama" (37), which is itself "tragedy in a vacuum" (41).

manner, to seal a bad fate, so I won't. But the consensus that does not, and maybe cannot, appear among critics of the gothic at the level of content or concept insists the level of device.

The thrilling proximity of citation and excitation in gothic modes of excess presents itself often, and I believe perfectly, in list form.[11] Here is one that is both extravagant and representative, from G.R. Thompson's Introduction to *Romantic Gothic Tales, 1790-1840*:

> Windswept castles, dim cathedrals, subterranean passages, creaking mansions, deserted churchyards. Dark forests, deep mountain gorges, sheer precipices, frozen wastes. Mysterious manuscripts telling stories within stories of vengeful villains, pursued maidens, murderous madmen; of rape, incest, torture, insanity, damnation; of pursuit by demons, ghosts, ghouls, resurrected corpses, vampires, werewolves. These are some of the stock-in-trade devices of Gothic fiction. (1)

Bindings charge and pass. In this passage, insight is not sentenced to the sentence form; it acquires its own momentum by lilts and halts. The gothic imperative (flee!) is installed as a grammatical category, the run on. And the stock of "devices" or "elements" reckoned in this manner do not sum (1); simply they are "some"; implicitly there are others, and (still more implicitly) none among them the "master" list. Evidently, it is difficult to express one's appreciation for this list and others like it except in listing. The abundance of lists like this in gothic criticism may be measured in the recognition that there is little terminological consistency among the list-riggers about what kind of thing is even being listed: "stock-in-trade devices" and "elements," above; elsewhere, parameters (Goddu 4), features (Miyoshi 8), figures (Savoy 167), paraphernalia (Varma 17; Ringe 183), trappings (Miyoshi 10), claptrap (which rises to a technical term Lowry Nelson Jr.'s "Night Thoughts on the Gothic Novel"), properties (Varma 61), aspects (Castle "Phantasmagoria" [1988] 37), tropes, traits, clichés, conventions, and so on.

[11] The concept of the list that I employ does not debase itself with ratings. It apprehends the heterogeneous by arbitrarily yoking items together. Lists like this differ essentially, as pure quotation does from an attributed quote (see Chapter One), from lists that preen to concoct and display a hierarchical, alphabetical, or logical ordering principle.

Claptrap, trappings: often like that, these words are: a touch overdone. Flair and reel take the place of fact and mastery.

When the gothic's "emphasis on variation" (Varma 237) receives a systematic redaction by William Patrick Day, gothic conventions still do not seem very consistent. Witness the sub and sub-sub –headings of the section in the chapter "The System of Gothic Fantasy" called "The Conventions" (115-150): Heroes and Heroines, Victims and Victimizers; Enthrallment; The Gothic Atmosphere, comprising sections on Subjectivity as Nightmare, The Exotic and History, The Supernatural and the Monstrous; and The Gothic Fantasy and Narrative Form. These sections are smart and rewarding, but also, in idiom and disposition, offensive to the notion of a "system." Plainly, the deepest "gothic fantasy," and maybe the most fantastic of the bunch, is the critic's that the cant of these bits consists. This, I submit, is how gothic expertise should look. Lateral relevance, code switching, and lexical overlap seem to be necessary if names and descriptions are to stick; they must stick together, in spite of organic unlikeness and apparent unlikeliness, if they are to stick on their object, the gothic. Headings like this insinuate a sort of subtle self-awareness: they are heading different ways. Here are titles that seem to be entitled to their apparent incoherence, that is, their categorical disorientation.

In his recent survey of *American Gothic Fiction* (2004), Alan Lloyd-Smith maneuvers his chapter on "Key Texts" toward the observation of how the rubric of "Key Texts" is metabolized by the gothic. Around midcentury, he finds, "American writers increasingly came to strike the Gothic note in macabre *detailing* rather than by invoking the genre *in toto*" (53). Implicitly, the notion of "key" is modulated into a musical meaning ("the Gothic note") then riffed away, into yet other discourses, decorative and academic ("*detailing*," "*in toto*"). A subsequent chapter impresses the reader with the diversity, nearly the incompatibility, of its roll call of "Major

Themes." The unevenness with which the overall "theme" of the list, the gothic, comes into view indexes the basic helpfulness of the arrangement: Gothic Heritage: Rationalism and Perversity; Puritanism; The Gothic Object, "The Thing"; The Uncanny in American Gothic; Frontier Gothic, Gothic Nature; The Gothic Inner Life: Domestic Abjection; Ghosts and Monsters; Darwinism and the Abhuman; Gothic Modernism; Southern Gothic; The Gothic Aesthetics of Absence; Heritage Gothic. That this list ends with a last term that is the opposite of its first one signals that knowledge does not accrue, here, but instead opposes itself to itself and to putative accumulation.[12]

The most subtle and self-conscious of the gothic list-riggers or motif leaguers is Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* treats precisely this critical habit. In it, Sedgwick models the gothic mode in a manner that suits it: the themes that she selects for discussion are nominated for their relevance "to fictional elements at every level… literal, figural, and structural" (4). The genius of Sedgwick's catalogue of conventions is how she describes their convention with one another. This happens no way but along a list. No attempt is made to isolate a common denominator. Instead, each convention is made to exhibit at least one interesting overlapping characteristic with at least one other convention:

> I have not tried to say that the important Gothic conventions are all about one thing, but have tried to find different ways of showing that the several conventions are about, and are like one another. What sleep has to do with the unspeakable (that, for instance, one seldom speaks while asleep) is not the same as what sleep has to do with live burial (that, for instance, both distort the sense of time). (5-6)

[12] I take up Smith's change of "key" to extend the claim: the items in lists like this have a way of cancelling one another out, dissolving into fuzz, as in black or doom types of metal music, in which technical prowess at every instrument overlaps deliriously,—and which stands to white noise as complex to simple forms of thoughtlessness,—and hence which, we say, throws other sorts of -lessnesses through itself as if to prove it cannot have them,—have them, I mean, as *thoughts* (godlessness, faithlessness, sexlessness, rifflessness, and so on).

Items on a list like this one belong like members of the rascal gangs of the gothic do, according to "particular congruencies" (6), which are non-hierarchical, non-exclusive, and non-complementary. Their form is the same as the one that Haggerty, in *Queer Gothic*, calls "queer company" (131). The world of the gothic as such, like the diamond admirers who pass through it ("In a Cellar"), prefers its inclusions obscure.

* *

In the wake of two landmark studies, the sophisticated *Poe's Fiction: Romantic Irony in the Gothic Tales* (1973) and the edited collection *The Gothic Imagination: Essays in Dark Romanticism* (1974), and while preparing the now-standard edition of Poe's *Essays and Reviews* (1984), G.R. Thompson publishes a pair of essays that consider the ontological distinction (*RGT* [1979] 13) or ontological differentiation ("WIAGS" [1983] 16) of the "various forms" of the gothic ("WIAGS" 16).[13] (It is enough for Sedgwick's purpose to call them "atmospherically different" [12].) The "basic modes" of the gothic mode ("WIAGS" 16), Thompson claims, are four: historical Gothic, supernatural Gothic, explained Gothic, and ambiguous Gothic. Each is an issue of "the disordered universe of the Gothic" ("WIAGS" 16), what Brooks refers to as the demolished "moral universe" postulated by excess (*MI* 15). Their distinction obtains "ontologically" not only because the eachness of each one is felt on the scale of the "worldview," though Thompson grants that, but also because of the zeal with which each congeals a kind of universe, improvises laws of physics for itself and itself alone (or makes a point of refusing to do so, as in the explained Gothic). Exceeding Thompson's notion slightly, we could extend his insight to still other subgothics (regional gothics, for instance, or body gothics like "the Female

[13] Though not presented in this way by Thompson, that is according to its intellectual genealogy, "ontological difference" is a technical term in Heidegger's philosophy, where it is used to distinguish between beings and their being, that is, things that have existence and the existence that so to speak they "have." Thompson's usage is philosophically illegitimate, but illegitimate usages, indeed illegitimacy as such, have a place in gothic discourse.

Gothic" [Moers]), and see that each of them entail and congeal a "distinct" or "differentiated" space-time. If a given genre *is* how it is belonged to, in the gothicisms this belonging is referred to time and space: the variety of their available relations. Each sub-sub or pseudo-sub differs from each in the way of bodies and perversions for Elizabeth Grosz, that is, according to "*spatio-temporal location*" (84), that is, in the way that space and time are oriented in them and in respect to others that attract and repulse them. Perhaps it would be possible to speak of the relative autonomy of modal zones, represented thematically in Poe and William Gilmore Simms as "locality" ("Monos"; *Castle* 89), or in Spofford as "spots" and "circumstances" ("The Amber Gods" 59; "Circumstance").

The topic of orientation brings us to another sub-gothic fourfold, broached by Leslie Fiedler. "Romantic exoticism," Fiedler writes, in a footnote to his Introduction of an edition of Lippard's *The Quaker City* that he insists on calling by its subtitle, *The Monks of Monk Hall*, "seeks to escape the tedium and alienation of bourgeois life by flight in four directions, Back, Out, In, and Down":

> backward in time like Sir Walter Scott; outward in space like Robert Louis Stevenson; inward toward the murky depths of the unconscious like Rimbaud; or down the social scale like Sue and, after him, the so-called 'Naturalists.' (It is interesting that Zola wrote one of the last 'mysteries,' *The Mysteries of Marseille* [1867].) (xxi)

If Thompson's fourfold (historical, supernatural, explained, and ambiguous) is a shady one (defined, like Todorov's fantastic, by degrees), then Fiedler's brightly reflects his aspiration as an author who means to revive interest in an author, Lippard, by referring possibilities back to representative men. Necrology doubles as genre-system. These schemes of ontology or orientation solicit their quibbles from the fellow critic, as they should, but for the moment I am more interested in their attractions than their repulsions. What if, via Grosz, we submit in the full sense Thompson's scheme to Fiedler's? (Forgive me this gothic fantasy.) We find, perhaps to our

surprise, that they do complement one another: Thompson's shady plot discovers its limits by being overlaid by Fiedler's, which is not shady but four-ways diffuse, like the four headings on a freaky compass (Back, Out, In, Down). The result is a scatterplot for the gothicisms.

Let's describe a field defines by two axes, SPACE and TIME (Poe calls them "the autocrats *Place* and *Time*" ["Monos"], and we can imagine each autocrat made uncertain of his power by the plural), each one of which has two extremes, DENSITY and DIFFUSION. Four gothicisms leap to meet these categories, the four radical positions that are also four far-flung clumps of space-time (were this scheme political instead of mathematical, the term would be "fanatic").

	Dense	**Diffuse**
Time	Historical novel	Science fiction
Space	Mysteries of the city	Frontier gothic

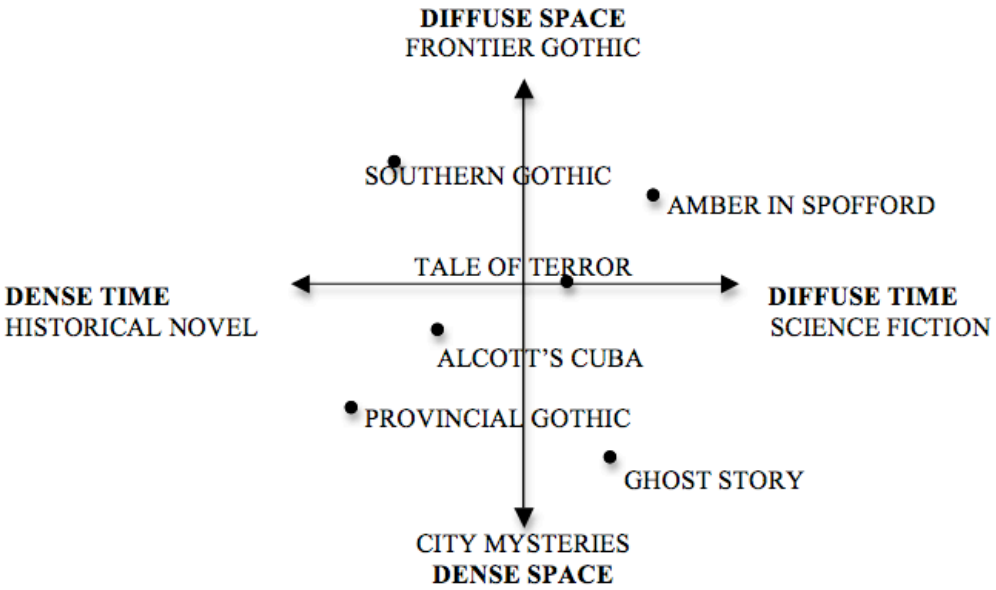
The historical novel, past its palmy days at midcentury, a residual genre, has a gothic streak that is cited both by Thompson and Fiedler, as it often is in studies of James Fenimore Cooper, John Neal,[14] or Catharine Sedgwick; it is absorbed and routinized by the revival gothic. Time in it reckons as history, and each historical moment as something compact or coiled, like a watch tightly wound. Analogously—and the analogy studies itself inside Lippard's output, which is often said to fall into two categories, our two DENSE categories, historical novels and novels of urban life—, the city-mystery novel establishes as its prime preoccupation the ceaseless allure of life atop life, thick space (teeming above, teeming below: think of the "Dark Vaults" of George Thompson's *City Crimes* [132-134], to which we will return). At the opposite extreme, the

[14] Ringe's account of Neal's *Rachel Dyer* (1828), "probably his best book" (119), demonstrates how awareness of historical difference, novelistic technique, and "Gothic effects" (121) are referred to one another in several scenes; see 119-121. See also Sivils, "'The Herbage of Death': Haunted Environments in John Neal and James Fenimore Cooper." The mechanics of the historical novel's conversion of time into space is held visible in this choice phrase, "the herbage of death": space communicates its meaning as environment, which in turn communicates its meaning in terms of the lifespan of an individual (space, that is, collapses to time, and time itself collapses to lifespan), which in turn is collapsed into its own most intense, existential moment (life collapses to death): dense time.

literary formation called frontier gothic catches the gross creep of U.S. imperialism in its "wandering narrative strands" (Hinds 109).[15] Such popular novels of unpopulated space discover it crossed by packs "of Vandals in quest of some new home to be won with the edge of the sword" (Bird *Nick of the Woods* [1837] 16): crossed indeed, or cursed, for instance, by two border-men in late Buntline, "one circling here and the other there, meeting only to communicate" (*Buffalo Bill* [1869-1870] 31). Ned Buntline's authorial career, in fact, straddles that axis, that of SPACE: first a city-mystery culture-worker, he later becomes a writer of westerns. And finally arrives the possibility that had stood long inchoate: arrives in bits, tales and magazine pieces at first, like Fitz-James O'Brien's "What Was It?" (1859), which seem to ask rather what it will be, "this struggling Something" (63): science fiction. Harold Beaver calls this mode "an offshoot of gothicism" (xv); H. Bruce Franklin documents its midcentury beginnings in Hawthorne and Poe. Here's DIFFUSE TIME, a temporal mode in which futures, pasts, and presents uphold an unwholesome correspondence, and in which the "time-scale" is subject to reversals, estrangements, and manipulations (Beaver xvi); its fixation is with "remote possibilities," writes Franklin (ix), "remote" from their present and from one another.

[15] "Wandering narrative strands": to forbid the figure its wander is to err, I believe. Hinds describes how Brockden Brown's *Edgar Huntly* (1799) opens the way to the frontier gothic in its depiction of "a universe filled with space in the local sense, and a hero literally overcome by his confrontation with frontier spaces" (110). "Local space," here, implies a multiplicity of locales, felt in their diffuseness. In the same manner, the punchline or moral of Ned Buntline's *Buffalo Bill* (1869-1870), "fortunes vary" (88), receives *passim* in the plot a consistent rendering as an immense space with places diffused through it. This is what the reader feels dashed together in the very first sentence: "An oasis of green wood on a Kansas prairie—a bright stream shining like liquid silver in the moonlight—a log house built under the limbs of great trees—within this humble home a happy group" (2). If this plain is "lovely" (57), it may be that what it loves is: the space between such humble homes; it has so much wood to grow. In the Introduction to their collection of five popular novels, including one from Buntline and one from Lippard, *Empire and the Literature of Sensation* (2007), Alemán and Streeby assert that sensation literature, "a form of melodrama" (xvii), composes "an excellent archive of popular fantasies and fears about U.S. imperialism" (xviii). The claim itself has an excellent archive: Streeby's *American Sensations* (2002), which outlines the ideological confluence of the cultural logic of such literature and that of the nation's bid for empire at midcentury.

Immediately thinkable too is the intersection of the two axes, and what stands *just* off-center: that designation that, by its apparent centrality, sometimes serves to designate the entire matrix of possibility: the tale of terror.[16] Time seems almost too full of itself in these tales, until a feature discloses itself that is just off, and from which issues the whole poetry of terror: "And, ah! what was this thing I had become?… I must have died at ten minutes past one" (Spofford "Amber Gods" 83). The slightest conceivable scatter: passing just past one. Once we feel what lies in the radical position on each axis and infer the intersection from what's just adjacent, then suddenly the scheme can incorporate a host of scattered possibilities. Our concern is not to survey and fully inventory—not gothic tasks, in truth—these gothicisms, but instead to indicate the basis of their scattered, clustered appearance.



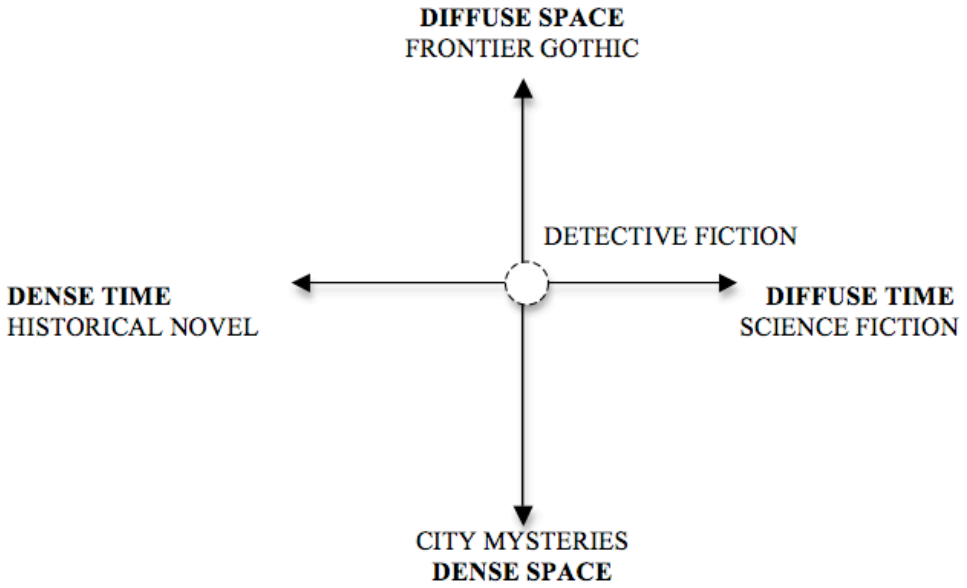
[16] "The tale of terror" stands for the full field of the gothic, for instance, in Birkhead's classic *The Tale of Terror* (1921), and in Heller's *The Delights of Terror* (1987). For a graphic account of the terror tale's slight off-center-ness, see Heller, 14; his website reproduces the figure: http://www.public.coe.edu/~theller/essays/delights/fig1.html. What I have been calling sub-sub and pseudo-sub categories proliferate (Uncanny Tale of Terror, Marvelous Tale of Terror, Horror Thriller, Fantastic/Uncanny Tale of Terror, Pure Fantastic Tale of Terror, Fantastic/Marvelous Tale of Terror, and Terror Fantasy) and assort themselves variously on converging lines representing Fantasy and Mimesis, (that is, what we have seen Halbeisen call the "stubborn problem of Romance and Realism").

It is in the context of the four extreme cases that the others should be situated. Ghost story, provincial gothic, female gothic, we need not skimp on the etceteras: there are always more of these sub- and cult genres, and now we can take pleasure in the panoply of their "headings." The incongruity of conceptualization and nomination converts itself into an advantage, a way to assure the scatterplot its scatter. Forms of differentiation without a guiding difference compose a genre that is "so shadowy and nebulous," in the nice phrase of the critic Maggie Kilgour (3), both blobby and overlapping like what the sun casts, and cold and brilliant like the stars. If positions seem to slide or shift when other terms instances enter the mix, the effect is intentional.

For an explicit discussion of each item in this matrix, let me substitute a consideration of one that will comes to occupy a crucial place. Detective fiction lies where the axes meet exactly. Like New York boom-bap to contemporary rap music,[17] this is a conservative subform of an intrinsically radical form, a reactionary or traditionalist iteration at the very heart of a mode of excess (toggling, indeed, that "very" from the very of muchness to the very of precision). The creepy sense of placement that thrives in the more radical gothicisms (groves, swamps, thickets: in one such setting from Simms, "radical" attains its full etymological sense, wrapped in roots [*Castle* 91-93]) becomes the official "scene" of detective fiction, delimited and secured, placed in its place, as Poe would say "really limited" (*E* 8). "Crime," writes Geoffrey Hartman, in the context of detective fiction, "induces a perverse kind of epiphany: it marks the spot, or curses it, or invests it with enough meaning to separate it from the ordinary space-time continuum" (204);

[17] That Ice-T—all things considered, an aesthetically conservative gangster rapper, with a pedigree that New York heads revere—is now serving a stint as a detective on a *Law and Order* spin-off confirms, I think, that this homology is not only my own. There is something infernal in Dante's sense about the fate that finds the poet of "Home of the Bodybag" (1991). Now homemaking—a process, or we say undertaking, at which the man rates professionally: see *Ice Loves Coco* (2011-2013)—requires that bodybags be processed as it were from the other side. The fact that Ice-T *totally* sells the homology has its downside. We observe that the agent of LL Cool J has been able to sell it too, meaning exploit it, though he has but a whiff of Ice-T's cred, to the producers of a spin-off from a spin-off.

the detective's task is to grid the spot again, "to acknowledge and explain the fact that both inside and outside are places within the same universe" (Madoff 50). In relation to one scene's bloody anomaly (its spots, its spatter), the detective's journey "from sensation to simplification" ensures and rehearses that of her sub-subgenre's central situation in the scheme (Hartman 209).[18]



A felicity in the vocabulary of the Formalists makes it possible to refer the motivation of "motivation," or of "motive," as a formal device in detective fiction. Once the scene is seen clearly, a sequence emerges, if only at first to an observer gifted with the detective's faculties. That sequence certifies itself as causal (or close enough, that is, "reasonable") by way of a criminal "motivation," a "motive," which cinches the knot of time and space (like the concept from which it derives, motion). "The act of analysis by which the detective turns chaos into narrative," claims Day, "means that he breaks the bonds of fear, desire, and ignorance by accepting the fact that he is part of the Gothic world" (56). "The detective," Moretti concurs,

[18] Hartman concurs about the detective novel's "conservative cast," though what he means is a bit different from what I do. When he says the words he's noticing that the storyform "has not changed much" since it was "[b]orn in the Enlightenment" (209). A still subtler "take" is to be found in Thoms: "the very fiction that celebrates the detective and awards prominence to his solutions simultaneously registers discomfort with his authority" (10); in this account, then, detective fiction "critique[s] the very investigation it unfolds" (146).

"must dispel the entropy, the cultural equiprobability that is produced by and is a relevant aspect of the crime: he will have to reinstate the univocal links between signifiers and signifieds" ("Clues" 146). The detective glosses the spot as scene, and he does so by resolving the matter that Poe had exaggerated as he literalized (meaning letter-ized) at the universal scale: why.

In Chapter One, we spoke of "the motivation of the device." We meant content that exists not for its own sake but as a secondary phenomenon, a mere tool for the form's expression of its form. In the gothic context, we are tempted to a willful misreading of this term: now let's say it like, "the motification of the devices." (And here "motif" is meant in Boris Tomashevsky's basic sense, "an irreducible part of the word" [67], an elementary particle.) Each would-be device is de-devised,—or perhaps viced, meaning vexed in its bid to become an organizing principle. The element resolves into a trope and nothing more, what Tomashevsky calls a "*free motif*" or "incidental motif," each one loosed into "various functions" (68), and no one function strictly exclusive. And so it might be said that the gothic carries its suspicions of power this far: into its form. Gothic narrative structures are without a dominant: all melts to motif; and in lists without a master list, these motifs abide one another.[19]

To close the present section, I call to the reader's attention what may have seemed a minor feature in it: the lucky accumulation of a cosmological vocabulary. Along with the listing penchant, the quirk of saying "world" insists in gothicist criticism. The usage to which I put space and time was structural, but the "worlds" and "universes" I have had to say or cite in

[19] Why is it that detective fiction shows up, in the gothic, to the gothic, not merely as conservative but as perturbing, "discomfort[ing]" even to itself in Thoms's term? Precisely on account of clues: precisely, that is, because it develops a device that *undoes* motification, that confutes excess in each instant of the story. "The clue," Moretti explains, is "that particular element of the story in which the link between signifier and signified is altered. It is a signifier that always has several signifieds," which it falls to the detective to "dispel" ("Clues" 146); "he will have to reinstate the univocal links between signifiers and signifieds" (146). The clue's essential structure then poaches from the structure of excess as we have seen Brooks set it out, in which an excess in the signified spawns an excess in the signifier, which in turn spawns more signified, and so on.

support of that point have had a surplus quality about them, I believe. The quirk is a quirk of frequency, a tic or fix, rather than a feature truly peculiar to gothic criticism. Nevertheless, noticing it here moves the argument forward by shifting it from an account of the gothic sitting scattered (on the scatterplot) to one the gothic actively scattering.

We can account for the "world" quirk if we suppose that one of the impressive features of gothic texts is their tendency to expose what the narratologist Seymour Chatman says each "*story*" presumes: "the total set of all conceivable details, that is, those that can be projected by the normal laws of the physical universe" (28). The term world, like "universe" for Valéry in his meditation on *Eureka* (145-146), indexes a totality that cannot be retrieved in a specific concept (145-146), a subconceptual totality in the sense of *sub* we strove to credit, or what Poe calls "a kind of something-ness" (*Marginalia* II). What the art historian Wilhelm Worringer refers to as "the Gothic world of expression" is well expressed, then, in terms like "world" or "universe." Elements and decorations, yes, but also projected are the rules and protocols for relations among the elements, this might mean, even an improvised physics of the sort that Chatman calls "folk" (96 fn 1), and that we can call "flash": flash physics.[20] (The possibility that this kind of thing can appear in a flash is the possibility Poe's *Eureka* is named after.)

Eureka, which ran to about one hundred and fifty pages in its first edition,[21] can be read along these lines as a gothic novel without the novel. I mean that it is a gothic plot without the plot, just the genre physics, the flash physics, like a horror flick shot through a scientific

[20] The nod is to the new mass-culture publishing paradigm of the 1840s, the flash press. See Cohen, *The Flash Press*, and Dennis.

[21] Available in facsimile as the Appendix to *Poe as Literary Cosmologer*, a collection that features a number of major essays on the text, including from Pollin and Drake. This Appendix is independently paginated; the Poe text runs 7-77.

instrument pointed at an open patch of night sky, so that the crunching and screaming and spurting can be heard or felt in the midst of eclipses.[22]

Critics often point out that themes and ideas from Poe's fiction and poetry play through *Eureka*. For Susan Manning, it is "a compendium of Poe-like poses" (236); echoes and variants of phrases and situations from the fiction crop up frequently, as the recent edition by Levine and Levine (2004) works out in footnotes; Poe himself does the same on one occasion, referring the reader in a note of his own to "***'Murders in the Rue Morgue'—p. 133***" (*E* 40). I claim, however, that *Eureka* is not only a "macrocosmic analogue" for Poe's aesthetics (Schaefer), a stellar projection, but also a physics textbook for his storyworlds, and not only his. It gives as such the backdrop or background reality of the gothic. What *Eureka* forecasts in perfect thoroughness as "a novel Universe" is the universe of the gothic novel antecedent to that universe's declension in sub-subs and pseudo-subs (*E* 103).

How does this novel universe swell? The drama is staged across five logical moments: there's, first, **UNITY** or perfect self-presence; then the introduction of different forms of difference, an intermediary "creative" phase called **IRRADIATION**; which, as it discovers its utmost, passes over into the third moment, **DIFFUSION** or multiplicity, in which the differently formed, differently sized, and differently oriented "atoms," "stars," or "particles," attain their maximal incoherence (of necessity, the notions keep loose from their ciphers in this phase). [23]

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[22] The scene evoked is one for real in Lippard's *New York*, a novel to which we will return. Motiveless, more or less, we leave the city for "An Episode" in some rural spot where the sky discloses itself through "an irregular frame of leaves" (259); the gothic keeps going, and we feel that, but for the moment all we are supposed to see is sky: 258-260.

[23] We can say "atoms," "stars," or "particles"—whatever term suits the particular sentence. That's what Poe does. In this phase, it's better if it's discombobulated. We aren't dealing with true, in-themselves type things but with scattered points of friction: "My particle proper is but absolute Irrelation," Poe claims (*E* 51). That sense of a scattered multiplicity ("at innumerable points throughout the Universal sphere, innumerable agglomerations, characterized by innumerable specific differences of form" [*E* 53]) we may

Distribution is centerless and motiveless in this moment: no whys, all's Y, is the motto. When the creative radiation that inspired different forms of difference among the atoms, and their drifting each through each, is discontinued, the process rebounds; **CLUSTERING** begins. "[A]t once, out of the condition of the atoms as described, at innumerable points throughout the Universal sphere, innumerable agglomerations, characterized by innumerable specific differences of form, size, essential nature, and distance each from each" will slide and bump with one another, will fall in and (modified) fall out, along "an infinity of particular curves—an infinity of local deviations from rectilinearity" (*E* 94). The instability of clustering resolves itself for a moment, but nothing more, into a second **UNITY**, the fifth and final moment, which differs from the first, as it does from itself, like a beginning from an end.[24]

Edward H. Davidson's "formula" in *Poe: A Critical Study* comprises only the first three moments:

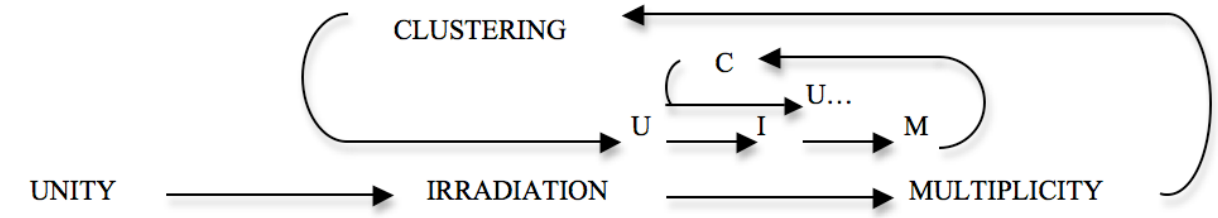
UNITY ⟶ **IRRADIATION** ⟶ **MULTIPLICITY**

recognize from reading around Lippard, who thickens it up into striking images as well. It is the condition of the fleet of ten-thousand coffins on the Schuykill River in Devil-Bug's gleeful dream (*QC* 381), say,—or of the rocks above the city of brotherly love in the frontispiece for *Life and Adventures of Charles Anderson Chester* (1849-1850), a re-vamp of *The Killers* (1849),—states, that is, in which dispersedness, the condition of being "on diffusion" (*E* 24), appears to have achieved a perfect form.

It is tempting to look at this picture and say a name Tomashevsky associates, though not perfectly, with "free motifs": "static" (70). The image is sampled from http://www.librarycompany.org/gothic/images/4.14.jpg; it is part of an online exhibition by the Library Company of Philadelphia titled "Philadelphia Gothic: Murders, Mysteries, Monsters, and Mayhem Inspire American Fiction 1798-1854."

[24] The five -term or -moment schedule that I here propose is a proposal, truly. It is not met in the criticism. Davidson proposes a three-step process, as we'll see, and Schaefer's account of this stretch of the text features eight parts. Generally, critical discussion skews to the topics of Unity and Multiplicity (in this and other matters, Manning's treatment of the book's place in the project of "American creative nihilism" is exemplary), but there are two notable glosses keyed to Irradiation, namely Dayan's *Fables of Mind* and Halliburton's phenomenological study.

And so we propose to revise it:



If this is the cosmogenesis of the universe of melodrama, we feel it not least when cause and effect dramatically "exchange their roles," as Valéry writes (128). Reason or the concept swirls and makes a vortex. And of the five, clustering is the decisive moment. It is clustering that kinks the logic, for which reason the text once chants like an incantation: "a cluster of clusters… clusters of clusters… a *series* of clusters of clusters" (*E* 76, original emphasis). It is the proper concept not only for the hodgepodge idiom of the text itself but also for the array of moments, which the second Unity, as we see, cannot be said to resolve. The only way to think the five moments of the process (whether in densifying mode, as depicted above, or having been toggled to diffusive, that is, running the other way round) is,—clustered.

Eureka divulges the universe imagined on the model of excess, which is in part the excess of the gothic mode over the mode of excess, melodrama. Hence it is a riff and a literalization on what Stephen Ahern, the genealogist of excess, refers to as "the erotically charged world of romance narrative" (12). Also excessively literal and energetic in form is the enactment that *Eureka* stages of a possibility framed by Nathan Fagin, in his classic study *The Histrionic Mr. Poe* (1949): Poe's work, this work, "drained his life and contains all the drama that was in him" (235). Reason in *Eureka* runs the ebb, and yet in every sense, its parts play. It gives an image of a process that looks as much like a drama as, by its swirl, a drain. "The process we have here ventured to contemplate," insists Poe, "will be renewed forever, and forever, and forever," that is, in clusters, as the phrase makes plain (*E* 103); "a novel Universe swelling into

existence, and then subsiding into nothingness, at the throb of the Heart Divine" (*E* 103). The claim seems to subside, then throb: "—this Heart Divine—what is it? *It is our own*" (*E* 103).[25] Like so many sentences in the book, the reader should whisper back at her book this one's end: "in the mode of excess." (It practically craves that little excess.) The universe that answers us no why, that beats us, beats too like a heart, our own heart in the mood, or the mode, of excess. Cosmology meets and fuses with a physiology of excess in the end. Truths turn to face us with a "face" (*E* 103); they would engage us in tete-a-tete, our question as trite as profound, as to a lover, to whom there is everything and nothing to say: "what is it?" In the end, what binds the reader, or breather, or beater, to others, is of the same essence as what rebounds upon him when other others won't bind. It's a clustering world, queerly clustering, which means that it is bound to working out the meaning of its binding one cluster at a time.[26]

[25] For Joan Dayan and David Halliburton, the book is, in essence, its dashes. Those dashes lend it "the rhythm of breathing" (Halliburton 410), a physiology of excess. For the most extensive treatment of this, see the heady and truly breathtaking section of Dayan's *Fables* called "The Analytic of the Dash," 55-79. "As the most abstract notions break up and shoot into all directions due to the irradiating force of the dash," Dayan claims, "they attack our sense as would a bombardment of particles" (64). My claim just turns this roundabout, as Clustering does Irradiation in the diagram: the book's sense, its intention, is to be a reverberator or repeater for *our senses*, our physiology ("in the mode of excess"). Hence I'm interested not in how *Eureka* breaks up notions but how its tend to clings in the strangest ways to other things (like scenes from Thompson and Lippard).

[26] For a parallel formulation of a parallel process, see Silverman's elegant chapter, "The Milky Way" in *World Spectators*, where the terms for clustering are "binding" and "linking" (106, 107). Complementary as well is the vision of Bersani's chapter on "The Restlessness of Desire" in *Forms of Violence*: "What we should try to imagine is a 'system' in constant disintegration and reformation as a result of the uninhibited and ever-changing relations among its elements…" (115). Shattering, for Bersani, as for Laplanche, pictures a process that is to be conceived as an iteration of what the early psychoanalytic critic Marie Bonaparte refers to in the plural, "splittings-off" (653), in her rich psycho-biography of Poe (French 1934; English 1937). A popular-scientific discussion of "functional clustering" in the brain and beyond, *A Universe of Consciousness* (2000), broaches it first by the model of "a tightly-unit, old-fashioned family" (120); this is the gothic novel's very own starting point, no sooner put forward than massively complicated; a crash course on that can be found in Perry's "Incest as the Meaning of the Gothic Novel."

II Blow Me to Atoms

Friction insists between the last section's last two sections: the claim, first, that the gothic falls to excess, and tends to format that falling in two directions, an excess of density (the scatter in) and an excess of diffuseness (the scatter out), each of which has two directions too (time and space); and second, the claim that *Eureka* stands as a gothic novel without the novel, the kind at a kind of zero degree. Frankly these do not square. There is the scatterplot of subgothicisms, in which instances abound like figures; and there is the exemplary status of *Eureka*, its standing as an *un-* or *sub-* instance: a gothic novel without the novel, an extended outlook weather forecast for the mode. Moving forward means moving from an awareness of the friction's insistence to an insistence on it as such.

What the occasion now requires is: a bid to know excess by excess. To progress we will display one of the "heterogeneous contiguities" (Otter 176), or shocking contrasts, for which gothic form is known, and by which we will seek to know it. Guided by that impulse, we enter what J.V. Ridgely calls "the World of the American Porno-Gothic": the pit-spot of the schema, the mysteries of the city. Our locus will be not a plot but a scene. The gambit of this gothicism has been termed by Michael Denning "figurative reduction" (92, 113), and by Stephen Knight, the compulsion to "concentrate and allegorize" (153); for Brooks, the term is "fusion" (*RP* 168). Such "condensing" action enables the varied formulas of the city mysteries embody "the world of the capitalist city" (Denning 92) in hyper-symbolic spaces like Lippard's Monk Hall (*Quaker City*), or the three train cars (in *Empire City*) that Janis Stout claims function as a "lurid microcosm" of society in 1844 (54). Figurative reduction—what a villain we meet in the next sentence dubs "tiny form" (*CC* 185)—seems to be a phenomenon that should be instanced in an instant. Our emblem for it will be a moment when the splendid villain of George Thompson's

City Crimes (1849), a man named Dead Man, suddenly becomes equal to his name and explodes, having had a powder flask planted in his stomach. (The character who plants it is not called "our hero," but is called a friend by both hero and villain, a fact to which we'll return.) David Reynolds and Kimberly Gladman describe this moment as an "emblem of the ultimate dispersal of meaning in the fractured world" (liv), that is, a succinct depiction of a general situation in which meaning is not succinct but dispersed. And so it is not surprising that the "extremities of the room" to which the exploded man's extremities "were scattered" (*CC* 303) are the extremities of our genre-chart, too. All four are felt at once. Here is a terribly compact "here": "*here* an arm, *here*, a blacked mass… and *here*, the most horrible object of all" (*CC* 303, my emphasis).

Thompson is the author of more novels than can be positively known, many of which were written, like *City Crimes*, under pen names, like "Greenhorn." His own estimate runs to triple digits; today one can read about twenty-five novels established to be his; sample titles include *The House Breaker* (1848), *The Ladies Garter* (c. 1851), *The Gay Girls of New York* (1854), and *The Bridal Chamber, and its Mysteries* (1856); this last title derives from the common title for city mysteries, "The Mysteries of X," itself derived, via Eugène Sue's *The Mysteries of Paris* (1842-1843), from Radcliffe's gothic classic, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). The proliferation of pseudonyms and the ephemerality of the cheap prints Thompson favored mean it cannot be imagined that his canon will ever be known precisely; it can be said that he is not afraid to bring some mystery to a figure like the sub-sub of Melville.[27] In any case,

[27] Cue the sub-sub. Much material will be treated below, to speed the shift of scale. The standard general account of Thompson's life and literary style is the Introduction by Gladman and Reynolds to a set of three works by him called *Venus in Boston* (2002), the only presently in print. Thompson is treated with Lippard in chapters and essays by Reynolds ("The Erotic Imagination" in *Beneath the American Renaissance*) and Erickson ("New Books, New Men"). The former foregrounds stylistic concerns; the latter, cultural and professional factors. Emphasis on his work as a publisher of "fancy books," meaning

City Crimes seems to be his longest and "one [of] his most popular novels," according to Donna

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pornography, is the distinguishing feature of Dennis's treatment in *Licentious Gotham*. The point of departure for serious, form-sensitive criticism, not only of Thompson, is Christopher Looby's "'Romance of the Real': Transgression and Taboo in American Sensation Fiction" (1993). This essay traces how the familiar norms that come in for violation at "radical moments" in Thompson's fiction come in also for restoration (666), indeed for a doubled-down, juiced-up reaffirmation (667). For Looby, Thompson conserves through excess. "Thompson's radical moments are not just recontained or nullified by the plot's inexorable movements toward eventual affirmation of domestic and political norms; rather their uncontainable violence and scandalous threat operate to make the plot's restoration of normality all the more urgent" (666-667). This position earns its prominent place in the abiding debate about the subversive charge of the sensational literatures of midcentury America (like Louisa May Alcott's blood-and-thunder romances, or the generically various oeuvre of Lippard). Other skeptics of the subversiveness of this and like literature are Anthony, Streeby, Erickson, and Nelson. On the other side, where the unskeptical and the skeptics-of-skeptics collide, we find Denning, Reynolds, Helwig, and Luck. Many of these critics we will meet in their particular positions as our discussion unfolds, though when we do they will not be arranged in this way on purpose. A critical domain like this is one of what James Watt would call "contest" (see *Contesting the Gothic*), or the savvy Ed White, of "antifederalist criticism."

The subversiveness debate particularizes what we might consider the basic critical controversy concerning the gothic: if it is a radical literature, what do we make of its tempering endings? If it is conservative, what of its glut of scenes of excess, and the moral warning these have seemed to require? The vocation of such a debate is to vary as it maintains itself among professionals, but above all to keep it up: "…as a critic, positioning oneself along the political axis has now become a matter of deciding which set of characteristics, the subversive or the conservative, outweighs the other. My own argument moves toward…" (Luck 203). That this debate does keep up in the face of an intervention as well-formed as Looby's shows it as "inexhaustible" as the norm that sensational feats of transgression neither can nor cannot in truth totally oppose (667). In fact, I believe one robust recent pro-subversive intervention in the debate, Sian Silyn Roberts's *Gothic Subjects* (2014), effectively translates a sense like this one for gothic criticism into a theory of the gothic proper, with many tasteful historicist flourishes. The gothic, American gothic, Roberts writes, exists to put ideologies "up for grabs, thereby creating a space of potential in which other models can take shape" (24).

My model differs as it ought from both those like Looby and those like Roberts, though it differs in a slightly irregular manner, that is, not in the way of disagreement. It gives me to privilege a different moment in Looby's thesis: not the critique of critique that ends it, but the essay's opening foregrounding of Thompson's concern with "solid fact" (Thompson qtd. Looby 651), "dire facts" (652), "*real life as it is*" (Thompson qtd. 672 fn 22),—Buntline indeed calls this the stuff of "*too-real* life" (*Mysteries and Miseries* [1848] qtd. Monaghan 137),—and a blurber of Lippard writes "as *it really is*," on the title page for the second edition of *Empire City* (1864). Looby's intervention brings out the fact-like status of Thompson's "de facto endorsements of present social and political arrangements" (654); "George Thompson's 'romance of the real' is not"—here's a fact to face—"the radical critique it pretends to be…" (666). Thompson's "romance of the real" thus seems *a form in which facts*, the elementary particles of modern, systematic, "*professional*" sorts of knowledge (Poovey 3)—which are codified in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, as Mary Poovey has established—, *and romance*, that is, the battery of gothic claptrap, as it were, annex one another. The critical debate is professionally gothic, I hazard, insofar as fact-like and de facto claims annex and engage romanticized versions of the same. (Poovey's insistence on the 1830s and 40s as a watershed in the codification of the form of facts should be supplemented with the fact of the mass media's rise during the same period; see footnote 38 below. What a penny-press denizen in Lippard's novel *Quaker City* calls "the world newspaporial" runs on this fact [163]: what happens now, happens in facts.)

Dennis (111); the discerning Paul Erikson refers to the novel as his "*magnum opus*" (174 fn 36); and a flash-press advertisement for a reprint in 1850 holds it up as the author's "master work" (qtd. Reynolds and Gladman xv).

A topic that the city mysteries generally, and *City Crimes* especially, do not regard as particularly mysterious, and so becomes something like their high mystery, coextensive with their surface, is the goodness of a good party. And so my first contention about this novel is one I can say plainly and mysteriously at the same time. *City Crimes* is a book about friendship. It is Frank Syndey's resourcefully pursued but finally failed quest to throw a dinner party worthy of him. The plot begins with a dinner party, at which men with names like Archibald Slinkey, Narcissus Nobbs, and Solomon Jenks make plain this fact: they can drink and fawn, but they are not fun. They're fools themselves, not fooling their host, Frank, an orphan with a dead uncle's fortune to enjoy, twenty-one and "a perfect master of his own actions" (*CC* 107). Frank swears to himself before the party's over, like he did before it began, that this is his last evening with the likes of these men. Frankly he does not like them.

When the "choir of flatterers" (*CC* 108) leaves at midnight, Frank does not watch them go. "The moon was shining brightly; and its rays fell with dazzling luster upon the snow which covered the ground. It was a most lovely night, altho' excessively cold…" (*CC* 109). After drinking in the moonlight, then drinking in the moon's light, Frank resolves to moonlight as an observer of the underworld. He throws on a cloak (in the style of Sue's Rodolphe) and leaves. What he seeks is something better than friendship, and he finds it in the form of friendship, first with a starving man who would have robbed him ("in me," Frank gushes, like it's his big line in the melodrama, "you will ever find a friend" [*CC* 110]), and then on the couch of a courtesan who's had it rough ("his fair friend occupied the time in narrating the particulars of her history"

[*CC* 112]). The underworld, a concept that this plot takes as literally as moonlighting in the moonlight, so it happens in the sewers, is a world of "queer company" (Haggerty) and "motley collection" (*CC* 192). The novel has a number of ways of thinking about friendship, and they are all like these puns: sort of silly, I think, and sort of profound.

Frank makes a habit of slumming and a new friend, a boy thief called *Kinchen* by his crew, properly Clinton Romaine. The boy brings him beneath the streets into a network of Dark Vaults, where the holy family can be beheld in dissolution: "'These wretches,' said the boy—'are many of them related to each other. There are husbands and wives there; mothers and children; brothers and sisters. Yet they all herd together, you see, without regard to nature or decency. Why the crime of *incest* is as common among them as dirt!" (*CC* 133). The system is not only perverse but also perversely self-contained: "these people derive almost all their food from the sewers. They take out the decayed vegetables and other filth, which they actually eat; and the floating sticks and timber serve them for fuel"—and when they die of their diet, what happens to the bodies? "*They throw them into the sewer*,' answered the boy, with indifference" (*CC* 133). What thrives in such a place in the family's place, along with love and mess, is an indecent, unnatural, sleazy, tactical, nameless form of friendship. It craves fuel, it craves food, it eats its dead. It is exemplified by a bunch the boy discover to Frank in the vaults, The Jolly Knights of the Round Table, lead by a man named the Dead Man, and belonged to by the man who would have robbed Frank in the moonlight, and who (above) he had asked to "find" him "a friend." His name turns out to be the Doctor.

The plot pits Frank against the Dead Man; for his part, the Doctor waffles. But the villain knows himself the better for being not only villainous but a nemesis, *the* nemesis, to Frank Sydney; he seems to overhear from the narrative voice that Frank is the hero, as the reader

*over*hears it (*CC* 198, 200, 202, 203, 237, 249, 287, 299, 301); to him, such a structure is an assurance. With that a certain problem, having attained thematic representation, recedes into the form: side-plots and non-plots and frame tales and fobbed morals make friends with one another, or not, and keep wary of the main story, which takes in turn from them a pleasant sense of the typicality of its essence and elements. A Reverend declines into sin. A mother and daughter mask and flirt at balls and on boats. The "Miseries of an aged Bridegroom on his Wedding Night" (*CC* 259) present themselves, and not only once.[28]

Unlike his entitled friends, Frank's fiancée is great—though, jesus, not to him. The night sky, in which the moon hangs, to which Frank had once referred his gaze, and from which he had cribbed a kind of purpose (to moonlight), Miss Julia Fairfield apprehends in her appetites. She owns them:

> "What a strange star I was born under, I know not; but my nature is impregnated with desires and longings which you would pronounce absurd, unnatural, and criminal. Be it so: I care not what you or the world may say or think—my cravings must be satisfied at all hazards." (*CC* 152)

This is a willful perversion of the deep-gothic logic of the supernatural explained: here the supernatural, occult, or cosmological exists as the explanation, not the mystery. Impregnation is not something Frank can accomplish; Julia delivers the baby of a body servant ("my superb African" [*CC* 152], she calls him) just before her wedding to Frank. She rides her desires past this man too, on toward another with money, and then past him. The entire time she keeps herself narratable, which the novel proves by craving the details of her exploits with a fervor like hers. Her performance is a provocation; "I care not what you or the world may say or think"; by the world she means, this novel. When Julia jumps off a bridge, it could be said, the novel does too:

[28] "[T]he sexual inadequacy of older men" is, for Thompson, a "particular fixation," Erickson perceptively notes (*Welcome* 307 fn 88), a point borne out by "a marvelous scene" in *City Crimes*, and the logical inverse of the old-school seduction scenario, which Denning, among other critics, insists is fundamental to Lippard (93-99).

it passes on the spot into song, five stanzas for her, redundantly a bridge.[29] A popular poem about a prostitute's inglorious end, Thomas Hood's "The Bridge of Sighs" (1844), is interpolated (*CC* 294-295).[30] The narrative sneaks out of itself in order to acknowledge what it owes Julia, and what appetites she owned, in an ode—as if all those could be smeared together in one moan, or a sigh, like slurring or flipping "bride" to "bridge." Syllables, indeed, thicken up, go dense; "all herd together" and echo like in the Vaults: "the use of suspense" for a moment does not function like a principle of plotting ("the key-note of the [gothic] romance," according to Birkhead's classic opinion [45]), and sounds instead an injunction.[31] I'm suspending everything; let's sing a song; here are keys and notes; hear me say, "hold." This story will miss Julia, yes Miss Julia, which now we recall was how it had named her from the start (*CC* 124).

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[29] Brooks finds this paradox at the heart of Sue's *Mysteries*, and not only that but also "the nineteenth-century novel," and not only that but also "perhaps in some degree all narrative" (*RP* 155): unspeakable lives are the ones that *tell*. Narrative "in general has precious little use for the simple, calm, and happy, since whatever moral obeisance one makes to these, they lack narrative interest" (*RP* 155). "[T]he state of infraction and deviance in its interaction with the controlling pressures of the law," instead, "increasingly in the nineteenth century preoccupies narrative" (*RP* 155). A claim like this is compelling, but practically it is useful only when it explains some particular, like who it is or what sings this little ditty or ode indeed for Julia,—that is, who or what is sighing and sorry for her since the hero is demonstrably not: here is the narrative, indeed, and maybe more ("the nineteenth-century narratable" [*RP* 156]), purging its worries, whatever "preoccupies" it.

[30] In fact, the inspirer of these lines, Harriet Shelley, is the first wife of Percy Bysshe, who around the time of their marriage published two gothic novels, *Zastrozzi* (1810) and *St. Irvyne* (1811), both with spectacular, scale-model-apocalypse-type endings, of the sort that *City Crimes* signals is coming. (The poet Shelley is said to be obsessed by the temple-house in Brockden Brown's *Wieland* [1798], where the elder Wieland spontaneously combusts.) Shelley's second wife, of course, is Mary, author of *Frankenstein* (1818).

[31] Moretti considers the form of suspense to be the one needful, in the task of thinking the midcentury city: "The novel reveals that the meaning of the city is not to be found in any particular place, but manifests itself only through a certain temporal trajectory… the convention of suspense" ("Homo Palpitans" 112, 118). Adding Moretti to Birkhead, then, means heeding the double appropriateness of the narrative technique of suspense (though notice we do not say "dominance") when dealing with the urban gothic. In fact, the double measure of appropriateness (urban hence suspense, gothic hence suspense) may be what gets the concept cracking up in this particular scene, telling itself bad jokes about what it means… The notion that in the city mysteries abstract elements mount odes, sing "*dithyrambs*," is borrowed from "The Mystery of Educated Society" section of Marx and Engel's "The Holy Family" (1845).

Frank does not miss Julia, however, because he trains his heart on a novel prospect, Sophia Franklin. Her initials mirror his: it's possible they enjoy small observations like that with one another in "one of those charmed *tete-a-tetes*" they share, and "which all lovers find so delightful" (*CC* 298). In the end, with Julia out of the picture, and the Dead Man dealt with, the couple weds. We hear about how it is in a second inset text, a few pages after "Sighs": a letter from Sophia to a nameless friend. Frank and Sophia live in Vermont by a lake, she writes, which reflects the sky, as their initials reflected one another's, or used to. During the day, the lake shows clouds "passing" (*CC* 308), like dead men and months; at night, "a myriad of bright stars" (*CC* 309), static and placid, without sigh or sign; the lake is without a bridge. The letter feels like a transmission from the far side of friendship: see how little it leaves Sophia to say to a friend; and Frank, by the still water, in the end says still less.

Between the elegy for Julia (a sort of strophe by the story) and Sophia's pastoral epistle, two scenes of catastrophe intervene. One of them is called "the scene of the catastrophe" (*CC* 303); the other, set two months later, "the final catastrophe" (*CC* 308). The second will not concern us; it's not married to the first, which after all models within itself an alternative to marriage, that is, gothic friendship. Nowhere is this more explicit than when, in this scene, one character says to another, "I do" (*CC* 300).

While Frank Sydney and Sophia Franklin abut nothings in tete-a-tete, "frankness" returning the "same frankness" (*CC* 298), the reader must imagine that their words for one another are no better than *Eureka*'s (what is it?). At the same time, in another room, Sophia's mother and sister play a card game called *ecarte*, discard. At the same time, across town, the Dead Man and the Doctor explore their apparent alliance. They smoke and scheme; they're going after the Franklins, and Frank. The Dead Man "blew a cloud which curled in fantastic

wreaths to the ceiling" (*CC* 295), exuding that type of bunchy, cloudy life that will pass right past the placid Vermont estate that Frank and Sophia on their way to. The room of the two men swarms with anticipations of what's coming: the walls have been dyed with the smoke of other smokers, and "rude inscriptions" and "interesting specimens" (*CC* 295), scrawled there, function as allegories for the plot in "tiny form" (*CC* 185): "deeds of robbery and murder," and, literalizing suspense, "a hanging scene" (*CC* 295). Hanging about the scene, too, is the landlady, an older woman who dies on a freak just then (*CC* 296). The game of discard, the clouds of smoke, the hanging scene: thematizations simmer.

The sudden penchant for low-level allegory complements a second tendency in the scene, which mounts as the Doctor and the Dead Man mount the stairs to the Franklins' apartment. We find this tendency mounting too in our analysis: a clarification of structures. The structure of character-roles, that is, obtains what Frank had when he heard of Julia's death: relief. In the smoky room, the Doctor and the Dead Man had been "two men [who] were seated at a rough deal table" (*CC* 295), "our old acquaintances" (*CC* 295). Ascending the steps to Frank, they are "two adventurers" (*CC* 297). But in the apartment itself, the Dead Man is "the villain" doing "villainy" (*CC* 299); Frank, "our hero" (*CC* 299); and the Doctor, in oscillation, an "ancient enemy…lately regarded as a friend" (*CC* 299). Indeed, the scene exists in order (1) to convert the many simmering emblems to one grand one, and (2) to decipher the Doctor's friendship. First a member of the Dead Man's gang, the Jolly Knights, the Doctor later allies with Frank, then still later seems to desert him out of boredom with do-gooding, only to seem to desert that desertion and the Dead Man in the midst of the catastrophe. When the Dead Man springs at Frank, the Doctor springs at the Dead Man. Together the two tie him up, bind him to himself alone; then they sort out who is bound to whom, and how. What might have been obvious suddenly comes to

seem surprising: the Dead Man is bound to become "a *dead man* indeed" (*CC* 299)—surely Frank's best line in the entire novel, as if he would not have the reader, whose hero (redundantly) he is ("our hero"), forget that lately tete-a-tete keeps him fresh. The Doctor is bound to become a respectable doctor (following one last feat of infamy); and Frank, a frank fellow.

The broker of this friendly transaction is the "I do" that the Doctor gives back to Frank when, on his way out of the room, Frank asks if his friend plans to torture his former friend in terrific fashion. Yes, the Doctor says, "I do" (*CC* 300). What the two men share is an understanding that this villain will pass like a cloud,—or blow like smoke,—and that Frank's on his way to becoming someone else now, or himself, and so is the Doctor (he's becoming a doctor indeed). Each one will equal his name; each will discard each; no one will call trump (in *ecarte* no one calls the trump).

Frank, excessively "our hero," can, must, and does now leave. The Doctor does what he can or must do. First, this is slow torture, something he's planned. Then it's an inspiration. The slow-torture phase ends when at certain point the Dead Man's punctuation is irradiated: "for God's sake stab me to the heart… I am in hell—I am floating on an ocean of fire—my murdered victims are pouring rivers of blazing blood upon me—my soul is in flames—my *heart* is RED HOT!" (*CC* 302). The Doctor is impressed by this wicked paraphrase of *Eureka*: the Heart Infernal, perhaps *it is our own*, too. He takes a moment for deliberation. Whatever happens next will happen fast; so whatever we say to the Dead Man, our villain, it shouldn't be "so long," which were among Frank's first words to the Doctor (*CC* 110).

He cuts open the Dead Man's abdomen and puts a flask of gunpowder in; he leaves a slow match projecting; he sews the guts shut: it's the "so long" he won't say. The spectacle is horrible, but the Dead Man spreads "a ghastly smile" (*CC* 303) and says, "You are going to blow

me to atoms, Doctor… I thank you for it; although I hate you and curse you in this my dying hour" (*CC* 303). He promises to keep close if he can, "like a shadow though life, free to preside in ghastly horror over your midnight slumbers and to breathe constantly in your ear" (*CC* 303). The Dead Man's smile is his consent. He does not mind putting more personality and theology than he can spare into this little soliloquy; his life flashes before the reader's eyes when she recalls that he once shammed as a church deacon (*CC* 228). Hatred mingles with intimacy in this mangling. The Doctor says something sharp that he does not entirely mean; his hard words do not betray what the narrator does, that his contempt is cut with pity. Then the Doctor lights the match: "Awful was the explosion that followed; the wretch was torn into a hundred pieces; his limbs, his brains, his blood were scattered all about. A portion of the mangled carcass struck the Doctor; the lamp was broken by the shock and darkness prevailed in the room" (*CC* 303).

Obscurity takes the room. It's lifted when several parties burst in, each with a light of his or her own. A dark room, that is, then that same room, lit variously, a body in pieces "all about" it, "scattered all about." Whatever he said to himself in the dark, the Doctor says to those who come after him (Frank himself, his inlaws [soon-to-be], and their domestics): "Summon some scavenger to collect the vile remains, and bury them in a dung-hill" (*CC* 303). First vengeance; then a shitty job for a "new man" literally;[32] not me, let someone else do it. That is not funny, the thing is not a joke, but perhaps it is worth what the Doctor gives it, "a grim smile" (*CC* 303). If that's twisted, that's the Greek sense of "catastrophe," twisted,—like lips in grinning, or lips in slurring a word like "grim" to "grin."

* *

[32] The term "new man" is lifted from Erickson's important essay "New Men, New Books: City-Mystery Fiction, Authorship, and the Literary Market."

Another concept from Greek dramaturgy clarifies the Doctor's narrative function. In a suggestive passage in *Poetics*, Aristotle associates the "full natural growth" of tragedy with two factors (1449a15, Else 22), curious in themselves and yet more so in combination: its felt preference for the most "speech-like" of meters, iambs, and the codification of the size of troupe of "assisting actors" at two (23). For Aristotle, these two aspects are of the essence for tragic form: speech-like speech and three speaking persons, one main and two "assisting actors," the second technically called tritagonist.[33] Much had been and can be accomplished between the chorus and two actors: on-stage conflict, for one, but also parallel or counterpointed subplots, and plays within plays (in which the first and second actor both appear in other guises), and a virtually endless parade of secondary characters like allies, messengers, and other acquaintances, not to mention the diversity of non-speaking roles. However, unthinkable in every one of these schemes is the novel possibility that the third man conditions. This character can appear onstage with the first actor *and* the second, that is, the protagonist and the antagonist in turn, the hero and

[33] Scholars disagree about whether credit for the second innovation is due to Aeschylus, the so-called "creator of tragedy" (Murray [1940]), or his younger rival, Sophocles. The preponderance favors Sophocles, following Aristotle. For an account of tragedy that sets emphasis on the third actor (and attributes that actor's introduction to Sophocles), see Kitto 75-77, 148-155. In his edition of *Poetics*, however, Gerald Else excises the phrase in which Aristotle appears to attribute the third actor's invention to Sophocles—"a farrago," he insists, perpetuated in poor Greek by a later age (88 fn 45). Elsewhere he makes the case that Aeschylus earns credit for this ("The Case of the Third Actor"). The case, which makes little demand on our attention, but yet might receive it with reward, has to do with the distracting term "actor." Tragedy, in its early form, featured the writer himself in the first role. The term "actor" (literally: "answerer") did not come into play until another role was added to that of the first and the chorus. The first actor, then, is the *second* member of the troupe. The term "actor" was generalized only when another one was added, that is, a *second* actor hence *third* member of troupe. Aeschylus, scholars suppose, acts the lead part in every one of his tragedies, as does Sophocles until late in his career. Only with the retirement of Sophocles from the stage does the era of three "actors" technically begin. The number in the troupe remains the same, three, but now the third is not the writer but an "actor" proper. (And so we notice that Else's claim crediting Aeschylus with the invention of the second as well as the third members of the company remains plausible even if the "farrago" he would excise truly is Aristotle's own. Well played. When Sophocles ceases playing in his own productions, the first actor at last must become an "actor" indeed, raising their number to three.) Knox, on the other hand, claims the farrago is no phrase but a "sentence," and the sentence no aberration but "typically crabbed" (104), that is, in appearance authentic.

the villain, as well as the helper-figures for both. And so this character's alliances with the other characters can seem to shift independently from the schemes and self-interests of anyone else in the plot.[34] The narratological term for what the third actor makes possible, the crossing of plots, is complication (Shklovsky 136).[35]

We return to our scene. What lurks around this room, what creeps about its corners, what strikes me like guts (in it) did walls, is the repressed speech to Frank that the Doctor rehearses but does not deliver, except for saying once "I do." This speech modifies that "I do" with an accurate appraisal of the situation from the erotic and the narratological points of view: it's complicated. Finding its frequency and tapping into what transpires requires an exercise in the

[34] Between the two initial practitioners three-actor tragedy, Aeschylus and Sophocles, the use of the third role varies considerably. Sophocles prefers to set his three in "a dramatic triangle" or "intricate three-cornered pattern" of exchange (Knox 106, 107), which one finds formalized in the psychoanalytic paradigm that sublimates his key scenes, the Oedipal conflict. Aeschylus's habit is weirder, and more like the one to which this chapter will shortly make recourse. In his plays, the third actor looms silently on the edges of episodes, through others' actions and exultations, their quandaries and laments, and even their pleas for personal advice, until one crushing moment, when speech erupts at last from her or him. Perhaps it breaks upon two main characters (as in *Libation Bearers*, when the third man encourages the main character to keep an oath and kill his mother: *do it*, a kind of inversion of "I do," to the main's "Pylades, what shall I do?" [qtd. Knox 109]); perhaps it breaks just after the other two actors step off stage, leaving the loomer alone with the chorus (like Cassandra's gushing, prophetic speech in *Agamemnon*, which staggers through incoherence into a terrible clarity, and which "blurs and almost suspends dramatic time," indeed mimics a unity in essence opposed to "the real world of time and space" [Knox 114]). What is felt in the exclamations of Pylades and Cassandra is the sheer fact of other plots, like the gods', in oblique relations with the main one.

[35] A minor Formalist, Michail Petrovskij, deploys the term "complication" with more rigor than Shklovsky; it composes a part of what he calls "the knot of the plot" (qtd. *Metapoetics* 86). Both Shklovsky and Petrovskij are working with Aristotle's model, and specifically with the concept opposed to the denouement, what in Else's translation is called "the tying," set against the resolution's "untying" (1455b25, Else 49-50). As for the gothicists, Punter calls the same effect "narrative complexity" (*Literature* 403). It is often related to the complication of moral value (Kilgour 39), and to the depiction of political topics rightly regarded as "complicated" (Denning 98; Otter 183; Duquette 32-33). Gothic criticism, I believe, exhibits a keen if almost unreasonable preference for the terms "complicated" and "complication." Perhaps this is owed to a dim memory (what Poe would call "unthoughtlike thoughts" [*E* 33]) of the term's art-historical charge, its capacity to evoke or index the form of formlessness (as in Worringer: "again and again the line is broken, again and again checked in the natural direction of its movement, again and again it is forcibly prevented from peacefully ending its course, again and again diverted into fresh complications of expression…" [42]). It may be that never before has the preference been exhibited as unreasonably as it will be in what follows.

style of experimental criticism that Garrett Stewart calls "narratography": "a term of engagement for the way we might sample and decipher that underlying excess"—the "phantom half stories" (516) and "covert narrative detonations" (515)—that echo oddly under the plot, themselves bidding and, by their verbal texture, vexing bids for what Stewart calls "straightforwardness" (515), and Spofford, "a straight story" (4).

The Doctor is not frank, like Frank. What he leaves unsaid would stay that way. But it goes like this:

> Let us not, then, improvise a family, Frank, especially not in "one of the most romantic spots to be found in all New England" (*CC* 309), which I'd wager my fortune is where you're headed. Holy family. You're a hero to me in a different sense than you are the hero of the main plot, excessively "our hero."
>
> Keep your "fortune" for yourself (*CC* 300). I will not share in it. Perhaps a modicum of "pecuniary aid" I will accept. I'd like to establish myself, as you'd say, "in a respectable and creditable manner" (*CC* 300). I love you, for what you did for me one winter night, "a most lovely night, altho' excessively cold" (*CC* 109), in the Park near Chatham Square, when the stars were in clusters and moon had luster and you were lusty.
>
> "Nature has many freaks," another friend of yours, another doctor, one Palmer (a man who has modeled himself "almost certainly" on the sex radical and friend of Whitman, Lorenzo Fowler [*CC* xxxix]), once told you, when you pressed him as a professional and indeed "*as a friend*" about whether, from certain physiological facts you had observed, it was likely that your wife had slept around (*CC* 127).
>
> Nature has many freaks, but it will have one less when I'm done.
>
> Congratulations on the Sophia thing. I will love you two—at least, I do love you now—at least I love *you*. You heard me say it more simply like, "I do" (*CC* 300). Solidarity means I do approve of you doing what I wouldn't recommend you to do. It's complicated, in the

narratological sense. To say so is almost professional of me. It *is* professional, I mean, but someone else's profession. You've made a new man of me, if no frank one, I guess.

I'm leaving. I'll let that tongueless kid that you like, Clinton Romaine, a friend once you made for me, tag along, or wag with me, if he likes, and you don't mind, or won't say.

Hey, I heard he used to fuck your mother-in-law (soon-to-be), or whatever. I mean, only once after he knew you wouldn't like it (*CC* 163). Maybe she didn't like him so well after he had his tongue cut out. That may not be what happened. It was the night of the masked ball. You were in jail for what happened with Maria. Probably I shouldn't have said anything.

Remember that little love letter you wrote her, Maria (*CC* 153), which when read to the letter was evidence against you for her atrocious murder (*CC* 173)? Clues blow, I mean: messages concerning desire and altruistic motivation assuredly are complicated.

Anyway I probably got the masked-ball thing wrong. Forget I said it.

I guess you'll be going now, and me too. Someone summon someone new. Let's start leaving. Say so long. I will leave my heart in this feat or deed, and then I will leave that behind. Heed it or read it, if you will. I do say I do. That's an oath indeed, and an oath in deed, and in the "deed" I did (*CC* 303). It's a path or two, twisting like two smiles (two separate smiles).

Hire someone, I mean, or I will, to collect "the vile remains" of this villain and bury the body in pieces in a pile of shit (*CC* 303). That's not my scene, anymore. I'll pay if, Frank, you'll loan me the money. *As a friend* (*CC* 110, 127). Just a little pecuniary aid…

A "dark man" (*CC* 134) speaking to a dark room, hurriedly, unheard,—over ears that ring like the door-bell his former-friend or he ("one of them" [*CC* 297]) did on the way up to this room,—

and over his own high pulse,—or, better to say, inside it. A transmission from "an alternative narrative universe," this is. What Stewart calls "the compressions and exclusions" of narrative closure close in (516), and the Doctor keeps what he can, which is not everything, but almost is, unsaid.

The slanting, sloping quality of such a message might be modeled in the Danish linguist Louis Hjelmslev's four-part schema of the linguistic sign in *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language* (1943). The schema is adapted to genre criticism by Fredric Jameson in *The Political Unconscious* (1982). What Jameson values in the Hjelmslev model, which essentially begins with the form/content distinction and then reduplicates the distinction within each of the two terms, is precisely what we will: its "working projection of… discontinuities" (147).[36] The form of the form/content binary is privileged over the content of the concepts.

Hjelmslev's framework is a model as well as an invitation to model. I build out one such model here. From Hjelmslev's text it is plain that there are two planes in this model, one like

[36] I think it correct to understand this juncture in Jameson's argument as a *scene*, a radical moment. In the space of a paragraph, it raises a conceptual possibility not plotted past that one paragraph (146-147), except as other readers rehearse it. That rehearsal tends to project further discontinuities, by the very nature of the model. Running parallel to the inner reduplication of the form/content distinction, there is also a slanting or torsion in the core terms, a kind of crossing of two imperfectly distinguished versions of the distinction: form/substance and expression/content. And so the fourfold that the model delivers up is, it turns out, tricky to fix. Different theorists redact its terms differently. Let's take them in lists. For Jameson, it is (or seems to be): the expression of the form, the content of the form, the expression of the substance, and the content of the substance (147). For Delueze and Guattari: the form of the expression, the content of the expression, the form of the content, and the substance of the content (43). For the film theorist Christian Metz: the form of the signifier, the substance of the signifier, the form of the signified, and the substance of the signified ("Methodological Propositions" 97); the terms signifier and signified, we note, come from Saussure, a precursor and conscious point of departure for Hjelmslev. For Hayden White, whose adaptation of the categories is perhaps the most illustrative of all in this context, because he acknowledges that he is merely adapting them from an earlier adapter, Jameson: the expression of the form, the substance of the form, the expression of the content, and the substance of the content (153); among these four does not appear the related phrase, the content of the form, which White's book takes for its title. In the standard translation, the Hjelmslev text itself refers to expression-form, content-form, expression-substance, and content-substance (32-35). That each of these models yields up somewhat different conceptual content readily will be guessed. The categories as we formalize them are also so formulated by Chandler (54).

form or the signifier, which is called the "*expression plane*" and one like content or the signified, which is called the "*content plane*" (37). Actively, Hjelmslev varies the schematization, keeping it from settling into itself, referring on the same page to *expression line*/*content line*, *expression side*/*content side*, and *expression plane*/*content plane* (37). These planes and these terms have "mutual solidarity" (37), as do their complements, form and substance; expression and content, however, represent "the two most inclusive paradigms" (37). For this reason, I speak of the form of the expression, the substance of the expression, the form of the content, and the substance of the content.

	Substance	**Form**
Content	The substance of the content	The form of the content
Expression	The substance of the expression	The form of the expression

What do these categories mean to the city mysteries? What might they mean for the gothic mode more broadly? The form of the expression, which Jameson associates with "the narrative structure of a genre" (147), might be here associated with gothic form's seeming lack of form, its effect of "formlessness" (Reynolds *Beneath* 202), in our terms the operation of the device or de-device of motification.[37] The substance of the expression, form's stuff, provides the conceptual ground for the encounter between the meaning of the form ("the semantic 'meaning' of a generic mode," for Jameson [147], for us, what it means to say the gothic scatters) and the means of that meaning, that is, the claptrap, the trappings, what lists well. Regarding the form of the content affords us an opportunity to think the text with its trappings of form subtracted: the story as it can be paraphrased. The form of the content is what sustains a paraphrase, or refuses to. In either case, but especially when paraphrase falters, the form of the content projects a new and peculiar

[37] An agreeable usage of the term "form of expression" can be found in George Perkins Marsh's *The Goths in New England* (1843). The Goth, writes Marsh, "recognizes life as an immutable principle, yet he perceives that its forms of expression, of action, of suffering, are infinitely diversified" (14).

totality, which can only be called "world." At the base of it all we have what so many accounts emphasize: that the historical world at this historical moment evolves or perfects a new tendency to disclose itself in little bits of information, "the modern fact,"[38] the "observed particular," which can be reported as news, considered as clues, regarded as filler, or fill out cases and files. The bitlikeness of information thus presented becomes its own excuse for being: sorry if they're ugly or violent or redundant, what can I say, the fact is that's what a fact is.[39]

	Substance	**Form**
Content	The fact of facts	Why we say "world," what (insists in) "worlds"
Expression	Trappings, claptrap, the gothic repertory: what (insists in) lists	The hint of formlessness

[38] Before what Poovey refers to as "the modern fact" or "the epistemological unit of the fact" (1) is a solution, indeed the building block for other solutions, all sorts, it is a problem. It is the site of a specific tension: the flux of the phenomenal world, on one side, and the stable knowledge-systems called disciplines, on the other. The form of the fact ("what counts as a fact" [1]) is shaped by the torsion exerted by these entities on one another, just as Poe's definition of "proper particle" is nothing but a specific experience of dissonance, or "absolute Irrelation" (*E* 51) Hence this form, the form of the fact, shifts and stabilizes and shifts again as, in "modernity," the system of the disciplines does.

The sense that this process—shifting, stabilizing, shifting again—arrives at a kind of climax in the first half of the nineteenth century is a claim cinched in Poovey's book through the use of a secondary argument about the relationship between "the modern fact" and one "specific form of representation," numbers (5), and statistics, their peculiar science, which is just then on the rise. Poovey insists that "the focus" of her argument is "the epistemological unit" of the fact, however, "not numbers" (5), and so it is tempting to imagine an alternate ending for her book in which the statistics sub-argument is subbed out for another about the "specific form of representation" called "the American Gothic Imagination" (Halttunen), that is, the murder mystery and ghost story. The fact form, that is, enables not only the feats of induction that Poovey treats in her chapter on social science in the 1830s ("Figures of Arithmetic, Figures of Speech: The Problem of Induction in the 1830s," 307-328), but also the adventures in abduction that in the same moment accrue to the figure of the detective. For historical approaches to this topic, see Halttunen, 91-134 and Weiss, 6-30; for an anatomy of abduction, see Eco.

[39] Emerson refers to "the fact of facts" in his lecture "The Method of Nature" (1841), given around the same time that the Dead Man was tempering his debauches and robberies with a side gig as a lecturer (*CC* 228). The emergence of the logic of the case and the form of fact ("those fragments of the past called evidence" [Halttunen 98], "bits and pieces of the past… assorted bits and pieces" [Kilgour 4-5]) should be understood as an upshot of the more general transition narrated by historian Karen Halttunen, from a culture of information scarcity to one of information abundance (93-104). Fact-form information is information "decoupled…from immediate usage" Cornelia Vismann writes (7)—and it seems, at least at first, in Halttunen's rehearsal, most alive to its nature and newness when it pertains to and portrays scenes of violent decoupling, sex crime. For an extended exploration of an early case that is contemporaneous with the rise of the flash press, see Cohen, *The Murder of Helen Jewett*.

There's the scheme, gothicized. The totality, or "world," then, that comprises lists like the gothic's, and "worlds" like the gothic's, also entails the fact of facts (that is, the romance of the real), and finally the hint of formlessness.

What we have in the scene of the Dead Man's death is, I believe, a moment in which the alignment of these planes of meaning are expressed together with their uneasiness at this temporary alignment: "the working projection of… discontinuities." The message of the scene has the effect of formlessness, even if it is not formless but complexly message-like in-itself. There is no basic thematic register for scattering and clustering, in the gothic; what's ajar, indeed, are the registers themselves.

If the list-dominant view of the relations between gothic, list, and world suggests they are to be reckoned as quirks along a list, in their relative contingency, the world-dominant view says they make up a world, or to use a phrase our next text will prefer, make a compact "against the world" (*EC* 142, 159), a contra-sub-conceptual totality. But is radicalness, in the city mysteries, a matter of moments only? Can an "I do" like our Doctor's spread itself over substantial narrative structures, like the one that Brooks calls "intention"?

III Oaths in Lippard

One scoundrel for another, now. Let's exchange them, like pledges in spite of self-interest, that is, like oaths in Lippard. A villain called Devil-Bug hallucinates, near the end of *The Quaker City* in every sense. He dreams of the Schuylkill, a river running through the city of the novel's name, a hundred years hence:

> Devil-Bug shouted aloud in the wildness of his glee. Ha, ha! Ho, ho! There was something so merry to his fancy in the spectacle of a broad river crowded by a fleet of coffins, something so joyous in the light flaming from the orbless eyes of ten thousand skulls, something so grotesque and horrible in shrouded corpses, scattered over the

> surface of the river, that Devil-Bug felt a strange frenzy of glee darting through his veins; he raised his hands and shouted for very joy. (*QC* 381)

The fiend knows what he likes, and it's excess: "very joy." Indeed, Devil-Bug's glee is very like the grin the Dead Man gave to his own dissolution,—or the "mad glee" the Dead Man once felt at the prospect of terror at the scale of the "universal" (*CC* 230). If Devil-Bug's delight in this vision of ten thousand coffins, steered by ten thousand skeletons, broadcast on a broad river, seems excessive, it may be because it exceeds him. The thrill that takes him over is the mode's: his "wildness," its nature. In this moment, in this rascal, the gothic exults. Spooks and raw-heads and coffin-floods and sodom-woe: the gothic loves them (and loves to list them too). Reversed, however, it has not been our experience that the proposition holds. What spooks the gothic is not love, exactly, which is alternately the object of its skepticism and bemused indulgence (hence the mawkish and shallowing, but I daresay unintimidated, sense of its endings, like Frank and Sophia's), and certainly is not friendship, its darling subject. Instead, it's paperwork. Terms, margins, leases, dividends, annotations, fair-copy MSS, the paltry joy of close negotiation, "huge volumes, bound in dingy buff" (*NY* 61), the technically petty collusions of bankers, landholders, and politicians, "a feverish and vain agitation which has become routine" (Lefort 112), files, shelves of full of files, and especially rooms full of shelves full of files: the effluvia of officialdom. The appurtenances of administration are awful to the gothic.[40]

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[40] In Claude Lefort's masterful redaction, the boom days of the bureaucracy look like the decay of decay, or the gothic's scatter-cluster regimen turned inside-out: "*The more that activities are fragmented, departments are diversified, specialized and compartmentalized, structural levels are multiplied and authority is delegated at each level, the more instances of co-ordination and supervision proliferate, by virtue of this very dispersion, and the more bureaucracy flourishes*" (108, original emphasis). Bureaucracy is a term that gains currency, and that enriches itself with multiple senses, in the middle of the nineteenth century. So too do terms like bureaucratist (*OED* 1836) and bureaucratize (*OED* 1865), which describe life or the world according to it. (It seems appropriate to me that this concept thrives or plumes by skeetering into declensions.) In this, bureaucracy is concomitant with the second-wave sort of gothic we have been examining; let us then imagine that bureaucracy is the shadow of this "shadowy" genre (Kilgour 3). It is inimical in its essence (say, fixed hours and a salary) to the model of excess, but

Bureaucracy enters the gothic novel, then, as a perturbation: an object of worry and abhorrence, if an intimate one. But abhorrence is not an instinct that the mode trembles to indulge. That, in the city mysteries, it does indulge, and in concentrated doses, is a claim with an internal structure that should be familiar to us by now. This radical sub-sub thrives by its penchant for the concentration or "fusion" of experience (Brooks's term [*RP* 168]), as opposed to other gothic clumps and –subs, which thrive by other penchants (some alike in extent but different in orientation, some alike in orientation but no so extensive, as we imaged on the scatterplot). In a particularly genre-responsive set of three novels written by Lippard near the end of his career, the lure of this abhorrence, wholly the mode's own, is worked out as a matter of style in the space of "intention" (also, Brooks's term). The complex plot of these novels studies the dispersal of a massive will, an estate for which riches are an embarrassment and accumulation, a kind of a curse. The gothic stock of crypts and vaults is cleared out in order to be restocked *with paperwork*. In the shuffle, the dispersal plot of the novel is twice dispersed. It is displaced, then displaced again: first, into a special iteration of literary style that is equivalent to the will-to-dispersal, a form of form we'll call "extravagant"; and then, into an emplotted profusion of pledging and oathcraft, promises made at oblique angles from one another and from the main plot. This section's first subsection examines the matter of style; the second samples from the welter of "I dos" and "I wills" into which narrative intention dissolves; and this leaves

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otherwise precisely repeats excess's whims and makeshift forms; it takes its tendencies over as its own. The vexed formal identity of the two phenomena is held visible in Kilgour's formulation of the gothic genre's "corporate identity," its "monstrous corporate identity" (8, 222). And so, it seems, our reversals bottom out here: if the gothic loves spooks, and is not spooked by love but bureaucracy, what does bureaucracy love? "Bureaucracy loves bureaucrats, just as much as bureaucrats love bureaucracy" (Lefort 108). (The bureaucracy concept here deployed finds exaggerated expression in Lewis Mumford's "megamachine": an "invisible structure composed of living, but rigid, human parts, each assigned to his special office, role, and task, to make possible the immense work-output and grand designs of this great collective organization" [189], and which supplants "more modest and diversified modes of technology" with "megatechnics" in the course of the nineteenth century [189].)

the third of three to bring into and out of focus a cluster of motifs in which formlessness (a form without a form) emerges as a progressively deformed image of reflexivity (a form within a form). No sooner, we'll see, does the concept to-be-formless emerge then it obeys its injunction, and dissolves, to be formless; it recedes back into the multiplicity of motifs, just another one. Appreciating a gothic effect like that last is the last thing we will require, I believe, in order to have had our chance to say the gothic scatters.

The confrontation between the literature of terror and truly terrible piles of paperwork, then, is the topic of Lippard's New York trilogy, which constitutes a sort of summa of his literary style. More generally, the trilogy's topic is what the third of the three refers to in its subtitle as "New-York life." The distance and uncertainty with which the three regard one another, that sort of suspicion and suspended interest that sketches itself in a battery of minor reenactments in the plots (we have taken one as our epigraph: "What mean you?" [*NY* 24]), has been shared by students of the American nineteenth century. While it is standard for critics to observe the relation between the first and second of them, *The Empire City; or, New York By Night and Day. Its Aristocracy and Its Dollars* (serialized partially in *Quaker City Weekly* in 1849, published in book form in New York in 1850 by Stringer and Townsend, and in Philadelphia in 1864 by T.B. Peterson) and *New York: Its Upper Ten and Lower Million* (Cincinnati, book form in 1853 by H.M. Rulison, and in 1854 by E. Mendenhall), this relation is characterized inconsistently. Sometimes the second is called a "revision" (Streeby "Opening Up" 181), sometimes a "sequel" (de Grazia 421, Bergmann 125, Otter 324 fn 45), sometimes a thing still more "complicated" (Steele 194, 189). In any event, they are supposed to compose a "pair" (Erickson *Welcome* 28 fn 50). The third book, *The Midnight Queen; or, Leaves from New-York Life* (New York, Garrett & Co., 1853), is, in spite of the phrase running above its stunning frontispiece, not typically

characterized as it is there—"**A NEW NOVEL**"—, but as "a volume of short stories" (Reynolds *GL* 22). The first of its three stories is an excerpt from *New York*, the back-story of a single character, (the speaker of our epigraph) a woman named Frank. *Midnight Queen*'s second and third stories, "The Life of a Man of the World, Written By Himself" and "Margaret Dunbar," which are continuous in chapter numbers with the first, do not concern characters and events from *Empire City* and *New York,* with one crucial exception, to which we will return.[41] And so the tag "Leaves from New York Life" functions, in the context of the trilogy, rather like it does in the layout of this book (that is, on its leaves): like a looming imperative, a cosmic stage direction ("The Midnight Queen… / Leaves from New York Life"; "…A Man of the World… / Leaves from New York Life"; "Margaret Dunbar… / Leaves from New York Life"), a running title indeed. If the relationship I posit between the three books (they're a trilogy) has escaped critical notice, perhaps this is because escape is, besides administration, their major action.

"The Midnight Queen" is the first-person story of a woman named Frank, seduced into a life of seducing others; "The Life of Man of the World" retains both the register of the first person, and the name Frank, to tell a story taking place in the same neighborhood, but happening not to overlap with the Midnight Queen's; in the third story, "Margaret Dunbar," the third person recurs, and the villain takes the title, "a man of the world in the intensest form" (*MQ* 102). Formal intensity and formal diffusion do not seem to be opposed to one another, here. One character, the mechanic John Hoffman, the first character introduced in *Empire City*, the first novel, and who dies the same death (leaping, it so happens, from the third story of a building) in two different ways on two different days at the end of *Empire City* and *New York*, eludes these

[41] "The Life of a Man of the World," the longest story in *The Midnight Queen*, is the critical darling of the bunch. Emilio de Grazia writes of it appreciatively (431-432), and in *Beneath the American Renaissance*, Reynolds notices (518) a passage that the "The Mazes of Dream" subsection of *George Lippard: Prophet of Protest* excerpts (298-300), a trippy and spectacular scene—"a free-floating dream world" (*Beneath* 518)—in which the title character endures a trans-planetary hallucination.

fates to emerge near the conclusion of "Margaret Dunbar," the third of three stories in *The Midnight Queen*. He's a sketchier version of himself, remarried, having shirked his first name. He plays a bit-role that, if plotwise pivotal, distinguishes itself in this: no one seems to notice it.

Administration is the explicit preoccupation of the first two novels, which concern the transpositions of awe and woe that the execution of a massive will entails. In a scene that takes place in seven vaults, each a perfect square (*NY* 63), one man speaks miserable words to another. Only sort of can the two sort out what it is they're in the middle of:

> 'This room or vault, without windows as you see, and rendered secure, beyond a doubt, from all danger of robbery or of fire, is one of seven,' said Ezekiel. 'In this room are kept all title deeds and papers, which relate to the THOUSAND ACRES in Pennsylvania.'
> 'The Thousand acres in Pennsylvania!' echoed Gaspar, 'surely all these documents and papers, do not relate to that tract, which Van Huyden originally purchased for one thousand dollars?'
> 'Twenty-one years ago, they could have been purchased for a thousand dollars,' answered Ezekiel: 'twenty-one years, to a country like this, is the same as five hundred to Europe. Those lands could not now be purchased for twenty millions.'
> 'Twenty millions!'
> 'They comprise inexhaustible mines of coal and iron—the richest in the state,' answered Ezekiel, quietly, and drawing a curtain, led his way into a third vault. (*NY* 63)

Gaspar's gasps—only exaggerated if the reader already suspects what he'll have confirmed later, that Gaspar, now in disguise, is himself the Van Huyden under discussion (those mines indeed are mine, is whispered under his words)—if they are not also the reader's, surely are the gothic's, which is appalled at this accumulation of capital, and appalled still more at the paperwork. The prospect of "constant accumulation" is horrible (*EC* 28), here, and we feel that from the prospect, the point of view: a set of square rooms, set above a neighborhood crammed with warehouses with flat roofs, monotonous on all sides, and all accounts kept square (*NY* 61-63).

Gulian Van Huyden must remake himself as Gaspar because, twenty-one years before this scene, on Christmas Eve, 1823, in the midst of a highly successful dinner party, he left for a walk with his brother, Charles, along North River, near Manhattan Bay. They stroll arm in arm

before fighting hand to hand. (The place, after all, is the Battery [*EC* 21].) After the tussle, Gulian leaps in water full of ice like so many glimmering concretions of the stars that its surface fills with reflecting (*EC* 21). Leaping into the current is a strange performance, but one that concurs with an intention Gulian had confided to a friend, Doctor Martin Fulmer—the very man who in the later scene appears as Ezekiel Bogart—ten minutes earlier. Like the ever-leaving characters of *Midnight Queen*, Gulian wants to escape his estate; he wants Fulmer to administer it in his absence. Gulian makes Martin Fulmer swear to execute his will; circumstances force Fulmer to pun back, "I will!" (*EC* 17) in agreement, and press hands with his new boss or old friend. Fulmer will pass the promise on to another ("repeat the OATH—" [*EC* 12]), the mechanic John Hoffman, the very next night, who will aver to this Doctor, as (in *City Crimes*) the Doctor did to Frank, "I do" (*EC* 12).

Gulian wants to escape his estate for two reasons. First, he hates his wealth and what it stands for: "Enormous WEALTH is only enormous CRIME," he insists (*EC* 30), with awful economy. Second, his wife Alice loves someone else, namely, Charles (*EC* 26), his brother, who in turn someone else, a woman named Frank (*EC* 38), with whom he has had a baby girl named Frank (*EC* 142), who will become in time, at their wicked behest, the Midnight Queen (*NY* 25). Money makes itself enormous, indeed an enormity to Gulian; desire ebbs on slant paths: real problems. Better than cursing wealth and Alice, he decides, is giving himself up to his house's curse: suicide in proximity to a body of water. Gulian's catastrophe matches the manner of the first American Van Huyden, a man ominously referred to as "OUR ANCESTOR" or "THE MASTER," properly nameless, who offed himself midwinter in Manhattan Bay, surfacing with a face bruised by ice (*EC* 28), seven generations previous (*NY* 268).

The scene in which Gulian trusts his friend, Doctor Martin Fulmer, with his intention, ten minutes before its execution and his, and nominates Fulmer his legal trustee, priming him to execute his will, is itself executed in this manner: as a proposal scene, an exchange of vows. It is sealed with an "I do." And Fulmer indeed discovers that the piles of paper money and paperwork keep him from building a life of his own, binding himself to another and then a family (*NY* 267). The run-up to the pledge—"You will read my will…" (*EC* 27)—would have us notice how neatly it is executed. It's a kind of centerfold of the Lippard style:

> "In ten minutes," said the merchant, "in ten minutes I will be dead."
> Sometimes words like these are spoken in dark chambers, where the light of the grey dawn, struggling with the red rays of the flickering candle, falls over the mournful array of the death-couch, with the ghastly paleness of the death-stricken face, contrasted with the dumb agony, the ceaseless tears of those who stand watching for the last tokens; the death-rattle and the glassy eye. Sometimes, in the crisis of battle, when the last hope has gone out, and the wounded soldier, dragging his mangled limbs to the nearest rock, stands erect for the last time, in the light of the setting sun, as—with every syllable half drowned by the blood that streams from his mouth—he utters these words in his comrade's ear, coupled with some sacred trust, and falls dead, ere his dying message is half told.
> But now ————
> They were spoken by a man who had not seen twenty-four years of life. He stands near the window, and the light streaming over his smiling face, while his right hand toys carelessly with his jeweled watch-seal. His handsome face is slightly turned over his shoulder, as the light, stealing through the narrow window, mingles with the glare of the candle on yonder antique desk.
> "In ten minutes I will be dead." (*EC* 14)

Like the Dead Man or Devil-Bug, Gulian smiles at dissolution. Around him, syllables set like the sun; they drag like mangled limbs; they drown like their speaker wants to, and as badly, in one another. No sooner do the merchant's words enter the text—"In ten minutes…"—than they are stripped of their clockwork and echoed, warped, through spaces off-scale and poles apart: sick chambers and solider cheeks. Samuel Otter refers to this technique, a trademark of Lippard, as "suspending" the "catastrophe[]" (177). Lippard lingers in the slippages between different moments with different emotional charges and different political weights, cocking them toward

one another, or pitting them against, lighting each by another, mingling dawns and sunsets, wicks that flicker and candles that glare. His prose, which is "*like*" no other writer's, one contemporary critic observes (*Nassau Literary Magazine* [1849]), spins within itself *likenesses* of the queerest kinds. This technique of likeness is one in which liking making likenesses means moving on, in turn, from each one to make more; the effect of this is an inner instability readily recognized by readers.[42] What will make up a will, that is an *intention*, stutters alongside it all: "in ten… in ten… in ten…".[43]

By way of this stutter, we begin to move the discussion from the space of intention toward what fills it full in the trilogy, an extravagant style. One meets in Lippard's city-mystery novels sprawling plots and counterplots that work in the manner of the sentences just sampled. They compose: "a twisting, tangled growth of conspiracies" (Ashwill 301); "heterogeneous contiguities and disrupted temporalities" (Otter 176); "neighboring but never quite connected stories" (Denning 90), of which the city's infrastructure, the "threads and arteries of that great social heart" (*NY* 23), functions as anti-emblem, and one which itself, like Poe's cosmos, requires nothing less than a knotty heart as *its* shadow or anti- emblem. Moving through Lippard's plots means encountering in each episode, incident, or sentence, a dim awareness that is intensely self-conscious and intensely self-contradictory. This element (1) must deliver its thrill, must make its terror "terribly distinct" (*EC* 47); and this moment, like each other, (2) must

[42] The political dimension of this stylistic practice has been treated by Streeby and Helwig, who consider Lippard's use of analogy and "juxtaposition" (Helwig 91) to forge cross-class and cross-race political alliances, "multiple, if contradictory, sites of identification" (Streeby "Opening Up" 180), forms of "solidarity" (Helwig 90) as well as "struggle" (Streeby "Opening Up" 180).

[43] It should be noted that the art historian Worringer employs a phrase earlier noticed, "the Gothic world of expression," more or less interchangeably with another, the "Gothic will to form" (e.g. 69, 70). We find this phrase reflected—like the sky in the surface of the water into which one seems to sink (*EC* 21), or dreams indeed of sinking (*NY* 137-138)—in Lippard's deep-gothic preoccupation with *the form of the "will,"* in the triple sense of aesthetic intention, the pact or promise, and the legal bequest, and with the triple sense being, in the trilogy, nothing less than the stamp of the form.

make itself available to every other moment, any one of which some later conspiracy (or still later counter-conspiracy) might require it to keep company. In fact, many characters in the trilogy have a kind of personal mantra or motto that expresses this sense: "One secret for another!" (*EC* 14); "Lay low! Keep dark!" (*EC* 69, 94, 96, *NY* 92); "*Does he remember?*" (*EC* 193, *NY* 21); "there's two ways of telling that story, my duck" (*NY* 134).[44] The mantras function something like the opposite of a safe word; they keep, by steady muttering, an illusion alive, and alive in part to its entanglement with other illusions, other fantasies, the dreams of facing pages (*NY* 145, 146).[45]

In *The Philosophy of Money*, his great work of 1900, Georg Simmel describes the same "double demand," that is, the expectation that certain moments seem to us "at the same time both final and yet not final" (231). Unexpectedly, the expectation finds "an almost ironical fulfillment" in the "inner polarity" of money (231). Because money is an absolute means (the medium through which any value can express its value with respect to any other, therefore "the value of values" [244], in which "all diversities and contradictions," "all estrangements and all irreconcilables" [236], discover forms of comportment; in Lippard's idiom, each to each "b'longs" [*EC* 49]), it is also an absolute end. "Money's value as a *means*," Simmel explains, "increases with its *value* as a means right up to the point at which it is valid as an absolute value

[44] Recall too, from *Quaker City*, Devil-Bug's "Vonders how that'll vork" (cf. 216, 278, 306, 457, 489, 490),—or, from the same, the phrase that will itself be recalled as the title of Lippard's *fait-divers* column in the newspaper he establishes, named after the novel, *Quaker City Weekly*: "Queer world this!... the queerest world a-going" (*QC* 34).

[45] This notion, the dreams of facing pages, refers to two incidents on adjacent pages, though in two different chapters. Two separate characters, Arthur Dermoyne and Nameless, each experience themselves in the midst of dreams: "Dermoyne felt his heart leap into his throat. He could not convince himself that it was not a dream" (*NY* 145); "Nameless could not repress an ejaculation as he surveyed the scene. / 'I am in a dream!' he said" (*NY* 146). (The moments seem to replay an early one in *Empire City*, when Gulian's wicked brother Charles, "gazing vacantly" at Fulmer, asks him: "Are we dreaming, doctor?" [*EC* 21].) In the first edition of *New York*, these sentences are printed on opposite sites of the same page, backed up against one another so to speak. This material form expresses something like the sense that these characters nearly share, that the real life of each one is on the other side of another's, *some* other's, dream.

and the consciousness of purpose in it comes to an end" (232). This process takes place over and over in the inner lives of Lippard's barons and villains, who have formed no notions of what they'll do with the money they spend themselves in scheming after, and for whom spending more on pleasure than one's body can abide feels less like an aspiration and more like an entitlement. Charles, the wicked brother, and Gabriel Godlike, and Israel Yorke, and Evelyn Somers, schemers each and all, are all also goalless men. If we were to expand the list to include all of Lippard's output we would see how right we would be to call such men "endless." Their schemes are what the narrative itself schemes sometimes to baffle but always to situate, that is, amongst other schemes.

The relationship between the clustering structures of plots and subplots in Lippard and the money form of value is not, I think, immediate. It is mediated by Lippard's extravagant style, which represents his stylization of monetary extravagance. "Extravagant indeed" (xv), insists Charles Chauncey Burr, a friend of Lippard (and of Poe), and early apologist for Lippard's style, in an "Introductory Essay" to a work of historical fiction, *Washington and His Generals* (1847).[46] The money form of value not only possesses an almost ironical affinity with the structure of final-not-final moments, but also presents itself to thought in terms of moments, what Simmel calls "the sequence of purposes." The "moment" of extravagance, also called "squandering," is the middle term of three. First, there is the possession of money; then, its expenditure on a certain object; finally the "enjoyment through the ownership of the object" (248). Greed and miserliness are aberrations at the first moment; in them, one takes a monstrous

[46] In this 1847 essay, Burr applies to Lippard's first major work of fiction, *Ladye Annabel* (1842), commended by Poe, the term "prose-poem," which *Eureka* takes as its subtitle the next year. Another early defense of Lippard's "habitual style" arrives in John Bell Bouton's *The Life and Choice Writings of George Lippard* (1855), published just after Lippard's death. Bouton too prefers this style for its "poetry." The poetic characteristic he isolates is Lippard's parallelism, his habit of expressing the same thought in two different forms, "balanced as on a pivot in the middle of the sentence" (108), like in the Hebrew of the Old Testament. Here is extravagance on the smallest scale: two for one.

pleasure in the possession of specie. The spendthrift takes his pleasure in the second, and only there, delighting neither in money nor what it purchases, but simply in its absorbing feats of equalization, and, isolated from ownership, the act of exchange itself. The third moment would convince us that it is the scene of healthy enjoyment, though the problem of being possessed by one's possessions is a topic that cannot exhaust, for instance, Thoreau's eloquence.[47] And so extravagance means: irregular allocation of enjoyment: means liking not what you buy, and not what you paid with, but *just buying* itself: "the pure function of squandering" (248).

To be doomed to the pleasure and purity of squandering is to be doomed to discover, again and again, the extreme transpositions of value that money-form makes possible, a discovery that may be keenest when these transpositions accord poorly with one's needs and circumstances, though they occur in the precise medium that admits the satisfaction of those needs (that is, money).[48] Extravagance, like formal democracy, another of Lippard's grand

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[47] It is *just possible* to think as true together the twisting line in Poe's logic, the conceptual arabesque from this chapter's first section, and the moment of squandering here presented. With a nod to Elias Canetti, we might imagine that the "profound and universal pleasure" of specie transaction recollects a species-level experience, or genus-level rather: grasping, flinging, grasping, from one branch to another. As Canetti expresses it: "trade is a translation into non-physical terms of one of the oldest movement patterns" (212). The feeling of flinging-between corresponds with the feeling of squandering, or extravagance, the moment between the moment of money-possession (grasp one) and the moment of object-possession (grasp two)—*and so* is to be associated with the kind of vertigo, the vortex below, which is not merely a motif but a structure of apprehension in Poe.

[48] Extravagance is a structural possibility, strictly speaking, not of capitalist economies, and not of paper money, but of monetary economies, a more encompassing category. It is one to which Lippard's awareness might have been aggravated by smaller alterations, like the switch off the gold standard, denounced, for instance, in papers like William Cobbett's *Paper Against Gold* (1815). That context, the gold-standard one, supplies its insights, for instance in David Anthony's work on paper-money poetics, but seems there incapable of delivering more incisive descriptors of Lippard's style than "seriocomic hyperbole" (735). Historical specificity, I think, vitiates the insight. Availing ourselves of the more abstract category, our anti-historicist gamble is that "extravagant" is finally a more instructive term.

For Anthony, the postures of panic struck by men in the sensational mode look like symptoms of structural instabilities of the Jacksonian economic market. Men freak out because the market subjects them to the freaky whims of the affluent. "Perhaps not surprisingly, the intersecting postures of economic and sexual vulnerability Lippard deploys," Anthony claims, of a vulnerability linked "to the period's perilously unstable economy" (719), "are standard fare for representations of masculine class struggle in

passions, invests in the radical equality of all values, the potential conversion of any want into any other, or any need.[49] If Lippard's style is "*like*" no other, it owes special essence to a subtle modulation, that of excess into extravagance. Beneath the intensifying clatter or clamor, the death-rattle and battle-whir of Lippard's sentences, is whispered a policy of extravagance, and beneath that is whispered the equal possibility and probability of the strangest sorts of exchanges, any thing for just anything.[50]

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the period's sensationalism," (737); "in each case, we are reminded that that the emerging form of professional masculinity during this period was built around the sensational aesthetics of masculine humiliation" (738). "The period," indeed: period. In the trilogy at least, I believe Lippard's interest in the economy tends in the opposite direction. Not its instability but its haunting regularity captivates him. Profits pile high, implacably; money makes money from money, as if automatically. Moving through the late style of Lippard, the really extravagant style, as a character means making yourself amenable to fantasies far more radical and technically extravagant than that of being fucked from behind by your banker (737)—the primal scene of what Anthony calls "debtor masculinity"—, though all things considered that may be a fine phantasy-piece to toss among the others. (I take the phrase "phantasy-piece" from the title for Poe's second projected collection of tales; an 1842 mock-up of the title page is printed in Mabbott, interleaved between pages 474 and 475.)

For an excellent account of gothic style and the gold standard, see Shell. For an application of Simmel's concept of extravagance, see Walter Benn Michaels, particularly 140-145. And for a suggestive examination of the relationship between the city, the cosmos, and "the socially essential power of money not only to unite commodities (however different) in the same system of abstract value, but also to unite thereby in agreement those whose relationship—*qua* transactors in a monestised transaction—is purely antagonistic" (250), see Richard Seaford's *Cosmology and the Polis: The Social Construction of Time and Space in the Tragedies of Aeschylus*, particularly 250-251.

[49] This extravagance projects its intra-gothic (say, sub-excessive) opposite in the "concatenated" style of Poe, described by Baudelaire (1852), in which each element is keyed to the single effect: "All his ideas, like obedient arrows, fly to the same target" (79). Opposites abet; deliberately they belong to one world and just one. In Lippard, extravagance, on the monetary model, means the ceaseless discovery of rough equivalences between things with unlike intensities, weights and measures, seeming virtues, and first-blush value. The slogan for this is more like: opposite abut. Nevertheless, it strikes me as an indicator of the gothic logic that these two styles both bottom out, as it were, in a concept of "equality," a revolutionary term given an expression both political and stylistic in Lippard, and both metrical and cosmic in Poe (see Poe's "The Rationale of Verse" and Dayan's "Analytic of the Dash"). Enactments of equality in the styles differ like metaphor does from metonymy: Poe's style condenses in a unitary image of universal equality; Lippard's attaches each element to the next in metonymy's slippery style (a dogged, unlawful logic of making-same). The reader who would make more of this is urged to consult also the section called "Take 'Equality' as Elementary, and Develop It in a Rigorous Logic of the Same" in Badiou's "Philosophy and Politics."

[50] Money, it could be said, runs in its low mood the high agenda of Nietzsche, the transvaluation of all values, in the practice of extravagant exchange, anything for anything, and that for it's own sake. For this reason, extravagance seems to be something like the site of the transvaluation of transvaluation.

In the space of narrative intention, then, Lippard's trilogy installs a pun, the Van Huyden will, which it next ciphers into a slew of competing promises, counter-promises, and consequences, set askance from one another (a world of schemes baffling schemers [*NY* 189]). Buzzing all about that, the engine of the cipher, is the style, Lippard's extravagant style, with its flair for the discovery of freak forms of "equality" (*EC* 126). Finally, as we'll now see (and this is really where we bottom), under cover of this buzzing, a hint can be heeded that also is an oath: to be formless, to relish as an identity the slogan "a form without form." It must be relished in a motif and nothing more, albeit a motif on a sort of spree, a transmigration of the trope. On this adventure, concepts of formal reflexivity (a form within a form), the genre's form of expression (the hint of formlessness, or a form without form), and the intention of one plot (to be formless), entangle with one another. They make of the motif seven variations.

Concerns with plot bubble under, as we bring the run of the motif to the fore. Here is a representative sequence: a young woman, one Mary, is bilked out of her contract work and some cash at the Universal Shirt Store on Canal Street;[51] a fray ensues; she is rescued by a stranger in a

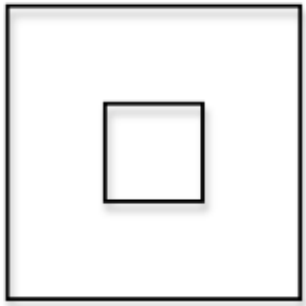
[51] For a recent reading keyed to the third moment in money's "sequence of purposes," see Chad Luck's treatment of *Empire City* and *New York*, "Feeling at a Loss: Theft and Affect in George Lippard" (2014). Luck attends to the episodes of theft that pepper *Empire City* and *New York*. He examines "how Lippard is able to link specific readerly affects," in particular, those that bundle in the concept of distress, "to a radical political program" (195). Depictions of theft and violence, he finds, shade into depictions of the capitalist expropriation and structural violence. Depicted distress induces distress in the reader, which stick in her or him as an image of the entire troublesome system, based in expropriation. Generally, Luck's phenomenological variation of the reader-response method is sophisticated and robust, and I cannot imagine it distressed by the smug, "thusly" sort of refutation to which it tempts me: not feeling it. The prime example of "distress" is the scene in which Mary has her money and labor both stolen at the shirt store, by its owner, one Screw Grabb (*NY* 207-209). Mary's distress at this is not distressing any more than it is distress's opposite, sort of boring to me: Screw Grabb (his first name makes my sense of being "bored" almost a pun) will screw and grab the garb; Mary will persevere and marry the hero, the chief object of The Will. Mary's distress is not mine, and indeed is hardly Mary's, who on the spot is not more worried than saintly ("almost holy" [*NY* 50-51]); that "almost" seems to reach out toward the reader who would affirm its object and be assured, wholly. More generally, Luck's focus on "scenes of theft" (205) (clumplike episodes, each read, each possessed) differs from my focus on style (as a site or mechanism of limitless exchanges: extravagance), as the moment of object-possession does from that of exchange.

Spanish mantle; on her way home she walks down Broadway past Astor House, which leers, unreal, as if with a hundred eyes; once she arrives, an unsigned letter does too, and summons her to the Temple, a venue for dinner and debauchery, at midnight (*NY* 50-54). Across town, another fray rages outside the place from which the banker Israel Yorke imagines slinking, to the Temple, for the night, and longer term, to Havana (*NY* 54-58). In another elsewhere, a man just arrived from Havana, wrapped in a Spanish mantle, will walk toward the Astor where he will register; the name he writes is both right and wrong; he's Gaspar Manuel (*NY* 58). Shortly we learn that the two appearances of Spanish mantles, like the two frays, are independent of one another. In each scene, some hint or suggestion of continuity, obtrudes, at least one element, like an anti-clue, marking the absence of causal connection, indexing what Otter calls the radical "swerve" of Lippard's narration (177).

The swerve is that of intention, or what flourishes in its space, style, or what flourishes in style's space, something we are on the way to a name for. Martin Fulmer has a bizarre everywhere-nowhere, omniscient-unconscious presence in many scenes that resembles the principle of intention in these narratives (if the word "resembles" can be used in this way). He is almost never their proper subject, always their silent partner, an unobserved observer, except for his flourish, the twirl of too many capes ("That queer stranger who never gives his name… with ever-so-many capes… nine or ten" [*NY* 23, 100]). The tease and flourish of his capes are like those of Lippard's style, back of the plot's capers. Fulmer is framed by what he frames: "—queer idear the doctor has of *boxes*—" (*EC* 13). In the end it will turn out that the person who was supposed to be the beneficiary of his stewardship, Gulian, has been torturing him the entire time, watching him watch the others, himself the envoy of a still larger bureaucracy ("Think not that your course has been unknown to me! You have been watched,—your every step marked,—your

very thoughts recorded,—" [*NY* 276]). Gulian as Gaspar has been tracking Fulmer as Bogart: this fact or possibility presents us with this insight: the watchers are watched ones too. And this presents concomitant with its inverse or blind spot, colloquially this "idear": blind spots abound.

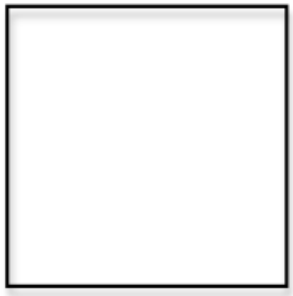
In order to bring such spots into view, we enter at last the will of Gulian, to which Fulmer is bound by oath. Gulian wants his wealth to "scatter" (*EC* 30). He imagines three outcomes for the estate and sets aside the four o'clock hour of a morning twenty-one years later, Christmas 1844, for their arbitration. First, Gulian considers, it is possible to prepare another person to dissolve the estate perfectly, to give it all way in ways that would ensure it is not absorbed by conglomerates, that is, by extant clusters of capital. If he has a son who can inherit, this son might be educated outside the home, in poverty, and so know how to alleviate it when he comes into the money. The plan, then, is for Gulian's son, if he has one (and it will turn out he does), to live in deprivation with his neighbor, the mechanic Hoffman and his wife. The second provision varies the first: the son-scheme may work too well; it may make this son too noble to survive to 1844. Gulian prepares a codicil that should be read in case he has had a son who dies early and in the furtherance of a noble cause. Fulmer is requested to bury the codicil in a wall. He contracts the job to Hoffman, who does it by filling in a square recess in a square wall in the Van Huyden mansion.[52]



1. A square within a square

[52] The inspiration for the following run of seven figures comes from two diagrams appearing in Bayer-Berenbaum: 87, 104.

Burying this codicil is the first scene in *Empire City*, the first novel. The square within a square comes to seem simply a square. That wall, plus that scrap of the will, remains sealed.



2. The aperture disappeared

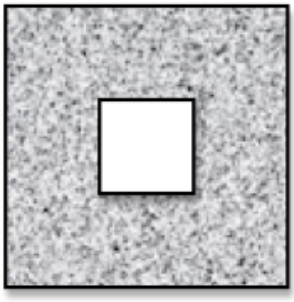
(Two other configurations of four lines, are notable: first, the "[f]our parallel lines of light" that a train makes, moving through the night in the first scene set in the 1840s in *Empire City* (45); second, the pure form of the intersection, the crossing of two paths, that is, the sign of the cross atop Trinity Church. Lippard never misses a chance to feed this notion or name back to itself, blasphemously: the cross glows supercharged, as in the "Margaret Dunbar," a cross, a curse, indeed [*EC* 16, *MQ* 92, 110].)

The third of the three provisions is the one that Fulmer, like the novel, supposes most likely to cover the case. If no son shows on Christmas, 1844, or if the son seems to the trustee to have died in a cause not laudable, then the estate will fall to seven distant relatives ("scattered over various parts of the Union" [*EC* 28]),—relatives, indeed, unaware of their relation. Though some of them know others, this provision, as it were, supplies a context in which they must know one another anew, a form that also finds itself expressed in the form of transportation in which a number of them are first pictured, the train, which chugs through the night behind four "lines of light" (*EC* 16).

To say the substance of the content, the fact of its facts, and the form of the expression, the effect of total formlessness, seem strangely exchangeable is to find ourselves facing a habit of self-reference that Roland Barthes would call "deranged": "not a quantitatively accumulated

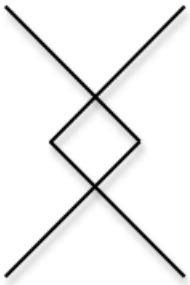
force," like a grand reflexive moment, but "a mobile energy, active in very small doses" ("Structure" 190). Hence a trilogy brimming with threes, not least in its obsession with Trinity Church, a gothic edifice that is depicted in the process of being built for the third and final time. Hence too a will (a hypostatized version of the text's governing "intention") that promptly dissolves into a thousand competing promises, a cacophony of "I dos" (*EC* 12, 177; *NY* 79, 141, 150, 199; *MQ* 51, 67) and "I wills" (*EC* 17, 35, 129, 133, 153, 172, 195; *NY* 42, 51, 91, 132-133, 140, 220, 233, 274; *MQ* 20, 22, 32, 41, 45, 52, 88, 91), and the provocation of such questions: "What shall I do?" (*EC* 141); "What can I do!" (*NY* 50); "Oh, what shall I do?" (*NY* 100). Deranged formalism is the formalism, in truth the tendency to formlessness, expressed in part by the narrative's habit of apprehending *just any* element of its content through the formula, "the form of…" (*EC* 18, 19, 48, 98, 124, 142; *NY* 94, 149, 236, 273; *MQ* 20, 30, 45, 77, 97).

All those "I dos" and "I wills" stand in conjunction with one another, unless they do not, furthering the central will, unless they do not. Another deranged emblem of this textual economy is the will in the wall that is then filled and sealed: a form that expresses itself by expressing its openness to any content (2. The aperture disappeared). Or a form that frames and contains no content but a copy of its form (1. A square within a square). No wonder that the latter form abounds, with mess to fill in the rest: a square stove in the middle of a square cell, with bodies scattered about it (*NY* 116); a square book in a square desk, with other papers in disarray (*NY* 133); a small square patch in center of a head of unkempt hair (*EC* 51).

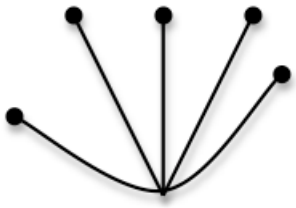


3. A square in a mess

In spite of their splintering of intentions and their complications, I think it would possible to read this set of three as the adventure of one motif—the form within a form, the square within a square—through varied incarnations, in the manner of Barthes's "The Metaphor of the Eye" (1963), an essay on Georges Bataille's novella *Story of the Eye* (1928).[53] The motif of the square with a square at its center, itself a declension of the form of pure reflexivity, a form within a form, wanders; it escapes itself into other selves, first a straight square, then a square in a mess. Then the form collapses into linked elbows, holding enemies as close as friends (*NY* 201), or spreads sideways into linking fingers ("his comrade's hand within his own" [*EC* 54]).[54]



4a. Arm in arm



4b. Hand in hand: four lines, five points

[53] Barthes glosses the plot as "a metaphoric composition" in which "one term, the Eye, is here varied through a certain number of substitutive objects which sustain with it the strict relation of affinitive objects (since they are globular) and yet dissimilar objects (since they are variously named)" (240).

[54] We recall of the famous intersection at Five Points, which, in another context, the hatchet-murderer Richard P. Robinson sketches like ✶ in a remarkable short book about getting away with murder (13), *Robinson Down Stream* (1836), staged as friendly conversation.

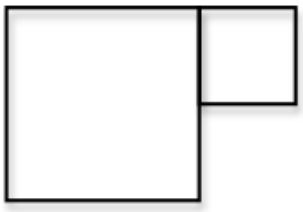
Then, the recoil. The third of the three stories in the third of three novels witnesses the restitution of the third person.[55] It concerns the romantic life of Margaret Dunbar, who marries a man named Harry just before he leaves for California. She hears rumors, in the papers, of his death; years later, she remarries, as we have remarked, "a man of the world in the intensest form" (*MQ* 102); the three will make a love triangle. When Harry returns, after all, flush with gold—"The fact is, here I am" (*MQ* 94)—he stumbles into the new husband, Stanley Burke, who obscures his marital status and poses as a friend to him, then stumbles away for a moment, so that Harry can stumble into Margaret herself in the Universal Shirt Store on Canal Street (*MQ* 97), sadly reduced in her circumstances. He's wearing a gold chain. He follows her to what feels like the North Pole (*MQ* 98). What he finds there has this form, framed by a barren field, which

[55] "Margaret Dunbar" moves from a remarkable premise, one that I believe calls immediately into question the only critical judgment I have seen concerning it, namely that the story is "hardly noteworthy" (de Grazia 431). It is worthy, at least, of a hard footnote. In "Margaret Dunbar," Lippard or the trilogy imagines encountering its primal scene, or some half-dreamt version of that scene, in the form of a small news item, filler of the kind that could appear in the "Queer World" column. A dead man is found floating on the waves outside the city, his face bruised as if by the ice that floats by him, in the manner of OUR ANCESTOR and the generations cursed to find themselves imitating him, up to and including men like Arthur Barnhurst who are dreamy, unconscious imitators (*NY* 138).

> Yesterday evening, the body of an unknown man, entirely divested of clothing, was found floating in the North River, Pier No. —. His hair was dark, and he appeared to be about thirty years of age. There was no mark upon him to indicate that he came to his death by violence, save indeed an abrasion of the skin on the right temple, evidently the result of contact with some object floating in the river. The coroner investigated the matter thoroughly; and the jury returned the verdict that the body of the unknown had been thrown into the river by resurrectionists. It was, after the inquest, properly interred in Potter's Field. (*MQ* 91)

The item itself takes a form like that of the *fait-divers*, a nineteenth-century news-genre sometimes referred to as "novels in three lines" (Sante), one that favors little fables of "death by violence." While its period of flourish is later, around the turn of the century, the form has its genesis on precisely the same social scene that sees the invention of the *roman feuilleton* (of which Sue's *Mysteries of Paris* is the canonical instance), not to mention engages the gothic imagination of the amateur detective of "In a Cellar." *Fait-divers* are collected by Gide, and the fascinating, omnipresent-elusive ("invisibly famous" [Sante viii]) *fin-de-siècle* French writer Felix Feneon is their patron saint, with Roland Barthes later playing high priest ("The Structure of the *Fait-Divers*" [1962]). Feneon took credit for little of his remarkable work in the form, remarks the introducer of a recent collected edition, Luc Sante, who also calls the items, "small slivers of occurrence that lie beneath history… represent[ations of] the whole world, with all of its contradictions" (xxxi). (Sante is the author of an experimental memoir, the title of which I have been tempted to appropriate for the flash-press phenomenon of the fact of facts, namely, *The Factory of Facts*,—or as a *New York Times* reviewer puts it, "the flea market of the mind": a squanderer's paradise.)

he glimpses through its one window: a room with another room appended. Harry presents himself to her, as rich as he promised he'd be when he promised to be her husband. (It was a wedding pledge purified of consummation; the oath was all; Harry was hurrying away to California.) Margaret keeps the second room dark, with the excuse that her sick mother is sleeping there.[56] It's like this:



5. Square without a square: the Dunbar floorplan

Which means at night it's like:

6. Dark variation

7. Darker still—in which the night dissolves the distinction between inside and outside a dark room

What's in the room is proof that Margaret's second marriage, unlike her first to Harry, was consummated: a daughter. Margaret fibs and puts him off for the night; the truth tomorrow, she tells herself. Stanley surprises her. He's wearing a gold chain. Plans change. The night passes.

[56] The Dunbar floorplan is technically fantastic, meaning objectively "uncertain," in Todorov's sense. We know that the "miserable tenement," set alone in an "open field," "a bleak space," among "piles of timber and broken rocks" (*MQ* 99), is composed of a room and a "second" (*MQ* 99) or "next room" (*MQ* 100, 101); we know its walls are white and bare and floor uncarpeted (99); we know it has but one window and one "narrow door" (*MQ* 99). Is the next room within or without the first? Since not knowing the answer makes the thing only more formless, we do not hesitate to throw up our hands (and if we must stop holding another's to do so, or break an embrace of elbows, even better).

The next episode is seen through Stanley's eyes: the two rooms of Margaret's house are completely clean; even the bed's gone; somehow even the stove has disappeared. There is nothing but the two rooms in their pure form, a square without a square. Harry, who never knew that home wasn't his home, just that it had one dark room beside one lit one, has been killed by Stanley. Stanley's crime has been inferred by Margaret (in fact, from the fact of the chain: a thought, as in "In a Cellar," that takes the shape of its object: "Her eyes were riveted to the chain, and she remembered…" [*MQ* 105]). Taking her cue from the running title, Margaret leaves. She hopes she'll find a witness, and does, and finds out when she does that he's named Hoffman ("—this man—this Hoffman" [*MQ* 108]). Burke thought she was dead: "The fact is, I saw it in the papers—" (*MQ* 107). Hoffman may have taken money in exchange for his silence, but later reappears, supporting Alice, arm on arm (*MQ* 109), and says that he'll soon be handing back the money he was handed by Burke, a bribe not to appear in this story. "I took your money," he owns, "but there was blood upon it, and as soon as a few little matters are settled you can have it back" (*MQ* 108). Maybe.

This resolves the motif's adventure. A form without a form is what a square perched on a square is, in fact: a copy of *this* form immediately outside *this same* form, at once the minimal and maximal form of excess. In the fifth glyph (5. Square without a square: the Dunbar floorplan), the accusation of formlessness appears, as it were, triple refined, three-times literalized.[57] (1) The concept of formlessness is reformatted as "a form without a form"; (2) this glosses not as a form without any form, but [Form *x*] without [Form *x*]; and (3) this in turn is glossed to mean, [Form x] *outside* [Form x]. Here the transformation stops in a form that is just

[57] The logic of "literalization" (90), in early Seltzer (1978), means: "figures of speech acted out in the narrative," that is, the "rapid interchange of inner and outer, metaphor and event, word and thing," that is, "a confusion, a transformation, of ways of saying into modes of being" (84). These are moments at which, as William Gilmore Simms puts it, "the ear, pained with its intensity, seems itself to whisper" (149).

outside a form, that is, a form *right* outside a form and *only* outside. The paradoxical formalization of formlessness, like taking the name of Nameless, no sooner does than undoes itself. Like that, the refined figure, an excessively formal symbol of formlessness, dissolves back into what it figures. It transforms itself to a motif among the motifs, just one attracted and repulsed by others and itself: in Tomashevsky's term, in the Formalist's word, "free." We cannot identify it with a character or kind of character; it seems not to submit anything very much like a meaning to us; pure extravagant, it is merely a *means* among others. It is the reader's taunt of the gothic (you are form flawed by "formlessness" and "wildness" [Reynolds *Beneath* 202-203]) turned inside out and handed back to him, with a bundle of half-cognizable propositions.[58]

This spree of the motif is not the trilogy's last word; it would be too neat; the motif would spoil its promise (to be formless) if it were. The trilogy at the end of the trilogy ends, instead, with the sort of moment that has become typical of it. It ends, namely, with the wish that it could end differently; then it presents the ending that is its true ending, differing from its wish. "Margaret Dunbar" ends with three figures, friends of the third man, Stanley, trading to-and-fro three words, until the booze abates. Harry, Margaret, and Stanley, the principals, have passed from the stage, even Hoffman has. The three men, all three in the role of the third man now, do a drill in gothic exegesis: "'Strange!' cried one. 'Odd!' another. 'Queer!' a third. And then they drank, and there was a long pause followed by another chorus of ejaculations, and another round of champagne. 'Strange! odd! queer!'" (*MQ* 109). Every other rehearsal, the second in the

[58] A square is set within a square, then perfectly obscured. The visual motif alters and alters again, again and again. What relationship obtains between this little cipher and the gothic's logic? Answer: it is an anti-emblem. One of the gothic's tricks is to refract its reader's historicism back at her: it absorbs and transforms it into a congeries of ideological causes. This is a society that sees different realities or worlds for different worldly reasons: "men of varying cultures share little in common in the first place and will necessarily see different realities mediated by their own distinct cultural practices" (Roberts 90). The perception of difference is conditioned by a host of different conditions or causes. This is why the serial killer can be said to typify typicality; the conceptual poetry typical of Seltzer's *Serial Killers* (1998) again and again opens for appreciation this dimension of "that little cliché machine called the gothic" (*TC* 42).

sequence threatens a sort of self-awareness (the fifth item of a series, indeed, is "odd," as is the eleventh…), which it leaves the next sip and drill to unsettle.

> The guests waited for [their host Stanley] deep into the night, and sacrificed themselves in the effort to exhaust his champagne; and at last, very much exhausted, and in some degree drunk—no Stanley Burke appearing—they hurried on their cloaks and overcoats, and went on their various ways… The night passed on, and passed away. (*MQ* 109)

* *

A strange joy. Published by three publishers, in three different cities (*The Empire City* and *Midnight Queen* in New York, *New York* in Cincinnati), in two different years (*The Empire City* in 1850, *New York* and *Midnight Queen* in 1853), and translated into two different languages (*Empire City* into German in 1854, *Empire City* and *New York* together, it seems, into Czech [*Tajnosti New-Yorki*, *Secrets of New York*]), and variously republished (*Midnight Queen* in 1858 in New York, *Empire City* in 1864 in Philadelphia), the trilogy, I think, has succeeded on its own terms in seeming to sit scattered and while clustering in clusters.[59] Taken as a trilogy, these books present Lippard in what is perhaps the most fascinating and baffling exercise of his style. Nowhere, perhaps, is the revived gothic so excessively self-aware and still so wonderfully and continually surprised by its own possibilities, and by the breadth of its internal resistances and boredoms—like the quite specific one that it directs at the fate of Nameless and Mary, the quiet home, which it seems it can abide only by cutting it together with a cluster of others (the "series of pictures" [201], four tableaus, that conclude *Empire City* [201-205])—, then another cluster (the series changes its content though its number of scenes is the same in *New York*: "ON THE OCEAN,—BY THE RIVER SHORE,—IN THE VATICAN,—ON THE PRAIRIE." [279])—, then even

[59] This game of matching and discarding is difficult to stop playing, even as time expires and returns diminish. Parting shots: the titles of the novels that compose the trilogy first seem simply to riff in succession on the first one in its fullness (*The Empire City; or, **New York** by Night and Day*—first this, then one called ***New York***, then one called *Midnight Queen*). And it is true too that two titles are synonyms, *Empire City* and *New York*; and two, explicitly imperial, *Empire City* and *Midnight Queen*,—that is, if wickedly, synthetic.

that collage is effectively scrapped for fodder for an entirely new one (the trilogy to end the trilogy, *Midnight Queen*). The work is a work of desperation and exhaustion, and indeed (like *Eureka*) of real familiar sorrow, but also its opposite, a strange joy, and one excessively processed.

* *

Based on money. In the seventh of the seven vaults, each one windowless, each square, each lined with files, and each file lined with facts, Gulian Van Huyden, disguised as what he also *is* in fact, the envoy of another administration, hears from the man who married his estate (*NY* 267), once his friend, what their "awful trust" has become (*EC* 32). Friendship is complicated, but estate management, a true horror. Fulmer states the case bravely: "the Van Huyden is not a secret society like the Jesuits, nor a corporation like Trinity church, nor a government like U.S. or Britain, but it is a Government based on Money and controlled by the *Iron Will of One Man*" (*NY* 64). This is the mission statement of a man "with his whole soul devoted to administration" (*NY* 64): it has been my business to become a business; if the Jesuits are not a secret society, but only sort of like one, if Trinity is not a corporation, but only sort of like one, if the U.S. has no true government only a devilish approximation, I can—I *will*—I've an "*Iron Will*"—pretend not to notice. I'm the boss, unless you're the boss, unless there are no bosses, and the fact of facts and the form of formlessness, the substance of the content and the form of the expression, determine one another. Hold my hand; take my arm; trade my secret for another; cherish my iron will or the irony of my saying that to you, just you. Behind them, silently, the files keep processing "the separation of the law into authority and administration" (Vismann xii).

* *

As critique and affirmation. The "social system" that the trilogy studies (*EC* 30) is one in which a communications revolution ("an era of information abundance" [Halttunen 69]) and a sexual revolution ("the new sexual system" [Halttunen 177], keyed to "romantic, intimate, and deeply conflicted sexuality" [176]), seem equally to inform and flirt with one another. Perhaps the best metaphor for their correspondence is the monetary one: between them, there's *interest*. Each keeps things centerless; "heresies abound" in a style that is (*NY* 68)—or is like—Lippard's style. The domain of this likeness is the one we set out to study in the guise of the midcentury gothic, animated by scattering and clustering, attraction and repulsion. It seems that this literature tends to submit to appreciation along these lines too; attraction and repulsion are professionalized as critique and affirmation. Historical methods of critique (like "the subversive style" [Reynolds *Beneath*]) come up for critical affirmation; historical methods of norm-affirmation come in for the critic's critique. Reading Lippard in this context—Lippard, whose prose works like money, and made him some, which he spent well, not least on friends, at least on Poe—I think we find ourselves poised to discover what sits unobserved on the far side of the distinction (critique and affirmation). There we glimpse or guess "the possibility that what has become realized as society gives cause *for the worst fears, but cannot be rejected*" (Luhmann 193). If professionalism requires the communication of this fact, I trust that attending factors have not spoiled its identity with its opposite, meaning mystery.

CONCLUSION

A GULF OF DIFFERENCE

I What Groups Together

Finally, in Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881),[1] nothing happens,—but only finally. Before that, Isabel Archer's experiments in gracious living sample questions and persons that a reader of nineteenth-century novels, such as Isabel exuberantly is, is likely to find familiar. Some stand out: a parentless heroine ("'a clever girl, with a strong will and a high temper'" [43]), who seeks herself by finding that self tangled up in love plots; a landed and elegant suitor, Lord Warburton; another whose name does not refuse the reader snickers at his sobriety (shades of Guy Hartwell, Caspar Goodwood); escapades in the attribution of motive; deathbeds abounding; and eventually, as if for the connoisseur, an adoptee's adopted daughter with her own opacity in love to study up ("so different" [437]). All this, and even—with what could be called consciousness of melodrama[2]—more gothically some more: the ghost of a "ghost" at Gardencourt (48, 610);[3] a late-altered will; a contrived inheritance; an interested executor, who lives and loves in the tending of another's estate (Ralph Touchett is not not Martin Fulmer);

[1] I cite from the 1881 edition of *Portrait*, popularly available from Penguin. In addition, I have consulted a useful website put together by Michael Anesko, which supplies electronic versions of the two serialized versions, British (Macmillan's Magazine) and American (Atlantic Monthly), of 1880-1881; book editions by Macmillan (1882, 1883) and Houghton Mifflin (1881); and the vitally revised New York edition of 1908. The website is: http://www.portraitofalady.psu.edu/Portrait_of_a_Lady_Homepage.html. The considerable differences between the 1881 and 1908 versions are the subject of the opposite-facing appreciations of Matthiessen (pro 1908) and Baym (pro 1881), among others.

[2] The phrase from Brooks I'm nodding at here is "melodrama of consciousness."

[3] Here we may recall Fiedler's claim that Henry James's stories somehow all are "ghost stories" (303). Fiedler's provocative claim may disappoint, in its execution, those who recall Saul Rosenzweig's 1943 essay, "The Ghost of Henry James." What haunts James there is sex and where it haunts is style: "His various novels and tales written both before and after the departure from America acquired their notorious peculiarities—precious overqualification of style and restraint of sexual passion—from the repressed pattern of his life" (454).

Rome in ruins for a background (enter the *bibelots*); a certain scene (Merle and Osmond, standing and sitting, confidential, while the fire burns) that can scarcely be said to be sinister in its own right, though instantly to its glimpser it seems so; a midnight epiphany as the candle snuffs, where our heroine glimpses her once-brilliant prospects snuffing too ("a dark, narrow alley, with a dead wall at the end" [447]). And the novel consequence of this last is that, at last, nothing happens. Scarcely a plot-point we haven't met before in our study of the subgenres. The nineteenth-century novel as this dissertation has theorized it, and the nineteenth-century novels we have read in that theory's pursuit, have a tremendous though nonspecific presence in *Portrait*'s plot: vibrant and atomized.

This presence, I believe, accords with our sense of system. Lord Warburton—whose name recalls Arbuton, the romantic lead in the Howells novel of our Introduction—has something "just like a novel" about him (16). This character is not the only one. Each of Isabel's three suitors, Warburton and Goodwood and Osmond, mixes something of subgenre to himself, and her concluding refusal to refuse lovely vexation (or, her artful acceptance that difference in love is what there is) does too, for her. Warburton, keeper of many fine homes—a mess or jumble of them: when he proposes to Isabel, he proposes together with his homes (115), including the stately Lockleigh—bears many marks of midcentury sentimentalism. Most interesting of them is that he is not averse to wedding the stepdaughter of our heroine for the sake of belonging not to her personally (for the sentimental suitor, personally's not the point), but to the broad spread of her kin.[4] Subgeneric too are the desires of one Caspar Goodwood, which in their intensity and their tending toward success-as-culmination ("his lips on her own lips" [622]) take something of the bildungsroman, or self-craft fable, into their texture. Osmond's

[4] We notice that it is especially on pages where Warburton is present that a certain quirk of the sentimental voice manifests: Isabel is called "our heroine."

secrets and schemes are easy: Italy; subterfuge; dimness; "house of darkness, house of dumbness, house of suffocation" (452);[5] all that; and that seems all the more gothic for creeping up on Isabel and the reader. And, finally, Isabel hews realist when nothing happens and she effectively elects dissatisfaction (we say: non-rapport, a sense of difference that renders really incidental any emotional content, a simple seperateness that does not disclose itself in a topic), that sort of personal disappointment that we have associated with lovers in Howells.

In an important review ("Henry James, Jr." [1882]), Howells himself insists that, with this choice, the novel comes to feel complete in its way, a new way: "[w]e must agree, then, to take what seems a fragment instead of a whole, and to find, when we can, a name for this new kind of fiction" (319). And in a sketch composed shortly after, "Niagara Revisited" (1883), Howells affirms the appropriateness of the "inconclusive conclusion" of *A Chance Acquaintance* (315). Writing in his *Notebooks*, James anticipates and situates Howells's claim for *Portrait*: "The *whole* of anything is never told; you can only take what groups together. What I have done has that unity—it groups together. It is complete in itself" (18). This grouping together of a series of groupings-together *happens*, it could be said, when happening stops happening. This is how Dorothea Krook brilliantly summarizes the consequences for the plot of Isabel's discovery of her disappointment: she abides, as does Osmond; "[n]othing 'happens'" (*Ordeal* [1962] 60).

The scare quotes take us further into the remarkable realist techniques of the novel. Realism's bias toward the concrete is perhaps nowhere more perfect than in its felt refusal of a consistent "theory of fictional *representation*" (21), which Michael Davitt Bell identifies as "the problem of American realism" but which we might even more easily produce as one of its most

[5] To this, after considerable ellipses, James's "Preface" of 1908 adds: "house of fiction" (*Art* 46).

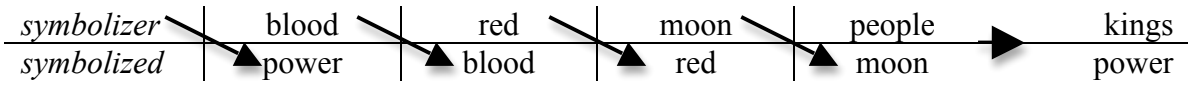
artful successes.[6] The problem that "realism" donates to its discussion is that it's "slipshod" (Bell 8). This yields the sort of realist symbol that came up in our discussion of *A Chance Acquaintance* in the Introduction—what Cady calls "an imploding symbol," one that "intensif[ies] inwardly the total effect" (*Light* 8).[7] The art of *The Portrait*—Howells calls it "the art of fiction" (322)—lies not in its intensification of a single symbol, but the entire symbolizing process. So doing, it makes the most of its riddance of a theory of representation.

Portrait is effectively understood along the line of impressions it makes: the way (first) it suspends those impressions in their signifierization or term-likeness (like in that "happens" from Krook); the way (then) those impressions make more; and (finally) the way that more devises for itself a way of closing the circuit and establishing "that unity" that is the unity of "what groups together." A useful model for this procedure can be found in Todorov's essay, "Language and Its Doubles," from *Theories of the Symbol* (1977). Toward its end, this essay describes the "eloquence" of a primitive dictum—"Persons born under a red moon will become kings"—by describing how it organizes a series of linked symbolic entities (some manifest, some latent): blood, red, persons, moon, kings, power. The "apparent absence of tropes" in this saying, Todorov claims, "is only the presence of tropes other than metaphor" (242)—as in realism, we might add, another aesthetics of the "other than." Auerbach's influential account associates nineteenth-century sorts of realism with the mechanism of metonymy (*Mimesis* 488-489), that slippery figural logic; in *Narrating Reality* (1999), Harry Shaw explores and extends that relation

[6] Bell, *The Problem of American Realism* (1993); see also Pizer, "Problem of Definition" (1995). A still broader rehearsal of "Realism and Its Problems" is given by Shaw in *Narrating Reality*, 1-37.

[7] Related, perhaps, is the "massive" ironic potential that Pizer in *The Theory and Practice of American Literary Naturalism* (1993) associates with the same sort of symbolics under naturalism (107): in works like *McTeague*, *Sister Carrie*, and *The Red Badge of Courage*, "there is a pervasive and striking symbol which, in a sense, accompanies the protagonist on his adventure… It is both a sign of his identity, in that it represents the static reality of his goal or question in an uncertain, shifting world, and it is a sign of the impossibility of fulfilling goals or discovering meaning in a world of this kind" (105, 108).

(101-109). Here I will adapt as I codify this line of argumentation. But first, I should be clear about Todorov's model. The symbolizer at one step in the series' unfolding converts to the symbolized in the next, like this:

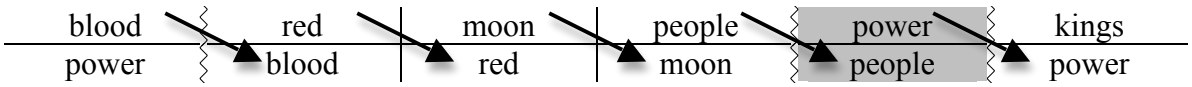


The thicker, horizontal arrow that precedes the final term, kings/power, marks in this model the moment or "scene" in which the symbolic chain or process "stops" and "meet[s]" another and distinct symbolic chain in a relation of "*equalization*" (245).[8]

There may be a subtler—or in the spirit of "other than," simply another—account of this moment in the logic to be made. For we notice that it is the very moment when a quite particular symbolic possibility is actively suppressed, namely power/people—the master symbol for the democratic imaginary—, that the power structure becomes visible as a structure ready to report the people's meaning, the sense of the commons. Such a signifier "power," meaning the people's, has currency in a world that is not this saying's: a world in which the people repeat not proverbs on kings but pass the word "power," filled somehow with their own sense, world-makingly among themselves.[9] *Implied* symbols, like blood/power and kings/power, present and active in the chain though not manifest in it, might therefore be differentiated from another class, *repressed* or suppressed symbolical possibilities, like power/people. We sketch this difference in our expansion of model: squiggles for *implied* items; for *repressed* ones, gray.

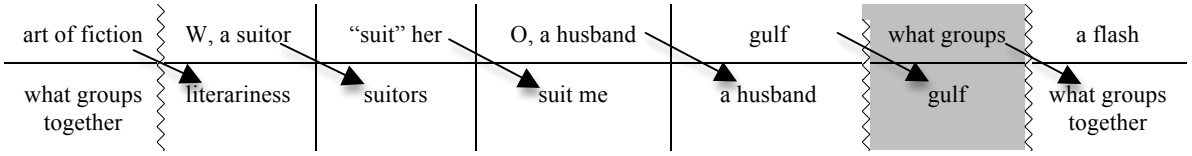
[8] The logic animating this model has a formal/abstract affinity with the logic described by Lacan in his dealings with non-rapport in Seminar XX. There is set out there a modal logic in which "sexual logic does not cease to write itself in so far as nothing of it can be symbolized" (Ragland "Ockham"). The point may be tenebrous and we will not press it… though it may be interesting to inquire whether something of the sense can be felt when we come to twin-chains reading of Howells's "Niagara Revisited," below.

[9] For one argument that the democratic possibility sits implicit in the structure of sovereignty, see Balibar's reading of Spinoza, "A Democratic Manifesto."



Blood/power is an *implied* symbol included in the chain—in fact, launching the chain. Power/people is an *implied* but *repressed* symbolic possibility, the exclusion (as repression trumps implication) of which interrupts the symbolizer level of the chain and allows for the introduction of a new term, kings. The repression of the term power/people creates a void or hiccup in the symbolization that admits something new, a signifier which descends into the process as if from the gods, and masks its coup of signification in a meaning that seems opposite (in essence, the king is the person who is the victim of a coup, not its perpetrator). Blood cycles; moons change; the fickle people wax or, tidelike, ebb; not kings. Each meaning is merely the means by which another term might be meant. And so if realism means through metonymies of the quotidian, the meaning of these small pieces can only be other such pieces, or what can be made by them to seem equivalent.

It is my contention that some of what James suffers and enjoys in England is his knowledge that some things come to their significance precisely as does the monarch of this saying. I wonder if I will be understood when I claim that *Portrait* seems to be one such thing. Since we mean to describe the eloquence of "nothing 'happens,'" sentence-form paraphrases will not take us far. For us the goal in handling plots of this stripe, realist plots, will be to generate an adequately textured scheme of the story with a minimum of terms. And so:



The first, *implied* and animating term of the series should look familiar: it is this novel's significant claim to literariness, it latent bid to be an art-object. *Portrait* is not a fragment; "it groups together"; it is somehow a whole; and as such it is something new; we require "a name for this new kind of fiction" (319). While Howells considers Osmond "perfect," he remarks most often, in "Henry James, Jr.," on the characterization of Warburton. So doing, he picks up on a symbolic association from early on in the novel, between Lord Warburton and what seems an entirely new world that, to Isabel and readers like her, feels, in the first place, read-about. The character of Warburton sheds some of his particularities, which often enough present themselves for Isabel's admiration *as* particulars (memorably, she cares for his house, even if she doesn't find herself in the sort of book where sense might set her to wed him for it: "I delight in a moat," said Isabel. "Goodbye" [115][10]). Improved slightly by slight abstraction, he becomes his type, "her English suitor" (511) or, still more simply, "the suitor." (Recall, reader, the scene in which Isabel has been reading a letter from Caspar Goodwood in which he's priming to propose; Isabel looks up from the letter and there, in the real, is another suitor: Warburton, like a body that stands there on behalf of what, artfully, has been written: "She put the letter into her pocket, and offered her visitor a smile of welcome… half-surprised at her self-possession" [107].) The matter of the suitors (liking them and their being like one another) next descends into a symbolized that seeds a new symbolizer, the signifier for taste in love, the dilemma of seeing what's suitable. The question of seeming to Isabel to match "her idea of a delightful person" (122), which is what is said of Caspar Goodwood in so many words and is repeated toward Warburton in what amounts to less: "I don't think I should suit you; I really don't think I should" (112).

[10] This is the only passage that I cite that changes between the 1881 and 1908 editions, with the exception of the famous kiss with Goodwood at the end, discussed below. In 1908 James makes an alteration that seems to prove that he delights in or adores this one-liner; this time Isabel says, "I adore a moat… Good-bye" (100).

This fleeting, unstable coincidence between symbolizer and symbolized (suiting/suitors) is responsible for the precarious stasis that is the novel's long middle section. Pansy solves or dissolves it, cures the stall, two pages before the novel's famous three-year ellipsis. Osmond's daughter says to Isabel: "You will suit me beautifully; but what I mean is that you and papa will suit each other… He should not, for instance, have a wife like my aunt… You will be a delightful companion for papa… I liked you from the first" (373). Pansy, who is in truth not a person, simply a little machine for matching right diction with its moment, spits all the book's best ones back at Isabel here, purging them, as it were, so that we can proceed. The process moves forward when suitability is transposed to a new scene: after the ellipsis, wedded life (376ff). The next poignant moment occurs with the midnight meditation that follows Isabel's glimpse of Osmond and Madam Merle by firelight. Somehow, they had seemed too much with one another. She can't, at first, quite say how. Him seated; her standing. Like the old friends they are, but somehow that's not it…

Suddenly, a signifier *does* appear near Isabel's mind, a word she didn't overhear from "a sort of joke" Warburton had made about his virility right before her arrival to Gardencourt (8), ten-thousands of words ago, in the book's first chapter. The word is "gulf." The joke is the sort that *Beulah* had made when it teased Guy Hartwell for taking some time for himself in the Far East, "heathenating." The Persian Gulf is the only place he's ever been sick, Warburton says (8). I can't say I understand the joke, but Ralph laughs and tell his father not to trouble himself about getting it. Forever later, there the same word is, "gulf," swirling around while Isabel tries to name to herself how her husband and her marriage suit her. "[M]istrust," the thought drifts with her in free indirect discourse, "was the clearest result of their short married life; a gulf had opened between them over which they looked at each other with eyes that were on either side a

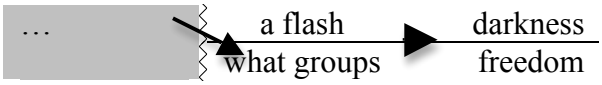
declaration of deception suffered" (447). Later, when we're closer to Osmond's thoughts, it's declared again: similar, a little different: "a gulf of difference" (570).

Now a term in the symbolizing process is elided so that a new one, one felt as "something new" (429), can be introduced. The elision: what is both implied and repressed is a symbolic possibility that would stand, as it were, over the gulf and mark out a meaning of it at the symbolizing level.[11] And "something new": this something has the structure of a scene, in the sense and with the importance Kaja Silverman has attributed to this term.[12] In it, the fire that flickers on Osmond and Merle as they half-stand together itself comes to stand in Isabel's mind for the scene's meaning (the medium—meaning light—stands for the meaning of the message): "the thing made an image, lasting only a moment, like a sudden flicker of light" (429). What the

[11] This describes a problem that I take to be the animating one in the late style, whose queerness has been evoked in congenial terms by Kevin Ohi in *Henry James and the Queerness of Style* (2011): "Whatever insights are available to or, on the contrary, elude individual persons, against the patterns of transmission, inheritance, and replication that structure heterosexual sociality, the discontinuities of gay life—histories, to say nothing of whole generations, lost to homophobia or the more or less violent disregard shown gay existence and gay culture; or, for the individual, a life narrative made discontinuous by 'coming out,' a rupture that replays as a moment of quasi-decision the imponderable question of gay origination—force an encounter with the way different cells of our lives, our capacities, our passions, our knowledges, are out of sync with each other, and with themselves, and wax and wane according to no overarching development, perhaps according to no development at all… to attend in detail to the movements of [James's late] prose is to discover the ways it stutters and screams" (29-31).

[12] A remarkable inheritor of Silverman's approach to James is Sigi Jottkandt's *Acting Beautifully: Henry James and the Ethical Aesthetic* (2005), a Lacanian account of the category of "the act" in James, something like what we've called "the scene" set inside out. The "ethical act," for Jottkandt, here building on the modeling of the concept in mid-career Lacan (think Seminar VII), "amounts to a creative solution to the problem of how to give phenomenal expression to something within our representational system that can have no phenomenal form known, in Lacaese, as the Real" (xii). If the scene is all that's there in an instant, the act, also instant-ish, exhibits what's not ("no phenomenal form"). We have been giving a different account, with help from the later Lacan (Seminar XX) with the concepts, of how a representational system expresses something other than what it should be able to. Jottkandt's reading of *Portrait* is stirring—it too is keyed to the realist moment of Isabel's return to Rome, but spells it "Real"—but for our purposes is pertinent only insofar as it centers on a particularly intense moment, or scene, or opposite-of-scene = act. An alternative formulation of "the scenic imperative" (11) as it pertains to the concept of realism (also alternatively formulated) can be found in Fredric Jameson's *The Antinomies of Realism* (2013); see especially Chapter II, in which what Lukács called "description" is smartly reimagined as affect, "the body's present." For more on the psychoanalytic sense of scene, which entails two scenes with a space between ("their hiatus"), see Laplanche, *Life and Death*, 38-40.

flicker might mean is a mystery that will be pondered in the literal, with lamps and candles and the meditation of Chapter XLII, perhaps the most renowned "nothing happens" in literary realism. The mystery that flash indicates is one of grouping: "the lamp had long since gone out and the candles had burned down to their sockets. But even then she stopped again in the middle of the room, and stood there gazing at a remembered vision—that of her husband and Madame Merle, grouped unconsciously and familiarly" (458).



Like a shadow to a spark, the symbol projects its own opposite at the novel's end. The darkness that descends after the "flash of lightning"[13] of Goodwood's kiss tosses off or projects its own opposite: what doesn't group, or more precisely, how it feels to be free: "His kiss was like a flash of lightning; when it was dark again she was free" (622). Projecting this precise reverse-symbol—flash posits dark; grouping posits freedom—is a speedy and effective means of securing semiotic closure, "[i]n an extraordinarily short time" (622), an effect important to James's account of what he's doing and Howells's self-authorizing appreciation.

> In an extraordinarily short time—for the distance was considerable—she had moved through the darkness (for she saw nothing) and reached the door… She looked all about her; she listened a little; then she put her hand on the latch. She had not known where to turn; but she knew now. There was a very straight path.
> (622)

The very straightness of the path before Isabel evokes—aesthetically, *not* discursively—the straightness that is the same as the darkness of a life at the moment just before sexuality as such

[13] In 1908, the passage undergoes major revisions, but "a flash" remains: "His kiss was like white lightning, a flash that spread, and spread again, and stayed; and it was extraordinary as if, while she took it, she felt each thing in his hard manhood that had least pleased her, each aggressive fact of his face, figure, his presence, justified of its intense identity and made one with this act of possession" (482). The glossers agree: an interesting and, for what it's worth, sexy bit about how a bunch of manly bits bunch inside the title that extends, "Goodwood." But it is not, I think, sexy in a particularly realist way: just sexy. The world suddenly and at random small; the flash and the dark; the door unlooked-for but *there*; the hand on the latch: all that's the realist's sort of sexy, and of course it's all in the 1881 edition (622).

descends and alters at the margins the sense of what orientations are possible.[14] Darkness can mean freedom because spark-likeness has stood for "something new." From this darkness, a delicious image of non-rapport, Isabel does not emerge, though other novels, other realist novels, each its own together-grouping, do.

II The Light of Common Day

We can broaden our consideration of the genre of realism ("if it can be called a genre" [Sundquist vii]—kinds are just the kind of thing that tend to self-suspend and slip away) at the same time our examination of the genre's dominant device (if it can be called a device), grows closer, more microscopic. What the narrator of *Portrait* calls "the crude light of that revelation" that Isabel has first when she glimpses Merle and Osmond unawares (581) exhibits its kinship with what William Dean Howells, in his critical writings, recurs to as "the light of common day." Once the phrase was the going title for the big coming-out book Howells was writing in 1881, eventually *A Modern Instance*, like *Portrait* for James, and which like *Portrait* was to be the same sort of intentional contribution to the canon of realism. The phrase passes from there into a pairing of images ("Michelangelo's 'light of the piazza,' the glance of the common eye" [73]) in a column from December 1887 that draws on John Addington Symond's seven-volume *Renaissance in Italy* (1875-1886), an article that in time becomes the lead essay of *Criticism and Fiction* (1892). On another occasion, the phrase, elaborated in a manner I much prefer and will discuss soon, functions as a mission statement and stamp of appreciation: an "American novel"

[14] Cautiously, cautiously, we might align the dark freedom that descends on Isabel with the darkness through which a dark thing scurries in this passage from Jonathan Ned Katz's *The Invention of Heterosexuality* (1995): "In the twentieth century, creatures called heterosexuals emerged from the dark shadows of the nineteenth-century medical world to become common types acknowledged in the bright light of the modern day" (83). In this, *Portrait* concurs with the image-reservoir of Katz. In the moment prior to its codification, its installation in discourse, the concept of heterosexuality may have appeared: a dark thing, rather creepy, lurking and skulking.

succeeds when it succeeds in "keeping in the light of common day an action whose springs are in the darkest fastness of the human soul." The phrase passes into criticism concerning Howells's criticism and fiction via Edwin H. Cady's bright and positive *The Light of Common Day: Realism in American Fiction* (1971).

Howells's deployment of the phrase "light of the common day" has something refractory to it. It ciphers a slogan from Michelangelo about fit conditions for seeing his sculpture (in the "light of the piazza," or public square, or marketplace: the frisson of meanings is crucial to Howells), as well as a few feet from Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" (1804). "The Youth" of the Great Ode, headlong at first and then attended by "the vision splendid" (ll. 72, 73), sadly, shrinks into "the Man," and "perceives it die away, / And fade into the light of common day" (ll. 75-76).[15] (The "it" might also refer to "the light" he once beheld or "the vision"; "it" is ambiguous.) Cady admits a similar slipperiness into his deployment of the dictum. When he cites the lines from Wordsworth as an epigraph he jump-cuts from "trailing clouds of glory / From God" (ll. 65-66) to "At length the Man perceives it die away / And fade into the light of common day," he represses the reference to "vision" that will soon emerge as the definition that he proposes of reality for the realists:

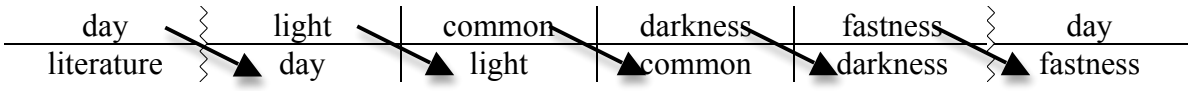
> the socially agreed upon 'common vision' which permits ordinary processes of law and social control to succeed, creates the possibility of games, makes most technical, economic, and even educational enterprises possible. That world of common vision is, indeed, what is ordinarily referred to as 'reality.' (*Light* 19)

Precisely the term that's repressed is precisely the term that's evoked ("vision") and ends up suspending a later term in its termlikeness ("'reality'"). If the phrase, "the light of common day," then, speaks to the ideals of literary realism, it does not do so by punctually offering up meaning

[15] Wordsworth's usage of "common day" signifies in the direction of the courts rather than, as in Michelangelo, the marketplace. "Common day" in contemporary legal parlance is an ordinary day in court.

in a way that can be agreed to; it yields a series which ends in suspicion or the suspension of another term, "reality."

This it does in a game's manner, a possibility Cady mentioned. The basic structure and rules of this game, we just learned: hide and seek in which every signifier seeks to set itself below the bar, to be meant by some other signifier, and every signified finds, slightly deferred, its potential to be, besides a meaning, the means by which something else might be meant. The game is closely played, in this case:

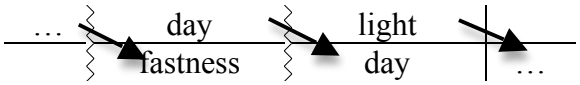


Like blood/power in the Todorov example, the sign or scene that sets this adventure in symbolization in motion sits only implicit within it (signaled by squiggles). Literature is not studied in its presumption of "book-likeness" (*CF* 300) but in its office of meaning: under realism, literature is the dimension in which daily life assumes meaning. Because it means in literature, the category "the everyday" becomes free to be meant by something else; this something else is here troped-up as "light," the visible aspect capable of standing for the dailyness of the day, that is, and the aspect which in turn lends an aspect of itself (the sense of indiscriminate exposure) to the crucial symbolizer, "common." In Howells's construction, what's common could be anything the same way light could light on anything, just anything. (Here we elide a trivial link in the chain: "common" is called upon to mean "human," an optional term. It would be a bold advocate of realism who claimed that the challenge of naturalism, that brutal literature, puts to realism is little more than opting-out of this optional term—as if Howells didn't realize dogs were as dark as wolves, or indeed as noble, and ditto for their masters.[16])

[16] Mocking up a version of Howells like this makes for interesting characterization in Jack London's *The Sea-Wolf* (1904), where Humphrey van Weyden is "Dean of American Letters, the Second," and proves as much by giving what seems an insipid account of our dark genius, Edgar Allan Poe.

Because it functions to shade one symbolized (light) toward an opposite symbolizer (darkness), "common" is the lynchpin and rightfully the privileged term in the symbolic chain. Common means first according to what light can expose to significance (common/light), but it subsequently comes to mean what might seem dark in the moral constitutions of the mass of men (darkness/common). To this darkness, in turn, a supplemental signifier is attached: "fastness." Our motivations spawn and dwell "in the darkest fastness of the human soul," Howells writes, echoing out an old-school usage of the term to denote a shut-tight space.[17]

At this point, the signifier "day" re-emerges, though implicitly, like new from old. Now it is primed to suggest the succession of light hours by dark ones: the swiftness, or the "fastness," by which one follows the other, neither more basic than the other. The symbolical possibility day/fastness thus means, or makes it seem: every day is but a day; it's fast. Then the process is poised to take it from the top:



The symbol "day" now starts back testing its capacity beneath the bar as the thing symbolized by "light." The second time round, we can see more clearly, so to speak, the feat that light-as-symbolizer accomplishes, namely to render comprehensible the rich and varied term that a literature of the everyday plumbs: "day." It seems a more dynamic phrase the second time around, in fact, which may be why Howells and his commentators keep using it. A notion of "common vision" that draws on the sense of "common" made available in this phrase is not, then, simply cribbing or riffing on the poetic sense of Wordsworth, in which the world of lowdown facts have something of the splendid melted into them by the pleasant medium of their

[17] It is, we note, a usage to which Howells resorts on two important occasions in *Modern Instance*. Of Bartley Hubbard: "those fastnesses of his nature which psychology has not yet explored" (40); and of Marcia: "a corner of her soul… an obscure fastness of her being" (341). Like the word "gulf" in *Portrait*, then, it appears as it were independently on either side of the impasse at the novel's center.

appearance: splendid though subjective "vision[s]" fade into "the light of the common day." Instead, "common vision" draws on Howells's own intimations of the semiotic power "that we might call *equalization*" (Todorov 245). This capacity here obtains between what is commonly felt in their opposition, darkness and light. "Common" is the term that shows what light means might also be meant by dark—and that what functioned as its signified might function as the signifier of the other.

This penchant for cascades of signification in literary realism is readily met: for instance, in Fred G. See's account of the representational dilemma regnant in literary realism ("a new mode of signifying called realism" [123]), it is the problem of "expelling an obsolete tradition of the signified from literary language" (133). See specifies this as a drama of "possession" in James, the signifier's possession of a signified other than its existing or presupposed one; so does Howells, who, speaking of James in "Henry James, Jr.," claims that "the novelist's main business is to possess his reader"—specifically, with a sense of the series of interlinked "situations," conceptual and otherwise, in which the novel's persons or concepts are placed (319). ("Situations": the same term is used in this sense by James in *Portrait*'s famous Preface [43].[18]) My intent has been to confer upon this tumbling tendency the dignity of a model, one that represents what James in "The Art of Fiction" (1884) insists is owed each novel-writer, and each of his novels: its *donnée* and that donnée's experimental working-out. Each novel should be given, or granted, its specific given, which gives in turn (and "in the face of presumption") the meaning of a subsequent situation, which itself gives in turn the meaning of the one subsequent to it, and so on, unto the end, which for its part ("in the face of presumption") need not look or feel like an end, so long as with the situations it composes a group.

[18] There James riffs on the notion of "possession" too; all the secondary characters came to him, he says, suddenly, at dawn, brought in with the day: "I seem to myself to have waked up one morning in possession of them—of Ralph Touchett and his parents, of Madame Merle…" (53).

However, we have produced not *a* model for this, but two. The first we evolved for James's *Portrait*; it involves a series of "situations" shuffling and twisting themselves until an episode of rupture arrests the process (a term or symbolic possibility that is both implied and repressed: what groups together/gulf); suddenly, this chain converges with a new "situation," a flickering instant that is the *telos* of the first series, and in itself the equal in experience of that series, *a scene*.[19] When "nothing happens" in *Portrait*, it is between this scene and the other in which it projects its opposite to stop the process. In Howells—and we will thicken this description in what follows—, the model exhibits a different dynamic. The second model we have snatched from a small phrase that recurs in Howells and talk about Howells; the same dynamic that animates the dictum on "common day" drives entire plots too. The texture of emplotment in Howells, early Howells especially (prior to the period of *A Modern Instance*, his sixth novel, published in the *Century* just prior to "Henry James, Jr." in the same periodical), calls up a model that does not predict that signifying chains will meet their truth in another term, a crossing and lodging term, the sort of thing for which we've said, "a scene." Instead, nothing happens the whole time. The processing of "situations" runs like on a loop; it ends or may end on just such a term as makes frank its capacity to begin the process again. Howells's many novels virtually refuse to distinguish themselves, especially the early ones, least of all from one another; as critics often note, he is a major author who writes few apparently major works. Swaths of his career can be evoked by slogans like his "self-conscious minority" [Brodhead 91] or "the Howells no one knows" [Cady *Light*]). In fact, the most Howellsian of Howells's novels, his first four or five, preserve themselves in a conscious enactment of their "smallness" or "persistent

[19] Not a "primal scene" but that sort of happenstance, to-others innocuous, *secondary* scene that triggers the meaning of whatever the "primal" one had organized and preserved in inaccessibility. Silverman treats of this in James. Here is our moment to point out the poignant reversal that ends "The Art of Fiction": the injunction to "go in" means, equally, (1) throw yourself into experiences and, (2) with a subtleness that attests to its profundity, let what meaning emerges emerge *within*.

littleness" of scope (Brodhead 91), a kind of formal quaintness[20] that associates itself in particular with what Brodhead says "might be called the nonderivativeness" of these works (90). These novels each animate *a* novel experience for each reader; if more is felt that's not the novel's fault. Howells's social vision of a political body composed of "simple separate persons" (*Light* 33) finds itself tangled up in a relation of mutual expression with an aesthetic practice in which novels relate to other novels in something like the same manner.

While there is no sex as such in James, then, there are scenes aplenty. But in the swan song of Howells early period, his brilliant self-study "Niagara Revisited" (1883), there are neither sex nor scenes: not even nothing happens.

III Basil Viewed from Behind

In the *Atlantic Monthly* in May 1883, Howells published "Niagara Revisited," an avowedly minor tale ("an inferior thing," Howells once writes [*Selected Letters* 3: 26], now that *A Modern Instance* and James's *Portrait* have clued him into what might not be), a story he composed over the previous summer and had finished by its end, in August. The tale is abidingly minor (we like to say inveterately): minor in spite of several features portending more. For one, Howells revives his interest in two characters, Basil and Isabel March, crucial to his ongoing career and the evolution of his novelistic sensibility. In the story, the friendly-anxious newlyweds of *Their Wedding Journey* (1872), make their first appearance since that early career blockbuster. The fictional surrogates for Howells and his wife Elinor will go on to feature in some of Howells's most important work of the next decade, including *A Hazard of New Fortunes*

[20] The "Littleism" phase in Howells appreciation: Gertrude Atherton, "Why Is American Literature Bourgeois? (1904): "the main current of Realism—or would it not be better to call it Littleism?—flowed placidly on…" (101).

(1889), as well as his brief and brilliant "psychological" novel, *The Shadow of a Dream* (1890).[21] The story is thus a meditation by a Howells beginning his major or middle phase on the meaning and anti-meanings of his intense and empty early output. "Niagara Revisited" plumbs that possibility that readers (like Henry Adams) and critics (like Edmund Wilson) refuse to attribute to the Basil and Isabel of *Their Wedding Journey*, namely, that these characters and their situation has a dark if not precisely disturbing side;[22] their wont is to enjoy it. The tale, moreover, is the first piece of fiction that Howells publishes on the heels of his first self-consciously major work, and a major trial to him in more than one sense, *A Modern Instance* (1882), in which divorce had featured.[23] Finally, this story is the first thing Howells publishes in a periodical after "Henry James, Jr.," which was published in the *Century* in November 1882, and which set off a tremendous reaction among British critics and readers. A recent biography refers to this as "the *Century* debacle" (Goodman and Dawson [2005] 232); it has been also been called an opening shot of the "Realism Wars" by their chronicler.[24] In spite of these conditions, however, "Niagara Revisited" has drawn little comment from critics—indeed, it draws little comments (footnotes

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[21] In 1900 will come the new novel *Their Silver Wedding Journey*, in which the Marches travel to Austria and Germany, and which Edmund Wilson says possesses interest in so far as it "illustrate[s] the aging of what could be called a happy marriage" ("Review" *NYRB* [1968]), though Wilson also calls both *Wedding Journey*s "tepid books."

[22] Called out comically by Dreiser ("one fine piece of work… not a sentimental passage in it, quarrels from beginning to end, just the way it would be"), and less hilariously though more precisely by Marion W. Cumpiano in "The Dark Side of *Their Wedding Journey*" (1969).

[23] Another item: a monograph edition of "Niagara Revisited" printed in Chicago in 1884 without authorization is the first to credit its author as "William Dean Howells" (rather than W.D.). The suppression of this edition makes it one of the most valuable to collectors.

[24] In *The Road to Realism* (1956), the run-up to his *The Realist at War* (1958). Cady refers to the essay "Henry James, Jr." as "a bombshell" (219), one giving rise to "vengeful reverberations" (220): 218-221. Not mentioned in Mark Spilka's comprehensive account of "the 'Art of Fiction' controversy" is the fact that the penultimate and supremely controversial paragraph of "Henry James, Jr." uses the phrase "the art of fiction," which go on to become the title of several famous essays of 1884, including those of Walter Besant and James.

and brief asides) when any.[25] Resiliently, then, it has been successful not only in staying "self-consciously minor," as Brodhead says, but in keeping others no more than half-conscious of its motley minorness.

This, I think, the story achieves in part by slighting the reader who would summarize it. By comparison, chapters from *Their Wedding Journey* and *A Chance Acquaintance* brim with incident. "Niagara Revisited" studies and insists on such comparisons; Basil, Isabel, and the narrator each recall the remarks and occurrences that made up these two earlier novels. The interest that fellow train-passengers elicit, the hints of impertinence in clerks, or the hesitation one of them felt or now feels in crossing a big bridge: in the imaginations of Basil and Isabel, and such faint echoes of their imaginations as they have made of their children's ("a boy of eleven, who 'took after' his father, and a girl of nine, who took after the boy" [289]), matters like these have taken on some of the heft and effective abundance that the narrative itself associates with their bodies (the sort of surface complexity that Basil himself associates with becoming "a little wrinkled, my dear" [314]). Mundane things fill them from within, and loom over them from without, bulging and enormous in the way the erotic exploits of gods or celebrities might seem to us. The narrator differs from Basil and Isabel precisely as they differ from one another: differ they do, without *being* different; simple, separate people in a world they would see composed of nothing else, except sights to see. Basil's small mal-alignment with Isabel's angle of vision, and her slight skew from his, are made visible by their reduplication in the narrator's relationship to the two of them taken as two. Like the boy who takes after the man, and the girl who takes after

[25] It has been "read" in the literary critic's sense of the verb only once, by John Crowley in *The Black Heart's Truth* (1985), a psycho-biography of early Howells: 133-136. Crowley has written a companion volume on middle and late Howells, *The Dean of American Letters* (1999), and a volume that collects topical and one-off essays titled *The Mask of Fiction* (1989). Included in the last is "Howells, Stoddard, and Male Homosocial Attachment," which concerns the friendship of Howells and Charles Warren Stoddard.

the boy, the story sets its imitations of reality (its taking place and coming after, telescoped in the phrase "took after") in implicit quotation marks. Keeping an eye on the boy, actually, may be the reader's best hope for orienting themselves in some way, among the haze of acute mal-alignments convened between Basil, Isabel, and the narrator; each seems to be just like the other most insistently when he, she, or it display how they like insisting on the subtlest difference.

The Marches retake their wedding journey from Boston to Niagara twelve years after the wedding, and with another couple, their two children, a boy and a girl. The boy and the girl are there as if to mark the limits of the "little municipal consciousness" that is called Isabel's (290), but belongs to Basil in a manner that is the same, just a little different. The kids have shadowy, barely-there sort of existences; they are referred to as "the boy and the girl" [302, 308], or "the boy" and "the girl," both before and more often than they are called by their own names (Tom, Bella). As such they are referred to hosts of other "boys" and "girls" so-called that skirt the edges of the sensible.[26] Thus "Niagara Revisited" has the sense in it there for the reader to have that there is in this relationship no foreground and no background. Unlike *Portrait*, it means via no single scene or situation. Suicide and murder and the ethics of tipping and erotic disappointment and genre poetry and daily life and the time-table and the bridal world: all are somehow at the same level in this storyworld, each in turn the breeze and the space through which the breeze blows: preoccupations. The boy can't be made more real than cold chicken (to the contrary, this has a "supernatural" interest [293] while the boy has "very little to commend him to the toleration of other human beings" [308]), or the Falls seeming "silent and still, as if it were vastly

[26] The question of who's who, particularly as it devolves on sexual difference ("the boy and the girl"), is a going one in *Their Wedding Journey* too, from the title forward: Who's "they"? Who is who, and how does belonging (signaled by the other reading of the apostrophe in who's who) pertain? How indeed—at the meta level—did the two halves of the last question get all tangled up in one another, how indeed do they belong?

painted" through the train window (319). None of it seems as intense and elaborate as, for instance, Isabel's irritation can seem to Basil.

Besides those spoken by Basil and Isabel—who speak plenty and indeed often make themselves clever unto interruption by one another or by the narrator—, there are four lines of directly reported speech in the story, plus the words "The Shadow of the Rock" painted in party colors on the roof of a tourist outpost (304). The affective experience of reading the story is sort of like listening to fuzz on the radio; the fuzz is never clearer than when for a moment an anonymous voice breaks through—uncannily intelligent, not intentionally. One is the response of a porter at a train station to Basil's inquiry about a disaster there some years before: "If the roof had fallen in five minutes sooner, it would have killed about three hundred people" (299). Two others are spoken by the boy, whose name eventually turns up in the narration like something known only too well: one of these is a question the answer to which Basil will imagine taking tremendous pains to conceal from Isabel ("Will they make you pay a dollar for each of us, papa?" [305]), when he's about to be bilked; the other, a grand soliloquy not only Tom's but also that of the flickering, scuttling others in the story besides Basil and Isabel (chicken-venders, clerks, waiters, drivers, photo-takers), muttering through their errands not understood. The boy evokes his own and his parents' predicament. Minding his father's watch and traveling through a tunnel he remarks: "Now… we are under the very centre of the mountain" (295). Now we're under the very center of the mountain. We're all buried in something, here, dirt-leagues deep, Tom means; of its aspect, I have no realizing sense, except by watching a watch not my own. The final instance of reported speech comes when the driver of a carriage tells Tom that he ought come back on his bridal tour to see initials he's traced into a handrail; light dialect makes it sound more like "your bridal tower," something huge and looming. Isabel half gasps, "as if she

had almost thought of something she was trying to think of" (309). All of these snatches of saying are not only curiously brief—nearly gnomic fragments from a world beyond the Two—, but also drained of affect.

That mountain through which the Marches move does not move them especially. The tunnel through it turns out to be "like all accomplished facts, all hopes fulfilled, valueless to the soul, and scarcely appreciable to the sense" (295). It's disappointing, and that disappointment is weighty and cascades. This, precisely because disappointingly realized, is the theme of "Niagara Revisited": "the discrepancy between the romantic hopes of the Marches' youth and the unromantic actualities of their middle age" (Crowley *Black* 133). What Isabel calls "the bridal world," the world as it was or seemed after their wedding, isn't there, for them or for others: Niagara seems empty, the grand hotels loom, their ballrooms impressively vacant. Looming too is the boredom of the minions of the tourism industry. Instead of things taking place, something seems taken from the place, to both Basil and Isabel, to whom alone it feels lonely, empty. The emptiness seems to Isabel specifically conjugal: "*Where are the brides*?" she implores, at the story's mock climax (312). (Indeed, it is a mock climax—or de-discovery—, but it would not be too much, I think, to find mocked in it also the form the climax supposes, the scene, which in succession have not been taking place the whole time the Marches have been in this place.) The disappointment that they all felt after the tunnel begins to feel as big as fatherly advice had made it: "If you rode upon a comet you would be disappointed. Take my advice, and never ride upon a comet. I shouldn't object to your riding on a little meteor,—you wouldn't expect much of that; but I warn you against comets; they are as bad as tunnels" (295). Boredom and interest (like their intensifications, anxiousness and smugness) cling tenaciously to one another, a pervading image of the couple. Here we might recall the truth to which Lacan turns the thesis of sexual non-

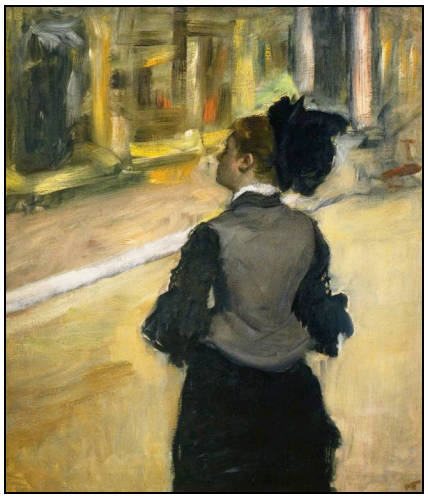
rapport: the unconscious, in darker moment the *Id*, is your only real other; no other person is. "Niagara Revisited" is a story with two mysteries, paired a little like they're married. The first is: are there other people here, maybe even many other people like there used to be, or not? Doesn't it seem we're more alone here than we counted on being? No one else seems to notice, but doesn't that just confirm the case? The second we'll come to shortly.

Another way to summarize what happens in the story would be to find a way to say how the people in it seem to want *out*. Tom tiptoes as close to "the edge of the precipice" as he can, making his sister squeal at his "suicidal zeal" (302). His parents tell him not to toss pebbles off the ledge because they might land on the people below (308); he smirks because he understands that in the world of this story he'd be doing them a favor. But the bigger joke in the story for its reader is that Isabel and Basil each separately, and as it were organically (in response to specific and unexpected moments along the way: contingent moments condition it), fantasize the death of the other one. Basil's is the more elaborate, but less compelling: having overpaid when renting seal-skin frocks at Prospect Park, and then having overheard from a worker a story about a Frenchman who brought his wife to the Falls, *c'est la vue*, pushed her over when alone and lied that she slipped, *c'est la vie*, imagines it possible to resort to the same feat in order to keep the fact of the frock-bilk from Isabel. It's a childish fantasy; no wonder the narrator once slyly calls him a child (308), just like the boy and girl. By contrast, Isabel's love-death fantasy is robust and adult. She gabs with Basil about the heroine of *A Chance Acquaintance*, Kitty Ellison, and affirms her right simply to walk away, miles away, when it wasn't right with Arbuton; then Isabel walks away herself, for a moment. She launches a reverie. She imagines life without Basil; there's poetry there, slanting poetry: "If she and Basil had broken each other's hearts and parted, would not the fragments of their lives been on a much finer, much higher plane?" (317): hearts /

parted; finer / higher. The question retrieves no answer; Isabel walks away from it too, in circumstances soon to be discussed. Before she does, she talks herself out of missing the children with little trouble, and broaches the notion that Basil could have died "just before they were married—" (317). She starts from the revelation and finds herself staring at Basil from the back, a fat man craning and staring like an oaf, perhaps with a middling insurance man's interest in charts, at the time-table at the train station. Would you look at those, all those possibilities…

Here I risk the hypothesis that there is something queer in Isabel's viewing Basil like this, from behind: Basil, amused and befuddled by a time-table full of options; the options into which he stares full of their own tantalizing dailyness (their own qualities of fastness, darkness, lightness, commonness, commotion, difference). When she comes upon him, she passes her arm "convulsively" through his, and pulls him off. In this moment Isabel sees Basil in a way he cannot see; and that doesn't communicate anything like a secret to her.[27] At the least, it's a moment's nice midrash on non-rapport: "male and female subjects…do not relate to what their

[27] A spate of realist and early impressionist paintings depict single figures from behind. For discussion of these figures, see Fried. The most relevant here is Degas's "Woman Viewed from Behind (Visit to a Museum)" (c. 1879-1885).



This painting that lends the section its title, in fact. For discussions of Degas and James, see two articles by George Smith ("James, Degas, and the Modern View" [1987] and "James, Degas, and the Emersonian Gaze" [1992]), and Elaine Pigeon's *Queer Impressions* (2005), in which 90-91 treats this painting and Isabel's first encounter with Merle (from behind). The painting is held by the National Gallery of Art; it can be viewed online: http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/art-object-page.66409.html.

partners relate to in them" (Salecl "Love Anxieties" 93). To maintain "there's no such thing as a sexual relationship," as Lacan does, is to maintain that there *is* a non-relationship between sexual partners (Seminar XX 58), a "fault" [*faille*, like a fault line, a break, a gulf, with a little poetry] with a quality he calls "compactness" (9), a black-box in which different forms of conceiving the difference sex might be imagined to span are preserved in their difference.[28] She embraces this, and him, with an arm through his arm, "convulsively" (317). ("Convulsively": precisely this adverb is Adorno's when he writes of how, in modern music, the "liberated" dissonances are still present in the plain tritone that would seem to be an affront to them [qtd. Žižek *Enjoyment* 181].) It is Isabel's genius to preserve this something by glimpsing in "the last car" of a train then passing "a face" that "looked full" at her, which she thinks the face of Kitty Ellison (318). This is the second mystery: is it Kitty?

Whether or not this was Kitty, and if so what it means, the narrator never tells. But Basil and Isabel find their own way to hang on to the question. Kitty's face, or whoever's, is another mystery: it is entirely ambiguous, neither meaningful nor its opposite: "In that moment of astonishment she forgot to observe whether it was sad or glad; she only saw, or believed she saw, the light of recognition dawn into its eyes, and then it was gone" (318). That "its" indexes the situation's ambiguity, rhyming one possibility with its opposite ("sad or glad"). The face, it looked full, was it her? Was it the "it" that's in "Kitty," first of all literally (that is, letter-wise)?

[28] Ellie Ragland is perhaps the major interpreter of non-rapport working in English. Two of her signal treatments are "How the Fact that There Is No Sexual Relationship Gives Rise to Culture" (2000) and "Lacan and the Hommosexuelle: 'A Love Letter'" (*Homosexuality and Psychoanalysis* [2001]). Another, her essay on Ockham and Lacan, has been quoted above. The point of departure for the first essay on non-rapport matches well Dreiser's reading of *Their Wedding Journey*: love's most consistent scene of expression is that of the quarrel; in love, as she recounts with a nod to Stanley Fish, it's clockwork: a daily affair (251). More generally, the rhetoric of non-rapport proves useful to Ragland as a way to talk in various and lively ways about the essential fact—essential, at least, to the realists (see *Light* 33)—that "Each of us, each thing, [each day,] everything differs, no matter how subtly, from every other person or thing [or day]" ("What Lacan Thought Women Knew: The Real and the Symptom" [2013]).

Depth psychology resolves into situational comedy no sooner than Isabel exclaims "Basil, stop the train!" (318). On the train back to Boston, Basil tells her to look out at the Fall, "with its mists at its foot and its rainbow at its brow" (319), as they pass, and she, having seen enough for now, says no (says "Never!"), closes her eyes and hides her face in her handkerchief.

Isabel feels what she wants when she sees a Basil not facing her, followed by a Kitty facing her, in fact with a face that "looked full" of a life that is different from Isabel's, unless it's not. Indeed, it is a life different from itself. Kitty may be in the middle of loving another man, or a woman, or not, just now. What matters is that "may be." We nearly assigned this section an epigraph, from Sarah Ahmed's suggestive *Queer Phenomenology* (2006): "This emphasis on the behind might be what makes psychoanalysis appealing for some queer readers" (72); what we wanted was this riff: this emphasis on the might-be is what makes Basil's behind, and everything else he can't see, in the instant arousing to Isabel.[29]

Isabel's attitude toward the wild "awfulness" of the Falls (301), to which might be juxtaposed the face that "looked full" when it fleets by on the train, is like the story's own: baseline meh. Tolerance. The fine points of visitor manners and the tourist economy, by contrast, are in the story objects of fascination and controversy: how far the hackmen stand from the sidewalk these days (300-301); how much waiters and porters are to be tipped (299); how tedious, even how brutal, it can be to hear the same anecdote over again from a different driver (306); how a boat-agent's son says "*Good*-morning" less expressively than his father had (312). Splendor interests Isabel, and her narrator, solely when it can be turned to a clever comment (as when she confirms that a lately fallen rock and the odd-shaped chasm has "something rather

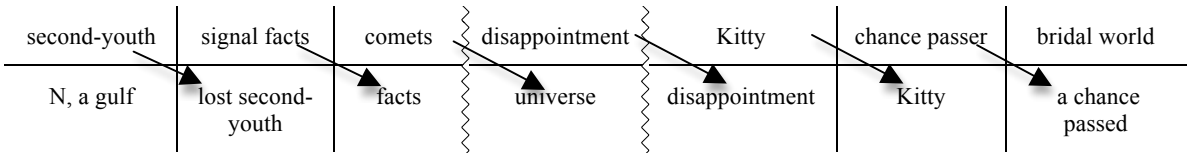
[29] The time-table thus means what the table does in the following passage from Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology*, a book whose scene is clearly that of *the table*: "What passes on the table establishes lines of connection between those that gather, while the table itself 'supports' the act of passing things around" (80).

cheap and conscious" about it [310]) or made to yield an understated aesthetic effect (like the tweeting of birds that mingles to the roar of the Rapids on arrival [301-302]). But if the Falls do not cascade in this story, what does?

The symbolizer/symbolized model with which we earlier worked might find itself here supplemented by the account given by the Czech structuralist Jan Mukařovský of the "process of semantic accumulation" (54), "a semantic stream which pulls individual words into its continuous flux, depriving them of a considerable part of their independence of reference and meaning" (50). "As long," Mukařovský explains, "as the utterance flows, each of its words [for us, symbols] is accessible to additional shifts in its reference" (50). The Todorov model tracks specific slippages in the symbolization process; for this reason, it has proved useful dealing with realist symbolics, which deal in the sort of symbols we described in the Introduction as possessed of "negative inner form," as "so to speak seek[ing] their meaning," like the March gaggle riding the rails. No less useful has it proved, as we've seen on two different scales with *Portrait* and the "common day" phrase, when no precise symbol manifests, so that the chain of symbols or symbolic "situations" preserves itself in negativity, in the enacted non-rapport between the symbolizing level of the text and that of the symbolized.

An adapted version of the Mukařovský model helps us describe this process of negative, or dys-, accumulation. This process conceives of semantic structures like the sentence or the narrative sequence, as composed of so many elements, *a*, *b*, *c*, and so on, not perceived discretely: "at the moment that we perceive unit *b* unit *a* is already in our consciousness; in perceiving unit *c*, we already know units *a* – *b*, and so on" (54); ordering is important. Poetry functions by causing the process to become "complicated and retarded by the clustering of very disparate meanings within one and the same syntactic whole" (54-55). "Niagara Revisited," like

Portrait, might be considered like poetry, in which one element accumulates a new signifier for the signifier acquired just previous.



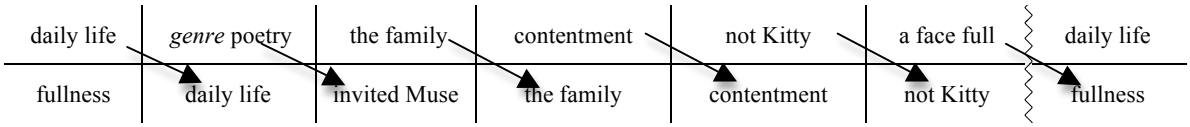
HOW ANXIOUSNESS MEANS IN "NIAGARA REVISITED"

Niagara is to this story what it is by way of *Their Wedding Journey* and its decisive "idealization of the commonplace" (9), as Henry Adams describes the major central symbolic imperative of that book. Niagara, a gulf, now means not what it might but what it *has* meant. Eventually, it's "that lost bridal world" (313), positively represented in the Marches' sense that "*the brides*" are what's missing from Niagara, but before that in the story it's the locus of a search for "their lost second-youth on the track" (290).[30] And that lost second-youth itself becomes a set of facts, persons and characters, procedures for fair payment, a quantum of chicken to be packed or replenished after lunch, a train to be taken at a certain time, and then another, a very long tunnel to be passed through, oh yes now that's "a signal fact" (291), while our watch are watched. But facts, to Basil, are not simply themselves, their precise weight in information, but also indicators (or signals) that they can be nothing more in the natural world, like the sparkle and the fade of comet screaming over a world of chance, a world that itself discovers Kitty as its prime symbol. (Not the least of the text's achievements is setting awash in an uncertainty as wide as the world such modern certainties as disappointment and tipping, such like fact-like insistences, the Howellsian equivalent of death and taxes.) A way of talking about how things means here for Basil and Isabel, especially for Isabel, is talking about what happened to Kitty in the same

[30] Ensuring that what has been "lost" in *Their Wedding Journey* keeps lost, a richly illustrated 1894 edition of the book opts to depict Basil and Isabel dressed in the fashions of the nineties rather than the seventies.

vicinity. The meaning of Kitty, finally, is represented by the world that conjures Kitty to Isabel differently from Basil, the scene of the gulf. The phrase "chance passer" does not occur in "Niagara Revisited," but creeps into our schema from Howells column on Symonds (1887; soon the lead essay in *Criticism and Fiction*), where it describes the ideal audience for the work of art. This work's beauties should be available to just anyone, "the chance passer" (12). There's something accumulating, if also something self-emptying about the meanings that tumble and plunge into one another. Each unit becomes the meaning of the next, and so any might mean any, and the end seems a scene prior to the beginning.

But the true feat here, the reason it should be said not that nothing happens but that not even nothing happens, is that the enchainment of elements evokes the sketch no less well when opposite terms are inserted: *not* bridal world—facts—a universe without—disappointment—Kitty's face—gulf, *but* daily life—genre poetry—the family—contentment—a face not Kitty's—fullness.



HOW SMUGNESS MEANS IN "NIAGARA REVISITED"

Here is how anxiousness and smugness come to feel, in this story, like bottomless attunements. Here we image what philosopher Quentin Smith would call this affect's "feeling-flow" (*Felt Meanings* 46). Love, between Basil and Isabel, is founded on a deadlock, or trauma, or open question, enriched by a sense of its contingency, like the day's.[31] Each day is filled full, perhaps unconsciously, with a dailyness that is peculiar to it: a little different from its brothers or lovers.

[31] The real, then, in realism is akin to what Slavoj Žižek calls "the real of sexual difference," in a commentary by that title on Lacan's Seminar XX: "Every translation of sexual difference into a set of symbolic opposition(s) is doomed to fail, and it is this very 'impossibility' that opens up the terrain of the hegemonic struggle for what 'sexual difference' will mean" (61).

This model is one way to talk about a story or plot that does not seem to make itself discussable in terms of any one scene or situation within it. The narrator mediates between the emotional worlds of Basil and Isabel, ensuring that terms or positions associated with either of them can attach to either chain. Smugness and anxiety, though tangled up in one another in the story's unfolding, are much more systematically distinguished than the personalities of Basil, Isabel, and the narrator. (Perhaps Tom could communicate that, if he were allowed to speak more than one sentence at a time.) This may be a version of what Jameson calls an "antinomy of realism."[32]

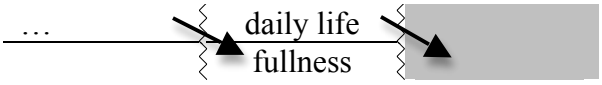
The way in which "nothing happens" has a very different texture than it does in *Portrait*, when the scene or situation when nothing happens sums up or aggregates in itself the previous scenes or situations to it, then throws off its opposite, to prove its capacity and that the process is now over. In Howells, nothing is happening, but somehow more thoroughly. Nothing sums, and each scene (like the parables of Christ for Frank Kermode) has its opposite note struck elsewhere in the story. These counterpointed meanings in effect de-accumulate, or cancel one another out.[33] The idea here is that middle-class life, experienced in its proximity to the "common," comes to

[32] The structure we describe is technically an antinomy, something like a thesis contradicted *in each term* by an antithesis, and term and anti-term, like thesis and antithesis, each sound to the same degree. Antinomy in Jameson, however, has the flavor of a dialectic in which realism is the name for the mediation between a tendency to sticky indulgences of affect (Jameson's term: "scene") and self-propelling emplotments, plots that churn like motors (Jameson's term: "story"). In this account, realism grasped as a literary process "in which the negative and the positive are inextricably combined, and whose emergence and development at one and the same time constitute its own inevitable undoing, its own decay and dissolution" (6). Negative and positive commune and intertwine, as do emergence and decay, development and dissolution. That sense of mutual engagement is called "symbiosis" (11); it's very interesting but not truly in the philosophical sense an antinomy, for in that thought-form it would fall to each term in the binary opposition to preserve its autonomy and guard jealously its logical integrity at each step of the way. (More simply true is Jameson's brilliant observation about how the idea of realism has a "wobble" [1]: it can be cognized clearly only in the midst of its arrival and departure. With its split treatment of realism—Introduction and Conclusion—, the mode or genre must have struck us as something to be handled in the same way.

[33] An idea or anti-idea that recurs in *The Antinomies of Realism* is that of an empty or impersonal consciousness (78, 99, 169, 171); I'm tempted to apply it to the mindframe that this story, "Niagara Revisited," leaves in its reader- like listening to silence in stereo, perhaps, the ideational equivalent of noise-cancelling headphones.

feel "both enviable and precarious" from within; this insight swirls around Isabel as it often does around prosperous bourgeois women in Howells (according to Shulman [183]), but in "Niagara Revisited" the swirl and plummet is everyone's.

In these two chains, everything is fairly explicit, save for the middle term in the first chain (in which disappointment figures a space far larger than Niagara or even "the great American fact": the sort of space through which comets pass, the world or universe) and final term in the second, which are both *implied* (witness squiggles). When non-rapport becomes gulf, poetry becomes fantasy, and (most complexly) disagreement becomes a sense of the familiar charged with disagreement, there's a shimmer or pivot when the concept plunges from symbolizer to symbolized. What this complex last term means is that each day disagrees with each other day, and fully so. Lacan would call it "the open and proliferating nature of [man's] world" (Seminar III 148)—also known as "reality" (148), "a world of reality" (150)—, but in Howells it feels like a lover's quarrel between days, between one day and the next, one moment and the following.[34]



The term after the final term, itself *implied*, is both *implied and repressed*.[35] Will this loop, the smug loop, repeat? Will the other, the anxiousness loop, its term-by-term opposite? Other tales may tell, or not. In the meantime, the situation that seems to be symbolically suggested is this: the desires of Basil, and differently those of Isabel, will fill their days, each day a bit differently. And Basil and Isabel's narrative, the story resumed in "Niagara Revisited," never completes in

[34] The year 1885 admits the funny possibility of thinking about days on dates, in the contemporaneous sense, variously successful or consequential meet-ups (*OED* "date" n.^{2} 8.a.)

[35] It is perhaps typical of the effect reading Howells has that the term that one is tempted to speak of the term that is both *implied* and *repressed*, double covered-over, as expressed, coaxed into the sensible.

Howells career. Days that mean or might in disagreement with one another grow to weeks in Basil's literary venture in New York, *Every Other Week*. Each day is something simply its own: this may be what it means to "hazard" "new fortunes." And after all a "journey," as in "wedding journey," speaking etymologically, or according to the sort of "quaint" usage Howells finds to his taste ("how pretty" [*Criticism and Fiction* 300]) is nothing but an adventure in days. A hazard of new fortunes, yes; the peace of the evening,[36] also, yes.

In August 1882, just after he has finished this story, Howells elucidates it in the form of a flirt with Edmund Gosse, a chance acquaintance he had made that month.[37] Flirting in this

[36] The peace of the evening: this redolent phrase supplies the impetus for a self-declared "purple passage" in Lacan's important early seminar on Schreber and the psychoses (148), Seminar III. What it means precisely is not worth troubling over here; better simply to enjoy it. More important than its meaning is Lacan's acknowledgment that the phrase enters us, in his imagination, as it were, when it does, from behind. A piece of the evening, it takes us from behind, in and out: "It's precisely when we are not listening for it, when it's outside our field and suddenly hits us from behind, that it assumes its full value, surprised as we are by this more or less endophasic, more or less inspired, expression that comes to us like a murmur from without, a manifestation of discourse insofar as it barely belongs to us, which comes as an echo of what it is that is all of a suddenly significant for us in this presence, an utterance such that we don't know whether it comes from without or from within – *the peace of the evening*" (138). As Lacan himself begins in this seminar to study and come to terms with the sheer weekliness of his teaching method (what can be tried by way of "days and lessons" [197]: we ought to note that in the signifier, where for him it counts, *seminaire* and *semaine*, are close), the pairing of day and night recur often in illustrations. "The day," he writes,

> is a being distinct from all the objects it contains and manifests, it's probably even more weighty and more present than any of them, and it's impossible to think of it, even in the most primitive human experience, as the simple return of an experience… The human being is not, as everything leads us to think is the case for the animal, simply immersed in a phenomenon such as that of the alteration of day and night. The human being poses the day as such, and the day thereby becomes presence of the day – against a background that is not a background of concrete nighttime, but of possible absence of daytime, where the night dwells, and *vice versa* moreover. Very early on, day and night are signifying codes, not experiences. 148-149

Later on, in the course of the course (hence, "of course"), the pairing day/night is transposed onto that of man/woman: "If I took day and night as examples, it's of course because our subject is man and woman" (198). Speaking of man and woman and their different forms of difference from one another, is, of course, the province of Seminar XX, and the site of the announcement: there is no such thing as sexual relationship, a negative announcement which is simultaneously the positive announcement of a non-relationship, a concept which we invoke as non-rapport.

[37] Howells and Gosse are enthusiastic correspondents. Their letters are included in *Transatlantic Dialogue* (1965); their literary friendship receives a section of its own in the book's Introduction, 38-49. Howells

manner is not the Howells style, but neither is it a perfect aberration.[38] A poet and critic, Gosse is a friend of Henry James and of John Addington Symonds; like Symonds, he was married, though like him he also had, not secretly, a male lover, the sculpter Hamo Thornycroft. How sexual Gosse's "Hamo-sexual" relationship (so called by Lytton Strachey) might have been seems to have been a point about which the relation itself was as curious as its observers were. In London for a spell, Howells finds a letter from Gosse waiting once, and answers, meets, and enjoys him. He goes away, then he writes: "I had such a lovely time last night that I would now like to cut the ties of husband and father, and come to live with you. Is there not some law or privilege by which you could adopt an elderly foreigner of failing intellect?" Howells loves the possibility for the sake of what's humdrum in it: "I would do chores about the house, run of errands, tell Teresa [Gosse's eldest] stories, and generally make myself useful." Then: "Think of it seriously: I mean business." Business is a sacred word to Howells, perhaps most of all when it comes to matters of men "of letters."[39] But the term of art here, I believe, is "it." It may be said that the nineteenth-century novel's genre-system that ends in realism ends in Howells, or almost: with Kitty Ellison's face like "it" and with the "it" that's meant in this letter. Each of these glimpse the possibility that will become aggrandized in the modernist novel: there is an "it" that is like Freud's *Id*, a sexlike tug or tendency, desire in its pulling capacity, that might be meant anew, "made new" in Pound's dictum, the secret motto of the modernist novel (of course not actually: see North), or not.

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furthers Gosse's acquaintance with America by helping him to set up, and then enjoy, a stateside lecture tour, 1884-1885.

[38] See Crowley "Howells, Stoddard, and Male Homosocial Attachment."

[39] The reference here is to Howells's "The Man of Letters as a Man of Business."

That it will fall to "each text" to enact this is the modernist possibility (Jameson *Singular* 125), in a new version of the anti-systematic manner of the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century novel and its sporadic search for new forms of newness and of form.[40] Henry James

[40] Impressions and associations may help us grasp what Howells, I believe, would not have us hurry to: what comes after realism. Reading the realist novels of the seventies and the early eighties, one hears beneath one a soft clear voice chanting: I am a realist novel; I am a realist novel; fine, if you are one too; let's simply differ, same as the lovers inside us do. But modernism—with its rebound to the bildungsroman all the more distinct in contrast with naturalism's exaggerated taste for excesses of sentimental and gothic varieties, blaring in delicious overlap their motifs—one detects differently. In its masterpieces and botches alike, one hears: [*rumbling and chugging*:] I am the modernist novel; I am the modernist novel; [*and a whisper, insistent, within the chug*:] this is art, elevated art. That is to say: novelness, in the moment of the modernist novel, which for our purposes seems like the next scene or scheme or system—or anti-system—in the form's unfolding in American letters, devolves on the individual and what Fredric Jameson calls "singular" instance (*A Singular Modernity* [2002]). "[E]ach individual text" (125), that is, feels not so much an enthusiasm for the emphatically new as the upshot of "an ever-keener distaste for what is outmoded and conventional" (Jameson 127). All of a sudden, the system (of belonging-logics) no longer seems, by its heterogeneity with respect to desire (Badiou calls it "the passion for the real" [*The Century*], as if he would be sure to show us the realists' own banner blowing back on them, flapping in their very faces), to be what might allow desire in its heterogeneity to be spoken by the speaking subject, but what, instead, blocks or swamps articulation.

One thinks of a grand modernist villain, a figure of felt rivalry like Jenny Petherbridge, a spoiler of passions, the middle-age widow from *Nightwood* (1936) by Djuna Barnes, who is born the same year that Howells's *Criticism and Fiction* came out (1892). (It bears recalling that the novel begins at precisely the moment James begins composing *Portrait*, "[e]arly in 1880" [3]. And like it, *Nightwood* simply studies what Eliot calls in his Introduction "significant relationship," that is, what groups.) Like the massive nineteenth-century genre-system that ends in realism to the modernist, Jenny is; "only severed could any part of her been called 'right.'" (71). A husband like Basil March (or say Walter Redburn) has not been enough for her, not even four of them have been enough, men who might have thought their gray crises of profession might be shaping a fate for the whole family. "There was a trembling ardour in her wrists and fingers as if she were suffering from some elaborate denial. She looked old, yet expectant of age; she seemed to be steaming in the vapours of someone else about to die; still she gave off an odour to the mind (for there are purely mental smells that have no reality) of a woman about to be *accouchee*…" (71). The analogy dallies before it's out, lingering about the wrists not 'right' and when it's not written. Finally it is: "The books in her library were other people's selections… The words that fell from her mouth seemed to have been lent to her… To men she sent books by the dozen; the general feeling was that she was a well-read woman… When she fell in love it was with a perfect fury of accumulated dishonesty…" (72-75). She's a walking bundle of nineteenth-century novel-parts and affects, and seems a faker for all that. She is to be disdained, this woman, we feel; she has been dying all the while she was waiting to be born. In this, she's just so unlike Robin, our heroine (though never "our heroine"), or the lover of our heroine, utterly unlike. We can hear that in Robin's utterances: "to know Robin ten minutes was to know about [her lover] Nora. Robin spoke of her in long, rambling, impassioned sentences…" worthy of modernists (75).

(Jenny, we note, is based on the real life Henriette McCrea Metcalf, born in Chicago and who inherited her considerable wealth. In an article on Thelma Wood, the artist upon whom the just-mentioned Robin is modeled, in *The Queer Encyclopedia for the Visual Arts* [2004], Metcalf is described as "[a] small, loquacious bisexual who loved to rescue people and animals" [350]—not a figure the nineteenth-

himself, in "The Future of the Novel" (1900), recurs to the complaint of the thirties and forties about the too-muchness of the novel, which we ruminated in the Introduction: too much newness, too much muchness ("The flood at present swells and swells, threatening…"). The rise model of the novel now explicitly rises in order to make all this allness seem like a problem that can solved (via "elevation": see McGurl). The revived complaint voiced for one in James's "Future" takes on the second, independent life in the criticism, for instance in H.L. Mencken's treatment of Henry Blake Fuller's *Bertram Cope's Year* in 1920, titled "The Flood of Fiction."

IV Cope's Bottom

The sense that each day might mean in disagreement with each other one is the upshot of "Niagara Revisited," its starting point and stopping place. This sense for the way that a sheer calendrical unit might bear out an erotic meaning, if not technically a sexual one, and bear it

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century novel [as we've described it] might be abashed to discover as its emblem and summa! Further, it is curious that she is a Metcalf by marriage [to the painter Willard Metcalf] and Melville's daughter Eleanor marries a Metcalf [precisely how related these men are related, if they are, is past my saying now (that is to say, I'm not particularly keen to uncover the precise nature of the relation of these two men)].)

Above, we had said that all of a sudden, in modernism, the system (of belonging-logics) that centers the nineteenth-century novels stop seeming like a resource and starts seeming like an impediment to effective expression for the speaking subject—or something like that. This could have been phrased: all of a sudden, the aesthetic possibilities of suddenness begin to make themselves felt at the level of the individual and the individual text. This would have led us toward the one of the great competitors of the Adorno-Jameson hypothesis about modernism, namely that of Karl Heinz Bohrer, which is positive not negative: "To put it simply, at the end of the nineteenth century the sign 'suddenly' experiences a dramatization of its reflection of time that corresponds to the modern period's love of speed…" (x). Suddenly, "suddenly" discovers in moments of discovery new potentials, new intensities, or so it says, which stand out from the dross or chaos of mere history, a history which goes on dumbly knowing the already known instead of opening toward the wild realm where the forbidden and unknown collide in astonishment.

What Bohrer shares with Adorno and Jameson is what really matters for us: an emphasis on "*the* sudden," "*the* moment," "*the* work of art itself." The dissent from the dissent from the genre-system of the nineteenth-century novel will still admit appreciation in that system's terms, as will become clear when we turn our attention to *Bertram Cope's Year*. It's about *a* year, just some one year, almost an empty one, really no one's best or worst… Hence the gap or gulf between realism, or the genre-system that ends or completes in realism, and what comes after it, modernism (or whatever), is absorbed back into the antecedent system itself at the site of realism in the gap or gulf between one realist text and others, every one of which to every other one seems simply different. Each whispers Kitty's motto: "I differ, I do differ."

exemplarily when it leaves for saying only that "nothing happens," Howells attributes to James at the end of "Henry James, Jr." He leaves it for the reader to choose whether he likes James better like an "annalist" or an "analyst": "We can only make sure that we have here an annalist, or analyst, as we choose, who fascinates us from his first page to his last…" (323). With the essay that ends in this choice begins what Henry Adams calls "our Howells-and-James epoch" (qtd. Brooks 164). That Howells and James are to be coupled like this is a claim not long in emerging; around 1885, for instance, it seems to Chicago writer Henry Blake Fuller that their names joined mark "fully and exactly… a certain sort of hero and heroine, a certain sort of plot, and a certain set of ideas with regard to the methods and ends of fiction" (281). That these two authors make up a proper realist couple, one bound to realize between them their non-rapport, is the larger, if largely implicit, discovery of Fuller's essay, "Howells *or* James?" Fuller reverses the judgment he imputes to the Howells of "Henry James, Jr." and finds Howells to be the superior realist, the "undisputed chief" (282). Why Fuller prefers Howells is not a matter that will detain us now (however, it behooves us to notice that the terms are quite like Tom's within the tunnel in "Niagara Revisited": "Howells, in fine, has come to the mountain; James seems to expect that he can bring the mountain to him" [285]). The preferring itself will, when it takes place inside a gorgeous scene in Fuller's late-career masterwork, *Bertram Cope's Year* (1919), a novel in which the realist-as-annalist abides.[41] The novel studies what could be called a single year—of course, we mean a single academic year—, in the life of a rather regular, handsome, spare, incomplete, occasionally eloquent, and essentially over-estimated twenty-four year old named Bertram Cope, as he works at an MA in English Literature. Cope both makes friends and

[41] Joseph Dimuro sets out the affinity between Howells theory and Fuller's practice in *Bertram Cope's Year* with care and precision in his "Introduction" to the novel, 33-34. It is from Dimuro's definitive edition that I cite below. Additionally, let it be noted that 1919 is the tail end of realism's period as it is marked in Warner Berthoff's lively and varied literary history, *The Ferment of Realism* (1965), which spans 1884-1919.

keeps a touch mysterious among the older set in the college town, called Churchton in the novel,[42] modeled on Evanston, IL. In the novel's second half, his plump and theatrical boyfriend from Wisconsin, named Arthur, comes to help him out of an accidental engagement in Churchton and stays on to study psychology. Their relationship passes for love, or friendship, while it passes: a critic of it calls it "a passing *amitie*—something soon to be over, perhaps" (210); he finds he can't be more precise. At the end of the year, they go away, neither together nor broken up. When Cope writes to one character that he'll be going east to teach, he simply does not say whether Arthur will be going with. The novel ends with two of Cope's Churchton friends, Basil Randolph and Medora Phillips, locals, each a generation older, gossiping in different directions about his erotic destiny and their own (they make a joke about marrying one another after another year), and noticing that no one's seem to come to much, after all. It seems that no one's worth it, whatever "it" is, it amuses them to murmur.

Bertram Cope's Year, then, is a novel that "treads gently around the edge of the erotic" ("Afterword" 291), according to Andrew Solomon. Its most erotic scene is one I am pleased to call the most erotic scene of the nineteenth-century novel, with whatever caveats the reader requires supplied by him. Though not edgy, exactly, it takes place at "the Edge of Things," that is, on a beach on a remote part of Lake Michigan, known locally for dunes and weekend picnics (and only known locally). It's late in the picnicking season, so the place is perfectly empty when we come to it. Soon we see blowing in like on the wind a number of signifiers from Howells and James great short works from the period of Fuller's essay on them, "Niagara Revisited" and "The Art of Fiction." Dust's kicked up. The most important of the floating signifiers is the one to

[42] This penchant for nominal abstraction, its half-step back from discourse, or the properness of proper place names, may be a significant feature of the novel: Chicago becomes the Big City; Lake Michigan, the Big Water; the wilds east of Gary, IN, Dunesland. Further from Chicago, the effect is persistent but less pronounced: a small city downstate, perhaps Rockford, Cope's hometown, is called Freeford; Oshkosh, WI takes the name of its county, Winnebago.

which we have allocated attention already, "the bridal world." The novel forecasts Cope's coming engagement—which will be set in motion on another of these daytrips to Duneland—, when it reimagines "the bridal world" as the "plausibly gentle and inert…bridal of earth and sky" (88). Perhaps this is the "edge, somewhere" that Tom kept his "longing to come to" precisely "inarticulate," when he was day-tripping with his folks and sister over the tableland, when the prairie was imposing ("NR" 295-296). Randolph, whose first name is Basil, like March or James's Ransom,[43] and Cope stride over desolate hills of sand, and arrive early to the vicinity of the vacation house where they'll spend the day's remainder. One consults his watch. They have three-quarters of an hour to spare.

Though it is late in the season for a swim, they test out the very possibility described at the end of "The Art of Fiction": "Do you want," one asks the other, "to go in?" "A fellow," the other says, "finds it rather slow, going in alone" (89). Go in they do, once they've stripped, Cope with "incredible rapidity" ("the suddenly resuscitated technique of the small-town lad who could take avail of any pond or any quiet stretch of river on the spur of the moment" [89]). It's a whim, but it's theirs: "Company's the thing" (89)—a slight improvement on Howells terse proposal to Gosse, "I mean business."[44]

Bertram and Basil dive in, twice, and then sit on the beach. For a sport, Cope rolls in the sand, and Randolph rubs some on a spot he sees that he can't see on his back. Under a wonder about whether Cope cares to become clever while nude (the coating of sand is "[a]n arenaceous

[43] Ransom is the bachelor of *The Bostonians* (1886), which was serialized on the heels of "The Art of Fiction." For the hypothesis that *Bostonians* encodes elements of "The Art of Fiction," including in names, see Spilka.

[44] Henry Blake Fuller is not required to have read the correspondence with Gosse in order to redact its nice phrase, "I mean business." Fuller is a correspondent of Howells, too. For more on the literary relationship of Howells, James, and Fuller, see Scambray, *Varied Harvest* (1987), 58-60. There one reads that *Portrait* is the James novel that Fuller enjoys the most.

ulster—speaking etymologically,' he said" [90]), Randolph wonders whether the caring they're doing together means caring to discover a Latinate name for it, or not. Other matters, as is said, come up—and perhaps some things not said do too—: Cope mentions how poorly the prospect of marriage seems to suit him. Randolph's a bachelor, and insists there's no real secret to keeping single. Only do it. Not the worst of his advice sounds rehearsed, as if he'd have Cope feel that he's had this chat before; that it's comfortable; that it's not a problem to go lonely through. The tone, if not common, keeps light. Randolph dries in the air. Cope dives once more, to lose the sand on his skin, then uses their two handkerchiefs to dry off. Cope does not hide but dries himself with these handkerchiefs, same as the one into which Isabel, almost crying, or not, says "Never!" Then they trudge toward the party, arriving on time.

Instead of a scene I'd say it's an episode on the smallest possible scale—an episode of nineteenth-century erotics, a momentary belonging that belongs to its moment and no other. And it's never more episodic than during the middle dive in, Randolph's last and Cope's penultimate. By way of encouragement, Cope teases: "One dip doesn't make a swim, any more than one swallow—"; then he dives: "He flashed his soles in the sunlight and was once again immersed, gulping, in a maelstrom of his own making" (90). A "maelstrom of his own making" is what this novel is, the reader feels. But also, this moment somehow feel like less than that, less than the image of what it's in. The genre-system of the nineteenth-century novel as I've described it ends well in ending with a realism that ends like this, with Cope's soles in the sunlight. His soles flash in the light that flashes on them. He swallows with a gulp the gulf that swallows him up, leaving his feet for last, to look from the beach like a couple and disappear before they can be called it by the uncoupled man there, who, like Cope clothesless, with his whole body, is watching (peering

in every pore stays unsaid), or not. The earth weds the sky at the horizon—except for an instant two soles insist.

A moment, then, that glitters on the surface the same way all the stars glimmer on the surface of the lake on a much-later night that Bertram and Arthur pass together: all the "starry firmament" equally and Urania equally (174-175): remembering not to memorialize such a moment as this is how the system ends. The system we have described proves how well, in the end, it understands itself when this moment is left to keep it's own company. Allowing a "nothing" like this to be lost on one is taking advice that James gives in "The Art of Fiction" to the letter.

Year, as we have said, is used in this novel in the term's official capacity to mean "school year." Once the year, unlike Cope, is entirely out (it falls to Cope neither to be entirely "out" nor, deep in talk that bubbles up about him, to be quite closeted), Cope's fate can be discussed, without bottom, by two characters who are like the couples that discuss Kitty's "inconclusive conclusion" ("NR" 315), the Ellisons of *A Chance Acquaintance* and the Marches at Niagara. Like them but more explicitly, Basil Randolph and Medora Phillips make an easy kind of mockery of marriage when they consider their own case, which they do, alongside their specimen's. Perhaps they should be married, they say, and mean, perhaps they should not, maybe even no one should: the proposition is gentle and inert. They mock themselves for their interest in Cope's fate; then, not precisely smug and not precisely anxious, keep talking about it. Their suggestions keep separate: "'You have something better to suggest?' 'Nothing better. Something different…'" (220). Their talk meets, I think, its match in moments like Cope's alone in the gulf, a moment that cannot really emerge into discussion, that dodges all that, that expresses precisely nothing (and expresses it the opposite of "suddenly"). Longing migrates or is taken inside the

moment itself as length: like the distance Cope's flashing feet and his gulping mouth, his feet and Basil's eyes on the beach, Basil's eyes and the rest of his body that is exposed for no one else, for a moment. Such moments are understood no better than they might be in the light of a sentence from John Addington Symmods, quoted by Howells in the first essay of his anti-theory of realism, *Criticism and Fiction*, published the same year Oscar Wilde meets Alfred Douglas, *Billy Budd*'s done, the word "homosexual" passes over into discourse, and the nineteenth-century novel as we've known it (as the genre-system) is officially over: "Some things of beauty are sometimes joys forever" (qtd. 299).

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