CHAPTER 2

Modernism's story of feeling

Seen through an ever-more-powerful critical microscope, the object once known as modernism is dissolving under our gaze. For some time now new (or renewed) attention to writers who for reasons of race, gender, politics, technique, or talent had been neglected by scholars has radically expanded, undermining a small canon of authors (Joyce, Eliot, Woolf, etc.) and works taken to exemplify Anglo-American high modernism; cultural history has further demanded that maps of modernism make room for popular forms ranging from newspapers to film to jazz. At the same time, the same canonical works have been subjected to new critical approaches in order to reveal their implication in wider social discourses.[1] As a result, an increasing amount of energy has gone into dismantling a high modernism that, we are gradually coming to understand, nobody actually practiced.

At the risk of simplification, however, I follow Pericles Lewis in his contention that the term modernism retains enough coherence to constitute a valuable critical tool.[2] In favoring Lewis's description over Lawrence Rainey's characterization of modernism as merely "a constellation of agents and practices," or that of critics such as Peter Nicholls who signal the heterogeneity of the era's culture through the plural *modernisms*,[3] I by no means disdain critical attention to the history of modernist patronage, publication and marketing, nor do I deny that the variety of modernist literature was for years ignored in a myopic reverence for a few great names. I mean, rather, that the work of theorizing modernism does not, for me, conclude with the abandonment of theory; and that I find Lewis's threefold crisis of representation, of liberalism, and of reason to provide a formulation of modernism that is neither too stringent nor too vague. At the same time, however, my own discussion does not center on the categories of technique, politics, and philosophy that have historically dominated discussions of modernism. Instead, I focus on problems of affect, and provide an account of feeling within modernism.

In this chapter, I divide this account of modernist feeling into four parts. First, I examine the affective protocols associated with an early modernist aestheticism, through attention to the writings of Oscar Wilde and to Max Beerbohm's novel *Zuleika Dobson* (1911). From there I turn to a reaction against that aestheticism, as found in the polemics of Ezra Pound and in *Tarr* (1918), the first novel of his sometime collaborator Wyndham Lewis. In both of these moments, I discern anticipations of the satire of the 1930s: Wilde and Beerbohm cultivate an indifference to ethical concerns, while Pound and Lewis exemplify satiric aggression. Next, I examine two novels of the so-called high modernist moment, Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and Aldous Huxley's *Antic Hay* (1923), both of which reveal the emergence of satire as an increasingly prevalent cultural mode. Finally, I briefly describe the late modernism of the 1930s as it has been theorized by other scholars and as I see it manifested in the writers I study in this book's later chapters. While such an account may imply a rigid chronology, my point is the opposite; history doesn't move in a line, and the satiric practices of the 1930s are clearly anticipated in earlier works of modernism. Yet because those earlier works have generally been studied as examples of a modernism fully realized, viewing them as antecedents to a later historical moment may shift our focus and help us to see aspects of these works that criticism has overlooked.

FORMS OF INDIFFERENCE: WILDE AND BEERBOHM

Fredric Jameson suggests that modernism can be said to have not one but two originary "moments," moments I will for brevity's sake call Symbolism and Futurism. The first, which Jameson associates with organic metaphorics, he uses to describe not only Symbolist poetry but also Impressionist painting, Art Nouveau, late Victorian aestheticism, and philosophical vitalism; the second, linked to technological motifs, can be found in Futurism, cubism, Vorticism, and the "purer formalisms" of movements such as architecture's International Style.[4] It is in the earlier, Symbolist moment that we might note a first shift in the theorization of affect, a move away from a Romantic or Victorian investment in feeling as a guarantee of value. This is the shift that Lionel Trilling identifies from sincerity to authenticity, and a key figure for Trilling is Oscar Wilde, who maintains a "principled antagonism to sincerity."[5] Wilde marks the moment where sincerity becomes sentimental and the importance of being earnest becomes laughable. Declaring that "all bad poetry springs from genuine feeling,"[6] he separates questions of *feeling* ("genuine feeling")

from those of *expression* ("bad poetry"), and questions of ethics from those of aesthetics. In this new hierarchy, the aesthetic now takes priority: "There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all."[7] This dichotomy then further extends to the separation of content and form:

> And just as out of the sordid and sentimental amours of the silly wife of a small country doctor in the squalid village of Yonville-l'Abbaye, near Rouen, Gustave Flaubert was able to create a classic, and make a masterpiece of style, so, from subjects of little or no importance . . . the true critics can . . . produce work that will be flawless in beauty and instinct with intellectual subtlety.[8]

As genuine feeling leads to bad poetry, so bad feeling (Emma's "sordid and sentimental amours") can produce genuine poetry ("a masterpiece of style"). Style is elevated over subject matter, form over content, aesthetics over ethics, expression over feeling. What ensues, finally, is Wilde's celebration of artifice over nature, and of lying over truth.

As Trilling observes, Wilde's polemical rejection of Victorian duty, earnestness, and sincerity entails the endorsement of a "doctrine of masks" which "proposes the intellectual value of the ironic posture."[9] Upholding the value of irony, Wilde professes antagonism toward Victorian morality, and to aesthetic practices that rely on it. Sounding much like Nietzsche decrying our compunction at laughing at Don Quixote, Wilde sees "the mere existence of the conscience" as "a sign of our imperfect development," and views a morality based on "self-denial" and "self-sacrifice" as "part of that old worship of pain which is so terrible a factor in the history of the world."[10] The result is a thorough skepticism whether our moral impulses serve any good beyond human vanity. The celebration of artifice thus entails a pronounced suspicion of the moral sentiments and suggests in their place a new emphasis on certain feelings – cruelty, indifference, aloofness – characteristic of satire.

It is at this historical moment, moreover, that indifference is recognized both as a precondition for laughter and as an affective state symptomatic of new social conditions. Wildean aloofness is at once akin to the freedom from emotion that Henri Bergson sees as necessary to the comic and to "the blasé attitude" that Georg Simmel sees as emblematic of modern metropolitan life. A fuller account of Simmel, Bergson, and the blasé will be offered in Chapter 5; for now it is enough to emphasize that Wilde's stance creates space for what Freud saw as the "benevolence" or "neutrality" necessary for successful joke-work.[11] If strong affect, as Freud contends, interferes with the pleasure that tendentious jokes afford, then low affect allows a receptivity to such pleasures.

But while Wilde has long been taken as the exemplar of aestheticist indifference, this "moment" in the development of modernist satire is perhaps best represented by that enigmatic work of his friend and protégé, Max Beerbohm's *Zuleika Dobson*. As a celebration of pure style, and as a narratorial display of a blasé indifference to the ethical stakes of his characters' fates, the novel is far more successful than Wilde's own moralistic *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Robert F. Kiernan describes the ornate, self-conscious manner of *Zuleika Dobson* as "the play of high style against a higher awareness of that style's absurdity," and he places the book within a tradition of the "camp novel," taking the absence of clear targets as grounds for denying it the label of satire.[12] Here Kiernan is merely following the lead of the seventy-four-year-old Max himself, who, in a prefatory note to the 1946 edition, blithely disavows any political, social, or ethical commitment behind his narratorial equanimity, and exhorts the reader to look at the novel not as a "satire" but as "just a fantasy."[13] Indeed, with only a few exceptions, critics of the novel have found its frivolity incompatible with the darkness that is seen to characterize satire (untroubled, apparently, by its conclusion in a mass suicide). For Beerbohm, then, even the indirect "commentary" or polemicism of satire is still subject to being recuperated as a socially minded or utilitarian earnestness in disguise. But in *Zuleika Dobson*, he insists, all art is quite useless.

Yet if Beerbohm's own stated position, readable in his self-celebratory style and irony-laden characterizations, suggests a withdrawal of authorial affective commitment, he hardly shies from the *representation* of intense feeling. The subject of the novel, after all, is love. It is the tale of the arrival at all-male Oxford of the bewitchingly beautiful eponymous conjuror, with whom every one of Oxford's undersexed undergraduates falls self-abasingly in love. Yet because Zuleika herself can only love a man who refrains from the abasement that love demands, all desire in the novel must remain forever unrequited. Thus, while the reader's level of emotion and the narrator's are kept to a minimum, the characters experience their own feelings at a feverish intensity that can hardly be comic to them. Feelings in *Zuleika Dobson* are as irrefutable as facts. Despite her often sadistic treatment of the men who adore her, Zuleika herself is a slave to her own feeling and can only act in accord with its tyrannical demands. Her opposite number, a dandy called the Duke of Dorset, is equally in thrall to his own heart, and as a result his experience of passionate love shatters his adherence to a personal code of style. "A theory, as the Duke saw, is one thing, an emotion another,"[14] Beerbohm writes, and the entire novel stages a conflict between the Duke's "theory" – his adherence to his

dandiacal style – and his "emotion," which everywhere is treated as something that comes upon the characters from without. Through the act of feeling, the Duke abandons the *theoretic* world for the *experiential*; a true Lacanian subject, he discovers himself exactly at the moment of self-loss: "he had no soul till it passed out of his keeping."[15] Beerbohm's most whimsical and memorable illustration of this external property of feeling is rendered through the supernatural changes of color that Zuleika's pearl earrings and the Duke's pearl studs undergo, changes which signal the characters' emotional states before they themselves are conscious of them.[16]

Here *Zuleika Dobson* seems curiously to resemble a contemporaneous text like Forster's *Howards End*, whose narratorial earnestness and commitment to the truth of feeling would otherwise seem to lie at some distance from Beerbohm's ironical maneuvers. But Forster tends to value this force of feeling, whereas for Beerbohm its compulsory quality is all the more reason that feeling should be resisted. For while emotion, in opposition to theory, is irrefutable in *Zuleika Dobson*, it is also social. Descending from aestheticism to life, from theory to emotion, involves for the Duke a loss of social and aesthetic distinction. Loving Zuleika makes the Duke merely "one of a number," rather than one "aloft and apart."[17] Previously aloof from public circulations of feeling – "Never had he given an ear to that cackle which is called Public Opinion" – the Duke, having fallen, now sees the epidemic of love for Zuleika as equivalent to "the noise made on the verge of the Boer War," a mob psychology or groupthink that threatens to devastate Oxford. The narrator agrees: "If man were not a gregarious animal, the world might have achieved, by this time, some real progress toward civilization. Segregate him, and he is no fool. But let him loose among his fellows, and he is lost – he becomes just a unit in unreason."[18] In spite of Beerbohm's disavowals, the novel can indeed be taken as a satire on "the herd instinct." The story is a parable about how publicly circulating feeling can overcome a private style.

Yet Beerbohm's own style, unlike the Duke's, furnishes proof against feeling's dangerous seductions; numerous readers comment on the novel's "dehumanized characters" and the low ethical stakes of the action.[19] The multiplicity of Beerbohm's playful stylistic devices – the sprinkling of archaic, Francophone and neologistic diction, the slapstick gags undercutting scenes of high drama, the ludic intervention of the supernatural, the parodic devices of melodrama – all work to deflect attention from the empathic claims of the characters' emotional lives onto the artifice of the novel itself. Beerbohm's success in banishing earnestness is nowhere more evident than in the novel's treatment of death. While the casual

execution of a minor suitor, dispatched with blasé manners, anticipates Evelyn Waugh's technique ("And last of all leapt Mr. Trent-Garby, who, catching his foot in the ruined flower-box, fell headlong, and was, I regret to say, killed"), more characteristic of Beerbohm is the mass suicide with which the novel climaxes:

> And over all this confusion and concussion of men and man-made things crashed the vaster discords of the heavens; and the waters of the heavens fell ever denser and denser, as though to the aid for waters that could not in themselves envelop so many hundreds of struggling human forms.[20]

Here sympathy for the characters is denied through the virtuosity of the writer's performance – the alliteration and assonance, the biblical echoes and cadences, the fanciful imputation of motive to nature – a performance that seems at first to rise to the importance of its subject and then to surpass it utterly. In so mitigating emotion through linguistic exhibition, Beerbohm, like the conjuror Zuleika herself, dazzles with virtuosity; he is "the omnisubjugant."[21] Zuleika Dobson, *c'est Max*. The deaths of so many of England's fine young men, an eerie anticipation of the war that will soon ravage the Continent, remains an exercise in style.

FORMS OF AGGRESSION: POUND AND LEWIS

If Wilde and Beerbohm will here have to stand in for a general "moment" in the story of modernist feeling, then what Jameson sees as modernism's second originary moment, Futurism, will have to be represented by the reaction against Symbolism and aestheticism as articulated in the Vorticist aesthetics of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis. Granted, lumping Vorticism and Futurism together may appear problematic given the overt proclamations of enmity between English and Italian factions, but I deploy the term Futurism in the broad sense that Pound himself uses when he writes, in 1914, that "we are all Futurists,"[22] and I follow Marjorie Perloff in uniting the warring parties underneath a single avant-gardiste banner. For, despite the doctrinal heterogeneity within this Futurist moment, Pound and Lewis share with Marinetti a contempt for decadence, *art pour l'art*, and the cult of beauty. Their break with the Symbolists is clear enough: the revolutionary posture of the later generation rejects as ineffectual the reclusive aestheticism of the earlier one; its swaggering bravado disdains its predecessors as effeminate; its diatribes against prettiness recast Paterian impressionism as one more kind of fakery; its trademark genre, the manifesto, supplants the Wildean epigram.

Nonetheless, the saturation of Futurist rhetoric with disgust for Symbolism suggests an anxiety born of proximity.[23] Pound shares with Wilde a rejection of moralizing about art – "Good art however 'immoral' it is, is wholly a thing of virtue. Purely and simply . . . good art can NOT be immoral."[24] Like Wilde, he firmly separates the ethical and the aesthetic, and takes all talk of morality in art as benighted Grundyism. Pound also emphasizes the necessity of technique, form, and control, so that however much he might reject the *particular* style of the Symbolists, the emphasis on style itself (and consequent adoration of Flaubert) remains firmly in place. And if Wilde's stance of moral indifference in "The Critic as Artist" owes something to Nietzsche's critique of a hypertrophied conscience in the (mis)development of the species, then so too does Marinetti's provocative, if pompous, declaration that art "can be nothing but violence, cruelty, and injustice."[25] Behind both originary modernist moments lies the same rejection of Victorian sentimentality.

That Futurism shared an antisentimental stance with its immediate precursor suggests a literary history that works via *differentiation*: each movement's need to distinguish itself from its predecessor dictates that the predecessor's rejection of sentimentality be rewritten as merely an illusory break, a continuation of sentimentality by other means. As Marinettian Futurism redefines *fin-de-siècle* aestheticism as a sentimental cult of beauty, so Lewis and Pound's *Blast* manifesto denounces Marinetti's automobilism as a "sensational and sentimental" rehash of Wilde.[26] The narrative of early modernism begins to look like an effort of each new splinter movement to surpass the previous in the completeness of its antisentimentality.[27]

But, as important as the ideological content of the antisentimental stance is the change in tone that separates these two moments. Pound, Lewis, Marinetti, even Lawrence – their *attitudes* are anything but blasé. And here lies their most pronounced contrast with Wilde and Beerbohm. There is among the Futurists an abundance of polemic that publicizes and justifies the revolutionary stance of their own art. These Futurist polemics share an argumentative, exhortative, antiacademic style, prone to sudden exclamations, slangy coinages, and derisive insults. As Perloff notes, "the aggressive, polemical tone, the unusual typography . . . the extensive use of onomatopoeia, pun, and extravagant metaphor, and the 'destruction of syntax' and *parole in libertà*" are features that cut across particular schools or movements within the Futurist moment.[28]

It would be too hasty to conflate Futurist polemic or manifesto with satire itself, but two crucial qualities must here be noted that are relevant

to the mechanisms of satire: (1) the ostensibly reformative or revolutionary motive of changing a corrupt modernity, and (2) an enthusiasm for that change whose violence often takes precedence over its professed ends. For Pound and Lewis, the "aggressive, polemical tone" is tied to the paradoxical position of the satirist in modernity, decrying fads and fashions while shrilly insisting upon newness. The opposition *both* to a corrupt modernity *and* to all the faulty modernisms that help to constitute that modernity begins to look like opposition for its own sake. Indeed, this aggression is something the Futurist polemic shares with important portions of Pound's early poetry, whose most memorable lines are often those which – to borrow the phrase with which Pound himself praised Yeats – strip poetry of its perdamnable rhetoric. It is equally a hallmark of Lewis's novelistic style, which has from Pound through Kenner and Jameson regularly been lauded for its violence and energy.

This violence with which Pound and Lewis confront a corrupt modernity is itself a kind of affect. Thus, while Hugh Kenner notes Pound's lifelong emphasis on technical rather than psychic criteria for poetry (corresponding to what I have called in Wilde the priority of aesthetics over ethics), Michael Levenson argues in response that in Pound's poetics a residual "psychic" criterion remains.[29] In Pound's famous "A Retrospect" (1917), for example, *sentimentality* is expectedly disdained (Poetry should be "austere, direct, free from emotional slither"), yet *emotion* remains a source of value ("Only emotion endures").[30] And if there is a hint of a contradiction in valuing emotion but not emotional slither, it is resolved by the distinction between false and true emotion. And true emotion, for Pound, is found in nothing other than satire itself: "I prefer satire, which is due to emotion, to any sham of emotion."[31]

In "A Retrospect," Pound leaves implicit the assumption that the emotion underlying satiric ridicule is authentic because it is negative and critical, but he comes closer to spelling out this idea over a decade later in "The Serious Artist" (1929). In this later essay Pound's tastes seem to have changed little. Although he praises beauty because it "reminds one what is worth while,"[32] he is again anxious to qualify his enthusiasm in a way that distinguishes his own appreciation for beauty from the bogus gushing he finds in aestheticism: "I am not now speaking of shams. I mean beauty, not slither, not sentimentalizing about beauty."[33] Even the diction here (sham, slither) is kept intact from "A Retrospect." As in the earlier essay, too, satire retains its critical, anti-slitherious function. Therefore, whereas "the cult of beauty" corresponds for Pound to the medical function of *hygiene*, "the cult of ugliness" is valuable for performing

the complementary function of *diagnosis*, locating what is corrupt in culture. And satire reappears as an adjunct to this diagnostic function: "satire, if we are to ride this medical metaphor to staggers, satire is surgery, insertions, and amputations."[34] In short, satire eradicates emotional slither so that real beauty can be discerned. Pound's medical metaphor, then, promotes a view of satire as a corrective force but at the same time a violent and invasive one.[35]

But while Pound's essays contain a valuable, if glancing, recognition of the importance of satire to Futurist poetics, Lewis's *Tarr* (1918) offers a richer case study. *Tarr* is satiric, first of all, through its mockery of modern sophistication, particularly its send-up of the "Bourgeois Bohemians," the bad artists and sentimental poseurs who populate Paris's Latin Quarter. The Englishman Hobson is mocked for the "sentimental indulgence" of his deliberately shabby tweeds; the painter Lowndes has "just enough money to be a Cubist"; Bertha, Tarr's fiancée, walks naked around her apartment, taking an "air bath" amid a plaster cast of Beethoven and a photograph of the Mona Lisa.[36] This ridicule of aesthetic pretensions and second-hand tastes suggests the conservative or moralistic tendency of satire I have discussed: *Tarr* manifests an urgent need to distinguish good art from bad, even good modernism from bad, at the same time that it also anticipates a tendency that emerges more fully in satire of the 1930s wherein modernism's oppositional and satiric energy begins to take itself as its own target.

Given Lewis's own repeated dismissals of bourgeois moral standards, this moralistic reading of *Tarr* may seem counterintuitive; yet such a reading was easily available to the novel's first critics. In his 1937 *Blasting and Bombardiering*, Lewis recounts *Tarr*'s critical reception: "'A painful commentary on modern morals,' said a provincial paper. 'But it has a powerful fascination,' it added. Whether the 'fascination' lay in the morals or the manner of presentment the writer does not say."[37] While Lewis pokes fun at the philistinism of the provincial reviewer and his outdated concern for moral content, the reviewer's clichéd language still recognizes *Tarr*'s fundamental outrage with modernity. Nor is it off the mark to note that this outrage takes on a moral coloring; even the current tendency to read Lewis as a cultural critic capable of diagnosing the ills of capitalism despite his right-wing leanings – one reader calls him "a one-man Frankfurt school of the right"[38] – retains a touch of this moralistic revulsion from the modern.

The moral outrage underlying *Tarr*'s satire of modern artists places it in contiguity with Lewis's polemics and manifestos, whose doctrinal objectives

often seem entwined with the dramatic action of the novel. The title character's dialogues, which Kenner has described as "*Blast* manifestos dramatized,"[39] are frequently cited in discussions of his creator's artistic principles, and Tarr's conversations with Anastasya even feature those repeated exclamations of "Bless" and "Curse" without which no modernist manifesto would be complete.[40] Tarr's argument for the deadness and the externality of art is fully consistent with Lewis's later treatises, and he distinguishes his own principles from the frauds about him in terms reminiscent of Pound's: "The second [condition of art] is absence of *soul*, in the sentimental human sense … No restless, quick flame-like ego is imagined for the *inside* of it. It has no inside."[41] Pater and his acolytes, derided as sentimental humanists, are the obvious targets here, and from this attack on flux and egoism it is only a small step to the "external method" of satire valorized in *Men Without Art*.

Tarr's attack on what Lewis calls "Humour" similarly anticipates Lewis's later position of the 1930s. The novel opens with a preface that, as Martin Puchner points out, itself takes the rhetorical form of a manifesto.[42] This preface dwells on "the maudlin and the self-defensive Grin" of the Englishman, which, Lewis asserts, "usually accompanies loose emotionality."[43] This critique of British humor becomes an explicit motif when Tarr renounces his Englishman's humor as emotional weakness, a "national institution" that "provides you with nothing but a first-rate means of evading reality."[44] Thus Tarr traces all his "mock matrimonial" problems with his sometime fiancée Bertha to humor, and resolves "to gaze on Bertha inhumanly and not humorously."[45] Tarr eventually names this failure to be inhuman as "sentimentality" and concludes: "He had humanized sex too much."[46] In short, the slither of Humor is opposed to the form-giving, inhuman gaze of the painter's eye, which Lewis later identifies with satire: "There is laughter and laughter. That of true satire is as it were *tragic* laughter. It is not a genial guffaw nor the titillations provoked by a harmless entertainer."[47] To the Grin, then, Lewis opposes the Grimace, which signifies not evasion but confrontation: "If you look very closely at my grin, you will perceive that it is a very logical and deliberate grimace."[48] Only the animality of the satiric grimace, in contrast to the evasive geniality of the humorous grin, provides the basis for emotional and artistic integrity.

Yet while *Tarr* advocates for the emotional coldness that Lewis would later characterize as satiric, it is less clear whether Lewis actually achieves inhuman, satiric distance from his representations. Tarr, to be sure, never succeeds in extricating himself from the "slop of sex."[49] Having

temporarily escaped his sentimental attachment to Bertha, he finds himself embroiled in an equally sentimental relation with Kreisler; he realizes that, despite his efforts, "the curse of humour was in him."[50] And Lewis himself also fails to escape the curse of humor. As one critic after another has noted, Lewis creates in Kreisler a much more vivid and engrossing representation than he achieves with Tarr, his authorial mouthpiece. As Kenner puts it, Lewis is "surreptitiously backing a rival horse,"[51] siding with the chaotic energy of the pathetic yet vital Kreisler rather than the disinterested cool that Tarr attempts to achieve. The two characters in fact might be seen as embodying the two poles of satire I have described; while Tarr discourses didactically on the principles by which modernist art can properly respond to a bogus modernity, Kreisler actually lives the aggressive energy of satire, which leaves behind its didactic aims in its outraged opposition to just about everything. Whether in the hilarious Bonnington Club dance, the grotesque duel (where slapstick misfortune slips into macabre revulsion), or his own suicide, Kreisler's solution to a problem is always action, usually violent action. There is, then, substantial slippage between the codified affective regimens articulated in Lewis's polemics and the more unpredictable practice of novel-writing: the impulsiveness of Kreisler overwhelms the intellection of Tarr.

Indeed, in *Tarr*, experience is always leaving theory disappointed. Tarr avers that art is "ourselves disentangled from death and accident,"[52] but in the novel accident usually gets the last laugh. Characters are constantly discovering their own narratives of self-definition to be contradicted by events, and they strain to form new narratives that will offer at least the illusion of control over life. As Paul Peppis writes: "Since persons can control neither their raging desires nor the actions of others, social activity becomes as chaotic as Kreisler's fanatic dances. Every scene, every interpretation, every plan of action invariably goes horribly wrong."[53] Tarr approaches Bertha with newfound indifference, only to discover her "ironical unsurprised eye" mocking him and turning his hard-won indifference into "truculen[ce]."[54] Kreisler, after seeing Anastasya with Soltyk, resolves to insult her in order to reclaim some control over events, even though he knows such an insult will fail to win her from his rival. Bertha, having spontaneously kissed the brutish Kreisler, constructs an account in which he appeared to her in need of help, thus "effacing, in some sense, the extreme involuntariness of the … incident."[55] In *Tarr*, one cannot author oneself outside of a hermetic world of art, because the contingencies of life are just too great.

One of the novel's most significant instances of experience defying theory is Kreisler's rape of Bertha, a scene that, as Ann Ardis points out, has largely been ignored by critics. Ardis maintains that this critical neglect speaks to a reluctance to confront the ethical questions involved in reading the rape, and argues that Pound and Lewis demand of their nascent modernist readership a willingness to overcome the "ideological response to violent content (i.e., a rape)" inherent in realist fiction.[56] It is certainly the case that Lewis posits a trained readership that breaks with realist traditions of ethical engagement; yet it is equally that case that rejecting the narrative conventions of realism is not the same as dispensing with ethical engagement altogether. Indeed, one could easily argue just the opposite: that for a narrator deliberately to cultivate sympathy according to a realist (or sentimental) narrative model would – especially given *Tarr*'s own indictment of sentimental patterns of feeling – interfere with not only aesthetic but also ethical judgment. To use Pound's phrase, realist conventions would produce only a "sham of emotion." The question thus becomes not *whether* Lewis engages a reader's ethical faculties in representing the rape, but rather *how* – the answer being that narratorial neutrality becomes for Lewis the most effective method of shaping readerly affect without giving way to fakery.

Yet to endorse narratorial neutrality as a means of indirectly implying moral judgment raises its own problems, as Ardis notes, nowhere more explicitly than in Lewis's own comparison of the rape to a joke:

> As she stood there she looked like some one on whom a practical joke had been played, of the primitive and physical order, such as drenching, in some amusing manner, with dirty water. She had been decoyed into swallowing something disgusting. Her attitude was reminiscent of the way people are seen to stand bent awkwardly forward, neck craned out, slowly wiping the dirt off their clothes, or spitting out the remains of their polluted drink, cursing the joker.[57]

Although Lewis in *Tarr* does not confine himself to the external method he later advocates,[58] in this moment the aftermath of the rape is represented in painterly or sculptural terms. Feelings are only implied through the outward signs of posture and gesture; passions can be read only because they are stamped on lifeless things. From Bertha's physical appearance, however, the narrator associates to a very different sort of event, a practical joke – a humiliation of significantly lower moral consequence. And while the narrator's descriptions of practical jokes retain the sexually laden imagery of "drenching" and "swallowing," the shift from rape to joke entails an uncomfortable aestheticization of the victim's body.

Because comparison of the rape-victim to the joke-victim is made in purely visual terms, its moral dubiousness can, at first, only be inferred. Yet Lewis's narrator enunciates the difference between the two soon enough, pronouncing the "desperate practical joke" to be "too deep for laughter."[59] Lacking the laughter that for Bergson restores humanity, Kreisler's sexual assault both is and is not a joke: "At its consummation there had been no chorus of intelligible laughter."[60] Lewis's treatment does not deny the possibility of a reader's moral outrage, yet neither does it nurture that outrage. Tarr has vowed to view Bertha "inhumanly," and he later regrets having humanized sex too much. But in this scene the Bergsonian "anaesthesia of the heart" necessary to joke-work takes on darker connotations, equated now with Kreisler's cold-hearted sexual violence.

SATIRE EMERGENT: JOYCE AND HUXLEY

Having looked at two originary moments of modernism, I want to turn briefly to the moment of high modernism after the First World War, circa 1922. The hypercanonical novel here is *Ulysses*, and its place in the modernist story of feeling doubtless merits a study unto itself. Jay Dickson has in fact provided an in-depth account of the novel's engagement with the sentimental tradition, finding echoes of it in, for example, Stephen's pained encounter with his underfed sister, Dilly, or in Bloom's sympathy for the extended labor of the pregnant Mina Purefoy. But Dickson's analysis of the sentimental in *Ulysses* must be complemented by the recognition that even as Joyce negotiates the claims of feeling with an eye to the sentimental or humanistic tradition, he also indulges his satiric side quite lavishly. To be sure, the novel is generally viewed as "comic" rather than "satiric," and Joyce's view of his characters is typically regarded as forgiving of human failings. Yet this reading has not always dominated Joyce criticism. An early critic, *Imagiste* Richard Aldington, condemned the novel as "more bitter, more sordid, more ferociously satirical than anything Mr. Joyce has yet written . . . a tremendous libel on humanity."[61] Soon after, Carl van Doren and Mark van Doren described the novel as "savagely satiric," and even Kenner's 1956 *Dublin's Joyce* reads *Ulysses* primarily as a satire.[62]

But even if a contemporary reader is prone to regard Bloom as a figure of compassion first and of ridicule second, the satiric spirit is nonetheless present in *Ulysses*: it is given the name Buck Mulligan. The Falstaffian figure of Mulligan, presiding over the novel's opening, exhibits traits of both the indifferent Wildean dandy and the aggressive Lewisian

materialist – sometimes aloof and witty, sometimes combative and cruel, invariably performing a social role. Robert Bell goes so far as to take Mulligan as the guiding spirit of the novel, characterizing him as a Shakespearean clown in contrast to Stephen's humorless Malvolio or Jacques.[63]

As a materialist and a violator of boundaries, Mulligan embodies the Bakhtinian grotesque body; referring everything to one bodily function or another, he reduces ideals to the level of the material lower stratum. Stephen's mother's death, for example, becomes an anatomy lesson: "And what is death, he asked, your mother's or yours or my own?" He invokes his perspective as a medical student – a profession that has a long association with the role of the satirist – who (as Pound would have it) performs surgery, insertions and amputations: "I see them pop off every day in the Mater and Richmond and cut up into tripes in the dissecting-room. It's a beastly thing and nothing else . . . To me it's all a mockery and beastly. Her cerebral lobes are not functioning."[64]

Religious beliefs and rituals are similarly reduced to the corporeal. Mulligan's "Ballad of Joking Jesus" reverses the process of transubstantiation, reducing spirit to body:

> If anyone thinks that I amn't divine
> He'll get no free drinks when I'm making the wine
> But have to drink water and wish it were plain
> That I make when the wine becomes water again.[65]

This delight in the excretory re-surfaces when Buck interrupts Stephen's Shakespeare seminar:

> –The tramper Synge is looking for you, he said, to murder you. He heard you pissed on his halldoor in Glasthule. He's out in pampooties to murder you.
> –Me! Stephen exclaimed. That was your contribution to literature.
> Buck Mulligan gleefully bent back, laughing to the dark eavesdropping ceiling.[66]

Urination on Synge's door is very much Buck's contribution to literature, an avant-garde clowning turned performance art that in a later day and age might have won him a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. The gesture here debunks not Stephen's self-indulgent grief or superstitious religious rituals, but his literary pretentions.

Buck's reductive materialism is often accompanied by outright aggression. From the beginning of the novel he is continually placing Stephen under intellectual siege, offering the reader what Bell calls "a valid satiric critique of Stephen."[67] "He fears the lancet of my art as I fear that of his,"

Stephen thinks; and later, when Buck appears in the National Library, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"[68] Mulligan questions Stephen's aesthetic principles (or pretensions) and engages him in a bawdy and jesting but fundamentally threatening intellectual swordplay. In this sense, as Maureen Waters observes, "Although he is often comic, Mulligan's purpose is to negate or destroy."[69]

To these qualities of materialism and aggression, reminiscent of the Lewisian satirist, a third crucial characteristic must be added: histrionicism. For Mulligan, satire or wit is a *social* mode, a way of displaying (mostly to other men) his own intellectual and sexual prowess. As critics frequently note, he is a Wildean figure in his dandyish dress, his aura of ambiguous sexuality, and his willingness to play the jester at the court of the British Empire; Stephen considers him one of a "Brood of mockers."[70] Buck is not only histrionic but necessarily histrionic, and when he doesn't have an audience he summons one out of the air: "For this, O dearly beloved, is the genuine Christine: body and soul and blood and ouns. Slow music, please. Shut your eyes, gents. One moment. A little trouble about those white corpuscles. Silence all."[71] Mulligan is not merely acting here: he is pretending to be a stagemaster who pretends to be a priest, pretending to have an audience that he can transform into a congregation, all for the benefit of his real audience, Stephen, and the even realer audience beyond him, Joyce's readership. It is in fact impossible to take any of Buck's lines without some kind of irony; he always seems to be speaking someone else's words, and never fully seriously. While all the characters in *Ulysses* assume social roles, Buck is qualitatively different from the novel's principals, Stephen, Bloom, and Molly, in that *he has no stream of consciousness* that we overhear; he exists only as a performance. As a thought experiment we might imagine what it would mean to be granted access to Buck's solitary consciousness as we are with Stephen, Bloom, and Molly. It is hardly overstatement to suggest that it would destroy the representation.

Mulligan's histrionic clowning modifies the aggression and negativity of his debunking satire with a happily irreverent freedom from authority. When the Dublin literati, including Stephen, earnestly discuss the greatest of literary authorities, Buck has little use for such obeisance:

> Buck Mulligan thought, puzzled.
> –Shakespeare? He said. I seem to know the name. A flying sunny smile rayed in his loose features.
> –To be sure, he said, remembering brightly. That chap that writes like Synge.[72]

(Yeats notoriously overpraised Synge as writing like Shakespeare.) No one possibly believes Buck to be this ignorant, nor does he expect anyone to. This feigned ignorance, rather, really is Buck's own theory of Shakespeare, just as pissing on Synge's door really is his contribution to literature. This is a sophisticated philistinism that engages the eggheaded intellectual contest in the reading room by pretending not to engage at all. His play-acting excuses him from the argument while trivializing it at the same time.

To be sure, the fraternal rivalry between Stephen and Mulligan is ultimately displaced by Stephen's more humane relation with the father-figure, Bloom. Even Bell, who argues that Mulligan's spirit of joking infects the novel's narrative style, must grant the ultimate predominance of Bloom, who "becomes the novel's center of value," offering a "comic" view opposed to Buck's "satiric" one.[73] The reasons behind this movement away from Mulligan's satire toward the more sympathetic mode of comedy may be peculiar to Joyce's psychology or aesthetics, yet the triumph of Bloom – talking earnestly about injustice and love – also suggests that the presence of satire within the moment of high modernism is, to use Raymond Williams's distinction, "emergent" rather than "dominant." (One might similarly find a visible, if emergent, strain of satire in that other monument of 1922, *The Waste Land*.) Thus, for Joyce, notes Waters, "satire is merely one facet in the larger comedy; the writers who came after him, or were younger contemporaries, were less optimistic."[74] Waters's survey of Irish writing points out the wider trend I mean to underscore: that in the late modernism of the 1930s satire becomes a cultural dominant at long last.

One of these "less optimistic" writers, not Irish but English, was Aldous Huxley, who enjoyed in the 1920s and 1930s critical prestige nearly equal to Joyce's; he was commonly described, Jerome Meckier notes, as both the voice of his generation and its intellectual and sexual liberator.[75] The Irish satirist Flann O'Brien pays (deliberately verbose) homage to both men equally in the opening pages of his 1939 *At Swim-Two-Birds*: "Each of [my books] was generally recognized as indispensable to all who aspire to an appreciation of the nature of contemporary literature and my small collection contained works ranging from those of Mr. Joyce to the widely-read books of Mr. A. Huxley, the eminent English writer."[76] I focus here on *Antic Hay*, his 1923 novel, not only because of its contemporaneity with *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land*, but also because it constitutes a compendium of the motifs and concerns of modernist satire, which will be taken up in different ways by the 1930s authors I discuss in my later chapters.

The modernity Huxley depicts is one of utter belatedness, lacking all possibility of meaning or redemptive value. The protagonist, Gumbril, Jr., observes of one character, "Other people's ideas, other people's knowledge – they were his food. He devoured them and they were at once his own." Yet he soon realizes that this secondariness is only an extreme version of his own: "He too was an assimilator."[77] This is what Tyrus Miller has a called a "condition of generalized mimetism," a world where all is copy or sham.[78] Gumbril therefore struggles to find values in which he can believe; his skepticism discredits religion, science, education, art, political reform, and even, for the most part, love. This problem of belatedness is, moreover, self-reflexive in that it poses a problem for the novelist as well as the character: what options remain for the artist after the heightened self-consciousness of modernism has discredited older values and modes of expression? Thus Gumbril tells his friend, the painter-poet Lypiatt, that "you can't say 'dream'" in a poem, "Not in this year of grace, nineteen twenty-two"; it is "altogether *too* late in the day," adds the aesthete Mercaptan.[79] The force of the word has been nullified by Freudian talk of latent and manifest content, and modern codes of "literary tact"[80] condemn such high-flown language as implicitly sentimental.

The problem of belatedness that permeates *Antic Hay* arises specifically as a result of capitalist modernity, manifested in a catalogue of technological developments that saturate the public sphere: "Cinemas, newspapers, magazines, gramophones, football matches, wireless telephones."[81] Even Gumbril's tailor can recognize these amusements not as the liberating gifts of a new utopian age, but as a further constriction of the modern subject: "take them or leave them if you want to amuse yourself. The ordinary man can't leave them. He takes; and what's that but slavery?"[82] In this world (anticipating Waugh's *Vile Bodies*) servants read newspapers that feed them grotesque accounts of violent crimes to satisfy their baser instincts, while sentimental tales reassure them of their good hearts: "For them, Her Majesty the Queen spoke kindly words to crippled female orphans; the jockeys tumbled at their jumps; Cupid was busy in Society, and the murderers who had disemboweled their mistresses were still at large."[83]

A post-war milieu in which nineteenth-century belief in progress has been discredited by mass death, Huxley's modernity is one in which the utopian enthusiasms of an earlier modernist moment have begun to wane, and modernism itself has been commodified. Gumbril's fantasies of wealth include "drawings by Picasso and Lewis," the terms "modern" and "Futurist" are used to describe curtains, and a businessman informs

Gumbril that "there is no better training for commerce than a literary education."[84] As in *Tarr*, modernism itself is subject to satire, and the novel presents an array of ludicrous figures espousing or embodying various strains of modernist dogma (including the sexually rapacious Coleman, a Mulligan-like clown, who is ceaselessly performing, parodying Christian liturgy and interrupting intellectual conversations with bad puns).

Of all the artists in the novel, Lypiatt alone might seem to offer a positive model, since he mounts the most sustained protest against modern imitation and the modernist accommodation to it. Lypiatt, like the Futurists, rejects the art-for-art's-sake credo as sterile and seeks to reintegrate life and art. Favoring an art "for God's sake," he scorns both Bloomsbury talk of significant form and the Wildean insistence that subject matter is incidental to the success of the artwork:

> Life only comes out of life, out of passion and feeling; it can't come out of theories. That's the stupidity of all this chatter about art for art's sake and the esthetic emotions and purely formal values and all that. It's only the formal relations that matter; one subject is just as good as another – that's the theory.[85]

Such a protest places Lypiatt close to Huxley himself, who sees morality as central to art and rejects the idea that art can be grounded in form alone.[86]

But Huxley is self-critical enough that he makes Lypiatt a bad artist. Myra Viveash realizes that Lypiatt's own paintings "are so bad" precisely because they have "no life in them,"[87] and she notes that his talents are best suited for Cinzano advertisements. But Huxley intimates that Lypiatt's artistic failure is due to his own personal, emotional failure – his tendency toward sentimentality. Lypiatt "sees himself as a misunderstood and embittered Prometheus," and after receiving a bad review imagines himself as Christ crucified: "There, he was making literature of it again. Even now."[88] *Antic Hay* indicts the excesses of the sentimentalist as well as the sterility of the aestheticist. Huxley may scorn Wilde's aestheticism, but Lypiatt illustrates beautifully the Wildean principle that all bad poetry comes from genuine feeling.

The structures of feeling within modernity are thus a major theme of *Antic Hay*. Gumbril's foray into capitalism requires that he learn to exploit "the social instinct, the instinct of the herd," through advertising.[89] In Huxley's analysis, capitalism turns out to be based not on the rational operations of markets but on the manipulation of feeling, on exploiting the capacity of the public to feel good about consuming a product and to feel bad about failing to do so: "We must pull the strings of snobbery and shame; it's essential to bear mockingly on those who do not wear

our trousers."[90] Yet if susceptibility to emotional manipulation is to be feared, the hardened blasé attitude of Huxley's urbane sophisticates proves equally perilous. Myra, emotionally deadened from having lost her true love in the war, best demonstrates this indifference; she is always bored and her search for stimulation proves fruitless. Her ennui comes to resemble a dull anxiety, a fear of introspection and repose – what Gumbril elsewhere calls "Restlessness, distraction, refusal to think, anything for an unquiet life."[91] In contrast to this need for stimulation, Gumbril does discover a few things that he can value: Mozart's twelfth sonata, the girl Emily whom he loves but mistreats and loses, and those "quiet places in the mind"[92] that offer a retreat from the chaos of modernity (and hint at the mystical direction of Huxley's later work). But while *Antic Hay* summons moments of poignancy amid its pervasive disgust for modern life, these moments are few and far between.

The indifference that Myra and most of the modern sophisticates experience is also shown to have a moral cost. One evening, while Gumbril and his friends are out, he overhears the story of an unemployed working-class man who has lost the horse that provided him with his only means to make a living. While Gumbril's friends smirk about their disdain for the poor, Gumbril finds himself "consumed with indignation and pity … like a prophet in Nineveh."[93] Yet his companions remain indifferent. Gumbril's thoughts, meanwhile, give way to a contemplation of the enormous scale of suffering in the world as he considers the fates of wounded veterans, homeless elderly, asthmatic servants, desperate suicides. Anticipating Nathanael West's fiction, the extent of suffering here is so vast that it leads to despair rather than action.[94]

In a different way, the pathetic but risible Lypiatt later makes his own protest against a satiric norm: "Every man is ludicrous if you look at him from outside, without taking into account what's going on in is heart and mind. You could turn *Hamlet* into an epigrammatic farce … You could make the wittiest Guy de Maupassant story out of the life of Christ."[95] Lypiatt brings to the fore one final theme of modernist satire – the idea that any ideal can be debunked by a sufficiently satiric view: "Everyone's a walking farce and a walking tragedy at the same time."[96] Anything can be made to look good or bad by being redescribed. Choices of language, genre, tone and expression shape affective possibilities. Yet such a realization also reopens the possibility of compassion and dissolves the basis on which a choice can be made, for the satiric and the farcical can also be rewritten. In this way, Huxley's satire proves important for the story of modernist feeling not only because it suggests a lack of redemptive

possibilities in modern life, nor only because it spoofs so many pretentious intellectuals and bad artists, but also because it begins to question the cruelty and aloofness that makes satire possible in the first place.

LATE MODERNISM

The story of modernist feeling from the close of the nineteenth century through the 1920s thus presents no single dominant position, but rather a series of tonal possibilities and thematic concerns that make possible the satire of late modernism. The notion of late modernism itself deserves a few words, since it has only relatively recently emerged as an era worthy of discrete nomenclature. The reasons for this emergence are numerous: the expansion of modernist studies beyond the old canon has licensed critical attention to the twentieth century's middle decades; the exhaustion of efforts to schematize modernism and postmodernism has invited study of transitional or anomalous works; the mere march of time has threatened literary studies with the embarrassment of having to posit a "post-postmodernism" unless new periodization can be imagined. Thus the rupture between modernism and postmodernism has opened up to become a period unto itself, and critics are coming to heed Tyrus Miller's exhortation that the cultural activity of the era cannot be adequately understood through the concept of transition alone.[97]

Like modernism and postmodernism, the idea of late modernism is often caught between a narrow chronological sense and a formal and nonhistorical one, and I try here to avoid both traps. For the sake of coherence, my focus is on novels of the 1930s, but I make no claim that late modernism ends abruptly with the Second World War, and I recognize continuity with earlier works of modernism and later works of postmodernism. Nor do I claim that the works under study are exhaustive of the possibilities realized in the 1930s; rather, I identify something like a cultural dominant, a set of family resemblances in a group of novels produced in a short space of time. Taken together, I suggest, the commonalities of the novels I examine appear significant enough to constitute more than a historical accident, and charting those commonalities is itself a form of history.

In much literary history, of course, the 1930s have been seen not as an outgrowth of modernism, but its eclipse. The crisis of the Great Depression, the promises and threats of Communism and fascism, and the looming possibility of another world war all shifted attention from aesthetics to politics. Samuel Hynes's *The Auden Generation*, still one of

the most important studies of the decade, discerns in the poetry, fiction, and essays of English writers of the 1930s a steadily increasing pressure to take political action.[98] Confronting politics in a way the writers of the 1920s had not felt compelled to, the Auden group developed a mode Hynes calls parable in order to address these new concerns. Yet, despite certain similarities, the public, civic mode of the Auden generation (or, in the US, the publicly political mode of a new generation of social realists) is by and large not the one adopted by the writers in this study. While the political atmosphere of the decade is visible in some of the works I discuss, and available through critical recovery in others, these writers' politics, when they do appear, are often mitigated by irony, and their extra-fictional commitments represented satirically, if at all.

Alan Wilde, one of the first critics to call the 1930s a period of late modernism, agrees with Hynes that "external events forced on the thirties writers a series of troubling contradictions, centering in particular on the rival claims of artistic vocation and political commitment."[99] He argues that a new emphasis on clarity, transparency and rigor – exemplified by Isherwood's, "I am a camera," or Orwell's comparison of good prose to a clear window – suggests a moral and linguistic severity, a need to see and represent the world clearly.[100] Yet Wilde maintains that even as such new ideals resolve certain tensions between art and politics they also complicate notions of character and self, and he thus turns his focus to subjectivity as a way of marking off phases of modernism. For Wilde the "chief paradox of the decade" becomes the problem of the "subversion of depth through ... attention to surface."[101] Placing the 1930s writers somewhere between the depth-model of modernism and the surface-model of post-modernism, Wilde finds in the turn to surfaces "something like a new sensibility," one which "defines in the most basic way both the moral program of late modernism and the aesthetic retrenchments of its writers."[102] Despite "the assumption of a self" in later modernism, then, there is an agnosticism about the workings of that self: "it is at the last the radically external view that is ascendant ... we can do no more than register the unaccountable and unpredictable vagaries ... of character in all its contradictions."[103]

The category of subjectivity is also important to a major book-length treatment of late modernism, Tyrus Miller's *Late Modernism*. Miller's study, which centers on Barnes, Lewis, and Beckett, shares many of my concerns, including a focus on the role of laughter and satire and the representation of human behavior as shot through with automatism. Miller argues that in the era of late modernism "the vision of a general

depersonalization and deauthentication of life in modern society" puts "subjectivity at risk of dissolution," a risk to which satiric laughter and grotesque bodies can be read as responses or symptoms.[104] Miller brings together an apprehension of modernity as secondary and simulated, a view of the self as discontinuous and dispersed, and a literary approach that rejects traditional modernist attempts to preserve or recuperate the self through heroic artistic gestures.

I aim both to extend and to revise Miller's important theorization of late modernism. First, I attempt, through a more thorough unpacking of terms such as satire, grotesque, and uncanny, to add specificity to an understanding of those late modernist concerns with surface and depth, outside and inside, self and character that have been identified by Miller, Wilde, and others.[105] For if an earlier confidence in the ability to represent interiority gives way to a new awareness of human automatism and a reluctance to represent a coherent personality, such awareness and reluctance are deployed in a variety of ways. In some cases, human mechanism is exploited for comic or satiric laughter, whereas in others it constitutes a source of uncanny apprehension.

Second, I would argue that despite his acknowledgement of "an already belated relation to high modernism as ruin,"[106] what Miller describes is often less a late version of modernism than what Marjorie Perloff has called a "counter" or "other" modernism – a tradition that would include works of Pound, Stein, and Marinetti. In Perloff's words, this counter-modernism was "iconoclastically anti-psychological, anti-formalist, and anti-aestheticist" and "its Utopian energies . . . were directed, not toward the making of beautiful autotelic objects, but toward changing the world."[107] As Miller to some degree acknowledges, the ostensibly late-modernist rejection of what he calls "an aesthetics of formal mastery" was always part of the modernist landscape, which at the time doubtless appeared less neatly partitioned than it does to us after generations of critical work.[108] Given the visibility of Lewis, Marinetti, and Pound in pre-First World War London, a Joycean or Eliotic "mythic method" might be seen as a reaction against this iconoclastic, anarchic counter-modernism rather than as a provocation for it. (Michael Levenson's *Genealogy of Modernism* in fact argues for something very much like this account.[109]) Thus Miller's argument slips from a theorization of laughter, satire, and automatism as the central components of late modernism to a more familiar divide between a progressive avant-garde aimed at a poetics of dispersal and a conservative high modernism aimed at sanctifying art. Lawrence Rainey has argued that such a schematization tends to

result in invidious and unsustainable comparisons between an elitist and repressive "modernism" and a more "self-aware and emancipatory" tradition embodied in "the historical avant-garde and postmodernism."[110] Satire thus tends to disappear from Miller's analyses of particular texts, in favor of reading his chosen writers as critics of the bad old high modernists: Beckett becomes the anti-Joyce, Barnes the anti-Eliot; Lewis the anti-everyone.

I hardly wish to deny Miller's achievement in identifying a late modernism with a satiric proclivity, and my criticisms should be taken as recognition of the force of his arguments. Yet I would maintain that, for the writers of the 1930s, Lewis, Marinetti, and Pound were as much a part of the landscape in which they found themselves as were Eliot, Woolf, and Joyce. I don't therefore see the late modernists as seeking to overturn the aesthetic project of an ossified "high modernism," for in certain ways they very much sought to extend it. My account of late modernism is consequently not focused on either Hynes's return to the political, or Miller's proto-postmodern poetics of dispersal, nor even Wilde's emphasis on restoring transparency to language in a kind of "moral clarity" of the left. Instead, I focus on understanding the affective ranges of satire, the uses and disadvantages of aloofness, indifference, aggression, cruelty, pleasure, anxiety, and revulsion as they play out through the late modernist novel.

To be sure, the belatedness of the late modernists, their having come after modernism, is central to such an understanding. Joyce, Woolf, and Eliot grew up in a Victorian culture whose residue is evident everywhere in their work, but the writers I discuss were all – with the exception of Djuna Barnes – born after the turn of the century and grew up in an emerging "modernist" culture that was already reinterpreting that older Victorian moment. For this later generation, modernism had already happened; as Henry Green noted, Joyce and Kafka were for his generation "cats who ha[d] licked the plate clean."[111] Michael Gorra argues that the later generation of modernists (at least in England) turns away from the idea of the modernist novel as "having fulfilled the promise of the nineteenth-century novel" in providing "a new sense of freedom."[112] Instead, these writers display a sense of "impotence before history," and a "belief that everything important had happened already"; for Gorra, even as late modernism continues "the modernist attack upon convention," it "can only negate the clichés of [its] culture rather than transcend them."[113] And although his periodization is slightly different, Jameson likewise discerns a belatedness in late modernism: "The situation of the first or classical modernists can never be repeated since they themselves already exist."[114]

At the same time, however, Jameson also seeks to link late modernism to its historical conditions: "Late modernism is a product of the Cold War, but in all kinds of complicated ways … the Cold War spelled the end of a whole era of social transformation and indeed of Utopian desires and anticipations."[115] Late modernism, in short, turns modernist skepticism against modernism's own revolutionary and romantic tendencies.

Therefore, while I do not see these writers as seeking to overthrow modernism, I do see them as having learned modernism in its many varieties, and in a sense learned it too well. For the writers of the 1930s, modernism was not yet the stuff of textbooks, but it was available by a kind of shorthand, and thus highly susceptible to ironic redescription.[116] This late modernist skepticism toward earlier modernist enthusiasms extends to Lewis's own idiosyncratic version of modernism, and Lewis's aesthetics are consequently no surer guide to late modernist novelistic practices than are Wilde's or Eliot's or Woolf's. Thus Waugh describes in *Vile Bodies* how the once-incendiary style of *Blast* has been adapted for party invitations; Stella Gibbons caricatures D. H. Lawrence's sexualized landscapes; Nathanael West writes of a whorehouse madam who discusses Gertrude Stein to provide an atmosphere of culture; Robin Vote appears in Barnes's *Nightwood* as a figure from an Henri Rousseau landscape; Samuel Beckett transforms Yeats's heroine from the Countess Cathleen to the Countess Caca. Never mind that Waugh endorsed Lewis's theory of satire, that Gibbons's tone embodies Simmel's blasé attitude, that West's own stylizations can sound highly Steinian, that Barnes's novel partakes of the primitivism that she recognizes as a prefabricated form – for all these writers, modernism was no longer new. For the late modernists, sexual transgression had lost its shock, revolutionary manifestos had lost their urgency, and innovation had lost its originality.

Having learned modernism, then, the late modernists represented themselves as more sophisticated than the sophisticates, and their new norms of sophistication are visibly at work in their treatment of feeling. To offer only the briefest of examples, in *The Dream Life of Balso Snell*, Nathanael West's John Gilson finds it impossible to consider the idea of death "sincerely" because his thoughts inevitably take the shape of clichés:

> No matter how I form my comment I attach to it the criticisms sentimental, satirical, formal. With these judgments there goes a series of literary associations which remove me still further from genuine feeling. The very act of recognizing Death, Love, Beauty – all the major subjects – has become, from literature and exercise, impossible.[117]

Gilson's immersion in literature, his modernist critical sensibility, prevents the articulation of feeling because all such articulations are recognized as banal. Life becomes a copy of art. Not only the sentimental, but also the satirical and the formal are seen as received literary tropes that prevent an experience original with the self. Thus while modernists rejected sentimentality through various strategies (Wildean aloofness, Lewisian classicism, Eliotic impersonality), the late modernists came to see that those very strategies which had been staked out by their predecessors, and which had pointed the way to satire, failed to resolve their concerns about how to represent feeling – indeed about how to feel. For them, modernism can itself appear as either unpersuasively sentimental (as in Gibbons's version of Lawrence), or unsustainably inhuman (as in Waugh's version of Marinetti). But, either way, modernism turns out to provide more problems than solutions.

Thus many of these works remain skeptical about the reliability of feelings and their expression. In a passage that Waugh used as an epigraph for *Vile Bodies*, Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* suggests such a skepticism, although it disguises its insight as a riddle or a joke:

> "If I wasn't real," Alice said – half-laughing through her tears, it all seemed so ridiculous – "I shouldn't be able to cry."
> "I hope you don't think those are real tears?" Tweedledum interrupted in a tone of great contempt.[118]

However fictional Alice is, she is certainly no more fictional than Tweedledum, and, she would like to think, probably a little bit less so. Reading these lines from Carroll, we laugh, like Uncle Fester at the movies, at tears which, however false they may appear, stubbornly insist on their own reality. Whether tears are real tears, whether suffering is ridiculous, whether to laugh or cry – these questions preoccupy the fiction of the 1930s, suggesting that because affect itself is so mobile, so given to changing shape and guise, true feeling might never be distinguished from false.[119]

Out of this dilemma the late modernists did fashion their own solutions of a sort. For although the novels I discuss are (except for Gibbons's *Cold Comfort Farm*) generally stories of failure, decay, and abjection, and tend to be more negative and critical than affirmative or utopian, they are by no means monolithically so. Indeed, their very existence still indicates the novelistic achievement of finding a form in which to treat such pessimism or skepticism. This is by no means to say that out of the ashes of life comes the reborn phoenix of art – only that the novels examined

here of necessity discover their own representational strategies in confronting problems of feeling. Indeed, these strategies are as interesting for their own failures and contradictions as for their successes in offering clear aesthetic prescriptions or models.

Late modernist satire thus presents a cluster of questions, themes, and strategies rather than a single neat doctrine. It often advances an antihumanist strain of satire and champions various stances – restraint, irony, aloofness, ridicule, aggression – in challenging the perceived inauthenticity of sentimental feeling or moral sentiment within both modernism and its precursors. These stances sometimes endorse or even celebrate the comic-satiric work of affective regulation, ethical detachment, or defiant cruelty. Yet late modernism's wariness of compassion (and its ruses) is also frequently balanced by a creeping wariness of satire's own strategies and consequences; and thus in many novels satire breaks down or gives way to a grotesque aesthetic based in aversive feelings of uncanny anxiety, fear, and revulsion – feelings which furnish a kind of emotional bedrock or Trillingesque authenticity. This self-undoing (of) satire becomes an appealing form for late modernists because it recognizes paradoxes and problems in the moral, aesthetic, and affective standards developed during historical modernity. Late modernist satire thus registers the impact of powerful social and psychological forces on that elusive dimension of human life – how we feel.