

IMPOSSIBLE MOURNING: MELANCHOLIA AND THE MAKING OF
MODERNISM

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines Modernist literature as an aesthetic reaction to the endemic sense of loss in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Western culture. Focusing on the aesthetic, political, and ethical aspects of literary Modernism as it evolved from decadence in the 1890's through to the "high Modernism" of the early 1920's, I read the formal and stylistic innovations that define Modernist literature as attempts to narrate the complicated and paradoxical experience of Modernism—the hope and optimism for a liberal cosmopolitan social order and a profound sense of loss for the stable, idyllic past. The vacillation between these two positions becomes the “process” of Modernism; Modernist narrative literature can, therefore, be simultaneously read as both progressive and melancholic, defined as a persistent, unresolvable attitude of loss towards an object that may not have been in the subjects' possession.

While the Modernists eagerly ascribed to such values as egalitarianism, the rejection of authority, and the transformative power of art, they began to question the virtues of scientific advance, democracy, mass culture, and the possibility of absolute truth and individual freedom. I will argue that this perceived sense of loss, a pervasive feeling that the nature of individual existence has irrevocably changed, is the defining characteristic of literary Modernism. Melancholia, however, problematizes the process of memorialization and history-making, and what modernism presents as an historic loss, might also be understood as a creative absence. Any artistic attempt to make visible the greatness that we can conceive is insufficient—therefore, the affectation of the

melancholic mode is painful, dejected, inconsolable. The object of loss in these cases typically inhabits some sort of “cultural archive”—that is, it is typically a lost ideal or abstraction, a value promoted by a cultural “metanarrative” that is perceived as having passed. Therefore, the ideal (and its metanarrative) may not be actually lost, but simply absent.

DEDICATION

To my family. To Jackson, who has been denied many card games and wrestling matches by this dissertation. To Derah, who has endured with great patience the uncertainty and instability so common to those in academics—I hope the next 20 years are easier on her than the first 20 were. To Kristine, who tolerated my complaints, listened to me talk through every single idea, shouldered the load when I needed to work, and, most importantly, ordered me to “just write.” I love you madly, Kristine, and I’m sorry it took so long. It’s your turn.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	ii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION	1
Notes.....	15
CHAPTER II THEORETICAL CONTEXTS.....	16
Mourning vs. Melancholia; Absence vs. Loss	16
The Great Divide	27
Impossible Mourning, Impossible Modernism	43
Notes.....	56
CHAPTER III MELANCHOLY AESTHETICS AND THE MAKING OF MODERNISM IN SALOME REVISIONS BY STRINDBERG, WILDE, AND IBSEN	60
Introduction	60
Decadence, Loss, and Modernity	66
The Salome Plot and the Public Imagination	70
Salome as Fairy Tale	74
Sexual Salome and the New Woman	78
Death of the (Romantic) Dancer	85
Conclusion.....	88
Notes.....	92
CHAPTER IV POLITICAL MELANCHOLIA: IMPERIALIST PASTORALISM AND THE RELUCTANT MODERNISM OF E.M. FORSTER’S <i>HOWARDS END</i>	97
Introduction	97
Imperialism vs. Cosmopolitanism.....	98
The Rise of the Metropolis and the Loss of the “Known Community”	104
On the Primacy of Place.....	110
Ideological Imperialism.....	113
Forster, Qualified Modernist.....	115

Howards End and the Condition of Empire	117
Melancholic Pastoralism	128
Primitivism and Commodified Authenticity	133
Only Connect: Ethical Melancholia and Territorial Cosmopolitanism.....	137
Notes.....	140
CHAPTER V ETHICAL MELANCHOLIA: THE DEATH OF HOSPITALITY AND THE ECONOMICS OF RECIPROCITY IN JAMES JOYCE’S “THE DEAD” AND THE “ITHACA” EPISODE OF <i>ULYSSES</i>	144
Introduction	144
The Death of Hospitality	151
The Question of Hospitality	155
The Structure of Hospitality	164
Hospitality in Homeric and Biblical Texts.....	168
Modern/ist Melancholia and the Failure “Hospitality”	173
Ethical Hospitality and the Economics of Obligation.....	179
Notes.....	190
CHAPTER VI CONCLUSION.....	195
Notes.....	210
REFERENCES	211

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Every age reaccentuates in its own way the works of its most immediate past.

--Mikhail Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel"

This dissertation will describe a means of reading Modernist literature as an aesthetic reaction to the endemic sense of loss in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Western culture. A fundamental assertion will be that the formal and stylistic innovations that define Modernist literature are not merely an aesthetic exercise, but rather a reflection of the conflicts and upheavals occurring at or near the turn of the twentieth century—a politics of loss. These literary innovations narrate the complicated and paradoxical experience of Modernism—the hope and optimism for a liberal cosmopolitan social order and a profound sense of loss for the stable, idyllic past.¹ The vacillation between these two positions becomes the “process” of Modernism; Modernist narrative literature can, therefore, be simultaneously read as both melancholic *and* progressive.

The paradoxical “backwards/forwards” stance of Modernist literature seems out of step with its avant-gardism. As Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane suggest, in the introduction to their landmark collection *Modernism: 1890-1930*, “the great works of Modernism live amidst the tools of modern relativism, skepticism, and hope for secular change; but they balance on the sensibility of transition, often holding in suspension the

forces that persist from the past and those that grow from the novel present” (49). To explore this paradox, my method will be to examine the *process* of Modernism (that is, an examination of the movement as it developed from decadence in the 1890’s through to the “high Modernism” of the early 1920’s) in regard to aesthetics, politics, and ethics, and how the highly recognizable characteristics of Modernist literature are indicative of the widespread sense of loss that pervades this cultural period. The “process” of Modernism would be a disentangling from the value systems of the Enlightenment and Romanticism—that is, the primacy of rationality and freedom, in the former, and beauty and truth, in the latter. While the Modernists eagerly ascribed to such values as egalitarianism, the rejection of authority, and the transformative power of art, they began to question the virtues of scientific advance, democracy, mass culture, and the possibility of absolute truth and individual freedom. I will argue that this perceived sense of loss, a pervasive feeling that the nature of individual existence has irrevocably changed, is the defining characteristic of literary Modernism.

In utilitarian terms, “Modernism” is a retrospectively applied term describing the breadth of experimental and avant-garde literature produced in the early decades of the twentieth century. Typical of literary periodizing, however, this definition reinforces the tendency for scholars to construct sensible narratives out of seemingly unrelated events and to make sensible divisions between categories. Taxonomy as a penchant for order and sequence can obscure more fluid and productive modes of inquiry. For instance, a dark line is customarily drawn to separate the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; this conceptually impermeable borderline is reinforced by library subject headings and

academic job descriptions. Western culture did not suddenly become “modernist” on a specific date; the radical advances that occurred in culture, technology, politics, the arts, and science that were later categorized as “modernist,” although fast-moving, did not happen in the span of a decade, much less in a single year. Thus, the tendency to focus our conception of Modernist literature on the years immediately preceding and in between the first and second world wars provides limits our understanding of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century history, culture, and art. As Raymond Williams asserts, by excluding the “great realists” (e.g. Gogol, Dickens, Flaubert) from the Modernist canon (as is often done), “this version of modernism refuses to see how they devised and organized a whole vocabulary and its structure of figures of speech with which to grasp the unprecedented social forms of the industrial city” (“When Was” 49). In supporting the larger argument, this dissertation seeks to shift the focus of Modernist studies slightly to “the left,” so to speak, and consider less the “moment” of Modernism and more the process of Modernism—that evolution from romantic, realist, and naturalist literature through decadent and avant-garde literature to the highly recognizable style of canonical “high Modernist” authors such as James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, or T.S. Eliot. Reading the early Modernist works retrospectively, with knowledge of how Modernist literature would develop, provides us a new perspective that improves our understanding of the very challenging, even inscrutable, works that we now describe as “high” Modernist texts.

For these (and many other) reasons, as the field of Modernist studies continues to evolve and expand, defining “Modernism” continues to present a challenge.²

Researchers who may very well be reading the same authors and studying the same historical events may use, in reference to the literature and movements of this period, the terms Victorian, late romantic, avant-garde, or decadent. As well, Modernism can be quickly subdivided into its constituent –isms: Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Symbolism, Aestheticism, Expressionism, Cubism, Futurism, Vorticism, Dadaism. The use of these terms breeds confusion and, therefore, productive dialogue, so I do not advocate for their replacement, since consensus often becomes totalizing (as Jean-François Lyotard suggests, “...invention is always born of dissension” (xxv)). In her influential 2011 essay “Definitional Excursions: The Meanings of *Modern/Modernity/Modernism*,” Susan Friedman offers a number of critical “parataxes” to illustrate the perplexing, yet productive, contradictions in Modernist studies, leading to a simultaneous description of the terms *modern*, *modernity*, and *modernism* both as a “critical Tower of Babel, a cacophony of categories that become increasingly useless the more inconsistently they are used” and as “fertile terrain for interrogation, providing ever more sites for examination with each new meaning spawned” (497). I am in agreement with the latter perspective, and attempts to define series of categories can easily derail any critical discussion. I would instead borrow Bradbury and McFarlane’s image of Modernism as “the bow-wave of a ship” and consider Modernism as a *process* or continuum, one that cannot understood only by studying a single example or moment (22). Determining the points of origin and termination for this continuum are also difficult. For that matter, it can be just as difficult to determine the direction of travel—does Modernism face “forward” or “backward?” Perhaps it is an ontological block to

adopt the binary model at all and assume that to be looking in one direction means the exclusion of the other. As Richard Lehan suggests in *Literary Modernism and Beyond*, “the modernists were not yet willing to write off mythic and symbolic reality. They could not reconcile theories of cyclical time and history with a belief in linear evolution and mechanical progress” (9). As Jean-Michel Rabaté observes, however, most historians of philosophy use the term “modernity” to refer to “a direct route from Descartes to the Enlightenment in a movement of thought that rejected religious authority and ended up stressing the political freedom allied with scientific knowledge” (1913 9). The Modernists were not quite ready to relinquish the past (although the concept of what was “the past” was problematic, as I shall explore in the first chapter of this dissertation). Adding to the terminological confusion is the fact that anything that critiques or rejects Enlightenment views is considered “anti-modern,” while the familiar term “modernist” is reserved for “aesthetic trends and describing how the apostles of the new attacked modernity while keeping an experimental edge in literary or artistic practices” (1913 10). By applying Rabaté’s definition, we can then read Modernism as a critique of the process of modernity that is distinguished by a distinct break in its stance towards aesthetics, politics, and ethics. With regard to aesthetics, Modernism was *avant-garde*, promoting stylistic and formal innovation and rejecting preceding literary techniques. Politically, Modernism ranged from socialism to fascism, but in all cases demonstrated a commitment to individual freedom and to communities formed upon ideals as opposed to nationalities or religious traditions. In terms of ethics, Modernism concerned itself chiefly with problems of alterity—that is, the ethics of relating to and

behaving as a stranger.³ Thus, to assign a literary work the designation “Modernist” is to say that the work is in the complicated position of both upholding and rejecting Enlightenment and Romantic values, to tear down the very ramparts upon which it stood, *even as it stood atop them*.

Another typical means of defining a literary movement is by its canon—to know what Modernism *was*, we must only point to a list of its most prominent authors. This path is problematic, as well. As Friedman writes, the “heuristic tendency” when generating “definitional generalizations” is to “characterize the whole in terms of what the historian retrospectively believes to be its most influential of significant components” (509). In other words, we do not present Joyce, Woolf, and Eliot as exemplars of literary Modernism not because they demonstrate specific, agreed-upon qualities of the literary movement; instead, they are selected as the standard-bearers *a priori* and the borderlines of literary Modernism are drawn around them. To avoid this conceptual trap, we determine what the identifying characteristics of literary Modernism *are* and then consider texts that demonstrate all or some of these features. The increasingly dominant trend in Modernist studies is, as Jessica Berman writes, to approach literary Modernism as, “a dynamic set of relationships, practices, problematics, and cultural engagements with modernity, rather than a static canon of works, a given set of formal devices, or a specific range of beliefs” (*Commitments* 7). By approaching texts composed and published at or near the turn of the twentieth century in this way, we can begin to reconsider the Modernist canon.

New approaches to reading Modernist literature require an expansion of both time and space. In a 2008 *PMLA* essay, Rebecca Walkowitz and Douglas Mao describe the various expansions that define what they term the “new” Modernist studies, including not only temporal expansion, but also spatial, what they describe as the “transnational turn” of Modernist studies. Walkowitz and Mao identify three common manifestations of this transnational trend: scholarship that a) argues for the “inclusion of a variety of alternative traditions;” b) explores “transnational circulation and translation in the production of modernist art;” or c) examines how Modernists “responded to imperialism, engaged in projects of anti-colonialism, and designed new models of transnational community” (739). This dissertation in particular takes a cue from the latter two modes as it considers how Modernist literature reconciles the old world to the new. Geographically speaking, the typical division of “English literature” versus “American literature” can be problematic when approaching expatriate authors like T.S. Eliot or Henry James, who were essentially British, despite being born in America; peripheral Europeans like Joseph Conrad, Henrik Ibsen, or August Strindberg, who despite being non-native speakers are typically (or, in the case of Conrad, always) encountered in English; or “colonial” writers like Oscar Wilde or James Joyce, who frequently receive the polite nod of “& Irish” in the titles of literary anthologies, despite being Irish only by birth and entirely cosmopolitan in practice. Assigning a single country of origin to such thoroughly “English” writers as Virginia Woolf and E.M. Forster can even be problematic, considering that their literary projects largely sought to undermine the nationalist and imperialist attitudes that so shaped their native country.

A seemingly more productive approach, then, would be to plasticate the temporal and geographical boundaries of literary Modernism and instead focus on formal or stylistic features. Seeking to catalog the formal and stylistic features of such a protean body of narrative works, however, is also problematic. As Berman argues, “even where modernism seems to exhibit certain formal preoccupations, such as textual defamiliarization, refusal of strict verisimilitude, or play with the vagaries of space and time,” these formal characteristics are “neither necessary nor ubiquitous conditions” but instead symptoms of a “particular attitude toward a specific literary horizon of expectations” (*Commitments* 7). In other words, the structural features of the works are not what defines them as “Modernist,” but are instead markers of the innate attitude that distinguishes literary works of this period.⁴ Instead, Berman posits that Modernist narrative be approached as “a constellation of rhetorical actions, attitudes, or aesthetic occasions, motivated by the particular and varied situations of economic, social, and cultural modernity worldwide and shaped by the ethical and political demands of those situations” (*ibid.* 7). In other words, we can read the progressive, experimental, and even challenging features of Modernist narratives as representative of the difficult process of *becoming modern*.

Therefore, a goal of this dissertation is to explore how Modernist narratives can be read in terms of their symptomatic features; furthermore, I hope to elevate the discussion above the local, specific, or national, considering instead the more abstract aesthetic, political, and ethical struggles of Modernism. In doing so, I proceed with four basic characteristics that distinguish Modernist works of literature: Self-awareness,

appropriation, formalism, and social commitment; with the first, conspicuous self-awareness as a work of art or cultural practice, driving the latter three characteristics. The dramatic social, technological, philosophical, and political changes from the mid-nineteenth century onward forced a total reconceptualization of subjectivity and the place of the individual within the modern global community. In seeking an understanding of this redefined position, Modernist authors often looked outside of their own local (both temporally and geographically) traditions and cultural practices for “new” modes of expression. Hence, the self-aware modernist narrative might, for example, juxtapose Byzantine, British, and Oriental traditions. Consequently, this self-aware bricolage increases the emphasis on the formal structures of the work—at times seeming to elevate the form above the content. This intense self-consciousness, often phrased as the “inward turn” of Modernism has led to the axiom that Modernist narrative is by definition “introspective.”⁵ As Jesse Matz argues, however, this intense aesthetic self-consciousness is actually a product of the Modernist preoccupation with social problems, particularly those that related to the “metropolitan perception.” The new style of urban living, “wholly changed the writer’s job, by making life a matter of overwhelming crowds, lonely isolation, and cosmopolitan connections to the larger world of commerce and culture. Therefore, while Modern narratives may seem “*autotelic*—focused inward on itself, concerned only with its own styles and structures” Matz argues that they are formed in response to “public problems and responsibilities” (*Modern Novel* 79). If we examine a range of Modernist narratives, we will discover at their core some sort of social problem, be it the problem of the “New Woman,” the

horrors of imperialism, classism, economic inequality, racism, religious bigotry, and nationalism, or even the dehumanizing effects of mass media, technology, and global commerce.

Although my discussion will be arranged chronologically—beginning with the “proto-Modernism” of the 1890’s and moving through to the “high Modernism” of the interwar years—that arrangement is more a matter of convenience than an attempt to fashion a chronology of Modernist literature. Instead, my discussion is thematically organized, focusing on the three major divisions of modern critical inquiry – aesthetics, politics, and ethics.⁶ In considering these thematic areas, I will examine texts that address crises in each of these three areas.

Chapter II will provide the general theoretical and historical background that undergirds the textual analyses to follow in the later chapters. The premise from which this dissertation proceeds is that the thematic, formal, and stylistic characteristics that today define Modernist narratives are a result of the self-perception that the modern age was becoming a period of “crisis,” an age of seismic shifts in the realms of science, politics, and cultural production that threatened the stability of meaning once enjoyed by citizens of earlier eras. Whether or not this perception is true and accurate is up for debate; drawing on the fundamental theories of Sigmund Freud, I will present this generalized sense of loss as melancholia, defined as a persistent, unresolvable attitude of loss towards an object that may not have been in the subjects’ possession.

Chapter III will begin in the 1890’s, commonly given the mournful descriptor *fin de siècle*, and focus on the Modernist attempt to reconcile conflicting aesthetic

paradigms. To describe the larger paradigm, I present as one profound example of the melancholia inherent in Modernist literature the late-nineteenth century obsession with the biblical figure of Salome, the “dancing daughter” of Herodias. Salome is present in three *fin de siècle* dramatic works: August Strindberg’s *Miss Julie* (1888), Henrik Ibsen’s *Hedda Gabbler* (1890), and Oscar Wilde’s *Salome* (1891).⁷ These treatments of the Salome plot are characteristic of decadent literature and the wider artistic culture of late nineteenth-century Europe. Extending the dominant thread of scholarship in this area, which focuses on anxiety over gender performance, I will demonstrate that the anxiety that these works express is produced by the competition between aesthetic paradigms near the turn of the twentieth century. Considering the disorienting aesthetic timeline of this period—wherein idealist romanticism evolves into realist naturalism and then anti-idealist decadence and Modernism—the avant-garde artists of the day would seek, by deploying old stories, to discover new meanings. This melancholic attachment, although a reaction to perceived loss, is in fact productive in that it lays the path for what will become known as Modernism.

We may find in the Salome narratives of the late nineteenth century not only a desperate grasping for historical reference point, but, with the apex of European imperialism, a fascination with primitive and exotic cultures. The dawn of the new century saw the European empires at their most expansive; in particular, the British empire controlled one-third of the world’s population and one-quarter of the world’s landmass, including much of the “near east” and Africa.⁸ Imperialism heightened awareness of and exposure to other cultures had a profound influence on Modernist art,

in particular “primitivist” movements in visual art, music, and lyric poetry. European imperialism created new possibilities for “Modernist” cosmopolitanism, both economic and intellectual. Taken together, these works display a corresponding melancholic position that is suggestive of a particularly Modernist strain of cosmopolitanism—that valorizes stability of historical meaning—or “rootedness”—while simultaneously aspiring to create supranational communities. We can find this characteristic in Modernist novels that examine the conflict between the provincial and the global, the familiar and the strange, the self and the Other.⁹

Authors who presage “mainstream” Modernism in English all hail from the periphery, so to speak. Wilde, an Irishman, Ibsen, a Norwegian, and Strindberg, a Swede, found large audiences outside of their native lands and, for the most part, outside of their native tongues. In Chapter IV, I will be examining how the interface between the desire for this cosmopolitan existence and the longing for the “pre-modern” functions to sustain “melancholic Modernism,” particularly within the context of “the metropolis,” or the densely-populated urban centers of the various Western empires, where the majority of Modernist writers and artists lived and worked. The interaction between the metropolis and the periphery demonstrates not only the obvious dangers of overzealous economic cosmopolitanism, but also the unforeseen dangers of intellectual cosmopolitanism—by opening oneself up to the exotic Other, the “historical” self the comfort of a cohesive, comfortable subjectivity is jeopardized. Imperialism—the economic face of cosmopolitanism during this period—relaxes the literal borders of the nation and invites the periphery into the metropolis and in doing so threatens the stability

of formerly stable conceptions of place, nation, and self. As its case study, this chapter will analyze E.M. Forster's *Howards End* (1910) to consider how Modernism works to resolve the unavoidable interaction between the provincial and the global, the threat it poses to the cohesive self, and what is to be gained and lost in the transaction of intellectual cosmopolitanism.

The fifth and final chapter focuses on hospitality in “high” Modernism. Hospitality, both in theory and practice, is the (often ritualized) practice of welcoming an outsider, the means by which one hosts a guest. It is the consideration of borders, thresholds, and limits—what we should do with individuals (or even texts and ideas) that seek to cross from their place of origin and to be situated in close proximity with another individual in his or her home. In terms of textual analysis, this chapter will turn towards the consensus exemplar of high Modernism, James Joyce. In particular, I will read his most-read short story, “The Dead” (1914) against the “Ithaca” episode of his magnum opus, *Ulysses* (1922). These texts are profoundly challenging in terms of style, structure, and theme. Yet, despite the aggressive progressiveness of the technical aspects of these works, their chief thematic concerns are to situate the timeless practice of ritual hospitality within the context of modernity. By approaching the most challenging of the canonical Modernist texts in this way, I hope to also raise theoretical issues stemming from reception theory: In what ways might the interaction between text and reader, the site of exchange, be interpreted as hospitality? In what way can, does, or should the text—especially the challenging, experimental text—function as the “host?” What courtesy or sustenance does it offer the reader-as-guest? What are the limits of this

relationship? Where does it end? What if hospitality is dead, and Modernism is its elegy? The last question is particularly relevant to the overall argument of this dissertation, since it would require accepting Modernism as simultaneously melancholic and progressive, a paradoxical position that I argue is its fundamental quality.

Notes

¹ As Vicki Mahaffey writes, “The temporary apprehension of a precious, unattainable wholeness is what much modernist literature aims to recapture, through Joyce’s epiphanies—those moments of textual revelation in which the trivial and the significant exist in perfect equipoise, Woolf’s moments of being, or the ‘image’ of Imagist poetry: the presentation of an ‘intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time’” (16).

² As Bradbury and McFarlane argue, “...few ages have been more multiple, more promiscuous in artistic style; to distil from the multiplicity an overall style or mannerism is a difficult, perhaps even an impossible task” (23) .

³ As Vicki Mahaffey opines, “Modernist literature...often goes unread—dismissed because of its arcane allusions, experimental procedures, and perceived difficulty. In the popular view, modernist writing is characterized by a willful obscurity and shot through with nostalgia for a rapidly waning elite culture—a nostalgia mired in the ugly politics of the time (4).

⁴ In her book *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation*, Rebecca Walkowitz applies this “symptomatic” approach to consider how Modernist narratives work to create a sort of “critical cosmopolitanism.” In Walkowitz’s view, many of the hallmarks of Modernist style indicate a strong interest in “...conditions of limited or suspended agency” and ask the reader to consider how “conceptions of belonging are bound up in the new production, classification and reception of literary narratives” (4). I will return to Walkowitz’s work in greater detail in Chapter II.

⁵ See Fletcher and Bradbury, “The Introverted Novel.”

⁶ David Eng and David Kazanjian deploy a similar structure in their anthology *Loss*, dividing their collected essays into three parts: “Bodily Remains,” “Spatial Remains,” and “Ideal Remains.” This tripartite structure maps quite well onto my own organizational structure.

⁷ The dissertation as a whole will be focused on narrative literature, which is generally taken to indicate the novel. At this particular stage of Modernism, however, the most innovative narrative literature was to be found on the stage—the novel lagged somewhat behind with regard to literary experimentation.

⁸ For an expanded discussion on the effects of British imperialism on the modern world, see Niall Ferguson’s *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power*.

⁹ A broadening area of Modernist studies is “transnational” Modernism, which considers non-peripheral texts, largely written by non-European authors and especially authors from colonial states. My method will be to apply much of the “transnationalist” approach to Eurocentric authors. For excellent discussion on transnational and cosmopolitan Modernism, see works by Jessica Berman, Rebecca Walkowitz, Jahan Ramazani, and Susan Stanford Friedman.

CHAPTER II
THEORETICAL CONTEXTS

Melancholy betrays the world for the sake of knowledge. But in its tenacious self-absorption it embraces dead objects in its contemplation, in order to rescue them.

--Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*

Mourning vs. Melancholia; Absence vs. Loss

In “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” Walter Benjamin outlines the practice of “historical materialism,” a means of studying the past in a way that establishes an active and open relationship with it, engages in a creative practice that connects the past with the present, and makes the past available to the future. In Benjamin’s view, those who engage in “historicism,” on the other hand, prefer to “blot out everything they know about the later course of history” and seek an “‘eternal’ image of the past,” whereas “historical materialism supplies a unique experience with the past” (262). To engage in historicism is to fixate the past, to subjugate it in service to “the victor,” as opposed to historical materialism, which seeks a range of “alternate empathies” in service of the future.¹ In his view, to engage in historical materialism is to seek an ethical engagement with the past.

As David L. Eng and David Kazanjian suggest in the introduction to the anthology *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, Benjamin’s essay “might be described as a treatise on the political and ethical stakes of mourning remains—mourning what remains

of lost histories and well as histories of loss” (1). By not simply establishing casual connections between past events, for to do so is to buttress the claims to power of “the victor,” one is obligated to seek creative means of representation that will allow the dead to speak to the living and create a productive tension between the past, present, and future—that is, to grieve ethically. The study of the remains of the past is essentially a study of loss, and “the politics of mourning might be described as that creative process mediating a hopeful or hopeless relationship between loss and history (Eng and Kazanjian 2). As Benjamin suggests, historicism is “a process of empathy whose origin is the indolence of the heart, *acedia*, which despairs of grasping and holding the genuine historical image as it flares up briefly” (256). As he suggests, this attempt to reconcile the past, to create a “universal history” is the origin of sadness, for it concedes the past as lost. Comparatively, historical materialism, in its effort to re-animate history, to keep the past alive in the present, could be said to be a melancholic practice, in that it refuses to completely relinquish the past or accept consolation. In other words, while both mourning and melancholia are acts of grief, mourning seeks to move beyond the grief by affixing a static meaning to the loss, whereas melancholia refuses resolution, thereby keeping the loss interminably alive.

The core argument of this dissertation is that the recognized features of Modernist narratives are a reflection of this melancholic politics of loss. Modernist literature is recognized for challenging its readers through its evasiveness, disregard for convention, and experimentalism.² The “challenging fictions” of Modernism (to borrow Mahaffey’s term) represent an internal struggle between hopefulness and hopelessness,

between redemption and consolation, in the face of the rapid and overwhelming social, political, technological, philosophical, and scientific advances of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. These advances rendered the existing means of understanding and representing the world essentially useless. General notions borne by the Enlightenment and by Romanticism failed to accommodate the new ways of being, and the narrative conventions that preceded this era could not adequately express this sense of loss. As Tammy Clewell notes in *Mourning, Modernism, Postmodernism*, Modernist authors “recognized the need to mourn a range of cataclysmic social events, including the slaughter of war, modernization of culture, and the disappearance of God and tradition” (1). Despite its fecundity, Modernism was a practice of grief.

For the purposes of this dissertation, it is important to distinguish between the two modes of grief. In common use, there are two distinct psychological responses to loss: mourning and melancholia. Although the two terms are closely related, both describing the abject grief and dejection experienced by an individual following the loss of an important person, thing, or ideal, Although the concept of melancholia as a mental and physical condition has existed since ancient times, contemporary discourse proceeds from the psychological model initially laid out by Sigmund Freud in his 1917 essay, “Mourning and Melancholia,” in which he bifurcates the two as independent, contrasting states of being. As a grief practice, mourning is identified by a disengagement from one’s normal behavior, coupled with an exhibition of dejection and loss of interest in the outside world, and, in extreme cases, a complete refusal of new objects of love or participation in any action that does not relate directly to the lost object. As Freud

writes, to mourn (in the pathological sense) is to “lose interest in the outside world—except as it recalls the deceased” and to lose the “ability to choose any new love-object—which would mean replacing the mourned one—turning away from any task that is not related to the memory of the deceased.” Within this framework, mourning is considered a normal, healthy reaction to loss, one that persists for a certain period of time and that is “pointless, or even damaging” to interrupt (204). We are allowed to—in fact, encouraged to—excuse ourselves from socially normative behavior to mourn our losses. The eventual goal, or “work,” of mourning (what Freud terms *Trauerarbeit*, translated as either “mourning work” or “sorrow work”) is to bring the subject back to equilibrium; through a process of “reality-testing” the mourning subject will come to comprehend that the “beloved object no longer exists,” and will then sever the bonds of the libido with that object. The subject’s libidinal attachment is then focused on a new object and the ego is “left free and uninhibited again” (204-205). As Alessia Ricciardi observes, “mourning is not simply an emotion for Freud, but the performance of a work that, like interpretation, is a psychically transformative activity” (21). This process is understood to be painful, difficult, and long; however, it is important to note that it does have a terminus, ending when the libidinal cathexes are reassigned to a new object.

In Freud’s original model, melancholia operates much the same as mourning, except with two important differences. Most seriously, for the melancholic, grief is accompanied by self-recrimination and an expectation of punishment (204).

Melancholia can produce intense anger or hatred, which, although primarily self-directed, can also be directed outward. Secondly, melancholia differs from mourning in

its duration. Whereas mourning, although a tedious process, does have a terminus, melancholia is of indeterminate duration, frequently ending only with the death of the sufferer (typically by suicide).³ Melancholia is an ongoing state of being with no fixed endpoint; it is considered “unsuccessful” mourning. In other words, Freud’s framework distinguishes melancholia as characteristic of an arrested process in which the subject is locked in compulsive repetition, consumed by the past, and narcissistically identified with the lost object, whereas mourning brings the possibility of a reinvestment in life that would allow the subject to proceed. Conceived as such, melancholia is the refusal to complete the work of mourning.

Although grief is understood as the range of reactions to the loss of a loved one, Freud explains that grief can also occur with the loss of “an abstraction taking the place of the person, such as fatherland, freedom, an ideal and so on” (203). Indeed, one may grieve a wide range of abstractions, including but not limited to one’s self-identity with regard to nation, class, ethnicity, or gender; a commitment to a political belief or a moral code; familial or geographic affinities; or even the disappearance of coveted ideals, such as “truth,” “beauty,” or “freedom.”

But why does mourning sometimes not succeed? What blocks the typical progress of grief that we see in mourning? Why cannot the subject sever the libidinal ties to the lost object and reassign them to a new object? Freud suggests several possible causes. First, he implies that melancholia may emerge as a response to “ideal,” rather than “real” forms of loss—for example, one’s lover may not have died, but instead suddenly cease to be a love-object (as in Freud’s example of a the jilted bride). In this

case, the loss may be considered traumatic, in that it occurred so suddenly that it could not be accommodated by the psyche; mourning is not successfully completed because the object still exists, but in a radically different relation to the subject, thereby obstructing the subject's attempts to reassign his or her desire to a new object.

Alternately, melancholia may occur if the subject has an important aspect of his or her identity altered (e.g. nation, title, station). The subject may not be able to conclude the process of mourning because it may seem that it is outside of an individual's ability to either recover the lost object or to identify a new object of desire. (Or, as I shall discuss, they may resist "working through" the grief out of fidelity to the lost object.) Secondly, the subject may not consciously comprehend what has been lost; even if the loss is known, the subject may not fully comprehend what that loss actually means (205).⁴

Because some change is evident, but the object of loss is obscured or unknown, the subject will find it impossible to conclude the work of mourning. Thirdly, the process of mourning may be obstructed because of the subject's ambivalent feelings towards the lost object—whereas he may consciously believe that he loved, he may instead actually be harboring subconscious hostility. Paradoxically, then, the melancholic may harbor ambivalence, and yet steadfastly refuse to relinquish connection. This refusal to mourn, to "let it go," is what distinguishes melancholia from mourning. To be melancholic is to be resolutely inconsolable. As Judith Butler comments, "the melancholic refuses the loss of the object, and internalization becomes a strategy of magically resuscitating the lost object, not only because the loss is painful, but because the ambivalence felt toward the

object requires that the object be retained until the differences are settled” (61-62). In this conception, resolution is never achieved, thus the indeterminacy of melancholia.

One major problem with attempting to apply Freud’s models to cultural studies and literary analysis is that deploying it as a pre-established critical method is severely limiting. As Seth Moglen observes in *Modernism and Loss*, Freud’s model was intended to analyze “private experiences of bereavement” and may therefore not “adequately capture the complex challenges of mourning collective injuries produced by historically particular social phenomena” (11). Although he frequently dabbled in literary analysis himself, his primary work was with individuals in therapeutic consultation and not with creative works of art. Yet his discourse as a whole is widely appropriated by cultural critics with little regard for the variants in focus that produced particular concepts or methods. In keeping with the conventions of psychoanalytic cultural criticism this dissertation moves from the model of individual loss to broader cultural phenomena patterning such loss on a communal scale. My method is not to apply the psychoanalytic method to a particular author or character, for example. Instead, my objective is to examine how Modernism, as a period of literary practice, addresses loss on a broad, socio-cultural and historical scale. My claim is that individual works in the transitional years at the beginning of the modernist period shared a pattern of response to social change that meshes with the individual patterns of response to loss. Therefore, Freud’s concepts provide a framework for the analyses, but one that is broadened to account for collective action and for aesthetic practice.

First, however, it is important to acknowledge the variants in Freud's own writing; notoriously self-reflective, he frequently revised his ideas years after initially publishing them (which, ironically, could be considered a melancholic practice). For instance, in his 1923 work *The Ego and the Id*, Freud revisited the idea that melancholia was merely an "unsuccessful" attempt to mourn, and asserted that melancholia, rather than being a "pathological" condition was a necessary stage of ego formation and a precondition for successful mourning. In completing the "work" of loss, the loss object is recreated by the subject's ego—a process Freud terms "introjection." This action maintains fidelity to the lost other by sustaining it through acts of imitation. As previously mentioned, however, the process of grieving may be problematized by a previously unacknowledged ambivalence towards the lost object; in Freud's revised model, the act of internalizing this ambivalence is what produces the self-reproach or hostility he identifies in "Mourning and Melancholia." As he had initially proposed, pathological melancholia may be successfully explained by supposing that, for the melancholic, object-cathexis is replaced by identification—the hostility or ambivalence felt towards the lost object is subsumed by the subject. Freud extends this notion, however, by claiming that this substitution has "a great share in determining the form taken by the ego" and makes an "essential contribution" to what is commonly termed as "character" (18). Rather than *opposing* mourning, melancholia may well be the only means by which the ego can endure the emotional pain of loss. Therefore, in his later framework, Freud casts melancholia not merely as a pathological state, but a necessary

phase of mourning, one through which the character of the ego is constructed (19). In other words, we *become* our losses.⁵

Applying Freud's paradigm—as articulated in “Mourning and Melancholia”—wholesale to literary analysis can be problematic, however, because it invites oversimplified categorization of complicated processes.⁶ I am in strong agreement with Jahan Ramazani when he cautions against devolvement into simple binary oppositions, such as modern vs. traditional or normative vs. melancholic. To do so risks flattening out the historical and literary complexities that influence the texts to be analyzed (9). In *Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney* (considered the foundation of the contemporary discourse on melancholia, mourning, and Modernism), Ramazani avoids this polarization by offering the hybrid phrase “melancholic mourning” to describe the posture of Modernist elegists, who self-consciously pursue the work of mourning but who resemble Freud's melancholic in their “fierce resistance to solace” and their “intense criticism and self-criticism.” Unlike their predecessors, the Modernist mourners “attack the dead and themselves, their own work and tradition; and they refuse such orthodox consolations as the rebirth of the dead in nature, in God, or in poetry itself” (4). Ramazani's offering of the operational term “melancholic mourning” is a rejection of Freud's (initial) rigid distinction between the two modes of mourning and an acknowledgement of the high degree of overlap between mourning and melancholia. The loss of clarity provided by clear demarcations is compensated for by a far more nimble, adaptable paradigm, one that better represents the complex, and often contradictory, experience of grief. As Nouri Gana argues in *Signifying Loss: Towards a*

Poetics of Narrative Mourning, the purpose of sustaining the discourse on Freud's seminal work, *vis-à-vis* Modernist literature, is "neither to accentuate nor to attenuate the differences or similarities between mourning and melancholia," but rather to "to study the implications of the narrative confluence between mourning and literary tropes, or figures, by discerning both the potencies and limits of such a confluence for an ethically and politically responsible practice of mourning" (179, 10). By seeking resolution and comprehension through concrete definition of "terms," we do violence to the practice of grief, by narrowing it, confining, and disallowing simultaneous meanings. To paraphrase Jacques Derrida, *success fails* and *failure succeeds* (*Mémoires* 35).

Similarly, Dominick LaCapra has interrogated the common tendency to conflate *loss* with *absence*, pointing out that "the temptation is indeed great to conflate one with the other, particularly in post-traumatic situations or periods experienced in terms of crisis" (179). Although LaCapra also discourages rigid binary oppositions, we can in a broad sense distinguish absence and loss in that, in the case of the latter, the loss is actual, historical, corporeal, or tangible; whereas, in the case of the former, the loss is only perceived, never having existed at all. As for reasons why the conflation of absence and loss is so tempting, LaCapra suggests that "the conversion of absence into loss gives anxiety an identifiable object...and generates the hope that anxiety may be eliminated or overcome." Whether consciously or not, the anxiety related to absence is less preferable to the anxiety of loss, as it has little possibility of being overcome or resolved (and this impossibility is a likely source of the blame and hostility that the melancholic directs at others). In contrast, by converting absence into loss, "one assumes that there was (or at

least could be) some original unity, wholeness, security, or identity that others have ruined, polluted, or contaminated and thus made ‘us’ lose” (183). This process of converting absence to loss is often termed “nostalgia,” indicating a sentimental longing for an idealized past.

This conversion of absence into loss can have serious political implications. Mourning could be seen not only as “individual or quasi-transcendental grieving” but as a “homeopathic socialization or ritualization of the repetition-compulsion that attempts to turn it against the ‘death drive’ and counteract compulsiveness by re-petitioning in ways that allow for a measure of critical distance, change, resumption of social life, ethical responsibility, and renewal.” In contrast, melancholy produces an “impossibly mournful response to the closure of metaphysics, a generalized ‘hauntology,’” that problematizes our interpretation and critical evaluation of historical trauma (LaCapra 189-190). This attachment to an idealized past can be problematic, as melancholia has the capacity to obscure the difficult truth that the object of desire was never really lost, but was lacking from the very beginning. As Giorgio Agamben observes, in such instances of melancholia—where absence is indefinitely mourned as loss—the libido stages a “simulation,” creating a “phantasmal” object, a fabrication of what the subject wishes the object to be, an object that often bears little resemblance to the “real” object (20). Slavoj Žižek clarifies this notion, claiming that “what melancholy obfuscates is that the object is lacking from the very beginning, that its emergence coincides with its lack, that this object is nothing but the positivization of a void or lack, a purely anamorphic entity that does not exist in itself (660).⁷ In other words, by transforming absence into

loss, before we are able to possess the desired object, we are first obliged to create it. This process of “anamorphosis,” although a creative act, “undermines the distinction between objective reality and its distorted subjective perception” (659). As LaCapra warns, when absence and loss are conflated, “melancholic paralysis or manic agitation may set in, and the significance or force of particular losses...may be obfuscated or rashly generalized,” or, worse, allowing those who did not suffer the loss to appropriate it, allowing “identity formation that makes invidious and ideological use of traumatic series of events in foundational ways or as symbolic capital (186). Formulating an identity on an untrue past, to inject the phantasmal object into one’s narrative of self-identity, not only lays false claim to a non-existent loss, but distorts subjectivity, thereby creating an impossibility that problematizes the process of mourning.⁸ I shall return to this notion of the “impossibility” of mourning, *vis-à-vis* Modernism, at the end of this introduction.

The Great Divide

This dissertation argues that the recognized thematic, formal, and stylistic advances of Modernist narratives are symptomatic of the creative process of melancholia, a process that also engendered the common perception that the modern age was a period of “crisis.”⁹ Therefore, if the fundamental assertion of this dissertation is that the stance of Modernist literature is fundamentally melancholic, my argument cannot progress any distance without proposing some possible causes of this melancholia. My end-goal is that, in examining what was believed to be lost, we may

come to some satisfying conclusions as to what was *gained* through the process of Modernism. As Eng and Kazanjian suggest, "...loss is inseparable from what remains, for what is lost is known only by what remains of it, by how these remains are produced, read, and sustained" (2). Ellipsis and omission work well enough in Modernist literature, but they function well in literary criticism; therefore, the question is worth asking—*what did Modernism mourn?*

Modernism grieved the perceived chasm that separated it from tradition, from the entire breadth of human intellectual, artistic, and technological history. For instance, in his inaugural lecture as the first Chair of Mediaeval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge University in 1954, C.S. Lewis offers an eloquent justification for the combining of the two historical eras under one chair, a decision which at that time was considered either impressively progressive or a serious injustice. In Lewis's view, the combination is entirely appropriate, as he goes on to argue that the "Great Divide" of Western history is most sensibly established not between the Mediaeval or Renaissance periods (or, for that matter, between Antiquity and the Dark Ages or between the Dark Ages and the Middle Ages), but rather between *all* of history and the "present" age—what we now describe as "Modernity." Lewis relates that his chief attraction to the newly created post was that it encouraged his own lingering belief that the "barrier between those two ages has been greatly exaggerated" (1). He goes on to refute all other possible historiographic divisions, supporting instead the claim that "...the greatest of all

divisions in the history of the West [is] that which divides the present from, say, the age of Jane Austen and Scott” (7). In support of this assertion, Lewis colorfully illustrates,

When Watt makes his engine, when Darwin starts monkeying with the ancestry of Man, and Freud with his soul, and the economists with all that is his, then indeed the lion will have got out of its cage. Its liberated presence in our midst will become one of the most important factors in everyone’s daily life.

(7)

The argument, then, is that a contemporary of Shakespeare or even Virgil would find the culture and literature of Lord Byron’s age more familiar than would Byron find the age of Wilde, Conrad, or Woolf. In the classic text of Modernist criticism, *Modernism, 1890-1930*, Bradbury and McFarlane offer a similarly hyperbolic description of the Great Divide between Modernism and its preceding ages. In describing the work of cultural historians as “cultural seismology,” wherein scholars attempt to “record shifts and displacements of sensibility that regularly occur in the history of art and literature and thought,” they distinguish between three orders of magnitude, with the third being the category reserved for “overwhelming dislocations, those cataclysmic upheavals of culture, those fundamental convulsions of the creative human spirit that seem to topple even the most solid and substantial of our beliefs and assumptions, [...] question an entire civilization or culture, and stimulate frenzied rebuilding” (19). Their sense, then, is that the decades leading up to and immediately after the turn of the twentieth century are somehow different than other historical thresholds, mainly because of the rapidity, magnitude, and breadth of the changes that occurred.¹⁰

Paradoxically, despite its breakneck progressiveness, Modernism is affixed to the past. Unlike many other artistic periods or historical eras, this duality was not identified post hoc, and it did not go unnoticed by those who experienced it. The Modernists *knew* that they were in the midst of change, *because they themselves manufactured a discourse of historical schism*, and this fact undergirds many of the critical assumptions that scholars make about Modernist literature. For example, in the introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, Michael Levenson writes that “crisis is inevitably the central term of art in discussions of this turbulent cultural moment,” going on to suggest that those attendant to the turning of the twentieth century quickly realized that it would be “the epoch of crisis, real and manufactured, physical and metaphysical, material and symbolic” (4).¹¹

A Latin loan, the word *crisis* originates from the Greek (κρίνειν) “to decide.” To say, then, that the word is overused in our own time is not unfair; if we are to consider Modernism as a “crisis,” we benefit from disregarding present connotations of strife and instead focus on the denotation as “a deciding point.” In *The Legitimation Crisis*, Jürgen Habermas observes that, “Prior to its employment as a social-scientific term, the concept of crisis was familiar to us from its medical usage. In that context it refers to the phase of an illness in which it is decided whether or not the organism’s self-healing powers are sufficient for recovery” (1). The implication is that “a crisis” is the point at which a conflict ceases to be an objective, external process and becomes a subjective, internalized process. In other words, the issue in question only becomes visible as a problem when it reaches the point of crisis, when it becomes clear that, beyond a simple

matter of fate or chance, the solution to the problem at hand requires the participation of those who suffer from it. We will approach Modernism as a point in the cultural history of the West in which it was broadly acknowledged that all that was known about art, science, and politics was either in the process of or on the verge of complete and utter change.¹² As Steve Giles adds, Modernism can be understood as a “radical aesthetic response” to a profound sense of cultural crisis following from “the disintegration of the Providential world picture, the depredations of imperialist capitalism, the collapse of traditional notions of self and character in the work of Nietzsche and Freud, and the undermining of long-standing assumptions about language and reality” (175-176). In short, the radical advances in, to use Immanuel Kant’s categories, science, morality, and art created a sense of crisis to which Modernism became the reaction—one could offer the paradox that modernity necessitated Modernism to explain itself.

As Richard Sheppard observes in his essay “The Problematics of European Modernism,” a common tendency in Modernist studies is to bring the recognized “traits” of Modernist literature into focus by “setting them in a one-dimensional historical, literary-historical, or sociological context” (3). It is this approach that has provided so many iterations of the Modernist “crisis.” For instance, in his 2011 survey of Modernism, Levenson describes a “crisis of ideology.” In depicting Modernism as an “oppositional culture,” he argues that the artists of the “precursor” phase of Modernism shared “an adversarial temper” that caused them to resist “the complacency of official culture that dominated the publishing industry, the venues of performance, and the pages of the mass circulation journals and newspapers” and create an aesthetic discourse that

was “fundamentally discursive, the challenge of propositions, ideas, and theories.” As Levenson writes, “from the 1880’s on, the sheer proliferation of forms, movements, manifestos, and experimental works indicated an openness to novelty that was itself a form of social insurgency” (*Cambridge* 18, 17). Novelty, by definition, however, cannot be maintained. As Levenson suggests, “The 1890s, once the decade of novelty, became in hindsight the decade of exhaustion. Acts of repudiation were grandly performed; recent novelty was reinterpreted as obsolescence” (*ibid.* 48).¹³

The proliferation of novelty relates directly to another commonly identified crisis of Modernism—a crisis of representation. In his oft-cited foreword to Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition*, Fredric Jameson defines this crisis as Modernism’s rejection of “an essentially realistic epistemology, which conceives of representation as the reproduction, for subjectivity, of an objectivity that lies outside it [and] projects a mirror theory of knowledge and art, whose fundamental evaluative categories are those of adequacy, accuracy, and Truth itself” (vii). The rise of such movements as Symbolism, Surrealism, and Dada are radical examples of the rejection of realism and the limitations of mimesis and the desire for increased autonomy for artistic practice. As Habermas notes, “the autonomy of the aesthetic sphere could then become a deliberate project: the talented artist could lend authentic expression to those experiences he had in encountering his own de-centered subjectivity, detached from the constraints of routinized cognition and everyday action” (“Modernism” 9). In Habermas’ view, by separating art from any sort of social or cultural function, to make it responsible only to itself, art seeks a reconciliation with society. Unfortunately, this reconciliation was

doomed, for “art had become a critical mirror, showing the irreconcilable nature of the aesthetic and social world,” and, the “Modernist transformation” was painfully realized (“Modernism” 10). Walter Benjamin describes this attitude as a “negative theology” that not only denied “any social function of art but also any categorizing by subject matter.” As Benjamin argues, the salvation of art comes in the form of mechanical reproduction, which “emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual.” When art—be it the photograph or novel—is produced specifically for reproduction and distribution, “the total function of art is reversed” and becomes not based on ritual, but on the practice of politics (224). In other words, the mystical “aura” or immediate presence of a work diminishes in importance as it instead becomes a practice of documentation—the work itself develops an “exhibition value” that is greater than its “ritual value” (226).

In taking up this role, Modernist narrative opens itself to further problems of memory, perception, authenticity—all of which directly relate to the work of mourning. To mourn the loss of an object is to arrive at some conclusion of what the loss represents, to offer testimony to it, to explain its history. In *Literary Modernism and Beyond*, Richard Lehan approaches Modernism as a “crisis of history,” describing it as a “state of mind” that involved a search for “an idealized reality—a quest for some kind of presence connected to the unfolding of time” (5). In Lehan’s view, “The idea of the beautiful was reinforced by theories of myth and symbol, leading to the idea of spatial form, the universalizing of modernism, the cyclicity of history, and the inevitability of historical decline” (x). Lehan also describes the general approach of Modernist artists—

visual and literary alike—as a “layering” of spatial and narrative meaning, a method conceptually analogous to the archaeological layering popularized by Heinrich Schliemann, who had, in the late 19th century, discovered the historical city of Troy. In Lehan’s words, “if Modernists turned to the past...it was to the historical past made mythic, to the layering of past and present events to suggest the simultaneity of historical event, the universality or mythic oneness of time (16). This notion of the “layering” of meaning and the grief for a singular temporality is echoed by Ronald Schleifer, who suggests in *Modernism and Time* that the various sorts of “abundance” created by the radical advances of the early twentieth century led to a departure from the Enlightenment-era concept of time—i.e. Isaac Newton’s “absolute, true, and mathematical” time, which is singular, universal, and constant in its forward progress (37). In its stead, Modernists had to contend with the idea that there could be different “types” of time; beyond the absolute truth of mechanically standardized time, temporality could be individual, subjective, and multi-layered (79).¹⁴ Certainly, a complete radicalization of such a fundamental concept as the function of time could be considered a significant loss, and we can find evidence of mourning work in the challenging narrative forms of many Modernists. Consider, for example, the temporal disparities of Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*, which advances a decade in a matter of pages, Joyce’s *Ulysses*, which advances only a dozen hours in hundreds of pages, and Hemingway’s *In Our Time*, which steps in and out of the past and present with little to no indication of how the individual episodes interconnect. Yet, each of these texts

embraces temporal variance as the crisis that justifies particular aesthetic experiments and adaptations

Each of these crises relates in some way to a radical rupture in the concept of time that took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. To be in modernity is to be self-conscious of one's existence in an historical moment that is fundamentally defined as having moved beyond those moments that preceded it.¹⁵ As Jonathan Flatley writes, we must only look at the etymology of 'modernity' – from *modernus*, meaning “now” or “of today” to understand that it is essentially separated from “before.” Yet modernity names a period that begins centuries before the modernist recognition of crisis, of a break with the past. While the forward focus of Modernism demands the exhilaration of the avant-garde, as Habermas argues, this new time consciousness, “does more than express the experience of mobility in society, acceleration in history, or discontinuity in everyday life. The new value placed on the transitory, the elusive, and the ephemeral, the very celebration of dynamism, discloses the longing for an undefiled, an immaculate and stable present” (5). By moving from the traditional conception of time as cyclical, ever-repeating, the modern culture thus achieves progress, looking forward to the promise of the future; however, this acute sense of temporality engenders a profound sense of loss, an acknowledgement of being separated from an idyllic state of being wherein time did not pass in measured units, marching inexorably towards a terminus. This idyll and our attempts to access it have been given many names—*thanatos*, the death drive, the Real, Eden, the Archive, Once Upon a Time.¹⁶

Modernist art and literature create a productive tension between this urge to retain the solidity of the past while articulating the experience of living in a world re-shaped by speed, communication, and technology. T.S. Eliot famously referred to “contemporary history” as an “immense panorama of futility and anarchy” while praising the success of Joyce’s *Ulysses* integrating myth as a means of “manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity” (175). A resulting tension is thus created between the urge to look forward in anticipation of an idealized future while being compelled to preserve the past against the advancement of historical decline; As Levenson writes, “set against a society organized around comfort and respectability, appetite and nostalgia, a true art will violently recover something ancient that has been forgotten, even as it creates something new that has never been anticipated. It will necessarily be out of harmony with its own time” (3). This discordance is the fundament of Modernist narrative and explains such characteristic features as unstable narrative points of view, ellipses, recursiveness, parataxis, allusiveness, and pastiche, collage, and bricolage.

Lewis’ “great divide” and Bradbury and McFarlane’s “cataclysmic upheaval” are not merely matters of technological breakthroughs, political revolutions, or philosophical schisms, but a total reconfiguration of the individual’s relationship to history and geography, or, more simply put, the very fabric of time and space.¹⁷ The drastic revision of these basic dimensions of human existence change not only one’s individual experience-as-lived, but also upend the means by which one conceives and articulates it.¹⁸

The radical reconfiguration of time and space was an unavoidable byproduct of the Industrial Revolution and the ascension of global capitalism, shifts that occur well before the twentieth century artist recognized them as critical crises. The development of reliable steam power and, later, the internal combustion engine dramatically reconfigured concepts of “society.” Prior to the widespread use of the locomotive and the automobile, the extent of one’s community was bounded by the distance one could comfortably travel on the back of a horse. Large cities—Paris, London, New York, Munich—certainly existed, of course, but it was not until the advent of steam power that that urban centers swelled to become the teeming metropolises of the modern age. Prior to the late nineteenth century, the common existence in the West was agrarian and rural, with the individual experience of time being completely local, dictated by the seasons, the rhythms of plants and animals, and the cyclical movements of astrological bodies. Although time had for centuries been divided into arbitrary units such as hour, day, month, week, these measures were by no means universal, and times and dates often differed from region to region, country to country, or even city to city. The expansion of railways throughout Europe and America created an altogether new problem—there was no reliable way of knowing when a locomotive would arrive or depart. The first standardized time system was employed by British railways in 1847, when local times were replaced with “railway time,” which was synchronized to Greenwich Mean Time; in the United States, the nationwide standardization of railway times was not established until 1883.¹⁹ But, as Lewis Mumford famously argued in his 1934 text *Technics and Civilization*, it is “the clock, not the steam-engine, [that is] the key-machine of the

modern industrial age,” not only because it, in its complexity and craftsmanship, marks a “perfection toward which other machines aspire,” but because in its essential nature “dissociated time from human events and helped create the belief in an independent world of mathematically measurable sequences” (14-15). The standardization of time, coupled with the “industrial geography” of the modern city and the omnipresent force of the free market, completely upended the conventional notion of individual time by dividing one’s individual experience with time into “public” and “private” segments.

Anthony Giddens terms this segmentation as the “commodification” of time and space, arguing that the differentiation of commodified time and space is “integrally related to the coordination of activity involved in labor discipline in the workplace; to the severance of work from ‘free time’ as sequential segments of a life governed by routine rather than by tradition; and to the severance of human beings from nature through the transformation of urban space through the prevalence of the ‘created environment’ of contemporary urbanism” (16). Furthermore, as Steve Giles explains, “the monetization of the relations in social life transforms time-space experience by, for example imposing ever stricter temporal regimes on the working day, while capitalist commodity exchange requires increasingly efficient spatial organization as well as more rapid turnover time of capital” (179). In contemporary culture, the differentiation between public and private time and space is not often examined—we take for granted a division between the two (it would be inconceivable, for instance, to any person living in a developed country in the present day to *not* be continuously aware of the “correct”

time). Furthermore, it is incomprehensible to us that anyone would reject the authority of standard time.

The establishment of standard time, however, can be read as a form of oppression, a means of homogenizing society, an attack on free, unrestricted, idiosyncratic time. Despite personal, philosophical opposition to the standardization of time, to the contemporary reader, the reordering of time might seem a relatively trivial matter, a simple adjustment to one's daily patterns (interpellated as we are in modern, industrial society). The standardization of time had, however, a profound effect on artistic output.²⁰ One of Kern's most interesting premises is that the strong reaction to the establishment of a World Standard Time in the artistic and philosophical communities can help to explain the avant-gardism of Modernist narrative and spatial arts:

The assault on a universal, unchanging, and irreversible public time was the metaphysical foundation of a broad cultural challenge to traditional notions about the nature of the world and man's place in it. The affirmation of private time radically interiorized the locus of experience. It eroded conventional views about the stability and objectivity of the material world and of the mind's ability to comprehend it. Man cannot know the world "as it really is" if he cannot know what time it really is. If there are as many private times as there are individuals, then every person is responsible for creating his own world from one moment to the next, and creating it alone.

(314)

The standardization of time is therefore a political action, a means of establishing hegemony—to control time is to control history. It is worth noting that the Prime Meridian Conference of 1884, which effectively located the “center” of world time in Britain, occurred in the same year of the Berlin Conference, which essentially divided up the continent of African between the European imperial powers. That the entire planet should also be divided up into time “zones,” each of which is relative to England precipitated also a new sense of geography, of center and periphery. As Adam Barrows notes, the Observatory “set the cosmopolitan standard for measuring historical progression and provided the infrastructure for modernity’s project of uniformity and homogeneity” (263). Thus, the Greenwich Royal Observatory becomes the physical embodiment of not only the British Empire’s dominance of global geography, but also of global time, and, therefore, the physical representation of the imperial metropolis.

These latter two qualities—the “imperial” and the “metropolis” provide another means understanding the Modernist aesthetic, which is in many ways a product of the discovery and absorption of non-Western colonial cultures’ own aesthetic practices.²¹ Given that the most notable characteristic of Modernist literature is its aesthetic experimentation, particularly such deeply personal techniques as interior monologue and stream of consciousness, colonialism and imperialism—both large-scale, external problems—may not seem one of the core areas of interest for Modernist studies; however, as Raymond Williams asserts, the development of Modernism “had much to do with imperialism: with the magnetic concentration of wealth and power in imperial capitals and the simultaneous cosmopolitan access to a wide variety of subordinate

cultures” (“Metropolis” 20). The vast and sufficiently advanced culture of the metropolis allows both for the existence of academies and museums that hold the authority of the cultural archive and the dissident cultures who reject the orthodoxy of these cultural institutions. Simultaneously, their position as the centers of imperialism provide these dissidents exposure to exotic, less-advanced, “authentic” cultures and aesthetic practices.

This new binary—the metropole vs. the colony—contributes to Modernist melancholia. One of the first scholars to explore the relationship between Modernism and imperialism at great length was Frederic Jameson, whose his basic premise is that the “structure of imperialism” makes its mark on the “inner forms and structures of that new mutation in literary and artistic language to which the term modernism is largely applied” (44).²² As a Marxist critic, Jameson frames his discussion of imperialism in terms of economics, emphasizing the relationship between the imperial center and the colony, a relationship of economic subjugation, as opposed to violence (48). The older conception of imperialism—which emphasizes the political strife between competing imperial powers—completely disregards the position of the colonial other, while the modern conception of imperialism shifts from a “horizontal” to a “vertical” perspective that demands a consideration of the intellectual, aesthetic, and philosophical hierarchies between the imperial metropolis and the colonial other. In other words, read from this perspective, modernist literature invites consideration of the situation of the individual subject—whether the “metropolitan” subject, the “colonial” subject, or the “cosmopolitan” subject—in regard to their relationship to and attitude towards the

central source of imperial power. This awareness of the spatial separation between the imperial center and the colony creates an awareness that every individual is now to varying degrees “outside” the locus of the imperial center.

Furthermore, the force of imperialism also means that even if the subject physically inhabits the “center,” the very existence of the periphery creates an awareness of the spatially vast system of which one is unavoidably a part. Although the majority of canonical Modernists inhabited an imperial metropolis—e.g. Forster, Woolf, and Conrad in London, Hemingway and Wilde in Paris, Strindberg in Berlin, Ibsen in Munich, Wharton in New York—their own experiences as-lived located them still outside the center of power. As Jameson suggests, the structure of imperialism dictates that “a significant structural segment of the economic system as a whole is now located elsewhere, beyond the metropolis, outside the daily life and existential experience of the home country” in places unfathomably far away inhabited by other individuals whose “own life experience and life world” remain unknown and ultimately unknowable. Jameson suggests that this “special disjunction,” results in an inability to conceive of the system as a whole, and the metropolitan experience, which in Jameson’s conception is the “the very content of the national literature itself,” no longer possesses immanent meaning (50-51). As result, no Modernist narrative can truly be a completely “national” narrative. There is no longer any such thing as a completely local, pastoral, or personal narrative that is not in some way touched by globalization, be it economically, aesthetically, or politically.

Impossible Mourning, Impossible Modernism

Modernists decided that they had much to grieve, and what we now consider to be the categorical “traits” of Modernist narrative document the struggle to accommodate their sense of dramatic shifts in Western art, politics, and ethics. What Benjamin terms the “crisis of artistic reproduction” that manifests itself at the close of the nineteenth century could also be read as a “crisis in perception itself,” in that Modernist melancholia creates itself in its creation of a crisis as well as a refusal to relinquish the past. As Benjamin suggests, “what prevents our delight in the beautiful from ever being satisfied is the image of the past, which Baudelaire regards as veiled by the tears of nostalgia” (187). Benjamin’s oft-quoted statement suggests that the unresolved attachment to the past—to what has been lost—is both what motivates Modernism and frustrates it. Modernist mourning is “impossible mourning,” for it can never be resolved or completed; thus, Modernism is essentially melancholic.

A similar reference to the limiting effects of nostalgia is voiced by Jean-Francois Lyotard, who, in his highly influential study *The Postmodern Condition*, suggests two alternate modes of “sublimity” in art.²³ One approach, which he labels “melancholia,” emphasizes “the powerlessness of the faculty of presentation, on the nostalgia for presence felt by the human subject, on the obscure and futile will which inhabits him in spite of everything” (79).²⁴ In the melancholic mode, the Romantic quest for communion with Nature falls short but nevertheless persists; that is, Modernism seeks to “make visible that there is something which can be conceived and which can neither be seen nor made visible” (78). What modernism presents as an historic loss, might also be

understood as a creative absence. Any artistic attempt to make visible the greatness that we can conceive is insufficient—therefore, the affectation of the melancholic mode is painful, dejected, inconsolable. The object of loss in these cases typically inhabits some sort of “cultural archive”—that is, it is typically a lost ideal or abstraction, a value promoted by a cultural “metanarrative” that is perceived as having passed. Whether or not the ideal (and its metanarrative) is actually lost or is simply absent is one of the primary questions of this dissertation.

In *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida plays with this notion of repetition and return to a point of stability, describing the primacy of the “archive,” or a repository of cultural information, establishing a metaphor of the literal archive (for example, libraries and museums) for the individual archive, considered as the Freudian subconscious. If the archive, as a repository of authoritative documents, is the source of power for nations and governments (and therefore the source of power for the “metanarratives” that inform them), then the individual subconscious is the repository of experiences from which a subject’s identity/agency is drawn. To fixate on unidentifiable loss and obsession with ancient motifs, this melancholic urge for return, is, in Derrida’s view, to be in the grips of the archive. As he writes, to be *en mal d’archive*, is to “have a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement” (cite). Along these lines, Jean-Michel Rabaté has examined how Modernism, in its unending cycles of repetition and in its refusal to relinquish what has been lost becomes “haunted’ by the past. In Rabaté’s view, these spectral voices are, “in

a classically Freudian fashion, what has not been processed, accommodated, incorporated into the self by mourning; the shadow of the lost object is still being projected onto the subject. Modernism postulates both the necessity and the impossibility of mourning...” (xvi). This vexing position calls to mind Benjamin’s musings on Paul Klee’s *Angelus Novus*, which resembles what Benjamin terms “the angel of history:”

His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.

(257)

Benjamin’s angel is a metaphor for the melancholic stance of Modernism—forced forward, yet facing backwards, consumed by losses that it refuses to mourn, for to do so would be to relinquish the essential character of Modernist practice. Yet Benjamin’s interpretation is itself a creative misreading, there is nothing in the Klee painting to indicate his *Angelus Novus* was an emblem of history, nor can the viewer see a pile of wreckage as the figure’s feet. Benjamin’s projection is representative of the Modernist tendency to impose a sense of loss on an absence, thereby legitimizing a melancholic

“return” that is actually an original invention of a past that must be maintained and grieved in equal parts.

This notion that Modernism demonstrates either the “impossibility” of mourning or a steadfast “refusal” of mourning has become a popular notion in recent years. Jahan Ramazani to a great degree initiated the discussion on the modernist refusal to mourn by arguing in his influential study *Poetry of Mourning* that the general resistance to the “work of mourning” is the defining characteristic of modern elegiac poetry. In Ramazani’s view, modern elegists resemble Freud’s melancholic in their “fierce resistance to solace, their intense criticism and self-criticism,” yet unlike their literary forbears cannot successfully complete the work of mourning and instead “attack the dead and themselves, their own work and tradition; and they refuse such orthodox consolations as the rebirth of the dead in nature, in God, or in poetry itself” (4). Furthermore, in addition to refusing consolation, modern elegists seek to expand the scope of their grief, according to Ramazani:

As poets mourn not only dead individuals but mourning itself, elegize not only the dead but elegy itself, the genre develops by feeding off a multitude of new deaths, including the body of its own traditions. Intruding into modern laments for war victims, public figures, relatives, and friends are many extraneous deaths—the death of mourning ritual, of God, of traditional consolation, of recuperative elegy, of the sanctity of the dead, of ‘healthy’ mourning, and even

perhaps—in the age of visual media and psychology—the death of the poet.

Once a more quiet tomb, the elegy becomes a noisy columbarium, crammed with corpses ontological, aesthetic, and physical.

(8)

From this perspective, we can conceive of Modernism as entirely dependent on mourning and loss, consuming it as fuel for its fires. If the notion of “the modern” itself becomes constitutive of its perceived losses, then the reasons for its refusal of consolation become clearer.

Until Ramazani, most critics shared the basic expectations set out by Freud in “Mourning and Melancholia,” that melancholia is but a pathological form of mourning. More recent scholarship, however, frequently contests Freud’s basic propositions with regard to successful vs. unsuccessful mourning and instead focuses on Modernism’s resistance to mourning and refusal of consolation. Patricia Rae describes this resistance as, “a deliberate decision about how not to respond to loss,” going to characterize this “resistance to reconciliation” as a “refusal to accept the acceptance of loss, whether through the severing and transference of libidinal ties or through the successful expansion of identity through introjection, or through any other kind of compensatory process” (16-17). The interesting questions—in terms of literary analysis—then become *why* one refuses to mourn, *how* a literary text attempts to present this ethical and political position, and *what* effect these experiments with representation have on literary narratives as a whole. As indicated in the preface to this dissertation, the following chapters will seek to answer these questions. These chapters are organized both

“horizontally” and “vertically”—that is, they are ordered chronologically, beginning in the 1890’s and ending in the 1920’s, as well as topically, with chapters focused on Modernist melancholia *vis-à-vis* aesthetics, politics, and ethics.

As previously suggested, the paradox of Modernist melancholia is that it is simultaneously a regressive and progressive stance; that is, although it remains inconsolably fixed upon the past, it must engage in creation to do so. It moves forward to look backwards. As Žižek insists, the resolution of grief requires not only one to successfully mourn the lost object, but to also “kill it a second time through symbolizing its loss.” The melancholic, by contrast, “is not simply the one who is unable to renounce the object but rather the one who kills the object a second time (treats it as lost) before the object is actually lost” (662).²⁵ In other words, the melancholic *not only* resuscitates the lost object by symbolically recreating it, but also creatively translates absence into loss.

We can read this fixation on imagined loss and the creative recovery of the past as the primary influence of the shifting aesthetics of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature and art, which promote a progressive “politics of mourning” that resists traditional forms of consolation. In the introduction to *Faces of Modernity*, Matei Calinescu describes Modernism as an “increasingly sharp sense of historical relativism” through which the artist, cut off from “the normative past with its fixed criteria” was obligated to invent a “private and essentially modifiable past” (3). Read from this perspective, we can begin to comprehend the melancholic stance of Modernism, in that it paradoxically creates the lost object in order to preserve it, produces a break with the

past in order to claim its own crisis. In terms of artistic production, Calinescu summarizes this cultural moment as a marked shift from an “aesthetics of permanence” based on a belief in an unchanging, transcendent ideal of beauty to a transitory aesthetics that valued novelty. This transition was, naturally, anxiety-provoking, necessitating as it did a sort of bidirectional view of history. We find this paradox manifested in the allusiveness and neoclassicism prevalent in late nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century literature; a key characteristic of both decadent and Modernist literature was an inherent urge for repetition and return, for the resurrection of older stories reshaped into new forms.

Since Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition*, it has been common to regard Modernism as an aestheticization of loss, what Tammy Clewell has described as “a literary practice whose nostalgia tethers it to the very discourses, traditions, and beliefs that it describes as lost” (4). In Lyotard’s view, modern art is that which seeks to express the fact that the “unpresentable” exists, meaning that it makes “visible that there is something which can be conceived and which can neither be seen nor can be made visible” (78). Modern art, then, is distinguished from such forms as “realism” that seek to create art that conforms to established aesthetic notions of “the beautiful.” Both postmodernism and Modernism would therefore fit within this circumscription,

As previously suggested, in Modernism, we detect a “nostalgia for presence felt by a human subject;” that is, Modernism melancholically mourns the loss of unity between conception and presentation—the experience of viewing a work of art that accurately presents the sublime (79). If we fail to recall LaCapra’s admonition to not

conflate *loss* with *absence*, we fail to successfully complete the work of mourning in an aesthetic sense because we mourn that which never was, so to speak. We resist the understanding that what we can conceive will never match what we can present. Melancholic aesthetics, “allows the unrepresentable to be put forward only as the missing contents; but the form, because of its recognizable consistency, continues to offer the reader or viewer matter for solace and pleasure” (81). In other words, while Modernism mourns the (perceived) loss of the sublime, it sustains a melancholic attachment to the traditional forms from which it seeks to separate itself.²⁶ In simpler terms, despite its fixation on loss, Modernism resists the completion of mourning.

New considerations of the political stakes of mourning have led to a reconsideration of melancholia. Instead of viewing the refusal of consolation as a pathological attachment to a lost object, it can instead be seen as a key entry point to understanding the relationship between mourning, politics, and aesthetic practice; as Eng and Kazanjian offer, “the politics of mourning might be described as that creative process mediating a hopeful or hopeless relationship between loss and history” (2). The problematization of “successful mourning” has led to a general trend to a “depathologizing” of melancholia that invites theorists to extend discourses on mourning and melancholia to include abstract losses, including items, places, ideals, and even concepts, such as “history.” Our notion of history is shaped entirely by our contemporaneous context, which itself is defined largely by our ethics and political engagements.²⁷

Freud's original framework assumed grief is "successful" when the attachment to the lost object is completely severed and placed elsewhere; however, we can easily imagine instances where to move past a loss in this way would be to abdicate our responsibility to the lost object, perhaps even asking us to ignore or forget a great wrong or injustice. Instead, a refusal to "let it go" can be seen as the refusal to assimilate to hegemonic norms, to support the power imbalances that created the loss. Remaining in a state of resistant melancholia keeps particular arguments usefully unsettled. As Patricia Rae notes, the successful "work" of mourning, "amounts to a forgetting of, or an abdication of responsibility for, what has been lost, and ... this amnesia has been too often demanded and paid in the interests of preserving the *status quo*" (18). In this way, the refusal to mourn indicates a desire for justice. As Rae points out, the sort of public mourning endorsed or promoted by nations or national identities encourages working through the loss of some peoples or identities but not others (20). In other words, to mourn the loss of an individual, that individual must first be considered "grievable," particularly in the context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century geopolitical stage, where the crushing reach of European imperialism creates new classes of "the subaltern," both abroad and "at home." (One might ponder, for instance, why late nineteenth-century authors would grieve the loss of the pastoral, but cheer the elevation of "the primitive.") Jameson's aforementioned emphasis on the relationship between Modernism and imperialism asks us to consider the relationships between Modernism, mourning, and the "imperialist dynamic of capitalism proper" (45-46). Whether couched as global capitalism or outright imperialism, the problematic political context of

the Modernist era invites a serious reevaluation on the effects of “progress.” As Rae suggests, Modernist narratives reflect this concern by leaving mourning “unresolved without endorsing evasion or repression,” encouraging “remembering where memory has been repressed,” and exposing “the social determinants for troublesome amnesia.” In this way, we can examine how Modernism’s resistance to “narratives and tropes that would bring grief through to catharsis...raise questions about the social forces that have prevented the work of mourning from being accomplished [and] offer alternatives to the consolatory strategies that have been widely deployed and that threaten to introduce a whole new round of loss and grieving” (22-23). Melancholia—conventionally considered a regressive, static condition—becomes not only a creative process, but a progressive political action. While mourning abandons lost objects, melancholia maintains an open relation to the past that promotes new discussions and new understandings of the past, rather than simply abandoning our losses to “history.” As Eng and Kazanjian argue, “This attention to remains generates a politics of mourning that might be active rather than reactive, prescient rather than nostalgic, abundant rather than lacking, social rather than solipsistic, militant rather than reactionary” (2). Melancholia becomes not only an aesthetic creative practice, but a force for positive social change.

A common characterization of Modernism is that it is elitist, demonstrating hostility towards commodification and popular culture. If we consider the refusal to mourn as a progressive political action, however, we could instead interpret this resistance to commodification and mass culture as a component of “ethical” mourning.

As discussed previously, Lyotard's theory of the "post-modern" holds that a "modern" discourse or practice is one that legitimizes itself "with reference to a metadiscourse" and by "making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative." He distinguishes the post-modern as any modern project that rejects or demonstrates "incredulity" toward metanarratives (xxiii-xxiv). In the absence of metanarratives, we then encounter a crisis of legitimation; that is, we have no reliable means of determining what is true or just, for there are no legitimate antecedents. This absence thus threatens the ultimate project of humanity, which is to constitute "sociocultural unity within which all the elements of daily life and of thought" take their places within an organic whole (72). As such, as we trace the progression from early Modernism through to late Modernism in anticipation what today is classified as "postmodernism," we begin to perceive the serious threat to practicable ethics engendered by the absence of legitimate metanarratives. By resisting attempts to normalize reactions to loss—particularly in service to metanarratives of capitalism or nationalism—Modernism offers its ethical and political resistance to hegemonic discourses. With regard to aesthetics, Modernism's disruption of narrative conventions or clear, concrete language is an act of rebellion, a refusal of "good forms." The refusal to complete the work of mourning informs the Modernist embrace of ambiguity and interpretive open-endedness, qualities that correlate with a refusal to "let go" of the past. The best hope of resolving the paradoxical progressiveness and nostalgia of this stance is to revise our conception of melancholia in such a way that casts it not as a conservative, degenerative, or regressive state of being, but rather a progressive one. In this way, we can develop a practicable "ethics of alterity" that allows for a

disengagement from restrictive metanarratives while also creating a space where we may host the Other (be it an idea, a belief, or an individual). As Lyotard suggests, to do so is to develop new knowledge of the world that is not merely “a tool of the authorities” but that refines “our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable” (xv).

The most influential recent work on the ethics of mourning has been offered by Jacques Derrida, who broadly considers reconciliation to loss as “unethical,” as the successful completion of mourning betrays the lost one and fails to adequately comprehend the meaning of that death. The only way to truly honor the dead, in Derrida’s view, is to sustain a relationship with them that somehow combines an intimacy with the lost one with the certain finality of their passing—what he frequently dubs a species of “aporia,” or the rhetoric of unresolvable contradiction. Per Freud’s original conception of grief, Derrida suggests that when confronted with the death of the other “we are given to memory, and thus to interiorization, since the other, outside us, is now nothing” (*Memoires* 34). In the practice of mourning, we keep the other alive “in memory,” which re-creates the other *within* ourselves. We bring the lost object into ourselves through the practice of memory. This “faithful interiorization bears the other and constitutes him in me (in us), at once living and dead. It makes the other a *part* of us, between us—and then the other no longer quite seems to be the other, because we grieve for him and bear him *in us...*” (*Memoires* 35). Ultimately, just as Freud came to argue in *Ego and the Id*, Derrida posits that we are who we are only as a product of our interiorized losses.

This attempt to successfully interiorize loss always fails, however; in Derrida's view, mourning is ultimately impossible because "we can only live this experience in the form of an aporia: the aporia of mourning and of prosopopeia, where the possible remains impossible" (35). In other words, when confronted with loss, we are forced to choose between two infidelities—do we neglect to memorialize what is lost, or do we internalize the loss, thus maintaining a conversation with the dead through a sort of ventriloquism? The work of mourning remains simultaneously compulsory and impossible, for the dead are outside of ourselves, separate, alone, yet close. We maintain them inside of ourselves through memory, we speak of them and to them, but the dead remain apart in their ultimate alterity, gazing back upon us. As Derrida offers, "when we say 'in us,' when we speak so easily and so painfully of inside and outside, we are naming space, we are speaking of a visibility of the body, a geometry of gazes, and orientation of perspectives. *We are speaking of images*" (Work 159). The dead are gone, but we reassemble their remainders within us. Again, in this way, we discover the essentially creative character of melancholia.²⁸ In the final chapter of this dissertation, I will seek a clearer understanding of Derrida's conception of ethical mourning by viewing it through the lens of the similar discourse regarding hospitality, as his conceptualization of "ethical mourning" depends on the *action* of welcoming this lost other *inside* oneself—the exact actions regulated by the demands of hospitality.

Notes

¹ As Edward Said writes in the first paragraph of *Culture and Imperialism*,

Appeals to the past are among the commonest of strategies in interpretations of the present. What animates such appeals is not only disagreement about what happened in the past and what the past was, but uncertainty about whether the past really is past, over and concluded, or whether it continues, albeit in different forms, perhaps. This problem animates all sorts of discussions—about influence, about blame and judgement, about present actualities and future priorities.
(3)

² As Mahaffey notes, “One of the main challenges of modernist writing in the twentieth century was to reawaken in its audience a willingness to relinquish the self-satisfaction of easy accomplishment in favor of immersion in the flux, the seeming desolation, of what is left to know” (14).

³ In “Mourning and Melancholia,” Freud does invite continued development of his framework, suggest that mourning does not seem pathological simply because we understand it well and can account for its behaviors. Melancholia, by contrast, is considered pathological because of its inscrutability, resistance to resolution, and potential for harm.

⁴ Resulting in “an extraordinary reduction in self-esteem, a great impoverishment of the ego” (205). Paradoxically, the lost object may actually be the subject’s ego (207).

⁵ Judith Butler famously extends this framework to articulate a theory of gender formation: “This process of internalizing lost loves becomes pertinent to gender formation when we realize that the incest taboo, among other functions, initiates a loss of love-object for the ego and that this ego recuperates from this loss through the internalization of the tabooed object of desire” (58).

⁶ Contemporary discourse on mourning and melancholia has expanded and, at times, challenged, Freud’s paradigms. For instance, some scholars, most notably Maria Torok, have interrogated Freud’s use of the term introjection, insisting on a distinction between introjection and incorporation. The former term—introduced by Sandor Ferenczi in 1909—is defined as “an extension to the external world of the original autoerotic interests, by including its objects in the ego” (316-317). Torok argues, however, that Freud (along with Nicholas Abraham and Melanie Klein), flatten Ferenczi’s original concept to signify only the act of object possession, disregarding the extension of autoerotic interests and the expansion of the ego. In distinguishing between introjection and incorporation, Torok emphasizes Ferenczi’s implication that introjection is not caused by the actual loss of an object of love and that it does not “tend toward compensation, but growth.” Introjection broadens and enriches the ego, introducing into it “the unconscious, nameless, or repressed libido” (113). Torok observes that, in contrast, while introjection of these desires thus ends dependence on the object, incorporation of the object creates or reinforces “imaginal times and hence dependency.... Like a commemorative monument, the incorporated object betokens the place, the date, and the circumstances in which desires were banished from introjection: they stand like tombs in the life of the ego” (114). The instinct of many readers would be to map Abraham and Torok’s introjection/incorporation dyad onto the melancholia/mourning dyad. While there are many logical interfaces between them, the concepts are not a direct 1:1 correlation. Instead, if, as Abraham and Torok specify, incorporation results from “those losses that for some reason cannot be acknowledged as such,” I would suggest that the more accurate distinction would be between pathological grieving versus successful mourning (130). In this way, we can begin to understand mourning and melancholia not as oppositional states of being, but as stages along the continuum towards the successful resolution of grief.

⁷ Žižek begins his essay by establishing that he intends to challenge the hegemonic trend in critical literature that holds that “Freud opposed normal mourning (the successful acceptance of a loss) to pathological melancholy (the subject persists in his or her narcissistic identification with the lost object),” as it is only through the refusal to relinquish the remainder of the object do we maintain fidelity (658).

⁸ Žižek also explains that, “the mourner mourns the lost object and kills it a second time through symbolizing its loss, while the melancholic is not simply the one who is unable to renounce the object but rather the one who kills the object a second time (treats it as lost) before the object is actually lost” (662).

⁹ I prefer to describe the posture of Modernist literature as melancholic, as opposed to mournful. In other words, my analysis will demonstrate that Modernist narrative deploys the markers of melancholia—grief for an ideal, as opposed to real, loss; lack of comprehension of the meaning of the loss; and unresolved ambivalence towards the lost object.

¹⁰ Steve Giles argues that while the experience of “crisis” is not unique to the modernist time period, but the Modernist crisis is unique because it is generated by the dynamics of capitalism: “The monetization of the relations in social life transforms time-space experience by, for example imposing ever stricter temporal regimes on the working day, while capitalist commodity exchange requires increasingly efficient spatial organization as well as more rapid turnover time of capital” (179).

¹¹ As Alessia Ricciardi suggests, Freudian psychoanalysis is by nature a “modernist discipline,” not only because it historically coincides with the emergence of the culture of high modernism, but because “the operations of psychoanalysis insist on such crucial modernist principles as the hermeneutics of fragmentation and the interiority or encoded ‘depth’ of the psyche” (17). By approaching Modernism from this perspective, we can interpret the widely accepted and highly recognizable characteristics of Modernist literature—non-linear emplotment, stylistic fragmentation, shifting narration, unconventional language, politicized themes—as representative of a resistance to grief, a refusal to mourn.

¹² In contextualizing Modernism within Louis Althusser’s thinking, Richard Sheppard offers that, “At the heart of the ‘problematique’ perceived by a large number of major modernist artists and intellectuals lay the sense, more or less explicitly formulated and explained in any given case, that contemporary European culture was experiencing the subversion of the most fundamental assumptions and conceptual models on which the liberal humanist epoch had been based” (13).

¹³ As Habermas writes, “a modern work becomes a classic because it has once been authentically modern” (4).

¹⁴ As Habermas suggests, “Aesthetic modernity is characterized by attitudes which find a common focus in a changed consciousness of time” (“Modernism” 4).

¹⁵ As Benjamin writes, “Historicism contents itself with establishing a causal connection between various moments in history. But no fact that is a cause is for that very reason historical. It became historical posthumously, as it were, through events that may be separated from it by thousands of years” (263).

¹⁶ As LaCapra suggests, “Paradise absent is different from paradise lost: it may not be seen as annihilated only to be regained in some hoped-for, apocalyptic future or sublimely blank utopia that, through a kind of creation ex nihilo, brings total renewal, salvation, or redemption (182).

¹⁷ The most influential text on the relationship between time, space, and modernity is Stephen Kern's *The Culture of Time and Space: 1880 – 1918*, which surveys how the sweeping technological and cultural changes during these years fundamentally transformed the way Europeans and Americans came to “conceive of and experience time and space” (2). Kern does offer that the two most important developments in the broad categories of “space” and “time” during this era were the leveling of traditional spatial hierarchies” and “the affirmation of the reality of private time” (8).

¹⁸ As Kern suggests, “...that very generation which had grown up amid the triumphant achievements of increasingly confident nineteenth-century science, technology, and economics, now felt that these systems were becoming dysfunctional and potentially totalitarian” (9).

¹⁹ The development of the railroad coincides with the development of the telegraph, which makes synchronized time possible at all. The first commercial electric telegraph was patented in Britain in 1837, with the first public telegraph company in the world, the Electric Telegraph Company, was formed in 1845. In the United States, Samuel Morse independently developed and patented his own electric telegraph system in 1837, and by 1861, the US was connected coast-to-coast.

²⁰ As Adam Barrows observes, the period during which Greenwich Mean Time became accepted, nation by nation, as the “universal time,” spans the period of literary history commonly ascribed to Modernism (263).

²¹ The move away from late 19th century realism frequently takes shape as Orientalism, as in the case of the Salome trope and the poetry of Ezra Pound, or as primitivism, as in the case of cubism or the poetry of T.S. Eliot. For an interesting discussion of Modernism's “cleansing” of African sources of inspiration, see Simon Gikandi's “Picasso, Africa, and the Schemata of Difference.”

²² For his part, Jameson defines “Modernism” as the combined effects of historical phenomena that include not only technological advances, but also “commodity reification,” “monetary abstraction and its effects on the sign system,” changes in the conception of the consumption of literature and art, and the rise of mass culture (44).

²³ For Lyotard, the aesthetic “sublime” is the sensibility that recognizes the demand of the un-presentable to be put into sensible form but overwhelming all attempts to do so (as contrasted with Kant's notion of the sublime, which occurs when our senses are presented with images of overwhelming magnitude – even to the point of terror).

²⁴ Lyotard labels the second mode “*novatio*,” which seeks “the increase of being and the jubilation which result from the invention of new rules of the game, be it pictorial, artistic, or any other” (80).

²⁵ Derrida offers a similar perspective in his discussion of friendship, noting that mourning is but another word for *anticipation* – as in the anticipation of the other's death. In *Memoires*, he notes that, “everything that we inscribe in the living present of our relation to others already carries, always, the signature of *memoirs-from-beyond-the-grave*.” He goes on to explain that this sense of finitude, “can only take that form through the trace of the other in us, the other's irreducible precedence; in other words, simply the trace, which is always the trace of the other, the finitude of memory, and thus the approach or remembrance of the future” (29).

²⁶ In Lyotard's thinking, then, post-modernism “denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable” (81).

²⁷ I use the term “politics” to describe large-scale engagement between groups of people (which includes not only governments and nation-states, but also classes or types or people), as opposed to interactions between individuals, which I assign to “ethics.”

²⁸ As Derrida offers, the “mimetic interiorization is not fictive; it is the origin of fiction, of apocryphal figuration” (*Mémoires* 34).

CHAPTER III
MELANCHOLY AESTHETICS AND THE MAKING OF MODERNISM IN
SALOME REVISIONS BY STRINDBERG, WILDE, AND IBSEN

And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.

--Mark 6:22

Introduction

Throughout the nineteenth century, a profound interest in the story of the death of John the Baptist inspired a remarkable number of novels, paintings, operas, and poems presenting variations on the Gospels' accounts of the martyr's demise. In particular, artists and writers were enraptured with the "dancing daughter" of Herodias, Salome. Most notable (and influential) were treatments by Gustav Flaubert in his quasi-historical 1877 novel *Hérodias* (which subsequently inspired an 1881 opera of the same title); an elaborate play/poem conceived by Stéphane Mallarmé in 1864 and published in parts until his death in 1898; a major section of Joris-Karil Huysmans' 1884 prototypical decadent novel *A Rebours*; not to mention famous visual renderings by Henri Regnault in 1870, Gustav Moreau in 1876, and Gustav Klimt in 1901, among many others.¹

On the dramatic stage, the best-known production (or perhaps most enduring) treatment was Oscar Wilde's 1891 play *Salome*, and I argue that this figure is found in the works of other well-known playwrights of this era. While Wilde's place in the "Salomania" of the late nineteenth century has been thoroughly explored, this work has not read alongside the "dancing daughter" plays of Wilde's main contemporary dramatists, August Strindberg, in *Miss Julie* (1888), and Henrik Ibsen, in *Hedda Gabler* (1890).² Similarities between the works were marked, however, by those involved in their composition and production.³ Strindberg is reported to have observed that "*Hedda Gabler* seems more gossiped together than observed, and its relation to [my own plays] seems indisputable."⁴ Wilde sought comparison with the more famous Norwegian playwright. As Kerry Powel comments, despite the fact that the popular critics rarely compared the two, Wilde viewed himself as Ibsen's equal, "working with the Norwegian on a level high above the swarming popular dramatists who gave London one adaptation from the French after another" (224). However, if the critics mentioned Ibsen in the same breath as Wilde at all, it was to draw sharp contrast between the two.

Wilde must certainly have been pleased, then, when, in William Archer (who was also Ibsen's translator), in his 1893 review of the English-language publication of *Salome*, commented that "Salomé is an oriental Hedda Gabler" (qtd. in Beckson 142).⁵ Archer's comment was embedded within his response to the recent decision to censor the play's production in England, an occurrence that he felt was, "perfectly ridiculous, and absolutely inevitable" (qtd. in Beckson 142). As Powell writes, there was few precedents in English drama for Wilde's "morbid, sexually frustrated" protagonist

“whose only satisfaction comes from causing the death of the man she vainly craves” (229), save Ibsen, who had been shocking European audiences with a succession of difficult and threatening women for several years. The ire of the theater-going public in London had long been raised against the “Ibscenity” of the Norwegian playwright’s work, and the implication of Archer’s comparison was that Wilde was paying the price for the critical outrage against Ibsen. *Salome* was to be the example.⁶ As well, for many years, Strindberg was unable to find an English-language theatre that would perform *Miss Julie*. So, in 1888, Strindberg leased the Dagmar Theatre in Copenhagen and prepared for his first season, which was to begin on March 2, 1889, with a production of *Miss Julie*. As with Wilde’s *Salome*, the state censors arrived to block the opening performance.⁷ The play was produced intermittently (and for *very* short runs) before its famous debut at André Antoine’s Théâtre Libre on January 16, 1893. The play was an immediate scandal, and it rocketed Strindberg to fame as an “enemy of women.” *Miss Julie* was not performed again for another ten years. Ibsen was not, of course, unfamiliar with censorship and outrage. Writing in such a way as to dismantle the superficial spectacle of “well-made plays” being produced in Paris and bowdlerized in London, Ibsen frequently suffered at the hands of the censors and critics alike. *Ghosts* was banned for over 20 years in England, and the Examiner of Plays did not look fondly upon any of Ibsen’s other works.⁸ While fairly tame by contemporary standards, at the time of their composition, these three plays were incendiary works that directly challenged common notions of decency, good taste, and decorum.

Therefore, although these treatments of the Salome plot melancholically lingered over well-worn narratives, they were thoroughly “modern” in that they were addressing issues of their time. In this way, they present an entry point for an examination of “proto-Modernism,” the Janus-faced art and literature of late nineteenth-century Europe, which was both challenging and progressive with regard to subject and form while being nostalgic in its themes and motifs, a time period that Strindberg himself described as an “age of transition more urgently hysterical at any rate than the one that preceded it” (59).⁹ As Strindberg’s use of the term “hysterical” suggests, a significant portion of the criticism on the Salome trope in *fin de siècle* literature is focused upon the cultural anxiety over the manufactured crises of gender performance and the “New Woman;” both of which are apparent concerns of these works (although I will suggest later that it is not the *major* concern of these works, as is commonly thought). I argue that these subversive works also function as commentary on the destabilized aesthetic of the last years of the nineteenth century. As authors attendant at the evolution from the retrospective idealism of romanticism to realist naturalism and, finally, through to anti-idealist decadence, aestheticism, and forward-looking Modernism, all three authors demonstrate a melancholic attachment to an aesthetic ideal—defined as a perfect unity of form and meaning—both by integrating biblical plots and fairy tale motifs into their works while simultaneously recreating the “lost” plots and motifs through *avant-garde* literary technique.

While discussion of the interplay between decadent (and decadent-influenced) *fin de siècle* writers and the New Woman “problem” is both compelling and fecund, I argue

that most of the perceived commentary on gender politics exists for sensationalist, rather than ideological, reason. While anxiety over gender roles is obviously present in these plays, I argue that the larger concern of these authors is to exploit the swirling discourse around gender to further their subversive projects, which are to express the intense, melancholic anxieties prevalent in *fin de siècle* culture and present larger arguments on the ongoing aesthetic conflict between aesthetic idealism and realism. These authors' characterizations are not as concerned with subverting popular conceptions of gender roles as much as they attempt to problematize discourse on the function of art. By approaching these competing Salome dramas from this perspective, the ambivalence to the accurate categorization of these plays (for example, as naturalistic, avant-garde, aesthetic) thus underscores the critical value in juxtaposing them, as they represent a site of problematic transition from the preceding movements of romanticism, aesthetic idealism, and naturalism to the Modernism to come.

Although the compositions of their "Salome" dramas were nearly simultaneous, separated by only three years, they took radically different approaches to the raw material. Although I consider them examples of early or "low" Modernism, both *Miss Julie* and *Hedda Gabler* are often treated as naturalist works, given their penchant for realism in their staging and dialogue and focusing on the social problems of women's emancipation and class struggle as central themes. In the preface to *Miss Julie*, Strindberg details his intentions, noting specifically his characters—"conglomerates of past and present stages of culture;" scenery—"I have borrowed the asymmetry and cropped framing of impressionist painting;" and dialogue—"I have avoided the

symmetrical, mathematical artificiality of French dialogue and allowed my characters' brains to work irregularly as they do in real life..." (60, 65, 63). In comparison, Ibsen's critics often attacked the jerky and disjointed dialogue of *Hedda Gabler*, which was Ibsen's similar attempt to more closely emulate natural speech.¹⁰ The lack of monologues and asides made it difficult for the contemporary audience to comprehend Hedda's complex character, and, as critic Henrik Jæger commented, "No concession is made to the general public to help it understand. No explanations by other characters, no self-characterization to excuse or defend itself, even a minimum of information about events that have gone before" (qtd. in Meyer 645-646). In contrast, though his preceding dramatic works were actually far more conventional than either Strindberg or Ibsen's, Wilde's *Salome* is an ornate, dream-like work often held up as a primary example of decadent or aesthetic literature.¹¹ It was originally composed in French and with a hypnotic, almost incantatory cadence, exactly the sort of stilted dialogue that Strindberg rejected.¹²

Despite these differences, however, each play can be easily seen as reacting critically to the intellectually light and unchallenging popular drama of the day.¹³ These three plays present a particularly interesting case study in that they represent both a culmination/summary of nineteenth-century literature and art *and* presage the modernist literature yet to come. In fact, neatly categorizing any one of these plays (or authors) into a single literary movement is quite difficult.¹⁴ In general, terminological ambiguity is one identifying characteristic of *fin de siècle* literature. John Stokes describes the theatre of the *fin de siècle* as a series of interlocking modes or genres: "realism, modulating into

naturalism, the symbolist reaction that will lead, eventually, to modernism” (209). These three authors—and these three works in particular—represent a literary “missing link” between the romanticism and symbolism of the nineteenth century and the Modernism of the early twentieth century. Taken together, we may read these artistic products as an attempt to respond to a prevalent sense of loss and to articulate an emerging metaphysical and aesthetic crisis categorized as the *fin de siècle*, a crisis to which “Modernism” became the response.

Decadence, Loss, and Modernity

The backward glance to cultural archives such as biblical legend and fairy tales can be read as a melancholic act; however, while melancholia is often understood as a failure to move beyond the past, to disentangle oneself from what has gone before, it differs from the work of mourning in that it is by necessity a creative process, for the melancholic is often grieving not a loss, but a lack or absence. In other words, in order to grieve a lost object of desire that was, in fact, never possessed, the melancholic must first create a spectral version of the object, in essence “re-creating” it. This fundamentally creative quality of melancholia correlates with the avant-gardism of aesthetic, decadent, and Modernist literature, as these movements are defined primarily by their radical separation from preceding artistic movements and epistemologies. Circuitously, this radical separation is the origin of the general sense of loss that pervades late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century narratives—as suggested in the introduction to this dissertation, Modernism created its own crisis.

This radical separation from previous ways of knowing and telling can be traced to the disorienting effects of, on one hand, the realization of widespread political and intellectual emancipation and, on the other, crushing imperialism, dehumanizing urbanization, and industrialization. These competing forces thus create a central tension between the urge to look forward in hopeful anticipation of an ideal future while being compelled to preserve our lost glories, to connect with the “golden age” of aesthetic idealism where beauty and meaning were one. Obvious and reliable touchstones are classical and biblical texts, legends, myths, and fairy tales. As Jean Pierrot writes, the decadent literary generation, in its rejection of contemporary reality and desperate for escape and dreams, “was naturally bound to make intensive use of the world of legends and myths” in its struggle to transmit “the metaphysical, moral, or esthetic ideas dear to their hearts” (206). The unifying characteristic of works from this period, then, is their aesthetic relationship to loss.¹⁵ The incessant repetition of and return to the Salome story is symptomatic of this pattern, this melancholic tendency to seek a sort of cultural “archive,” a space that houses the records of the past and preserves stable meanings, from which to draw artistic inspiration and find aesthetic authenticity. By reading the various iterations of the Salome story as emanating from a sort of cultural archive containing Biblical texts, historiography, visual art, and even folk traditions such as fairy tales, one begins to detect pervasive anxiety, a sense of loss expressed by *fin de siècle* writers.

The melancholia associated with this bidirectional view is an essential characteristic of what is now considered “decadent style.” The first and primary theorist

of decadent style was Paul Bourget, who, in his 1883 collection *Essais de psychologie contemporaine*, established an analogy between social evolution and manifestations of artistic language. In Bourget's model, the "style" of Decadence is a sort of organic decomposition. If a society could be seen as an organism comprised by a descending series of lesser organisms (e.g. a country that consists of provinces, which are comprised of towns, which are populated by individual citizens, who themselves are comprised of millions of cells), we must assume that for the larger organism to survive and function, each lesser organism must subordinate itself to the good of the larger order(s). Should any level of this hierarchy fail, then the entire society descends into anarchy. In Bourget's model, "decadent" literature is that which embraces this anarchy and rejects the hierarchy:

A decadent style is one in which the unity of a book decomposes to leave room for the independence of the page, the page decomposes to leave room for the independence of the phrase, and the phrase to leave room for the independence of the word.

(qtd. in Hutchinson 76) ¹⁶

While this decomposition and decadence would be catastrophic to the stability of the state, Bourget argues that in regard to art, it may stimulate a new creativity of morbid, melancholy, refined, sensual kind (Bernheimer 10). In the venerable articulation of Richard A. Long and Iva G. Jones, decadent literature represents a "change in concentration from the whole to the parts, as a disruption of unity, as a pursuit of the particular and the eccentric" (246). This movement, rather than being a means of

deconstruction, is instead a separation, an emphasis on the individual within society.¹⁷

As we shall see, this concern over the individual is expressed by Strindberg, Ibsen, and Wilde through their Salome-esque heroines, who, as with typical fairy tale protagonists, struggle against normative society as strangers from outside its borders.

Decadence, in this framework, is not so much an intentional movement but rather a descriptor that may be applied to *fin de siècle* works of literature that exhibit three primary characteristics. First, decadent literature exhibits an obsession with decay and a particularly powerful fixation on loss. Yet, this fixation on decay results in vibrant innovations in form and style. In this way, we discover once again the essential creativity of melancholia—the decay over which decadence ruminates is often created for its own sake, an absence in place of a loss. Secondly, I argue that decadence represents the conflict of Romanticism and Realism that, in aesthetic terms, overlays the larger, societal struggles between religion and science, between the ideal, imperfectable relationship with the sublime through a personal connection with truth, as found in nature and the beautiful, and the discovery of truth and meaning within the self. In spatial terms, the intellectual preoccupation becomes the relocation of meaning from “inside” to “outside.” Despite the pessimism of its name, however, decadence is optimistic; as Weir offers, “the negation of spirituality and the pessimistic acceptance of the reality that man is an animal and not an angel may be cause for despair, but, at the same time, outright acceptance of mortality as an end in itself can be liberating” (xiii). Thirdly, decadence upholds the superiority of Art to nature. As Wilde suggests in “The Decay of Lying,” “the only effects that [nature] can show us are effects that we have

already seen through poetry, or in paintings. This is the secret of nature's charm, as well as the explanation of Nature's weakness" (392). In this way, meaning is not found in a direct encounter with nature itself, but rather through the more stable, permanent truth offered by Art. The font of creation, then, is located in the hands of man.

The Salome Plot and the Public Imagination

Considering this melancholic attachment to the perceived stability of aesthetic idealism, the fact that Salome is a popular subject in late nineteenth-century art and literature, with its predominant interest in beauty and decay, seems logical. This intense interest in Salome, however, is not unique to symbolism, decadence, or other *fin de siècle* movements. Although a minor figure in the Biblical texts, Salome has captured artists' imagination for centuries, and each new phase has added contours to the basic plot that, when examined, suggest that there are more complex forces at play in the *fin de siècle* treatments of Salome.

The generally accepted *ur*-texts for the Salome plot are the Gospels of Mark (6:14-29) and Matthew (14:3-12), which relate similar stories: Jesus has been attracting increased attention, and when word of his deeds reaches Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch suspects that Jesus is actually John the Baptist, whom he had previously beheaded. John had been critical of the marriage between Herod Antipas and Herodias, for she had previously been married to his half-brother (whom Mark names as Philip). Herodias wishes John dead but hesitates to act. The opportunity for revenge presents itself when her unnamed daughter dances at Herod's birthday banquet, so pleasing him that he

promises her anything that she wishes, even half of his kingdom. The dancing daughter (Salome) goes to her mother to seek advice as to what she should request; she then returns to Herod and asks for the head of John the Baptist on a platter. To keep his oath and preserve his honor before his guests, Herod complies.

The biblical account of John the Baptist's death plays a subversive role in the New Testament, both thematically and narratively. From a narratological perspective, both accounts are of special interest because they are told in analepsis, or flashback, a rare and unusual device in the Bible. Its use suggests some authorial interjection into the "historical" plot, as the Bible is generally linear; the interruption of the story of Jesus suggests that ideological forces are at play, and the inconsistencies between the gospels are indicative of contemporary anxieties of the gospel authors. For instance, Ross S. Kraemer suggests that the competing ancient Salome narratives are indicative of early Christian anxieties about the relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist. The interjected anecdotes are intended to refute not only the notion that John had been resurrected but also the idea that Jesus is actually John raised from the dead (341). Thus, the beheading of John is essential, for it means that his body has been desecrated in such a way as to make resurrection impossible, thereby subverting any claims that Jesus and John are one in the same.

Considering the crisis of belief experienced at the end of the nineteenth century, it is unsurprising to find a similar didactic objective in the Salome plays of Strindberg, Ibsen, and Wilde. The Salome story has been retold and reworked countless times, and with each re-telling, the story has added or subtracted elements so as to better reflect or

comment upon the culture to which it was being told. (And, in fact, the essential elements of the story likely pre-date the Christian era entirely; I will discuss this further on in the chapter.) The account of the slaying of John the Baptist was recounted again in the first century by Roman historian Flavius Josephus (who is credited with giving Salome—otherwise known only as “the daughter of Herodias”—her name). Josephus’ account, like that of Mark and Matthew, is also told in analepsis; as well, in both the New Testament and the histories, the anecdote is brought up as a means of explaining Herod’s unreasonable fear that the tumultuous events of the present—that is, the miracles of Jesus in the former or the imminent defeat of Herod’s armies by Aretas, King of Arabia, in the latter—are caused by his unjust execution of his former prisoner, John the Baptist.¹⁸

The Salome story remained in the popular imagination for several centuries thereafter, and from the fourth century on, the previously benign, obedient (and minor) Salome began to acquire the immoral characteristics with which we are now familiar.¹⁹ Around the year 1,000, Salome began appearing in painting and sculpture, most famously in the tympanum of the *Porte St-Jean* in the Cathedral of Rouen, where Salome is depicted in an acrobatic stance, bent backwards onto her hands, emphasizing an acrobatic physicality.²⁰ Although Salome had begun to acquire immoral, erotic characteristics throughout the medieval period, during the Renaissance, these elements faded from popular depictions. Instead, she became an ideal subject for depicting the beauty of the human form and a convenient means of displaying artistic virtuosity, given the challenges of painting the severed head and the opulent, Oriental costumes.²¹ Salome

gradually disappeared from the artistic imagination until the early nineteenth century, when the trope resurfaced with several important thematic additions in Heinrich Heine's long narrative poem, *Atta Troll* (1841). Heine admittedly embellished the Biblical story with elements found in popular the folk tales of Reimarus Secundus,²² and commentaries written by the Brothers Grimm.²³ *Atta Troll*'s contribution to the Salome story was to introduce the taboo eroticism emphasized by Flaubert, Moreau, and Wilde, among others. Heine's narrative conflates Salome and Herodias, casting the composite character as a melancholic figure who is motivated not by the political vindictiveness of the medieval Herodias/Salome, but by a fierce, unrequited love:

Still with her hands she bears
That deep charger with the head
Of the Prophet, still she kisses—
Kisses it with fiery lips.

For she loved the Prophet once,
Though the Bible naught reveals,
Yet her blood-stained love lives on
Storied in her people's hearts.

(114)

After its 1847 publication in French, Heine's capricious revision of the basic Salome plot not only rescued it from relative obscurity, but also established Salome as the muse of the new type of "aristocratic" artist, artists that would later be categorized as leaders

of the symbolist, decadent, and aesthetic movements.²⁴ Salome had become not only a symbol of idealized beauty, but a figure that is socially, politically, and sexually subversive.

Salome as Fairy Tale

As previously indicated, another aspect of the Salome trope that makes it such a popular subject of the avant-garde artists of the *fin de siècle* is that it comes to us from “the archive”—that is, the stable cultural repository of Biblical, historical, and fairy tale narrative traditions. As mentioned, Heine drew many of his more radical inspirations for his depiction of Herodias-Salome from German folk narratives, which had carried along the Salome trope from the Middle Ages on. In *Teutonic Mythology*, Jacob Grimm observes that the story of Herod’s dancing daughter, “must have produced a peculiarly deep impression in the early part of the Mid. Ages, and in more than one way got mixed up with fables” (283, abbreviation original). Grimm then goes on to explain the conflation of Herodias with Diana and the Teutonic deity Holda (or *Frau Holle*), who is the matron of childbirth, domestic animals, witches, and the “Wild Hunt” mytheme. Therefore, the Salome story re-entered the modern artistic imagination, in part, by way of the fairy tale.²⁵

It is reasonable to assume that Strindberg, Ibsen, and Wilde were not only familiar with the Salome narrative, but also the literary tradition of fairy tales as a whole; each author had done significant scholarly or creative work in the field.²⁶ Given that these authors were familiar with the didactic potential of the fairy tale form, we can

understand why they would so quickly adapt it to their needs: the appropriation of fairy tale motifs serves both as an efficient means of situating the new work within the cultural canon and as a means of layering complex, perhaps even subversive, themes upon the story at hand.²⁷ Attempts to subvert, however, are not without risk of generating in both English and Norwegian contexts what Henry James describes as the “cries of outraged purity which have so often and so pathetically resounded through the Anglo-Saxon world” (521). The difficulty of a subversive project, then, is to encode it so as to be both recognizable and effective, to be old and yet new.²⁸ The technique of appropriating fairy tale forms is a means of putting new wine in old wineskins. In this way, Strindberg, Ibsen, and Wilde can deliver the “metaphysical, moral, or esthetic ideas dear to their hearts” described by Pierrot in a form that is accessible by their audiences. In other words, the familiar narratives offered by fairy tales provide a comfortable, recognizable point of access—a means of allowing the audience to conserve their mental energy. Therefore, composing a *revised* fairy tale creates an entirely new product that both allows for the incorporation of the author’s cultural critique *and* corresponds to the expectations tastes of the audience.

Furthermore, these acts of revision represent the melancholic process of *creating* the absent object in order to possess it. There are several obvious fairy tale motifs in these three plays, and I shall touch on the most important characteristics in regard to setting, plot, and character. One essential quality of the fairy tale is the presence of a supernatural or magical atmosphere. In *Miss Julie*, this magical quality is established by the setting, as the play is set on Midsummer’s Eve, a Swedish festival traditionally

celebrated on June 23 and 24, the Feast of St. John the Baptist.²⁹ Considered one of the times of the year when the potential for magic is the strongest, numerous oracular traditions arose around the holiday. In particular, young people would pick bouquets of flowers and lay them beneath their pillows in order to dream of their future spouses; greenery was placed in and around the house and barn to bring good fortune and fertility to people and livestock alike. This theme of fertility is promoted in Wilde's *Salome* through the repeated emphasis on the moon, which is a complicated metaphor in the play, simultaneously representing both life, as Salomé's fertility and virginity, and death, gazing down in judgment upon Salomé at the end of the play. Of the three plays, *Hedda Gabler* is the most realistic in its mood and setting, although the fertility/death theme is continued in Ibsen's work as well, given that Hedda begins the play pregnant, against expectations, given her distaste for her new groom.

Another important fairy tale motif is the plot of transformation and integration. A fairy tale typically begins with some sort of extraordinary disturbance of their "home," or point of equilibrium. The narrative then examines how the protagonist overcomes this extraordinary challenge in an attempt to achieve his or her strongest desire, which is typically a return to the original point of equilibrium. Quite typically, however, the protagonist, through the course of his or her adventures, returns to their place of origin with their circumstances much improved (for example, riches, marriages, status). In *Miss Julie*, the point of disturbance is the recent dissolution of Julie's engagement, coupled with the revelry of Midsummer. In *Salome*, the disturbance is fairly obvious—the presence of Iokanaan and Salomé's sudden attraction to him. In *Hedda Gabler*, the

obstacle is Hedda's pregnancy, her marriage, and the prospect of a mundane, bourgeois lifestyle. In each of these three cases, the protagonist does not achieve equilibrium—there is no “happy ending.” I shall comment further on this deviation below.

Additionally, the protagonist's point of origin is often undesirable, as fairy tale protagonists typically begin the story outside of mainstream society, often because of an abnormal upbringing, thus constituting a third important element of the fairy tale trope. True to form, all three protagonists—Hedda, Julie, and Salomé, are either mistreated by step-parents or raised unconventionally by their own parents (or both). Julie is raised by her mother to be masculine, in Julie's words, “a child of nature and, what's more, I was to learn everything a boy has to learn...” (93). Hedda is an aggressive gynander. Her new aunt-in-law Miss Tesman remarks that Hedda is, “General Gabbler's daughter” and comments to Berta the maid, “the way she lived in the general's day! Do you remember how she would go out riding with her father?” (291). Salomé is raised by the opportunistic, vengeful Herodias and gazed upon by the lecherous Herod Antipas (who together are in a perverse marriage). Perverted by her step-father's lust for her and goaded by her mother's vengefulness, Salomé begins the play seemingly a demure, chaste virgin, and but by the end is revealed to be as vengeful and lascivious as both of her parents. At the climax of the play, as she speaks to Iokanaan's severed head, she says, “I was a princess and thou didst scorn me. I was a virgin, and thou didst take my virginity from me. I was chaste, and thou didst fill my veins with fire....” (65). The characterization of Salome/Julie/Hedda as an eroticized predator is the problematic point, in terms of the dramatic re-interpretation of the original plot.

Sexual Salome and the New Woman

The depiction of Salome as an aggressive, sexual predator, not only conforms to the outsider trope of the fairy tale mode, it is also the hallmark of the decadent vision of her, which itself is a product of her confusing and problematic artistic history. As previously indicated, Strindberg, Ibsen, and Wilde's interest in Salome was neither unique nor timely—Salome had been the subject of countless poems, paintings, and narratives for decades before the *fin de siècle*.³⁰ Prior to her re-appearance in *Atta Troll*, Salome had been depicted, from the fourth century onward, flatly, as a villain; during the Renaissance, she was simply depicted as an object of ideal physical beauty, void of eroticism or immorality. Upon her reappearance in the nineteenth century, however, Salome is depicted in remarkably divergent ways: at one end of the spectrum, she is childlike, pure (to the point of sterility), unpossessible; at the other, she is a highly (though coldly) sexual emasculating gynander, a vile seductress, a *femme fatale*. It is the latter trope that was favored by symbolist and decadent writers alike, and it was this version of Salome that influenced the characterization of Hedda, Julie, and Salomé.³¹ The decadent Salome is ambiguous, both corrupt and innocent, a predator and a victim, androgynous yet sensual (Parker 473). Both Salomé and Hedda attempt to manipulate those who gaze upon them (Herod Antipas/Tesman and Judge Brack) and orchestrate the demise of the would-be lovers who spurn (or have spurned) their amorous advances (Iokanaan/Løvborg). Strindberg's scandalous Miss Julie follows a similar trajectory of a high-born young woman seeking to assert ultimate control of her circumstances by asserting sexual emancipation. Like her counterparts, Julie attempts to seduce a

subordinate—her father’s valet, who, as it turns out, is not as inferior as the haughty Julie had first assumed.

This theme of the *femme fatale* is particularly emphasized by the essential element of the Salome motif: her dance of seduction. Although many details of the Salome story have changed over the centuries, the centrality of her dance has remained consistent. In Wilde’s *Salome*, the dance is not described in great detail: “*Salomé dances the dance of the seven veils*” (54). In *Miss Julie*, the dance motif occupies a greater part of the dramatic space, given the importance of ritual dance to the Midsummer festival. As a fertility celebration, it was also a time strongly linked to sex and marriage. The first reference to Julie is to her dancing:

JEAN. Miss Julie’s quite crazy again tonight; absolutely crazy!

KRISTIN. Oh, so you’re back then, are you?

JEAN. I went with the Count to the station and on my way back past the barn I just stopped by for a dance. And who do I see but her ladyship with the gamekeeper, leading the dance? But as soon as she claps eyes on me, she comes rushing straight on over and invites me to join her in the ladies’ waltz. And how she waltzed!—I’ve never known the like. She’s crazy!

(71)

Furthermore, in place of an act division, Strindberg writes in a “ballet” that is reminiscent of the Herodian fête and alludes to off-stage events:

The peasants enter, dressed in their best clothes, with flowers in their hats; a fiddler at their head; a cask of small beer and a small keg of acquavit, garlanded

with leaves, are placed on the table; glasses are produced. They drink. Then a circle is formed and they sing and dance the dancing game, 'There came two women from out the wood'. When this is finished, they exit again, still singing.
(86)

In *Hedda Gabler*, the dance of seduction was performed before the commencement of the play's narrative. When asked by Brack why she had married the "most acceptable" George Tesman, she replies, "I'd danced myself out, dear Judge. My time was up" (314). In the action of the play itself, the dance is revised: Hedda instead performs dance music on the piano. At the climax of the play, the point at which Hedda realizes that her attempts to orchestrate a heroic death for Løvborg have failed and that her manipulations of Brack have been reversed, the stage directions read as follows:

Hedda goes into the rear room and draws the curtains after her. Short pause.
*Suddenly she is heard to play a **wild dance melody** on the piano.*
(355, emphasis mine)

Shortly thereafter, a blast is heard, and Hedda is found to have shot herself with her father's pistol—through the temple, in heroic fashion.³²

The deaths of Julie, Hedda, and Salomé are not only narrative innovations to the Salome plot, but they are also obvious points of divergence from the typical fairy tale trope. Indeed, a common characteristic of a fairy tale is the happy ending in which the protagonist reaps the rewards of his or her transformation and lives "happily ever after." The deaths of the protagonists are obvious commentary—but upon what do these deaths comment?³³ What critique are these authors attempting to make? In the end, it is Julie

who has been seduced, and she does not escape the story alive – she slits her own throat with a straight razor. Similarly, Salome and Hedda’s triumphs are short-lived and end with their deaths—in the case of Salomé, execution by Herod Antipas’ soldiers. The heroine’s deaths forward a number of thematic arguments. Whether Julie, Hedda, and Salomé are murdered by an oppressive system, martyred for the cause of women’s emancipation, or sacrificed for idealized love is up for debate. Of the three, Strindberg is the least sympathetic towards his subject—Julie is disempowered and humiliated before her death, whereas Hedda and Salomé retain their agency. A more important question, however, is why they must die at all. If Strindberg exhibits underlying misogyny when he kills Julie to punish her for her abnormal behavior, then what motivates Ibsen and Wilde when Hedda and Salomé do not live? Why did these authors, who so often gave audiences not what they wanted but what they needed not make their ideological arguments clearer?³⁴

I argue that the deaths of these Salome-esque protagonists are not so much commentary on specific political or social issues as they are representative of the heightened sense of impending crisis. Read this way, the deaths of our protagonists are but symptomatic of a trend in *fin de siècle* literature. While plays adapting the well-known fairy tales of Perrault and the Grimms became increasingly popular from the late eighteenth century onward, particularly as a form of political and social commentary, beginning at the turn of the next century with the Modernist moment, dramatic adaptations of fairy tales began to take a darker turn. Given the generalized anxieties and feelings of doom at the *fin de siècle*, the fantastic utopias of fairy tales may have seemed

an inadequate means of discourse; therefore, avant-garde authors sought to “re-produce” them to better suit the contemporary mood. Playwrights like Maurice Maeterlinck, Strindberg, Ibsen, Wilde, and W.B. Yeats turned to fairy tales and other anti-realistic forms to bring poetry and spiritual meaning back into the theatre. In particular, Maeterlinck’s 1893 play *Pelléas et Mélisande*, considered to be the definitive example of symbolist drama, converted the typical plots of social integration and “happy endings” into decadent themes of doom, disillusionment, and despair.³⁵ If fairy tales serve moral purposes, the revision of a fairy tale serves a moral revision appropriate to historic shifts in social arrangements.

As mentioned, the plays’ emphases on sexuality, perhaps mundane by today’s standards, were the primary causes of public outcry against them. In the minds of many viewers, Julie, Hedda, and Salomé were “nervous, depraved women” whose deadly sexual games were a direct contradiction of the “pure and noble” attributes upon which the Victorian male had constructed his feminine ideal (Powell 230). As Tydeman and Price comment, adherents of the “cult of overt, self-conscious masculinity” that so dominated the late Victorian age strongly rejected aesthetic and decadent art, often criticizing it as morbid, unnatural, perverted and unwholesome (143). To be fair, decadent art was quite intentionally morbid and perverse; as Pierrot observes, decadent authors “took great delight” in depicting such erotically “perverse” subjects as, sadism, incest, and even bestiality with clear intentions of shocking the bourgeois audiences of the day.³⁶ Against this context, that Strindberg, Ibsen, and Wilde would exploit the uncertainties felt by their audiences should not be surprising. As the manufactured crisis

of Modernism began to coalesce, they were happy to lend a hand in pushing what remained of convention over the edge of decency. Ever the provocateurs, these authors are practically expected to mount a full-frontal assault the convoluted sexual mores of the waning days of Victorianism, particularly *because* of the controversy such campaigns attract. It is not difficult, then, to read the Salome plays of Strindberg, Ibsen, and Wilde as commentary on the ascendancy of the “New Woman” and the ebb of Victorian-era mores.³⁷ What is more difficult, however, is interpreting precisely *what* that commentary seeks to achieve.

Although the Decadents (and other avant-garde *fin de siècle* writers) did not overtly lend their voices to the cause of the New Woman, they did share an interest in upending mainstream middle-class values, which, in the public mind at least, coupled the two groups together. The popular press attacked both groups for their sexual candor and desire to challenge prevailing notions of gender, particularly in British society. Ironically, according to Sally Ledger, a significant portion of New Woman writers drew more allegiance to “social purity feminism” and were antagonistic towards “sexual avant-gardism” (“Wilde Women” 7). Likewise, two popular depictions of woman in decadent and symbolist art were either as nakedly helpless or as lethally seductive; women were either passive slaves to their emotions or predators that sought to drag man to her base—that is, biological—level. Ledger points to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* to illustrate the man/culture woman/nature dualism frequently promoted by decadent writers: “The art/nature dualism is clear in the distinction made between ‘femininity’ and ‘woman’ in Wilde’s decadent novel, and this in turn can be inserted into the

Enlightenment culture/nature dichotomy which locked ‘man’ into culture and ‘woman’ into nature” (*New Woman* 108-109). Woman was generally devalued (or, more accurately, *not valued* in any special way), cast as either as helpless victims of biology or as dangerous parasites that would leech man’s vitality through the bourgeois conceptualization of the marriage contract. In particular, dandyism, an outgrowth of decadentism, was a particularly misogynistic cultural position. To point, in her extensive study of dandyism, gender, and performance in the *fin de siècle*, Rhonda K. Garelick argues that because dandyism values perpetual, artificial youth, it rejects the woman because “by virtue of their association with the human life cycle and reproduction, women threaten the dandy’s eternal present with temporality, and hence become objects of fear and disdain in decadent literature” (5).³⁸ Whether or not Strindberg, Ibsen, and Wilde belong to this misogynistic cohort is debatable. Strindberg was openly hostile towards women, as described in his perplexing essay 1895 “On the Inferiority of Woman” in which he cites Darwin, among others, to support a quasi-scientific hypothesis that menstruation, the “anemia of necessity,” “seems to atrophy the brain,” so that the normal condition of a grown woman is that of a “sick child” (qtd. in Parker 473). This sort of misogyny, however, is significantly different than the typical decadent misogyny, which originates from a preference for the artificial over the natural and the social limitations implied by a woman’s role in middle-class culture.

Wilde and Ibsen were, by comparison, ardent feminists. In *Ibsen’s Women*, Joan Templeton observes that Ibsen’s female characters are generally drawn in such a way as to subvert the paradigm of “dutiful feminine submission” (21-22). Hedda is among

Ibsen's most extremely subversive female characters; in fact, the majority of the critical backlash against her as a character attempts to categorize her as a defective or degenerate woman, going as far as psychoanalyzing her as a study in sexual neurosis (Templeton 204-205). In *Hedda Gabler* (and most of his other plays), Ibsen displays a high degree of empathy for the social limitations placed upon women. Wilde, the nominal head of British decadence, was a champion, of sorts, for the New Woman. For instance, in negotiating his appointment as editor-in-chief of *The Woman's World* (née *The Lady's World*), Wilde argued for a reduction in the number of articles about dress and ornament and an increase in the publication's attention to matters such as women's education and women writers (Ellmann 291-292). Thus, one cannot simply point to the authors' misogyny or fear of the New Woman as the cause of death in these plays.

Death of the (Romantic) Dancer

I read any apparent "decadent" misogyny (that is, anxiety over biology, or an allergy to the natural) as evidence of a melancholic attachment to an idealist paradigm, the Romantic Image of essential female beauty described by Kermode. Therefore, woman should *not*, in art, ever be treated realistically. As Toril Moi writes, the idealist view holds that, in avoidance of "the coarse and the vulgar," that which is *not* beautiful, there is an urge to transcend the physical body in favor of "wildly idealized" representations of women, including the trope of a pure woman proving her purity by sacrificing her life for love, the highest ideal of (melancholic) beauty. Moi goes on to describe an "an increasingly impoverished, moralizing, didactic form of idealism" that

continued to function as a the master discourse about literature and art in the wake of romanticism proper (79, 82), and I would argue that Strindberg, Ibsen, and Wilde are participating in *this* discourse, thereby sacrificing their women not in punishment for their deviance or degeneration (as would be the case in the New Woman discourse), but to either preserve them as an aesthetic ideal or employ them as a metaphor. Salomé and Julie must die because their death is the only way to salvage their honor and elevate them above the base animalism of their unreasonable sexual needs. Hedda dies for a similar reason—because she is confronted by a system that gives her no other choice and because she aspires to a masculine ideal of heroism. Granted, these sacrifices are departures from the traditional trope of sacrifice for an idealized love, but in each case, the death of the Salome-esque protagonist signals an unwillingness to resolve the conflicts or disappointments of the present age and instead reach towards an idealized past. This melancholic turn is not a sort of unresolved attachment to the loss of the true “woman” in the socio-cultural sense, but rather in the aesthetic sense. In other words, the melancholic attachments of Strindberg, Ibsen, and Wilde are to an idealized time when form and meaning were one, when Unity of Being was possible in art – the unity sought by Symbolists, but destroyed by the onset of Modernism, concerned as it was with the dichotomies of self and other, art and artifice, organism and machine. Salome dies not as a warning against the progress of the New Woman in the socio-political sense, but rather to mark the passing of beauty in the sense of Kermode’s “Romantic Image,” which prizes the unity of meaning achieved by the perfectly proportioned body of a beautiful woman. Kermode muses, in considering the work of William Butler Yeats,

“It is hardly too much to say that whenever Yeats refers back to the historical concept of unity of being, or to the aesthetic one of beauty as a perfectly proportioned human body, the image of Salome is likely to occur to him...” (76).

This fixation on “beauty” is the point upon which we may easily segregate these three plays. As previously indicated, Strindberg was a well-known and fairly conspicuous misogynist, and his execution of his protagonist is likely a punishment for Julie having overstepped the bounds of both class and gender.³⁹ If he leads Julie to her death, it is not to somehow preserve her ideal beauty or prevent her from further degeneration—instead, I read her death as an unavoidable outcome of the complex range of factors that prevent her, from her birth onwards, from ever achieving this idealized female beauty. Her death is not simply a castigation of *only* women’s emancipation, but a naturalistic interpretation of the entire range of “degenerative” outcomes of modernity. As Strindberg comments, “I flatter myself that this multiplicity of motives is in tune with the times” (59). In other words, Miss Julie’s death was inescapable, for she is the product of a flawed culture that had *a priori* negated the possibility of ideal beauty.

Hedda’s suicide is in service to romantic ideals. Throughout the play, Hedda indicates her commitment to romantic ideals, particularly the notion that modern society is an artificial restriction of individual free will. As her own agency is diminished—by her pregnancy, her marriage, and the increasingly ominous sexual advances of Judge Brack—her eagerness for any sort of self-defining act of will increases. For instance, she praises Løvborg for having “more of life’s courage than the others,” even though his passions are entirely self-destructive (334). In the fourth act, when she learns that he had

fatally shot himself, she remarks that he “had the courage to live life his own way, and now—his last great act—bathed in beauty” (351). When the full truth is revealed—that Løvborg’s fatal wound was most likely an accidental shot to the stomach—Hedda realizes that her quest for a romantic ideal is futile. She takes her own action and dispatches herself in “heroic” fashion, with a shot to the temple. Like the dancer, she represents action and meaning united as beauty.

Wilde’s objectives are a bit more obscure. He considered, in early drafts, letting Salomé live out her days in exile, subsisting on locusts and wild honey, as had St. John the Baptist (Ellmann 344-345). But to allow her to escape the bounds of the tragedy would disavow Wilde’s core principle in that, “...all excess, as well as all renunciation, brings its punishment... (“The Artist” 246). Salomé, must perish as a result of not only her initial commitment to chastity, but also her later self-consuming desire for Iokannan’s physical beauty *not to mention* Herod’s all-consuming desire for hers.

Conclusion

We have identified in the works of Strindberg, Ibsen, and Wilde a subversive mien, inspired in part by their affinity for fairy tales; however, their urge to appropriate precedent plots also suggests the possibility of a desire to elevate and legitimize their self-consciously scandalous works, to infiltrate the grand narrative of Western culture, and to resuscitate the dramatic form. These attempts to dramatize the Salome story—to perform it—are an attempt to revive the oral tradition and reject the “industrial” plays

produced for the urban masses. This paradoxical urge to return to a fabled past is the marker of Modernist melancholia.

If we follow this line of thinking, however, we realize that Strindberg, Ibsen, and Wilde not only insinuated an ancient story into their modern texts, they reinterpreted the story to better fit the needs of their contemporary culture, an subversion through duplication and revision common to the literary appropriation of fairy tales. Such a process of duplication and revision is to be expected, as the dramaturgical inheritance of Strindberg, Ibsen, and Wilde was essentially bankrupt. While the preceding century had borne an unprecedented wealth in European poetry and painting along with and the rise of the realist novel, bowdlerization and government censorship had crushed all adventure from popular drama, resulting in either heavily melodramatic popular works or well-made plays rife with thinly-disguised fashionable taboos, such as adultery—works from a peculiar form of “literary industrialization.” For an artist compelled to make bold statements, the stage was an underused vehicle, vacant and ready. As the leaders of avant-garde theatre, Strindberg, Ibsen, and Wilde demonstrate conflicted attitudes towards the preceding traditions of aesthetic idealism. Numerous authors considered as “decadent” writers expressed their separation from romanticism by valorizing artificiality (either thematically or stylistically) while at the same time maintaining the romantic interest in “erotic sensibility” (Weir 14). Decadence was not so much an inspired literary movement as it was the site of a collision between opposing literary tendencies, and a decadent work may be discovered to be simultaneously innovative and imitative, overtaking, as it were, parallel literary movements such as

realism and naturalism to eventually become a means of writing circumscribed as Modernism. These complexities notwithstanding, the notions of “decadence” and “*fin de siècle*” both carry negative connotations, suggestions of decay, degeneration, and an unhappy end. The artistic and formal innovations of decadence are perhaps eclipsed by its fixation on the past, which encourages one to read decadence as a reaction to romanticism and realism, an attempt to dismantle the faulty notion of truth, whether it be the rage of Caliban seeing himself in the mirror or *not* seeing himself in the mirror (to paraphrase Wilde’s preface to *Dorian Gray*). But an ancillary argument posed by this chapter is to read decadence as a form of “proto-modernism,” not only for the “newness” of its style, but also because the backwards gaze of decadence is distinct from the nostalgia of romanticism and instead more accurately described as a particular form of melancholia that later evolves into the highly recognizable neo-classicism of Modernism. In this way, we may understand this sort of unresolved longing for the lost object *not* as a process of decay or degeneration, but as a process of creation.

Per Freud’s later conception of melancholia, which depicted it as an unavoidable and necessary stage of the mourning process, loss becomes an “introjection” into the psyche around which the ego is constructed. As Flatley argues, the ego is thus “like an archive or archaeological site” that contains the record of our choices (49). We are our losses. While from a certain point of view, the melancholic attachment to “the archive” is a system of compulsive repetition under the sway of the death-drive and beholden to pleasure and desire, a more balanced view would recognize that melancholia is a process of subject formation. Conceiving melancholic attachment to archival sources in this

way, we can then recognize the sort of morbid, refined, sensual kind creativity described by Bourget. Rather than a process of decomposition or deconstruction, this creative sort of melancholia is instead a separation, an emphasis on the individual within society, however discomfoting or painful it may be.

Notes

¹ For thorough surveys of the Salome/Herodias/Judith trope in fin de siècle art, see Bram Dijkstra's *Idols of Perversity*, Helen Zagona, *The Legend of Salome and the Principle of Art for Art's Sake*, Charles Bernheimer's *Decadent Subjects: The Idea of Decadence in Art, Literature, Philosophy, and Culture of the Fin de Siècle*, and Robert C. Schweick, "Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, the Salome Theme in Late European Art, and a Problem of Method in Cultural History."

² Wilde composed *Salome* in 1891 while residing in France. Composed in 1890, *Hedda Gabler* premiered in Paris on 17 December 1891 at the Théâtre du Vaudeville (after an April, 1891 London premier); *Miss Julie* was composed in 1888 and premiered in Paris on 16 January 1893 at Théâtre Libre (Törnqvist 93). There is little doubt that these three writers were not only influenced by the major Salome-themed works of the late nineteenth century, they almost certainly influenced one another (with the greatest influence perhaps belonging to Ibsen on Strindberg as a rival and Wilde as an aspirant). For discussion of Strindberg's exposure to the Salome trope, see Brian Parker's "*Miss Julie* and the Legend of Salome."

³ For a thorough examination of the relationship between Ibsen and Strindberg, see F.L. Lucas, *The Drama of Ibsen and Strindberg*.

⁴ In his typically bombastic fashion, he goes on to ask his friend, "Now do you see that my seeds have fallen even in Ibsen's brain-capsule—and grown? Now he carries my semen and is my uterus! This is the Will to Power and my pleasure in settling others' brains in molecular motion" (qtd. in Lucas 465). According to Ibsen biographer Michael Meyer, Strindberg particularly hated *Hedda Gabler* because he felt that Ibsen had based the character of Eilert Løvborg on him. Ibsen, for his part, felt no fondness for Strindberg, either. From 1895 onward, he kept in his study a portrait of the Swede, about which Ibsen commented, "He is my mortal enemy; he shall hang there and watch what I write" (qtd. in Meyer 732).

⁵ Wilde is known to have seen the London performance of *Hedda Gabler*, commenting "I felt pity and terror, as though the play had been Greek" (Holland and Hart-Davis, 293).

⁶ Wilde's play was to have been performed as part of a repertory season of French-language plays at the Royal English Opera House, starring Sarah Bernhardt. By July 1892, *Salomé* had been in rehearsals for over two weeks when its production was terminated by the Examiner of Plays, who refused to grant a license on the "entirely traditional grounds" that forbade the performance of biblical figures on the stage in Britain. *Salomé* was not staged in Britain until 1931. Rumors abound that Wilde wrote *Salomé* with Bernhardt in mind. Meyers twice comments that Bernhardt disliked Ibsen's works because his characters were too plain and reserved (517; 569-570).

⁷ As a compromise, Strindberg instead offered the premier as a "private" performance, attended by students from Copenhagen University, close friends, and critics. It did not get good reviews.

⁸ He was not directly censored again, however, as the Examiner felt that his plays were generally unintelligible and would therefore not cause a scandal.

⁹ Frank Kermode suggests that this tendency for profound expressions of anxiety at *saecula* (arbitrary chronological divisions) is a means of means of projecting the in-temporal 'weight of our anxieties and hopes' onto a historical calendar, which appeases our human need for order and reason. Kermode cites the *fin de siècle* as a prime example of this tendency, describing it as a literary-historical moment where "all the elements of the apocalyptic paradigm clearly co-exist" (*Sense* 11).

¹⁰ For further discussion on the effects of Ibsen's dialogue in *Hedda Gabler*, see Joan Templeton's *Ibsen's Women*.

¹¹ In the critical literature related to *fin de siècle* literature, the terms "decadent" and "aesthetic" are often used interchangeably. My general sense of the terms is that "decadent" refers to a movement in French literature, while "aesthetic" refers to the similar movement in British literature. Terminological clarity is problematic, however, when dealing with cosmopolitan authors such as Strindberg, Ibsen, and Wilde. The latter, for instance, was Irish, publishing mostly for a British audience, but who composed *Salome* in French. Strindberg and Ibsen, although Swedish and Norwegian, saw their plays performed primarily to German, French, and British audiences.

¹² Readers have disagreed as to whether the incantatory quality of Wilde's dialogue is intentional or a result of his lack of fluency in French. William Tydeman and Steven Price note that during the time that Wilde was in Paris, working on *Salomé*, a series of stage experiments were underway at the Théâtre d'Art that dramatized the Song of Solomon, thereby alerting Wilde to the 'dramatic relevance of this rich scriptural text with its sharply etched erotic imagery, lyric simplicity of expression, patterned repetitions and periphrastic elaboration' (6). I argue that Wilde's incantatory dialogue is an attempt to emulate the cadences found in fantasy and fairy tale plays by Belgian playwright Maurice Maeterlinck, whom Wilde admired. See Zagona, *Legend of Salome*, p. 129 and Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p. 373.

¹³ In regard to the 'comforting' drama of the preceding decades, see Stokes, "Varieties of Performance at the Turn of the Century" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle*, p. 207.

¹⁴ As Brian Parker argues, Strindberg's approach may also be closer to Wilde's decadence than the naturalism than he professes, given his 'comparatively slight concern for the social, as distinct from the psychological, aspects of environment' that is a defining characteristic of mainstream naturalism. Parker also observes that *Miss Julie* also departs from typical naturalism for its 'hallucinatory intensity of focus' and Strindberg's exploitation of 'oneiric and romantic—even fairytale—elements that are literary and theatrical in origin, not social or autobiographical' (469-484).

¹⁵ Stephen Arata describes this same characteristic in British literature, a widespread expression of anxiety over "the collapse of culture, the weakening of national might, the possibility of fatal decay—physical, moral, spiritual, creative—of the Anglo-Saxon 'race' as a whole" (1).

¹⁶ No English translation of Bourget's work has yet been published.

¹⁷ As Calinescu suggests, the decadent style is simply a style "favorable to the unrestricted manifestation of aesthetic individualism," one that rejects traditional authoritarian requirements such as unity, hierarchy, and objectivity (171).

¹⁸ See F. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XVIII, Chapter 5.

¹⁹ Zagona suggests that the change in attitude towards the character of Salome coincides the erection of a great church in honor of St. John the Baptist in Alexandria, which, in conjunction with the crusades, led to increased general interest in the Baptist. As she writes, 'In legends, the purer the hero, the blacker the hero, and the Salome story followed the rule' (20).

²⁰ Flaubert is known to have visited the cathedral, and it is supposed that he drew his inspiration for *Hérodiade* in part from the tour.

²¹ For further discussion, see Zagona, p. 21.

²² In Secundus' version, the name of Herod's daughter is Pharaildis (not related to St. Pharaildis of Ghent). We find elements of the Biblical plot intertwined with pagan narratives:

Herod had a daughter, named Pharaildis, and he would have been happy about it, if she would not have been taken by a fatal passion. This maiden yearned only to embrace the Baptist and had vowed not to belong to anyone if she could not have him. When the father had discovered the love of his daughter, he was angry, and in his cruelty had the innocent saint beheaded. Stricken with grief, the virgin asked to have the head brought to her on a dish; when a courtier did so, she embraced it with her soft arms and moistened it with tears, but as she attempted to cover it with kisses, it drew back and blew so hard that she was blown through the roof opening by the whirlwind. Since that time, she still rides the all too implacable wrath of John through the air. Even in death he resents the unfortunates who he had in life not saved. But fate has at least saved them from total destruction by the honor she bestows. Her grief and reverence for her eases the penalty, thus a third of people follow her.
(46-47. Translation mine.)

²³ Intended primarily as a satire, *Atta Troll* is primarily directed at the new forces of liberalism, which promoted equality for all at the expense of artistic integrity and exceptional genius. The Herodias episode in the poem is relatively brief, but thematically important, as she represents the influence of non-Christian (specifically Semitic) art, which Heine prizes above all for its 'ardent spirit of life' (Zagona 29, 34-35). See also Dijkstra (395).

²⁴ Between 1862 and 1877, dozens of prominent French artists, writers, and composers created works based on the Salome story, including Stéphane Mallarmé's poem *Hérodiade* (1869), Gustav Flaubert's story 'Herodias' in *Tres Contes* (1877), and major paintings by Puvis de Chavanne (1869), Henri Gagnault (1870), and Gustave Moreau (1876). This 'second generation' of Salome works influenced a flurry of artistic production from 1883 to 1893, including works by Symbolist poets Jules Lafourge, Jean Lorrain, Albert Samain, an opera by Jules Massenet and the bellwether decadent novel *À rebours* by Joris-Karl Huysmans. For a detailed discussion of many of these major works, see Zagona.

²⁵ The term 'fairy tale' is somewhat problematic, as it often laden with culturally-specific meanings and individual associations. Additionally, the terms 'folk tale' and 'fairy tale' are often used interchangeably. In folklore studies, the term 'fairy tale' is used to identify one type of folk tale (alongside 'myth' and 'legend'). Furthermore, the term 'folk tale' is generally used in reference to a tale deriving from or existing in oral tradition, whereas 'fairy tale' refers to a genre of prose literature. See Stein, "Folklore and Fairy Tales" in *The Oxford Companion to the Fairy Tale*. The major (relevant) point of consensus on the definition of the genre is that fairy tales typically reflect historically specific visions of gender, class, and sexuality, and the interpretation of a fairy tale is a highly individualized experience. For further discussion, see Anne Martin, *Red Riding Hood and The Wolf in Bed: Modernism's Fairy Tales*, p. 13.

²⁶ Wilde wrote two collections of children's stories, *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888) and *A House of Pomegranates* (1891), which are conventionally labeled as 'fairy tales.' A significant body of literature has commented on the influence of fairy tales on Strindberg's works, and, as Edmund A. Napieralski writes, Strindberg's 'interest in legends and fairy tales...was not something casual, accidental, or temporary' (282). Strindberg translated Hans Christian Anderson in the 1870's, composed a fairy-tale drama, *Lucky Peter's Travels*, in 1882, and wrote a collection of original fairy tales, *Sabor*, in 1903. Likewise, Ibsen was an avid folklorist, having received, as a young writer, a public grant to support the collection of popular folktales, producing an essay 'On the Heroic Ballad and Its Significance for Literature' (1857). He later spent two months in rural Norway, collecting folk ballads and tales, after which he composed *Peer Gynt* (1876).

²⁷ As Martin writes, fairy tales in Modernist works often function as "...repositories of cultural knowledge, or as links to the childhood of the nation, or as representations of an original humanity" (7).

²⁸ As Strindberg continues in the Preface to *Miss Julie*, '...I have not tried to accomplish anything new, for that is impossible, but merely to modernize the form...' (56).

²⁹ Note Cantos XVIII to XX of Heine's *Atta Troll*, which depicts the 'Wild Hunt,' which according to legend, also occurs on this date. Notably, Julie's dog is named Diana, a cross-reference the Herodias-Diana conflation previously mentioned. Also note the role of the notorious (and implicitly lascivious) singer Miss Diana in *Hedda Gabler*.

³⁰ According to Brian Parker, it is estimated that by 1912, no fewer than 2,789 French poets had written of Salome.

³¹ In *A Rebours*, Huysmans inscribes the centrality of this figure in the grand narrative of decadent modernity through Gustav Moreau's Salome:

No longer was she merely the dancing-girl who extorts a cry of lust and concupiscence from an old man by the lascivious contortions of her body; who breaks the will, masters the mind of a King by the spectacle of her quivering bosoms, heaving belly and tossing thighs; she was now revealed in a sense as the symbolic incarnation of world-old Vice, the goddess of immortal Hysteria, the Curse of Beauty supreme above all other beauties by the cataleptic spasm that stirs her flesh and steels her muscles, - a monstrous Beast of the Apocalypse, indifferent, irresponsible, insensible, poisoning.
(95)

³² Taking as it does such a prominent role, one must consider what the metaphoric meaning of "the dance" is in these works. Transgressing culture, and time, and artistic boundaries, the image of dance is a complex and fecund symbol. A particularly useful means of interpreting this symbol is presented by Frank Kermode in *Romantic Image*. Kermode proposes a notion of "the Image" as a point of access to higher truths and a means of reconciling opposites, such as action and contemplation (5). In Kermode's way of thinking, the work of art itself is a symbol, a "means to a truth...more exalted than that of positivist science or any observation depending upon the discursive reason." Specifically, Kermode is consumed with the idea of the woman's body in motion as the "emblem of the work of art or Image." Kermode refers to this recurring image as "the Dancer." In outlining the role of the Dancer in romanticism, he spends significant time considering the importance of the Salome motif, asserting that, "throughout this tradition, the beauty of a work of art, in which there is no division of form and meaning [...] is more or less explicitly compared with the mysterious inexpressive beauty of such women, and perhaps particularly with that of Salome" (44, 57, 60). In other words, the dancer is the representation of a unification of form and meaning, the elusive and ultimate goal of the artist's effort. In this, the Dancer eludes reduction to dichotomies and is the "lost object"—the ideal of aesthetic perfection.

³³ This sort of killing is expected in melancholia. As Žižek suggests, "In short, the mourner mourns the lost object and "kills it the second time" through symbolizing its loss, while the melancholic is not simply the one who is unable to renounce the object; he rather kills the object the second time (treats it as lost) before the object is actually lost" ("Excursions" par 22).

³⁴ As Calinescu writes, the most striking paradox of literary modernity is that, 'freed from the constraints of tradition, the writer should strive to give his contemporaries a pleasure that they seem unprepared to enjoy and perhaps do not even deserve' (41).

³⁵ For further discussion, see Shawn Jarvis, “Drama and Fairy Tales” (139).

³⁶ Tydeman and Price, *Wilde: Salome*, p I. 143

³⁷ As Linda Dowling writes, “late-Victorian critics of the avant-garde used the vocabulary of apocalypse to express the urgent sense of cultural crisis, their fear of imminent besiegement, betrayal, and collapse” (439).

³⁸ Garelick also identifies the same dyad that I describe here: “Taking into account the burgeoning women’s movement of the period, many critics have seen the fin-de-siecle Salome as either an emblematic feminist heroine, a strong woman who uses her seductive power to bring a rule to his knees, or as a misogynist portrayal of the New Woman, a grotesque, masculinized virago who threatens all around her, and whose appeal only leads to mutilation” (133).

³⁹ In his preface, Strindberg professes that he has ‘motivated Miss Julie’s tragic fate with an abundance of circumstances,’ including her upbringing, her ‘degenerate brain,’ the festive atmosphere, her preoccupation with animals, the ‘powerful aphrodisiac influence of the flowers,’ and even her menstrual period (58).

CHAPTER IV
POLITICAL MELANCHOLIA: IMPERIALIST PASTORALISM AND THE
RELUCTANT MODERNISM OF E.M. FORSTER'S *HOWARDS END*

Introduction

This chapter examines how the contradictions between the desire for a cosmopolitan order and the longing for the “pre-modern” in the face of globalized modern society functions to produce the formal and stylistic innovations that we now recognize as Modernism. The *fin de siècle* Salome narratives discussed in the previous chapter demonstrate a desperate grasp for aesthetic stability presumed to be threatened by various destabilizing crises of modernity—the crisis of meaning, of belief, of representation—read as cherished ideals lost or threatened by the radical transformations of technology, communication, philosophy, and politics that occurred at or near the turn of the twentieth century. The question remains, however, as to whether these ideals were ever actually possessed or if they were already absent; therefore, this process of grieving is performed as melancholia, for it not only engages in a creative act to recast the absence of these meanings as instead losses, but it also resuscitates fallow symbols of bygone eras to represent and communicate these losses.

As a popular choice of precedent in the early decades the Modernist period, Salome illustrates the Modernist tendency to resurrect symbols or tropes from previous eras and cultures as a means of articulating the present. In melancholic fashion, however,

the Modernists resurrect these symbols and tropes only to grieve them a second time, thus providing a site for expression of grief that would otherwise be dislocated. The intense interest in the figure of Salome is also noteworthy in that she comes not from “within” Western cultural history, but from outside of it, from the exotic “Orient.”¹ The trend towards exoticism in early twentieth-century art and literature presents an interesting means of re-considering the melancholic stance of Modernism. This dialectic between these melancholia and exoticism, two seemingly unrelated processes is perhaps initially unexpected; however, the correlation between the two becomes clearer if we proceed from a conception of exoticism as a byproduct of progressive Western imperialism.² This chapter will take a counter-intuitive approach to demonstrating the interplay between imperialism, exoticism, Modernism, and melancholia in that it will look *not* towards texts explicitly concerning themselves with exotic colonial adventures or primitive cultures, but instead focus its analysis on a narrative concerning urbane, highly localized cultures: E.M. Forster’s *Howards End*. My analysis shifts from the direct encounter between the modern and the exotic to the ancillary effects of the encounter between the colonial subject and the Empire, so to speak.

Imperialism vs. Cosmopolitanism

The spike in interest in exotic cultures coincides with the apex of Western imperialism.³ The dawn of the new century saw the European empires at their most expansive; in particular, the British empire controlled one-third of the world’s population and one-quarter of the world’s landmass, including much of the “near east”

and Africa. Following the Berlin Conference of 1884, the European powers jostled for colonial control of Africa; Britain, Germany, and the Netherlands consumed Southeast Asia; and even the United States, under the guise of manifest destiny and the Monroe doctrine, entered the business of colonialism by staking claims in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Pacific.⁴

It was a common view in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century that imperialism (particularly European) was not merely an economic endeavor, but also a “civilizing” mission, one that would bring not only technological and economic development to the poor, backwards cultures of Africa, the Middle East, Oceania, and Southeast Asia, but also the fortifying effects of religion, education, and industry.⁵ As Patrick Brantlinger observes, in reference to the evolution of Britain’s imperialism, “by mid-century, the success of the antislavery movement, the impact of the great Victorian explorers, and the merger of racist and evolutionary doctrines in the social sciences had combined to give the British public a widely shared view of Africa that demanded imperialization on moral, religious, and scientific grounds” (168). In other words, drawing subordinate nations and cultures into the “global” community was a point of national pride for many imperial powers. Paradoxically, the Western Imperialist project could be said to have informed both the development of nationalism—in that it was a point of national pride and identity to be at the center of a global economic system—and cosmopolitanism, in that colonized and colonizers alike were drawn into a system that operated above the level of national boundaries.

The byproduct of imperialism was heightened awareness in the “metropole” of less technologically advanced foreign cultures; we can find this interest demonstrated as a range of themes, forms, and motifs appropriated from the “exotic” and “primitive” colonized cultures in avant-garde works of visual art, music, and lyric poetry. For instance, posthumous exhibitions of Paul Gauguin’s Tahitian-themed paintings at the Salon d’Automne in 1903 and 1906 inspired a range of avant-garde visual artists to reject the highly academic realism that had dominated European art from the mid-nineteenth century in favor of foreshortened perspective, garish, conflicting colors, and bold lines. When the controversial works of Henri Matisse and Andre Derain were exhibited in 1905 at the Salon d’Automne, the critics disparaged them as *fauves*—“wild beasts.”⁶ Drawing inspiration from these Fauvists and, to a greater degree Gauguin’s work, Pablo Picasso offered *Les Femmes d’Alger* in 1907, establishing the Cubist movement.⁷ Primitivism also impacted popular music, most notably Igor Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring* (1913), which spurned traditional Western harmony in favor of repetitive rhythms and short, violent musical phrases. The accompanying ballet paid homage to pagan rituals, and, as in the Salome plays discussed in Chapter 1, ended with a violent dance leading to the death of the female protagonist.⁸

With regard to narrative, the influence of exoticism is more complex and varied. One would like to believe that the intense interest in “the exotic” among Western audiences was based in sincere curiosity about unfamiliar cultures and a desire for communion. Sadly, this was commonly not the case. For instance, “adventure novels” set in exotic locations became quite popular at the *fin de siècle*, with the most well-

known examples being Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883), H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mine* (1885) and *She* (1887), Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (1894), or Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan of the Apes* (1914). At the time generally referred to as "imperial romance," these novels were primarily conceived for mass-market consumption and relied on straightforward plots—either brave men go to an exotic setting in search of treasure or a lost boy is raised by beasts to become a "noble savage"—and on simplified depictions of "primitives" as the primary complication. Beyond being commercially viable and easily consumable, these types of novels did much to promote and support the imperialist project. As Nicholas Daly suggests, this sub-genre of novels "constituted a more or less explicit part of the propaganda of empire, leading whole generations of schoolboys...to believe that Britain's colonies promised exciting adventures for those who were bold enough" (21). And, despite its supposedly more sophisticated worldview, exoticism in "higher" forms of literature and art was often no less problematic. As Judith Walkowitz posits, the increased interest in world culture at this time was "less associated with Kantian concerns of universal justice or disinterested humanitarianism than with transnational forms of commercialized culture and with transnational migrants" (338). Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush add to this view, suggesting that, as an aesthetic movement, exoticism supplied the "necessary 'Other' against whose specter embattled Victorian society reinforced itself" and served as a "defensive expression of a specific moment of crisis—the prehistory of a future whose unsettling shadow had just crossed the horizon" (2).⁹ Given the amorphous anxieties prevalent during the Modernist period, the Western imagination sought a

concrete receptacle for both its pride and longing. To paraphrase Voltaire, if primitive or exotic cultures did not exist, the Western mind would find it necessary to invent them.

And, to a large degree, they did. Read as a “defensive reaction” to the crises of modernity, exoticism can be read as form of melancholia, in that its essential function is to seek a replacement for a lost object of grief. In a rather pessimistic view of this process, Brantlinger suggests that the “racist view of Africans as a natural laboring class, suited only for performing the dirty work of civilization, expresses a nostalgia for lost authority and for a pliable, completely subordinate proletariat that is one of the central fantasies of imperialism” (181). In this way, Africans symbolically replace the wide swaths of the indigent working poor many of whom, near the turn of the twentieth century, began to form a new stratum of the middle class who performed jobs requiring moderate skill.¹⁰ Less dour is Bongie’s suggestion that, “the project of exoticism is to salvage values and a way of life that had vanished, without hope of restoration, from post-Revolutionary society...but that might, beyond the confines of modernity, still be figured as really possible” (270). The most scathing articulation of this sort of “imperialist melancholia” is offered by Paul Gilroy, who argues that “Victorian melancholy”—that is, the “older melancholy of the poor, the expropriated, the oppressed and the abjected”—began to evolve to a modernist melancholia “as soon as the natives and savages began to appear and make demands for recognition in the empire’s metropolitan core;” thus the process of determining where “...the boundaries of British culture would fall was contoured by a new arrangement in which immigration, war, and national identity began to challenge class hierarchy as the most significant

themes from which the national identity would be assembled” (91). In Gilroy’s conception, the lost object is Britain’s “historical responsibilities as well as its relationship to the classical world that had supplied the template for its global imperium” and its mission to “civilize and uplift the world” (90-91). Marianna Torgovnick view supports my own thinking about the melancholic posture of Modernism, suggesting that an intense interest in primitive and exotic cultures, “inhabits thinking about origins and pure states; it informs desires for known beginnings and, by extension, for predictable ends” and is emblematic of a “utopian desire to go back and recover irreducible features of the psyche, land, and community—to reinhabit core experiences” (5). This articulation of melancholic exoticism echoes the utopian sensibilities remarked by Brantlinger, Bongie, or Gilroy: each is a form of impossible mourning, a type of grief that can never be resolved, as this object of desire was never lost, but absent from the very beginning and can therefore never be adequately recovered.

Furthermore, exoticism can be read as an attempt at consolation for the trauma of modernity. Torgovnick asserts that the West has “almost continuously” been engaged in defining itself in opposition to a series of primitive “Others,” and explains this urge for differentiation from the Other as “a response to the disruptive effects of identification with the Other.... Fascination with the primitive thus involves a dialectic between, on the one hand, a loathing and demonizing of certain rejected parts of the Western self and, on the other, the urge to reclaim them” (8). Therefore, the “cultural imperialism” of Modernism suggests deeper anxieties about the effects of modernity on communities in the West. This sense of loss is performed as “melancholic cosmopolitanism”—a

simultaneous longing for both nationalism and true “world citizenship.” We can find this characteristic in Modernist novels that examine the conflict between the provincial and the global, the familiar and the strange, the self and the Other. As Paul Stasi argues, cosmopolitan primitivism arises as a “response to the structural transformations of the Age of Empire, where imperial expansion was conditioned by the overproduction of commodities in the metropole, leading to the pursuit of ever-larger markets in the periphery.” This unending process of imperialist expansion occurs concurrently with the “emergence of that mass commodity culture which is one of neo-imperialism’s chief features and was also one of modernism’s most consistent objects of attack” (6). Modernism is identified by its rejection of mass media and consumer culture (alternately described as “elitism”). Read from the perspective of mourning and melancholia, however, we can read in this conflict the self-loathing described by Freud. Modernism despises the very conditions that make it possible.

The Rise of the Metropolis and the Loss of the “Known Community”

Any scholar who studies a specific historical or literary period is susceptible to the siren song of exceptionalism—and (with full awareness of irony) scholars of Modernism are perhaps the most frequent victims. As David Adams observes, “...the history of modernity may be seen as a sequence of returns or revivals, with each period attempting to mitigate or escape the unsettling aspects of modern experience more successfully than its predecessors” (20). Every stage of modernity—if we casually define it as any era in the Western world after the Middle Ages—assumes that it is

simultaneously the apex of civilization and the beginning of its end. We recognize in this tendency a melancholic pattern—the resuscitation of what has passed solely for the sake of sustaining the process of grief.

I would argue that one primary quality that differentiates the modernity experienced in the early twentieth century from previous “modern” eras, however, is the rise of the “metropolis,” the massive, technologically advanced, population-dense, heterogeneous urban capitals of the various Western empires—London, Paris, New York, and Berlin. These cities—and the individual experience of living in them—are inseparable from the idea of Modernism. The experience of living in these global cities is frequently articulated as an existence as a stranger—either as a stranger come from afar to a new place, or as an individual who finds himself a stranger in his own home. In “The Metropolis and the Emergence of Modernism,” Raymond Williams argues that the “key cultural factor of the modernist shift is the character of the metropolis” considering that “the most important general element of the innovations in form is that the fact of immigration to the metropolis, and it cannot too often be emphasized how many of the major innovators were, in this precise sense, immigrants” (91). The status as a stranger or outsider in the metropolis is articulated in Modernist literature as themes of “strangeness and distance, indeed of alienation” and led “the artists and writers and thinkers of this phase” to the only community available to them: “a community of the medium; of their own practices” (92). In other words, Modernists developed an allegiance to a sort of aesthetic cosmopolitanism—an allegiance to forms of expression and ways of seeing, as opposed to conventional patriotism.

In his influential lecture “When Was Modernism?”, Williams adds that new media such as photography, cinema, and radio not only provided possibilities for new outlets for expression, but also prompted the “internationally anti-bourgeois” artists of the era to form “defensive cultural groupings,” particularly in the “new metropolitan cities, the centers of the also new imperialism, which offered themselves as transnational capitals of an art without frontiers” (50).¹¹ These enclaves of the cultural elite became havens for the cosmopolitan artist, the “restlessly mobile émigré or exile,” to find refuge as he or she sought to develop an aesthetic that both honored the great cultural traditions of the past while faithfully representing the disorienting experience of modernity. The Modernist aesthetic developed by a range of “cosmopolitan” authors, such as James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway, E.M. Forster, Joseph Conrad, and Edith Wharton, was the result of the increasingly difficult attempts to define new communities and reconcile oppositional concepts such as “the past” and “local” with “the present” and “global.” The world had become simultaneously large and small. These sorts of oppositional pairings are easily traced throughout Modernist literature, which is perhaps most easily understood as the varied aesthetic attempts to resolve the paradoxes presented by rapidly globalizing market economies. These paradoxes present opportunities for loss, as the assumption is that if one option is selected, the other is abdicated. With regard to these sorts of “binaries of loss,” Williams offer in contradistinction to “the metropolis” the concept of “the known community,” offering that,

the growth of towns and especially cities and a metropolis; the increasing division and complexity of labour; the altered and critical relations between and

within social classes: in changes like these any assumption of a knowable community—a whole community, wholly knowable—became harder and harder to sustain.

(*Country* 165)

This fragmentation of community means that there is no such thing as shared experience, except as through the “community of speech” (*ibid.* 245). The loss to be grieved, then, is the ideal of the rural, intimate community in which every individual is known or at least knowable, where one’s individual place or purpose is understood, and where the forms of knowledge and meaning are stable and specific to the local community.¹²

If we follow Freud’s basic framework of the process of mourning, we understand that, typically, once a loss is accepted, the grieving subject will seek a new object of desire to which he or she can attach. In the particular context of the loss of the “known community,” many Modernist artists sought to develop communities formed not upon geographical proximity or historical connection, but ideological affinity—a form of identification frequently described as *cosmopolitanism*. Jessica Berman has explored this concept of cosmopolitan community, extending Williams’ argument to suggest that in the early twentieth century, the loss of “this realm of the knowable” becomes “a key experience of the narratives of modernism” (2). Berman observes that the Modernist response to this loss is neither unified nor even, in that these writers “engage directly with early twentieth-century historical and political transformations of community, transformations that occasioned on the one hand an almost desperate effort to recoup community in the form of nationalism and fascism, and on the other hand an insistence

on deepening cosmopolitanism” (3). Berman’s model runs counter to the previously dominant view of Modernism as largely apolitical, as this process of community-building is most definitely a political action, particularly because it rejects existing political affiliations and identifications.

This process of community re-formation is not without its hazards. Despite the best efforts to develop a cosmopolitan community sustained by affinity and ideals, Modernism frequently finds itself in a disconsolate position—one may not so easily discard one episteme in favor of another (nor may one actually wish to do so). For instance, we find traces of this melancholia in the idea of nationalism, specifically the concept of a “national literature.” To point, Jameson offers a Marxist perspective on the dissolution of the “known community,” arguing that the larger process of imperialism creates a “spatial disjunction” wherein a significant segment of the economic structure is located outside of the metropolis, “outside of the daily life and existential experience of the home country.” The effect of this disjunction is not only an inability to integrate the radical alterity of the colonized Other, but also a complete inability to comprehend the overall system of the nation as a whole. When the separate pieces of the system’s “puzzle” can never be seen as a whole, no amount of personal experience, introspection, scientific investigation, nor statistical analysis can ever bring sufficient understanding. In Jameson’s view, then, the “daily life and existential experience in the metropolis,” the fundamental material of a national literature, can no longer be “grasped immanently; it no longer has meaning, its deeper reason for being, within itself” (51).

Jameson argues that the spatial disjunction created by imperialism thereby makes a satisfactory national literature impossible,

As artistic content it will now henceforth always have something missing about it, but in the sense of a privation that can never be restored or made whole simply by adding back in the missing component: its lack is rather comparable to another dimension, an outside like the other face of a mirror, which it constitutively lacks, and which can never be made up or made good. This new and historically original problem in what is itself a new kind of content now constitutes the situation and the problem and the dilemma, the formal contradiction, that modernism seeks to solve; or better still, it is only that new kind of art which reflexively perceives this problem and lives this formal dilemma that can be called modernism in the first place.

(51)

Modernist melancholia reflects the expanding tension between a Victorian cosmopolitanism, based upon a perception of the good work of the global distribution of “culture,” the rise of the middle class, and the realization of the Kantian world order; and early twentieth-century imperialism, as exhibited by the diminishment of the “old country” notion of nationalist identity at the hands of the ever-expanding globalized metropolis, the genocidal horrors of the colonial capitalist enterprise, and the impending doom of the Great War, the first techno-modern armed conflict of many.

On the Primacy of Place

Much of the argument presented in Chapter II assumed great concern over the individual's relationship with time in modernity, that is, one's relationship with history as a source of authority in justifying an aesthetic position. At this point in the dissertation, however, I wish to extend Jameson's emphasis on spatial relations to examine the relationship between space and loss. If we look towards the archive of history in search of meaning, in what way is this meaning "territorialized" inasmuch as the perceptions that one derives of the individual's place in the world are developed through an entirely "local" filter?¹³ In other words, understanding the nature of grief and loss depends on understanding how identity depends not only on conceptualizations of *time*—as in memory and history—but also on conceptualizations of *space*—that is, physical and geographical *place*.¹⁴ The reconfiguration of spatial relations has a profound effect on the ways in which we narrate the human experience.

To this point, this chapter has been attempting to establish the point that, as a result of advances in technology and the far-reaching effects of Western Imperialism, the concepts of space, place, and distance were completely undone, and attempts to narrate the experience of this rapid transformation thus necessitated new formal and stylistic means of expression. In *Moving Through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism*, Andrew Thacker proceeds from Foucault's suggestion that modernity is less a specific period or era and more an attitude towards the historical present, arguing that the Modernists' attitude towards physical space and geography is as equally important as their attitude towards time. Thacker suggests that "Modernist writing...is about living

and experiencing ‘new times,’ not in the abstracted location of literary history, but in specific spatial histories: rooms, cities, buildings, countries, and landscapes” (13). The simultaneous expansion and contraction of the wider world engendered a heightened sensitivity and awareness of physical and geographical space.

A fundamental assertion of this dissertation is that the experimental forms of Modernist narratives were an invention of necessity, in that the pre-existing means of narrating personal experience were no longer adequate. Moving from local, communal, face-to-face interactions between similar people to the global, metropolitan, indirect communication between people of diverse beliefs, backgrounds, and languages severely problematized the act of narration. For instance, in his 1936 essay “The Storyteller,” Walter Benjamin discusses the incommunicability of experiences in the modern world, suggesting that “Less and less frequently do we encounter people with the ability to tell a tale properly” (83). Despite the numerous and varied narrative experiments of Modernism, however, Benjamin has no faith in the novel as means of conveying human experience, arguing that, “the earliest symptom of a process whose end is the decline of storytelling is the rise of the novel at the beginning of modern times.” He continues, suggesting that “to write a novel means to carry the incommensurable to extremes in the representation of human life” (87). As Berman suggests, Benjamin identifies, “the way that we, removed yet again from the scene of face-to-face narration” tell the story of “community;” therefore, the concept of community becomes “something inherently linked to the experience of geographical distance, for it operates in translating the experience of the faraway into a story that can be told in the here and now.” The

difficulty presented by cosmopolitan modernity, however, is that the only way that the community “creates itself anew is to retell both its own stories and those of other places, and to recognize in them their common relationship to their own past and to the lives of others.” Therefore, in Berman’s view, “Modern narratives of community arise in the movement and translation of foreign experience (whether of the past or of a geographically distant place) into common experience and the concomitant and never-ending movement back towards the foreign experience that this process entails” (Berman 19). This process of formulating affiliations thus “creates radically new forms of cosmopolitan communities” (*Commitments* 27).

As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, the familiar inclination when examining moments of crisis or conflict is to identify oppositional relationships; habitual contrasts include mourning vs. melancholia, absence vs. loss, nationalism vs. cosmopolitanism, when in fact these notions are actually different phases of a particular process, stops along a continuum, or complimentary voices in the discourse. In *Cosmopolitanism and Place*, Emily Johansen reacts to this tendency, arguing in favor of a “consideration of the everyday experience of global connections in local places, and the cosmopolitical ethics that emerge from this recognition” in an effort to move away from “the critically reified opposition between the local and the global, the parochial and the cosmopolitan” (3). Johansen observes that preceding philosophical and political discourses generally approach cosmopolitanism at the “macroscopic” scale, with an emphasis on “large, shared categories of being,” with the unspoken goal of defining “something like a universal humanity” at the cost of becoming an “all or nothing”

proposition—that is, either cosmopolitanism will save us all or lead us to our doom (5).¹⁵ In place of the “macro” discourse, Johansen proposes the concept of “territorialized cosmopolitanism” to invite consideration of how local, individual experience—that is, the day-to-day as-lived experience of individuals living in a specific geographical area—is influenced by cosmopolitan sensibilities (8). This notion is provocative, as the natural inclination is to contrast “the local”—sensed as parochial, inward-focused, and self-interested—with “the global.” Extending the work of scholars of cosmopolitanism Robin Cohen and K. Anthony Appiah, Johansen suggests, however, that “local” cosmopolitanism must neither be “rooted” in a specific place, nor must it be in direct opposition to nationalism.¹⁶ In simplest terms, approaching texts from the perspective of territorial cosmopolitanism invites consideration of how individual experience that is strongly connected to a specific geographical location can still be influenced by super-national concerns.¹⁷

Ideological Imperialism

A common-sense assumption is that cosmopolitanism is a practice for those who abandon their geographical point of origin in favor of a “nation-less” existence in a foreign locale—a pattern sustained by the tendency to stereotype Modernist authors as outsiders or expatriates. But could one not practice cosmopolitanism at home? In *Cosmopolitan Style*, Rebecca Walkowitz attempts to re-direct the recent conversations about “international modernism” (and *modernisms*) away from thinking about context or physical space (i.e. the Irish writer in Trieste) towards a specific intellectual practice,

what she terms “critical cosmopolitanism,” the practice of interrogating how the dominant conceptions of identity and belonging are bound up in the “production, classification, and reception of literary narratives” (7, 4). This practice, in Walkowitz’s view, explains many of the “salient features of modernist narrative, including wandering consciousness, paratactic syntax, recursive plotting, collage, and portmanteau language” (2). Walkowitz’s argument is innovative in that it, first, focuses on style (which she defines as the “attitude, stance, posture, and consciousness” of the author as expressed in and by their writings), and, secondly, that it offers the concept of “critical” cosmopolitanism, an “intentional engagement” to be distinguished from “planetary humanism” for its aversion to “heroic tones of appropriation and progress” as well as epistemological privilege (2). In other words, Modernist literature can be read as an attempt to measure what it means to think and act “super-nationally,” interrogate the responsibilities engendered by this political stance, and, more importantly, explore the interrelationship between narrative, political ideology, and ethics. I would agree that Modernist authors, taken as a whole, do not necessarily promote a coherent political or ideological stance on nationalism vs. cosmopolitanism (ranging as they do from socialism to fascism), but rather promote the practice of metacognition, a practice that Walkowitz identifies as “the critique of the critique” that is the fundament of critical cosmopolitanism (3).

I can think of no other author from this period who practices “critique of the critique” with greater dexterity and to greater effect than E.M. Forster, and the remainder of this chapter will examine his breakthrough novel, *Howards End*, to establish a

conception of cosmopolitanism not as a form of action—that is, as self-imposed exile or adventurous travel to exotic locations—but rather a critical position as a melancholic subject exceedingly aware of the losses produced by imperialism, not only for the colonial subject, but also at the imperial center.

Forster, Qualified Modernist

If Forster is to be classified as a Modernist, I will at least concede that he might rank as a sort of “qualified” Modernist. He has been described by critics as, “at best, a closet Modernist” (Jameson 54) or an “Edwardian Modernist” (Domestico), while others affirm that Forster was “never a modernist” (Tambling 2), “if not by choice then by native genius” a Victorian (Sarker 318), or even a “Georgian” novelist (Woolf “Character” 421). In his introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to E.M. Forster*, David Bradshaw adds that Woolf “saw Forster as part of the post-Edwardian avant-garde, and while shoehorning him into the canon of high modernism alongside Eliot and Joyce now seems more than a touch audacious, his various affinities with the writings of Lawrence, Strachey, and Woolf are obvious enough” (5). For her part, Virginia Woolf, his Bloomsbury contemporary, considered his approach to the novel “baffling and evasive” (“Novels” 391). For what it’s worth, Forster classified himself as belonging to the “fag-end of Victorian liberalism” (*Two Cheers* 56), and in all fairness, one does not simply toss Forster in the same bag as Joyce, Eliot, Ezra Pound, Stein, or Woolf. Stylistically, Forster wrote not with the flamboyant virtuosity of Joyce, nor was he particularly ground-breaking in his form, as his novels more closely resembled Jane

Austen's work than Woolf's.¹⁸ His preferred subject matter related to "contrasts," particularly contrasts between the English and other nationalities, and he could be said to have taken up the "condition of England" torch from such writers as Benjamin Disraeli or Elizabeth Gaskell.¹⁹

I would argue, however, that Forster's philosophical elusiveness—the critical dexterity to which I earlier referred—is a key marker of Modernist style, which exists in the space between the literal meaning of a thing and an apparent meaning, whether an object is a symbol, metaphor, or merely the object itself, presented as perceived in objective reality. As Jameson writes, "Modernism is itself the very hesitation; it emerges in this spatial gap within Forster's figure..." arguing that his style, "is at one with the contradiction between the contingency of physical objects and the demand for an impossible meaning..." (55). For his evasiveness of style and philosophy, I would agree that Forster is worthy of reconsideration as a Modernist, if at least a "missing link" sort of Modernist.²⁰ As Elizabeth Langland writes, although Forster refused to participate in a self-congratulatory Modernism that lacked both a "strong ethical grounding and a commitment to illuminating human life in society," he was obviously drawn to "the beauty, the mystery, the meditative, mythic, and numinous quality of human life that inhabits the ordinary" (102). Although Forster was occupied by many of the same existential concerns as his High Modernist contemporaries, he was ultimately unable to fully commit to avant-gardism in the same way, preferring that his moral arguments be presented by plot and character, rather than through formal innovations.²¹ If he were a composer, he would be praised not for his virtuosity, but for his thoughtful and

understated arrangements; conversely, he might be criticized not for alarming or shocking the listener, but for apparently failing to meet expectations established in the first movement.

Forster's position at the adolescence of Modernism, so to speak, provides an excellent case study in the evolving relationship between Modernism and melancholia. In his extensive examination of Forster's Modernism, David Medalie refers to Forster's "reluctant" Modernism, characterizing it as an "interweaving of old and new, modern and traditional in a complex process of disintegration and recomposition." This sort of Modernism cannot, by necessity be "a triumphant or euphoric modernism, for it is permeated with elegies for past traditions, even as it admits, with a mixture of reluctance and suspicion, the new" (193). This bi-directional view is a melancholic posture, in that it remains affixed to the past while at the same time expressing animosity towards it, simultaneously refusing consolation for grief while also seeking to release what has been lost. If only for his melancholic posture towards twentieth-century modernity, Forster is a Modernist.

Howards End and the Condition of Empire

The most nostalgic of Forster's novels is *Howards End*. Published in 1910 and set in the years immediately preceding World War I, the novel explores a range of philosophical, socio-economic, and political issues of chief concern in England, which at that point was the heart of the largest Empire in human history and riding the tide of high industrialism and unprecedented wealth. The Edwardian period was brief but intense,

and, immediately followed as it was by the horrors of the first global war, became the focus of much nostalgia—almost before it was over. As Alistair M. Duckworth suggests, this nostalgia often leads to portrayals of Edwardian England as “a social Eden before the Fall, a time of order and harmony, the golden evening of Empire and the *Pax Britannica*,” that unfortunately also “exclude[s] from view the problems of Britain’s cities—poverty, ill health, substandard housing—and the growing tension of its relations with Germany” (3). In fact, the years between 1901 and 1910 were quite dynamic, punctuated by the upheavals of the Irish home rule movement, the increasing militancy of the woman’s suffrage movement, the ascendancy of organized labor and trade unions, divisive internal politics, and a looming trade war and arms race with post-Bismarck Germany. So while Forster may be prone to nostalgia, he is also not blind, and as many critics have suggested, *Howards End* is a continuance of the “condition of England” novelistic tradition, although I much prefer Stuart Christie’s description of the novel as a “condition of Empire” novel (119). However it shall be classified, it is, as Duckworth suggests, a “subtle and complex response to the conflicts and contradictions of a swiftly changing, increasingly urban world” (7). It is precisely Forster’s subtlety and complexity that makes pinning upon him labels such as “liberal” or “nostalgic” so difficult. In many ways, he works at cross-purposes to himself, resuscitating the very thing that he despises, sustaining it only to condemn it, in melancholic fashion. The proposition of this chapter is that *Howards End* seeks to analyze the reverberative effects of European imperialism on the as-lived experience of the metropolitan subject, and in doing so exhibits a particularly Modernist melancholia.

Ostensibly a novel chiefly concerned with the plight of the British middle-classes, the chief question of *Howards End* is, as Lionel Trilling writes, “Who shall inherit England?” (118). The primary tension that structures the novel is the contradistinction between three families—the industrious Wilcoxes, the intellectual Schlegels, and the working-class Basts—who represent oppositional interpretations of British modernity and of three “levels” of middle-class British society.²² The Wilcoxes are energetic, purposeful entrepreneurs. Father Henry, sons Charles and Paul, and daughter Evie belong to the world of “telegrams and anger,” and for them, all that exists in the world exists for a purpose, with the end being productivity and success. They are critical of and condescending towards those they consider beneath them, for their laziness and incompetence; they are disdainful of progressiveness in all its forms, from women’s suffrage to socialism, for its lack of economic benefit; they are great lovers of sport, from shooting to cricket to calisthenics to golf, as opposed to music and art; and they admire technology and machinery, as emblemized by their enthusiasm for the motor car. They are, for better or worse, Edwardian imperialist England—pragmatic, ambitious (perhaps even rapacious), capitalistic.

The Wilcoxes—with their multiple properties, motor-car, and ardent imperialism, are set in contrast to the Schlegels, who represent the aristocratic and intellectual traditions of England. Whereas the Wilcoxes are *nouveau riche*, the Schlegel clan, comprised of sisters Margaret and Helen and little brother Tibby, subsist not on the bounty of their labor but the interest of their inherited wealth, and, furthermore, they aspire not to accumulate greater wealth, but to rather pursue a contented life of cultured

leisure. Drawing on the cosmopolitan idealism of their German father—characterized as the “countryman of Kant and Hegel, as the idealist, included to be dreamy, whose Imperialism was the Imperialism of the air”—the Schlegel family is humane, urbane, progressive, and concerned chiefly with the arts and, perhaps too ardently for their own good, the welfare of the less fortunate (*HE* 22-23). The late Mr. Schlegel, in his idealistic nationalism, patriotically fought for Germany in the Franco-Prussian war, yet immigrated to England in rejection of his native country’s aggressive colonial ambitions and materialism. He married *Eine Engländerin* from a well-to-do family, thereby cementing a literal union between pre-imperialist Germany and England.

The three families are introduced to one another through a series of chance encounters. The novel begins *in media res*, with the Schlegels rallying forces to intercede on an impromptu marriage between Helen, the younger Schlegel sister, and youngest Wilcox son Paul (Helen and Mrs. Wilcox had become acquainted during a Germany holiday, just prior). The initial interactions between the two families demonstrate that, although they are in most ways diametrically opposed to one another, the cosmopolitan Schlegels are drawn towards Wilcoxian imperialism. Although the episode between Helen and Paul ends in naught, the reader is introduced to the figure of Mrs. Wilcox, who, as foil to her husband and children, is the picture of peace, grace, and good will. The narrator imparts that, “She seemed to belong not to the young people and their motor, but to the house, and to the tree that overshadowed it. One knew she worshipped the past, and that the instinctive wisdom the past can alone bestow had descended upon her....” Trailing “noiselessly over the lawn” with an actual “wisp of

hay” in her hands, she seems almost a supernatural presence, Ceres reborn as a pastoral English ideal (*HE* 18). Mrs. Wilcox is indivisible from the house at Howards End, having been born there and its legal owner (the house had been her dowry). If the Schlegels represent Britain’s *intelligentsia* and Henry Wilcox represents its entrepreneurs, Ruth Wilcox is Britain’s essentially pastoral character.

In contrast to both the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes, Leonard and Jacky Bast are neither wealthy nor cultured, nor do they have much control over their own fates. Leonard Bast is not necessarily “poor,” but rather of the new sort of English middle-class who perform skilled jobs in the cities (he is a clerk an insurance firm) as opposed to manual labor or agrarian work. Later in the novel, at Leonard’s second appearance in the Schlegel’s home, the narrator observes that, “one guessed him as the third generation, grandson to the shepherd or ploughboy whom civilization had sucked into the town; as one of the thousands who have lost the life of the body and had failed to reach the life of the spirit” (*HE* 84).²³ Leonard is neither robust, as a Wilcox, nor cultured, as a Schlegel. He and his wife Jacky exist “at the extreme verge of gentility” and although Leonard is not in “the abyss,” of London’s faceless poor, “he could see it, and at times people whom he knew had dropped in, and counted no more.” The narrator continues, imparting that Leonard “knew that he was poor, and would admit it: he would have died sooner than confess any inferiority to the rich” (*HE* 35). The narrator, whose judgements and opinions loom large in the novel, does offer that, however, that Leonard was “inferior to most rich people,” as he was “not as courteous as the average rich man, nor as intelligent, nor as healthy, nor as lovable” (*HE* 35). Leonard would be a comic

character, were he not so tragic. In essence, he represents the unforeseen product of post-industrial, modern England—physically weak, disillusioned, disgruntled, and filled with unrealistic hopes of societal advancement. He was neither born, as the Schlegels were, into a position of sufficient privilege to allow for deep rumination on art, philosophy, and literature, nor does he possess the influence and connections of the Wilcoxes to change his circumstances.

The complication of *Howards End* relies on number of opposing principles representative of the English character, oppositions that, as Duckworth observes, persist in the present day:

Memories of a communal and rural past versus the experience of a frenetic urban present; an awareness of society's irreversible commitment to technology versus an awareness of technology's destructive ecological effects; cosmopolitan concerns versus local attachments; the world of business versus the world of the intelligentsia; cultured versus popular tastes' and enthusiasm for art versus an enthusiasm for sports; established male power versus emerging female aspirations; a laissez-faire economy versus a poverty-stricken and hopeless underclass.

(10).

The juxtaposition of the Wilcoxes and the Schlegels, in particular, invites comparison and contrast of seemingly oppositional views on British imperialism, with the Wilcoxes, being sort of social Darwinists, viewing it as their duty and right to wrest financial profit from the hands of lesser cultures who refuse to work, while the Schlegels would consider

imperial ambitions as crass, materialistic, and, perhaps, inhumane. The third part of the troika, the Basts, do not offer an alternative to these binaries, as their social and economic station does not afford them agency of any kind, and they are therefore haplessly adrift in the wakes of the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes. Leonard's fate—as with the fate of millions of Britons and British colonial subjects—depends on the outcome reached between the two parties' negotiations.

With full knowledge of Forster's characteristic liberalism, one would assume that he would, at worst, direct the narrative in favor of the Schlegels or, at worst, seek a synthesis between the two worldviews to present his solution for “problem” of modernity, represented in the hapless, disenfranchised Leonard Bast. Forster, however, typically avoids tidy solutions to his narrative complications; as Trilling observes, Forster's manner does not “tolerate absolutes” and frequently “confuses the issues, forcing upon us the difficulties and complications of the moral fact” (74). Rarely in a Forster novel does a proper denouement ever occur, although readers will typically find that if they have not discovered a solution to the problem, they at least have a better understanding of it. The “problem” of *Howards End*, so to speak, is Empire. It is “foreign things,” or at least the wealth that they create, that make the Schlegels, Wilcoxes, and Basts who and what they are, and it is the modernizing effects of the imperial system that propel whatever changes occur to both characters and settings in the novel. As Delany observes, the increasing popularity of foreign investments had a powerful effect on Britain's economic development. From the mid-nineteenth century to the beginning of World War I, Britain “exported capital on a huge scale,” with a

correlating decline in domestic capital investment (288). It was easier (and more lucrative) for British investors—such as the Schlegels—to invest in overseas ventures—as sought out and developed by the Wilcoxes—than to invest not only the financial capital, but the social capital, to upgrade Britain’s native industries to compete with their industrial rivals, Germany and the United States. The irony presented by *Howards End* is that the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes are not opponents—they are symbiotic. The Schlegels have no industry or work ethic of their own, whereas the Wilcoxes depend on the inherited wealth of others to provide the capital for their imperialist ventures.

The theme of foreign investment and its effects on British culture are implied from the outset of the novel. As early as the third chapter, we discover that the Schlegel siblings’ income is derived almost entirely from “Foreign Things,” indicating a range of foreign investments, which, in the opinion of Margaret’s Aunt Juley “always smash.” In deference to her elder relative, Margaret does invest “a few hundreds in the Nottingham and Derby railway, and though the Foreign Things did admirably the Nottingham and Derby declined with the steady dignity of which only Home Rails are capable” (*HE* 12). In this brief aside, Forster contrasts Aunt Juley’s improvident patriotism against Margaret’s sagacity—sagacity, it should be noted, that is at odds with Margaret’s fervent liberalism. As suggested above, it is these “Foreign Things” that connects the Wilcoxes and the Schlegels. Initially, it would seem that Forster intends to pillory the ardent capitalism of the Wilcoxes and promote the liberal humanism of the Schlegels, who would seem to more closely resemble Forster’s own worldview. As we learn however, the Wilcox family business is the Imperial and West African Rubber Company, which

outright owns a “helping of West Africa” (*HE* 141).²⁴ At the start of the novel, when it is thought that Helen and Paul had become engaged, we learn from his elder brother, Charles, that Paul is about to take up the reigns of the family enterprise himself: “He has to make his way out in Nigeria. He couldn’t think of marrying for years, and when he does it must be a woman who can stand the climate...” (*HE* 17). The thought of a Wilcox being so impetuous and impractical seems shocking to Henry Wilcox, particularly when there is an empire to run, and when the time comes, the woman who would be the newest Mrs. Wilcox would have to meet certain immutable criteria. In a certain sense, the view of Henry Wilcox presented in *Howards End* could very well be the domestic picture of the ivory-hunting Kurtz from *Heart of Darkness*; Forster provides a glimpse of this darker side in Chapter 34, when Henry, Margaret, Tibby, and Charles discuss what is to be done about Helen’s increasingly aberrant behavior: “The genial, tentative host disappeared, and they saw instead the man who had carved money out of Greece and Africa, and bought forests from the natives for a few bottles of gin” (*HE* 201). The Wilcoxes—Henry and Charles in particular—embody the materialistic pragmatism that made European imperialism so brutally effective.

Although it would seem that Margaret would be particularly anti-imperialist, there are numerous indications throughout the novel that she is, at best, ambivalent towards Empire, or, at worst, passively supportive of it. For instance, describing the Schlegels early in the novel, the narrator imparts that,

in their own fashion they cared deeply about politics, though not as politicians would have us care; they desired that public life should mirror whatever is good

in the life within. Temperance, tolerance, and sexual equality were intelligible cries to them; whereas they did not follow our Forward Policy in Thibet with the keen attention that it merits, and would at times dismiss the whole British Empire with a puzzled, if reverent, sigh.

(22)

If the Schlegels are idealists, they are but drawing-room idealists, and their strong opinions tend to fade when asked to be pressed into action. In fact, although seeming philosophical opposites in nearly every way, the Schlegels are easily dazzled by the Wilcoxes' vigor and vitality. During the initial complication of the novel, when Helen has supposedly fallen in with Paul, the narrator imparts that, "the energy of the Wilcoxes had fascinated her," and that,

[s]he had liked giving into Mr. Wilcox, or Evie, or Charles; she had liked being told that her notions of life were sheltered or academic; that Equality was nonsense, Votes for Women nonsense, Socialism nonsense, Art and Literature, except when conducive to strengthening the character, nonsense. One by one the Schlegel fetishes had been overthrown, and, though professing to defend them, she had rejoiced. When Mr. Wilcox said that one sound man of business did more good to the world than a dozen of your social reformers, she had swallowed the curious assertion without a gasp, and had leant back luxuriously among the cushions of his motor-car.

(*HE* 19)

Even Margaret, the more sophisticated and resolute of the Schlegels, in incurious regard for the brusque Wilcoxes, notes that “An Empire bores me, so far, but I can appreciate the heroism that builds it up” (*HE* 82). This affection for Wilcoxian virility develops throughout the novel. Margaret is perhaps not as idealistic as we are led to believe, and she becomes increasingly pragmatic over time. She is not ignorant, for instance, that her own station depends entirely on the economic pursuits of the Wilcoxes and their ilk, commenting that, despite their empathy for the less fortunate, “all our thoughts are the thoughts of six-hundred-pounders, and all our speeches; and because we don't want to steal umbrellas ourselves, we forget that below the sea people do want to steal them, and do steal them sometimes, and that what's a joke up here is down there reality” (46). Later, in defending to Helen her decision to marry Henry, Margaret opines, “if Wilcoxes hadn't worked and died in England for thousands of years, you and I couldn't sit here without having our throats cut. There would be no trains, no ships to carry us literary people about it, no fields even. Just savagery.... More and more do I refuse to draw my income and sneer at those who guarantee it” (*HE* 126-127). The reader comes to realize, then, that with regard to imperialism, if the Wilcoxes and Schlegels are on opposite sides, it is of the same coin. The sense is that, if the two families are presented as the possible stewards of the soul of England, neither is a desirable choice.²⁵

As the novel draws towards its close, however, Margaret begins to drift away from her newfound pragmatism as she becomes increasingly disillusioned with Henry, seeing him not as part of Britain's “civilizing mission,” but rather as the indifferent, amoral cad that he is. On a personal level, for instance, Margaret notes that he shows no

remorse for having provided disastrous career advice to Leonard Bast, and when Helen's tryst with Leonard is revealed, he demonstrates appalling hypocrisy by refusing to allow Helen to stay the night at Howards End. On a broader plane, rather than uplifting the poorer workers of England or the "subject races" abroad, Henry exploits both for profit. As Delany observes, Henry represents a destructive breed of social Darwinism that does not ensure the "survival of the fittest" but instead leads to "the destruction of the cherished past, the pollution of the countryside by the noise and stink of the motor car, and the loss to the English people of what they most need—a sense of being securely rooted in their own corner of the earth." Initially impressed by the Wilcoxes' assertiveness and strength in contrast to her own inactivity and intellection, she eventually comes to despise them as "hopelessly philistine, materialist, and brutal" (289).

Melancholic Pastoralism

Having discredited the Schlegel's intellectual cosmopolitanism and the Wilcoxes' rapacious imperialism, Foster obliges the reader to seek a new answer to the question of "who shall inherit England?" Common sense (and the conventions of the Victorian "marriage plot") would suggest that the conclusion of Forster's didactic novel should offer a compromise between rapacious, capitalistic imperialism and effete, liberal cosmopolitanism, at least metaphorically in the union between Henry Wilcox and Margaret Schlegel. As asserted above, however, Foster is notoriously evasive and rarely offer simple resolutions.

To be sure, Foster's work is guided by a strong moral code, one that would best be categorized as "liberal humanist" for his emphasis on the virtues of individual freedom. As Trilling has observed, however, while Forster's novels are "politically and morally tendentious and always in the liberal direction," his work is actually "deeply at odds with the liberal mind, and while liberal readers can go a long way with Forster, they can seldom go all the way" (74). While on one hand Forster openly critiques the manners and opinions of Britain's middle class and the British class system, public schools, capitalism, and imperialism, he never quite finishes the task. As Trilling suggests, for Forster, the main deficiency of liberalism is its lack of imagination, for, despite its affinity for reason, theory, and evidence, liberalism does not do well with anomaly or contradiction. Liberalism depends on oppositional definitions, dyads such as "good and evil," "rich and poor," "right and wrong." These sorts of oppositional positions—the same sort that engender the basic complications of the plot—are perceived by the Schlegels at the outset of the novel, although they becoming increasingly muddled as the novel progresses. As Trilling suggests, liberalism "is an attractive game because it gives us the sensation of thinking, and its first rule is that if one of two opposed principles is wrong, the other is necessarily right." The difficulty of reading Forster, according to Trilling is that he "will not play this game; or rather, he plays it only to mock it" (75). Just as the reader begins to ascertain the lesson that Foster means to teach, "the outline of known things [grows] dim" (*HE* 59).

This elusiveness is indicative of the melancholia interwoven in Foster's work and is the marker of his Modernism. As indicated in the first chapter, the essential quality of

Freud's initial conception of melancholia is grief is accompanied by self-recrimination and an expectation of punishment ("Mourning" 204). The subject's failure to internalize hostility or ambivalence towards the lost object is often directed inward, and as the grieving process progresses onward, this ambivalence is directed outward. On this point, Jesse Matz, in summarizing Forster's *oeuvre*, offers that "Melancholia overdevelops the conscience, or that faculty through which we subject ourselves to critical scrutiny" ("Death" 309). The sort of contradictory position characteristically occupied by Forster is the *aporia* of melancholia—a state of being in which one refuses consolation for a lost object while simultaneously harboring animosity for it; or in which one resuscitates (or even creates) a lost object only to unendingly attend its death.

Forster's lost object is, quite plainly, the pastoral traditions of Britain.²⁶ As Tambling observes, "Forster's attachments are nostalgic, dwelling on a Britain which is agricultural, non-industrial, pre-motor-car" (2). Forster himself was not evasive about his attitude towards modernity, writing in *Two Cheers for Democracy* that the movement in Britain away from agriculturalism towards industrialism, "has meant the destruction of feudalism and relationship based on the land, it has meant the transference of power from the aristocrat to the bureaucrat and the manager and the technician. Perhaps it will mean democracy, but it has not meant it yet, and personally I hate it" (281). It is this well-defined attitude that explains Forster's incredibly cruelty towards some of his characters. For instance, consider the narrator's observations of Leonard Bast:

His mind and his body had been alike underfed, because he was poor, and because he was modern they were always craving better food. Had he lived some

centuries ago, in the brightly coloured civilizations of the past, he would have had a definite status, his rank and his income would have corresponded. But in his day the angel of Democracy had arisen, enshadowing the classes with leathern wings, and proclaiming, 'All men are equal—all men, that is to say, who possess umbrellas,' and so he was obliged to assert gentility, lest he slipped into the abyss where nothing counts, and the statements of Democracy are inaudible. (35-36)

Less observation of Leonard's characteristics than an editorial statement on the shortcomings of liberalism, this passage implies that he (and his lower-middle-class ilk) were perhaps "better off" under pre-industrial feudalism, where they could at least live a life of robust physical activity as agrarian laborers, never begrudging the art, culture, and leisure that they would never enjoy, for it never came to their mind.

This hostility towards Leonard Bast (or at least the system that created him) seems a surprisingly conservative position for Forster, at least in the sense that it assumes an anti-progressive position. For Forster, however, Leonard Bast, through no fault of his own, represents the complete and utter disintegration of England's essential character. As Stuart Christie observes, "Bast is the literal embodiment of the smog clouding the horizon in *Howards End*. His is the 'atmosphere' of class encroachment that the text must accommodate and, where possible, purify" (23). Forster makes it clear from the very start that Leonard's attempts to acculturate himself to the intellectual class cannot overcome the insurmountable obstacles of "the inauthentic text of suburban privilege on one hand, and the impenetrable façade of genteel *noblesse oblige* on the

other” (Christie 24). His demise could be read as poignant critique of the lingering attitude, among certain circles, that such attempts at upward mobility is untoward or presumptuous. Still, Forster implies his own critique of liberalism by dictating that Leonard’s specific cause of death is a weak heart—a heart that, had he been a pastoral laborer, would have been sufficiently strong to survive both the attack by his economic and social better, Charles Wilcox, and the (rather symbolically heavy-handed) avalanche of books in the final confrontation between the two in the house at Howards End.

Forster’s preference of the rural “yeoman” is underscored just prior to this climatic scene, as Leonard walks from Hilton to Howards End. Along the way, he observes that, “[h]ere men had been up since dawn. Their hours were ruled, not by a London office, but by the movements of the crops and the sun. That they were men of the finest type only the sentimentalist can declare. But they kept to the life of daylight. They are England’s hope” (*HE* 229). As Leonard makes this observation, he is passed by a motor car (one assumes Charles), and,

in it was another type, whom Nature favours—the Imperial. Healthy, ever in motion, it hopes to inherit the earth. It breeds as quickly as the yeoman, and as soundly; strong is the temptation to acclaim it as a super-yeoman, who carries his country’s virtue overseas. But the Imperialist is not what he thinks or seems. He is a destroyer. He prepares the way for cosmopolitanism, and though his ambitions may be fulfilled, the earth that he inherits will be grey.

(*HE* 229)

The comparison of the three “types” of Briton are offered quite plainly here: the Yeoman (the Basts, in a previous life); the Imperialist (the Wilcoxes); and the Cosmopolitan (the Schlegels). Of the three, the latter two are rejected, while the favored face of Britain, the Yeoman, is either extinct or on his way there (via railway to London, one would assume). The Yeoman—that is, pastoral England—is the lost object that Forster seeks to recover in his melancholia.²⁷

Primitivism and Commodified Authenticity

Very little in *Howards End* could be said to be “exotic,” with the exception of the golliwog purchased by Margaret Schlegel as a Christmas present or Henry Wilcox’s Dutch Bible taken as a trophy of the Boer War. Still, many of the same processes that create the Modernist fascination with the exotic and the primitive are to be found in the Forster’s fixation on the pastoral ideal. This reluctance to abandon the past suggests the anxieties related to recovering “origins and pure states” discussed earlier, which as Torgovnik suggests, are representative of the “utopian desire to go back and recover irreducible features of the psyche, land, and community—to reinhabit core experiences” (5). This desire is presented in the figure of Ruth Wilcox, who, after temporarily relocating to a flat opposite the Schlegel residence in London, is further revealed to be gracious and self-effacing in contrast to the witty, opinionated banter of Margaret’s highly intellectual circle. Tellingly, Ruth is horrified to learn that the lease of Wickham Place is nearing its end and that the Schlegels are to be turned out within the year. While the loss of their residence is distressing—or at least irritating—to the Schlegel siblings,

to Ruth Wilcox, the notion of losing one's family home is "monstrous." As she argues, "To be parted from your house, your father's house—it oughtn't to be allowed. It is worse than dying. [...] Can what they call civilization be right, if people mayn't die in the room where they were born?" (HE 62). Whereas the cosmopolitan Schlegels' patriotism is owed to lofty concepts and a community of ideals, Ruth Wilcox's value system is quite plain: She believes in constancy, family, and generosity. Her sense of place is static, corporal, fixed. She is the embodiment of the comforting sense of identity promised by the pastoral house at Howards End.

The notion of houses and homes becomes the fundamental conflict of the novel. Just before her death, early in the novel, Ruth Wilcox revises her will to bequeath the house at Howards End to Margaret, a final act of selfless generosity to which the remaining Wilcoxes react, of course, with incredulity, collectively disregarding the request, a moment of disloyalty that they justify, in part, because, as Evie observes, Margaret "...really isn't English," to which Charles adds, "She's a cosmopolitan... I admit that I'm rather down on cosmopolitans... I cannot stand them, and a German cosmopolitan is the limit" (HE 75). If Ruth is the embodiment of the English pastoral ideal, her attempt to bequeath the house at Howards End to Margaret would seemingly align with Forster's liberalism in that the decision promotes individual humanistic needs and the valuation of individual choice and freedom. The Wilcox's blockage represents the triumph of materialism, superficially masquerading as patriotism.

From a certain point of view, however, the fetishization of the country home is itself a form of materialism, an increasingly common practice of commodifying

authenticity, a modern trend that Forster had likely observed. In the final decades of the nineteenth century, the rapid increase of economic prosperity not only led to increasing urbanization but also the expansion and solidification of the relatively new British “middle class.” This new class was an advanced form of the bourgeoisie, neither aristocrat nor proletariat, and with ambitions for social advancement and the benefit of disposable income. As Elizabeth Outka observes, the dawn of the twentieth century saw an “explosion of efforts” to market nostalgia in the form of relatively cheap, accessible “country homes” that conformed to conventional images of the idyllic English cottage.²⁸ Ironically, the desire to insulate the idealized notion of English rural life from “the contaminating forces of commerce and urban bustle” only made commercialization of it more profitable (68-69). She goes on to argue that *Howards End* “reveals a surprisingly nuanced understanding of commodified authenticity” and “presents both a scathing critique and a more subtle investigation of its powers” (71).

Howards End presents two types of real estate, the city home—such as Leonard’s flat or Wickham Place—which is temporary and transitory; and the “authentic” English country home—found in Oniton Grange or Howards End—which is timeless and far removed from the flux of the metropolis and its economic transactions. We see this sentiment articulated after Margaret arrives at Howards End for the first time. The reader learns that,

“The sense of flux which had haunted her all the year disappeared for a time. She forgot the luggage and the motorcars, and the hurrying men who know so much and connect so little. She recaptured the sense of space, which is the basis of all

earthly beauty, and, starting from Howards End, she attempted to realize England. She failed—visions do not come when we try, though they may come through trying. But an unexpected love of the island awoke in her, connecting on this side with the joys of the flesh, on that with the inconceivable”

(*HE* 147)

In this passage, the house at Howards End becomes, for Margaret the entirety of Britain, and she discovers a new patriotism where there had before been mild ambivalence. This change within Margaret’s perception is an important development, as it signals her movement from her previous position as a cosmopolitan intellectual, in England but not *of* England, towards a more patriotic position. As Tambling observes, the retreat from the urban and return to pastoral, “marks the Forster text as in retreat from otherness and clinging to an ideology of ‘Englishness’” (3). One must wonder, however, how deep this conversion actually is, for Margaret has not become any more sympathetic towards the “condition of England,” as represented by Leonard Bast, and she still enjoys the economic benefit of the investment returns on “foreign things.” Her patriotic epiphany follows on the heels of newfound admiration for Henry in particular and the virtues of Wilcoxian pragmatism and efficiency in general. As Tambling argues, “this clinging to the local, which runs counter to the very internationalism of modernism, fitted the projections of England that were necessary for it to maintain an imperialist status, as at the center of the empire, and helped to preserve and England which paradoxically Forster could never be happy with...” (3). The juxtaposition of these “alterations” to Margaret’s character indicates Forster’s awareness of the necessary relationship of

nationalism to imperialism—the latter both protects and is produced by the former. On this point, Ian Baucom suggests that the English “country house” depends entirely on “those distant, all but invisible spaces of empire to which it is connected through a perpetual passing of bodies, capital, and commodities and from which it derives its principles of order, stability, and rule” (261-262). So, with regard to the question, “Who shall inherit England?” it seems that the choice is not to be between landed gentry or the metropolitan imperialist, for they cannot survive without each other.

Only Connect: Ethical Melancholia and Territorial Cosmopolitanism

In the final chapter of *Howards End*, Helen and Margaret stand outside the eponymous home, looking out over the meadows as they are being cut for hay. Looking to the distance and observing the “red dust” of the encroaching suburbs, Helen says, “You see that in Surrey and even Hampshire now... I can see it from the Purbeck Downs. And London is only part of something else, I’m afraid. Life’s going to be melted down, all over the world” (*HE* 240). This observation echoes sentiments offered numerous times throughout the novel. For instance, earlier, in contemplating where she and Henry will reside as husband and wife, Margaret muses,

Marriage had not saved her from the sense of flux. London was but a foretaste of this nomadic civilization which is altering human nature so profoundly, and throws upon personal relations a stress greater than they have ever borne before. Under cosmopolitanism, if it comes, we shall receive no help from the earth.

Trees and meadows and mountains will only be a spectacle, and the binding force that they once exercised on character must be entrusted to Love alone.

(*HE* 186).

This anxiety over the loss of the “known community” to come with cosmopolitanism (which Forster uses as a synonym for “modernity”) is eloquently expressed by the oft-quoted epigraph to *Howards End*: “Only connect...,” indicating some grief for the loss of individual human connections, between one another and between their *places*. The hope for the future, then, is that these connections can somehow be made. For instance, in Chapter 22, shortly after Henry kisses Margaret for the first time, we read of her thoughts, “Only connect! That was the whole of her sermon. Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its height. Live in fragments no longer. Only connect, and the beast and the monk, robbed of the isolation that is life to either, will die” (*HE* 134). The implication here is that dealing in absolutes and oppositions is futile, and the path to progress is through connecting one thing to the other. Even *Howards End*, the epitome of idyllic English pastoralism, is doomed, for as Outka observes, “while *Howards End* offers a sense of continuity missing from the London flats, time here remains fixed, unable to accommodate the modern age and urban time” (75).²⁹

In observing the approach of the “red dust,” Margaret articulates an answer to the question “who shall inherit England?”:

“Because a thing is going strong now, it need not go strong forever.... This craze for motion has only set in during the last hundred years. It may be followed by a

civilization that won't be a movement, because it will rest on the earth. All the signs are against it now, but I can't help hoping, and very early in the morning in the garden I feel that our house is the future as well as the past."

(*HE* 240)

The house, now filled with the belongings of the Schlegels, takes a new form. Previously, the only connections offered by the novel were economic—Margaret capitulated to the necessary conditions of imperialism through her marriage to Henry, and Helen sought to assuage her guilt by donating her wealth to Leonard. The solution offered in the figure of the revitalized Howards End is free of commercial entanglements—Henry and Leonard are both absent from the equation—and offers not a radical departure from the past, but a continuance of it into the future. This sentiment of connecting the future with the past is the best hope that England—or any society drawn into the flux of cosmopolitanism—has for preserving true human connections. If Howards End is to symbolize England, we find, at the conclusion of a novel, hope for the future. Both are to be inherited by the progeny of the liberal intellectual and the yeoman, raised modestly and with a sense of history—a union of the global and the local, the past and the future, a form of the “territorial cosmopolitanism” proposed by Johansen. In this way, Forster’s refusal to relinquish the image of the pastoral, to admit its passing and release it, is read as “ethical” melancholia, per Derrida – he is preserving this past with the false hopes of recuperating it in a new version of ideal Englishness, to create a new community that exists self-consciously above the nation.

Notes

¹ Wilde's depiction of the dancing daughter, in particular, with his famous "dance of the seven veils," engendered a wave of spin-off theatrical and artistic performances that amplified the alluring exoticism suggested in the play. For further discussion of the later performances of the "dance of the seven veils," see Amy Koritz's "Dancing the Orient for England: Maud Allan's 'The Vision of Salome' and Judith Walkowitz's 'The 'Vision of Salome': Cosmopolitanism and Erotic Dancing in Central London, 1908-1918."

² Chris Bongie explains that exoticism as a literary and cultural practice, "creates another space (the space of the Other) outside the boundaries of a society that to some observers, in the aftermath of the political and technological revolutions at the end of the eighteenth century, seemed inalterably modern and deeply alienating" (270).

³ In defining "imperialism," I point to Edward Said, who uses the imperialism to mean the "practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory," as distinguished from "colonialism," which describes the "implanting of settlements on distant territory" (9).

⁴ For an interesting overview of the United States' imperialist ambitions in the Pacific, see Brody, *Visualizing American Empire: Orientalism and Imperialism in the Philippines*.

⁵ While colonial ambitions are roundly ridiculed in our own times, one has to wonder if our own efforts of "international development" are that much different. As Craig Calhoun rightly observes, "the cosmopolitan ideals of global civil society can sound uncomfortably like those of the civilizing mission behind colonialism, especially when presented as a program from the outside borne by global NGOs rather than an opportunity for local development" (875).

⁶ Coincidentally, Matisse, Durain, and many of the Fauvists had studied under the Salome-obsessed Symbolist Gustave Moreau at Paris' *École des Beaux-Arts* in the 1890's.

⁷ In *A Life of Picasso*, art historians John Richardson and Marilyn McCully describe the profound effect that Gauguin's retrospective exhibitions had upon Picasso: "Gauguin demonstrated the most disparate types of art—not to speak of elements from metaphysics, ethnology, symbolism, the Bible, classical myths, and much else besides—could be combined into a synthesis that was of its time yet timeless" (461). Richardson's description of Gauguin's oeuvre mirrors many of the same characteristics ascribed to Modernist literature.

⁸ For further discussion, see Pericles Lewis' *Cambridge Introduction to Modernism* (75-76).

⁹ "For middle- and upper-class Victorians, dominant over a vast working-class majority at home and over increasing millions of 'uncivilized' peoples of 'inferior' races abroad, power was self-validating" (Brantlinger 166).

¹⁰ I shall consider this figure later in this chapter when discussing Forster's Leonard Bast.

¹¹ Williams asserts that any explanation of the "breaks in all arts" that signals the emergence of modernism "must start from the fact that the late nineteenth century was the occasion for the greatest changes ever seen in the media of cultural production. Photography, cinema, radio, television reproduction and recording all make their decisive advances during the period of identified as modernist." Williams asserts that it is in response to these technological advances that the "defensive cultural groupings" form (50).

¹² This conception resembles Kwame Anthony Appiah's notion of the "tribal fantasy," which he describes as an idealized "small-scale, technologically uncomplicated, face-to-face society, where most interactions are with people whom you know." Every member of this idealized society shares a common language, belief system, and understanding of cultural practices (626). In contrast, the modern "imagined communities" of the nation-state are not and cannot be "centered on a common culture of this sort" (627). In "When Was Modernism?", Williams suggests that this notion of the "tribal fantasy" explains the "the ideological victory" of Modernism, which is a result, in large part, of the "relations of production of the artists themselves in the centres of metropolitan dominance, living the experience of rapidly mobile emigres in the migrant quarters of their cities. They were exiles one of another, at a time when this was still not the more general experience of other artists..." (51). Modernists created their own communities, so to speak.

¹³ I draw this notion of "territorialized" meanings and identities from Emily Johansen's *Cosmopolitanism and Place*, which I discuss in later detail below. Johansen offers the term "territorialized cosmopolitanism" as a contradistinction to the phrase "rooted cosmopolitanism" frequently used by such theorists as Mitchell Cohen, Kwame Anthony Appiah, Bonnie Honig, to indicate shared super-national values—such as "democracy"—that also allow space for local loyalties and traditions. Johansen's "territorialized" cosmopolitanism then considers *where* and *how* cosmopolitan is practiced, in terms of quotidian experience.

¹⁴ As Jessica Berman comments, "At the same time as we recognize national, communal, and cosmopolitan narratives as always already implicated in each other, we must also see them as particular discourses, spoken from a particular location at a specific moment in time" (17).

¹⁵ This perception of incompatibility between the local and the global or between nationalism and cosmopolitanism has a long history. For instance, as Craig Calhoun suggests, "while some nineteenth-century thinkers embraced cosmopolitanism as an urban aesthetic ideal, others, like Thomas Carlyle, were ambivalent about cosmopolitanism. They worried that it was somehow an 'attenuated' solidarity by comparison to those rooted in more specific local cultures and communities" (872).

¹⁶ In his essay "Cosmopolitan Patriots," Appiah offers a model that refuses the necessity of oppositional conditions, arguing that one can be simultaneously be "cosmopolitan—celebrating the variety of human cultures; rooted—loyal to one local society (or a few) that you count as home; liberal—convinced of the value of the individual; and patriotic—celebrating the institutions of the state (or states) within which [one lives]" (633).

¹⁷ As Jeff Popke observes, "Practical, everyday cosmopolitanisms...are embedded within a complex politics of obligation and concern in which local demands must necessarily be weighed against, and at times may supersede, what might be seen as more 'global' claims." The impression of global matters on local concerns is not always a mutually beneficial exchange, since many people are pressed into cosmopolitanism against their will (as in the case of imperialism and colonialism) and that a "cosmopolitan sense of responsibility may therefore end up being a "luxury of a gentrifying urban elite" (510).

¹⁸ Woolf and Forster are frequently compared and contrasted, as they were both members of the Bloomsbury Group. As Elizabeth Langland observes, Forster was quite aware of “his somewhat anomalous position” in literary history, often finding himself at odds with Woolf, who advocated for a more experimental, “self-sufficient” aesthetic, while Forster argued that art should take a secondary position to the “claims of life.” As Langland suggests, “he objected to her singleness of vision as a denial of life, she to his double vision as a failure of art” (93).

¹⁹ For an interesting reading of *Howards End* against Gaskell’s *North and South* (1855), see Paul Delaney’s “‘Islands of money’: Rentier Culture in E.M. Forster’s *Howards End*.” As in Gaskell’s work, Forster depends upon a series of dialectical oppositions – town and country, rich and poor, art and business – to structure his novel.

²⁰ As Jeremy Tambling notes in the introduction to his excellent casebook on Forster, the bulk of scholarly attention on Forster occurred in the 1940s and ‘50s, and little new critical work has been done, particularly work informed by various theoretical discourses, including narrative theory, post-structuralism, Marxism, or psychoanalysis (although significant recent work has been done by gender and queer theorists). Tambling’s suggestion—one with which I would agree—is that Forster’s novels often end ambiguously, seemingly incomplete in their arguments. This quality is not, in my mind, a detraction.

²¹ Lionel Trilling suggests that one reason for the difficulty in classifying Forster is that he writes in the comic manner: “Forster owes much to Fielding, Dickens, Meredith and James. And nowadays even the literate reader is likely to be unschooled in the comic tradition and unaware of the comic-seriousness” (71-72).

²² Perhaps betraying his Victorian influences, Forster’s choice of character names borders on the edge of what Duckworth terms “onomastic decorum,” with “Bast” too obviously close to “bastard,” and “Wilcox” being too obviously a phallic reference (30).

²³ Numerous critics have observed that Leonard Bast is representative of the wave of rural inhabitants that began swarming the city centers in the late nineteenth century, particularly after the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1852, which removed all tariffs from imported grain and essentially undercut the entire British agricultural economy. As Duckworth observes, “Since the 1870s, when Americans extended their railroads to the Midwest and began shipping vast quantities of cheap grain across the Atlantic, Britain had suffered from a depression in agriculture,” resulting in “large scale movement of agricultural laborers to the cities” (5).

²⁴ The choice of rubber as the Wilcox’s imperialist commodity of choice is fitting, considering also their affinity for the motor-car, Forster’s preferred symbol of anti-pastoral modernity. As David Bradshaw observes, within a few years of the Congress of Berlin (1884-1885), rubber had become “nothing less than the raw material of modernity, insulating the ever increasing range of electrical goods and enabling the burgeoning number of bicycles and cars to speed along ever more rapidly” (164). As one of the “foreign things” into which a well-to-do Briton might invest, rubber plantations were an especially profitable option in the 1900’s.

²⁵ The paradox offered by Forster is unsurprising, given his own ambivalence towards his own privileged position, which he could neither endorse nor refuse: “The education I received in those far-off and fantastic days made me soft, and I am very glad it did, for I have seen plenty of hardness since, and I know it does not even pay.... But though the education was humane it was imperfect, inasmuch as we none of us realized our economic position. In came the nice fat dividends, up rose the lofty thoughts, and we did not realize that all the time we were exploiting the poor of our own country and the backward races abroad, and getting bigger profits from our investments than we should. We refused to face the unpalatable truth” (*Two Cheers* 56).

²⁶ Or, to be more specific, the ideal of his own pastoral childhood in Britain.

²⁷ Forster is not alone in his beliefs; this sort of pastoralism—understood in this sense as a nostalgic view of British identity as rural and agricultural—had been gaining prominence in Britain from the 1850s onward. This trend coincided with very real and dramatic demographic and economic shifts in Britain. The repeal of British Corn Laws in 1846, combined with the improvement of both transportation and agricultural technologies abroad, resulted in a dramatic drop in the price of grain in the Britain and an increased dependence on imports, thus gutting the domestic agricultural sector. During the 1830’s, for instance, Britain imported only two percent of its grain, whereas by the 1880’s, it imported as much as 65 percent (Ensor 116). British census data shows a decline of 92,250 in agricultural laborers with a concurrent increase of 53,496 urban laborers between 1871 and 1881 (Ensor 117). Of these nearly 54 thousand emigres to the metropolis was certainly Leonard Bast’s father or grandfather.

²⁸ For additional discussion of the “fetishization” of the English country house, see Ian Baucom’s “Mournful Histories: Narratives of Postimperial Melancholy.”

²⁹ Related to this notion of pastoral timelessness vs. urban time, Baucom argues that the inextricable nostalgia that comprises English nationalism elevates the nation to “a principle of authority rather than as a space of inhabitation, as a deity rather than a home.” As a deity, then, the nation exists outside of history and dwells beyond “the lived experience of history, the messiness of the everyday, and designates belatedness and postponement as its sole temporalities” (272-273).

CHAPTER V

ETHICAL MELANCHOLIA: THE DEATH OF HOSPITALITY AND THE ECONOMICS OF RECIPROCITY IN JAMES JOYCE'S "THE DEAD" AND THE "ITHACA" EPISODE OF *ULYSSES*

Introduction

Thus far, this dissertation has explored the means by which Modernist authors develop narratives that exhibit melancholic attachments to bygone ideals, notions and values assumed to be lost, victims to modernity. As demonstrated in the preceding chapters, the multiple technological, political, philosophical, and socio-political advances of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries irrevocably altered the modern conception of both historical time and geographic space. The modern subject (which is to say, the metropolitan subject) now stood at the center of a vast global economic network, connected by telecommunications networks and accessible by (relatively) rapid transportation, that stood almost entirely outside of her daily existence. The modern subject was not only daily aware that a larger world existed, she was aware that it operated far outside of her known community. With the loss of the former ways of "knowing" the world, the existing means of narration ceased to effectively communicate experience. The resulting grief for the loss of stability of meaning was performed as melancholia—a sustained longing for a lost object of desire and a refusal of consolation. The past two chapters explored Modernism's melancholia with regard to aesthetics—

that is, the loss of the unity of truth and beauty—and politics—seen as the loss of the “knowable community” in the face of a globalized economy. The final chapter of this dissertation will explore melancholia with regard to ethics, particularly what I term the “ethics of alterity,” the practice of which is *hospitality*, or the cultural institution that dictates proper behavior towards strangers. Hospitality is the means of governing complicated social relations, the process by which one manages the difference presented by the other and comes to accept this difference into one’s own “home.”

The fundamental ethical practice of hospitality was, of course, in crisis during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The prevailing Western models of the ethical relationship processes and rituals of behavior that exist between a guest and his or her host are based entirely on classical and Abrahamic models, models drawn from antiquity and therefore can only partially account for the radical alterity presented by Modernity. The pre-existing notions and models of hospitality did not and could not account for dramatic effects of rapid technological advances in transportation, telecommunication, and media that occurred in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As summarized in the introduction to this dissertation, advances such as the steam engine, the telegraph and telephone, and photography and the cinema not only forced a restructuring of commonplace notions of time, distance, and space, but also notions of “public” versus “private” space, notions that are fundamental to the deployment of hospitality.¹ Furthermore, the rampant border-drawing (and re-drawing) resulting from the establishment and concretization of various European nation-states (particularly after the Revolutions of 1848) severely problematizes the application of the sort of “absolute”

hospitality practiced by the nomadic peoples of the Old Testament or the pre-*polis* figures from Homeric narratives.

That there would be grief for a perceived loss of hospitality is not surprising, considering the basic structure of Western civilization was in a state of flux. Feudalism and mercantilism gave way to widespread capitalism, industrialism, and globalization. In the conclusion to *1913: The Cradle of Modernism*, Jean-Michel Rabaté, in relating the observations of Italian journalist Guglielmo Ferrero, suggests that the late nineteenth-century optimism resulting from the general death of absolutism at the hands of rising liberalism quickly degraded a generalized gloom of impending global war. “In the middle of the nineteenth century, the utopia of the bourgeois liberals had almost come true when power had shifted from the princes, kings, and courts to democratically elected parliaments” (209). The preceding assumption had been that large-scale wars were most commonly the result of long-standing feuds between royal families or individual ambitions of monarchic rules; the belief at the dawn of the twentieth century was that a new, liberal Europe in which democratically elected parliaments sought to craft a future in which each nation could live peacefully alongside its neighbors, would bring about the end of imperialist aggression. Rabaté suggests, however, that democracy may have come too quickly, not allowing sufficient time for public opinion to become calibrated with the increasingly powerful popular press. The result was a dramatic increase in rabid nationalism that spurred Europe to war faster than any dynastic caprice could have. Rabaté writes that the First World War was the inevitable consequence of “the paradoxical conflation of a modern evolution towards democracy in a period of

industrial revolution and scientific progress, and the spectral resurgence of an ancient heroic Romanticism, a compromise between the fruits of the French Revolution and the return of the nationalist myths” (1913 209). Never had there been a time period in which cosmopolitan hospitality was so desperately needed and so seriously in jeopardy.

A secondary (and aggravating) effect of this ardent nationalism was that it promoted widespread immigration. As the old empires collapsed, new nation-states formed. While the emergence of the modern, liberal state promoted democratic ideals, the foundational elements of “the nation” (e.g. shared language and common religion) instantly generated new ethnic minorities that were often refused recognition, or even oppressed, by the states that had previously been their homes. As Panikos Panayi writes in the introduction to the anthology *Refugees and the End of Empire*, “the desire for ethnic purity, legitimized by nationalist ideology, meant, in some cases that the transition from empire to nation-state involved ethnic cleansing as part of the nation-building process” (22). The Armenian Genocide of 1915 and the wave of pogroms of Eastern Europe and Russia are the most dramatic example of mass forced exodus and relocation in pre-WWI Europe; the novelty of the concept is signaled by the newness of the term “refugee,” which was not codified, however, until the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951.

Not all immigration and movement throughout Europe was forced exile. The increasing popularity (and decreasing cost) of rail travel throughout Europe from the middle of the nineteenth century onward resulted in dramatic growth of tourism that essentially rendered any existing passport and visa policies untenable. France abolished

passports in 1861, and by 1914, passport requirements were essentially non-existent in Europe (although the Russian and Ottoman Empires maintained both domestic and international travel paper requirements). Relatively few people even possessed passports. Many modernist writers responded to the increasing wave of trans-cultural exchange and immigration at the start of the twentieth century by eschewing national identity in favor of “world citizenship,” or cosmopolitanism. To point, notable Modernist authors such as James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway, E.M. Forster, Joseph Conrad, and Edith Wharton established the model for the expatriate author by living nomadic, cosmopolitan lives. On a larger scale, however, the increase in emigration and immigration between and within Europe and its colonies and the United States forced Modernist thinkers to address the challenge of the foreigner, to consider the ethics of alterity.

A key premise to my larger argument, then, is that the commonly accepted penchant for experimentation and avant-gardism of Modernist literature is the result of the problematic dialogue between nostalgic notions of hospitality and “modern” perceptions of reality. As Mahaffey suggests, Modernist literature is “deeply engaged with questions of how we categorize, define, identify, and interpret the multiplicity of the world around us” (3). Approached in this way, we can begin to read the difficulty of Modernist literature, art, and culture as an ongoing (and ultimately undecidable) examination of the ethics of social relations, the demands of reciprocity, and concepts of “stranger,” “foreigner,” and “guest.” As suggested, the spread of liberalism, the rise of the cosmopolitan community, and the solidification of the modern nation-state near the turn of the twentieth century problematized not only the individual’s conception of

herself within the larger community, but also the terms by which one defines and interacts with a “stranger.” This anxiety over hospitality was not unique to the twentieth century, however, and as early as 1795, Immanuel Kant exposed a fundamental problem of international law in his essay “Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch”: Kant’s compact treatise is generally viewed as the originary text of modern discourses on contemporary liberal theory, cosmopolitanism, and hospitality. In it, he lays out a plan for the establishment of ongoing, sustainable world peace.²

For, as far as my freedom goes, I am bound by no obligation even with regard to Divine Laws—which are apprehended by me only through my reason—except in so far as I could have given my assent to them; for it is through the law of freedom of my own reason that I first form for myself a concept of a Divine Will.
(121n)

This quote in particular, however, identifies the crux of the problem in regard to international law, peace between nations, and ethics: In the absence of immediate threat of punishment, laws only hold as much power as an individual decides that they do. In his essay, Kant establishes the fundamental premise of “universal hospitality,” the third essential article for the establishment of perpetual peace between states: “The rights of men, as citizens of the world, shall be limited to the conditions of universal hospitality” (137). This edict identifies hospitality as the *right* of a foreign stranger to be treated without hostility, provided that he or she is peaceful and abides the rules of the host. This right, Kant contends, exists by virtue of the fact that each human being enjoys a common right to possession of their individual portion of the globe.

As compelling as Kant's arguments are, it is what he *does not* say about hospitality that conveys the impending tension of modernity: Whereas the preceding notions of hospitality were governed by religious texts or doctrine, Kant's cosmopolitan hospitality reflects the Enlightenment shift away from the church as the seat of power and authority to the nation-state and, even, the individual. As Kant writes,

The idea of a cosmopolitan right is no fantastical, high-flown notion of right, but a complement of the unwritten code of law...necessary for the public rights of mankind in general and thus for the realization of perpetual peace. For only by endeavouring to fulfill the conditions laid down by this cosmopolitan law can we flatter ourselves that we are gradually approaching that ideal.

(142)

If we read Kant's observations against the evolving tension between the Romanticism and Realism of the late nineteenth century and the high Modernism of the early twentieth century, we can begin to perceive a profound conflict between two world views: the Levinasian ethics of the twentieth century, which contends that the self is only created through an ethical encounter with an unknowable other; and the preceding ethics of Romanticism and Realism, which seeks an ideal, imperfectable relationship with the sublime through a personal connection with truth, as found in nature and the beautiful. In simpler terms, the intellectual preoccupation becomes the relocation of self from "inside" to "outside." This conflict is read not only in the changing notions of hospitality in an increasingly cosmopolitan world, but also in the increasingly fragmented, melancholic texts offered by Modernist writers.

Hospitality, like any idea worth discussing, is both universally known and recognized yet also entirely elusive and paradoxical. To paraphrase Martin Heidegger's statement about the concept of "Being," it could be said that hospitality is the "most universal and emptiest concept" in that little attempt is made to thoroughly define the concept, for everyone who uses it understands perfectly well what they mean by it (42). This disinterest in defining such a profoundly universal concept has, however, led to the sort of melancholic dissatisfaction expressed above, not to mention a good deal of consternation over attempts to apply an ethical code engendered in the ancient Hellenistic and Arabic worlds to a technologically advanced, globalized culture. This chapter will examine in depth the concept of "hospitality," not only as a political act, but as an ethical practice problematized by modernity. Specifically, this chapter will draw comparisons between two works by James Joyce to demonstrate how the melancholic posture of Modernism problematizes this ethical practice and requires new methods of narration.

The Death of Hospitality

At the conclusion of the dinner party that is the central plot element of James Joyce's oft-anthologized short story "The Dead," the protagonist Gabriel Conroy stands and delivers an eloquent speech in praise of his hosts' hospitality:

Ladies and Gentlemen. It is not the first time that we have gathered together under this *hospitable* roof, around this *hospitable* board. It is not the first time that we have been the recipients—or perhaps, I had better say, the victims—of

the *hospitality* of certain good ladies.... I feel more strongly with every recurring year that our country has no tradition which does it so much honour and which it should guard so jealously as that of its *hospitality*.

(202-03; *emphasis mine*)

In the early years of the 20th century, “hospitality” loomed large in the public consciousness of England and Ireland. Gabriel Conroy’s after-dinner speech acquires additional meaning when read against its contemporary context—the subject of fading traditions had been a hot topic in the press throughout 1904 (Power 109). Numerous articles from the era lament the apparent death of hospitality, no more vehemently, perhaps, than Marie Corelli’s aptly named pamphlet, “The Death of Hospitality.”³ In this short but vigorous piece, Corelli eviscerates “new” concepts of hospitality and laments that traditional “hospitality, large-hearted, smiling gracious Hospitality, is dead and wrapped in its grave-clothes, waiting in stiff corpse-like state for its final burial” (89-90). The powerful rhetoric throughout the pamphlet bears such an uncanny resemblance to Gabriel’s remarks that it seems impossible that Joyce could not have been referencing Corelli. For instance, Gabriel remarks, “I sometimes fear that this new generation, educated or hypereducated as it is, will lack those qualities of humanity, of hospitality, of kindly humor which belonged to an older day” (*D* 203). In her pamphlet, Corelli muses, “What do we mean by Hospitality? Surely we mean friendship, kindness, personal interest, and warm-hearted openness of look and conduct...” (95). Further, Corelli invokes Grace, while Gabriel refers to the Three Graces; also, we see in both

Corelli and Gabriel's statements a rhetorical mourning for a simpler era in which friends and relations were treated with high regard and with the utmost sincerity.

These sentiments are, of course, not unique to the turn of the 20th century; it is very likely that social critics engaged in nostalgic yearning for "proper" hospitality have for centuries gazed backwards as far as Homer. The Modernist urge to re-contextualize a unified human history is well documented, however, and we know, for instance, that Joyce had the *Odyssey* on his mind while writing *Dubliners* and that *Ulysses* grew out of a story that was to have been included in the collection. Thus, reading Joyce's narratives with such classical concepts as *philoxenia*—formal rituals of hospitality—at the fore is not untoward.

If we accept the premise that the concept of hospitality transgresses historical eras and cultural contexts, then it would be fallacious to argue that the Modernists are notable at all for their attention to hospitality. My contention, however, is not that the Modernists were preoccupied with hospitality because it transgressed historical eras, but rather that the Modernists, consumed with grief for the losses of modernity, sought to resuscitate an idealized model of "historic" hospitality as a means of navigating the perceived chaos of modernity. In *Literary Modernism and Beyond*, Richard Lehan describes Modernism as a "state of mind" that involved a search for "an idealized reality—a quest for some kind of presence connected to the unfolding of time" (5). It is precisely the transhistorical, mythical quality of hospitality that makes it a lodestone for Modernist artists. In Lehan's view, "The idea of the beautiful was reinforced by theories of myth and symbol, leading to the idea of spatial form, the universalizing of

modernism, the cyclical nature of history, and the inevitability of historical decline” (x). To be in modernity is to be self-conscious of one’s existence in an historical moment that is defined primarily as having moved beyond those moments that preceded it; to be “modern” means to have lost some part of one’s past. This loss—or, rather, this *perception* of loss triggers melancholia, which itself requires creative production to “resuscitate” the lost object so that the mourning of its loss may be sustained.

Lehan also describes the general approach of Modernist artists—visual and literary alike—as a “layering” of spatial and narrative meaning, a method conceptually analogous to the archaeological layering popularized by Heinrich Schliemann, who had, in the late 19th century, discovered the historical city of Troy. In Lehan’s words, “if Modernists turned to the past...it was to the historical past made mythic, to the layering of past and present events to suggest the simultaneity of historical event, the universality or mythic oneness of time (16). It is this same fundamental desire that promotes the desire for authentic, stable meanings, as discussed in the two previous chapters. Read from a distance, the narrative innovations of late nineteenth- and early twentieth- century authors suggests a deeper struggle to find effective means of representing the disorienting and irruptive experience of modernity. One of my fundamental assertions is that what we now consider modernist art and literature are the products of the productive tension between this urge to retain the solidity of the past while articulating the experience of living in a newly global world, one being re-shaped by speed, communication, and technology. T.S. Eliot famously referred to “contemporary history” as an “immense panorama of futility and anarchy” while praising the success of Joyce’s

Ulysses, because, as he argued, of its integrating myth as a means of “manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity” (175). A resulting tension is thus created between the urge to look forward in anticipation of an idealized future while being compelled to preserve the past against the advancement of historical decline. This conflicted position is the dilemma of melancholia—the opposing urges to seek relief from the grief of loss and the desire to maintain an ethical fidelity to the lost object.

The Question of Hospitality

The beguilingly simple concept of hospitality—that is, the proscribed behaviors for dealing with a stranger crossing a boundary from “outside” to “inside”—has come to be examined from a kaleidoscope of perspectives, resulting in range of fecund questions being asked about some fundamental qualities of human civilization: What *should* be done with a stranger at the threshold? How do we distinguish between a potential guest and a possible enemy? To what protections is the guest entitled? What degree of comfort is the host obligated to provide? At what point is the guest no longer a guest but a resident? What questions may or may not be asked of the guest by the host? To what degree is the host *responsible* for (and to) the guest? What danger is posed to the host? The guest? Who (or what) may even be considered a “guest? What is the boundary between “stranger,” “guest,” and “friend?”

Following the example of the Modernists, I will first look backward to move forward. The “history” of hospitality across world cultures is too vast to adequately summarize, but it may suffice to say that all world cultures have their own clear rules

governing the proper treatment of guests in one's home. Furthermore, these laws are seemingly universal: A guest should be offered food and rest, a guest's privacy should be respected, a guest should not be unduly interrogated, a guest should not overstay his or her welcome, a guest should reciprocate in some way the gesture of hospitality. These universal laws are so deeply ingrained that they are rarely critiqued or questioned. In the introduction to the first issue of *Hospitality & Society*, the editors offer that, from the perspective of historical study of the Greek, Roman, or Enlightenment traditions, hospitality entailed "a sacred obligation not just to accommodate the guest, but to protect the stranger that arrived at the door" (Lynch 4). In fact, historically, hospitality has been generally viewed as a religious or moral duty, in the words of hospitality scholar Heidrun Friese, "a sacred commandment of charity and generosity to assign strangers a place in the community..." (52). This view has—as with most beliefs—considerably changed over time, thereby necessitating increasingly sophisticated *theories* of hospitality when originally there was only a mandate. These contemporary discourses on hospitality are generally informed by three textual traditions: 1) Homeric and Biblical depictions of hospitality; 2) Immanuel Kant's treatise on cosmopolitanism and hospitality, "Perpetual Peace;" and 3) contemporary readings of these texts offered by Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida, and their commentators.

Hospitality, both in theory and practice, is the consideration of borders, thresholds, and limits, the cultural institution through which we decide what is to be done with individuals (or even texts and ideas) that seek to cross from a foreign place and become situated in close proximity with another individual in his or her "home." We

as individuals engage in hospitality when we welcome another into our private residences; as members of a state, we participate in it when the immigrant crosses our political borders; as intellectuals, readers, and free-thinkers, we metaphorically engage in hospitality when we encounter ideas that are new and strange. In most basic terms, hospitality is the catch-all for any organized system that dictates what *should* be done with a stranger and how that stranger should treat his or her host.

The study of hospitality—as a concept, practice, or ethics—has notably increased over the past two decades, not only in historical and literary studies, but also in philosophy, sociology, economics, political science, and even business management studies.⁴ The recent surge of scholarly interest in hospitality studies is perhaps unsurprising, considering the rise of globalization, migration, and telecommunications. Increasingly, we find ourselves called to respond to a stranger—in many cases, a literal foreigner—or find ourselves a guest of another, far away from our own homes. The impetus for this movement could range from voluntary—in the case of global tourism and business/trade—to involuntary—in the case of political exiles and refugees.

As was discussed at length in the previous chapter, the march towards cosmopolitanism has created much anxiety about the porosity of national boundaries and stable means of identifying one's "native" culture. The lingering effects of Western imperialism and colonialism, now compounded with commercial globalization, tourism, and travel, call into question proximity and the historical practice of hospitality. In their introduction to an entire issue of *Paragraph* devoted to the topic of hospitality, Mustafa Dikeç, Nigel Clark, and Clive Barnett observe that "Globalization, we might say, is the

predicament in which some of us enjoy the benefits of easy connection and extensive mobility, while others are locked in place or coerced into motion by dire economic and political pressures” (2). The economic benefits of trans-national commerce are not made available to all people, and free movement about the globe is not enjoyed (or at least experienced) by all peoples. The very powers that drive some from their homes may lock others in place, albeit without the authority of being “at home.” In our contemporary context, we may find tourists seeking hospitality from those who are in no economic or political position to do so; conversely, in such examples as the global relief industry, we may find “guests” travelling far from home to offer the benefits of hospitality to others in their own “home” environment.

Given increased migration towards and within an expanded Europe, including both “economic migration” and asylum and refugee-seekers, the critical discourse on hospitality has taken on a new urgency. Large numbers of Africans, Arabs, and Eastern Europeans from former Soviet-bloc countries have flooded Southern and Western Europe in recent years, and this population of “strangers” has called into question many of the basic tenets of the cultural institution of hospitality, and several recent incidents have highlighted a growing *inhospitality* in Western Europe.⁵ United States citizens can undoubtedly draw a parallel to the issue of Latino migration in the US, which in the context of post-9/11 national security, the 2008 “Great Recession,” and the ongoing “war on drugs,” is one of the core political issues of our generation.⁶ Although the word is rarely invoked in the American political discourse, hospitality is at the fore of any discussion of border (in)security. In addition to this political demand, the lasting effects

of early twentieth-century colonialism and the aftereffects of the Second World War, particularly the Holocaust, have encouraged vigorous discussion of the ethical aspects of hospitality. This approach to hospitality would have us consider “difference” in less concrete terms than a Polish bricklayer in London or a Mexican day-laborer in Houston, but the radical alterity of the “Other” (i.e. the subject who is not the self) and the means by which we come to understand or are called to respond to the Other. This line of philosophical discourse also calls us to examine the potential for violence as an unavoidable (and perhaps necessary) aspect of hospitality, as well as matters of ethics, morals, justice, and laws that surround and govern hospitality.

In offering his propositions for the establishment of an international order that can realistically bring and sustain lasting peace, Kant asserts that, “The rights of men, as citizens of the world, shall be limited to the conditions of universal hospitality,” wherein he offers an operational definition of *hospitality* as “the claim of a stranger entering foreign territory to be treated by its owner without hostility” (137). Kant is clear to establish that hospitality is not a gift, not “philanthropy,” but rather a *right*.⁷ One important aspect of Kant’s “universal” hospitality, however, is that it is conditional. Kant argues that to be deserving of hospitality, the guest must conform to the standards of acceptable behavior as established by their host.⁸ We see, then, a form of reciprocity, an economy. In the Classical model, this economy could be quite literal – the exchange of goods and services for the promise of future return.⁹ From this perspective, we can imagine an “ethical economy,” through which obligations between individuals and states are exchanged as a form of currency.

Proceeding from Kant, we then conceive of hospitality as a means of managing this ethical economy, a process by which one manages the difference presented by the other and comes to accept strangeness. It is a process of translation through which a stranger becomes a guest and the other becomes a subject, and the two enter into an ethical relationship. This process is discussed at length by Levinas in his extended essay *Totality and Infinity*, which focuses on transcendence as found in the face-to-face relationship and raises questions of social existence and justice.¹⁰ The concept of hospitality is the cornerstone of Levinas' discourse: "Metaphysics, or the relation with the other, is accomplished as service and as hospitality" (300).¹¹ In extending Kant's notion of hospitality, Levinas draws finer distinctions on the concept, offering that it operates in two distinct realms: the ethical and the political. As with Kant, proximity is an essential quality. For Levinas, however, one primary distinction between the realms of the ethical and the political is the distinction between private and public spaces. In terms of ethics, the self is morally obligated to welcome the stranger into the private space of the self—the home or *dwelling*. In regard to the political realm, Levinas holds that the self is obligated to welcome the entirety of humanity into the *public* space of the homeland. As with Kant, the complicating factor in both realms is the presence of our potential for *violence*, an inherent threat engendered by the proximity necessary to activate hospitality in the first place. When inviting a stranger into one's home, one also allows accepts the possibility that the stranger will do violence to the host—steal his riches, murder his family, rape his daughters. (And conversely, to accept the offer of hospitality is to accept the possibility that one will become the *hostage* of the host.)

The distinction between public space (the political) and the private space (ethical) of the self is described in *Totality and Infinity* as the “home” or “dwelling,” a term that occupies a privileged position in Levinas’ thinking.¹² Obviously, physical protection from the elements is an essential human need, a part of the “gear consisting of things necessary for the life of man” (152). The *home*, however, is more than a mere shelter; it is an essential implement in the process of intentional or subjective human action: “The privileged role of the home does not consist in being the end of human activity but in being its condition, and in this sense its commencement” (152). This space, which both initiates the possibility of violence towards another and is the font of the self’s ability to offer hospitality to another, is the space in which transcendence becomes possible. For Levinas, the seemingly unremarkable act of opening up one’s home to a stranger is a profound ethical exercise, for it demonstrates obedience to the fundamental Abrahamic moral imperative, “thou shalt not kill.” This negation of murder, this refusal to do violence is not only an essential quality of hospitality, but also demonstrates recognition of the presence of transcendence, as found in the face of the Other. For Levinas, this “calling in question of the I, coextensive with the manifestation of the Other in the face, we call language” (171). In this way, by creating the necessary conditions for language, hospitality becomes the fundament of all ethics.

Beyond the offering of recognition (as language), however, hospitality also presents some material, economic demands. Beyond the gesture of opening one’s home, hospitality also requires that the host offer nourishment, comfort, and shelter from the elements (e.g. food and drink, rest, warm dry clothing, a bath, etc.). The offering of

material comforts is also of benefit to the Host. As Levinas observes, "...in order that I be able to free myself from the very possession that the welcome of the Home establishes, in order that I be able see things in themselves, that is, represent them to myself, refuse both enjoyment and possession, I must know how *to give* what I possess" (170-171). In this way, hospitality is not only of immediate material benefit to the guest, but also the host, who is separated from the demands of material possession. This newfound freedom, however, engendered by hospitality-through-language and separation from possession, produces an ethical problem in that the self now comprehends that the exercise of freedom is potentially *unethical*. As D.J. Gauthier, in his reading of Levinas, suggests, "The self's discovery of the ethically problematic consequences of its freedom constitutes the decisive stage in its transformation from an egoistical being to an altruistic servant of the other" (164).

Derrida extends this discussion by suggesting that the very possibility of hospitality makes it impossible. In other words, I am only able to offer hospitality to another if I am "at home"—that is, if my authority springs from my autochthony, then I cannot *completely* and *totally* give to the stranger, as the Law of hospitality would have me do, nor can I *completely* and *totally* open my home, thereby exposing myself to potential violence, as the Law would have me do, for either would negate my ability to offer hospitality at all. This essential tension is what Derrida describes as the "undecidability" of the matter. The paradox of hospitality is that for an ethical relationship to exist (thereby making transcendence possible), we must dispossess ourselves of the very material objects that provide us the ability to offer hospitality at all;

we must open ourselves to the violence that would destroy our home, our dwelling. In Derrida's line of thinking, limiting hospitality is what we both *cannot* and *must* do.¹³ The institutions to which Levinas refers threaten hospitality just as they make it possible. Derrida famously examines this paradox in *Of Hospitality*:

It is as though hospitality were the impossible: as though the law of hospitality defined this very impossibility, as if it were only possible to transgress it, as though *the* law of absolute, unconditional, hyperbolic hospitality, as though the categorical imperative of hospitality commanded that we transgress all the laws (in the plural) of hospitality, namely, the conditions, the norms, the rights and the duties that are imposed on hosts and hostesses, on the men or women who give a welcome as well as the men or women who receive it . And vice versa, it is as though the laws (plural) of hospitality, in marking limits, powers, rights, and duties, consisted in challenging and transgressing *the* law of hospitality, the one that would command that the "new arrival" be offered unconditional welcome.

(75-77)

Derrida's writings on hospitality have opened several new avenues of thought, as difficult and intricate as they might be; the seeming result of these avenues is a Mobius-strip line of reasoning in which we come to understand that the very material conditions that make hospitality possible at all also make hospitality—in its truest, most essential sense—completely impossible. This impossibility of hospitality invites the melancholic

conversion of an absence into a loss. Modernism is prone to defining itself through an ethical commitment to its losses. If committed to an inauthentic idealization of loss, this melancholia becomes irresolvable.

The Structure of Hospitality

If we desire to embark on this discussion from a point of consensus, however, the place from which to commence would be by examining the history of the word *hospitality*, which although not contested, does trace a puzzling trajectory. Hospitality as practiced in contemporary culture—that free fellowship so lauded by Gabriel Conroy—is quite different than hospitality as practiced at the dawn of Western culture. The present-day concept of the giving of food, drink, and rest is rooted in ancient concepts of social control, economic exchange, power relations, obligation, and threat of violence.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* indicates that “guest” is a cognate of “host,” with both words tracing their roots to the Latin *hospes*, which the *OED* defines as “possibly meaning host, guest, stranger, foreigner.” One could infer, then, that in the Greco-Roman world, there was little use in distinguishing between host and guest; both parties are committed to the protocol of hospitality. The fine delineation between “stranger,” “guest,” and “enemy” becomes less clear when considering that the Latin *hostis* refers to “enemy” or “stranger” (thereby giving us *hostile*), and that a homonym for host—“host” as the Eucharistic bread—comes also from *hostia*, or “sacrifice, victim.” The etymology would indicate that the original conceptions of guest and host were not as clearly

oppositional as we currently conceive them; *hostia*, *hostis*, and *hospes* could all potentially be applied to a stranger.

In *Indo-European Language and Society*, Émile Benveniste devotes significant attention to a number of terms that describe institutions of “welcoming and reciprocity” that allow members of a given culture the ability to find hospitality in one another, but also societies of different kinds to enter into alliances and formal exchanges (83). He observes that the term *hospes* is actually a compound of **hosti-pet-s*; whereas the former component refers generally to “guest,” the latter component designates “master.” The literal meaning of *hospes*, then, would be “the guest-master.”¹⁴

The meaning of the former part of the compound, **hosti-*, is, however, problematic. As Benveniste observes, “‘stranger, enemy, guest’ are global notions of a somewhat vague character, and they demand precision by interpretation in their historical and social contexts” (75). The Latin *hostis*, for example, originally meant “stranger” but came to acquire a more specific meaning as “enemy” over time.¹⁵ The key to unraveling this particular etymological knot, according to Benveniste, is the observation that most of the Latin terms related to our contemporary conception of hospitality conveyed in varying degrees a sense of compensation and equalization. For instance, in agriculture, the term *hostus* refers to the amount of olive oil obtained from a single pressing; *hostorium* is a stick used for a bushel measure, to ensure consistency and equality in basket loads. A lesser-known part of the Roman pantheon was *Dea Hostilina*, who was responsible for equalizing the size of ears of corn and ensuring that one’s hard work in the fields was fairly compensated at harvest. Previously mentioned is *hostia*,

which refers to a ritual victim offered to appease the anger of the gods (76). This latter notion exists in current use as *host*, referring to the consecrated wafer of the Eucharist.

Benveniste's research reveals that in its ancient form, *hostis* denotes only the stranger who is recognized as eligible for same rights as Roman citizens, as contrasted to *peregrinus*, which refers to a "foreigner" or "traveler;" in the early Roman empire, the term referred to a subject of the empire who was *not* a Roman citizen. Therefore, *hostis* refers only to a stranger of a certain sort—a foreigner who has entered into a pact of reciprocity with Rome (what could be considered a pact or treaty).¹⁶ This same sense exists in the Greek *xénos*, which defines a relationship of mutual reciprocity between two men of the similar standing. The literal exchange of gifts itself—*xenía*—is a mutually agreeable pact not only between the two parties, but their heirs as well. As noted classical scholar M.I. Finley writes in *The World of Odysseus*, the modern notion of a "gift" and its meaning in the ancient world differ considerably:

It may be stated as a flat rule of both primitive and archaic society that no one ever gave anything, whether goods or services or honors, without proper recompense, real or wishful, immediate or years away, to himself or to his kin. The act of giving was, therefore, in an essential sense always the first half of a reciprocal action, the other half of which was a counter-gift.

(64)

As mercantile as this practice may seem to present-day Christmas and birthday enthusiasts, networks of reciprocity were the means by which civil order was maintained.

Over time, however, this sense of obligatory reciprocity eventually became obsolete. Benveniste writes, “When an ancient society becomes a nation, the relations between man and man, clan and clan, are abolished. All that persists is the distinction between what is inside and outside the *civitas*” (78). As a result of the rise of the nation-state, the sense of “ritual friend” faded from *hostis*, leaving only the sense of “stranger,” thus implying hostility, and resulting in the classical meaning of the word, “enemy.” The common notion of hospitality then resided solely in *hospes*, “the guest-master.” Likewise, the *xénos* (guest) of Homer eventually devolved into simply “stranger” (79). At first glance, that the word history of hospitality could involve such opposing meanings as “welcome” and “hostility” is entirely confounding.¹⁷ By considering evolving usages in their historical contexts, however, we can observe how the responsibility of kinship-making and treaty formation migrated from the individual “master” of the house/family/clan to the authority of the state.¹⁸ Establishing such boundaries was now a political action.¹⁹ In this way, we can conceive an “economy” of ethics that depends on the exchange of obligations between individuals and states; as shall be demonstrated in my discussion of Joyce below, pledging fidelity to hospitality means willingly entering this economy, and by refusing to participate, one refuses hospitality. Melancholic attachments to inauthentic ideals problematizes this exchange.

Hospitality in Homeric and Biblical Texts

The melancholic attachment to hospitality is representative of the desire to sustain a commitment to the stability of historical authenticity, particularly because many notions of its practice originate from the ur-texts of Western culture. In the ancient world, hospitality was a fundamental moral practice that not only maintained a level of basic well-being and order, but also sustained communities and provided networks that created culture (Pohl 17). As indicated above, the lineage of hospitality in Western literature begins with the classical Greek concept of *xenia*, a proper code of ethics for dealing with *xenos*, which can be translated as either stranger or “ritual friend.”²⁰ In Classical society, wayfarers occupied a special place, for they were thought to be completely helpless and therefore under the special protection of Zeus. The institution of hospitality, then, was a specific religio-moral practice that distinguished Greek culture as an advanced civilization in comparison to more hostile, and therefore “primitive,” cultures (Oden 18). For instance, in the *Odyssey* it is notable that men are judged most severely not by their physical prowess or by their abilities as a warrior—they are judged by their hospitality, a peace-time virtue. Hospitality was not only an important means for an individual to display his wealth and generosity (and, therefore, status), but also in an era before the *polis*, hospitality was a means of forging alliances and maintaining peace—a cosmopolitan practice in the Kantian sense. As Finley writes, “Guest-friend and guest-friendship were far more than sentimental terms of human affection... they were technical names for very concrete relationships” (123). So although the specific meaning and practice of hospitality has certainly evolved over time, it has consistently

remained a means of ritualizing and defining the status of friendship. One can appreciate, then, why it becomes a focus of Modernist melancholia, which in the face of the utter uncertainty of modernity refuses to relinquish the past.

Much of our understanding of Ancient Greek culture is derived from Homeric texts, which prominently feature hospitality scenes: in his extensive study of Homeric hospitality scenes, Steve Reece accounts for 18 such scenes in works attributed to Homer, twelve of which appear in the *Odyssey* (5).²¹ The events of these hospitality scenes are notable in that they are composed of overly formal diction and are arranged in a fixed order, thus implying ritualism inherent in the act of giving and receiving hospitality in the Ancient Greek world. Reece identifies 38 elements that occur repeatedly in the given hospitality scenes (he also notes that not all 38 elements appear in any single given scene, although the elements that do appear *always* appear in the same order) (6-7). In reviewing these elements, a clear-cut code of etiquette begins to emerge. First, the stranger waits at the threshold of the house until either invited inside by the master of the house or sent away. If the visitor is a social equal to the host, he stands at the threshold; if he is an inferior, come to beg or in supplication, he sits at the threshold in a posture of submission. When acknowledged, the host welcomes the visitor, takes him by the hand, relieves him of his spear, and leads him into the home. Once inside the home, the guest is offered a seat, usually in a position of honor. This offer to rest is typically followed by a feast of some sort, at which the guest is often showered with excessive hospitality.²²

Only after the guest has rested, been fed, and offered drink does the host enquire as to the guest's identity, place of origin, and reason for travel.²³ As Reece writes, "The revelation of a guest's identity is perhaps the most critical element in the development of a relationship of *xenia*, for it is the vital link that guarantees the host reciprocal hospitality in the future" (25). For this reason, the revelation of the guest's identity is a formulaic, ritualistic affair. In Homeric hospitality scenes, the guests are frequently savvy enough to emphasize the host's obligation of hospitality by also identifying kinship between the host and guest (whether as familial relations or as hospitality previously offered or accepted by an ancestor or relative).

The guest reciprocates the offer of hospitality by providing news from abroad, entertainment or a story, or even a blessing upon the host and home. Zeus, as patron of strangers and travelers, is typically invoked. Once the exchanges have occurred, the guest is symbolically welcomed into the host's community, so to speak. As Reece stresses, "perhaps the most symbolically powerful gesture of a host's willingness to incorporate a stranger into the community, to transform an outsider into an insider, is an invitation to participate in the community's religious rituals" (30). This offer can take the form of libations or even a sacrifice.

In the case of extremely generous hosts, the guest must actually alert his host that the time has come to sleep. This element occurs in situations where the host's efforts to be hospitable are well in excess of the guest's expectations or needs. Frequently, the guest is offered a bath, ranging from a simple offer to bathe one's feet to a ritualistic bath involving a tripod, anointing oils, and new clothes. Before he departs, the guest is

offered a gift by the host, which serves as material representation of the new bond that exists between them. Further, this gift also materially represents the reciprocity expected by the host, should the need arise in the future. Especially notable gifts are those that have been “re-gifted,” or received by the host as a guest-gift in a previous, historical instance of hospitality.²⁴

These essential elements of hospitality also feature prominently in Biblical texts. Several narratives in the Old Testament portray hospitality in practice, echoing the core themes and tensions present in Classical examples. The most prominent example occurs in Genesis 18, wherein three strangers appear at the tent of Abraham:

He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. He said, “My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the three. Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.”

(Genesis 18: 2-5)²⁵

Abraham then instructs his wife, Sarah, and his servant to prepare bread and a calf, respectively. Once the strangers have eaten, one remarks, “I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah will have a son,” an especially generous offer, considering that Sarah is well beyond the age of childbearing (Gen. 18: 10-11). Furthermore, the reader learns that not only will Abraham and Sarah be blessed with a son, but he shall also establish a “great and mighty nation” (Gen 18: 18).

Although brief, this narrative contains many elements similar to those found in Homeric hospitality scenes. First, we see that Abraham offers hospitality to the strangers immediately and without question; he does not interrogate them as to their purpose or place of origin. Secondly, as in the Greek epic form, Abraham provides the strangers with a place to rest, a means of bathing, and food and drink before any formal “business” is addressed. Lastly, Abraham receives a blessing in return for his hospitality (in this particular instance, Isaac). In particular, the Lord (one of the strangers, now identified) is keen to reward Abraham for his “righteousness and justice,” which will be passed on to his descendants (Gen. 18: 19). In this way, the social convention is perpetuated not only as a matter of etiquette or ethics, but a moral imperative.

So as not to be overlooked this latter point is immediately driven home by means of contrast with the people of Sodom and Gamorrah, about whom the Lord has received reports of wickedness and whom he has come to cast judgment upon. In Genesis 19, two of the strangers (now identified as “angels”) arrive in Sodom and are greeted by Lot in an almost identical fashion to Abraham. The point of contrast in this episode, however, occurs when the men of Sodom surround Lot’s home and demand that the strangers be given up so that they may “know” them (Gen. 19: 4-5). This scene is frequently cited as an example of Biblical disapproval of homosexuality; however, the primary purpose is to underscore the sanctity of hospitality. So crucial is the safety and well-being of his guests that Lot offers up two virgin daughters in their place—he offers to make an ultimate sacrifice for the sake of hospitality. To modern eyes, this offer may seem repulsive or immoral, but it does underscore the importance of the law of hospitality.

His offer of extreme hospitality is denied, however, and the angels intervene to blind the maddening crowd. In the end, Lot is rewarded with his life for his hospitality, and in punishment for their inhospitality, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah suffer “sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven” (Gen 19: 24).²⁶

We see in these examples of hospitality from Homer and the Bible many obvious similarities. Most interesting to consider, however, is the gulf that exists between our present-day practices of hospitality and those of the ancient world. A key component of ancient hospitality is that it is offered *unconditionally* and as an act of religious obedience. Over time, we see hospitality becoming increasingly “institutionalized,” becoming a realm of the church and the state. In the modern world, segregated as it is by its borders and mandated points of egress, rarely is an individual presented with an absolute stranger at the door of his or her dwelling.

Modern/ist Melancholia and the Failure “Hospitality”

Xenia—the Homeric notion of hospitality—was close at hand in Joyce’s various appropriations of Greek precedent. Approaching “The Dead” from this perspective, we can see that the “traditional Irish” hospitality featured in the central scene of the story is actually *not* hospitality in the original Homeric sense. In this way, Joyce offers a critique of the modern desperation to maintain fidelity to what it is perceived as lost.²⁷

As Mary Power points out, Gabriel Conroy’s hospitality toast acquires additional meaning when read against its contemporary context; the subject of fading traditions had been a hot topic in the press throughout 1904 (109). Numerous articles from the era

lament the apparent death of hospitality, no more vehemently, perhaps, than Marie Corelli's aptly named pamphlet, "The Death of Hospitality."²⁸ In this short but vigorous piece, Corelli eviscerates "new" concepts of hospitality and laments that traditional "hospitality, large-hearted, smiling gracious Hospitality, is dead and wrapped in its grave-clothes, waiting in stiff corpse-like state for its final burial" (89-90). As Power argues, the powerful rhetoric throughout the pamphlet bears an uncanny resemblance to Gabriel's remarks. For instance, Gabriel comments, "I sometimes fear that this new generation, educated or hypereducated as it is, will lack those qualities of humanity, of hospitality, of kindly humor which belonged to an older day" (*D* 203). In her pamphlet, Corelli muses, "What do we mean by Hospitality? Surely we mean friendship, kindness, personal interest, and warm-hearted openness of look and conduct..." (95). Eulogizing the past in this way—that is, by grieving a "more hospitable" (i.e. more *Irish*) past—is a melancholic act in that it treats a lack as loss.

This expression of grief is also melancholic in that it creates the lost object, as in the sentiments of both Corelli and Gabriel Conroy, we find misappropriation of the term "hospitality." I would agree with Mahaffey's argument that "Joyce, in the wake of Homer, understood genuine hospitality as something very different than what is presented in 'The Dead'" (27). As she writes, classical hospitality is "a perfect equipoise between opposite extremes, in this case foreigner and native, that grows out of humility" and that through rituals of hospitality, "the distinction between stranger and friend is eradicated" (28-29). In other words, the ritual of hospitality is meant to equalize stranger and host. The Feast of the Epiphany party of "The Dead" is not, then, an example of true

hospitality, for it is comprised only of friends and relatives (*philos*); there are no strangers, no *xenos*, to receive the hospitality, no power relationships to equalize. It is rather, as Gabriel suggests, an act of “camaraderie.”²⁹

I argue that this dissonance with Homeric hospitality is precisely what the story offers and that Joyce extends it as a critique of melancholic fidelity to idealized losses, particularly losses pressed into service to nationalism. In an oft-quoted letter written to his brother Stanislaus on September 25, 1906, James mentions his dissatisfaction with *Dubliners* before the addition of “The Dead:” “Sometimes thinking of Ireland it seems to me that I have been unnecessarily harsh.... I have not reproduced [Dublin’s] ingenuous insularity and its hospitality. The latter ‘virtue’ so long as I can see does not exist elsewhere in Europe” (166). The quotations (or “perverted commas,” as Joyce called them) around “virtue” indicate irony.³⁰ Of the many Irish stereotypes in existence is the conception of Irish hospitality, an image that paints the Irish as a merry class of people, veritable Hobbits who are quick to share a song and a pint, who are eager to sit by the hearth and spin a yarn for a weary traveler and impart some golden nugget of folksy wisdom before sending the intrepid voyager back out into the cosmopole to confront the dreary realities of modern urbanity.³¹ Living as I do in a post-*Riverdance*, post-*Angela’s Ashes* world, I may be overstating the case, but it is safe to say that Joyce was also cognizant of and perhaps burdened by nostalgia and sentimental clichés about Ireland, promoted in large part by the Irish nationalist movement. As Oona Frawley points out, at the time that Joyce was crafting “The Dead,” idealizations of pastoral Ireland were becoming commonplace among urban intellectual nationalists: “...to be in Ireland—and,

perhaps, particularly Dublin—of 1904 was to be pummeled with the idea of rural Ireland being real Ireland, the seat of some essentialist Irish spirit connected to land and nature in an intimate way” (110-111). In similar fashion to *Howards End*, we observe that nostalgia can quickly become melancholy, specifically Žižek’s articulation of melancholy, in that one’s sense of “Englishness” or “Irishness” becomes wed to idealized conceptions of the past. The melancholia depicted in Forster’s work—quite intentionally and with a strong sense of irony—glosses over the perils of modern industrial society and the evils of imperialism. In similar fashion, Joyce is well aware that the Irish idyll certainly never existed, especially when read against the history of the fairly recent famine and the centuries of brutal colonial rule (imperialism, for Kant, was a version of abusing hospitality, overstaying welcome). The melancholic performance of hospitality (if we read it as homage to “tradition”) thus produces fidelity to an inauthentic object of desire.

This sort of attachment to an inauthentic image of the past is typically referred to as “nostalgia.” We find it performed most powerfully in “The Dead” by Miss Ivors, a member of the Dublin *intelligentsia* who speaks fluent Irish, is planning a month-long holiday to the (pastoral) Aran Islands, and refers to Gabriel as a “West Briton,” shaming him for writing for *The Daily Express*, a British publication (110). Gabriel’s lack of “Irishness” would not necessarily be problematic, however, if he did not so put on airs in extolling the “genuine warm-hearted courteous Irish hospitality” in his after-dinner speech (203). And while his rhetoric represents his commitment to the pastoral ideal, his actions—shrewdly critiqued by Miss Ivors—suggest that Gabriel entertains no such

nationalistic illusions; in fact, he seems to explicitly reject “Ireland,” the idealized conception that he honors in his speech, in favor of a more cosmopolitan existence, rejecting a trip to the west of Ireland in favor of a “cycling tour” to France and Belgium “partly to keep in touch with the language and partly for a change” (189). When Miss Ivors interrogates this position, Gabriel admits, ““O, to tell you the truth...I’m sick of my own country”” (189). When she presses further, however, Gabriel cannot explain why he is so sick of Ireland, and his hospitality speech would suggest that he does suffer some anxiety of nostalgic impulse. I read Gabriel’s duplicity as a means by which Joyce is able to air conflicted thoughts on hospitality, especially the “traditional” (i.e. nostalgic) hospitality promoted in his native land in balance with the patterns of emigration and exile in post-Famine years.³²

The ultimate irony is that while Gabriel seeks to give homage to the tradition of Irish hospitality, he does so in the service of an emotional expulsion of the prime proponent of “Irishness,” Miss Ivors; thus, he occupies a conflicted position in which his original attempt to integrate the other into his nostalgic perception of hospitality actually rejects the other, who, in the case of Miss Ivors, did not comply to his version of “hospitality.”³³ By situating a fabricated hospitality as the lost object, Gabriel eliminates the possibility of an ethical relationship with an Other. We will see this act continued, challenged, and upended in a later scene with his wife, Gretta, which I will shortly discuss.

In reference to Žižek’s concept of “the remainder,” or that part of the lost object that cannot be integrated or worked through, we hear Gabriel note in his speech that,

“...there are always in gatherings such as this sadder thoughts that will recur to our minds: thoughts of the past, of youth, of changes, of absent faces that we miss here tonight” (204). His reference—especially at such a happy event—is the symptom of the pathologic self-reproach that Freud identified as a melancholic tendency. Knowing what we do about Joyce’s plan for the story (and, for that matter, *Dubliners* as a whole), we can justifiably infer that Gabriel’s melancholy is representative of a perceived cultural tendency in Dublin as a whole. As Karen R. Lawrence writes, Joyce’s Dublin is “a place where the dead brood over the living, haunting the homefront and estranging it from itself” (137). In Joyce’s Dublin, the past and the present, the living and the dead, are unresolved extremes—strangers not equalized through hospitality (which is impossible in nostalgic hospitality, as it cannot properly acknowledge strangers). Knowing that one has experienced a loss does not necessarily promise that one is cognizant of *what* has been lost; this concept of an unidentified lack is often described as “gnomon,” a term that appears in “The Sisters,” the opening story of *Dubliners*.³⁴ In Euclidian geometry, the gnomon is a missing portion of a geometric figure, discernable by the shape of what remains. As applied to human psychology, the conception is that one may determine meaning and describe what is lacking by considering what remains, a truly nostalgic thought. If we are to take Gabriel Conroy at his word, this missing part, this gnomon, is traditional Irish hospitality. Žižek, however, also argues that a refusal on the part of the melancholic subject to process a loss through mourning often “takes the form of its very opposite, a faked spectacle of the excessive, superfluous mourning for an object even before this object is lost” (661).³⁵ While Gabriel, and, by inference, his contemporaries

are quick to mourn the loss of hospitality, their attempt to do so is essentially melancholic; they mourn an ideal that never existed, for the “Irish” form of hospitality that they practice is narcissistic, exclusionary, and, therefore, unethical.

Ethical Hospitality and the Economics of Obligation

By comparison, the ritual of hospitality performed by Leopold Bloom towards Stephen Dedalus in the “Ithaca” episode of Joyce’s later work, *Ulysses*, can be described as “true,” or Homeric hospitality. The relationship created between Bloom (as host) and Stephen (as stranger) requires activation of a hospitality ritual; the question is whether Bloom will activate “nostalgic” or Homeric hospitality. But as Constance V. Tagopoulos writes, “Ithaca” is “focused on the hero's homecoming, restarting, in Joycean terms, the Viconian argument that basic experiences and situations recur through history” (185). It would seem that the novel thus far has been preparing the way for a Homeric ritual, one that would seek to equalize Bloom as host and Stephen as guest.³⁶

Bloom faithfully follows many of the proscribed elements of *xenia*, as illustrated by the *Odyssey* and described by Reece. He offers Stephen refuge, refreshment, a bath, gifts, and, even, a bed. The catechistic narrator of “Ithaca” points to such acts directly. I quote from three successive questions: “What supererogatory marks of special hospitality did the host show his guest?” (17:359-60). Next, “Was the guest conscious of and did he acknowledge these marks of hospitality?” (17:366-67). And lastly, “Were there marks of hospitality which he contemplated but suppressed, reserving them for another and for himself of future occasions to complete the act begun?” (17:371-73). In

answer to the first question, we learn that Bloom has forgone his favorite cup in favor of “a cup identical with that of his guest” and, with the hot cocoa, he serves, “extraordinarily...and, in reduced measure, to himself the viscous cream ordinarily reserved for the breakfast of his wife Marion (Molly)” (17:363-65). The “exceptional” hospitality extended to Stephen could be compared to the example of “exceptional” hospitality shown by Telemachus to Athena (who is disguised as Mentos) in Book I of the *Odyssey*.³⁷ Bloom’s actions are an attempt to equalize the relationship between himself—the host—and Stephen—the guest.

Stephen, however, flatly refuses much of Bloom’s hospitality. First, he declines the ritual bath (“What reason did Stephen give for declining Bloom’s offer?” That he was hydrophobe, hating partial contact by immersion or total by submersion in cold water...” (17:236-238)). Later, when Bloom offers to Stephen that he “pass in repose the hours intervening between Thursday (proper) and Friday (normal) on an extemporized cubicle in the apartment immediately above the kitchen...,” Stephen “promptly, inexplicably, with amicability, gratefully” declines this ritual offer of a bed (17:931-933 and 955). Bloom is exemplary in his performance of Classical hospitality, having not only equalized himself with his guest, but offered refreshment, rest, and even a bath—yet Stephen refuses to participate in the ritual. Perhaps it is this refused union that prompts Rabaté cryptically to offer the following: “One can therefore claim that *Ulysses* is a great novel of hospitality because it demonstrates the impossibility of hospitality” (160). “Ithaca” creates a possibility, but it ends in disunion. The most nagging question, here, one that *Ulysses* leaves unanswered (despite the promise that the

“Ithaca” chapter is the “key” to the novel, the episode that answers all questions posed by the book) is *why*, exactly, Stephen refuses Bloom’s hospitality, why he refuses to participate in *xenia*. It would seem that Stephen, as a (notoriously) classically educated person would recognize and appreciate the virtue and ethics of a hospitality ritual. Yet, he “inexplicably” declines Bloom’s offer.

Insight on this conundrum can be found by placing “The Dead” in dialogue with the “Ithaca” episode. In his after-dinner speech, Gabriel Conroy attempts a joke when he remarks, “. . . we have been the recipients—or perhaps, I had better say, the *victims*—of the hospitality of certain good ladies. . .” (202, emphasis mine). This comment touches on a remarkable truth and also perhaps suggests why Stephen would refuse Bloom’s hospitality. As mentioned earlier, a fine distinction exists between *hospes*, *hostis*, and *hostia*.

One way to understand the differences is to examine reciprocity, and one way better to understand reciprocity, oddly enough, is to examine the word “parasite,” which comes from the Greek *parasitos*, which literally translates as “next to” (*para-*) “grain” or “food” (*sitos*). As J. Hillis Miller observes, in its original usage, “parasite” had positive connotations, for to be a parasite was to be a dinner guest, one with whom the host is sharing food. Over time, however, the word acquired a negative meaning, used to describe a perpetual dinner guest, one who never extends an invitation to dinner in return (442).³⁸ The host, then, not only dines alongside the parasite, but is also its source of sustenance, to the point that the host is being drained of resources without compensation. In other words, if a guest does not reciprocate the hospitality—as directed under *xenia*—

then he or she becomes a parasite, or the *victim* of an act of hospitality that they do not intend to reciprocate. Edward Brandabur observes that, “spiritual parasitism is a central experience of Joyce's *Dubliners*.” He goes on to suggest that Joyce's characters are unable to craft satisfactory lives of their own and therefore feed on “the real or imagined strength of those they envy and despise” (109). It is this quality, very likely, that Joyce had recognized and sought to exploit in *Dubliners*. Brandabur continues: “The living feed on the dead, the dead on the living. The lives of others keep Dublin alive, even in its supposedly most gratifying aspect, the hospitality which Joyce felt obliged to honor, however ambiguously” (110). The melancholic hospitality practiced by those at the dinner party of “The Dead” (and, by extension, all *Dubliners*) is not reciprocal, but parasitic.

Both etymologically and conceptually, hospitality has a double meaning. As Miller suggests, “The relation of household master offering hospitality to a guest and the guest receiving it, of host and parasite in the original sense of ‘fellow guest,’ is inclosed within the word ‘host’ itself” (442). In other words, because there can be no host without a parasite or *vice versa*, to be involved in an act of hospitality (melancholic or not) is to become duplicitous—that is, in the sense of being twofold in meaning, to the point of internal contradiction. Whether or not one recognizes this duality is another matter: Gabriel Conroy generally disregards his duplicity, and his *epiphany* occurs when, at the conclusion of “The Dead,” he comes to recognize the stranger within himself.

Doubleness of meaning, or perhaps, more accurately, doubleness of understanding, is an essential concern of both “The Dead” and “Ithaca,” for it explains

the reactions that their respective protagonists have to the model of hospitality deployed in their texts. Mahaffey argues that the “emotional intensity of Joyce’s lyrical ending depends on this doubleness of signification” (29). As the central symbol of “The Dead, the falling snow represents the duplicity of hospitality. Throughout the story the snow functions to draw a contrast between “inside” and “outside.”³⁹ For instance, as Gabriel rehearses his upcoming hospitality speech, he observes the snow through the window:

Gabriel’s warm trembling fingers tapped the cold pane of the window. How cool it must be outside! How pleasant it would be to walk out alone, first along the river and then through the park! [...] How much more pleasant it would be there than at the supper table!” (192).

Gabriel occupies a duplicitous position with respect to nostalgic hospitality; although he sings its praises in his after-dinner speech, he also comments that he is “sick” of Ireland. He is an avowed cosmopolite, yet he sides with tradition against the Modernism represented by Molly Ivors, with her ostentatious “Irish device,” a symbol of her nostalgic strain of nationalism.⁴⁰ In the latter portions of the story, however, we begin to understand that his preference for tradition is not a commitment to the idea of it, but rather a sort of paralysis that is committed to the past in general. As he and his wife depart from the party, Gabriel melancholically ruminates on his past:

A wave of yet more tender joy escaped from his heart and went coursing in warm flood along his arteries. Like the tender fires of stars moments of their lives together, that no one knew of or would ever know of, broke upon and illuminated

his memory. He longed to recall to her those moments, to make her forget the years of their dull existence together and remember only their moments of ecstasy.

(214)

From here, Gabriel begins to imagine the upcoming intimacy that they will share in their hotel room, his lust fueled by—of all things—melancholia. When he attempts to extend his desire to Gretta in a distorted act of hospitality, he is frustrated by her lack of acknowledgement of his “gift.” Instead, Gretta is herself engaged in her own grieving, recalling the death of Michael Furey, her first love. Gabriel’s love, his desire for his wife, read as melancholic hospitality, eliminates the possibility of an ethical relationship with his wife. As Marian Eide argues, in *Ethical Joyce*, “the first ethical consideration” in Joyce’s work is the “preservation of difference within a context of response or responsibility” (7). Gabriel does not see Gretta as an Other, for in his melancholy, Gabriel has grafted his phantasmal concept of her and their past together to his ego. If they cannot stand apart as Self and Other, then they cannot enter *xenia*, or a hospitable relationship that creates the possibility for reciprocity. Melancholic attachment would seek to integrate the other into the ego, conflating self and other and thereby eliminating the possibility of hospitality and, thereby, an ethical relationship.

As stated, however, Gabriel’s epiphanic moment is a recognition of true hospitality, and it occurs when he embraces his own duality, thereby recognizing in himself both guest and host.⁴¹ Furthermore, his realization of “how poor a part” he had played in his wife’s romantic history actually opens the possibility for hospitality, as it

disengages him from the melancholic incorporation of Gretta's other into his nostalgic self and re-establishes Gabriel and Gretta as strangers: "He watched her while she slept as though he and she had never lived together as man and wife" (222). By recognizing that his own nostalgia, his dependence on inauthentic creations of the past, Gabriel begins to reconcile himself with a deeper past of which he had previously no notion (Rabaté, *Egoism* 156). In the final two paragraphs of "The Dead," Gabriel experiences his epiphany and realizes his love for his wife. Through the window, he spies "the form of young man standing under a tree," a form that could be a ghost.⁴² His identity (i.e. ego) fades, "out into a grey impalpable world," and he watches as the snow falls faintly (*D* 42). He recalls an earlier comment that the snow is "general all over Ireland," thereby equalizing the Modern and the pastoral, the strange and the familiar, the living and the dead. The concluding image of the story draws a contrast between the nostalgic, exclusionary hospitality practiced earlier and the true hospitality that Gabriel has come to understand as a process of recognizing alterity, in oneself as well as others.⁴³ To see oneself as a potential guest or stranger allows for true hospitality, which depends also on understanding of reciprocity, the ability to imagine one's self also as the host.⁴⁴ Therefore, one can simultaneously be both "inside" and "outside."

This matter of "inside" versus "outside" is a prevalent theme in *Ulysses*, as well. Whereas in "The Dead," Gabriel Conroy's epiphany moves from "inside" to "outside," in "Ithaca," Bloom's ritual of hospitality offers Stephen the reverse of the same opportunity, to move from "outside" to "inside." Read in this way, however, Stephen's refusal becomes all the more perplexing. J. Hillis Miller writes that, "Gift-giving is the

binding or sealing of that relation of reciprocal obligation expressed in the word ‘host,’ but it is also apotropaic, the warding off of the evil the parasite may do you or the evil your host may somehow do you if you do not recompense him for feeding you” (446). Stephen understands the classical world well enough to know what true hospitality requires; he does not wish to enter the economy of reciprocity. To point, our narrator offers, “What various advantages would or might have resulted from a prolongation of such an extemporization?” Among the possible “advantages” are, for Leopold Bloom, “a rejuvenation of intelligence, vicarious satisfaction” and for Molly Bloom, “disintegration of obsession, acquisition of correct Italian pronunciation” (17:935-939). These “advantages” are the obligations faced by Stephen, should he accept the hospitality offered him.

But this point begs the question. Still, we must ask, why does Stephen refuse to accept the possibility of obligation? Stephen’s refusal can be interpreted in many ways, and because the reader is not granted access to Stephen’s consciousness before he departs the novel, we cannot know his conscious motivation for certain. A simple explanation is that Stephen is simply immature and petulant, and lacks the common courtesy to graciously accept what he has been offered. But Joyce takes great pains to follow the proscriptions of Classical hospitality, and it is therefore logical to assume that Stephen’s refusal would parallel a similar act in Homer’s narrative. I therefore argue that Stephen’s rejection of hospitality is analogous to Athena’s refusal of Telemachus’ hospitality at the end of the *Odyssey*. When Telemachus implores her to extend her stay: “Although your voyage presses, bathe—/refresh your spirit; then, find gift in hand,/you

can with satisfaction sail away,/That gift will be precious, handsome thing,/a keepsake such as dear friends give to friends” (1.400-404). Athena replies that she must be on her way, but will accept Telemachus’ gift on her return voyage when she will bring with her “a gift of equal merit” (1.412). As Reece suggests, as divinity, Athena cannot fully participate in *xenia*, for it would result in “an unacceptable obligation to her host” (56). The relationship between gods and mortals cannot be equalized—they offer reciprocity in return for sacrifices and offerings. I am not prepared at this point to offer an argument that Stephen Daedalus is divine (although he is customarily read as a parallel to Telemachus), but I do recognize that in both cases, the strangers recognize that they cannot meet their obligation to the host and therefore decline the hospitality offered to them.⁴⁵ True hospitality, “Homeric” hospitality, is ethical for it follows a code under which both host and stranger, Self and Other, are treated justly. So, by this same logic, it would also be ethical to refuse an obligation that one cannot (or will not) meet.

By juxtaposing Joyce’s two most obvious treatments of the concept of hospitality, we can begin to discern a complicated and nuanced examination of hospitality in the context of early twentieth-century modernity. Although Joyce’s design is never as graspable as the reader would perhaps like, an implicit argument does begin to take form. The immediate urge is to contrast the critiques of hospitality offered by the “The Dead” and in “Ithaca,” with the assumption being that the two are offered in opposition to each other. In “The Dead,” we see melancholia performed as nostalgia, an allegiance to a misremembered or misunderstood vision of the past. The grief expressed over the “death” of hospitality is predicated on a fictive memory of an idyllic Ireland and

pressed into service to present desires. Through Gabriel Conroy's epiphanic recognition that his memories of his own relationship with his wife, Gretta, have become sentimentalized, the reader begins to perceive the potential for narcissism in melancholia. In attempting to maintain fidelity to an object of desire, one grafts it to one's own ego; ethical melancholia, as demonstrated in "true" hospitality, maintains a separation of Self and Other.

And while Stephen's refusal of Bloom's hospitality might initially be read as a rejection of an ethical mandate, it presents two arguments. First, Stephen's refusal demonstrates his awareness of the conditions of hospitality—by accepting Bloom's offer, he would then be implicated in the economy of reciprocity formed by the practice of hospitality.⁴⁶ This economy of mutual obligation is the basis of modern society—we form communities to not only protect one another but to share resources and information. Stephen's refusal demonstrates his admission that he is neither capable of this reciprocity, nor does he wish to become a member of this society. By refusing hospitality, Stephen opts for a society formed not from mutual obligations to family, religion, community, or country—each of which are determined by birth and are conditions of pure chance—but rather a society of his own choosing, a community of affinity that is self-consciously above the nation. Stephen is a Modernist subject, one who is eager to leave the past behind in favor of a cosmopolitan economy, one that does not implicate one in an interlocking chain of pre-determined obligations.

Secondly, Stephen's refusal presents an alternative to the "ethical mourning" I previously discussed, in which fidelity to the lost object is maintained in order to sustain

awareness of the loss. In many cases, the loss of an important ideal or an instance of great trauma should not be grieved, resolved, and forgotten. One can find in Bloom's exemplary hospitality fidelity to "true" Abrahamic hospitality—which, for its authenticity, we assume to be the superior mode of being. Furthermore, however, Bloom's urgency to have Stephen stay in his home also indicates Bloom's own unresolved grief for the loss of his son—his desire to have Stephen reside in his home is a means of resuscitating his lost child. This offer of hospitality, then, becomes an act of fidelity to his own losses. Stephen's refusal—which is essentially a refusal to be detained on his journey—also suggests Joyce's refusal of a false dilemma that one must either choose sustained fidelity to the past or accept consolation for its passing. Instead, Stephen's refusal to participate in the economy of reciprocity that hospitality mandates posits an alternative pathway, one that rejects the closed loop of this economy. Eide has observed that, for Joyce, Dublin is suffused by a tyranny in which "subjects are not precisely citizens, in which the individual has no voice in the polity" (319). Complying with the edicts of hospitality would signal Stephen's submission to this tyranny, and the warning is clear: if we are to hold dear to (what we believe to be) the past, then we must also endure the negative repercussions of what the past brings with it. This desire for resolution signals an alternative to melancholia, in that it seeks not consolation and release of the lost object, nor does it insist upon the sustainment of grief. Stephen's departure signals a break entirely with the obligations of the past.

Notes

¹ Recall Kern's assertion that the "assault on a universal, unchanging, and irreversible public time was the metaphysical foundation of a broad cultural challenge to traditional notions about the nature of the world and man's place in it" (314).

² The first part lays out six "preliminary articles" for the establishment of "perpetual peace between states," which essentially mandates that treaties that would allow for future hostilities be invalid, abolishes standing armies, disallows exorbitant national debt, forbids covert operations (e.g. assassins or poisoners), and generally advocates for the complete sovereignty of individual states. From the perspective of history, Kant's proposals seem eerily prescient.

³ Which, according to Mary Power, appeared first as "The Decay of Hospitality" in *The Bystander*, 29 June, 1904. I quote from *Free Opinions Freely Expressed on Certain Phases of Modern Social Life and Conduct*, a collection of Corelli's editorials, which appeared in 1905.

⁴ 2011 saw the launch of *Hospitality & Society*, an international multidisciplinary social sciences journal focusing upon hospitality's connections to wider social and cultural processes and structures.

⁵ Consider, for instance, France's 2010 ban of face coverings, aka "the burqa ban," Germany's notoriously difficult citizenship test (introduced in 2008), and the rise of far right-wing, anti-immigration political parties, such as Spain's *Movimiento Social Español*, Norway's Progress Party, or the UK's British National Party, among numerous others.

⁶ Latino/Hispanic immigration to the U.S. garners the most attention, the data actually reveal that Asian-born immigrants have recently overtaken Hispanics as the largest proportion of immigrants to the U.S. Yet, Asian immigrants are rarely considered a threat to the U.S.'s economy, security, or identity. (Pew Research Center).

⁷ He also predicts the oncoming wave of cross-cultural interaction in modernism, arguing that it is "...possible for men to come into touch with one another across these unappropriated regions and to take advantage of our common claim to the face of the earth with a view to a possible intercommunication" (138).

⁸ Kant's view on hospitality as a "right" is admittedly problematic, in that it does open the door for an assimilationist model, one we find demonstrated throughout U.S. and, now E.U., immigration policy. In the U.S. and, now, throughout the E.U., both of which enjoy their position of "host" on the basis of their imperialist (i.e. "forced hospitality" projects. Contra to Kant, Derrida argues that for hospitality to exist at all, it must be unconditional: "Let us say yes to *who or what turns up*, before any determination, before any anticipation, before any *identification*, whether or not it has to do with a foreigner, an immigrant, an invited guest, or an unexpected visitor..." (*Of Hospitality* 77)

⁹ Lynch, et al., offer that "one could in fact posit hospitality as operating on a continuum with commercial hospitality at one end, ulterior-motives hospitality a bit further along, reciprocal hospitality somewhere in the middle, and genuine altruistic hospitality at the other end" (11).

¹⁰ The concept of hospitality is the cornerstone of Levinas' discourse: "Metaphysics, or the relation with the other, is accomplished as service and as hospitality" (300). In *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, Derrida states, "Although the word is neither frequently used nor emphasized within it, *Totality and Infinity* bequeaths to us an immense treatise *of hospitality*" (21).

¹¹ His meaning is that the encounter of the I with the Other, thus resulting in the We, is the fundament of “a State, institutions, laws, which are the source of universality” (300).

¹² As Gauthier observes, “...Levinas’s discussion of the home posits nothing less than a normative standard by which the adequacy of the human relationship to place can be ethically judged” (165).

¹³ For instance, hospitality scholar Judith Still argues that hospitality “inevitably touches on that fundamental ethical question...of the borders of the human, and how we set those up” 4

¹⁴ In *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, Derrida refers to this guest-master binary as a “chain that would link, like two sovereign powers, hospitality and ipseity” (18).

¹⁵ Lambros Kamperidis observes, “According to the Burgundian Laws, a *hospes* is a barbarian warrior settled on Roman soil, based on the *hospitalitas* principle governing the settlement of barbarians on Roman estates” (12).

¹⁶ Benveniste draws a comparison to the notion of *potlatch* common among Native Americans of the Northwest, which denotes a gift-giving ceremony and economic system in which each gift ceremoniously given to a guest produces an obligation of reciprocity and generates prestige for the host.

¹⁷ Sigmund Freud explores this phenomenon in his short essay, “The Antithetical Meaning of Primal Words.” In exploring an observation made in *The Interpretation of Dreams* that “[dreams] show a particular preference for combining contraries into a unity or for representing them as one and the same thing” (94). Relaying the work of philologist Karl Abel, who studied at length the penchant for duality in ancient Egyptian, Freud concludes, “our concepts owe their existence to comparisons” (97).

¹⁸ Along these same lines, Benveniste draws an interesting relation between the evolution of *hostis* and another series of words coming from the root **mei-*, specifically the Latin *munus*, which connotes a sort of official gift but also an office or public duty. From this root, stem the cognates *muneral*, *municipal*, and *remunerate*. Benveniste suggests that the relationship between the sense of “exchange” and the sense of “public responsibility” “In nominating somebody as a magistrate one confers on him honour and certain advantages. This obliges him in return to counter-service in the form of expenditure...” (79).

¹⁹ Kamperidis observes that this migration in meaning is also reflected in contemporary religious ceremony: “Under the influence of the militaristic mentality of the West, even the sacrament of communion with God assumed the form of the *Hostia*, the sacrificial victim, the scapegoat slain as a hostage for the redemption, the atonement of our sins.” The failure, then, is that the ceremony that began as a means of equalizing guest and host has devolved into a belief system that “reduces free men and women into inferior beings in need, worthy to receive institutionalized care, since they cannot of their own free will exercise their freedom of entering into relationships with one another, of offering hospitality to one another, of showing compassion to each other, as long as they perceive the other, the stranger, as enemy” (12)

²⁰ Although *xenos* has multiple possible meanings, the essential connotation is “foreigner,” although the degree of “foreignness” is ambiguous, and *xenos* can describe an individual who is not of one’s own family, state, or race, or, more abstractly, to someone who is merely a traveler to whom *xenia* is obligatorily extended. The latter conception, which could be thought of as “friend-guest” can be contrasted with *philos* (translated as “friend” or “relative”), which indicates a friendship relationship not beholden to the rituals of *xenia*.

²¹ In his accounting, Reece includes “everything that occurs from the moment a visitor approaches someone’s house until the moment he departs.” These “scenes” then are actually composites of a number of type-scenes, including arrival, reception, seating, feasting, identification, bedding down, bathing, gift giving, and departure (5).

²² Reece notes that “a truly generous host may ‘bestow great honor’ . . . on his guest by relinquishing his own ‘designated portion’ . . .” (23). Cf. this scene to the “Ithaca” chapter of Joyce’s *Ulysses*, where Bloom extends ‘excessive’ hospitality to Stephen, giving him use of Bloom’s mustache cup and pouring the remainder of Molly’s cream.

²³ For example, in Book 3 of the *Odyssey*, Telemachus is welcomed by Nestor: “But when they saw / the strangers, all the men of Pylos rushed / to welcome them with hands outstretched; they asked / the visitors to join the celebrants” (3:45-48). Nestor proclaims that, “It surely is more proper to inquire—to ask our guest to tell us who they are—after and not before we’ve shared this feast” (3:93).

²⁴ The protocols of hospitality were especially important in an era when the common belief was that the gods (or their representatives) walked among men. Reece notes that theoxeny “appears in folktales universally, and is well attested in Greek and Roman myth generally,” citing the examples of Odysseus and the Phaeacians (7.199-206), Telemachus meeting his father (16.178-79), and the suitors observing Odysseus disguised as a beggar (17.485-87) as examples where people suspect a disguised Odysseus as being a god come to judge the conduct of mortals (47). A review of the *Odyssey* will show that harm is immanent for any character who fails his or her obligation to *xenia*, either as a host or a guest. Consider, for instance, the devastation that befalls Odysseus’ men after slaughtering Helios’ oxen or the fate of the suitors to Penelope, who are egregiously poor guests. In terms of poor hosts, both Polyphemus and the Laestrygonians are punished for not obeying *xenia*.

²⁵ All quotes taken from Suggs, M. Jack, et al. *The Oxford Study Bible: Revised English Bible, with the Apocrypha*.

²⁶ Two other notable examples from the Old Testament reiterate this theme of *theoxenia*: 1 Kings 17-18, in which the prophet Elijah seeks hospitality from a widow in Zarephath, and 2 Kings 4:9, in which the prophet Elisha repays the hospitality offered him by the Shunammite woman with a son (as with Sarah).

²⁷ Jean-Michel Rabaté writes that “The Dead,” “deals directly with the two related issues of hospitality and betrayal, which appears indeed as the perversion of hospitality” (155).

²⁸ Which, according to Powers, appeared first as “The Decay of Hospitality” in *The Bystander*, 29 June, 1904. I quote from *Free Opinions Freely Expressed on Certain Phases of Modern Social Life and Conduct*, a collection of Corelli’s editorials, which appeared in 1905.

²⁹ It worth noting that the Feast of the Epiphany is celebrated on the twelfth day of Christmas, the day that the Magi brought their gifts to the infant Jesus. Joyce’s careful selection of the setting calls to mind August Strindberg’s selection of the Feast of Saint John as the setting for *Miss Julie* – both holidays clearly connect to the core themes of the narratives.

³⁰ Jean-Michel Rabaté writes, “Quite early in his career, [Joyce] became aware of a tension between the cosmopolitan pattern he wanted to write down as a symptom of culture and a national or provincial reality that tenaciously resisted the virtuoso deployment of the most varied technical skills” (153).

³¹ Of interesting note, leading academic study on “Irish hospitality” seems concentrated on the provision of hospitality (particularly food, drink, and tobacco) at wakes and funerals. For an extended discussion, see Lysaght. Lysaght’s conception of hospitality is also at odds with Homeric hospitality, as I define it above.

³² As Whelan argues, “Modernity’s nostalgia for its past became a political placebo, sweetening the bitter pill of history and establishing the comfort of distance between past and present.... “tradition” was a defence against a deliberately torn culture, fully exposed to, and unprotected against, the modernist blast” (60). We can find this conflict being examined elsewhere in *Dubliners*: “A Little Cloud” and “Evaline.”

³³ As Rabaté suggests, “Gabriel both wishes to exclude her from the gathering and to take her as an example of the rudeness, of the brash new spirit he condemns. ‘Hospitality’ begins fissuring itself, and needs an alien, a xenos, as a butt to satirize and criticize in order to rejoice in its fake universality” (157).

³⁴ As suggested earlier, Žižek distinguishes between loss and lack, wherein in the former, the subject actually *loses* the object, while the latter is an “already always” condition, in that the subject *never* possessed the object.

³⁵ Rabaté would agree: “Gabriel is thus portrayed as the liberal intellectual who is caught up between the values of the past he cannot completely make his—there is a forced and histrionic quality in his praise of tradition.... Gabriel’s beautiful soul swoons too quickly, betraying his own alienation, his ganwing sense of failure, his restless uneasiness” (*Egoism* 157).

³⁶ In many ways, the two are already equals; as Tagopoulos writes, “Stephen’s presence in Bloom’s house as a guest validates Bloom as a host—the latter can be a host only as long as there is a guest present.... Stephen, whom Bloom gets to know only that same day, is a ‘stranger,’ in the Joycean idiom, an Irishman who is an exile in his own fatherland, like Stephen, like Bloom, like the author himself” (191).

³⁷ Reece comments that “Telemachus’ hospitality is not merely conventional and adequate. He lavishes special attention on his guest, placing her spear against a pillar, in a stand among Odysseus’ own spears (1.127-29)” (49).

³⁸ And from this meaning comes our current conception, as a way to describe an organism that feeds off of a host.

³⁹ Joyce emphasizes this separation: “People, perhaps, were standing in the snow on the quay outside, gazing up at the lighted windows and listening to the waltz music”

⁴⁰ The most common reading is that Gabriel rejects Miss Ivors because she threatens his intelligence, thereby suggesting that the condition of modernity—the movement towards an uncertain and unstable future—is the cause of Gabriel’s anxiety.

⁴¹ Mahaffey argues that hospitality “depends upon acceptance of the strangeness within the self” (31).

⁴² Etymological evidence suggests that *ghost* and *guest* are cognates, as well.

⁴³ This attempt at emphasis by contrast can also be found in Book I of the *Odyssey*, where Telemachus displays extraordinary hospitality, as opposed to the inhospitable suitors, who make no attempt to either offer hospitality to their guest (Athena in disguise as Mentos) nor reciprocate the hospitality that they have been offered *ad nauseum*.

⁴⁴ With regard to the reconsideration of the self in relation to others, Marian Eide suggests that, “Joyce’s fiction frames Levinas’s ethics as a system of compassion and generosity, and also of a goodness that displaces the self, that decenters the primacy of self as transitive in a way that, while it is morally good, is also deeply pleasurable” (“Otherness” 315).

⁴⁵ We may look elsewhere in *Ulysses* for instances of Stephen’s avoidance of obligation; the most obvious incident occurs in “The Wandering Rocks,” where Stephen experiences the *agenbite of inwit*—the remorse of conscience—in the form of his sister, Dilly: “She is drowning. Agenbite. Save her. Agenbite. All against us. She will drown me with her, eyes and hair. Lank coils of seaweed hair around me, my heart, my soul. Salt green death” (*U* 10:875-877).

⁴⁶ Marian Eide reads Bloom’s hospitality and strong sense of responsibility to others as masochism, in that he derives pleasure from subordinating himself to others. Eide suggests that “Bloom’s masochistic pleasure does not reduce his altruism to mere self-interest but opens the possibility for an asymmetrical ethical reciprocity” (“Otherness” 315). I would disagree slightly with Eide on this point, for although Bloom does give more than he receives elsewhere in the novel, in this particular scene – what might arguably be considered the climax of *Ulysses*—he acts with clear self-interest.

CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

*What has happened will happen again, and what has been done will be done again;
there is nothing new under the sun.*

--Ecclesiastes 1:9

As Michael Levenson writes, in his excellent survey, *Modernism*, “no book on Modernism can ever be ambitious enough; there will always be much more to say and to write” (11). Modernist literature, in its ambitiousness and evasiveness, never seems definitively understood, and its meanings evolve as they are viewed through the kaleidoscope of contemporary culture. As Mahaffey writes, despite the common view that “Modernist writing is characterized by willful obscurity and shot through with nostalgia for a rapidly waning elite culture,” increased familiarity, such as I have attempted to limn in this dissertation, reveals a body of works that are “deeply engaged with questions of how we categorize, define, identify, and interpret the multiplicity of the world around us...” (3). In this way, Modernism remains current and serves as a bridge between “then” and “now.”

Modernism asserts itself as a response to an era of rapid and overwhelming social, political, technological, philosophical, and scientific advances that rendered the

existing means of understanding and representing the world essentially useless, and Modernism suggested that notions borne by the Enlightenment and by Romanticism could not explain, and the narrative conventions that preceded this era could not adequately express, the sense of loss produced by these revolutions. A distinction between varying practices of grief has been essential to my argument, as one form—mourning—is accepted as a normal, healthy reaction to loss, while the other—melancholia—is, in Freud’s original terms, “pathological.” While I do not dismiss melancholia as an unhealthy or inappropriate reaction to loss, I do admit that it is a problematic state of being, particularly because melancholia is by its nature an aporia. I identify two essential, interlocking, paradoxes that define melancholia. First, the melancholic subject, while well aware of his own grief, does not fully comprehend what it is that he is mourning; he constructs a lack as a loss. Secondly, the melancholic subject resists any means of resolving the grief, of successfully completing the act of mourning. This apparent absence can either be the result of external—most commonly, cultural—factors that inhibit successful mourning, or internal constructs that prevent one from accommodating the loss and accepting consolation.¹

I have suggested in this dissertation some possibilities for objects both created and lost to the Modernist subject: how one interpreted representative artistic production, how one conceived one’s own “community;” and how one behaved towards strangers. During the time period that I have considered in this dissertation—the late 1800’s through the 1920’s—these ideals, formerly stable concepts rooted in the prehistory of human society, were, being supplanted by new concepts, new means of knowing one’s

world and articulating one's experience in it. With regard to aesthetics, the Modernist penchant for experimentalism engendered stylistic and formal innovations that presented themselves as rejections of preceding literary techniques. Politically, Modernism ranged from socialism to fascism, but in all cases demonstrated a commitment to individual freedom and to communities formed upon ideals as opposed to economic, geographic, linguistic, or religious affinities. The ethical concerns of Modernism focused chiefly on alterity, or the moral responsibilities owed to and by individual "others." These values thus established a movement in cultural production distinguished by its avowed self-consciousness, penchant for appropriation of historical or exotic themes, concern for the function of essential forms, and social commitment. As discussed at length in Chapter IV, one of the most influential modern concepts was the idea of the "nation," which, beginning with the Enlightenment, supplanted local communities in favor of larger-scale societies conceptually organized around such abstract concepts as language, history, or politics. As Benedict Anderson suggests, the end of the eighteenth century brought not only the "dawn of the age of nationalism" but the "dusk of religious modes of thought." As he offers,

The century of Enlightenment, of rationalist secularism, brought with it its own modern darkness. With the ebbing of religious belief, the suffering which belief in part composed did not disappear. Disintegration of paradise: nothing makes

fatality more arbitrary. Absurdity of salvation: nothing makes another style of continuity more necessary. What then was required was a secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning.

(11)

In this context, where the irrefutable and immutable truth of religious doctrine is replaced by ideological communities, that a widespread sense of grief should be present is perhaps unsurprising. Given that melancholia is a form of grief for an ideal not fully comprehended, it is a logical state of being for the modern subject. Melancholia is also sustained by its ability to fabricate a sense of identity. The melancholic-modern subject is identified by his status as one who has suffered a loss. As Jahan Ramazani suggests, identifying oneself through loss can even be the foundation of a national ideal: “Because death is nothing but sheer construct, it is in its imagined forms inextricable from our local, national, and subnational frames of reference and custom, thinking, and feeling. As such, it lends itself to being...the absent center around which the nation weaves itself” (Ramazani *Transnational* 92).

This attachment to an idealized past can be problematic, as the conversion of absence into loss can have serious political implications. Mourning could be seen not only as what LaCapra terms, “individual or quasi-transcendental grieving” but as a “homeopathic socialization or ritualization of the repetition-compulsion that attempts to turn it against the ‘death drive’ and counteract compulsiveness by re-petitioning in ways that allow for a measure of critical distance, change, resumption of social life, ethical responsibility, and renewal.” In contrast, melancholy produces an “impossibly mournful

response to the closure of metaphysics, a generalized ‘hauntology,’” that problematizes our interpretation and critical evaluation of historical trauma (LaCapra 189-190). We understand that Freud’s framework identifies self-loathing as an aspect of melancholia. Self-reproach is also a characteristic of Modernism, often understood as a bifurcated process of criticizing the process of modernization while also demanding a radical rupture with the past. One objective of my discussion, however, has been to suggest that melancholia may threaten not only our individual psychic well-being, but also our understanding of history and politics.

Few Americans who were alive and aware at the time will ever forget where they were or what they were doing at or around 8:46 AM, EST, September 11, 2001. I was brushing my teeth, preparing for a day of teaching at the University of New Orleans when I was called up to the living room of my Irish Channel shotgun by my roommate. I arrived at 8:02 AM, CST, just in time to see the second airliner strike the South Tower of the World Trade Center, live on television. I immediately knew that I had just witnessed something tragic and horrible, although I could not imagine at the time what a profound effect it would soon have on our culture, our history, and our collective psyche. After showering, dressing, eating, and driving to campus, just as I would any other Tuesday, I found myself in front of 25 freshmen writing students. Nobody had stayed home. They wanted to talk. Their reactions ranged from utter grief—some were weeping—to stunned and silent disbelief, to outright rage. What I remember most is that they were looking to me, a first-year college instructor who at the ripe age of 25 had yet to even

buy a car on my own, to explain what had just happened, what it meant, and what we should do next. We had lost something vital—we didn't *know* anything.

What is notable about the tragic events of September 11, 2001, is the widespread and universal grief experienced by every American, and millions of others worldwide. This grief was not solely felt by the friends and relations of the 2,977 victims of these atrocities—it was deeply felt by everyone. For my part, after the full details of the events came to light, I had been shaken to my core, and many friends commented to me that I seemed to be “taking it pretty hard.” I, like everyone who is reading these words, live in a world of ideas, of abstract concepts and philosophical notions, and it profoundly frightened me to witness the destruction that could be wrought by others who also lived in a world of ideas. Powerful ideas.

This profound sense of loss will forever mark our generation to future scholars, although it remains to be seen how this trauma defines the formal means by which we relate our experiences to one another, how we narrate our experience to the future. That much may not be fully understood until the last witness of 9/11 is gone from this earth. The losses endured were, for the vast majority of us, not corporeal losses; we did not grieve the loss of a brother or sister, wife or husband, mother or father. What we began to mourn was something more abstract – an ideal that we perhaps had not fully comprehended prior to the attacks. Naming this ideal is difficult, and agreement on the terms is unlikely. Perhaps we would call it “safety,” “certainty,” “distance,” or “superiority,” while others prefer to simply say “freedom.” I would argue that what we

lost was our innocence, the lovely naiveté enjoyed by the privileged minority of humans who never experience threat of sudden violence and instantaneous death from afar.

Sadly, the traumatic reverberations of 9/11 are not a unique occurrence. The survivors and witnesses of the Rwandan Genocide, the Cambodian Killing Fields, the Holocaust, the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Rape of Nanking, the Russian Pogroms, the Armenian Genocide, the Herero and Namaqua Genocide, and innumerable other atrocities from the past century can surely lay claim to equal if not greater losses. Death and violence were not invented in the twentieth century, but they were certainly improved upon. That our societies, however one cares to define them, are forever changed after these tragedies is inarguable. What is less certain is if we have appropriately mourned these losses, memorialized the victims, and “worked through” the grief. I cannot imagine that we have or even could do so, and for a great many survivors, there is a steadfast refusal to do so. As LaCapra observes,

Those traumatized by extreme events, as well as those empathizing with them, may resist working through because of what might almost be termed a fidelity to trauma, a feeling that one must somehow keep faith with it. Part of this feeling may be the melancholic sentiment that, in working through the past in a manner that enables survival or a reengagement in life, one is betraying those who were overwhelmed and consumed by that traumatic past.

(Writing History 22)

As suggested earlier in this dissertation, an ethical code may oblige one *not* to complete the mourning process, *not* to release the lost object. There is, as Žižek argues, a

“conceptual and ethical primacy of melancholy,” for no loss is every fully worked through, and there is always a remainder. For Žižek, “the ultimate fidelity is the fidelity to this remainder,” and “mourning is a kind of betrayal, the second killing of the (lost) object” (658). Therefore, if we seek an ethical relationship with the past, melancholia is essential.

As previously discussed, Derrida has argued that the only way to appropriately honor the dead is to sustain a relationship that combines intimacy with the certain finality of their passing—which he describes in terms of “aporia,” or an impossibility. In the practice of mourning, we keep the other alive “in memory,” which re-creates the other *within* ourselves. We bring the lost object into ourselves through the practice of memory, practiced as a “faithful interiorization” that “makes the other a *part* of us” (*Memoires* 35). Ultimately, just as Freud came to argue in *Ego and the Id*, Derrida posits that we are who we are only as a product of our interiorized losses. In Derrida’s view, however, melancholia forces us to choose between two infidelities: do we fail to memorialize the past, or do we internalize the loss, thus maintaining a conversation with the dead through a sort of ventriloquism? The work of mourning remains simultaneously compulsory and impossible. We maintain our losses inside of ourselves through memory, we speak of them and to them, but the dead remain apart in their ultimate alterity, gazing back upon us.

It is perhaps because of its ultimate irresolvability that melancholia retains its negative connotation, despite the ethical and creative vantage it provides. Another source of the negative disposition towards melancholia is its tendency to diminish our ability to

remember. The primary purpose of what scholars in the humanities do is to look backward at what has already happened, what we have made, done, or said, and create a sensible narrative out of it. We call this narrative history. Our ability to accurately craft this narrative greatly depends on proximity and distance—that is, our temporal and geographic relationship with the events in question.² When these two delimiters are violated—that is, when an event is impossibly close or overwhelmingly rapid—we experience trauma. It is trauma, I would argue, not melancholia, that is what problematizes memory and, thereby, history. For instance, as Cathy Caruth has observed, “the possibility of knowing history...is raised as a deeply ethical dilemma: the unremitting problem of *how not to betray the past*” (27). Caruth also suggests that this problematic relationship with history can, in the view of some, “lead to political and ethical paralysis,” as “the possibility that reference is indirect, and that consequently we may not have direct access to others’, or even our own, histories, seems to imply the impossibility of access to other cultures and hence of any means of making political and ethical judgements” (10). The impossibility of history is therefore assigned to melancholia, with its fixation on the past.

But as previously suggested, however, melancholia is an essentially creative state of being, not in that it requires one to re-construct (or, in the case of absence, completely construct) the lost object, but to create the narrative of our present relation to that lost object. As Caruth suggests, that by reconsidering our response to traumatic loss, “we can begin to recognize the possibility of a history that is no longer straightforwardly referential” and that we can understand that “a rethinking of reference is aimed not at

eliminating history but at resituating it in our understanding, that is, precisely permitting *history* to arise where *immediate understanding* may not” (11). This inability to make sense of what has happened, this sense of being separated from history, to not participate in it, explains much of what we now recognize as Modernist literature.³ What modernism presents as an historic loss, might also be understood as a creative absence. Any artistic attempt to make visible the greatness that we can conceive is insufficient—therefore, the affectation of the melancholic mode is painful, dejected, inconsolable. The object of loss in these cases typically inhabits some sort of “cultural archive”—that is, it is typically a lost ideal or abstraction, a value promoted by a cultural “metanarrative” that is perceived as having passed. Whether or not the ideal (and its metanarrative) is actually lost or is simply absent is one of the primary questions of this dissertation.

The objective of this dissertation was not to provide a sweeping summary or survey of melancholia exhibited in Modernist narratives, but rather to establish the framework for continued discussion of Modernism’s fundamentally melancholic nature. This claim proceeds from the premise that the thematic, formal, and stylistic characteristics that conventionally define Modernism are a response to the pervasive sense of loss that resulted from upheavals in science, politics, and cultural production in the West at or near the turn of the twentieth century. Those attendant to the crisis of modernism grieved the loss of stability of meaning they claimed had once been enjoyed by their predecessors. Thus, Modernist narratives exhibit melancholic attachments to perceived objects of loss—ideals such as truth in beauty, a knowable community, or authentic hospitality. This claim would initially seem at odds with the characteristic

avant-gardism and experimentalism of Modernist literature, qualities that one would typically associate with progressivism, not nostalgic conservatism.

I cannot help but feel, however, that by suggesting that Modernist literature is simultaneously progressive and nostalgic, I have somehow suggested that Modernism is either inauthentic or hypocritical. The argument could be made that efforts to “make it new” fall short of the mark, and that Modernism simply puts old wine in new wineskins, to invert the old phrase. While this argument *could* be made, however, I don’t believe it to be worthwhile to do so, as being dismissive of any work of art as “inauthentic” demonstrates a narrow view of history. It is for this reason I began the dissertation with an epigraph from Bakhtin’s essay “Discourse and the Novel,” which asserts that, “Every age reaccentuates in its own way the works of its most immediate past.” As Bakhtin continues:

The historical life of classic works is in fact the uninterrupted process of their social and ideological re-accentuation. Thanks to the intentional potential embedded in them, such works have proved capable of uncovering each era and against ever new dialogizing backgrounds ever newer aspects of meaning; their semantic content literally continues to grow, to further create out of itself. Likewise their influence on subsequent creative works inevitably includes re-accentuation. New images in literature are very often created through a re-accentuation of old images, by translating them from one accentual register to another....

(421).

T.S. Eliot offers a similar argument in his defense of Joyce's *Ulysses* against criticisms that Joyce's strategy to structure the novel as a parallel to Homer's *The Odyssey* is nothing more than, "an amusing dodge, or scaffolding erected by the author for the purpose of disposing his realistic tale, of no interest in the completed structure." In response, Eliot praised Joyce's work as a watershed moment, the founding of a new art form, based on a "mythic method" that represented "a step toward making the modern world possible for art, toward that order and form" that the offended critics so desired. By "re-accentuating" the narrative, Joyce had translated one human experience from eras long past into the Modern idiom, which, like Einstein's theories, is but a "simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history." In this way, we respond to the crisis of modernity by seeking our place in the flow of human history.

In conclusion, I offer three questions in summation that will, one hopes, inspire continued investigation and discussion. First: is grief experienced as the result of the physical death of a loved one substantively different than the grief experienced as the result of a lost ideal? Do we assume that the former is more powerful or more "authentic" than the latter? Is mourning a lost ideal substantively different than mourning a literal loss? And what degree are these differences discernable in literary representations of loss? And can mourning be a way of killing off an ideal one wishes to alter, while melancholia is an aporatic method for both creating that revolution and maintaining connection with history?

Secondly, must grief—either corporeal or abstract—be resolved, worked through, or otherwise completed in order to be considered “successful?” As discussed in the first two chapters of this dissertation, Freud’s original conception of mourning vs. melancholia classified the former as a “healthy” reaction to loss, a normal psychological process that must be allowed to run its course; whereas melancholia is to be considered “pathological” in that, by refusing consolation for his grief or to release the lost object, the melancholic subject is subject to irresolvable self-loathing. As we know, Freud later revisited the idea that melancholia was merely an “unsuccessful” attempt to mourn, arguing instead that the behaviors considered as melancholic are but a step in completing the “work” of mourning. By recreating the lost object within the ego, the melancholic subject maintains fidelity to the lost other through acts of imitation. The hostility and self-loathing that Freud initially identified is not necessarily a symptom of melancholia, but rather an indication that the subject holds unresolved ambivalence or hostility towards the lost object, feelings that, through the process of introjection, are grafted onto the ego. Therefore, if these feelings are worked through, melancholia may be the only means by which the ego can endure the emotional pain of loss. Melancholia is, in this framework, a necessary phase of mourning, one through which the character of the ego is constructed (*Ego* 19). We become, in essence, who we are because we mourn.

The third and final question for further discussion regards the relationship between grief, memory, and history. In our attempts to memorialize what has been lost, to what degree do we *misremember* the past, creating an inaccurate or inauthentic history? As discussed in Chapter II, when experiencing abstract grief—that is, grief for a

lost ideal, rather than a literal loss—there exists the risk of confusing absence for loss. We may mourn the loss of an ideal that, in our nostalgic imaginations, once existed but has since, in the face of modernity, ceased to exist. In this attempt to articulate the process of being a human being—to create a narrative—we thus proceed from a faulty premise. We refuse to accept that the conditions or ideals that we so desperately seek never existed at all; it is somehow preferable to believe that they have been lost.

LaCapra suggests that “the conversion of absence into loss gives anxiety an identifiable object...and generates the hope that anxiety may be eliminated or overcome.” Whether consciously or not, the anxiety related to absence is less preferable to the anxiety of loss, as it has little possibility of being overcome or resolved (and this impossibility is a likely source of the blame and hostility that the melancholic directs at others). In contrast, by converting absence into loss, “one assumes that there was (or at least could be) some original unity, wholeness, security, or identity that others have ruined, polluted, or contaminated and thus made ‘us’ lose” (183). This process of converting absence to loss is often termed “nostalgia,” indicating a sentimental longing for an idealized past.

To read Modernism is to assent to paradox. As Morag Shiach asserts, in her contributing chapter of *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms*, “Modernism is constructed through its own contradictions: it is rooted in tradition and classicism but fascinated by the impulse towards the ‘new’; it aspires to aesthetic integrity but finds increasingly ingenious ways to capture fragmentation; it presses towards the intensity of the moment but also reaches towards the infinite” (17-18). This dissertation has argued that the paradoxical nature of Modernist narrative, which concurrently maintains hope

and grief, optimism and despair, is an aesthetic reaction to the widespread conflicts and upheavals occurring at or near the turn of the twentieth century. The challenging thematic, formal, and stylistic innovations of Modernist literature proceed from melancholia—understood as a form of inconsolable grief, an impossible mourning. As it is not a static canon, but an unending attempt to find and make meaning in our perceived losses, Modernism becomes not a period, but a “process.” This perceived sense of loss, a pervasive feeling that the nature of individual existence has irrevocably changed, is the defining characteristic of literary Modernism. Modernist narrative literature can, therefore, be simultaneously read as both melancholic *and* progressive.

Notes

¹ It is worth considering the socio-historical context of Modernist melancholia. That Sigmund Freud should compose the definitive pathology of grief in 1917 in the midst of the Great War is unsurprising, considering that the codification of death was undergoing significant revision. In Britain, specifically, throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, funerary practices significantly changed, due in large part to Queen Victoria herself. Ever the trendsetter, Victoria had had much influence on British attitudes towards mourning, particularly with regard to her conspicuous and long-running grief over the death of her husband Albert, who preceded her in death by forty years. Following Victoria's lead, mourning in England became a protracted performance. For instance, following the death of a loved one, it was expected that the bereaved wear black clothing for a period of at least one year (deep mourning), after which her or she would dress in other dark colors (half mourning), typically purple or dark green. After a suitable period of time, the bereaved would "come out of mourning" and resume wearing brightly colored clothing. Funerary practices were taken out of the home and given over to professionals, and most of the rituals associated with state funerals (e.g. backwards-facing boots, the conveyance of the body by gun carriage). I am planning future work exploring the connection between the publicization (and professionalization) of grief during this time period and portrayals of grief in Modernist narratives.

² One of Kern's most interesting premises is that the strong reaction to the establishment of a World Standard Time in the artistic and philosophical communities can help to explain the avant-gardism of Modernist narrative and spatial arts:

The assault on a universal, unchanging, and irreversible public time was the metaphysical foundation of a broad cultural challenge to traditional notions about the nature of the world and man's place in it. The affirmation of private time radically interiorized the locus of experience. It eroded conventional views about the stability and objectivity of the material world and of the mind's ability to comprehend it. Man cannot know the world "as it really is" if he cannot know what time it really is. If there are as many private times as there are individuals, then every person is responsible for creating his own world from one moment to the next, and creating it alone.

(314)

³ As Esther Sanchez-Pardo suggests, "[Modernist] writers used a number of strategies to draw attention away from the intrinsic temporality of language and human action," including the use of "mythic structures as organizing principles, the movement from perspective to perspective, rather than from event to event, and the use of metaphoric images as leitmotifs to draw together separate moments and thereby efface the time that has elapsed between them" (211). New and dramatic forms of loss mandated new and dramatic means of expression.

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