PHILOSOPHICAL THEORIES AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

IN NINETEEN OUTSTANDING NOVELS

FROM 1850 TO 1930

A Thesis

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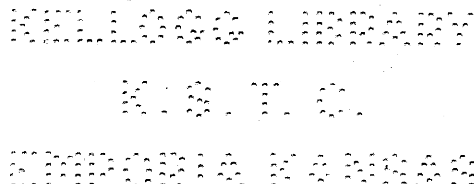

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INTRODUCTION

Human behavior has always been an absorbing problem. Almost in a state of frenzy early novelists portrayed it in every fashion, usually picturing love, frequently religion, and occasionally fear. The result has been that human behavior of a certain type is very well documented, but the countless adjustments which constitute life have been left to the psychologist to study and describe. The average individual is constantly adjusting himself to his environment, often times struggling to escape it; and this not only necessitates knowledge of the universe and of self, but also requires imagination. These adjustments, study, and imagery are now being described by writers of fiction; and the public calls them psychological novels. At least it may be said that their aim and that of psychology, are similar: to increase and disseminate knowledge of human nature, and to suggest a way to shape and systematize such knowledge for the benefit of mankind.

In a broad sense, it is true all novels are psychological. But there has developed a specific type of psychological novel, belonging to a particular genre. The following dissertation concerns a group of novels selected because their themes are psychological, and because they belong to the particular genre just mentioned.

The psychological novel as a genre will be studied from

its first timid advances to its maturity—to its official recognition as a distinct form of the modern novel. The stages of its development, and changes as caused by science, changing social ideals and psychology will be traced as various writers through the years felt these influences and expressed them in fiction. The novels of these recognized writers will be looked at closely in an attempt to obtain a clear picture of the authors' interpretations of human behavior and its relation to the prevalent psychological theories.

The novel has been studied faithfully from a critical technical point of view for years. It has been studied as a piece of art, as an aesthetic accomplishment and rather thoroughly as a historical development. But as a psychological and moral influence, critics either have failed to see the profound effect that it might be having or they have disregarded it. In the process of compiling material for this thesis, only one source was found dealing specifically with psychology in literature. Taking the Literary Pulse, by Joseph Collins, is a discussion of the general field of literature and what it has to offer psychologically. The particular writers discussed by Collins are all of the modern period, many of whom are rarely heard of. But Mr. Collins does realize the conflict which is going on between the reformer and the psychological writer; and he presents with much personal fervor his own

rationalization of the state of affairs.[1]

The study of the psychological novel will be divided into three periods, (1) the formative period from 1850 to 1900, (2) the pre-war period from 1900 to 1914, and, (3) the modern period from 1914 to 1930. It was at these points of division that the most noticeable changes occurred, even though it may seem that from the point of view of time the periods are unbalanced. A systematic critical summary will be made of certain outstanding psychological novels and their authors in each period, relating each implication to psychological or philosophical theory.

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[1] Joseph Collins, Taking the Literary Pulse (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1924), 317 pp.

CHAPTER I

THE FORMATIVE PERIOD

1850-1900

Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth*

Wilbur Cross says that *Ruth* occupies a very important position in the history of psychological fiction. Mrs. Gaskell followed certain ethical lines—the doctrine of the act and its train of good or evil—which announced the approach to the psychological novel in a restrictive sense.[1]

> The outward sequence of its incidents is the correlative of an inner sequence of thought and feeling which is brought into harmony with an ethical formula and accounted for in an analysis of motive.[2]

Mrs. Gaskell, Cross believes, did not possess the clearness of vision, the scientific knowledge, and the breadth of horizon requisite for completely satisfying this definition of the psychological novel. What she did in part was fully accomplished by George Eliot.[3]

Ruth is an attractive young girl, a milliner's apprentice who is seduced by a lover, and abandoned. At the point of suicide she is rescued by a Dissenting Clergyman who

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[1] Wilbur Cross, *The Development of the English Novel*. (New York: The McMillan Company, 1914), p. 235.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 237.

[3] *Loc. cit*.

takes her to his sister. When it appears that she is to have a child the sister is reluctant to take her into the family.[4] The clergyman insists:

> "In the eye of God she is exactly the same as if the life she has led had left no trace behind. We knew her errors before, Faith."
>
> "Yes, but not this disgrace---this badge of her shame!"
>
> "Faith, Faith! let me beg of you not to speak so of the little innocent babe, who may be God's messenger to lead her back to Him. Think again of her first words---the burst of nature from her heart! Did she not turn to God, and enter into a covenant with Him---"I will be so good!" Why it draws her out of herself! If her life has hitherto been self-seeking and wickedly thoughtless, here is the very instrument to make her forget herself, and be thoughtful for another. Teach her (and God will teach her, if man does not come between) to reverence her child; and this reverence will shut out sin---will be purification."
>
> "These are quite new ideas to me," said Miss Benson, coldly. "I think you, Thurston, are the first person I ever heard rejoicing over the birth of an illegitimate child. It appears to me, I must own, rather questionable morality."[5]

Ruth brings up her son with the help of the Bensons and earns an honorable place in the community as a widow. Her old lover reappears and wishes to marry her but Ruth refuses. She no longer loves him and she will not submit her son to his influence. In the course of time Ruth's offense and the parson's deceit are suddenly revealed. They are persecuted

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[4] Cross, op. cit., p. 236.

[5] Elizabeth Gaskell, Ruth. (New York: Putnam and Company, 1926), pp. 107-108.

by the narrow-minded Puritans of Benson's parish. But Ruth heaps coals of fire on their heads by nursing them through an epidemic of typhoid fever; and just as her last patient, who is her one-time seducer, is pronounced out of danger, she sickens and dies, infected by him. Thus Mrs. Gaskell affirms and illustrates a cardinal principal of Victorian Morality and spiritual excellence--renunciation.[6] It is the inevitableness of punishment for sin, "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

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[6] Robert Morss Lovett, and Helen Sard Hughes, _The History of the Novel in English_ (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1932), p. 243.

George Eliot's Romola

1863

According to Cross, George Eliot at first took Elizabeth Gaskell as her model in the externals of her art in the choice of her subject. But after reading Ruth in 1853, her criticism was that, Mrs. Gaskell seemed to be constantly misled by a love of sharp contrasts--of "dramatic" effects. She was not contented with the "subdued coloring", the "half-tints", of real life. Cross asserts that George Eliot has laid her finger upon the very defect of Mrs. Gaskell as a realist. She attempted to depict life with which she was not thoroughly acquainted. Ruth is the Soul of Goodness, and her betrayer is the soul of villany. George Eliot had seen too much of life and observed character too closely to fall into the error of dividing men and women into angels and demons.[7]

Lovett and Hughes say that George Eliot was a realist of the English type. The critic Brunetiére contrasts her favorably with the French naturalistic school, which in these years was led by Flaubert, the Goncourt brothers, and Zola, giving her the advantage in three respects: her conception of morality, her sympathy with life, and her psychological penetration. The French naturalists were behaviorists. They

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[7] Cross, op. cit., p. 238.

believed in a thoroughly objective presentation of life, leaving the reader to divine character from action. George Eliot maintained her right to enter the consciousness of her characters and analyse the thought which she found there. This procedure was necessary to George Eliot as a scientist and a moralist. Her realism was scientific in a sense different from that of the French naturalists. Where they undertook a complete account of the phenomena of the external world, corresponding to the account, which science was achieving with respect to its mechanical construction, George Eliot strove to trace in the moral world the laws which were as undeviating as those of the physical.[8] Hers was the method of introspection, and firm was her belief that man is master of his will.

Cross calls Romola a study in deterioration, a tragedy of crime. Tito Melema awoke on a fair spring morning in 1492 to find himself a shipwrecked stranger in Florence.

> He was a beautiful Greek of sunny face, who was on his way to Venice, where he hoped to sell some jewels intrusted to him, and with the proceeds to ransom from the Turks his foster father, to whom he owed all his culture and attainments. He disposed of some of his jewels at once in Florence, and then asked himself: Why should I trouble myself about my father, who likely died long ago? Why should I run the risk of a possible capture myself? Why not remain here, where I am assured of pleasure and an easy career? He yielded to the temptation and from that moment began his descent to treachery and broken vows. He betrayed all who placed their trust in him, Romola, Tessa, and Savonarola.

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[8] Lovett and Hughes, op. cit., pp. 300-301.

> Regardless of others, he attempted to steer his course so that there might be no grating rubs against the shingle. For a time he succeeded. But one day Tito awoke on the banks of the Arno to feel the great fingers of Boldassarre pressing upon his throat.[9]

But Romola lived; the one who had finally discovered true happiness survived to enlighten Tito's ill-gotten son, the son of Tessa. He desires to become a great man, a happy man, with no hindrances to his quest of pleasure. She instructs him in the light of her experience.

> "It is a poor sort of happiness that could ever come by caring very much about our own narrow pleasures. We can only have the highest happiness, such as goes along with being a great man, by having wide thoughts and much feeling for the rest of the world as well as ourselves; and this sort of happiness often brings so much pain with it that we can only tell it from pain by its being what we would choose before everything else, because our souls see it is good. There are so many things wrong in the world that no man can be great-- he can hardly keep himself from wickedness--unless he gives up thinking much about pleasure or rewards and gets strength to endure what is hard and painful..... And so, my Tillo, if you mean to act nobly and seek to know the best things God has put within reach of men, you must learn to fix your mind on that end, and not on what will happen to you because of it. And remember, if you were to choose something lower and make it the rule of your life to seek your own pleasure and escape from what is disagreeable, calamity might come just the same; and it would be calamity falling on a base mind which is the one form of sorrow which has no balm in it and that may well make a man say 'it would have been better never to have been born'."

Eliot gives to Romola the wisdom of her own experience.

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9 Cross, *op. cit.*, pp. 245-246.

10 George Eliot, *Romola*, Vol. II (London: Unwin, n. d.) p. 387.

Tito is told to discipline his will and mind to the following of one high and noble rule by constantly holding his every thought and action to the one purpose, disregarding entirely the results such action might bring to cause pain. By so doing, continued conduct so rigidly controlled will become a habit and, leaving a wide easy path of behavior, always open, other possible paths of conduct will close through long disuse. Here the will is the all-powerful.

George Eliot's reputation has not survived in its greatness, but she was the leading philosophic and psychological novelist of her time, the first to take the psychological novel with entire seriousness.

George Meredith's The Amazing Marriage
1895

One of the peculiarities of George Eliot as a psychologist is that she was concerned with the psysiological mechanism of the processes which she was exhibiting. Meredith was not concerned with this technical aspect of psychology.

With Eliot, the thing desired by the character, the ultimate goal of the process, is some selfish gratification, some familiar and tangible good easily definable in the ordinary terms of plot. In Meredith the psychological process is a much more sophisticated affair, involving what he calls highly "civilized" people, that is, people more than ordinarily concerned with purely subjective values. What they are after is not so much a definite tangible wordly good, in the interests of which they are willing for the moment to hush up their consciences. The ultimate sin of their endeavor is something subjective; it is the satisfaction of their own moral vanity. They are sentimentalists. What they seek more than all else is to feel good about themselves, and they do not depend on the ordinary objective standards for measuring their own worth---they are past masters in the art of manipulating their sentiments in such a way as to give them the appearance of the utmost elevation and refinement. Meredith's variety includes all the features of Fielding's and George Eliot's with certain specialties of his own. The author is there with a

vengeance, generalizing the psychology of his character and analyzing his feelings, distinguishing what he thought he felt, from what he really felt. He stands to a large extent outside the mind of the character, looking in. He may not be scornful in his irony, but he joins with the comic spirit in watching the fun of a fine mind gone wrong. More extensively than Eliot he refers the reader to the general laws of human nature which are exemplified by the antics of his character. He is never through telling us about Sentimentalism in the abstract or quoting from the Book of Egoism.[11]

Like Eliot, Meredith possessed a fully formed philosophy of life, based on current scientific thought, although it colors his fiction far more subtly than does hers.[12]

Lovett and Hughes suggest that he felt himself engaged in the task of civilization—that of purging humanity of pretentiousness, hypocrisy, and conceit. His methods were not satire and irony; these he detested. His novels are animated by the contest of intelligence, reason, or common sense, against tradition or prejudice, social stupidity, or individual folly.[13]

These same two critics believe also that Meredith does what the greatest art should do; he gives the reader a height-

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11 Lovett and Hughes, _op. cit._, pp. 300-310.

12 _Ibid._, pp. 303-304.

13 _Ibid._, p. 306.

ened sense of the values—the color, the warmth, the light, the pain, and the joy—of life. By his process of distillation he gives him the concentrated essence of humanity and makes it appeal to him as greater and more significant than he had thought. He not only gives the reader a sense of increased capacity for life, but also he overwhelms him with a sense of its complete fulfillment in comprehension and sympathy.[14]

> Meredith lived in a day when the discoveries of science were bringing forward a new conception of nature and man's place in it. He shared fully in the thought of his age. He was, of necessity, a believer in Darwin's theory of evolution, and his interpretation of it was optimistic. He saw humanity as the flowering of nature and the mind of man as the flowering of humanity. He believed that the process of evolution was still at work in brain and intelligence; that its future was beyond our dreams. Nature he presented under the metaphor of a rough but kindly mother who, with a purpose which might be described as conscious, had brought forth man and mind. Natural selection through conflict was the means she used in the struggle for existence and survival of the fittest.[15]

The Amazing Marriage is the characteristic story of conflict between common sense and tradition. It is the revolt of a wife against the tyranny of the husband.

The title of his novel suggested that Meredith was still interested in problems presented by relations existing between man and wife; but Meredith was studying the relationship from a new point of view. There was no discrepancy in

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[14] Lovett and Hughes, op. cit., p. 311.

[15] Ibid., p. 312.

age between husband and wife, no such a situation as illegal barriers to an otherwise suitable match. There was, however, such a difference of taste in one case, and of taste and rank in the other, as to bring about a separation. The husband, Earl of Fleetwood, found himself at last in a ridiculous position, with nobody but himself to blame. He deserted Carinthia because he could not brook her birth and breeding; he had his eyes opened to his error in time, but only to find that the day for repentance had gone by. When he willingly would have offered devoted allegiance to the woman whom he had scorned, he found himself unable to awaken any sympathetic response.

Lord Fleetwood, proud and erratic, cruel and selfish, is almost never absent from the scene, and stands out dominantly. The Countess of Fleetwood is never other than calm and statuesque; she is at all times firmly selfcontrolled. She is patient, receptive, and restrained.

Since here and in other novels Meredith has apparently approved of the parting of man and wife because of inequality of rank and temperamental differences, it may be concluded that he found in certain phases of the marriage relation some of the gravest problems furnished by modern society.

He shows clearly, that to his mind, society must needs enter into a careful study of the troubles resulting from strained marriage relations. But this is a social problem and Meredith does a good job of psychologizing in addition. Lord

Fleetwood and his wife are naturalistic individuals, both battling to the end in their own proud ways for their own rights. It is the story of personalities of men and women, and of their divine ability to conquer circumstance. Philosophically speaking, the right or wrong of a situation depends not upon current, social standards, but upon the realization of rightness within the individual.

Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*

1895

Thomas Hardy, like Meredith, followed George Eliot in treating the novel seriously as a form of art which should offer not only a representation of human life, but also interpretation of it. This quality of his work, however, was scarsely recognized till his last two novels were published, the last being *Jude the Obscure*.[16]

Jude Fawley grows up and works as a stone mason within sight of the university city, Christminster, whose towers symbolize the intellectual life of his desire. He is tempted by a coarse country girl whom he marries. After her desertion he meets Sue Bridehead, who leaves her husband for him. Both Jude and Sue are poor and helpless in the conflict with law and society. They are conquered without a chance of victory. The outcry on the publication of the novel in 1895 was tremendous. The crude realism of Arabella's seduction of Jude was attacked as an instance of French naturalism, from which English criticism was seeking to protect English readers; and the episode of grotesque tragedy, in which Jude's little son, by his early marriage, kills his half-sister and himself with the pathetic explanation "We was too many", was to mordant in its irony to be pardoned by English taste. Thereafter Hardy wrote no more novels.[17]

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[16] Lovett and Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 316.

Between Meredith and Hardy lies a fundamental difference which makes their contrast a dramatic episode in literary history. Meredith draws his characters from the walks of life where men and women are most highly conscious and complex, where instinct and impulse are subordinated to intelligence. His scenes occur in the "drawing rooms" of society. Hardy, on the contrary, lays his scene in the country, among simple, instinctive, even primitive human beings; and "violent crashes" of tragic coincidence are his stock-in-trade.[18]

Lovett and Hughes infer that in Meredith's world there is "nothing great but man, and in man, nothing great but mind". In the works of man, his society, his conventions, his expressions of himself, lies the secret purpose of the universe. It is true man is held down and thwarted by folly--the stupidity and perverseness of his fellows--but he can always rise against it, attack it, overthrow it. Even when Meredith's heroes are crushed, they are not defeated. The struggle of humanity is that of man with man, or of woman against a world of men--a desperate but never hopeless warfare; and the enemy are often noble foes to conquer whom is added glory.[19]

On the other hand, the same critics believe that in Hardy's world, man is far from this cosmic importance. The

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18 Lovett and Hughes, _op. cit._, pp. 316-317.

19 _Ibid._, p. 317.

study of man's works will not bring one nearer to the secret of things. Nor does he picture man as thwarted and betrayed only by his fellows; the misery of his lot is not of their making, although they are often agents of its enforcement. The very nature of the world is indifferent to man's desires and aspirations; the turn of circumstance even suggests a malignant spirit at work against him. The element of healthful, hopeful combat, Hardy refused to admit. His heroes fail because they cannot come to a close quarter with their foes.[20]

> Both Meredith and Hardy lived in the intellectual atmosphere of science, and are evidence of its penetration into literary thought and style. There are some hundreds of references to science in Hardy's novels. Both accepted the theory of evolution, but while Meredith's reading of it gave hope of infinite achievement for man through the development of his intellectual faculties, Hardy saw consciousness as an adventitious circumstance in the cosmic process, something for which nature had made no provision. In 1883 he wrote in his diary: "We (human beings) have reached a degree of intelligence which nature never contemplated in framing her laws and for which she consequently has provided no adequate satisfactions." This belief is of recognizable similarity to that of Schopenhauer, but it is clear that Hardy arrived at it independently. It is to him the fundamental principle of tragedy.[21]

Lovett and Hughes further assert that pessimism was the most popular form of the disillusionment brought about by science. "Man, instead of being the end to which an all-wise and all-loving Creator had wrought, was shown as the product of impersonal evolution, working by the cruel means of struggle

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20 Lovett and Hughes, _op. cit._, p. 324.

21 _Ibid_, p. 318.

for existence and survival of the fittest-fittest in adapting himself to an environment indifferent to the things his consciousness endows with meaning."[22] Man's behavior is dominated and controlled by some awful power outside himself which impels him to action independently of a will of his own.

So effective was Hardy's rise of this philosophic and psychological background that early critics were inclined to think he had, for artistic reasons, arranged the presentation of human characters against a black curtain-drop of pessimism. It is perfectly clear to these critics, however, that his novels represent a personal belief, one which questions the Victorian faith in God and immortality, and the spiritual values of knowledge, human love, renunciation and death, so eloquently set forth by Browning. The processes by which George Eliot and Meredith maintained these values in the face of science and evolution have been described. Hardy appealed to a later generation than theirs and his work is characteristic of what Joseph Wood Krutch calls the "Modern temper". However, Hardy's logic, like George Eliot's and Meredith's, is affected by reading his conclusions into his premises. Lovett and Hughes believe that like them he worked from themes which appealed to his own temperament.

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[22] Lovett and Hughes, op. cit., p. 324.

In 1882 he consciously set the theme which he followed in so many novels: "Write a history of human automatism or impulsion--viz., an account of human action in spite of human knowledge showing how very far conduct lags behind the knowledge that should really guide it." Here there is implied a belief in intelligence, which should perform a function to which it is not yet equal.[23]

[23] Lovett and Hughes, op. cit., p. 324.

Henry James's *The Tragic Muse*

1890

A close contemporary of Hardy was another of the younger generation of writers, Henry James. Meredith had carried on the literary tradition of George Eliot, but he belonged essentially to a time when science amused itself with broad generalizations; when its methods were synthetic rather than analytical. Science became more and more exact; in withering irony and sarcasm, it excluded the so-called spiritual from its consideration or reduced the spiritual to the material; beyond perception it refused to go; it found its working hypothesis in the theory of evolution; and as to minor formulas, it proceeded warily. Literature matched science, eager for instruction; it aimed at scientific exactness of perception. Where it had not done this, it had, by theory or practice or both, insisted that imagination should be subordinated to observation.[24]

From universal realism has issued--under the influence of Ivan Turgenea and Alphonse Daudet--an artistic presentation of the matter of real life often called impressionism, of which one of the exponents in criticism and fiction is Henry James. He has said that a novel should be an exact picture or impression of life and the value of the novel depends upon the

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[24] Cross, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

intensity of that impression. He describes only what he sees, but not all that he sees. In fact it hardly seems possible that there is so much to be seen and that what he sees is really there.[35] For example, the Tragic Muse has wretchedly failed in her first performance. One of the spectators nevertheless still believes in her:

> .....he remained conscious that something surmounted and survived her failure; something that would perhaps be worth taking hold of. It was the element of outline and altitude, the way she stood the way she turned, her eyes, her head, and moved her limbs. These things held the attention; they had a natural felicity and, in spite of their suggesting too much the school girl in the tableau, vivant, a sort of grandeur. Her face, moreover grew as he watched it; something delicate dawned in it, a dim promise of variety and a touching plea for patience, as if it were conscious of being able to show in time more expressions than the simple and striking gloom, which, as yet, had mainly graced it. In short, the plastic quality of her person was the only definite sign of a vocation.[36]

Cross makes the following observations of James:

> .....it will be observed that James looks at the externals of life through the eyes of the connoisseur of the fine arts, particularly of painting.....The impressionist is also a psychologist. George Eliot begins with inner states and inner events and works her way outward; sometimes never reaching the surface at all.....James begins on the outside and passes a little way beneath appearance, reading character through feature and movement of eyes, head, and limb. It is the manner of Richardson, to which is added the trained perception that has come with science.

James is inclined to play with the stern analysis of George Eliot. He evidently thinks that the Crisis

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[35] Cross, op. cit., p. 264.

[36] Henry James, The Tragic Muse, Vol. I, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908. p. 131.

> has been overdone; and he would call attention to the fact that our conduct in the so-called "sacramental moments" often leaves no visible trace. It is not customary with him to round off his plots; whether the novel is long or short, it is an episode. Men and women meet, have their tender experiences, and then go their way. Nothing happens in his novels, the critics used to say. The marriage expected in the last chapter does not take place; if the young man and young woman marry at all, it is to some one else. This apparent incompleteness originated among the modern novelists in an attempt to correlate literature more closely with life as it is. But in the view of the impressionist there is no incompleteness; rather a higher morality than in the old novel where virtue was rewarded and villiany punished. "The moral sense and the artistic sense", James has written, "lie very close together". In "The Tragic Muse", a portrait painter would marry an ambitious woman-politician; and a diplomat would marry an actress. James does not allow these things to happen. He marries the actress to a third-rate actor, and leaves the rest of his characters unmarried. For him to do otherwise would be insincere art, just as in real life a marriage between a man and a woman having no common fund of ideas would be an immoral act. We should stick to the career nature seems to have marked out for us, accept the conditions, and struggle on to the end.[27]

According to Lovett and Hughes, James belongs to the school which John Stuart Mill has defined as that of consciousness as opposed to the unconscious, of the rational as opposed to the instinctive. Like Meredith he chose his characters and situations from the walks of life where intellectual forces play the largest part, and where overt action emerges from an intricate background of thought. He held that it is through the operation of consciousness that the social experiment is carried on under most favorable conditions,

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[27] Cross, op. cit., pp. 266-267.

and the discovery of what makes life worth living, most hopefully sought. He was one for whom motives, reasons, relations, explanations, are a part of the very surface of the drama. Mind stuff he made the controlling background of his fiction. But he rejected the possibility of revealing the entire stream of consciousness, attempted by his successors; so he rejected the effort of the naturalists to render all the visible and all the audible phenomena of the external scene. Although James achieved no great following, his precept and example have served to strengthen the development of the psychological novel in a new direction.[28]

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28 Lovett and Hughes, op. cit., p. 343.

CHAPTER II

The Pre-War Period
1900-1914

During the last two decades of the 19th century, a great change occurred; writers became conscious of aesthetic considerations, and fiction became a fine art. The early years of the 20th century were marked by a continuation of the new aesthetic interest and the technical progress of the form. They showed, however, a revulsion against the frivolity of the nineties, a resumption of the serious social and philosophic interests of the nineteenth century, with at once a more penetrating criticism and a lighter touch. Stereotypes of the Victorians in matters of religious dogma, of social institutions such as the family and the home and of individual behavior especially in sexual relations, were subject to a revaluation in which the novelists bore a leading part.[1]

The four outstanding novelists of this period, Joseph Conrad, John Galsworthy, Arnold Bennett, and H. G. Wells, are all critics of life, all in the tradition of evolution interpret characters through environment and all are literary artists. With them must be considered Samuel Butler, who in a single novel incarnated the spirit of iconoclasm so aggressively that

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[1] Lovett and Hughes, op. cit., p. 374.

he and his professed follower, George Bernard Shaw, might claim the honor of slaying the Victorian Era, if it has not already been dead.[2]

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[2] Lovett & Hughes, loc. cit.

Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*
1903

The Way of All Flesh was twelve years in the making—from 1872 to 1884—and was left lying to be published posthumously. Lovett and Hughes say that the delay in publication was fortunate. The book perfectly expressed the challenging and iconoclastic temper of the nineties, summed up the reaction against the Victorian Age, and by its example set in motion a school of fiction with a new education motive and a new criticism of life.[3]

It is the life story of Ernest Pontifex who, like Butler, is brought up in a country rectory by evangelical parents, educated at Roughbarough, a school not unlike Shrewsbury, and then at Cambridge. He goes into parish work in London where he gets into a scrape which lands him in prison, and thereafter, with the help of a legacy, succeeds at last in fitting himself to his environment and living the life of a normal human being. The story is thus autobiographical in general, though not in detail. The story is told by Ernest's godfather, Mr. Overton, who has always known the Pontifex family and who writes from his own knowledge supported by letters and other documents which have come into his possession. This ingenious device is used for preserving and justifying the double focus shifting between intimacy and

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[3] Lovett and Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 375.

detachment. A good deal of the material originates in Ernest's own confidences, sometimes in the form of direct quotation, sometimes presented as general narrative. Furthermore, Overton is a literary man and he assumes at times the right of the novelist to comment freely as another, and to slip into the role of omniscience. Undoubtedly this juggling with the point of view seemed inartistic to Henry James, but it proved well adapted to the purpose at hand. The scenes in the Pontifex household which Querton witnesses, and the letters of Ernest's parents, give verisimilitude to the narrative; the confessions of Ernest have a directness and naivete that is moving; and Overton's comment fixes the view of life which it was Butler's purpose to set forth. Indeed, Lovett and Hughes would assume that Ernest and Overton similtaneously represent Butler in his youth and in his maturity.[4]

These same critics consider thus another aspect of the book:

> The theory of evolution had emphasized two factors, heredity and environment. Realism following in the steps of science took account of both, recognizing that a character is determined in part by factors existing before his birth. In <u>The Way of All Flesh</u> the narrator remembers Ernest's great grandfather, a village carpenter; he has known about the rise of the grandfather, George Pontifex, to wealth, and has been at school with the father, Theobold. He is thus able to see the family in perspective and to estimate the importance of inheritance. If a man is to enter the kingdom of Heaven, he remarks, he must do so, not only

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[4] Lovett and Hughes, <u>op</u>. <u>cit</u>., p. 378.

> as a little child, but as a little embryo, or rather as a little zoosperm—and not only this, but as one that has come of zoosperms which have entered into the kingdom of Heaven before him for many generations.[5]

Lovett and Hughes feel that this view would seem to determine the career of Ernest Pontifex from before his birth, but that is not the effect of his life as presented to the reader. Butler, as an evolutionist, was not a follower of Darwin, having in his novel Erewhon satirized Darwin, but of the French biologist, Lamarck, who held that species arise, not from the accumulation of minute accidental differences tending spontaneously toward adaptation to environment, but from the exercise in nature of a function corresponding to the human will, aided by unconscious memory, which enables the more vigorous individuals to strengthen and transmit qualities which make for survival. The distinction between Darwin's theory and Butler's is important to these critics because it corresponds to a difference between the English realists and the French naturalists. The latter reflect the determinism implicit in Darwinism; to them the individual is the resultant of heredity and environment—predestination is a scientific fact. English realism, on the contrary, in general, reflects the freedom of the will which, illusion or not, is basic in our sense of experience. With Butler this view becomes explicit under the sanction of a scientific theory. Ernest Pontifex is

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[5] Lovett and Hughes, op. cit., pp. 376-377.

a weak character in an unfavorable environment, but events which seem to spell his ruin shock him into an exercise of his latent will. He finds in a world of reality an environment in which he can develop and gain fitness through activity.[6]

This theme of making the best fight possible with the resources at hand connects The Way of All Flesh with the neo-stoics, like Conrad; but whereas these romanticists portray the poetry of conduct, Butler sees its prose. His philosophy was pragmatic long before that term had been adapted.* Pragmatism is a mode of thought developed from the scientific view of the world and akin to realism in its strict adherence to the facts of experience. It is the use of the experimental method in all phases of human experience, in the place of what had been a great deal of theory and assumption. Butler dismissed with scant courtesy the intellectual scruples of the Victorians.

> The question which they had asked more and more anxiously as supernatural faith declined, "Is Life Worth Living?" Butler derides in his "Notebooks" as "a question for an embryo, not for a man." Living, the pragmatic view, is a habit. It is part of human nature to be alive, and life asks for no intellectual or religious sanctions. In a similar spirit, Butler rejected the idealism of Carlyle and the romanticists, who attributed to conduct, values of its own apart from consequences, and read a certain beauty into repentance, remorse, and renunciation. One of the recurring features of his satire is the moral romanticism of Christina Pontifex and her habit of dramatizing conduct in her mind.[7]

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[6] Lovett and Hughes, op. cit., pp. 377-378.

[7] Ibid., p. 378.

* "Pragmatism" was first used by Charles Pierce in his article in The Popular Science Monthly of January, 1878. It was then merely a new name for a modified form of utilitarianism.

Thus she thinks:

> .....Christina pictured herself and Theobald as braving the scorn of almost every human being in the achievement of some mighty task which should rebound to the honor of her Redeemer.....But always toward the end of her vision there came a little coronation scene high up in the golden regions of the Heavens, and a diadem was set upon her head by the Son of Man himself, amid a host of angels and archangels who looked on with envy and admiration--and here, even Theobald himself was out of it.[8]

Butler finds the sanctions for conduct on a far lower plane:

> Virtue's true lineage is older and more respectable than any that can be invented for her. She springs from man's experience concerning his own well being, and thus, though not infallible, is still the least fallible thing we have.
>
> A very high standard involves the posession of rare virtues, and rare virtues are like plants or animals, things that have not been able to hold their own in the world. A virtue, to be serviceable must, like gold, be alloyed with some commoner, but more durable metal.
>
> Pleasure, after all, is a safer guide than either right or duty. For hard as it is to know what gives us pleasure, right and duty are often still harder to distinguish and, if we go wrong with them, will lead us into just as sorry a plight as a mistaken opinion concerning pleasure.[9]

Lovett and Hughes say that one of the conclusions to which this practical attitude toward life led Butler, concerned the importance of money. He points out that there are three

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[8] Samuel Butler, The Way of All Flesh (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1916), p. 60.

[9] Ibid., pp. 147-148.

serious losses---money, health, and reputation. "Loss of money is far the worst; then comes ill-health and the loss of reputation."

> True to this pragmatic concept, he makes Ernest's rehabilitation depend, not entirely on his own exertions, but in part on a legacy which his aunt, without his knowledge, has left for him to receive at the age of twenty-eight. Butler describes in detail Overton's investment of this sum and its increase, giving a thoroughly realistic treatment to the romantic theme of the fairy godmother. The sanction of conduct in the good opinion of society he tosses overboard with other moral baggage. Loss of reputation, indeed, he makes a constructive element in setting Ernest free from a profession which he had come to detest, and throwing him on his own resources. "If a man's moral and intellectual constitution is naturally sound, there is nothing which will give him so much strength of character as having been well cut."[10]

The Way of All Flesh owes its importance in large part to its critical appraisal of Victorian institutions, chief of which was the family. Theobald Pontifex is naturally opposed to offspring:

> If Christina could have given birth to a few full-grown clergymen in priest's orders---of moderate views, but inclining rather to Evangelicism, with comfortable livings and in all respects facsimiles of Theobald himself---why, there might have been more sense in it; or if people could buy ready-made children at a shop of whatever age and sex they liked instead of always having to make them at home and to begin at the beginning with them---that might do better, but as it was he did not like it.[11]

Lovett and Hughes feel that Theobald's treatment of his son reflects the unconscious sadism of his character. Christina

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[10] Lovett and Hughes, op. cit., p. 379.

[11] Butler, op. cit., p. 98.

on the other hand, they think, torments Ernest to the point of distraction about the state of his soul, and casually extracts from him in these scenes of confession his own secrets and those of others. They believe that Ernest's parents are his worst enemies.[12]

Here are the concluding words of Lovett and Hughes concerning The Way of All Flesh:

> But though Butler's iconoclasm attacks institutions sacred to the conservative, it has no more respect for attitudes dear to the radical heart. One of the bad pieces of intellectual currency passed off on Ernest is "a remark that poor people were much nicer than the richer and better educated." For a time Ernest rode third class because of the people were so much pleasanter and better behaved. But the scales fell from his eyes, and "he saw that no one was nicer for being poor, and that between the upper and the lower classes there was a gulf which amounted practically to an impassable barrier." Another part of the radical creed, passed down from the French Revolution and preached by John Stuart Mill, was the belief in consciousness and in the rule of reason. In this matter Butler was of the school of Hardy rather than of Meredith, and anticipated the Freudian emphasis on the unconscious. "Man, forsooth, prides himself on his consciousness!.....I fancy that there is some truth in the view which is being put forward nowadays, that it is our less conscious thoughts and our less conscious actions which mainly mold our lives and lives of those who spring from us."[13]

The positive element in Butler's novel, the theme of making good through freedom from social prejudice and superstition, and the education of experience is an important influence in the early twentieth century.

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[12] Lovett and Hughes, op. cit., p. 380.

[13] Ibid., pp. 380-381.

John Galsworthy's The Island Pharisee

1904

The social philosopher who has but one large thing to say usually says it over and over again in a voice which becomes at length a shout or a frenzied shriek. Mr. Galsworthy stands practically alone among latter-day novelists as the social philosopher who, however often he delivers his one message, repeats it in a voice of astonishing quietness and clarity.[14] He is a critic of the static element in society, that is, of the aristocracy and the upper bourgeoisie---from the point of view of the dynamic or revolutionary element. Mr. Galsworthy writes of the aristocracy which is founded not on bestness but on badges---all the insignia of class which exert a restraining force on the individual, the badges of property and social rank and family which apply to the grandson an enormous pressure toward the ideals and instincts of the grandfather, and which make the man of the younger generation more responsive to the dictates of his own kind than to the urgency of shifting conditions in the world.[15]

In his introduction to The Island Pharisee Galsworthy lays down his general doctrine, his definition of the aristo-

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[14] Helen Thomas Follett and Wilson Follett, Some Modern Novelists (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1918), p. 264.

[15] Ibid., p. 271.

crat. It is a document in which he describes his view of the social unrest, the central and all-important conflict of which all other conflicts about particular issues are simply the less important phases. "That unrest means to him, the clash of two temperamentally dissimilar beliefs about society: Whatever is, is right; and whatever is, is wrong. The conflict is always waged about the status quo of the given moment, the aristocrat fighting to maintain and the revolutionist to abolish."[16] In The Island Pharisee the struggle is between Antonia of the younger generation who was born old in spirit contented with the established order, and the young rebel, Ferrand. Between these two, allied by birth and training to the aristocratic order but blown upon by new winds of doctrine and caught in the surge of young individualism, is Shelton.

In this novel the aristocratic class is satirized through what it believes, through its inability to believe any truth except that which is palatable and flattering. "Antonia breaks with Shelton because it is impossible for her to agree with the young revolutionist Ferrand, Shelton's protege, with whom she sees Shelton more and more agreeing. Ferrand is to her like a destructive principle, theNemesis of the class she represents. She does not see how Shelton can find any light or truth in him; for to her he is darkness. Antonia's instinctive hatred of truth, her Pharisaical assurance that any light she does not see is darkness, is Mr. Galsworthy's kind

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[16] Follett and Follett, op. cit., p. 273.

of evil."[17]

But he is not a destructive critic of the family as an institution.

> He happens to choose the family as the fighting ground for the social doctrines in which he is interested; and the triumph of the doctrine which he regards as relatively right involves the disorganisation of this particular kind of family. His attack is not against the idea of the family; it is against the principle of solidarity on which that one family is based. Mr. Galsworthy does not see how two loyalties that conflict can both be right; and he is always interested in the larger loyalty. He attacks the solidity of the family group when it interfers with the solidity of mankind. The ruthlessness of his gospel that the individual must be free for humanity is the ruthlessness of Christianity, which requires that a man hate his own flesh, his own kindred, or anything that blocks the larger outlook.[18]

This ruthlessness is of the intellect; for the unique trait of Galsworthy is his tenderness for the helpless individual aristocrat. The trouble with the folk in his world is not the presence of vices, or even the absence of the mild negative virtues. "The trouble is their lack of the positive and courageous virtues--the power to think, to grow, to give themselves, to act outside what they have been taught. It is as symptoms that these persons are terrible."[19] Antonia is great in her capacity for personal sacrifice. It is when called upon for the impersonal sacrifice of prejudice that she neither

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[17] Follett, op. cit., p. 279.

[18] Ibid., pp. 280-281.

[19] Ibid., p. 281.

hears nor answers.

"There is something in Mr. Galsworthy's make-up, a kind of gentility, which prevents him from being a satirist in the vindictive sense. It has to do with his philosophical belief in the community of all living things, his perception that what hurts one hurts all, so that to hurt anything is the only real crime. That belief prevents him from taking, with even the unloveliest of his characters, the tone of scorn."[20] He unites a critical sense of the disastrous and deadening results of class blindness with much solicitude for the blind individual. Rigidly controlled by the reason, that solicitude is one great element of beauty and strength in his work.

But this solicitude needs to be distinguished with some care from a soft and shallow humanitarianism much in evidence during this period. For the dominant quality of this novelist's art is impersonality, restraint, a kind of austerity.

> He is neither satirist nor sentimentalist; his irony is not a lash for the individual soul in its moments of inhumanity, but only a sense of the strangeness of the world's contradictions, and especially of man's inhumanity to man. There is something in all cruelty that faintly puzzles him; his indignation is provoked, but it is the patient indignation of high courage.....Like Wells, he will have the truth at whatever cost; like Wells, he shows that the cost is sometimes prohibitive. But he differs from Wells in that he does not make an insistently selfish personal necessity of the truth. He keeps himself and his desires out of the actual spectacle; his personality is present only as the interpretation of the spectacle--the con-

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20 Follett, op. cit., p. 282.

> clusion we are forced to draw. The result is a number of lives that seem to live themselves intensely in our sight, quite unconscious that they are there for a purpose.[21]

The purpose is outside them; their very blindness clarifies their significance. He leaves his ideas to be gathered by the reader if he wants them; "and the result is that the ideas seem, not like one side of an argument, but like an inevitable part of the nature of things. This security of Galsworthy in the possession of a kind of truth so irresistible that it proves itself, gives his work its restraint, its air of calm and impersonal conviction—the Greek austerity, and something of the Greek sense of inevasible Fate."[22]

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21 Follett, *op. cit.*, p. 283-284.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 284.

Arnold Bennett's <u>The Old Wives' Tale</u>

1908

Critics regard <u>The Old Wives' Tale</u> as Bennett's masterpiece. There is a good deal of justification for the verdict of one critic, rendered before it was quite fashionable to praise <u>The Old Wives' Tale</u>, that in his opinion the book would be read fifty and a hundred years hence, as Dickens is read now.

> The story is that of two sisters, Constance and Sophia Baines, daughters of a respectable old-school line draper of the Five Towns. Constance, the steady-going, solidly dependable, slightly dumpy sister, lives the placid yet somehow exciting life of a housewife and mother in the scene, even in the very house, of her birth. Sophia, petted and pettish and a little spoiled, develops brilliant initiative and contempt for the stuffiness of Bursley. She marries in haste; her husband, a worthless scamp, deserts her in France. She does not see him again until, a woman far on in years, she stands by the bed where he has died in miserable squalor. Meantime she has learned a deal about life. She has fought a bitter fight for bare self-preservation, against the rapacious Paris of the 1870 siege, and after; she has succeeded, not in the way of her girlish dreams, but in the average human way; and after thirty years she has gone back to Bursley and to her sister, who is now a widow. And the two finish out their lives together.[23]

Superficially, it appears to the reader that Sophia alone has really lived, while Constance has become stagnant.

> But what Bennett makes clear beyond mistaking is that both live, and that these two careers are equally triumphs of fortitude, of womanly courage, and--

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[23] Follett, <u>op</u>. <u>cit</u>., p. 229.

> yes, even of imagination. Constance, wondering whether she shall wear her best or her second best to honor the return of the sister whom she has not seen for more than a quarter of a century, and pathetically undecided between the tram and the train, is as momentous a figure as Sophia, caught in the Paris of 1870 and earning her little fortune while others starve. She is as momentous because she is as fully and as faithfully revealed. To us her life may seem gray; but to her it is scarlet.[24]

Everyone of the characters may be as clearly understood as these two.

> Gerald Scales, the rascal who marries Sophia, is after all more a weakling than a villain; he is even a pathetic and persecuted weakling, with an opinion that life has not been quite fair to him. Daniel Povey, who killed his wife, was a murderer by the law of the land, but very few men would have done differently. Chirac, with his naive continental code, his complete lack of moral sense and his pagan goodness, is at once fantastic and likable. The son who steals from his father's till is never understood by that father; but we understand him, and do not have to wait until we have forgot the theft before we forgive it. There is even an amazing attempt to admit us to the mysterious and innocent mind of a ten-months baby.[25]

Not only are the characters readily understood, "in rare moments, or after unusual accumulation of experience it is given them to reach something like understanding of each other. The understanding does not always come in time to make broken lives whole or to heal wounds of misunderstanding; but it does sometimes come."[26] Constance at last fully understands her own mother, long after that grim silent character has died, when

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24 Follett, *op. cit.*, pp. 229-230.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 230.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 231.

Constance herself is weighed down by the sorrow of her husband's death.

> Sophia, looking down on the emaciated body of Gerald Scales, whom she had last seen young and proud and pitifully sure of himself, has part of the answer to the tragic riddle of youth and age. Constance and Sophia, re-united after thirty years, find themselves infinitely closer now by understanding than once they had been by blood. As girls they had quarreled pettily; as aged women, coming together from widely sundered lives, taught by suffering and loss, they are strangely, though not sentimentally, near each other.[27]

The Folletts feel that it is this aspect of The Old Wives' Tale that expresses the point of last importance in Bennett's philosophy of life; "his insistence on experience as the only teacher of the meaning of life. Other matters have a high critical importance, which cannot be belittled. But they can be pushed aside in order to reemphasize finally this note, the comprehension of life through the experience of it. Dissonant personalities, like those of Constance and Sophia can come together at the end, however different their lives; they can come together because each has learned what life is. And the last and crowning experience is the mysterious discovery that somehow life has meant the same thing to both; that if means the same thing to everybody. They have separately learned, even if they cannot define, the meaning of existence."[28] That is the philosophical meaning of the whole story. Men

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[27] Follett, op. cit., p. 281.

[28] Ibid., p. 282.

learns what life means, if he lives it honestly, without shrinking. It is the best meaning of Arnold Bennett. He sanctifies and fortifies the natural human passion for believing that life can somehow, behind all the miseries and the mysteries, mean something of profound worth.

H. G. Wells's The New Machiavelli
1910

The most admirable thing about H. G. Wells is the unmatched versatile intensity which he has always applied to the process of being himself. He has not the artist's impersonality. His impersonality is of the thinker only, and he gives himself over to his public precisely as friends do in frank and frequent intercourse.[29] Being essentially a polemical and propaganaist writer, inflamed by the sense of having a large burden of truth to acquit himself of, Wells feels the need of the largest possible number of hearers, and chooses to exert his unquestioned gifts as a teller of tales in order to make his kind of truth the more palatable. He uses fiction as a teaching agent and in so doing makes his flaming personal sincerety an inevitable consequence.[30]

> .....the uppermost claim of his work is its multitudinousness. His mind is such a compound of contradiction and parodox, of logic and illogicality that he quite escapes the monotony and reiteration of the propagandist to whom life is an affair of a simple formula or two. Just at the instant when one is prepared to utter a final and crushing objection to some one of Mr. Wells's ideas or interests, one finds that Mr. Wells himself has uttered a final and crushing objection to it.[31]

"No art so completely didactic as his has ever achieved so complete an escape from the novel indictments against didac-

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29 Follett, op. cit., p. 235.

30 Ibid., p. 236.

31 Ibid., p. 237.

ticism in art."[32]

He has so just a perception of the half-truth in everything that the mind registers, that the reader has to look twice before being sure of having disinterred what Wells means for truth. In the closing chapter of The New Machiavelli all objections to the life of Remington, his desertion of his wife for his mistress, and his public position for obscurity are stated by Remington's friend Britten in that very chapter, and on the whole much more cogently than could be stated by the reader.[33]

> In short, Mr. Wells has the grace--partly intellect, partly a sense of humor--to see that very few things are ultimately and always true or right, and to subject even his most ardent convictions to the test of renewed and challenging experience. He does not critisise life by a set formula; therefore, it is futile to try to summarize him in a formula.[34]

But these critics believe that the foundation for his many and varied ideas is his particular kind of cold, hard modernity. The folletts make this discovery:

> We were just about to cite him as an example of the "tough-minded" man of The New Machiavelli, the very sentence used by William James in Pragmatism, "It suffices for our immediate purpose that tender-minded and tough-minded people.....do exist." It is quite clear that Wells is ultra-modern in his tough mindedness; and he gives the fact a considerable poignancy by his frequent and contemptious exposure of tender-mindedness with him almost a synonym of Victorianism.[35]

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32 Follett, op. cit., p. 238.

33 Loc. cit.

34 Loc. cit.

35 Ibid., p. 239.

Nothing is clearer to the Folletts about him, however, than this:

> That with all his touchness of intellect he has an unusual sensitiveness of temperament, and even..... a capacity for sentimentalism. The result of this contradiction is that he is always scourging himself, preaching to himself, a hard gospel of discipline and austerity, demanding of himself sacrifices to truth. He reveals in one episode after another the beauty of pain when pain helps to self-knowledge, he even preaches the duty to do the wrong thing--that is, the conventionally wrong thing--when the right thing is only safe, timid and unthinking submission. However unsparing his tough-mindedness may be in exposure of others, it is always as ruthless in self-exposure. There is a perverse quality in his personal revolt that always draws him toward pain, a kind of Nemesis of the personal conscience that makes him take the way of greatest hardship. He finds duty in infidelity, in betrayal, in dishonesty--that is, in the appearances that are called by these harsh names. "Directly a crust forms on things," Margaret says to Remington in her last recorded letter, "you are restless to break down to the fire again." And she, describes him as one who goes "deliberately out of all the decent fine things of life to run dangers and be singed and tormented and destroyed".[36]

The theme of The New Machiavelli is that of a statesman who, just at the threshold of a great future, is forced out of public life by a private entanglement. He is crowded and mastered by the pressure of a condition, the condition produced by the collective will of society, and too great for him. to evade or resist. The trouble is with the contradiction between man's nature and society's conventions and prohibitions. Man is so constituted that he needs above all else to work out

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36 Ibid., pp. 239-240.

what is in him; but society is so constituted that it will accept his gift only if he obeys a set of laws that have nothing to do with his serviceableness, and allows himself to be inhibited by every thoughtlessly-made law of the thoughtless masses.

This, the Follets feel, is the cruelty of the world as Wells sees the world.

> It wrecks a man's public usefullness because of something irrelevant in his private life—usually passion. The life of Remington becomes a conflict between the need to give society his best work, his self expression and a passion which society refuses to countenance, but which is nevertheless a condition of his usefulness.....The ultimate indictment of society is that it is a wastrel of its human products and of their unusual abilities. It cares more for its dead rules than for its living men.[37]

Wells explains such deplorable results as being the outcome of "muddle" rather than malevolence. Remington, thinking in impersonal terms just before the hour of his fateful decision, sees most of all the chaos and incongruities of life about him. He had dreamed once of man's future in such a dilemma, when mighty energies would go wild and uncontrolled, when men would become involved in unknown catastrophes.

Victorianism, in the mind of Remington, is responsible partly for the confusion. Conditions change but ways of thinking fail to change accordingly and the result is a society cramped to fit precepts that were never made for it. But a greater part of the confusion is artificial sex-morality. The

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[37] Follett, op. cit., p. 255.

most important thing in life, he believes, is hidden by pruderies, false shame, and concealment. Youth isn't really taught, it is "mumbled at". Those that call themselves moralists defeat their own purpose by ruining that which they would defend, by hushing it up as some detestible, filthy thing, which must be suffocated by unreasoning prohibitions.

> There is more of the confusion in the inequality of the sexes, the clash between the supremacy of the mother in nature and the supremacy of man's possessive instinct in man-made law. And on the political side there is the confusion in the state between its natural function as a public servant and its actual operation as a servant of those who can profit by the safe status quo.[38]

According to the Folletts, these are Wells's principal kinds of muddle.

> It is simple justice to him whatever is thought of his ultimate philosophy, to indicate that his objection to them proceeds from a high sense of order and of social economy, and is only the obverse of the great positive modern force upon which he depends for any good that may come out of the confusion--that will to think in unselfish terms of the social order, rather than in selfish terms of personal expediency; the instinct of solidarity, or as he calls it, the "state-conscience".[39]

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38 Follett, op. cit., pp. 256-257.

39 Ibid., p. 257.

Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*

1900

Conrad is, as are James, Galsworthy, and Bennett, an evidence of the modern attitude toward the novel. ".....he defines art in general as an attempt to find in the forms and appearances of the universe, in its colors, in its lights, in its shadows, in the aspects of matter and in the facts of life, what of each is fundamental---what is enduring, and essential---their one illuminating and convincing quality---the very truth of their existence."[40] The beginning of this process is with the senses,.....but this appeal is only the beginning. Realism in its narrow sense of naturalism is not enough. He would appeal to universal emotions by the temperamental handling of personal experience.[41]

Knight believes that sensitive people oppressed by a conviction of the barbaric futility of living can find Conrad a tonic, and people who read into his pages only irony read but what is written.

> "His men may be as beaten as Hardy's; they may lose all save the sweet assurance of having done their duty.....; but they go triumphantly to their doom, having engraved upon their hearts the old phrase, "We who are about to die, salute you!" Conrad is not an indifferentist nor does he deplore existence, even though he does complain sadly of "The terrible, the

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40 Lovett and Hughes, op. cit., pp. 402-403.

41 Ibid., p. 403.

> revolting insignificance of life". Even his conquered win in losing.....One ideal--doing one's duty--may be held to the last breath, and only in surrender is ignominy.[42]

Knight goes on to say that:

> Conrad can throw about his sturdy men and women .....a magic something which makes the reader feel for them an affection almost paternal.....So many of his people have that youthful eagerness in face of great odds, that prescience of untoward destiny which causes the reader to brook over them anxiously. They are mysterious beings even when.....they strive against God; their souls are legible only partly to themselves and only partly to us.[43]

Further, this critic says that the significance of life and death was ever in Conrad's mind because he was a Slav, with all the mysticism, the seriousness and sad tenderness of his race.

> Life to him was not a merry-go-round of days and nights terminating in some kind of eternity and crowded with ambiguous events forced upon many by some blind pressure; it was a baffling, but forever alluring exploration--a query thrown at God--a chronicle of thoughts and deeds with strange and unreadable meanings but forever worthy of respect and awe. Nothing about it was paltry and only its obvious phenomena were neglible for the questing man. He says of Marlow in <u>Lord Jim</u>, what was true of himself: ".....to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel, but outside enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of those misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine." And Conrad plays this spectral illumination upon his men so that they grope and stumble.....In all of Conrad's writing the things unseen are more real than the things seen;

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42 Grant C. Knight, <u>The Modern Novel in English</u> (New York: Richard R. Smith Inc., 1931), pp. 307-308.

43 <u>Ibid</u>., p. 309.

> his heroes respond to signs not visible to all and to whispers heard by none but themselves.[44]

"Lord Jim" was a young Englishman who had in a crisis, forfeited his honor as a seaman and an officer, who was haunted for years by the sense of his disgrace and driven from one inferior occupation to another, from one port to another, by his desire to escape his ill fame; and who then, among savages of a remote trading post, "made good", "mastered his fate", and in his death won back his honor and self-respect.

The whole tale of Lord Jim comes from one who knew him and was deeply interested in letting the reader know the truth about him. He tells of his friend's life in the form of a story told aloud. He speaks with authority, arouses his audience to sympathy, argues with them over the character of his hero and produces evidence concerning this or that episode. Marlow had befriended him and understood him through fleeting intuitions from time to time, but never really "knew" him. All who were interested in Jim faced the doubt of how they would have acted in a similar crisis; whether their honor was strong enough to stand the test. Marlow wishes most devoutly to believe in Jim, in order that he may believe in himself in human nature in general, in the possibility of the ideal in this world.

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44 Knight, op. cit., pp. 309-310.

Miss Eloise Somermier in her study of Lord Jim has suggested the key to Jim's peculiar purpose. She calls it the idée fixe, or the fixed idea. The shameful knowledge that he, Jim, had been a coward, had jumped from his ship to save himself first, was the driving force the rest of his life. He must atone by living honorably and dying honorably. But during that last part of his life he was forever running from accusation, or the fear of it. It was not until he was facing death, gladly and honorably, that the load of fear and shame was lifted from his consciousness.[45]

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[45] Eloise Somermier, The Ideé Fixe As it Manifests Itself in Certain of Conrad's Characters, Unpublished Master's Thesis, (K. S. T. C. of Emporia, 1933), pp. 59-63.

CHAPTER III

The Modern Period

1914-1930

The World War brought a marked change. From this catastrophe the novel emerged with new attitudes toward life and new methods of dealing with it.

> The age is highly electric, and shows a natural disposition to throw itself back on the past for relief from its own confusions. Toward the present its characteristic attitude is not merely critical, as was that of the preceding period, but skeptical.[1]

It shows a sheer and rather terrifying falling away from the faith of the Victorians in God or in humanity--a faith which the pre-war writers strove to maintain as a force in the world, even though they criticize the outworn forms in which it was expressed. "The war was doubtless the greatest shock to faith in a world order. It exposed the futility of the ideals, political, social, religious, in which people had trusted..... But apart from the war the general tendency of contemporary thought is adverse to constructive faith."[2] The subject which had occupied intellectual inquiry so fully for sixty years was science, and the possibility of arriving at a complete account of the universe in mathematical and mechanical terms appeared

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[1] Lovett and Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 413.

[2] *Ibid.*

within the bounds of scientific achievement. With the announcement of the principle of relativity and the discovery that certainty of effects from known causes cannot be predicted of electrons, came doubt of the nature of knowledge itself.[3] As Professor P. W. Bridgman puts it:

> Here is a situation new and unthought of. We have reached the point when knowledge must stop because of the nature of knowledge itself; beyond this point meaning ceases.....a bound is thus forever set to the curiosity of the physicist. What is more, the mere existence of this bound means that he must give up his most cherished convictions and faith. The world is not a world of reason understandable by the intellect of man, but as we penetrate ever deeper, the very law of cause and effect, which we had thought to be a formula to which we could force God himself to subscribe, ceases to have meaning.[4]

Lovett and Hughes write concerning Bridgeman's analysis of this period:

> Professor Bridgeman regards this so-called bankruptcy of science as more serious that the loss of faith in the supernatural which marked the nineteenth century. While such abstruse considerations hardly enter into the mental processes of people in general, their presence creates an atmosphere of doubt; and even the simplest mind can discern the discrepancy between the results of science and the problems of man in society, the fact that the conquest of nature has put into his hands unlimited power of destruction, and as yet no adequate means of social control to turn that power to constructive uses.
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> In these circumstances it is natural to find the mind turning from what is known to that which knows,—to the individual consciousness. The impressive aspect

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[3] Lovett & Hughes, loc. cit.

[4] P. W. Bridgeman, "The New Vision of Science". Harper's Magazine, CLVIII (March, 1929), 450-451.

> of knowledge of nature gave to naturalism its power as a literary creed. The discovery of reality for the artist seemed to follow that of the scientist, and by the same method of complete description of the external world. The loss of faith in knowledge emphasizes the already felt inadequacy of naturalism as an aesthetic creed. In consequence, the pursuit of reality takes the only other possible road, that of exploration of consciousness. This effect has been given stimulus, and to some extent method, by the discoveries of psychoanalysis.[5]

In particular, the study of the relation of consciousness to the regions which lie below its threshold,--of the conscious and the unconscious,--has revived the claim asserted by what Carlyle called the supremacy of instinct over reason. The exploration of the conscious life by means of abnormal mental states has opened to fiction a new field of sensational effects. The importance of the dream, emphasized in the science of Dr. Freud, affords a basis for one phase of the romanticism of Stevenson and his followers.[6]

Lovett and Hughes go on to say that;

> These conditions are responsible for certain aspects of the technique of the school especially characteristic of the post-war epoch. In the first place conscious artistry manifests itself in what Henry James called, in 1914, "an appetite for closer notation, a sharper specification of the signs of life, of consciousness of the human scene and the human subject in general that the three or four generations before us had been moved to insist on".[7]

In the nineteenth century it was known as impressionism. "Now

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[5] Lovett and Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 414.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 414-415.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 415.

in the twentieth century it is called expressionism, the rendering of consciousness directly as it takes up from the senses the images of external things."[8]

These critics feel that the new novel obviously makes character analysis and portrayal its chief business. The treatment of character, however, takes a different turn. A new principle has been found known as incongruity of character, the unexpected, the uncontrolled behavior of a human being against reason and at variance with his usual pattern of conduct.

> This incongruity, though not known by that name, was a feature of the romantic view of character. Undoubtedly the breaking down of conventions of conduct by which men and women are largely controlled, makes incongruity of behavior a more frequent phenomenon of actual life at the present day. Further, the attention focused upon peculiarities and abnormalities of the mental life by phychoanalysis has given us a clue to the existence of incongruities hitherto unsuspected. .....The recognition of the place of the unconscious in personality gives opportunity for the extension of character into regions beyond the exact delimitation of knowledge. The presence of this ocean of the unknown surrounding us had been suggested by the sumbolism of the late nineteenth century; now it becomes a part of the material of the novelist, to be used with confidence in what is called extrarealism, which may be defined as a union of mysticism and actuality.[9]

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[8] Lovett and Hughes, *loc. cit.*

[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 415-416.

D. H. Lawrence's Sons and Lovers

1913

D. H. Lawrence is one of the novelists whose work has been most directly influenced by psychoanalysis, although as he explains in his two books which expound the philosophy underlying his fiction--"Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious" (1921), "Fantasia of the Unconscious" (1922)--his belief is an adaptation rather than a full acceptance of psychoanalytic theories.[10]

Sons and Lovers was published, it is true, in 1913, before the actual beginning of the modern period. But it definitely showed the trend of the period, the change that marked the modern style. It can thus be studied as the first of these novels.

For his love theme Lawrence has here borrowed and developed a morbid perversion from Jude the Obscure; but, for all her imported falseness, the woman whom Paul loved is a true woman, when herself. The supreme tragedy of an individual over-developed in one respect, to whom inheritance and fate deny full self-understanding, who can never--for that reason--give the best of herself completely, has seldom been drawn with such intense power. She is almost the great Earth--spirit, mother and lover in one. This woman is too humanly weak for

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[10] Lovett and Hughes, op. cit., p. 421.

the triumph of the divine, the triumph which could have made Paul a man, which could have broken the strange binding power that was stunting his personality. But, incomplete, she towers immeasurably over her mere sex-rivals in charm, substance, and depth.[11]

The critic, Johnson, feels that Paul was obviously born to trouble; and his moral instability, divided allegiance, and ignoble surrender to the spirit of feminine allure seemed to him inevitable.

Mrs. Morel, Paul's mother, dominates him and the whole book. Pride, tyranny, stern self-suppression, secret ambition, and a very passion of love is found in her. Paul's sense of motherhood too is strong, deep, and instinctive. She is home, and home frequently contracts or kills life. Always deep down in the very roots of nature the mother stands first with Paul. His loyalty to her never wavers, even under the extreme provocation of sordid poverty, a brutal father, and a mob of brothers and sisters, each with an exacting vitality of his own which proved more or less destructive to free development of personality.[12]

Johnson says that one of two judgments may be read from <u>Sons and Lovers</u> and nothing, he feels, apparently dictates which

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[11] Brimley R. Johnson, <u>Some Contemporary Novelists</u> (Men), (London; Leonard Parsons, 1922), p. 124.

[12] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 125.

shall be chosen. Mrs. Morel may have killed Paul's manhood, as she hampered his growth so that he just missed the power to rule life or himself, and achieve complete individuality. She may, on the other hand, be honored as the one real thing in his life, at once the foundation and the support of a character which, wandering and stirred by other loves could but, at last, return home.[13]

Another critic pays tribute to Lawrence. He believes that Mr. Lawrence possesses supremely, in his way, a sense which Meredith and Hardy possess supremely in theirs--a sense of the earth, of nature, of the soil in which human nature is rooted.

> His landscapes are not painted cloth, but living land and sky, inseparable from the characters of the people who move upon the land and are pathetically adrift under the splendid inscrutable heavens. The beauty of the scene, for all its splendor, is usually sad; nature is baffling and tragic in its loveliness. Young people in love make ecstatic flights to the clouds and meet with Icarian disasters. From luminous movements they plunge into what Mr. Lawrence calls "the bitterness of ecstacy". Their pain out-weighs their joy many times over, as in Hardy, and as in the more genial Meredith.....[14]

Though with this book Mr. Lawrence took his place at once among the established veterans, he belongs to the modern period, not to the age of Victoria. He is solid and mature,

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13 Johnson, op. cit., pp. 125-126.

14 John Macy "Introduction", Sons and Lovers by Lawrence, (New York: The Modern Library Publishers, Introduction copyright 1922), p. vii.

but he shows his youth in an inquisitive restlessness; and he betrays his modernity, if in no other way, by his interest in psychoanalysis. His investigations have influenced even this book, which was written before everybody went a-freuding.[15]

Lovett and Hughes feel that perhaps the strength of his feeling constitutes Lawrence's greatest weakness. The violence of his resentment against traditional ideas about sex and education issues in a fanatical insistence on what he believes to be the corrective attitudes. He stands strongly against all that is tender-minded, opposing to the Victorian ideal a neo-primitive hero compound of Nietzsche and Freud.

> Self fulfillment is the goal of his hero; he must be himself even though himself is a psychological juggernau. To fulfill himself he must find sexual satisfaction; but this is a means, not an end--a means to the enjoyment of psychic equilibrium and the freedom to pursue some higher and less personal activity. Of such activity, Lawrence gives no adequate picture. He concentrates rather on the struggle to attain the desired state, a warfare which must be waged against the dominance of perverted traditions and the encroachments of other individuals who seek to violate the sacred solitude of the inner self.[16]

In another place Lovett and Hughes infer that Lawrence feels such an intense reverence for soul privacy that he should naturally feel every love relationship as consisting largely of antagonism and conflict.

> He inveighs against the notion that love between man and woman should be based on tenderness and under-

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[15] Macy, _op_. _cit_., p. viii.

[16] Lovett and Hughes, _op_. _cit_., pp. 422-423.

standing. Such affection.....saps the individual, softens him, leaves him a victim to the depredations of preying personalities. The love he pictures as healthy, begins in a strong physical attraction and leads to a spiritual battle in which defeat means the abnegation of self, and victory the freedom to withdraw at will into a secret stronghold of the spirit. The warfare is not waged in full consciousness, however, but in the "premental" state which represents primal consciousness. Lawrence distrusts the intellect as scornfully as he distrusts the ideals of sweetness and light. "The primal consciousness in man is premental and has nothing to do with cognition. It is the same as in the animals. And this pre-mental consciousness remains, as long as we live, the powerful root of our consciousness."[17]

Lovett and Hughes continue with;

> In writing about people torn between conscious and unconscious desires—the desires prescribed by society and those asserted by their own instincts—Lawrence carries to an extreme the incongruity of personality made familiar first through Russian fiction and later by the English authors who aimed at psychological verisimilitude. His characters are strange and unexpected; more to themselves, perhaps than to readers who have read other books by Lawrence. In telling his story he makes free use of the "stream-of-consciousness" technique, with the difference, that he like James Joyce, aims to project not only the conscious, but also the unconscious processes of his characters.[18]

These two critics assert that Lawrence illustrates the peculiar and intimate relation between realism and romanticism. He strove, they believe, to be a realist in so far as realism may be understood to mean telling the truth about things. But the writers to whom criticism has applied that label were concerned with the truth about physical conditions. Lawrence belongs to the later realism which takes for granted the right

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[17] Lovett and Hughes, *op. cit.*, pp. 423-424.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 425.

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to be as realistic as it will about externals.[19]

Further:

> .....Lawrence wrote with the purpose of exposing the evils of attitudes handed down by the Victorian Age, and of the education by which those attitudes are imposed upon the young. "He consciously conceived it as his mission" writes his friend and biographer, J. M. Murry, "to create, or help to create a world in which men so divided as himself shall be impossible.".....The very violence of his revolt against conventions is romantic, and the type of hero he evolved to represent escape from these conventions is also so exaggerated as to be romanticized.[20]

In conclusion Lovett and Hughes realize that much of Lawrence's symbolism is Freudian. It is to be expected that one who drew so much upon psychoanalysis should have his weapon turned against himself. Psychological diagnoses have been offered of the spiritual malady against which Lawrence's novels are so patent a defense.

> It is difficult to draw the line between clinical and critical considerations in this case. The personal frustration which found voice in his writing, the struggle between inherited values and acquired knowledge, between acquired values and native temperament, is typical of his day. It is characteristic of the postwar period that the very motive for his writing seems to be, not to tell a story, as in the early novel, not to point a moral as in its later developments, not art for art's sake, as in the nineties; here it is art for the artist's sake, and its great effort is to heal the split in his personality, to end the war of passion and reason, of spirit and flesh.[21]

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19 Lovett and Hughes, loc. cit.

20 Ibid., p. 426.

21 Ibid., pp. 426-427.

Compton Mackenzie's Sinister Street

1914

Mackenzie's Sinister Street has been called a sort of nostalgia for the outposts of moral and civilized life. The exotic element which exists in absolute evil, the inhumanity which hides in human beings abnormally sharpened and debased by suffering, may be alluring to some. For Michael this experience was foredoomed from infancy. In Vol. I he gets no further from home than St. James. But here, early in his life, is his infatuation for Lily Haden, whose etherial charm wrapped him in a kind of spell from which he was to emerge too late. But he was then a hopelessly adolescent school boy, "an awkward lout of eighteen".

Michael's early boyhood had been subjected to the tortures of hard discipline, and he had received little constructive guidance. He loathed meats (or Brother Aloysius). The Capuchin and the faun-like men at Mr. Wilmot's had no power over him.

His mother could do but little for him, though she heard his prayers. His governesses, especially Mme. Flaune, did less. "Neither the Calvanistic town church nor the ritualistic seaside church where the red-cossacked incense-boy put out his pious tongue at him helped him one whit. Grown up morality was delightfully unintelligible to him."[22]

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[22] C. C. Martindale, "Psychology in the Concrete" The Living Age CCLXXX (March 14, 1914), p. 677.

At one time though, Michael was seized with almost violent spiritual exaltation. During the Magnificat at Clere Abbas Michael, Michael genuinely did commune with the "Saints of God". He mentally offered all of himself in complete surrender to the Christ. The Holy words and the music of worship struck a deep note in his consciousness. He prayed with a sincerety he had never known before and went away unable to see life as he had seen it before. It completely revolutionized his every act. A new understanding of his mother strengthened his affection for her. A new consciousness of sin made his confessions truthful and frequent. He was converted, not to any particular thing, only changed, different from what he had been. He explains it as a feeling of being "frightfully alive".[23]

But the Boer War brought death and disillusionment, and Michael was caught up in the wave of skepticism.

In Vol. I Michael goes to Oxford, where he gradually gathers together the loose ends of his personality, though he always remains addicted to ridicule and self-doubt.

> Finally the "Oxford Mixture" turns Michael into a good hater. He aspires to "all sorts of fanciful private beliefs"; he wants to force everything within convention. "I hate free thought, free love, and free verse, and yet I hate almost equally the stuffy people who have never contemplated their merit."[24]

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[23] Martindale, op. cit., p. 678.

[24] Johnson, op. cit., p. 136.

Mr. Johnson thinks that the Michael whom Mackenzie sets out to construct cannot be taken seriously as a philosopher, even in cap and gown;

> "Though chivalrous by instinct--a dreamer easily fired to romance--he has a fine zest for life. He gains something from all men, much from a few.....For him the "muddle of existence" never made existence itself less glorious.....Still.....the man himself lived somewhat apart.....College seemed after all but as the sowing of the seed.[25]

After Oxford, Michael drifts for some time until suddenly chance shows him in a "damnable place", his Lily of the flower-soft kisses. He is seized with the idea that her despised condition is the outcome of his early wooing. But she vanishes again, and he determines to seek her with the intention of marriage "to make an honest woman of her".[26]

During his quest through the highways and byways of vile London streets, Mackenzie draws a vivid picture of the loose life of the adventurous youth of London.

When Lily is found and persuaded to accept him, Michael once more fancies himself madly in love. But Lily, being "doomed from the creation of the universe to be a plaything of man"proves faithless to him on the very eve of marriage.

So Michael gives up what seems to him a fruitless way of living and attempts to right himself with God and man.

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[25] Johnson, op. cit., pp. 136-137.

[26] Ibid., p. 138.

> All I have done and experienced so far would not scratch this stone. I have been given knowledge, and I fancied I was given disillusion. I now offer myself to God humbly. I give myself to the service of man..... The reason why the modern world is so critical of the fruits of christianity after nineteen hundred years is because they expected it from the beginning to be a social panacea. God has only offered to the individual the chance to perfect himself.....[27]

For all his outspoken revelations of sin and misery, Mackenzie is essentially romantic. He does not see life as it is, but as he desires it shall be to illustrate the characters and situations of his imagination.[28]

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[27] Compton Mackenzie, Sinister Street, Vol. II (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1914), p. 853.

[28] Johnson, op. cit., p. 131.

May Sinclair's Mary Olivier: A Life
1919

May Sinclair's literary career spans the entire period from the publication of Jude the Obscure to the present. She has been only too ready to absorb current fads and theories. Even as early as 1898 she showed herself interested in the psychology which was later to be exploited as Freudianism.[29]

In Mary Olivier, Miss Sinclair deals with the problems of the family. Under the surface of an ideal family life runs a deep current of parental egoism, the more deadly because it is unconscious. What the psychoanalysts call the Aedipus Complex she uses as the canker at the heart of this family. The mother loves her oldest son Mark more than anything else in her life. Mary, the daughter, somehow understands the situation and speaks with remarkable clear-sightedness to Mark.

> "Ever since I began to grow up I felt there was something about Mamma that would kill me if I let it. I've had to fight for every single thing I've ever wanted. It's awful fighting her when she's so sweet and gentle. But it's either that or go under."
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> "Minky—you talk as if she hated you."
>
> "She does hate me."
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> "You lie. He said it gently without rancour."
>
> "No. I found that out years ago. She doesn't know that she hates me. She never knows that awful sort of a thing. And of course, she loved me when I was

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29 Lovett and Hughes, op. cit., p. 427.

> little. She'd love me now if I stayed little, so that she could do what she liked with me; if I'd sit in a corner and think as she thinks, and feel as she feels, and do what she says....."
>
> "You haven't got away altogether. Half of you still sticks. It'll never get away.....You'll never love anybody, you'll never marry."
>
> "No, I won't. You're right there."[30]

It is the opinion of Lovett and Hughes that Miss Sinclair, in using psychoanalysis, approaches the normal through the abnormal.

> Her situations are build on complexes, unfulfilled desires, compensations, frustrations, wish-fulfillments, and dreams. Like Lawrence she leans heavily on the unconscious and meets the difficulty that this region can be suggested only through the conscious. It is clear also that she regards society as suffering from neuroses similar to those of its members, and reacting miserably upon the individual. The conventions, spiritual and social, of the Victorian she views as sources of tragedy for the normal individual, especially for women. Like Meredith, Miss Sinclair has read deeply in the Book of Egoism.[31]

Her studies in selfishness seem pathological when compared with those of Meredith. "But selfishness for both is the source of stupidity and folly against which war is waged in the name of intelligence."[32]

Mary Olivier, the nearest of all her heroines to Miss Sinclair herself, finds refuge in Kant and Spinoza. In spite of her impatient comment: "Transcendental Idealism is just another sell", she is a witness to the urgency of the subjective life. This novel involves the objective world as it

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30 May Sinclair, _Mary Olivier: A Life_ (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1919), p. 249.

31 Lovett and Hughes, _op. cit._, p. 429-430.

32 _Ibid._, p. 430.

is taken up in consciousness, and consciousness itself taking form as an independent entity.[33]

As a whole, these two critics feel that Miss Sinclair's novels represent the revolt against the Victorian conception of the family, against the egoism of fatherhood and motherhood, against the religious sanctions and ideals of renunciation which destroy the individual. "Her technique, the result of many influences, bears witness to the intensity with which she conceives a condtiion of human life which is not certain to be relieved by the slow process of evolution."[34]

The following passage may illustrate something of the vague craving Mary Olivier felt:

> .....she wanted somebody. Somebody. If you lay very still and shut your eyes he would come to you. He had Jimmy's body and Jimmy's face, and Mark's ways. He had the soul of Shelley and the mind of Spinoza and Immanual Kant. They talked to each other.....about Space and Time and the Thing-in-itself, and the Transcendental Ego. He could tell you.....whether Substance and the Thing-in-itself were the same thing or different.[35]

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[33] Lovett and Hughes, op. cit., p. 431.

[34] Ibid., p. 432.

[35] Sinclair, op. cit., pp. 226-227.

James Joyce's Ulysses

1922

Mr. Knight does a remarkable bit of critical analysis when he analizes Ulysses. He sees that the earlier book by Joyce forshadowed the later book.* Significant, he believes, is Stephen's declaration: "....I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defense the only arms I allow myself to use, silence, exile, and cunning." And Knight quotes again from Cranly's utterance of one of Stephen's own purposes: "To discover the mode of life or of art whereby your spirit could express itself in unfettered freedom."[36] Quoting from Knight:

> This last is what Joyce did in Ulysses. He threw his pen high over the garden wall; he released himself from every inhibition one can think of and wrote one of the strongest combinations of profanity, obscenity, and blasphemy ever published in English. It is not, however, a mere perversity....Ulysses, composed between 1914 and 1921, while the rest of the world was busy with the making of Hymns of Hate, may well be called a Hymn of Contempt. It Out-Swifts Swift. It derides every thought, every aspiration, every ideal, every custom and institution that man has held dear; it is full of loathing for everything connected with the human body; it has a mock for motherhood and a filthy jest for Christianity. Its pages reek with disgust at the mere necessity of living. There are stupendous jeers at romance, parodies of great writers, jibes at journalism, sneers even for Hamlet, which is seemingly the only piece of literature which Joyce comes near respecting; there are Rabelaisian catalogues, pages of poetry, a take-off on Goethe's Walpurgis Night, a burlesque of Billy Sunday's manner of exhortation. It is, in fact, a deep toned and bitter Hymn of

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* A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916).

36 Grant C. Knight, The Novel In English (New York: Richard S. Smith, Inc., 1931), p. 355.

contempt.[37]

At first glance it would seem to Mr. Knight that much of Ulysses is made up of a wild confusion of words, some of which are not likely to take on any meaning, no matter how often they are read. But after minute inspection the reader sees that Joyce is accurately reproducing the thoughts which might well pass through anyone's mind if concentrated upon a certain point. Knight calls it the capturing of the stream of consciousness, "scooping it up, holding it in the dipper of attention". It is this frank and intense use of the subconscious, Knight believes, which makes Joyce's book a landmark on the way to the new technique. "Seen in relation to Joyce's work, the experiments of other members of the younger generation become clearer, but only he has so far had the courage to lay back completely the epidermis of the soul and do it without a tremor or a hesitation," says Knight.[38]

Lovett and Hughes find this book to be created around the same plot situation as the Homeric epic from which it takes its name.

> Stephen Dedalus is Telemachus; Leopold Bloom is Ulysses; and Bloom's wife, Mrs. Marion Tweedy Bloom is Penelope. Incidental characters correspond to minor characters in the Odyssey, and the incidents themselves to episodes in that poem. Emphasis is slightly shifted, however, for the story of Ulysses is essentially the account of Telemachus. Stephen's search for a spirit-

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[37] Knight, op. cit., pp. 355-356.

[38] Ibid., pp. 356-357.

> ual father and of Ulysses Bloom's search for a spiritual son whom he finally identifies as Stephen. The events of the novel, which cover more than seven hundred pages, are confined to a single day, during which Bloom and Stephen three times cross each others' path. Not until evening do they actually come together, and they part at the end of the book. But it is clear that their meeting may serve to rehabilitate both.[39]

"A second symbolism lies in the representation by each section in the book of a human organ and some art or science."[40]

In an attempt to make Ulysses as nearly life-like as life itself, Joyce has drawn upon all the resources of realism. The Dublin of his novel is minutely recreated, with its streets, its houses, its people. His descriptions are outspoken to the point of offense against orthodox conventions and the sensibilities of many readers, including official censors. But he departs from the old realism, and approaches a new realism which can, with difficulty, be classified under that term.[41]

Lovett and Hughes further analize this novel:

> His characters in all their human complexity, live and breathe, as solid, as elusive, as incongruous, as self-questioning and as self-perplexed, as people in real life. Bloom has been called "the most complete character in fiction". So thoroughly is he realized that in spite of his individuality, he seems to represent humanity in the large---its loveliness, its fatuity, its ugliness, its wistfulness, its aspiration.[42]

It is, however, a humanity bereft of faith, hardened by a

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[39] Lovett and Hughes, _op_. _cit_., p. 459.

[40] _Loc_. _Cit_.

[41] _Ibid_., p. 460.

[42] _Ibid_., p. 461.

mechanistic conception of life, disillusioned by the failure of wars to settle disputed points of international ethics, dazed by speed, oppressed by a growing standardization of things used daily, confronted by a youth ready to revolt against all the maddening confusion of life. It is a point of view often found nowadays, and Joyce blazes out its scorn and its conviction of the futility inherent in all things. He is modern despair incarnate. Plainly enough his view is behaviorism in the extreme. It seems to tear away the last shreds of Victorian faith which had clung desperately to human hearts. No longer did there exist a serene confidence in man's ability. He became a plaything of the elements, a puppet without a chance. Philosophically, good and evil became unknown quantities; that which is best is purely selfish. Everything, seemingly, is disgusting, is to be sneered at. Life is just a "mess" and man is a minute part of that "mess".

Theodore Dreiser's An American Tragedy

1925

Beach gives an excellent picture of Dreiser's world--the world which he perceived around him and which he was destined to record.

> It was made up of men and women starting poor, vulgar, ignorant, emotionally starved, but--so far as they were strong--determined to win for themselves wealth, luxury, culture, social estimation, and the gratifications of love. They were not snobs--that was not at all the way they appealed to Theodore Dreiser--they were simply vital forces pushing forward irrepressibly to take their place in the sun. All about them were swarming millions of their kind, through the milling jam of whom they must force their way forward. The methods were the age-old methods of competitive, never before perhaps displayed on so grand a scale as in the America of Dreiser's time; tireless work, organization, speculation, cooperation with those who can aid you, abandonment of those who cannot serve you, political graft and intimidation. The mental equipment was imagination, feline cunning, the gambling instinct, indomitable courage.....a the devil take the hindmost! For those who won the rewards were unlimited power, grand houses, picture galleries, and a choice of women, demanded by the insatiable cravings to gratify the ego. The race was to the strong.[43]

In his attitude toward this jungle life of human beings, Beach feels that Dreiser is not a satirist.

> He was neither the genial irony of a Thackery, nor the often smart and brittle mockery of a Sinclair Lewis. He is in deadly earnest. He does not take a tone of superiority or set himself apart from his characters. He does not regard them as philistines or as sinners. These people are, one feels, very much the sort he takes himself to be, with the same problems, ambitions, cravings, discouragements. And whether they

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[43] Joseph Warren Beach, The Twentieth Century Novel (New York: The Century Company, 1932), p. 323.

> are winners or losers in the struggle, he is pretty closely in sympathy with them, even though in his wider vision, he may see them in their littleness, helplessness, and futility. He understands the selfish urgencies that move people to unsocial behavior, and equally well the misery and ruin that so often follow in the wake of such behavior, most often for others but frequently also for themselves. His tone is that of a brooding, compassionate, philosophical observer.[44]

Beach continues thus:

> The genteel tradition Dreiser pushes aside altogether and goes back, for his models, to Bolzac and perhaps the later French naturalists. His effort is to vision society not from the standpoint of a clique, but with the broad, comprehensive view of a scientific observer.....However, it may have been direct from science rather than from literature, that Dreiser took his disposition to regard human behavior as one manifestation of animal behavior in general, or even--to use his more frequently recurring term--as a chemical phenomenon.[45]

In comparing the crass scietism of Dreiser and the more humanistic philosophy of Bolzac, Flaubert and Zola, Beach asserts the following:

> These French writers had very firmly in mind a model of social well-being and ideal behavior against which to measure in all boldness the abberations of degraded and perverted humanity. They all had in mind certain social ideals as a salutory force for constraining men and subjecting them to the collective will of society, necessary for its very existence..... It was impossible for them to forget for an instant that, along with the savage struggle for existence, there was a social will and a social order which could never be radically contravened and set at naught.[46]

Beach concludes rather surprisingly with this:

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[44] Beach, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

[45] *Ibid.*, pp. 325-326.

[46] *Ibid.*, pp. 326-327.

> Dreiser is very unlike the.....modernists. He shows no interest in technical experiments and inventions.....He tells a simple story, straight forward. He is scarsely more interested in psychology as such than is Hardy. Like Hardy.....he is literal, matter-of-fact, extravert, moving in a world of "substantial things". The lives of his people are made up of what they do and what happens to them.....there is no psychopathic divorce between thought and action, between motive and behavior. Compared with the new men, the generation of Joyce, he is a classical figure.[47]

A birds-eye view of An American Tragedy presents a chaotic picture. T. K. Whipple sees it thus:

> It shows tragedy inherent in all existence in the very scheme of things--tragedy inescapable, essential, universal, perceived by many, but by very few so overwhelmingly felt. Brooding pity penetrates all life, touching every human being from the most glittering superman to the forlornest prostute; it touches everyone from the bell boys of the Green-Davidson Hotel in Kansas City to the rich and beautiful Saundra Finchley, social leader of Lycurgus, New York. It shows man's endless capacity for suffering, lending dignity to even the weakest and most contemptible of Dreiser's creatures.[48]

Even the elder Griffiths, seem noble in their blind, meager faith and in their grief for their son. Dreiser would have even the mediocre and inefficient attain a height merely through misery and pain.

In Whipple's opinion, Dreiser has romantic love of realty charged with wonder and awe. His love of life--good or bad, beautiful or ugly, is omniverous; because it is all

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47 Beach, op. cit., p. 331.

48 T. K. Whipple, "An American Tragedy by Theodore Dreiser," The New Republic XLVI (March 17, 1926), p. 114.

strange, to him it is all exciting.[49]

This same critic sees that his world is chaotic and tawdy, without plan, purpose or sense, lacking even in the rudimentary organization of a wolf pack, a world offering no valid reasons for living, no reward which would appeal to a rational or civilized being, no prize save an economic success which can buy only physical luxury, inane display, and vulgar snobbery. It is a brutal world, a free for all; a world of personal aggrandizement, no more human than the jungle or Sabre-toothed Tiger and wally elephant, a world seeking the meretricious and gawdy in the absence of genuine satisfaction. Not only futile and wasteful, it is also tragic and passionate, for its inhabitants are endowed with desires and possibilities for which it affords no possible means of fulfillment. The strongest and coarsest are dissatisfied victors; the weak mill helplessly about, kicked and trodden upon.[50]

He regards human existence, says Whipple, as inevitably a bestial anarchy never under any circumstances capable of yielding better gratifications than the joy of fighting, sensual pleasure, and the display of money.[51]

Joseph Wood Krutch makes the following observations:

> Dreiser believed that novelists had lost themselves in their own refinement; enamored of moral

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49 Whipple, loc. cit.

50 Loc. cit.

51 Ibid., p. 115.

delicacy and psychological subtleties, they had forgotten the simple motives by which the vast majority of mankind are moved; so with a simple shrug he sloughed off once and for all the implications of the theory that man is primarily a moral animal, and he did this much as the behaviorists in psychology sloughed off the soul. Let us, he said in effect, take life as I have observed it and let us see if it cannot be observed on the basis of what was afterwards called a theory of animal conduct.

He doesn't deny, however, the existence of delicate feelings or of moral restraints. From the beginning scene in which Clyde's family sends up from the street corner the plaintive wail of a hymn which beats against the wall of a skyscrapper and loses itself in the passing throng, Clyde is not unaware of the moral precepts which his parents have inculcated, nor is he unmoved by the thought of another's pain. But these things are pale shadows in comparison with needs and lusts which are nourished, not by ideas and habits, but by blood. They may go forth to battle but they never win; they may haunt the mind like overtones, or like ghosts, but they never direct crucial action. Given a man like Clyde, with fortune against him, he will end with murder and the electric chair. Clyde, born into a family which preached a fanatical religion and a puritanical morality, observed the hopeless inapplicability of that religion and that morality to the world as he found it. He cast them off to live by commandments which his desires dictated because they alone, in his experience, had any real authenticity; and though a little knowledge and experience of the world as it is might have saved him, no amount of conventional moral instruction or religious training could have done so. Born an animal in an animal world he went clumsily to work to win for himself the satisfaction which all those about him were winning, and was punished for his clumsiness. But the civilization in which he found himself offered him no choice save that between a feebly sentimental religion and a disastrous experiment in anarchy.[52]

The vagueness of any real faith, any saving device, remains with Clyde even when he faces death, clasping the hand

[52] Joseph Wood Krutch, "An American Tragedy by Theodore Dreiser," The Nation, CXXII (February 10, 1926), p. 152.

of his clergymen who has guaranteed the saving of his soul.

> Was he truly saved? The time was so short? Could he rely on God with that absolute security which he had just announced now characterized him? Could he? Life was so strange. The future so obscure. Was there really a life after death--a God by whom he would be welcomed as the Reverend McMillian and his own mother insisted? Was there?[53]

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[53] Theodore Dreiser, An American Tragedy (New York: Horace Liveright, 1929), Vol. II, p. 403.

Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*

1927

Following in the lead of James Joyce, Virginia Woolf made excellent use of the stream of consciousness method. In her novel *To the Lighthouse*, Lovett and Hughes find that: ".....character is employed chiefly as a means of grasping at the very essence of life, the feeling and significance of being alive";[54] it shows one character affecting all other lives. These critics are convinced that:

> In this book there is a persistent sense of external appearances as hieroglyphics which transcribe a hint of revelation. There is also a bald statement by the theme latent throughout Mrs. Woolf's writing. Lily Briscoe, spinster and amateur artist, whose only achievement is a sweet yearning to appreciate the life and art in which she seems cast for the role of spectator, pauses in her painting to meditate.[55]

Thus her meditations are recorded:

> .....the old question which traversed the sky of the soul perpetually, the vast and general question which was apt to particularise itself at such moments as these, when she released faculties that had been on the strain, stood over her, paused over her, darkened over her. What is the meaning of life? That was all—a simple question; one that tended to close in on one with years. The great revelation had never come. The great revelation perhaps never did come. Instead there were little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark; here was one. This, that and the other, herself and Charles, Tansley and the breaking wave; Mrs. Ramsay bringing them together;

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[54] Lovett and Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 450.

[55] *Ibid.*, pp. 450-451.

> Mrs. Ramsay saying, "Life stands still here;" Mrs. Ramsay making of the moment something permanent--this was of the nature of a revelation. In the midst of chaos there was shape; this eternal passing and following (she looked at the clouds going and the leaves shaking) was struck into stability. "Life stands still here," Mrs. Ramsay said.[56]

Lovett and Hughes observe that each of Virginia Woolf's characters struggles with the same question: What is the meaning of life? She never attempts to answer it except by incarnating the question itself in a person who represents the "unseizable force". Never before has the meaning of life been made the deliberate theme of an author, in successive novels. And to accomplish her purpose, Mrs. Woolf writes prose like poetry, teeming with metaphor and simile, with facile use of rhythm and refrain in thought and in words. Part of the poetry is the result of sensibilities which link the inner life with outward manifestations, especially the manifestations of impersonal nature. Physical perception becomes an experience, emotional and intellectual, while the spiritual life overflows into physical experience.[57]

In withdrawing her emphasis from the aspect of life stressed by the early realists, Lovett and Hughes believe that Mrs. Wolf expresses as truly as they did the trend of the time.

> They showed how unscientific it was not to take account of physical factors. The later realists have

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56 Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927), p. 240.

57 Lovett and Hughes, op. cit., pp. 451-452.

> shown how unscientific it is to suppose that science can account for everything. Mrs. Woolf agrees with them in a stressing of the inner life which a generation before would have been frowned upon as old fashioned and romantic. One respect in which her attitude is distinguished from that typical of present day realism is its freedom from bitterness and frustrations which oppress so many contemporary novelists.[58]

Her books may be considered without the need of taking account of the author as a maimed personality in a disorganized world—without needing to consider the author's personality at all. "She can and does portray frustration, but it is never sensed as her own." She is quite alive to the implications of her scenes; she too has read Fraser and Freud as well as the classics, domestic and foreign. She treats it with a mellowness rare in her day.[59]

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[58] Lovett and Hughes, op. cit., p. 452.

[59] Loc. cit.

H. H. Richardson's Ultima Thule
1929

"The world of reality is a world of irrevelant facts not yet got into order—unframed, unlighted, uninterpreted. And printed books are full of matter from the world of facts, big facts, and little, important and trivial; and, above all, crude facts, facts not yet assimilated to any system of meaning, nor strained through any effective medium." This is the way Joseph W. Beach feels about even so powerful a book as Ultima Thule. "Here", he says, "is plenty of the stuff of human nature and emotion. Here is a tragic story if there ever was one, such a story as lurks behind the scenes of many social pleasantries. But somehow the thing lacks in some respect. The effect upon the reader is almost irritating. Emotionally the author understands her characters, but aesthetically she does not seem to appreciate them."[60]

Beach says that superficially her characters are commonplace people. The children are practically alley-brats. But he infers that common-placeness treated properly may be dealt with either by playing up to it or ignoring it in the fase of tragic suffering which transcends it.[61]

Beach's opinion is that the author of Ultima Thule did neither of these things, and the result is the novel which

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60 Beach, op. cit., pp. 223-224.

61 Ibid., p. 224.

leaves a vague dissatisfaction that has nothing to do with the depression naturally coming from so morbid a tale.[62]

The story concerns an Australian family, the Mahonys, Irish in origin, consisting of a husband, wife, and three small children. Richard Mahony is a physician, forty-nine years of age, when the story opens. At the beginning of the novel he rises from financial and social calamity, setting up a practice near Melbourne, and waiting for his wife and three children to arrive from England. Unbearable situations soon arise here and they move to Barambogie, a small town many miles in the bush. In this village, too, tragedy fills the days; everything and everyone is miserable. After one more move, Mahony's inevitable mental and physical collapse occurs, and thereafter tragedy is deep and continuous. There is no doubt of his approaching paralysis and insanity. The novel might be called a study in the growth of insanity accompanied by physical degeneration. We stand by helpless--waiting as if for some certain destructive act of God. There is no relief; the Australian scene, desolate and hostile, is as oppressively vivid as a scene under a threatening sky by the quick brutality of lightning. The wife grows desperate in her faithfulness to her mad husband. The children are terrified by their father's unaccountable weakness and hysteria. A kind of "drone" in the background is the poverty in the family, the sense of complete

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62 Beach, Loc. cit.

isolcation from all that makes ordinary living decent and rewarding.[63]

Richard Burton says that here is a study in the irony of human weakness and futility as pitted against the serpent-like coils of life.[64] Mary, sitting by the dead body of her husband, thus thinks aloud:

> What was life but carrying or suffering?--for everyone alike--his had never been much else, even though his troubles were mostly of his own making. For he had always asked more of life than it could give; and if for once he got what he wanted, he had not known how to sit fast and hold it; so the end was a poor old wreck on the bed before her. Now, death was best. Death alone could wipe out the shame and disgrace that had befallen him--the shame of failure, the degradation of his illness.[65]

This, believes Burton, may fairly be taken as typical of the view throughout. In his estimation it is important to note that failure in one's life work doesn't necessarily carry with it spiritual shame; nor is there disgrace in such an ending, unless the soul be disgraced. Such a spectacle as that of Dr. Mahony, he admits, is piteous, yes, but neither shameful nor disgraceful. Yet the faithful wife (or the author back of her) conceives of it on those terms.[66]

Burton concludes that Miss Richardson may have a grudge

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63 Richard Burton, "Analysis of Henry H. Richardson's Ultima Thule," Creative Reading Discussions in Current Literature Vol. III, No. 21 (October 15, 1929), pp. 8-12.

64 Loc. cit.

65 Henry Handel Richardson, Ultima Thule (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1929), p. 308.

66 Burton, op. cit., p. 22.

against life; she may be saying: "Now and again there is a character like Mahony, and here is what happens to him, when he occurs." Or she may be saying: "Life is a state of misery, take it or leave it; let me show you what it did to a certain Australian physician, half a century or more ago."[67]

The writer is inclined to believe that Richardson made her miserable hero just another illustration of mechanistic man, the victim of his environment. She is, no doubt, thoroughly convinced of the truth in behaviorism. And as for her philosophy, the reader concludes that Dr. Mahony was a total failure, entirely bereft of any self-respect because of his physical degeneration. This alone makes him incapable of fighting the elements of the universe and this alone finally drags him into the bottomless pit of degradation. She would probably deny that a man's spirit could remain undaunted and his will unconquered, even when his poor body fails him.

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67 Burton, loc. cit.

John Cowper Powys's <u>Wolf Solent</u>

1929

To use one of Mr. Powys's own terms, this book is a "psychic map" of one person, Wolf Solent. Every single thing or person in the book, every single activity or everything or person, comes to the reader through the sole medium of Wolf Solent's perception or meditation.

Wolf Solent at the age of thirty-five finds himself journeying back to the village of his childhood, having lost his teaching position in London because of his failure to control himself on one occasion, when he burst out impulsively against the society in which he lived.

As he travels, a fleeting experience he has just had is uppermost in his thoughts. On the steps outside Waterloo Station he saw the face of a tramp which seemed to embody the utmost of human tragedy---a face which is to him the symbol of universal human suffering, "that no conceivable social readjustments ameliorative revolutions could ever atone for." This face on the Waterloo steps is destined to reappear throughout the book at various emotional crises.

Upon arriving at his destination and making himself at home with the Otter family, he finds that a certain Squire Urguhart wishes to engage him to write a very unconventional history of Dorset. It consists wholly of scandalous episodes in Dorsetshire families---"things like adultries, murders, and

fornications," using "the perspective on human occurrences that the bed posts in brothels must come to possess." The Squire furnishes the records and directs the research and Wolf does the actual writing in his own style.[68]

Wolf soon discovers that his predecessor in the position supposedly committed suicide "in the hot of his job". Other disturbing elements arise concerning various duties and errands required of him. But Wolf is protected by a certain "mythologizing" faculty, a way of withdrawing completely into himself, of "sinking into his soul" which has been his secret practice since childhood. His mythology is his real life, his "dominant life illusion"; and as long as he can keep it inviolate, somehow external events do not touch him harmfully.[69]

Donald Davidson observes that it is this ability that prevents Solent from seeing that the series of events in which he is now involved constitutes a history of scandalous doings fully as monstrous as the history of evils which he is recording. Every one of the evils encompasses his own life and the life of the quiet village of Dorset.[70]

Meanwhile, says Davidson, Wolf finds himself in the

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[68] Donald Davidson, "Analysis of John Cowper Powys's Wolf Solent," Creative Reading Discussions in Current Literature, Vol. III, No. 17 (August 1, 1929), p. 10.

[69] Ibid., p. 11.

[70] Loc. cit.

position of loving two women almost equally and for quite separate reasons. Gerda is a physical, Christie a spiritual or platonic, companion. But when Christie, in a shy and quiet way, gives Wolf the opportunity of assuming the physical relationship toward her also, he recoils at the crucial moment, held back by the vision of the "Face on the Waterloo Steps". Christie, hurt to the soul, withdraws herself, thenceforth from Wolf.[71]

As Wolf fights perlexedly with the circumstances that crowd in upon and threaten to extinguish his inner self-sufficiency, he is obliged to yield point after point. Other lives force themselves upon his, and disclose depths of evil or pitiful tragedy, sinister and malicious. The line between Good and Evil, and the battle between them in which he had pictured himself as the sublime contender gifted with God-like clairvoyance and power---at least over his own life--melt into a general confusion. His "Mythology" is destroyed. He faces suicide; he agaonizes in spirit, striding the lonely roads.[72]

The conclusion of his turmoil can best be conveyed in Mr. Powys's words, the ostensible frame of Wolf Solent's thoughts:

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71 Davidson, _op. cit._, p. 12.

72 _Ibid._, p. 13.

> He recognised now that his secret motive of all these months.....had been his faith in some vast earth-born power within him that was stronger than the Christian miracle.....That sense of a supernatural struggle going on the abysses, with the good and evil so sharply opposed, had vanished from his mind. To the very core of his life, things were more involved, more complicated, than that.....What was left to him now was his body....."There is no limit to the power of my will as long as I use it for two uses only---to forget and enjoy!.....And with this as my background (nature) why can't I be as heathenly good as Gaffer Barge."
>
> Alone! that is what he had learned from the hard woman who had given him birth. That every soul was alone.....Endure or escape. He must spread the wisdom of that word over all the miserable moments that were to come![73]

And obviously, Davidson feels, Wolf Solent's choice is now to endure---these words are quoted in the book as the transcendental expression of his mental decision. He has reached a point of ecstacy again. But it is ecstacy of a new sort, consisting very largely of a philosophic resignation as well as in eager mysticism. Wolf's own life, where good and evil strangely intermixed, has taught him some lenience toward other lives. His final thought is that one must forbear to generalize and must have care for particulars.[74]

In Davidson's estimation, this work of Mr. Powys is highly experimental, indirect, circumstantial---after the modern method. But it is artistic as well, he believes.

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73 John Cowper Powys, Wolf Solent, Vol. II (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1929) pp. 961-966.

74 Davidson, op. cit., p. 14.

> It shows, as do the works of Conrad, that "psychologizing" does not necessarily mean dullness or drabness and that a writer does not need to be vulgar or blatant, or make an excessive parage of frankness or smartness in dealing with material that was beyond the Victorian pale.[75]

As to meaning of the novel itself, Davidson has found that the reader suddenly comes to a point in the course of Solent's development which is bewildering in consistency. Although Davidson knows it is true that Wolf, in his dual spiritual tendency, is a fair symbol of the sensitive modern mind typical of twentieth century man. He feels that Wolf sways aside from the Christian synthesis, also, and has left neither one thing nor the other. After recognizing the fact of evil as an external force, he gradually discovers that there is as much evil in him as there is everywhere else. That is, of course, what the Christian calls conviction of sin. But the line between good and evil gradually vanishes until Wolf cannot tell where one begins and the other ends. Davidson asserts that all that he has left is a lurking wordsworthian sense of "something far more deeply interfused", a stoical motto of "Endure or escape".[76]

Perhaps Solent is brought up only to the point where he can begin to compose a satisfactory scheme of existence. At any rate, the inclusiveness of the book, which is like the

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[75] Davidson, op. cit., pp. 23-24.

[76] Ibid., p. 25.

inclusiveness of much modern fiction, leaves the reader on a ragged edge.

Osbert Sitwell's The Man Who Lost Himself

1930

The events of this narrative take place in a long distant past still going on. A catastrophe has taken place; a famous author has died mysteriously, his death apparently due to supernatural circumstances. A boyhood friend, young at the time of THE LITTLE WORLD WAR (1914-1918), now writing after the close of THE GREAT WORLD WAR (1953-1957), believes that the key to this mystery may be found, not in the circumstances immediately preceding the death that has just taken place, but in a slow subtle process, culminating years before in a strange and portentious event, the turning point of his career, determining at once the conditions of his later life and death. This life story he thus relates. Tristram Orlander, the youth, is a writer of uncommon charm. His early verses and novels have an "innercore of intense personality radiating through them" giving them an individual strain. He writes as an artist should in obedience to an inner compulsion with which no compromise for the sake of praise or popularity is, to the artist, ever possible. Naturally, though he makes a living at writing, he does not make a fortune.[77]

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[77] May Lamberton Becker, "Analysis of Osbert Sitwell's The Man Who Lost Himself," Creative Reading Discussions in Current Literature, Vol. IV, No. 9 (April 15, 1930), pp. 296-299.

Tristram as a youth has a refined facial beauty, a changing beauty of expression as determined by the moods of the soul. He has a singular influence over friends, a sort of hypnotic power whereby the most inspired of them blaze out all at once with unparalleled eloquence.

> Yet, not only could he induce them to show their power at a level to which they were ordinarily incapable of attaining, but also to exhibit them at their most typical; a much more subtle miracle in that a bore would become amusing, illuminating, yet remain withal radiantly himself......[78]

Before any sign of impending change has appeared, a difference is already apparent:

> In spite of the glow and exhilleration one notice in him, there was, too, a change difficult to sum up.....Something fragile and delicate had either withdrawn itself or had been coarsened beyond recognition, until even his outlook had become different—grown a little askew.[79]
>
> Gradually he would become dejected at intervals, but swiftly recovering, would "point out in his defense, that if he had decided to be a stock broker or if he had only chosen to write badly and vulgarly he would by now be rich, surrounded by every kind of luxury universally beloved and respected".[80]

At last he is as a man who has sold his soul, and become "an empty, if walking shell".

The cause of so complete a change rests on one event, which occurs during his stay in Granada. Tristram is appar-

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[78] Osbert Sitwell, The Man Who Lost Himself (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1930), pp. [illegible].

[79] Ibid., p. 101.

[80] Ibid., p. 103.

ently improving in health as his doctors had predicted upon suggesting the trip, when the forces of nature suddenly take on a tenseness, so to speak, as if anticipating some forthcoming disaster. Thick tropic heat settles down, and his new health gives way; he is tortured by insomnia, plagued by longing, and maddened by lonliness.[81]

In desperation he seeks among the tourists at a nearby hotel for someone who knew him in London. But fearing to ask for some person that might actually be there he takes the safer course of giving his own name. "I have come to see Mr. Tristram Orlander," he says. "Is he in?" To his amazement the man at the register replies, "Yes, sir. I believe he is waiting for you," and leads him straight way along a corridor. In a rich, ridiculous apartment glowing under shaded oriental lamps, a dignified elderly man, beautifully trimmed, groomed and dressed, awaits him. "I was expecting you, but not yet; you who always ruin yourself by being too late, are for once too early."[82]

It is himself. He swoons, stricken by sheer horror. Upon recovery he is assured by the clerk that he had fallen into a faint as soon as he had begun to speak, and he is quite willing to believe the whole thing no more than a trick

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81 Becker, op. cit., p. 300.

82 Ibid, p. 234.

of tired nerves. He returns to London in a state of well being and takes up living again. This incident, then, is the turning point in the life of Tristram Orlando. He becomes all that he was not before. He becomes a writer of "muddy fiction" in a stiff technical style, entirely lacking in intensity and beauty. But his precious public applaused and praised this writer who, it believed, had at last found himself. He acquired wealth and social prestige—all that society had to offer. In a last frenzy of ambition he prepares to write the book of his career, a gay contribution to literature. But he begins to weaken under the strain and once again is sent to Granada by the doctors. He finds himself queerly enough in the same hotel that he had visited before. The next evening as he rests in his ornate ornamental apartment, the porter announces someone to see him. He is at a loss to explain the sense of impending doom rushing upon him.[83]

> He looked up and saw standing there a tall young figure, his gold hair shining under the light, the narrowing upward-slanting and deep blue eyes fixed upon his flashing out a whole fire of contempt and hatred; a tall young figure, every line instinct with beauty, pride and genius.[84]

He has met himself again. This time it kills him.

Philosophically speaking, it is the opinion of Miss Becker that Tristram lost his own soul, and though he got in return all the world could give, there was no profit in the

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83 Becker, op. cit., p. 306.

84 Sitwell, op. cit., p. 297.

transaction. "If something innate, intrinsic, intensely personal, belongs to a writer, to his thought, his style, his vision of life and beauty, the unforgivable sin is for him to sell that something for conformity, even if he should get the whole world to boot."[85]

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85 Becker, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The development of the psychological novel has practically paralleled the growth of psychology itself. No sooner had the first psychological principle appeared than Mrs. Gaskell and George Eliot began to utilize it, and to their advantage. Heroes began to introspect, attempting to analyze their own motives. Fiction became an account of thought as well as of action, and novels took on a new attractiveness.

But these first psychological novelists had high and mighty ambitions for their characters; their men and women, if they battled nobly, always triumphed in the end, by sheer will power, over environment. Each individual in his own way seeks to reach the top either in Eliot's way, by acquiring tangible good, or in Meredith's way, by acquiring subjective satisfaction, the sense of inner well-being.

Henry James invented characters who rationalized before or after acting. The mind as well as the will become, with him, all-important. It is interesting to conjecture how much Henry learned from his famous brother, Prof. William James, about the stream-of-consciousness idea. The Jameses called themselves impressionists.

Thomas Hardy did a rather startling thing when he invented his Jude. For the first time a novelist showed man defeated by circumstance. Jude Fawley is a pitiful creature, destined to meet disaster in the choking coils of environment.

With the advent of the twentieth century, that which Hardy had prophesied at the close of the nineteenth came true; behaviorism triumphed. Psychologists and philosophers preached it and novelists like Butler, Conrad, Bennett, Galsworthy, and H. G. Wells interpreted character in the light of it. Man was no longer judged by his steadfast perseverance, his will to do; but he was rather excused in his failures because of unfavorable environmental forces which closed in on him. Victorian moralists threw up their hands in horror at danger signals here and there where morality was becoming an unknown quantity. Modern skepticism was slowly but surely forming during the closing decades of the twentieth century; the world was already seething beneath the surface and the war brought about the explosion of old ideas and the final collapse of the old faith.

So what was left of man as he crawled back from France did not have to be urged to deny any goodness in God and humanity. Science was unconsciously doing her bit to destroy what remained of the old beliefs. By the principle of relativity the very certainty of knowledge itself was upset. Man's intellect as the key to the understanding of the universe, became a mere phrase without meaning, since the long-relied upon formula of cause and effect was rendered nugatory. Something had to be depended upon, and that something became the "biologic urge". Since the human being could gain nothing by rationalization, he could at least rely upon the urge, since

this was assumed to be the underlying force in all phases of animal life. The discovery of what these desires might be, was accomplished by tapping the unconscious. In addition to the utilization of Henry James's stream-of-consciousness, the modern novelist employed impressionism--the revelation of certain instinctive, unconscious motives through outward manifestations. Lawrence, Mackenzie, May Sinclair, and Joyce all adopted this new method of motivation. Their characters are driven by strange unknown urges which they themselves fear and are ashamed of. The general tone of such novels was hopelessly depressing. Life became futile--there was no hope of attaining dreamed-of heights because instinct constantly dragged man down when he attempted to conform to the laws of society.

Virginia Woolf managed to be more optimistic in her treatment of this new realism. Her characters struggle to obtain some clear view of existence, but the struggle is slow and calm and stretches over long periods of time. There is more of the frantic frustration found in the plots of her contemporaries.

But Miss Richardson* reflected all the imbecility of

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* Henry Handel Richardson is a pseudonym. Morbidly loathing to be judged too tolerantly if she were known as a woman writer, she assumed a masculine name, Henrietta becoming Henry, and the Handel being added because of her love for music. Richardson is her actual surname. She created her hero so like a man that her ruse was not suspected for some time.

existence that she could gather from the far corners of modern psychology. She even harked back to Hardy's mechanism and produced a horrible example of what environment could do to man. Her Dr. Mahony, in fact, is no man at all but a weakling without a redeeming feature.

Powys leaves Wolf Solent still purplexed at the close of the last chapter. As a youth he had been sure of his own power, his own self-control and at the end of the book he is broken, confused, and grasping at some saving device, anything that will explain the unseen, horribly impersonal powers that have crushed him.

Tristram Orlander Sitwell's character, determines in his youth to follow his own divinely-inspired convictions as the foundation for his writing. For a time he is strong enough to do so, but the inevitable comes--he complies with the literary demands of the moment and produces stiff, colorless, complacent books which make him wealthy and famous. By means of an abnormal psychic occurrence the horror of this sin which he has committed is revealed to him and it kills him. The fact that Orlander was given no chance to redeem himself admits the theory of behaviorism. But his death, the result of the revealing shock, confirms such behavior as sinful.

As a personal conclusion to this dissertation, the writer would like to express an opinion which has been forming during the process of the study. It seems very much as though life in general has become a pretty "scummy" sort of thing, if

we are to believe what the average novelist would teach us. True, it has always been the aim of the novelist to reveal life as realistically as possible, and it appears that he has done a rather good job in portraying the popular beliefs of his period. But the question is this: What one person is qualified to infer that this or that psychology or this or that philosophy is the one to explain conduct? The leading thinkers say such and such is true, and surely they ought to be entitled to serious consideration. But great philosophers of another day said something else and the masses who thought likewise seemed as capable and wise as modern society, if not more so in some respects. The writer's point is: does the next step always lead in the direction of progress? If not (and history confirms the temporary loss of much that is good) then why should we believe the latest merely because it is the latest and supposedly the improved? Why should we read Sons and Lovers in the year of its popularity and approve simply because a certain Dr. Freud says that at best we are all high grade animals seeking self satisfaction at each other's expense? Further--what will be the effect of such implications upon the mind of the adolescent? Such questions can only be left open for extended study. The writer feels that she is hardly qualified to make any conclusive statements on these matters. She has only the desire that some other student of English literature, philosophy, or psychology may assume the

responsibility. An interesting study for a future dissertation would be the literary trend in this immediate era, from 1930 to 1940. Will the psychological novel finally extricate itself from the "Slough of Despond" and continue its interrupted journey on the "King's Highway"?

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