

**“SOLEMN PROGRESS”:
MODERNISM, SOCIAL CONSTITUTION, AND COSMIC LIFE**

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A dissertation submitted to Johns Hopkins University in conformity with the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Baltimore, Maryland
August 2014

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines how modernist writers engaged with various forms of civic virtue even as they considered how still broader affective investments might sustain a common humanity. Employing a method similar to what Susan Stanford Friedman has termed “cultural parataxis” (the use of global juxtapositions to highlight cross-cultural ramifications of modernist texts), it illuminates affinities and divergences in works by Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Lin Yutang, and Rabindranath Tagore to uncover a shared attentiveness, on the part of writers in the East and the West, to the implications of collective modes of feeling for public life. Though writing from different sides of the colonial divide, the authors under discussion remained similarly vigilant about the ways in which patriotic sentiments could be marshaled for militant and self-interested purposes in the name of civic virtue. Instead of negating the significance of civic engagement, however, they sought to create alternative understandings of collective spirit that they believed would be nourishing for modern life.

I argue that the re-imaginings of solidarity in these writers’ works involve two moves that are temporally divergent yet temperamentally complementary: a renewal of attention to older conceptions of civil society whose ethic was civilized rather than narrowly civic; and an extension of the domain of society to a cosmic realm of life beyond the purview of the political state. Focusing on the relation between shared cosmopolitan sensibilities and various imaginings of the cosmic in modernist literature across cultural boundaries, the project sheds light on aspects of collective experience that are structured (but not completely circumscribed) by economic models of globalization and opens up new avenues for thinking about the scope, content, and applicability of

cosmopolitanism. Its ethico-aesthetically attuned approach, while attending to cultural particularities captured by these literary works, establishes deeper affinities between intellectual traditions in the East and the West.

First Reader: Douglas Mao; Second Reader: Jesse Rosenthal

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is a blessing to work with Doug Mao, who has been such a wonderful guide and friend in my intellectual odyssey in the past six years and has illuminated a way to the lighthouse. From him, I have learned not only the beautiful and profound art of close reading but also more subtle and rigorous ways of thinking and writing. This project began with a joyful exploration of the lambency and iridescence of *Ulysses* with Doug. He has since then read numerous rough drafts of this work with extraordinary patience, sympathy, and acuity, offering crucial insights, detailed comments, and generous support until the very last minute of its completion, for which I remain forever grateful.

I would like to thank Simon During and Amanda Anderson for their inspiring seminars and scholarship, and for their great help and encouragement at Hopkins and from afar. I am grateful to Jesse Rosenthal for helping this project move into the final stage. My thanks also go to Frances Ferguson, Jonathan Kramnick, Eric Sundquist, Chris Nealon, Pat Kain, and Will Evans, who have provided me with invaluable guidance and support. Nicole Goode, Karen Tiefenwerth, and Sally Hauf have been extremely kind and helpful, and I thank them for keeping us all together. I must express my deep gratitude to professors Lu Gusun, Fan Jiakai, and Chu Xiaoquan at Fudan, who encouraged me to pursue my academic interests a decade ago, and whom I have continued to turn to for enlightenment, wisdom, and magnanimous help.

It has been my great fortune to be part of the vibrant intellectual community at Johns Hopkins. For their warm friendship and for enriching my life in graduate school, I want to thank Jessica Valdez, David Schley, Elizabeth Brogden, and Roger Maioli. I owe a special debt to Elizabeth and to Chris Westcott, who read drafts of this work and

offered incisive comments. Discussions with them and Katherine Goktepe, Ben Barasch, Will Miller, Ben Tam, as well as my fellow Philological Society members—including Shana O’Connell, Chris Geeke, and Jamie Gianoutsos—have enlarged my horizons and stimulated my thinking. And conversations with Mande Zecca, Anthony Wexler, Kara Wedekind, Christiane Gannon, and Kaitlyn Whyte have always been heartening. I want also to thank the East Asian Studies Program at Hopkins for a generous travel grant and for the great opportunity to meet Ryan Sayre, Yige Dong, and Ke Ren.

I am deeply indebted to my old friends who have been there for me on this journey. Wang Qing and Gu Shaohua have given me a home from home in DC and often gone out of the way to help me. It is amazing to see the growth of their son, Xuanxuan, from such a tiny baby in Hong Kong to a little expert on international relations eager to challenge his “professor auntie.” Thanks are also due to Ella Ji, Steven Zhang, and Jody Zhao, who have made their places delightful havens for me outside of Baltimore; to Liu Weimin, Wang Genhua, Yang Hua, Hu Hongbo, and Glenn DeSouza for many a delicious treat here and there, and for perpetuating those precious moments in Beijing; to Jane Ding, Yunlong Sun, and Liang Mao for intellectual warmth. Iris Shi has been a most loving friend for more than a decade, always taking care of me wherever and whenever we were together.

My parents’ love for me knows no bounds. They have not only indulged my wanderlust but also traveled with me, and for me, all these years. It is profoundly touching to see them embrace the world like two lovely children. I dedicate this dissertation to my grandma, who passed away ten years ago, but whose inner strength and largeness of spirit I won’t let go.

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INTRODUCTION

In the November 13, 1930 issue of *The China Critic*—a Chinese-owned English-language weekly edited by a group of Western-educated Chinese intellectuals and published in Shanghai from 1928 to 1945—there appeared an editorial titled “Proposal for a Liberal Cosmopolitan Club in Shanghai.” Addressing both Chinese and foreigners in Shanghai, the article suggests forming “a club of men who can think, or are willing to make an effort to think, over and above the merely nationalistic lines” in the “big cosmopolitan port.” The proposal is animated by both corrective and instructive purposes. On the one hand, it seeks to rectify “a common mental attitude [of so-called Woodheadism or anti-foreignism] ... among the foreigners and Chinese alike.” On the other hand, as the article proclaims, it constitutes the editors’ effort “to establish and foster a tradition of liberal thought in China.” The liberal cosmopolitan club would be one of “internationally minded people, who come together for the purpose of better understanding one another’s point of view and culture, and for discussing problems of life common to the modern world. It will be exclusive in the sense of having for its members only such people as have the liberal cosmopolitan mind, people who are more interested in the examination of ideas than in national glorification, more in the common problems of modern life than in any patriotic propaganda.” The article further elaborates on the desirable qualities of prospective members: modesty (“humbler and less self-complacent souls”); a probing spirit (“men afflicted with the common human malady of searching and thinking and doubting and trying to understand”); open-mindedness and a

global consciousness (“men who are citizens of the world and can come together to thrash out some of the problems confronting mankind as a whole”).¹

The article is informed by two cosmopolitan tendencies that have proven central to global modernist studies, one pertaining to the forces of economic globalization, the other signifying a cultural attitude and choice. First, describing Shanghai as a “big cosmopolitan port,” it highlights the image of a modern metropolis of transnational encounters and exchange while also alluding to the aggressive imperialist expansion that had turned Shanghai into a treaty port based on extraterritorial jurisdiction—an arrangement, legitimized through violent means, that granted legal impunity to foreign nationals in China. This silhouette of metropolitan modernity in Shanghai emblemizes what has become a familiar materialist account of globalization organized around a global market and capitalist world system.² It also draws attention, however, to the temporality and extent of globalization in a way that aligns with an important reminder offered by Jean-Michel Rabaté. “Modernist globalization,” Rabaté observes, “should not be seen as a recent factor associated with late capitalism as we tend to believe, but as an older trend closely linked to the development of European and American imperialisms at the end of the nineteenth century, a development that reached a climax when the competitive logic of international capital and the explosion of newly unleashed nationalism inevitably led to a world war.”³

¹ “Proposal for a Liberal Cosmopolitan Club in Shanghai,” in *The China Critic: the Only Chinese Owned and Edited English Weekly*. Eds. Chang, Hsin-hai et al. (Shanghai: China Critic Publishing Company, 1930), 1085-6.

² World-systems analysis as elaborated by Immanuel Wallerstein, Giovanni Arrighi, Andre Gunder Frank, and others has widely influenced the fields of modernist studies, postcolonial studies, world literature, and cultural studies. For a detailed account, see Susan Stanford Friedman, “World Modernisms, World Literature, and Comparativity,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*. Eds. Mark Wollaeger with Matt Eatough (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 499-525, see 501-503.

³ Jean-Michel Rabaté, *1913: the Cradle of Modernism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2007), 14. See also

Critical attention to the relation between globalization and literary modernism has not only presented detailed accounts of the production, circulation, and translation of modernist texts and aesthetic value in transnational systems but also provided insights into how modernist writers responded to imperialism and nationalism and imagined new forms of transnational affiliation and collaboration.⁴ Rebecca Walkowitz, for example, examines various forms of “critical cosmopolitanism” in a group of modernist and late twentieth-century texts with a view to illuminating their engagement with “projects of democratic individualism, on the one hand, and of antifascism or anti-imperialism, on the other.”⁵ Similarly, Melba Cuddy-Keane pits “a cultural discourse of globalization” against the imperializing forces inherent in economic globalization. Resituating the modernist self in the world of global flows, Cuddy-Keane outlines several modes of “globalized thinking” in modernist literature that seem to her to “open up the multiple possibilities in transcultural encounters” and experiences.⁶

The emphasis by modernist scholars such as Walkowitz and Cuddy-Keane on global imagination or orientation bears resemblance to the second cosmopolitan form in the editorial, which is grounded in a mode of feeling and thinking. The liberal cosmopolitan attitude proposed by the editors, in opposition to narrow patriotic preoccupations and animosity toward foreigners, is associated with a hope of facilitating

Leo Ou-fan Lee's *Shanghai Modern: the Flowering of a New Urban Culture In China, 1930-1945* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), for a detailed account of Shanghai's cosmopolitan culture in the 1930s.

⁴ See Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, “The New Modernist Studies,” *PMLA* 123.3 (2008): 737-748.

⁵ Rebecca L. Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism beyond the Nation*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 4-5.

⁶ Melba Cuddy-Keane, “Modernism, Geopolitics, Globalization.” *Modernism/Modernity* 10 (2003): 539–58, see 540, 543, 545. See also Jessica Berman's account of “partial, non-national affiliations” created in modernist narratives. Jessica Berman, *Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 202.

intercultural cooperation and with a worldview more attuned to transnational space. Yet although an enlargement of cultural horizons is crucial to overcoming parochialism and xenophobia in an increasingly globalized world, scholars of modernism have noted how privilegings of the global always risk glossing over local connections, histories, and attachments that complicate and enrich global understanding. As Mark Wollaeger puts it, “For a global perspective to be something more than ‘the view from nowhere’ that has been attributed to an older understanding of cosmopolitanism, it must be willing to engage in a double movement of acknowledgement and decentering: an acknowledgement of one’s own position and an effort to think beyond it.”⁷

Similar concerns about a free-floating notion of globalism find expression in arguments for the continuing relevance of the nation-state for transnational literary studies. In their introduction to a special issue of *Contemporary Literature* focusing on the relation between literature and the state, Matthew Hart and Jim Hansen question the dualism that opposes world and state, or global and national, in academic approaches to transnationalism. Hart and Hansen grant primacy to the state as an organizing basis of global politics, arguing that “the state model of government and citizenship” remains an important frame for “writers’ investigations of justice and authority” in an age of “‘super mobility,’ where the movement of populations across the globe is more hectic than ever.”⁸ Likewise, Laura Doyle stresses the function of the nation as a site for the exercise of civil rights, and she proposes a historically inflected approach to transnational modernist studies: “Given that the nation is still the only available apparatus within

⁷ Mark Wollaeger, “Introduction,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*, eds. Mark Wollaeger with Matt Eatough (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 5.

⁸ Matthew Hart and Jim Hansen, “Introduction: Contemporary Literature and the State,” in *Contemporary Literature* 49.4 (Winter 2008): 491-513, see 502-504.

which most persons and collectivities vote and defend rights, even if within it they are also always at risk of losing rights, perhaps the goal of transnational thinking should not be strictly to deconstruct, supersede, or get free of the nation but rather to queer its history, avow its suppressed stories, and accept it as one of multiple venues of collective struggle.”⁹

This dissertation extends the inquiry into the relation between the national and the transnational in modernist literature by examining how modernism simultaneously engaged with civic virtue (which is tendentially but not inevitably associated with national priorities) and considered how still broader affective investments might sustain a common humanity. Employing a method similar to what Susan Stanford Friedman has termed “cultural parataxis” (the use of global juxtapositions to highlight cross-cultural ramifications of modernist texts),¹⁰ it illuminates key affinities and divergences on this front in works by Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Lin Yutang, and Rabindranath Tagore. While scholars have offered some incisive analyses of how these writers contested the upsurge of nationalisms and authoritative demands on common allegiance and loyalty, less attention has been paid to how they created alternative understandings of public spirit that they believed would be nourishing for both national life and humanity as a whole.

“Solemn Progress,” then, uncovers a shared attentiveness, on the part of modernist writers in the East and the West, to the implications of collective modes of feeling for public life. Though writing from different sides of the colonial divide, the authors under discussion remain similarly vigilant about the ways in which patriotic

⁹ Laura Anne Doyle, “Transnational History at Our Backs: A Long View of Larsen, Woolf, and Queer Racial Subjectivity in Atlantic Modernism.” *Modernism/Modernity* 13.3 (2006): 531–60, see 555–56.

¹⁰ Susan Stanford Friedman, “Cultural Parataxis and Transnational Landscapes of Reading: Toward a Locational Modernist Studies,” in *Modernism*. Eds. Vivian Liska and Astradur Eysteinnsson (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2007), 35–52.

sentiments are marshaled for militant and self-interested purposes in the name of civic virtue. Instead of negating the significance of civic engagement, however, these authors seek to shape a more hospitable and receptive political culture by both differentiating the nation-state from a social life structured by other kinds of bonds and relocating the nation-state in larger terrains of human experience.

I argue that the re-imaginings of solidarity in these writers' works involve two moves that are temporally divergent yet temperamentally complementary: a renewal of attention to older conceptions of civil society whose ethic was civilized rather than narrowly civic; and an extension of the domain of society to a cosmic realm of life beyond the purview of the political state. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, for example, Woolf negotiates between social life and the political state through a contrast between the mechanization of power symbolized by Westminster on the one hand, and, on the other, the more vibrant and intimate textures of society embodied by Clarissa's party and life on the London streets. Similarly, Joyce posits a social community of Dublin characterized by customs, routines, habits, everyday practices, and interpersonal connectivity in contradistinction to the imagined collectivity of an Irish nation defined by a constructed, and exclusive, Irish/Celtic identity.

Though Woolf's London and Joyce's Dublin diverge with respect to their places in the uneven power relations of imperialism and to the ways imperial power structures collective experience in the two cities, both writers' treatments of the social collectivity evoke the eighteenth-century understanding of civil society elaborated by thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment. Civil society in this conception describes, as the historian John Burrow succinctly puts it, "the subtler, sometimes tacit interconnections of social life" as

opposed to “the community organized in its explicit political aspect, as government and public law.”¹¹ Further, differentiating society from the nation-state allows both Woolf and Joyce to set what have been called social virtues (such as benevolence, politeness, and tolerance) against more militant forms of civic virtue, including patriotic loyalty and masculine valor, inculcated by imperial administrators from one side of the colonial divide and touted by belligerent nationalists from the other.

In his depiction of Chinese life in the early twentieth century in the novel *Moment in Peking*, Lin Yutang enacts the Confucian notions of *tianxia* (天下, literally all under the sun; world; universe) and *guo* (國: country, nation), which bear resemblances to the delineations of civil society and political state in Woolf and Joyce. In Joseph Levenson’s pithy formulation: *guo* “connotes not only land and people but protection by military force,” whereas *tianxia* is “a conception of civilized society,” meaning “far more than just a political unit held by *de facto* power.” *Tianxia*, in other words, is organized around value or culture, in contrast to *guo* as the domain of power. In Confucian thought, the idea of *tianxia* not only exceeds the boundary of *guo* but also works “to broaden the people’s lives and to straighten the people’s virtue.”¹² Against the backdrop of China’s topsy-turvy political government in an age of revolution and civil war, Lin limns the contours of Chinese social life undergirded by the Confucian virtues of civility and humaneness, even as he demonstrates how such life is under attack from both imperialist forces and iconoclastic ideologies.

¹¹ J. W. Burrow, *Whigs and Liberals: Continuity and Change in English Political Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 26.

¹² Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate: A Trilogy*. Volume One: *The Problem of Intellectual Continuity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 101.

Writing in colonial India, where nationalism was becoming the dominant political ideology, Rabindranath Tagore was preoccupied with the relation between nation and society. His conception of social life is both similar to and different from those of Woolf, Joyce, and Lin. Partha Chatterjee has illuminated Tagore's non-statist idea of *samāj* (society) as an alternative to the political organization of the nation. As Chatterjee points out, the form of *samāj* Tagore believes India must "revive and reconstruct" is *svadeśsamāj*, which embodies "the collective power of self-making or *ātmāsakti*."¹³ Tagore's vision of *svadeśsamāj*, differing from the machinery of political organization, denotes a collectivity that amalgamates inner life with traditional Indian ways of communal existence. As E. P. Thompson notes in his introduction to Tagore's *Nationalism*, a series of lectures Tagore delivered throughout the United States during his visit in 1916-17, "More than any other thinker of his time, Tagore has a clear conception of civil society, as something distinct from and of more personal texture than political or economic structures."¹⁴ Tagore gives vivid form to his idea of *svadeśsamāj* in the novel *The Home and the World*, which is set in the aftermath of the Partition of Bengal in 1905 and against the backdrop of the nationalist *Swadeshi* movement.

If Woolf, Joyce, and Lin refuse to recognize the nation-state as the last word on public life without denying its necessity as an organizing principle for politics, Tagore criticizes the very organization of the nation-state, comparing it to a lifeless machine whose operation he believes strips people of their individuality and humanity. What

¹³ Partha Chatterjee, *Lineages of Political Society: Studies in Postcolonial Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 104-6.

¹⁴ E. P. Thompson, "Introduction." Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism* (London: Papermac, 1991), 14. See also Ashis Nandy's analysis of how Tagore sees the basis for the tradition of India "at the social level, not the political," in *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism: Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of Self* (Delhi: Oxford University Press India, 1994), 6.

distinguishes Tagore's conception of social life, then, is its inextricability from the "attainment of spiritual ideals."¹⁵ In *The Home and the World*, Tagore depicts such ideals through his character Nikhil's aspiration toward the infinite, which involves at once a Buddhist abnegation of possessive desires and an affirmation of the spiritual union of humanity guided by moral reason and freedom. Though Tagore's emphasis on the spiritual stands at a remove from the perceived softening power of social virtues in the other writers in question here, his delineation of how a stance toward the infinite can foster collective human spirit resonates through their works. For Tagore, as Poulomi Saha has pointed out, "[H]umanism and spiritualism were not antithetical but rather productively synthetic."¹⁶

The second part of my argument addresses the dynamic between cosmic imagination and universal sympathies in these writers' works by attending particularly to the expansive rhythm of the texts, which is often achieved through representations of the perceptions and consciousness of their main characters. For all the novels discussed in this project, not just Tagore's, extend social existence to a more cosmic register in which affiliation with the immediate social community is broadened to identification with a larger construct of human community. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf suffuses social life with a sense of fate confronting humanity as a whole. Locating the capacity for action in the face of fate in a group of mature and motherly female figures, Woolf rewrites the virtue of civilized manners into a public spirit harking back to the Renaissance notion of *virtù vince fortuna*, even though her recreation changes the gender dynamics of the concept of *virtù*. Joyce juxtaposes the mundane and monotonous atmosphere of Dublin society with

¹⁵ Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism* (London: Macmillan, 1917), 16.

¹⁶ Poulomi Saha, "Singing Bengal Into A Nation: Tagore The Colonial Cosmopolitan?," *Journal Of Modern Literature* 36.2 (2013): 1-24. Web. 10 July 2014. See 19.

the metaphysical contemplations of Stephen Dedalus and the transnational, cosmological imaginings of Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses*, especially in the “Ithaca” episode of that text. In those imaginings, the sense of race as defined by geography, culture, or nationality gives way to a sense of race encompassing the human species, whose social and moral redemption, Joyce suggests, starts with Bloom’s humble proposition: “a little goodwill.”

Lin’s rendering of cosmic life in *Moment in Peking* draws on a Taoist aesthetic of *tianxia*, a universe in which nature and humanity merge in harmony. As the heroine Mulan observes in a moment that reenacts the Taoist worldview and sensibility, “the sunrise which made the earth seem so human—it cleanses you from the inside and makes you want to be kind to everybody who shares this earth with us.” The trope for the enlarged vision is chiasmus: the earth made human by the beauty of sunrise transcends national boundaries and nurtures, in turn, larger sympathies toward humankind. Given the fact that Lin wrote for an English-speaking audience in a time of intensified aggression and militancy driven by imperialism, his emphasis on being “kind to everybody who shares this earth with us” embodies a self-conscious appeal for international understanding and cooperation.

My examination of how the cosmic, as rendered in these modernist texts, works to foster identification with humanity beyond the exclusivities of nationalism recalls the rich history of cosmopolitan thinking. Cosmopolitanism has often been discussed across academic disciplines in terms of an ethical orientation informed by universal values such as justice and right,¹⁷ or strivings toward common ethical norms for a global civil

¹⁷ See, for instance, Martha Nussbaum’s influential essay “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism,” in *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*. Ed. Joshua Cohen (Boston: Beacon, 1996), 2-17.

society.¹⁸ In these accounts, cosmopolitanism is firmly grounded in a world that is politically organized and coextensive with the global domain of socioeconomic existence, even though it can operate at various levels of social collectivity. As Bruce Robbins has argued, cosmopolitanism points to “a domain of contested politics [designated “cosmopolitics” in his analysis],” which is not “universal reason in disguise,” but “one on a series of scales, as an area both within and beyond the nation (and yet falling short of ‘humanity’) that is inhabited by a variety of cosmopolitanisms.”¹⁹ By pluralizing the world and thus cosmopolitanism, Robbins challenges the idea of one “worldwide community of human beings” based on Western models of philosophical universalism.²⁰

Robbins does, however, mention in passing the difference between world and cosmos, the latter of which seems to him to be resistant to a plural form. Indeed, the disparity between the concept of world and that of cosmos can be traced back to cosmopolitanism’s origin. In an outline of the evolution of cosmopolitanism in Western intellectual history, Kwame Anthony Appiah points out that when the Cynics first coined the expression cosmopolitan, meaning “citizen of the cosmos,” in the fourth century BC, the cosmos “referred to the world, not in the sense of the earth, but in the sense of the universe.” While “citizen of the cosmos,” meant as an oxymoron, reflected the Cynics’ “skepticism about custom and tradition,” as Appiah suggests,²¹ the cosmic dimension inherent in the idea of cosmopolitanism is nonetheless essential to its capacity to expand its bearer’s horizons and sense of belonging. My analysis of the cosmic thus redirects

¹⁸ See Seyla Benhabib, et al. *Another Cosmopolitanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹⁹ Bruce Robbins, “Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism,” in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*. Eds. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 12.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2. See also Bruce Robbins, *Feeling Global: Internationalism in Distress* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 148.

²¹ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), xiv.

attention to this salient aspect, which has been largely missing from current critical discourse on cosmopolitanism. Focusing on the relation between shared cosmopolitan sensibilities and various imaginings of the cosmic in modernist literature across cultural boundaries, the project opens up new avenues for thinking about the scope, content, and applicability of cosmopolitanism.

Meanwhile, the cosmic in my discussion intersects with the analytical category of the planetary that has informed a good deal of recent work in modernist studies. Drawing on discussions of the concept of planetarity elaborated by Gayatri Spivak, Wai Chee Dimock, and other critics, Mary Lou Emery, for instance, compares the planetary vision to “an aesthetics of earth departing from romanticized landscapes and colonial notions of the ‘primitive,’ intruding into and disrupting the global market forces of tourism, and ... catalyzing an ‘ecological imagination that ranges from the deep history of geology to the frenetic energy of quantum physics.’” With her emphasis on such geological sites as the sea and its fluid boundaries with the earth in Caribbean literature, Emery further aligns the planetary with an “alterity beyond the human.”²² Questioning the adequacy of the category of the global, which seems to her to be entrenched in economic models of globalization, Emery stresses that the concept of the planetary helps us to rethink “the rationalist logic of received histories.” She writes, “Neither equivalent to the global nor opposed to it, the planetary registers possibilities of multiple spatial and temporal dimensions beyond the rational ordering of the global.”²³ While I share Emery’s attentiveness to a terrain larger than that of the organization of human production, however, the cosmic in my analysis is not extra-human. Rather, it is both bound up with

²² Mary Lou Emery, “Caribbean Modernism: Plantation to Planetary” in *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*, 68.

²³ *Ibid.*, 49.

human perceptions, consciousness, and sensibilities and endowed with a humanizing effect. In the chapters that follow, I will examine the different yet related ways in which each of the authors under discussion recreates collectivities of belonging by combining social and cosmic imaginings.

My first chapter analyzes Virginia Woolf's vision of "solemn progress," which conjoins a Burkean emphasis on manners and sensibility with a re-gendered humanist notion of *virtù*. In her aesthetic manifesto "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," Woolf makes two claims about the idea of character that seem at odds. On the one hand, she famously declares that "on or about 1910, human character changed," depicting character as a collective trait that is socially conditioned and variable. On the other hand, describing her fictitious and ideal character as "the spirit we live by, life itself," she avers: "Mrs. Brown is eternal, Mrs. Brown is human nature, Mrs. Brown changes only on the surface." The tension between the two conceptions of character points to a persistent focus, in Woolf's writing, on both the malleability of constitutive human qualities and aspects of human spirit that we may apprehend as universal and enduring. *Mrs. Dalloway* exemplifies Woolf's exploration of a collective spirit exceeding both bourgeois egotism and the narrow patriotic allegiance inscribed by political authority. Excavating affinities between Woolf and Edmund Burke, I examine a Burkean concern in the novel with the centrality of "sentiments, manners, and moral opinions" to public life. Yet unlike Burke, whose valuation of an aristocratic code of manners is at one with his defense of the social hierarchy, Woolf disrupts the containment of such manners by class. Realigning such manners with moral responses to a view of shared fate, Woolf seeks to relocate virtue in a collective experience across class and national boundaries.

Chapter 2, which is informed by perspectives from David Hume and Adam Smith, begins with the tension between the virtues of justice and generosity in *Ulysses*. From the beginning of *Ulysses*, Joyce highlights the incongruity between “the tradition of genuine warm-hearted courteous Irish hospitality” and a belligerent, identitarian Irish nationalist politics that fights under the banner of justice yet betrays both unjust and ungenerous tendencies. Drawing attention to how a combat for justice is often confounded with the pursuit of material self-interests in Dublin and implicated in socially constructed rules and high-flown rhetoric, Joyce contrasts justice to the unmediated operation of generosity in fostering interpersonal connections and social cohesion. Of course, Joyce does not negate the importance of justice per se as a value or a system. But he does suggest how a prevailing militant nationalism not only stifles collective spirit but also deprives justice of its moral significance, and how justice can be better served by a more generous stance toward both one’s fellow Irishmen and human beings in general.

In Chapter 3, I first place Lin Yutang’s *Moment in Peking* in the context of the semi-colonial conditions and complex intellectual terrain of China in the early twentieth century. Lin’s concern with the conflict between old ways of life governed by such Confucian values as family, honor, and civility and multifarious forces of modernity was typical among Chinese intellectuals of his era; indeed, divergent attitudes toward Confucianism partly defined the political landscape of China’s modernity. On the one hand, revolution-minded social reformers and nationalists denounced Confucianism as the reason for China’s backwardness in the face of socioeconomic modernization and aggressive imperial expansion. On the other hand, cultural conservatives upheld Confucianism as the very essence of Chinese identity. Differing from both positions, Lin

endeavours to recuperate a Confucian emphasis on civility in an international context. He denounces extraterritoriality for its demoralizing effects, explaining how it divides people and destroys neighborliness, a vital foundation of civil society. His depiction of Confucian value, therefore, acquires transnational relevance. The chapter also discusses in detail how Lin unites Confucian ideas of civility with a Taoist aesthetic of *xingling* (性靈), which works to nurture larger sympathies and identification with humanity. Lin does not assume such attitudes to be the solution to the devastating problem of imperialist aggression. He does suggest, however, that modes of thinking and feeling can guide and direct ways of living and courses of action.

The subject of my last chapter, Rabindranath Tagore's *Home and the World*, has often been cited in discussions of cosmopolitanism, including Martha Nussbaum's highly influential essay "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism." What has received little critical attention, however, is the spiritual dimension within the moral ideals upheld by Tagore's privileged character. Through a close examination of spatial tropes in the novel, I will demonstrate how Nikhil's values are grounded in aspirations toward cosmic infinity. This analysis will also shed light on how Tagore draws on Buddhist traditions in depicting the complicated relation between the constitution of self and allegiance to vital sites of belonging—home, nation, the world, and the infinite. By juxtaposing Nikhil's Buddhist understanding of the soul with Sandip's mechanistic notion of success, on the one hand, and with Bimala's desires for intimacy and anchorage on the other, Tagore both situates Nikhil's spiritual ideal within India's philosophical tradition and tests its viability in modern life.

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“Solemn Progress” examines a group of modernist texts that operate on both a national and a transnational scale. Adopting an ethico-aesthetically attuned approach, it attends to cultural particularities captured by these literary works while establishing deeper affinities between intellectual traditions in the East and the West. In my analysis of how Woolf, Joyce, Lin, and Tagore negotiate competing forms of virtue and value in their respective texts and cultural contexts, I have tended to dwell on moments of affirmation, with a view to elucidating these writers’ creative aspirations rather than debunking the ideological mystifications with which such aspirations can always be charged. Such affirmative tendencies have received insufficient attention, in my view, in part because the analytical framework in modernist and postcolonial studies has largely not moved beyond the paradigm of oppression and resistance (and critique as resistance) and in part because cultural studies in general still draws much of its energy from what Eve Sedgwick has called “paranoid reading”—which, governed by a hermeneutics of suspicion and preoccupied with negative affects, places its faith in “the detection of hidden patterns of violence and their exposure.”²⁴ Sedgwick further points out that critics have often shunned “reparative motives and positionalities” because these have so routinely been accused of being “sappy, aestheticizing, defensive, anti-intellectual, or reactionary.”²⁵ This project does not shy away from reparative impulses, though it examines how such impulses are grounded in specific social, historical, and cross-cultural circumstances. Its affect is, at last, solemn.

²⁴ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, Or, You’re So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is about You,” in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 143.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 150.

CHAPTER 1

“SOLEMN PROGRESS”: MANNERS, FATE, AND THE NEGOTIATION OF VIRTUE IN *MRS. DALLOWAY*

“But she derived from the eighteenth century. She was all right.”

—Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*²⁶

“And as usual I feel that if I sink further I shall reach the truth. That is the only mitigation; a kind of nobility. Solemnity. I shall make myself face the fact that there is nothing—nothing for any of us.”

—Virginia Woolf, *Diary*, June 23rd, 1929²⁷

In 1939, when the war between Britain and Germany loomed large, Virginia and Leonard Woolf left their home in London and moved out to Monk’s House at Rodmell. During those dark days of blackout and bombing, Virginia Woolf struggled to adapt to her life away from London. As she remarked in her diary in early 1940, “Odd how often I think with what is love I suppose of the City: of the walk to the Tower: that is my England; I mean, if a bomb destroyed one of those little alleys with the brass bound curtains & the river smell & the old woman reading I should feel—well, what the patriots feel.”²⁸ Woolf’s attachment to London is anything but surprising given how her life and career are deeply rooted in the place. What is worth noting here, however, is the way Woolf defines her country in terms of everyday activities and sense experiences. Locating her patriotic sentiment in cherished memories of concrete places and people,

²⁶ Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 1925. Annotated Edition (Orlando: Harcourt, 2005), 169. All further citations will be from this edition.

²⁷ Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Anne Olivier Bell. Vol. III (San Diego: Harcourt, 1984), 235. All subsequent citations will be from this edition.

²⁸ Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*. Vol. V, 263.

Woolf at once identifies with and distances herself from “the patriots,” whose loyalty supposedly lies with Britain as a nation under attack.

Woolf’s skepticism about patriotism is a familiar subject for critics. In *Three Guineas*, she criticizes prevalent forms of patriotism deriving from “pride of nationality” along with other “unreal loyalties” including “religious pride, college pride, school pride, family pride, sex pride,” and so forth,²⁹ thus drawing out the connection between such loyalties and “the great modern sins of vanity, egotism, megalomania.” In the meantime, however, Woolf acknowledges the persistency of some patriotic emotion of a different kind, “some love of England” that “dropped into a child’s ears by the cawing of rooks in an elm tree, by the splash of waves on a beach, or by English voices murmuring nursery rhymes.” As Woolf quietly blends human voices with sounds of nature, she both naturalizes and enlarges the feelings of allegiance to one’s homeland. In Woolf’s account, “this drop of pure, if irrational, emotion” not only contrasts with patriotic demonstrations inextricable from a sense of superiority but also accords with “desires of peace and freedom for the whole world.”³⁰ Yet the line between what Woolf describes as the prideful and the pure love of country is never secure, and she is acutely aware of how both remain entwined with shared feelings toward the past and cultural traditions.

Scholars have noticed Woolf’s simultaneous abhorrence of imperialist and patriarchal structures persistent in English society and her attraction to the past and the idea of “Englishness.” Focusing on her relations to Victorian culture, Gillian Beer, for instance, establishes how Woolf both revolts against Victorian forms of life and draws on the literary and intellectual legacies, especially evolutionary discourses, of the Victorian

²⁹ Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*, 1938. Annotated Edition (Orlando: Harcourt, 2006), 97.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 99, 129.

era. Beer argues that Woolf's modernist techniques—including fragmentation, parody, pastiche, and an emphasis on the permanence of the ephemeral—embody an endeavor “to find a linguistic rhythm by which to express England without false patriotism” and “to find a distance from which it will be possible to observe what is unmarred by disagreeable opinions or out-of-date politics.”³¹

The past represents, for Woolf, not only an integral part of social order but also a salient component of human feeling. Attentive to a human mind that “holds so deep a reservoir of time past within it,”³² Woolf does more than unfold the complexity of modern subjectivity in her writing. Her preoccupation with how such capacities of the mind as memory, loyalty, and affection operate in public life testifies to an abiding concern with the collective spirit of human society. This is in part borne out by Woolf's conception of character, as elaborated in her aesthetic manifesto “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown.” Rachel Bowlby and other critics have drawn attention to Woolf's understanding of the fragmented and chaotic nature of human consciousness in the modern experience of everyday life,³³ yet Woolf's discussion of consciousness in the essay also congeals around an emphasis on the collective aspects of the idea of character. She declares at the beginning of the essay that “on or about 1910, human character changed,”³⁴ stressing the

³¹ Gillian Beer, *Arguing with the Past: Essays in Narrative from Woolf to Sidney* (London: Routledge, 1989), 142. Steve Ellis furthers the discussion by highlighting the coexistence of Woolf's modernist innovations and nostalgia for values associated with Victorian culture. See Steve Ellis, *Virginia Woolf and the Victorians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). In recent work, Angeliki Spiropoulou draws new attention to the political significance of Woolf's representations of the past and historical reimagining. Constellating Woolf's historiographical practices with Walter Benjamin's philosophy of history, Spiropoulou reframes Woolf's concerns with historical issues of gender, class, and oppressive power, contending that like Benjamin, Woolf seeks to reactivate “unfulfilled or lost potentialities of the past, with a view to understanding and revolutionizing the present.” See Angeliki Spiropoulou, *Virginia Woolf, Modernity and History: Constellations with Walter Benjamin* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 6.

³² Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*, 125.

³³ Rachel Bowlby, *Virginia Woolf: Feminist Destinations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 6.

³⁴ Virginia Woolf, *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Andrew McNeillie. Vol. III (London: Hogarth Press,

development of human character as an effect of changes in institutional and historical circumstances. Meanwhile, describing her fictitious and ideal character as “the spirit we live by, life itself,” Woolf avers: “Mrs. Brown is eternal, Mrs. Brown is human nature, Mrs. Brown changes only on the surface.”³⁵ The seeming conflict between the two dimensions of character points to a persistent focus, in Woolf’s works, on both the malleability of constitutive human qualities under the influence of various social forces and forms of human spirit of a universal and enduring kind.

While Woolf explains that Mrs. Brown’s character is “of unlimited capacity and infinite variety,” varying according to “the age and country” in which it is observed and portrayed, Mrs. Brown nevertheless exhibits a certain constancy that puts Woolf’s aesthetics in a new light. In narrating the story of Mrs. Brown, a woman over sixty who “came of gentlefolks,” but is suffering from “more extreme poverty than rags and dirt,” Woolf repeatedly uses the modifier “heroic” to describe the old lady’s “decision,” her “character,” and her appearance. In fact, Woolf’s perception concentrates on her heroism as soon as she presents the conversation between Mrs. Brown and Mr. Smith, “a man of business” who seems to have some power over Mrs. Brown and tries to settle some unpleasant business with her.³⁶ Highlighting Mrs. Brown’s self-command and “superb dignity” in the face of Mr. Smith’s aggressive pressures, Woolf clearly shows compassion for Mrs. Brown. As Lorraine Sim, invoking David Hume’s moral philosophy, has pointed out, the relationship between the narrator and a stranger in this context is ethical by nature; it is “based upon sympathy, a transfusion of sentiment and ideas of

1986), 421.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 430.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 423-25.

proximity.”³⁷ But Mrs. Brown elicits more than “pity” in Woolf as her stress on Mrs. Brown’s self-possessed bearing becomes more manifest; indeed, the tone of Woolf’s portrayal of the “very small, very tenacious” and “very frail and very heroic” lady becomes overtly admiring in the end.³⁸ This tonal change in the characterization of Mrs. Brown parallels the shift in the signification of Woolf’s term “character” from a national trait that is socially conditioned and variable to an elusive but eternal spirit of life that is grounded in human nature itself.

An exemplification of Woolf’s vision of modern fiction, the snippet of Mrs. Brown’s story also reveals Woolf’s concern with the moral relevance of manners (such as those embodied by her protagonist) to public life. In Woolf’s portrayal, the encounter between Mrs. Brown and Mr. Smith reflects the changing class relations in British society. While Woolf imagines Mr. Smith as a corn dealer, she aligns Mrs. Brown with both the gentry and the poor. The “seaside house” she lived in, with such ornaments as “models of ships” and “[h]er husbands’ medals”—reminders of both British naval history and Mrs. Brown’s widowhood—seems to be at the mercy of Mr. Smith now. In light of the allusion to social changes in Britain, Mrs. Brown’s seemingly random question for Mr. Smith during their brief and strained conversation—“Can you tell me if an oak-tree dies when the leaves have been eaten for two years in succession by caterpillars?”³⁹—evokes an old trope of “the British oak,” which describes what has been called “an organic society.” Such a society, in this imagining, is slowly evolving like “a

³⁷ Lorraine Sim, *Virginia Woolf: The Patterns of Ordinary Experience* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 184.

³⁸ Virginia Woolf, *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*. Vol. III, 424-25.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

living organism of complex structure and historical continuity,” to use Leslie Stephen’s terms.⁴⁰

Edmund Burke deploys such a metaphor in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, comparing England to an oak while dismissing British political agitators as “grasshoppers.” In Burke’s words, “Because half a dozen grasshoppers under a fern make the fields ring with their importunate chink, whilst thousands of great cattle, reposed beneath the shadow of the British oak, chew the cud and are silent, pray do no imagine, that those who make the noise are the only inhabitants of the field; that, of course, they are many in number; or that, after all, they are other than the little, shriveled, meager, hopping, though loud and troublesome insects of the hour.”⁴¹ Of course, Woolf is deliberately vague about what “caterpillars” symbolize, and her tone differs significantly from Burke’s debasing one. Yet Woolf’s unflattering portrait of Mr. Smith bears a distant resemblance to Burke’s criticism of “sophisters, oeconomists, and calculators,” whom he groups into the same camp in *Reflections*.⁴² Further, her allusion to the British oak, alongside her stress on Mrs. Brown as “the spirit we live by,” betrays a concern with civil society and public spirit that is reminiscent of Burke. Indeed, consideration of Burke, as I will show in the following analysis, sheds new light on Woolf’s aesthetic vision and political thought.

Edmund Burke and Civilized Manners

⁴⁰ Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. II (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1902), 230.

⁴¹ Edmund Burke, *Select Works of Edmund Burke*. Vol. 2, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999), 180.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 169.

In her diary between December 1939 and February 1940, Virginia Woolf wrote repeatedly about her absorption in Edmund Burke. She noted on 26 January 1940, for instance: “I’m enjoying Burke though, & shall tune up on the French Revolution.”⁴³ Two weeks later, she remarked again: “I like Burke.”⁴⁴ It is hardly surprising that Woolf would be interested in Burke. Her father Leslie Stephen held this eighteenth-century political thinker in great esteem, as is demonstrated by his admiring analysis of Burke’s mind and work in his copious *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*.⁴⁵ And as Hermione Lee mentions in her biography of the novelist, Woolf was deeply impressed by “Shakespeare, Dante, Burke, Euripides,” whom she avidly read during her summer vacations in the countryside in her early twenties.⁴⁶

Woolf’s most explicit expression of her gravitation to Burke in the late 1930s coincided with her avowed disagreement with a new generation of writers whose sympathies lay with the political Left. In her 1940 essay “The Leaning Tower,” a paper originally read to the Workers’ Educational Association, Woolf addressed the differences between a long list of nineteenth-century writers who were active until 1914 and a cohort she dubbed “the leaning tower group,” who “began to write about 1925” and “came to an end as a group in 1939.”⁴⁷ The tower stands as Woolf’s metaphor for material privileges that include good upbringing and a leisurely life enjoyed by writers from middle-class

⁴³ Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. V, 261.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 262.

⁴⁵ Leslie Stephen’s introduction of Burke in the book begins with an effusive appraisal: “No English writer has received, or has deserved, more splendid panegyrics than Burke.” See Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought*, 219. John Burrow describes Leslie Stephen’s admiration for Burke in contrast to Stephen’s dismissive attitude toward eighteenth-century political thought in general. See J. W. Burrow, *Whigs and Liberals: Continuity and Change in English Political Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 8-9.

⁴⁶ Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (New York: Vintage, 1999), 168.

⁴⁷ Virginia Woolf, “The Leaning Tower,” in *The Moment and Other Essays* (New York: Harvest Book, 1948), 139. Subsequent references to the essay will be included parenthetically in the text.

families. Defending the older generation of writers as “aristocrats; the unconscious inheritors of a great tradition” (139), Woolf decries the interbellum generation’s destructive tendencies in a tone evocative of Burke’s critique of the Jacobins in his *Reflections*. Burke upbraided the Jacobins for having “a power . . . to subvert and destroy; but none to construct, except such machines as may be fitted for further subversion and further destruction.”⁴⁸ For Burke, the revolutionists were characterized by nothing but their negative energies: “Something they must destroy, or they seem to themselves to exist for no purpose.”⁴⁹ Woolf, too, denounced the negativity of certain revolution-minded writers: “They are flogging a dead or dying horse because a living horse, if flogged, would kick them off its back. It explains the destructiveness of their work; and also its emptiness. They can destroy bourgeois society, in part at least; but what have they put in its place?” (145). Woolf’s image of these writers bullying a moribund horse evokes Burke’s famous dramatization of the violent treatment of Marie Antoinette—in his portrayal a delicate and defenseless figure—and his lament over chivalry’s decline in

⁴⁸ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 162. J. G. A. Pocock provides an account of Burke’s conception of “Dreadful energy” through an imagined dialogue between Burke and Karl Marx: if “Karl Marx be imagined explaining to Edmund Burke that he had simply failed to recognize that one system of property relationships was replacing another, and that the ‘dreadful energy’ was that of the revolutionary and triumphant bourgeoisie, Burke must be imagined retorting that Marx was another ‘learned and ingenious speculator,’ who had simply failed to recognize the spectacle of human energy disengaged from any system of property relationships whatever. Should Marx reply that this was impossible, since all human energy was by its nature involved in productive activity and the generation of new property relationships, Burke would declare that this comparatively liberal and relatively optimistic dogma failed to bring him any comfort, since he had seen a vision of human energy turned wholly and systematically destructive.” See Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 208-9. From a different perspective, Andrew Stauffer discusses Burke’s deployment of moral indignation as a rhetorical weapon against the French revolution and its sympathizers in his analysis of the place of anger in the discursive fight over the meanings of the French Revolution in the Romantic age in England. According to Stauffer, Burke participated in “an elaborate rhetorical struggle over the political ownership of . . . two opposing conceptions of anger,” namely, “a righteous, judgmental emotion exercised for the public good, and a furious, irrational passion indulged in a personal, destructive fit.” See his *Anger, Revolution, and Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 40. In Woolf’s description, anger is a salient trait of the younger generation of writers. See “The Leaning Tower,” 141.

⁴⁹ Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 148.

Reflections. More crucially, Woolf evinces a Burkean doubt about the ultimate meaning of a revolution that aims to disrupt the entire social order.

The “violence of [the leaning tower group’s] attack upon bourgeois society” antagonized Woolf. She was not blind to the social problems and injustices arising from the existing class hierarchy, but she called into question the leaning tower writers’ denial of their own benefits from the very “society which they abuse” (145), echoing Burke’s charge that the Jacobins disavowed their inheritance from tradition: “You began ill, because you began by despising everything that belonged to you.”⁵⁰ Of course, the historical circumstances Burke and Woolf addressed were considerably different. While Burke was alarmed, if not appalled, by the burgeoning bourgeois capitalism that presaged a “revolution in sentiments, manners, and moral opinions” in the late eighteenth century,⁵¹ Woolf in “The Leaning Tower” acknowledged the enabling effect of a stable bourgeois society in what she called the “very prolific, creative, rich” nineteenth century (132). Unlike Burke, who from the perspective of a political thinker and practitioner repudiated the endeavor to develop a form of government purely from abstract principles, Woolf was sympathetic to the end of creating “a society in which every one is equal and every one is free” (146). Yet Woolf’s thinly veiled skepticism about the tower-leveling means was not so far from Burke’s vindication of inherited social arrangements,⁵² and a

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 174.

⁵² The rhetorical moves in the essay need to be taken very carefully. It seems that Woolf tries to strike a balance between her aesthetic identification with nineteenth-century writers on the one hand and her sympathy with the working-class audience on the other. Woolf’s descriptions of a future classless society in the paper sound ambivalent. For one thing, the two reasons she lists for the realization of such a society—political will and income tax—are undercut by an identifiable distrust of politicians’ promises and the impoverishing result the income tax engendered for middle-class parents. For another, Woolf celebrates the enriching and liberating effects such a society would have on both the working class and writers. See pp. 150-54. Woolf’s positive depiction of the nineteenth-century writers, who “wished to help the working class to enjoy the advantages of the tower class; but ... did not wish to destroy the tower, or to descend

keen awareness of the inadequacies of the bourgeois logic of means and ends aligns the two writers. For both, it is of paramount importance to keep alive those habits of mind that resist such logic and enrich human experience in an era of accelerated material expansion and rationalization.

This congeniality illuminates a Burkean concern, in Woolf's writing, with the centrality of "sentiments, manners, and moral opinions" to public life. These vital aspects of social existence, Burke and Woolf suggest in their writings, remain not only integral to the structure of social governance but also subject to the impingement of its power mechanisms. In this light, Woolf shares with Burke both sociological insight and moral wariness. Of course, neither Burke nor Woolf denies the importance of material development for a continuous social order. But both remain vigilant about the destructive effects of a scheme of power dominated by material preoccupations and instrumental reason. Woolf's recognition of the indispensability of the material basis for "intellectual freedom" and "poetry," which she articulates most notably in *A Room of One's Own*,⁵³ is often balanced out by an emphasis on forms of value that are not defined in material terms. Critics have ascribed the cultural and aesthetic values Woolf upholds to her own privileged position in the established social order. Sean Latham's analysis of Woolf's implication in the production and circulation of cultural capital, for example, typifies a tendency to accentuate the workings of her habitus in Bourdieuan terms.⁵⁴ What has yet to be fully addressed, however, is Woolf's affinity for a code of manners associated with the aristocracy, whose status within the British political system had for centuries grown

from it—rather to make it accessible to all" (138) resonates with what she valorizes by virtue of a comment from a middle-class mother: "the best of both worlds" (151).

⁵³ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 1929. Annotated Edition (Orlando: Harcourt, 2005), 106.

⁵⁴ See Sean Latham's "Am I a Snob?": *Modernism and the Novel* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 59-117.

increasingly shaky and dubious in the face of a historical trend toward democratic capitalism. Sympathies for the patrimony of the nobility may inevitably be tinged with nostalgia, and Woolf is not free of such sentimentality. Yet the presumed obsolescence of this class in the modern age also allows room for critical reflection on its mores and social legacy. To fully understand Woolf's artistic project, it is important to see how standing at an aesthetic distance from such an inheritance, Woolf tries, à la Burke, to recover its moral relevance for modern life.

In an incisive analysis of the Bloomsbury group in his essay "The Bloomsbury Fraction," Raymond Williams attributes the group's espousal of "social conscience" to "the precise formulation of a particular social position, in which a fraction of an upper class, breaking from its dominant majority, relates to a lower class *as a matter of conscience*: not in solidarity, nor in affiliation, but as an extension of what are still felt as personal or small-group obligations."⁵⁵ According to Williams, in relation to the ruling class those in Woolf's circle "were at once against its dominant ideas and values and still willingly, in all immediate ways, part of it," because instead of fighting for change in the hierarchical social system, they appealed to "the supreme value of the civilized individual, whose pluralization, as more and more civilized individuals, was itself the only acceptable social direction."⁵⁶ Here Williams points to the limitations of the group's commitment to an ethico-aesthetically oriented goal, which seems to him to reinforce existing relations of power and privilege.

Christine Froula has taken Williams to task for his critique of Bloomsbury's celebration of "civilized individualism." In Froula's formulation, Williams "silently

⁵⁵ Raymond Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980), 155.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 156, 165. In Williams's account, the sensibility of Woolf's novels offers "convincing evidence of the substance of the civilized individual" (166).

discounts the qualifier *civilized*.” Situating the group within a matrix of international politics between the Wars, Froula stresses Bloomsbury’s inheritance of the Enlightenment project of promoting “a democratic, economically egalitarian, international civilization” against the upsurge of totalitarianism.⁵⁷ To be sure, Froula insightfully restores Bloomsbury’s critical role in helping to shape the direction of European politics in times of a historical crisis. Yet her reevaluation of the group’s political engagement elaborates more than contradicts Williams’s observation that “Bloomsbury was carrying the classical values of bourgeois enlightenment.”⁵⁸ What is obscured by Froula’s translation of “civilized” into “civilization” and by Williams’s binary structure of ruling and ruled alike is a substantive account of Woolf’s attitudes toward an aristocratic tradition whose “civilized” codes and values overlap with, but also vary from, the tenets of bourgeois liberal individualism.

Dissecting the political economy of Burke’s analysis of the French Revolution in the context of a Whig tradition, J. G. A. Pocock expounds Burke’s defense of “an aristocratic and commercial order which could be represented as at once natural and progressive and defended by reference to a system of civilized manners.”⁵⁹ As Pocock suggests, “To most eighteenth-century defenders of Whig civilization, the rise of commerce and the rise of polite culture went together, under the name of ‘the progress of the arts,’ and required to be defended together, against those who hankered after the austere republicanism of Spartan or Roman antiquity.”⁶⁰ Burke shared with Scottish Enlightenment thinkers including David Hume, William Robertson, Adam Smith, and

⁵⁷ Christine Froula, *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-garde: War, Civilization, Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 4.

⁵⁸ Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture*, 165.

⁵⁹ J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, 209.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 210.

John Millar a theory of manners as “fulfilling the natural sociability of man” and inseparable from “the course of the commercialization, refinement and diversification of society.” Unlike these others, however, Burke believed that the prosperity of a commercial order depended on civilized manners, and not the other way around. As Pocock points out, Burke’s insistence that manners took precedence over commerce and that “modern European society needed and must not sever its roots in a chivalric and ecclesiastical past” was “historicist and traditionalist, but . . . not reactionary. It anchored commerce in history, rather than presenting it as the triumph over history.” In other words, Burke’s defense of nobility and religion is at one with his belief in social continuity. Moreover, in Pocock’s formulation of Burke’s thought:

If “manners” were *moeurs*, refined and enriched by the progress of society, they were also *consuetudines*, disciplined and reinforced by the memory of society; and presumption, prescription and prejudice were signs and means of society’s determination to keep its memory alive. Burke proposed to keep the past actual, but he did not propose to return to it; there is no neo-medievalist programme for reactivating an age of chivalry or an age of faith, only a declaration that to destroy the historical structure built up by older social forms must lead to the destruction of society in its modern character. It is “manners,” that key term in the defence of commercial humanism, which the demonic revolutionaries have set out to subvert, and it is the strength of a commercial Britain by which they must be defeated.⁶¹

While Burke championed an aristocratic code of manners as necessary nourishment for a commercial order, he also insisted on the affective power of aesthetic sentiments in softening feelings and cementing allegiances. Sentiments that “beautify and soften private society,” he claimed, “subdued the fierceness of pride and power; . . . obliged sovereigns to submit to the soft collar of social esteem, [and] compelled stern authority to submit to elegance.” Abstract political doctrines, by contrast, stifle the vital

⁶¹ Ibid., 210.

sources of social cohesion. In Burke's analysis, politics has an affinity with poetics, insofar as "love, veneration, admiration, or attachment" instills a sense of beauty and unity into social experience: "These public affections, combined with manners, are required sometimes as supplements, sometimes as correctives, always as aids to law. The precept given by a wise man, as well as a great critic, for the construction of poems, is equally true as to states. *Non satis est pulchra esse poemata, dulcia sunt.* There ought to be a system of manners in every nation which a well-formed mind would be disposed to relish." Burke proceeds to reinforce the connection between aesthetics and affect with his famous chiasmic declaration: "To make us love our country, our country ought to be lovely."⁶²

The essentially aesthetic attitude toward a code of manners residing in the nobility proves congenial to Woolf, even though she understands that what is good and redeemable about this class could hardly be delinked, in the modern mind, from a whole spectrum of associations with the outmoded and politically dubious. Woolf's conception of the dynamics of manners and sentiments in political life finds especially vivid expression in *Mrs. Dalloway*, which arguably depicts the rich and intimate texture of society more creatively and poignantly than any of her other writings. In the phrase of the modernist scholar Avrom Fleishman, *Mrs. Dalloway* is "in part a political novel in the

⁶² Burke, *Reflections*, 171-72. For a detailed account of how Burke conflates "a spiritual sphere of attitudes and beliefs on the one hand, and concrete national institutions, on the other," see Roberto Romani, *National Character and Public Spirit in Britain and France, 1750-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 190. From a different standpoint, Terry Eagleton provides a critical interpretation of the moral ideology of Burke's thought reflected in this passage, which is at once trenchant and unsatisfactory. Eagleton claims that by aestheticizing "the full sadistic blast of authority" and incorporating the feminine category of beauty into "the sublimity of the masculine law," Burke renders "[w]oman, the aesthetic and political hegemony" synonymous. With its preoccupation with the relation between the law and hegemony, Eagleton's analysis forestalls a closer scrutiny of Burke's understanding of collective experience and social organization. See Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Cambridge, MA, USA: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 58-59.

modern mode—updating Trollope’s milieu in effect.”⁶³ Quoting passages from *Mrs. Dalloway*, Hugh Kenner attributes Woolf’s depiction of Englishness to a limitation on scope, dismissing her as “a classic English novelist of manners” rather than a representative “modernist” comparable to James Joyce and T. S. Eliot.⁶⁴ Kenner’s uncharitable remark touches upon an important aspect of Woolf’s work without doing justice to its profound meaning. For Woolf, manners mediate between social activities and the inner workings of the human heart. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, she undertakes to revive the social and affective relations of modern life by infusing moral power into manners. A close examination of Woolf’s rendering of characters and the social system in the novel in light of her ongoing interest in Burke will help to illuminate her moral imagination and conception of collective spirit.

Love and Law

Mrs. Dalloway opens by portraying a lack of attunement between public sentiments and British institutions—one of Burke’s chief concerns. As Clarissa ventures from her childhood retreat of Bourton into the busy London street, thanks to Woolf’s deft suturing of chronologies, she is enveloped in the solemn political atmosphere of Westminster, on the one hand, and intoxicated by the vital and interconnected social life of London on the other. The two spheres, bodied forth through Clarissa’s two states of mind, are certainly contiguous, mediated by the “leaden circles” of Big Ben that “dissolved in the air” (4). Yet Woolf brings to light their conflict by foregrounding the

⁶³ Avrom Fleishman, *Virginia Woolf: A Critical Reading* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 73.

⁶⁴ Hugh Kenner, *A Sinking Island: The Modern English Writers* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 175.

dissonance between love and law. The timepiece's power to establish rules intimates the dominance of political authority, which is made more explicit in a later context when Woolf describes, in a satirical tone, the clock "which always struck two minutes after Big Ben ... as if Big Ben were all very well with his majesty laying down the law, so solemn, so just" (125).

In contradistinction to the sense of gravity Big Ben's booming sound provokes, Clarissa conveys a tender embrace of life shared by people from all walks of life, including "the veriest frumps, the most dejected of miseries sitting on doorsteps (drink their downfall)," people who "can't be dealt with ... by Acts of Parliament for that very reason: they love life" (4). It is important to note that from the very outset, Woolf makes a point of connecting Clarissa and people of different social classes through shared feelings. Meanwhile, mocking the rationale behind lawmaking, the parenthesis highlights the tension between a spontaneous emotion and a rigid instrumental mentality. If "Acts of Parliament" fail to control the alcoholic vagrants, it is their love of life that defies the penetrating power of regulation. Focusing on the symbolic meaning of these vagrant figures, Michael Whitworth argues that the easy alliterative phrase—"drink their downfall"—"is swept along in the tide of Clarissa's rhapsodic and lyrical account of London," thus deflecting the narrative from an observation of implications of a social problem into a celebration of "liberty" that "tends to obscure their humanity and to erase the lives they led before becoming vagrants."⁶⁵ The general drift of Woolf's description, however, points to an issue larger than specific social problems such as alcoholism or vagrancy. Like Burke, Woolf contrasts, albeit in a rather non-Burkean scene, a warm affective mode of existence with a stern system of authority. Relocating love in a

⁶⁵ Michael H. Whitworth, *Virginia Woolf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 142.

boundless domain of life, whose vitality overflows the containment of governing power, Woolf broadens the horizon upon which she is to reconfigure patriotic feelings, manners, and authority.

Whereas Parliament loses connection with collective modes of feeling, the appearance of the monarchy elicits more complicated sentiments from the public in the opening scene. Here Woolf simultaneously reinforces the disjunction between state power and forms of social life and adumbrates the penetration of such power into the emotional experience of the people. On the one hand, the “mystery” and “authority” of “the enduring symbol of the state” is separated from the crowd by the “dove grey” blinds of a modern vehicle (14, 16). And royalty seems to stand as a vehicle for people’s curiosity, nostalgia, and topical chitchat. The irony intensifies when grey is later deployed as the color motif for Sir William Bradshaw, a representative of bourgeois pretentiousness, whose “motor car was grey, so to match its sober suavity, grey furs, silver grey rugs” (92).

On the other hand, the royal spectacle and crowd behaviors reflect how the establishment works on modern men and women affectively. As the narrator avers, what underlies “the surface agitation of the passing car” is “[s]omething so trifling in single instances that no mathematical instrument, though capable of transmitting shocks in China, could register the vibration; yet in its fullness rather formidable and in its common appeal emotional” (17-18). Crucially, Woolf does not simply dismiss the emblematic function of monarchy. Instead, she counterbalances such superficiality with an emphasis on British society’s historical continuity, a move again evocative of Burke. As Richard Dalloway reflects, thinking of the symbolic meaning of the royalty on his way home to

tell Clarissa he loves her, “he liked continuity; and the sense of handing on the tradition of the past” (114).

But though both register a collective emotionality, the crowd’s “dark breath of veneration” contrasts with the love of life earlier described (16). Intermingling the loyalty and sentimentality provoked by the “greatness” of the state power with haunting memories of “the dead; of the flag; of Empire” and images of “poor women, nice little children, orphans, widows, the War,” as well as “bronze heroes,” the narrative implies a connection between the traumatic experience of the War and a dangerous mode of patriotism (17-19). Woolf’s description of the movement of the clouds in the midst of the skywriting further reinforces the reach of state power symbolized by the royalty: “The clouds to which the letters E, G, or L had attached themselves moved freely, as if destined to cross from West to East on a mission of the greatest importance which would never be revealed, and yet certainly so it was—a mission of the greatest importance” (20-21). The telltale sequence of E, G, L, combined with the geographical vector “from West to East” and the satirical repetition of the phrase “a mission of the greatest importance,” alludes patently to England and her imperialism.⁶⁶ If the monarchy remains a locus of communal feelings and historical experience, those feelings, Woolf suggests, are also susceptible to manipulation in the service of the exercise of its massive power.

⁶⁶ In his essay “Air War Prophecy and Interwar Modernism,” Paul Saint-Amour provides a detailed review of the interpretations of the motorcar/skywriting sequence. Comparing “the novel’s narratorial gaze” to “the gaze of total war,” Saint-Amour faults the novel for “refusing to fabricate some fictive escape from total war’s inexorable logic.” In support of his argument Saint-Amour claims that although the novel “attempts to capture the logic of total war for redeployment in a deeply pacifist agenda,” the way it “protest[s] total war on the grounds that social, cultural, industrial, and military systems are crucially interpenetrative is not to step outside the logic of total war; it is simply to resist one application of that logic.” Paul K. Saint-Amour, “Air War Prophecy and Interwar Modernism,” *Comparative Literature Studies*, 42.2 (2005): 130-161, see 148-49. While Saint-Amour’s analysis of the narrator’s agency in the novel is remarkably incisive, his preoccupation with the motorcar/skywriting scene and machinery of war leaves out Woolf’s perception of collective emotional experience in this affectively charged scene and elsewhere in the novel.

The novel uncovers such manipulation of devotion and civic attachment at various points. Analogous to the skywriting transmitting a web of imperial and industrial signals are manifestations of authoritative power inscribing patriotic doctrines in the souls of soldiers and civilians alike. Uniformed boys in military training are described as wearing “an expression like the letters of a legend written round the base of a statue praising duty, gratitude, fidelity, love of England” (50). And this patriotic indoctrination lies behind Septimus’s motivations for enlisting. He “was one of the first to volunteer,” driven by a heroic passion “to save an England which consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare’s plays and Miss Isabel Pole in a green dress walking in a square” (84). Septimus’s romantic idea of his country, shaped by the predominance of a literary heritage, confirms the account by historians like Stefan Collini, according to which the canon of English literature has been mobilized to establish a national identity and to serve the nation’s cause “in increasingly official form” since the late nineteenth century.⁶⁷ In her examination of social tensions in late Victorian and early Edwardian Britain, Jose Harris also observes that “the politics of Empire ... in the 1890s and 1900s drew heavily upon the older philosophies of civic virtue and ‘masculine radicalism’.”⁶⁸ In Harris’s analysis, “Imperial visions injected a powerful strain of hierarchy, militarism, ‘frontier mentality,’ administrative rationality, and masculine civic virtue into British political culture, at a time when domestic political forces were running in quite the opposite direction, toward egalitarianism, ‘progressivism,’ consumerism, popular democracy,

⁶⁷ Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 347. For a detailed analysis of the relation between English literature and national identity, see the chapter titled “The Whig Interpretation of English Literature: Literary History and National Identity,” 342-373.

⁶⁸ Jose Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit*, 15.

feminism and women's rights."⁶⁹ The way Septimus idealizes his country and gallantry manifests an internalization of moral virtues of duty, manliness, and loyalty.

This is not to say that Woolf impugns the meaningfulness of common feelings of allegiance. On the contrary, she understands the importance of affect for politics in a way similar to Burke: "Politics ought to be adjusted, not to human reasonings, but to human nature; of which the reason is but a part, and by no means the greatest part."⁷⁰ Burke further pointed out that understanding the complexity of human nature required a subtle knowledge of the "tempers, dispositions, and moral, civil, and social habitudes of the people, which disclose themselves only in a long space of time."⁷¹ Woolf shares Burke's emphasis on how politics must address rational and non-rational elements in human nature, and for her, aesthetic sensibility serves to facilitate comprehension of human nature. But Woolf had to negotiate a situation in which artistic insights into humanity seemed to have lost still further ground to instrumental reason and were considered less and less relevant to politics. In her essay "The Artist and Politics" (1936), Woolf argues that the artist has a special vantage point in probing the profundities of the human heart:

[T]he practice of art, far from making the artist out of touch with his kind, rather increases his sensibility. It breeds in him a feeling for the passions and needs of mankind in the mass which the citizen whose duty it is to work for a particular country or for a particular party has no time and perhaps no need to cultivate. Thus even if he be ineffective, he is by no means apathetic. Perhaps indeed he suffers more than the active citizen because he has no obvious duty to discharge.⁷²

⁶⁹ Ibid., 6.

⁷⁰ Edmund Burke, "Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents (1770)," in *Edmund Burke: Selected Writings and Speeches*, ed., Peter J. Stanlis (New York: Anchor Books, 1963), 102.

⁷¹ Quoted in Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 11.

⁷² Virginia Woolf, "The Artist and Politics," in *The Moment and Other Essays* (New York: Harvest Book, 1948), 227.

Without negating the importance of the civic duty performed by the active citizen, Woolf stresses the value of the artist's sensibility, which, she believes, will enable him to reach a more thorough and penetrating understanding of humankind that is unattainable to the active citizen.

Woolf's essay contains a response to a political environment inhospitable to aesthetic sensibility. When recounting his experience during the 1920s as literary editor of the *Nation*, a weekly liberal journal whose chairman was John Maynard Keynes at the time, Leonard Woolf pointed out that "there was almost always a pretty deep gulf between the political and literary editors of left-wing weekly papers, like the *Nation* and the *New Statesman*," which "too often led to a violent struggle for space between politics and literature."⁷³ What Leonard Woolf described as a grab for journal space is indicative of a larger divergence between art and politics at that time, when the rise of Fascism and large-scale economic and financial crises gave urgency to immediate and structural changes in economic and political institutions and called into question literary practices that did not seem capable of solving real problems.

It is now common knowledge that the growing complexity and scale of modern socioeconomic activities have given rise to an unprecedented privileging of political machinery, engineering, and legislation that rely on expertise of a scientific kind. In his lecture "Politics as a Vocation," Max Weber traces "the development of modern bureaucracy into a specialized, highly qualified, intellectual workforce that has undergone a lengthy preparatory period of training."⁷⁴ What ensues, as Weber puts it, is

⁷³ Leonard Woolf, *Downhill All the Way: An Autobiography of the Years 1919-1939* (London: A Harvest Book, 1967), 139-140.

⁷⁴ Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *The Vocation Lectures*. Eds. David Owen and Tracy B. Strong, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Indianapolis: Hackett Company, 2004), 44.

“the professional bureaucracy with its division of labor into specialized fields of expertise.”⁷⁵ The formation of this expert group, comprising professional politicians responsible for social organization and governance, is in keeping with the development of “expert systems” in general, which, as sociologists such as Anthony Giddens have pointed out, “organize large areas of the material and social environments in which we live today.”⁷⁶

One of the consequences of the emphasis on expertise and professionalism in the political bureaucratic system was arguably an enlarging of the gap between formal politics and other avenues such as imaginative literature, which used to nurture social and political life in significant ways. Indeed, Burke’s *Reflections* blends diverse literary genres and often relies on the power of imagination in advancing its arguments.⁷⁷

Another example from the nineteenth century is Benjamin Disraeli, who made use of the genre of novels to express political beliefs and sensibilities. By contrast, increasing specialization in the province of politics seems to tend toward marginalizing, or even discrediting, conceptions of political life that are not informed by practical experience with the intricate operation of the political machinery. Woolf’s intimate connection with Bloomsbury members including Leonard Woolf and John Maynard Keynes, who were deeply involved in public affairs and government administration, must have enhanced her

⁷⁵ Ibid., 44. Focusing on the social and administrative history in mid-Victorian Britain, Lawrence Goldman identifies “the relatively swift development of a professional bureaucracy” as a characteristic of the period “from the 1870s.” See his essay “Experts, investigators, and the state in 1860: British Social Scientists through American Eyes,” in *The State and Social Investigation in Britain and the United States*. Eds. Michael J. Lacey and Mary O. Furner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 111. Goldman, however, denies the professional bureaucracy any expertise, which is strictly defined as “specialist skills and esoteric knowledge” in his analysis (126). Goldman contends that from the 1870s onwards the professional bureaucracy alienated the professional experts and intellectuals, a community that played a more important role in the making of social and political policies in mid-nineteenth century.

⁷⁶ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 27.

⁷⁷ See John Whale’s *Imagination under Pressure, 1789-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), for a detailed account of how different forms of imagination play out in Romanticism.

awareness of the different preoccupations of artists and politicians. She is critical of the petrifying effects of excessive rationalization in politics and seeks to restore a more nuanced understanding of human sentiments to it, even though she does not challenge the division of labor between artists and politicians in modern life.

The juxtaposition of artistically disposed figures and professional politicians in her novels, which is typical of Woolf's characterological system, highlights her concern with the relations between aesthetic sensibility and administrative rationality. As Jane Wheare observes, her first novel, *The Voyage Out*, foregrounds "the question of the relative value of politicians and social reformers on the one hand, and artists and critics on the other"—a question that "was to trouble Woolf throughout her life" and punctuates ... her writing as a whole."⁷⁸ The conversational style and canny balance of contrasting perspectives in *The Voyage Out* facilitate Woolf's exploration of social, moral, and aesthetic implications of this key question. Woolf clearly refrains, in the novel, from validating any of the conflicting points of view voiced by either the artistically inclined characters (including Helen and Rachel) or the politicians and social reformers. As a typical politician characterized by pragmatism, "a grasp of things," and knowledge of the mechanism of the state, Richard Dalloway enunciates the contrast between politicians and artists in terms of their differing engagements with the messy conditions of the real world.⁷⁹ In his words, "It is impossible for human beings, constituted as they are, both to fight and to have ideals."⁸⁰ Although the overall portrayal of Richard in Woolf's first novel does not work in his favor, Woolf leaves many of his analyses uncontested, including his conclusion about the driving force that differentiates politics from art. This

⁷⁸ Jane Wheare, "Introduction," in Virginia Woolf, *The Voyage Out* (London: Penguin, 1992), ix.

⁷⁹ Virginia Woolf, *The Voyage Out*, 36.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 56.

observation of Richard's is reminiscent of what Max Weber calls the "two fundamentally different, irredeemably incompatible maxims": "an ethics of conviction" and "an ethics of responsibility."⁸¹ Evoking Richard's point of view, Weber describes politics as "a slow, powerful drilling through hard boards," for which responsibility rather than ideals acts as the best guide.⁸²

While recognizing the distinction between political action and artistic vision, Woolf conveys a sense of the inadequacies of instrumental reason in political governance through an analogy between overwrought intellectualism and administrative mindsets. An avatar of rigorous Cambridge logic, Mr. Pepper talks about the death of his friend "with sinister conciseness," and like a mechanic offers the diagnosis, "A screw [was] loose somewhere, no doubt of it."⁸³ Though a figure of speech, the banality of the expression does not dissolve its dehumanizing effect. And Mr. Pepper's remark then reverberates with Richard Dalloway's admonishment against the malfunctioning mechanism of the state: "if the meanest screw fails in its task, the proper working of the whole is imperiled."⁸⁴ Richard Dalloway's notion of social organization here reveals a mechanical rationality that focuses exclusively on the workings of machinery rather than human feelings and sensibilities.⁸⁵ In this light, Sally's comments in the end of *Mrs. Dalloway*—"Richard has improved.... I shall go and talk to him. I shall say good-night. What does the brain matter ... compared with the heart"—though phatic and facetious in a way, bespeak a central concern in Woolf's work.

⁸¹ Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," 83.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 93.

⁸³ Virginia Woolf, *The Voyage Out*, 9.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁸⁵ Woolf's treatment of the Dalloways in this early novel is clearly more satirical. Alex Zwerdling, for example, notes the tonal and conceptual changes in Woolf's depiction of the Dalloways in *Mrs. Dalloway*. See Zwerdling's *Virginia Woolf and the Real World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 137-38.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf further establishes how such a functionalist mentality tends toward manipulation of emotions. Such tendencies are confirmed by William Bradshaw's mantra of "a sense of proportion" and the concurrent desire (Woolf dubs it "Conversion," Proportion's "less smiling, more formidable" sister) to impress such "venerable" ideas as "love, duty, self sacrifice" "on the face of the populace" (97-98). The sense of proportion, in Bradshaw's preaching, must go hand in hand with "family affection; honour; courage; and a brilliant career," and all this for "the good of society" (99). Bradshaw's language, aglow with the high-sounding vocabulary of civic virtue, strikingly ends with a bourgeois value system of success. His conflating of the non-rational character of honor and courage, on the one hand, and a rational understanding of professional reward, on the other, betrays an insidious utilitarian logic that subjects genuine feelings to administrative control in the name of "the good of society." Bradshaw's praise of civic virtue thus rings hollow, with the moral resonance of those virtues being emptied out. Differing from Burke's sociological sophistication about the importance of politics' adjusting both to "human reasonings" and non-rational parts of human nature, Bradshaw affirms a morality that, with its emphasis on discipline and instrumentality, coarsens, if not stifles, the collective spirit of public life.⁸⁶

Bradshaw's rhetoric figures as part of the patriotic discourse inculcating a sense of civic duty in the populace, including Septimus and the uniformed boys. And indeed the forms of patriotism harnessed for social utility and imperial purposes by centralized authority stand as Woolf's critical target in *Mrs. Dalloway*. For Woolf, such allegiances not only twist the meaning of public virtue but also remain implicated in a political

⁸⁶ David Bromwich offers an insightful analysis of Burke's defense of the non-rational character of virtue and critique of utilitarianism in his introduction to Edmund Burke, *On Empire, Liberty, and Reform: Speeches and Letters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 19-20.

machinery of power that threatens to reduce all motivations to cold calculations of interest. From this perspective it can be argued that Woolf, in the spirit of Burke and John Stuart Mill, displays a classical liberal concern with the diminishment of human spirit in the face of the predominance of interest-driven principles and practices. At the heart of Burke's arguments in *Reflections* and elsewhere lies his affinity for "enlarging [people's] ideas" and "furnishing their minds," as well as the cure he attempts to find in "the spirit of nobility" for "selfishness and a narrow mind."⁸⁷ Mill is more widely known for his critique of "the pinched and hidebound type of human character."⁸⁸ As George Kateb writes, "The avoidance of human dwarfing, of diminishment and self-diminishment, is a prominent theme in *On Liberty* (and other writings by Mill) because dwarfing appears to be inherent in many social tendencies that relentlessly remove diversity from the world."⁸⁹ In *Mrs. Dalloway*, a focus on the debilitating effects of political mobilizing of civic sentiments seems to give rise to an imaginative exploration of alternative understandings of virtue as an essential human capacity. Mindful of the malleability of patriotic sentiments, Woolf not only provides a social critique of "imperial progress and civic hypocrisy," as Rebecca Walkowitz has cogently argued,⁹⁰ she also gestures toward some uncoerced forms of collective spirit that she sees as nourishing for modern life.

Civil Society and Cosmic Life

⁸⁷ Edmund Burke, *Reflections*, 173, and "A Letter to a Noble Lord," in *Further Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed., Daniel Ritchie (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1992), 321-22.

⁸⁸ J. S. Mill, *On Liberty*, in *The Spirit of the Age, On Liberty, The Subjection of Women*, ed., Alan Ryan (New York: Norton, 1997), 89.

⁸⁹ George Kateb, "A Reading of On Liberty," in *On Liberty: John Stuart Mill*, eds., David Bromwich and George Kateb (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 64.

⁹⁰ Rebecca Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 104.

Indeed, it would not be too much to say that the novel engages in the task of negotiating the meaning of public virtue. An outsider to formal politics herself, Clarissa is nevertheless sensitive to moral qualities that are pivotal for political life. Her favorite character is Lady Bexborough, an aristocratic figure who “opened a bazaar, they said, with the telegram in her hand, John, her favourite, killed” (4-5). Lady Bexborough is at the outset juxtaposed with Mrs. Foxcroft, who, in Woolf’s portrayal, “[ate] her heart out because that nice boy was killed and now the old Manor House must go to a cousin” (4). The dramatization of Mrs. Foxcroft’s reaction to bereavement and the suggestion of a causal relationship between her grief and the loss of the Manor house not only make her akin to Jane Austen’s matronly characters but also enhance the stoicism of Lady Bexborough, whom Clarissa not only admires but, for a counterfactual moment, wishes herself to be. For the matter-of-fact message about Lady Bexborough soon develops into a highly affective estimation: “[I]f she could have her life over again,” Clarissa decides, she “would have been, like Lady Bexborough, slow and stately; rather large; interested in politics like a man; with a country house; very dignified, very sincere” (10).

The twin aspects in Lady Bexborough’s characterization—her exteriority (“slow and stately”) and inner quality (“very dignified, very sincere”)—converge on the qualifier “large,” suggesting magnitude of both appearance and spirit. Woolf’s portrayal of Elizabeth, Lady Holland in an early essay supplies a kind of footnote to the connotations of this word. As Woolf puts it, “We seem to feel, however dimly, the presence of someone who is large and emphatic, who shows us fearlessly her peculiarities because she does not mind what we think of them, and who has, however peremptory and unsympathetic she may be, an extraordinary force of character. She makes certain things

in the world stand up boldly all round her; she calls out certain qualities in other people.” Beneath this iridescent, if also overbearing, façade, there lies what Woolf calls “a hard woman perhaps, but undoubtedly a strong and courageous one.”⁹¹ The evocative nature of the “large and emphatic” character extends personal traits to interpersonal influence, indicative of Woolf’s interest in forms of human spirit with contagious and collective efficacy. Further, from “large and emphatic” to “strong and courageous,” Woolf’s description of force of character modulates into a morally charged language of virtue, giving emphasis to her character’s intrinsic qualities of strength untethered from social identities.

In his analysis of Woolf’s “dual commitment to self-control and to emotional expression” in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Alex Zwerdling anchors Lady Bexborough’s stoicism in the ideology of the governing class.⁹² Such an alliance is supported by Peter Walsh’s disapproval of Clarissa’s attraction to the aristocratic ladies whom she finds courageous: “In all this there was a great deal of Dalloway, of course; a great deal of the public-spirited, British Empire, tariff-reform, governing-class spirit” (75). But although Woolf acknowledges Peter’s critique, she does not dismiss public spirit as such. Rather, she moves to disentangle the idea of public spirit from the unsavory authority and belligerence characteristic of imperial power, seeming in this endeavor to make an anachronistic turn to what John Burrow calls “old-fashioned Whiggism,” which “placed salons and the society of women among the chief agents of education.”⁹³ Clarissa’s party

⁹¹ Virginia Woolf, *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, ed., Andrew McNeillie. Vol. I (London: Hogarth Press, 1986), 236-238.

⁹² Alex Zwerdling, *Virginia Woolf and the Real World*, 136.

⁹³ John Burrow, *Whigs and Liberals*, 96. Burrow considers this ethos antithetical to “the public school ethos” in the second half of the nineteenth century.

provides such a venue, a social space where effects of beauty and refinement of manners counterpoint the stark power of political authority.

Harking back to the contrast between august Westminster and lively street life, the setting of the party reenacts the tension between political and social realms. In a passage of free indirect discourse filtered through Peter's lens, the gathering is endowed with a sense of beauty—"Not the crude beauty of the eye" or "beauty pure and simple," Peter explains, but beauty of a revelatory kind. Peter recognizes the shallowness of the party scene: "It was straightness and emptiness of course; the symmetry of a corridor." Yet he also perceives something more profound latent in such a social gathering: "[B]ut it was also windows lit up, a piano, a gramophone sounding; a sense of pleasure-making hidden, but now and again emerging ... young people slowly circling, conversations between men and women, maids idly looking out..., stockings drying on top ledges, a parrot, a few plants. Absorbing, mysterious, of infinite richness, this life" (159). The well-balanced rhythm of sound and silence, of motion and stillness, adds to the enchantment of the scene. The leisurely and cordial manners of young people infuse an aura of ease, reinforcing the natural cheerfulness and sociability emanating from the party.

This feeling of serene beauty also contrasts with the semblance of beauty Septimus is desperate to cling to. Looking at the "smoke words" inscribed by the skywriting aeroplane, Septimus sees nothing but beauty: "exquisite beauty"; "one shape after another of unimaginable beauty." The symbols, in his eyes, "[signal] their intention to provide him, for nothing, for ever, for looking merely, with beauty, more beauty!" (21). While Septimus's feverish reification of beauty indicates the frenzied mind of a shell-shocked soldier, his sense of beauty is also divorced from spontaneous feelings. For

Septimus, “beauty was behind a pane of glass,” and his insistence on its ubiquity only reinforces the sad fact that “he could not feel” (85-86). Beauty in his perception exhibits a certain franticness, like “swallows swooping, swerving, flinging themselves in and out, round and round, yet always with perfect control as if elastics held them” (68), in contradistinction to the gentle and effortless harmony of the aforementioned social scene.

If Septimus’s incantation that beauty “was the truth now; beauty, that was the truth now” embodies a prophetic self-fashioning that contrasts with the sociality of Clarissa’s party (68), the appearance of the Prime Minister gives the party a political bass note, generating a somber sense of state power. Woolf’s tone in describing the impact made by the Prime Minister’s advent is simultaneously mocking and grave: “He tried to look somebody. It was amusing to watch. Nobody looked at him. They just went on talking, yet it was perfectly plain that they all knew, felt to the marrow of their bones, this majesty passing; this symbol of what they all stood for, English society” (168).

Apparently, the Prime Minister is at once among and apart from the other party guests. Though the “commanding authority” he engenders doesn’t completely subdue the “frivolity” of the occasion (168), it conjures up an idea of “English society” that differs from the non-authoritarian community represented by Clarissa’s party. Whereas the former suggests an aggregate social body with a recognizable power structure, the latter is composed of more affective interpersonal relations. As Maria DiBattista puts it, “Clarissa’s party preserves the principle of voluntary, unforced participation by acknowledging the gratuitousness of [the soul’s freedom].”⁹⁴ The Prime Minister’s retreat into the little room further makes visible the disconnection between political

⁹⁴ Maria DiBattista, *Virginia Woolf’s Major Novels: The Fables of Anon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 61.

authority and what is a definitive characteristic of civil society—social mutuality. The concept of civil society is famously elastic. Woolf’s depiction evokes the eighteenth-century understanding of civil society elaborated by the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, which describes, as the historian John Burrow succinctly puts it, “the subtler, sometimes tacit interconnections of social life” as opposed to “the community organized in its explicit political aspect, as government and public law.”⁹⁵ In this light, Clarissa’s party is more than a lady’s salon. It is a microcosm of social collectivity whose vitality relies on effects of manners rather than authoritative power.

At the same time, however, the party reaches toward life in a more cosmic register. Throughout the novel, Clarissa and her party have been profoundly connected with London and life. In the opening scene, Woolf immediately transports Clarissa, who sets out to buy flowers for her party, from her home (both at Bourton via memory and in Westminster) to London streets and the larger sphere of living. As Clarissa reflects on her emotional response to the booming of Big Ben, “Such fools we are, she thought, crossing Victoria Street. For Heaven only knows why one loves it so, how one sees it so, making it up, building it round one, tumbling it, creating it every moment afresh; . . . they love life” (4). The inundation of verbs in the prior sentence seems at first striking for a novel characterized by perception rather than action, yet it serves to impart deeper meaning to Clarissa’s party. As Peter sees “infinite richness” of life through the party, Clarissa considers it as a way to bring people together; it is “an offering; to combine, to create” (119). At the same time, the spatial expansion is paralleled with a temporal condensation,

⁹⁵ John Burrow, *Whigs and Liberals*, 26. See also Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 69-82. This understanding is different, for instance, from what Habermas calls civil society “in the narrower sense as the realm of commodity exchange and of social labor.” See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), 30.

as Woolf encapsulates life in a commingled “Life; London; this moment of June” (4), or hypostatizes it in “every moment of it, every drop of it, here, this instant, now, in the sun, in Regent’s Park” (77). In addition to creating a poetic cadence, the switch between the infinite and the infinitesimal brings forth a sense of continuity between lived experience and life apprehended in cosmic dimensions.

Clarissa’s imagination of her permanence in the world functions similarly to connect her to larger spaces of life. To her mind:

But every one remembered; what she loved was this, here, now, in front of her; the fat lady in the cab. Did it matter then, she asked herself, walking towards Bond Street, did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely? but that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was; part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best, who lifted her on their branches as she had seen the trees lift the mist, but it spread ever so far, her life, herself. (9, emphasis added)

Clarissa’s thought here echoes the “transcendental theory” she proposed in her younger days, which considers possible latent connections between people and between self and world. Reflecting on “[o]dd affinities she had with people she had never spoken to,” the young Clarissa suggested that “since our apparitions, the part of us which appears, are so momentary compared with the other, the unseen part of us, which spreads wide, the unseen might survive, be recovered somehow attached to this person or that, or even haunting certain places after death ... perhaps—perhaps” (149). As S. P. Rosenbaum observes, Clarissa’s is “a theory of perception as well as immortality” in which consciousness is “defined or completed by what it is conscious of” and “individual consciousnesses are related to one another through their perceptions of a common

environment.”⁹⁶ Clearly, Clarissa continues to ponder the relation between self and cosmic life as she grows older. It is true that her belief in the passage quoted above is couched in a language of afterlife, yet the consistency of the past tense works to confound temporalities, unifying the two sentences led by “but,” which refer to a life of “here and now” and an imagined state of immortality respectively. In other words, Woolf’s refraining from using the subjunctive mood to describe Clarissa’s meditation on the afterlife has an effect of naturalizing the interconnectedness between Clarissa and the world. And depictions of what she loved of London life and of how she lived ubiquitously in the streets and trees flow into each other.

Peter Nicholls has noted how the larger rhythmic pattern in Woolf’s writing produces “a certain permeability of self and other which is felt as an effortless (though temporary) union.”⁹⁷ In Nicholls’s view, “the peace which comes from a sense of community with the world is also a kind of finality, an end to struggles which tie us to individual suffering.” Nicholls questions the efficacy of Woolf’s desire to seek “some ground of identification beyond the divisive realm of actual social relationships,” arguing that in so doing “Woolf is left with either truths of an ineffable order, truths which cannot be spoken, or with the possibility that only with death can there be a return to an ideal unity.”⁹⁸ As we shall see, however, death functions as a condition of, rather than a coda to, Woolf’s recreation of public spirit.

⁹⁶ S. P. Rosenbaum, *Aspects of Bloomsbury: Studies in Modern English Literary and Intellectual History* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), 18-19. Douglas Mao examines Woolf’s “interest in the possibility that subjectivities might be *connected* through objects” in relation to philosophical ideas of F. H. Bradley and G. E. Moore in his *Solid Objects: Modernism and the Test of Production* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 51-52.

⁹⁷ Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (London: MacMillan, 1995), 265.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 266-67.

Fate and the Art of Living

Riven as it is by the news of Septimus's suicide, Clarissa's party does embody the vulnerability of life. While William Bradshaw is talking with Richard Dalloway about some bill concerning "the deferred effects of shell shock," Lady Bradshaw tells Clarissa of the case of Septimus, who had served in the army and has now killed himself. In the wake of the Bradshaws' conversations about Septimus' suicide, Clarissa thinks, "In the middle of my party, here's death" (179), expressing not only criticism of a dynamic of administrative and discursive power that is implicated in Septimus' death but also a lament over an ontological reality. Even before Clarissa heard of Septimus's death, a thought had already crossed her mind: "how it is certain we must die" (171). This is not merely a fleeting sentiment, but a recurrent theme that reinforces a solemn view of fate. Woolf conveys this idea of fate more explicitly earlier in the novel. In Peter's dreamlike visions of the solitary traveller's journey, Woolf depicts how a portentous sense of fate permeates a peaceful atmosphere of domestic life: "So, as the solitary traveller advances down the village street where the women stand knitting and the men dig in the garden, the evening seems ominous; the figures still; as if some august fate, known to them, awaited without fear, were about to sweep them into complete annihilation" (57).

This notion of fate is rendered more vividly in a scene fraught with social tension. Sauntering down the Strand in the middle of the novel, Clarissa's daughter Elizabeth finds her enjoyment of the "geniality" of the street life of London interrupted by some loud noise (134):

[S]uddenly there were trumpets (the unemployed) blaring, rattling about in the uproar; military music; as if people were marching; yet had they been dying—had some woman breathed her last and whoever was watching, opening the window of the room where she had just brought off

that act of supreme dignity, looked down on Fleet street, that uproar, that military music would have come triumphing up to him, consolatory, indifferent. (135)

The passage begins with an observation of some political procession of “the unemployed.”

While the description of how the “military music” blared out by the “trumpets” remains indifferent to individual suffering might recall Clarissa’s previous remark that “causes,” like “religious ecstasy,” “made people callous” and “dulled their feelings” (11), Woolf presently subsumes individual suffering under a common, and even cruel, destiny:

There was no recognition in [that uproar, that military music] of one’s *fortune*, or *fate*, and for that very reason even to those dazed watching for the last shivers of consciousness on the faces of the dying, consoling. Forgetfulness in people might wound, their ingratitude corrode, but this *voice*, pouring endlessly, year in year out, would take whatever it might be; this vow; this van; this life; this procession, would wrap them all about and carry them on, as in the rough stream of a glacier the ice holds a splinter of bone, a blue petal, some oak trees, and rolls them on. (135, emphasis added)

The “uproar” and “noise” of the political procession is now absorbed into the aeonian “voice” of a cosmic one. Woolf’s mesmerizing reiteration of “this vow; this van; this life; this procession” signifies more than a Bergsonian flow of time; it emphasizes some inexorable force to which humanity as a whole is subjected.

Clarissa’s states of mind at the outset of *Mrs. Dalloway* foreshadow this sense of fate. As Clarissa walks along the London streets, “She had a perpetual sense, as she watched the taxi cabs, of being out, out, far out to sea and alone; she always had the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day” (8). While enacting a voyage toward infinity, the metaphorical language of seafaring heightens a sense of precariousness. There is a subtle change of tone, however, when Clarissa envisions herself as part of the crowd in an “astonishing and rather solemn progress ... up Bond

Street” (10). While such a progress resonates with the procession of life in the passage quoted above, the descriptors “astonishing” and “solemn” infuse it with emotional and moral charge. Reuben Brower has drawn attention to the meaning of the adjective “solemn” in his incisive analysis of the formal structure of the novel. Focusing on how Woolf continuously uses the term to describe the ambience engendered by Westminster and Big Ben, emblems of the force of political authority, Brower argues that the word suggests the terror of interruption, of a break in “the exhilarated sense of being a part of the forward moving process” of life.⁹⁹

Brower’s interpretation captures an important facet of this key word, but “solemn” is laden with even deeper meanings in Woolf’s work, describing an orientation toward life, a deportment of solemnity. As she wrote in her diary: “And as usual I feel that if I sink further I shall reach the truth. That is the only mitigation; a kind of nobility. Solemnity. I shall make myself face the fact that there is nothing—nothing for any of us.”¹⁰⁰ The expression “solemnity,” used synonymously with “nobility,” denotes a moral response to the discovery of nothingness. Mrs. Ramsay in *To The Lighthouse* gives another example of Woolf’s fascination with the idea of solemnity. Describing Mrs. Ramsay in a moment of solitude, Woolf writes: “All the being and the doing, expansive, glittering, vocal, evaporated; and one shrunk, with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others.”¹⁰¹ Though the privacy of Mrs. Ramsay’s soul is locked in an inscrutable form, one way to understand it is to turn to Woolf’s description of her mother in her *Reminiscences*. In her portrait, Woolf

⁹⁹ Reuben Brower, “Something Central Which Permeated: Virginia Woolf and *Mrs. Dalloway*” in *Virginia Woolf (Modern Critical Views)*, ed., Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1986), 7-18.

¹⁰⁰ Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*. Vol. III, 235.

¹⁰¹ Virginia Woolf, *To the Light House*. 1927. Annotated Edition (Orlando: Harcourt, 2005), 65.

highlights her mother's sense of "the mystery of life" as "a vast procession on the march towards death":

You may see the two things in her face. 'Let us make the most of what we have, since we know nothing of the future' was the motive that urged her to toil so incessantly on behalf of happiness, right doing, love; and the melancholy echoes answered 'What does it matter? Perhaps there is no future.' Encompassed as she was by this solemn doubt her most trivial activities had something of grandeur about them; and her presence was *large* and austere, bringing with it not only joy and life, exquisite fleeting femininities, but the majesty of a *nobly* composed human being.¹⁰²

Woolf indicates two moral codes here: one based on a sense of duty and love; the other located in a code of manners. And with regard to the second sense, Woolf's emphasis on the "large" and "nobly composed" qualities of her mother is redolent of her delineation of Lady Bexborough. The awareness of an ultimate emptiness in life, in Woolf's account, does not lead to sheer resignation. Rather, Woolf accentuates a mode of "solemnity" that describes moral responses to such a gloomy realization.

What Woolf means by "solemnity" is expressed more fully in Clarissa's belief in an "art of living" in *Mrs. Dalloway* (54). The emphasis on peace and beauty associated with Clarissa's party arises, strangely enough, from a dismal sense of fate. In Peter's recollection of Clarissa's outlook on life:

As we are a doomed race, chained to a sinking ship (her favourite reading as a girl was Huxley and Tyndall, and they were fond of these nautical metaphors), as the whole thing is a bad joke, let us, at any rate, do our part; mitigate the sufferings of our fellow-prisoners (Huxley again); decorate the dungeon with flowers and air-cushions; be as decent as we possibly can. Those ruffians, the Gods, shan't have it all their own way...if, all the same, you behaved like a lady. (76)

Clarissa's sense of doom finally develops into an ethical stance toward life. Rather than relying on the mediation of death as the way to protect individual autonomy from

¹⁰² Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1985), 36. Emphasis added.

oppressive power, as Peter Nicholls has argued,¹⁰³ Woolf employs the empty center of nothingness to consolidate an unforced community of sentiment constituted by a sense of shared destiny. Her appeal for decency here evokes Burke's notion of dignity in *Reflections*. Ruminating on the consequences of the disappearance of "antient chivalry," Burke writes:

All the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off. All the superadded ideas, furnished from the wardrobe of a moral imagination, which the heart owns, and the understanding ratifies, as necessary to cover the defects of our naked shivering nature, and to raise it to dignity in our own estimation, are to be exploded as a ridiculous, absurd, and antiquated fashion.¹⁰⁴

Not only does Clarissa's idea of "decorat[ing] the dungeon" echo Burke's well-known metaphor of "the decent drapery of life," the two writers also propose similar aesthetically oriented forms of life that invest moral power in manners. For Clarissa's avowed faith in ladylike and other-regarding behaviors bears a resemblance to Burke's conviction that the ancient morality of chivalry possesses refining and civilizing power.

In his defense of such morality phrased in an elegiac form:

But the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, oeconomists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever.... The unbought grace of life, the cheap defense of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprize, is gone! It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms*, 267.

¹⁰⁴ Edmund Burke, *Reflections*, 171. Jenny Davidson has pointed out that "Burke's defense of chivalry is motivated in part by his conviction that politeness serves as an essential buffer, not just between the powerless and the powerful but between man and the violence of his own nature." See Jenny Davidson, *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness: Manners and Morals from Locke to Austen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 81.

¹⁰⁵ Edmund Burke, *Reflections*, 169-170.

Arguing against the practical rationality of “sophisters, oeconomists, and calculators,” Burke tries to bestow a moral loftiness on a chivalrous code of honor. Such morality is grounded in aesthetic judgment, or what Burke calls the “mixed system of opinion and sentiment.”¹⁰⁶ It is the aesthetic appeal of grace, suggests Burke, that enables chivalry to bolster manly strength while bridling truculent energies. There is a discernible connection between “vice” and “ferocity” at individual and institutional levels in Burke’s formulation, and the softening power of an appreciation of grace or elegance remains central to his thought. Jenny Davidson has shown how Burke’s comparison of virtue to a garment that one wears is liable to accusations of hypocrisy.¹⁰⁷ Yet David Bromwich suggests that by the phrase about vice and grossness Burke means to “defend hypocrisy as a practice consistent with the socialized understanding of shame.”¹⁰⁸ Bromwich points out Burke’s reasoning that “virtue is actually made stronger by being confirmed into a habit ... because manners are civilizing through and through.”¹⁰⁹

In keeping with Burke’s belief that a civilized code of manners makes “vice los[e] half its evil, by losing all its grossness,” Clarissa expresses a similar view that “behav[ing] like a lady” could effectively counteract the evil forces of the “ruffians” and “the Gods” (76). Of course, Clarissa’s notion of the ladylike partakes of the “tinselly” part of her character,¹¹⁰ which is why the reader may be tempted to dismiss her “art of living” as snobbish or trivial. Yet by emphasizing the collective “we” (“we are a doomed race”) under the sway of fate, Clarissa’s exhortation—“let us ... do our part; mitigate the

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 170.

¹⁰⁷ Jenny Davidson, *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness*, 84-87.

¹⁰⁸ David Bromwich, “Wollstonecraft as a Critic of Burke,” in *Liberal Modernism and Democratic Individuality: George Kateb and the Practices of Politics*, eds. Austin Sarat and Dana R. Villa (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 181.

¹⁰⁹ David Bromwich, *Politics by Other Means: Higher Education and Group Thinking* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 145-46.

¹¹⁰ See Woolf’s comment in her diary, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. III, 32.

sufferings of our fellow-prisoners... ; be as decent as we possibly can”—espouses a moral stance of egalitarian import. Differing from Burke’s emphasis on the inherited manners of “chivalry,” which simultaneously defends the status quo, Clarissa’s idea of decency is not confined to her own class, nor confined to her country, but applicable to the human race as a whole.

Virtù Vince Fortuna

In contrast to Burke’s locating of the morality of chivalry in a hierarchical social order, Woolf attempts to disengage the moral quality embodied by “a lady” from the distribution of status by accentuating human togetherness in the face of a shared fate. Woolf’s depiction of fate recalls the classical conception of fortune—as embodied by the Greek *tyche* and Latin goddess *Fortuna*—as a random, irrational, and sometimes malignant force that has great power over human affairs.¹¹¹ Fortune carries a note of inexorable helplessness, comparable to Clarissa’s idea of our being “chained to a sinking ship.” Charting “the Renaissance transformation of the figure of fortune,” Hanna Pitkin describes a revival of “the metaphorical connection of fortune to ships, steering, ports, and storms” in an age when maritime activities played an important role in economic life.¹¹² We might note too that in both the classical tradition and its transmission to subsequent centuries, fortune symbolized the caprices of human affairs without necessarily positing a supernatural order. In the understanding of the ancient Greeks, fate

¹¹¹ For a detailed account of the historical evolution of the image of fortune in Roman thought, see Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccolò Machiavelli* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 138-141.

¹¹² Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman*, 141.

was deeply grounded in the social structures of life.¹¹³ As Alasdair MacIntyre puts it, for the Greeks, “Human life is invaded by passions which appear sometimes as impersonal forces, sometimes as gods.... These forces and the rules of kinship and friendship together constitute patterns of an ineluctable kind.... Fate is social reality and the descreying of fate an important social role.”¹¹⁴ Bernard Williams expresses a similar idea in his analysis of the relation between possibility and necessity in Greek tragedy. In Williams’ formulation:

There is a gap between what the tragic character is, concretely and contingently, and the ways in which the world acts upon him. In some cases, that gap is comprehensible, in terms of conflicting human purposes. In other cases, it is not fully comprehensible and not under control. That may be as true of social reality as of a world that contains supernatural necessities. The interaction of character or individual project with forces, structures, or circumstances that can destroy them can retain its significance without the presence of gods or oracles.¹¹⁵

From this perspective, Clarissa’s reference to “ruffians” and “Gods,” who “never lost a chance of hurting, thwarting and spoiling human lives” (76), connotes both the arbitrary presence of fate and its social mediation in the complexity of human existence.

The moral response to fate in Clarissa’s conception is also in tune with the Renaissance humanist motif of *virtù*, denoting “a capacity to act in confrontation with *fortuna*.”¹¹⁶ In the Renaissance humanists’ belief, “a man of true *virtù* can never be totally overwhelmed even by the most evil fortune,” and the combat between *virtù* and *fortuna* reflects the classical conception that “the human predicament is best envisaged as

¹¹³ In “On Not Knowing Greek,” published in the same year as *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf wrote that “it is to the Greeks that we turn when we are sick of the vagueness, of the confusion, of the Christianity and its consolations, of our own age.” Virginia Woolf, *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*. Vol. IV, 51.

¹¹⁴ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. Second Edition (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 124.

¹¹⁵ Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 164-65.

¹¹⁶ J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, 41. For a more detailed historical account of the concept and the Italian Republican tradition, see also Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, Vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 186-189.

a struggle between man's will and fortune's wilfulness."¹¹⁷ Quentin Skinner has pointed out the Renaissance moralists' revival of the opposition between *virtus* and *fortuna*, noting the confidence in the extent of man's capacities in Machiavelli and his contemporaries. Machiavelli emphasizes in his *Discourses* that "there is always hope" even though men "know not the end and move towards it along roads which cross one another and as yet are unexplored." And this leads to Machiavelli's proclamation that men "should not despair, no matter what fortune brings or in what travail they find themselves."¹¹⁸

In "Modern Fiction," an essay that was published in the same year as *Mrs. Dalloway*,¹¹⁹ Woolf uses the polarity of despair and hope to characterize the difference between Russian and English fiction. For all her admiration for the compassion and profundity of the Russian mind, Woolf states that the "hopeless interrogation" of life in Russian fiction "fills us with a deep, and finally it may be with a resentful, despair." In English fiction, by contrast, a "voice of protest mix[es] itself with our gloom." As Woolf sees it, "The voice of protest is the voice of another and an ancient civilisation which seems to have bred in us the instinct to enjoy and fight rather than to suffer and understand."¹²⁰ And such an instinct constitutes a salient feature of Clarissa's character. As Peter remarks, "she enjoyed life immensely. It was her nature to enjoy" (76). In this light, the love of life Woolf registers at the beginning of *Mrs. Dalloway* also acquires

¹¹⁷ See Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*. Vol. I, 121, 94-95.

¹¹⁸ Quoted in Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*. Vol. I, 186.

¹¹⁹ The essay was a substantial revision of Woolf's "Modern Novels," which was first published in 1919.

¹²⁰ Virginia Woolf, *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*. Vol. IV, 163. Woolf's affirmation of "the instinct to enjoy and fight" in a way refutes Lukács's diagnosis of the trajectory of the modernist subjectivity: out of "despair at the cruelty of the age," it insulates itself from the reality (of capitalism) and indulges in its own isolation, yet the "intoxicated fascination with [its] forlorn condition," according to Lukács, soon develops into a "new horror," or existential *angst*. Georg Lukács, *Realism in Our Time: Literature and the Class Struggle*, in *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach*. Ed. Michael McKeon (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 767.

additional moral weight: it can be conceived as a motivating force necessary to induce action in the confrontation with fate.

Framed as an essential characteristic of both English artistic vision and English national temperament, Woolf's emphasis on "the instinct to enjoy and fight" resonates with the Machiavellian thought that "*virtù* is that [quality] internal to ourselves by which we resist *fortuna* and impose upon her patterns of order, which may even become patterns of moral order."¹²¹ Indeed, *Mrs. Dalloway*'s ending brings sharply into focus the morally laden form that Woolf aims to impose on "august fate" (57). After Clarissa learns of Septimus's suicide, she retreats into the little room, the space that had separated the Prime Minister from the party but now enables a communion between Clarissa and an old lady, seen through windows, with a stoic bearing—not through language, but by a look. This fleeting encounter with the old lady mediates an intense moment in Clarissa's struggle between life and death—her leap from an attraction to the "embrace in death" to her determination, "But she must go back. She must assemble. She must find Sally and Peter" (180, 182).¹²² The emphatic use of the word "must," following the tonal and semantic shift signaled by "but," carries a forceful note of moral imperative. From a vicarious experience of Septimus's death Clarissa reorients herself toward her party and life, in a way not unlike that of Lady Bexborough opening a bazaar in response to her beloved son's death. Both characters exhibit a kind of fortitude with which they resist the

¹²¹ See J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 167.

¹²² This passage in the novel has provoked varying interpretations. Some critics read it as Clarissa's shallow response to the serious matter of death. For example, Pericles Lewis suggests that her attitude toward Septimus "puts Clarissa's self-involvement in uncomfortably sharp terms," reflecting the sentiment that "the deaths of others can even be a source of pleasure for their survivors." Pericles Lewis, *Religious Experience and the Modernist Novel*, 176 and 220n28. Maria DiBattista reads it as Clarissa's misinterpretation and deliberate transvaluation of the message Septimus meant to communicate. See her *Virginia Woolf's Major Novels*, 56-57.

devastating force of death. And both, in the face of adversity, demonstrate a form of public spirit by committing themselves to offering social spaces where people can meet and communicate. Clarissa's party, in tandem with Lady Bexborough's bazaar, signifies activities of social exchange, evoking the eighteenth-century custom that uses terms like "conversation" and "commerce" interchangeably.¹²³ If Clarissa is resurrected from the kingdom of death, as J. Hillis Miller has argued,¹²⁴ she doesn't seem simply to be revealing the defiance embodied by Septimus. The narrative casts her as reliving as well something like the dignified and courageous spirit of Lady Bexborough.

Countering Peter's previous alliance of the spirit of Lady Bexborough with the "governing-class spirit," Clarissa's reincarnation of it takes on an existential ring, reminiscent of *virtù vince fortuna*. This realignment of the spirit of Lady Bexborough with *virtù* also alters the gender dynamics of *fortuna* and *virtù*. Historians have noted that Fortune has been personified as a female figure since ancient times; for Machiavelli, the concept of *virtù* is inherently connected with martial virtue.¹²⁵ As Machiavelli declares in *The Prince*: "[I]t is better to be impetuous than cautious, because Fortune is a woman, and if you want to keep her under it is necessary to beat her and force her down. It is clear that she more often allows herself to be won over by impetuous men than by those who proceed coldly. And so, like a woman, Fortune is always the friend of young men, for they are less cautious, more ferocious, and command her with more audacity."¹²⁶ But

¹²³ See J. G. A. Pocock, "Cambridge Paradigm," in *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, eds., Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 241.

¹²⁴ J. Hillis Miller, "Mrs. Dalloway: Repetition as the Raising of the Dead," in *Virginia Woolf (Modern Critical Views)*, ed., Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1986), 92.

¹²⁵ See, for instance, Quentin Skinner, *Machiavelli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 53-5.

¹²⁶ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans., Peter Bondanella (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 86-87. Hanna Pitkin suggests that "Machiavelli appears to be the first to use that metaphor as a way of suggesting the sexual conquest of fortune, introducing into the realm of politics and history concerns about

against the will to conquer that is generative of the concept of *virtù*, Woolf in *Mrs. Dalloway* locates the capacity for action in the face of fate in a group of interconnected mature and motherly female figures: Clarissa, Lady Bexborough, the battered woman whose “singing of love” resonates “[t]hrough all ages” (79), the spectral mother figure “whose sons have been killed in the battles of the world” in the scene of the solitary traveller (57), and the inscrutable old lady, who recalls Rachel’s vision of the “old widow” in her discussion with Richard about art and politics in *The Voyage Out*.¹²⁷ Though several of these characters play cameo roles in *Mrs. Dalloway*, their connection with the past and painful historical memories nevertheless enlarges the epic dimension of the narrative, creating a cumulative effect that heightens a sense of cosmic life in the novel. Indeed, the phantasmagoric atmosphere associated with their appearance brings back Woolf’s Mrs. Brown—an embodiment of the elusive spirit of life—and evokes Woolf’s description of life as “a luminous halo.”¹²⁸ What seems to unify these women, eventually, is not just the pain, loss, and lessons brought about by the war but also the moral qualities that carry them through the contingency and vicissitudes of life. Amalgamating Clarissa’s perceptions of their quiet endurance in “the process of living” and of the value of civilized code of manners (181), Woolf delineates a public spirit at once non-aggressive and courageous. And because such a spirit is situated in the vast domain of life as a whole, it implicitly transcends national boundaries.

manliness, effeminacy, and sexual prowess.” See her *Fortune is a Woman*, 144.

¹²⁷ Virginia Woolf, *The Voyage Out*, 57.

¹²⁸ Virginia Woolf, *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*. Vol. IV, 160. Commenting on Woolf’s characterization in *Jacob’s Room*, Jane Goldman writes that “it is [the] very sketchiness of character in process that appeals to more recent readers of Woolf, influenced by French feminism.” Jane Goldman, *The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 53.

“Solemn Progress”

Clarissa cannot disavow her upper-class identity, nor can Woolf, any more than Burke, affirm an “art of living” without simultaneously bringing to life manners inherent in “the solemn, the portentous or demodé” institution of the nobility.¹²⁹ Yet unlike Burke, Woolf seeks to disrupt the containment of manners by class. For one thing, she makes a point of debunking the pompous manners demonstrated by such gentlemanly figures as Hugh Whitbread, whose meanness of spirit comes to light when he snubs a shop assistant in purchasing a necklace for his wife. For another, she creates a sense of collective existence through a view of fate that exceeds class boundaries. Such a notion of fate is channeled through Clarissa’s perceptions. As the story draws to an end, looking at the sky, “this country sky [at Bourton], this sky above Westminster,” Clarissa feels the confluence of time and space. The sky where the country and the city connect, the past and the present converge, Clarissa felt, “held something of her own in it” (181). In place of the skywriting aeroplane inscribing industrial and imperial messages on this symbolic space of life, Clarissa projects her own vision on that sky. Such a vision combines a sense of shared fate with a civic conscience. As Clarissa professes while reflecting on the death of Septimus, “[s]omehow it was her disaster—her disgrace. It was her punishment to see sink and disappear here a man, there a woman, in this profound darkness, and she forced to stand here in her evening dress” (181).

There is no denying that this perceived union across classes comes at the cost of sidestepping critical social problems and conflicts. But as her artist character Bernard reflects in *The Waves*:

¹²⁹ The phrase is Wallace Stevens’s. See his “The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words,” in *Collected Poetry and Prose* (New York: the Library of America, 1997), 664.

I wish to go under; to visit the profound depths; once in a while to exercise my prerogative not always to act, but to explore; to hear vague, ancestral sounds of boughs creaking, of mammoths, to indulge impossible desires to embrace the whole world with the arms of understanding, impossible to those who act. Am I not, as I walk, trembling with strange oscillations and vibrations of sympathy, which, unmoored as I am from a private being, bid me embrace these engrossed flocks; these starers and trippers; these errand-boys and furtive and fugitive girls who, ignoring their doom, look in at shop-windows? But I am aware of our ephemeral passage.¹³⁰

Like Woolf, Bernard emphasizes that the artist is in an advantageous position to explore and understand “the profound depths” of “the whole world.” Bernard’s reflections end with a perception that reiterates Woolf’s vision in *Mrs. Dalloway*. The doom confronting humankind, of which Bernard is aware, “our ephemeral passage,” recaptures the sense of fate in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Such awareness, as Woolf has demonstrated in that novel, enriches understandings of collective spirit. To be sure, neither Bernard nor Woolf denies the importance of political action. Yet they both point to how artistic vision can provide moral and spiritual sustenance for political life.

In his *Sources of the Self*, Charles Taylor draws attention to the “transpersonal” dimension of “the timeless, the mythic, and the archetypal” brought forth in modernist literature, associating it with Schopenhauerian pessimistic views of nature “as a great reservoir of amoral power.”¹³¹ According to Taylor, the modernist consciousness is multileveled and “thus frequently ‘decentred’: aware of living on a transpersonal rhythm which is mutually irreducible in relation to the personal.” What concerns Taylor is the consequence that “[t]he epiphanic and the ordinary but indispensable real can never be fully aligned, and we are condemned to live on more than one level—or else suffer the

¹³⁰ Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*. (Orlando: Harcourt, 1978), 114.

¹³¹ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 481, 457.

impoverishment of repression.”¹³² *Mrs. Dalloway* exhibits a desire to reconnect “the epiphanic” and “the ordinary” through a haunting sense of life’s precariousness. Thinking “it was very, very dangerous to live even one day,” Clarissa infuses the ordinary with an existential intensity and sense of fatedness.

If Woolf asks the question of how to live in a wounded world in *Jacob’s Room* and questions the possibility of a flourishing life in *Between the Acts*, in *Mrs. Dalloway* she offers a vision of “solemn progress” that transposes understandings of collective existence into larger terrains beyond the purview of the political state. Through an emphatic depiction of daunting fate, human beings’ shared destiny, Woolf seeks to reshape public virtue in a way that can overcome both bourgeois egotism and narrow patriotic allegiance. Such an endeavor reflects Woolf’s commitment to enlarging human spirit for public life. As Pericles Lewis has argued, Woolf’s literary experiments aspire to “a new form of spirituality” in which the meaning of life and community can be reformulated (144).

Resonating with Woolf’s equation of “solemnity” with “nobility” in her diary, the qualifier “solemn” in her vision of “solemn progress” maintains a double signification, suggesting both an aristocratic bearing and an ethical stance toward life and others. Woolf’s emphasis on the inseparability between political life and moral qualities belongs to a civic humanist tradition in which Burke figures prominently, though her particular endeavor to organize civilized manners into a collective spirit capable of undoing the stunting forms of civic virtue inscribed by political authority derives from a distinctly modernist imagination. Attending to the habits of thought and feeling and socio-historical circumstances of public life peculiar to Britain, yet stressing a view of common fate

¹³² Ibid., 480-81.

confronting humankind, Woolf's conception of "solemn progress" provides a new way to think about the relation between patriotism and cosmopolitanism. With its emphasis on moral and affective conditions of life, this "solemn progress" also invites a rethinking of models of material progress that both underpin imperialism as it appears in *Mrs. Dalloway* and prevail in the contemporary world.

CHAPTER 2

“BE JUST BEFORE YOU ARE GENEROUS”: JAMES JOYCE AND THE POLITICS OF VIRTUE

ROWLEY. Ah! There’s the point! I never will cease dunning you with the old proverb—

CHARLES. BE JUST BEFORE YOU’RE GENEROUS.—Why, so I would if I could; but Justice is an old hobbling beldame, and I can’t get her to keep pace with Generosity, for the soul of me.

ROWLEY. Yet, Charles, believe me, one hour’s reflection——

CHARLES. Ay, ay, it’s very true; but, hark’ee, Rowley, while I have, by Heaven I’ll give; so, damn your economy! and now for hazard.

—Richard Sheridan, *The School for Scandal*, Act IV, Scene I

Bloom and Stephen thereby become heavenly bodies, wanderers like the stars at which they gaze.

—Joyce, letter to Frank Budgen¹³³

In his astute interpretation of how the act of “righting” pervades James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Fritz Senn points out that one of the “righting” processes concerns “characters in the book, mainly Bloom, amending their practices or conjectures in what they momentarily believe to be improvements.”¹³⁴ Bloom’s “first endeavor” as “a new character” in *Ulysses*, Senn notes, is the activity of “righting”: “Kidneys were in his mind as he moved about the kitchen softly, righting her breakfast things on the humpy tray.”¹³⁵ Bloom’s conscientious preparation of his wife’s breakfast at this moment further illustrates Senn’s observation: “Another slice of bread and butter: three, four: *right*. She didn’t like her plate full. *Right*. He turned from the tray, lifted the kettle off the hob and

¹³³ Stuart Gilbert, ed. *Letters of James Joyce*. Vol. I. (New York: Viking, 1966), 160.

¹³⁴ Fritz Senn, “Righting *Ulysses*,” in *James Joyce’s Ulysses*. Ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1987), 107. The other three “righting” processes in Senn’s analysis of *Ulysses* include “Joyce revising and retouching his own handiwork”; “the reader/critic adjusting to the text”; and “the book itself tending towards ameliorative diversity” (107).

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 101-02.

set it sideways on the fire. It sat there, full and squat, its spout stuck out. Cup of tea soon. *Good*. Mouth dry.”¹³⁶ While the fact that Bloom’s consciousness is punctuated by the word “right” here draws attention to his sense of duty and propriety, a salient trait of his character, the movement of Bloom’s thought from “right” to “good” reveals the moral dynamics of *Ulysses*. The two key moral concepts of right and good punningly invoked in this mundane context speak to *Ulysses*’ larger concern with how ideas of justice and goodness work to structure Irish social and political life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

In the Name of Justice

Bloom’s earthy notions of the right and the good in his “Calypso” debut, in fact, playfully reenact a theme of justice and generosity that finds more somber expression earlier in *Ulysses*. In “Nestor,” Mr. Deasy propounds a logic of justice when he pays Stephen his wages and gives him advice about the importance of saving money. Declaring that “[m]oney is power” (25), Deasy ascribes the success of the English to their financial prudence. He further links Stephen’s debt problem to the socioeconomic situation of Ireland, reminding Stephen: “We are a generous people but we must also be just” (25-26). Deasy’s use of “we” denotes a racial identity as an immediate embodiment of the social whole. The syntactic asymmetry between the indicative (“we are a generous people”) and the imperative (“we must also be just”) in Deasy’s enunciation points to an inherent tension between the virtues of generosity and justice. While describing generosity as an Irish collective trait in a matter-of-fact way, Deasy’s injunction attaches

¹³⁶ James Joyce, *Ulysses*. Ed. Hans Walter Gabler (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), 45. Emphases added. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by page number.

more urgency and emphasis to the action of being just. His advice at once evokes and contradicts “the tradition of genuine warm-hearted courteous Irish hospitality” that Gabriel Conroy extols in his dinner speech in “The Dead.”¹³⁷ Whereas Gabriel celebrates generosity as a hallmark of Irish culture, Deasy intimates that generosity must be contingent upon something like economic solvency.

Meanwhile, Joyce’s punning on the material (read solvent) and the moral (read fair) dimensions of the word “just” becomes clearer when Deasy’s speech assumes an increasingly strident political tone. As he proceeds to talk about politics, race, and religion, his counsel on saving money is confounded with his opinions on the salvation of Ireland—both its economy and its integrity. When Deasy makes vehement anti-Semitic and misogynistic remarks, what he refers to as “we” sounds ironically neither generous nor just. His solemn pledge, “I will fight for the right till the end”(29), transposes his terms—“generous” and “just”—from an economic domain to a larger ethico-political context, echoing a belligerent, identitarian Irish nationalist politics that is rendered most vividly in “Cyclops.”

While Deasy’s proclamations concerning “generous” and “just” betray his economic calculation and chauvinistic prejudices, Stephen regards the terms “just” and “generous” with equal disfavor. In response to Deasy’s statement “[w]e are a generous people but we must also be just,” Stephen retorts, “I fear those big words, ... which make us so unhappy” (26). Stephen’s reply not only expresses his disaffection with Deasy’s Unionist platitudes but also alludes to the Irish political and cultural activists’ endeavor to place such concepts as generosity and justice in the service of Irish nationalism. Yet Stephen’s own attitude is challenged in his dialogue with Bloom in “Circe,” which

¹³⁷ James Joyce. *Dubliners*. Eds. Robert Scholes and A. Walton Litz (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 203.

refocuses the relation between the two virtues. Stephen is clearly drunk at this stage and his carelessness with money at Bella Cohen's brothel concerns Bloom. When Bloom offers to keep Stephen's coins for his sake, Stephen regurgitates Deasy's enjoinder in a more proverbial form: "Be just before you are generous" (456). The scene here recreates the conversation between Charles Surface and Rowley in *The School for Scandal* by the Irish-born playwright Richard Sheridan, whose style is among those parodied in the previous episode of *Ulysses*, "Oxen of the Sun." In Sheridan's play, Rowley, the former steward of the Surface brothers' late father, urges the financially straitened but profligate Charles to be prudent when the latter asks Rowley to send a hundred pounds to his needy relative Mr. Stanley (who proves to be Charles's rich uncle Sir Oliver). But Charles brushes aside the economic wisdom of the old proverb, insisting on the primary value of generosity in a manner befitting his aristocratic status.

Of course, it is ironic that in "Circe" the same piece of advice has been given by the intoxicated and indebted Stephen to the sober and solvent Bloom, who is dubbed "the prudent member" and "the prudent soul" by his fellow Dubliners (244-45). Given the context, however, Stephen could be telling Bloom that he should think better before offering generous help to someone who is in trouble. The realignment of terms in Stephen's utterance draws attention to the proper sequence of justice and generosity. In this light, Bloom's response to Stephen—"I will but is it wise?"(456)—both expresses his promise to take care of Stephen's belongings and voices his objection, not to being either just or generous but to the wisdom of being just first. Indeed, Bloom's response sounds funny. It is as if he is asking: "Is it wise to be (conventionally) prudent?" Yet his questioning also brings to the fore the politics of virtue at play in *Ulysses*.

In his book *James Joyce and the Problem of Justice*, Joseph Valente provides a detailed account of how various groups and organizations in Irish history have strategically reinterpreted the idea of justice not only to challenge existing British law but also to establish “self-styled juridical structures” in their pursuit of Irish independence. Such structures, Valente points out, aim to secure “[n]ot just an Ireland free of the invader,” but “an Ireland purged of internal dissonance, not to say difference, as well.”¹³⁸ Joyce vividly depicts such an exclusionary tendency in “Cyclops” by contrasting the nationalists’ commitment to political justice for the Irish community to their simultaneous cruelty to those considered external to the community. The chapter foregrounds what Joyce perceives as the discursive outbursts and excesses that are characteristic of the variegated nationalistic advocacies. Through hyperbolic parodies of a series of styles of writing that have been variously marshaled to advance nationalistic agendas—including the legal, the epic, the romantic, the scientific, the journalistic, and the biblical—it highlights justice’s implication in high-flown rhetoric. Further, the nationalists’ combat for justice becomes inextricable from what Bloom calls “force, hatred, history” manifested by their jingoistic propaganda and their brutal treatment of Bloom (273).

Bloom’s relative temperance and rational stance toward everything being discussed in Barney Kiernan’s pub—from capital punishment to the consequences of violent physical exercise—immediately set him apart from the group of hot-blooded nationalists centered around the citizen, who label him a stranger, a “rank outsider” representative of the Jews in Ireland (267). Indeed the nationalists’ glorification of Irish

¹³⁸ Joseph Valente, *James Joyce and the Problem of Justice: Negotiating Sexual and Colonial Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 34.

history and culture goes hand in hand with their cursing of Bloom and the Jewish people. In an effort to reason with the citizen, who is preaching vengeance and violence, Bloom reminds him of the ongoing persecution of the Jewish race, in which these vindictive Irish nationalists also participate. When challenged by the citizen and his ilk to fight “with force” against injustices inflicted on his race, Bloom enunciates the futility of such belligerence, contending that the enmity inevitably engendered and reinforced by violent confrontations is “not life for men and women” (273).

Bloom’s dissent from the nationalists’ advocacy of force makes him a target of abuse. His pacifist definition of love as “the opposite of hatred” is equated at once with the Christian utopia of “Universal love” and a carnal, selfish, and self-reproducing desire—“Love loves to love love” (273). In both cases, Bloom is ruthlessly ridiculed for his redemptive pretensions and lustful propensities. For the fervent nationalists, Bloom’s notion of love is a pusillanimous sentiment, and his emphasis on benevolent feeling as key to resolving social and national conflicts instead of fighting for justice attests to nothing but his unmanliness. Any affirmation concerning goodness arising from Bloom’s dialogue with the others is quickly appropriated and absorbed into existing ideological structures and subsumed under the nationalistic agenda. And the linguistic explosions and playfulness in “Cyclops” call into question the meaning and rationale of justice upheld as a political ideal by the militant nationalists.

This is not to say that *Ulysses* dismisses the value of either justice or generosity per se. Rather, Joyce explores both their dynamics and conditions of possibility in a Dublin society under the sway of passionate nationalistic aspirations. Indeed, Bloom’s equation of everyday life with love, which he reiterates as “a little goodwill” and

“friendlier intercourse between man and man” in “Eumaeus” (525)—a point I will return to—brings back the interconnected themes of hospitality and generosity in “The Dead,” a story that contains Joyce’s conscientious and self-reflexive endeavor to recuperate the “virtue” of Dublin’s hospitality.¹³⁹ In a conversation about aunt Julia’s experience in the choir, aunt Kate questions the pope’s expelling “the women from the choirs that have slaved there all their lives,” remarking that “it’s not just..., and it’s not right.” What such an exclusionary action violates, to aunt Kate’s mind, is what she calls “common everyday politeness and gratitude.”¹⁴⁰ Aunt Kate’s vindication of a familiar form of kindness echoes Bloom’s understanding of love as definitive of quotidian life. Though formulated in a modest manner contrasting with Gabriel Conroy’s encomium of Irish generosity, both Aunt Kate’s and Bloom’s emphasis on benevolent feelings reveals the centrality of the notion of generosity to Joyce’s work.

In his essay “‘The Dead’ and the Generosity of the Word,” Vincent Pecora analyzes the intertwinement of the value of generosity and “the codified expression of the myth of self-sacrifice lying at the heart of Joyce’s Dublin.”¹⁴¹ For Pecora, Gabriel’s spiritual expansion and his sacrifice “to the past, and to the dead” at the end of the story do no more than reproduce the “culturally authorized” structure of generosity and heroism.¹⁴² Interpreting the idea of generosity as a Christian myth of self-sacrifice on the one hand, and as a bourgeois sentiment on the other, Pecora argues that the story stands as an illustration of the totalizing force of “the institutionalized codes” that not only “structure personal intentions” of Gabriel and his fellow Dubliners but also condition

¹³⁹ See Joyce’s letter to Stanislaus Joyce in Richard Ellmann, ed. *Letters of James Joyce*, vol. 2 (New York: Viking, 1966), 166.

¹⁴⁰ James Joyce. *Dubliners*, 194-95.

¹⁴¹ Vincent Pecora, “‘The Dead’ and the Generosity of the Word,” *PMLA* 101.2 (1986): 233-245, see 238.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 242-43.

critical responses to Joyce's story.¹⁴³ To be sure, Pecora's disclosure of the cultural ideologies attached to the idea of generosity serves to counterbalance the critical tendency to overemphasize the political efficacy of Gabriel's enlarged consciousness. Yet by glossing generosity as nothing more an ideological code, Pecora's argument reduces the conceptual complexity of generosity as an important category in Joyce's writing. Indeed, if "the liberal imperative to justice ... acts as a shaping force in Joyce's representational and counterrepresentational strategies,"¹⁴⁴ as Valente has argued, Joyce is also concerned with the function of generosity in public life. And the compatibility of the two values of justice and generosity constitutes an essential theme of *Ulysses*.

David Hume and the Nobler Virtue of Generosity

The relationship between justice and generosity has occupied a prominent place in various systems of moral philosophy. David Hume's systematic investigation of the subject provides a particularly useful framework for examining Joyce's approach to this issue in his work. In *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Hume differentiates benevolence and justice as "natural" and "artificial" virtues respectively, although he later drops the categories of "natural" and "artificial" and groups both benevolence and justice into what he designates as "social virtues" in his second enquiry. In Hume's analysis, benevolence remains a general term for a cluster of related virtues including generosity, humanity, kindness, affability, and so forth. Hume compares the different workings of the two virtues, arguing that benevolence and generosity "exert their influence immediately, by a direct tendency or instinct, which chiefly keeps in view the simple object, moving the

¹⁴³ Ibid., 237.

¹⁴⁴ Joseph Valente, *James Joyce and the Problem of Justice*, 47.

affections, and comprehends not any scheme or system, nor the consequences resulting from the concurrence, imitation, or example of others.”¹⁴⁵

In contrast to the unmediated operation of benevolence and generosity, justice depends for its social function on a system of socially constructed rules. The benefit that results from justice, as Hume puts it, “is not the consequence of every individual act; but arises from the whole scheme or system, concurred in by the whole, or the greater part of the society.”¹⁴⁶ Adam Smith identifies a similar distinction between the two virtues, though his focus is on what society requires of its members if it is to function properly. In Smith’s formulation: “[W]e feel ourselves to be under a stricter obligation to act according to justice, than agreeably to friendship, charity, or generosity; . . . the practice of these last-mentioned virtues seems to be left in some measure to our own choice, but . . . somehow or other, we feel ourselves to be in a peculiar manner tied, bound, and obliged to the observation of justice.”¹⁴⁷ Smith thus concludes that beneficence is “less essential to the existence of society than justice. Society may subsist, though not in the most comfortable state, without beneficence” because it may still be sustained by “a sense of its utility” or “a mercenary exchange of good offices according to an agreed valuation,” but “the prevalence of injustice must utterly destroy it.” In Smith’s metaphorical language, beneficence is “the ornament which embellishes, not the foundation which supports the building, and which it was, therefore, sufficient to recommend, but by no means necessary to impose. Justice, on the contrary, is the main

¹⁴⁵ David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*. Ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 170.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 170-71.

¹⁴⁷ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Ed. Ryan Patrick Hanley (New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books, 2009), 97.

pillar that upholds the whole edifice. If it is removed, the great, the immense fabric of human society . . . must in a moment crumble into atoms.”¹⁴⁸

While Smith emphasizes the primacy of justice in maintaining social stability from a functionalist perspective, Hume engages in a philosophical inquiry into the conditions of possibility for the two virtues. For Hume, benevolence is prior to justice, and justice comes into being only under the empirical circumstances of material scarcity and “limited generosity” in persons.¹⁴⁹ If scarcity and selfishness did not exist, “the cautious, jealous virtue of justice,” Hume reasons, “could never possibly have place in the catalogue of virtues.”¹⁵⁰ In other words, Hume suggests that the enlargement of affections and generosity could diminish the social need for justice. Family, in Hume’s exemplification, stands as a locus wherein mutual benevolence can be strong and deep enough to make justice redundant. In Hume’s ranking of virtues with respect to their nobility, then, justice falls rather low: “Encrease to a sufficient degree the benevolence of men, or the bounty of nature,” Hume writes, “and you render justice useless, by supplying its place with much nobler virtues, and more valuable blessings.”¹⁵¹ Of course, Hume is discussing the ideal scenario here, and he is fully aware of the limitedness of generosity in reality.

Alasdair MacIntyre has observed that the problem of justice in Hume’s conception is essentially “a problem about rules of property and their enforcement.”¹⁵² What makes Hume’s view of justice unconventional in his time, according to MacIntyre,

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 104.

¹⁴⁹ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*. 2nd edition. Ed. L. A Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 586.

¹⁵⁰ David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, 83.

¹⁵¹ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 494-95.

¹⁵² Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice, Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 307.

is its incompatibility with the prevailing theological account, according to which justice is “antecedent to all rules of property,” and “it is theology which provides the most adequate understanding of morality.”¹⁵³ In Hume’s view, on the contrary, “public utility is the *sole* origin of justice,” and the virtue of justice derives from “the observance of the general rule.”¹⁵⁴ At first sight, the limited focus on distributive arrangements in society makes Hume’s moral theorizing of justice seem inapplicable to situations wherein conflicts and disagreements center less around material interests than such complicated subjects as fundamental individual and collective rights. Hume’s conception of the circumstances of justice, however, sheds light on certain peculiarities in Joyce’s depiction of the relation between justice and generosity in *Ulysses*. In accordance with Hume’s account of how justice depends on socially constructed rules for its operation, Joyce draws attention to justice’s susceptibility to social as well as linguistic mediation and manipulation in Dublin. Moreover, Joyce lays bare the entanglement of a combat for justice with the pursuit of self-interest in human society. As Bloom remarks later on in “Eumaeus”: “All those wretched quarrels, in his humble opinion, stirring up bad blood, from some bump or combativeness or gland of some kind, erroneously supposed to be about a punctilio of honour and a flag, were very largely a question of the money question which was at the back of everything greed and jealousy, people never knowing when to stop” (526). Bloom’s observation that material possessiveness lies at the heart of most brutal conflicts of various kinds bears resemblance to Hume’s grounding of justice in the material conditions of society.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 322.

¹⁵⁴ David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, 83, 171.

In “Cyclops,” one of the striking, and of course intentional, dissonances arises from a contrast between heroic, grandiloquent, and often religiously charged myths and legends about Ireland, on the one hand, and mundane concerns and material calculations of Dubliners on the other. The first parody of legalese in this episode, for example, focuses on an economic dispute between two Dubliners—Geraghty, an old plumber and Moses Herzog, a Jewish merchant. Geraghty has purchased some goods worth “one pound five shillings and sixpence” from Herzog on credit but now attempts to wriggle out of his debt (241). Foregrounding a trifling material conflict as well as Herzog’s Jewish ethnicity, this incident sets the tone for a whole chapter organized around the theme of justice and nationalism. If Joyce’s juxtaposition of the citizen’s incendiary “tall talk” and his barbaric activities dramatizes the discrepancy between the theory and the practice of justice (269), Joyce’s irony resides in the incongruity between the high-sounding language of law and retributive justice, as reflected by the citizen’s rallying cry, “put force against force” (270), and the Dubliners’ practical material considerations.

Another interpolation that draws attention to the interconnection between law, mores, and the economic-mindedness of Dubliners involves Denis Breen, who receives an insulting postcard and is ridiculed by his fellow townsfolk for trying to take a libel action for ten thousand pounds. Joyce’s portraits of both Mr. Breen and his jeerers are unflattering. Mr. Breen appears a ludicrous figure in several episodes, shuffling on Dublin streets in “skimpy frockcoat” and “bathslippers” and “hugging two heavy tomes to his ribs” (131, 245). His sanity is certainly called into question by everyone, including his wife, yet the suggestion that justice could serve as a means for material gain does not get lost amid Joyce’s representation of Breen’s motivation for bringing a lawsuit. On the

other hand, those who relentlessly scoff at Mr. Breen betray a mean spirit of resentment against what Bloom calls “[r]elics of old decency” (77). While Bloom’s description of the change in Mrs. Breen’s dressing style from “tasty” to “shabby genteel” drops a hint about her fall in the social scale (130), another parody in “Cyclops” mocking the Breen couple brings to the fore their class pretensions: “there passed an elder of noble gait and countenance, bearing the sacred scrolls of law and with him his lady wife a dame of peerless lineage, fairest of her race” (245). Breen’s fight for financial compensation, like the legal dispute between Geraghty and Herzog, reveals a Dublin society where justice is deeply grounded in economic calculation.

Even in the conflict between Bloom and the hostile citizen and his fellow nationalists, animosity toward Bloom’s racial identity is often intermixed with grudges against him based in economic considerations. Bloom’s profession as an advertisement canvasser leads to the citizen’s accusation that he is “swindling the peasants” and “the poor of Ireland” (265). Moreover, the misbelief that Bloom secretly makes financial gains from horse betting, reinforced by the complaint about his refusal to stand drinks, stokes collective fury against him. In other words, judgments about Bloom’s racial identity and “unmanly” temperament are fused with jealousy of his imagined financial superiority. The rancor culminates in the citizen’s symbolic crucifixion of Bloom and the jaundiced narrator’s verdict of “justifiable homicide” (277). The narrator’s diction is particularly telling. The jarring sound of the legal term in its immediate context of gossip and gripe makes a mockery of the notions of justice promulgated by the belligerent nationalists. Justice, as is shown by the narrator’s mindset, can readily be deployed to legitimate the persecution of individuals.

To be sure, although both Hume and Joyce understand justice as rooted in particular social settings and circumstances, they hold different perceptions of the relation between such particular circumstances and the possibility of justice. In Hume's formulation, "the rules of equity or justice depend entirely on the particular state and condition, in which men are placed."¹⁵⁵ The particular situation has to do with the material and affective conditions of a society, as was pointed out earlier, as well as such factors as a society's lawfulness. For Hume, particularity does not conflict with historical continuity because moral sentiments remain the reliable source of what he calls "a sense of common interest," which "each man feels in his own breast, which he remarks in his fellows, and which carries him, in concurrence with others, into a general plan or system of actions, which tends to public utility."¹⁵⁶ In Joyce's depiction of Dublin, however, such "a sense of common interest" is missing, at least insofar as it is to include all. Indeed, history itself becomes a battlefield that threatens to undermine the foundations of justice.

National Consciousness, Hospitality, and Humanity

If "Cyclops" suggests a link between hatred and the nationalists' inflated and mythological glorification of Irish history, "Oxen of the Sun" intimates an alternative narrative of the intersection of gestation, history, and civilization by mapping the ontogenesis of a fetus onto the development of English prose style from Anglo-Saxon days to twentieth-century Dublin. Indeed, several structural and thematic parallels can be identified between "Cyclops" and "Oxen of the Sun." Both consist of a series of parodies of multifarious linguistic styles that bring into sharp focus the complex relation between

¹⁵⁵ David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, 86.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 172.

the past and the present. While “Cyclops” illustrates dogged efforts to revive Irish cultural traditions including ancient bardic legends and the Gaelic language, as well as the effort to place sports in the service of nationalist political agendas, “Oxen of the Sun” explores how the evolution of an English literary history bears upon human consciousness and social relations. As Wolfgang Iser has noted, each of the parodies in “Oxen of the Sun” demonstrates an “essentially manipulative character” of each of the styles, which imposes “an historically preconditioned form” on reality.¹⁵⁷

Where “Cyclops” is suffused with an air of bloodthirstiness and ends with a symbolic killing and death, “Oxen of the Sun” centers on the themes of procreation, birth, and growth. Indeed, a comparison between the two episodes sheds light on how Joyce posits a social community of Dublin characterized by customs, routines, habits, everyday practices, and interpersonal connectivity in contradistinction to the imagined collectivity of an Irish nation defined by a constructed, and exclusive, Irish/Celtic identity. “Oxen of the Sun” is set in a maternity hospital in which expectations of the newborn trigger memories of the deceased. We see both Stephen mourn his dead mother and Bloom grieve the death of his young son. Yet while Stephen blames his mother for leaving him “alone for ever in the dark ways of [his] bitterness” (322), Bloom’s sorrow for his own son extends to his concern for “his friend’s son” Stephen, who, in his eyes, “lived riotously with those wastrels and murdered his goods with whores” (320). For the first time in the book, Bloom and Stephen sit at the same table and engage in a conversation. As Jean-Michel Rabaté has pointed out, the same Latin root of “hospital” and “hospitality” grafts a thematic significance onto the locale of “Oxen of the Sun.” Rabaté draws

¹⁵⁷ Wolfgang Iser, “Doing Things in Style: An Interpretation of ‘The Oxen of the Sun’ in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*.” *James Joyce’s Ulysses*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1987), 36.

attention to Stephen's remembrance of an ancient custom of hospitality that requires the host to offer his wife to his guests/strangers. In Stephen's words, which parody John's gospel and Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, "Great lover than this ... no man hath that a man lay down his wife for his friend. Go thou and do likewise. Thus, or words to that effect, saith Zarathustra" (322). In Rabaté's reading of the passage, Stephen not only mounts a poignant critique of colonial oppression by analogizing Irish people to those dominated by this "perverted sexual law"; he also foretells the triangle linking Bloom, Molly or Milly, and Stephen. Bloom's later act of hospitality in "Ithaca"—inviting Stephen to his house—implies an honoring of the old custom of offering the women in the house to the guest.¹⁵⁸

The relation between Bloom and Stephen, however, needs to be situated in the larger social context set forth by the episode. In a way similar to "Cyclops," "Oxen of the Sun" gives prominence to the temperamental differences between Bloom and other Dubliners, though in this episode such differences are complicated by a generation gap between them. Bloom's gentleness and sympathy make him stand as the Other of both the violent and xenophobic citizen and his underlings in "Cyclops" and of the rowdy and bragging young men in "Oxen of the Sun." But if he appears as an odd man out in "Cyclops" from the very outset, in "Oxen of the Sun" Bloom becomes increasingly estranged from his fellows as the parodies move on to a sequence of styles by eighteenth-century Irish-born writers including Jonathan Swift, Richard Steel, Lawrence Sterne, Oliver Goldsmith, Edmund Burke, Richard Sheridan, and probably Sir Philip Francis. One needs to read the parodies closely to trace such a change in the relationship between

¹⁵⁸ Jean-Michel Rabaté, *James Joyce and the Politics of Egoism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 160-61.

Bloom and his company, which is enmeshed in a tangled web of medical shoptalk, bawdy and blasphemous comments, metaphysical questionings, and historical and religious allusions.

Although the content of this cluster of pastiches still revolves around topics of procreation and sexuality, there is a perceptible change in the social atmosphere from bonhomie to hostility as the evening wears on. Previously, Bloom not only mingled with the medical students but also established a connection of sorts with Stephen. It is true that Bloom's effort to allay Stephen's fear of thunder fails, but for all his bitterness, Stephen is "a little moved" by Bloom's concern for animals (327). This is not to say that Bloom's idiosyncrasies disappear at this stage; rather, they remain an object for railleries directed at anything that might be associated with reproductive activities. Bloom is characterized as "a passing good man of his lustiness. And sir Leopold that was the goodliest guest that ever sat in scholars' hall and that was the meekest man and the kindest that ever laid husbandly hand under hen and that was the very truest knight of the world one that ever did minion service to lady gentle" (318). The image of Bloom's good, mild, and lewd inclinations reinforces his peculiar character, but it does not alienate him from the ribald youths.

A social fissure appears, however, with the complex apologue of "an Irish bull in an English chinashop" in a passage evocative of the style of Jonathan Swift (327). The multifaceted metaphor ushers in a succession of parodies of Irish-born writers in the English literary tradition, as if Joyce is imputing an additional literary dimension of meaning to the expression "an Irish bull in an English chinashop," whose religious and historical connotations have been elaborated by the young men. Moreover, the clear

sound of discord signals a tonal and focal change in the narrative. Within the sequence of the parodies, the tension between Ireland and England suggested by the parable, which ends with the enforced emigration of Irishmen to America, parallels Bloom's isolation from the group. The prior amity between Bloom and his fellows gradually fades out, and Bloom is now "the stranger" (330) and "alien" to the community (334). Before the parody progresses to English writers again, Bloom becomes the target of a fierce tirade, which harks back to the animus toward him in "Cyclops."

The diatribe against Bloom is notably preceded by a passage registering Bloom's disapproval of the young men's lack of sympathy toward Mrs. Purefoy's ordeal of parturition. The description is aglow with a Burkean idiom, contrasting Bloom's valuation of "proprieties," "plenitude of sufferance," "feminine delicacy," and "experience" with the "impudent mocks," "testiness," "strong animal spirits," "insolency," "extravagancies," and "wits" attributed to the group of medical students. Bloom softens his critical stance through an acknowledgement of the spirits characteristic of young people, making allowances for the "mettlesome youth ... caring nought for the mows of dotards or the gruntlings of the severe." But their ruthless mockery of a "gentlewoman" in labor seems to him to evince an intolerable disregard for "humanity" (333). While Bloom's critique sounds reasonable, its mannered presentation strains against its seriousness and authority, and we soon find Bloom the target of an excoriation as he utters his opinion of the young men's "cold constitution" and "frigid genius" (333).

The verbal attack on Bloom marks the culmination of the sequence parodying eighteenth-century Irish-born writers in "Oxen of the Sun." The passage takes the form of a polemic in a style similar to that of Sir Philip Francis, who in 1904 was believed to

have penned, in the pseudonym of Junius, a number of letters containing biting criticisms of George III and his ministers.¹⁵⁹ The censure of Bloom betrays a twisted logic of nationalism. Bloom is first denounced as a “traitor to his kind” for his ingratitude to a country that has admitted Jewish people to “civic rights.” In the speaker’s words, a series of rhetorical questions: “But with what fitness ... has this alien, whom the concession of a gracious prince has admitted to civic rights, constituted himself the lord paramount of our internal polity? Where is now that gratitude which loyalty should have counselled?” Asserting Bloom’s foreignness to the “internal polity,” the speaker denies Bloom his citizenship, herein implicitly redefined in racial terms (334). Meanwhile, the speaker insists that the civic benefits and favors Bloom receives from the country nevertheless oblige him to patriotic duty, by which he means Bloom should refrain from passing moral judgments on its citizens and dedicate his life to the country that allegedly offers him a shelter.

The speaker repudiates Bloom’s preoccupation with his own material interest when the country is in danger, accusing him of doing nothing but “seiz[ing] that moment to discharge his piece against the empire of which he is a tenant at will” and “trembl[ing] for the security of his four per cents” (334). (We discover in “Ithaca” that Bloom possesses £900, Canadian 4% government stock [594].) In the speaker’s verdict, then, Bloom is guilty of caring more about the dividends accrued on his government stock than the fate of his host country. The argument, which simultaneously deprives Bloom of his nationality and demands of him unreflective loyalty to the nation, sounds all too familiar now, reminiscent of the nationalistic tenets preached by the citizen in “Cyclops.”

¹⁵⁹ See Don Gifford and Robert Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated: Notes for James Joyce’s Ulysses* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1988), 367, 429.

The rebuke of Bloom is not over yet, though. The speaker proceeds to point out the inconsistency between Bloom's moral beliefs and his perverted behaviors, alluding not only to his habit of masturbation but also to his attempt to seduce a servant girl in the past and his "peevish asperity" when he worked for Joseph Cuffe at the cattlemarket (334). The charge of Bloom's hypocrisy is hard to dismiss. Bloom, whose sexual desires and fantasies constitute a continuing undercurrent of *Ulysses* and a theme of the previous episode "Nausicaa," is clearly vulnerable. But if the mimicry of a pompous Burkean style undoes the simple message of Bloom's emphasis on humanity, the eloquence of the polemic also overdoes Bloom's weaknesses. The denunciation of Bloom ends with a vituperative comment couched in a seemingly harmless botanical metaphor: "this new exponent of morals and healer of ills is at his best an exotic tree which, when rooted in its native orient, throve and flourished and was abundant in balm but, transplanted to a clime more temperate, its roots have lost their quondam vigour while the stuff that comes away from it is stagnant, acid and inoperative" (14. 936-941). In addition to reinforcing prejudices of anti-Semitism, the description of the exotic and sapless tree also remains a thinly disguised sexual innuendo that is deeply disturbing, especially given that Bloom has lost his beloved son.

But why does Joyce stage a debate on morals between Bloom and his adversaries while letting neither side win out? And why does he arrange the passages in such a way that the condemnation of Bloom as an alien marks the climax of a set of parodies of Irish-born writers? It may not be too far-fetched to draw a connection between the symbolic growth of Irish consciousness in the episode and a diminishment in tolerance of foreignness of various kinds, even though the writers being mimicked themselves cannot

be held responsible for such an attitudinal change. In fact, as I have shown in the previous chapter, politeness and civility remain the eighteenth-century's central terms for debating questions about political and civil communities. By invoking the eighteenth-century emphasis on social virtues articulated by such writers as Burke and Sheridan, Joyce points to the tensions between national consciousness and sociality.

At the same time, Joyce seems to authenticate the porousness between Bloom's earlier affirmation of love as life for men and women and forms of love that have to do with sensual pleasures. Drawing attention to ramifications of Bloom's voluptuous indulgence, Joyce no doubt undercuts his moral authority. As a phrase that appears later on in "Oxen of the Sun" indicates, Bloom has been "soiled by the dust of travel and combat and stained by the mire of an indelible dishonor" (341). Yet Bloom's flawed character can also be said to prevent the narrative from falling into the trap of moral dogmatism. Having demonstrated Bloom's victimization at the hands of bilious nationalists and mean-spirited townspeople, Joyce questions Bloom's own pretensions to moral superiority. What Joyce pushes against, in other words, is a complacent humanism that lay claims to a moral high ground. An analogy can be made here with Joyce's treatment of Gabriel's dinner speech in "The Dead." In a histrionic manner, Gabriel sings the praises of "the qualities of humanity, of hospitality, of kindly humour which belonged to an older day," while criticizing what he sees as the skeptical, curt, and "thought-tormented" attributes of a young generation.¹⁶⁰ Gabriel's attitude toward the past and the present is fraught with ambivalences in the story, but what is pertinent here is how Joyce at once validates his message and debunks his false assurance. Joyce's depictions of the abrasive nationalist Miss Ivors certainly lends credibility to Gabriel's comment, but Joyce

¹⁶⁰ James Joyce, "The Dead," 203.

also exposes his hypocrisy in using the praise as a way to get back at Miss Ivors after she has left the party. Joyce deflates Gabriel's moral righteousness, and Bloom's likewise, without nullifying a sense of the value of benevolence.

The Conditions of Justice and Generosity

Bloom himself keeps rephrasing his idea of "love," or what he has previously pitted against doctrines of force and hatred, in "Eumaeus." In a discussion that seems to resume what has been silenced in "Cyclops," Bloom tries to express the value of "a little goodwill":

It is hard to lay down any hard and fast rules as to right and wrong but room for improvement all round there certainly is though every country, they say, our own distressful included, has the government it deserves. But with a little goodwill all round. It's all very fine to boast of mutual superiority but what about mutual equality. I resent violence and intolerance in any shape or form. It never reaches anything or stops anything. A revolution must come on the due instalments plan. It's a patent absurdity on the face of it to hate people because they live round the corner and speak another vernacular, in the next house so to speak. (525)

Bloom's way of comparing goodwill and rules of justice, which in his opinion are "hard to lay down," reminds us of Hume's view on justice and benevolence. While acknowledging the lack of consensus on justice, Bloom suggests that the practice of "a little goodwill" is not predicated on such concurrence or established rules. He assigns a status to goodwill that is prior to rules of justice. Further, Bloom's repetitive formulation—"but room for improvement all round" and "[b]ut with a little goodwill all round"—though interrupted by garbled thoughts, emphasizes the inextricability, if not equivalence, of "room for improvement" and "a little goodwill."

In fact, “Eumaeus” is replete with Bloom’s small plans for social and financial improvement. Even his expression “a little goodwill” modulates into a comparative form: “friendlier intercourse between man and man,” gesturing toward not only an increase in degree but a development from an individual stance to an interpersonal connection. As Bloom puts it: “I want to see everyone [...] all creeds and classes *pro rata* having a comfortable tidysized income, in no niggard fashion either, something in the neighborhood of £300 per annum. That’s the vital issue at stake and it’s feasible and would be provocative of friendlier intercourse between man and man. At least that’s my idea for what it’s worth. I call that patriotism” (526).¹⁶¹ Critics have long noted the correspondence between the episode’s flabby and sluggish style and the weary and jaded mood of the wee hours. A. Walton Litz, for example, has described “Eumaeus” as a “relinquishment to fatigue.”¹⁶² But we can also consider the style as indicative of the ongoing piecemeal reforms Bloom proposes with caution, hesitation, and self-modification. The muddled prose may reflect the silliness of Bloom’s plans, but it may also suggest the inchoate and messy states of any process of reform.

Bloom’s moderately formulated social blueprint contrasts sharply with the slogan-ridden and radical vision he ventriloquizes in the hallucinatory realm of the “Circe” episode, where, for a moment, he is applauded as “the world’s greatest reformer” (392). Bloom’s lines there read:

¹⁶¹ Bloom entertains a plan of a similar egalitarian nature in “Lestrygonians.” He ponders that if each child were given five quid out of all the taxes at birth, with a compound interest rate of 5 percent for twenty-one years, all would enjoy financial security when they grew up (132). In his utopian dream of Bloom Cottage in “Ithaca,” Bloom proposes to pay for his imagined residence “a maximum of £60 per annum, being 1/6 of an assured income” (589).

¹⁶² Quoted in W. J. McCormack, “James Joyce, Cliché, and the Irish Language,” in *James Joyce: The Augmented Ninth: Proceedings of the Ninth International James Joyce Symposium*, Frankfurt, 1984. Ed. Bernard Benstock (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1988), 324.

Union of all, jew, moslem and gentile. Three acres and a cow for all children of nature. Saloon motor hearses. Compulsory manual labour for all. All parks open to the public day and night. Electric dishscrubbers. Tuberculosis, lunacy, war and mendicancy must now cease. General amnesty, weekly carnival with masked licence, bonuses for all, esperanto the universal language with universal brotherhood. No more patriotism of barspongers and dropsical imposters. Free money, free rent, free love and a free lay church in a free state. (399)¹⁶³

A hodgepodge of revolutionary rally cries interspersed with realistic ideas of technological inventions, including saloon motor hearses and electric dishscrubbers, this picture dramatizes in a “carnival[esque]” spirit various communist ideals and internationalist conjectures prevalent at the turn of the twentieth century. The reference to “esperanto,” which stands for a fairly popular proposal for an international language in the late nineteenth century,¹⁶⁴ for instance, is telling. Noticeably, Bloom’s wish to “see everyone [...] all creeds and classes *pro rata* having a comfortable tidysized income” reconfigures the notion of “[t]hree acres and a cow for all children of nature” in the radical vision in “Circe”; by replacing agricultural means of production with a form of money, he transforms the agrarian nature of the original plan into something more amenable to a money economy.¹⁶⁵ Further, the addition of the phrase “*pro rata*” to “all creeds and classes,” though slightly pretentious and incoherent, pragmatically qualifies the absolute equity touted in the utopian ideals in “Circe.”

Bloom’s assumption that material abundance could promote sociability manifests a progressive logic that consorts with his economic mindset. Still, Bloom’s emphasis on the significance of a friendlier social intercourse here warrants attention. He describes his

¹⁶³ See Wolfgang Wicht’s *Utopianism In James Joyce’s Ulysses* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 2000) for a detailed account of how Joyce parodies various utopian discourses in *Ulysses*.

¹⁶⁴ See Don Gifford and Robert Seidman, 479.

¹⁶⁵ The rural countryside and lifestyle are crucial to the construction of an authentic Irish identity by such nationalist movements as the Gaelic Revival. See for instance, Vincent J. Cheng, “Nation without Borders: Joyce, Cosmopolitanism, and the Inauthentic Irishman” in *Joyce, Ireland, Britain*. Eds. Andrew Gibson and Len Platt (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006), 212-233.

longing for such a condition as patriotism, which seems in part a retort against the disparagement of him as an outsider in “Cyclops” and a traitor in “Oxen of the Sun.” By reformulating patriotism as something contiguous with “friendlier intercourse between man and man,” Bloom erases national and racial boundaries, shifting the ground of citizenship from militant forms of civic masculinity and allegiance to benevolent fellow feelings. Bloom’s words “chang[e] colour” in the ear of Stephen, who doubts, as always, the sincerity and meaning of the voice he hears. We have reason to join Stephen in questioning Bloom’s motives in employing the phrase “friendlier intercourse between man and man,” especially as we soon see Bloom spell out his win-win plan to profit from Stephen’s singing by launching “his vocal career” (542). Yet Joyce’s depiction of Bloom revolving the centrality of benevolence to public life is insistently compelling, in its way, and Bloom’s notion of the convergence between patriotism and universal sympathies finds further expression in “Ithaca.”

In a catechistic exchange that follows Bloom’s sentiment of “[t]he irreparability of the past” (illustrated by the story of the clown who falsely declared Bloom to be his father) and “[t]he imprevidibility of the future” (illustrated by Bloom’s marked florin, which never returns from “the waters of civic finance”), the narrative focus moves on to Bloom’s preoccupation with present social problems:

Why would a recurrent frustration the more depress him?

Because at the critical turningpoint of human existence he desired to amend many social conditions, the product of inequality and avarice and international animosity. (571)

Notably, Bloom’s diagnosis of the causes of social ills—“inequality and avarice and international animosity”—lumps together the systemic, the moral, and the affective,

suggesting an intertwining of socioeconomic structures and public morals. Bloom's focus on "human existence" in general contrasts sharply with the nationalistic preoccupations of the citizen and his group. Further, his concern with international animosity expands the scope of what he calls "friendlier intercourse between man and man" in "Eumaeus."

We soon find Bloom's fight against "international animosity" recurring in another context in "Ithaca," where the relationship between justice and benevolence is again renegotiated. In a fantasy about a residence that might be called Bloom Cottage, Saint Leopold's or Flowerville, Bloom envisions an idyllic life that is said by the catechistic narrator to embody all his "concurrent and consecutive ambitions" (585). Starting from meticulous descriptions of the architectural and infrastructural designs of the property, the catechism proceeds to list intellectual pursuits ("[s]napshot photography, comparative study of religion, folklore ... contemplation of the celestial constellation") and recreational pursuits ("garden and fieldwork, cycling ... natation ... vespertinal perambulation or equestrian circumprocession ... discussion in tepid security of unsolved historical and criminal problems: lecture of unexpurgated exotic erotic masterpieces: house carpentry...") that Bloom would enjoy at the imagined place (587). The emphatically bourgeois tenor of Bloom's utopia has drawn a good deal of critical attention. Fredric Jameson, for instance, calls the fantasy "Mr. Bloom's 'bovarysme',"¹⁶⁶ saturated with claims of bourgeois ideology.

The value of utopian desires embodied by Bloom in *Ulysses* has also received much critical scrutiny. In *Utopianism in James Joyce's Ulysses*, Wolfgang Wicht presents a comprehensive analysis of the utopian elements in the book. Excavating a set

¹⁶⁶ Fredric Jameson, "Ulysses in History," in *The Modernist Papers*, (New York: Norton, 2007), 150.

of interconnected discourses from which Joyce draws ideas for his depiction of the utopian in *Ulysses*, Wicht argues that the text thoroughly rejects utopianism as a sociopolitical ideology through its ironies and parodies. Yet as Hugo Azérad has pointed out, Wicht “circumscribes utopianism in an almost exclusively political/ideological framework.”¹⁶⁷ While Bloom stands for a sheer caricature of utopianism for Wicht, Azérad observes that “Bloom’s rhetoric never ceases to combine an indictment of socialist utopianism with genuine messages of betterment and realistic visions of modernity.” Agreeing with Wicht that Joyce remains skeptical about any credibility that utopianism could have, Azérad nonetheless discerns that Joyce alludes to “a thirst for hope lodged within mankind, the presence of hope that endures against all odds and all betrayals of ideas,” which, for Azérad, is “redolent of Bloch’s notion of concrete utopia: an internal, dynamic, and processual idea that opposes any fixed idea for a better future.”¹⁶⁸ Azérad’s more dialectical reading of the utopian content in *Ulysses* sorts better with the book’s complex tone, in my view. Not only does Bloom indulge in utopian imaginings; his fantasizing of halcyon and comfortable dwelling at Bloom Cottage (“ameliorating the soil, multiplying wisdom, achieving longevity”) also ends, strikingly, with a determinedness to battle against “international animosities” (587-88).

In Flowerville, Bloom fancies the highest order of his “civic functions” to be that of a resident magistrate, who, charting “[a] course that lay between undue clemency and excessive rigour” would dispense in “a heterogeneous society of arbitrary classes, incessantly rearranged in terms of greater and lesser social inequality, of unbiased

¹⁶⁷ Hugo Azérad, “‘Negative Utopia’ in James Joyce, Walter Benjamin, and Ernst Bloch,” in *Joyce in Trieste: An Album of Risky Readings*. Eds. Sebastian D. G. Knowles, Geert, Lernout, John, McCourt, (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2007), 103.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 107.

homogeneous indisputable justice, tempered with mitigants of the widest possible latitude but exactable to the uttermost farthing with confiscation of estate, real and personal, to the crown.” Note how the language navigates extreme conditions and hastens to qualify them. Neither a heterogeneous social hierarchy nor a homogeneous system of justice remains ironclad—one is “incessantly rearranged”; the other is “tempered with mitigants of the widest possible latitude”—in this account, though how to reconcile the former’s arbitrariness with the latter’s indisputability appears a matter of the magistrate’s finesse.

The description goes on to attach further importance to the magistrate’s moral sense:

Loyal to the highest constituted power in the land, actuated by an innate love of rectitude, his aims would be the strict maintenance of public order, the repression of many abuses though not of all simultaneously (every measure of reform or retrenchment being a preliminary solution to be contained by fluxion in the final solution), the upholding of the letter of the law (common, statute and law merchant) against all traversers in covin and trespassers ... , all resuscitators (by trespass and petty larceny of kindlings) ... all orotund instigators of international persecution, all perpetuators of international animosities, all menial molesters of domestic conviviality, all recalcitrant violators of domestic connubiality. (588)

The reader is invited to think whether loyalty to power and love of rectitude mesh so well, and Bloom the magistrate presently conveys a sense of constraint and a necessity for practicality as he explains why it is impossible to suppress all abuses simultaneously. It is important to note how his emphasis on “reform,” which precedes the avowal of “upholding of the letter of the law,” questions fixed rules of justice while managing to maintain a sense of justice through the goodness of the adjudicator. Indeed, by the time we read how the letter of the law would be upheld against “instigators of international persecution, all perpetuators of international animosities,” we might be alerted to the disproportion between the jurisdiction of a county magistrate and his international vision

as well as the discrepancy between domestic law and international animosity. The sudden swerving to “molesters” and “violators” of domestic happiness at the end of the passage, in addition to creating a sense of bathos and ludicrousness, raises a similar question about the law’s applicability. Yet the domestic can also signify the national in the wake of the international, thus connecting Bloom’s family life with the situation of Irish society. If for Bloom, “justice of the peace,” rules of justice are subject to “fluxion,” his benevolence imparts a steadiness that serves as a favorable condition of justice (588).

We might see an odd codification of this shift of attention from justice to qualities of its dispenser in Bloom’s utopian imagination in an earlier catechistic exchange in “Ithaca.” After Bloom brings Stephen to his house at 7 Eccles Street, he leads him down the hallway and into the kitchen and then busies himself at the range for a while. A juxtaposition of two descriptions of water then runs on for about two pages:

What did Bloom do at the range?

He removed the saucepan to the left hob, rose and carried the iron kettle to the sink in order to tap the current by turning the faucet to let it flow.

Did it flow?

Yes. From Roundwood reservoir in county Wicklow of a cubic capacity of 2400 million gallons, percolating through a subterranean aqueduct of filter mains of single and double pipeage constructed at an initial plant cost of £5 per linear yard by way of the Dargle, Rathdown, Glen of the Downs and Callowhill to the 26 acre reservoir at Stillorgan, a distance of 22 statute miles, and thence, through a system of relieving tanks, by a gradient of 250 feet to the city boundary at Eustace bridge, upper Leeson street, though from prolonged summer drouth and daily supply of 12^{1/2} million gallons the water had fallen below the sill of the overflow weir for which reason the borough surveyor and waterworks engineer, Mr Spencer Harty, C. E., on the instructions of the waterworks committee had prohibited the use of municipal water for purposes other than those of consumption (envisaging the possibility of recourse being had to the impotable water of the Grand and Royal canals as in 1893) particularly as

the South Dublin Guardians, notwithstanding their ration of 15 gallons per day *per pauper* supplied through a 6 inch meter, had been convicted of a wastage of 20, 000 gallons per night by a reading of their meter on the affirmation of *the law agent of the corporation*, Mr Ignatius Rice, solicitor, thereby *acting to the detriment of another section of the public, selfsupporting taxpayers, solvent, sound.*

What in water did Bloom, waterlover, drawer of water, watercarrier, returning to the range, admire?

Its universality: its democratic equality and constancy to its nature in seeking its own level: its vastness in the ocean of Mercator's projection: its unplumbed profundity in the Sundam trench of the Pacific exceeding 8000 fathoms: the restlessness of its waves and surface particles visiting in turn all points of its seaboard: the independence of its units: the variability of states of sea: its hydrostatic quiescence in calm: its hydrokinetic turgidity in neap and spring tides: its subsidence after devastation: its sterility in the circumpolar icecaps, arctic and antarctic: its climatic and commercial significance: its preponderance of 3 to 1 over the dry land of the globe: its indisputable hegemony extending in square leagues over all the region below the subequatorial tropic of Capricorn: the multiseular stability of its primeval basin: its luteofulvous bed: its capacity to dissolve and hold in solution all soluble substances including millions of tons of the most precious metals ... its ubiquity as constituting 90 percent of the human body: the noxiousness of its effluvia in lacustrine marshes, pestilential fens, faded flowerwater, stagnant pools in the waning moon. (548-9, emphases added)

In his essay “*Ulysses in History*,” Fredric Jameson has adduced the first passage about the waterworks, or rather, a part of it, to support his Marxist account of dereification. Focusing on how the waterworks maps out the infrastructure of Dublin life, Jameson contends that “the whole dead grid of the object world of greater Dublin is ... finally, disalienated and by the most subterranean detours traced back ... to the transformation of Nature by human and collective praxis deconcealed.”¹⁶⁹ The kind of imagined community bodied forth by the underground aqueduct, in Jameson’s analysis, opposes the social atomization of modern society, or what he calls “a merely additive way within

¹⁶⁹ Fredric Jameson, “Ulysses in History,” in *The Modernist Papers* (New York: Verso, 2007), 151.

those great agglomerations which are the modern cities,” by reintegrating divided and alienated labor in the market system of capitalism.¹⁷⁰

Michael Rubenstein cites the same passage in discussing the imagined community in *Ulysses* from another perspective. Differing from Jameson’s point of departure, Rubenstein draws attention to the “social infrastructure of the city of Dublin.”¹⁷¹ Explicating Joyce’s vision of the political structure of the Irish state, which he calls Joyce’s “pragmatic utopianism,” Rubenstein elaborates the civic dimension of communal relations in *Ulysses*. More specifically, he discusses the sphere of civic finance as a mode of such an imagined community, which, in his account, reflects “not alienation but personalized integration.”¹⁷² One exemplification of civic collectivity is the system of taxation, as is implied toward the end of the waterworks passage. As Rubenstein observes, the structure conjures a “social whole” involving “collective thought, collective engineering, collective or public good.”¹⁷³

It is crucial to note, however, that such a dereified world or social whole is still characterized, in *Ulysses*, by the conflict between “pauper[s]” and the “solvent, sound,” and “selfsupporting taxpayers”—a conflict that the solicitor, and by extension the law, reveals rather than resolves. Both critical accounts, perhaps symptomatically, leave out the narrative switch from the metonymic to the metaphorical significations of water in Joyce’s depiction. The detailed depiction of the “subterranean aqueduct of filter mains of single and double pipeage” and the “system of relieving tanks” in the structure of waterworks certainly bespeaks a sense of fascination. Yet admiration is located

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 141.

¹⁷¹ Michael D. Rubenstein, “‘The Waters of Civic Finance’: Moneyed States in Joyce’s *Ulysses*.” *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 36.3 (2003): 289-306, see 289.

¹⁷² Ibid., 298.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 293.

unequivocally in the attributes of water conducted through the infrastructural system. In other words, it is in the symbolic qualities of water—its “universality,” “democratic equality,” “vastness,” diversity, inclusiveness, and so forth—that the strident note of social and material contention embodied in the first passage is dissolved.

Yet the distension of the catalogue, which slowly moves away from morally charged big words and assumes an air of scientific neutrality, might contain a self-reflexive wariness of the naivety and danger of didacticism of any kind. Meanwhile, typical of how Joyce’s catalogues heighten the epic dimension of his book, the list expands endlessly, addressing a myriad of forms, features, and functions of water ranging from the physical and chemical to the “climatic and commercial,” to the biological and geological in a quasi-scientific manner, until it eventually reaches “the waning moon” (549-50). While the dramatic expansion of the passage enacts the vastness and universal qualities of the water, the cosmic realm also proves inseparable from Bloom’s enlarged horizons and international vision.

Cosmic Imaginings and “Seeing More of the World”

Indeed, “Ithaca” abounds with descriptions of Stephen’s metaphysical contemplations and Bloom’s cosmic imaginings, which contrast with the mundane and monotonous atmosphere of Dublin society portrayed in *Ulysses*. These imaginings are often tied up with Bloom’s understandings of the social and moral conditions of human existence. In a sequence of catechistic exchange that interlaces Bloom’s ideas of the perfectibility of human life and meditations on various constellations with his interactions

with Stephen, we read Bloom's thoughts about the issue of redemption in relation to planetary conditions:

Did he find the problems of the inhabitability of the planets and their satellites by a race, given in species, and of the possible social and moral redemption of said race by a redeemer, easier of solution?

Of a different order of difficulty. Conscious that human organism, normally capable of sustaining an atmospheric pressure of 19 tons, when elevated to a considerable altitude in the terrestrial atmosphere suffered with arithmetical progression of intensity, according as the line of demarcation between troposphere and stratosphere was approximated, from nasal hemorrhage, impeded respiration and vertigo, when proposing this problem for solution, he had conjectured as a working hypothesis which could not be proved impossible that a more adaptable and differently anatomically constructed race of beings might subsist otherwise under Martian, Mercurial, Veneral, Jovian, Saturnian, Neptunian or Uranian sufficient and equivalent conditions, though an apogean humanity of beings created in varying forms with finite differences resulting similar to the whole and to one another would probably there as here remain inalterably and inalienably attached to vanities, to vanities of vanities and to all that is vanity. (574)

Though the passage ends on a pessimistic note invoking biblical language, Bloom's cosmological consciousness suggests an enlarged understanding of race and humanity.

When he affirms either love as life for men and women or a friendlier intercourse between man and man, Bloom's notion of humaneness counters narrow patriotic allegiance, yet such humaneness is also grounded in everyday social and economic relations, which cannot always overcome prejudices about race and nation. Indeed, Bloom himself betrays such mindsets from time to time. In "Aeolus," for instance, in an encounter with the Irish-Italian printer and politician Joseph Patrick Nannetti, who was born in Ireland as was Bloom, Bloom thinks: "Strange he never saw his real country. Ireland my country... More Irish than the Irish" (98). It is ironic that Bloom thinks of Nannetti as a foreigner in the same way others think of him by confounding nation and

race. (272).¹⁷⁴ But if in social life Bloom, like others, cannot free himself of divisive conceptions of racial and national identities, Bloom's cosmic imaginings both instill in him a keener sense of the race as encompassing the human species and enable him to reflect on its existential conditions.

While Bloom's cosmological interests are peculiar, the rhythm of cosmic expansion is essential to Joyce's art. This is manifest in the final scenes of "The Dead." When Gabriel contrasts the "thought-tormented" new generation with "those qualities of humanity, of hospitality, of kindly humour which belonged to an older day," he concedes: "we were living in a less spacious age. Those days might, without exaggeration, be called spacious days."¹⁷⁵ Of course, there is no denying Gabriel's sentimentality and nostalgia in this moment of his Christmas speech. And as I have pointed out earlier, his extolling of the past betrays a sense of hypocrisy. Still, Gabriel's emphasis on "spaciousness," instead of being completely swamped by those formalities and disingenuous feelings, is validated as Joyce deftly stages a scene that synchronizes, if it does not fully synthesize, a spatial and spiritual expansion.

As many critics, including Allen Tate, have pointed out, the snow at the end of the story, falling "all over Ireland" and "through the universe,"¹⁷⁶ channels Gabriel's "expanded consciousness; it stands for Gabriel's escape from his own ego into the larger world of humanity, including 'all the living and the dead.'"¹⁷⁷ Yet the expansion of Gabriel's spirit marks, as it were, the end of a beginning. In his compelling reading of how the snow rendered in alliterative sounds and a lyrical rhythm (un)covers a bleak and

¹⁷⁴ See Vincent J. Cheng's *Joyce, Race, and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 185-218, for a detailed analysis of imaginings of nation in *Ulysses*.

¹⁷⁵ James Joyce, *Dubliners*, 203.

¹⁷⁶ James Joyce, *Dubliners*, 224.

¹⁷⁷ Allen Tate on "The Dead," in *Dubliners*, 394.

militant Irish landscape (“the dark central plain”; “treeless hills,” “the Bog of Allen”; “the dark mutinous Shannon Waves”; “the lonely churchyard”; “the crooked crosses and headstones”; “the spears of the little gate”; “the barren thorns”), Paul Saint-Amour convincingly argues that the delineation recreates Gabriel’s belief that “literature was above politics.” The scene forecloses, in Saint-Amour’s words, “an ethical relation to a future political form.”¹⁷⁸

Indeed, portrayed as a solitary figure perceiving the infinite and cold world outside from inside a hotel window in the end, Gabriel seems akin to James Duffy in “A Painful Case,” who is “outcast from life’s feast.”¹⁷⁹ In this regard, the setting of Bloom’s first appearance and performance of a ritual feast, which is also the setting of the close of his encounter with Stephen, acquires additional significance in that it creates a warm sense of life. If Gabriel’s spiritual expansion does not take him anywhere, Bloom’s cosmic imaginings animate his desire to “amend many social conditions.” And one thing that does connect Bloom, Stephen, and Gabriel is their stress on spaciousness. A flashback to Bloom’s debut: “Kidneys were in his mind as he moved about the kitchen softly, righting her breakfast things on the humpy tray. Gelid light and air were in the kitchen but out of doors gentle summer morning everywhere” (45). We can probably see the spatial enlargement better if the things and spatial references in the description are singled out:

Leopold Bloom
Kidneys
His Mind
The Kitchen
out of doors

¹⁷⁸ Paul K. Saint-Amour, “Christmas Yet To Come”: Hospitality, Futurity, the *Carol*, and “The Dead,” *Representations*, 98:1 (2007), 93-117, see 111.

¹⁷⁹ James Joyce, *Dubliners*, 117.

everywhere

In a modest and prosaic fashion, the expansion of Bloom's consciousness runs parallel to Stephen's reflection on his place in the world in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* when he is a student at Clongowes Wood College. He has written on the flyleaf of the geography:

Stephen Dedalus
Class of Elements
Clongowes Wood College
Sallins
County Kildare
Ireland
Europe
The World
The Universe

Compared to Stephen's, Bloom's consciousness moves in a space less gridded by institutions such as the nation and abstract concepts. Beyond the homely kitchen is a natural world of gentle summer. With hindsight, we can see how the crisp description of Bloom's thought movement foreshadows important themes of *Ulysses*. The widening of the inner and outer space in Bloom's experience works against a prevailing parochial nationalism that insists on a binary structure of "internal polity" and otherness. Similarly, the perception of the gentleness of summer everywhere provides an index of Bloom's "soft politeness" (77). Moreover, it exudes an air of peace susceptible to the attacks of "international animosities."

What further differentiates Bloom from Gabriel and Stephen, however, is his concern with the material conditions for more spacious life. If Bloom's imagining of his Flowerville residence connects domestic life with international politics, his "schemes of wider scope," which completes the section on his utopian thinking in "Ithaca," revolve

around ideas for improving traffic and to facilitating connections between people across national boundaries. In Bloom's account:

A scheme for the development of Irish tourist traffic in and around Dublin by means of petropelled riverboats, playing in the fluvial fairway between Island bridge and Ringsend, charabancs, narrow gauge local railways, and pleasure steamers for coastwise navigation (10/- per person per day, guide (*trilingual*) included). A scheme for the reprimation of passenger and goods traffics over Irish waterways, when freed from weedbeds. A scheme to connect by tramline the Cattle Market ... with the quays ... parallel with the Link line railway laid ... in proximity to the terminal stations or Dublin branches of Great Central Railway, Midland Railway of England ... and [in proximity to] transit sheds of Palgrave, Murphy and Company, steamship owners, agents for steamers from *Mediterranean, Spain, Portugal, France, Belgium and Holland and for Liverpool Underwriters' Association* (590-91, emphasis added)

The schemes Bloom deliberates on have something in common; they are all meant to connect: riverboats, steamers, tourists, passengers, goods, animals, railway companies, steamship owners, agents, not only from local Dublin, but also from Europe and beyond. This passage presents a vivid picture of cross-national interactions that has farther-reaching significance than easier and faster getting about on a Dubliner's part or economic benefits stemming from thriving tourism. Joining Bloom Cottage to a bigger world, Bloom's schemes demonstrate a preoccupation with enlarging the scope of life and increasing social connectivity.

In fact, the issue of traffic has remained Bloom's obsession all day along. In "Circe," Bloom promotes his idea of "run[ning] a tramline from the cattlemarket to the river" to his "[e]lectors," calling it "the music of the future" (390). He later ponders the deeper meaning of traffic in "Eumaeus." Wondering "whether it was traffic that created route or vice versa or the two sides in fact" (513), Bloom sees in traffic one of the trajectories of friendlier human connection in life. As Bloom perceives, "It was a subject

of regret and absurd as well on the face of it and no small blame to our vaunted society that the man in the street, when the system really needed toning up, for the matter of a couple of paltry pounds was debarred from seeing more of the world they lived in instead of being always and ever cooped up” (513). Bloom envisions more exposure to the world one lives in as helping to pave the way for deeper connections between people, not just within their immediate circles, but in the widest community possible.

Coda

In *Ulysses*, a belligerent and identitarian Irish nationalist politics not only begets racial prejudice but also confounds the pursuit of self-interest with a combat for justice. The term “justice,” in this context, is in danger of losing its moral resonance and becoming no more than an instrument, or a pretext, for a course of action. Exploring the tension between the two virtues of justice and generosity, Joyce draws attention to the moral foundations of justice, showing how justice can be better served by a more generous stance toward both one’s fellow Irishmen and human beings in general.

Generosity, in Joyce’s depiction, starts with Bloom’s humble proposition: “a little goodwill.” Compared to what Hume believes to be the nobler value of benevolence, and to the aristocratic virtue of generosity in Sheridan’s play, the littleness of goodwill sounds like a feeble velleity. From this perspective, Gabriel’s comment on “a princely failure,” referring to the loss of the tradition of Irish hospitality, can be understood in a similar way. Stripped of the magnificence of generosity that used to inhere in the nobility, Bloom’s proposition of “a little goodwill” reflects a bourgeois ethic that cannot easily be untethered from material calculations and profit-mindedness, which are descriptive of

Bloom's own character at times. Indeed, Bloom can seem at some junctures a reincarnation of the "spiritual accountant" in "Grace,"—originally the last story of *Dubliners*—who "wished each and every one of his hearers to open his books, the books of his spiritual life, and see if they tallied accurately with conscience."¹⁸⁰ And yet if Joyce presents this bourgeois form of generosity with a mixed sense of regret and realism, he also locates hope in the desire to amend: "But with a little goodwill all round"; "but room for improvement all round."

¹⁸⁰ James Joyce, *Dubliners*, 174.

CHAPTER 3

CIVILITY AND “THE COSMIC WIND”: THE SPIRIT OF SOCIAL CONSTITUTION IN LIN YUTANG’S *MOMENT IN PEKING*

One mind seeks the learning of ancients and moderns;
Two legs straddle the cultures of East and West.
两脚踏中西文化
一心评宇宙文章

—Lin Yutang¹⁸¹

The Moment and Eternity are one.

—Lin Yutang, *Moment in Peking*

In *Moment in Peking*, a novel by the Chinese writer Lin Yutang that was written in English and first published in the U.S. by the John Day Company in 1939, Lifu, one of the most scholarly and pivotal figures among nearly a hundred major characters in the book, questions Confucius’s interpretation of the inscriptions on Emperor Tang’s bathtub. Lifu’s study of oracle bones, which bore “the earliest known forms of Chinese writing and often threw light upon the histories of words or of religious practices” in ancient China,¹⁸² leads to his discovery that the bathtub inscriptions, instead of signifying daily renewal and renovation,¹⁸³ might have indicated that the names of the emperor’s brother, father, and grandfather are all “*Hsin*”—meaning “new.” This reinterpretation of the ancient pictorial signs serves as an index of how attitudes toward Confucianism inform

¹⁸¹ A couplet Lin Yutang wrote on his fortieth birthday in 1935. See his memoir *From Pagan to Christian* (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1959), 63. For the Chinese version, see Lin Taiyi’s biography of her father *Lin Yutang Zhuan* (林语堂传) (Beijing: China Drama Press, 1993), 181.

¹⁸² Lin Yutang, *Moment in Peking: A Novel of Contemporary Chinese Life* (New York: The John Day Company, 1939), 660. All the subsequent citations are from this edition and will be included parenthetically in the text.

¹⁸³ In the *Da Xue* 大學 (*The Great Learning*), the inscriptions are recorded as “苟日新，又日新，日日新，” which, in Lin Yutang’s translation, read: “Since daily renewed, daily, daily renewed; again daily renewed” (675).

the political scene of China's modernism. As Lifu suggests in discussing ideological infiltrations into philology with his leftist sister, recent cultural or intellectual understandings of Confucian thought in China had been bound up with political positions circumscribed by such prevalent—yet hitherto new—terms of the period as “democracy, fascism, and communism” (676). Moreover, Lifu's philological findings invite a rethinking of the famous modernist slogan “Make It New,” which was initially Ezra Pound's rendering of the description of Emperor Tang's bathtub inscriptions in Confucius's classic work the *Da Xue* (大學, *The Great Learning*), the first of the *Four Books* illustrating core ideas and teachings of Confucianism.¹⁸⁴ As Michael North has pointed out, Pound's phrase “make it new” leaves out the emphasis on the renewal of moral virtue present in the original text and previous versions of translation, even though the idea of virtue remains important to Pound himself.¹⁸⁵

If the kernel of Confucian moral philosophy gets lost in Pound's translation, Lin's novel puts Confucian thought to the test of modern experience in a complex historical context. Whether Lifu's deciphering of the ancient inscriptions as the shared name of “*Hsin*” (new) across generations is authoritative or not is perhaps less relevant than the relations it draws out between inheritance and innovation, between the past and the present—questions that are essential not only to Lin's art but also to conditions of modernity and global modernism. In fact, situated within the arduous process of China's

¹⁸⁴ For a detailed genealogy of Pound's translation of the phrase, see Michael North's *Novelty: A History of the New* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 162-70.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 242n90. North's attribution of the virtue to “the sovereign,” however, strains against Confucius's stress on cultivating one's moral character from the emperor down to the common men (“自天子以至於庶人，壹是皆以修身為本”). Douglas Mao also notes that Pound's translation “shifts the locus of newness from subject to object (“it”) but adds a suggestion of material fabrication simply absent from” J.-A.-M. de Moyriac Mailla's phrase in his *Histoire Générale de la Chine*, Pound's source for information. See Douglas Mao, *Solid Objects: Modernism and the Test of Production* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 279n23.

nation building since the late nineteenth century, *Moment in Peking* exemplifies the endeavor among Chinese intellectuals to explore the modern fate of a Confucian cultural tradition in the face of multiple impingements from within and without. As his first novel, Lin's aesthetic creation vividly conveys his perspective on the issue, extending his transcultural practices beyond those of translator, lexicographer, bilingual essayist and critic publishing in both China and the U.S., and chief editor for a number of periodicals in Chinese and English.

In a way reminiscent of Joyce's reinvention of the *Odyssey* in his *Ulysses*, *Moment in Peking* bears resemblance to two Chinese classics in terms of narrative structure, thematic concerns, and characterological system. One of these is *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* (浮生六记), an autobiographical novella written by Shen Fu (沈复) in the early nineteenth century. Lin first translated Shen's book for *T'ien Hsia Monthly*, an English-language periodical published in Shanghai from August 1935 to November 1941 and edited by a group of Chinese intellectuals including Lin himself. Lin later adapted his translation and included it in his book *The Wisdom of China and India*, which was published by Random House in 1942. I'll return to connections between Lin's *Moment in Peking* and *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* in a later context. The other book from which Lin draws most inspiration is one of the four major classical novels in China, Cao Xueqin's *Red Chamber Dream* (红楼梦, also translated as *Dream of the Red Chamber*), which was written around the middle of the eighteenth century during the Qing Dynasty. Similarities between the two novels are widely recognized.¹⁸⁶ Not only do Lin's

¹⁸⁶ For a vivid account of how Lin admired and found inspirations from *Red Chamber Dream*, see, for example, Lin Taiyi's *Lin Yutang Zhuan*, 153. Lin Yutang's own book, *Re-opening the Question of Authorship of "Red Chamber Dream"* (Taipei: Book World Co., 1966), also attests to his abiding fascination with and expertise in the classic novel.

protagonists enjoy comparing notes about their favorite characters in *Red Chamber Dream*, his narrator also directly references well-known scenes and subplots from the classic novel. Akin to *Red Chamber Dream*, *Moment in Peking* is a novel of epic proportions, delineating in meticulous detail almost every aspect of Chinese culture, society, and life.

Where Lin's novel differs most markedly from *Red Chamber Dream*, however, is in its effort to negotiate the very idea of Chinese culture. For Cao Xueqin, Chinese society remained, for all the corruptions of the Manchu government and the degradation of morals, by and large a stable and continuous entity. Lin, by contrast, was confronted with a China that was no longer a closed system sustained by its feudal structures and traditions. Instead, it was dispossessed of its full sovereignty and forced to overhaul its old social order in the face of aggressive expansion of foreign imperialist powers and an acceleration of socioeconomic modernization in the early twentieth century. As Lin remarks in his *My Country and My People*, which became an immediate success after it was first published in the U.S. in 1935, "Culture, which is the fruit of a continuity of life and thought, is no longer possible."¹⁸⁷ Lin's lament highlights the shaky state of Chinese national life and the imperilment of its culture and traditions.

To be sure, Lin's attentiveness to what might be considered authentic Chinese culture in *Moment in Peking* is inextricable from his construal of target audience. Focusing on the circulation and reception of Lin Yutang's English works in America, critics have pointed out how Lin worked closely with his publisher, Richard Walsh of John Day, and Walsh's wife Pearl Buck in catering to the interests of American readers. In his essay "Collaboration and Translation: Lin Yutang and the Archive of Asian

¹⁸⁷ Lin Yutang, *My Country and My People* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1936), 336.

American Literature,” Richard Jean So argues that “the appeal of China novels such as *A* [sic] *Moment in Peking* derived from their reality effect or ability to accurately document what the US public perceived to be life in China.” According to So, “American readers of Lin’s novels judged his works according to a rubric of realism.”¹⁸⁸ Yet although criticisms like this are invaluable in illuminating patterns and limitations of intercultural communication in a specific historical period, they tend to obscure dynamics and conflicts within individual texts whose implications exceed practical concerns about readership. *Moment in Peking* does not present a static China that can be understood in terms of essentialized traits; rather, it accentuates cataclysmic changes that were taking place in Chinese society in the early twentieth century as well as intellectual revolts against Chinese tradition during the New Culture Movement and beyond, even as it capitalizes on preconceptions of Chineseness for the market. Indeed, its rich narrative unfolds complex relations between the contested realms of nation, culture, tradition, and society in semi-colonial China. A close analysis of Lin’s under-studied novel in the context of his thought and other writings not only contributes to scholarship on Lin and Chinese modernism but also sheds light, in turn, on modernism’s cross-cultural scope and significance.

Extraterritoriality and Neighborliness

Moment in Peking presents a vivid picture of China’s ramshackle state under treacherous historical circumstances. The body politic itself has become extremely

¹⁸⁸ Richard Jean So, “Collaboration and Translation: Lin Yutang and the Archive of Asian American Literature,” in *Modern Fiction Studies*, 56.1 (2010): 40-62, see 44. See also Qian Suoqiao, *Liberal Cosmopolitan: Lin Yutang and Middling Chinese Modernity* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), Chapter Six, “Oriental Other: The Business of Translating Chinese and American Cultures” (161-196).

precarious and hardly recognizable. Lin alludes to the fact that since the First Opium War between Britain and China in the 1840s, the ascendance of a number of foreign powers in China had increasingly undermined the Qing government and changed China's political landscape. Furthermore, the dictatorship of the Empress Dowager Cixi and her suppression of The Hundred Days' Reform undertaken by the Emperor Kuanghsu and his supporters in 1898 hastened the demise of China's last dynasty. The broad canvas of Lin's novel traces the tumultuous years from the xenophobic Boxer Rebellion at the dawn of the twentieth century, to the Xinhai Revolution that overthrew the Qing dynasty in 1911 and established the Republic of China, to the beginning of the Sino-Japanese war in the late 1930s.

The setting of *Moment in Peking* illustrates what critics have called China's semi-colonial situation, including "the specific effects of multiple imperialist presences in China and their fragmentary colonial geography (largely confined to coastal cities) and control, as well as the resulting social and cultural formations."¹⁸⁹ As Shu-mei Shih has explained, the "semi-" in the specific form of semi-colonialism in China does not "denote 'half' of something, but rather the fractured, informal, and indirect character of colonialism, as well as its multi-layeredness."¹⁹⁰ In addition, Shih points out how this characteristic requires an analytical framework different from existing theoretical models:

Chinese modernism departs further from the usual binary models of the non-West's confrontation with the West—'China versus the West' or 'East versus West.' Most significant in this regard was the prominent role played by Japan as the mediating transmitter of Western culture and a potent force in the formation of Chinese modernism. This triangular relationship is indicative of the political and cultural condition of China under multiple domination from Euro-American and Japanese

¹⁸⁹ Shu-mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China 1917-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 31.

¹⁹⁰ Shu-mei Shih, *Ibid.*, 34.

imperialisms, which in turn problematizes the China/West binary model privileged in comparative culture studies.¹⁹¹

Indeed, written during the Sino-Japanese war, which followed the Japanese military invasion of China in 1937, *Moment in Peking* foregrounds Japanese domination of China. Meanwhile, the novel emphasizes the complexities of China's political and intellectual topography, characterized as it was by competing forces of multiple imperialist powers as well as rivalries among different political doctrines and ideologies. A description of the interrogation of common Chinese people by Japanese soldiers at the train station in the novel testifies to the intricacy of the situation:

“Are you anti-Japanese?”
“Are you a Blue-Shirt?”¹⁹²
“Are you a Communist?”
“Are you of the Anglo-American clique?”
“Have you read the Sanmin Doctrine?”
“Do you believe in Sun Yat-sen?”
“Do you believe in Chiang Kai-shek?”
“What is your attitude toward Manchukuo?”
“Do you believe in the co-operation of Japan, China, and Manchukuo?”
“Is it fair for China to play one foreign nation against another?” (775)

In an effort to rally support for nationalism, Sun Yat-sen (孫逸仙 or 孫中山), the founder of the Republic of China, in his Sanmin Doctrine (a subject to which I will return) decries the “comfort” associated with the expression “semi-colony,” replacing it with the term “hypo-colony,” which describes a situation worse than colonialism.¹⁹³ Sun argues that “China is not the colony of one nation but of all, and we are not the slaves of one country

¹⁹¹ Shu-mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern*, 4.

¹⁹² The Blue Shirt Society is a clique within the Kuomintang acting as a secret police and predecessor of the Bureau of Investigation and Statistics. For a detailed study of the organization, see Maria Hsia Chang, *The Chinese Blue Shirt Society: Fascism and Developmental Nationalism* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California-Berkeley, Center for Chinese Studies, 1985).

¹⁹³ Sun Yat-sen, *San Min Chu I: The Three Principles of the People*, trans. Frank Price (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1930), 38-9. The Chinese phrase in Sun's doctrine is “次殖民地,” which is often translated as “sub-colony.” But Price's translation “hypo-colony” seems apt since Sun explains that the prefix “次” in his coinage is taken from chemistry, as in the word “hypophosphite.”

but of all.”¹⁹⁴ Lin’s novel, however, suggests that the multiplicity of foreign powers vying for political and economic domination also renders semi-colonial China an arena wherein international politics plays itself out and intercultural encounters seem particularly diverse.

The multipolarity of imperialist powers in China was violently legitimized by extraterritorial jurisdiction—an arrangement peculiar to the mode of China’s semi-colonialism that granted legal impunity to foreign nationals in China. As Eileen Scully has pointed out, treaty-port extraterritoriality granted foreigners “something of a ‘Midas touch,’ allowing them to extend their privileges and immunities to employees, protégés, institutions, businesses, and land.”¹⁹⁵ In recent work, modernist scholars have engaged with the concept of extraterritoriality in discussing questions centering on cultural translation and the limitations of nationalism. In his analysis of W. G. Sebald’s “extraterritorial poetics,” for example, Matthew Hart argues that “although [extraterritoriality] is commonly described as involving the abrogation of national authority, it is just as often used to expand the power of the nation-state.”¹⁹⁶ In semi-colonial China, the abolition of extraterritoriality figures prominently in anti-imperialist discourses and nation-building projects. Typical of critiques of imperialist intrusion into China, *Moment in Peking* denounces the encroachment of the extraterritorial system on China’s national sovereignty. Yet delving into cultural and ethical ramifications of extraterritoriality, Lin also draws attention to how the operation of this juridical apparatus affects the moral foundation of society.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 38.

¹⁹⁵ Eileen Scully, *Bargaining with the State from Afar: American Citizenship in Treaty Port China, 1844-1942* (New York: Columbia UP, 2001), 5.

¹⁹⁶ Matthew Hart and Tania Lown-Hecht, “The Extraterritorial Poetics of W. G. Sebald.” *Modern Fiction Studies* 58.2 (2012): 214-238. See 215.

Of course, the practice of extraterritoriality in Republican China was tied up with the dominance of military power. When Lifu in *Moment in Peking* commits himself to an anatomy of the Chinese Customs' failure to suppress opium and other smuggled contraband from Japan as well as violent attacks on unarmed Chinese Customs officers, he emphasizes how "the extraterritorial treaty," coupled with "the Japanese military authorities," produces these devastating consequences (734). Lifu's analysis echoes Lin's critique of extraterritoriality in an essay entitled "An Open Letter to an American Friend" published in *The China Critic*. Lin served as an editor of this Chinese-owned and edited English-language weekly newspaper, which was published from 1928 to 1945, and wrote regularly for a column named "The Little Critic."¹⁹⁷ Repudiating America's objection to the abolition of extraterritoriality, Lin calls extraterritoriality "one of the modern conveniences you [referring to the virtual "American friend"] don't like to do without. But it is a 'modern convenience' you can well afford only while your gunboats can at any time silence C. T. Wang [the Foreign Minister of the Nationalist government], when they choose to."¹⁹⁸

It is important to note, however, that Lin's observation of unequal power relations is soon transposed into an emphasis on the ethical implications of the rule of extraterritoriality. As Lin puts it, "Extraterritoriality is demoralizing. It breeds bad manners, and it exempts the persons enjoying the privilege from the social obligation of

¹⁹⁷ *The China Critic* constantly made critical comments on the topic of extraterritoriality in its editorials. See its issues on March 19, June 4, June 25, and August 6 in 1931 for examples. For a detailed discussion of the history and political significance of *The China Critic*, see Shuang Shen, *Cosmopolitan Publics: Anglophone Print Culture in Semi-Colonial Shanghai* (Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 2009). Shen argues that "Anglophone periodicals" including *The China Critic* created what she calls "cosmopolitan publics" in semi-colonial Shanghai through various strategies of cultural translation and negotiation.

¹⁹⁸ Lin Yutang, *The Little Critic: Essays, Satires and Sketches on China (first series: 1930-1932)* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1937), 129.

being pleasant to one's neighbours."¹⁹⁹ The conflict between extraterritoriality and good manners in Lin's account is noteworthy. The legal construct that organizes extraterritorial concessions in China creates neighborhoods but prevents extraterritorials from being neighborly. Rather than fostering friendly co-existence, it engenders alienation and acerbity. Shifting the register from a political domain of power to a notion of civil society based on neighborliness, Lin highlights the incongruity between an inequitable rule-bound system and agreeable social virtues.

Calling extraterritoriality "an atrocious word," Lin proceeds to link politics with sociolinguistic and cultural practices by proposing that the word be replaced by "a liberal use of ... three phrases": "Nin hao (Good morning)",²⁰⁰ "Tui pu chu (Pardon me)"; "Tsai huei (See you again)," which mark greetings of approach, encounter, and leave-taking. Lin argues that these phatic phrases function as "lubricators of unnecessary social friction and promoters of international understanding" that are "greater and more important" than "all the diplomatic protection ... [the] Washington State Department is able to give." In a tone at once hortatory and reassuring, Lin further avers: "when you, Mr. American, will care to reveal the essential gentlemanly side of your character, there is always enough essential gentlemanliness in your Chinese business associates to meet it."²⁰¹ Lin's stress on "gentlemanliness" in the face of the domination of militant imperialism may sound out of place at first sight, but it was not altogether archaic in its moment. Indeed, it serves as a reminder that some traces of gentlemanly discourse were alive and of critical interest in both the East and the West in the early twentieth century. Lin's formulation, which casts gentlemanliness as both desirable manners and "essential"

¹⁹⁹ Lin Yutang, *The Little Critic*, 130.

²⁰⁰ Lin's translation. "Nin hao" is often considered an equivalent of "how do you do?"

²⁰¹ Lin Yutang, *The Little Critic*, 131.

qualities of character in a transnational context, signifies both an appeal for mutual respect and understanding and a belief in universal humanity. Further, this endeavor to bring civilized virtues to bear on power politics emblemizes Chinese intellectuals' abiding concern with the relation between a Confucian humanist tradition and Western-driven modernization. If extraterritoriality conflicts with such values as civility in a world featuring a growing trend of various modes of border crossing and intercultural interaction, Lin's novel exhibits an attempt to resuscitate those social virtues that he considers essential to the sustenance of more organic forms of living across national boundaries.

“Total Culture” and National Character

Against the backdrop of the general conditions of political strife in semi-colonial China, *Moment in Peking* encapsulates the contentions among Chinese intellectuals, in this historical moment, over cultural traditions deeply rooted in Confucian thought. The historian Joseph Levenson has succinctly summed up “two reciprocal processes” that characterize modern Chinese intellectual history: “the progressive abandonment of tradition by iconoclasts and the petrification of tradition by traditionalists.”²⁰² In his novel, Lin represents such conflicts as disputes between the old school of classicists and the new school of radical social reformers, many of whom receive their education abroad and all of whom are eager to transform China from what they conceive as a feudal dinosaur to a modern nation-state. The old school, Lin observes, holds fast to Confucian culture as the foundation of Chinese society, refusing to open up to modern thought. The new school,

²⁰² Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate: A Trilogy*. Volume One: *The Problem of Intellectual Continuity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), XXX.

by contrast, is marked by its subversive attitude toward Confucianism, denouncing it as the culprit for China's backwardness. Dismissing Confucianism as a "cannibal religion," the radical leaders attack its entire structure of culture and morality, including the "poetic form" of writing, "ancestor worship," and "the family system" (502). What they offer in its place, as is noted in the novel, are Western models of sociopolitical and practices. Lin depicts in a genial tone the cultural refinement of leading classicists such as Lin Shu (林紓) and Gu Hongming (辜鴻銘)—they were both real people as well as characters in Lin's book—on the one hand, and the zest of the social reformers, on the other,²⁰³ yet he also points to the inadequacies of both schools. The former seem to be largely immersed in their own anachronistic cultivated world, while the latter disavow any connection with the past. Lin also shows the dissonance among the reform-minded intelligentsia. In parallel with the vying interests of foreign powers in China, there exists a division among the various groups of "the French-returned, the Japanese-returned, the English-American returned, each with its own weekly organ, all coming to fisticuffs with one another, and all very much alive" (514). Both traditionalist and iconoclastic tendencies seem insufficient to Lin. As Lifu puts it, "The new school argues badly and the old school can't argue at all" (502).

Lifu's remark bespeaks Lin's distinctive attitude toward the strained relationship between Confucian culture and modernity. In his monograph on Lin Yutang, Qian

²⁰³ Lin's portrayal of the legendary figure Ku Hung-ming, "the old philosopher and wit and a whole-hearted supporter of oriental culture" (502), is noticeably one of admiration. Lin Yutang acknowledges that Ku "played a critical role in the direction of my beliefs by turning everything upside down" in *From Pagan to Christian*, 46. See also Qian Suoqiao's *Liberal Cosmopolitan* for an analysis of Ku's "cosmopolitan critique of imperialism," 38-46. Both Lin Shu and Ku Hung-ming, whom Lin Yutang mentions with pride in his memoir, are from his own home province of Fukien (43). For a recent study of the relation between Lin Shu's translation and modern Chinese culture, see Michael Hill, *Lin Shu, Inc: Translation and the Making of Modern Chinese Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Suoqiao (钱锁桥) portrays Lin as a liberal cosmopolitan mediating between cultural nationalistic and radical revolutionary advocacies. Qian establishes that “creative transformation of Confucian (as well as Taoist) cultural resources” was “an important part of his liberal cosmopolitan endeavor.”²⁰⁴ Against either a sanctifying or a demonizing of Confucianism, Lin proposes a searching and open-minded stance toward Confucian tradition and its relevance to modern life. For Lin, it is important to keep alive those elements in Confucian humanism that have bolstered Chinese society in both tranquil and turbulent times. In an article titled “Confucius as I Know Him,” published by *The China Critic* on January 1, 1931 and originally given as a speech at the winter Institute of the foreign Y. M. C. A., Shanghai in 1930, Lin suggests that the first step toward understanding Confucianism is to restore “the human side of [Confucius’] character.”²⁰⁵ By “human” Lin emphasizes both the wisdom and weakness of humanity, thus making Confucius and Confucian thought at once sympathetic and amenable to modification. In contradistinction to the traditionalistic and iconoclastic camps, both of which in forging a Chinese national essence or political identity betray a view of the Confucian legacy as one of rigid modes and systems, Lin locates Confucianism in a whole way of life, and in so doing engages in an aesthetic mode of cultural analysis of national character that combines observation and evaluation with a goal of achieving greater international understanding.

The word “culture” has become notoriously polysemous in the twentieth century. In his “Notes towards the Definition of Culture,” which originally appeared as a series of articles in *New England Weekly* in 1943, T. S. Eliot points out three senses of culture

²⁰⁴ Qian Suoqiao, *Liberal Cosmopolitan*, 9.

²⁰⁵ *The China Critic* (Shanghai: China Critic Publishing Company, 1931), 5.

based on a social taxonomy. Culture, in this schema, has different connotations when associated with the development of “an individual”; “a group or class”; or “a whole society.”²⁰⁶ For Eliot, the flourishing of the culture of an individual and of a group depends on the culture of the whole society, or what he designates as “the total culture of a country,” which “involves a good deal more than government.”²⁰⁷ It is this last sense of culture that lies at the heart of Eliot’s discussion. Countering Karl Mannheim’s claim that the intelligentsia creates culture, Eliot conceives of culture as “the creation of the society as a whole.” Culture, in Eliot’s view, is “that which makes it a society.”²⁰⁸ It cannot be identified with “the *sum* of distinct cultural activities”; rather, it is “a way of life”; “a peculiar way of thinking, feeling and behaving.”²⁰⁹

While culture thus defined is tethered by Eliot to religion—in his phrase, “the culture being, essentially, the incarnation (so to speak) of the religion of a people”²¹⁰—Eliot also draws a close connection between culture and people when it comes to cultural understanding. It is easy to see the influences of such twentieth-century disciplines as anthropology and sociology on Eliot’s conception of culture, but in support of his idea that culture is not simply an aggregate of separate human activities or anthropological phenomena, Eliot lays emphasis on a holistic and imaginative understanding of a people as a condition of true understanding of a culture. He writes:

The anthropologist may study the social system, the economics, the arts, and the religion of a particular tribe, he may even study their psychological peculiarities: but it is not merely by observing in detail all of these manifestations, and grasping them together, that he will approach

²⁰⁶ T. S. Eliot, *Christianity and Culture* (New York: Harcourt, 1977), 93.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 119.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 109.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 113-4, 130.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 101.

to an understanding of the culture. For to understand the culture is to understand the people, and this means an imaginative understanding.

Eliot doesn't elaborate what constitutes "imaginative understanding," but he clearly contrasts it with scientific approaches that tend to atomize human activities and overlook the difference between a culture and its manifestations. Eliot proceeds to describe two positions often assumed by an anthropologist that hinder full understanding of another culture:

Such understanding can never be complete: either it is abstract—and the essence escapes—or else it is *lived*; and in so far as it is *lived*, the student will tend to identify himself so completely with the people whom he studies that he will lose the point of view from which it was worth while and possible to study it. Understanding involves an area more extensive than that of which one can be conscious; one cannot be outside and inside at the same time.²¹¹

In his analysis, imaginative understanding remains an ongoing process that departs from both pure abstraction and total involvement. Despite the negativity of his conclusion, Eliot seems to suggest a fine balance between observation and participation, between detachment and identification in approaching a culture and a people. Eliot's own migration from the U.S. to Britain might, wittingly or unwittingly, have enabled him to appreciate such a stance more deeply.

Lin Yutang's relation to Chinese culture is more complicated. His contact with the West and the English language began very early in childhood. From the missionary schools he attended in Fujian province to St. John's College in Shanghai, an Anglican university founded in 1879 by American missionaries, Lin was immersed in studying English and Western culture. As he recounts in his spiritual memoir, "I had just begun to

²¹¹ Ibid., 113-14.

get interested in Chinese history when my entry to St. John's abruptly terminated it."²¹²

It was when he started to teach at Tsinghua University in Peking after graduation in 1916 that Lin was struck by a sense of cultural deprivation and determined, in his own words, "to rediscover [his] own country, and to make a journey of exploration through the obscure, luxuriant jungle of Chinese thought and try to arrive at some kind of understanding."²¹³ It is not the purpose of the present study to chronicle Lin's exposure to Chinese and Western cultures. What is germane to my discussion is that Lin's cross-cultural experiences, including his pursuit of graduate studies abroad in the early 1920s and his living in the U.S. as an expatriate writer for thirty years, give him a vantage point of both an outsider and insider in understanding culture.

Eliot is not alone in commingling the two concepts of culture and people. His analysis, which harks back to Woolf's exploration of English national temperament and Joyce's depiction of the manners and mores of Dubliners, overlaps with modernist writers' fascination with the idea of national character. In his study of how Wyndham Lewis negotiates the relation between individualism and nationalism, Paul Peppis analyzes the differences between ideas of national character and hierarchical and polygenic models of race. Peppis illustrates how Lewis articulates in *Tarr* "a conception of national character that modifies and complicates the prewar moment's (double) vision of the category" as essence and construct. For Lewis, Peppis argues, what supplements the conception of nationality as the result of either "an 'heredity' that fundamentally defines the character of individuals of a particular 'race' or nation" or "a restrictive regime of cultural training that persons of sufficient energy, insight, and will can and

²¹² Lin Yutang, *From Pagan to Christian*, 31.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 57.

should overcome” is a view of human nature as “essentially chaotic.” Peppis illuminates Lewis’s notion of race as not “the different and competing (sub)species nineteenth-century racialists believed inhabited the nationalized, Darwinian world,” but “the race *in toto*.”²¹⁴

In “Notes on the English Character” (1926), E. M. Forster situates the importance of understanding national character in an international context, which proves akin to Lin’s endeavor. In this essay, Forster describes English collective traits in terms of qualities he associates with the middle class, including “solidity, caution, integrity, efficiency,” “[I]ack of imagination,” and “hypocrisy.”²¹⁵ Forster’s tone here sounds slightly harsher than and dissonant from that in *Howards End* (1910), where he compares Englishness metaphorically to a comradely tree, “bending over the house, [with] strength and adventure in its roots, but in its utmost fingers tenderness.”²¹⁶ But Forster also emphasizes the incompleteness of any portrait of national character, suggesting that the ascendance of the working class in England will transform its character into something “less unique and more lovable.” For Forster, careful analyses of national character both rectify cultural stereotypes and facilitate international understanding in a global age. He writes, “The nations must understand one another and quickly; and without the interposition of their governments, for the shrinkage of the globe is throwing them into one another’s arms.”²¹⁷

²¹⁴ Paul Peppis, *Literature, Politics, and the English Avant-Garde: Nation and Empire, 1901-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 17-18.

²¹⁵ E. M. Forster, *Abinger Harvest and England's Pleasant Land*. Ed. Elizabeth Heine (London: A. Deutsch, 1996), 3.

²¹⁶ E. M. Forster, *Howards End*. Ed. Douglas Mao (New York: Longman, 2010), 165.

²¹⁷ E. M. Forster, *Abinger Harvest*, 13.

On the other side of the modern world, national character remains a prevailing concern among May Fourth intellectuals in China. Lu Xun's *True Story of Ah Q* (阿 Q 正传, 1921) is widely acclaimed as an exemplary text about Chinese national character. As Lydia Liu has noted, "The question of national character was ... cast in predominantly negative terms during the New Culture movement and the May Fourth period, whence it turned practically into a near equivalent of *guomin liegen xing* ([inherently] flawed national character)." ²¹⁸ Framed as a purely negative category, national character serves Lu Xun and his fellow writers' iconoclastic agenda, allowing them to attack Confucian tradition as the chief reason for China's backwardness and to prioritize, to use Liu's words, "the clinical task of 'dissecting' (Lu Xun's favorite verb) the sick mind of the nation in order to restore life to its weakened body." ²¹⁹

Lin Yutang's depiction of national character, by contrast, exhibits more analytical richness and less nationalistic anxiety. In a piece for *The China Critic* entitled "The Chinese People," Lin presents an understanding of "nation" that is redolent of Eliot's notion of "total culture." This essay, along with a number of other related writings, anticipates Lin's first bestseller in the U.S., *My Country and My People*. Lin states that "taking the Chinese people as a whole, there is a certain homogeneity of culture which justifies our calling it a nation. The Chinese people, as they are today, manifest certain racial characteristics. And here we come to the mental and spiritual side of the Chinese

²¹⁸ 国民劣根性.

²¹⁹ Lydia Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China 1900-1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 49-50. Liu's preoccupation with debunking Eurocentrism leads her to assert that national character is "a discourse that European nations first [and continually] used to stake their claim to racial superiority" (49). As a result, Chinese intellectuals' concern with national character, in Liu's account, was informed by "a desire to improve the Chinese character according to a Eurocentric criterion" (395n17). Liu's analysis, however, doesn't do full justice to heterogeneous applications of the national character discourse in both China and the West.

character.”²²⁰ Crucially, Lin equates “racial characteristics” with “the mental and spiritual side” of communal character. While he draws a list of such qualities as “sobriety”; “simplicity”; “love of nature”; “patience”; “indifference”; “old roguishness”; “fecundity”; “industry”; “love of family life”; “cheerfulness”; and “sensuality,” Lin does not cling to any rigid essentialist account of these characteristics, emphasizing instead their social conditioning. Indeed Lin immediately follows up by explaining, “These characteristics are, I believe, the results of their historical environment, partly economic and partly cultural.”²²¹

Lin’s view evokes the eighteenth-century discourse on national character associated with such thinkers as Montesquieu and David Hume. In *The Spirit of the Laws*, Montesquieu describes “a general spirit” of a population that is important for legislation. According to Montesquieu: “Many things govern men: climate, religion, laws, the maxims of the government, examples of past things, mores, and manners; a general spirit is formed as a result.”²²² Hume presents a similar account of the “moral” causation of collective dispositions in his essay “Of National Characters.” By “moral causes” Hume means “all circumstances which are fitted to work on the mind as motives or reasons, and which render a peculiar set of manners habitual to us.”²²³ Hume refers specifically to a nation’s political, administrative, economic, and geopolitical situations in his illustration of these causes, which, in his words, include “the nature of the government, the revolutions of public affairs, the plenty or penury in which the people live, the situation

²²⁰ Hu Shih and Lin Yutang, *China’s Own Critics: A Selection of Essays* (New York: Paragon Book, 1969), 135.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 310.

²²³ David Hume, “Of National Characters.” *Selected Essay*. Eds. Stephen Copley and Andrew Edgar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 113.

of the nation with regard to its neighbours.”²²⁴ Although Lin is particularly concerned with the shaping force of a Confucian humanist tradition and its enduring effects on collective spirit in early twentieth-century China, he shares with these European philosophers a nuanced understanding of the formation and manifestations of national character.

To say that Lin’s commitment to cultural analysis of national character diverges from the forms of nationalism espoused by traditionalists and iconoclasts is not to deny his patriotic sentiments. In fact, such sentiments find their vivid expression in *Moment in Peking*, especially in Lin’s impassioned praise of Chinese youths and soldiers fighting bravely against Japanese invaders. Nor is this to dismiss Lin’s deep concern with the plight and problems of China as a nation struggling to regain its sovereign rights in the international arena. Lin has been faulted by literary critics for the lightness of the tonality of his writings. In his seminal work on modern Chinese fiction, C. T. Hsia writes, “Lin Yutang did more than any other writer of his time to alienate readers from Communism, but he ended in the blind alley of hedonism, unable to provide the necessary critical incentive for the disinterested pursuit of art.”²²⁵ In the post-Mao era, when the literary scene was no longer uniformly leftist in its orientation, Chinese scholars still took issue with what they saw as Lin’s political disengagement. Chen Pingyuan (陈平原), for one, maintains that Lin’s aesthetic concerns were out of tune with the tragic air that saturated

²²⁴ Ibid. Hume’s argument is often considered as a critique of the climatological theory championed by Montesquieu, which stresses climate as an important factor in forming “a general spirit.” For a detailed discussion of the relation between Hume and Montesquieu, see P. E. Chamley, “The Conflict between Montesquieu and Hume,” in *Essays on Adam Smith*. Eds. A. S. Skinner and T. Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 197-207.

²²⁵ C. T. Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*. Third Edition (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 134.

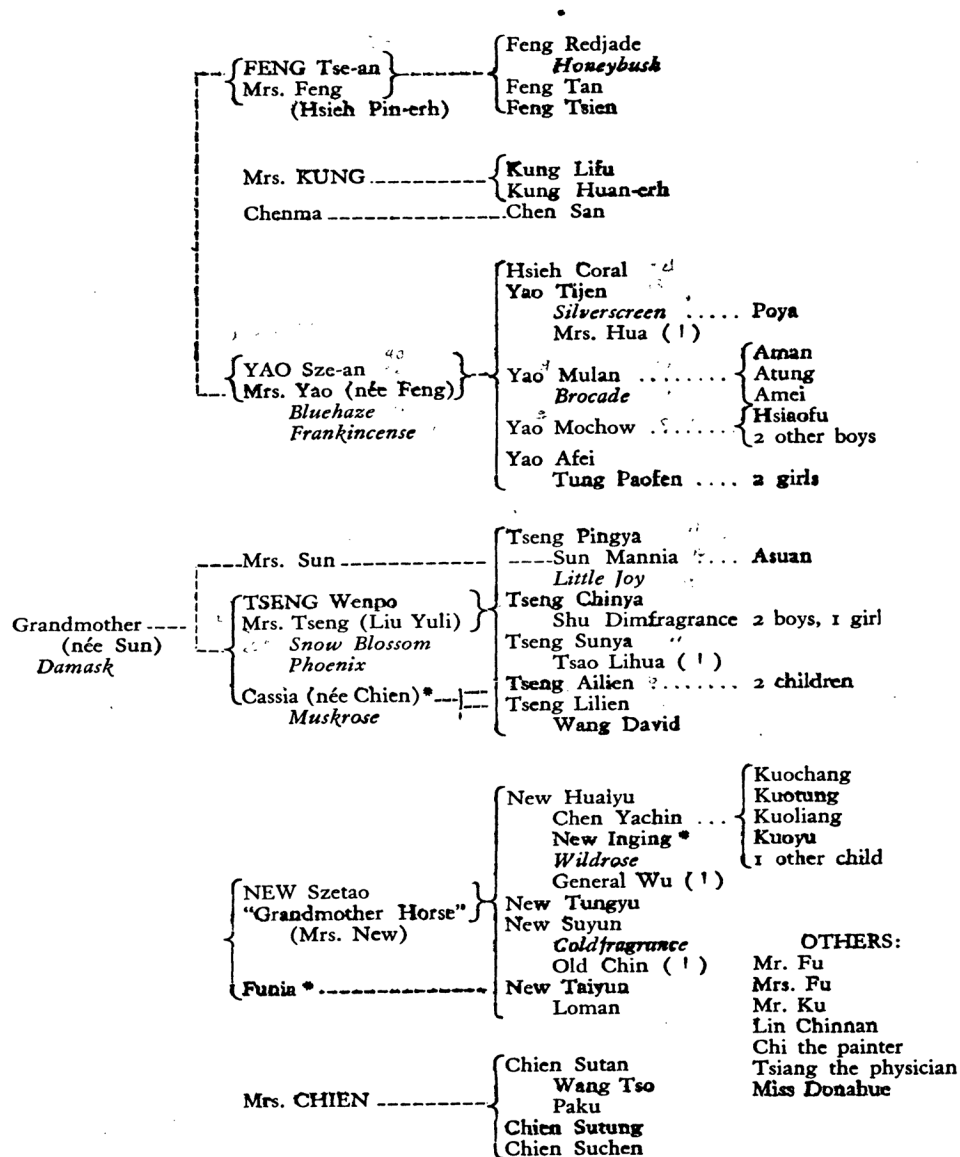
modern Chinese literature.²²⁶ What critiques like Chen's in part reveal is a tension between an overriding sense of national crisis in early-twentieth century China and aesthetic projects that celebrate the vitality and transnational quality of culture. Unlike either apologists or antagonists of Confucianism who, despite their contrasting advocacies, both assume a temporal rupture between China's cultural tradition and a modernity shaped by Western models, Lin draws attention to the underlying continuity of Chinese society even under the attacks of violent forces of modernity. Lin's effort to probe the internal resilience of Chinese society involves both an exaltation of culture over nation and an emphasis on cross-cultural fertilization. Reconsidering Confucian thought in the context of modern-western ideas about individuality and social relations, Lin gestures toward a chronotope that is at once Chinese and cosmic, local and boundless.

Civil Society and the Spirit of Social Constitution

Moment in Peking foregrounds the conflicts between old ways of life governed by such Confucian norms as hierarchy, honor, and civility, on the one hand, and multifarious forces of modernity, on the other. The novel charts the life and fate of four generations in three intermarried upper-class families: the YAO family, which engages in an herbal medicine business but is highly cultivated and conversant with Chinese literary and philosophical classics; the TSENG family, whose patriarch is a senior government official believing in feudalistic Confucianism; the NEW (meaning "ox" in Chinese) family, whose wealth accrues from usury, corruption, and bribery. These big and wealthy households, consisting of old and young masters and mistresses as well as a bevy of

²²⁶ See Chen Pingyuan, *On Collision Between Eastern and Western Cultures* (在东西方文化碰撞中) (Hangzhou: Zhejiang wenyi chubanshe, 1987), 80.

concubines, relatives, and servants (see the family trees from Lin's novel in the John Day edition, below, for a detailed picture of these families and major characters²²⁷), sustain forms of Chinese culture and tradition when the country as a whole is in great turmoil and undergoing systemic transformation.



²²⁷ In the diagram of the family trees, "brackets indicate families, grouped by generations, and including maidservants important in the story. Names in *italics* indicate maidservants. Names followed by "!" indicate illicit relationships. Names followed by "*" indicate concubines.

The political upheaval of the period, aggravated by the tangled warfare among a bunch of warlords in complicity with competing imperialist powers, makes it impossible to identify with the country or to feel allegiance to it. So when urged by Huaiyu, the second son of the New family and a ruthless opportunist, to “support our Chief Executive in order to serve our country,” Lifu proclaims: “I don’t want to serve our country,” believing that the “country” connotes no more than domination by an arbitrary power (423). But if the fracture and flux of the political system are tearing the country apart, Chinese social life underpinned by the organic unit of family, in Lin’s delineation, is still vital enough to bind people together and impart a sense of order. Against the backdrop of political pandemonium and bloodshed, Lin portrays a vibrant life in Peking.

Indeed, he devotes a great deal of space to depicting such rituals as wedding and funeral processions, which make the contours of social life more visible by knitting together entire families and their kin, friends, and communities. The wedding itself is an elaborate ceremony whose performance is a family celebration and a communal affair. The bride’s trousseau is carried across town in a parade; the bride herself is carried in a sedan chair all the way to the bridegroom’s house. Of course the wealthier the family, the more pompous the procession. The wedding of Mannia, a girl from the country marrying the dying son of the Tseng family, is therefore not as extravagant as that of Mulan, the eldest daughter of the Yao family and the heroine of Lin’s novel. In Lin’s lavish description, Mulan’s trousseau “came in seventy-two open exhibit cases in the order of gold, silver, jade, jewelry, bedroom outfits, library outfits, antiques, silks, furs, trunks, and quilts” (321), attracting great crowds and admiration. Funerals, likewise, remain a

significant part of Confucian rites while evoking profound reflections about the meaning of life. Before his own funeral, Mulan's father says to her: "I am immortal through you and your sister and Afei and all the children born of my children. I am living all over again in you, as you are living all over again in Atung and Amei [Mulan's children]. There is no death. You cannot defeat nature. Life goes on forever" (716). Family, in these reflections on the permanence of life, remains not only a locus of personal feelings and memories but also a foundation for social continuity.

Lin locates the vigor and flavor of social life in what he describes as "a breadth of human spirit" characterized by "tolerance, geniality, and urbanity" (171-72). Infusing a "human spirit" into the city of Peking, Lin's statement calls to mind Montesquieu's notion of "a general spirit" of society, as does his remark that "[c]limate, topography, history, folk customs, architecture, and the arts combined to make it the city that it is. The human element in the life of Peking is the great thing" (171). In a description of Mulan's admiration of Peking, the novel limns a panoramic view of the social fabric in a shared space in which buildings and roads of the city and the country merge with "the common man's homes with their inevitable pomegranate trees and jars of goldfish, no less than the rich man's mansions and gardens" (172). The social interconnectedness is also made manifest in the hustle and bustle of commerce that brings together people from different classes and walks of life and operates in numerous venues, including

the open-air teahouses where men loll on rattan armchairs under cypress trees, spending twenty cents for a whole afternoon in summer; the enclosed teashops where in winter men eat steaming-hot mutton fried with onion and drink *pehkan* [white strong liquor—translation mine] and where the great rub shoulders with the humble; the wonderful theaters, the beautiful restaurants, the bazaars, the lantern streets and the curio streets; the temple fairs which register the days of the month; the system of poor man's shop credits and poor man's pleasures, the open-air jugglers,

magicians, and acrobats of Shihshahai and the cheap operas of Tienchiao; the beauty and variety of the pedlars' street-cries, the tuning forks of itinerant barbers, the drums of second-hand goods dealers working from house to house, the brass bowls of the sellers of iced dark plum drinks, each and every one clanging in the most perfect rhythm. (172)

The correlation between everyday economic activities and the peace and pleasantness of social existence in Lin's depiction may remind us of the eighteenth-century thesis concerning "*Le doux commerce*" elaborated by Montesquieu and Scottish Enlightenment thinkers. As Montesquieu puts it, "it is an almost general rule that everywhere there are gentle mores, there is commerce and that everywhere there is commerce, there are gentle mores."²²⁸ Lin's description further corroborates Montesquieu's point as it moves beyond the arena of spontaneous commercial exchange to manners and customs that organize social activities:

the pomp of wedding and funeral processions half-a-mile long and official sedan chairs and retinues; the Manchu women contrasting with the Chinese camel caravans from the Mongolian desert and the Lama priests and Buddhist monks; the public entertainers, sword swallowers and beggars, each pursuing his profession with *freedom and an unwritten code of honor sanctioned by century-old custom; the rich humanity* of beggars and "beggar kings," thieves and thieves' protectors, mandarins and retired scholars, saints and prostitutes, chaste sing-song artists and profligate widows, monks' kept mistresses and eunuchs' sons, amateur singers and "opera maniacs"; and *the hearty and humorous common people*. (172, emphases added)

Lin's list, which eventually expands into juxtapositions of people inhabiting antithetical and unorthodox social roles and across the social hierarchy, has a touch of humor itself. It also maps out an interlaced society wherein "an unwritten code of honor sanctioned by century-old custom" applies to mandarins, scholars, beggars, and public entertainers alike. The admiring tone in Lin's stress on "the rich humanity" of "the hearty and humorous common people" gives expression to a Confucian love of humanity. Clearly, Confucian

²²⁸ Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, 338.

mores sit harmoniously with daily commerce here. Yet the organic social life Lin has conjured up in this scene, against the backdrop of China's topsy-turvy political structure, is also evocative of the distinction between civil society and political state in Western political thought.

Scholars have established the idea of civil society as what extends beyond a political frame of reference. In *Modern Social Imaginaries*, Charles Taylor expounds the lack of equivalence between civil society and polity in the development of social imaginaries in the modern West. In Taylor's formulation, "There will be more than one way in which the same body of systematically interacting human beings can be considered as forming an entity, a society. We can speak of them as an economy or a state or a civil society (now identified in its non-political aspects) or just as a society or a culture. 'Society' has been unhooked from 'polity' and now floats free through a number of different applications."²²⁹ Taylor's analysis conceptualizes ways of understanding social constitution differing from the form of the political state. Focusing on Scottish Enlightenment accounts of civil society, Mary Catherine Moran points out that "civil society as political association" is often conflated with "'civilized' society as the stage of progress in which manners, customs, and institutions are in a condition of 'improvement,' 'refinement,' and 'civility.'" Moran draws attention to the key word "civility," arguing that while the term "still resonates with legal and political meanings derived from 'civil' and associated with citizenship," it "also carries a new cluster of associations relating to manners and politeness."²³⁰ The interplay between the two layers of meaning of the term civility, as we will see, is effectively essential to Lin's social imagining.

²²⁹ Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 79.

²³⁰ Mary Catherine Moran, "'The Commerce of the Sexes': Gender and the Social Sphere in Scottish

***Tianxia* Reimagined**

Similarities can be found between these ideas of civil society and political state and Confucian notions of *tianxia* (or *T'ien Hsia*, 天下, literally all under the sun; world; universe) and *guo* (國: country, nation). *Tianxia* is a rich concept that embodies important worldviews in Chinese moral and political philosophy. As geographical spaces, *tianxia* and *guo* were closely intertwined in ancient China. *Tianxia* designated a realm wherein peoples of different regions and ethnicities could be united under a common government. As such it often gave emperors a legitimate reason to expand territories: that of establishing a unified political order. This notion of *tianxia* betrayed a Sino-centric attitude, a placement of China at the center of the world. As Liang Qichao (梁啟超) laments in his “Xin-min shuo” (新民說, a series of essays published from 1902 to 1906 expounding various qualities of citizens that are essential to China’s transformation to a modern nation-state), China used to have little knowledge of such “civilized countries” as “Persia, India, Greece, [and] Rome,” and “looked on its country as the world.”²³¹

More importantly, however, *tianxia* has come to signify a moral order grounded in Confucian ethical precepts and ideals, which diverges from the idea of *guo*. Joseph Levenson illuminates significant differences between the two concepts in Confucian thought. Drawing on ideas of the Ming scholars Huang Zongxi (黃宗羲) and Gu Yanwu (顧炎武), Levenson writes that *guo* “connotes not only land and people but protection by military force,” whereas *tianxia* is “a conception of civilized society,” meaning “far more

Enlightenment Accounts of Civil Society,” in Frank Trentmann, ed. *Paradoxes of Civil Society: New Perspectives On Modern German and British History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000), 68.

²³¹ Quoted in Joseph R. Levenson, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 112.

than just a political unit held by *de facto* power.” *Tianxia*, in other words, is organized around value or culture, in contrast to *guo* as the domain of power. Levenson also points out that in Confucian thought the idea of *tianxia* works “to broaden the people’s lives and to straighten the people’s virtue.”²³² Confucius emphasizes the enlargement of life in *The Great Learning* when he lays out the principle of moral cultivation as the key to attaining the peace of *tianxia*:

When things are investigated, then true knowledge is achieved; when true knowledge is achieved, then the will becomes sincere; when the will is sincere, then the heart is set right (or then the mind sees right); when the heart is set right, then the personal life is cultivated; when the personal life is cultivated, then the family life is regulated; when the family life is regulated, then the national life is orderly; and when the national life is orderly, then there is peace in this world [literally *tianxia*].²³³

物格而後知至，知至而後意誠，意誠而後心正，心正而後身修，身修而後家齊，家齊而後國治，國治而後天下平。

The path from person to family, to the nation, and eventually to *tianxia* marks the expansion of life while outlining the Confucian ideal of moral development. A vital concept in the Confucian imagining of world order, *tianxia* not only transcends national life but also remains the sphere wherein “illustrious virtue” must be upheld (明明德於天下).²³⁴

Tianxia was imbued with new meanings and relevance in early twentieth-century China thanks to Sun Yat-sen’s revivification of “*Tianxia Wei Gong*” (天下為公, “The Universe is for everybody”), a phrase from *The Book of Rites*, one of the Confucian classics. Sun Yat-sen developed his political philosophy on *The Three Principles of the*

²³² Joseph R. Levenson, *The Problem of Intellectual Continuity*, 101.

²³³ See Lin Yutang’s translation in *The Wisdom of Confucius* (New York: The Modern Library, 1945), 139-40.

²³⁴ “To illustrate illustrious virtue” is James Legge’s translation of the phrase “明明德” in *The Great Learning*.

People (三民主義, widely known as *Sanmin Doctrine*) in a series of lectures he gave in 1924, which laid down the ideological foundations of the Nationalist Party. The doctrine includes three parts: *The Principle of Nationalism*, *The Principle of Democracy*, and *The Principle of Livelihood*. Scholars have traced Sun's formulation of the "Three Principles of the People" to his admiration for American republicanism and to his affinity for Lincoln's famous phrase "by the people, of the people, and for the people."²³⁵ Motivated by the political ambitions of making China a free and prosperous nation and of creating a new world order based on equality and justice, Sun Yat-sen deploys the above-mentioned notion of "Tianxia Wei Gong" in the service of what he describes as "the true spirit of cosmopolitanism."²³⁶ Yet Sun's cosmopolitan vision is grounded in a form of anti-imperialist nationalism:

[Imperialist powers] are now advocating cosmopolitanism to inflame us, declaring that, as the civilization of the world advances and as mankind's vision enlarges, nationalism becomes too narrow, unsuited to the present age, and hence that we should espouse cosmopolitanism.... *But it is not a doctrine which wronged races should talk about. We, the wronged races, must first recover our position of national freedom and equality before we are fit to discuss cosmopolitanism.... We must understand that cosmopolitanism grows out of nationalism; if we want to extend cosmopolitanism we must first establish strongly our own nationalism. If nationalism cannot become strong, cosmopolitanism certainly cannot prosper.*²³⁷

Sun Yat-sen questions the motive of imperialist powers in promoting cosmopolitanism. Such advocacy, in his view, serves as nothing but a guise for aggression, allowing "the strong states and the powerful races" to "make themselves forever secure in their

²³⁵ See Sidney H. Chang and Leonard H. D. Gordan, *All Under Heaven... Sun Yat-sen and His Revolutionary Thought* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1991), 111.

²³⁶ Sun Yat-sen, *San Min Chu I: The Three Principles of the People*, 99.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 89. Emphases added.

exclusive position and to prevent the smaller and weaker peoples from again reviving.”²³⁸ Setting “decolonizing nationalism” against “imperializing cosmopolitanism,” to use Pheng Cheah’s terms,²³⁹ Sun goes on to assert the superiority of Chinese culture and political philosophy in the same lecture. In his account, Confucian “pacifist morality” is a genuine cosmopolitanism, but it is declining because in an age of capitalistic and military expansion, China’s economic weakness is unable to make manifest her “ancient morality and civilization.”²⁴⁰ While Sun Yat-sen embraces the Confucian idea of civilized society, his ideal of nationalism gives priority to material strength and economic competitiveness, and in so doing falls little short of rendering moral value subservient to power politics.

Sun Yat-sen’s son Sun Fo (or Sun Ke 孫科) later aspired to promote his father’s international vision in his capacity as the chairman of the Sun Yat-sen Institute for the Advancement of Culture and Education in Nanjing, under whose auspices the Chinese-run English periodical *T’ien Hsia Monthly* was published. Sun Fo invoked Sun Yat-sen’s favorite quote “Tianxia Wei Gong” in his foreword to the first issue of the periodical in August 1935, stressing that “[w]e want to see this dream of over two thousand years ago realized today.”²⁴¹ But unlike Sun Yat-sen, who, guided by his view of nationalism as a necessary basis for a more just international system, gives precedence to state politics and economic reconstruction, Sun Fo emphasizes a cultural approach in striving toward the goal of “Tianxia Wei Gong.” Sun Fo points to the failure of technological and political machinery to reduce international animosity, remarking, “physical contiguity has not brought about international amity,” and “neighborhood does not mean neighbourliness.”

²³⁸ Ibid., 83.

²³⁹ Pheng Cheah, *Inhuman Conditions: On Cosmopolitanism and Human Rights* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 29.

²⁴⁰ Sun Yat-sen, *San Min Chu I*, 99.

²⁴¹ Sun Fo, “Foreward.” *T’ien Hsia Monthly* 1, no. 1 (August 1935), 5.

Instead, he attaches importance to intercultural understanding in facilitating “real political and economic understanding.”²⁴²

Sun Fo’s observation, it is worth noting, echoes Lin Yutang’s view, earlier discussed, that extraterritoriality ruins neighborliness. Similar to Lin, Sun Fo argues that intercultural exchange fosters such social virtues as goodwill because of culture’s capacity to speak to universal humanity. Against what he sees as “the present dangerous urge towards economic nationalism,” Sun Fo affirms the transnational efficacy of culture. As he puts it, “Culture traffics in ideas. It has no national boundaries [;] it enriches itself by what it gives as by what it takes. In it, everybody can participate.”²⁴³ Sun Fo’s belief clearly departs from Sun Yat-sen’s argument that cosmopolitanism “is not a doctrine which wronged races should talk about.” Released from the grip of the nation, culture is imbued with a cosmopolitan openness to mutually beneficial exchange, thus offsetting unequal power structures in global politics. Sun Fo tries to level the playing field by emphasizing everybody’s access to culture. Speaking for a Chinese-run English-language journal that seeks to promote intercultural understanding, Sun Fo voices hope for a more equal international community.

T’ien Hsia Monthly is introduced as a platform that embodies Sun Fo’s egalitarian vision of a genuinely transcultural framework by incorporating “anything that is of vital interest to men and women all over the world.”²⁴⁴ To be sure, Sun Fo’s claim reveals an international orientation that tends to overlook questions of accessibility and readership of an English-language journal in semi-colonial Shanghai, where the ability to read and

²⁴² Ibid., 3.

²⁴³ Ibid., 4.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 5.

write in English among Chinese was limited to the cultural and political elite.²⁴⁵ Yet his emphasis on the universality of culture seems congenial to Lin Yutang. One of the four members of its board of editors, Lin also contributed regularly to the journal by both writing and translating until he moved to the U.S. in 1936. In the same year *T'ien Hsia Monthly* was founded, Lin launched another Chinese-language journal in Shanghai called *The Cosmic Wind* (宇宙風). The resonance between the two titles is striking. Addressing a large Chinese readership, *The Cosmic Wind* embraces a similar idea of inclusive vastness and promises to discuss everything under the sun.

A Taoist View of Cosmic Life

Lin's conception of the cosmic translates into what he conceives as a Taoist outlook on life in *Moment in Peking*. Indeed, his reinvention of Taoism sets him apart from the post-May Fourth neotraditionalists, who were devoted to preserving a Chinese national essence and to redefining the universal validity of Confucian ethical values through philosophical negotiations with Western critical discourses on modernity.²⁴⁶ One of the besetting problems in their effort to revive Confucian culture, as Shu-mei Shih points out, is their selective treatment of Chinese culture, privileging Confucianism at the cost of other prevalent currents of thought (such as Taoism and Buddhism) and, as a result, positing a normative view of "what 'Chinese culture' ought to have been and ought to be."²⁴⁷ Lin's approach to Confucian tradition is different: he not only situates

²⁴⁵ For a detailed study of these questions, see Shuang Shen, *Cosmopolitan Publics*.

²⁴⁶ For differences between the neotraditionalists and pre-May Fourth cultural conservatives, see Hao Chang, "New Confucianism and the Intellectual Crisis of Contemporary China," in *The Limits of Change: Essays on Conservative Alternatives in Republican China*. Ed. Charlotte Furth (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 276-302.

²⁴⁷ Shu-mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern*, 175.

such tradition in lived experiences (rather than ideational representations) but also tries to constellate Confucian humanism with liberatory Taoist sensibilities.

The Taoist worldview in Lin's rendition is deeply rooted in a perceived connection between universal laws of nature and the continuity and permanence of life. Following her perception of a vibrant and interwoven social life in the passage previously quoted from Lin's novel, Mulan reflects on how festivals bestow meaning on time and life: "She had learned through the annual festivals the meaning of spring, summer, autumn, and winter, a system of festivals which regulates life like a calendar from the beginning to the end of the year, and enables man to live in close touch with the year's rhythm and with nature" (173). If Mulan wonders at the harmony between the human and natural world at this point, her musings toward the end of the novel, which blend the cosmic rhythm of the four seasons with the organic process of human life, enhance this essential theme of the natural flow of life. Thinking of all the young men, including her son Atung and her nephew, who are fighting against Japanese invaders on the battlefield, Mulan ponders the laws of nature as well as the strength and vitality they infuse into life: "The song of autumn leaves contains within itself the lullaby of the coming spring and the full melody of the following summer. So do the dual forces of the Tao wax and wane in the alternation of upward and downward cycles, intercrossing....So also does human life go in cycles of youth, maturity, and decay....As Mulan felt her own life entering the period of autumn, she also felt vividly the sense of life and youth springing up in Atung" (798). As the seasons are mutually constitutive and all parts of an organic whole, Mulan's own existence, embodying a narrative of social life and cultural tradition inherited from her father, in turn finds its continuation in her son's form of life. Not only does Mulan's

epiphany highlight the continuum of human life; it also seamlessly integrates life in its metaphysical sense and life as it is actually lived in human society.

Mulan's Taoist philosophy of life accords, in curious ways, with Edmund Burke's understanding of civil society as "a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born." Burke reiterates that "[e]ach contract of each particular state is but a clause in the great primaevial contract of eternal society, linking the lower with the higher natures, connecting the visible and invisible world."²⁴⁸ Burke's idea of "eternal society" seems analogous to Lin's rendering of human life—though "each particular state," emblemized most consistently by the experiences of each generation of the big families in *Moment in Peking*, does not always meld into the next peacefully. If, for Burke, the French Revolution released the destructive force that disrupted the social order of the "European world" undergirded by "manners" and "civilization,"²⁴⁹ Lin's novel demonstrates how "contact with Western ideas" (46), enforced or voluntary, brought about drastic changes in China in the early twentieth century. Imperialist encroachment not only ruptured China's existing political order from without; it also spurred a will to "social revolution" that seems to Lin to have a farther-reaching impact than China's constitutional transformation to a republic (347). The "break with the past," the narrator of *Moment in Peking* observes, lies in "a change of attitude." He draws attention to the incongruities resulting from attempts to transplant Western cultural and social models: "Such acts as the official adoption of the Western calendar, of Western diplomatic dress, and of a Western form of government, were tantamount to open admission that the West

²⁴⁸ Edmund Burke, *Select Works of Edmund Burke*. Vol. 2, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999), 193.

²⁴⁹ Burke, *Reflections*, 173.

was better than the East. Henceforth, the conservatives were always on the defensive. It was a decade of ludicrous contrasts, between the old bottle and the new wine, between social fact and socialistic theory, between a bewildered older generation and a bewildering younger generation” (347). Lin pokes fun at Chinese radicals who were “ready to go farther even than the modern West” in modernization: “Professor Chien [a leading intellectual of the New Culture movement] had at this time denounced the family name as an outmoded anachronism, carrying with it the baneful mentality of the family system and submerging the ‘individual,’ and had therefore discarded his family name altogether and called himself ‘Professor yiku’ or ‘Doubter of the Ancients’” (599).

In contrast to such polarization of the old and the new, of collectivity and individuality, Lin explores their compatibility in the contact zone—what Mary Louise Pratt defines as a “social space where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other”²⁵⁰—between China and imperialist powers through his recreation of Taoist attitudes toward life in *Moment in Peking*. He describes a Taoist as “naturally more liberal-minded than a Confucianist,” and his juxtaposition of the two patriarchs, Mr. Yao and Mr. Tseng, bears out this comparison. Though both are steeped in the culture of Chinese literati, Mr. Tseng represents traditional Confucian mandarins unable to relinquish nostalgia for “the poise, the culture, the natural dignity of the ancient scholar-officials” (363). Mr. Yao, on the other hand, is portrayed as “a true Taoist” (6), who remains “liberal toward Western ideas” such as marriage by one’s own choice, which he thinks fits “very well with the Taoist doctrine of noninterference with nature” (170). Moreover, Mr. Yao believes that Taoism and Western science share a similar fascination with the laws of nature, and he encourages Lifu, his son-in-law, to delve into the

²⁵⁰ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Studies in Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 4.

mysteries of nature opened up by Western science. Mr. Yao, whose Taoist persuasions lie at the heart of the novel, essentially bodies forth what Lin believes is “the highest ideal of Chinese culture,” which

has always been a man with a sense of *detachment* (*takuan*) toward life based on a sense of wise disenchantment. From this detachment comes *high-mindedness* (*k'uanghuai*), a high-mindedness which enables one to go through life with tolerant irony and escape the temptations of fame and wealth and achievement, and eventually makes him take what comes. And from this detachment arise also his sense of freedom, his love of vagabondage and his pride and nonchalance. It is only with this sense of freedom and nonchalance that one eventually arrives at the keen and intense joy of living.²⁵¹

Lin’s description of the ideal of detachment is not to be confused with either escapism or passive fatalism. Rather, such detachment provides spiritual support for political engagement, enabling one “to deal with the worldly without worldliness,” to borrow the Chinese scholar Li Zehou’s phrase. In his explication of affinities between Confucian visions of life and Taoist aesthetics, Li Zehou defines the highest ideal of Confucianism as “an aesthetic realm of life” in which “one deals with human affairs with a heavenly heart, or carries out Confucian duties with a Taoist spirit.”²⁵² Li’s account helps us to grasp the sense of detachment Lin commends, which seems to him to be able to transport one to a state of “keen and intense joy of living.”

While sharing Mr. Yao’s Taoist receptiveness toward the world, Lifu goes further in fusing Taoist philosophy and Western science. Lifu’s name is certainly carefully chosen. Surnamed Kung (孔), the same as Confucius, Lifu seems to embody Lin’s effort to explore the adaptability of Confucian culture. Moreover, for readers familiar with the

²⁵¹ Lin Yutang, *The Importance of Living* (New York: John Day Co., 1937), 1-2.

²⁵² Li Zehou, *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition*. Trans. Maija Bell Samei (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2010), 88. Li addresses the utopian aspect of this ideal, noting that very few can attain this state in reality and Chinese intellectuals are often torn between “the sacrifice of the individual in the service of society” on the one hand, and on the other, “flight from political struggle to the pleasures of nature.”

Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, KMT) led by Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) since the late 1920s, the name “Lifu” would ring a bell. It evokes Ch’en Li-fu (陈立夫), Chiang’s personal secretary and (for some time) right-hand man, who held the position of minister of education from 1938 to 1944 in wartime China. Ch’en Li-fu received his M.A. degree in engineering in the U.S. before coming back to serve as Chiang’s aide-de-camp. He had been involved in educational and cultural circles long before World War II. A set of his lectures entitled “On Vitalism” (*Wei-sheng lun*, 唯生论), which was first published in 1934, attempts to reconcile cosmological ideas of the universe in Confucian classics with modern sciences of biology and physics. Ch’en’s goal was to “discredit Marxist materialism [*Wei-wu lun*] (唯物论)” and to defend Confucian virtues and moral life.²⁵³ In addition, Ch’en Li-fu and his brother Ch’en Kuo-fu (陈果夫) are widely known for controlling the CC Clique, which dominated the administrative bureaucracy and ideological functions of the Kuomintang. The CC Clique was engaged in instrumental propagation of Confucianism in the 1930s and Chen Li-fu played a prominent role as head of the Organization Department of the party.²⁵⁴

An expert on biology, Lifu in *Moment in Peking* shares Ch’en Li-fu’s enthusiasm for science and aspiration to unite science with Chinese tradition, although the way Ch’en promulgated Confucianism jars with Lifu’s defiance of political propaganda. Lifu is characterized as a modern liberal, who sees as good and valuable elements in both Chinese and Western cultures. As Lin writes: “Intimate scientific knowledge bred in [Lifu] such a deep admiration of the West that he was naturally progressive in his

²⁵³ Ch’en Li-Fu, *The Storm Clouds Clear Over China: The Memoir of Ch’en Li-fu 1900-1993*. Eds. Hsu-Hsin Chang, and Ramon Hawley Myers (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Press, 1994), 148.

²⁵⁴ For a detailed account of how Kuomintang sought to restore the Confucian system for a new and modern order, see Lloyd E. Eastman, “The Kuomintang in the 1930s,” in *The Limits of Change*, 210.

political viewpoint” (593). With a nod to the New Culture Movement’s advocacy of Western “science” and “democracy,” Lin at the same time recounts Lifu’s equal attraction to Taoist philosophy and endeavor to bridge “science and Taoism” in “one long, thoughtful article” (592). Drawing upon ideas of Zhuangzi (莊子), both Lin’s and Lifu’s favorite Taoist philosopher, Lifu proposes what he calls “a kind of scientific pantheism.” His theoretical sketch, titled *Feeling in Plants*,

revised the conventional notion of ‘feeling’ and ‘consciousness’ and extended it to cover *a sense of perception of the surroundings common to all animals and plants*, such as the definite evidence that the ants feel a coming storm. Conscious life, he showed, certainly was not peculiar to the human being. He also broadened the definition of ‘language’ as merely an expression of feeling of whatever kind, so that he came to believe literally in the ‘smile’ of a flower and the ‘bitter sigh’ of an autumn forest. He spoke of the ‘pain’ of a tree when we break off its branches or strip its bark. *The tree would feel the breaking off of a branch as an ‘injury’ and the stripping of its bark an ‘insult,’ a ‘disgrace,’ a ‘slap in its face.’* The tree sees, hears, touches, smells, eats, digests, and discharges differently from human beings, but no less effectively for its biologic purposes; it feels the movements of light, sound, warmth, and air and is ‘happy’ or ‘unhappy’ as it gets or fails to get sunshine or rain. . . . Then he turned about and *belittled human arrogance and its assumption of human monopoly of “feeling,” “sentiment,” “consciousness,” and “language.”* (592-93, emphases added)

Arguing for a sense of perception ubiquitous in biological entities, Lifu’s account in a way resonates with the social organism bodied forth by Mulan’s observation of the street scene in Peking. Lifu’s description, however, widens the scope of human existence by resituating humankind in the natural world. As Lifu indicates, his theory of an innate perception common to all organisms involves a rethinking of language, which must in turn reshape human beings’ perception of the world. Crucially for Lifu, redefining language entails an attitudinal change on the part of humankind, from a haughty to a humble position. It is important to note how Lifu’s scientific hypothesis shifts to a moral

critique as he moves from sense perceptions to more complex psychological responses like “insult” and “disgrace.” Embracing a Taoist value of humility reflected in Zhuangzi’s notion that “[t]he Tao is in the ants, it is in the weeds, it is in the broken bricks, it is in the excrements” (593), Lifu gestures toward an anti-anthropocentric stance that challenges the supposed superiority of human beings in the physical world.

The political implications of Lifu’s ideas are palpable, and not just because the passage proceeds to discuss Lifu’s “progressive...political viewpoint.” The ethically charged language in Lifu’s description of the tree’s suffering suggests a homology between plants and the colonized. Lifu’s emphasis on a tree’s feeling of such pains as “insult,” “disgrace,” and “a slap in its face” easily lends itself to an identification of the tree with semi-colonial China at the mercy of multiple imperialist powers. The moral resonance of Lifu’s terms becomes even more pronounced when we recall Lin’s rendering of how “freedom and an unwritten code of honor sanctioned by century-old custom” underlie the vibrant social life in Peking (172). As Leela Gandhi has pointed out, imperial reason is characterized by “tireless binarism, and its insistence upon rigid dichotomies between races, cultures, species, genders, sexualities.”²⁵⁵ Lifu’s disparagement of “human arrogance,” then, illustrates Gandhi’s argument that anti-imperial discourses often draw a connection between cruelty toward other species and violence against other races.

Toward a Cosmopolitan Aesthetic of *Xingling* (性靈)

²⁵⁵ Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-siecle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 11.

Along with a political critique, Lifu's conceptualization of an egalitarian world of sense experience gives prominence to a natural universe that invites aesthetic perception. Though Lifu democratizes consciousness, his appreciation of "the 'smile' of a flower," "the 'bitter sigh' of an autumn forest," and "the 'pain' of a tree" also implies an aesthetic sensitivity that puts one in deeper touch with nature. Such sensitivity is central to the aesthetic of *xingling* (性靈), which Lin Yutang enthusiastically embraced and promoted in his literary journals in the 1930s. *Xingling* is an aesthetic concept developed by Yuan Zhonglang (袁中郎), leader of the Kung-an School (公安派) of poetry in the late Ming Dynasty. The term is extremely difficult to translate and has been variously construed as individual personality, the unbridled human spirit, self-expression, native sensibility, and the spirit of taste.²⁵⁶ Lin's translation of an essay by Yuan Zhonglang delineates some of the essential connotations of this elusive idea. *Xingling* is compared to something gossamer like "hues on the mountains, taste in water, brilliance in flowers, and charm in women. It is appreciated only by those who have *understanding*, and is difficult to explain in words." Lin makes a point of differentiating *Xingling* from affected taste in certain diversions. In his words, "Some cultivate a love for painting, calligraphy and antiques, and others are fascinated by the mystics and the recluse and the life of a hermit. Still others are like the people of Suzhou who make a hobby of tea and incense, turning it almost into a cult. These are superficial, and have nothing to do with real zest and *understanding* of the flavor in living."²⁵⁷

²⁵⁶ For a detailed account of the circulation of the aesthetic theory of *Xingling* in China's literary world in the early 1930s, see Qian Suoqiao, *Liberal Cosmopolitan*, 128-141.

²⁵⁷ Lin Yutang, *The Importance of Understanding* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1960), 112. Emphases added. See also Qian Suoqiao, *Liberal Cosmopolitan*, 130-131.

What Lin means by “understanding,” which is emphatically noncognitive and nonarticulable and lies at the heart of the aesthetic of *xingling*, can be better grasped within the context of Lin’s literary activities and critical advocacies during the time. In fact, before Lin’s joyful discovery of Yuan Zhonglang’s aesthetics of *Xingling*, he was attracted to the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce and translated sections of Croce’s *Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistics*. He published his translations in 1930 in a book entitled *New Literary Criticism* (新的文評), which also incorporates his translations of a group of essays on literary criticism by J. E. Spingarn, Oscar Wilde, Edward Dowden, and Van Wyck Brooks. Lin’s interest in Croce was mediated through Spingarn, Croce’s enthusiastic champion in the US. In his *Memoirs of an Octogenarian*, Lin recounts a debate between Irving Babbitt and Spingarn concerning the nature of art and literary criticism that took place when Lin was studying for an M.A. degree in Comparative Literature at Harvard. A founding figure of a movement that became known as the New Humanism, Babbitt emphasized the inseparability of literary education and the cultivation of moral attitudes and self-discipline. Spingarn, on the other hand, objected that art and literary criticism should not be subordinated to moral judgments and rules. He advocated a more spontaneous and self-fulfilling approach to art and literature, faulting Babbitt for caring only that “young men and women should have discipline, training, tradition, ideals.”²⁵⁸

In a sense, this debate was restaged in China between Lin, who defended the aesthetic beliefs of Spingarn and Croce, and his fellow Harvard-returned students, including Mei Guangdi (梅光迪), Wu Mi (吳宓), and Liang Shiqiu (梁實秋), who were

²⁵⁸ Quoted in Douglas Mao, “Modern American literary criticism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to American Modernism*. Ed. Walter Kalaidjian (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 287. For a detailed account of the debate, see 286-289.

influenced by Babbitt and promoted his New Humanist doctrines along with tenets of Confucian morality. It should be pointed out that Lin's vindication of Croce and Spingarn in China did not imply a dismissal of Confucian humanist values. Rather, it embodied a further resistance to the increasingly politicized literary scene in China in the 1930s. At a time of political upheaval, literary creation was dominated by a sense of crisis and social responsibility, leaving less and less room for the free expression of sensibility. Croce's creed that art cannot be a utilitarian or moral act proved agreeably truthful to Lin. As C. T. Hsia has pointed out, Lin, alongside Zhou Zuoren (周作人)—another major exponent of *xingling*—"initiated a minor revolution in literary taste to counteract the prevalent didacticism of their times."²⁵⁹

Lin's practical considerations apart, Croce's aesthetic theory that art is intuition has affinities with his emphasis on "understanding"—that which constitutes the fineness of the crepuscular idea of *xingling*. In Croce's gloss, art/intuition means "indistinction of reality and unreality, the image with its value as mere image, the pure ideality of the image; and opposing the intuitive or sensible knowledge to the conceptual or intelligible, the aesthetic to the noetic, it aims at claiming the autonomy of this more simple and elementary form of knowledge, which has been compared to the dream (the dream, and not the sleep) of the theoretic life, in respect to which philosophy would be the waking."²⁶⁰ Croce further suggests that intuition is a cluster of images unified by feeling. It is feeling that "gives coherence and unity to the intuition.... Not the idea, but the feeling, is what confers upon art the airy lightness of the symbol: an aspiration enclosed

²⁵⁹ C. T. Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, 133.

²⁶⁰ Benedetto Croce, *The Essence of Aesthetic*. Trans. Douglas Ainslie (London: William Heinemann, 1921), 16-7.

in the circle of a representation—that is art.”²⁶¹ In Croce’s formulation, “art is a true *aesthetic synthesis a priori* of feeling and image in the intuition, as to which it may be repeated that feeling without image is blind, and image without feeling is void.”²⁶²

While the synthesis of “feeling and image” in Croce’s aesthetics evokes Lifu’s representation of “the ‘smile’ of a flower,” “the ‘bitter sigh’ of an autumn forest,” and “the ‘pain’ of a tree,” Lin also conjoins *xingling* with a Taoist art of living in which, as Li Zehou puts it, “the creation or appreciation of a single flower or blade of grass could contain and express a transcendent attitude toward life. This attitude imbued everyday life with a holy aura and brought refreshment to fevered office seekers and moralists, providing those enslaved and wrenched about by various forces a way back to what is natural for humans, to genuine sensuousity.”²⁶³ The stress on the natural plays out in Lin’s novel in the double sense of an emphasis on the natural world and an embrace of ingenuous and spontaneous human nature. From his privileged characters, Lifu and Mulan, we can see Lin’s synthesis of a Taoist aesthetic of *Xingling*. Lifu is described as a “true aristocrat—an aristocrat of the senses” (222). He is one of the few major characters to grow up in a poor family, but as the narrator repeatedly notes, “There was something naturally refined and aristocratic about Lifu in spite of his uncouth dress” (241). This emphasis on his natural refinement is further enhanced by the narrator’s remark: “Good manners like many other things were of the spirit, and though Lifu broke all the rules, he was never bad-mannered. He was just being natural” (455).

As Lifu’s kindred spirit, Mulan shares this defining quality of naturalness. As we see through Lifu’s lens, “The perfect naturalness of Mulan made even an awkward

²⁶¹ Ibid., 30-33.

²⁶² Ibid., 39.

²⁶³ Li Zehou, *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition*, 99.

situation beautiful, and he thought of her as a strange spirit but congenial to his world of belief” (492). Combining the traits of several classic female characters in Chinese literature, Mulan’s character bears a significant cultural sedimentation. Early in the novel, Mulan self-consciously identifies with Hua Mulan (花木蘭), a legendary heroine who, disguising herself as a man, fought for her aged father in the Northern Wei dynasty (386–534) and proved herself a worthy warrior on the battlefield. The strength in Mulan’s character is balanced out by her gentle virtues and charming whims, making her akin to several female personalities, including Shi Xiangyun (史湘雲) and Jia Tanchun (賈探春), in *Red Chamber Dream*. What distinguishes Mulan from numerous other female characters in Lin’s novel, however, is her Taoist and aesthetic understanding of life. If Mulan’s father embodies a wise Taoist, Mulan is portrayed as a Taoist aesthete. Her contemplation of cosmic life is inextricable from her keenness of perception. Like the heroine Chen Yun (陳雲) in *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*, whom Lin called “one of the loveliest women in Chinese literature,”²⁶⁴ Mulan has an eye for beauty. In Lin’s description, “Mulan loved embroidery because she loved color and was fascinated by the many subtle or brilliant shades of the silk thread. She loved colors of all kinds—rainbows, sunsets, clouds, jades and precious stones, parrots, flowers after rain, ripening corn. She loved the translucent color of amber, and she often peeped into a prism that her father had given her. The spectrum of the prism held for her an inexhaustible mystery” (56-57). A “prism,” it should be noted, was considered to be a curio associated with Western science in early twentieth-century China. Mulan’s curiosity about the prism mirrors her fascination with Chinese oracle bones. In parallel to the mystery created by the prism, the

²⁶⁴ Lin Yutang, ed., *The Wisdom of China and India* (New York: Random House, 1942), 964.

meaning of the inscribed bones seems to her “philosophical and mystic” as well (614). Mulan’s interest in both the prism and oracle bones testifies to a simultaneous attraction to Western and Chinese cultures.

Further, the questions of perception and interpretation inherent in these synecdochic objects recall Lifu’s effort to synthesize science and Taoism. Aligning the two characters through their shared Taoist sensibility and worldview, Lin conveys how these outlooks could nurture an orientation toward civilized society evoked by the Confucian notion of *tianxia*. An epiphanic moment that foreshadows the final scene of the novel throws into bold relief the ethos of Lin’s novel. It happens as Mulan and Lifu are visiting Mountain Tai (the Sacred Mountain) and reflecting on life and death. Lin vividly reenacts a famous description in *Mencius* (孟子), one of the *Four Books*—“The world is dwarfed by the mountaintop of Tai Confucius has scaled” (孔子登泰山而小天下)—while he undertakes to integrate Taoist aesthetics into Confucian humanist values. To understand Lin’s synthesis, it is important to examine the development of his narrative arc:

[Mulan] came down to the foot of the tablet. It was the tablet of Chin Shih-huang, builder of the Great Wall. After he had conquered the whole of China and established his Empire he went up to Taishan and offered sacrifices to the Sacred Mountain, which was the prerogative of an emperor. How that tablet came to have no inscriptions on it no one quite knows. Some say that he was suddenly taken ill, and the tablet was therefore left unfinished when he died. A more plausible explanation was that the stone cutters were unwilling to perpetuate the memory of the tyrant and did not cut the words deep enough, so that they wore off in the course of time....

[Lifu] had read in that wordless tablet the glory of the builder of the Great Wall, the swift disintegration of his Empire, the march of history—the passing of more than a dozen dynasties—a complete chart, as it were, of the centuries themselves. And *the dark shape of the silent rock* protruded itself upon his mind and hers in that mountain sunset—a rugged challenger of time....

Darkness was quickly enveloping them. What had been a sea of golden fleece was now only a sandy gray surface blanketing the earth; and wandering clouds, tired of their day's journey, came into the valleys before them and settled for the night, leaving the higher peaks like little gray islands in the sea of night. *So does Nature herself labor by day and rest by night. It was peace with a terror in it....*

[Mulan] realized that *this was but a passing moment in the eternity of time, but to her it was a memorable moment—a complete philosophy in itself, or rather a complete vision of the past and the present and the future, of the self and the non-self.* That vision, too, was wordless. Garrulous philosophers would be at a loss to express what that moment meant. Unable to call it by another word, writers have called it only an “experience”....

And—I don't know—*the sunrise which made the earth seem so human—it cleanses you from the inside and makes you want to be kind to everybody who shares this earth with us....* (493-98, emphases added)

The narrative begins with a description of the tablet of Chin Shih-huang (秦始皇), who ended the Warring States period and was considered to be the first emperor of China and a dictator. The irony of his conquest, the narrator intimates, is that the tablet becomes a *memento mori* with ambiguous implications. And people like stonecutters can always find tactics to defy tyrannical power. While the Chinese setting and the implicit critique of authoritarianism situate the readers in a specific historical context, however, the narrative gradually moves to a more transcendental frame of time and space; both the landscape—“the dark shape of the silent rock” and “that mountain sunset”—and the language—“this was but a passing moment in the eternity of time”—eventually take on a universal resonance. Mulan's “complete vision of the past and the present and the future,” reinforces the cosmic rhythm enacted by her reflections on the continuity of life in the novel.

Lin's richly emphatic depiction of nature here is significant. The sky and earth, which at once enlarge and surmount the geographical sphere of the world conquerable by such rulers as Chin Shihuang, evokes the cosmic realm of *tianxia*. Lin's description

evokes what Zhuangzi has highly valued as *zhuangmei* (壯美, great beauty, grandeur). The boundless beauty of nature remains Zhuangzi's supreme aesthetic object, in which he locates the freedom of an ideal personality at one with the universe.²⁶⁵ Mulan's "complete vision . . . of the self and the nonself," in this light, gives expression to the harmony in Zhuangzi's conception. In the meantime, Lin's image is pregnant with an ineffable feeling. The phrase, "It was peace with a terror in it," while evocative of the notion of the sublime, could also allude to the perilous life in semi-colonial China. Yet the narrative culminates in a solemn moment fraught with a feeling of universality. The chiasmus in Mulan's perception—"the sunrise which made the earth seem so human—it cleanses you from the inside and makes you want to be kind to everybody who shares this earth with us"—encapsulates the two complementary dimensions of what Li Zehou has formulated as a Taoist-Confucian aesthetic synthesis: the "humanization of nature" and the "naturalization of humans."²⁶⁶ The earth made human by the sunrise transcends national boundaries and fosters, in turn, a universal sympathy toward humankind.

In discussing patterns of globalized thinking in modernist texts, Melba Cuddy-Keane points out how the trope of chiasmus can mark a "perspectival shift" that facilitates intercultural understanding. She calls such a reversal of perspectives "critical globalization," which "uses knowledge of other regions or countries to disrupt habitual perceptions and practices, and to prompt a self-reflexive repositioning of the self in the global sphere. It resembles the typical learning experience of the traveler but the transformative experience arises, not through an encounter with the foreign, but through the imagined adoption of the other's point of view." The chiasmic twist in such a reversal,

²⁶⁵ See Li Zehou, *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition*, 91.

²⁶⁶ Li Zehou, *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition*, 77.

in Cuddy-Keane's formulation, reads: "Learn to understand us, and in doing so learn better to understand yourselves."²⁶⁷ Considering that Lin wrote for an English-speaking audience in a time of imperialist contention, his emphasis on being "kind to everybody who shares this earth with us" embodies a self-conscious appeal for international understanding and cooperation. If he invokes Chin Shihuang to demonstrate the impermanence of oppressive power in both ancient and semi-colonial contexts, his message speaks resoundingly to humanity as a whole. As Joseph Levenson succinctly frames matters, "Confucian universalism was a criterion, a standpoint, not a point of departure. It applied to all the world [*tianxia*]; and it was open to all."²⁶⁸

The final scene of the novel demonstrates Mulan's kindness at work. To escape Japanese bombing, Mulan and her family have to flee from home and embark on a long and treacherous journey alongside numerous fellow refugees. During the flight Mulan adopts several orphans and newborn babies whose parents can't afford to keep them. The plot is simple, yet the way Lin interweaves vital sites of belonging—home, country, nation, and *tianxia*—reveals how he reconciles patriotic allegiance with universal humanity. On the one hand, Lin evokes the connotations of the Chinese notion of "country" (國家) as the conjunction of family and soil of the nation. The question of Mulan's son when he tries to persuade his parents that he must go to the front to fight Japanese invaders — "What's the use of a family, if one's country perishes?"—points to the inseparability of the two (779).

Even Mulan is stricken with patriotic passion when suckling a baby she has adopted. She feels that "she was doing something not for an individual, but something

²⁶⁷ Melba Cuddy-Keane, "Modernism, Geopolitics, Globalization," 546-7.

²⁶⁸ Joseph R. Levenson, *Revolution and Cosmopolitanism: The Western Stage and the Chinese Stages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 24.

eternal for China, to carry on the life of the Chinese race” (812). Yet the ending extends common patriotic loyalties to “humanity” beyond the containment of national boundaries (814-15). In Lin’s delineation, the refugees traverse a space that spreads out from recognizable Chinese terrains to a sublime natural landscape of “the distant horizon” and “the Sacred Mountain,” which re-presents the scene of Mulan’s epiphany just described (815). The spatial expansion mirrors Mulan’s feelings of inner change: “She lost all sense of space and direction, lost even the sense of her personal identity, and felt that she had become one of the great common people.... The conquest of the ego which her father had achieved by sheer contemplation, she now achieved through human contact with this great company of men, women, and children” (814-15). Like the newborn babies she has taken in, Mulan experiences a sense of rebirth at this moment. Her “personal identity,” she feels, is now part of a larger construct of human community. Further, as the national identity of these “men, women, and children” is submerged in a cosmic space, Mulan’s identification with common people registers sympathies larger than patriotic sentiments. For Lin, the flight of these Chinese refugees emblemizes the movement of “[a] stolid mass of trudging humanity” (806), and Mulan’s acts of kindness, alongside the courage demonstrated by young Chinese soldiers and civilians alike in fighting the Japanese invaders, emblemizes “the triumph of the human spirit” (814).

Eternal Moment

There is certainly something paradoxical about Lifu’s reinterpretation of Emperor Tang’s bathtub inscriptions. Whereas the fact that the brother, father, and grandfather share the same name seems to emphasize a heritage, the shared name itself means being

new. This conjunction of tradition and newness aptly describes Lin's artistic project in *Moment in Peking*. In his preface to the novel, Lin explains that it is

neither an apology for contemporary Chinese life nor an exposé of it. . . . It is neither a glorification of the old way of life nor a defense of the new. It is merely a story of how men and women in the contemporary era grow up and learn to live with one another, how they love and hate and quarrel and forgive and suffer and enjoy, how certain habits of living and ways of thinking are formed, and how, above all, they adjust themselves to the circumstances in this earthly life where men strive but the gods rule.

In line with his emphasis on both “how certain habits of living and ways of thinking are formed” and “how [men and women in the contemporary era] adjust themselves to the circumstances,” Lin explores the resilience of Confucian culture in the face of various forces of modernization and imperialist encroachments in *Moment in Peking*. Meanwhile, like Woolf's London and Joyce's Dublin, Lin's Peking remains a locus of both particular historical and cultural traditions and a common humanity. Through a portrayal of how “[men and women in the contemporary era] adjust themselves to the circumstances in this earthly life,” Lin affirms the Confucian value of being “kind to everybody who shares this earth with us.” In other words, in spite of his announcement of a descriptive—rather than celebratory or condemnatory—account of the life of “men and women in the contemporary era,” Lin's novel reveals an endeavor to shape ways of thinking and feeling in an international context.

Lin's stress on universal sympathies aligns him with a cosmopolitan cast of mind. As I noted in my introduction, *The China Critic* featured an editorial in the November 13, 1930 issue titled “Proposal for a Liberal Cosmopolitan Club in Shanghai,” which urges Chinese and foreigners in Shanghai to form a club of “internationally minded people, who come together for the purpose of better understanding one another's point of view

and culture, and for discussing problems of life common to the modern world. It will be exclusive in the sense of having for its members only such people as have the liberal cosmopolitan mind, people who are more interested in the examination of ideas than in national glorification, more in the common problems of modern life than in any patriotic propaganda.”²⁶⁹ Lin clearly espouses this liberal cosmopolitan position, and in his article for *The China Critic* on March 12, 1931, titled “What Liberalism Means,” he echoes the proposal by calling for a “liberal attitude of mind” to match the growth of what he calls “material cosmopolitanism,” by which he refers to the acceleration of modern technologies that brings people around the world closer together.²⁷⁰ Yet Lin also conveys a distinct cosmopolitan vision in *Moment in Peking*, which is nurtured by a Taoist sensibility and a recreation of *tianxia*. If extraterritorial zones divide people and destroy neighborliness, a vital foundation of civil society, Lin presents a vivid picture of how a cosmic worldview can foster larger sympathies. Lin does not assume such attitudes to be the solution to the devastating problem of imperialist aggression. He does suggest, however, that modes of thinking and feeling oriented to a general humanity can productively guide ways of living and courses of action.

²⁶⁹ *The China Critic*, 1930, 1086.

²⁷⁰ *The China Critic*, 1931, 253.

CHAPTER 4

HOME AND WANDERLUST: PATRIOTIC WAYFARERS ON THE PATH OF “UNIVERSAL LIFE” IN TAGORE

The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures.
It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth in numberless blades of grass and breaks into tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers.
It is the same life that is rocked in the ocean-cradle of birth and of death, in ebb and in flow.
I feel my limbs are made glorious by the touch of this world of life. And my pride is from the life-throb of ages dancing in my blood this moment.

—Tagore, *Gitanjali*

Whatever we understand and enjoy in human products instantly becomes ours, wherever they might have their origin. I am proud of my humanity, when I can acknowledge the poets and artists of other countries as my own. Let me feel with unalloyed gladness that all the great glories of man are mine.

—Tagore, *Letters to a Friend*²⁷¹

During Rabindranath Tagore’s visit to China in 1924, the Crescent Moon Society (新月社, a literary group that had been established the year before and took its name from Tagore’s book of poems, *The Crescent Moon*),²⁷² organized a party in Peking to celebrate his sixty-third birthday on May 8. Tagore’s Chinese hosts arranged an amateur performance of his one-act English-language play *Chitra* at the party. Among the large audience of the capital’s intellectuals and celebrities was Lin Yutang, then a new faculty member in the English department at Peking University and a cultural critic. Lin

²⁷¹ Rabindranath Tagore, *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore: Vol. 6: Essays, Lectures, Addresses* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2007), 374.

²⁷² Hsü Chih-mo (徐志摩), one of the chief founders of the Society, helped plan Tagore’s trip to China and accompanied Tagore as his translator and personal assistant throughout his visit to such cities including Shanghai (上海), Hangchow (杭州), Nanking (南京), Tsinan (济南), Peking (北京), Taiyuan (太原), Hankow (汉口), and Wuchang (武昌).

remarked in an essay published in the *Morning Newspaper Supplement* (晨報副鐫) on June 16 that he found the play “sentimental, mawkish,” the same way he felt about a few poems he had read by Tagore.²⁷³ Lin acknowledged his ignorance of Tagore’s writings in general, but remained skeptical about Tagore’s speeches in China, which upheld the importance of spiritual purification and revival as means to counteract the doctrines of materialism. Lin faulted Tagore for being politically disengaged and distracting. To his mind, Tagore’s embrace of spiritual life betrayed a conquered people’s resort to psychological consolation and would do little to help India’s struggle to break out of the clutches of colonialism.

Lin’s criticism of Tagore is clearly constrained, as he himself conceded, by his limited knowledge of Tagore’s work. But it is also indicative of the political climate in China in the 1920s, in which pursuits of national salvation predominated in the wake of the May Fourth advocacy of economic and political modernization through science and democracy. The resistance to material progress and political machinery that Tagore pronounced at his myriad talks, in other words, sounded out of tune with widespread endeavors to create a new political order in China. The critical responses to Tagore’s message certainly reflected the particular cultural and political conditions in China,²⁷⁴ yet Lin’s comments on the emotional and spiritual characteristics of Tagore’s work and ideas also point to complicated aspects of Tagore’s thought that often get lost in cultural translation. Martha Nussbaum, for example, presents a different image of Tagore in her influential essay “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism.” Invoking Tagore’s novel *The Home*

²⁷³ Lin uses the English expressions twice to describe his impressions in this Chinese essay, titled “论泰戈尔的政治思想” (“On Tagore’s Political Thought”).

²⁷⁴ For a detailed account of Tagore’s visit to China and oppositions to Tagore’s message among Chinese political and intellectual circles, see Stephen N. Hay’s *Asian Ideas of East and West: Tagore and His Critics in Japan, China, and India* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1970), 146-185.

and the World, in which militant loyalties to nation are unfavorably contrasted with allegiances to what is morally good for the community of humanity, Nussbaum portrays Tagore as a champion of “universal reason” in line with the Stoic and Kantian cosmopolitan ideals of moral rationality.²⁷⁵ In Nussbaum’s words, “I believe that Tagore sees deeply when he sees that at bottom nationalism and ethnocentric particularism are not alien to one another, but akin—that to give support to nationalist sentiments subverts, ultimately, even the values that hold a nation together, because it substitutes a colorful idol for the substantive universal values of justice and right.”²⁷⁶

Like Nussbaum, Amartya Sen gives prominence to Tagore’s espousal of reason in his reflections on Tagore’s political and philosophical thought. Comparing Tagore and Mohandas Gandhi, Sen argues that Tagore was committed to “pressing for more room for reasoning, and for a less traditionalist view, a greater interest in the rest of the world, and more respect for science and for objectivity generally.”²⁷⁷ Drawing attention to Tagore’s 1938 essay “Gandhi the Man,” Sen notes Tagore’s disagreement with Gandhi’s nationalistic defense of past traditions and deployment of an “irrational force of credulity in [Indian] people.”²⁷⁸ In Sen’s analysis, reason stands as the highest ideal for Tagore. Sen writes: “The question he persistently asks is whether we have reason enough to want what is being proposed, taking everything into account. Important as history is, reasoning has to go beyond the past. It is in the sovereignty of reasoning—fearless reasoning in freedom—that we find Rabindranath Tagore’s lasting voice.”²⁷⁹

²⁷⁵ Martha C. Nussbaum, “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism,” in *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*. Ed. Joshua Cohen (Boston: Beacon, 1996), 17.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁷⁷ Amartya Sen, “Tagore and His India,” in *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian Culture, History and Identity* (London: Penguin, 2005), 92.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 99.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 119-20.

Other critics, however, have cast doubts on accounts of Tagore's cosmopolitan ideal that polarize abstract reason and cultural traditions. Saranindranath Tagore, for instance, argues that Tagore's conception of cosmopolitanism emphasizes rather than eschews the richness of local traditions. Quoting Tagore, Saranindranath draws out Tagore's idea of how inherited traditions shape the mind's ability to reason and absorb different traditions through cultural encounters: "I have come to feel that the mind, which has been matured in the atmosphere of a profound knowledge of its own country and of the perfect thoughts that have been produced in that land, is ready to accept and assimilate the cultures that come from other countries."²⁸⁰ Saranindranath concludes that Tagore's cosmopolitanism is rooted in lived experiences instead of what Nussbaum calls "universal reason." As he puts it, "Cosmopolitan identity, for Tagore, is not simply an empty token of an abstracted universal, produced by theoretical reason . . . ; rather, cosmopolitan identity has to be existentially realized in each life project."²⁸¹

A great deal of critical effort has been devoted to negotiating between Tagore's local attachments and universal sympathies, along the lines of what Kwame Anthony Appiah has conceived as a rooted cosmopolitanism, one that must "reconcile a kind of universalism with the legitimacy of at least some forms of partiality."²⁸² Yet what has received insufficient attention is the spiritual dimension of Tagore's cosmopolitan vision, which cannot be fully captured in terms of current debates about patriotism and cosmopolitanism. For Tagore's vision involves a substantive notion of the infinite that

²⁸⁰ Saranindranath Tagore, "Tagore's Conception of Cosmopolitanism: A Reconstruction." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 77.4 (2008): 1070-1084. See 1076.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 1082.

²⁸² Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 223. In her essay "Singing Bengal Into A Nation: Tagore The Colonial Cosmopolitan?," *Journal Of Modern Literature* 36.2 (2013): 1-24. Web. 10 July 2014, Poulomi Saha reads Tagore in a similar frame, describing Tagore's model of patriotic attachment as "a locally-rooted globalism," 2-3.

differs from preoccupation with a world that is politically organized and coextensive with the global domain of socioeconomic existence. Tagore's novel *The Home and the World* (*Ghare Baire*, written in Bengali, translated into English and published in 1919), from which Nussbaum draws support for her argument about cosmopolitanism, presents a dynamic picture of the complicated relation between the constitution of self and allegiance to vital sites of belonging—home, nation, the world, and the infinite. Indeed, the moral ideals upheld by Tagore's privileged character, Nikhil, are grounded in aspirations toward cosmic infinity.

Nationalism and “Intimate Truths of the Universe”

The two male protagonists of *The Home and the World*, which is set in Bengal in the aftermath of the Partition of Bengal in 1905 and against the backdrop of the nationalist *Swadeshi* movement, have often been read as hero and villain. In this scenario, Nikhil, a liberal cosmopolitan figure guided by his moral ideals and humanist sympathies, stands as the antithesis of Sandip, an unscrupulous and self-serving instigator of nationalist passions and violence. The novel no doubt highlights the contrasts between their moral beliefs and social behaviors, and often in Nikhil's favor. From the very outset, for example, Nikhil's and Sandip's different attitudes toward their country bespeak their conflicting moral persuasions. Explaining why he doesn't accept the nationalist spirit—*Bande Mataram* (“Hail Mother”)—of the *Swadeshi* upsurge, Nikhil says, “I am willing ... to serve my country; but my worship I reserve for Right which is far greater than my country. To worship my country as a god is to bring a curse upon it.”²⁸³ Sandip

²⁸³ Rabindranath Tagore, *The Home and the World* (London: Penguin Books, 1985), 29. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by page number.

snubs such ideals, associating them with passivity and weakness. Instead, he preaches a doctrine of patriotism based on force and unscrupulousness: “‘That is really mine which I can snatch away.’ My country does not become mine simply because it is the country of my birth. It becomes mine on the day when I am able to win it by force” (45).

Though Sandip’s emphasis on “win[ning]” his country expresses a will to fight against colonialism, echoing the citizen’s rallying cry of “put force against force” in “Cyclops,” his doctrine of the preemptive use of violence and his attempt to snatch Nikhil’s money and wife are called into question throughout the text. Yet the rich texture of the novel discourages a simplified picture of good and evil, or right and wrong. Indeed, in response to the questions of his readers shortly after the novel was published, Tagore explained that his writing “was realistic, representing human traits that were psychologically accurate rather than idealized stereotypes.”²⁸⁴ The narrative structure lends further support to Tagore’s emphasis on his exploration of human nature. The novel is narrated from the interlaced first-person perspectives of Bimala (Nikhil’s wife), Nikhil, and Sandip, whose accounts complement, challenge, and sometimes contradict each other. Its intensified delineation of consciousness also gives voice to motivations, inner conflicts, introspections, and aspirations of each individual character that demand understanding before critical judgment.

John Marx has pointed out that in spite of the divergence of their political and moral positions, Nikhil and Sandip both belong to the English-educated Bengali elite. In Marx’s view, “The English school gives these two a political scientific vernacular in

²⁸⁴ See Radha Chakravarty, *Novelist Tagore: Gender and Modernity in Selected Texts* (London: Routledge, 2013), 93-94.

which to debate.”²⁸⁵ What Marx’s interpretation leaves out, however, is how the debate between the two reflects different adaptations and applications of their shared education and scientific expertise. Whereas Nikhil tries to help the local community to develop its own industries through modern technology and finance and to acquire knowledge of political economy (26-7), Sandip promotes ideas of tyrannical power and ruthless material acquisition, which he attributes to “[a]ll the world-conquerors, from Alexander down to the American millionaires, [who] mould themselves into a sword or a mint” (79-80). Moreover, Tagore extends the debate between Nikhil and Sandip to the local community to show the sway of Sandip’s advocacy. In an argument between Nikhil and the local undergraduate and graduate students about *Swadeshi* and the necessity of coercion in the governance of an estate, and by extension, a country, the students rebuff Nikhil’s condemnation of violence of any kind by ventriloquizing Sandip’s doctrine. As a history student remarks, “Sandip Babu rightly teaches that in order to get, you must snatch. This is taking all of us some time to learn, because it runs counter to what we were taught at school” (129-130).

More important, the arguments between Nikhil and Sandip are couched in cultural terms, which shed light on the characteristics of Nikhil’s spiritual ideal. While Sandip situates his doctrine of power and success within world history, trying to prove its truth by adducing Alexander and American millionaires, Nikhil refutes it by presenting an alternative view of universal truth. In a discussion about true freedom with his mentor Chandranath Babu, to whom Nikhil constantly turns for guidance and congenial company, Nikhil opines: “It was Buddha who conquered the world, not Alexander—this is untrue

²⁸⁵ John Marx, *Geopolitics and the Anglophone Novel, 1890-2011* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 110.

when stated in dry prose—oh when shall we be able to sing it? When shall all these most intimate truths of the universe overflow the pages of printed books and leap out in a sacred stream like the Ganges from the Gangotrie?” Nikhil’s reference to Buddha follows from his emphasis on the importance of freeing the mind of possessive desires. For him, those who “seek to reform something outside themselves” fail to see that “reform is wanted only in one’s own desires.” The “most intimate truths of the universe,” in Nikhil’s description, at once reside in the inner world of the self and require an orientation toward the universe that can hardly be taught by didactic “books” and “scriptures” (134-35).

Setting the Buddha against Alexander, Nikhil does not posit a form of cultural nationalism, even though he draws spiritual sustenance from Indian traditions. By focusing attention on self-improvement, Nikhil recasts the conflict between domestic and foreign foregrounded by the *Swadeshi* movement and Sandip’s patriotism as one between the material and the spiritual that concerns the deeper question of human nature across national boundaries. Nikhil’s invocation of the Buddha expresses Tagore’s own interest in Buddhist thought as a salient part of the Indian philosophical tradition. Niharranjan Ray has illuminated how Tagore went to the Upanishads and the Buddha and Buddhism for his intellectual and emotional inspiration. According to Ray, it was “the humanist tradition of the Buddha and the Buddhist way of life that appealed to him most.”²⁸⁶ Indeed, at the heart of Nikhil’s disagreement with Sandip lies a conception of self-creation that differs from Sandip’s deterministic viewpoint.

In many of their arguments and reflections concerning the question of the self, both Nikhil and Sandip talk about giving life a certain shape; at first sight, their

²⁸⁶ Niharranjan Ray, “Rabindranath Tagore and the Indian Tradition,” in *Rabindranath Tagore: A Centenary Volume 1861-1961* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1992), 229.

formulations seem similar. In Nikhil's words, "Providence leaves our life moulded in the rough – its object being that we ourselves should put the finishing touches, shaping it into its final form to our taste" (197). Sandip, too, speaks of molding life into a shape: "We men, with our ideas, strive to give [life] a particular shape by melting it into a particular mould—into the definiteness of success" (79). Yet their conceptions of the shape of life are substantively different. For Nikhil, it is both a possibility and a duty to realize "the great, the unselfish, the beautiful in man" (61). The "finishing touches," in his view, constitute humanity's moral and aesthetic aspirations and obligations. Dismissing Nikhil's moral delicacy as idealistic, Sandip asserts that "human nature was created long before phrases were, and will survive them too" (57). Sandip locates human agency in manipulating the material rather than cultivating the self. He avers: "My creation had begun before I was born. I had no choice in regard to my surroundings and so must make the best of such material as comes to my hand" (78). This seemingly defensive notion of material pursuit based on a deterministic outlook, however, immediately translates into an assertive account of conquest, an insistence on shaping life into "the definiteness of success."

Nikhil takes Sandip to task for his mechanistic understanding of man, which, to his critical eye, is prone to "making [man] petty" (61). Nikhil's criticism is twofold. To his mind, Sandip's idea is not only misguided but also deleterious as a leading principle for nationalism. Against Sandip's principle of material success and embrace of passionate desires, Nikhil pits "the soul," which, he affirms, "knows itself in the infinite and transcends its success." When Sandip complains that the idea of the soul is vague, Nikhil counters, "If to gain distinctness you try to know life as a machine, then such mere

distinctness cannot stand for truth. The soul is not as distinct as success, and so you only lose your soul if you seek it in your success” (80). The opposition Nikhil highlights between a machine and the soul is crucial here. Nikhil discerns in Sandip’s outlook on life both a form of “covetous self-love” and a fetishizing of machinery widespread in the modern world (43). He ascribes Sandip’s conception to the influences of a purely scientific understanding of man in European education, remarking, “in Europe people look at everything from the viewpoint of science. But man is neither mere physiology, nor biology, nor psychology, nor even sociology.... Man is infinitely more than the natural science of himself.... You want to find the truth of man from your science teachers, and not from your own inner being” (61). Against scientific claims to the truth of man, Nikhil’s stress on the truth emanating from one’s inner being echoes his Buddhist conception of the “intimate truths of the universe,” which, in turn, reflects Tagore’s views on the nation and social life.

***Svadeśsamāj* vs. Nation**

Nikhil’s critique, however, is not targeted at science per se or European civilization *in toto*,²⁸⁷ nor is it a nationalistic attempt to establish the superiority of Indian culture. What it condemns are the mechanical tendencies that seem to Nikhil to diminish humanity as a whole. Here Nikhil gives expression to Tagore’s abiding concern for “the weakening of humanity from which the present age is suffering.”²⁸⁸ In his lectures on “Nationalism in the West,” which he delivered throughout the United States during his

²⁸⁷ See Monish R. Chatterjee’s “Poetic Intuition and Cosmic Reality: Tagore as Preceptor of Scientific Rationalism,” in *Rabindranath Tagore: University and Tradition*. Eds. Patrick Colm Hogan and Lalita Pandit (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003), 83-94, for an account of Tagore’s emphasis on the role of scientific training in India’s education.

²⁸⁸ Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism* (London: Macmillan, 1917), 18.

visit in the winter of 1916-17, Tagore compares the organization of the nation-state to a lifeless machine whose operation tends to strip people of their individuality and humanity.

He writes:

When this organization of politics and commerce, whose other name is the Nation, becomes all powerful at the cost of the harmony of the higher social life, then it is an evil day for humanity...When [society] allows itself to be turned into a perfect organization of power, then there are few crimes which it is unable to perpetrate. Because *success is the object and justification of a machine*, while *goodness only is the end and purpose of man*. When this engine of organization begins to attain a vast size, and those who are mechanics are made into parts of the machine, then *the personal man is eliminated to a phantom*, everything becomes a revolution of policy carried out by the human parts of the machine, requiring no twinge of pity or moral responsibility.²⁸⁹

In Tagore's contrast between success and goodness one can hear echoes of the debate between Sandip and Nikhil. While Tagore's emphasis on moral goodness as the end and purpose of man evokes the Kantian categorical imperative, his denunciation of machinery resonates with both a British tradition of social criticism and the Frankfurt School, to whose work questions of instrumentality remain central.²⁹⁰ Matthew Arnold, for example, argues in *Culture and Anarchy* (1867-9) that "faith in machinery" is a "besetting danger" for "the whole civilisation" of a modern world growing increasingly "mechanical and external." Like Tagore, Arnold maintains that machinery has no "value in and for itself," and he mounts a critique of the prevailing tendency in England to regard machinery as "precious ends."²⁹¹ In a similar vein, Arnold's conception of culture as "consist[ing] in becoming something rather than in having something, in an inward condition of the mind

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 23. Emphases added.

²⁹⁰ See Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), for a genealogy of such a tradition in nineteenth-century Britain.

²⁹¹ Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy and Other Writings*. Ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 63-4.

and spirit, not in an outward set of circumstances” seems to overlap with Nikhil’s idea of self-creation.²⁹²

Yet Tagore goes even further and incorporates the category of “the Nation”—as the organizing principle of political and economic life—into his vision of machinery. Seeing the nation as a Western state organization transplanted to the soil of India, Tagore grounds Indian history in its social and spiritual life. He writes, “In the West the national machinery of commerce and politics turns out neatly compressed bales of humanity which have their high market value; but they are bound in iron hoops, labeled and separated off with scientific care and precision.” Indian history, by contrast, “has not been of the rise and fall of kingdoms, of fights for political supremacy.... Our history is that of our social life and attainment of spiritual ideals.”²⁹³ In Tagore’s analysis, social life is not “union of a people ... organized for a mechanical purpose.” By contrast, Tagore continues:

It is an end in itself. It is a *spontaneous* self-expression of man as a social being. It is a *natural regulation* of human relationships, so that men can develop ideals of life in cooperation with one another. It has also a political side, but this is only for a special purpose. It is for self-preservation. It is merely the side of power, not of human ideals.²⁹⁴

Contrasting social life with political organization, Tagore lays emphasis on the “spontaneous” and “natural” characteristics of the former, in contradistinction to the mechanistic and unnatural ones of the latter. Tagore’s view further aligns him with “a continuing tradition of criticism of the new industrial civilization” in Britain since the late eighteenth century, in which, as Raymond Williams has pointed out, the word “unnatural”

²⁹² Ibid., 62.

²⁹³ Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism* (London: Macmillan, 1917), 16-17.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 19-20. Emphasis added.

is the constant emphasis.²⁹⁵ Moreover, the way Tagore differentiates social life from schemes of political power brings back the eighteenth-century understanding of the distinction between society and polity and the Confucian ideas of *tianxia* and *guo* that I have spelled out in the previous chapters. Social life, for Tagore, cannot and should not be contained by the organization of political power. As E. P. Thompson notes in his introduction to Tagore's *Nationalism*, "More than any other thinker of his time, Tagore has a clear conception of civil society, as something distinct from and of more personal texture than political or economic structures."²⁹⁶

What distinguishes Tagore's conception of social life, however, is its inextricability from the "attainment of spiritual ideals." Partha Chatterjee has illuminated Tagore's non-statist idea of *samāj* (society) as an alternative to the political organization of the nation. As Chatterjee points out, the form of *samāj* Tagore believes India must "revive and reconstruct" is *svadeśsamāj*, which embodies "the collective power of self-making or *ātmāsakti*."²⁹⁷ Chatterjee draws attention to Tagore's explanation of the relations between *deś* (country), *svadeś* (my own country), and *ātmāsakti* (self-making) in an essay written around 1920:

The certain knowledge that I have a *dēs* comes out of a quest. Those who think that the country is theirs simply because they have been born in it are creatures besotted by the external things of the world. But, since the true

²⁹⁵ Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society*, 15.

²⁹⁶ E. P. Thompson, "Introduction." Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism* (London: Papermac, 1991), 14. See also Ashis Nandy's analysis of how Tagore sees the basis for the tradition of India "at the social level, not the political." *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism: Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of Self* (Delhi: Oxford University Press India, 1994), 6.

²⁹⁷ Partha Chatterjee, *Lineages of Political Society: Studies in Postcolonial Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 104. Partha Chatterjee also outlines the change in Tagore's attitude towards the idea of the nation. In Chatterjee's account, at the time of the *Swadeshi* movement in Bengal in 1905–6, Tagore did not deny the necessity of statecraft "for the construction of the *svadeśī samāj*," even though he believed mere machinery would not suffice. Chatterjee mentions that Tagore even "prepared a constitution of the *svadeśī samāj*." But according to Chatterjee, Tagore grew increasingly doubtful about the machinery of political organization and came to see it as doomed to failure (105-6).

character of the human being lies in his or her inner nature imbued with the force of self-making (*ātmāsakti*), only that country can be one's *svadés* that is created by one's own knowledge, intelligence, love and effort.²⁹⁸

For Tagore, *svadés* signifies neither a territorial concept nor simply an inheritance one has acquired by birth; instead, it grows out of the force of self-making (*ātmāsakti*). In other words, *svadés* is a moral and spiritual ideal based on an ongoing process of self-creation. And Tagore's vision of *svadésamāj*, differing from the machinery of political organization, denotes a collectivity that amalgamates inner life with traditional Indian form of communal existence. But while the unity of inner being and communal life underpins Tagore's social imagining, his protagonist Nikhil's experience in *The Home and the World* suggests that "one's own knowledge, intelligence, love and effort" need to be fostered in a space that is larger than and can even be in conflict with the sphere of social bonds. As earlier described, Nikhil insists, in his argument with Sandip, that the soul "knows itself in the infinite" (80). Yet the infinite space, toward which Nikhil aspires, also brings him anguish and alienation from his beloved.

A Solemn Orientation Toward Infinity and Aesthetic Enjoyment

The Home and the World is characterized by many spatial tropes, beginning with the title. Critics are inclined to read home and world dichotomously—in terms of domestic and social, private and public, Colonial India and the British Empire. Rebecca Walkowitz, for instance, argues, "The self-styled cosmopolitanism of *The Home and the World* ultimately depends on the uneasy encounter between one invented place and another, between public and private, between a conventional England and an

²⁹⁸ Quoted in Partha Chatterjee, *Lineages of Political Society*, 104.

invented ‘Motherland.’”²⁹⁹ These interpretive paradigms are certainly true to the setting of Tagore’s novel, especially if one follows the plotline of the female protagonist Bimala, who, encouraged by her husband Nikhil and abetted by her would-be lover Sandip, leaves the traditional female seclusion of *purdah* and gets caught up in a world of nationalist passions and violence. Yet “the world” also contains a cosmic dimension in the novel that exceeds the global sociopolitical systems that the word often evokes in the modern mind. In this sense, the original English translation of the title—*At Home and Outside*—used when the book was published serially in the *Modern Review* in India in 1918-19, might be said to capture the openness and rhythm of the text more aptly.

A related trope central to the novel is the journey to Calcutta upon which Nikhil and Bimala are to embark. From the very beginning, Nikhil’s project of cultivating Bimala contains a significant spatial component. While inviting an English governess, Miss Gilby, to instruct her and trying to teach her himself, Nikhil also encourages Bimala to leave *purdah* and see the outside world. He proposes that they move to Calcutta to give their life “more room to branch out” (25). Nikhil’s master, Chandranath Babu, later elaborates the importance of enlarging one’s scope of life after Bimala becomes embroiled in the chaos of the local nationalistic agitations. Rebuking the parochial patriotism that puts “the country” in the place of “conscience,” he advises Nikhil: “Take Bimala away to Calcutta. She is getting too narrow a view of the outside world from here, she cannot see men and things in their true proportions. Let her see the world—men and their work—give her a broad vision” (165). As an important center of culture and education in India at that time, where Nikhil obtained his BA and MA degrees, Calcutta

²⁹⁹ Rebecca L. Walkowitz, “Cosmopolitan Ethics: The Home and the World,” in *The Turn to Ethics*. Eds. Marjorie Garber, Beatrice Hanssen, and Rebecca L. Walkowitz (London: Routledge, 2000), 227.

indubitably represents a larger world than Nikhil's estate and the village they live in. And Chandranath Babu draws a connection between broadening one's horizons and the achievement of worldliness.

Moreover, Nikhil's insistence on Bimala's exposure to the larger world constitutes his endeavor "to save the country from the thousand-and-one snares – of religion, custom and selfishness," which he sees people like Sandip "busy spreading" (136). Nikhil had already detected a blind devotion in Bimala at the beginning of their marriage, when she persisted in performing the ritual of touching his feet to show her worship of him. Such a blind devotion, Nikhil believes, is both shaped by conventions and susceptible to vicious manipulation. The tendency to worship certainly has a gendered aspect to it. The novel opens with Bimala's recollections of her mother's Hindu womanhood, an inheritance that conditions her feelings and choices. Bimala recounts reflectively: "It was my woman's heart, which must worship in order to love" (18). At the same time, however, Nikhil sees idolatry as a problem plaguing the whole country and making people vulnerable to incitement and delusion. Indeed, Sandip explicitly tells of his ploy to exploit such a collective mentality for his nationalist cause: "True patriotism will never be roused in our countrymen unless they can visualize the motherland. We must make a goddess of her.... We must get one of the current images accepted as representing the country – the worship of the people must flow towards it along the deep-cut grooves of custom" (120). Sandip renders Bimala an icon of "the *Shakti* [divine power] of the Motherland" by playing on her passion for him (31), and in turn, he deploys the deified image of the country to inflame patriotic feelings of the people. In this light, Nikhil's commitment to freeing Bimala from spatial and conventional constraints

embodies not merely a personal concern for his beloved; it emblemizes his conviction of the importance of critical detachment for the country as well.

The journey to Calcutta, however, also symbolizes Nikhil's spiritual longing for the faraway, which tends to clash with his domestic and communal ties. Nikhil's yearning points toward "the outside," which, in Nikhil's vocabulary, extends to the infinite where the inner self seeks its abode. He throws into bold relief his perception of differences between home and outside in a contemplative moment: "There are many in this world whose minds dwell in brick-built houses – they can afford to ignore the thing called the outside. But my mind lives under the trees in the open, directly receives upon itself the messages borne by the free winds, and responds from the bottom of its heart to all the musical cadences of light and dark" (132). Nikhil's description of the mind living under the trees conjures up the image of the Buddha meditating under a tree and achieving his enlightenment. In his lyrical rhapsody, the mind merges into the cosmic, and designedly poetic, world of the trees, the free winds, and the musical cadences of light and dark.

Though the ethereality of such a realm contrasts with the earthiness of the "brick-built houses," Nikhil's cosmic aspiration means more than a metaphor for a spiritual journey beyond the confines of custom. Commenting on the changing conceptions and modes of travel writing, James Buzard notes that Kant's idea of enlightenment as humankind's "'liberation from self-incurred tutelage' lent itself to metaphorical travel narratives about the enlightened soul's search for its new, true homeland in that clear ether of rational discourse that was thought to lie just beyond the boundaries of all mere 'cultures.'"³⁰⁰ Nikhil's conception of the soul intersects with the Kantian notion of

³⁰⁰ James Buzard, "On Auto-Ethnographic Authority," *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 16.1 (2003): 61-91, see 85.

enlightenment; and yet the cosmic, in Tagore's rendering, is grounded in the natural world, as Nikhil's enjoyment of the trees and winds indicates. Nikhil's invoking of the Buddha also suggests an affinity with an Indian intellectual and cultural tradition.

Moreover, Nikhil's aspiration toward the infinite involves at once an abnegation of possessive desires and an affirmation of spiritual union. For Nikhil, "the union or separation of man and woman" is subordinate to the confluence of humanity in its ongoing striving for betterment. He constantly reminds himself of "the great world [that] stretches far beyond," in which "one can truly measure one's joys and sorrows when standing in its midst" (88). On the day when he and Bimala are about to set out for Calcutta, Nikhil rewrites his relationship with Bimala into a purely spiritual one in an elegiac monologue: "As master of the house I am in an artificial position—in reality I am a wayfarer on the path of life.... My union with you, my love, was only of the wayside; it was well enough so long as we followed the same road; it will only hamper us if we try to preserve it further. We are now leaving its bonds behind. We are started on our journey beyond, and it will be enough if we can throw each other a glance, or feel the touch of each other's hands in passing" (187). Clearly, the contrast between house and life reiterates Nikhil's conceptions of home and outside; further, the passage to Calcutta, in Nikhil's language, takes on a spiritual undertone and translates into the journey of life in which Nikhil reimagines his relationship with Bimala in comradely, rather than conjugal, terms.

Radha Chakravarty and other Tagore scholars have linked Nikhil's desire for a companionate marriage to the influence of "the Victorian model of a new form of domesticity based on marriage as a partnership between two like-minded people" on the

educated Bengali gentry in the early twentieth century.³⁰¹ On the other hand, critics attentive to the limitations of Nikhil's liberal humanism point to his complicity with the social hierarchies that keep women and peasants subservient to their (land)lords. Bruce Robbins, for example, claims that in spite of his effort to liberate Bimala from women's traditional position in the home, Nikhil doesn't really enable Bimala to engage in social activities other than those confined to the home. Robbins writes, "Just as Nikhil's political aspirations for the welfare of his tenants are couched in paternalistic terms, so his and his creator's aspirations for change at home remain patriarchal, even if neither can be happy with the results."³⁰² It is true that Nikhil doesn't see the importance of a profession for Bimala, or women in general, even though he is committed to her intellectual cultivation. What is glossed over in both accounts, however, is Nikhil's questioning of the establishment of marriage itself: "In the midst of the immense, age-long concourse of humanity, what is Bimala to you? Your wife? What is a wife?" (64). In keeping with his idea that his union with Bimala is "only of the wayside," Nikhil subsumes connubial relationship under the larger unity of "humanity." As Tanika Sarkar observes in her analysis of the interlocking forms of love in the novel, Nikhil's ideal of love "acquires larger, non-conventional horizons, based on intellectual and political affinities, emotional honesty and capacity for mutual nurture" rather than "prescriptive norms about conjugal monogamy."³⁰³

³⁰¹ Radha Chakravarty, *Novelist Tagore*, 97. See also Supriya Chaudhuri, "A Sentimental Education: Love and Marriage in The Home and the World," in *Rabindranath Tagore's The Home and the World: A Critical Companion*. Ed. P. K. Datta (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2002), 45.

³⁰² Bruce Robbins, *Feeling Global: Internationalism in Distress* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 161-62. See also Sumanta Banerjee, "The Peasant in *Ghare Baire*," in *Towards Freedom: Critical Essays on Rabindranath Tagore's Ghare Baire/The Home and the World*. Eds. Saswati Sengupta, Shampa Roy, and Sharmila Purakayastha (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2007), 137-62.

³⁰³ Tanika Sarkar, "Many Faces of Love: Country, Woman, and God in The Home and the World," in *Rabindranath Tagore's The Home and the World*, 37.

But as shown in Nikhil's case, such an envisioned spiritual union of humanity in cosmic life entails both a quality of self-command and a non-attachment to connections essential to social life. Recalling Nikhil's contrast of the Buddha and Alexander, we might see resemblances between Nikhil's emphasis on the "journey beyond" and the Buddhist doctrine, "go forth from home to homelessness." The voyage toward the infinite that Nikhil anticipates mirrors the Buddha's own journey from the princely life of luxury and power to one of a wandering mendicant. Gravitating to "universal life" (187), Nikhil, too, is disposed to break up family ties. Yet accompanying Nikhil's pursuit of spiritual freedom in the vast domain of life are feelings of anguish and inadequacy. When Nikhil tells Bimala he refuses to be her fetters and sets her free based on the belief that "[grasping] desires are bonds" (133-4), Bimala silently questions such a thought: "can freedom – empty freedom – be given and taken so easily as all that? It is like setting a fish free in the sky – for how can I move or live outside the atmosphere of loving care which has always sustained me?" (137). For Bimala, what Nikhil offers is but negative freedom, a severing of emotional bonds between them. The atmosphere of loving care means more than material comforts to Bimala. It is also the familiar and warm sphere in which her life has been rooted.

If Bimala voices her apprehension about how Nikhil's ideal of spiritual freedom could engender displacement, Nikhil himself regrets that he "could not impart" to humanity what he calls "the vital spark" for "self-creation" (197). Although he determines that "[a]lone, then, shall I tread my thorny path to the end of this life's journey," he is torn between a longing to be "free under the starlight, to plunge into the infinite depths of the night's darkness after the day's work was done" and a sense of

loneliness “in the midst of the multitudinousness of life” (197, 132). Now we seem to come back to the debate concerning particular allegiances and universal sympathies. Addressing the uneasy path of cosmopolitanism, Martha Nussbaum writes, “Becoming a citizen of the world is often a lonely business. It is as Diogenes said, a kind of exile—from the comfort of local truths, from the warm, nestling feeling of patriotism, from the absorbing drama of pride in oneself and one’s own. In the writing of Marcus Aurelius (as in those of his American followers Emerson and Thoreau), a reader can sometimes sense a boundless loneliness, as if the removal of the props of habit and local boundaries had left life bereft of any warmth or security.”³⁰⁴

Yet while Tagore portrays Nikhil’s loneliness in a sympathetic manner, he also heightens a sense of inadequacy in Nikhil’s vision. It is important to note how the novel at once endorses Nikhil’s moral value and questions his somberness. Indeed, part of the complexity of the tone of the text lies in its simultaneous exposure of the danger of Sandip’s passion and of the inefficacy of Nikhil’s renunciation. Compared to Sandip, who was called a “Hindu Nietzschean” who worships passions by the reviewer in *The Times Literary Supplement* after the novel was published in 1919,³⁰⁵ Nikhil seems like a Buddhist monk committed to “self-denial.” As he himself laments, “How severely I have curbed my desires, repressed myself at every step, only the Searcher of the Heart knows” (197). Through many arguments between Sandip and Nikhil and via their own introspections, the novel takes pains to accentuate Nikhil’s moral rectitude. When Sandip accuses Nikhil of espousing moral precepts at the cost of emotion, asking, “Can’t you recognize that there is such a thing as feeling?” Nikhil eloquently defends his moral

³⁰⁴ Martha C. Nussbaum, “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism,” 15.

³⁰⁵ See Radha Chakravarty, *Novelist Tagore*: 94.

feelings and condemns Sandip's vices: "It is my feelings that are outraged, whenever you try to pass off injustice as a duty, and unrighteousness as a moral ideal. The fact, that I am incapable of stealing, is not due to my possessing logical faculties, but to my having some feeling of respect for myself and love for ideals" (37). Yet, without downplaying the dangerous power of Sandip's siren song of hatred and violence, the text also contrasts Sandip's ability to sing his sin with Nikhil's incapacity for enjoyment, which Nikhil recognizes as his "incorrigible solemnity" (64).

This description of his character reflects back on his ideal of "self-creation," which tends toward engendering what Bernard Williams has called "the characterless self." In his critique of the Kantian ideal that locates freedom in critical reason, Williams writes:

This ideal involves an idea of ultimate freedom, according to which I am not entirely free so long as there is any ethically significant aspect of myself that belongs to me simply as a result of the process by which I was contingently formed. If my values are mine simply in virtue of social and psychological processes to which I have been exposed, then (the argument goes) it is as though I had been brainwashed: I cannot be a fully free, rational, and responsible agent. Of course, no one can control their upbringing as they receive it, except perhaps marginally and in its later stages. What the ideal demands, rather, is that my whole outlook should in principle be exposed to a critique, as a result of which every value that I hold can become a consideration for me, critically accepted, and should not remain merely something that happens to be part of me.... It presupposes a Platonic idea of the moral self as characterless.... If the aspiration makes sense, then the criticising self can be separated from everything that a person contingently is—in itself, the criticising self is simply the perspective of reason or morality.³⁰⁶

Admittedly, Nikhil's ideal has a spiritual dimension that departs from the Kantian conception of moral reason. Yet envisioning a union of humanity in a quest for moral

³⁰⁶ Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, 158-9.

ideals, Nikhil, too, superposes the moral and critical self, a colorless “solemnity,” on the socially embedded personalities.

Saranindranath Tagore has mentioned that for Tagore, “the ideal of humanity is facilitated by the aesthetic category of enjoyment.”³⁰⁷ Indeed, in *Gitanjali*, Tagore’s song offerings, he locates spiritual freedom not in renunciation, but in a joyful perception of beauty and sensuous delight. In Poem No. 73 Tagore writes:

Deliverance is not for me in renunciation. I feel the embrace of freedom in
a thousand bonds of delight.
Thou ever pourest for me the fresh draught of thy wine of various colours
and fragrance, filling this earthen vessel to the brim.
My world will light its hundred different lamps with thy flame and place
them before the altar of thy temple.
No, I will never shut the doors of my senses. The delights of sight and
hearing and touch will bear thy delight.
Yes, all my illusions will burn into illumination of joy, and all my desires
ripen into fruits of love.³⁰⁸

Tagore’s poem can productively be brought to bear on *The Home and the World*.

Reminiscing, at the beginning of the novel, about her mother’s devotion to her father as a manifestation of the tradition of womanhood, Bimala observes, “devotion is beauty itself, in its inner aspect. When my mother arranged the different fruits, carefully peeled by her own loving hands, on the white stone plate, and gently waved her fan to drive away the flies while my father sat down to his meals, her service would lose itself in a beauty which passed beyond outward forms. Even in my infancy I could feel its power. It transcended all debates, or doubts, or calculations: it was pure music” (18). It is easy to see, with Nikhil, how Bimala’s commendation of wifely devotion here reflects the influences of an enslaving tradition. It also transpires that the irrational form of loyalty that transcends moral and instrumental reasoning alike is liable to be remarshaled for

³⁰⁷ Saranindranath Tagore, “Tagore’s Conception of Cosmopolitanism: A Reconstruction,” 1078.

³⁰⁸ Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali: (Song Offerings)* (New York: Macmillan, 1913), 68.

nationalistic causes and cruelties. As Sandip declares, his words “are not meant to be scribbled on paper” that can be analyzed, but “to be scored into the heart of the country” (123). But there is something more in Bimala’s detailed description of the beauty of the loving hands and careful and gentle acts that cannot be dismissed as sheer delusion. The beauty and tenderness of the “fruits of love”—to borrow Tagore’s befitting phrase in the poem—Bimala perceives and enjoys contrast with both Nikhil’s solemnity and Sandip’s intense passion. They are what Sandip destroys and Nikhil fails to engage.

Desires for Agency and Anchorage

Many critics have pointed out that the character of Bimala represents a contested site wherein the struggle between Nikhil’s moral ideals and Sandip’s destructive passions is played out. In this line of thinking, Bimala’s initial surrendering to Sandip’s hypnotic power and subsequent appreciation of Nikhil’s morality reflect both the seductiveness of passion and the triumph of moral reason. Yet such a binary structure is too neat to capture the complexity of a range of affective states between and beyond passion and reason. Bimala’s inner thoughts and feelings warrant closer examination if we are to understand the novel’s representation of the tensions between individual aspirations, social existence, and cosmic life. Bimala’s praise of womanly devotion in the beginning, notably, is attended by a desire for agency. Reflecting on Nikhil’s love for her, Bimala describes how it “seemed to overflow [her] limits by its flood of wealth and service.” And she proclaims: “But my necessity was more for giving than for receiving” (19). Bimala’s declaration, surprisingly enough, resonates with that of Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of*

the Lady when she refuses Lord Warburton's proposal: "It is not what I ask; it is what I can give."³⁰⁹

Tagore lays bare the fact that Bimala's passion for Sandip and his nationalism is bound up with a sense of empowerment. Bimala is not gullible; rather, she exhibits a keen sensibility when she describes her earlier impressions of Sandip, "too much of base alloy had gone into (the) making" of his handsome face and "the light in his eyes somehow did not shine true" (30). But when extolled by Sandip as the goddess, "the Queen Bee" of the nationalist movement, Bimala is inebriated by her new-found feeling of importance. She expresses her euphoria thus: "I who was plain before had suddenly become beautiful. I who before had been of no account now felt in myself all the splendor of Bengal itself.... My relations with all the world underwent a change. Sandip babu made it clear how all the country was in need of me.... Divine strength had come to me, it was something which I had never felt before, which was beyond myself" (50). One could see similarities between Bimala and Sandip in terms of their self-love masquerading as patriotic passion, though the narrative seeks to rationalize Bimala's desire for admiration in a larger community due to the traditional, religious, and social constraints imposed on her as a woman. Further, Bimala shows a keen awareness of her stupefaction by Sandip. As she concedes, "There must be two different persons inside me. One of these in me can understand that Sandip is trying to delude me; the other is content to be deluded" (149). Bimala's knowledge of and willing submission to Sandip's delusion complicates a simple dualism of moral reason and blind passion.

Crucially, Bimala finally breaks away from Sandip's spell not only because she sees through his moral depravity but also because she sees through it via an emotional

³⁰⁹ Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady*. Ed. Philip Horne (London: Penguin, 2011), 112.

bond with Amulya, a young devotee of Sandip and an enthusiast for the nationalist movement. Bimala emphatically describes the innocence and beauty of Amulya; his “guileless face, his gentle eyes, his innocent youth,” and his “beautiful [face], radiant with devotion” (147, 182) evoke tender feelings in her, which harks back to her aesthetic experience when observing her mother serving her father fruits. Indeed, Bimala recounts how her maternal instincts come alive in the company of Amulya; “delightfully, lovably immature was he – of that age when the good may still be believed in as good, of that age when one really lives and grows. The mother in me awoke” (139). The novel, however, connects them as loving “Sister Rani” and devoted “little brother” instead of mother and child (159). One could argue that the relationship of siblings is less hierarchical than one of mother and son, even though Bimala treats Amulya with motherly love. This arrangement on the level of the plot also extricates Bimala from being idolized as the nationalist spirit of *Bande Mataram* (“Hail Mother”), thus endowing the bond between Bimala and Amulya with familial affection in contrast to patriotic passion.

In the meantime, the newly developed tie between Bimala and Amulya parallels the renewed connection between Nikhil and his widowed sister-in-law Baba Rani. In spite of his devotion to moral and spiritual ideals, Nikhil at one moment confesses that his “empty, drifting heart long[s] to anchor on to something” (133). This desire for anchorage balances out Nikhil’s aspirations toward infinity and illuminates the significance of warm emotional connections that Nikhil’s spiritual ideal forecloses. Nikhil is astonished by Baba Rani’s determination to go with him on the day of his departure for Calcutta. He does not realize so acutely, until that moment, how she treasures her sisterly bond with him. Nikhil articulates the real reason for her decision

that Baba Rani quietly conceals: “she had made up her mind to drift away towards the unknown, cutting asunder all her lifelong bonds of daily habit, and of the house itself, which she had never left for a day since she first entered it at the age of nine.... She had only this one relationship left in all the world, and the poor, unfortunate, widowed and childless woman had cherished it with all the tenderness hoarded in her heart” (189). The appreciation of Baba Rani’s tender feelings softens the solemn Nikhil, who now “should love to go back to the days when [they] first met in this old house of [theirs]” (190). This nostalgia for the past seems to strain against Nikhil’s spiritual journey beyond, yet it works to relink the cold infinite space and warm social life.

The End of the Beginning

Critics tend to agree that *The Home and the World* is a tragic story. The novel ends in a *Swadeshi* riot in which Nikhil is seriously wounded in the head and Amulya takes a bullet through the heart. The tropes of “head” and “heart” at this tragic moment have eluded critical attention yet are crucial to central themes of the novel. The final killing scene clearly embodies Tagore’s censure of the *Swadeshi* movement and the consequences of nationalistic fervor. Yet Tagore’s reference to the wound of Nikhil’s head and Amulya’s heart seems to convey a more specific message that both moral reason and genuine feelings fall victim to belligerent patriotism.

But if the final scene highlights the failure of both head and heart, the novel reaches its significant culmination in the penultimate scene, where both the mind and the heart show their redeeming power. First, Nikhil criticizes his own imposition of his moral ideals on Bimala and his inability to connect with her: “I did not realize all this while that

it must have been this unconscious tyranny of mine which made us gradually drift apart. Bimala's life, not finding its true level by reason of my pressure from above, has had to find an outlet by undermining its banks at the bottom. She has had to steal this six thousand rupees because she could not be open with me, because she felt that, in certain things, I despotically differed from her" (198). Even Sandip, troubled by "the ghost of compunction" (200), returns the stolen money and Bimala's jewel-casket, though he characteristically denies that this represents an act of repentance under the influence of Nikhil's moral principles. Sandip explains instead that the restitution is a tribute to Bimala, renamed by him "Queen of the bleeding hearts, Queen of desolation." Bimala has blamed men who are either "bent on making a road for some achievement" or "mad with the intoxication of creating,"—implicitly referring to Sandip's doctrine of success and Nikhil's ideal of "self-creation" respectively—for having no feeling for her plight itself and only caring for "their own object" (146). Yet both men show sympathy, though in different ways and with different degrees of consciousness, for her feelings in the end.

The moment of hope in the novel is often located by critics in Bimala's moral awakening. Martha Nussbaum argues that as a story of education, its success lies in Bimala's awareness in the end that "Nikhil's morality was vastly superior to Sandip's empty symbol-mongering, that what looked like passion in Sandip was egocentric self-exaltation, and that what looked like lack of passion in Nikhil contained a truly loving perception of her as a person."³¹⁰ But as I have noted above, Bimala is not unaware of Sandip's delusion; her choice of Sandip over Nikhil before she steals money from Nikhil involves a desire for agency and for a more affectionate mode of connection. More important, Bimala is acutely aware of her sin when she steals money from Nikhil; her

³¹⁰ Martha Nussbaum, "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism," 15-6.

recognition of Nikhil's morality does not await the end, when she receives Nikhil's generous forgiveness.

Indeed, it is less Bimala's moral awakening than the expansion of her consciousness toward something more infinite that embodies the novel's ethos of universal humanity. After Bimala steals the money, she is tormented by the pangs of guilt. She thinks, "I had robbed my house, I had robbed my country. For this sin my house had ceased to be mine, my country also was estranged from me" (144). It is crucial to note that here Bimala grounds her sense of belonging in moral desert, which contrasts sharply with her former pride in being idolized as a goddess of her country. She believes her moral transgression deprives her of her claim to both her house and her country. Bimala's thought brings back Tagore's idea of *svadeś* (my own country), which, as I have shown earlier, grows out of the force of self-making. Still, Bimala's consciousness continues to expand from house and country into the infinite space. Gazing at the starry winter sky, she imagines that if she steals all the stars for her country, "the sky would be blinded, the night widowed for ever, and my theft would rob the whole world," and she compares her stealing to this "robbing of the whole world – not only of money, but of trust, of righteousness" (145). Bimala's meditation on the starry sky echoes Nikhil's desire to be "free under the starlight," pointing to aspirations toward a larger universe. We might also identify affinities between the imagery conjured by Bimala and Kant's "the moral law within us, and the starry sky above us." The personification of the sky and the night in Bimala's depiction paints not just, if at all, a material world of existence, but a moral and spiritual union of humanity. The novel, in this sense, ends with a beginning. After Sandip returns her jewel-casket, Bimala dismisses gold and jewels, announcing: "To set out and

go forth was the important thing” (201). Bimala finally keeps alive Nikhil’s spirit, even as her emotional connection with Amulya, coupled with Nikhil’s renewed bond to Baba Rani, enriches Nikhil’s moral ideal.

Tagore and Global Modernism

Summing up Tagore’s aesthetics in relation to modernism in *1913: the Cradle of Modernism*, Jean-Michel Rabaté notes that “Tagore belonged to the reformist Hindu sect founded by Rammohun Roy, Brahma Samaj. It rejected ordinary Hinduism and embraced a ‘deity’ that was purposely left vague and formless. It was a religion which was an esthetic at the same time, and their fusion prevented Tagore from being a modernist, at least in the sense that modernism implies a questioning of these values and he steadily refused the accolade of modernist masters that he felt too condescending.... Indeed, he embodied the Romantic ideal of the poet as priest and prophet with a vengeance.”³¹¹ Rabaté argues that Tagore’s fusion of religion and the aesthetic runs up against the supposed epistemology of modernism, even though he suggests that Tagore’s religious beliefs betray a poetic character.

Given Tagore’s renowned reputation as a spiritual poet, it is surprising how criticisms of *The Home and the World* largely leave out the spiritual dimensions of the book. Among earlier responses to the novel, E. M. Forster claims that Tagore’s “World proved to be a sphere ... for a boarding-house flirtation that masks itself in patriotic talk.” Criticizing the novel’s style, Forster remarks that Tagore “meant the wife to be seduced by the World, which is, with all its sins, a tremendous lover; she is actually seduced by a West Kensingtonian Babu.” Georg Lukàcs, in a more irascible manner, considers the

³¹¹ Jean-Michel Rabaté, *1913: the Cradle of Modernism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2007), 126.

novel as “a petit bourgeois yarn of the shoddiest kind” and Tagore as “a wholly insignificant figure ... whose creative powers do not even stretch to a decent pamphlet.”³¹² Postcolonial studies has produced abundant rich and nuanced readings of the book, yet still, Nikhil’s spiritual ideal and renewal of the Buddhist intellectual tradition have received insufficient attention.

The stepping away from the spiritual in the novel is not hard to understand, considering how studies of colonial and postcolonial authors have largely not moved beyond the paradigm of oppression and resistance (and critique as resistance). Yet as I have shown in this project, the works of Woolf, Joyce, Lin, and Tagore—authors who write from different sides of the colonial divide in the East and the West—convey various cosmic imaginings that work to foster larger sympathies with humankind. The cosmic, rendered in the works under discussion, attends to moral and spiritual conditions of modern life. It overlaps with religio-philosophical traditions in the East and the West but does not collapse into religious systems, and certainly not Christianity. In *Religious Experience and the Modernist Novel*, Pericles Lewis invites a rethinking of the spiritual energies in Western modernist novels. Lewis coins the phrase “secular sacred”—meaning “a way of seeing aspects of human experience itself as set apart, venerable, inviolable”—to describe modernism’s spiritual character. In Lewis’s account, modernist writers employ a language composed of words like “sacred, reverence, sanctity, magic, and soul” to speak about “ultimate truths, human truths for which supernatural explanations might no longer seem adequate.”³¹³ My exploration of the cosmic shares Lewis’s attentiveness to the spiritual dimension of modernism, though I focus on texts across cultural

³¹² Anita Desai, “Introduction,” in Rabindranath Tagore, *The Home and the World*, xxi.

³¹³ Pericles Lewis, *Religious Experience*, 30.

boundaries and pursue my inquiry in a different frame. The cosmic, I contend, proves to be an exceptionally useful way to think about the scope and politics of global modernism.

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