

THE MODERNIST IMAGINATION: EDUCATION OF THE SENSES IN WOOLF,
MANN AND JOYCE

A Dissertation

by

SUNJOO LEE

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2011

Major Subject: English

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee,	Paul Christensen
Committee Members,	M. Jimmie Killingsworth
	Katherine Kelly
	Scott Austin
Head of Department,	M. Jimmie Killingsworth

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ABSTRACT

The Modernist Imagination: Education of the Senses in Woolf, Mann and Joyce.

(May 2011)

Sunjoo Lee, B.A., Kyunghee University;

M.A., Hankuk University of Foreign Studies;

M.A., Texas A&M University

Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Paul Christensen

This dissertation examines literary modernism as foremost an endeavor that concerns the imagination. Gaston Bachelard, whose studies on material and dynamic imagination provide the theoretical underpinning for the dissertation, defined the imagination as “nothing other than the subject transported inside the things.” Reformulation of subject-object relations, clearly suggested in that definition, is indeed an important element in the aesthetics of Bachelard and that of Adorno, another thinker whose thought informs the dissertation. As the principle behind modernist responses to the crisis of the modern world, the crisis Georg Lukács captured in the phrase “transcendental homelessness,” reformulation of subject-object relations impels the mobilization of creative energies in the way that may very well be called “the modernist imagination.” I first state the premise for the dissertation and situates it in the present landscape of modernist scholarship. Then I examine Adorno and Bachelard at the intersections of their thoughts, in preparation for a theory of the modernist imagination.

Next I consider *Mrs. Dalloway* as a modernist probing of the sensual, in which familiar dualisms – subject vs. object, the external vs. internal, life vs. death, mind vs. body – collapse. Following this, I examine *The Magic Mountain* as an attempt at what Adorno calls materialist metaphysics. The novel’s preoccupation with death in all its aspects, its problematizing of the human body and the imagination of cold are examined in light of Adorno’s view on reviving metaphysics in modernity. Then I read in *Ulysses* water’s lyricism, a lyricism learned from water, into which important modernist themes (not least the ones considered previously in the dissertation) converge. Lastly I look at a film – Andrei Tarkovsky’s *Solaris* – and a science fiction novel from the 1950s – Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451* – in light of what may be called the “philosophy” of modernism. The spirit of modernism – the primacy of the object as a modernist dictum, modernism’s resistance to identity thinking and its dismantling of dualisms – is shown to continue in genres other than literature and in the period now called “post”-modern.

To my parents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Christensen, and my committee members, Dr. Killingsworth, Dr. Kelly and Dr. Austin. I would never have been able to complete my dissertation without their encouragement, guidance and support. Each of the classes I took from them has been a milestone in my life at the graduate school. It was in Dr. Kelly's "Theory" class that I first acquainted myself with the formidable thought and language of Adorno. Wallace Stevens, from whose poetry I took two epigraphs for the dissertation, was read (and reread) with great delight in Dr. Killingsworth's "Poetry" class. The scorching Texan summer I braved to take his course will always remain a memory I cherish. Dr. Christensen's seminar in "Poetics of Destruction" gave me an opportunity to explore Nietzsche's aestheticism in relation to contemporary American fiction. I know that the thinking and writing I did for his class have been the inception of this dissertation. Finally, Dr. Austin's "Ancient Philosophy" class, where I read Plato's dialogues in awe, let me begin to have a glimpse into a philosophical life.

I am deeply grateful to my parents, who did so much for me. I send many thanks to my friends far away in Seoul as well. The "rescue plan" I had initiated and pulled off did indeed come to the rescue of me. I mean every word when I say that this dissertation could not have been written without them.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following is a list of frequently cited works that are referred to parenthetically with these abbreviations. See Works Cited for complete textual information.

- AT* Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*
- CM* Theodor Adorno, *Critical Models*
- DE* Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*
- MM* Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia*
- ND* Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*
- NL* Theodor Adorno, *Notes to Literature*
- AD* Gaston Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*
- EW* Gaston Bachelard, *Earth and Reveries of Will*
- PE* Gaston Bachelard, *La Poétique de l'Espace*
- PR* Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie*
- PS* Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*
- R* Gaston Bachelard, *La Terre et les Rêveries du Repos*
- WD* Gaston Bachelard, *Water and Dreams*
- D* Virginia Woolf, *Diary*
- L* Virginia Woolf, *Letters*
- MD* Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*
- W* Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This dissertation considers literary modernism as foremost an endeavor that concerned the imagination, the definition and understanding of which is to be achieved largely through the works of two thinkers: Gaston Bachelard and Theodor Adorno. In one of his “essays on the imagination,” Bachelard defines the faculty as “nothing other than the subject transported inside the things” (*R* 3). Reformulation of subject and object relations, evident in this definition, is an important strain also in the thoughts of Adorno and is what impels the mobilization of creative energies among a large group of modernist writers. Charles Baudelaire’s emphatic stanza in “Artist’s Confiteor,” from the 1869 collection of prose poems *Paris Spleen*, can be taken as an early example of the artistic reorientation that will soon become a uniquely modernist outlook.

What bliss to plunge the eyes into the immensity of sky and sea! Solitude, silence, incomparable chastity of the blue! a tiny sail shivering on the horizon, imitating by its littleness and loneliness my irremediable existence, monotonous melody of the waves, all these things think through me or I through them (for in the grandeur of reverie the ego is quickly lost!);

This dissertation follows the style and format suggested by the seventh edition of *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*.

I say they think, but musically and picturesquely, without quibblings,
without syllogisms, without deductions. (3)

From the last line of the poem – “The study of beauty is a duel in which the artist shrieks with terror before being overcome” – readers of modernism may recall the famous line in *Duino Elegies* – “For beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror, which we still are just able to endure” (3). Much of Rainer Maria Rilke’s works, from the influential poetry in *Duino Elegies* and *Sonnets to Orpheus*, to his attempt at a novel *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, and to the vast amount of correspondence, among which the popular *Letters to a Young Poet* is but a tiny sample, often acutely exemplifies the modernist imperative of rethinking subject and object relations. In *The Notebooks*, everyday objects hold a powerful allure for the protagonist, Malte. The “allure” may in fact be a revulsion or antipathy in disguise, yet, be it attraction or aversion, a point is consistently made that they demand our attention and responsibility because they potentially are our flesh and blood, and in quite a literal sense. In the oft-quoted passage on how poets create poetry, Malte puts this point powerfully. To write one good poem, a poet should see “many cities, many people and Things” (19). He should have many memories of “streets in unknown neighborhoods . . . unexpected encounters . . . days in quiet, restrained rooms . . . mornings by the sea . . . many nights of love” (19-20). And it is when they “changed into our very blood, into glance and gesture, and are nameless, no longer to be distinguished from ourselves” that “the first word of a poem arises in their midst and goes forth from them” (20). Later, speaking of the impossibility to run away from the city of his choice, Malte makes an astonishing formulation – “it is at home

inside me” (48). This is a moment when the division of subject and object is not merely disrupted or narrowed but dissolved, in a state of thorough reconciliation, or peace as a “state of differentiation without domination, with the differentiated participating in each other” (*CM* 247).

In “The Essay as Form,” Adorno points to an important aspect of essay writing, which is shared by modernist literature in general: a close attention to the transient. The essay, he says, “tries to render the transient eternal,” and thereby testifies “to the utopia which is blocked by the partition of the world into the eternal and the transient” (*NL* 1:11). To be keen to the transient and the minute is a method to put the “duality of subject and object” into “unceasingly active . . . inversions” (*PS* xix). It is, in other words, to enter into an arena for “open intellectual experience,” and in that regard, “the method itself expresses its utopian intention” (*NL* 1:13). While Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time* as a whole may be taken as a single, monumental testament to the modernist preoccupation with the transient and minute, the opening pages of *Swann’s Way* are particularly exemplary. Here the narrator Marcel, unable to sleep through the night, sets out on an inquiry into the workings of memory, a large part of which is a reconstruction of scenes from his childhood memories as they come alive. He would remember, for example, among the many unfamiliar bedrooms he had to sleep in, one with a “high ceiling, hollowed in the form of a pyramid out of two separate storeys, partly walled with mahogany,” a room in which from the very first moment he was “convinced of the hostility of the violet curtains and of the insolent indifference of a clock that chattered on at the top of its voice” (7). In this memory and others like it,

attention to the transient leads Marcel to what Rilke in *Letters to a Young Poet* calls the “depths of Things,” or “the small Things that hardly anyone sees [but] that can so suddenly become huge” (15, 33). Marcel himself explains such moments of a close contact with things with a belief from Celtic myths, a version of the transmigration of the soul, which he shares. The souls of those we have lost travel and then “are held captive in some inferior being, in an animal, in a plant, in some inanimate object” (59). They are lost to us but only until one day when we recognize them in their new abodes: “Then they start and tremble, they call us by our name. . . . Delivered by us, they have overcome death and return to share our life.”

These “inferior beings” share life with us, a life which is to be awakened and experienced by way of the senses. Rilke, while learning about the artistic vocation from the works of Rodin, Cézanne, and many other artists at work or on display in museums in Paris in 1907, is one day struck by what he would call “that special eighteenth-century blue” in the paintings of such 18th century painters as Perronneau, La Tour, Watteau and Chardin (*Letters on Cézanne* 32). Then he imagines what a “monograph on the color blue” would read like, if it considers properly “the dense waxy blue of the Pompeiian wall paintings to Chardin and further to Cézanne,” and exclaims, “what a biography!” The biography of blue he imagines will be in a way Rilke’s own biography, for the life of the color blue in all its wealth of nuances is the life of one given to respond to each of them. In his “Introduction” to *Letters on Cézanne*, Heinrich Wiegand Petzet suggests that an important lesson Rilke learned from closely studying Cézanne’s paintings was an intensity of perception, the need for participation in, and not just understanding of, the

artistic process revealed in the paintings (xxii). Rilke learns the same lesson from a heather grove also. Remembering that he failed to revel in the sight and smell of heather, whose beauty deserved much more from him, he writes: “[I] am truly ashamed that I was not happy when I was permitted to walk about in a superabundance of these” (10). Then he notes: “One lives so badly, because one always comes into the present unfinished, unable, distracted.”

To respond to the sensory or sensual potential of objects is often a way to revisit the part of our life that has been lost or forgotten. Marcel in *Swann's Way* comes to the famous moment of a Proustian rush nearly as “unfinished, unable, distracted” as Rilke did to a heather grove, and yet his palate immediately responds to the touch of “the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs” of madeleine, and he experiences an extraordinary sensation, in which “at once the vicissitudes of life had become indifferent to [him], its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory,” and he ceases “to feel mediocre, contingent, mortal” (60). Essaying the task of identifying whence the powerful sensation could come from, Marcel muses over the madeleine’s “richly sensual” potential, with its “power of expansion,” oblivious to him on numerous occasions when he only saw it and came alive when he tasted it (63). When people we knew are dead and things we used to have are laid waste, “taste and smell alone, more fragile but more enduring, more immaterial, more persistent, more faithful, remain poised a long time, like souls, remembering, waiting, hoping, amid the ruins of all the rest” (63-64). And their “power of expansion” may indeed bring about a whole forgotten world, by resurrecting a memory in all its

splendid details, the way, in the game played by the Japanese, a little piece of paper put into a bowl of water would bloom into houses or flowers or people (64).

The celebrated madeleine scene from *Swann's Way* may be taken as a best known example, if not quite to the following effect, of how literary modernism investigates the ways the senses experience matter and the world. In the scene, as in others this dissertation will take from three other prominent modernists – Virginia Woolf, Thomas Mann, and James Joyce –, a correspondence of materiality, established between things and ourselves, puts into practice an inversion of subject and object (*AD* 9). The inversion implicitly calls for a rethinking of the doctrine of the transcendental subject, of “the forms of thought, their unity, and the originary productivity of consciousness” that are supposed to constitute the transcendental subject, and in this regard, performs a critique of abstract, dominant rationality (*CM* 247-48). The critique of reason by way of the material imagination, I argue, is the principal accomplishment of literary modernism.

In recent scholarship in modernist studies, the senses, the body, or materiality more generally, have been given increasing emphasis. Sara Danius's *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics* (2002) tackles directly the issue of sensual perception in high modernism – or more precisely, a “crisis” of senses and modernist responses to it. Her thesis is bold: “modernist aesthetics from Marcel Proust to James Joyce is an index of a technologically mediated crisis of the senses, a perceptual crisis that ultimately cuts across the question of art as such” (1). Her aim is to correct the

“anti-technological bias,” largely unchallenged in modernist studies. In the works of such notables in high modernism as Proust, Mann, and Joyce, emerging technologies of perception not only figure prominently but are “in a specific sense constitutive of [their] high-modernist aesthetic” (3). Hence, *The Magic Mountain* – Mann’s “total work of art” – turns on the premise that “medical hermeneutics” and “the mechanical eye of the X-ray machine” are replacing a good part of the role our visual sense has played (66). *Ulysses* is not just, as Joyce himself called it, an “epic of the body” – it charts the changes made in our way of perception, ones brought about by emerging new technologies. In this sense, it is as much a “social history of the body” as it is a “natural history of the body” (150-51).

Her arguments are often cogent and revealing. Changes in the modes of perception due to the “invasion” of technologies are indeed a very valid element of these works. And yet cases can be overstated. In Proust, for instance, every motif Danius charts as being affected by new technologies – from the “train whistle” heard in the opening pages of *Swann’s Way* to the “photography”-influenced precision of vision in *Within a Budding Grove* – do not really seem to have more than an episodic significance. In her “Introduction,” she sums up her view on the materialist theories of aesthetic experience witnessed in modernist works as being the result of “the increasing internalization of technological matrices of perception” (2). I disagree with this point by viewing the materialist turn in modernism as more primitivist than technological in nature, that is, as based in a desire to investigate the (unaided) senses’ experiences in and of the world.

Jesse Matz's *Literary Impressionism and Modernist Aesthetics* (2001) revisits the vastly studied topic of impressionism and modern fiction, positing literary impressionism as a theory of perception with a strong potential for social and political critique. Such potential, however, was often not fully realized because the impressionists/modernists he considers – Pater, James, Ford, Woolf, Proust – were aware of the uncertainty involved in the doctrine of impressionism as a way of knowing the world via a mediation between body and mind. They sought to eliminate this uncertainty by making their impressions a matter of mediation between their own mind and some other body. Hence Conrad's "distant laborer," James's "woman of genius," Woolf's "Mrs. Brown," and Ford's "peasant cabman" provide the role of the other bodies in these writers' pursuit of impressionism.

Matz sees the interrogation of the senses as a key element of modernist epistemology and aesthetics, a point this dissertation is in full agreement with. He seems, however, to make a critical blunder in his chapter on Woolf, which is of more direct interest to this dissertation. Here a set of well-established dualisms – essence vs. existence, mind vs. body, sense vs. reason, politics vs. aesthetics, materiality vs. ideality, highbrow vs. lowbrow, (Woolf's) feminism vs. (her) modernism/aestheticism, and lastly, subject vs. object – are taken for granted throughout. And, despite his careful and nuanced readings of her works, which obviously challenge many of them, none of these dualisms is seriously questioned by Matz himself. Materiality – that is, intimate understanding of the sensuality of things – is one facet of Woolf's complex and subtle

subversiveness. In Matz's treatment, it is ultimately reduced to what he calls her "phenomenological impression."

Douglas Mao's *Solid Objects: Modernism and the Test of Production* (1998) examines the powerful "allure" material objects held for a group of Anglo-American modernists – Woolf, Lewis, Pound and Stevens. Starting from a memorable episode in H. D.'s *Tribute to Freud*, where Freud relates the small confusion over "Gods" and "Goods," upon receiving H. D.'s flowers with a message congratulating the return of the "Gods" – Freud's collection of statues from Vienna – now in his London flat, Mao proceeds to show that neither a yearning for authenticity ("Gods") nor an affirmation of commodity culture ("Goods") but an extraordinary fascination with objects *as* objects was a defining motif in the writings of such modernists as those listed above. His discussion of the apparently guileless materiality of modernism quickly turns to "larger issues" (25): the modernists' fixation on material objects was in fact an agonized response to the deepening crisis of cultural production in the early 20th century. In the case of Woolf, he starts with her short story "Solid Objects" to discuss how a candid description of the powerful claim of the object on the subject belies a tension arising from what he terms the "test of production." Then he reaches the conclusion that in *Between the Acts* (1941) Woolf presents an argument against the culture of domination and aggression, by calling our attention to the element of subjugation in artistic production itself.

In Mao's view, rethinking of the subject-object relation was a task central to literary modernism, which I also argue. But I disagree with his thesis that "the

affirmation of subject-object distance is one of Anglo-American modernism's defining gestures" (10). As the following chapters will show, putting the subject and object relation into a cycle of inversion, and not "the affirmation of subject-object distance," was at the heart of literary modernism.

Michael LeMahieu's essay, "Nonsense Modernism: The Limits of Modernity and the Feelings of Philosophy in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*," in *Bad Modernisms* (2006), a collection of essays by emerging young scholars in modernist studies, considers ways of reading the enigmatic philosopher's "Janus-faced, strictly philosophical and simultaneously literary" text (83). Conceived and composed during World War I and published at the height of high modernism in 1921 (English translation in 1922), the *Tractatus* seems to present an impossible blend: on the one hand, it inaugurates the tradition of logical positivism, and on the other, it speaks of the mystical in human experience. The first feature places it in the line of works produced by Frege and Russell, while the second brings the book's argument closer to that of Heidegger or Nietzsche. LeMahieu points out that at stake with the first feature is philosophical modernity, a certain veneration of scientific discourse, and with the second, a tension that may define the language of literary modernism (73). Avoiding the mistake of reading Wittgenstein either as a logical positivist or a mystic, LeMahieu pays particular attention to Wittgenstein's picture theory of language in *Tractatus*, in which "feeling," as an act of touching, plays a decisive role in a consummately logical doctrine. A pictorial form establishes a referential relation between a picture and reality. Wittgenstein's solution for the relation to become "not only isomorphic but contiguous"

was to introduce the figure of “feelers” (84). And in their role in bridging the gap between that which consists of a picture and that which consists of a state of affairs, feelers “mark the interface between subject and object, simultaneously a logical limit and an empirical boundary, both separating language from reality and binding language to reality” (85). The *Tractatus* is ultimately suspended over the “boundary separating what can be argued in language from what can merely be felt through language” (88). LeMahieu’s essay interrogates the intersection between philosophical modernity and literary modernism, and in that regard, is something of an exception in “the new modernist studies,” scholarship under a strong methodological influence, among other things, of new historicism. That it appeared in a book, edited by other young scholars in the field, Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz, and which was to become a landmark in the new direction modernist scholarship took, is especially welcome.

Walkowitz’s own contribution in *Bad Modernisms*, “Virginia Woolf’s Evasion: Critical Cosmopolitanism and British Modernism,” is noteworthy for similar reasons. Focusing on Woolf’s evasiveness, which often exasperates the reader, Walkowitz carefully examines the politics and “philosophy” of Woolf’s style. In Woolf’s own time and later, critics, from both sides of the political aisle, tend to be in agreement that Woolf focuses on small matters at the expense of important ones. Reading “The Mark on the Wall” in the 1930s, for instance, the socialist writer R. D. Charques decried that Woolf seeks “refuge or immunity from the worst in contemplation of – what shall we say? – a mark on the wall,” by “the worst,” referring to threats of war (122). Walkowitz first makes it clear that while those who see and condemn evasiveness in others assume a

collective agreement about topics of importance and proper degrees of attentiveness, Woolf herself does not assume such a thing. If anything, she interrogates “literary classifications – evasion, argument, euphemism, literalism, generalization, and others – that many of her critics take for granted” (123). When Woolf seems to cultivate “naïve myopia,” concentrating on “domestic minutiae” or “peripheral spaces,” her intention is “not simply to create a new ideal of attentiveness, more expansive and extensive, but to display the customs and conventions, social and psychological, that control what can be seen and what can be said.” Walkowitz draws on Adorno in developing her argument. Adorno and Woolf, she notes, “share the conviction that social norms are embedded in traditions of literary style and that literary style is embedded in the politics of national culture” (125). Woolf’s evasiveness is a rejection of euphemism, “which translates intense experiences into language that is habitual and therefore invisible,” and a critique of literalism, “which proposes that there is only one, objective experience to present” (129). It is a way, in other words, to “resist the pressure to assimilate,” for action without thought is complacent and contemptible (126, 130). Walkowitz concludes that Woolf’s “cultivating moments of diversion and rejecting wartime priorities of attention” is her way of alerting her readers to social networks of meanings (140). In spite of being “mandarin modernism’s last great champion,” or perhaps because of that, Adorno’s thoughts have not been actively drawn upon in discussions of literary modernism, high or low (*Solid Objects* 7). Walkowitz’s essay successfully incorporates Adorno’s ideas in revisiting Woolf as a trenchant thinker and social critic.

Tim Armstrong's *Modernism: a Cultural History* (2005) is exemplary in what Mao and Walkowitz sum up in their 2008 *PMLA* report on "the changing profession" as an "expansion" in modernist scholarship over the past decade or two (737). The expansion, as Mao and Walkowitz assess, is three-fold. With the first, temporal expansion, the field has witnessed an inclusion of the mid-19th through mid-20th centuries in its markers, while the core period remains from about 1890 to 1945 (738). The second, spatial expansion, has been more momentous than the first, involving not just a broadening of regions to include Asia and Australia but also a launching of investigation into the "complex intellectual and economic transactions among, for example, Europe, Africa, the United States, and the Caribbean." The third, vertical expansion, has led a disruption of a traditional "high vs. low culture" schema that held sway in modernist studies. Armstrong's work attests to inclusiveness, often very far-reaching, on all three counts. He opens his first chapter, "Modernity, Modernism and Time," by saying that "Any account of literary modernism must begin with the category of modernity," and then defines modernity "as set of changes initiated by the Renaissance" (1-2). Apparently, it stretches the inception of modernity as far back as possible. Secondly, the geography of modernism he charts isn't as expansive, and yet it is still a far more international, or rather postcolonial, one than the modernism as it was usually mapped before the advent of the "expansion" of modernist scholarship. Modernism, he argues, is "inextricably linked with the emergence of the modern nation-state from late Victorian imperialism," and its proper understanding must include not only "Yeats's nation-building and its plot of struggle" but also the Caribbean

Francophone writer Aimé Césaire and his Surrealist-inspired works, as well as works of Scottish modernism (Hugh MacDiarmid, for instance), of African-American modernism (Ralph Ellison, Robert Hayden, among others) and of native American modernism (N. Scott Momaday) (44-45). That some of the writers he cites were active well after the 1950s again speaks of the inclusiveness of his definition of modernism. And finally, on the third “vertical” expansion, his chapter devoted to the “high vs. low” division within modernism and modernist scholarship, “Modernism, Mass Culture and the Market,” opens with a question: “Is modernism to be understood as a phenomenon of the market?” (48). His answer is an emphatic yes. As to the question of art’s autonomy, for example, his view is that it is “a strategic illusion, an advertising point rather than a philosophical absolute” (49). The market determines modernist literary production not just in the sense of the processes involved in publication and distribution but also in the sense that modernist literature “registers the way in which the market penetrates the modern self” (51).

As to a more fundamental question of the relation between modernism and modernity, Armstrong makes it clear that in his understanding modernism is *not* counter-modernity: “If one still fairly prevalent view of modernism is that it is a ‘reaction against’ modernity, ‘a kind of soul trapped in the gross body of modern industrial society’ as James Knapp puts it, then my argument throughout this book is that such a view must be displaced in favour of one in which the two are bound together in a relation which is often homologous rather than antagonistic” (1). My dissertation disagrees with this understanding, in that it views modernism as an implicit, though no

less radical, critique of modernity. While I am in full agreement with Armstrong's work as to the first two expansions, since an understanding of modernism will be far richer as its temporal and geographical markers expand, as to the third expansion Armstrong advances, I am somewhat skeptical. That an artwork is a product of the market does not necessarily make it pro-market, or otherwise completely subject to the laws of the market, as critics who view modernism as a market phenomenon often seem to suggest. Contra Armstrong and other critics who share his view on this point, I seek to reclaim and rethink modernism's radical dimension, which has been largely discredited amidst the expansions of modernist scholarship Mao and Walkowitz chart and Armstrong's work exemplifies. Perhaps it's worth recalling that Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, in their influential anthology, *Modernism: 1890-1930* (1976), could assess modernism in terms of "cultural seismology" and confidently assert that the changes modernism brought about belonged to the highest order of magnitude (19). The changes were no less than of "those overwhelming dislocations, those cataclysmic upheavals of culture, those fundamental convulsions of the creative human spirit that seem to topple even the most solid and substantial of our beliefs and assumptions." Modernist scholarship for the past decade or two has all but debunked the loaded language of such appraisals, and driven the question of the radical in modernism out of the picture in the process, I propose to rethink it, by examining the "work" literary modernism does: the critique of dominant rationality by way of the material imagination.

Following this first, introductory chapter, Chapter II reads Adorno and Bachelard at the intersections of their thoughts: their polemic against metaphor, or metaphorical (equivalence-seeking) thinking, the reformulation of subject and object relations, and the importance of childhood in relation to mimesis or the imagination. Adorno and Bachelard may at first seem an odd couple. Read together, the two thinkers emerge as close allies, theoretical partners, as it were. Bachelard's work on the imagination can be read as studies of nature that 'survives' in- and out-side the human being, a denial and mastery of which forms an essential element of what would be termed "instrumental reason" after Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Indeed, the critique of instrumental reason was a task Bachelard shared with Adorno and Horkheimer, without himself using the phrase.

Chapter III considers how, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, the senses' experience of the world leads to a collapse of dualisms. Oscar Wilde's 1891 novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is presented as its direct precursor in this regard. The novel's preoccupation with 'touch' recalls Michel Serres's claim in his magisterial *The Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies* that contact, nearly literally in its tactile sense, is the only and true source of love or knowledge (35). Lord Henry's take on what Serres calls "The ecstatic transfiguration, the loss of the body into the soul" (25), which he expounds on in his final speech to Dorian, is shown to haunt *Mrs. Dalloway*. Woolf's professed aim of the novel – a critique of the social system – is realized indirectly and yet powerfully in the novel's knocking down of the masculinist identity principle.

Chapter IV studies the preoccupations with death in *The Magic Mountain* and shows how they lead to what Adorno calls materialist metaphysics in *Negative Dialectics*. In the “Snow” section, Hans Castorp experiences death – near death – possibly in all the temporal and spatial dimensions it may involve, which must be viewed as central to his *Bildung*. Set against nature at its most sublime (fearsome and beautiful), Hans’s experience is at once “grand” and “intimate,” the same way, as Hans would relate to Joachim, ancient people watched celestial zones and wrote poetry about them (439).

Chapter V considers the valences of water images in *Ulysses* to show how, as both “womb” and “tomb,” water contributes to the novel’s lyricism. Adorno’s view that Joyce “put discursive language out of action,” that he brought about “the transformation of communicative into mimetic language” (*AT* 112) echoes with Bachelard’s on the poetics of material images, in which what makes literature different from other kinds of writings is to be found in its sensitiveness to the seductions of matter, in which, in other words, “matter is the unconscious of form” (*WD* 50).

My conclusion looks at a film – Andrei Tarkovsky’s *Solaris* – and a science fiction novel from the 1950s – Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451* – in light of what may be called the “philosophy” of modernism. The spirit of modernism – the primacy of the object, modernism’s resistance to identity thinking and its dismantling of dualisms – is shown to exist in genres other than literature and in the period now called “post”-modern.

CHAPTER II

“NOTHING OTHER THAN THE SUBJECT TRANSPORTED INSIDE THE
THINGS”: READING ADORNO AND BACHELARD FOR A THEORY OF THE
MODERNIST IMAGINATION

Imagination is the will of things.

Wallace Stevens “Colloquy with a Polish Aunt”

Terry Eagleton’s Attack on the Imagination

A very common misconception about the imagination is to be found in a section titled “Imagination” in Terry Eagleton’s *How to Read a Poem*. Here, imagination is presented as the human capacity that creates imaginary things, which means, in Eagleton’s view, things that never really existed. Literature is generally regarded as the product of the imagination and that makes literary critics people who “are paid for reading books about people who never existed and events that never took place” (22). Lest the reader miss his point, Eagleton adds: “In everyday life, talking about imaginary people as though they were real is known as psychosis; in universities, it is known as literary criticism.” Things and people of suspected entity cannot matter that much after all, and it is because critics cannot flatter themselves about working on matters of undisputed importance that they exalt the imagination to “an altogether superior realm” and view it as “an unequivocally positive faculty” (23). The imagination as this positive

and powerful faculty, these critics suggest, enables you to virtually travel South-East Asia by reading Conrad or to enliven, if only in your mind, your dull sex life by reading the obscene letters Joyce wrote to his wife Nora. In cases like these, the imagination becomes “a sort of spiritual prosthesis” with which we extend our normal capabilities far beyond their range.

The ‘power’ of imagination is not powerful but meager, since it is not about the real thing anyway, but why is it at the same time suspicious? Eagleton does not say outright that such an idea – that the imagination can be powerful in enriching our lives – is itself wishful thinking. He points out instead that as a “theory of the imagination,” it happened to gain its ground during the years of early industrial reordering of societies, which were a time “when the experience of a great many men and women was being warped and narrowed by inhuman conditions.” When the imagination is praised for its transformative power, the question of “why the lives of so many people should be imaginatively impoverished” becomes one that’s easily overlooked. Such is a theory of imagination in which imagination’s “transformative power” is celebrated for the sake of condoning, and even concealing, life conditions that need to be transformed. There is another theory of the imagination and this one locates its power in an ethical dimension, viewing the imagination as a source of human compassion. Eagleton sneers at this idea as well: “So brutality, on this view, is just a breakdown of imagination” (24). It’s more likely that acts of brutality are an outcome of very active imagination than otherwise, since “Sadists know exactly how their victims are feeling, which is what spurs them on to more richly imaginative bouts of torture.” To Eagleton, the imagination, whether as a

self-serving ability to experience things vicariously or an other-oriented readiness to empathize, is rarely a virtue in itself and usually a doctrine concocted to cover up something. When it is commended as a special spiritual power given to us all, power to transcend the status quo, it is so as to gloss over the fact that some of us are suffering under the cruelest living conditions. As to the ‘imagination as empathy’ view, he doesn’t waste much space before throwing it out the window by saying, “The only drawback with this doctrine is that it is obviously false.”

There is certainly some truth in Eagleton’s negative view of the imagination. In his widely influential *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, Eagleton persuasively shows how the doctrine of the imagination as a ‘transcendental’ psychic force, once a radical credo of Romantics, becomes an important part of the Victorian ruling class’s ideological maneuver made in response to the severe crisis that swept mid-nineteenth century Britain. Education of literature, backed with the doctrine of the imagination, would take over the role formerly played by religion, namely the role of appeasing the working class, or as Eagleton puts it, of leading “the lower orders . . . to forget their grievances” (22). Literature, for example, is very good at giving “vicarious self-fulfillment” to the reader, which can be effectively used to supplement “the actually impoverished experience of the mass of people, an impoverishment bred by their social conditions” (26). That is, “instead of working to change such conditions . . . , you can vicariously fulfil someone’s desire for a fuller life by handing them *Pride and Prejudice*” (26-27). Contrary to what some Romantics believed, you would nullify the workers’ desire for “political practice” by giving them a “poetic vision” (20).

In sum, the “rise of English” from about the mid- 19th century was a result of the ruling class’s endeavor to ideologically tame the working class. Literary education proved an effective way of forestalling the working class’s political action: “If the masses are not thrown a few novels, they may react by throwing up a few barricades” (25). This is, however, a strange reversal, considering that, with Romantics in the not too distant past, literature was a powerful means of opposing “the fragmented individualism of the capitalist marketplace” and poetry was something “at the sound of [which] the ruling class might quite literally reach for its gun” (19-20). The blame for this sudden reversal is laid on the Romantics’ own flawed conception of the imagination. The imagination was valued by Romantic writers most of all for its “sovereignty and autonomy,” but the “‘transcendental’ nature” thus given to it could easily become “a comfortingly absolute alternative to history itself” (20). It is for this reason that, in the “Conclusion” to *Literary Theory*, Eagleton includes the imagination in his list of themes that make for literary theory’s “flight from real history”: “the poem itself, the organic society, eternal verities, the imagination, the structure of the human mind, myth, language and so on” (196). But as he himself believes, notably with regard to the case Romantics made for imagination and how it was taken over by the Victorian ruling class, whether these themes served the interests of the oppressed or not is more a matter of how they are understood and put to use than of the themes themselves.

This chapter of the dissertation is an attempt to rescue the imagination from the misunderstanding of its determined skeptics. It reads two notable thinkers from the 20th century, Theodor Adorno and Gaston Bachelard, who both left to us remarkable ideas

and insights on the question of the imagination. Adorno, intervening in the controversy over literature's "commitment" vs. "autonomy" in the early 1960s, began his talk with these words: "Since Sartre's essay *What Is Literature?* there has been less theoretical debate about committed and autonomous literature. But the controversy remains as urgent as only something that concerns spirit and not the immediate survival of human beings can be today" (*NL* 2:76). Here he is not saying that the question of the "survival of human beings" is only secondary to that of the human spirit. His point is rather that the question of human survival, especially if it is immediate, cannot be a matter for debate. It can be settled, and it should be settled, immediately and once and for all. As he says elsewhere, it is only "the coarsest demand" that has tenderness: "that no one shall go hungry any more" (*MM* 156). The question of human spirit, on the contrary, is one that would always call for careful and searching reflection.

In popular images these two thinkers couldn't have been further apart: Adorno the patrician pessimist and grouser and Bachelard the genial "teacher of happiness" (*The Ideology of the Aesthetic* 358, *Chimisso* 32). Surprisingly, there are quite a few points of intersection between their thoughts that are mutually illuminating. Three of them are to be considered: 1) their polemic against metaphor or metaphoric thinking, 2) reformulation of the subject-object relation, and 3) mimesis and childhood. A theory of the imagination to come into shape from this consideration will further add to an understanding of literary modernism, since these topics are at the heart of modernist innovations.

Against Metaphor

Metaphor is not held in high regard in Bachelard's poetics. Metaphor "thinks fast," and is too short-lived (*PE* 82).¹ An "ephemeral" expression, it delights or impresses us only once, the first time it's used (*PS* 75). The chapter "Drawers, Chests and Wardrobes" in *The Poetics of Space* considers the difference between metaphor and image – metaphor as a mere "accident of expression" and image a "product of absolute imagination" (77, 74). Henri Bergson, against whom the chapter forms a minor polemic, is a philosopher who uses the word "drawer" consistently as a metaphor, a contentious one, always in the role of "giving orders and passing judgment" (74). To Bergson, the drawer metaphor is used roughly the same way as another well-worn one of "ready-made garments" and refers to the shortcomings of the philosophy of concept (75). In this philosophy, knowledge is something that is classified and filed into the "drawers" of concepts. The drawer-concept, in the process, smooths out "the individuality of knowledge that has been experienced" and itself becomes "lifeless thinking" because "by definition, it is classified thinking." As Bachelard notes, that is how Bergson intends his drawer metaphor as a polemic against scientific rationalism, in which knowledge is produced by placing new objects into existing categories, which in their turn, through simple classifications, "fit into one another" (76). Bachelard suggests in passing that this is a misunderstanding on Bergson's part of the nature of scientific knowledge.² More importantly for the problem in hand, Bachelard points out that the drawer metaphor Bergson uses to reproach the limitations of scientific reason reveals more about such

limitations in his own way of thinking. With him, the drawer metaphor becomes “an example of a metaphor that hardens and loses even the spontaneousness of the image.” In classrooms where “simplified Bergsonism” is taught, the hardening of the metaphor is unmistakable. Originally meant as a polemic against “stereotyped ideas,” the metaphor of a drawer in a filing cabinet is at the ready to such an extent that it has itself become a stereotyped idea. At certain lectures, it is even possible to foresee that the metaphor will appear in a moment, and when one can sense a metaphor coming, “there can be no question of imagination.” The drawer metaphor, which has been from the start “a crude polemical instrument,” one aimed against what Bergson called ““dry” rationalism,” ends up in the toolbox of Bergson’s own “dry” rationalism.

To further make his point, Bachelard quotes from Henri Bosco’s novel *Monsieur Carre-Benoit in the Country*, where the reader witnesses the drawer metaphor used as a key to “the psychology of an arrant fool, rather than that of a Kantian rationalist” (77). Carre-Benoit loves his sturdy oak filing cabinet and cannot pass it without admiring it for all it can do. It has a total of forty-eight drawers, which is “enough to hold an entire well-classified world of positive knowledge.” Carre-Benoit believes these drawers have a “magic power” as “the foundations of the human mind.” Created by a “meticulous mind,” with all possible future usages taken into account, these well-fitted cubes of drawers would not let in “an iota of haziness or shiftiness.”³ To Bergson, intelligence is made up like a filing cabinet. To Carre-Benoit, it is reversed and the filing cabinet itself comes to embody intelligence. In the presence of his cabinet, Carre-Benoit feels most assured, for here he had something reliable, something “that could be counted on. You

saw what you were looking at and you touched what you were touching.” The intelligence of Carre-Benoit’s cabinet, in other words, is suited best for the most positivistic knowledge. As Bachelard notes, the cabinet, together with its owner, successfully embodies a dull bureaucratic mind, or in one word, “stupidity.” One day, Bosco’s hero would open the drawers of this “august” cabinet and discover that his maid has been using it to store sundry groceries: rice, coffee, salt, mustard, peas and lentils (77-78). As Bachelard memorably sums it up: “His reasoning cabinet had become a larder” (78).

A mind-cabinet that can’t tolerate “haziness or shiftiness” will soon be filled with the most humdrum objects. Bachelard sees here a consequence of a “philosophy of having,” and suggests: “There are many erudite minds that lay in provisions. We shall see later, they say to themselves, whether or not we’ll use them.” Adorno makes the same point when he, in reference to the banality and monotony of sociologist Georg Simmel’s writings, says: “They show the recondite to be the true complement of mediocrity” (*MM* 80). To Simmel, thoughts should be entirely transparent, universally communicable and exactly reproducible: in other words, they should resemble everyday grocery items in the drawers of Carre-Benoit’s cabinet. Knowledge to Simmel is something that needs to be approximated “to the preexisting standard.” Any thought worth its name, however, is to be valued “by its distance from the continuity of the familiar,” and when thinking is subjected to such pressure for approximation, it will “unfailingly boil down to mere repetition” (81). Further, knowledge entirely free of “haziness or shiftiness” is not knowledge, because “knowledge comes to us through a

network of prejudices, opinions, innervations, self-corrections, presuppositions and exaggerations, in short through the dense, firmly-founded but by no means uniformly transparent medium of experience” (80).

Intolerance for “haziness or shiftiness” is intolerance for qualitative distinctions, and as such constitutes a defining characteristic of enlightenment reason. As to enlightenment reason’s de-qualification of nature, Adorno and Horkheimer write, “Nature, stripped of qualities, becomes the chaotic stuff of mere classification, and the all-powerful self becomes a mere having, an abstract identity” (*DE* 6). To the self thus ensured of its identity, a basis for possessive individualism, the varied affinities that exist between things will be “supplanted by the single relationship between the subject who confers meaning and the meaningless object, between rational significance and its accidental bearer” (7). This self, which learns about order “through the subjugation of the world,” will “soon equate truth in general with classifying thought, without whose fixed distinctions it cannot exist” (10). And classifying thought presupposes the principle of immanence, or “the explanation of every event as repetition, which enlightenment upholds against mythical imagination” (8). Hence in the “arid wisdom which acknowledges nothing new under the sun,” the wisdom in which real apprehension of the object becomes a “taboo,” language is eventually made into “tautology” (8, 10, 11).

When Aristotle in the *Poetics* declares the capacity for metaphor-making “a sign of genius,” explaining “since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars,” he was in effect laying out an epistemological premise of enlightenment reason (2:2335). And a more direct definition of metaphor, that it

“consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy,” presents it as enlightenment reason’s paradigmatic mode (2:2332). About metaphor’s reflecting an entire philosophical outlook, Jonathan Culler, one of the few modern critics who indeed proposed to be done with the term, makes a similar point, albeit in a different context: “One cannot study metaphor as a use of language in the philosophic text because metaphor implies a whole philosophic framework (of essence and accident, identity and difference) which prevents it from being a use of language in the text and makes it a condition of the language of the text” (220). Metaphor is not on the side of novelty but on that of “accustomed intelligibility” (225). By calling “something a metaphor, we invoke a traditional model of replacement which says that the reduction of the strange is easily accomplished, that we can replace what is said by what is meant, because we have discovered what property the former and the latter share” (226). Indeed it is an instance of the “principle of identification,” through which “non-identical individuals and performances become commensurable and identical” and “an obligation to become identical, to become total” is to be imposed “on the whole world” (*ND* 146).

Bachelard objects to metaphor for its affinities with enlightenment reason or, in his words, for its “intellectualism,” as opposed to the activism of “pure imagination” (*PS* xxxix). He sums up his discussion on Bergson’s drawer by noting that metaphor, which “thinks fast,” fails to “unite exterior realities with intimate reality” (78). In metaphor is occasioned enlightenment reason’s “self-contained, self-ratifying certainty” (Shawn and

Gregory 103).⁴ In the place of metaphor, what Bachelard proposes is a kind of knowledge that “really apprehends the object” (*DE* 10). Such knowledge comes from what he calls the “strange region of the superlative” (*PS* 89). It is a region that keeps out “positivity,” for “all positivity makes the superlative fall back upon the comparative” (89). To go there, “We must listen to poets.” Or, as Culler finally notes: “Literature’s power has been thought to lie in metaphor, but in fact it is precisely literature’s resistance to metaphor, resistance to replacement operations, which is the source of this power” (229).

Subject and Object

Notwithstanding the “false image” of Bergson’s drawer, there are genuine images of drawers, wardrobes, caskets or chests, all instances of creative imagination, that will let us “resume contact with the unfathomable store of daydreams of intimacy” (77-78). If Bergson’s drawer is a passive, powerless, pure “object,” genuine images of drawers, wardrobes, caskets or chests are “hybrid objects,” that are at once subjects and objects (78).

Bachelard first gives us images of a wardrobe or, as he suggests it is the French word itself that must be carefully pronounced here, *armoire*. One of the “grand words” of the French language, *armoire* is at once majestic and familiar, composed with beautiful and great volume of breath (*PE* 83). Bachelard alerts the reader to how the “a” sound of the first syllable opens the word and then the second syllable, with a mute “e”

at the end, closes it gently and slowly. There is a great difference between the drawer of Bergson's metaphor, which "thinks fast," and *armoire* the organ and model of our intimate life, with which "we are never in a hurry," since it is a word we endow with a poetic being.⁵ In the case of *armoire*, the word itself reminds us of an "entity of depth," or an "inner space" that is "also intimate space, space that is not open to just anybody" (*PS* 78). It is only natural that dreamers of words have always affectionately responded to the word.

Consider Oscar Milosz's line, "A wardrobe is filled with the mute tumult of memories." With it, the reader experiences the way memories come alive "crowding," silently, upon opening the door of a wardrobe, on whose shelf sheets of linen lie one on top of the other, each as the French say well—"lavendered/*lavandés*" (79). Opening the door of a wardrobe is tantamount to reviving "the history of the seasons" lavender introduced into the wardrobe. When Charles Péguy, who was a disciple of Bergson, wrote, "On the shelves of memory and in the temples of the wardrobe," he was in effect, contra Bergson, proposing that "memory is a wardrobe." Shelves of memory are analogous to the temples of the wardrobe because a wardrobe/*armoire* "is not an everyday piece of furniture" and "is not opened every day, and so, like a heart that confides in no one, the key is not on the door." A wardrobe with no keys on its door thus has the power to signal a promise that mixes with history but also transcends it, as Arthur Rimbaud shows in a stanza on "The Orphans' New Year's Gift" (80).⁶ Finally among the wardrobe images, André Breton's, with its "typical surrealist imperturbability," adds "a blessed impossibility to the riddle of the wardrobe" and thus

awakens a marvel of unreality: “The wardrobe is filled with linen / There are even moonbeams which I can unfold.”

Breton’s wardrobe recalls what Bachelard says about a house, citing a poet Georges Spyridaki, who wrote: “My house is diaphanous, but it is not of glass. . . . Its walls contract and expand as I desire. . . . I let the walls of my house blossom out in their own space, which is infinitely extensible” (51). What Bachelard sees in Spyridaki’s line is a house that transcends geometry so as to become “both cell and world.”

Contradictions of this sort arouse us from the “doldrums of concepts” and liberate us from “utilitarian geometrical notions” (53). Breton’s wardrobe is like Spyridaki’s house, in that it too is both cell and world. It is also like Rimbaud’s wardrobe, for here too, history is introduced and transcended. To cite Bachelard from elsewhere, Breton’s wardrobe takes the reader to “the frontier between history and legend” (*PR* 101). Inside a wardrobe from another season lie folded together sheets of linen and moonbeams (*PE* 85). They are linen made of moonbeams, if we remember how big, and how spreading out, was an old sheet when we unfolded it, or how white, white as the moonlight on the wintry meadow, the old tablecloth was (*PS* 81). The image of unfolding the sheets made of moonbeams is at “a point of exaggeration that no reasonable mind would care to attain,” and yet if “we dream a bit, Breton’s image seems perfectly natural” (80-81).

Among the instances of the psychology of small boxes Bachelard discusses, Rilke’s is particularly revealing about intimacy. In one of his correspondences, Rilke confesses to a certain “ineffable experience” (83). This experience “must remain quite remote,” or else it would respond only “to the most cautious handling.” Then he

imagines it to be inside a box, the kind most elaborately designed to attract, frustrate, and eventually reward a trespasser. The box will come with a top covered by an imposing array of “all sorts of bolts, clamps, bars and levers” – in addition, it will also have one of “those heavy, imposing seventeenth-century locks” (83-84). The look of the box is deceptive, for it is only a key, “a single, easily turned key,” that will pull “this entire apparatus of defense and deterrence from its most central point” (84). And Rilke writes, “But the key is not alone. You know too that the keyholes of such chests are concealed under a button or under a leather tongue which also only responds to some secret pressure.” Rilke’s images here “express the “Open, Sesame” formula” and the reader wonders “what secret pressure, what soft words, are needed to gain access to a spirit, to calm a Rilkean heart.” One may “write” a house, room, or a box, just as one may “read” them, and presenting an accurate geometrical description is not the only way to write them (83). For, as Rilke’s box reminds us, the depth it conceals is that of “the dreams of intimacy” (84).

Milosz’s, Rimbaud’s and Breton’s wardrobes and Rilke’s casket are “veritable organs of the secret psychological life” (78). Without these, “our intimate life would lack a model of intimacy.” They are “hybrid objects, subject objects,” which is to say, “Like us, through us and for us, they have a quality of intimacy.” It is for this reason that “we do not open a wardrobe without a slight start,” because it is an essential part of our intimate life and we tend to give it a friendship it deserves (81). In this view of the intermingling of the subject and object, Bachelard is at one with Adorno, among whose central philosophical concerns was a critique of the doctrine of the transcendental

subject by way of what he called “the primacy of the object.” The untruth of the separation of subject and object, Adorno declares in an essay titled “On Subject and Object,” “is manifested in their being mutually mediated, object by subject, and even more and differently, subject by object” (*CM* 246). The Kantian transcendental subject, whose forms of consciousness are supposed to be stable and immutable, is a mirror image of human beings’ reification historically necessitated by changes in society (249). It is predicated upon “abstract, rational relations” between subject and object and its model is exchange (248). It is announced to be independent so that it can make its claim to domination (246). Separation of subject and object, fixed without mediation in this manner, is in fact essential for enlightenment reason, which requires the kind of subject whose “awakening . . . is bought with the recognition of power as the principle of all relationships” (*DE* 5). In truth, however, subject and object stand in a relation of mediation, or reciprocal permeation, and “everything that is in the subject can be attributed to the object” (*ND* 139, 256).

The question of subject and object relation was for Adorno a question of theory and praxis, for it is when the dichotomy of subject and object was philosophically ratified that the relation between theory and praxis became one of tension (*CM* 259). When Goethe in *Faust* makes Mephistopheles tell the student, “All theory is gray,” he in effect captured the historical abyss forced open between subject and object (260). Theory’s grayness is a response on the part of the subject whose world has been de-qualified, and it has been de-qualified because the subject has been confined within itself, cleaved from its Other by an abyss and thereby rendered incapable of action.

Viewed in this manner, questions of the relations between subject and object, and theory and practice, become also questions about “the loss of the experience,” which are caused by “the rationality of the eternally same.” In *How to Read a Poem*, Eagleton has a section titled “The Death of Experience,” right before the one on the “Imagination,” in which he seems intent to dismiss the crisis of experience as something of a corporate invention. “It is sobering to reflect how many deprived souls in the past visited the Grand Canyon without knowing that they were having the Grand Canyon Experience,” he mock-laments, pointing to tour packages that stress the special “experience” they come packed with (18). He cites the names of Heidegger and Benjamin among others as those thinkers who issued a warning about the withering of experience in modernity, but he takes their ideas as little more than misguided naïveté – “Astonishingly, what is in peril on our planet is not only the environment, the victims of disease and political oppression, and those rash enough to resist corporate power, but experience itself,” he says for instance – and these thinkers begin to seem somehow to have been in cahoots with advanced capitalism in its mystification of objective reality for more profits (17).

Adorno views the withering of experience as having to do with abolition of thinking, and that of life itself, in modernity. Not what Eagleton calls, with a mildly feigned disbelief, an emptying out of our subjectivity – “[in its critics’ views, modernity] has delved into the recesses of our very subjectivity, and emptied us out like so many rich plums ripe for scooping” – but a near total “departmentalization of mind,” or modeling it in advance to suit the needs of society, so that life itself becomes “an appendage of the process of material production” should be scrutinized if we wish to

know what experience, that is “life in its immediacy,” is like (*How to Read a Poem* 18, *MM* 21, 197, 15). The crisis of experience, the dichotomy of subject and object, and the separation of theory and praxis are all means and consequences of domination, in which subsumptive reason – “the belly turned mind,” Adorno says, referring to the “system” aspect of enlightenment reason – plays an essential part (*ND* 23). His dictum of “the primacy of object,” the imperative “to abide with minutiae,” to philosophize not about concrete things but out of them, is not meant just as a corrective for the dichotomous relation of subject and object but as an axiom that will guide us in recovering experience and critiquing instrumental reason (*ND* 33).

Experience, its loss or recovery are not among Bachelard’s stated concerns. Nor is the critique of instrumental reason. Implicitly, however, they are at the heart of the whole of his literary critical writings. Not the least intriguing in this regard are his concluding remarks for the “Drawers, Chests and Wardrobes” chapter. Following up on Rilke’s chest, whose inside was imagined by the poet as a remotest recess in which to hide his secrets, Bachelard presents the reader with the treasure casket from Edgar Allan Poe’s story, “The Gold Bug.” When the casket is opened, the three characters of the story find jewels of inestimable value. Inventoried not by a lawyer but by a poet, they are not “ordinary” jewels (86). As Bachelard quotes a critic Jean-Pierre Richard, who analyzed the images of jewelry in the Poe story, to speak for him, the treasure is charged with “unknown and possible elements,” and “it becomes again an imaginary object, generating hypotheses and dreams,” then “it deepens and escapes from itself toward an infinite number of other treasures.” The inside of the casket deepens into what may be

called an intimate infinity, or as Richard comments, “We shall never reach the bottom of the casket.” That the casket is *bottomless* in the reader’s imagination helps the story to retain its dreamy quality even when it reaches its conclusion, “a conclusion that is as cold as a police record.” Poe’s casket, in other words, does not subjugate its object to a utilitarian order, as it is the case with Bergson’s drawer and Carre-Benoit’s cabinet-turned-larder. On the order of Rilke’s chest, Poe’s casket is one that has to be actively imagined, whereas quick thinking would suffice for Bergson’s drawer and Carre-Benoit’s larder. To imagine is to sharpen all our senses, for it is to contemplate with keen attention the “minutiae” of the object (87). To imagine, therefore, is a way to get at the intimate intersection of the human and the material, a place of “the hidden,” or the said “strange region of the superlative,” a region “that has hardly been touched by psychology” (89). The domain of the superlative is the domain of the imagination, and “it is always more enriching to imagine than to experience” (88).

To imagine is more enriching than to experience because imagination is a force that awakens. There is a “dialectic of imaginary energies” that animates “the interiority of matter,” which, also as a “dialectic of invitation and exclusion,” calls for the subject’s active participation in working the matter, often against it (*EW* 13). For an illustration of this dialectic, Bachelard gives a kneader’s example among others. In Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick*, a text “dedicated to the glory of kneading,” there is an interchapter titled “A Squeeze of the Hand,” that tells the reader the exquisite joy of kneading spermaceti. Deeply struck with the matter, when he and other sailors had to squeeze it into thinner fluid, Ishmael exclaims, “A sweet and unctuous duty! Such a clearer! Such a sweetener!

Such a softener! Such a delicious mollifier!” (61). And he continues, “After having my hands in it for only a few minutes my fingers felt like eels, and began, as it were, to serpentine and spiralize.” In the act of kneading, which occasions what Bachelard calls “the cogito of the kneader,” Ishmael’s fingers “stretch in the softness of this perfect matter,” and they “become fingers – consciousness of fingers, the dream of fingers, infinite and free.” The “certitude of equilibrium between hand and matter” thus achieved is an example also of a “fullest equilibrium” achieved in “the philosophic dualism of subject and object” (61, 18). It is an “energetic dualism,” and “Hand and Matter must become one in order to form the point of intersection for this energetic dualism, an active dualism quite different from the classic dualism of object and subject, in which both are sapped by contemplation, the one in its inertia, the other in its idleness” (19). In his essay “On Subject and Object,” Adorno speaks of a “peace” to be achieved in the relationship of subject and object (247). The peace is not one of stasis, since it will be a dynamic one of “the state of differentiation without domination, with the differentiated participating in each other.” Adorno’s reformulation of subject and object relation as seen in this essay accords with the very definition of imagination Bachelard gives in *La Terre et les Rêveries du Repos*, a companion and a sequel to *La Terre et les Rêveries de la Volonté*, translated as *Earth and Reveries of Will*. In *Will*, Bachelard’s major topic was images of ‘will,’ the will to work terrestrial matter. In its sequel, his theme is, here too apropos the title, repose. To the will to work will be attributed what Bachelard calls the “psychology of “against/*contre*”” and the “process of extroversion” (R 3, 2). It is here that the subject is well awake “for an oppositional activity, expecting and predicting

resistance from the matter” (2). Images of repose, on the other hand, are oriented toward the psychology of “inside/*dans*” and the “process of introversion” (3). Here the subject responds to the invitation, from the inside of the matter, to submerge all the way into its infinitesimal (3, 5). These two poles, however, are not strictly separated but, rather, exist in an “ambivalent synthesis,” in which a unity is achieved dialectically between the “against/*contre*” and the “inside/*dans*,” and an “undeniable solidarity” is demonstrated between the processes of extroversion and introversion (3). As the first chapters of *Will* demonstrate, the will to work matter is often an impassioned desire to delve into it and hollow it out. In other words, human forces imagined, even when they are outer directed, are imagined as coming from within a kernel of intimacy. Extroversion, introversion, or intimacy. These are all qualities of human psychology. To possible objections thus to be raised, that they should be defined and discussed strictly in terms of what constitutes the human subject, Bachelard responds by giving a definition of imagination. “Imagination,” he says, “is nothing other than the subject transported inside the things.” In other words, material images bear the marks of the human subject and it is through the study of imagination that a most certain diagnosis of human temperament is to be made.

Mimesis and Childhood

Defined as such, Bachelard’s doctrine of imagination again brings to mind that of Adorno’s on the primacy of the object. An inheritance of what Hegel called the freedom to the object, or the subject’s act of self-relinquishment by way of spiritual experience in

its relation to the object, the primacy of the object leads to one of the most productive ideas in Adorno's thought, that of mimesis, or "the nonconceptual affinity of the subjectively produced with the unposited other" (AT 17, 54). In *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno draws on Hegel's freedom to the object to refute the subjective reduction in idealistic epistemology. Hegel's freedom to the object is what philosophy has lost, beguiled by the concept "freedom," that is, the freedom of the subject in its "sense-determining autonomy" (28). Also lost in the process is an ability to comprehend the particular, an eye capable of interpreting a phenomenon, for idealistic epistemology eliminates any trace of heterogeneity in the existent (28, 26). Another name Adorno gives to such an eye is "discrimination." A discriminating person is one who responds to the "nuance," who has never renounced the "ideal" of cognition and who therefore "can distinguish even the infinitesimal, that which escapes the concept" (44-45). When the subject's reactions to the qualitative determinations of the object are proscribed as being merely subjective, cognition soon deteriorates into tautology (44, 184). By contrast, when they are permitted and encouraged, that is, when discrimination as "the experience of the object turned into a form of subjective reaction" is active, there will be a "haven for the mimetic element of knowledge, for the element of elective affinity between the knower and the known" (45). In *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno's primacy of the object thesis is tuned most of all to rescuing "the indelible mimetic element in all cognition and all human practice" (150).

Throughout Adorno's corpus, redemption of mimesis is an important task and tends not to get restricted to any one narrowly defined context, be it philosophical,

aesthetic, psychological, or anthropological. What Adorno calls “discrimination” in *Negative Dialectics* has much in common with Bachelard’s imagination, in regard to which mimesis becomes as much an aesthetic concept as it is an epistemological one. Likewise, in *Aesthetic Theory*, mimesis certainly retains its more strictly aesthetic sense, as a particular kind of self-relinquishing comportment artworks induce in the subject, but it at the same time freely extends to other dimensions. Thus in discussing mimesis for “Theories on the Origin of Art,” Adorno turns his attention to “art’s rationality.”

Speaking against the attempts to pin down, and to construct theories on, the origin of art, thereby to integrate art into a unified whole, Adorno stresses that the haze of prehistory is due not just to its distance but also to “something of the indeterminate, of what is inadequate to the concept,” that it guards against the threat of integration (326). With this in mind, the “naturalism” of the earliest surviving art, that of cave paintings, which has been affirmed always so readily, may very well be reconsidered. To Adorno, these paintings are portrayals not of their objects per se but of their movements, “as if they already aspired to what Valéry ultimately demanded: the painstaking imitation of the indeterminate, of what has not been nailed down.” If this indeed is the case, then “the impulse of these paintings was not naturalistic imitation but, rather, from the beginning a protest against reification” (326-27).

Hence the question of art’s ratio. Little is known about art before the Paleolithic period, but it is for sure it did not begin with “works,” be they of magical or aesthetic nature (329). Rather, one can surmise from the cave paintings that first attempts at images were made out of “a mimetic comportment – the assimilation of the self to its

other.” Since “aesthetic comportment contains what has been belligerently excised from civilization and repressed, as well as the human suffering under the loss, a suffering already expressed in the earliest forms of mimesis,” artistic rationality is one that “denounces the particular essence of a ratio that pursues means rather than ends,” and therefore will be marked as “irrational according to the criteria of dominant rationality” (330). The eye capable of discrimination, or the subject capable of aesthetic comportment, perceives more in a thing than it is, and it does so solely for what it is, because what it does is to free an objectivity from the categorial structure (*ND* 28, *AT* 330). To respond to the qualitative determinations of the object this way is to participate in “the sublimation of the mimetic comportment,” without which thought becomes tautology (*ND* 44, *AT* 331). The separation of thought and mimesis in instrumental reason, a fatal separation but one that “came about historically and is revocable,” should be undone, for “Ratio without mimesis is self-negating.” Mimesis, or artistic rationality, therefore presents itself “as a counterweight to the modern dominance of instrumental reason” (Zuidervaart 10).

Adorno’s mimesis is something akin to what’s often tritely called “life’s magic.” In a commentary on the 19th century German writer Hebbel’s diary entry, in which Hebbel discusses why “life’s magic,” an essential and natural part of a child’s life, is invariably taken away in later years, Adorno annotates and revises Hebbel’s view as to the way children experience the world differently from adults (*MM* 227-8). Children are, as Hebbel says, prone to “illusions of ‘captivating variety’,” so that when they see “the tightrope-walkers singing, the pipers playing, the girls fetching water, the coachmen

driving,” they think it all happens for the joy of doing these activities (228, 227). Their perception has not yet been marred by “equivalent form,” and so they see the “quality” of the things as their “essence” (227). To a greater extent, however, they are “aware, in their spontaneous perception, of the contradiction between phenomenon and fungibility that the resigned adult no longer sees, and they shun it” (228). In other words, children in their childlike spontaneity apprehend the threat of “exchange value,” that which commandeers all the activities of singing, pipe-playing, fetching water or coach-driving as bare “means” for earning a living, by reducing them “to interchangeable, abstract labor-time,” and strike against it by siding with “use value.” “Play is their defense,” and with the toys they play, they practice rescuing what’s benign to people and defies exchange value, which deforms human beings and things alike. The little trucks that go nowhere, with their mini barrels empty, are still the ones that “remain true to their destiny,” for they obstinately refuse to be a part of “abstraction” that crushes the destiny (227). At play, children practice defending their toys from “appropriation,” so as to keep them “colorful and useful at once,” i.e. illuminated by the light of their self-determination (227-28). For the unreality of play intimates to children about reality that is not yet real, play for them becomes an unconscious rehearsal for the right life (228).

These words on children’s psychic life must not be taken lightly, as somehow peripheral or incidental to Adorno’s thought, which has so often been charged with monolithic elitism, mandarin pessimism and such, for as Jacques Derrida rightly points out in his Adorno prize acceptance address, childhood was one of Adorno’s “insistent themes” (171). Reflecting on the dilemma of the intellectual in contemporary society, in

which on the one hand getting informed about the material reality risks becoming a part of what one intends to overcome, and on the other, refusing to take part in that reality leads one to renounce the very condition for his intellect, Adorno concludes: “Whatever the intellectual does, is wrong. He experiences drastically and vitally the ignominious choice that late capitalism secretly presents to all its dependents: to become one more grown-up, or to remain a child” (*MM* 132-3). Adorno’s commentary on Hebbel’s diary entry may be read as a Marxist reiteration of Nietzsche’s epigram from *Beyond Good and Evil* – “A man’s maturity – consists in having found again the seriousness one had as a child, at play” (83) – and with this in mind, the alternative of becoming just another adult or remaining a child becomes less a two-way defeat than a false “choice,” one imposed without the other from without. In other words, Adorno’s dilemma is closer to an imperative than an alternative: by all means, remain a child. In a child a longing for a “transformed existence” is still unimpaired, with which what Bachelard calls “[dreaming] at the frontier between history and legend” comes natural (*MM* 177, *PR* 101). When a family guest comes to visit, a child’s heart fills with wild expectation, not for the presents she will bring, but for the different law that will preside and transform life during her stay. The perfume she puts on a dresser while the child watches her unpacking will enchant him with “a scent that resembles memory even though he breathes it for the first time” (*MM* 177). Since the guest takes the child seriously and answers every question the best way she can, the child will feel admitted to the so far forbidden world of mystery, that of the adults (177-78). A drastic change in the rules will allow the child to miss school or not to go to bed until 11 o’clock, with which a

Thursday will seem like a day at a festival, whose euphoric noise seems to be made by all humanity (178). To a child, a guest's appearance is a promise of a world far away from family, which will banish the curse placed on the happiness of what is closest to the child by wedding it to the most far away. Only those who do not forget the waiting they did for this promise in childhood would later know how to wait for a better life.

As Adorno suggests in the last chapter of *Negative Dialectics*, "Meditations on Metaphysics," a child is a better metaphysician than an adult. And here it is because children are closer, for they haven't yet internalized the taboo, to the sheer physicality of life. They sense what civilized adults don't, in their "fascination that issues from the flayer's zone, from carcasses, from the repulsively sweet odor of putrefaction, and from the opprobrious terms used for that zone" (366). They hear a whisper that civilization represses and that says, "this is what matters." The sense of smell is the locus where the mimetic impulse is most indomitable, for smelling is stimulated "without objectifying," and thus "reveals most sensuously the urge to lose oneself in identification with the Other" (*DE* 151). For that reason, even though "smell is regarded as a disgrace, a sign of the lower social orders, lesser races, and baser animals," even in adults, "the old nostalgia for what is lower lives on, the longing for immediate union with surrounding nature, with earth and slime." Mimesis, not least acts of smelling, is proscribed by civilization whose means, ranging "from the religious ban on graven images through the social ostracizing of actors and gypsies to the education which "cures" children of childishness," form "the condition of civilization" (148). Indeed, education, social or

individual, “reinforces the objectifying behavior required by work and prevents people from submerging themselves once more in the ebb and flow of surrounding nature.”

In a work that considers the “triple liaison between imagination, memory and poetry,” in order to understand what he calls “that human phenomenon which is a solitary childhood, a cosmic childhood,” Bachelard is in assent with Adorno on education that “cures” children of childishness (*PR* 105). Childhood to Bachelard does not just refer to a period in one’s life, but is developed into a critical concept, or to put it in Adornian terms, a part of the ‘constellation’ of concepts, in which other important concepts such as imagination, memory and poetry together create and exist in a “liaison.” And when he declares “Within us, still within us, always within us, childhood is a state of mind,” in which we respond to the “qualities of being,” or “nuances of ontology,” often revealed to us by poets, Bachelard’s childhood comes very close to Adorno’s mimesis (130, 152). Much in the same way as, to Adorno, growing up in civilization means to outgrow mimetic behaviors, to Bachelard, a child’s entry into the “age of reason” comes at the expense of forgoing the right to imagine, i.e. of repressing childhood (107). Education leads a child to become “a premature man,” and by being much too well educated, the child will learn to renounce the “intuition of the world,” with which he would often become “the first inhabitant of the world” – the “intuition of the world” as an opening up of a “primitive world,” or what Bachelard calls a special “*Weltanschauung*,” which is “a childhood which dares not speak its name” (102-103).

To Bachelard too, it is the sense of smell that enables one to have an “immediate union with surrounding nature,” or as he put it: “Odors! The first evidence of our fusion

with the world” (136). The perfume from a lady visitor would send the child to the hazy “frontier between history and legend,” the frontier between memory and desire, and yet Adorno’s child is also susceptible to smells of “dung hill” and “pig sty” (*ND* 366). These are ones that, if the child recalls them later, will bring the child closer to absolute knowledge than reading Hegel would. By contrast, Bachelard gives the reader only the “beloved” odors from “the seasons of childhood,” ones that are at “the center of an intimacy” (136). There is, for example, a smell of a hooded sweater a child spends a whole autumn wearing (“... the odor of a poor, damp hood / Through you Autumn”), which, recalled later, will bring back the sense of “immediate union with surrounding nature” (“Who then does not remember / —o fraternity / of a tree, of a house, or of a childhood”) (137).⁷ Or as, since “the fragrance of springtime” is often concentrated in the poplar bud, Bachelard exhorts: “Ah! Young dreamers, crush the sticky poplar bud between your fingers, taste that unctuous, bitter dough and you will have enough memories to last all your life” (138). Such is why “in its first expansion, the odor is a root of the world, a truth of childhood,” and to go even further, why “A whole vanished universe is preserved by an odor” (138-39). In her best known line, Lucie Delarue-Mardrus declared: “The odor of my country was an apple” (139). Also to her credit is a line often recited without her name: “And who then was ever cured of his childhood?”. Her variation on the latter – “Ah! I shall never be cured of my country” – shares in the same “state of mind” as the one in the line written by the Lithuanian poet Adam Mickiewicz while he was in exile in Paris: “When I write, I seem to be in Lithuania” (139, 134).

Childhood as a “state of mind” is another name for “reverie.” Reverie, or “a mnemonics of the imagination,” gives birth to a new *cogito*, in which one is in a state of “Admiration in order to receive the qualities of what is perceived” (112, 119). In other words, one becomes “the pure and simple subject of the verb “to marvel”” (127). In line with Adorno, to whom perceiving nuances is the ideal of discrimination, Bachelard tells the reader that reverie brings us to witness “nuances of ontology,” and that “With the nuance, [one] knows the *cogito* being born” (152-53). The *cogito* in reverie knows “original peace,” that is, it “is not divided into the dialectic of subject and object” (159, 158). Reverie as “original peace” remarkably resembles Adorno’s mimesis. It would indeed be hard to find a better illustration of mimesis, and its essential role in life, than the quote Bachelard makes from Julien Green, in order to comment on how ‘reveries’ lead one’s life. Green wrote: “It is a bizarre disposition of my mind . . . to believe a thing only if I have dreamed it. By believing, I do not mean simply possessing a certainty, but retaining it within oneself in such a way that the being finds itself modified because of it” (160). To Green, self-certainty comes after self-relinquishing toward the Other. The sonnet to Orpheus Bachelard quotes from Rilke may also be read as a commentary on reverie as mimesis.

See the flowers, the faithful of the earth
 He who would carry them away into the
 intimacy of sleep and would sleep
 deeply with things – : O how light he would return
 different in the face of a different day, from

the common depth. (157)

It is because one emerges changed from “the common depth” formed with “things,” if one dreams and sleeps with them deeply, that Bachelard responds to Edmond Vandercammen’s line, “I spy a flower, adorable leisure,” by saying that to read it is to experience a great “relaxation of being” and that “The flower being born in poetic reverie, then, is the very being of the dreamer, his flowering being” (154).

Thus it is in reverie, “In front of the flower or fruit,” that “the poet returns us to the birth of a happiness” (157). In another sonnet to Orpheus, Rilke invites the reader to a feast over an apple.

Dare to speak what you call apple.

That softness which first condenses

In order, with a softness set up in the taste,

to reach clarity, alertness, transparency,

to become a thing of this place which means

both the sun and the earth – (155)

An apple’s softness, the softness “set up in the taste,” is one that “concentrates a softness of the world” (156). If a single apple “joins the double sign of the sunny sky and the patient earth,” what bounties must it have? In still another sonnet to Orpheus, Rilke’s motto for life is to “Dance the orange.”

Dance the orange. Who can forget it,

drowning in itself, how it struggles through

against its own sweetness. You have possessed it.

Deliciously it has converted to you.

Dance the orange. The sunnier landscape –

fling it from you, allow it to shine

in the breeze of its homeland! Aglow, peel away

scent after scent. Create your own kinship

with the supple, gently reluctant rind

and the juice that fills it with succulent joy. (*Duino Elegies* and *The*

Sonnets to Orpheus 111)

Rilke's invitation to his reader in these sonnets is more direct, and greater in scale, than Vandercammen's. Rilke's apple and orange, "inexhaustible" and extravagant fruits are they, are "World-Fruits," which invite the reader "to taste the world" (*Duino Elegies* and *The Sonnets to Orpheus* 107, PR 157). Accepting the invitation from these "World-Fruits," the dreamer "bathes in the happiness of dreaming the world, bathes in the well-being of a happy world" (157).

One way to better understand such exuberant celebration of the dreamer's happiness is to read it as a commentary on what Adorno calls "happiness without power" (*DE* 141). Liberalism promises happiness by ensuring human rights to all. Masses, however, perceive the lie in the promise because they are vaguely aware that, universal human rights and, with it, universal happiness cannot be realized as long as classes, in

other words a system of domination, exist. This awareness makes them suspicious and resentful of the thought of happiness, if only as a possibility, and they have to suppress it fiercely if it seems to have its chance. Any hint of happiness close to realization in the midst of “systematic deprivation” incites “the destructive fury of the civilized, who can never fully complete the painful process of civilization.” To control nature is one of civilization’s tasks, and those who carry it out compulsively are to be tormented by the images of “powerless happiness” nature will reflect back to them. They find even “relaxation unbearable because they do not know fulfillment,” and they are tormented by the idea of happiness without power “because it alone would be happiness” (140-41).

To Adorno, Odysseus “the prototype of the bourgeois individual,” whose guiding principle is of a piece with self-preserving reason, cannot tolerate bliss, “the bliss “near the rim of the world”” (35, 49). The quote “near the rim of the world” comes from Jacob Burckhardt’s *History of Greek Culture*, from the passages where he speaks of a “more ideal and blissful life” in *Odyssey* where “one breathes pure sea air free of all dust and dirt” (180-81). Such is indeed one of the few images or “positive blueprints” of utopian fulfillment Adorno gives the reader (*MM* 156). Speaking against commonplace visions of utopia, whose goal is full realization of societal and human potential, he suggests that an emancipated society may have little to do with increased material production and its human counterparts. He says: “Perhaps the true society will grow tired of development and, out of freedom, leave possibilities unused, instead of storming under a confused compulsion to the conquest of strange stars.” In such a society, enjoyment may at last have nothing to do with planning, process, act, subjugation (157). Perhaps a true

satisfaction would be that of “*Rien faire comme une bête*, lying on water and looking peacefully at the sky, ‘being, nothing else, without any further definition and fulfillment’.”

This happiness on water again brings Adorno and Bachelard together. In Novalis’s works, Bachelard tells us, there is knowledge about the special “lightness acquired in water,” like “a dream-knowledge, that knowledge, as we shall see, which opens up an infinity for him” (*WD* 130). Lamartine, Balzac, and Michelet, on the other hand, were the ones attracted particularly to the rocking sensation in a drifting bark. Lamartine called it “one of the most mysterious sensual pleasures in nature” (131). Bachelard asks: “During long, calm, carefree hours, lengthy hours when, lying in the bottom of a lone bark, we contemplate the sky, to what memory do you give us over?”. To Michelet, rocking on water was the best way to lure the “habit that relaxes our attention,” that is, the habit of reverie: “Deep is the reverie and deeper and deeper . . . an ocean of dreams on the smooth ocean of water.” The line from Balzac Bachelard asks us to contemplate is about water’s invitation on an imagined journey: “The river was like a path along which we flew” (132). All these reveries and dreams where water rocks us and makes us lighter impress us with the “extraordinary gentleness” of the matter (131). With this gentleness, “They give happiness a taste for infinity” (131-32). And with the special carrying water does, “It is near water and on water that we learn to sail on clouds, to swim in the sky” (132).

In their “Preface” to the 1944 and 1947 editions of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer say something that the casual eye may find curious. In regard to

their famous thesis that enlightenment has destroyed itself by relapsing into mythology, they say they have shown its cause to be “not so much in the nationalist, pagan, or other modern mythologies concocted specifically to cause such a relapse as in the fear of truth which petrifies enlightenment itself” (xvi). Fear of truth? All the “triumphant calamity” that radiates the enlightened world from fear of truth? (1) Then read (read again) with this odd phrase in mind, it dawns on the reader that questions of truth and fear of truth are raised on every page of the book, including the very first, from the “Preface to the New Edition (1969),” where the authors call their theory “a theory which attributes a temporal core to truth” (xi). In a chapter on anti-Semitism as “a well-rehearsed pattern, indeed a ritual of civilization,” the authors assert that “the pogroms are the true ritual murders” (140). Racist thinking, and in its extreme evolution pogroms, “demonstrate the impotence of what might have restrained them – reflection, meaning, ultimately truth.” And truth, impotent as it may be, is to be apprehended when imagination is present: “Because imagination is involved in truth, it can always appear to this [racist paranoiac’s] damaged imagination that truth is fantastic and its illusion the truth” (160). To Adorno, imagination is all but synonymous with mimesis, and mimesis-cum-imagination is damaged when the “intermeshing” between the subject and object is broken (156). Here he is making essentially the same point as when he says in *Aesthetic Theory*: “Ratio without mimesis is self-negating.” Or, reason without imagination is reason’s self-negation. Abolition of thinking, dissolution of the subject, decay of happiness and withering of experience – all these themes that were important to Adorno may actively be thought again, especially from their relation to the question of the

imagination. As Adorno himself notes: “contemporary loss of experience may largely coincide with the bitter repression of mimesis” (331). Mimesis as an ability to “shudder,” shudder of the subjectivity stirring “without yet being subjectivity [in] the act of being touched by the other” – such a relation between the subject and object will join “eros and knowledge.”

CHAPTER III

“WHAT A LARK! WHAT A PLUNGE!”: DUALISMS’ COLLAPSE IN *MRS.*

DALLOWAY

Remind yourself of “the sense of reading on quicksand, the fear of speaking uncertainty, the resistance to uncovering bafflement” that you had as “virginal readers” of Woolf (Friedman 101-02). In these words, offered as something of a memento to teachers of Woolf’s texts, are captured the peculiar difficulty many readers would remember from their initial encounter with Woolf. Another critic has the following words to say about the difficulty of reading – and writing about – Woolf’s texts: “*Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* [are] fluid, kaleidoscopic, judgment-shy, restless, gesturing, hungry, dazzling books that stay with us, disclose only some of their secrets, make the entire project of criticism into something embarrassingly artificial and rigid. How do you package flowing water? Streaming light? The actual pulse of life?” (Weinstein 197). Here too, Woolf readers would readily agree. But what is the nature of this difficulty that requires these unusual words for description? When, in 1922, her short story “Mrs. Dalloway in Bond Street” grew into a book, Woolf wrote in her diary: “I adumbrate here a study of insanity & suicide: the world seen by the sane & the insane side by side” (*D* 2:207). Early the same year, sensing she might have a bout of breakdown soon, she wrote in a letter to E. M. Forster: “Every one is reading Proust. I sit silent and hear their reports. It seems to be a tremendous experience, but I’m shivering

on the brink, and waiting to be submerged with a horrid sort of notion that I shall go down and down and down and perhaps never come up again” (*L* 2:499). To Woolf, bouts of depression or breakdown were experienced as going down or under, as the “dive underground” or under water, and if they were particularly severe, as being “submerged,” i.e. buried under water (*L* 2:400). In a letter to Janet Case, her former Greek teacher, she wrote: “there’s the whole question . . . of the things one doesn’t say; what effect does that have? and how far do our feelings take their colour from the dive underground? I mean, what is the reality of any feeling?” Insanity – and in turn, sanity as well – to Woolf are aspects of human existence that can be defined in terms of motion and texture, that is, experiences of the senses. They are part of “a vast tumult of life” (*L* 2:82).

Virginia Woolf’s language, which itself “brush[es] shoulders with the language of the mad” is the subject of this chapter (Rancière 59). Jacques Rancière, in his recent work on “the politics of aesthetics,” considers politics as regards “the perceptual coordinates of the community” and aesthetic acts as “configurations of experience that create new modes of sense perception and induce novel forms of political subjectivity” (3, 9). Woolf’s language of the mad, in Rancière’s view, better suits us when we think and write democratic history than do, say, Émile Zola’s overtly social or political writings, for, by contracting or distending temporalities or by situating and examining experiences at a minute level, it “establishes a grid that makes it possible to think through the forms of political dissensuality more effectively than the ‘social epic’s’ various forms” (65). In this chapter, I show that “the language of the mad” of *Mrs.*

Dalloway has to do with its way of presenting human beings amidst “tides of sensation,” in “contact” with each other and with the world (W 87). Reading *Mrs. Dalloway*, the peculiar challenge of which has been noted by critic after critic, is to experience, as Jinny in *The Waves* likes to call it, ‘breaking into a hoard of life,’⁸ and in the process undergo a series of collapses of dualisms. How this indirect critique of what may be summed up as “philosophical modernity” becomes a social critique will be discussed at the end of the chapter. What needs to be considered first is a direct precursor to the novel as regards its preoccupation with the primacy of the sensual.

At the Threshold of Modernism

Oscar Wilde’s only novel problematizes both life and art, primarily by way of the tactile sense. Dorian Gray’s portrait in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* stands in between life and art, unceasingly letting one into the other and merging the two into a changing surface. Only two people see the change and neither of them is absolutely certain of it. After he discovers the mystery of the painting the night he was cruel to Sybil Vane, Dorian Gray watches it “with no small wonder” and “with a feeling of almost scientific interest,” but “That such a change should have taken place was incredible to him” (80). He raises many questions he cannot answer. First: “Was there some subtle affinity between the chemical atoms, that shaped themselves into form and colour on the canvas, and the soul that was within him? Could it be that what that soul thought, they realized? – that what it dreamed, they made true? Or was there some other, more terrible reason?”

(80-81). Then a few hours later: “Had it indeed been prayer that had produced the substitution? Might there not be some curious scientific reason for it all? If thought could exercise its influence upon a living organism, might not thought exercise an influence upon dead and inorganic things? . . . might not things external to ourselves vibrate in unison with our moods and passions, atom calling to atom in secret love or strange affinity?” (89). When Basil sees it the night of his death, he cries an “exclamation of horror” and, while recognizing the brushwork and the frame as his own creation, looks for his name, which is there in the left corner as he had written it (130). Part of him still refuses to be convinced – “It was some foul parody, some infamous, ignoble satire. He had never done that” – and attempts to give an explanation: “No! the thing is impossible. The room is damp. Mildew has got into the canvas. The paints I used had some wretched mineral in them. I tell you the thing is impossible” (130-31).

That there exists “sympathy” between Dorian Gray and his portrait is certainly absurd and it is only natural for Dorian and Basil to resist such an idea (89). Adding to the mystery that such sympathy does exist is that both Dorian Gray and Basil, in spite of their resistance and at the same time powerful attraction to the absurd idea, do not try one obvious way to ascertain it, namely to *touch* the canvas. When Dorian decides to hide it with a purple drape that was perhaps used as a pall in the past, he has the following thoughts: “Now it was to hide something that had a corruption of its own, worse than the corruption of death itself. . . . What the worm was to the corpse, his sins would be to the painted image on the canvas” (98-99). The meaning gets more literal when Basil has a similar impression. “He held the light up again to the canvas, and

examined it. The surface seemed to be quite undisturbed, and as he had left it. It was from within, apparently, that the foulness and horror had come. Through some strange quickening of inner life the leprosy of sin were slowly eating the thing away. The rotting of a corpse in a watery grave was not so fearful” (131-32). There is a suggestion here that the canvas is now not just a surface (as skin) but has a volume (as flesh), and the decomposition happening to the painting is three-dimensional. In either occasion, both Dorian and Basil examine the painting only by sight, although there are hints of temptation to touch it.⁹

Until Basil sees it, in spite of his strong impressions, it is still possible that the “corruption” happening in the painting pertains solely Dorian’s soul, and is visible only in a spiritual sense, for “The surface seemed to be quite undisturbed, and as he had left it” (131). But later, after Alan Campbell destroys Basil’s body, Dorian will see blood on one of his hands in the painting: “What was that loathsome red dew that gleamed, wet and glistening, on one of the hands, as though the canvas had sweated blood?” (145). On his own fatal day, he to his horror discovers that the portrait has shed more blood:

The thing was still loathsome – more loathsome, if possible, than before – and the scarlet dew that spotted the hand seemed brighter, and more like blood newly spilt . . . why was the red stain larger than it had been? It seemed to have crept like a horrible disease over the wrinkled fingers. There was blood on the painted feet, as though the thing had dripped – blood even on the hand that had not held the knife. (182)

In all these occasions, and particularly the latter ones, Dorian's portrait appeals to touch as much as to sight, if not more so. It *begs* to be touched, if for no other reason than to prove that, all the repellent but fascinating progression of decay notwithstanding, it's really only a painted canvas. Or, as Michel Serres says of the impressionist painter Pierre Bonnard's nudes, Dorian's portrait "does not turn the skin into a vulgar object to be seen, but rather into the feeling subject, a subject always active beneath the surface" (30). According to Serres in his essay on the mysteries of the tactile sense, what we see in Bonnard's paintings is that the eye, being "distant, lazy, passive," "loses its pre-eminence in the very area in which it is dominant, painting" (35, 37). For they showcase that "At the limits of its endeavour, impressionism attains its true original meaning, contact" and that there can be "No impressionism without an impressing force, without the pressure of touch" (37, 35). Contact is the "experience of sensation," for which Bonnard the painter "throws himself naked into the garden swimming pool, bathes himself in the world" (36). Not just Bonnard's but paintings of the nude for centuries "are not aimed at voyeurs, but reveal what belongs to the realm of the senses." In Serres's view, contact is the only and true source of love or knowledge: "No-one who has refused contact – who has never kneaded or struggled – has ever loved or known" (35). Hence if you might one day want to paint or think, he advises, "throw yourself into the ocean of the world" (36).

Lord Henry in *Dorian Gray* seems to speak from such a view himself when, toward the end of the novel, he tells Dorian:

I wonder what the rest of your life will be. Don't spoil it by renunciations. . . . Dorian, don't deceive yourself. Life is not governed by will or intention. Life is a question of nerves, and fibres, and slowly built-up cells in which thought hides itself and passion has its dreams. You may fancy yourself safe, and think yourself strong. But a chance tone of colour in a room or a morning sky, a particular perfume that you had once loved and that brings subtle memories with it, a line from a forgotten poem that you had come across again, a cadence from a piece of music that you had ceased to play – I tell you, Dorian, that it is on things like these that our lives depend. Browning writes about that somewhere; but our own senses will imagine them for us. There are moments when the odour of *lilas blanc* passes suddenly across me, and I have to live the strangest month of my life over again. (179)

Lord Henry's "things like these," moments when a scent of flower lets him relive a different time and place, are moments of what Serres calls "The ecstatic transfiguration, the loss of the body into the soul" (25). In these moments, dualisms, notably that of the mind and body, collapse, and we experience our bodies as "hazy surfaces, mixtures of body and soul." In other words, we realize that "Body and soul are not separate but blend inextricably" and that, therefore, "two mingled bodies do not form a separate subject and object" (26).

London: A Submerged City

In Serres's "philosophy of mingled bodies," the sense of vision relates to the solid whereas that of the tactile merges with the fluid (81). Capable of achieving "fusion without confusion," the tactile sense or the skin "apprehends and comprehends, implicates and explicates . . . tends towards the liquid and the fluid, and approximates mixture" (81, 67). As Serres puts it, "The organs of the senses . . . irrigate the whole skin with desire, listening, sight or smell" (52). Then "Skin flows like water, a variable confluence of the qualities of the senses."¹⁰

If the skin is the most sensual organ to Serres, water is the sensual matter *par excellence* to Bachelard. In *Water and Dreams*, to illustrate this point, he cites from Novalis's dream. Overwhelmed by an "uncontrollable desire to bathe," as he relates the dream, Novalis goes into a tub and feels "the wave of the delicious element" strike him "like a sweet breast" (126). The sensation is of the touches of "a group of charming maidens," that have been dissolved in the water, become "corporeal again" upon being in contact with Novalis's body. Water for Novalis in his dream, Bachelard comments, is "a matter that surrounds the entire being and penetrates it intimately" (127). With regard to this "very peculiar physical characteristic" in Novalis's dream, which is not a sexual element, Bachelard suggests that here we see Novalis not as "a *Seer* who sees the Invisible" but as "a *Toucher* who touches the untouchable, intangible, or unreal." In other words, water becomes woman only when it flows against, around, and even into, his body. Novalis does not see maidens as "distant images" provoked by the presence of

water but experiences them as the very quality of water. Something of a ‘doubling’ of water’s sensual power happens here, or as Bachelard puts it, Novalis “falls asleep in his sleep; he lives a sleep within a sleep.”

Water to Novalis is not an “object” but a “substance,” for it is an intensely material and profound reverie that engages him, and “One cannot dream profoundly with *objects*. To dream profoundly, one must dream with *substances*” (20, 22). The “materiality” of water images, that is, the “density” of water-related “phantoms,” is to be “felt in the transition from *sensory values* to *sensual values*,” because “Only sensual values offer “direct communication,”” and “Sensory values give only translations” (20). That objects should turn into substances for a direct communication to occur is witnessed, for instance, in a stanza on the “mirror” in Mallarmé’s poem “Herodiade,” which begins with a striking metaphor – “O Mirror! Cold water frozen by boredom in your frame” (22). It may at first seem that both “mirror” and “water” are good media through which to convey a dialectic of narcissism – “seeing and revealing oneself” – , and yet countless examples from myths and literature tell us that only water can be such a medium (20-21). For a mirror “is too civilized, too geometrical, too easily handled an object” (21). With its “resistance of glass” which makes anyone looking at it looking for himself only “go around” it, to find nothing, it actually forms a “barrier” to any investigator of narcissism. As Louis Lavelle, a contemporary philosopher Bachelard cites, memorably puts it: “A mirror imprisons within itself a second-world which escapes [Narcissus], in which he sees himself without being able to touch himself, and which is separated from him by a false distance which he can shorten, but cannot cross

over.” By contrast, water offers an “open road” for him, where he can feel “*naturally* doubled” and witness the “revelation of his reality and his ideality” – thanks to the fully activated “participation” of imagination into the matter charged with sensual values (21-23).

A “favored substance, an active substance that defines the unity and hierarchies of expression,” water in *Mrs. Dalloway* is charged with sensual values, ones that are direct, touchable, and penetrating (45-46). In the opening of the novel, “with a squeak of the hinges,” Clarissa Dalloway relives – or rather, is plunged into – the morning in Bourton from many years ago, which was as “fresh as if issued to children on a beach” as the morning of June in the novel is (3). Bourton’s open, morning air, Clarissa remembers, was “like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave.” And such is how she would feel about “life; London; this moment of June” (4). Early on her way to the flower shop, “Arlington Street and Piccadilly seemed to chafe the very air in the Park and lift its leaves hotly, brilliantly, on waves of that divine vitality which Clarissa loved” (7). Right before the doors of the florist, Clarissa recalls her hatred of Miss Kilman, the self-righteous governess for her daughter Elizabeth, whose “soul rusted with that grievance sticking in it,” and feels a “physical pain” (12). Once inside the shop, moving along jars of flowers with Miss Pym the florist, the pain will be overcome by the positive energies flowing there and from her: “nonsense, nonsense, she said to herself, more and more gently, as if this beauty, this scent, this colour, and Miss Pym liking her, trusting her, were a wave which she let flow over her and surmount that hatred, that monster, surmount it all; and it lifted her up and up” (13). The moment of falling in love, or even

that of ecstasy in making love, are similarly experienced in terms of the mass and movement of water, or water-like matter. The moment of falling in love is like a chance encounter with “a faint scent, or a violin next door,” an encounter Lord Henry theorizes in his final speech, and it is a moment of “a sudden revelation, a tinge like a blush,” that spreads and expands and rushes one “to the farthest verge,” where one quivers and feels “the world come closer, swollen with some astonishing significance, some pressure of rapture, which split its skin and gushed and poured with an extraordinary alleviation over the cracks and sores!” (32). Though virginal, Clarissa knows of ecstasy in lovemaking, if only “dimly,” which, she thinks, is “something central which permeated; something warm which broke up surfaces and rippled the cold contact of man and woman, or of women together” (31).

An affinity with the element of water is evident throughout Woolf’s works. Her essay “The Moment: Summer’s Night” depicts the pleasure of a cool summer night in a language that recalls Serres’s advice of “throw yourself naked into the ocean of the world.” First the body “opens on to the senses,” then the night as darkened water sends a “ripple” through the “ocean of the world” (Serres 55, 36).

To begin with: it is largely composed of visual and of sense impressions. The day was very hot. After heat, the surface of the body is opened, as if all the pores were open and everything lay exposed, not sealed and contracted, as in cold weather. The air wafts cold on the skin under one’s clothes. . . . Then the sense of the light sinking back into darkness seems to be gently putting out with a damp sponge the colour in one’s own eyes.

Then the leaves shiver now and again, as if a ripple of irresistible sensation ran through them, as a horse suddenly ripples its skin. (“The Moment: Summer’s Night” 3)

Jinny in *The Waves* first uses the verb ‘ripple’ for what she herself does – “Now I smell geraniums; I smell earth mould. I dance. I ripple” – , then later declares: “There is nothing staid, nothing settled in this universe. All is rippling, all is dancing” (7, 31-2). In a scene from childhood he remembers, where he escapes into a vast wood of tall trees while on an expedition in Elvedon, Bernard says he heard nothing, that what he heard was “only the murmur of the waves in the air” (10). The shivering leaves make sounds similar to the ripples, waves, murmurs of the sea: this would be an instance of what Bachelard calls water’s becoming “a kind of universal home” (WD 51). Bachelard’s own examples of water as “universal home” are from Poe’s poetry and stories, where a lake captures the sky in its bosom and thereby creates images of inversion such as lake-sky, star-isle, and even bird-fish (“Al Aaraaf” and “Landor’s Cottage”), or where the mirage of reflections on the water, by means of its idealizing power, “corrects the real” (“The Domain of Arnheim” and “The Island of the Fay”) (47-51). Bachelard counsels the reader to *not* read Poe “in a realistic frame of mind,” by trying to identify among the scenes of life ones that have given us similar experiences as Poe’s narrator tells us (49). Such “static realism” is to be resisted and, in its place, the “materializing reverie – reverie dreaming of matter,” which makes water a “destiny” for Poe, is to be embraced (50).

The same has to be said in the case of Woolf. Water is a matter not just of prevalence but of consistent tonality¹¹ in Woolf's works that, for example, Bernard's hearing "the murmur of the waves in the air" cannot be taken simply at its onomatopoeic dimension. In his recollection of a bath from the same day of the expedition, water penetrates his being even more intimately than it does Novalis's.

Water pours down the runnel of my spine. Bright arrows of sensation shoot on either side. I am covered with warm flesh. My dry crannies are wetted; my cold body is warmed; it is sluiced and gleaming. Water descends and sheets me like an eel. Now hot towels envelop me, and their roughness, as I rub my back, makes my blood purr. Rich and heavy sensations form on the roof of my mind. (17)

Bath water running down and through his body, Bernard lives the whole day again as if it were a waterfall and he stood beneath it, delighted: "down showers the day – the woods; and Elvedon; Susan and the pigeon. Pouring down the walls of my mind, running together, the day falls copious, resplendent" (17). Just as a day may pour down the walls of one's mind, the mind may pour out of one's body. In response to Bernard's monologue above, Rhoda in her monologue says: "Out of me now my mind can pour" (18). In an illustration of the "shockingly social" vision of human relationship in Woolf's novels, Weinstein points to the "astonishing force field" Mrs. Ramsay animates in *To the Lighthouse* (193-94). The world of *Mrs. Dalloway* – indeed that of most of Woolf's novels – is also defined as something of a force field, and it is experienced as such mainly due to the "flow" or "currents" of energies, that is, motions or actions of

water. Clarissa lets the “wave” of Miss Pym’s goodwill “flow over her and surmount that hatred.” The car parked on the pavement opposite the florist backfires before going off, leaving “a slight ripple which flowed through glove shops and hat shops and tailors’ shops on both sides of Bond Street” (17). Big Ben too strikes to palpable – palpably liquid – effects. The “leaden circles” its sound makes “dissolve in the air,” or else the sound flows through London and even “floods” Clarissa’s drawing room (4, 48, 117). After her guests leave, Mrs. Bruton, the famous hostess of amusing luncheons, feels “Murmuring London flow[ing] up to her” (112). Perhaps most notable is the very “social instinct” of Clarissa’s (62). With the “power of communicating without words,” that connects Peter Walsh with Clarissa, they can go “in and out of each other’s minds without any effort” (63). This is not an explicitly watery image, and yet something of water’s “boundless fluidity” is suggested in Clarissa’s understanding of Peter (Weinstein 196). It is this side of Clarissa, her social instinct, or “her power of carrying things through,” that makes her “The perfect hostess” (*MD* 62). It is by dint of this side of Clarissa’s that a vision of human relationship – “interrelationship,” as Weinstein calls it – is created where “The self is spread out. The self is inhabited. The self lives in and through others” or “We are extended, connected; we flow into each other” (Weinstein 193, 229).

The same side makes her able to “slice like a knife through everything” (8). The word is “a knife,” and its ‘slicing’ “through everything,” but here too is felt the “boundless fluidity,” as keen and quick appreciation of other people, of Clarissa’s self. And it is her fluid self that is “at the same time . . . outside, looking on,” and has “a

perpetual sense . . . of being out, out, far out to sea and alone” (8). A fluid self in a fluid world: it would be prone to terror as much as joy and give in to foreboding as much as celebration. So she has “the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day,” and questions the meaning of life, if it is to be ended absolutely by death: “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?” (8-9). Clarissa has known the finality of death. Later in the novel, Peter would reflect on her thoroughgoing skepticism and remember the “horrible affair,” in which her sister Sylvia was killed by a collapsing tree before her very eyes (77-78). Sylvia was “a girl too on the verge of life, the most gifted of them, Clarissa always said,” and the accident was “enough to turn one bitter” (78). It indeed turns her a skeptic and she evolves an “atheist’s religion of doing good for the sake of goodness.” Knowing death’s finality would have made her feel “an emptiness about the heart of life” while the “atheist’s religion” would have been a part of what made her a perfect hostess (31).

And yet she also retains a “theory” she developed in her girlhood to explain the inherent limitedness of our knowledge of other people, according to which to know someone is to know everybody and every place that together complete the person, a theory which thereby “ended in a transcendental theory . . . 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” (153). This morning in June she takes hold of this theory:

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)

As Maria DiBattista sums it up, it is a theory of “the ubiquity of the spirit,” in which “death ends the seen, but not the unseen, essential part of human existence” (46-7). To paraphrase Joanne Stroud in her “Foreword” to *Water and Dreams*, Clarissa’s take on the soul’s immortality is a way the subjective implicates itself in the objective world, by way of the imagination of matter: in this case, water (viii). The imagination of water abounds in what Bachelard paradoxically calls “ambivalent certitudes,” which imbue Clarissa’s view of life and death (5). In a moment that seems to freeze-frame her ambivalence towards the power of water, Clarissa first contemplates Lady Bruton’s face and the “dwindling of life” it signals, “as if it had been a dial cut in impassive stone,” then feels “an exquisite suspense,” the way a diver would feel before plunging.

so that she filled the room she entered, and felt often as she stood hesitating one moment on the threshold of her drawing-room an exquisite suspense, such as might stay a diver before plunging while the sea darkens and brightens beneath him, and the waves which threaten to

break, but only gently split their surface, roll and conceal and encrust as they just turn over the weeds with pearl. (30)

How there is no death: such is a pervasive sense in the novel, but it is one perpetually darkened by “the sense of what is unescapable in our lot; death” (*W* 199). The “exquisite suspense” a diver feels, before the sea water darkening and brightening beneath him, is as much “an invitation to die,” “an invitation to a special death that allows us to return to one of the elementary material refuges,” as it is an invitation to vanquish “the inner terror of the initiate,” the terror no real swimmer or diver completely disown, and to revel yet again in the “thrills of waters” (*WD* 55, 165, 103). The intuitions from childhood, as Bernard in *The Waves* calls them, “satiety and doom,” equally reign in the novel (199).

Darkness, signaling portending doom, often combines with water and dissolves into it. The sea “darkens and brightens” beneath a diver, or in her moment of despair, Rezia feels “darkness descends, pours over the outlines of houses and towers” (24). Since water deepens by absorbing darkness, depth alone would be enough to suggest a presence of darkness. Septimus writes about “how there is no death,” and yet continues to suffer from a vision of his own drowning (140). Late in the afternoon, in his sitting room, he lies on the sofa and watches the play of light and shadow on the wall, while “Outside the trees dragged their leaves like nets through the depths of the air; the sound of water was in the room and through the waves came the voices of birds singing” (139). The play of light and shadow on the wall makes “the depths of the air” outside resemble the sea that “darkens and brightens,” for Septimus here is having an illusion of being

under water, and the play of light and shadow would feel like water plants wavering, creating effects of darkening and brightening. Bachelard notes that, in Poe's imagination, "one of the functions of the vegetable world . . . is to produce shade as the cuttlefish produces ink," and that, in "The Island of the Fay," shadows die when they are separated from the tree that give them life (*WD* 54). Dead shadows of a tree by the stream then "shroud themselves in water as in a blacker death." To Septimus who had nearly drowned, if in an 'insane' vision – "he himself remained high on his rock, like a drowned sailor on a rock. I leant over the edge of the boat and fell down, he thought. I went under the sea. I have been dead, and yet am now alive" – play of shadows on the wall would have evocations of the darkening undersea or shadows of plants about to die (69).

That water by itself could mean something of a black, absorbing depth to Woolf is suggested in both her diary and her memoir "A Sketch of the Past." It was an incident from her childhood, recalling which she wrote in her diary: "Life is, soberly and accurately, the oddest affair; has in it the essence of reality. I used to feel this as a child – couldn't step across a puddle once, I remember, for thinking how strange – what am I? etc." (100). The recollection is more detailed in "A Sketch":

There was the moment of the puddle in the path; when for no reason I could discover, everything suddenly became unreal; I was suspended; I could not step across the puddle; I tried to touch something . . . the whole world became unreal. . . . But it was not over, for that night in the bath the dumb horror came over me. Again I had that hopeless sadness; that

collapse I had described before; as if I were passive under some sledgehammer blow; exposed to a whole avalanche of meaning that had heaped itself up and discharged itself upon me, unprotected, with nothing to ward it off, so that I huddled up at my end of the bath, motionless. I could not explain it; I said nothing even to Nessa sponging herself at the other end.

(Moments of Being 78)

In Bachelardian terms, here is an example for “the psychology of the imagination,” in which a place is given to a “prolix animism,” which is “an animism that animates everything, projects everything, mingles, on every occasion, desire and vision, inner impulses and natural forces” (*WD* 184). This doctrine of the psychology of the imagination puts images before ideas and, accordingly, nature before society. Bachelard’s example in this regard is strikingly reminiscent of Woolf’s memory of a puddle. A child in a gym class who strains before a jump is in a human competition, whereas a child who cannot cross a creek in one leap is in a different competition altogether. Encountering the “natural obstacle” of a creek is a chance to acquire a “direct knowledge” of an element’s “inner” life, that which corresponds with that of the human (184, 173). In other words, one who contemplates her inner reality will see it reflected in “the inmost recesses of the world” (173). Or, as Bachelard puts it, “The soul suffers in things.” Once overcome, the creek will give rise to “reveries” enlivened by the “taste for power, for triumph, for scorn toward what can be overcome” (184). If not, it will remain a source of inexplicable dread that makes life “the oddest affair.”

Another incident from Woolf's childhood that "happened so violently" she remembered all her life concerns an apple tree. At the dinner table she overhears her parents discussing the suicide of a family friend, Mr. Valpy. Then at night in the garden she comes upon the apple tree, and cannot pass it: "It seemed to me that the apple tree was connected with the horror of Mr. Valpy's suicide. I could not pass it. I stood there looking at the grey-green creases of the bark – it was a moonlight night – in a trance of horror" (*Moments of Being* 71). Almost the same memory is painfully, and repeatedly, remembered in *The Waves*. The moment young Neville on the way to his room on the stair hears a cook discussing a man "found with his throat cut," the leaves of the apple tree outside become "fixed in the sky" (15). It is a "stricture," he declares, and names it "death among the apple trees." It is also "an obstacle," to which he has to say "I cannot surmount this unintelligible obstacle," and which reminds him "we are all doomed, all of us by the apple trees, by the immitigable tree which we cannot pass" (16). Bernard in his final monologue would remember his friend's memory and say: "the dead man in the gutter; the apple tree, stark in the moonlight; the rat swarming with maggots" (178).

The puddle too is repeatedly remembered. Rhoda recalls the "cadaverous, awful . . . grey puddle in the courtyard" and says "I came to the puddle. I could not cross it" (45). The puddle strikes her down and she undergoes a brief death, if the mind's taking leave of the body can be called death: "We are nothing, I said, and fell. I was blown like a feather. I was wafted down tunnels. Then very gingerly, I pushed my foot across. I laid my hand against a brick wall. I returned very painfully, drawing myself back into my body over the grey, cadaverous space of the puddle" (45). All these

memories from childhood are reminders of “our lot; death,” and they seem ever present in *Mrs. Dalloway*, usually dissolved in water or in its darkness. Contemplating the shadows of trees in Poe’s story, which “absorbed by the stream,” follow their “predecessors thus entombed,” Bachelard presents the reader with a question-cum-*memento mori*: “Give us this day our daily shadow – one that is part of oneself – is this not living with Death?” (WD 54). For water “to absorb shadows” is “to offer a daily tomb to everything that dies within us each day” (55). Gillian Beer, in her discussion on *Mrs. Dalloway*, points out that “To be alive on the same day in London may be a deeper bond . . . than any of the individual choices of love and friendship which narrative fiction ordinarily privileges” (48). Woolf herself, in a letter written to politely decline T. S. Eliot’s offer to publish a part of the novel in *The Criterion*, says it is too “interwoven” for that: “I would rather appear than anywhere else. But the novel is getting too interwoven for a chapter broken off to be intelligible” (L 3:106). *Mrs. Dalloway* is certainly one of her major works, each of which forms a “whole – all parts contributing” (D 5:135). It was intended, as noted earlier, as “a study of insanity & suicide: the world seen by the sane & the insane side by side.” Here, she would “give life & death, sanity & insanity” (D 2:248). Writing it, she would also discover: “how I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters; I think that gives exactly what I want; humanity, humour, depth. The idea is that the caves shall connect, & each comes to daylight at the present moment” (D 2:263). That the novel is “interwoven” not just structurally but thematically is suggested in all these comments. Late in the afternoon, on his way to the hotel he is lodging, Peter Walsh thinks of “one of the triumphs of civilization” or “the communal

spirit of London,” when the traffic clears of its own accord for an ambulance speeding to the hospital (151). The communal spirit is over the dead, for, unbeknownst to him, the ambulance is carrying Septimus’s body. A little later, going to Clarissa’s party, he muses about “the truth of our soul”: “For this is the truth about our soul, he thought, our self, who fish-like inhabits deep seas and plies among obscurities threading her way between the boles of giant weeds, over sun-flickered spaces and on and on into gloom, cold, deep, inscrutable” (161). Then he feels the day’s changing to evening as if it “took gauze,” and thinks, about the young people swarming London streets, that “they looked as if dipped in sea water – the foliage of a submerged city” (161-62). Londoners may at once be undersea plants and fishes that, inhabiting around them, go “on and on into gloom, cold, deep, inscrutable.” This vision – of astonishing beauty, to Peter – is shared by Neville in *The Waves*, to whom one certain source of “the mystic sense of adoration, of completeness that triumphed over chaos” can be had by “saunter[ing] along the river bank, where the trees meet united like lovers in the water” (36).

“What a Lark! What a Plunge!”

Air in *Mrs. Dalloway* is a medium of energy. “The air stirred with energy,” declares “Mrs. Dalloway in Bond Street,” the short story precursor to the novel, before it tells the reader, in a nearly identical sentence as in the novel, how the air changes into – or merges with – the “waves of that divine vitality”: “Piccadilly and Arlington Street and the Mall seemed to chafe the very air in the Park and lift its leaves hotly, brilliantly,

upon waves of that divine vitality which Clarissa loved” (*Complete Shorter Fiction* 154). Among the many enchanted memories from her childhood in “A Sketch,” Woolf says this about the “quality of air above Talland House”:

When I think of the early morning in bed I also hear the caw of rooks falling from a great height. The sound seems to fall through an elastic, gummy air; which holds it up; which prevents it from being sharp and distinct. The quality of air above Talland House seemed to suspend sound, to let it sink down slowly, as if it were caught in a blue gummy veil. The rooks cawing is part of the waves breaking – one, two, one, two – and the splash as the wave drew back and then it gathered again, and I lay there half awake, half asleep, drawing in such ecstasy as I cannot describe. (66)

Woolf draws on the memory when she gives a similar joy to Septimus, when he is sitting on a chair under a tree in Regent’s Park, talking to himself: “To watch a leaf quivering in the rush of air was an exquisite joy. Up in the sky swallows swooping, swerving, flinging themselves in and out, round and round, yet always with perfect control as if elastics held them” (69). And it is against the backdrop of air tonalized¹² and experienced as such that we read, in the opening of *Mrs. Dalloway*, the puzzling and yet captivating exclamation: “What a lark! What a plunge!” (3). “For,” the novel continues, “so it had always seemed to her, when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air.”

Here is an example of “evok[ing] the lark while refusing to describe it” (AD 84). According to Bachelard in an amusing chapter titled “The Poetics of Wings” in *Air and Dreams*, “to describe the lark is to abandon the task of description,” for the lark, “a very common image in various European literatures,” exemplifies “the supremacy of dynamic over formal imagination” (83, 82). A “dazzling invisibility,” the lark “does not even exist for the painter’s eye” (84, 82). It doesn’t have any place in the landscapes painters created because “It is too small to be on the same scale as the landscape. The same color as the furrowed fields, it cannot add a single flower to the autumn earth” (82). By contrast, when a poet evokes it, “it appears in some ways to be as important as the forest or the stream, despite the question of size.” Percy Bysshe Shelley, among the poets Bachelard cites, understood that the lark signals “a cosmic joy, an “unbodied joy,” a joy that is always so new in its revelation that it seems a new race has made it their messenger” (85).¹³ And when he writes:

Teach us, Sprite or Bird,
 What sweet thoughts are thine:
 I have never heard
 Praise of love or wine
 That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine

The lark does not just express but embodies and projects “the joy of the universe” (85). As “a burst of Shelleyan sublimation,” the lark dynamizes the imagination through and through so that “no languor can survive, nor can any trace of boredom” (84-85).

With thy clear keen joyance

Languor cannot be:

Shadow of annoyance

Never came near thee:

Thou lovest, but ne'er knew love's sad satiety

Bachelard's commentary on the stanza evokes an "*ennui*," a "nostalgic" one for Shelley's "shadow of annoyance": "Who has not felt this "annoyance" in the solitude of a plain lighted by the sun on a cold morning? A single song of the lark is enough to banish this nostalgic *ennui*" (85-86). A single song of the lark alone banishes the nostalgic *ennui* because it is a song of joyous "verticality" or "flight-in-itself" (84, 65). Unlike William Blake's earthly birds in *Vala* that are heavily under the influence of "vertebral dynamics," to whom flight is essentially a slow "deliverance," from the terrestrial bondage into the aerial freedom, the lark signals "freedom from the outset" (78, 84). The lark "is a tearing itself away from the earth that meets with immediate success," and thus "A dynamic description of the lark depicts an awakening world that at one stage is singing" (84-85). Bachelard proposes to "bring to poetics the great syntheses of scientific thought" for us to be able to say: "In poetic space, the lark is an invisible corpuscle that is accompanied by a wave of joy" (84).

The Shelleyan "unbodied joy" of the lark explains Clarissa's euphoric affirmation of life in the June morning of *Mrs. Dalloway*. And the joy is not just hers but "that of the world" as well. As Bachelard points out, the first two lines of "To a Skylark" – "Hail to thee, blithe Spirit! / Bird thou never wert" – present the lark as a "pure image" (86). For, here, the "real creature teaches us nothing." Since description is not the task of

pure image or “pure poetry,” they “must transcend the laws of representation,” and transcending the laws of representation, pure poetic objects “absorb both the subject and object in their entirety.” The pure image of Shelley’s lark, therefore, “is a sum of the subject’s joy and that of the world.” Likewise, Clarissa’s ‘loving it so,’ “creating it every moment afresh,” and the “waves of that divine vitality” that float around London streets together form the “wave of joy,” or “cosmic joy,” summed up in “What a lark!” (*MD* 4, 7, *AD* 85). It is indeed a cosmic joy because it “reflects the happiness of a universe in expansion, a universe that grows as it sings” (86). If speaking in these terms feels like “overstatement and inflated language,” Bachelard’s forceful protest may be remembered: “Is a dream really a dream if it does not change the boundaries of the world? Is a dream that does not enlarge our world really a poet’s dream?” (44). John in “Solid Objects,” Woolf’s fascinating short story that perhaps is a single best example speaking of the modernist dictum of the supremacy of the object, falls into a dream – daydream – that changes the boundaries of the world, on the beach after having a fierce discussion on politics with his friend Charles, a discussion that make their bodies “so solid, so living, so hard, red, hirsute and virile” (102).

So Charles, whose stick had been slashing the beach for half a mile or so, began skimming flat pieces of slate over the water; and John, who had exclaimed ‘Politics be damned!’ began burrowing his fingers down, down, into the sand. As his hand went further and further beyond the wrist, so that he had to hitch his sleeve a little higher, his eyes lost their intensity, or rather the background of thought and experience which gives

an inscrutable depth to the eyes of grown people disappeared, leaving only the clear transparent surface, expressing nothing but wonder, which the eyes of young children display. No doubt the act of burrowing in the sand had something to do with it. He remembered that, after digging for a little, the water oozes round your finger-tips; the hole then becomes a moat; a well; a spring; a secret channel to the sea. (102-03)

By burrowing into the sand, John leaves his present world defined by “thought and experience” or his career in politics – “addresses to constituents, declarations of policy, appeals for subscriptions, invitations to dinner, and so on” – and enters into “another world,” when a child’s wonder expands a smallest hole in the sand to a moat, well, spring, and a secret channel to the sea (104-05). “A pool contains a universe,” as Bachelard says, and it does because it can *expand* (WD 50). In “A Sketch,” Woolf recalls summers spent at St. Ives were “the best beginning to life conceivable,” and that by taking Talland House her parents gave her something “perennial, invaluable” (*Moments of Being* 128). And the “perennial, invaluable” memories she had of her childhood – “to dig in the sand ... to scabble over the rocks and see the red and yellow anemones flourishing their antennae; or stuck like blobs of jelly to the rock; to find a small fish flapping in a pool” – made their way into her works other than “Solid Objects” (127). Nancy Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* explores a tiny pool on the beach left by ebb tide, creates a universe out of the pool and feels all powerful. Then the universe returns to the pool it is, and she is stricken with a paralyzing sense of the nothingness of all.

Nancy waded out to her own rocks and searched her own pools and let that couple look after themselves. She crouched low down and touched the smooth rubber-like sea anemones, who were stuck like lumps of jelly to the side of the rock. Brooding, she changed the pool into the sea, and made the minnows into sharks and whales, and cast vast clouds over this tiny world by holding her hand against the sun, and so brought darkness and desolation, like God himself, to millions of ignorant and innocent creatures, and then took her hand away suddenly and let the sun stream down. Out on the pale criss-crossed sand, high-stepping, fringed, gauntleted, stalked some fantastic leviathan (she was still enlarging the pool), and slipped into the vast fissures of the mountain side. And then, letting her eyes slide imperceptibly above the pool and rest on that wavering line of sea and sky, on the tree trunks which the smoke of steamers made waver upon the horizon, she became with all that power sweeping savagely in and inevitably withdrawing, hypnotised, and the two senses of that vastness and this tininess (the pool had diminished again) flowering within it made her feel that she was bound hand and foot and unable to move by the intensity of feelings which reduced her own body, her own life, and the lives of all the people in the world, for ever, to nothingness. So listening to the waves, crouching over the pool, she brooded. (75-76)

When Nancy enlarges the pool, she achieves “a transcendence of mere size,” not just of the pool but of herself as well (*AD* 64). And it is in a certain sense about herself becoming (a part of) an enlarging world. Jean Tardieu, a poet Bachelard cites as among those who knew the “bird” as “an uplifting force that wakes all of nature,” writes:

An amazing dream surrounds me:
 I am walking along releasing birds,
 everything that I touch is within me
 And I have lost all limitations. (70)

Here, amidst releasing birds, I expand to enclose “everything” I touch, and then all limitations enclosing me are gone: I am ready for “verticality,” i.e. I am ready to *fly*. The moment I get thus ready to fly is when both the subject and the object collapse into ‘I,’ the way they do into the lark as a pure poetic object.

Such is the moment when “In the realm of the imagination transcendence is added to immanence” (5). To put it in more demotic terms, it is when “a special vigor” is added to “our decision to be a person,” or when “hope” is added to a “feeling,” hope in this case being “as precise as it can be,” as “an upright destiny” (2, 60). Clarissa’s elation in the morning of *Mrs. Dalloway* is of this kind: “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” (4). It is “in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead” that she has what she loves: “life; London, this moment of June.” She considers the possibility of starting her life over: “Oh if she could have had her life over again! she thought, stepping on to the pavement, could have

looked even differently!” (10). And, at one moment, still on the way to the florist, she feels “unbodied”: “But often now this body she wore (she stopped to look at a Dutch picture), this body, with all its capacities, seemed nothing – nothing at all. She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible, unseen” (10-11). Becoming invisible: it is Tardieu’s ‘losing all limitations,’ which is indeed something close to the “unbodied joy” of Shelley’s lark. It also evokes something of the will to uprightness Nietzsche’s tree¹⁴ has, one Rilke picked up, most famously in the very first line of the first sonnet to Orpheus: “A tree ascended there. O pure transcendence!” (*Duino Elegies* and *The Sonnets to Orpheus* 83). It is no coincidence that Peter envisions a tree rising between he and Clarissa, when he feels reconnected with her: “as if he had set light to a grey pellet on a plate and there had risen up a lovely tree in the brisk sea-salted air of their intimacy . . . their exquisite intimacy” (46).

The “upward élan” in *Mrs. Dalloway*, however, seems ever ready to succumb to “downward plunge” (AD 92). The cry of joy that takes Clarissa back to Bourton of her girlhood is a pair: “What a lark! What a plunge!” The plunge can be an unambiguously joyous one, one into the core of the moment so as to capture the best of it, as it is with Clarissa, back home from the errand to the florist: “June, July, August! Each still remained almost whole, and, as if to catch the falling drop, Clarissa (crossing to the dressing-table) plunged into the very heart of the moment, transfixed it, there – the moment of this June morning on which was the pressure of all the other mornings” (36-37). More often, it marks the psychological reality of fear, which does not have to be of actual falling. Fear of falling, as Bachelard notes, is “what constitutes the dynamic

element of the fear of the dark” (91). In other words, “One who flees feels his legs giving way.” Legs’ giving way into darkness would certainly feel like falling, especially if one follows Nietzsche in considering walking as an essential component for an “apprenticeship” in “verticality” (143). Nietzsche, as quoted by Bachelard, says: “he who would learn to fly one day must first learn to stand and walk and run and climb and dance: one cannot fly into flying.” *One cannot fly into flying*: it is because walking is a precursor not only to running but to *flying* that when Bernard in *The Waves* recalls his childhood expedition with friends in Elvedon, saying “We shall sink through the green air of the leaves, Susan. We sink as we run,” sinking becomes a synonym of falling (9).¹⁵

Bachelard cites psychoanalyst Henri Wallon to point out that agoraphobia is “a variation on the fear of falling,” and as such not a fear of crowd but a fear of radical loneliness: “It is not a fear of meeting other people, but rather a fear of being unprotected” (91). The “dizzy feeling” of falling, as he notes elsewhere discussing the “Psychology of Gravity,” is “a sudden attack of loneliness” (*EW* 266). Sinking as falling, or a fear of falling as a fear of loneliness: these too, along with the sense of elation or ascension, i.e. the “unbodied joy,” form Clarissa’s “psychic slope,” which is ever changing (*AD* 11). In other words, they form the other half of the “dialectic of enthusiasm and anguish” in her psychic life (10). It is the “perpetual sense” she has, “of being out, out, far out to sea and alone,” that makes her feel “it was very, very dangerous to live even one day” (8). Having lived in Westminster for over twenty years, she never fails to feel “a particular hush, or solemnity; an indescribable pause; a suspense” before Big Ben strikes (4). Such “suspense” is a moment of anguish – if, in a way, programmed

– and as in the diver’s “exquisite suspense” before plunging, the suspense she tends to feel when she stands on the threshold of her drawing room, it is a fear mingled with what may well be called “a promise of happiness.”

As to fear mingled with joy, Bachelard quotes from the opening of Rilke’s eleventh dream, where he writes:

Then there was a street. We were going down it together, keeping step, close to each other. Her arm was lying across my shoulders.

The street was wide, with the emptiness of morning, a Boulevard, slightly downhill, sloping just so much as would be needed to take the little bit of weight from a child’s step. She walked as if little wings were on her feet.

I was thinking of. . . . (*AD 32, Selected Works 1:24*)

Here is an example of “the certitude of happiness” contained in the “memory of an aerial state” (*AD 33*). In an aerial state that promises happiness, one feels “uplifted and upraised by everything, even when we are going downward.” The street slants down just right and little wings begin to grow on your feet, so that “With a very simple movement, your heel will change the descent into an ascent, the walk into a soaring.” Following “this feeling of youthful lightness,” however, Rilke immediately remembers something ominous: “I was thinking of a street far away in an eastern town which was as broad, as empty, as bright, only it was much, much steeper” (*AD 33, Selected Works 1:24-25*). Then he relays to the girl a quick succession of random and yet terrifying images that passed before him in the memory. The reason he remembers them, he tells

the girl, is because their steps' getting lighter somehow recalled them: "because we are walking. And because I felt very much the same then, in those strangely detailed moments, in which I saw a lot, as I do now. As if it were the same thing at bottom; the same feeling, the same wave of feelings, things, thoughts, brilliance and movement that carried everything along with it" (*Selected Works* 1:25). Listening to this, she sums up for him what he has not known until now, whereby the eleventh dream ends:

"You are extraordinary," said the girl, whilst we continued to go down the broad, bright street. "You think, you do hardly anything else, and yet everything escapes you. Did you really not know till now that joy is something terrible of which one is not afraid? One goes right through a terror to its very end: and that is just joy. A terror, of which one does not know even the first letter. A terror that one trusts. – Or were you afraid?"
(25-26)

With a foretaste of flight – and the happiness it promises – Rilke remembers the terror, very likely of falling, standing at a beginning of a very steep street. Happiness for Rilke in the dream is one that remembers "the sign of our first successful attempts to conquer [the] primordial fear" of falling (*AD* 34). Here Bachelard sees what he calls "a Rilkean turnabout," in which fear readily changes into joy and vice versa. In dreams of flight one easily achieves "the synthesis of falling and rising," and yet "Only a soul as totally integrated as Rilke's can retain in joy itself the terror that joy surmounts" (34-35). Something of "the synthesis of falling and rising" seems already in place in the world of *Mrs. Dalloway*. One of the lasting impressions Bourton left on Clarissa as a girl of

eighteen is “the trees with the smoke winding off them and the rooks rising, falling” (3). Before Peter peacefully dozes off on a bench at Regent’s Park, he listens to “children’s voices, the shuffle of feet, and humming traffic, rising and falling traffic” (56). When Clarissa sits down on a table with her dress to mend, she recites the first three words of the two lines from *Cymbeline* – “Fear no more the heat o’ the sun / Nor the furious winter’s rages” – which are repeated throughout the novel as if a mantra and seems to put “the synthesis of falling and rising” into practice.

Quiet descended on her, calm, content, as her needle, drawing the silk smoothly to its gentle pause, collected the green folds together and attached them, very lightly, to the belt. So on a summer’s day waves collect, overbalance, and fall; collect and fall; and the whole world seems to be saying “that is all” more and more ponderously, until even the heart in the body which lies in the sun on the beach says too, That is all. Fear no more, says the heart. Fear no more, says the heart, committing its burden to some sea, which sighs collectively for all sorrows, and renews, begins, collects, lets fall. (39-40)

Late in the night, at her party, Clarissa hears of Septimus’s death and remembers “the terror,” or “the overwhelming incapacity” before life, she felt only this morning (185). Septimus’s suicide, somehow “her disaster – her disgrace,” revives the “awful fear” that was “in the depths of her heart.” She sees it before her: a man sinking and disappearing into a “profound darkness.” And yet it also recalls what she once thought her own death should be like, which is a ‘happy’ one: “‘If it were now to die, ‘twere

now to be most happy,” she had said to herself once, coming down in white” (184). The words – “Fear no more the heat of the sun” – come to her and she doesn’t pity him (186). She feels “somehow very like him” and “glad that he had done it; thrown it away.” There is a thing, she realizes, “that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter,” and by killing himself, he preserved it (184). Death can be “an attempt to communicate,” and when in life “closeness drew apart; rapture faded, one was alone,” there can be “an embrace in death.” In spite of the initial “terror” Septimus’s suicide inspired, Clarissa feels “she had never been so happy” (185).

Even though, as Sally rightly sees, Clarissa is “at heart a snob,” she knows, like Rilke, how to “retain in joy itself the terror that joy surmounts” or that “terror can produce happiness” (*MD* 190, *AD* 35). To Adorno, the ability to feel fear is the same as the ability to feel happiness, which is “the unrestricted openness to experience amounting to self-abandonment” (*MM* 200). The world we have is a “deeply ailing” one, in which happiness cannot be anything other than that which is “measured by the immeasurable grief at what is.” One who knows the infliction on the world and yet can be happy, by being able to self-abandon: only such a person is able to “think on the illusoriness of disaster, the ‘unreality of despair’, and realize not merely that he is still alive but that there is still life.” To Simone Weil, “if we conceive the fullness of joy, suffering is still to joy what hunger is to food” (*Gravity and Grace* 136). It is because joy and suffering are both ways of being conscious of reality, acutely so (132). And consciousness of reality is consciousness of other people. Weil confesses she used to

have a desire to spread pain, as when her headaches were severe she “had an intense longing to make another human being suffer by hitting him in exactly the same part of his forehead” (47). If there is an alterity in happiness, as Bachelard says – “In order to be happy one must think of the happiness of another person. There is thus an alterity or an altruistic element in the most selfish enjoyments” – it is in affliction as well (*Psychoanalysis of Fire* 111). At the very end of the novel, Peter Walsh is filled with “extraordinary excitement” when, looking at Clarissa, he thinks to himself, “What is this terror? What is this ecstasy?” (194). The excitement has to do with alterity – “It is Clarissa, he said. For there she was” – involved in the “terror” and “ecstasy.”

Molly Hite in her introduction to *The Waves* discusses “an immediate but abstract experience” narrated both in Shelley’s poetry and the novel (xlii). The experience is of “fall,” which is “not a literal fall, faint, or (physical) failure but a psychological and metaphysical event that readers are implicitly invited to universalize as well as sympathize with” (xlii). Fall as a psychological event figures importantly in *Mrs. Dalloway* as well and, when it happens to Clarissa and Peter, it is part of “the synthesis of falling and rising,” or of the synthesis of joy and terror, as “terror that one trusts.” There is fall, however, in the novel that is more than psychological and exists outside those syntheses. During moments when Septimus feels he is welcomed into the world, he too sees something of a synthesis in his surroundings – “Up in the sky swallows swooping, swerving, flinging themselves in and out, round and round, yet always with perfect control as if elastics held them” – and can believe “beauty, that was

the truth now. Beauty was everywhere” (69). Yet what he perceives as the unity of all life can also sicken him and drive him mad:

A marvellous discovery indeed – that the human voice in certain atmospheric conditions (for one must be scientific, above all scientific) can quicken trees into life! Happily Rezia put her hand with a tremendous weight on his knee so that he was weighted down, transfixed, or the excitement of the elm trees rising and falling, rising and falling with all their leaves alight and the colour thinning and thickening from blue to the green of a hollow wave, like plumes on horses’ heads, feathers on ladies’, so proudly they rose and fell, so superbly, would have sent him mad. But he would not go mad. He would shut his eyes; he would see no more. (22)

He would have “sudden thunder-claps of fear” that makes him incapable of feeling (87). He has a protection from the calmly domestic life his wife Rezia surrounds him with – “Still, scissors rapping, girls laughing, hats being made protected him; he was assured of safety; he had a refuge” – and yet he, deeply stamped by despair, “suffers the abyss”: “There were moments of waking in the early morning. The bed was falling; he was falling” (*MD 87, AD 95*). And the abyss he suffers is that of the sea. For he, “lately taken from life to death,” has been to the realm of the dead by drowning at sea: “Then there were the visions. He was drowned, he used to say, and lying on a cliff with the gulls screaming over him. He would look over the edge of the sofa down into the sea” (25, 140-41). His fall is that of one who has already fallen, and he dreads the persecution of the fallen as much as the fall itself: “Once you fall, Septimus repeated to himself,

human nature is on you” (98). Or the desertion of the fallen: “For the truth is . . . that human beings have neither kindness, nor faith, nor charity beyond what serves to increase the pleasure of the moment. They hunt in packs. Their packs scour the desert and vanish screaming into the wilderness. They desert the fallen. They are plastered over with grimaces” (89). That he already knows fall, left forever with “the consciousness of having fallen,” makes his fall “substantial and enduring” in nature, one that ever “sinks deeper” into his curse (*AD* 95) And it is even further “weighted down, heavier, and guiltier” because it is a “falling through the sea,” which is a sea heavy with “black suffering” (*AD* 92, *MD* 142, *WD* 46). If trees’ and birds’ rising and falling signal a synthesis of joy and terror to Clarissa, they do something close to it to Septimus too, as the “perfect control as if elastics held them.” When they do, Septimus sees beauty everywhere and feels “To watch a leaf quivering in the rush of air was an exquisite joy” (69). In such moments, “The trees waved, brandished. We welcome, the world seemed to say; we accept; we create. Beauty, the world seemed to say.” The “perfect control,” “as if elastics held them,” can turn into an “enveloping heaviness” in which “Nothing flies” (*AD* 103, 102). Then the welcoming world becomes a place of confinement and madness in no time.

He who has never swooned, is not he who finds strange palaces and wildly familiar faces in coals that glow; is not he who beholds floating in mid-air the sad visions that the many may not view; is not he who ponders over the perfume of some novel flower; is not he whose brain grows bewildered with the meaning of some musical cadence which has

never before arrested his attention. (*AD 98, Complete Tales and Poems* 435)

Like the narrator of Poe's story "The Pit and the Pendulum," Septimus falls and has fallen: he expects, and is already in, his abyss/hell. He has "the visions, the faces, the voices of the dead" (145). He hears people "talking behind the bedroom walls, and sees things, for example, "an old woman's head in the middle of a fern" (66). Sparrows may sing about "how there is no crime . . . how there is no death," and they do so in Greek words (24-25). Listening to their song, however, Septimus sees the dead, among them Evans, his friend killed in the War: "There was his hand; there the dead. White things were assembling behind the railings opposite. But he dared not look. Evans was behind the railing!" (25). He experiences fall as a moment of "total differential when our whole being is losing its strength," and he anticipates, while already living it, "the annihilation of our being after death" (*AD 93, 96*). The annihilation must be total, and even when the fall is through the sea, flames await him: "Miracles, revelations, agonies, loneliness, falling through the sea, down, down into the flames, all were burnt out" (142-43). He looks "over the edge of the sofa down into the sea" but he dreams of "falling down, down into the flames" (141). Fire, Bachelard notes, is "Less monotonous and less abstract than flowing water, even more quick to grow and to change than the young bird we watch every day in its nest in the bushes," and death by fire "suggests the desire to change, to speed up the passage of time, to bring all of life to its conclusion, to its hereafter" (*Psychoanalysis of Fire* 16). Something of this desire seems to spur Septimus when he makes his final choice: "But he would wait till the very last moment. He did not

want to die. Life was good. The sun hot. Only human beings – what did they want? Coming down the staircase opposite an old man stopped and stared at him. Holmes was at the door. “I’ll give it you!” he cried, and flung himself vigorously, violently down on to Mrs. Filmer’s area railings” (149).

Mrs. Dalloway and the Social System

“I want to criticise the social system, & to show it at work, at its most intense” (Zwerdling 120, *D* 2:248). Alex Zwerdling begins his chapter on “*Mrs. Dalloway* and the Social System” with this quote from Woolf’s diary. Woolf’s own statement about the theme of the novel has been regularly ignored, he notes, in favor of “the traditional view of her work as apolitical and indifferent to social issues.” Zwerdling does not draw on Adorno, but Zwerdling’s analysis reveals Clarissa Dalloway’s world in *Mrs. Dalloway* to be what Adorno called “an antagonistic society,” the essence of which “is not a society *with* contradictions or *despite* its contradictions, but *by virtue of* its contradictions” (*Lectures on Negative Dialectics* 8-9). Adorno gives two illustrations. First, a society owes its existence to profit motive, which divides it: “This profit motive which divides society and potentially tears it apart is also the factor by means of which society reproduces its own existence” (9). Secondly, a very large part of social production has to do with the production of the machinery of war, or weapons of mass destruction, so that “the ability of our society to withstand crises, an ability that is generally held to be one of its finest achievements, is directly linked to the growth in its

potential for technological self-destruction.” The contradiction here must be understood “not simply as the contradiction between two unrelated objects, but as an immanent contradiction, a contradiction in the object itself.”

When Clarissa in “Mrs. Dalloway in Bond Street” muses, “Thousands of young men had died that things might go on,” she points to the very fact that “the world itself is antagonistic in its objective form” (*Complete Shorter Fiction* 158-159, *Lectures on Negative Dialectics* 9). Less obvious than war as an instance of the barbarism of civilization is politics. Zwerdling notes how the “political activities of the novel – Richard’s committees, Lady Bruton’s emigration project, Hugh Whitbread’s letters to the *Times*, the ritual appearance of the prime minister – are all essentially routine in nature” and “it is only by ignoring the more devastating facts and deep scars of recent history that the “social system” has managed to keep functioning” (124).

Clarissa in the short story “can tell from a voice when people are in the habit . . . of making other people . . . obey” and it is indeed this aspect of social life that Zwerdling sees the novel most concerns itself with as a criticism of the social system (158). He notes: “behind the public concern and tradition of social service is the need to dominate, the habit of power. It is here that one can see the social system “at work, at its most intense”” (129). The need to dominate, or “the governing-class mentality,” translates “individual human beings into manageable social categories,” by for example turning living Septimus into a category, “an “it” to be considered by government committees drafting legislation” (128). The Richard Dalloway set are people who speak and think in “officialese,” which is a language designed, among other things, to make class

distinctions. With it, “they compartmentalize in order to control and make things manageable” (129). Such mechanics of domination is institutionalized in nearly every aspect of social life: “Behind philanthropy and reform, industriousness, morality, and religion there is the same impulse – telling others how to live, “forcing your soul,” as Clarissa puts it” (130, *MD* 184).

To Adorno, “the factors that define reality as antagonistic are the same factors as those which constrain mind . . . and force it into its intrinsic contradictions” (*Lectures on Negative Dialectics* 9). Involved in both cases are “the principle of mastery, the mastery of nature, which spreads its influence, which continues in the mastery of men by other men and which finds its mental reflex in the principle of identity.” By “the principle of identity,” Adorno means “the intrinsic aspiration of all mind to turn every alterity that is introduced to it or that it encounters into something like itself and in this way to draw it into its own sphere of influence” (9). In *A Room of One’s Own*, Woolf uncovers the “factors” that “constrain mind” in the writings of male authors. At first they feel “so direct, so straightforward after the writings of women” and indicate “such freedom of mind, such liberty of person, such confidence” (99). And yet after a chapter or two a shadow seems to fall on the page: “It was a straight dark bar, a shadow shaped something like the letter ‘I’.” Woolf notes that, no matter what the reader does to go around or behind the shadow, and no matter what happens in the book, “Back one was always hailed to the letter ‘I’” (100). Woolf’s “I” indeed embodies Adorno’s identity principle, the driving force behind enlightenment reason. Just as, without regard for differences, enlightenment reason makes the world subject to man (*DE* 5), in the shadow

the letter “I” throws, all is made “shapeless as mist,” ready to be absorbed by the “dominance of the letter “I” and the aridity” (100).

In a letter to Katherine Mansfield in early 1921, while she was working on *Jacob’s Room*, Woolf wrote: “I think what I’m at is to change the consciousness, and so to break up the awful stodge” (*Congenial Spirits* 128). As the editor of her letters notes, *Jacob’s Room* is “the first of her experimental novels,” and the intention behind writing it she noted in these words didn’t change in all her subsequent, and “experimental,” works (127). If, “for a genius, imagination produces thought” (*AD* 16), the filiation between the imagination of *Mrs. Dalloway* and the thoughts of *A Room of One’s Own* may well be pursued and established. The inversion or collapse of dualisms – mind and body, life and death, subject and object, among others – or “to change the consciousness, and so to break up the awful stodge,” by way of the material imagination of the senses in *Mrs. Dalloway*, impels the work done in *A Room of One’s Own*: knocking down the shadowy “I” and the walls it creates within the mind to separate it into different chambers (101).

CHAPTER IV

“*PLACET EXPERIRI*”: BODY’S PEDAGOGY IN *THE MAGIC MOUNTAIN*

Body (Forced) Out of Joint

In the opening of *The Magic Mountain*, when Hans Castorp arrives for a three-week visit, Joachim Ziemssen, Hans’s cousin and a resident at the International Sanatorium Berghof, tells him the need for “acclimatization.” “Well, wait and see,” he says to Hans who plans on taking him back home with him at the end of his visit, “you’ve only just arrived. Three weeks are almost nothing for us up here, of course, but for you, just here on a visit and planning to stay a grand total of three weeks, for you that’s a long time. Acclimatize yourself first – and you’ll learn that’s not all that easy” (7).¹⁶ Acclimatize yourself: in other words, you have no idea what this place has in store for you; brace up, you are in for a real surprise. In its first pages, *The Magic Mountain* makes it clear that Hans’s separation from outer world, or ‘flatlands’ as the Berghof residents call it, will be total. So with his travel of two days, Hans will be disconnected “from his everyday world . . . his duties, interests, worries, and prospects” (4). It will be a separation “far more than he had dreamed possible,” since, for starters, space has powers comparable to those of time.

Space, as it rolls and tumbles away between him and his native soil, proves to have powers normally ascribed only to time; from hour to hour, space brings about changes very like those time produces, yet surpassing

them in certain ways. Space, like time, gives birth to forgetfulness, but does so by removing an individual from all relationships and placing him in a free and pristine state – indeed, in but a moment it can turn a pedant and philistine into something like a vagabond. Time, they say, is water from the river Lethe, but alien air is a similar drink; and if its effects are less profound, it works all the more quickly. (4)

Visiting Berghof is to undergo the work of complete defamiliarization space is capable of, and Hans will soon be “lifted . . . into regions whose air he had never breathed before and whose sparse and meager conditions were, as he well knew, both unfamiliar and peculiar.” The prospect before him begins “to excite him, to fill him with a certain anxiety.” The following pages chart in great detail the excitement and anxiety involved in Hans’s acclimatization to Berghof and the reader will be alerted to the ways how it is always in part in the passive voice. The acclimatization is as much the work of the ‘magic mountain’ as it is that of Hans himself, and Hans often seems to simply suffer the work of acclimatization that befalls him. When his “train pulled into dingy little stations and backed out again on the same set of tracks,” his “sense of direction” is confused until he “no longer knew whether [he’s] heading north or south” (5).

Magnificent vistas” open alongside the tracks his train climbs, presenting him with “a world of ineffable, phantasmagoric Alpine peaks,” and Hans wonders “how he had left hardwood forests far below him, and songbirds, too,” which leads first to “the idea that such things could cease, the sense of a world made poorer without them” and then to “a slight attack of dizziness and nausea” (5). The attack passes, and soon Hans is

greeted by Joachim, who has been waiting for Hans at the Davos-Dorf station. Then, seeing Joachim, below his window on the platform, Hans feels “dumbfounded” – for one thing, it is 8 pm “but still daylight,” for another, Davos-Dorf is one station too early to his original destination, Davos-Platz (6, 5). Hans gets off the train, it is quickly arranged that his luggage will be fetched from Davos-Platz, but he doesn’t receive explanation as to why Joachim decided to pick him up at Davos-Dorf, other than a short “The sanatorium’s closer from here” (6). If Joachim was going to pick him up at Davos-Platz, the reader wonders, shouldn’t he have let him make it the final destination? These – confusion in Hans’s sense of direction, an attack of dizziness and nausea, an unusually long day, and a little something left unexplained that may bother Hans, if only for a very short while – are only the early, and minor, experiences of disorientation Hans undergoes before he starts his stay at Berghof. In the following days – and years, for he will eventually live 7 years there – Hans will have many more of such experiences, most of them much more serious in degree.

The Magic Mountain is very often discussed in the context of European *Bildungsroman*, at times as its representative example but mostly as an instance of its parody. That Hans’s *Bildung* revolves around the body – that, in an important sense, his education is about and through the body – curiously has not received much attention. In an essay intended as a general introduction to the novel, Irvin Stock calls the reader’s attention to what he aptly calls the “adventures of body and mind” Hans will go through in the mountain, but he views the adventures of body and mind narrowly, as mostly ones of “love,” that is, Hans’s affair with Frau Chauchat (495).¹⁷ Love, with all the

possibilities it has for one's physical and spiritual development, is certainly an important theme of the novel, but it is still only a part of Hans's education, whose subject, as Mann himself summed up, is "humanity" or "the mystery that is man" ("Making" 727).

Besides *Bildungsroman*, 'novel of ideas' would be the term most often applied to *The Magic Mountain*, and it is expected to read in introductory essays on the novel statements such as "An enormous proportion of the novel consists of bravura descriptions of battling ideas" (Byatt xii). To be sure, in exploring his theme of "humanity" or "the mystery that is man," Mann relies heavily on deploying ideas in battles, but he also employs to great purpose a thorough tracking of characters' bodily interaction with each other and with their environment. This tracking presupposes a thorough description of the environment itself, and the rich physicality that thus pervades *The Magic Mountain* from its first pages is something a first-time reader of the novel would find quite unexpected and fascinating. Right after his advice to his cousin about acclimatization, Joachim tells him that time up there is something different from what he knows from the "flatlands," so that, for example, three weeks will be about the same as one day for the residents of Berghof (8). One needs to and one will acclimatize there because, in Joachim's words, "A man changes a lot of his ideas here." Here, though, it strikes Hans that Joachim looks quite healthy with all the tan on his complexion and he tells Joachim what he thinks – "But you really have made a splendid recovery" – with which Joachim for a moment seems to agree heartily.

"Do you think so?" Joachim replied. "It's true, isn't it? I think so, too!"

he said, sitting up taller against the cushioned back, but immediately

slumping again a little to one side. “I am feeling better,” he explained, “but I’m not yet entirely well, either. The upper left lobe, where the rattling used to be, there’s only a little roughness there now, it’s not so bad, but the lower lobe is still *very* rough, and there are also sounds in the second intercostal.” (8)

His mention of such terms as “upper left lobe” or “second intercostal” impresses Hans, who responds with “How learned you’ve become” (8). Also noteworthy is the ambivalence in the way Joachim’s body reacts. For an instant he seems in better shape (“sitting up taller against the cushioned back”), an impression the reader is quickly asked to revise (“but immediately slumping again a little to one side”). Ambivalence in Joachim’s body language is further noted when he responds to Hans’s compliment on how learned he’s become. ““Yes, a fine sort of learning, God knows. I would gladly have unlearned it all on active duty,” Joachim retorted. “But I still have sputum,” he said with a nonchalant, but somehow vehement shrug that did not suit him at all.” His gesture, a shrug, is here at once “nonchalant, but somehow vehement.” These descriptions of minute changes and changes of nuances in the characters’ physiognomy, ones in the way of increasing ambiguity and ambivalence, are an important and pervasive element of the novel that contributes to what one critic called the “irreducible ambivalence” that “No novel can match” (Nehamas 19).

In “Arrival,” the first section of the first chapter of *The Magic Mountain*, descriptions of the sanatorium and its surrounding scenery, when carefully read, may seem to suggest threats in hiding or even an almost gothic sentience of the place. When

the building makes its first appearance, “they were now trotting up a gently rising road in the direction of wooded slopes and a low, outcropping meadow where an elongated building stood, its façade turned to the southwest, topped by a copper cupola, and arrayed with so many balconies that, from a distance as the first lights of evening were being lit, it looked as pockmarked and porous as a sponge” (8). In *Earth and Reveries of Will*, Bachelard speaks of what one may call a ‘dynamism’ of sponges, when sponges are imagined as an “intermediate between water and earth,” for the cooperation between these substances gives way to “a veritable *struggle* between them” in which “earth confronts the challenge of dissolution when water dominates” while water is faced with “the challenge of absorption by the earth that drains it” (56). Hence, “In the hands of the *terrestrial* dreamer, sponge, oakum, and brush can be weapons.” When Woolf writes in *The Waves*, “The earth absorbs colour like a sponge slowly drinking water. It puts on weight; rounds itself; hangs pendent; settles and swings beneath our feet,” she turns the earth into “one enormous, triumphant sponge” (*W* 212, *EW* 57).¹⁸ To a reader whose own terrestrial imagination has been sensitized, by reading such authors as Woolf or Bachelard, intimations of danger or threat from a building that is “pockmarked and porous as a sponge” will not be lost. Evening is coming down fast on the mountain, and it seems, in the transition from daylight to night, the mountain enters a brief moment of mourning, mourning for its own death. “A Pale red sunset that had enlivened the generally overcast sky faded now, leaving nature under the transient sway of the lackluster, lifeless, and mournful light that immediately precedes nightfall” (9).¹⁹ It is indeed only a passing – “transient” – death, and signs of life, having begun to swarm

from below in the valley, are already moving upward. So, “Lights were coming up in the long, meandering, populous valley, dotting its floor and the slopes on both sides – particularly on the swelling rise to the right, where buildings ascended a series of terraces.” Death (darkness) and life (light) cross paths, while mountains from afar indifferently look on it. “Paths led up the meadowed hills on their left, but were soon lost to sight in the dull black of pine forests. Behind them, the mountains in the more distant background, where the valley tapered to an end, were a sober slate blue.”²⁰

Joachim and Hans feel the chill as nightfall rapidly approaches and begin to talk about the glaciers and eternal snow the Magic Mountain is known for. The snow is eternal, as Joachim explains, because the mountain summits are all very high, but at “Five thousand three hundred feet above sea level,” the sanatorium and the people who occupy there are “dreadfully high up” themselves too (9). Hans realizes he has made “quite a climb” – “Why, that’s over a mile high. I’ve never been this far up in my whole life” – and then consciously tastes the “famous” air up there: “And in his curiosity, Hans Castorp took a deep breath, testing the alien air. It was fresh – that was all. It lacked odor, content, moisture, it went easily into the lungs and said nothing to the soul.” There is nothing remarkable about the air, which has nothing to say to the soul. To unimpressed Hans, Joachim tells that the landscape, which isn’t looking its best just now, is certainly beautiful, although he will quickly get bored by it. And as if to add to the ambivalence of what he just said, “his mouth wrenched in an expression of disgust that seemed both exaggerated and out of control” (10). Then, before the “Arrival” section wraps up and Hans checks into his room so that the next section “Room 34”

starts, death makes its first appearance in the novel, when Joachim tells Hans about the way another sanatorium in Davos, Schatzalp, which is even higher than Berghof, disposes of the bodies during the winter: “They have to transport the bodies down by bobsled in the winter, because the roads are impassable.” Hans cracks up at this, but his body doesn’t know for sure how to respond, or it gets interfered and dictated by the cold wind: ““The bodies? Oh, I see. You don’t say!” Hans Castorp cried. And suddenly he burst into laughter, a violent, overpowering laugh that shook his chest and twisted his face, stiffened by the cool wind, into a slightly painful grimace.”

Hans’s education on the Magic Mountain begins with his body’s acclimatization, whose process, to note it again, is a continuous interaction between his body and Berghof. In the earliest pages of *The Magic Mountain*, his body as well as Joachim’s seem just slightly out of control, only momentarily at a loss for what they feel or want. As an active party of the said interaction, however, his body will increasingly assert its autonomy, so much so that it seems “the body goes off on its own accord, living with no connection to one’s soul and putting on airs” and Hans at one point has to confess he can no longer trust his five senses (83, 100). The autonomy is a strange kind too, for it is a discordant one. The night he arrives, inside the elevator that will take him to the floor of his room, “Room 34,” Hans feels weary from all the laughing he did, especially over what Joachim told him about Behrens, the director of Berghof and “a brilliant surgeon,” and his assistant Krokowski, a psychiatrist who “dissects the patients’ psyches” (10). Although weary, he goes over it – “I’m exhausted, I’ve laughed so hard. . . . It’s all the crazy things you’ve been telling me. The psychic dissection was just too much, I could

have done without that” – and then realizes his body is acting in two conflicting ways – “Do your feet get cold so easily, too? And at the same time your face flushes – it’s an unpleasant feeling” (11). Joachim tells him matter of factly that the Room 34 is where an American woman died two days before, which is nothing to worry, because it has been “all thoroughly fumigated with formalin” (12). Hans analyzes what this account means – “Fumigated, that’s spiffing. . . . Yes, Methyl aldehyde, even the toughest bacteria can’t take that – H₂CO, but it does burn in your nose, doesn’t it? It’s obvious, of course, that strict cleanliness is essential” (13). Then he realizes it’s very cold for August and his body is still acting in the conflicting ways – “August, August. . . . But I’m freezing! I’m ab-so-lute-ly freezing. I mean my body is, although my face feels awfully flushed – here, feel it, it’s burning up.” Hans is then embarrassed by his own suggestion because asking someone to feel his face is not typical of him at all.

On the way out of his room and to the restaurant, Hans hears a ghastly cough, mesmerized – “a man’s cough, but a cough unlike any that Hans Castorp had ever heard; indeed, compared to it, all other coughs with which he was familiar had been splendid, healthy expression of life – a cough devoid of any zest for life or love, which didn’t come in spasms but sounded as if someone were stirring feebly in a terrible mush of decomposing organic material” (14). At his first meal in the restaurant, “his body still seemed cold, and he felt a pleasurable and yet somehow annoying restlessness in his joints,” and back in his room, he falls asleep and has dreams of Joachim “riding down a steep slope on a bobsled” and of the horseman his neighbor “who was coughing in that ghastly, slimy way” (16, 20). These dreams are clearly intimations of death, for the idea

of bobsled riding for Hans this evening should be one of dead bodies and the cough of the horseman is a noise dying or dead ‘matter’ makes while further decomposing. *The Magic Mountain* is best known for its fascinated obsession with death, which, as in these instances, goes hand in hand with the minute attention paid to the body’s assertion of its autonomy.

Next day of his arrival, a Russian couple next to his room makes quite a noise during lovemaking, and Hans is uncertain whether the flush now on his face is a response to this or the return of the one he had the day before (45). It can be, as he’s told at the breakfast table by one of the patients, “a physical excitation with no psychological basis” (51). It is also possible, as director Behrens insinuates – “There’s no shortage of ladies – we have the most adorable ladies here” – , that he is excited by, as the noise from next door signals, erotic possibilities in store for him (53). Or, as Behrens further remarks in persuading Hans to try act a tubercular patient and be better at it than Joachim, it can be a work of the place – “why don’t you do just what your cousin does? In a case like yours, there’s no wiser course than to live for a while as if it were a slight *tuberculosis pulmonum*, and build up your protein a little. It’s very curious, you see, the way protein is metabolized up here. Although one’s general metabolism increases, the body stores the protein” (54). A year later, that is, after the year has “come full circle,” Joachim departs the sanatorium in August and Hans is visited by his uncle James Tienappel in October (437). To James who feels the cold the same way as Hans did a year before – “the crisp autumn evening was close to freezing . . . his teeth were very close to chattering” – and asks the question “The cold doesn’t affect you, does it?”, Hans

replies curtly “We’re never cold” (508-09). His own first responses to Berghof have been replaced by what he has acquired from there for the past year, for then he goes on about the “famous” air and the special metabolism the place establishes in the patients. “Certainly, [James’s] companion replied, it was not world-famous for nothing. This air had special properties. Although it accelerated the metabolism, the body was still able to store protein” (509). He follows this praise of the air and metabolism with a recapitulation of what he picked up conversing with Behrens and Dr. Krokowski “about illness as life’s lascivious form” (435). “Of course it could heal sickness, but its first effect was greatly to enhance illnesses that everyone carried latent within them, because the impetus and stimulus this air gave the whole organism brought illness to exuberant eruption, so to speak. Beg pardon, exuberant? But of course. Had he never noticed that there is something exuberant about the eruption of illness as if the body were celebrating?” (509).

Such indeed is the *raison d’être* of Berghof. During the consultation with Hans, in which he is announced officially a tubercular patient, Behrens tells him the reason for the seeming deterioration of physical condition since his arrival on the mountain in these words:

“And the catarrh? . . . Where does it come from? . . . First and foremost: there’s the air up here. It’s good for fighting off illness, wouldn’t you say? . . . But it is also good *for* illness, you see, because it first enhances it, creates a revolution in the body, causes latent illness to erupt, and your catarrh – no offense intended – is just such an eruption. I don’t know if

you were already febrile down in the plains, but in any case you had a fever your very first day here, and not because of any catarrh.” (216)

The persistent flush on his face regardless of the cold, the “dizzy, anxious, and dreamy” feelings, his heart going off pounding hard on its own accord, at one point to such an extent that he *hears* it coming from outside not just his body but his room – “And someone was beating a carpet outside – which was less than probable and indeed not the case. It turned out that it was his heart that he heard pounding somewhere far in the distance outside – just as if someone were walloping a rug with a wicker carpet-beater” – will all be seen by Behrens as eruptions of Hans’s old illness (91, 104). Erich Heller views them as indications of “Dionysian intoxication,” and just as Behrens tells Hans he has an aptitude as a patient – “I knew at once that you’d be a better patient than visitor” – Heller notes susceptibility to such intoxication makes Hans an apt pupil (176, *The Magic Mountain* 216). Comparing Hans with another character from Mann’s first major work *Buddenbrooks* he says: “Dionysian intoxication is . . . productive of learning. Hanno Buddenbrook, similarly inspired, was a bad pupil. Hans Castorp becomes a very good one. His soul bursts forth rhapsodically, while his mind patiently learns all about the oxidation of cellular albumins” (176).

The latter part of this comment alludes to what Behrens tells Hans, during a discussion at Behrens’s lodgings one evening over the nature of life. Hans’s interest in the matter has in part to do with his excitement over sensual promises of a female body, ones he sees in Frau Chauchat, who is a temptation to Behrens himself too and whose partial nude portrait Hans has just seen on a wall of Behrens’s lodgings. So he first tells

Behrens that he probably should have tried his vocation in medicine – “I’ve always taken a great deal of interest in it. The human body – I’ve always had a singular fondness for it. Sometimes I’ve asked myself if I shouldn’t have become a doctor” (312). Then after Behrens’s brief lecture on human physiology, he asks excitedly – “Yes . . . it’s true. I could easily have become a doctor. The formation of breast milk . . . the lymph of the legs – it all interests me very much. The body! . . . The flesh! The human body! What is it? What is it made of? Tell us now, this very afternoon, Director Behrens. Tell us, for once and for all, in precise terms, so that we may know” (316). “It’s made of water” is the calm answer by Behrens – “The human body consists of water for the most part. Nothing better, nothing worse than water – nothing to get excited about.” The human body is mostly water and death means its discharge and becoming formless, as Behrens goes on – “[after death] everything gets a lot more diffuse. We evaporate, so to speak. Just think of all that water. All those other ingredients are not very stable without life. Decomposition takes over, and they resolve into simpler chemical compounds, into inorganic matter.”

“Decomposition, corruption,” Hans Castorp said, “but that’s really just a kind of burning off, isn’t it? It all binds with oxygen, if I recall.”

“Absolutely correct, oxidation.”

“And life?”

“That, too. That, too, my lad. That’s oxidation, too. Life is primarily the oxidation of cell protein, that’s where our pretty animal warmth comes from, of which some people have a bit too much. Ah yes,

life *is* dying – there’s no sense in trying to sugarcoat it – *une destruction organique*, as some Frenchman once called it in that flippant way the Frenchies have. And it smells of dying, too, life does. And if we sometimes think otherwise, it’s because we have a natural bias in the matter.”

“And so if someone is interested in life,” Hans Castorp said, “it’s death he’s particularly interested in. Isn’t that so?”

“Well, there’s a certain difference all the same. Life means that the form is retained even though matter is being transformed.” (316-17)

Life and death are essentially the same process of material dissolution called oxidation, the only difference being that in life the form is maintained. Hans refuses to accept this fully: “But why retain the form? . . . Form is namby-pamby nonsense” (317). It is only a few weeks ago that he took his first x-ray, an “illuminated anatomy, the triumph of the age” (256). “[H]is own hand through the fluoroscope” – it was a “gaunt *memento mori*” (260, 259). Or he “saw exactly what he should have expected to see, but which no man was ever intended to see and which he himself had never presumed he would be able to see: he saw his own grave” (260). Then he almost has a foresight of the conversation he will have with Behrens, with Behrens’s definition of death applied to his own:

Under that light, he saw the process of corruption anticipated, saw the flesh in which he moved decomposed, expunged, dissolved into airy nothingness – and inside was the delicately turned skeleton of his right

hand and around the last joint of the ring finger, dangling black and loose, the signet ring his grandfather had bequeathed him: a hard thing, this ore with which man adorns a body predestined to melt away beneath it, so that it can be free again and move on to yet other flesh that may bear it for a while. With the eyes of his Tienappel forebear – penetrating, clairvoyant eyes – he beheld a familiar part of his body, and for the first time in his life he understood that he would die. (260)

An awareness that life is a matter of form, which may very easily separate from its ‘matter,’ pervades *The Magic Mountain*. Hans is a young man visiting a land of death, who himself knows more about death than he thinks he does. His education starts when his body is forced out of joint and he starts questioning the callow notion he used to have of “perfect health.”

“Snow”: The Space-Time of Death

Heller says the section “Snow” “is a synopsis of the whole book” (190). Thematically, either the section or the book can be read “as a parable of Man, man lost and saved – or perhaps not quite as much saved as he is lost.” In terms of the form and techniques, the section or, again, the book as a whole “aspires to, and perhaps achieves, a formal unity unparalleled by any other novel,” and “weaves and inter-weaves its motifs and arabesques into a pattern which, despite its endless variations, seems yet complete on every single page.” With qualification that is really a compliment, Stock agrees with

Heller on the thematic and technical brilliance of the section: “‘Snow’ culminates in what might have been a dangerously explicit statement of the novel’s vision, even going so far as to italicize its core idea. What saves it – what puts it among the greatest achievements of the art of fiction – is that it is also a particularly dazzling example of Mann’s characteristic methods and gifts” (510). These comments may very well be examples one recent critic of Mann’s novel would give of the “hyperbolic statements” that praise Mann for his “faultless command over the thematic structure of his novels, and of [*The Magic Mountain*] in particular,” statements that “have been reiterated many times” (Cohn 204). Hyperbolic as they may be, it is still hard not to see the section as indeed something remarkable. Stock sums it up as “an account of a genuine battle against death in an Alpine snowstorm – of the terror of the battle and the gigantic and “uncanny” beauty of the mountains” (510). In Stock’s view, the section, “which could make the fortune of a realist,” also became “a “transparency” for the full, accumulated wealth of the novel’s meanings.” So on the one hand, the reader has a “densely particularized reality, its gripping . . . drama of character in action,” and on the other, “a play of ideas by which . . . all the hints of meaning that came before are echoed, related, and fulfilled.” The section is a “triumph” of “the special Mann effect of intellectual daring and dexterity,” and the source of that triumph is an “explosion of idea-carrying leitmotifs” (510-11).

The section is also a triumph of Mann’s imagination. For starters, as an account of a “battle against death in Alpine snowstorm,” it gives us an uncommon example in fiction of what Bachelard called “the imagination of cold” which, as he says, has been

“rather poor” (*EW* 176). At best, Bachelard tells us, writers “scrape by with descriptions of numbness and whiteness – snow and ice – or make use of comparisons with cold metal to approximate coldness. In short, they quickly turn to moral metaphor, unable to find images more simple and direct.” If Bachelard is right about this impoverished state of the imagination of cold, “Snow” should be a rare exception. Here the imagination of cold puts together far more than just “descriptions of numbness and whiteness – snow and ice” or “moral metaphors,” and creates the stage for a young man’s “encounter with that Other, nature itself in its naked destructive power” (Stock 512). Winter, its cold, snow, and ice are actively and intimately imagined, which, in Bachelard’s theory of imagination, is the same as the “active ambivalence” in each of them dreamed and set loose (*WD* 105). Stock says that in the “Snow” section we see “a recognition that – to use the words of Mann’s letter – “the antinomies of the world are inherent in existence itself”” (513). What he puts as “an explosion of idea-carrying leitmotifs” can also be seen as an explosion of what Mann here refers to as “the antinomies,” antinomies “of the world” and antinomies as they are manifested in “existence.” In “Snow,” these “explosions” are carried through not just by what Stock calls the “famous trick Mann learned from Wagner,” i.e. using leitmotifs, but also by the force of the imagination (511).

It starts with the coming of Hans’s second winter at Berghof, a winter marked by its negligence “in fulfilling its duties as an Alpine winter,” duties of providing “the meteorological medicine for which these regions were famous,” the medicine being massive quantities of sunlight (555). In place of sun, there is “snow, great, colossal

masses of snow, more snow than Hans Castorp had ever seen in his life” (556). It snows “in monstrous, reckless quantities, reminding you of just how bizarre and outlandish these regions were.” These “monstrous” masses of snow soon *petrify* and combine with what Bachelard calls “petrifying reveries.”

It snowed day after day, and on through the nights, in light flurries, in heavy squalls – but it snowed. The few paths still passable were like tunnels, with snow piled man-high on both sides, forming walls like slabs of alabaster, grainy with beautiful sparkling crystals, a surface guests found useful for drawing pictures or writing messages – news, jokes, ribaldries. And between the walls, the snow was packed so thick, despite all the shoveling, that here and there you came across holes and soft spots where you could suddenly sink in, sometimes up to the knee. You had to pay close attention to keep from accidentally breaking a leg. The benches had vanished, had sunk beneath the snow – here and there the back of one might stick up out of its white grave. Down in town, street level had shifted oddly until shops had become cellars you entered by descending stairways of snow. (556-57)

Snow, when large quantities of it accumulate, may solidify as hard as a rock and it does here. Yet the solidification is a deeply ambivalent one. Two pages later, we will read Hans’s love of snow as “a deep, loose, unblemished powder,” a quality it shares with “yellowish-white sand” on the shore, which he also loves, for “both felt clean to the touch” (559). In the passage above, although the snowfalls are in massive quantities, so

much so that passages through the walls built from them should feel like “tunnels,” they still retain such powdery quality. Note that they come both “in light flurries” and “in heavy squalls.” The insides or the “walls” of a tunnel, so that you pass through it without fearing a collapse, should have a solidity of a rock in the unconscious, and here they do, to a degree, but they also are brittle. They sparkle like crystals, the precious stones that, aside from reveries of “condensation of limpidity,” often become “an atom of hardened reverie one imagines no hammer capable of shattering” (*EW* 226). But the supreme hardness of crystals is qualified by “grainy,” an unevenness that suggests instability, and, at any rate, it wouldn’t take much for alabaster, if “slabs” of it, to cave in. Early in *Earth and Reveries of Will*, discussing the dialectic of hard and soft, Bachelard comments on a French idiom – “Matter is the best measure of our hostility. For example, “to fight like plaster” [*batter comme plâtre*] designates the act of a weak aggressor – cowardly, drunken, and turning to dust” (17). Such dialectic of hard and soft is at work here also in the “grave” snow turns into. It is hard enough to be a grave – and later, stairways into cellars – but soft enough also to let the buried “stick up out” of it. Snow in the passage creates a landscape at once forbidding and calming, if not – not *yet* – inviting, and it is matter that is by turns condensing and collapsing.

As to images of pure petrification, Bachelard says:

Some individuals create images by refusing to participate, as if they longed to retire from the life of the universe. The first thing one senses is an antivegetal tendency. They harden every landscape. They like sharp, clashing, severing, indeed hostile, contours. Their metaphors are violent

and raw, their colors stark and loud. They live by instinct in a paralytic world. The very rocks die at their touch. (159)

Petrifying reveries in “Snow” create a snowy landscape that may well be viewed with these terms in mind. When we read, for example, following a description of the lack of sunlight due to heavy snow and fog, “there was a momentary hint of blue sky, and even this bit of light was enough to release a flash of diamonds across the wide landscape, so oddly disfigured by its snowy adventure,” the “flash of diamonds” seems to be as much about the light from the stone, of the paramount hardness, rearranging the landscape into geometric – hence “sharp, clashing, severing” – forms in its own image, as it is about the “flash” adding a sudden light on the landscape (558). Or the reader will take the “strong west wind” as having paralyzing and immobilizing – that is, petrifying – forces and, accordingly, the beautiful mountains as paralyzed and immobilized when we read “The wintry mountains were beautiful – not in a gentle, benign way, but beautiful like the wild North Sea under a strong west wind. They awakened the same sense of awe – but there was no thunder, only a deathly silence” (562). If solidity-fragility is one pair of ambivalence, starkness-fuzziness is another. So we read:

Outside was gloomy nothing, a world packed in grayish-white cotton, in foggy vapors and whirling snow that pushed up against the windowpanes. The mountains were invisible, although over time something of the nearest evergreen forest might come into view, heavily laden with snow, only to be quickly lost in the next flurry; now and then a fir would shake off its burden, dumping dusty white into gray. Around ten o’clock the sun

would appear like a wisp of softly illumined vapor above its mountain, a pale spook spreading a faint shimmer of reality over the vague, indiscernible landscape. But it all melted into a ghostly delicate pallor, with no definite lines, nothing the eye could follow with certainty. The contours of the peaks merged, were lost in fog and mist. Expanses of snow suffused with soft light rose in layers, one behind another, leading your gaze into insubstantiality. And what was probably a weakly illumined cloud clung to a cliff, motionless, like an elongated tatter of smoke. (557)

Such is when peace reigns. At peace, the snowy landscape achieves an elemental unity and seduces a human being into it. So Hans feels that sleep amidst the “cottony nothing” of the snow-draped world is the purest sleep in which all memories of life will be annulled: “Snow was falling silently. Everything grew more and more blurred. Gazing into cottony nothing, eyes easily closed and drifted into slumber, and at just that moment a shiver passed over the body. And yet there could be no purer sleep than here in this icy cold, a dreamless sleep untouched by any conscious sense of organic life’s burdens” (558). Sufficiently disturbed or energized, however, the landscape can turn into “a beast”:

Yes, it could storm, even in this high, peaceful valley. . . . Gusts that could suffocate you drove flurries in wild, driving, sidelong blasts, pulled snow up from the valley floor in great eddies, set it whirling in a mad dance – it was no longer snowfall, it was a chaos of white darkness, a

beast. The whole region went on a monumental, unbridled rampage, and only the snow finches, which could suddenly appear in flocks, seemed to feel at home in it. (559)

If the gentler side of the snowy mountain is sleep-inducing, its harsh side arouses Hans's will to confront it, so that, on the one hand, aside from the sleep, he wants to "be alone with his thoughts to "play king"" in his balcony, and on the other, he wants to "enjoy a freer, more active, more intense experience of the snowy mountain wilderness, for which he felt a great affinity" (560). So he decides to buy skis, which, once he acquires the skills he needs, will "open up inaccessible worlds and almost obliterate barriers" (563).

Even before the skis do that, the mountain aroused "feelings of the sublime and holy" but it also had a "droll" quality "straight out of fairy tales" (558).

Usually the snow stopped at that hour of the day, as if for a quick survey of what had been achieved thus far; the rare days of sunshine seemed to serve much the same purpose – the flurries died down and the sun's direct glare attempted to melt the luscious, pure surface of drifted new snow. It was a fairy-tale world, childlike and funny. Boughs of trees adorned with thick pillows, so fluffy someone must have plumped them up; the ground a series of humps and mounds, beneath which slinking underbrush or outcrops of rock lay hidden; a landscape of crouching, cowering gnomes in droll disguises – it was comic to behold, straight out of a book of fairy tales. But if there was something roguish and fantastic about the

immediate vicinity through which you laboriously made your way, the towering statues of snow-clad Alps, gazing down from the distance, awakened in you feelings of the sublime and holy. (558)

Among the many pairs of ambivalent forces that permeate “Snow,” one manifest in this passage is that of ‘small vs. big.’ When snow stops and the sunlight fills the landscape, it turns into a somewhat shrunk, scaled-down, and thus “childlike and funny” “fairy-tale world.” The ground is scattered with “humps and mounds,” or small hills for dwarfs who, although it’s not certain whether *on* the ground or *under* it, are making merry.

In this brief transformation into a landscape “straight out of a book of fairy tales,” objects are for a moment made to look smaller. The scale of reduction itself is not great enough for us to view it as a “miniature,” and yet here is an example of what Bachelard calls “dynamic virtues of miniature thinking” (*PS* 150). Bachelard cites a short story by Hermann Hesse in which a “prisoner paints a landscape on the wall of his cell showing a miniature train entering a tunnel.” The picture and the tunnel give the prisoner a refuge or means of escape that are too real to be called ‘vicarious’. So when the jailors visit him he asks them to give him a moment, to let him make sure everything is all right inside the train. As the prisoner-narrator tells us:

As usual, they started to laugh, because they considered me to be weak-minded. I made myself very tiny, entered into my picture and climbed into the little train, which started moving, then disappeared into the darkness of the tunnel. For a few seconds longer, a bit of flaky smoke

could be seen coming out of the round hole. Then this smoke blew away,
and with it the picture, and with the picture, my person. (150)

Anyone who saw Frank Darabont's *The Shawshank Redemption* will remember the wonder-filled climax of the film, reading the following commentary by Bachelard on the passage from Hesse, the climax in which a *real* tunnel is revealed behind the poster of Raquel Welch on the cell wall when a rock tears through it: "How many times poet-painters, in their prisons, have broken through walls, by way of a tunnel! How many times, as they painted their dreams, they have escaped through a crack in the wall! And to get out of prison all means are good ones. If need be, mere absurdity can be a source of freedom."

Imagination in this instance of miniature-making is a desire to create and possess a world, or as Bachelard notes, "The cleverer I am at miniaturizing the world, the better I possess it" (150). We possess the world better when it's made smaller because "inversions in the perspective of size" condense and enrich values (151). In other words, knowing more clearly – and dearly, in the sense both of endearment and diminution – what one wants to possess, one possesses it more surely. And yet, paradoxical as it may sound, miniaturizing is always magnifying as well. The train for the prisoner in the Hesse story is small as pictured on the wall but it should also be large enough to accommodate him. In a story by Charles Nodier Bachelard quotes, the hero rides a coach of the size of a bean, while carrying a bag of beans – six thousand beans – on his shoulder (149). Is it the case that the coach is as small as the bean, or that the bean is as large as the coach? A bean is large enough to accommodate six thousand of its own kind

inside it and small enough to get inside one of its own along with six thousand others. Consider, for still another example, this exhortation to the reader from a dictionary of botany under the entry of *Periwinkle*: “Reader, study the periwinkle in detail, and you will see how detail increases an object’s stature” (155). It asks its reader to study the flower with a magnifying glass in hand, with which the reader will experience the true dimension of the flower. In other words, the periwinkle’s minute details, sources of many a botanist’s daydreams of miniatures as those of any other flower’s are, will eventually give rise to images of greatness. One may recall the botanist who, describing the stamens and pistils of the flower of the German stachys, “found wedded life in miniature, in a flower,” and had to say, for example:

The little pistil remains respectfully at their feet, but since it is very small, in order to speak to it, they, in turn, must bend their knees. These little women are very important, and those that appear to be the humblest, often assume great authority in their homes. The four seeds remain at the bottom of the chalice, where they are grown, the way, in India, children swing in a hammock. (154)

As can be seen in this example, when we study a flower with a magnifying glass, Bachelard tells us, “at the moment when we have to accept unnoticed detail, and dominate it,” an important psychological law comes into force, that of objectivity rendered unstable (155). Objectivity befitting the spirit of observation is renounced for the sake of an entry into a world – a “new” world. A botanist with a magnifying glass, such a man “is not an old man still trying to read his newspaper, in spite of eyes that are

weariness of looking.” This old man is intent on his everyday world, however weary from it he is. Contrary to him, one who looks with a magnifying glass “bars” the everyday world to become “a fresh eye before a new object.” With the magnifying glass, the botanist recaptures “the enlarging gaze of a child,” and enters into the garden “where children see enlarged.” Small details of an object, when attention is paid to them, open “a new world which, like all worlds, contains the attributes of greatness.”

To return to Hans Castorp and his Alps adventure: newly acquired skills in skis “open up inaccessible worlds and almost obliterated barriers,” and they thereby would “permit him the solitude he sought, the profoundest solitude imagined touching his heart with a precarious savagery beyond human understanding” (563). In the previous “Walpurgis Night” section, Hans’s task was to bring to a resolution his infatuation with Frau Chauchat and his maddening hunger for understanding its nature. The section was an attempt to understand Hans’s heart, “his heart, his human heart, with its questions and riddles” (566). The section “Snow” too, or indeed *The Magic Mountain* as a whole, may very rightly be seen as a study of Hans’s heart, with its questions and riddles, and if the question and riddle in “Walpurgis Night” are ones concerning erotic love, they are ones about death in “Snow.” So with the “precarious savagery” aroused in his heart, he will now experience the “exhilarating thrill of brushing up against powers whose full embrace would destroy [him]” or the “taste for extending the thrilling contact with deadly nature until it threatened with its full embrace” (564). In short, he will confront “death,” death as “a great power” (588). And this confrontation, or the courage for it, is prepared by the sense of possession and command he could have over Berghof’s

landscape when it, during the letups of snowfall, turned itself into its own mockery of sort, somewhat shrunk, and something “comic to behold, straight out of a book of fairy tales.” Bachelard says that to know elements and forces that are “characterized by *resistance*,” we have to “dream of them in their ambivalence of gentleness and cruelty” (EW 7). At one pole, there are images of snow and the mountain that valorize around gentleness or repose – recall the “gnomes” seeking their hideouts under snow and the purest sleep Hans falls into while watching, for example, “every inch of ground . . . cushioned soft with snow” – and then there are those that embody the challenge, indeed a deadly one. It should be noted, as Bachelard tells us, that they don’t take place in isolation at just one pole, and instead that they “emerge somewhere on a continuum between these two poles.” In other words, such images “exist dialectically, balancing the seductions of the external universe against the certitudes of the inner self.”

In “Snow,” responding to the powerful seductions of the mountain with “devout” certitudes of his heart, Hans on his ski outing braves a menacing snow storm and ventures into “the very heart of the realm to which desire had lured him, the realm of death” (Stock 512). Barely surviving the storm, and the lure of death, he stumbles on a hut which, he finds to his dismayed horror, is the same hut, the abandoned and crumbling one, he came across upon undertaking his adventure. The hut was to serve as a landmark of sort, for his sense of bearings, not as a point to return but a point to get away from. Debilitated Hans decides to rest amidst the “illusion of some hospitality” the hut’s roof provides and drinks the port in the small bottle he pocketed. With the “organic warmth” it brings on, Hans gets drunk, falls asleep and has dreams. The dreams are first

about humanity's "gentleness," then about their "cruelty," and each in its extremes. In the first dream, he sees beautiful Mediterranean landscape and seascape full of lights and colors, vivid and delicate. It is a blissful sight and Hans feels overwhelmed: "Oh, no, enough, all so undeserved – what a bliss of light, of deep pure sky, of sun-drenched water" (581). This landscape of "blue sunshine" is inhabited by "people, children of the sea and sun . . . intelligent, cheerful, beautiful, young humanity, so fair to gaze upon" (581-82). In short, it is an image of "sunny, civilized happiness" (584).

Then one of the boys in the image guides Hans to a temple with a massive foundation. Inside the temple are dense rows of columns, into which Hans walks as if absorbed by the power of its forest-like depth. A group of statues, of female figures, appear and, behind them, Hans sees witches "busy at a ghastly chore among flickering braziers" (585). To his utmost horror, they are "dismembering a child held above a basin, tearing it apart with their bare hands in savage silence." In the first dream of the sunny civilization in the Mediterranean, Hans knows that he has never actually been there, the place, before, and yet he recognizes it from his memory: "He had never vacationed in the south, taken so much as a sip of it, knew only his own rough, pallid sea and clung to it with clumsy, childish emotion, but he had never reached the Mediterranean – Naples, Sicily, Greece. And yet he *remembered* it. Yes, it was that peculiar sense of recognition he celebrated now" (581). In the second dream, the witches do something inconceivable, which almost paralyzes Hans – "They devoured [the child] piece by piece, the brittle little bones cracking in their mouths, blood dripping from their vile lips. Hans Castorp was caught frozen in the gruesome, icy spell" – then, spotting

him, they curse at him in the dialect of his hometown, Hamburg, which even further adds to the already utmost horror – “They went on about their grisly work, but they had seen him now and shook bloody fists and damned him soundlessly with the filthiest, lowliest curses of his hometown dialect. He felt sick, sicker than he had ever felt in his life. Trying desperately to pull himself away, he slipped and fell against the column at his back” (585).

It is the “bloody feast” that goes on inside the temple of civilization and its insufferable horror wakes Hans up (586). Now he knows the meaning of death. His understanding of life and death has deepened and he rhapsodically goes on about what his achievements up to this moment mean. His raving is in a way a continuation of his dreams, for “he went on dreaming, as it were – no longer in visions, but in thoughts hardly less perilous and tangled.” His first thought regards how come, in the dream he just had, he knew a landscape he has never seen and he decides that he does because he is part of humanity:

Where did I get that beautiful bay with those islands, and the temple precincts, to which the eyes of that lovely lad who stood off by himself directed me? We don't form our dreams out of just our own souls. We dream anonymously and communally, though each in his own way. The great soul, of which we are just a little piece, dreams through us so to speak, dreams in our many different ways its own eternal, secret dream – about its youth, its hope, its joy, its peace, and its bloody feast. (586)

Thus he reaches at an understanding of humanity as a “whole,” of which he is a part. Beginning with this thought, Hans delivers an impassioned summation of his education so far at the mountain, in which he embraces death, death as “the other half” of life (586). Now he knows death because he has known life: “I know everything about humankind. I have known flesh and blood. . . . But he who knows the body, who knows life, also knows death.” Since knowing life is knowing death and vice versa, and in quite an active sense, what Mann himself put as “antinomies . . . inherent in existence itself” no longer are antinomies and rather become two parties of what Bachelard called an “energetic dualism” (EW 19). Hans says: “Because our interest in death and illness is nothing but a way of expressing an interest in life. . . . Death or life – illness or health – spirit or nature. Are those really contradictions? I ask you: Are those problems? No, they are not problems. . . . Death kicks over its traces in the midst of life, and this would not be life if it did not, and in the middle is where the *homo Dei*’s state is found” (586-87). And yet he has to guard against death as well. He recalls the dream he just had, in which he saw the “bloody banquet,” and emphatically pledges: “*For the sake of goodness and love, man shall grant death no dominion over his thoughts*” (588). “Death is a great power,” he muses, “Reason stands foolish before him, for reason is only virtue, but death is freedom and kicking over the traces, chaos and lust. Lust, my dream says, not love.” Death is power, freedom, chaos and lust. And Hans arrives at this “dynamic” view of death through his experience of what may be termed the “space-time of death.”

The snow and mountain are strange minefields of energies. The silence of the mountain’s insides is not just “primal,” “deathly,” “absolute” and “perfect,” but is

“padded soundlessness,” which is “like none ever known or perceived anywhere else in the world” (563). That the mountain is a field of forces – ones that are active, if not sentient – is more clearly suggested in the passage that follows the above description of silence: “No, this world with its fathomless silence did not receive a visitor hospitably. He was an invader who came at his own risk, whose presence was only tolerated in an eerie, foreboding way; and he could sense the menace of mute, elemental forces as they rose up against him – not hostile, but simply indifferent and deadly” (563). Entering the mountain is to confront the “menace” and defy the “forces,” and to do so not just in either a physical or psychological sense but with a whole being. The “secret, holy fear” Hans feels is likewise more than merely psychological. Fear “is the prerequisite of courage,” and the courage is a “courage before the elements,” which is “defined not as a dull, level-headed relationship with them, but a conscious abandonment to them, the mastering of the fear of death out of sympathy with them” (566, 564). To cite the words Bachelard uses to comment on the material dimension of Atlas myth, Hans is receptive to the “energies” of the mountain, which means “resisting the tyranny of nature through *human* effort, pitting the human body against the universe” (EW 278). In other words, Hans’s confrontation with the mountain, or his abandonment to it, is defined by his human body against the body of the mountain.

The snow, when stabbed with Hans’s ski pole, gives off a blue light. And it is not just a light but *light-force*: “It was such a peculiar, delicate greenish-blue light, icy clear and yet dusky, from the heights and from the depths, mysterious and seductive” (566). In other words, it is a light that encloses the dynamism of heights and depths, or dynamism

from heights to depths and vice versa. With the mystery and seduction augmented by this dynamism, the light reminds Hans of “the light and color of a certain pair of eyes, slanting eyes that spoke of destiny.” Actually two pairs of eyes, those of Frau Chauchat and Hippe, the two people who exerted irresistible charm on Hans. Even what Hans takes as a symbol of “the secret of death itself,” snow crystal, achieves an active ambivalence due to a dynamism of this kind. Hans with his “magnifying glass” discovers that snow crystals “were collections of dainty, precise little jewels: gemstones, star insignia, diamond brooches – no skilled jeweler could have produced more delicate miniatures” (568). Along with the miniature-making imagination, what Bachelard calls an “activism” of gemstones is at work. Gemstones, their lights, enchant us because they are in active correspondence with “the astral.” The stars in the heaven and the gemstones on earth are connected through the “material influence” they give each other, and therefore “it must be noted that the beautiful, hard substances of precious stones do not passively adopt the *influence* of the stars. *In truth, the mineral attracts the astral*” (233). In other words, gemstones enclose not just the lights of stars but the *act of capturing* them as well. It is partly because of this dynamism projected onto snowflakes, due to their similarity to gemstones, that Hans, before deciding that snowflakes are too perfect and too precise to be a part of life, juxtaposes apparently contradictory qualities of snowflakes, without suspecting a contradiction. So, he muses, snowflakes are “little pieces of an inorganic substance, the wellspring of protoplasm, of plants and human beings; and among all those myriads of magical stars in their secret, minuscule splendor never intended for the human eye, no two were alike” (568). It is inorganic matter, little

pieces of it at that, but it hides the “splendor” of “myriads of magical stars” that is not meant for the human eye. And it gives birth to the source of life, protoplasm, the living content of a cell.

Protoplasm was something of a preoccupation of Hans’s during the winter a year before when he, possessed with burning intellectual curiosity regarding the question “what is life?”, devoured books on anatomy, physiology and biology. It is part of the “magic of the winter night,” when the whole world has fallen under “a spell of icy purity” in which the moonlight is bright enough to read books by, to curl up with one in the balcony or in the room (323, 322). On such nights, as “the moon followed its prescribed path across the high mountain valley glistening like crystal below,” he would “pursue his study of organized matter, of the characteristics of protoplasm” (326). Protoplasm intrigues him because it stands for the “impure mystery” of life – it is “that self-sustaining, delicate substance that hovers intriguingly between synthesis and dissolution and whose basic forms have remained the same as when it first assumed rudimentary shape.” If there is a bridge between life and inanimate matter, it should be found in protoplasm – hence the “jubilation” that “had greeted the first primal slime fished from the sea’s deepest deeps,” for the slime was taken as a sample of protoplasm, and the subsequent disappointment over the discovery that the slime was actually “a precipitate of gypsum” (327). But, between life and inorganic matter, it is “a yawning abyss, which research sought in vain to bridge.” As he will realize a little later, there is also a yawning abyss “between the material and non-material,” an abyss which is “far more mysterious than the one between organic and inorganic nature” (336-37). A

molecule stands between the material and non-material, and a molecule is “made up of atoms, and the atom [is] not even close to being large enough to be called extraordinarily small” (337). An atom is closer to “energy” than matter, so that “one could not yet, or perhaps no longer, think of it as matter, but rather as both the medium and boundary between the material and immaterial.” With an atom, one loses all sense of proportion, because it is so small that it is no longer small, and “no longer small” is tantamount to “immense.” As Hans concludes, “at the moment of the final division, the final miniaturization of matter, suddenly the whole cosmos opened up.”

When all the learning of Hans from the previous winter is applied, snowflakes do not just enclose “all those myriads of magical stars” in a figurative sense, but in a literal sense – that is, theoretically, they do really contain “the whole cosmos.” To continue with Hans’s thought: no two of them are like, he muses, due to “all the result of an endless delight in invention, in the subtlest variation and embellishment of one basic design: the equilateral, equiangular hexagon” (568). Then his view takes a turn toward death: “And yet absolute symmetry and icy regularity characterized each item of cold inventory. Yes, that was what was so eerie – it was anti-organic, hostile to life itself.” Looking at the exacting regularity of snowflakes, Hans thinks he now understands why the architects of ancient cultures secretly built elements of asymmetry into their temples. “Snowflakes were too regular; when put into the service of life, the same substance was never so regular as that. Life shuddered at such perfect precision, regarded it as something deadly, as the secret of death itself.” Snowflakes are carriers of protoplasm, which holds the key to the “impure mystery” of life. They are at the same time “the

secret of death itself.” An instance of the “irreducible ambivalence” that pervades the novel, they really add not only to the “ambivalence” but to the “dynamism” – dynamism, or “dynamic temptation,” involved in the challenges Hans takes on (575).

Skis allow Hans “the solitude he sought, the profoundest solitude imaginable touching his heart” (563). It is a solitude in the midst of “mute, elemental forces,” and “a padded soundlessness,” which at one point he realizes is the other face of “secret, holy fear” (563-64). It is in other words, a “dangerous solitude” amid a “profound silence” (567). Bachelard, reading German romantic Ludwig Tieck’s story about a fall (plunge) and its “tonality,” with which any sound is annihilated, tells us that “Silence suffices to create a void” (*EW* 269). In other words, an abyss is made audible by the increasing soundlessness inside and downward. Or as Bachelard says, “[during a fall] our soul becomes an ear reaching out across a well of silence.” In light of this insight, Hans’s adventures in the snowy mountain in “Snow” can be seen as an extended fall through an abyss, an abyss that is “a well of silence.” And the sensation of a fall is most of all a “sudden and total solitude” (267). The absolute solitude of a fall through an abyss that is “a well of silence” is succeeded by Hans’s withstanding the “white transcendence” or “white darkness” of snowstorm. The time-space of death combines with its matter-duration. Such is the closest Hans can have for a first-hand experience of death. After that he’s back to life, to its “magical blur” of colors, unfolding (580).

“Merely a Beginning, Pedagogically Speaking”

In the impassioned and extended soliloquy in “Snow” about his *Bildung* so far at the mountain, Hans sounds rightly proud of himself – “I have experienced so much among the people up here,” “I know everything about humankind,” and so on – and yet he also modestly calls it only a “beginning”: “I have known flesh and blood, I gave Pribislav Hippe’s pencil back to ailing Clavdia. But he who knows the body, who knows life, also knows death. Except that’s not the whole thing – but merely a beginning, pedagogically speaking” (586). It is only a beginning because now he will have to turn his knowledge of death into that of life. As he tells himself: “You have to hold it up to the other half, to its opposite. Because our interest in death and illness is nothing but a way of expressing an interest in life.”

If there has been a guiding principle in his *Bildung*, it was one given to him by Settembrini the Italian humanist in one of their first meetings: *placet experiri*, or “it pleases to experiment.” A “fine maxim” Settembrini himself calls it, but it is meant less as a piece of advice than of warning: allow yourself “temporary experimentation with all sorts of standpoints,” but always beware the tricks it may play on you (115). As Settembrini would note later, it is fine to live by the maxim as long as “it is a matter of a respectable passion to explore the world,” but it is no longer so when it becomes “a matter of depravity” (423). To Settembrini, a staunch believer in the humanistic tradition of the West, Berghof is essentially an underbelly or netherworld of civilization, all its cutting-edge medical facilities and beguiling cosmopolitanism notwithstanding. In fact,

it is Hans's very first evening at Berghof that Settembrini tells him to leave, for one "can be a European only in the flatlands," and he will soon get too "confused under these atmospheric conditions" (294). As he warns Hans, the depravity of the place will turn him into swine: "I urge you. . . . Avoid that swamp, that isle of Circe – for you are not Odysseus enough to dwell there unharmed. You will walk on all fours, you are tipping down onto your front limbs already, and will soon begin to grunt – beware!"

It is in defiance of Settembrini's warning and living fully by the maxim "*placet experiri*" that Hans achieves his *Bildung*, which, as "merely a beginning," has been a training of sort in what Adorno calls materialist metaphysics (*ND* 365). To Adorno, "a fresh start in metaphysics" is given its force by the total failure of culture: Auschwitz, to sum it up in one word (368). A "radical questioning" of culture is in order so that one may "scrape off the delusions which a culture that had failed was papering over its guilt and over truth." Metaphysics has traditionally been considered as directly opposed to materialism, but if it's to be given a fresh start, it must combine with it. For one cannot believe "any more that the immutable is truth, and that the mobile, transitory is appearance" (361). Metaphysics is still to be defined as "a science of the transcendental," but it must no longer be "in contradistinction to the sphere of immanence" (*Metaphysics* 3). Rather, the tension itself, "the tension between the sphere of transcendence and the sphere of that which is merely the case," must become the subject of philosophy if metaphysics is to be given a new life (18). In other words, metaphysics comes into being when the immanent and sensible world is taken seriously and its relation to the "supra-sensible" is given reflection. The "intra-mundane" is

infinitely relevant to the transcendental, especially if one considers the ample evidence from traditional metaphysics itself that, what it presents as its “eternal values,” its “immutabilities,” derive from experience and from the mutable (100).

Hans’s defiance of Settembrini’s warning is in a way a refusal to become a “European” as Settembrini would see fit. In “Snow,” after declaring that his learning so far has taught him much and yet is still “merely a beginning,” Hans says that to him now the “one great, urgent concern” will be “man himself, his true state and condition” (586-587). Then he repudiates the influences from the two mentors he met at the mountain, Settembrini the humanist and Naphta the Jesuit. In place of their teaching, he would rather stand by what he saw in the visions while dreaming.

I dreamed about the nature of man, and about a courteous, reasonable, and respectful community of men – while the ghastly bloody feast went on in the temple behind them. Were they courteous and charming to one another, those sunny folk, out of silent regard for that horror? What a fine and gallant conclusions for them to draw! I shall hold to their side, here in my soul, and not with Naphta, or for that matter with Settembrini – they’re both windbags. The one is voluptuous and malicious, and the other is forever tooting his little horn of reason and even imagines he can stare madmen back to sanity – how preposterous, how philistine! (587)

Hans’s words about the barbarism of civilization recall Adorno’s on the same topic. In “Meditations on Metaphysics” of *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno tells of a “first image” of man a child has from an innkeeper Adam, who clubs the rats scurrying around

in the courtyard, an image that will be remembered whenever the child sees a dogcatcher's van (366). When the child no longer remembers how he used to feel before the dogcatcher's van: that is when culture both triumphs and fails. It may be a dogcatcher's van or what happens in, in Adorno's other examples, Vietnam or South Africa: all the same, if culture lives on in a world where things happen of which one knows and only with difficulty represses the knowledge that they happen, then culture in that world is "a lid over refuse" (*Metaphysics* 130). Or, as Auschwitz, atomic bomb, and the introduction of torture as an institution attest, culture is often administrative barbarism outright (104). The *Bildung* Hans achieved is merely a beginning because, following a vision of negation, it sets him up for a new task.

CHAPTER V

“OOMB, ALLWOMBING TOMB” – WATER’S LYRICISM IN *ULYSSES*

“The Flood Is Following Me”: Stephen’s Fear of Water

Virginia Woolf’s initial reservations about *Ulysses* are well-known. In a diary entry in 1922, she confessed she was, at first, “amused, stimulated, charmed interested by the first 2 or 3 chapters – to the end of the Cemetery scene,” but then quickly, “puzzled, bored, irritated & disillusioned as by a queasy undergraduate scratching his pimples” (*D* 2:188-89). She decides it is an “illiterate, underbred book,” a “book of a self taught working man,” meaning it is “egotistic, insistent, raw, striking, & ultimately nauseating” (189). Eagleton sees in these remarks Woolf’s “odious snobbery” and suggests she shares a class bias typical of the British upper-class with, for example, the former Provost of Trinity College, Dublin, “at that time the academic home of the Anglo-Irish upper classes,” who remarked that *Ulysses* “proved what a blunder it had been to establish a special university (University College, Dublin, which Joyce attended) ‘for the aborigines of this island, for the corner-boys who spit in the Liffey’” (*The English Novel* 284, 283). A few days after she made the entry above, Woolf writes in the diary that one of the “[ways] to rock oneself back into writing is to read “good literature”” and then adds she will “now rock myself into literature by reading *Ulysses*!” (193). The exclamation mark at the end is suggestive indeed. Still, a couple weeks later, she records, “I finished *Ulysses*, & think it a mis-fire. Genius it has I think; but of the

inferior water” (199). Inferior water? – the reader may mark the phrase and wonder whether Woolf too, as did the Provost of Trinity College, Dublin, had Liffey in her mind, if only in a figurative sense but nonetheless with the same condescension. In a letter written at around the same time as these entries to Ottoline Morrell, Woolf considers and denigrates *Ulysses*, also in water-related terms: “I am now reading Joyce, and my impression, after 200 out of 700 pages, is that the poor young man has only got the dregs of a mind compared even with George Meredith. . . . It is true that I prepared myself, owing to Tom [Eliot], for a gigantic effort; and behold the bucket is almost empty” (*Congenial Spirits* 144).

One thing Woolf had in common with Joyce was an affinity with water, and when she evoked “inferior water” and some more water-inspired terms, she was responding to the quality of water strikingly different to her own in *Ulysses*, especially in its early episodes. Unlike any character in Woolf’s fiction, Stephen Dedalus fears water and feels not just haunted but harassed by it. In the opening of ‘Telemachus,’ Buck Mulligan sees a “new art colour for our Irish poets” on Stephen’s handkerchief, or as he calls it “the bard’s noserag,” a color which is “snotgreen” (1.73). The sea, “a great sweet mother,” as he quotes Algernon Swinburne to call it, is also “The snotgreen sea. The scrotumtightening sea” (1.77-78). He calls Stephen over to the parapet to take a look at the sea with him – “Ah, Dedalus. . . . She is our great sweet mother. Come and look” – and then reminds him of what he did to his dying mother – “The aunt thinks you killed your mother. . . . That’s why she won’t let me have anything to do with you” (1.79-81, 88-89). In spite of his mother’s begging, Stephen refused to kneel down and pray for her.

Stephen recalls a visit from his dead mother in a dream, gaunt in her shroud and smelling, and looks on the sea resenting Mulligan – “Across the threadbare cuffedge he saw the sea hailed as a great sweet mother by the wellfed voice beside him” (1.106-07). Then the “snotgreen” sea becomes “a dull green mass of liquid” contained in a gigantic bowl rimmed by the “ring of bay and skyline,” which in turn merges with the bowl Stephen’s mother used to spit out her vomit – “The ring of bay and skyline held a dull green mass of liquid. A bowl of white china had stood beside her deathbed holding the green sluggish bile which she had torn up from her rotting liver by fits of loud groaning vomiting” (1.107-10). The sea thus turns into “a bowl of bitter waters” (1.249).

In ‘Telemachus,’ the sea is equated with the mother. The sea as the mother is of course a universal symbol and the words of Marie Bonaparte Bachelard quotes from her study of Edgar Allen Poe – “The sea is for all men one of the greatest and most constant maternal symbols” – would seem simply to state the most obvious (*WD* 115). Bachelard cites these words to elaborate on his unique idea of filial love as the first principle of imagination. At the root of humanity’s love for the nature – no, at the root of all forms of love – is a filial devotion (115). For filial love is “the ability of the imagination to project an inexhaustible force that seizes all images and puts them in the most reliable human perspective: the maternal perspective” (116). Filial love is “the first ability to love,” onto which other loves that will come after will be grafted. None of the later loves, however, “will ever be able to destroy the priority of our first feelings” because – and this is a striking thing to say – “The chronology of the heart is indestructible.” Loving nature is, therefore, to tap into the first love we knew. And nature beloved by us becomes “a

projection of the mother,” or to quote Bonaparte again, “an immensely enlarged, eternal mother, projected into infinity” (115).

Filial love, the love that starts the indestructible chronology of the heart – part of “love’s bitter mystery” – is present not just in ‘Telemachus’ but in all three episodes of *Telemachia*, which in Homer’s original is meant to present a son beginning his journey in search of his father. The allusion to Ophelia’s ballad from *Hamlet* at the end of ‘Proteus,’ one she sings mourning the death of her father, is an apt ending to Joyce’s *Telemachia* in this regard. It is apt because, in spite of hints for “[Stephen’s] need for a spiritual, as opposed to a biological, father,” the filial love in *Telemachia* is not of a son in search of his missing father but of a son tormented by the death of a parent (Burgess 91). The love, in other words, is not to be defined by its empowering elements – the “passion and the constant curiosity of love,” for example, that enable so many “enthusiastic descriptions” of nature are only silent undercurrents in these episodes – but by the misfortune it can be (*WD* 115). Stephen’s relation to his mother, who recently passed away, is most of all that of guilt. It is a strange kind of guilt, though, for it is guilt that is remorseless. He grieves her death, feels pity for her and yet is resolutely remorseless about what he did. As Burgess notes, “His mother remains as a symbol for a Church he both despises and fears,” the Church being “the temporal voice of a hateful Butcher God” (95-96). In other words, “it is his mother, not his father, who is to be associated with the bearded monster called God” (96). Stephen’s love for his mother, in short, is one fated to be betrayed. In ‘Telemachus,’ he almost *refuses* to drink milk, an easy symbol of water’s maternity and what Bachelard calls “the first substantive in the

order of liquid realities,” delivered by an old woman who, as Burgess pithily sums up, “is Ireland, poor and dispossessed” (117, 97). Stephen takes note of her “Old shrunk paps” and how she can’t produce milk, as she pours “white milk, not hers” (1.398). For water is “the primary nourishment of all beings” in material imagination, it is often simply interchangeable with milk in its imaginative value (119). In ‘Telemachus,’ however, it is not the “nourishment” of water or milk but their mucosity that make the two one in nature – mucosity, that is, sticky density, as a quality that can trap and drag one down, the way, as Bachelard shows us, “dirt” does as a “muddy abyss” in August Strindberg’s play *A Dream Play* (EW 97). The ‘snotty’ sea is “a dull green mass of liquid.” It is a bowl “holding the green sluggish bile.” And on the beach at the end of ‘Telemachus,’ Stephen sees a young man moving “slowly frogwise his green legs in the deep jelly of the water” (1.680-81). His legs have turned green the sea’s color, and their movement has slowed down, caught in the jelly-like water.

Joyce is anything but a complainer and Strindberg’s play is a study of humanity whose “mother tongue is complaint” and itself also a complaint (*A Dream Play* 21). And yet *A Dream Play* shows motifs that *Ulysses* or *A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man* seem to share and that can be enlightening, especially about Stephen’s predicament: mother-child relationship defined not by joy and blessing but by anger and pain, a fear of sinking or drowning, and a will to shake off “dirt” or “mud” and arise into the air to achieve freedom. From this play Bachelard quotes a part of the dialogue between ‘Master’ and ‘Officer,’ while a ‘Poet’ stands by:

MASTER: Oh, he's a poet. Who's going to have his mudbath!

(*The POET* enters with his eyes directed toward the sky and a pail of mud in his hand.)

OFFICER: Heavens, you'd think he'd need a bath in light and air!

MASTER: No, he's always way up there in the heights so he gets homesick for mud. (*EW 97, A Dream Play 49*)

Bachelard comments that the poet in the play is one "perpetually tormented in an excremental hell" (97). In other words, since the "abyss is the matter that drags us down," the poet's "abyss is dirt." Following the dialogue above, the poet gives a monologue about what clay is meant for and how it is different from mud:

POET (*ecstatically*): Of clay the god Ptah created man on a potter's wheel, a lathe – (*skeptically*) – or what the hell have you! – (*Ecstatically*) Of clay the sculptor creates his more or less immortal masterpieces – (*skeptically*) – which most often are pure junk! (*Ecstatically*) Of clay are created these vessels so needed in the pantry, which have the name dishes in common, plates – (*skeptically*) – as far as that goes I don't care much what they're called! (*Ecstatically*) This is clay! When it's mixed with water and flows, it's called mud – *C'est mon affaire!* (49)

Later the poet has a session with Agnes, daughter of Indra the Hindu god of heaven, who has traveled down here on earth to lend her ear to the complaints of mortals, at a seaside cave. Nearby are "The music of the winds. The music of the waves" (66). Agnes tells the poet that she has become so fluent in the language of complaint that

she now can translate even the lamentations of winds. Then she listens to the winds and translates. They lament, for example, “Born under the clouds of heaven / we were chased by the bolts of Indra / down unto the dusty earth . . .” (66-67). In short, the winds’ complaint is that “The earth is not clean, life is not good” (67). Agnes tells the poet that she herself has become too much like the mortals and lost the power to ascend. She cries out:

I’ve been too long down here bathing in mud as you do . . . My thoughts cannot fly any more; there’s clay on my wings . . . soil on my feet . . . and I myself – (*lifts her arms*) – I’m sinking, sinking . . . Help me, Father, God of Heaven! (*Silence*) I don’t hear His answer nay more! Ether won’t carry the sound from His lips to the shell of my ear . . . the silver thread has broken . . . (*sighs*) I am earthbound!” (70)

Executing what Bachelard calls an “elemental dramaturgy” in these instances and elsewhere, Strindberg in *A Dream Play* offers a “terrestrial realism,” in which “human suffering grows heavier, darker, harder, more troubled – in short, more real” in the material images of mud (98). As Bachelard memorably sums up, “Mud, in Strindberg’s poetics, is misfortune multiplied.”

Stephen’s predicament is something akin to Strindberg’s misfortune of mud. *Portrait* is full of its variations – unpleasant liquid, that is, muddy, slimy, sluggish, opaque, suspiciously warm or revoltingly cold liquid or mud keeps getting in the way of Stephen. One of his very first memories is the sensation of bedwetting, which is bluntly

narrated right after a transcription of the first nursery rhyme he picks up from the story his father tells him.

O, the wild rose blossoms

On the little green place.

He sang that song. That was his song

O, the green wothe botheth

When you wet the bed first it is warm then it gets cold. (3)

His father's telling him a child's story opens a world of sounds and their meanings, hence language, for him, and his own bedwetting opens that of the senses. What he remembers, immediately after the sensation of bedwetting, is a smell – "His mother put on the oilsheet. That had the queer smell" – which conjures up another smell, of his mother who "had a nicer smell than his father" (3). His mother has a nicer smell than his father but, aside from this ambiguous distinction, the world of the senses opened for Stephen is clearly not a pleasant one. The dampness and coldness of a wet bed seems to set a pattern for his future experiences of the senses, even ones that by nature can't be damp or cold. Young Stephen in his first days at Clongowes is tortured by cold and slimy sensations, actual, remembered, or imagined. His classmates' "muddy boots" force him into a scrimmage in which he is forced to bend down to look (6). One of them, Wells the ringleader of bullies, pushes him into a square ditch when he refuses to swap his snuffbox for his chestnut, leaving him with a shockingly repugnant sensation: "How

cold and slimy the water had been!” (7). Stephen remembers what he heard about someone who “had once seen a big rat jump into the scum,” which adds to the already powerful repugnance, and on the night that day, while trying to read sentences from a spelling book, he yearns to “lie on the hearthrug before the fire” and then shudders, feeling “as if he had cold slimy water next his skin.” At the dining hall next day, he notices that the tablecloth is “damp and limp” and finds himself unable to eat the bread because it too is “damp” (10). A maid who serves there wears a white apron and, looking at her, Stephen has to wonder whether her “apron was damp too or whether all white things were cold and damp.” The cold air in the corridor of Clongowes, which feels “queer and wettish,” soaks “inside his clothes” on the night he falls ill, as he relives the memory of the “cold slime of the ditch [covering] his whole body” (9, 13).

He feels “sick in his heart” and then falls physically sick (11). On the morning he wakes up feverish, when the prefect touches Stephen’s burning forehead with his hand, Stephen feels “his forehead warm and damp against the prefect’s cold damp hand. That was the way a rat felt, slimy and damp and cold” (22). Stephen’s forehead is warm and the prefect’s hand is cold, but both are damp and thereby a strange inversion occurs, for Stephen at once feels the way a rat feels *to* him and *as a rat* himself. Rats in *Portrait* are quite alike mud, what Bachelard characterized as “soft matter,” and Stephen suffers a mild ‘nausea’ at them, the way Jean-Paul Sartre’s Roquentin does, at various objects, though it is much more severe in his case, in *Nausea*. Everywhere around him, Roquentin sees what Bachelard terms “the material drama of uncleanness” (EW 86). To him, things feel either soiled on the outside – by excrement or mud – or decomposing

from within, exuding slimy mud-like matter in the process. He develops a fear of tactile contact, even with things that are by nature clean and cannot decompose, such as pebbles on the shore washed smooth by the sea. He calls it a “nausea in the hands,” the “sweetish sickness” he feels when he holds objects, even a clean one like a pebble, because he senses *they* touch him as much as he touches them.

Objects should not *touch* because they are not alive. You use them, put them back in place, you live among them: they are useful, nothing more. But they touch me, it is unbearable. I am afraid being in contact with them as though they were living beasts.

Now I see: I recall better what I felt the other day at the seashore when I held the pebble. It was a sweetish sickness. How unpleasant it was! It came from the stone, I’m sure of it, it passed from the stone to my hand. Yes, that’s it, that’s just it – a sort of nausea in the hands. (Sartre 10-11)

Reading this passage, Bachelard sees a temporary dissolution of the subject-object dualism. He writes,

Before anything slightly insidious or shifty, the separation between subject and object is poorly realized, the toucher and the thing touched are blurred, the one too slow, the other too yielding. The World is my Nausea, a Sartrean Schopenhauer might claim. The world is glue, pitch, paste – always too pliant; a dough that softly kneads the kneader, and

whispers to the hand the absurdity that it should *loosen* its grip, renounce its labor. (87)

Stephen's revulsion at rats shares something of the fear Roquentin has about being seized and dissolved away by the glue, pitch, paste and dough – in short “mud” – of the world. “That was a way a rat felt, slimy and damp and cold,” he muses about the prefect's cold and damp hand upon his warm and damp forehead. Then he adds, “Every rat had two eyes to look out of. Sleek slimy coats, little little feet tucked up to jump, back slimy eyes to look out of. They could understand how to jump. But the minds of rats could not understand trigonometry. When they were dead they lay on their sides. Their coats dried then. They were only dead things” (22). Rats, when they are alive, are sleek and slimy. ‘Slimy’ of course describes viscous and probably filthy dampness but ‘sleek’ here also is what Bachelard would call a ‘water word,’ since anything that is lustrous and reflects light contains a degree of liquidity. ‘Sleek’ makes them insidious and shifty. Roquentin in *Nausea* confesses, when an ordinary glass of beer bedevils him with its oddness, “But I can't explain what I see. To anyone. There: I am quietly slipping into the water's depths, towards fear” (8). Later, describing the feeling of getting lost amidst the sound of jazz, his words are – “it is a small happiness of Nausea: it spreads at the bottom of the viscous puddle . . . it is made of wide, soft instants, spreading at the edge, like an oil stain” (21). To Stephen or to Roquentin, the repulsed terror has to do with a sensation of sinking – a weighted, thus slow but assured, sinking in the grip of dark heavy water.

In Chapter III, and thus about in the middle of *Portrait*, one and the last of Stephen's many sins, those that have sprung forth from "the evil seed of lust," is given in an image of a "swamp" (130). So, concluding the long list of his sins is "the swamp of spiritual and bodily sloth in which his whole being had sunk" (130). Numerous evocations throughout *Portrait* of the swamp and its cognates – square ditches, quagmires, and what would be called "cheerless cellardamp and decay" much later, etc. – all help to substantiate the material power when it is particularly needed, as in the one above (222). Stephen's take on the soul's birth probably needs it the most: the swamp's power as an "abyss" that is "matter that drags us down" should be given its full force when we read his words, "The soul is born . . . first in those moments I told you of. It has a slow and dark birth, more mysterious than the birth of the body. When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets" (*EW* 97, 254). The soul's birth is slow and dark because it is a struggle out of a swampy abyss that bogs one down. It is to be achieved only as a victory against the threat of an engulfment by dark and viscous matter. Stephen clearly differs from Roquentin in this regard, Roquentin who chooses to "exist slowly," that is, to be "too exhausted" to stand the nausea/threat, but he is at one with Agnes in his desire to shake off the mud and rise up into the clean air (157). In spite of Joyce's reputation for an "earthbound" imagination, it was not for nothing that Stephen was named after the greatest builder of things, among which are sets of wings that will enable him and his son Icarus to fly to freedom.

“Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead” – with this plea to Dedalus, Stephen had left Dublin for Paris (318). In *Ulysses*, he is back in Dublin – such is the power of the sea/mother that drags him down – and hears his “Usurper” calling him “from the sea” in a “wellfed voice,” a “voice, sweettoned and sustained” (1.107, 1.741). “The flood is following me,” he notes (3.282). He is slipping into the abyss again.

Water’s Infinite Pain: Bloom and the Ophelia Complex

Among other things, Leopold Bloom is a “waterlover” (17.183). In ‘Ithaca,’ the penultimate episode of *Ulysses*, Stephen and Bloom finally sit together with cups of hot cocoa between them, and it is an encounter presented as one between Bloom the “waterlover” and Stephen the “hydrophobe” (17.237). Other differences – in age, race, or intellectual temperament – will be suggested and explored but the difference in the attitude toward water is the first one declared and, by way of giving an extensive list of what in water Bloom admires, which will be followed by an account of how Stephen the hydrophobe’s last bath was 8 months ago and how he distrusts the “aquacities of thought and language,” given a clear and extended contrast (17.240). Hugh Kenner calls this list of water’s admirable qualities an example of “great feats of marmorealisation” and a “sonorous hymn to Water” that deserves to be copied out in full “for reading aloud like something of Browne’s or Donne’s” (135). Then he indeed quotes it in full, which is a little over a full page, and again gives praise: “Only so, by such decorum, with such

gravity, ought sacred truths be communicated” (136). The paean to water in ‘Ithaca’ is notable for its Joycean transformation of the prosaic, or even pedantic, into the poetic. As Kenner further notes: “‘Ithaca’ achieves on one page the improbable feat of raising to poetry all the clutter of footling information that has accumulated in schoolbooks since the living sea became but an instance of water, and water a domestic and domesticated amenity concerning which classroom instruction is imparted” (136-37).

Water is something of a mild obsession to Bloom – or rather, qualities of water, and they are ones not mentioned in the hymn in ‘Ithaca.’ On his way out to buy the breakfast kidney at the butcher Dlugasz’s, Bloom fantasizes about life in the East, “the far ancestral home” (Burgess 107). His daydreams are escapist – “Cries of sellers in the streets. Drink water scented with fennel, sherbet. Dander along all day. Might meet a robber or two. Well, meet him” – and yet also contain what one may call reveries of happy labor, at a “model farm at Kinnereth on the lakeshore of Tiberias,” raising cattle or growing olives and citrons (4.90-91, 4.154-55). As Burgess aptly points out, they are about returning to “the far ancestral home.” In other words, they are reveries on the “powers of maternal earth” (EW 100). Out of Dlugasz’s and on the way back home at 7 Eccles Street, however, Bloom’s thoughts turn less cheerful, as they conjure up images and associations of the Dead Sea. In the hymn to water in ‘Ithaca,’ the Dead Sea is praised for its “buoyancy” – “its buoyancy in the waters of the Dead Sea” (17.213). Here, in Bloom’s early morning reveries, it signals a landscape of death:

A barren land, bare waste. Volcanic lake, the dead sea: no fish, weedless,
sunk deep in the earth. No wind could lift those waves, grey metal,

poisonous foggy waters. Brimstone they called it raining down: the cities of the plain: Sodom, Gomorrah, Edom. All dead names. A dead sea in a dead land, grey and old. . . . Dead: an old woman's: the grey sunken cunt of the world. (4.219-28)

As Bloom declares in one word, the Dead Sea is a landscape of "Desolation" (4.229).

This moment of Bloom's depression coincides with Stephen's, when in 'Telemachus' he sees the sea as a bowl of bitter waters. It is thus a moment of their lives' intersection, by way of their responding to the sea, but each in his own way.

If Stephen's response to the sea/water is largely that of fear, Bloom's is one of longing. In the 'Introduction' to *Water and Dreams*, Bachelard notes that a material element can be "linked to a type of reverie that controls the beliefs, the passions, the ideals, the philosophy of an entire life" (5). Neither Stephen nor Bloom, or Joyce himself for that matter, was dominated by the element of water to such an extent that, by way of determined types of reveries, it controls their beliefs, passions, ideals and philosophy. Edgar Allan Poe, whose poetics of "heavy waters" is given an entire chapter in *Water and Dreams*, perhaps is among the few of whom that can be said with confidence. And yet as in the case of Stephen's fear of water discussed in the previous section, "a type of intimacy" and even "a type of destiny," with regard to water, are found also in the case of Bloom (*WD* 6). Bloom the waterlover *desires* water and there are numerous qualities of water to be loved and desired as the hymn to water in 'Ithaca' eloquently reminds us. Most notably, and especially in the early episodes of the second part of *Ulysses*, that is Bloom's *Odyssey* proper, he desires water as matter in which death can dissolve and

become a desired element, which forms part of a psychology Bachelard named “Ophelia complex.”

Ophelia complex most of all explains a certain distinct type of suicide.

Bachelard quotes the last lines of Hamlet that end his “To be, or not to be” soliloquy.

Here Hamlet greets Ophelia and it is the first scene Hamlet speaks to her on stage.

Soft you now!

The fair Ophelia! Nymph in thy orisons

Be all my sins remember'd (Act III. Sc. I. 88-90)

By saying these, Hamlet is foreseeing her destiny. For “Ophelia is destined to die for the sins of others and to die in the river, quietly, without fanfare” (81). Ophelia chooses to drown and, as Bachelard says, “Water is the element of young and beautiful death, of flowery death ... the element of a death with neither pride nor vengeance – of masochistic suicide” (82). In *Hamlet*, it is the Queen who reports on the death of Ophelia. So she tells Ophelia’s brother Laertes:

Queen: One woe doth tread upon anther’s heel,

So fast they follow. Your sister’s drown’d, Laertes.

Laertes: Drown’d O, where?

Queen: There is a willow grows aslant a brook,

That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream;

There with fantastic garlands did she come

Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples

That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,

But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them:

There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds

Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke;

When down her weedy trophies and herself

Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide;

And, mermaid-like awhile they bore her up:

Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes;

As one incapable of her own distress,

Or like a creature native and indued

Unto that element: but long it could not be

Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,

Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay

To muddy death.

Laertes: Alas, then, she is drown'd?

Queen: Drown'd, drown'd.

Laertes: Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,

And therefore I forbid my tears: but yet

It is our trick; nature her custom holds,

Let shame say what it will [*Weeps.*] When these are gone

The woman will be out. (Act IV Sc. VII 162-188)

The Queen's speech contains hints to the components of Ophelia complex. First of all, as Bachelard notes, here it becomes "futile to consider accident, madness, and

suicide separately in this . . . death” (82). In other words, in Ophelia’s death, fate, temperament and will are inseparable from each other. We may of course take into account one important lesson of psychoanalysis, that there isn’t really an “accident” because accidents happen for a reason. We would also want to note that, in literature, insanity has its rationale, that there is “enough causality” in insanity to create “drama” operating on its own law. Considering all these, Ophelia becomes a “symbol of feminine suicide” (82). She is a “creature born to die in water,” or as Shakespeare made the Queen say, water is the element “native and indued” to Ophelia. She is one of those poor souls who hear “the tragic summons of the waters” (81). When a man is confronted with a woman who killed herself, by drowning, he comes to understand her pain “with all that is feminine in him,” which what Laertes does in his speech above (82). As he says, he would become a man again when he spends all the tears inside him and becomes “dry.”

In ‘Lotus-Eaters,’ Bloom’s escapist reveries turn to images of increasing listlessness. So he

read again: choice blend, made of finest Ceylon brands. The far east.

Lovely spot it must be: the garden of the world, big lazy leaves to float about on, cactuses, flowery meads, snaky lianas they call them. Wonder is it like that. Those Cinghalese lobbing in the sun in *dolce far niente*, not doing a hand’s turn all day. Sleep six months out of twelve. Too hot to quarrel. Influence of the climate. Lethargy. Flowers of idleness. (5.28-34).

He has to stop by the post office to pick up a letter for him, addressed to “Henry Flower Esq.” On the way to the post office, a signboard for *Leah* catches his eye, in which an American actress Millicent Palmer plays a leading role. Bloom thinks of her performance as Hamlet and his thoughts drift to Ophelia and her suicide, which brings up the memory of his father, who was enthusiastic about a production of *Leah* he saw in London years ago: “Hamlet she played last night. Male impersonator. Perhaps he was a woman. Why Ophelia committed suicide. Poor papa! How he used to talk of Kate Bateman in that. Outside the Adelphi in London waited all the afternoon to get in. Year before I was born that was: sixtyfive” (5.195-99). The reader will later come to know that Bloom’s “poor papa” also committed suicide. While the reason he gives here for Ophelia’s suicide – that she found out about Hamlet’s gender and despaired – sounds a little unbecoming for a play generally known as one of the greatest tragedies, it still puts Bloom in a mood for mourning his father. He recalls a scene from *Leah*, where Abraham grieves and dies over his son Nathan’s apostasy, then he seems to tell himself that his father too died of “grief and misery” (5.204). He remembers the day the inquest was held – “Poor papa! Poor man! I’m glad I didn’t go into that room to look at his face. That day! O, dear! Ffoo! Well, perhaps it was best for him” (5.207-09). There is a sense of resignation, which is really a part of Bloom’s character, but there is also a genuine grief for his father’s death.

Bloom picks up the letter, which contains a flat dried flower and is written, as he makes it out upon the second reading, in language of flowers. Then he heads to a Turkish bath, hammam, to take a longed-for bath. The weather is “heavenly,” and Bloom

seems to have left his depression early this morning far behind. Almost elated, humming a song after another, before a prospect of bath, he foresees and then sees his body in the water.

He foresaw his pale body reclined in it at full, naked, in a womb of warmth, oiled by scented melting soap, softly laved. He saw his trunk and limbs riprippled over and sustained, buoyed lightly upward, lemonyellow: his navel, bud of flesh: and saw the dark tangled curls of his bush floating, floating hair of the stream around the limp father of thousands, a languid floating flower. (5.567-72)

The “languid floating flower” is obviously a play upon his alias, Henry Flower. It is also, as Don Gifford’s extensively researched guide *Ulysses Annotated* tells us, an allusion to an actual flower. The note given to the phrase “the limp father of thousands, a languid floating flower” says: “After the plant *Saxifraga stolonifera*, called “mother of thousands” because it spreads by runners that seem to float its flowers. It is used as a ground cover in moist, shady places in the south of England and Ireland” (100). It is thus an allusion that confounds gender, which is intriguing because it has been already confounded, considering it is also in part a reference specifically to Bloom’s male organ. As Burgess comments, here “the *yin* and *yang* elements cohere in him as the *yoni* and *lingam*, the phallus and the flower, meet as joint rulers of this chapter,” for “Bloom himself, a man” is “also a flower” (111).

Much has been made of Bloom’s femininity. He is declared “bisexually abnormal” and a “finished example of the new womanly man” (15.1775-1776, 15.1788-

1789). His femininity, an actual reference to Ophelia in his mind, if a typically oddball one of his, numerous evocations of flowers in ‘Lotus-Eaters,’ and the image of his body/flower floating in the water – all of these, along with his stated affinity for water, lead us to view Bloom in light of Ophelia complex. In ‘Lotus-Eaters,’ it is most of all his “passivity” that marks him “Opheliaized.” His “sexuality is passive,” Burgess notes – in him, “The genital image and the lotus image fuse into passivity” (110). The passivity is of the kind that, though not ‘suicidal’ in a strict sense, lets one abandon oneself almost as completely, by taking faith in the destiny of his or her matter, which is water, “the stream of life” (5.563). Water defines a type of destiny that may be called “Heracliteanism,” in which a “Heraclitean flux is a *concrete* philosophy, a *complete* philosophy” (WD 6). Such is a part of Bloom’s experience this morning. Bloom, “philosophical about change,” knows that the “heavenly weather” cannot last (Burgess 113). Or, as Bachelard writes, elaborating on his version of Heracliteanism, “One cannot bathe twice in the same river because already, in his inmost recesses, the human being shares the destiny of flowing water” (6). The “stream of life” washes you clean not just physically but metaphysically. Bloom will gladly wash off the “Dirt [that] gets rolled up in your navel,” and something of his substance will fall away, undergoing a Heraclitean flux (5.502-03, WD 6).

Water’s Heracliteanism, with its call for a dedication to water as matter in eternal flux, becomes a practice of daily death. Fire’s form of death, “piercing heaven with its arrows,” is too exuberant and decisive to be daily death (WD 6). Only the death of water – water that “always flows, always falls, always ends in horizontal death” – can

be daily death. Death in water is more dreamlike than death by fire or death associated with earth because “the pain of water is infinite.” Water’s infinite pain brings about a strange paradox – on the one hand, death in water can never be final for the pain never ceases, and on the other hand, it is a total death, or death made substantial, because death as “the loss of our being” in water is one lost “in total dissolution” (91). The lines Bachelard quotes from Rimbaud’s “The Drunken Boat” give us an image of such death in water that is at once provisional and absolute.

And from then on I bathed in the Poem
Of the Sea, infused with stars and lactescent,
Devouring the azure verses; where, like a pale elated
Piece of flotsam, a pensive drowned figure sometimes sinks;²¹

In the second Duino elegy, Rilke too captures this profound ambivalence of water, in which constant falling away from our being is at once to die a little and to open into a new life.

Like dew from the morning grass,
What is ours floats into the air, like steam from a dish
Of hot food. O smile, where are you going? O upturned
Glance:
New warm receding wave on the sea of the heart ...
Alas, but that is what we *are*. Does the infinite space
We dissolve into, taste of us then? (12-13)

Astutely, Burgess points out that water in 'Lotus-Eaters' is not only about death and forgetting but about happiness as well: "Joyce described the technique of the lotus-eating chapter as 'narcissistic,' and this explains its occasional references to water – not just the water of Lethe which is cognate with the juice of the lotus – but water as a stroker, warmer and flatterer" (114). Also with Rilke in *Duino Elegies*, to whom water is a profoundly ambivalent matter and, accordingly, the "guilty river-god of the blood" and "an immemorial sap" that "flows up through our arms when we love" are at once far apart and converging, one would have to say that water in 'Lotus-Eaters' is melancholy and at the same time happy matter. In the chapter on "maternal water and feminine water," as I discussed toward the end of Chapter II of this dissertation, Bachelard points to the qualities of happiness water lets one experience. He notes: "Of the four elements, water is the only one that can rock. . . . This is one more feature of its feminine make-up: it rocks like a mother" (130). One who discovers and delights in the "lightness acquired in water" will enjoy it directly, "like a dream-knowledge, that knowledge, as we shall see, which opens up an infinity for him." Such dream-knowledge can be achieved on a drifting bark. When we lie in the bottom of a solitary bark, it becomes "a rediscovered cradle" for us (131). We curl up in it, then "Water carries us. Water rocks us. Water puts us to sleep. Water gives us back our mother." The dream-knowledge coming from water's lightness opens up an infinity. Likewise, the "rocked reveries and dreams" on a bark would multiply the way "all dreams and all reveries that are attached to a material element, to a natural force" do. Hence, reveries on rocking water "give happiness taste

for infinity” and “It is near water and on water that we learn to sail on clouds, to swim in the sky” (131-32).

What is often referred to as Joycean economy is found at the end of ‘Lotus-Eaters’: “He saw his trunk and limbs riprippled over and sustained, buoyed lightly upward, lemonyellow” (5.568-69). It is only a bath, a very small body of water that cannot compare to those on which you can launch a bark, but Bloom experiences the same happiness as the one Bachelard describes, if on a quite reduced scale, the happiness that is attained by the lightness of water and that opens into infinity. It is said in one sentence and the word Joyce coined, “riprrippled,” seems to perfectly capture water’s rocking motion and the body’s trusting happiness on/in it. According to Bachelard, water’s happiness is at once substantial and dynamic – i.e. substantially dynamic and dynamically substantial. His quotations from Balzac’s *The Lily of the Valley* – “The river was like a path along which we flew” – or from Alphonse de Lamartine’s *Raphael*, in which a “material continuity of water and sky” is expressed – “It seemed to me that I was swimming in pure ether and being engulfed by the universal ocean. But the inner joy in which I was swimming was a thousand times more infinite, more luminous and more incommensurable than the atmosphere with which I was thus mingled” – attest to the experience of waters’ – even imaginary ones – substantial dynamism (132). In other words, with water, “Man is *transported* because he is *carried*.”

‘Hades’ follows ‘Lotus-Eaters’ and here Bloom partakes in a journey – that is, to be transported, by being carried – to the land of the dead. It is Paddy Dignam’s funeral at Glasnevin Cemetery, which he will attend along with a group of Dubliners including

Stephen's father, Simon Dedalus. In 'Hades,' Bloom naturally has many occasions to muse on death, dying and the dead. Simon Dedalus's pride in his son Stephen leads him to remember the son he lost, Rudy – "Noisy selfwilled man. Full of his son. . . . My son. Me in his eyes. . . . I could have helped him on in life. I could. Make him independent. Learn German too" (6.74-84). A tiny child's coffin passes by and Bloom decides it (child's death) is "Mistake of nature" (6.329). Bloom the scientist – "The distinguished scientist Herr Professor Luitpold Blumenduft tendered medical evidence," as the narrator of 'Cyclops' announces, when Bloom starts explaining the mechanism of 'death erection' to drinking Dubliners at Barney Kiernan's pub – and Bloom "the funniest man on earth" make matter-of-factly and yet amusing observations about the sheer physical realities of death too (12.468, 15.1737). Following Bloom's suggestion for "municipal funeral trams," Martin Cunningham recalls a scene he and his Dublin pals saw together, a scene where a hearse was capsized and a corpse sprang out of the coffin (6.406). Bloom in his mind sees it happening with Paddy Dignam – "Red face: grey now. Mouth fallen open. Asking what's up now. Quite right to close it. Looks horrid open. Then the insides decompose quickly. Much better to close up all the orifices. Yes, also. With wax. . . . Seal up all" (5.423-26). But then, he wonders, does a dead body bleed? – "But suppose now it did happen. Would he bleed if a nail say cut him in the knocking about?" (5.432-433). Later he muses on how decomposing spill from human bodies is the best manure, be it for opium or for fruits, for "blood sinking in the earth gives new life" (5.768-73). A moment of death is a moment of heart breaking, heart that is "A pump after all, pumping thousands of gallons of blood every day" (5.674). After the moment of

death, all there is is “corpsemanure, bones, flesh, nails” that “Rot quick in damp earth” (5.776-78). Corpses “must breed a devil of a lot of maggots. Soil must be simply swirling with them” (5.783-84).

In his chapter that discusses ‘Hades,’ Burgess notes right away that death in this episode “is not the opening of a door on to ultimate reality” (114). Certainly, there is not much metaphysics in ‘Hades.’ Yet, if death doesn’t open a door to ultimate reality, it still opens one to “the other world,” as Burgess writes three pages later, the other world which, paradoxically, has “a life of its own” (117). While Father Coffey starts the requiem mass and shakes holy water, that is, the water of Lethe, Bloom “is aware of the city of the dead, of which Glasnevin Cemetery is but a suburb, taking in its fresh batches every day.” Indeed, to Bloom in ‘Hades,’ death is on the one hand understood entirely in terms of its physiology, if we can call the functioning of a ‘dead’ organism that, but on the other hand, it is experienced in its imaginary, as a beginning of a journey, which is a journey for life of its own. In ‘Hades,’ in other words, images of death as absolute physical corruption go hand in hand with repeated evocations of a sense of continued life. In the midst of life we are in death (6.335). And in the midst of death we are in life (6.759). “Both ends meet” (6.760).

The Homeric parallel of the episode sends Bloom and others along the routes of four waterways. At one of them, the royal canal, Bloom sees a man on a dropping barge:

Their eyes watched him. On the slow weedy waterway he had floated on his raft coastward over Ireland drawn by a haulage rope past beds of reeds, over slime, mudchoked bottles, carrion dogs. Athlone, Mullingar,

Moyvalley, I could make a walking tour to see Milly by the canal. Or
 cycle down. Hire some old crock, safety. Wren had one the other day at
 the auction but a lady's. Developing waterways. James M'Cann's hobby
 to row me o'er the ferry. Cheaper transit. By easy stages. Houseboats.
 Camping out. Also hearses. To heaven by water. Perhaps I will without
 writing. Come as a surprise, Leixlip, Clonsilla. Dropping down lock by
 lock to Dublin. With turf from the midland bogs. Salute. He lifted his
 brown straw hat, saluting Paddy Dignam. (6.442-52)

The man on the barge is clearly cast in the role of Charon, the ferryman in Greek mythology who transports the newly deceased to Hades by way of the river Styx.

“Death is a journey, and a journey is a death,” declares Bachelard, in his discussion of what he terms a Charon complex (*WD* 74). And it is a journey over water, as the “departure of the dead over the floods,” a common trait of myths over the world, suggests (72). Death's journey is over water because water is a substance of death as well as it is a substance of life, and because it is also a powerfully maternal matter (72-73). Here Bachelard reminds the reader of myths where man from his birth is dedicated to the vegetable world, by having his own personal tree (72). The tree will later be used as his coffin, thus giving him “the same protection as life,” and becoming itself a maternal symbol. Death in water therefore doubles the maternal power – “By placing the dead person in the interior of a tree and entrusting the tree to the breast of the waters, one somehow doubles the maternal powers” (73). It is with this doubled maternal power that we imagine, as Bachelard quotes Carl Gustav Jung to say, “the dead person is given back

to his mother to be born again.” If the idea of immortality has any material basis, it is in the imagination of water, for human desire, as Jung says, “is that the somber waters of death may become the waters of life, that death and its cold embrace may be the maternal bosom, just as the sea, which, although it swallows up the sun, gives it new birth in its depths. . . . Life has never been able to believe in Death!”

Water is an ambivalent matter *par excellence* and its ambivalence is most profound when it comes to life and death. It may provide a material basis for a belief in immortality, as death in water is to be embraced by the maternal bosom so as to be *born again*, but it is also a way “to commit the living to total death, to a death with no turning back” (74). And it is a total death because it is a total departure from earth, because “Only water can cleanse the earth.” It is because the one over the water is a total departure that “a farewell at the water’s edge is the most heartrending and . . . the most literary of all farewells” – consider that “the myth of death conceived as a departure over water” forms an entire facet of our imaginative life (75). As an example of a departure materialized with water, which will take the departed *materially* away from the earth, Bachelard quotes Charles Baudelaire from *The Flowers of Evil*.

O Death, old captain, time to make our trip!

This country bores us, Death! Let’s get away!

Even if sky and sea are black as pitch

You know our hearts are full of sunny rays! (WD 75, *The Flowers of Evil*
293)²²

One may recall the Baudelaire who declares new, exotic landscapes for a bored soul to be mere “counterfeits of Death” in the prose poem “Anywhere Out of the World” from *Paris Spleen* (100). In these poems by Baudelaire, the land of the dead is imagined as ‘elementally’ different from the land of the living. And as such, death becomes the truly *first – not last –* journey. As Bachelard notes, “For some profound dreamers, it will still be the first true trip” (73). Death in water is the first true journey, a journey into a land elementally different from life, “as if death itself were a substance or life in a new substance” (72). In this land, you cannot fully die. On the other hand, it is a journey taken only once, and never again, to a land of no turning back. Death in water in this respect is an absolute death.

Bachelard discusses the Charon complex alongside the Ophelia complex, distinguishing the two by whether, in it, water is an “accepted element” (Charon complex) or a “desired element” (Ophelia complex). The difference – “accepted” vs. “desired” – is a subtle one, which further adds to the ambivalence of water. Water is something of a fate in both, with a difference in whether it is more an active than a passive one. Considering that the two can be a pair as types of reveries on death in water, perhaps it is not a coincidence that in ‘Hades,’ which has clear allusions to Charon, the reader hears an echo to Ophelia as well. On the way to the funeral, Mr. Power, one of the funeral attendants, says that suicide is the worst of all deaths. Martin Cunningham, who knows about the suicide of Rudolph Virag, Bloom’s father, sympathetically covers for Bloom by saying that suicides are committed out of “Temporary insanity,” and hence “We must take a charitable view of it” (6.339-40). Bloom was about to say something

but chooses to be silent. His thoughts wander from Cunningham's humanity, his face that is "Like Shakespeare's face," to the cruel, Catholic attitudes toward suicide (6.345). "They have no mercy on that here or infanticide. Refuse christian burial. They used to drive a stake of wood through his heart in the grave. As if it wasn't broken already. Yet sometimes they repent too late. Found in the riverbed clutching rushes" (6.345-49). The last two sentences recall Ophelia, her drowning and the subsequent mourning from the Queen, Laertes and Hamlet. Bloom's thoughts return to his dead father again. It is here that the circumstances of Rudolph Virag's death are fully given.

That afternoon of the inquest. The redlabelled bottle on the table.
The room in the hotel with hunting pictures. Stuffy it was. Sunlight
through the slats of the Venetian blind. The coroner's sunlit ears, big and
hairy. Boots giving evidence. Thought he was asleep first. Then saw like
yellow streaks on his face. Had slipped down to the foot of the bed.
Verdict: overdose. Death by misadventure. The letter. For my son
Leopold.

No more pain. Wake no more. Nobody owns. (6.359-65)

He poisoned himself in a hotel room, leaving his son a letter whose three short sentences seem to haunt the son. Moments before Bloom remembers them – "No more pain. Wake no more. Nobody owns" – he sees a tiny coffin for a child flashing by the carriage taking him and others to the Dignam funeral. Mr. Dedalus shows his pity – "Poor little thing" – and Bloom remembers lines from Thomas Noel's song "The Pauper's Drive," which is about a "grim one-horse hearse" taking the body of a pauper

to the funeral, with a small modification – “Rattle his bones. Over the stones. Only a pauper. Nobody owns” (6.332-33).²³ Probably the very last sentence from his father’s letter – “Nobody owns” – was thus echoing in his mind before he actually remembered it from the letter.

In other words, his father’s death is much on Bloom’s mind and perhaps that explains his seemingly passing musings on death in water, including Ophelia’s. When he tells himself “To heaven by water” in the passage I quoted earlier in this section, where a man standing on a barge is cast in the role of Charon, he seems not only to reflect on the conveniences of using inland waterways for funerals but also to muse on death as a journey that is embarked on “After life’s journey,” possibly with his father in mind (6.466). At the end of the funeral, he considers various ways of death, among which drowning is rated higher than others, and ponders again on the physical unpleasantness of death.

A corpse is meat gone bad. Well and what’s cheese? Corpse of milk. I read in that *Voyages in China* that the Chinese say a white man smells like a corpse. Cremation better. Priests dead against it. Devilling for the other firm. Wholesale burners and Dutch oven dealers. Time of the plague. Quicklime feverfits to eat them. Lethal chamber. Ashes to ashes. Or bury at sea. Where is that Parsee tower of silence? Eaten by birds. Earth, fire, water. Drowning they say is the pleasantest. See your whole life in a flash. But being brought back to life no. Can’t bury in the air however. Out of a flying machine. Wonder does the news go about

whenever a fresh one is let down. Underground communication. We learned that from them. Wouldn't be surprised. Regular square feed for them. Flies come before he's well dead. Got wind of Dignam. They wouldn't care about the smell of it. Saltwhite crumbling mush of corpse: smell, taste like raw white turnips. (6.981-94)

That drowning is the pleasantest death belongs to the realm of legend, as much as the idea Bloom here relays, that one sees one's whole life flashing by before death, does, be the death by drowning or otherwise. In other words, it belongs to the realm of "values" rather than "facts," "dreams" rather than "realities," and "chimeras" rather than "projects" (*PR* 104). In other words, it is the soul's – and not the mind's – memory. That death in water is the most pleasant death: it is "a value of the imagination" that itself does not explain but needs explaining, just as the adjective "ancestral," when it describes forests, describes *not* the realities of forests themselves but the "realities of the imagination" of forests (*PS* 188, 158). To imagine is to valorize – the imagination increases the value of that which interests it. Death in water is imagined as the most pleasant death, because values – mostly maternal – associated with sea/water are set to work. It is imagined as a return to the mother's bosom so that perhaps, as Paul Eluard wrote, you can "sleep in the sea" as in ancient times (*WD* 115). Since it is the mother's bosom, you sleep the most peacefully. Bachelard discusses undersea explorer Philippe Diolé's experiences of the undersea's immensity in the chapter "Intimate Immensity" of *The Poetics of Space*. Diving and exploring deep underseas, Diolé certainly knew what it means to conquer "the intimacy of water" (205). He knew the "absolute depth" of water,

a “depth that is beyond measuring, and would give no greater powers of dream and thought if it were doubled or even tripled.” In other words, he “*really entered into the volume of the water*,” a volume that is a “space-substance, a one-dimensional space.” For water as a pure volume is “One substance, one dimension” and as such “bears the mark of limitlessness.”

Diolé the underseas explorer also went into the Sahara desert and wrote that completing the “magical operation” he knew in deep water, which “allows the diver to loosen the ordinary ties of time and space and make life resemble an obscure, inner poem,” was his aim (206).²⁴ Bachelard quotes a passage from Diolé’s *Sahara Adventure* (*Le plus beau désert du monde*), a passage in which, he says, we have “a veritable drama of the material imagination.” Diolé experiences the desert as if it is deep sea. To Bachelard, the passage is about an immensity of space that awakens an intimacy of being. As he puts it, “The *being-here* is maintained by a being from elsewhere. Space, vast space, is the friend of being” (208). It also enlightens our understanding of values of repose that often defines the matter water.

I once wrote that a man who was familiar with the deep sea could never be like other men again. Such moments as this (in the midst of the desert) prove my statement. Because I realize that, as I walked along, my mind filled the desert landscape with water! In my imagination I flooded the space around me while walking through it. I lived in a sort of invented immersion in which I moved about in the heart of a fluid, luminous, beneficent, dense matter, which was sea water, or rather the memory of

sea water. This artifice sufficed to humanize for me a world that was dishearteningly dry, reconciling me with its rocks, its silence, its solitude, its sheet of sun gold hanging from the sky. Even my weariness was lessened by it. I dreamed that my bodily weight reposed on this imaginary water.

I realize that this is not the first time that unconsciously, I have had recourse to this psychological defense. The silence and the slow progress I made in the Sahara awakened my memories of diving. My inner images were bathed then in a sort of gentleness, and in the passage thus reflected by dream, water appeared quite naturally. As I walked along, I bore within me gleaming reflections, and a translucent density, which were none other than memories of the deep sea. (207, Diolé 120)

Here indeed are hints to the reasons why drowning may be imagined as the pleasantest death. Diolé's "invented immersion," being surrounded by the silence and solitude of the sea in his memory, makes a state of near weightlessness possible. Earlier in his book, Diolé notes: "Spirit and body float in undisturbed equilibrium in the peace of the waters and in the peace of the Sahara, in the swaying of the camels' movement and in the cradling of the deep dive" (17). The "anonymity" and "melancholy" of the deep sea or the desert sand hill come from things "dying rather than dead" (16). Surrounded by these things, the moment may arrive where gravity is nullified. In such moments, one achieves "a kind of shifting in existence, which temporarily conceals its

unreasonableness and holds the individual in suspense above time and space, attentive only to what goes on within himself” (19).

The funeral is over and Bloom decides to go “Back to the world again” (6.995). His thoughts linger for a moment on a form of immortality, that is, a belief in the spirits of the dead, then decide he likes it much better here. “I will appear to you after death. You will see my ghost after death. My ghost will haunt you after death. There is another world after death named hell. I do not like that other world she wrote. No more do I. Plenty to see and hear and feel yet” (6.1000-1003). The mention of hell seems random and not to carry any real weight. But in light of one of the themes of the episode – death as journey over water, or the Charon complex – it has a reason to be here. Bachelard quotes a French writer, Joseph Xavier Saintine, who studied the numerous appearances of Charon in literature. Since it carries the dead to hell, Charon’s boat materializes “man’s indestructible misfortune,” passing through “ages of suffering” (*WD* 79). That is why it has appeared again and again. As Saintine says:

[Charon] will return. Where? Everywhere.... During the earliest years of the Church in Gaul, on the tombstone of Dagobert at the abbey of St. Denis, this king, or rather his soul, was depicted crossing the Cocytus in the traditional bark; at the end of the thirteenth century, Dante, with his great authority, had reestablished the ancient Charon as the ferryman of his Inferno. After him, also in Italy and, better yet, in the Catholic city *par excellence*, working under the very eyes of a Pope, Michelangelo

painted Charon in his fresco of the Last Judgment along with God, Christ,
 the Virgin, and the saints. (79)

And he returns and will keep returning because “Without Charon, hell is impossible”
(79). With Charon not far away from his mind, Bloom knows for sure that it is hell that
awaits him after death. On this morning, death and the absolute repose it can be are
embraced and rejected.

“Oomb, Allwombing Tomb”: Birth of Language from the Sea

 She is drowning. Agenbite. Save her. Agenbite. All against us. She will
 drown me with her, eyes and hair. Lank coils of seaweed hair around me,
 my heart and soul. Salt green death.

 We.

 Agenbite of inwit. Inwit’s agenbite.

 Misery! Misery! (10.875-80)

 This is how Stephen feels when, later in the afternoon in ‘Wandering Rocks,’ he
 runs into his sister Dilly at a bookcart. His troubled conscience about his sister, who in
 spite of all the “Misery! Misery!” in her life is still hopeful enough to pick up a French
 primer for a penny, is equated with his fear of drowning: try help her out of the sea and it
 will be the “Salt green death” for both of us. Stephen’s fear of the sea/water, specifically,
 his fear of drowning, are made clear throughout *Ulysses* and the passage above is one of
 the most poignant.

The sea/water is an abyss and tomb, which will swallow him down if he let it. And yet the sea is also a womb that gives birth to, among other things, a new language. Listen to Stephen's "wavespeech": "Listen: a fourworded wavespeech: seesoo, hrss, rsseeiss, oos. Vehement breath of waters amid seasnakes, rearing horses, rocks. In cups of rocks it slops: flop, slop, slap: bounded in barrels" (3.456-59). On the morning at the Sandymount beach, his lips mouth "fleshless lips of air" and his mouth molds "issuing breath, unspeeched: ooeeha: roar of cataractic planets, globed, blazing, roaring wayawayawayawayaway" (3.401-404). To Stephen, water, with "its ever changing mirror," is a "creator of changes" (*WD* 85). It is a tomb, but it is a tomb that "makes death more human and mingles clear sounds in with the dullest of groans" (87). The Liffey is pronounced a "sewage" that carries all kinds of wastes including carcasses of animals to its mouth, the Sandymount Strand, and into the sea (8.53). Yet there is a certain lyricism to the Liffey and the sea from which Stephen learns. Bachelard tells us that rivers' lyricism first makes us want to speak, in a "liquid language," a "smooth flowing language," and a "continued and continuing language" (187). Then it teaches us a silence, for near water "poetic gravity deepens" (193). Bachelard quotes Pelleas in Maeterlinck's *Pelleas and Melisande*, who has to say, "There is always an extraordinary silence. . . . One might hear the water sleeping." Silence has to be *seen* before it is understood thoroughly and water is a visible silence. In other words, to *see* a silent water is to *hear* the water's silence. This fusion or inseparability of the senses is what Stephen struggles with in 'Proteus.' The "Ineluctable modality of the visible" or the *Nebeneinander* merge with the "ineluctable modality of the audible" or the

Nacheinander (3.1, 13). At the end of the episode, he silently watches “Moving through the air high spars of a threemaster, her sails brailed up on the crosstrees, homing, upstream, silently moving, a silent ship” (3.503-05).

CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

Real and unreal are two in one

Wallace Stevens, "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven"

The Profound Philosophical Idea of the Knowability of the World

Answer: No, ever since man destroyed social inequality and did away with war, science has achieved tremendous success. Nevertheless, you are mistaken in thinking that science is all-powerful.

Question: Is human knowledge really limited?

Answer: I see you're desperate for me to tell you what you should have learned in school. I will give you this comfort: human knowledge is infinite and boundless. But that doesn't mean that the problem we are struggling with will be solved this year, this decade or this century.

Question: But experience of studying the Universe offers evidence.

Answer: It seems you know too much about the Universe. (Laughter in the auditorium). If we knew so much, we wouldn't have anything to do in space.

Question: You mean in space you're attracted to the Unknown?

Answer: Again, you haven't understood me. I am interested in m-a-n-k-i-n-d.

(From an interview with psychologist Dr. K. Kelvin for the magazine "Our Time").²⁵

Above was the opening text of Andrei Tarkovsky's 1972 film adaptation of Stanislaw Lem's novel *Solaris* – that is, in its original version. It appears right after the title sequence, during which the haunting organ strains from Bach's chorale prelude in F minor prepares the viewer for, in the words Tarkovsky himself used with regard to Bach's music in Ingmar Bergman's *Cries and Whispers*, "a kind of vacuum, an empty space, where the spectator feels the possibility of filling the spiritual emptiness and feeling the breath of an ideal" (qtd. in Bird 151). Without this opening text, the final cut moves from the title sequence, which is in somber black and white and seems to linger, lasting over 3 minutes, directly to the shock of green – a green that recalls what Woolf called in *The Waves* the "depths of green" and the "breadths of green" (90, 91) – of water plants slowly swaying in the limpid water of a pond. It is a most saturated, almost elemental, green. Kris Kelvin contemplates it before taking a short walk around the pond and going inside. Following Kelvin's walk, the camera shows the luscious beauty around the pond. Indeed, the images of the film's opening immaculately capture what the film's cinematographer, Vadim Iusov, refers to as "Earth's sensual nature." In an interview given for the Criterion Collection's release of the film, Iusov says the following about Tarkovsky's conception of the film:

I knew that Andrei's interpretation of the theme was slightly different from the way it is developed in the novel. For him the theme of human moral conscience was most important in this material. He was fascinated by the theme of the material and magical force of the Earth. He conceived of it as Earth's sensual nature. I remember our discussions and how he tried to explain his position, that it was something greater than our usual perception of earth, water, or grass. It is greater, it is all alive, saturated with moisture and the movement of microscopic particles. It follows the laws of physics and chemistry but it is also a part of human experience.

Set entirely in space, the narrative interest of Lem's novel is mainly in the fantastic behavioral patterns of the Solaris ocean, an as yet unknown extraterrestrial intelligence. By contrast, that of Tarkovsky's film seems to be in the 'human drama' of guilt, repentance and redemption. In his superb study of Tarkovsky's films, Robert Bird quotes Lem who claimed that Tarkovsky "did not make *Solaris*; what he made was *Crime and Punishment*" (116). Czeslaw Milosz speaks of the established view, that is, in regard to in what ways Tarkovsky's version differs, and differs radically, from Lem's original, when he says: "Of course, Tarkovsky's film and Lem's novel are two totally different things. For Tarkovsky, the most important thing is the Earth, returning to Earth. And the rain with its obvious religious symbolism. Rain representing the holy spirit. The water washing down over the characters. He wouldn't be Russian if he didn't imbue it with some kind of religious mystical meaning."

Contrary to the much publicized differences between the two, however, the film and the novel are surprisingly close. Closely woven into the ‘drama’ of the film is a compact yet savvy and charged adaptation of reflections on the nature of (narrowly) scientific knowledge, which abound in the novel. Early on in the film, referring to his son’s industriousness and meticulousness, Kelvin’s father approvingly likens Kelvin to an accountant: “I’ve had it with that Solaris project! He reminds me of an accountant preparing the annual accounts” (*Collected Screenplays* 135). The same quality is disapproved by Berton, Kelvin’s uncle, when he senses it as a disregard for morality. Berton, after his first-hand experience of the uncanny Solaris ocean, believes limits can be imposed on the scientific pursuit of knowledge if such is deemed ‘moral.’ To Kelvin who disagrees and retorts, “It is the truth that interests me. . . . I’m no poet,” Berton exclaims, “Don’t make science immoral!” then turns to Kelvin’s father to tell him, “He is an accountant, not an academic. You were right!” (146). Little of this happens verbatim in the novel. The thematic interest of the exchange is not, however, extraneous to the novel but effectively brings together many closely related threads in the novel: for example, Kelvin’s argument with Sartorius, upon Kelvin’s arrival at the Station, over what makes one a true scientist. Both agree that a scientist is “a servant of science,” whose sole concern is single-minded research, and once one lets issues of the heart get in the way one becomes “a miserable coward” (44). Each of them thinks he himself is a servant of science while the other is probably a miserable coward. The mere mention of “moral” by Berton or Kelvin’s laconic “I am no poet” may seem Tarkovsky’s skewing Lem’s novel to his own purpose, which has generally been taken as the case, but close

reading of both the film and the novel show that, thematically, Tarkovsky never really veers away from Lem's original. If anything, Tarkovsky's understanding of the novel is not just original but thorough, and his film achieves even more brilliantly that which Lem's novel intends to.

Tarkovsky's proposal for the film shows that he was not blind to the popular appeal of the novel. In its "entertaining plot," he writes, it has "tense, surprising, full of unexpected peripeteia and suspenseful collisions," in short, elements that will help the film become a "commercial success" (qtd. in Bird 114). In spite of them, his intention is not in creating a genre film that will satisfy viewer expectation. In the proposal, he first defines what he understands as artistic 'realism,' then notes that it is not the novel's plot but its central idea that attracted him:

For me there is no difference between a science-fiction, an historical and a contemporary film. If it is directed by an artist, then the problems that concern the director are the legacy of the current day, whatever time the plot might occur in. The most realistic plot is always invented, is always fantasy, while the ideas and thoughts of a true artist are always topical and current, they are always reality, whatever unlikely or supernatural form these ideas might take. After all true realism is not the copying of any particular circumstances of life, but the unfolding of phenomena, of their psychological or philosophical nature. [...] This is why I dream of screening Stanislaw Lem's novel *Solaris*; I am attracted not by its entertaining and provocative plot, but by the profound philosophical idea

of the knowability of the world, which is conveyed in a precise psychological conception. [...] I do not yet see the future film completely, but I would not like to make it an entertaining science-fiction or adventure film. It appears that I should have to reject the science-fiction trappings and call the spectator's attention to the psychology of a protagonist who has encountered his past. (115)

Tarkovsky's call for a "true realism" is reminiscent of modernist writers speaking on their art: Woolf in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" and "Modern Fiction," most notably, or Joyce in his conversations with Arthur Power, also called for a "new realism" that would take us "closer to reality," and give us "the spirit we live by, life itself" (Power 64, 86, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" 119). In rejecting the conventional realism they inherited, all three cite its inadequacy in capturing reality or life. A realistic plot is an invention, a fantasy, Tarkovsky says. Likewise, Edwardian writers' method of describing Mrs. Brown – "Begin by saying that her father kept a shop in Harrogate. Ascertain the rent. Ascertain the wages of shop assistants in the year 1878. Discover what her mother died of. Describe cancer. Describe calico. Describe—“ – is renounced by Woolf for its incongruity in depicting 'human nature' (112). Discussing "philistine" elements in literature, Joyce says, although a writer should have "a sound basis of fact in his work," works that have no mystery are ultimately inadequate, for a writer's task is "to deal with motives, the secret currents of life which govern everything" (84-85). Idealism is a name he gives to the conventional mentality that refuses to "explore the hidden world, those undercurrents which flow beneath the apparently firm surface," and

he notes “Idealism is a pleasant bauble, but in these days of overwhelming reality it no longer interests us, or even amuses” (85-86).

Joyce’s stress on psychology – he specifically notes enlarging “our vocabulary of the subconscious as Proust has done” is modern writers’ objective – is shared by the other two (86). Tarkovsky makes it clear in the proposal that his *Solaris* is going to be about the psychology of the protagonist. Lem’s complaint about it being *Crime and Punishment* makes eminent sense in this regard. Woolf’s gripe with Mr. Bennett is that he would lay “an enormous stress upon the fabric of things” and tell the reader “facts about rents and freeholds and copyholds and fines” but he “has never once looked at Mrs. Brown in her corner” (112, 109). And the duties and responsibilities for modern writers are to really look at her in her corner, which is to say, to face the complexity of feelings, explore the thousands of ideas that course through one’s brain in one day, and examine the emotions of many shades and strengths that meet, collide, and disappear (118). The modern writers’ point of interest “lies very likely in the dark places of psychology” (“Modern Fiction” 152).

Search for a new language is always a critical act and involves a theorizing – implicit or explicit – about the nature of ‘knowing’ the world. Comparing Synge’s “romanticism” with Ibsen’s “realism,” Joyce says Synge the romantic forces life into a “fabricated language” and “conceived idea,” whereas Ibsen is a writer with a more “intellectual outlook which dissects life” (42, 45). What interests him most is just that: dissecting life or “to get down to the residuum of truth about life, instead of puffing it up with romanticism, which is a fundamentally false attitude” (45). In “Modern Fiction,”

which can be read as a critique of Edwardian writers' epistemological positivism, Woolf takes their "magnificent apparatus" to task for failing to capture life (149). The form of fiction their apparatus creates "more often misses than secures the thing we seek. Whether we call it life or spirit, truth or reality, this, the essential thing, has moved off, or on, and refused to be contained any longer in such ill-fitting vestments as [it] provide[s]."

That, in adapting *Solaris*, Tarkovsky was attracted, on the one hand, to the question of the "knowability of the world," and on the other, to exploring the psychology of his protagonist, shows his affinity with literary modernists. Indeed, what Bird calls Tarkovsky's "sensorial poetics," for whose investigation *Solaris* is especially useful, and for which the two-pronged interests in the knowability of the world and the psychology of the protagonist form essential elements, shares in the task of literary modernism this dissertation has been concerned with so far: critique of instrumental rationality by way of material imagination. The opening text of the film's original version, which is not directly taken from the novel, showcases what Adorno called "a confused compulsion to the conquest of strange stars," a natural corollary of dominant reason's "inescapable compulsion toward the social control of nature," and would have clearly signaled Tarkovsky's aim from the outset (*MM* 156, *DE* 27).

The opening text, or "prologue," particularly roused the ire of Lem and Tarkovsky decided to delete it. The central question it raises, however, has been subtly yet effectively woven into the early scenes. The early exchange on what makes Kelvin more an accountant than an academic at least asks the viewer to consider the differences

between the two. A physics professor Dr. Messenger in the press conference scene, by vocally advocating research without limits and rejecting a morally informed dissident view, personifies professionalized science's hardening to ethical considerations. In an important sense, the opposition between the Solaris ocean and the Earth is of different kinds of knowledge. The opposition is enacted dramatically when Hari's injury heals on its own before Kelvin's eyes, and to appalled Kelvin who exclaims "I've burned some blood with acid, but it reconstructs itself!" Sartorius sardonically rejoins, "Regeneration? You don't say! Immortality – Faust's problem. Sorry, no need for cotton wool. Are you sufficiently qualified to conduct a post mortem?" (165-66). Since Solaris calls for only knowledge befitting or required for "post mortem," "immortality," a "Faust's problem," is mere "cotton wool," although it would be an important question back on Earth.

The Earth is brought to Solaris in the critical library scene. The library, as in the novel, is the most isolated room in the spaceship and has no window. It is a room, therefore, where a semblance of a distance from Solaris ocean and the presence on Earth can be created, which is the reason Snaut chooses it for his birthday party. Hung among the paintings on the wall is Pieter Bruegel The Elder's *Hunters in the Snow*, which is one of the series called *The Four Seasons*. A "compendium of some of the things that Tarkovsky loved best," the landscape of the painting shows birds, trees, dogs, humans, a river, a church steeple, a whole village on a snowy day (Johnson and Petrie 156). With the compositions de-centred, it is a "breathing landscape" that has a "movie-like" quality, to which, along with the subject matter itself, Tarkovsky was drawn (157).

Adding to the mobility captured in the painting, the way it is presented to the viewer – tracking/panning close-ups interceded by dissolves – creates an impression of fond memories recollected one by one. As the set designer Mikhail Romadin notes it was “Tarkovsky’s desire to link Earth with the cosmos in the film and create feeling of nostalgia for Earth’s beauty, especially through the sets and paintings chosen for the library” (155).

Placed alongside the life in flux in Bruegel’s painting and the loving gaze roaming over it is a despair over the dead-end of “modern science,” whose dominant mode of operation is abstraction, i.e. liquidation of differences, and on the road to which “human beings have discarded meaning” (*DE* 3, 9). Snaut’s monologue in the scene, which is one of the most thematically charged moments in the film, explains the futility of space exploration, when it is motivated by the desire to rule over the other.

Science? Nonsense! In this situation, genius and mediocrity are equally helpless. I have to say that we don’t want to conquer any cosmos. We want to extend the earth to the utmost frontiers of the cosmos. We don’t know what to do with other worlds. We don’t need other worlds. We ne . . . need a mirror. We’re struggling to make contact, but never find it. We’re in the ridiculous position of a man striving for a goal that he is afraid of, that he doesn’t need. (172)

Divested of any “illusion of immanent powers or hidden properties,” things’ “in-itself” becomes a “for him” to the man of science (*DE* 3, 6). By thus transforming the essence of things into always the same, which is “a substrate of domination,” the man of

science sees only himself everywhere (6). If Snaut has been disillusioned of his mission on Solaris expedition in this manner, Sartorius is its firm – or maniacal – believer still. To Kelvin who tries to reason with Snaut over what drove Gibaryan to kill himself, whether it was out of fear or despair, Sartorius starts to rant: “God! What are you talking of? All these heartrending emotions – worse than Dostoevsky!” (173). Since *he* knows what he is doing on the mission:

I work. Man is created by nature, in order to be able to know her. [...] Endlessly moving towards truth, man is condemned to acquire knowledge. Everything else is unimportant. Allow me to enquire, dear colleague, why you came here to Solaris? [...] You don't do much work. I'm sorry to say it, but apart from romancing your former wife, nothing interests you. You lie on your bed for days on end full of lofty ideas. Is this carrying out your duty? You've lost your sense of reality. I'm sorry to say it, but you're just an idler! (173)

Rediscovering love in the phantom of Hari, Kelvin has fallen under the “curse of irrationality,” a force that seduces a man into becoming “a tender-hearted idler” (*DE* 80). About the latter point, even the despairing Snaut can snap at Kelvin: “Don't turn a scientific problem into a love story!” (177).

Tarkovsky's negative response to Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, a film that has often, although mistakenly, been considered an American precursor to Soviet's *Solaris*, is revealing. Tarkovsky called it “a spectral sterile atmosphere, like a museum of technological achievements” (qtd. in Bird 117). *Solaris* would be a

completely different film. As he explains it: “Of course, the action of *Solaris* occurs in a unique and unfamiliar atmosphere. [...] Our task is to concretize this uniqueness in its sensuous external features, so that it be material and tangible, without anything ephemeral, uncertain, special or intentionally fantastic; so that the screen manifests the “flesh” and the texture of the atmosphere.” In spite of its stunning visual effects, Kubrick’s film extirpates the sensual and in that regard enacts a “mimetic taboo,” becoming hostile to everything “moist,” becoming, in other words, “hygienic” (AT 116). It is significant that water appears only in its strictly utilitarian role, as a primitive drinking source, as water hole, for herbivorous early humans at the beginning of the film. By contrast, in Iusov’s words again, *Solaris*’s atmosphere is “saturated with moisture and the movement of microscopic particles.” If, as Ivan Illich points out, the history of domesticating water is a history of domesticating the body (1-6), it is no wonder that repression of water often goes hand in hand with that of the body, as it does in Kubrick’s film, or that a poetics of water contributes to “the “flesh” and the texture of the atmosphere,” as it does in Tarkovsky’s.

“Time Has Fallen Asleep in the Afternoon Sunshine.”

Tarkovksy’s *Solaris* explores two different kinds of knowledge – knowledge which, as power, “knows no limits, either in its enslavement of creation or in its deference to worldly masters” (DE 2), which is knowledge embodied in Solaris expedition, and what Bachelard called “the poetic knowledge of the world,” the world

that is “beautiful before being true” and that is “admired before being verified” (*AD* 166), knowledge about earth and retained in the memories of earth – and chooses the latter over the former. Perhaps this is the only significant difference between the two versions: Kelvin in Lem’s original ambiguously decides to stay on Solaris while in Tarkovsky’s film he unambiguously returns to Earth.

A world where an absolute power nearly succeeds in abolishing the second kind of knowledge is presented in Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451*. It is a totally administered world where human beings are “made identical to one another through isolation within the compulsively controlled collectivity” (*DE* 29). “No one has time any more for anyone else,” as Clarisse tells Guy Montag early in the novel (23). People may have a semblance of talk with one another, but they do not really ‘meet,’ that is, come in contact and respond to, each other. As Guy Montag thinks to himself: “how many people did you know who refracted your own light to you? People were more often . . . torches, blazing away until they whiffed out. How rarely did other people’s faces take of you and throw back to you your own expression, your own innermost trembling thought?” (11). Or as Clarisse clarifies it to Montag: “but do you know, we never ask questions, or at least most don’t; they just run the answers at you, bing, bing, bing” (29). And yet, in spite of the isolation in place, by constantly watching the same wall-to-wall TV that surrounds the walls of their TV parlors, “they all say the same things and nobody says anything different from anyone else” (31). After two technicians visit Montag’s house to perform a blood transfusion operation on his wife unconscious from a drug overdose, a suddenly paranoid Montag finds himself musing about how people being all alike might

mean everybody is a stranger to everyone else: “There are too many of us, he thought. There are billions of us and that’s too many. Nobody knows anyone. Strangers come and violate you. Strangers come and cut your heart out. Good God, who *were* those men? I never saw them before in my *life!*” (16).

Suppression of thought is effectively done through banning books. And the regression thus occurs is not limited to thinking but also affects the experience of the sensuous world. Meeting with Clarisse, a 17 year old free spirit, wakes up Montag from his stupor, and the stupor is not just of the intellect but of the whole person, including that of the body’s experiences. Since Clarisse doesn’t watch “parlor walls” or otherwise distracts herself, she has time for independent thinking and remembers how billboards in the country used to be only twenty, not two hundred, feet long, before fast driving was enforced. When she tells him about it, he finds it quite amusing. But she tells him something else too:

“I didn’t know that!” Montag laughed abruptly.

“Bet I know something else you don’t. There’s dew on the grass in the morning.”

He suddenly couldn’t remember if he had known this or not, and it made him quite irritable.

“And if you look” – she nodded at the sky – “there’s a man in the moon.”

He hadn’t looked for a long time. (9)

Here, knowing and remembering dew on the grass in the morning belongs to Bachelard's "poetic knowledge of the world" and as such involves not just the intellectual function but the whole person. Clarisse tells him her family are people who 'walk' and 'talk,' and talking, as she puts it, is "like being a pedestrian, only rarer" (9). Montag dumbly asks: "But what do you *talk* about?" (10). Clarisse laughs at this and asks him a simple question, "Are you happy?" "Am I *what*?" is another stupefied response from Montag. This exchange leads Montag to realize, in the darkness of his house, that he is not happy. The mask of happiness he has been wearing was taken off by Clarisse (12).

When they meet again in the rainy afternoon next day, Clarisse stands on the sidewalk letting the raindrops fall on her face and tells Montag that the rain "feels good" and "even tastes good" (21). Then she shows him how to tell whether one is in love by rubbing a dandelion under one's chin: if it rubs off, one is in love, if it doesn't, one isn't. It gives Montag a mild agony when the dandelion sticks under his chin and Clarisse tells him "What a shame. . . . You're not in love with anyone" (22). Clarisse starts to tell him about the psychiatrists she sees: "They want to know what I do with my time. I tell them that sometimes I just sit and *think*. But I won't tell them what. I've got them running. And sometimes, I tell them, I like to put my head back, like this, and let the rain fall in my mouth. It tastes just like wine. Have you ever tried it?" (23). He has never tried it, but on the way to his work, he does the first time: "And then, very slowly, as he walked, he tilted his head back in the rain, for just a few moments, and opened his mouth. . . ." (24). Montag's education of the senses, as it were, goes a little further when, in the next

meeting with Clarisse, she rouses his sense of smell and assures him that he has become “more relaxed.”

“Let’s talk about something else. Have you ever smelled old leaves? Don’t they smell like cinnamon? Here. Smell.”

“Why, yes, it *is* like cinnamon in a way.”

She looked at him with her clear dark eyes. “You always seem shocked.”

“It’s just I haven’t had time –“

“Did you look at the stretched-out billboards like I told you?”

“I think so. Yes.” He had to laugh.

“Your laugh sounds much nicer than it did.”

“Does it?”

“Much more relaxed.”

He felt at ease and comfortable. (29)

Clarisse mysteriously disappears after this, but it is with what she awoke in him that Montag goes on his next assignment of “fixing” a hidden library. Amidst heaps of books rolling out as firemen swing their hatchets at doors, Montag climbs up the stairwell to the second floor when:

Books bombarded his shoulders, his arms, his upturned face. A book lit, almost obediently, like a white pigeon, in his hands, wings fluttering. In the dim, wavering light, a page hung open and it was like a snowy feather, the words delicately painted thereon. In all the rush and fervor,

Montag had only an instant to read a line, but it blazed in his mind for the next minute as if stamped there with fiery steel. “Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine.” He dropped the book. Immediately, another fell into his arm. (37)

In just a little over a minute his mind was stamped with the line, his hand, “closed like a mouth,” would “crush the book with wild devotion, with an insanity of mindlessness to his chest.” What is it about the line that instantly obsesses him so?

What shocks Montag in the line is a promise of happiness, and happiness as “the only part of metaphysical experience that is more than impotent longing” (ND 374). Such happiness “gives us the inside of objects as something removed from the objects.” It is to be in the presence of that which transcends the immediate, and thereby to experience something as truly alive (375). Here is revealed the power of the imagination, for as Bachelard notes, in one of his definitions of the term, the imagination is not “the faculty for forming images of reality” but “the faculty for forming images that go beyond the reality, which *sing* reality” (WD 16). In a sense, it is “a superhuman faculty,” and “a man is a man to the extent that he is a superman” because a man is to be “defined by the sum of those tendencies which impel him to surpass the *human condition*.” Real life gets healthier when it is given “the holiday in unreality that is its due” (23), which is, in other words, “the joy of elevation, the joy of rising beyond what merely is” (*Metaphysics* 114). The joy of mind found thus is the essence of freedom.

NOTES

¹ In the French original, Bachelard says, “nous avons considéré une métaphore qui pense vite,” or translated literally, “we have considered a metaphor that thinks fast” (82). Jolas put it, “we began by examining a hastily formulated metaphor” (78).

² He opens Chapter 6, “Non-Cartesian Epistemology,” of *The New Scientific Spirit*, with a discussion on how in scientific research new concepts or theories lead to discoveries of new phenomena. “There always comes a time when scientists lost interest in searching for the new along old trails,” and there are no methods “that are exempt from obsolescence” because scientific research will always “bring about a reciprocal reorganization of the domain of rationality” (135, 137).

³ Indeed, Carre-Benoit’s cabinet is an apparatus made for what Adorno calls “farsighted instrumentality” (*DE* 149).

⁴ André Gregory and Wallace Shawn’s script, *My Dinner with André*, made into a film by Louis Malle in 1981, is in many interesting ways a study of “dialectic of enlightenment.” The phrase quoted occurs in André’s lengthy speech condemning the dangers of unbridled scientific reason. Adorno and Horkheimer would point out, in regard to the “Limits of Enlightenment,” that such self-certainty comes with “paranoia” (*DE* 161).

⁵ Almost an entire paragraph is omitted in Jolas’s translation, the paragraph beginning with “Est-il un seul rêveur de mots qui ne résonnera pas au mot *armoire*?,” translated as “Does there exist a single dreamer of words who does not respond to the word wardrobe?” (*PE* 83, *PS* 78). Citations from the paragraph are accordingly from the original.

⁶ The stanza in question in Jolas’s translation:

The wardrobe had no keys! ... No keys had the big wardrobe
Often we used to look at its brown and black door
No keys! ... It was strange! Many a time we dreamed
Of the mysteries lying dormant between its wooden flanks
And we thought we heard, deep in the gaping lock
A distant sound, a vague and joyful murmur. (80)

⁷ These lines are from Louis Chadourne’s *Accords* (*PR* 137).

⁸ Here’s how she uses the expression:

“I have fifty years, I have sixty years to spend. I have not yet broken into my hoard. This

is the beginning” (39). “I open my body, I shut my body at my will. Life is beginning. I now break into my hoard of life” (45). “Days and days are to come; winter days, summer days; we have scarcely broken into our hoard” (102).

The ambivalence of the word “hoard” recalls Bachelard when he, explaining the meaning of ‘forgetting’ to Nietzsche, calls the memory of the past “avaricious harvest”: “*cast yourself* into the sea, not to find death in oblivion, but to consign to death everything within you that could not forget, this whole creature of flesh and earth, all those ashes of knowledge, that whole mass of results, that whole avaricious harvest that makes up a human being” (AD 144).

⁹ In fact, the whole of Wilde’s novel can be read as a narrative of tension surrounding flesh and the tactile sense. Flesh itself is vilified and craved, and touching it is a taboo, which tempts and repels the characters. The temptation and repulsion are equally powerful. “We were quite close, almost touching,” Basil remembers thus his first meeting with Dorian (10). His instant attraction to Dorian brings about a “curious sensation of terror,” which, together, make him “grow pale.” He senses that he is “on the verge of a terrible crisis” in his life. He of course doesn’t/can’t “touch” Dorian, except by way of an indirect “touch” of brush on the canvas image of him. Lord Henry’s liaison with Dorian, on the other hand, also non-physical if more reciprocal, is described in unmistakably suggestive language:

And how charming he had been at dinner the night before, as with startled eyes and lips parted in frightened pleasure he had sat opposite to him at the club, the red candle shades staining to a richer rose the wakening wonder of his face.

Talking to him was like playing upon an exquisite violin. He answered to every touch and thrill of the bow. (34)

Indeed, at the end of the encounter at the club above, Dorian “touches” Lord Henry: “As he was passing out of the door Dorian Gray touched him on the arm. “Let me come with you,” he murmured” (40). “It is only the sacred things that are worth touching, Dorian”: Lord Henry reproaches Dorian with these words when he is repulsed at the suggestion of physical relations with Sybil Vane (47). Much later, Dorian would concur with Lord Henry when he tells Basil that “yellow satin could console one for all the miseries of life” and that he loves “beautiful things that one can touch and handle” (92). And yet, touching, by its own profanity, destroys what is touched. About Sybil’s death: “The moment she touched actual life, she marred it, and it marred her, and so she passed away ... Then Death himself had touched her, and taken her with him” (87-88). Or there are objects too profane to be touched. When Dorian has to destroy what Basil has left in his library, his grey ulster and a Gladstone bag, “He winced. He hated the idea of even touching them” (152). Twice Dorian has to exclaim hysterically “Don’t touch me!,” first when Sybil grabs him and second when Basil tries to, apparently (75, 92). They are moments of tension and intriguing ambiguity. When he becomes touchable, is Dorian profane or sacred? Is he worth touching, or is touching him something to shudder at?

¹⁰ Two recent studies pay focused critical attention to Clarissa’s physicality. In her chapter on Woolf in *Out of Touch: Skin Tropes and Identities in Woolf, Ellison, Pynchon, and Acker*, Maureen F. Curtin first points out that “oversights in Woolf’s general corpus” have been “repeated in the critical mis-treatment of skin in *Mrs. Dalloway*” (16). In correcting the oversight and mis-treatment, her aim is to consider the ways *Mrs. Dalloway* concerns itself with skin, which is “one of the twentieth-century’s preeminent tropes of exteriority and materiality.” Curtin

charts “finely nuanced representations of an interior world contained and expressed by and through the varying textures of skin” in Woolf’s world and in the process persuasively argue for the primacy of the tactile, which dictates even the mind’s interior state, as can be seen in her celebrated essay “Modern Fiction” – “The mind receives a myriad impressions – trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms” – in Woolf’s corpus (32, 28).

In *Female Embodiment and Subjectivity in the Modernist Novel: the Corporeum of Virginia Woolf and Olive Moore*, Renée Dickinson has a chapter on “The Shape of Modernism: Female Embodiment and Textual Experimentation in *Mrs. Dalloway*,” where she examines how “portrayals of women’s physical bodies in *Mrs. Dalloway* ... are both continued and contradicted in the text’s images of landscape, rhetoric of nationalism, and experiments in form” (26). My reading of the novel has been informed by an important point Dickinson makes about a blurring of identity, physical and psychic, that comes about when bodily boundary is unsettled. With all the insight and information it garnered from the two critics, however, my reading also differs from Dickinson’s as well as Curtin’s. As Curtin’s analysis is eventually that of skin as “trope” in Woolf’s works, Dickinson’s sees female embodiment or disembodiment in Woolf’s novel as primarily “representations,” i.e. belonging to the novel’s “textual strategies,” in which they, together with the geographical and national representations, form a part of a “textual body.” My reading views the tactile in the novel as primarily based in ‘actual’ sensory and sensual experiences of the organ and understands that such is an essential element of Woolf’s “material imagination.”

¹¹ This is a Bachelardian term, a noun form (*tonalité*) from the verb of his neologism, *tonaliser*. The meaning he gives these words has to do with matter’s power to involve human beings in the process of becoming, provoked and in response to the matter’s qualities. Kenneth Haltman translates the verb as “involve.” For example, part of the paragraph on contemplating architecture ‘imaginatively,’ from a chapter on “The Psychology of Gravity,” reads: “In the words of Leo Frobenius: “A work is born not just from a point of view but from an interplay of energies.” It is therefore to be contemplated in both line and tension, gravity and thrust, with an eye responsive to its contours and a shoulder supportive of its volumes; in short, with one’s entire being open and involved [*tonalisé*]” (EW 302).

¹² See the note above.

¹³ “It is helpful on the whole to speak of cosmic vision but not of colonialism, of beauty but not of bourgeoisie,” notes Eagleton in his essay “The Crisis of Contemporary Culture” (144). The sentence may be taken as a rundown on his contrast of politically minded, radical criticism against apolitical and conformist one. It is unfortunate that the word “cosmic” now always has a ridiculous ring to it. One may remember, with Bachelard in his words that open the chapter “Drawers, Chests and Wardrobes” of *The Poetics of Space*, that “all words do an honest job in our everyday language” (74). They certainly can be made to perform a “dishonest” job, and hence Eagleton’s objection to two of them here, “cosmic” and “beauty,” but that doesn’t make the words themselves guilty of the deception. When Louis Menand, in an otherwise enlightening and sobering assessment of the humanistic profession at present, says, “There is a talk of a return

to the literary and to sterile topics like beauty – the very things that the greatest generation rescued us from,” he similarly declares bankruptcy on a topic itself, when what went out of steam is a way of talking about it.

¹⁴ About the valorization of upright trees in Nietzsche’s imagination, see the chapter “Nietzsche and the Ascensional Psyche” in *Air and Dreams*.

¹⁵ Woolf herself experienced the joy of walking as something akin to that of swimming and flying. In a diary entry where she first records her grief over Roger Fry’s death, she turns her attention to “a very vigorous, happy summer” and remembers: “Oh the joy of walking! I’ve never felt it so strong in me. Cowper Powys, oddly enough, expresses the same thing: the trance like, swimming, flying through the air; the current of sensations and ideas; and the slow, but fresh change of down, of road, of colour; all this churned up into a fine thin sheet of perfect calm happiness” (*D* 4:246).

¹⁶ Page reference to *The Magic Mountain* is to John E. Woods translation unless noted otherwise.

¹⁷ Indeed, Stock views “love” to be the driving force of Hans’s education. Hans is exposed to both death and sex on his first night – death through his memory of his grandfather and sex through the noise from the Russian couple’s lovemaking next door. Such exposure to death and sex is the beginning of “the transforming spell,” under which Hans will nurture “an unconscious desire to stay on the mountain” when he meets Frau Chauchat (493). He falls so hard for her because she reminds him of the object of his childhood infatuation, Pribislav Hippe and, as Stock tells us, “His love each time is a fever of desire rooted in and affecting both the body and the mind” (494). As he further comments, “In fact, the spell our hero falls under is a fever of body and mind which will seduce him away from work, duty, dignity, uprightness, and the respect for time, the obligation to make time pay in progress for ourselves or our community” (495). In sum, “Mann’s *Bildungsroman*, then, is a modern version of the medieval education by love. In this version, however, love is “unmasked” as the most insistent expression of our physical nature, of that hungering, digesting, dying body civilization tends to conceal” (496).

¹⁸ Woolf’s evocation of the earth itself as a gigantic sponge would also enlighten our reading of *Mrs. Dalloway* where, as Chapter III of this dissertation showed, a vision is achieved in which lives of Londoners connect into one intermeshed body.

¹⁹ H. T. Lowe-Porter’s translation reads: “The faint rose-colour that had briefly enlivened the overcast heavens was faded now, and there reigned the colourless, soulless, melancholy transition-period that comes just before the onset of night” (8). Here too evening comes after a brief disappearance of all signs of life from the mountain.

²⁰ In Porter's translation, last two quotes I made in the paragraph reads: "The populous valley, extended and rather winding, now began to show lights everywhere, not only in the middle, but here and there on the slopes at either hand, particularly on the projecting right side, upon which buildings mounted in terrace formation," "Paths ran up the sloping meadows to the left and lost themselves in the vague blackness of the pine forest. Behind them, where the valley narrowed to its entrance, the more distant ranges showed a cold, slaty blue" (8). Both the "sober slate blue" of Woods's translation and the "cold, slaty blue" of Porter's translation seem to indicate not just a color of the mountain but its "look" or character.

²¹ Bachelard writes, "It is water dreamed in its everyday life, the water of a pond "Opheliaized" on its own, that is covered naturally with sleeping beings who abandon themselves and float, beings who die quietly. Then in death the still floating victims of drowning seem to continue dreaming. In "The Drunken Boat" Arthur Rimbaud has rediscovered this image:

Pale flotsam

And, ravished, a pensive drowned man, sometimes

descends...." (83).

The stanza I quote is from *Rimbaud: Complete Works, Selected Letters*. Trans. With an Introduction. Wallace Fowlie. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005. p. 131

²² Bachelard writes, "This materialized departure takes us away from the earth's matter. Such astonishing grandeur is contained in this verse by Baudelaire, whose sudden image goes to the heart of our mystery: "O death, ancient captain, the time has come! / Let us weigh anchor!" (75). The stanza I quote is from *The Flowers of Evil*. Trans. James McGowan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

²³ Gifford gives the following as the original lines of the song, "The Pauper's Drive": "[First verse and chorus:] There's a grim one-horse hearse in a jolly round trot – / To the churchyard a paper is going I wot; / The road it is rough, and the hearse has no springs; / And hark to the dirge which the sad driver sings: // Rattle his bones over the stones! / He's only a pauper, whom nobody owns! [Fifth and last verse with final chorus:] But a truce to this strain; for my soul it is sad, / To think that a heart in humanity clad / Should make, like the brutes, such a desolate end, / And depart from the light without leaving a friend! // Bear soft his bones over the stones! / Though a pauper, he's one whom his Maker yet owns!" (111).

²⁴ The part with this quote in Bachelard's original reads: "Au début de son livre (*loc. cit.*, p. 12), Diolé nous dit qu'il a voulu «parachever au Désert l'opération magique qui, dans l'eau profonde, permet au plongeur de délier les liens ordinaires du temps et de l'espace et de faire coïncider la vie avec un obscur poème intérieur»" (186-187). Jolas misleadingly put the verb "parachever" into "terminate." Her translation reads: "At the beginning of his book (*loc. cit.*, p. 12), Diolé tells us that he had wanted to "terminate in the desert the magical operation that, in deep water, allows the diver to loosen the ordinary ties of time and space and make life resemble an obscure, inner poem" (206). The verb should be taken in the sense of "to complete."

²⁵ This is transcribed from the film's deleted original opening, which is included in the "Deleted Scenes" of the Special Features of the Criterion Collection's release of the film.

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VITA
 Sunjoo Lee
 abgrund@naver.com

EMPLOYMENT

Graduate Lecturer, Department of English, Texas A&M University, 2005-2010
 Teaching Areas: Composition and Rhetoric, An Introduction to Literature
 Teaching Assistant & Research Assistant, Department of English, Texas A&M
 University, 2002-2005
 Editorial Assistant, *South Central Review*, fall 2004
 Lecturer for a graduate course in Translation: Theory and Practice, Department of
 English, Kyunghee University, 1998

EDUCATION

Ph.D. Texas A&M University, Department of English, May, 2011
 M.A. Texas A&M University, Department of English, 2004
 M.A. Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Graduate School of Interpretation and
 Translation, Seoul, South Korea, 1998.
 B.A. Kyunghee University, Department of English, Seoul, South Korea, 1994

PUBLICATIONS

Selected Translations:

Doris Lessing, *Memoirs of a Survivor*. Seoul: Goldenbough, 2001.
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AWARDS

Graduate Student Conference Travel Grant, The Melbern G. Glasscock Center for
 Humanities Research, Texas A&M University, 2007
 Graduate Student Travel Grants, English Department, Texas A&M University, 2007,
 2008
 Department of English Summer Dissertation Fellowship, 2009

CONFERENCE PRESENTATION

"Seductions of Life: Nietzschean Aestheticism in Donna Tartt's *The Secret History* (1992)"
 at the 17th International Congress of Aesthetics, July 9-13, 2007, Ankara, Turkey