

**From the holdings of the Department of Special Collections , Princeton University Library,
Princeton, NJ**

These documents are either in the public domain, or can only be used for educational and research purposes (Fair use) as per U.S. Copyright law (text below). By accessing this file, all users agree that their use falls in the public domain or within fair use as defined by the copyright law. We do not charge any permission or usage fees for the publication of images of material in our collections, including those provided by Princeton University Library, via our website, catalog, or directly from staff. For more information regarding copyright, credit, and citation please review the information on the Copyright, Credit and Citation Guidelines page of our website.

<https://library.princeton.edu/special-collections/policies/copyright-credit-and-citation-guidelines>. If you have any questions, including how to order higher-quality images from the collection, contact Special Collections Public Services via our Ask Us! Form. <https://library.princeton.edu/special-collections/ask-us>

Doctoral Dissertations, 2011-2026

Comparative Literature

2011

The Secret Languages of Modernism: On James, Woolf, and Faulkner

Chun, Maureen

Princeton, NJ : Princeton University

<http://arks.princeton.edu/ark:/88435/dsp01nc580m67j>

U.S. Copyright law: The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, §108, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research. If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of fair use that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve a violation of copyright law. <https://www.copyright.gov/title17/title17.pdf>

**THE SECRET LANGUAGES OF MODERNISM: ON JAMES, WOOLF, AND
FAULKNER**

Maureen Chun

**A DISSERTATION
PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY
OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**RECOMMENDED FOR ACCEPTANCE
BY THE DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE**

Adviser: Michael Wood

November* 2011

© Copyright by Maureen Chun, 2011. All rights reserved.

Contents

Abstract	iv
Acknowledgments	v
Introduction: On Omniscient Style	1
1. The Language of Consciousness Without Psychology	4
2. The Afterlife of Vital Knowledge in <i>The Wings of the Dove</i>	49
3. Virginia Woolf's Grammar of Consciousness	83
4. The Matter of Style in <i>Absalom, Absalom!</i>	123
Conclusion	155
Bibliography	160

Abstract

This dissertation investigates a counter-current in modernism that turns away from the metaphoric production of meaning exemplified by Joyce and Flaubert, toward a concern with material embodiment as the crux of consciousness. The title of my dissertation is taken from Virginia Woolf's essay "The Cinema," in which she reflects on the new mechanical medium and its expressive potential: "Is there, we ask, some secret language which we feel and see, but never speak, and, if so, could this be made visible to the eye? Is there any characteristic which thought possesses that can be rendered visible without the help of words?" Drawing primarily upon *The Wings of the Dove*, *The Waves*, and *Absalom, Absalom!*, I argue that the later works of the three novelists reflect a dissatisfaction with the concept of consciousness as inhering in a single person, a discrete subjectivity, which dominates in *The Portrait of a Lady*, *To the Lighthouse*, and *The Sound and the Fury*. Each of the three novelists betrays an ambition to tell stories in an unspeakable "secret language": in anti-revelatory narratives embedded in a style that presents images in language as thing-like and consciousness as immanent in the material world. In attending to the status of metaphor developed in the syntax and forms of the later novels, I read this style as conflating multiple perspectives to assume itself the function of a material consciousness whose impersonality derives from the impersonality of the matter of the body.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank first and foremost Michael Wood, for whom I wrote my first seminar paper at Princeton on *The Waves*. If my reading of this novel has developed for the better since then, it is in large part due to his incomparable generosity as an adviser as well as the much appreciated good-humor and warmth that have helped sustain me during my work on this project. I am extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with Peter Brooks, whose arrival at Princeton came at a crucial moment in the development of this dissertation, and whose dedication to student work is behind any and all of the improvements I have made since then. Their conversation and guidance have been a great intellectual and personal boon during my career as a graduate student. Daniel Heller-Roazen has been an inspiring figure and uniquely incisive reader who has definitively influenced the way I try to read and write as a scholar. Always delivered with a remarkable, contagious passion for scholarship, Jean-Michel Rabaté's invaluable comments have never failed to point me in the right direction when I was astray.

I am indebted to Timothy Attanucci, Masha Mimran, and Jonathan Foltz, wonderful friends and intellectual interlocutors without whom I could not have finished this dissertation, which has vastly benefited from their insights and suggestions over the years. Annie Bourneuf, Abigail Mauldin, and Eleanor King have read drafts of various chapters and provided the unstinting encouragement that kept me afloat during the final, frenzied months of composition.

Introduction: On Omniscient Style

This dissertation engages in close analyses of three modern novels—*The Wings of the Dove*, *The Waves*, and *Absalom, Absalom!*—and, in looking specifically at metaphor and style, reads in these texts conclusions about consciousness and the nature of the self very different from the commonly held psychological, philosophical, and literary conception of consciousness as the activity and property of the subjective self.

In attending to the uses of figurative language, it becomes clear that the metaphorical imagery does not serve an essentially descriptive or expressive function. That is, it does not merely enrich representations of the real world external to the self, or expressions of the experience of this world. It operates in an indeterminate territory between the objective and the subjective, in which the contents of experience are depicted as materially present, in space and outside the self. Radically depersonalized, resolutely impersonal, metaphors and images are treated as real things in the world, circulating between characters' minds in the absence of verbal communication, or outside the mind and in the material world.

Structuring this uncanny, un-subjective territory are three disparate novelistic forms that each resist easy narratological analysis. While these narratives present the reader with the perspectives and voices of different characters, the language of what might seem to be the omniscient or third-person narrator is composed in the same style as represented mental thoughts and verbal speech. Style mixes and dissolves subjective perspectives within the omniscient narrative; it offers itself as the embodiment of materialized consciousness, composed of sensations, thoughts, and perceptions immanent in both material reality and the human subject. This is not the consciousness of psychology, which posits a qualitative split between the

unconscious and conscious mental activity, nor the metaphysical entity or process taking place in or with the body encountered in philosophy. James, Woolf, and Faulkner are primarily interested in what they can do with writing, in engaging the full range of psychical and physical experience in narrative. Closer to yet still distinct from the spectrum of preverbal and conscious experience regarded as the domain of the stream of consciousness technique, this consciousness constitutes a rhetorical expression and stylistic effect of the essential connectedness of the subject with the nonverbal reality of matter.

To scrutinize the stylized language of the novels, I argue, is to see it and the metaphors it contains straining away from the representational strictures of language, of word as signifier, toward language as a sensuous phenomenon, in which words acquire the material aspect of physical things. Words, images, metaphors, and consciousness cohere and collectively portray the experience of the self as the experience of the body embedded in material reality. Superseding the fundamental perspectivism of earlier novels such as *The Portrait of a Lady*, *To the Lighthouse*, and *Absalom, Absalom!*, the “omniscient style” of the three later works contains no isolated, psychologized perspective, but unfolds, to borrow the words of Leo Bersani, as the “transposition of particular ways of distributing bodily intensities.”¹ These intensities, crystallized in the impersonal metaphors of material consciousness, illuminate two of the dominant questions addressed in *Wings*, *The Waves*, and *Absalom*: what it means to live in a body, animated with fantasies and sensations and knowledge, bound to return to the state of inanimate matter; and what meaning this material destiny might bear on the status of literature.

In this dissertation I hope to demonstrate how the omniscient style assumes the function of consciousness in confounding and melding multiple perspectives, and in absorbing within its somatic omniscience tropes that do not seem to belong to any psychologized subjectivity. The

¹ *A Future for Astyanax*, p.129.

analysis of the usage and function of metaphor necessitates a study of their context, and so I will also be looking closely at linguistic ambiguity in James and syntactic and lexical tendencies in Woolf and Faulkner. Metaphor, technical style, and novelistic form mutually reinforce the theme of the material subject, and each contributes to and converges in the omniscient style.

The first chapter presents the historical context of these novels of consciousness and the theoretical background to my readings. The technological, social, and cultural developments of the modern period, especially as emblemized in a specific concept of the cinematic, vitally shaped the culture in which the authors' notions of the self in the world and the subject in art emerged. These historically inflected notions intersect with psychoanalytic theories of the subject and poststructuralist thinking of metaphor, which I apply to my analysis of style and material consciousness in these formally experimental narratives. The following chapters devoted to *Wings*, *The Waves*, and *Absalom* offer close analyses indebted to critical studies by Sharon Cameron and Ann Banfield on the nonpsychological in the writings of James and Woolf, which have been widely regarded as exemplars of a subjective turn in literary modernism. Together these novels, I will argue, call for a thinking of the novel not as a literary representation of and about the world, but as stories that not only recount but also enact and effect our nonverbal, bodily correspondences with the material world that gives rise to art.

Chapter 1: The Language of Consciousness Without Psychology

The modern novel is about consciousness. This is an irrefutable point that has become a commonplace in literary criticism. The concern with perspective, subjectivism, the preverbal and preconscious experience of the individual perceiver is everywhere in evidence in the novels of James, Woolf, Joyce, and Faulkner, among the most notable and widely commented practitioners of modernist fiction. In an influential 1954 study of the turn in fiction to the particulars of consciousness, Robert Humphrey applies the label “stream of consciousness,” a term borrowed from the psychologist William James, to describe novels that undertake the depiction of “the entire area of mental attention, from preconsciousness on through the levels of the mind up to and including the highest one of rational, communicable consciousness.”² Critical accounts of the modern novel in history have largely upheld the reading of its project as a study and revelation, initiated by the Romantics, of individual subjective experience—of psychic depth and conflict, the intertwining of the rational and irrational, and the dynamics of perception—, and not without reason.³ The concern with subjective experience in modern fiction coincides with the thinking of consciousness in psychology around 1900, in William James and in Freud, for which consciousness is also a key term to be debated and defined. The

² *Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel*, p.2. Anne Fernihough points out that May Sinclair was the first writer to use the phrase as a literary term and cites Suzanne Raitt, who argues that “the actual phrase ‘stream of consciousness’ might have come from a whole range of texts, psychological and biological, that Sinclair had read, and not necessarily from James.” See “Consciousness as a stream,” p.68.

³ See, for example, Leon Edel’s *The Psychological Novel*, Georg Lukács’s *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, John Fletcher and Malcolm Bradbury’s essay “The Introverted Novel” in *Modernism: 1890-1930*, Michael Levenson’s *Modernism and the Fate of Individuality*, Peter Nicholls’s *Modernisms: A Literary Guide*, and Jesse Matz’s *Literary Impressionism and Modernist Aesthetics*. I should emphasize that here I am speaking of scholarship on the modern novel and not Modernism generally.

emphasis on introspection and the subjective spectrum of inwardness that Humphrey's study, among others, reads in the modern novel has arguably been validated by the critical writings of James and Woolf themselves; in his prefaces and their essays the authors call for an impressionistic literary aesthetics that would truly encompass the vital fluidity of consciousness.⁴ In "The Art of Fiction" Henry James defined the novel as "a personal, a direct impression of life" born of "an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider-web of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness," and "the very atmosphere of the mind." For him, experience "is never limited" and "never complete."⁵ In "Modern Fiction" Woolf famously stated that life "is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end," and that it remains "the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit."⁶ Life, it would seem, would be commensurate with the vastness and complexities of subjective experience in time, and modern narrative the attempt at a portrait of its dynamic processes.

Yet in qualifying life and the spirit as "uncircumscribed," Woolf gestures toward a conception of consciousness that is not restricted to a private sensorium or even a phenomenological consonance of perceiving subject and exteriority. It is a conception of consciousness, illustrated vividly in both her non-fiction and her novels, as unconfined to individual subjectivity, the Romantic subject, the Freudian psyche, interiority, and psychology; it proposes that subjectivity—defined here as moments in (a stream of) consciousness, the

⁴ See, for example, Jesse Matz's *Literary Impressionism and Modernist Aesthetics*, especially Chapter 1, "Impressions of modernity," for one such reading of the modern novel as a reflection of the critical preoccupations of James and Woolf. Matz, drawing upon Frederic Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* and Michael Levenson's *Genealogy of Modernism*, identifies the aesthetic innovations of the Impressionists as the threshold of literary modernism, which he then links to British empiricism, Paterian aesthetics, James's theories of perspective in fiction, and the philosophically inflected psychological writings of Bergson and William James.

⁵ "The Art of Fiction," p.52.

⁶ "Modern Fiction," p.9.

empirical welter of thoughts, sensations, and percepts constituting “life” for Woolf—is not discrete or coherent, not circumscribed by the subject, and thus incapable, in fact, of properly containing anything. In this dissertation I will explore how the novelistic developments of James, Woolf, and Faulkner seem to enact, confront, and address the contradiction in Woolf’s statement about life: life, with consciousness and the spirit, forms an *uncircumscribed envelope*. From “luminous halo” life becomes a “semi-transparent envelope”: the implication is that life is not simply luminous, but dense, semi-opaque: simultaneously borderless and contained, illuminable and inaccessible. James enacts a similar contradiction in writing that experience “is never limited” while figuring consciousness as a chamber. Woolf’s ambivalence and the ambiguity of her vital terms—life, consciousness, and spirit—inform her ongoing, evolving project to fulfill the task of the modern novelist, not merely to reveal and describe the uncircumscribed envelope of life, but to determine and clarify its “varying” and “unknown” character. I will argue that her efforts to move beyond the bare depiction of the semi-luminous envelope of subjectivity result in a conception of consciousness as shared and disseminated among, even between, subjects, and that this development is also discernible in the later major novels of James and Faulkner.

Woolf’s contradiction transpires as an oscillation between a notion of consciousness as a transparent envelope and consciousness as unbindable light, both between and within novels, and this oscillation, too, occurs in James and Faulkner. (If Woolf emerges from the three novelists I have grouped together as the key figure in this chapter it is because she, throughout her massive body of work, was the most consciously preoccupied with the nonpsychological as suggested in the cultural, social, and intellectual constellation of her time.)⁷ Nonetheless, one may argue that

⁷ The notion of a “world without a self” that recurs throughout her fiction and non-fiction distinguishes her aesthetic concerns from those of James, who in his prefaces consistently

life for these authors constitutes at least later in their careers the experience of the dissolution of the spirit in the diffusion of a consciousness deriving from the subject's crux of impersonality. This is not confined to the impersonality of the artist, the artwork, the mobile omniscient voice, or a kind of Romantic, Fichtean comprehension of the world through a visionary collapse of the objective and subjective.⁸ These elements undoubtedly subtend the impersonality of nonpsychological consciousness which, however, depends less on a thematic exploration of the subject than formal alignments of style, metaphor, and novelistic form.

For the authors composing *The Wings of the Dove*, *The Waves*, and *Absalom, Absalom!* the mysterious opacity of life evolves from the question of how one knows and should portray other psychologically complex subjectivities—of the psychology of expression—to that of how it is that we share as much as we do—what we experience and the actual substance we are made of—with other persons and even things. The subject remains, though the contents of her experience are not wholly subjective because they may be depersonalized, shared, and even radically *externalized* beyond the empirical scope of any single subject: this is the threshold of nonpsychological consciousness the novels cross in the modern project in fiction that begins as an exploration of subjectivity through language.

figured both the novelist and the characters of his fiction as individuals of discrete consciousness. His essays on literary style, however, arguably reveal more about his art in practice than his own professed intentions. My interpretation of James's fiction here and in Chapter 2 is consequently to some extent a symptomatic reading.

⁸ See, among the many studies of impersonality in modernism, Maud Ellman's *The Poetics of Impersonality: T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound* for a critique of modernist theories of the impersonality of the artist and Daniel Albright's *Personality and Impersonality: Lawrence, Woolf, and Mann*, which reads depictions of personality in modern literature as a mode of authorial self-expression. Sharon Cameron's *Impersonality: Seven Essays* focuses on nineteenth-century American literature but reads in her texts many of the same features of impersonality I read in certain modern novels, notably the erosion between the inanimate and the human.

The trajectory I am describing is given a more sophisticated account in William James's 1904 essay "Does Consciousness Exist?," in which he concludes that the phenomenon of the "stream of thinking" is "only a careless name for what, when scrutinized, reveals itself to consist chiefly of the stream of my breathing."

The "I think" which Kant said must be able to accompany all my objects, is the "I breathe" which actually does accompany them. There are other internal facts besides breathing (intracerebral muscular adjustments, etc., of which I have said a word in my larger Psychology), and these increase the assets of "consciousness," so far as the latter is subject to immediate perception; but breath, which was ever the original of "spirit," breath moving outwards, between the glottis and the nostrils, is, I am persuaded, the essence out of which philosophers have constructed the entity known to them as consciousness. *That entity is fictitious, while thoughts in the concrete are fully real. But thoughts in the concrete are made of the same stuff as things are.*⁹

James suggests an equivalence between the "muscular adjustments" involved in breathing, the materiality of objects, and the concrete, thing-like contents of our biologically produced consciousness, which bears no resemblance to the soul or the transcendental ego. Consciousness is emphatically a process, and not a subjective content, though thoughts can become things outside of the strictures of subjectivity. William James, as well as the three novelists of this study, particularly Woolf and Faulkner, exhibits a dissatisfaction with previously reigning conceptions of individual consciousness derived in part from Romantic and Christian notions of subjectivity and the spirit. The artistic, even spiritual triumph Lily Briscoe attains at the end of *To the Lighthouse*—a Romantic accomplishment of the visionary mind over the chaos of

⁹ In *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p.19. Emphasis in the original.

subjective consciousness and the formlessness of the material world—gives way to Bernard's negations as he is engulfed by the waves. *The Sound and the Fury* proposes a teleology of consciousness in the chapter by chapter progression from Benjy's perspective to those of Jason, Quentin, and finally an omniscient narrator. This progression, along with the sense of order summarized in Benjy's closing vision of familiarity and regularity, is utterly superseded by the chaos and overlapping of voices in *Absalom, Absalom!*. Woolf and Faulkner with Henry James, I will argue, begin to see the components of consciousness as concrete and substantial, unbound to any "I". But unlike William James's conception, consciousness for them is not defined by conscious mental experience. Nor is there a distinction in these authors between the conscious and unconscious in the operations of consciousness. With the melding of thought with sensations and perceptions within the single register of consciousness conveyed on the pages of *The Wings of the Dove*, *The Waves*, and *Absalom*, the materiality of thought extends to sensation and the full range of human experience.

This thinking of consciousness is radically distinct from the philosophical, aesthetic, and psychological theories based on a concept of the subject as empirically defined and structured by psychology, which corresponds here to the metaphor of a luminous and illuminable envelope that remains sealed.¹⁰ I see the emergence in modern fiction of a consciousness without psychology as correlative with changes, whose seeds date back to the eighteenth century, in what Jonathan Crary has called "techniques of the observer"; and closer to the aesthetic and intellectual projects of Cézanne rather than Monet, Baudelaire than Pound, Peirce than Saussure, Bertrand Russell

¹⁰ Poststructuralist theories of the subject deny psychology in defining the subject in terms of contingency and dispersal, differentiation and heterogeneity, yet they arguably largely reject the materiality of consciousness, a central idea embraced by the novels of my study, in the redefinition of the subject in semiotic terms. Deleuze, however, provides an important exception in his rethinking of Bergsonian consciousness, which I will consider in the conclusion.

than Freud.¹¹ The towering figure of Joyce in modernism enters this study as an absent presence, a counterpoint to the Anglo-American authors I do read closely, because Joyce, in my mind, is more closely allied with Monet and Pound, Saussure and Freud, and with the illuminable, manifold, yet circumscribed subject insofar as the subject is unloosened through textuality and not through consciousness. In the following pages I will look at moments in cultural history analogous to the nonpsychological vision of experience to contextualize my readings of James, Woolf, and Faulkner. From there I try to illustrate how this vision is expressed not simply thematically but through form and style, and to elucidate how this vision and these forms propose a reading of metaphor in language as essentially, paradoxically non-metaphorical. In *Ulysses*, via Stephen, Joyce tells us, “In the beginning was the word, in the end the world without end.”¹² In the novels of this study, it is ultimately not the impersonality of art and the semiotic play of language that expands the reaches of the self, but the nonpsychological currents of a material consciousness that find correspondence in modernist aesthetics. In the alternative current of literary modernism at stake here, the foundation of the aesthetic medium and the aesthetic community is not the word but what Woolf has called “a language without words”: “some secret language which we feel and see, but never speak.”¹³ The secret languages of

¹¹ In her preface to *The Phantom Table* Ann Banfield cites Foucault’s opposition of Russell to Freud in *The Order of Things* to support her contention that the “debate about modernism stands in need of a new formulation which takes into account its revolutionary conception of the objects of sensation, at once physical and subjective. That such a new formulation should call upon analytic philosophy challenges the other assumption of contemporary understanding of modernism—that the only philosophy of relevance to twentieth-century art and literature is continental... It required a French philosopher with the necessary distance from British philosophy to reinstate Russell as the culmination of one of the two important directions of modern thought. The philosopher was Michel Foucault. He identified ‘the nineteenth century’s double advance, on the one hand towards formalism in thought and on the other toward the discovery of the unconscious—towards Russell and Freud,’” p.xi.

¹² *Ulysses*, p.415.

¹³ “The Cinema,” p.184.

James, Woolf, and Faulkner tell us that language is endless because consciousness is not necessarily a matter of the self.

The Cinematic Before and Without Cinema

The mysterious nature of subjective experience described by Woolf in “Modern Fiction” can be linked to the major ideas and developments of the intellectual and social climate of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century that collectively effected a Copernican decentering and dismantling of the self. The scientific theories of relativity and natural selection marginalized the human mind of the Enlightenment; the medical discovery of the unconscious conceived the mind and body as an organism terminally fractured and obscured by repression, the conflicted instrument rather than agent of primitive conflicting impulses. More importantly for social and cultural existence of the period, technological advancements, industrialization, and consumerism further destabilized the cohesiveness of self-identity as they converged in the anonymous, chaotic, moneyed space of the modern city. Memorably studied by Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin, a sense of randomness and fungibility in the crowded environment of the commodity, amid the profusion of mechanical reproduction and the rise of popular culture, entered the modern sensibility and gave rise to an aesthetics emblemized, for one, in the figure of the flâneur. In his essay “The Painter of Modern Life” Baudelaire characterizes the painter referred to as “M.G” as an artist of the new sensibility, a constitutionally incomplete, restless recorder of urban phenomena possessing the impersonality of a lens: “the lover of universal life enters the crowd as into an immense reservoir of electricity. One can compare [M.G] to a mirror as immense as this crowd; to a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness that, with each of its movements, represents the multiplicity of life and the mobile grace of all the elements of life. It

is an *I* insatiable for the *not-I* that renders and expresses it at each instant in images more vivid than life itself, always unstable and fugitive.” The technical analogies between the urban crowd and electricity, between the artist and artificial optics, reinforce a vision of modernity and the urban experience as a heightened experience of life itself; the *I* is an insubstantial, mechanistically figured entity who partakes of the “wine of Life” in the intensively inhabited city.¹⁴

Baudelaire’s *I* and *not-I* (“*moi*” and “*non-moi*”) do not represent merely a reformulation of the subject-object relationship; the *I* is figured as an atomistic element among drifting, shifting elements that are neither strictly subjective or objective, human or inorganic. The images rendered and expressed by Baudelaire’s “*moi*” are less the products of an inspired, creative imagination than a translation of the “*non-moi*” into an aesthetic medium “more vivid than life itself” for opening the domain of life to the purer ‘perceptions’ of inorganic technology. In representing the sensorium of the modern artist as a kind of technology, Baudelaire’s subject provides a compelling analogy with the nonpsychological subject emerging in select modern fictions that similarly draw the subject as a not quite subjective composite of *I* and *not-I*.

Baudelaire’s essay was published in 1863, decades before the first of two scandalous exhibitions of Post-Impressionist painting in 1910 organized by Roger Fry that for Woolf, among others, represented a significant moment in the (British) culture of art and a parallel to the experiments of literary modernism.¹⁵ Yet as Jonathan Crary has persuasively demonstrated, the rendering of visual perception itself as an object of study, typically regarded as the innovation of

¹⁴ “C’est un moi insatiable du non-moi, qui, à chaque instant, le rend et l’exprime en images plus vivantes que la vie elle-même, toujours instable and fugitive.” Baudelaire, “Le Peintre de la vie moderne” in *Ecrits sur l’art*, pp. 352, 384. My translation.

¹⁵ See n.3 above. Susan Roe, among others, assumes that when Woolf “wrote that ‘in or around December 1920, human character changed,’ she was referring [Fry’s] first Grafton exhibition.” See “The impact of post-impressionism,” p.168.

modernist art in photography, film, and painting, was originally undertaken in the eighteenth century and well established by the 1800s, when the observer of industrial society began to be treated as a commodified object. Whereas the previous paradigm of sight represented by the camera obscura assumed a transparent relation between image and referent, the new observer prefiguring modernism himself became the object of observation, much like Baudelaire's artist as kaleidoscope "gifted with consciousness." Thus Goethe's influential *Theory of Colors* (1840) "insistently cites experiences in which the subjective contents of vision are dissociated from an objective world, in which the body itself produces phenomena that have no external correlate," and "poses the opacity of the observer as a necessary condition for the appearance of phenomena." The phenomenon of color as a product of light waves meeting the eye was exemplary of this uncertainty in creating, for Goethe, "a single surface of affect on which interior and exterior have few of their former meanings and positions."¹⁶ According to Crary, the new primacy of the body, the "carnal density of vision" opened up two "intertwined paths": "One led out toward all the multiple affirmations of the sovereignty and autonomy of vision derived from this newly empowered body, in modernism and elsewhere. The other path was toward the increasing standardization and regulation of the observer that issued from knowledge of visionary body, toward forms of power that depended on the abstraction and formalization of vision."¹⁷ In Baudelaire's case the primacy of vision contributed to his image of the modern artist as *both* producer of images more vivid than life itself and as contingent subject in the mechanized landscape of the city. In the case of modern fiction, the oscillation between the psychological and subjectivist and the nonpsychological and impersonal operating in *Wings*, *The Waves*, and *Absalom*, as well as the novelists' other major novels, arguably relates to the

¹⁶ *Techniques of the Observer*, p.71.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.150.

intertwined paths outlined by Crary in that they contain moments that describe subjective experience as Romantic and visionary even as the consciousness of the subject—his sensations—are abstracted in a greater impersonality. For the aspects of nineteenth-century modernity that seduced Baudelaire onto the streets of the city and led to the emergence of an opaque observer also contributed to the conditions for the emergence of the nonpsychological subject in James's fiction of the turn of the century, which for all its famous abstruseness is firmly entrenched in contemporary urban, social, and economic realities.¹⁸ Indeed, one may venture that the rarefied intelligence of Jamesian consciousness in the late style of the major phase circulates with all the abstract concreteness of the vast sums of money at the heart of his plots.¹⁹

Here I want to bring to the foreground the distinctive ambivalence and fascination for the body to be found in my three authors, evident in the themes of eroticism and death in James, the preoccupation with sensation in Woolf, or the troubling fact of blood relations and the myth of racial purity in Faulkner. For them, as I will elaborate in the following chapters, and as I take it for Crary, if the modern body is opaque it is not because its processes, like the Freudian psyche,

¹⁸ Christina Britzolakis explicitly makes the link between Sharon Cameron's recognition of the nonpsychological in James with Crary's work on the nineteenth-century observer in the article "Technologies of Vision in Henry James's 'What Maisie Knew.'"

¹⁹ My reading of James is influenced by John Goode's insightful essay "The pervasive mystery of style: The Wings of the Dove," which reads style, specifically Milly's pervasive, moneyed style, as a kind of circulating commodity: James's "understanding of the dramatic relations between great wealth and the world of thought is deep enough for him to bring out all the complexities involved in experiencing those connexions. The simplicity of the plot not only permits the spatial presentation of these complexities, it is the direct reflection of the connexion: for money and language both seek to compose relationships into commendable fictions," p.297. Insofar as style—both Milly's style as well as James's prose style—are expressions of the nonpsychological, as I will argue in chapter 2, I read Goode's interpretation as consonant with my own here.

For an extensive discussion on how urban social and political relationships shaped Woolf's life and entered her writing, especially *Between the Acts* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, see Alex Zwerdling's *Virginia Woolf and the Real World*; for an analysis of how the urban experience shaped Woolf's aesthetics see Rachel Bowlby's *Feminist Destinations and Further Essays on Virginia Woolf*, especially "'The Crowded Dance of Modern Life.'"

are largely hidden and difficult to decipher, but that the boundaries of bodily experience, like those of consciousness—from which, of course, it is not distinct—are uncertain. (More specifically, in Crary’s Foucauldian study the body is opaque because the ways in which its experiences are regulated by external social powers require critical analysis for legibility.) Color had become coextensive with the body, which rendered it manipulable, a thing among things. Yet the impulse in Woolf, for one, to release the thing from the tyranny of the commodity, to attribute color and uniqueness to the thing, also rendered the subject more thing-like—to liberating effect.

In “The Secret Life of Things (Virginia Woolf and the Matter of Modernism),” Bill Brown provides an close, complex reading of Woolf’s 1918 short story “Solid Objects” with Benjamin, Simmel, Heidegger, Adorno and other theoretical writings from the 1920s in which the discourse of the object takes prominence amid the pervasive sense that the modern subject is alienated from his own sensations and the sheer materiality of things. He reads Woolf’s story of a man obsessed with collecting abstract fragments of material—glass, china, iron—as an obliquely political “narrative of things accumulated but not arranged, intimate but unassimilated, ‘extimate’ in their simultaneous proximity and distance, accreted as vivacious fragments that belong to no whole.”²⁰ Brown links the recuperation of the object as a sensuous thing and not a ready-to-hand object to the aesthetic potential Woolf sees in the cinema, which renders things abstract—not in the sense of being alienated from the subject, but precisely as a substance in itself of unfamiliar, unmanipulable shape. The vivification of the object engages in the simultaneous ‘abstraction’ of the subject as a new, impersonal body of matter. In “Solid Objects” we read that “Any object mixes itself so profoundly with the stuff of thought that it loses its actual form and recomposes itself a little differently in an ideal shape which haunts the

²⁰ “The Secret Life of Things (Virginia Woolf and the Matter of Modernism),” p.12.

brain.”²¹ Here, Woolf is gesturing toward a phenomenological recomposition of the object for which perceptual experience, in which thought is not divorced from sensation, acts as the medium integrating object with subject. In her thinking on the cinema, however, Woolf builds upon and moves away from perceptual experience as the medium of subject/object reconfiguration toward a literary style based on the materiality of language, a style implicating the material indifferentiation of the body and the physical world.

In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries it was photography and cinema that most powerfully represented the resemblance of person to thing, as well as a particularly modern self-alienation—which, as both Benjamin and Woolf agreed, could be harnessed in view of particularly powerful aesthetic forms and experiences.²² As Benjamin observes in the third version of his famous essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility,” the “*presentation of reality in film*” “*provides the equipment-free aspect of reality [the people of today] are entitled to demand from a work of art, and does so precisely on the basis of the most intensive interpenetration of reality with equipment.*” Not only does the photographic basis of film allow for the incorporation of the reality of modern life with technology; the “distracted masses” of the city symbolized by the Baudelairean flâneur can actively engage with art once it has been stripped of its aura of self-containment and originality: “A person who concentrates before a work of art is absorbed by it; he enters into the work, just as, according to legend, a Chinese painter entered his completed painting while beholding it. By contrast, the distracted

²¹ Quoted in *ibid.*, p.10.

²² For a detailed discussion of Woolf’s work and life in light of Benjamin’s theories of technology see *Virginia Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, edited by Pamela L. Caughie. See also Karen Jacob’s *The Eye’s Mind: Literary Modernism and Visual Culture* for a reading of *Between the Acts* with Benjamin’s theories of distraction and mass culture.

masses absorb the work of art into themselves.”²³ In other words, the formal power and technical impersonality of the artwork had now been assumed by the subject himself.

It is a view of the aesthetic potential of technology that Woolf espouses in “The Cinema.” Woolf’s thinking on mechanical art recorded in her 1926 essay adumbrates the great experiment of *The Waves* (1931) and reveals part of the thought-processes behind the uninhabited landscape of the chapter “Time Passes” in *To the Lighthouse*, published one year after the essay was completed. Some of the language of the essay seems to have been either borrowed from her *Lighthouse* manuscript or to have inspired the shaping of the novel; she writes of an imaginary film scene, “Watching the boat sail and the wave break, we have time to open our minds wide to beauty, and register on top of it the queer sensation—this beauty will continue, and this beauty will flourish whether we behold it or not. Further, all this happened ten years ago, we are told. We are beholding a world which has gone beneath the waves.”²⁴ But the absence from a reality that is not merely represented but mechanically recorded does not radically separate the subject from that world: the “queer sensation” that is later likened to a synesthetic “visual emotion” corresponds to the absence-presence of cinema and derives from the interpenetration of felt reality with nonhuman materiality. The essay on the cinema contains practically no film analysis (only a few references to adaptations of *Anna Karenina*); the most compelling experience with cinema Woolf describes is actually an accident of projection. Of seeing a shadow shaped like a tadpole on the screen at a showing of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, we are told, “For a moment it seemed as if thought could be conveyed by shape more effectively than by words. The monstrous quivering tadpole seemed to be fear itself, and not the statement, ‘I am afraid.’”²⁵ The

²³ “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility,” pp. 264, 268. Emphasis in the original.

²⁴ “The Cinema,” p. 181.

²⁵ Ibid., p.183.

strange visual emotion produced by cinema is more than an internal confusion of the senses, or the dynamic continuum between subject and object in the process of perception: it is a moment of uncanniness, in which affect and perception inhere in matter itself and correspond to human experience in the same way that the matter composing the subject corresponds to the shifting light waves on the screen.

As in Baudelaire, in the complexity and strangeness of the synesthetic moment the subject seems to fuse with external things. In the famous poem “Correspondences” Baudelaire writes, “The pillars of Nature’s temple are alive/ and sometimes yield perplexing messages;/ forests of symbols between us and the shrine/ remark our passage with accustomed eyes”; among these pillars “the sounds, the scents, the colors correspond.”²⁶ “Perplexing messages” does not quite convey the same connotations as “confuses paroles,” which also describes confused (rather than confusing), mixed, vague words or speech, especially verbal speech. Synesthesia is not simply the disordering of the senses, but an associative network of relations to the material world in which human sensations and perceptions mingle with the impressions of things—human impressions of things, as well as the responsive qualities of things that indicate that they also hold perspectives and even observe us. Remarkably, like the exemplary poet of the city, Woolf transposes the “visual emotion” invoked by a paradigmatically modern experience—in her case, of the technology of cinema—to a natural landscape, thus relating the technological restructuring of the human sensorium to capacities that have always existed in the range of bodily sensation.²⁷

Moreover, the distinctly human phenomenon of language is attributed to external things, though

²⁶ “La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers/ Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;/ L’homme y passe à travers des forêts de symbols/ Qui l’observent avec des regards familiers.” “Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent.” The translation is by Richard Howard in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, p.16.

²⁷ Cf. David Trotter, *Cinema and Modernism*, p.172: “Film, I would argue, did not teach Woolf how to write eyelessly, but it did teach her how to imagine eyelessness as an element of the human condition.”

in very different form: the experience of the cinema raises the possibility of a kind of synesthetic “language without words which we feel and see, but never speak” and which “*may still await the cinema.*”²⁸

Yet it is Woolf herself who undertakes the ‘writing’ of a language without words in her fiction. More than any other of her novels, *The Waves* is replete with moments of synesthesia, and as in *Absalom, Absalom!*, the distinctions between the spoken, thought, and narrated are deliberately obscured. In reflecting further on the tadpole on the screen, Woolf observes, “Terror has besides its ordinary forms the shape of a tadpole; it burgeons, bulges, quivers, disappears. Anger is not merely rant and rhetoric, red faces and clenched fists. It is perhaps a black line wriggling upon a white sheet.” Here, she subtly suggests that literature that draws attention to its own materiality and realizes the possible materialization of emotion would form the basis of a secret language without words. Such literature would be able to show us “thought in its wildness, in its beauty, in its oddity, pouring from men with their elbows on a table; from women with their little handbags slipping to the floor. We should see these emotions mingling together and affecting each other.”²⁹ The dynamic motions of visual emotions would supplant rhetorical self-expression.

It is interesting, then, to read in her diaries that she conceived of the novel as “playpoem” and, during its composition, described it as “a series of dramatic soliloquies.” These notes are undoubtedly superficial descriptions of what she attempting, which was more accurately “an abstract mystical eyeless book,” which would “saturate every atom” in a “combination of thought; sensation; the voice of the sea.”³⁰ But whatever their more profound nature, the voices of the novel do indeed take the form of soliloquies. James’s love for the theatre shaped the

²⁸ Woolf, “The Cinema,” p.184. My emphasis.

²⁹ Ibid., pp.183-4, 185.

³⁰ Woolf, *A Writer’s Diary*, pp. 134, 156, 136.

“scenic approach” he would apply to his novels, which remain decidedly untheatrical in their focus on the movements of consciousness.³¹ His late novels of consciousness ultimately valorize the mystery of living style—both as vibrant personal style and only quasi-perspectivist literary language—over psychological depth and subjective presence. This vital style, as I will argue, becomes in the *The Wings of the Dove* an impersonal style and form of being. Faulkner’s modernism was nourished as well by another artistic form of far greater history than the novel; his fiction teems with voices carrying the trace of the age-old storyteller. In a 1953 interview he claims, “The South’s the place for a novelist to grow up because the folks there talk so much about the past. Why, when I was a little boy there’d be sometimes twenty or thirty people in the house, mostly relatives... swapping stories about the family and about the past, while I sat in a corner and listened. That’s where I got my books.”³² Yet as in James before him and his contemporary Woolf, the expressive, unified self of articulate presence is dissolved in Faulkner. The embodied self of traditional stream of consciousness, in the full range of preconscious and conscious experience, is broken down to a kind of cloud of “saturated atoms” in *Absalom*.

In preparing *The Sound and the Fury* for publication Faulkner requested that the different chronological registers of experience recorded in the monologue-like sections be indicated in different colored inks, but the high cost of such a production forced him to rely on italics.³³ His use of italics came to connote far more than temporal displacements in consciousness, and it is revealing that he seized upon color, rather than any other typographical marker or narrative signposts, to illustrate the sensuous complexity of consciousness. His experience as a

³¹ For a summary of the major aspects of the theatrical influence in James’s fiction, see Francis Fergusson essay “James’s Idea of Dramatic Form.”

³² From “Faulkner Without Fanfare” in *Conversations with Faulkner*, ed. M. Thomas Inge, p.101.

³³ See Stephen Ross, *Fiction’s Inexhaustible Voice*, pp. 145-46 for a brief account of Faulkner’s use of italics.

screenwriter probably shaped the composition of *Absalom* (he was working in Hollywood at the time), yet the cinematic influence, at least for this novel, was arguably less in montage than in the particular synesthetic effects of the material medium.³⁴ Each novelist seems to have wanted to return to the practice of live speech and embodied presence to discover what had become of the self; each investigates individual voice and perspective and arrives at the impersonal, even inhuman nature of the body's sensations. The fullness of the singular voice gives way to the impersonal matter of language, words, and self; the expressivity of the voice is overturned in an emphasis on the materiality of both spoken and written language.³⁵ Once again, Woolf appears the most self-aware of her project and its implications.

Before undertaking an exploration of how the nonpsychological is represented specifically in language, I want to turn to one fascinating instance of it in the professed aesthetics of a filmmaker, Robert Bresson, who treated the 'theatrical' as an outdated artistic mode and trans-generic possibility that had infected cinema, much as the modernists conceived of a cinematic principle that could describe the experience of the metropolis generally. For Bresson, theatre had corrupted cinema to the point that he saw the need to distinguish the latter from what he defines as the art of cinematography.³⁶ One might venture to say that a strain of literary modernism rejecting the theatricality and psychology of self-expression preceded and either directly or subliminally influenced Bresson's view of the cinematographic actor as

³⁴ The montage-like effects of *The Wild Palms*, for example, in which different dramatic scenarios are intercut with one another, are obvious. See Bruce Kavin's *Faulkner and Film* for a thorough discussion of his career as a screenwriter and the literary practice of montage in the fiction, as well as the essays in *Faulkner, modernism and film*, ed. Evans Harrington and Ann Abadie. Joseph Urgo's "Absalom, Absalom!: The Movie" gives an account of Faulkner's work in Hollywood during the time he wrote *Absalom*, as well as an unconvincing reading of how the cooperative work behind film production is reflected in the novel.

³⁵ See n.57 below for Fredric Jameson's account of the "historical and dialectical reversal" in which articulated speech imbues point of view with the materiality of language.

³⁶ See, for example, pp. 66 and 78 of *Notes on the Cinematographer*.

nonpsychological “modèle.” But my intention here as elsewhere in this study is less to map a traceable network of direct influences than to illuminate an aesthetic concern shared by twentieth-century writers and filmmakers to depict the subjective self differently. In looking at this common project, I want to show, moreover, how disparate authors and artists arrived at a similar way of conceiving and depicting the relation between the self and material reality, and how this shared vision resulted in formal developments in their art.

In his 1913 essay “Thoughts on an Aesthetics of Cinema,” Georg Lukács bluntly announces that the cinema, as opposed to the world of theatre, is a medium that presents “life without soul.”³⁷ The stage represents a universe in which the individual is bound up with his own soul, in the fullness of his presence, and consequently in full and meaningful embodiment of his human fate. The cinema offers the “movements and deeds of people, but *not people*”: with these motions on celluloid one loses “his *soul*, yet gains his *body* in return.”³⁸ Published roughly sixty years later, Robert Bresson’s aphoristic and prescriptive meditations on the cinema collected in *Notes sur le cinématographe* engages in a similar opposition between cinematography and theatre by arguing for a type of non-actor—the famous Bressonian model—for the art of cinematography, an aesthetic medium foreign to the classically expressive, theatrical, and “cinematic” actor. “An actor,” he writes, needs to get out of himself in order to see himself in *the other person*. YOUR MODELS, ONCE OUTSIDE THEMSELVES, WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GET IN AGAIN”: the goal for the cinematographer is not to elicit a performance of psychological realism and depth of character, but to compel his models to

³⁷ “Thoughts on an Aesthetics of Cinema,” p.13.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 12, 14. Emphasis in the original. Many early theorists of cinema rehearsed and defined a similar opposition of cinema to theatre in the struggle to define cinema. See Dudley Andrew’s *Concepts in Film Theory* for a summary of the main points of the debate. Lukács’s basic argument about the ‘soulless’ or contingent, active, vibrantly physical cinematic subject has been elaborated most notably in the realist film theories of Siegfried Kracauer and André Bazin.

“discover the matter they are made of.”³⁹ Depleted of an originary interiority and expressive core, the cinematographic model is arguably one response to the question of the body Lukács’s essay implicitly raises without addressing: what is the relationship between the “movements and deeds” in cinema that do not constitute persons of soulful, subjective plenitude but nonetheless return the body to the subject? Bresson’s cryptic, compelling notes suggest that a nexus of entities—the soul, the spirit, aesthetic precision and truth, even life itself—must enter the hollowed subject from without through radically flat, desubjectivized gestures that are in turn transformed by the nonpersonal, montage-based language of the cinematographer. It is only when the subject is emptied of soul and subjectivity—of an empiricism based on psychological depth—that his movements and deeds demonstrate to him the matter he is made of.

Bresson explicitly states, “No psychology (of the kind which discovers only what it can explain).”⁴⁰ Psychology, in this sense, proposes a pre-existing content firmly positioned within the subject susceptible to explication upon expressive manifestation. But “life” and the truth of which only the cinematograph is capable is only available through the careful technical work of montage, which counterpoints the model’s empty gestures with external sounds and images to produce, not an investigation of the psyche, but an illumination of what people stubbornly, opaquely are. Bresson writes of “THE BONDS THAT BEINGS AND THINGS ARE WAITING FOR, IN ORDER TO LIVE”; people become human through their bonds with things.⁴¹ As Susan Sontag has observed, “Bresson is interested in the forms of spiritual action—

³⁹ Robert Bresson, *Notes on the Cinematographer*, pp. 53, 47. Emphasis in the original. Bresson’s *Notes* was originally published in 1975, but the majority of the reflections, including the two quoted here, were written between 1950 and 1958.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.82.

⁴¹ Ibid., p.80. Emphasis in the original.

in the physics, as it were, rather than in the psychology of souls.”⁴² The repudiation of the unified self as body and soul does not undermine the spiritual physics and impersonality of the body. It is the transparent physicalism of Bresson’s models and not a hidden uniquely human depth that redeems them aesthetically, renders them mysterious, and grants them “souls.” What Sontag describes as Bresson’s “spiritual style” is a syntax, the structure of a cinematographic language that draws its grammatical units from all human and nonhuman things. This, we will see, accords with the idea of consciousness in the three novels as a grammar in which the grammatical subject may be either a person or a thing, and with metaphors that syntactically bind persons with the world of things to illustrate the physics of consciousness.

In introducing a split between content and form, psychology artificially distances people from their bodies and alienates them from the world of things. If the syntax of the matter of the human in film draws its efficacy from the materiality of the medium, and from the integration of the human with things on the screen, how then might the nonpsychological be translated in the non-mimetic medium of language, specifically the language of narrative?

The Metaphors of Material Consciousness

In this post-Cartesian literary and philosophical landscape, the problem that accompanies the initial conception of the stream of the mind’s consciousness as the product of a discrete, ego-delimited entity gives rise to two questions: How the body interacts with the mind in processing the world? How the body knows the world differently from the mind, both in the production of consciousness? While these questions remain vital to this study, my ultimate concern is to

⁴² “Spiritual style in the films of Robert Bresson” in *Against Interpretation*, p.189. Sontag’s book as a whole, but especially the opening chapters “Against interpretation” and “On style,” can be seen as a rejection of the hermeneutics of psychologism in the name of style and form in her suggestion that psychology divides the work of art into content and form.

investigate how the thinking of these questions led to a rethinking of consciousness and consequently to stylistic developments in the corpuses of James, Woolf, and Faulkner. They begin with the questions, How do we interact with the world and what do we know and experience? From there, I argue, each asks, What is the nature of consciousness—does it, as William James asked, even exist, as a phenomenon meaningfully distinct from the physical, the material and the organic, as much as thoughts are separate from the objects we contemplate? For once consciousness, in the context of the rise of mechanical reproduction, is released from the spiritual countenance of the Romantic subject, it begins to splinter from the self as a psychologized subjectivity and even assumes a metaphysical status akin to the reality of nonhuman things. In the attempt to chart consciousness as encountered in *The Bostonians*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, or *Light in August*, as entrenched more or less in the confines of ego-dominated consciousness, the authors seem to realize that the transactional space constituted in the experience of reading and writing defies the originally posited isolation of the subject: consciousness is only relatable as an impersonal—as in transpersonal or interpersonal, as well as *extra*-personal—phenomenon.⁴³ In this way, at least implicitly, the question arises, If consciousness does not inhere in the subject, and thoughts and percepts, thus liberated from the subject, possess the reality of real things while remaining distinct from them—if the realm of the aesthetic represents unique proof of the impersonality and lastingness of our most private moments of perception—how do we tell the story, in language, of the matter of which we are made?

⁴³ For an excellent account of Woolf's attempts to write beyond the confines of the ego see James Naremore's *The World Without a Self*, one important work that sees Woolf's fiction as concerned with the experience of selflessness rather than subjectivity.

In the later major novels of Henry James, Woolf, and Faulkner, consciousness is constituted as eminently pervious, even limitless.⁴⁴ One reads a heightened sense, in the uses of metaphor and developments of novelistic structure, of the properly aesthetic boundlessness of the thoughts and percepts that would seem to originate from the subjectivity of a single character. As biology encroaches upon the definition of the thinking self as a singular bodiless subjectivity, the shift from “I think” to “I breathe,” in turn, reframes the individual body as a conglomerate of universal physiological processes. The elements of consciousness come to be seen as partaking of the materiality of the body. The biological underpinnings of consciousness recast the discrete mind and materially delimited body as the universal phenomena of breathing, perceiving, thinking, and subsisting: it is in this sense that the processes of conscious and unconscious experience alike in these authors are transpersonal. The consciousness of a single character in fiction is conceived as transpersonal in its accessibility, even transparency to other characters as well as to the narrator and the reader herself.

Between the two investigations—how do we interact with the world and what do we know and experience, and how does one relate in fiction the matter that composes us—what emerges in the later novels, perhaps symptomatically, is a sense of confusion over the distinction between knowledge, as information located beyond the confines of the self, and consciousness, as contained within it. Between *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Wings of the Dove*, *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*, and *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!*, the analytic pressures put on individual consciousness in view of a novelistic art expose the incoherence in the treatment of the physical world as distinct from the self, and of knowledge of the world as incorporated within consciousness. When the distinction between self and the external other—as

⁴⁴ I add “major” here to distinguish Faulkner’s later novels from the experimental novels—*As I Lay Dying*, *Light in August*, *The Sound and the Fury*, *Absalom, Absalom!*, and *The Wild Palms*—from the more traditional forms he returns to with *The Hamlet* and the fiction following it.

another person, but also as the indefinable otherness of nature and family—is thus dissolved, the psychologism of the earlier fictions—evidenced especially in the clearer separability between the represented experiences of characters—begins to give way to a portrait of experience based on the impersonality of the physiological over the uniqueness of the conscious mind. The perceiving mind is no longer divorced from the body, or even readily distinguishable in its processes from the living body. Knowledge, as impressions or an account of the world, is no longer the product of an encounter with reality and incorporated within the self, but shifts and develops among characters without traceable modes of transmission; consciousness is both interpersonal and material. Perceptual images, sensations, thoughts, and even knowledge of past events (in *Absalom*) circulate among fictional minds just as air circulates with the somatic rhythms of the living, breathing, dying body. Each is drawn, in Woolf's words, as “a porous vessel afloat on sensation; a sensitive plate exposed to invisible rays.”⁴⁵ Sensation and consciousness form an impersonal medium in which nonhuman forces continuously exert their presence, engulfing the self.

Characters of diverse contexts such as Kate Croy, Bernard, and Quentin Compson seem to stand in for the narrator in their tendency to draw upon the images disseminated throughout the fiction, the greater imaginary projected by the novel, to write and to tell their own plots and life stories. Milly Theale, Louis, and Rosa Coldfield harness the absorbable vital energies and unfixed images of others, whether as the thoughts and preverbal impressions passing through other minds or the nonverbal and impersonal impressions of the body, to make sense of their experience. Yet consciousness is not shared only among the fictional characters. As the boundary between one fictional mind and the next dissolves, so too does any inflexible demarcation between what the omniscient narrator knows of a character and what the

⁴⁵ *Moments of Being*, p.133.

‘transparent mind,’ to borrow Dorrit Cohn’s term, knows of itself. This erosion reaches to the distinction between what one figure may observe and what the narrator reveals; between the reader, absorbed in her perusal of the consciousness that could be said to originate only from the novel, and the narrator; between the reader, narrator, author, and characters in their communal access to the free-floating percepts and thoughts. It is not until the later major novels that the forms, syntax, metaphors, and themes seem to cohere with the nonhuman aspect of fictional discourse. In each of the novels, the unbridled contents of consciousness reference much more than the private experience of a single mind of an external material reality. Because the distinction between inner (subjectivity) and outer (material world of referents) required for the recovery of meaning, the acquisition of knowledge, in the novel of experience as revelatory self-discovery is deconstructed in these works, the transcribed components of consciousness—the multitude of overlapping percepts, sensations, thoughts that compose human experience—are no longer simply the signs of external referents or sensory stimulants, but rootless metaphors of the egolessness and “eyelessness” of consciousness. Narrative, through a pervasive prose style that subsumes all articulations and representations of consciousness, and through formal structures that implicate the reader, constitutes an experience of immanence.

Here I should clarify that by the novel of experience as self-discovery I mean, not necessarily the nineteenth-century Bildungsroman or any other novel of the genre, but Genette’s famous reading of *In Search of Lost Time* in his essay “Metonymy in Proust,” which treats the modernist epic novel as the narrative of self-revelation. Genette concludes his essay by affirming, “Without metaphor, says Proust (more or less), there are no true memories; I will add, for him (and for all): without metonymy, there can be no chain of memories, no *story* [histoire], no novel. For it is metaphor that recovers lost Time, but it is metonymy that reanimates it and

sets it in action.”⁴⁶ In other words, metaphor serves as a synchronic, unifying revelation attained through a diachronic chain of metonymies; the interplay of both figures produces the novel and constructs the conditions of possibility for experience as the narrative accumulation of self-knowledge. In his own reading of Proust and of Genette’s analysis, Paul de Man tells us that metaphor and metonymy, in fact, cannot be said to assume stable or transparently legible functions, for “There seems to be no limit to what tropes can get away with.”⁴⁷ De Man’s essay “Reading (Proust)” centers on a passage in which the young narrator is recounting the experience of reading in a darkened room away from the heat of a warm summer day. One of the figures De Man analyzes is “le soleil ayant tourné ailleurs son regard [the sun having turned its eye elsewhere],” which, he concludes, “is pure nonsense from the naturalistic point of view that the logic of the passage, structured as a nature/art dialectic, demands”: for such a dialectic and Genette’s own metaphor/metonymy dichotomy depend upon “the unbreakable strength of the tie that unites the sun (as entity) with the eye (as the knowledge of the entity),” and its impossibility precludes not only the “intelligibility of natural metaphors but of all tropes.”⁴⁸ When the impossibility of the metaphoric synthesis described by Genette is exposed, so too is the “relationship between the literal and figural sense of a metaphor [which] is always, in this sense, metonymic.”⁴⁹ De Man’s critique of Genette is relevant here for it bears meaningful parallels to the concluding moments in Woolf and Faulkner I have mentioned above, in which Lily’s visionary moment and the coherence of narrative closure offered by Faulkner’s omniscient narrator are followed in *The Waves* and *Absalom* by concluding notes of defiance and anguish in the face of the unintelligibility of human experience. Bernard’s cry and Quentin’s denial are

⁴⁶ “Métonymie chez Proust” in *Figures III*, p.63. My translation.

⁴⁷ Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading*, p.62.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.61, n.5.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.71.

paradigmatic of the general unintelligibility of the tropes of their fictional worlds, contexts that deliberately collapse interiority with materiality and thereby render the unanchored images of the narrative consciousness as metaphors, in the final analysis, only of the ultimate opacity of experience. The metaphors of the novels partake metonymically—or, as I will argue, indexically—in the opacity of matter and the body.

Even repeat readings of the primary novels of this study frequently raise the questions, Who is speaking or thinking here? To whose consciousness does this image ‘belong,’ and why is it that characters of disparate personalities are all steeped not only in the same stylized language, but draw upon the same repository of images in their conscious and unconscious experience? Once the issue turns from the more properly narratological—who the characters, as products of the novel, are—to the philosophical—*what* they are and signify, in themselves and in the medium of language—one remains bewildered by the nature of the images (as metonymies, as metaphors) sustaining the fictional medium. For, as with the impossibility of naturalizing, taming, and grasping the figure of the sun “turning its eye elsewhere,” it remains impossible, not only to tie the two components of a metaphor (as with the sun and the eye), and thus locate and attach an image to a discrete consciousness or a figure to a mind, but also to distinguish between the natural and the symbolic, the sun and the eye. Because the source and drift of reflections and articulated experience cannot be localized, as de Man has demonstrated of the false opposition between the act of reading and the enveloping physical world in Proust, the ambiguity extends to the classification of sensation and concept or percept and verbal articulation: it is frequently unclear, in the works, if it is the narrator articulating a character’s pre- or nonverbal impressions, or whether the character is sensing synesthetically a free-floating verbalized image as a sensuous thing. In these novels in which the organic processes of receptive, constructive consciousness

are analogous to the thingness of objects and bodies, how are we to understand Milly's very real illness and the metaphor of her wings, the recurring and dominant image of the waves within both the frame narrative and soliloquies of *The Waves*, or the dust clouding Rosa's room that seems to choke Quentin in the final lines of *Absalom*?

Absalom seems, in this sense, to allegorize this conception of consciousness in the threat of incest between Judith and Henry, challenging or ironizing the use in structuralist anthropology of the incest taboo as the dividing bar between nature and culture when consciousness itself is 'promiscuous' and its symbolic creations, its stories and fantasies, are depersonalized. In these novels consciousness is impersonal in as much as the matter of which each body is made is nonhuman. The dissolution of the boundaries between self and other, subject and object, also acts upon the distinction between metaphor and sensation, or perception and materiality. These terms are collectively disseminated in a literary style that seems to assume the functions of consciousness. The novels thus refute the narrative model of Genette's theory, which bears parallels to the dominant narrative of psychoanalysis, in which repression produces the symptom as signifier of frustrated desire. Yet there is another more difficult and vexed psychoanalytic reading of the symptom proposed by Freud himself in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) that accords with the nonpsychological and non-metaphoric stance. In introducing the concept of the death drive Freud dissolves the fundamentally figurative structure of the pleasure principle: the struggle for satisfaction is no longer a creative life force with symptoms requiring unique interpretations in the archaeological work of psychoanalytic treatment, but reconceived as a return to literalism and the brute materialism of inorganic death.

Laplanche and Pontalis point out several complications introduced by the new concept, among them that the death drive runs counter to the pleasure principle, and nonetheless is

supposed to subsume it as the essence of all instincts. More relevant to this discussion is the difficulty that arises in describing drives (*Trieb*) “applied, on the one hand, to that factor which Freud described and whose operation he demonstrated in the complex functioning of human sexuality; and, at the same time, to those ‘mythical forces’ whose confrontation he postulates not so much at the level of clinically observable conflict as in a combat which transcends the human individual in that it can be identified in veiled form in all living things—including the most primitive ones.”⁵⁰ In one such passage of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud writes, “The attributes of life were at some time evoked in inanimate matter by the action of a force of whose nature we can form no conception. It may perhaps have been a process similar in type to that which later caused the development of consciousness in a particular stratum of living matter. The tension which then arose in what had hitherto been an inanimate substance endeavoured to cancel itself out. In this way the first instinct came into being: the instinct to return to the inanimate state.”⁵¹ Here, the position of the death drive in Freud’s work is illustrated in all its strangeness. Whereas the instincts for pleasure and self-preservation had delineated the domain of human psychic activity, the death drive situates human behavior and sexuality in the context of primitive forms that are barely on this side of the divide between life and inorganicity. In proposing this new (theoretical) context for psychoanalysis, Freud effectively depletes the life instincts of creative figurative powers and the symptom of symbolic potential. If Eros is essentially the desire to return to an earlier, restful state of affairs in which the individual was fused with another (as in the Platonic myth cited by Freud),⁵² then the very notion of human sexuality oscillates wildly between the literalism of inorganic repose and the fecundity of

⁵⁰ From the entry “Death Instincts” in J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 101-3.

⁵¹ *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p.46.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

insistent, self-preserving desire, the source of psychic figurations. It seems an untenable position.

It is nonetheless the position that the novels attempt to recreate through fictional narratives in which human metaphors are ‘materialized’ at the site where the inorganic seems to overlap with the organic: the human body. The body is eminently at the mercy of nonhuman forces of nature, even as it bears witness to the operation of these impersonal forces within itself, and the novels want to tell the impossible story of those aspects of experience that resist metaphors of subjective synthesis inhering in psychology. One can anachronistically imagine the James brothers, Woolf and Faulkner unable to shake the conceptual allure of passages such as the following, to which they were no doubt exposed even if they did not read Freud carefully before the composition of the novels at hand: “Shall we follow the hint given us by the poet-philosopher [Plato], and venture upon the hypothesis that living substance at the time of its coming to life was torn apart into small particles, which have ever since endeavoured to reunite through the sexual instincts? That these instincts, in which the chemical affinity of inanimate matter persisted, gradually succeeded, as they developed through the kingdom of protista...”⁵³ The nonpsychological perspective in fiction thus bears analogies with developments within psychoanalysis of the thinking of the body and the interpretation of its images; it is perhaps most vibrant in novels whose form and metaphors, structure and syntax, are particularly opaque or difficult to account for, attempting as they do simultaneously to override and work within the representational strictures of literary narrative and within the conception of the self as the confused site of the inanimate and organic. The style we read in the novels of my study represents the full range of human consciousness—from mental awareness to the most basic

⁵³ Ibid., p.71.

consciousness inhering in “a particular stratum of living matter”—in metaphors that act as syntactic links between self, other, and material world.

In his essay “Psychoanalysis and the Aesthetic Subject,” Leo Bersani touches upon the death drive while distinguishing between nonpsychological and psychological currents in Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis; my usage of the terms is indebted to his own. Freud’s theories are psychological when they predicate a fundamental antagonistic distinction between ego and object and the self is seen as projecting its antagonistic desire onto the world; Lacan is psychoanalytic when he posits the *objet petit a* as a fragment of the subject reinvested in the world, absorbed rather than projected.⁵⁴ The death drive is at once a promise of pure satisfaction in the subject’s immersive return to the inorganic, and of our living reconciliation with the world of nonhuman things, which in fact produces the unconscious and effects the private, endlessly replicating fantasies of the subject. Bersani tells us that the visual arts convey the connectedness of the subject and his fantasies with the material world; his text of reference to illustrate this necessary relation in literature is Pierre Michon’s novel *La Grande Beune*, the story of a nameless narrator’s never consummated erotic fixation on the woman Yvonne. The following passage is his detailed summary of a scene from the novel:

Late one afternoon the narrator... rushes out of the village toward the fields and the edge of the woods where he had often seen Yvonne returning, so he had imagined, from a tryst with her lover. His frantic searching eyes evoke the phantom Yvonne he had imagined seeing a thousand times emerging from the forest, in her stockings, her hips naked in the cold, and reminding him of some

⁵⁴ “Psychoanalysis and the Aesthetic Subject,” pp. 161-4. Bersani, however, is not without reservations about Lacanian psychoanalysis; his ambivalence is also palpable in *Forms of Being*, his study with Ulysses Dutoit on cinema, among other works. See pp. 127-8 in *Forms* and n.62 below.

‘big game’ (*un gros gibier*). It is just at that moment that the boys appear carrying [a dead fox]. In the place of the fox, the young man hallucinates Yvonne tied to the poles and, instead of the fox’s red hair, wet black pubic hair foaming, he writes, ‘in the bitch’s thick thighs’ (*aux cuisses épaisses de cette garce*). Just then, Yvonne really does come into view, and he sees the black marks on her cheek and neck that he attributes to her lover’s expertly handled whip. The scene is the novel’s most extreme example of a delirious project that appropriates the world as a setting for a private fantasy, while at the same time a certain reality distinct from this fantasy persists, independently but analogously. The substitution of Yvonne for the dead fox is an erasure of the world as world. When Yvonne appears, it is as if the private fantasy had to accommodate her real presence (she is part of the world as world). *But the fantasy is of course no longer entirely private. The word ‘gibier,’ thought before the boys appear, ‘meets,’ by chance, its objective correlative in the dead fox, to which ‘gibier’ ‘responds’ by inventing a specifically human version of violence...*⁵⁵

Bersani elaborates that the unconscious is “a dimension of virtuality rather than of psychic depth—from which we connect to the world, not as subject to object, but as a continuation of a specific syntax of being.”⁵⁶ I want to suggest that the connectedness of subject and world in literature is affirmed not only through the manifestations of things as objective correlative to desire in the details of plot, but also in the unintelligibility and unnaturalness that de Man attributes to all tropes. This illegibility is emphasized and thematized in narrative contexts in which the perceiving eye is implied but not directly represented in the language of impersonality.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 167-68.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.169.

The literary syntax of the nonpsychological draws its grammatical units from words and images as tropes eliminating the self/nature and subject/object dichotomies, much as the film medium presents persons and things as ontologically equivalent. The uncanniness of synesthetic moments of correspondence in the novels of my study bears traces of an inhuman vision that the narrative style embodies as a consciousness exceeding the subject; the very texture of the language suggests a narrative immanence in which the sensations of consciousness are manifold without belonging to a delimited subjectivity.⁵⁷ Style formally assumes the function of consciousness itself in subsuming and confusing multiple perspectives, and in embedding within its somatic omniscience tropes that do not seem to belong to any subjectivity.

Bersani's "syntax of being" in conjunction with the problematic nature of the death drive, its uneasy overlapping of figuration and literalism, can be read in line with Peter Brooks's application of the death drive to narrative, as a desire for the stasis of meaning, with the important difference that it is not primarily plotting that drives these novels.⁵⁸ Rather, the desire is for the satisfactions of 'literalism' achieved through material correspondences in tragic, overdetermined plots, through the heightened moments of shared consciousness when the world

⁵⁷ This view of style and its implications is consonant with Fredric Jameson's account of Conrad's "perceptual vocation of style": "If the multiple narrative shifts in Conrad are to be seen as textbook exercises in point of view, then we must add something which changes everything: they are point of view conceived as being inseparable from speech, from the materiality of language. In this historical and dialectical reversal, Conrad's yarn-spinning becomes the epitome of a thinking which has discovered the symbolic; James, on the other hand, if he manifests, along with other modernisms, a powerful practice of the symbolic and of linguistic invention, is still theoretically locked into non-symbolic, essentially 'expressive' categories." *The Political Unconscious*, pp. 213, 206. Jameson, here, like many of James's commentators, seems to rely too heavily on the prefaces rather than the novels in reading them primarily as the juxtaposition of elaborately delineated, isolated perspectives, but his distinction between the symbolic and expressive is nonetheless very pertinent here.

⁵⁸ See *Reading for the Plot*, especially "Freud's Masterplot," in which Brooks writes, "Desire necessarily becomes textual by way of a specifically narrative impulse, since desire is metonymy, a forward drive in the signifying chain, an insistence of meaning toward the occulted objects of desire," p.105.

connects to a character and ripples through the fictional medium to other characters and the reader. If “repetition toward recognition constitutes the truth of the narrative text,” especially of nineteenth-century novels such as *Great Expectations*, the textual desire I see operating in these modern novels is the desire for correspondences that would satisfy more completely what Lukács, quoted by Brooks, calls the “will of life to remain within its own completely enclosed immanence.”⁵⁹ Thus Bernard is absorbed in the waves, and Quentin continues to breathe the air of the South in Massachusetts. This is not to say that the corresponding dead fox of Bersani’s example is the signifier for the ‘gibier’, or that the imagined ‘big game’ acquires metaphoric plenitude in the sadomasochistic fantasy through the metonymic intervention of the fox. I do not mean either that these three elements escape the chain of significations undoubtedly at play here insofar as the fantasy is indeed private and strictly human. When Michon’s fiction supplies the dead fox to the desiring narrator, it meets his desire with a meaning that is literal rather than metaphoric, indexical rather than metonymic. It provides the context for the satisfaction of the death drive through contiguity with the world of the inorganic, which responds to the narrator’s fantasy.

There remains, nonetheless, an aspect of the fantasy as projection onto the world, an ensnaring of the things of the world into the private domain of fantasy, and, for critic and character alike, the diagnosis of psychosis for the feeling that the inanimate world is alive to one’s desire. The unreality of psychic projections and the limits of subjectivity are also amply illustrated in the novels of this study, which I do not see as necessarily rejecting the many psychobiographical, psychoanalytic and poststructuralist readings of language and subjectivity in

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 108, 111. Brooks quotes *The Theory of the Novel*.

James, Woolf, and Faulkner.⁶⁰ In attending to the omniscient style operating in the novels, a style that conflates individual subjectivities with the tenuously maintained omniscient point of view, I want to propose the reality of fantasy, broadly defined, as an eminently *aesthetic* moment within fictions that open the possibility of consciousness unbound by subject-based psychology, in the Barthesian motions of writerly reading. In *S/Z* Barthes argues that “*Objectivity* and *subjectivity* are of course forces which can take over the text, but they are forces which have no affinity with it.” For him, “I am not hidden within the text, I am simply irrecoverable from it” in the “metonymic labor” of reading.⁶¹ Even beyond the blissful play of signification, the aesthetic moment does not simply multiply meaning or fracture the subject, but radically unfolds him, effaces and extends him, in the dissemination of consciousness and the sensuous materiality of style. The literary metaphors reflect more than private experience and acquire a more powerful charge as correspondences. In this reading, the unconscious may be structured ‘like’ a language, but that language is no longer restricted to the symbolic register of semiotic differentiation, to presence, absence, and projection; the unconscious is, unthinkableably, more than “transindividual” as the syntax of human contiguity with the material and the inorganic.⁶² Barthes says that the

⁶⁰ Notable among them are John Carlos Rowe’s *The Theoretical Dimensions of Henry James*, John T. Irwin’s *Doubling and Incest/ Repetition and Revenge: A Speculative Reading of Faulkner*, André Bleikasten’s *The Ink of Melancholy*, John T. Matthew’s *The Play of Faulkner’s Language*, Elizabeth Abel’s *Virginia Woolf and the Fictions of Psychoanalysis*, Daniel Ferrer’s *Virginia Woolf and the Madness of Language*, and Makiko Minow-Pinkney’s *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject*. I have found this last study, however, useful in my reading of *The Waves* in Chapter 3; Minow-Pinkney’s juxtaposition of the Kristevan semiotic and the Lacanian symbolic, which in her argument intersects in Woolf’s fiction and especially *The Waves*, reintroduces the body as a nonpsychological entity within the symbolic register of language.

⁶¹ *S/Z*, pp. 10-11. Emphasis in the original.

⁶² See Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*. Lacan describes the unconscious as “transindividual” in “The Function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis,” p.49. It is worth noting here that he denies the biological component of the Freudian death drive in the same essay: “So the congruence between the contrasted terms of the death instinct and the phenomena of repetition to which Freud’s explanation in fact related them under the term ‘automatism’ ought not to cause

text wants our desire; Kaja Silverman, drawing upon Bersani, that the world wants our desire, to be seen.⁶³ In the case of the three novels, the world is rendered visible, tactile, immediate in the secret language of synesthesia. Style is delivered to the reader as partaking of the sensuous materiality of the world.

This is the experience of the aesthetic, rather than the psychological subject explored in much literary criticism of the modern novel, and it is this plane of experience I want to explore in view of complicating and possibly enriching the valid psychological readings. Even *The Wings of the Dove*, I will argue, presents us in key moments with a textual universe of immanent correspondences rather than the potential for metaphoric transcendence through the well-known Jamesian play of desire and knowledge. For Kate, and even the less lively Densher and the seemingly passive Milly, are figured as creative authors whose vivid metaphors, seemingly borrowed or articulated by the narrator, find meaningful, frequently revelatory correspondence not only in the thoughts and images of others, but also with inanimate objects. The most memorable of these is perhaps the Bronzino painting, a portrait that further emphasizes the

difficulty, if it were simply a question of a biological notion... But we all know very well it is not a question of biology.” See pp. 102-3. There is, nonetheless, arguably much difficulty in the biological foundation of the death drive, and it is a problem and disturbance that the novelists seem to intuit. Bersani critiques the denial of the biological/physical underpinnings of the unconscious with reference to the death drive: “If psychoanalysis invites us to think a register of being radically different from a subjectivity grounded in psychology (it calls that other mode of being the unconscious), it has also, for the most part, failed to see how that discovery reconfigures the subject in ways that open us to the solidarity of being both among human subjects and between the human and the non-human. It is this failure that accounts most profoundly for the limitations of psychoanalytically inspired approaches to art.” “Psychoanalysis and the Aesthetic Subject,” pp. 161-2.

⁶³ Like Bersani, Kaja Silverman undertakes the reconciliation of the subject and her being in the world in *World Spectators*, where she works through obstacles to her project in Lacan with Heidegger. Unlike Bersani, she does not see this reconciliation as possible in literature: “If words represented our only form of symbolization, we would indeed be hopelessly estranged from it.” For her, the world wants to be seen without the mediation of language. See pp. 128-9. Her sense of the essential estrangement of language is echoed in moments in James and Woolf where painting symbolizes the immediacy and tactility of the senses.

creative act—as manipulative plot, vivid metaphor, or self-exploration—as ultimately *uncreative* in producing connections to extant minds and situations and things, in revealing what is already known and confirming the syntactic contiguity of human subjects with preexisting nonhuman things.

Modernist Styles of Silence

The following chapters engage in close analyses of *The Wings of the Dove*, *The Waves*, and *Absalom, Absalom!* in reference especially to *The Portrait of a Lady*, *To the Lighthouse*, and *The Sound and the Fury*. Each chapter, it will be evident, takes as its critical point of departure a specific text: Sharon Cameron’s *Thinking in Henry James*, Ann Banfield’s “Describing the Unobserved” (which informs the basis of her study of Bloomsbury, *The Phantom Table: Woolf, Fry, Russell and the Epistemology of Modernism*), and T.J. Clark’s essay “Freud’s Cézanne” in *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism*. Both Sharon Cameron and Ann Banfield describe the fictional depictions of consciousness in James and Woolf respectively as non-psychological, though each arrives at the epithet from opposite ends of the spectrum between the transcendental ego of phenomenology and the utterly egoless percepts posited by Bertrand Russell.

Employing Husserl’s *Cartesian Meditations* as a critical philosophical analogue (though without historical ties of influence) to the workings of consciousness as enacted in both James’s fiction and non-fiction, Cameron delineates a portrait of consciousness originating with the fullness of a transcendental perceiving center that grants the objective world the possibility of existence in the very transaction between perception and the perceived.⁶⁴ While acknowledging

⁶⁴ See pp. 21-28 for Cameron’s complete reading of Husserl and its application to her reading of James.

James's insistence in his prefaces on the isolation of the individual mind in its complexity and sensitivity, Cameron argues that in his writings consciousness transpires *between* minds, between characters. Jamesian consciousness is not located in a psychological subject: it "is not stable, not subjective, not interior, not unitary, as James's Prefaces claim. But it is also, as a consequence, not dismissed or deconstructed. Rather it is disseminated. In the novels consciousness is not in persons; it is rather between them... What is radical about this reconception is that it dispenses with the idea of a psychology while preserving the idea of a consciousness. In fact, it valorizes consciousness just to the extent that consciousness can be separated from the confines of a self."⁶⁵ Cameron's key term is consciousness—defined in terms of conscious experience, especially thinking—as an intersubjective social phenomenon, though especially in her discussion of *The Wings of the Dove* the indistinctness between seeing things and thinking, I will argue, introduces a confusion between sensation and thought in consciousness. Nor is consciousness essentially intersubjective: knowledge frequently arrives at the subject from outside, from other minds but also from places and objects, thus indicating the presence of the nonhuman in consciousness.

Banfield is concerned with sensation, rather than consciousness per se. For Russell's philosophy and for the language of narrative, "What is sensed is no longer personal, is de-psychologized, but it remains nonetheless private, events in a private and impersonal space and time revealed by the sensitive instrument."⁶⁶ The novel moves beyond the phenomenological immersion of self and other or object in consciousness insofar as sensation escapes the subject's consciousness in both time and space. Sensation indicates the presence of an eyeless and inhuman look—in the senses both of vision and appearance—beyond any intersubjective

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.77.

⁶⁶ "Describing the Unobserved," p.268.

perceptual transaction enacted in human minds: “Those aspects of subjectivity built into the notion of a perspective limited to a unit of space-time inhere in the very appearance of things and not in the mind or eye to whom they may appear.”⁶⁷ My approach to the thinking of consciousness in James, Woolf, and Faulkner comprises an interweaving of both conceptions of the nonpsychological in literature. Drawing upon T.J. Clark’s reading of Cézanne’s late paintings as the attempt to represent the materialization of fantasy, a project he links to Freud’s struggle to establish the biological context of the psyche, I read consciousness as both interpersonal and nonhuman, as between people but also between people and things. My project also departs from *Thinking in Henry James* and *The Phantom Table* in attempting a formalist reading of isolated novels, in attending closely to tropology in conjunction with formal poetics in order to appreciate the structural and stylistic experiments of the authors, as well as the thematic repercussions of these practices. Thinking, sensation, and fantasy: each serves as a specific conduit to nonpsychological consciousness, and upon closer inspection overlaps with the others terms in the omniscient style of the three novels.

In these novels, the blindness and eyelessness of elements of consciousness enter and exit the subject subsumed in the omniscient style. Consciousness composes not only knowledge and sense-data but also the objective resonance of external, material things one experiences in the uncanny language of synesthesia. This language, Woolf’s secret language, represents less the internal derangement of the senses than syntactic continuity based on the inhumanity of the material world and of the human body. It is a language of silence: of the unspoken, but more significantly, of the unspeakable. The language in these novels is based, not only on the transpersonal indifferentiation between characters and of author, character, and reader, especially in the form of free indirect discourse. Its silence derives from the strange, sensuous, paint-like

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.267.

materiality of words in narrative language that contains multiple perspectives unanchored in psychology.⁶⁸ The baseline consciousness that Freud attributes to barely animate matter subtends the omniscient style, which disseminates these unpsychologized perspectives within the immanence of consciousness and thus renders them inarticulable. That is, the words and metaphors originating with a specific character, once produced, reveal correspondences with other words and metaphors outside the self. Because these correspondences do not belong to one subjectivity or perspective, they preclude the possibility of speech as self-expression. To scrutinize the language of these novels is to see how the metaphors produced within impersonal consciousness do not produce expressive, psychical meaning, but present us with the syntactic continuity binding all people and material things.

I begin with a reading of *The Wings of the Dove* for several reasons. The 1902 novel serves as a literary historical precedent for the high modernist works of Woolf and Faulkner, a reflection of widespread cultural and intellectual interest in perspective and consciousness, and as an exemplar of developments within James's own corpus. In my reading the novel trembles on the cusp of perspectivism and nonpsychological consciousness. The late James maintains an understanding of the self as a psychological entity and of knowledge as radically external to that self, to be incorporated within it; in James unlike in Woolf or Faulkner, the atmosphere of silence is generated by acts of concealment and deception. Yet in creating a style that penetrates to all the minds of the drama without reliable signposts for focalization, and a series of metaphors that emphatically exceed both the mind and the very life of the self, James concurrently proposes the

⁶⁸ William James offers paint as an example of the materiality of thought: paint can be sold in a can or in a store, or used with others paints in a picture: "Just so, I maintain, does a given undivided portion of experience, taken in one context of associates, play the part of a knower, of a state of mind, of 'consciousness'; while in a different context the same undivided bit of experience plays the part of a thing known, of an objective 'content.'" *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p.7. Cameron singles out this example in her reading of James, referring to it in her interpretation of thought as a picture in *Wings*.

novel, the arena of the aesthetic, as the privileged context of a boundless consciousness—not a window onto another mind, but a limitless field. The uneasy juxtaposition of perspectivism and impersonal or objective narrative voice is also discernible in *To the Lighthouse* and *The Sound and the Fury*. In a development paralleling the thematized problematization of perspective in late James, Woolf and Faulkner create a stylized narrative voice in *The Waves* and *Absalom, Absalom!* that absorbs all persons and perspectives, representing them indirectly, presenting them as immanent within a broader consciousness. Constructed respectively as a series of soliloquies and extended dialogues, the two novels nonetheless do not give us distinctive voices, but words as aspects of a material consciousness embodied in an omniscient style.

In James, we will see, the ambiguity and abstruseness of his language, specifically his pronouns, accumulate and develop as intensified expressions of the material expansiveness of thought and perception. Woolf's use of repetition and parataxis denies the subjective projection of causality implicit in hypotaxis—the perceiving eye directly linked to its impressions—and emphasizes the nonsubjective mobility of images and sensations between the self and the world. Faulkner's lexical density, polysyndetic clauses, and endless sentences in which syntax is nearly altogether dismantled suggest paratactic effects produced on a more minute scale, between words rather than clauses or sentences. James's abstractions ultimately do not present thoughts as immaterial and opposed to the concreteness of the physical world, but embody the opacity of the ways in which thoughts move and inhere in a material immanence. Repetition and syntax in Woolf and Faulkner reinforce the sense of language as a material phenomenon and of recurring images as presences in the world; linguistic syntax supports the figural syntax between self and world represented by 'indexical' metaphors and metonymies themselves. All three technical

styles coalesce with the respective uses of metaphor and converge, in turn, with the dominant themes of the novels.

The secret languages of the three authors represent a theory of the subject in which the body, consciousness, and the world are no longer in disjunction—not a theory of signification, but a theory of the physics of consciousness. In this sense, the secret languages of modernism bear parallels with Walter Benjamin’s theory of language, which provides a theory of the mimetic subject at the crossroads of linguistic semiotics on the one hand and unsignifying matter on the other, rather than a theory of signification per se. Resembling Woolf’s implicitly theorized subject in “The Cinema”, Benjamin’s mimetic subject is motivated by a persistent primeval impulse to find correspondences with inanimate matter, an impulse that assumes new potency and scope in the modern era with the material language of cinema.⁶⁹ In the 1916 “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man,” he claims that language consists of the “mental being” [*geistige Wesen*] of both humans and the inanimate: “There is no event or thing in either animate or inanimate nature that does not in some way partake of language, for it is in the nature of each one to communicate its mental contents.” Language is not a semiotic vehicle for the *expression* of mental being, but “communicates the mental being corresponding to it,” and as such is a coextensive infinity and immanence whose “linguistic being, not its verbal contents, defines its frontier.”⁷⁰ Art, therefore, draws its power not from the contents or expressiveness of language, but “the spirit of language of things.” The world constitutes a nonverbal language

⁶⁹ In the essays collected in *Heretical Empiricism*, Pier Paolo Pasolini offers a concept of cinematic style based on Benjamin’s theory of the language of reality, in which the camera-eye relates the language of the physical world through a not entirely subjective perspective demonstrating the flexibility of literary free indirect discourse. The true protagonist of a certain type of art cinema, he argues, is style itself. The connection he makes between style and physical reality has influenced by own concept of omniscient style in literature. See especially “The Cinema of Poetry.”

⁷⁰ “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man,” pp. 62, 63, 66. I have referred to the collection *Angelus Novus* for the original German.

whose basis is the “magic of matter,” which, like linguistic being, is infinite in its “material community.” This, at least, was the prelapsarian state of language: after the Fall, language became nonsensuous, and man began to rely on it for expression. The nonsensuousness of post-Adamic language derives from the arbitrariness of the signifier: “The incomparable feature of human language is that its magical community with things is immaterial and purely mental, and the symbol of this is sound.”⁷¹ If nature was previously mute in the bliss of linguistic immanence, it is now speechless out of mourning for that loss.

The magic of natural correspondences, the powerful way it charged the mimetic faculty of early man, his urge to “become similar” to external things, has given way to “nonsensuous similarity” in both written and spoken language, writes Benjamin in “On the Mimetic Faculty.”⁷² The languages of sculpture, painting, and even poetry, however, have maintained the language of continuity with things, with “languages issuing from matter.”⁷³ Non-poetic verbal language is no longer faithful to the linguistic being of the mental being of people and things. Of what, more precisely, does Benjamin’s mental being consist? It is not only the mental activities or spirit of being, as the German “geistig” denotes; it is also, perhaps, consciousness: “consciousness is apparently (or really) bound to such [linguistic] communication to varying degrees [*grössere oder geringere Bewusstseinsgrad*].”⁷⁴ Consciousness appears at the beginning of the essay before being favored by mental being as Benjamin’s key term; he is arguably speaking here of consciousness as conscious reflection, the cogito, and not the spectrum of consciousness from the preconscious to conscious. But if we extrapolate from “mental being” and from his theory of mimesis, we can conclude that the being communicated by the prelapsarian state of things is the

⁷¹ Ibid., p.67.

⁷² “On the Mimetic Faculty,” pp. 721, 720.

⁷³ “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man,” p.73.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p.720.

full range of consciousness—not simply the preverbal and preconscious states which Robert Humphrey reads in the stream of consciousness novel, but also the nonverbal aspect of being that continually compels the subject to seek out resemblances and “become similar” to other things.

The languages of *The Wings of the Dove*, *The Waves*, and *Absalom, Absalom!* reflect a longing for the original language of things. They present us with language that communicates the nonverbal through style. Michael Taussig has observed that, for Benjamin, “the surfacing of ‘the primitive’ within modernity” was due especially to its “mimetic machinery.”⁷⁵ Partaking of the alienation of the abstract signifier, the novels attempt to restore an echo of the original language, effectively echoed by the cinematic medium, through metaphors that act as indexical correspondences between the self and nature, literary styles of sensuous silence, and stories in which images circulate within the nonpsychological matter of consciousness—its affects and thoughts, percepts and sensations, words and silences, which pass indiscriminately through human and nonhuman matter.⁷⁶ The original subject, recaptured in the novels’ characters, is nonpsychological because of a constitutional, if residual, sameness with other subjects and things. The silence of the secret language, however, is twofold: it results from the inarticulable

⁷⁵ From *Mimesis and Alterity*, quoted in Pamela L. Caughie’s Introduction to *Virginia Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, p.xxix.

⁷⁶ Miriam Hansen relates the mimetic impulse to the Peircean index over the icon in her article “Benjamin, Cinema, and Experience: The Blue Flower in the Age of Technology,” pp. 195, 212: “In semiotic terms (following Peirce), mimesis is not concerned with an iconic relationship, a perceptual likeness between sign and reality. If the correspondences actualized by the mimetic faculty pertain to any aspect of signification, then it is to the realm of the indexical, which involves a relationship of material contiguity hinging upon a particular moment in time and thus brings into play the disjunctive temporality of all reading.” The indexical contiguity formally binds us not only to the distanced, auratic world of nature (Benjamin’s famous example of aura is that of a branch in nature) but equally to things crafted by human hand—what subsists, persists despite human labor: “That forgotten human element,” Hansen, citing Marleen Stoessel, tells us, “is nothing but the material origin—and finality—that human beings share with non-human nature.” It is precisely this confusion of the organic life of the human subject and the inorganic and inanimate, converging at the site of the human body, that invests the metonymic metaphors of literary texts seeking to establish this convergence in theme and form with a sense of indexicality and physical reality.

nature of correspondences, as well as the silence of speechlessness and loss. This loss is the palpable sense that people and things are not merely opaque in themselves, in the matter they are made of, but indecipherable; the tension between mystery as opacity and mystery as ambiguity and illegibility represents the oscillation between the nonpsychological and the psychological. None of the novels entirely does away with psychology, but the aesthetic subject remains resolutely nonpsychological. Viewed strictly within the textual immanence of the narratives, the aesthetic subject is embedded in the physical world through words that are as much elements of the linguistic sign as they are moments of sensuousness. The secret languages of modernism constitute the medium of an aesthetic experience that reconnects the subject with the world in a coherent immanence, a subject disseminated in a consciousness of and in the world.

Chapter 2: The Afterlife of Vital Knowledge in *The Wings of the Dove*

Music, states of happiness, mythology, faces worn by time, certain twilights and certain places, all want to tell us something, or have told us something we shouldn't have lost, or are about to tell us something; that imminence of a revelation as yet unproduced is, perhaps, the aesthetic fact.⁷⁷

—Jorge Luis Borges

Decorative style has never existed. Style is the soul, and unfortunately with us the soul assumes the form of the body.⁷⁸

—Jean Cocteau

I want to open my reading of *The Wings of the Dove* with two conceptions of style elaborated by James in his essays on Flaubert and Shakespeare. For James, the perfectly crafted representations embedded in Flaubert's realist fiction have supplanted image with reality: the ingredient missing in Flaubert's characters and prose is vitality. Shakespeare's style, on the other hand, is defined by a shimmering excess of energy, through which images suffuse language with reality. Nonetheless, in singling out *The Tempest* for its "lucid stillness," James suggests that "the violence of the movements" in many of the other plays lacks the clarity of form supplied by artistic detachment.⁷⁹ Both stylistic practices are palpable in late James, and overlap uneasily. In the story of Milly Theale, a terminally ill young woman with a great hunger for life, the mixing of styles becomes particularly pertinent to a discussion of the drama of the novel. Style and theme converge in *Wings* in the question of the proper representation of life—or, more specifically, vitality, moments of intense experience, and modes of engagement marked by the expansiveness of passion and curiosity. The quintessentially Jamesian question of the nature of knowledge, I will argue, is ultimately subordinated to the question of the meaning of vitality in life and in art.

⁷⁷ "The Wall and the Books" in *Borges: Selected Non-Fictions*, p.346.

⁷⁸ Quoted in Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, p.17.

⁷⁹ "Introduction to *The Tempest*," p.1209.

In his 1902 essay on Flaubert, roughly contemporary with *Wings*, James identifies the French novelist's sensibility as one in which "beauty comes with expression": in Flaubert one senses that "expression is creation, that it *makes* the reality, and only in the degree in which it is, exquisitely, expression; and that we move in literature through a world of different values and relations, a blest world in which we know nothing except by style, but in which also everything is saved by it, and in which the image is thus always superior to the thing itself." James's reservation about Flaubert's aesthetics is that style, "with all respect to Flaubert, never *totally* beguiles; since even when we are so queerly constituted as to be ninety-nine parts literary we are still a hundredth part something else. This hundredth part may, once we possess the book—or the book possesses us—make us imperfect as readers, and yet without it should we want or get the book at all?"⁸⁰ The hundredth part is that remainder which is not satisfied with the supremacy of the image over the thing itself, a hierarchy that maintains the fissure between perceiving subject and perceived object and replaces the fullness of reality, its complex values and relations, with rhetorical representation. Style remains bloodless and unengaging insofar as it insists on this divide and, in the process, alienates the "imperfect" part of the reader who longs for complete possession of and by the text in the drama of reading.

Flaubert's style is purely literary; it displaces the lifeblood of his characters onto the plane of the signifier. James's novels, on the other hand, frequently read as the attempt to replace the author as impersonal God with the author as artist, who communicates a living curiosity in characters that actively, intelligently seek to escape mediocrity, to shape their own fates. For James, Shakespeare's style, as "an active, applied force," injects reality into

⁸⁰ "Gustave Flaubert" in *Henry James: Literary Criticism*, p.340. Peter Brooks provides a gloss of this passage, along with an extensive discussion of James's shifting attitude toward Flaubert's modernism, in *Henry James Goes to Paris*. See p.98. Brooks ultimately allies James's style with a Balzacian expressionism over Flaubert's realism.

expression and provides the more admirable model for literary art: in such a style, “the provision of images, emblems, energies of every sort, laid up in advance, affects us as the storehouse of a king before a famine or a siege—which not only, by its scale, braves depletion or exhaustion, but bursts, through mere excess of quantity or presence, out of all doors and windows.”⁸¹ The window shattered by stylistic excess and energy presents a very different metaphor from the window onto consciousness as narrative technique that James famously describes in the preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*. In both cases the author is figured as an inhabitant of the house of literature, but the Shakespearean artist establishes, violently, the energies of style as a conduit between author and character and, James writes, between the author and the reader: Shakespeare is so powerful an artist “that it is as if he came to meet us more than his usual half-way, and as if, thereby, in meeting *him*, and touching him, we were nearer to meeting and touching the man.” Shakespeare meets the part of the reader untouched by Flaubert’s style, but James suggests that his style requires further refinement: in the plays, “life itself, in its overwhelming crudity, offers itself as the paste to be kneaded.”⁸²

In *Wings*, James’s compromise with the indisputable seductions of pure expression is the fashioning of style as an expressive mode of vitality: as disembodied as chiseled rhetorical representation in the precise construction of his sentences, yet comprehending within the continuum between carefully selected words and narrative representation multiple ways of seeing, thinking, and experiencing that constitute ways of being. James’s project of radical perspectivism is practiced in the goal of transparently representing centers of consciousness fixed in characters that plunge into worldliness and plot to improve their separate lives. But in that transparency consciousness is loosened, liberated, and fluxes between characters. Free indirect

⁸¹ “Introduction to *The Tempest*,” p.1211.

⁸² Ibid., pp. 1209, 1211.

discourse mixes an omniscient perspective with a character's consciousness; the scenic method, in which a character's consciousness is viewed and dissected not only by the author but also other characters, ultimately disengages consciousness from subjectivity and disseminates it between characters⁸³: consciousness comes to inhere in the scene itself. Unlike Flaubert's Emma, Kate, Densher, and Milly, as well as Maud Lowder and Susan Stringham, are not represented by or contextualized in a series of what Barthes has called "reality effects," naturalistic, structurally superfluous details that integrate characters into scenes of realism.⁸⁴ Rather, they engage in acts of seeing and thinking so heightened and elaborately wrought in the narrative that perception and thought exceed the self. Moreover, the idea of knowledge as factual information privately assimilated, as radically external data that solidifies the confines of subject-object dualism, is eclipsed in the conclusion by the notion of knowledge as communicable vitality.

The multiple ways of seeing, thinking, and experiencing in the novel are defined essentially as ways of being impersonal. The late James favors vivid recurring or extended metaphors over the naturalistic excess of reality effects in order to establish that the characters do indeed exist in reality and are responsive to mutually recognized ideas and things. The metaphor of Milly as a dove, for one, is collectively adopted and treated as a thing (much as William James treated thought as a material entity), to be adapted and interpreted differently until Milly's death, when the dove is concretized as a symbol of her spirit. But her spirit is not simply ethereal, nor a memory, as Kate suggests when she asks Densher if he is "in love with her memory."⁸⁵ The metaphor comes to represent the immanence of consciousness as the transpersonal medium of knowledge; it represents worldliness, as materialism as well as knowledge as interpersonal

⁸³ See Sharon Cameron, *Thinking in Henry James*, p.77, for the passage introduced in Chapter 1.

⁸⁴ See "The Reality Effect" in *The Rustle of Language*.

⁸⁵ *The Wings of the Dove*, p.711. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

experience. The precise meaning of the wings of the dove in terms of the drama is not resolved, nor can be by the reader. Its very opacity, finally, expresses the novel's aesthetic vision of vitality as a way of being that exceeds the psychological self.

The meanings of James's late style

Moments before asking whether he is in love with Milly's memory Kate tells Densher that he fell in love with her on his last visit, claiming, "'But your change came—as it might well—the day you last saw her: she died for you then that you might understand her. From that hour you *did*. And I do now. She did it *for* us. I used to call her, in my stupidity—for want of anything better—a dove. Well she stretched out her wings, and it was to *that* they reached. They cover us'" (710). *That* is one of countless pronouns in the novel with an ambiguous referent. In fact, each of the emphasized words is enigmatic; Kate's terse statements are equally abstruse as the far more layered, contorted sentences that make up the narrative. *Did* could refer to Densher's understanding or his love, or both, in which case they are meaningfully linked; emotion and clarity of vision would be interdependent. *For* probably suggests that Milly's will to be loved/understood was not only a desire for recognition, but a gift (however perverse) of illumination, in which Kate and Densher would finally come to understand themselves and one another through understanding her; her death in this case was intended to precipitate "the knowledge of each other that they couldn't undo" (698). "She did it *for* us" could also simply mean that Milly willed her death and decided to turn her face to the wall in order to leave her money to them with the understanding that she blessed them as a couple. At Milly's dinner party in Venice, Kate describes her as a bejewelled dove, with which Densher agrees, though he recognizes that for Kate, among others, the power of her wings is "that element of wealth in her

which was a power,” that “spread themselves for protection” and have “lately taken an inordinate reach” (533). Yet Milly’s death undeniably changes how Kate and Densher see her, and though Densher’s thought of Milly’s material reach and Kate’s unqualified mention of reach would seem to converge, it is also likely that Kate’s *for* finally shares with Densher’s own dove-metaphor, by the novel’s end, a spiritual inflection. The different readings could be reconciled in the reading that Milly wanted to be understood as generous and forgiving, and died in order to bequeath her fortune to them. The mutual agreement between Kate and Densher that her wings cover them then either suggests that Milly was aware that understanding her act would bring them to appreciate morally what they had done and thus devastate them, or that her love for Densher and perhaps Kate is unconditional, or both: that her act was vindictive and violently revelatory yet her love for Densher unconditional.

The meaning of *that* depends on preceding meanings, and in this case draws its sense from ambiguity, the complex density of the dove metaphor itself: it suggests Densher’s love for Milly and his transformation through understanding; Kate’s understanding of Milly’s spirit and love for Densher; Milly’s benevolent acceptance of Kate and Densher’s engagement, her understanding as love; Milly’s wings as the devastating understanding and appreciation of what each has done and each is like; the immense power of money to enrich life, and Milly’s wings as her sympathetic appreciation of the scope of her fortune and the imaginative range it inspires in its seekers. This view of Milly is also suggested by Maud Lowder, who in mourning her mentions “‘the mere *money* of her, the darling, if it isn’t too disgusting at such a time to mention that—!’” The narrator follows, “Aunt Maud mentioned it—and Densher quite understood—but as fairly giving poetry to the life Milly clung to: a view of the ‘might have been’ before which the good lady was hushed anew to tears” (649). In each case the wings represent a complex

interpersonal moment. At the least, Kate's admission that her former idea of Milly as a dove was stupid tells us that we should not see the metaphor as the cliché of simplicity and innocence.⁸⁶

There is an underlying sense in some readings that Milly did not simply will to be understood—she was, after all, growing steadily more ill even before receiving the terrible information from Lord Mark—but that she anticipated Kate and Densher's response to her spirit and legal will and to one another.

Recourse to Psalm 55, one of two from which James borrowed his metaphor, does not illuminate the matter. The King James version of Psalm 55 reads: "My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! *for then* would I fly away, and be at rest." Here the flight of the dove promises escape, but escape is the last thing that either Kate, Densher, or even Milly achieves. Milly's death is not a flight, an act of transcendence: she covers Kate and Densher with her wings and enfolds them in some palpable sense of her ever-present act (her death and her bequeathal) and immanent spirit. Psalm 68, in which the dove is a symbol both of worldly vindication against one's enemies and material recompense for suffering, proves to be more relevant to Milly: "Though ye have lien among the pots, *yet shall ye be as* the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." In the second psalm, the dove indicates worldly comfort and thus accords with the sense, embodied in Milly, of the sheer beauty and freedom offered by material wealth, seductive and

⁸⁶ My reading here echoes that of Laurence Holland, who observes, "In the rhythm of *The Wings of the Dove* the form is made to be analogous to the action which the novel is about... The form enacts the passion which lies at the novel's center and is revealed, chiefly through Milly's sacrifice, in the action which she helped by others, brings to pass." The novel "acts as if its vision lay within the presence but beyond the reach of language"; it "intimately acknowledges the fact in the contortions of expressive movement." *The Expense of Vision: Essays on the Craft of Henry James*, p.320. In my argument, however, the vision is never beyond the reach of language; the contortions and obliquities of the style, combined with the frequently unaccountable metaphors, embody and express it.

awe-inspiring to the point where it affects and actually effects imagination and spirituality: this is the dove that emerges for Kate and Densher at Palazzo Leporelli, a dove of “embodied poetry” wearing pearls that “suit her down to the ground” (532).

In Susan Stringham’s mind, with Milly one is “in presence of the real thing—the romantic life itself,” and this common perspective is frequently depicted as an emanation of rather than a projection onto her physical presence (131-2). In a passage that shades Susan’s first impressions of her into a general statement about Milly, we read that though she is far from gaudy (before, at least, Venice), her wealth inheres in her expensive yet simple black dress, her unfashionable hairstyle, even the pages of the book she carries with her: “She couldn’t have lost it if she had tried—that was what it was to be really rich. It had to be *the* thing you were” (146). Milly is the embodiment of an abstraction, poetry and romance, as well as the sum of her physical appearance and possessions. Both are referred to as the ‘thing’: despite the distinctiveness of her character and her surviving spirit, she is consistently figured as an indefinable presence within consciousness and the material world that exceeds her own self. Although several meanings are obscurely inscribed on the wings that cover Kate and Densher, I will argue that only those that conform to a reading of Milly’s spirit and money as a presence within a worldly, shared consciousness support not only this metaphor but James’s use of metaphor generally in the novel. Milly as Christ, for example, also serves as a metaphor, unrestricted to a single mind, of an expansive immanence. As John Carlos Rowe has pointed out, “The evocation of the third temptation of Christ does not lead us to a source of authority for the action of the novel, but leaves us with the ambiguity of Christ’s humanity and immanence.”⁸⁷ When Milly is seated on the cliff she is positioned as Christ in his ambivalent and ambiguous humanity. She is tempted not to leap, but to embrace the kingdoms of the earth. The dove

⁸⁷ “The Symbolization of Milly Theale: Henry James’s *The Wings of the Dove*,” p.141.

denies transcendence because what she craves and seeks during the novel's course is worldliness. When she does in fact 'leap' much later and succumb to her illness, the gesture remains, as its possibility does on the cliff, "a question of taking full in the face the whole assault of life, to the general muster of which indeed her face might have been directly presented as she sat there on her rock" (150): in this sense she turns her face to the wall in recognition of the full assault of life, love as well as the betrayal she had not foreseen.

In her reading of the novel Sharon Cameron analyzes several instances in which thought seems to enter consciousness from another person or the inanimate world; each of her examples focuses on Milly's consciousness and its porousness. She observes that when Susan sees Milly on the cliff she seems to receive Milly's thoughts—"Was she choosing among [the kingdoms of the earth], or did she want them all?"—including the question of confronting the assault of life, in her own consciousness without her awareness that Susan is watching her (149). These thoughts are not merely projected, as a characteristically enigmatic conversation between the two shortly afterward reveals: Milly wonders aloud if she "shall have much of it." When pressed by Susan she adds, "Of everything. Of everything I have" (154). At this point it is unclear whether thought, detached from psychology, has transferred from Milly to Susan without communication or whether thought resides in things, immanent in the world and outside of subjectivity.⁸⁸ If the central question remains exactly to what Milly's wings reach and what they cover, one could argue that the wings emblemize the many inarticulable or unspeakable intangibilities—composed of intuitions, doubts, revelatory insights, secrets, crystallized perceptions of indecipherable meaning—that suffuse the narrative as the medium of consciousness, and come from both people and the world of things: from paintings and rooms, books and pearls. And, like

⁸⁸ See *Thinking in Henry James*, pp. 131-6, for the complete analysis I have summarized here.

things, the intangibilities of consciousness have a reality of their own, as consciousness is not an isolated, subjective phenomenon but assimilates the ‘thoughts’ inhering in the material world.

A prime example of this dynamic materiality transpires at the Palazzo, in a scene I have mentioned above, where Densher, considering Milly and her pearls, reflects, “Milly was indeed a dove; this was the figure, though it most applied to her spirit. But he knew in a moment that Kate was just now, for reasons hidden from him, exceptionally under the impression of that element of wealth in her which was a power, which was a great power, and which was dove-like only so far as one remembered that doves have wings and wondrous flights... It even came to Densher dimly that such wings could in a given case—*had*, in fact, in the case in which he was concerned—spread themselves for protection” (533).⁸⁹ The reasons for Kate’s enthrallment are revealed to Densher through further contemplation of the pearls when he remarks that they would also suit her, at which Kate exclaims that she could see herself adorned with them: “As she saw herself, suddenly, he saw her—she would have been splendid; and with it he felt more what she was thinking of. Milly’s royal ornament had—under pressure now not wholly occult—taken on the character of a symbol of differences, differences of which the vision was actually in Kate’s face” (533). Densher sees in Kate’s face that Milly represents the fact that he could never offer Kate such pearls, and this dynamic fact is transmitted to Kate: “[Milly] unconsciously represented to Kate, and Kate took it in at every pore” (534). Knowledge, both conscious (for Densher, though “it was not till afterwards” that he realizes fully the import of the exchange) and unconscious (for Kate), is assimilated through things, specifically the power of things purchased at high cost. The pressure of the scene is no longer “wholly occult,” laden only with secrets: it

⁸⁹ One cannot but suspect that had Kate understood her own metaphor as Densher does here, and candidly confided in Milly her affair with Densher, she would have gotten the fortune in the same way, in a different spirit, after Milly’s death. The immanence covered by the wings, I believe, also contains this thought and lost possibility.

contains the weight and pressure of knowledge, which Kate has not entirely processed, but which is legible on her face and absorbed through her skin.⁹⁰ Knowledge weighs as heavily as the pearls hanging around Milly's neck. Seymour Chatman has commented that James's frequent "use of deictic pronouns to replace abstractions" converts them grammatically into "things, entities, as substantial as any character."⁹¹ Kate's *that* ("it was to *that* they reached"), along with all that the wings reach and cover, carries the material reality of knowledge drawn from the real world of money and things.

Many critics see Milly's death and her final metaphor as products of her artistic will to produce her own symbol.⁹² But her artistry arguably has a vaster reach. Milly's final metaphor represents her way of seeing and being, which is simply to see things clearly and be intensely receptive to life—to the consciousness of others, in the world.⁹³ If the novel teases out again and again the vagaries and implications of consciousness, it nonetheless preserves the opacity, in her

⁹⁰ Cf. J. Hillis Miller, *Literature As Conduct*, pp.197-8: "The word [face] names in *The Wings of the Dove* the most conspicuous and subtle way in which consciousness is always, for James, externalized, embodied. Consciousness, for James, is incarnated in material manifestations that may be read as signs. These are, however, ambiguous and never wholly transparent or verifiable signs. In this the face is like the words that face speaks."

⁹¹ See his invaluable linguistic analysis of the ambiguities in the prose of James's major phase, *The Later Style of Henry James*, pp. 56-7. Chatman cites an extended passage from the scene of Mrs. Lowder's dinner party to illustrate the abundance of neuter pronouns standing in for abstractions, from which I will cite only the following sentence: "Whatever it was it had showed in this brief interval as better than the alternative; and it was now presented itself altogether in the image and in the place in which she had left it."

⁹² See, for example, Ruth Bernard Yeazell, *Language and Knowledge in the Late Novels of Henry James*, p.55: "Milly triumphs not so much by inventing metaphors of her own as by adopting and transforming the metaphors of others."

⁹³ John Goode makes the same argument, though he thinks of consciousness (as subjectivity) and style (as visionary personal style and lifestyle, not literary style) differently: "Dying will not matter. Already [Milly] is able to invade and assimilate the consciousness of others, recognizing Susan Stringham's 'positive need' to treat her as a princess, seeing that the way Kate looks sometimes 'was the peculiar property of someone else's vision'. Milly is able to create a lifestyle which is also a mode of vision, in which object and subject coalesce, and distinctions between life and death cease to matter." "The pervasive mystery of style: *The Wings of the Dove*," p.269. Goode's essay, nonetheless, has been central to my own thinking of the meaning of style in *Wings*.

final image, of the one character who does live vitally. Kate has the ability to name things, but these things are her machinations to marry Densher with Milly's money. She is vivacious, ambitious, and admirable in her energy, but her knowledge is not vital; she does not properly see either Densher or Milly until the conclusion.

We are told that Milly "was for ever seeing things afterward" (177). The narrator tells us throughout that Densher, too, often sees things retrospectively, but more frequently in the retroactive sense of understanding situations only later, whereas knowledge tends to stay with and haunt Milly from the moment of its contextual reality. Milly, in fact, eerily seems to *see* Kate and Densher after her death, for the ambiguities of Kate's articulated thoughts on Milly's wings collectively represent Milly's immanence—the thoughts of her own, those of others, and those that do not seem to arrive from any person, for all of which she functions as a conduit throughout the novel. To cite Chatman again, Milly is the character most often associated with "recipient" mental verbs, that is verbs in which it is unclear whether the agent is performing or receiving an act of cognition, as in "awarenesses, realizations, senses, feelings" as opposed to "decisions, conclusions, inferences, guesses" that one makes rather than has. Of these passive or semi-passive verbs, "Literally half are elliptical, that is, make no explicit reference to Milly, leaving it to context and narrative point of view to make clear that she is the ultimate agent."⁹⁴ In Milly's presence, things seem or seem to her or to others; they appear, represent, present, are vivid, are significant to an agent that is not always grammatically certain.

One could even venture that the dove is not quite a metaphor: to borrow Jean Guiguet's term for the monologues of *The Waves*, the dove is the "poetic correlative" to Milly's vital way

⁹⁴ See *The Later Style of Henry James*, pp. 16-19.

of being, and represents “a way of writing, a style” that communicates a particular reality.⁹⁵ This is the reality of consciousness without psychology, which, however, does not obtain equally for the other characters. It may be illogical to state that only Milly’s consciousness is essentially without psychology, as consciousness without psychology cannot be located in a single person. Milly’s singularity, however unreasonable, is structurally necessary for the composition of a moral drama, in which Kate and Densher are able to emerge from subjectivity, to understand and feel Milly’s wings and learn from experience because they are psychologized. Thus Milly is absent when we are first exposed to Kate and her situation, and becomes an absent presence in the last third of the novel, when Densher’s point of view is given prominence. In James’s melodrama, Milly embodies the possibility for the subject in the world to experience moments of selfless correspondences; it is through her that Susan Stringham, Kate, and Densher occasionally see from a non-egoistic perspective, and these moments are figured as moments of revelatory vitality. Early on the narrator notes of Milly, “She worked—and seemingly quite without design—upon the sympathy, the curiosity, the fancy of her associates, and we shall really ourselves scarce otherwise come closer to her than by feeling their impression and sharing, if need be, their confusion” (141). The narration lapses out of free indirect discourse into the voice of an outside observer—the narrator with the reader—as if to underscore that Milly is, in herself, qualitatively different as a character from the others, and that the confusion she inspires even in the narrator is not a question of distance or ambivalence.

A tenuously maintained free indirect discourse rife with abstract terms and ambiguous phrasing, however, remains the primary medium for all consciousness in the novel, and represents the ever latent possibility of nonpsychological permeability as vitality. In terms of

⁹⁵ From *Virginia Woolf and her Works*, quoted in Makiko Minow-Pinkney, *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject*, pp. 152-3.

James's art, Milly's wings take on yet another valence: style, as in Flaubert, *does* make reality. But this reality is the experience of boundless consciousness, embodied in metaphors that do not contain meaning so much as act as conduits to vivid sensations and intense impressions. Milly's wings, like the other metaphors I will analyze below, do not simply express vitality but recur to enact it, much as Shakespeare's images invest language with life—with the difference that the life of this style is depersonalized through carefully crafted metaphors that pass through separate minds. Waterproofed, as it were, against final meanings and readings, Milly's wings thus reach to the "imperfect part" of the reader who longs for vital expressions that exceed the naturalistic representations of a Flaubertian, purely aesthetic style.

On Being Ill

After learning from Lord Mark that Kate and Densher have deceived her, Milly Theale "turn[s] her face to the wall" (632). The moment in the drama is the supreme instance of the power of interpersonal knowledge: we know that Milly has long been suffering from a terminal organic illness, but it is only when she learns that the man she loves and the woman she admires perhaps above all others are secretly engaged to one another that she succumbs openly and precipitously to its debilitations. Up until then she has kept indications of her illness at bay, fulfilling Kate's assurance to Densher that Milly wouldn't "live, by inches" or "taste, as it were, of medicine" (373). With knowledge of the true state of relations in the triangulated drama of which she stands at the head, Milly accepts her mortality with a dramatic swiftness. Her death is at once a capitulation to the disappointments of worldliness and an active, expressive gesture of the specific knowledge that undoes her formerly dominant will to live. Both senses of her death would seem to oppose the novel's towering metaphor of the dove, in its biblically resonant

spirituality, to the literal though unnamed illness that claims Milly's virginal body before releasing her as a bodiless symbol of untainted love and ravaged innocence. Because the illness is only starkly manifest with the disturbing revelation, it seems to be knowledge itself that kills Milly, even as Milly invites her fate.

Yet this "illness as metaphor" (as Susan Sontag has decisively termed it) contains within it an opposition between innocence and experience that illuminates, in its very tenuousness, the dynamic, shifting meanings of knowledge that animate the novel and its complex sentences. The metaphor's cruder signification is that of doomed innocence, a reading that underscores the tragic and unstoppable trajectory of the plot: innocence cannot survive in the corrupt world of society, in which self-interested lovers will scheme to inherit a dying girl's money. Milly's illness, in this sense, is proof of her purity and unfitness for the world; she is the archetypal innocent American abroad that figures in nearly all of James's fiction, fresh and hungry for experience in the older, decadent, more seductive setting of Europe. But what distinguishes her from Isabel Archer is the characterization implicit in the allegorical scene where we first encounter her, on a cliff contemplating her prospects in and for life. She has not seen the world, but she receives a foretaste of the experiences in wait for her, partly because she has already encountered death; her entire family, we read in the narrator's introduction to her, has passed away in an unspecified manner. She is ill and alone, the "survivor of a general wreck" as she tells Sir Luke Strett, and she is, unlike the fresh-faced Isabel, already independent (261). More importantly, she, like Ralph Touchett, is gravely ill. Illness generates her thirst for life, her fear that she will not enjoy all that she already possesses, and consequently her sensitivity to the nuances and intensities of experience. If, as James writes, she is "conscious of a great capacity of life," it is because illness sparks this awareness.

Although Milly's illness is never identified, as a metaphor it assumes the same metaphoric connotations that tuberculosis has carried in history. Kate and Densher speculate whether her illness is tuberculosis; Sontag assumes that it is, and her description of the twofold nature of TB as a metaphor certainly applies to Milly: "It described the death of someone (like a child) thought to be too 'good' to be sexual: the assertion of an angelic psychology. It was also a way of describing sexual feelings—while lifting the responsibility for libertinism, which is blamed on a state of objective, physiological decadence or deliquescence. It was both a way of describing sensuality and promoting the claims of passion and a way of describing repression and advertising the claims of sublimation... Above all, it was a way of affirming the value of being more conscious, more complex psychologically."⁹⁶ Drawing upon a decadent literary tradition intertwining morbidity with sensuality and art, James suggests that Milly's illness allows her to live and see intensely. Illness grants her the sensitive receptivity of aesthetic seeing. To be more conscious, more complex and subtle, charismatic and perceptive, is to find release from the egotistical claims of the robustly ambitious, like Kate, in the luxurious experience of the sensitive, ailing body. Milly is denied sex, but is alive with her own desires and to the erotic being of others.

Thus Milly senses that the face Kate presents to the world is "the peculiar property of somebody else's vision, that this fine freedom in short was the fine freedom she showed Mr. Densher. Just so was how she looked to him, and just so was how Milly was held by her—held as by the strange sense of seeing through that distant person's eyes" (276). But, contrary to one point of Sontag's argument, Milly's illness, unlike Ralph Touchett's, is not essentially a way of describing repression and sublimation. I say essentially, because while, from a clinical perspective, repression is certainly operative in the story of Milly's unfulfilled attraction to

⁹⁶ *Illness as Metaphor*, pp. 25-6.

Densher, James casts sublimation—the channeling of erotic energies into nonsexual activity—as vital sensuousness, rather than subverted sensuality or anemic sexuality. There is a sense throughout that these characters are not only steeped in an atmosphere dense with erotic longing, but that the omniscient style of ambiguity, opacities, suspended meaning is the vital basis of all somatic experience. Eroticism is not channeled into other pathways of an intricate circuit of desire: what Sontag describes as sublimation is, in late James, more erotic and vital than sex itself, the dynamic of an impersonal material consciousness. When, earlier on at Lord Mark's house, Milly senses, then sees Kate has entered the room, she feels “something that was perversely *there*,” an entity she “was more and more uncomfortably finding, at least for the first moments and by some spring of its own, with every renewal of their meeting” (245). That something which is *there*, as a presence in the room, outside her mind and also between her mind and Kate's, is the thought that the ways Kate regards others may be “the way she looks to *him*” (245). The presence of the something in the room exists in the world and reenters Milly's own mind when she clearly does see Kate through Densher's eyes. Repression is no longer revealed on the surface of the body or in distorted speech, or projected onto external things; the erotic currents behind clinical repression are materialized in the world as sensuous entities. Like the *that* reached by Milly's wings, the “something there” is an indefinable substance contained in an impersonal, sensuous consciousness, filtered and disseminated in language.

When Milly sees Kate with Densher's eyes, the strange sense of that moment does not return her only to her attraction to Densher; the moment ramifies into the “revelation to herself that she absolutely had nothing to tell” Kate of her visit to Sir Luke Strett, and that Kate herself will never be ill (277). “These things, for Milly, inwardly danced their dance; but the vibration produced and the dust kicked up had lasted less than our account of them” (277-8). These

sensuous vibrations constitute the intangibilities of James's prose as well as the unspoken 'quantities' (one of James's favorite abstract terms) between characters, the novel's language of silence: the details of Milly's medical visit, for instance, that she chooses not to reveal to Kate. The characters collectively turn the common knowledge that Milly is ill into a "conspiracy of silence, as the *cliché* went, to which no one had made an exception, the great smudge of mortality across the picture, the shadow of pain and horror, finding in no quarter a surface of spirit or of speech that consented to reflect it" (609-10). Although mention of her illness is largely absent from their conversation, the narrative reflects it at all points and relates it to all the other unspoken or indefinable things in the novel—namely sex. The secret, unspoken language subtending the dialogue as well as the language of the quasi-omniscient narrator dissolves sexual desire within the complex range of eroticism and sensuous experience, both of which structure interpersonal knowledge. In choosing to make the only sexual encounter in the novel invisible, James diffuses sexuality within a language that continuously refers to that which it does not speak. As Hugh Stevens has pointed out, silence, eroticized (like tuberculosis) in the art of the nineteenth century, informs the language of *Wings*: "the determining absent centre for James," he writes, "is not the scene of seduction as such, but the absence of a language which can adequately describe human affections and erotic attachments."⁹⁷ Sex is not represented, but language itself embodies, indirectly and immanently, the complex range of embodied experience and material consciousness. In concealing the scene of consummation, James makes an aesthetic gesture, an argument for his own style: the art of the novel should be less concerned with representation than with creating a suggestive, sensuous language that both infiltrates and exceeds the scene of possession. The novel thus seems to anticipate Woolf's call for the writing of a language of illness and to respond to that call with a language that speaks the silent interplay

⁹⁷ *Henry James and Sexuality*, p.7.

of sex, organic death, and the subjective death of consciousness without psychology, figured throughout as vivid seeing made possible through illness.⁹⁸

Kate agrees to sex with Densher to secure his complicity, to sustain his love and attachment at a critical moment of their demoralizing scheme. When she loses him at the novel's close, James seems to affirm Proust's narrator's meditation that in sex one possesses nothing. Densher loves Milly after her death because her wings, her vision and her style, cover and connote far more than the act of sexual possession. One could argue, in fact, that all acts that aim for possession—primarily possession of money or through sex—are undermined in the novel. The plot as generated by the three main characters, the three main 'reflectors,' could be oversimplified thus: Kate wants money; Densher, sex with commitment; Milly, life and Densher. Each gets what she or he wants. Densher offers Milly's fortune to Kate; Densher has consummated his engagement; and Milly has 'lived,' has fallen in love and gained Densher's love. Milly dies unhappily, and Kate and Densher are irreparably estranged in the knowledge of each other that they can't undo. If Milly's spirit and vision nonetheless triumph after her death when she spreads her wings, it is because what she desires requires no object to *possess*. After her death Kate tells Densher that Milly wanted not the truth about their engagement but him alone; Milly gains his love after death without possessing him, sexually or through marriage. Dying from a symbolic illness—from having "much of it," everything she senses and knows, loves and wants—Milly embodies vitality and ways of eyeless seeing that erode the boundaries between bodies and between life and death.

⁹⁸ See her essay "On Being Ill," from which the title of this section is taken. James's focus on consciousness aligns his novel with modern fiction, though the late Romantic and decadent association of physical decline with aesthetic vision remains the thematic scaffolding to the style—the rarefied language and impersonal metaphors—of *Wings*.

In his analysis of the multiple meanings of knowledge in the novel, Michael Wood identifies one recurring sense, a “semi-intransitive sense of ‘know’, where the word seems almost synonymous with life, or at least with vivid consciousness.” Milly, he reminds us, “had too much wanted to know.” What she wanted to know, Wood tells us, is “particular things about the world, of course. But also everything.”⁹⁹ Milly’s wings spread this semi-intransitive vivid consciousness, covering the immanence of knowledge of ‘everything’. Among the many ways one character may know another in the novel, one could add the biblical sense of knowing as sexual possession, which is ultimately superseded by knowing as the profound interpersonal intimacy and insight granted by vivid, semi-intransitive seeing and living. The novel ends when the wings cover Kate and Densher with the consciousness of what each is like and what they have done against Milly and for themselves. Before that climax, James introduces other recurring, and evolving, metaphors that foreshadow Milly’s postmortem wings and enact the dynamism of vivid, borderless consciousness without psychology.

During a visit to Sir Luke Strett, where her medical condition is never directly addressed, their dialogue conducted along lines unusually oblique even by the novel’s standards, Milly discerns that her disease is fatal precisely because Strett avoids the mention of death, just as James avoids presenting us with sex itself. He asks about her life, not her symptoms, and she guesses, “Wanting to know more about a patient than how a patient was constructed or deranged couldn’t be... anything but some form or other of the desire to let the patient down easily. When that was the case the reason, in turn, could only be, too manifestly, pity; and when pity held up

⁹⁹ *Literature and the Taste of Knowledge*, pp. 19-20. Wood identifies seven senses of knowledge in the novel: 1. To know something is the case. 2. Knowing the thoughts or feelings of others or yourself. 3. To know people in the sense of having met them. 4. To recognize people and things. 5. To know in the sense of deep intimacy. 6. Knowing as vivid consciousness. 7. To guess correctly. See pp. 16-20. My application of the sixth definition subsumes or overlaps at points with the second, fourth, and fifth.

its tell-tale face like a head on a pike, in a French revolution, bobbing before a window, what was the inference but that the patient was bad? He might say what he would now—she would always have seen the head at the window” (260). The passage is striking for two reasons: first, the metaphor of grotesque political violence comes across as excessive and unaccountable in the context of a medical consultation for an organic disease; and second, the strange past conditional, *she would always have seen*, offered instead of “she would always see the head at the window (from then on).” The tense is jarring, as subtly eerie as other heightened moments in the novel when a character sees through another’s eyes, except here Milly is seeing through her own in a disjunctive temporality. It adumbrates the end, when Milly ‘sees’ Kate and Densher after her death.

Considering the metaphor strictly within this scene produces the reasonable reading that Milly has known unconsciously all along that she is to die young, and thus can see herself in the past in possession of that unacknowledged knowledge. But when the metaphor of execution reappears much later, the head on a pike takes on another sense retroactively. After leaving Venice and before receiving any letters from Milly—which, like her wings, arrive after her death—Densher finally acknowledges to himself Milly’s “unapproachable terror of the end”: it is “*the horrible thing to know*,” yet grants him “the strangest of reliefs” in “so naming it”: “He allowed it all its vividness... Milly had held with passion to her dream of a future, and she was separated from it, not shrieking indeed, but grimly, awfully silent, as one might imagine some noble young victim of the scaffold, in the French Revolution, separated, in the prison-cell, from some object clutched for resistance” (649). In naming the terror and ‘seeing’ Milly’s metaphor, Densher, too, “would always have seen” the vividness of Milly’s consciousness—not only her terror, but her eyeless way of seeing through and past separate bodies and death. Milly’s

knowledge of her terminal condition is not depicted as her own, acquired and internalized in a specific time and place through intuition, so much as it is conceived as facts independent of her consciousness and even Sir Luke Strett's, equally legible, as I will argue in line with Sharon Cameron, in the crowds of London and in the Bronzino painting.

The window through which Milly sees the head has disappeared: what transpires is less that Densher has looked into Milly's perspective than that her consciousness has depersonalized his own. The violence and terror of death remain in Densher's revision of the metaphor. What changes is the status of pity: Densher assumes Dr. Strett's pity, but through him, pity becomes the foundation of his love, and the knowledge of vividly knowing another person (the doctor, it should be remembered, wants to know about Milly's life) accessed through the dissolution of subjectivity. In knowing and recognizing Milly thus, Densher's knowledge partakes of the "semi-intransitive" sense of knowledge ultimately embodied in Milly's wings. Densher tames the strangeness and excessiveness of the original metaphor, the equation between pity and violent death, by revealing that the past moment in the doctor's office immanently contained his own pity, love, and appreciation of Milly's passion for life, all of which were realized *after* her death. He seems, moreover, to see the moment after her visit when she carries a metaphorical "musket on her shoulder... freshly on the warpath," and illuminates the head on a pike, no longer as the mark of the doctor's pity, but as his own pity for her private battle for life against the ravages of disease (268-9). Only with Densher's revised metaphor do we learn that pity is a head on a pike, not only because it conveys the doctor's unspoken diagnosis, but also because Densher's pity names Milly's terror of death and the fact of that death: her tragic and fatal response to his cruel secret with Kate, and her victimization by that knowledge. To account for "would always have seen" when Milly guesses at a specified moment why the doctor is avoiding

her illness, and for the way in which the metaphor of terror and violence reaches Densher's mind after her death, is to reject subjective psychology as the precondition for knowledge—and to expand the definition of knowledge beyond the limited sense of data or information. For, when knowledge exists outside minds, it defies death and can even defy the temporality of acquisition: Milly knows she will die as a victim not of illness alone. (This moment, we will see, connects the novel to Ann Banfield's analysis of the temporal operations of sensibilia in Virginia Woolf). Metaphors, in this sense, are presented, as Victor Shklovsky says of images generally, as though they have preceded the artist, who does not create them but uses them differently¹⁰⁰: they belong to no one person, circulating between minds in a depersonalized consciousness.

Before receiving Kate in his rooms in London to discuss the will sent by Milly's lawyers, Densher thinks of the personal letter from Milly that Kate has destroyed. Kate burns it because both she and he know what information it contains: Densher will inherit her fortune. But he regrets not knowing "the turn she would have given her act. That turn had possibilities that, somehow, by wondering about them, his imagination had extraordinarily filled out and refined. It had made of them a revelation the loss of which was like the sight of a priceless pearl cast before his eyes—his pledge given not to save it—into the fathomless sea, or rather even it was like the sacrifice of something sentient and throbbing, something that, for the spiritual ear, might have been audible as a faint, far wail. This was the sound that he cherished, when alone, in the stillness of his rooms" (702-3). The passage returns us to the pearls Milly wore at her dinner party in Venice, which I have argued represent the way knowledge and consciousness inhere in the things of the physical world. The scene in which Densher and Kate assimilate knowledge of themselves through the sight of Milly, likened to a dove in pearls, demonstrates the borderlessness of consciousness and its metaphors. Neither Densher nor the reader knows the

¹⁰⁰ See his *Theory of Prose*, pp. 2-3.

wording of Milly's letter, yet, in linking her turn and style to her pearls, James suggests that Densher's imaginative seeing works within the immanence of her wings. The suggestiveness of the lost letter is a lost revelation, but the passage implies an equivalence between the refinements of his imagination and the revelation of her presence metonymically represented in her language: his imagination itself makes her writing a revelation.

He has failed to save her words, and thus sacrificed something sentient (her words, like her pearls, contain a certain sentience), but his metaphor recuperates Milly's deathless consciousness. Neither possession of the contents of the letter nor, ultimately, exact knowledge of her turn matter at this point, for Densher now participates in this deathless consciousness and egoless vision. The fact that the contents of the letter are practically irrelevant is key here, setting the stage for the final scene in which the power of vivid consciousness is definitively valorized over the claims of possession—of sex, money, or knowledge as information. Whereas the thought of Kate after their sexual encounter leaves Densher with “the somewhat chilled state—tending to the solitary—of supreme recognition” which has lost “the warmth of the element of mystery” (550), Milly maintains the “pervasive mystery of Style” Densher remarks at her Palazzo: the style composed of “the candour of her smile, the luster of her pearls, the value of her life, the essence of her wealth” (518, 544). Milly learns of Kate and Densher's secret—the truth of the state of things—but gains Densher himself through the penetrating power of her way of seeing and being. Her lost phrases, like the *that* covered by her wings, are everywhere indistinct and palpable in the novel; her words and her pervasive style persist in impersonal consciousness and in the money that continues to circulate and express her after death. Her style remains potent and alive in Densher's imagination, which James here shapes not as fantasy but as visionary knowing.

Densher finally comes to know and recognize Milly in the same way she knows and sees him upon their chance meeting at the National Gallery. Before seeing him she takes notice of three Americans whom she assesses instantly: “she *knew* the three, generically... She would have been able to say where they lived, and how,” and overhears the remark “‘Handsome?... In the English style,’” which she takes at first to be a comment on the paintings (309). She then sees another visitor removing his hat, and the “occupation held him long enough to give Milly time to take for granted—and a few seconds sufficed—that his face was the object just observed by her friends.” We read, “This could only have been because she concurred in their tribute, even qualified, and indeed ‘the English style’ of the gentleman—perhaps by instant contrast to the American—was what had the arresting power. This arresting power, at the same time—had already sharpened to pain, for in the very act of judging the bared head with detachment she felt herself shaken by a knowledge of it. It was Merton Densher’s own...” (310-11). Milly falls in love at second sight. It is not by accident that James shows us recognition of his ‘English style’ transferring from the American tourists to herself, nor that Milly is accompanied by Kate, whom we know is in love with Densher. Though her own recognition contains a personal erotic charge, it bears traces of external knowledge. James is arguably not creating a scene of imitative desire, in which desire is determined outside the psyche, but drawing Milly’s painful, immediate recognition specifically as knowledge, rather than desire, that exceeds subjectivity.

From that moment on, the vividness with which Milly sees Densher, and he her, will carry the foretaste of death. Her metaphors, defying psychological subjectivity, represent the somatic assimilation through people and things of the knowledge residing in the external world, even after death. Unlike Kate, Milly loves and sees Densher in a semi-intransitive way, and this way of knowing presages the organic death of the self.

Death and the Knowledge of Art

In his preface to the novel James provides a general description of Milly's charisma: "I have named the Rhine-maiden, but our young friend's existence would create rather, all round her, very much that whirlpool movement of the waters produced by the sinking vessel or the failure of a great business; when we figure to ourselves the strong narrowing eddies, the immense force of suction, the general engulfment that, for any neighbouring object, makes immersion inevitable" (8). It is her ability, deriving mainly from her wealth and her "great capacity for life," to draw others into her drama that creates the medium of consciousness in which all the players are immersed (1). The persons "affected in such a manner [by Milly] to make them part of the action" would "make up together, for her, contributively, her sum of experience, represent to her somehow, in good faith or in bad, what she should have *known*" (5). James later describes his characters as "successive centres" and Milly as a character seen "through the windows of other people's interest in her," and speaks of his London-based reflectors as "laying a trap for the great innocence to come (11, 25, 21). Although James's late style constitutes a departure from the delimited subjectivity-centered consciousness of Isabel Archer, James's novels never entirely give up on psychology: the fundamental drama of innocence and experience enacted in nearly all of his fiction demands a psychological substructure, however crude or limited, to any character capable of acquiring worldly experience.¹⁰¹ Knowledge in James is gained, manipulated, coveted, and concealed in ways that

¹⁰¹ See Ruth Bernard Yeazell's illuminating comparison of central scenes in *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Golden Bowl*, Madame Merle asserting herself before Countess Gemini and Charlotte Stant confronting Fanny Assingham, in *Language and Knowledge in the Late Novels of Henry James*, pp. 5-15. Yeazell observes that whereas Madame Merle remains an unknowable person of surfaces ("even the narrator himself has no direct access to Madame Merle's inner life"), the scene of the later novel "serves to blur the line between private imaginings and narrative facts... [the] solid grasp of the 'facts' temporarily give way before this creation of a reality so fluid and so potentially consoling." Yeazell notes later on that "what the late style

are not only unimaginable but essentially incompatible with the implicit epistemology we read in Woolf and Faulkner, in which an overriding sense of determinism, of an always already perceived destiny realized from moment to moment, undoes any hard opposition between innocence and worldliness. But what does bring late James closer to Woolf and Faulkner is a growing interest, most explicitly demonstrated before *The Wings of the Dove* in *What Maisie Knew*, in the overlap or confusion between seeing and knowing. As the conclusion of the latter novel tells us, it is never clear what Maisie knows, but we do know that she has seen nearly everything. In *Wings* the indeterminate overlapping terrain is the medium in which the characters engage with one another.

The sense of knowledge as vivid consciousness brings knowing closer to the sensuous immediacy of seeing; to understand the metaphors of impersonal consciousness is to see clearly the knowledge immanent in it. The confusion between seeing and knowing we see experienced mainly by Milly ultimately results in the sensation and knowledge of death. What James tells us Milly “should have *known*” is the exposed secret that will kill her. But in two of the most striking instances in which knowledge of death arrives from the external world, from seeing people in Regent’s Park after an appointment with Sir Luke Strett and the Bronzino painting at Lord Mark’s house, one can nonetheless detect, with Milly, *how* she will die. The drama is contingent on Milly’s innocence, but James also suggests that the interpersonal consciousness in which her power immerses the other characters contains knowledge of deception before the fact: the “inevitable” immersion in shared waters would make interpersonal knowledge immanent in impersonal consciousness, rendering death irrelevant to knowledge and the future itself legible,

dramatizes is the painful struggle of the intelligence literally to come to terms *with* full consciousness—and thus in some measure to hold it in check,” p.18. While my emphasis is on the operations of full consciousness between and through persons as this fluid reality, Yeazell’s stress remains on illumination and intelligence within psychological subjects in late James.

just as the metaphorical “head on a pike” confuses the proleptic and retroactive registers. And despite Milly’s undeniable innocence of Densher’s engagement, I will argue that she does perceive both her social and biological fate, that she sees in a way similar to that of Woolf’s Rhoda and Faulkner’s Quentin after her.

Sir Luke Strett cryptically counsels Milly “to live,” sounding more like the Old Testament author of Ecclesiastes than a medical doctor when he says, “‘You’re active, luckily, by nature—it’s beautiful: therefore rejoice in it’” (267). He tells her explicitly to enjoy life; he implies that she should have a love affair. Milly, succumbing anew to the temptation to embrace the kingdoms of the world, re-enters the streets of London, where “it was as if some instant application of [these last words] had opened out there before her (266). In her heightened state she feels, “Wonderments in truth... even now attended her steps: it was quite as if she saw in people’s eyes the reflection of her appearance and pace” (268). When she reaches Regent’s Park she also sees herself in others: “here doubtless were hundreds of others just in the same box. Their box, their great common anxiety, what was it, in this grim breathing-space, but the practical question of life? *They could live if they would*; that is, like herself, they had been told so; she saw them all about her, on seats, digesting the information, feeling it altered, assimilated, recognizing it again as something, in a slightly different shape, familiar enough, the blessed old truth that *they would live if they could*. All she thus shared with them made her wish to sit in their company...” (269; my emphasis). The inversion between ‘could’ and ‘would’ in Milly’s thinking arguably confuses wanting to live (would) with living (would live): ‘would’ as a helping verb for ‘live’ makes *they would live if they could* a conditional statement of a real possibility—living as a possibility translated into the present indicative of non-narrative usage as “they will live if they can”—whereas the first ‘would’ alone suggests not only this real possibility but also

willing. The narrative context of these thoughts places a subtle accent on the sense of *if they would* as willing, as in would want or would choose to do. One could translate, then, *They could live if they would* as “They could live if they wanted to live,” or “They can live if they want to live.” The first part of the formula represents what she sees of herself in others; the second, what others return to her in “slightly different shape.” The effect of the chiasmic inversion is ultimately syllogistic: if one can live if one wants to live, and if one will live if one can live, then one will live if one wants to live.

They with Milly have been “told” that they will live if they want to live, and they wordlessly, unwittingly present her (like Strett before them) with the thought that they, and she, will live if they can—if they are not dying. The knowledge she and the people of the park have of death is essentially the same. To reconcile the first thought, essentially what Strett tells her, with the second, essentially a tautology, is to read in others that one can live if one wants to be able to live. Living and willing are interdependent, as are willing and the ability to live. In other words, because Milly knows already from her visit to Sir Luke Strett that she cannot live, despite his advice to love and enjoy life, the knowledge that occurs to her from seeing people in Regent’s Park tells her she will die because her dying will be willed.

Similarly, when Milly sees the Bronzino she knows, or senses, that she will die without joy. Lord Mark leads her to see the portrait of the unknown woman that everyone remarks resembles her. As she stands before the painting, “Once more things melted together—the beauty and the history and the facility and the splendid midsummer glow: it was a sort of magnificent maximum, the pink dawn of an apotheosis, coming so curiously soon” (240). Tears come to her eyes as she studies “the face of a young woman, all magnificently drawn down to the hands, and magnificently dressed; a face almost livid in hue, yet handsome in sadness... that

must, before fading with time, have had a family resemblance to her own. The lady in question, at all events, with her slightly Michaelangesque squareness, her eyes of other days, her full lips, her long neck, her recorded jewels, her brocaded and wasted reds, was a very great personage—only unaccompanied by a joy. And she was dead, dead, dead. Milly recognized her exactly in words that had nothing to do with her. ‘I shall never be better than this’” (240-1). Lord Mark, not understanding her statement, blithely responds that Milly is no doubt better than she, but Milly feels nonetheless “It was probably as good a moment as she should ever have with him. It was perhaps as good a moment as she should have with any one, or have in any connection whatever,” and explains, “‘I mean that everything this afternoon has been too beautiful, and that perhaps everything together will never be so right again’” (241). To see the portrait of a young, bejeweled, joyless woman as the image of death is to recall Milly’s confession to Susan Stringham before their arrival in London that she has everything, lacking only, as she says, “‘the power to resist the bliss of what I *have!*’” (155). At this, Susan Stringham considers, “One had only to admit that her complaint was in fact but the excess of the joy of life, and everything *did* then fit. She couldn’t stop for the joy, but she could go on for it, and with the sense of going on she floated again, was restored to her great spaces” (156). When Milly navigates the hallways deep into Lord Mark’s residence to stop before the painting, the sight of the portrait without joy tells her that she, like the painting, will be stopped in space and time, and that she will die unaccompanied by joy.

There are other reasons why the painting presents Milly with her own death. Lord Mark with others tell her that the resemblance is striking, so that when she herself sees the woman as the image of death, their observation becomes an indirect confirmation of her own.¹⁰² They, like

¹⁰² Sharon Cameron makes more or less this point, along with many others I make here. See *Thinking in Henry James*, pp. 126-131. As with her analysis of Milly’s observation of the people

the people in Regent's Park, do not tell her anything, but nonetheless communicate a presentiment that she confirms in her own looking, which is never clearly either assimilative or analytical. Their murmuring presence sets the stage for her looking, which is itself described as a scene congealing into a tableau, "a magnificent maximum" reinforcing the sense of both painting and looking/recognition, even by the side of an uncomprehending Lord Mark, as a moment of apotheosis. The subject of the painting is dead; Milly knows that after the sitting she must have faded with time. The woman is also dead in the sense that her image is frozen and inanimate. The passage presents us with two important but ambiguous pronouns: Milly recognizes the portrait/woman but in words that have nothing to do with "her," which can be either herself, the portrait, or the formerly living subject, and claims she will never be better than *this*. The ambiguity is deliberate and itself meaningful. It anticipates her apotheosis as a dove. The words have nothing to do with an unspecified "her" because neither the subject nor Milly is or will be extinct, even after death, but will subsist as a thing, as painting or wealth or Densher's thoughts and love for Milly: each embodies knowledge of her consciousness, as emblems of a consciousness into which her death dissolves her completely. Milly perceives she will die joylessly, and that she will never be better than the moment in which she covers Densher with her spirit and her style, "the candour of her smile, the luster of her pearls, the value of her life, the essence of her wealth," all of which subsist without her body. Her candor, luster, value, and

in Regent's Park, my method and main point—that knowledge comes from outside the mind—borrow much from her own, but arrive at different conclusions about art and consciousness in the novel. For Cameron thinking is the activity of conscious experience, which is her notion of consciousness, and knowledge is the data produced or accessed by thinking. I argue that thinking is no longer strictly the activity of the conscious mind, that it overlaps with what is more properly sensation, and thus expands the notion of consciousness beyond that of the workings of the conscious mind. The confusion between seeing and thinking that she identifies as highly problematic for the concept of thought can be addressed by introducing sensation as the term that describes the knowledge produced by both thinking and seeing as a heightened form of consciousness of what is already outside the self in the world.

essence survive vividly and expressively in the thing-like, paint-like metaphors that exceed her own life. Her metaphors are things of the world, conduits of a broader, vivid, egoless consciousness that suffuses the ambiguous pronouns, imprecise mental verbs, and conversational obliquities of the narrative, which indirectly gives us the consciousness of individual characters while just as frequently hovering between or beyond them in a dynamic reflecting the impersonal drift of knowledge in people and the world of things.

Cameron writes that James proposes in his essays and novels “an almost unthinkable question”: “It is as if James asked... How could thought have power in the world? And as if he answered the question by asserting that thought can have power if, outside the mind and ‘in’ the world, it breaches the boundaries between the subjective and the objective.” I want to develop this question further: in *Wings*, with the breach between the subjective and the objective, between psychology and material reality, James seems to ask, How can art have power in the world? In his essay “Is There Life After Death?” he speculates that the intensity of one’s consciousness determines whether it will persist after death; in *Wings* he proposes that art can have power by breaching the boundaries between life and death, by rendering consciousness immanent in the world in a language that ‘contains’ both sex and death. Cameron concludes that James’s reasoning is flawed: thought (and consciousness) can only have power in the world when the mind is a psychologized agent interacting with the world, for thought as a picture in the world cannot exert power in it.¹⁰³ James seems to anticipate her critique when he writes in the Preface of the inveterate tension between picture and drama: of, one might say, Milly fixed in a scene of looking before a portrait of death, and Milly as an agent in the world (14). Psychology and impersonal consciousness coexist in the novel as incommensurable forces: Milly wants to

¹⁰³ Ibid., p.157. See pp.167-8 for her critique of James’s empowerment of thought.

live yet correctly predicts that she will want to die; Kate, like Milly, is also the receptacle of external thoughts, yet cannot see how her plot will end.

For the moral tragedy of the novel is less the consequences of Kate's egotistical plot for possession than the impersonal, irresistible allure of the mysterious Style granted by wealth alone. When Milly claims "I shall never be better than this" she anticipates Kate's final words to Densher: "'We shall never be again as we were!'" With this, she accepts Milly's fortune from Densher. Densher has already assimilated Milly's style in his imagination and love. Kate will live with Milly's money, which we know will continue to embody her presence for Kate. Despite her illness, Milly, dripping with money, is never an otherworldly creature, nor is her style immaterial. The mystery of impersonal consciousness is also the mystery of the power of material things to invade and contain thoughts, to participate in wordless thoughts and the unspoken language between bodies. Kate sees Milly only at the end, but her desire for money is originally an external claim from her sister and father on the potential financial gains offered by Aunt Maud ("She often ended up by giving up to [other people's interpretation of her conduct]—it seemed really the way to live"), and it is while living with her wealthy relative that she sees "as she had never seen before how material things spoke to her" (52, 54).

Rebuffed by her father, Kate succumbs to and soon avidly assumes broader social desires for material gain. These influences are depicted as social pressures lacking in the mysterious transfers of thought and sensation in moments that truly dissolve psychology, but they are nonetheless a cruder articulation of the power of outside thought to enter one's own. They stand at the other end of the spectrum of consciousness defined by the socially influenced, healthy egoism as represented by Kate and the morbid, impersonal, aesthetic style embodied by Milly, with the entire range subtended at both ends by the power and unspoken language of money and

material things. Kate says of Milly, “‘One *sees* her, with intensity—sees her more than one sees almost any one; but then one discovers that that isn’t knowing her’” (361). Kate, however, like Madame Merle with Isabelle, soon knows what to do with Milly, though failing truly to see her until she has gained possession of her goal. James never resolves the confusion between seeing and knowing, or the antagonism between picture and drama. His art shows us consciousness as a dynamic, palpable reality—a kind of picture that shows and tells us what we are, what we are like—but abstains from reconciling what we see with what we do. But while the novel’s drama is constructed in proleptic terms that undermine the dramatic revelation of plot and knowledge, one could argue, with Michael Wood, that what the novel itself ‘knows’ is different from what James or the characters know.¹⁰⁴ The knowledge inhering in the words and style of the novel resists moral conclusions in the same way that Milly’s wings resist absolute readings; it does not, within the narrative immanence, represent Kate and Densher as objects of judgment. But what the novel knows about morality reaches, less to the imperfect part of the reader touched by the vital expansiveness of Jamesian style, than to the reader as psychological agent in the world, perhaps alone in being morally implicated in the textual nexus of reader, author, character, and narrator.

¹⁰⁴ See *Literature and the Taste of Knowledge*, pp. 8, 35-6. Wood writes, for example, that “thinking of Proust and asthma, say, we could ask, not what Proust knew about the condition or what doctors know now or knew in Proust’s time, but what *A la recherche du temps perdu* knows about asthma—what it knows and perhaps will not tell us directly, or what it knows that only novels know, or only this novel knows.”

Chapter 3: Virginia Woolf's Grammar of Consciousness

In an oft-commented passage from her memoir “A Sketch of the Past,” Woolf reflects upon how isolated “shocks” she experienced as a child, variously characterized as moments of non-being, horror, and revelation, have crucially shaped her art and her philosophy of art:

... it is a constant idea of mine; that behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we—I mean all human beings—are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art. *Hamlet* or a Beethoven quartet is the truth about this vast mass that we call the world. But there is no Shakespeare, there is no Beethoven; certainly and emphatically there is no God; we are the words; we are the music; we are the things itself. And I see this when I have a shock.

...If I were painting myself I should have to find some—rod, shall I say—something that would stand for the conception. It proves that one's life is not confined to one's body and what one says and does; one is living all the time in relation to certain background rods or conceptions.¹⁰⁵

Woolf denies subjectivism, and by claiming that we are parts of the world as a work of art, binds us to the media of art, to words, sounds, and things. We are the things of art in the world as art. In her writings, the revelatory shock translates as the sense that consciousness, too, is a medium that partakes of all things and people.

After mentioning music and literature, Woolf brings up painting to consider how she would visually depict her relationship to the meaning of her shocks. The move is unexpected, as we know she is a writer—why then does she resort to painting? Moreover, why is her

¹⁰⁵ *Moments of Being*, pp. 72-3.

speculation not focused on the expression of the limitlessness of experience, but concerned with the representation of the revelation as a symbolic rod, a concrete self-contained thing, presumably relegated to the background of a self-portrait?

In this memoir from 1938, Woolf makes an implicit comparison between painting and her own literary art that suggests how she attempted to portray ideas, perceptions, and things *as* things in literature. To present them as things, she shows in *The Waves*, is not necessarily to depict them as isolated and external to the self's perceptions or even the body. In my reading of *The Waves*, the novel represents Woolf's struggle to unsettle the ineradicable symbolic function of language by renewing a sense of words as things, as material as paint. It attempts to disturb the abstractions of signification by framing images as well as the sense impressions behind them as palpable, dynamic entities carrying material traces of the subject, within the greater project of proving that "one's life is not confined to one's body" and its subjective expressions and motions. It reclaims words for the world of non-symbolic sounds and things in a narrative that insists that all human beings are material bodies, that consciousness is an experience of the impersonality of the body in the immanent world of things, and not the psychological self.

The allegory of free indirect discourse

There is a moment in *To the Lighthouse* when Lily thinks back to a friendly moment shared on the beach with the awkward Charles Tansley: "this scene... survived, after all these years complete, so that she dipped into it to re-fashion her memory of him, and there it stayed in the mind affecting one almost like a work of art."¹⁰⁶ The moment, as Laura Marcus observes, is "from the past that is not narrated in 'The Window'" and "thus not a repetition but a scene

¹⁰⁶ *To the Lighthouse*, p.160. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *TL*.

‘remembered’ by the narrative itself.”¹⁰⁷ In this chapter I want to investigate at length the implications of the phenomenon that seems to transpire with Lily’s private recollection. The scene, distinct from the actual diegesis and even, it appears, from the other contents of Lily’s subjectivity, carries an uncanny, non-subjective aura—that of a work of art: the narrative remembers the moment and confers a sense of impersonality to the memory. In *The Waves*, structurally perhaps Woolf’s most unconventional novel, each scene, memory, and privately experienced moment is cast as uncanny and non-subjective, an instance within a broader consciousness that exceeds and contains the self. If *To the Lighthouse* presents us with isolated moments in which this consciousness surges into view, *The Waves* presents it in the foreground as *the* subject, as the primary character, itself. To get at the crux of the language of the voices in *The Waves*, I want to begin by taking a closer look at Woolf’s use of free indirect discourse in *To the Lighthouse*, to show how its impersonal and dynamic fluidity is consolidated in the soliloquies. To use Bernard’s words, the soliloquies, though attached to specific characters, illustrate how “We are for ever mixing ourselves with unknown quantities,” representing collectively the impersonal voice of nonpsychological consciousness transmitted through individual characters and the sea itself.¹⁰⁸

The melding of character and author in free indirect discourse is achieved through a porous narrative voice that never entirely abandons its claim to omniscience.¹⁰⁹ Flexible and

¹⁰⁷ *The Tenth Muse: Writing about Cinema in The Modernist Period*, p.152.

¹⁰⁸ *The Waves*, p.118. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

¹⁰⁹ ‘Style indirect libre’ in French, ‘erlebte Rede’ in German, free indirect discourse has been variously rebranded by scholars: as the tripartite “psycho-narration, quoted monologue, and narrated monologue” (Dorrit Cohn), for example, and “represented speech and thought” (Ann Banfield). I prefer to use the generic term, however problematic it may be, to encompass all the different accents accorded to this narrative mode by different scholars of narrative language. See the Introduction to Dorrit Cohn’s *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction*, pp. 3-17, Gérard Genette’s *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, and Mieke Bal’s *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* for a history of the development of

dense, composed of indistinct ingredients, free indirect discourse represents sentiments, expressions, sensations, observations, and judgments that are nonetheless arguably as accessible as their counterparts in direct or quoted speech: the sensation or observation itself is not in question, rather its slippery perceiving center and its actual susceptibility to representation.

Consider the following passage, the concluding sentences from *To the Lighthouse*:

There it was—her picture. Yes, with all its greens and blues, its lines running up and across, its attempt at something. It would be hung in the attics, she thought; it would be destroyed. But what did that matter? she asked herself, taking up her brush again. She looked at the steps; they were empty; she looked at her canvas; it was blurred. With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision. (TL 208-9)

“There it was—her picture... It would be hung in the attics, she thought; it would be destroyed.”

Lily is looking at the picture; it signifies a blurred personal “attempt at something.” Yet the picture with its lines and greens and blues comes to us as an unambiguous deictic fact—*There it was*—for both the narrator and for Lily. The next sentence is presented as Lily’s thought. The repetitive lull and pull of the ensuing phrase—“it would be destroyed”—seems to extend and reinforce Lily’s thought, to translate “it would be hung in the attics”; the translation, like all translations, indicates a creative filter. “She looked at the steps; they were empty; she looked at her canvas; it was blurred”: here the paratactic rhythm swings from Lily (“She looked at the steps”) to the bald statement “they were empty”; the rhythm of the sentence encompasses and

free indirect discourse and its scholarship. In *Unspeakable Sentences: Narration and Representation in the Language of Fiction*, Ann Banfield analyzes the linguistics of free indirect discourse, concluding that the use of tense and deictic markers in fiction point to an empirically impossible temporality and thus to an absent narrator.

levels the plurality of statements—descriptive, perceptual, and factual—within the linked clauses.

“She looked at the steps; they were empty”: the latter clause reads not only as a (relatively) direct representation of Lily’s perception, but as objective fact. The first semicolon distinguishes the act of looking from Lily’s observed fact; in weaving observation with fact (the emptiness of the steps are a fact, but the blurriness of the canvas must be measured subjectively) Woolf seems to be underscoring that this last clause translates a physical fact not restricted to Lily’s experience. The reality of emptiness informs the perceptual blurriness: the steps are devoid of human presence, and convey a *feeling* of emptiness that seeps into the impression of blurriness: the blurriness is a perceptual description proper to the narrative immanence of free indirect discourse and not simply to Lily’s private sensorium. I say Woolf seems to be underscoring this point, because in the domain of free indirect discourse even “It would be hung in the attics, she thought” is washed through the process of narration. As Dorrit Cohn has written, the equivocation (between, for example, hypothetical phrases such as, She thought it would be hung in the attics, It would be hung in the attics, No doubt it would be hung in the attics) “creates the characteristic indeterminateness of the narrated monologue’s relationship to the language of consciousness, suspending it between the immediacy of quotation and the mediacy of narration.”¹¹⁰ Free indirect discourse (“narrated monologue” in Cohn’s revised terminology) is that mediation and movement by which the language of consciousness manifests its complexity in fiction.

The grammatical ambiguity of free indirect discourse results both in novelistic transparency—a window is opened onto the house of a fictive consciousness—and linguistic indeterminacy. To quote Cohn again, it “casts a peculiarly penumbral light on the figural

¹¹⁰ *Transparent Minds*, pp. 105-6.

consciousness, suspending it on the threshold of verbalization in a manner that cannot be achieved by direct quotation.”¹¹¹ In other words, while a fundamental aspect of an experience is illuminated, its transparency is marbled with the density of a narrative mode that conflates multiple perspectives (those of the character and the broader narrative consciousness) and—*within* this mixed, porous consciousness—preverbal sensory information with language. “With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished”: The characteristic repetitiveness of the second sentence heightens the impression of an impersonal rhythm shaping the rhythm of the prose, Lily’s psychosomatic processes, and the universal passage of time. The opening clause describes Lily’s movement, how she draws, and the third narrates what she does, where she draws; interposed between the two arrives the narration of something that hovers “on the threshold of verbalization”—*as if she saw it clear*. The same “penumbral” narrative intelligence that gives us this conditional is also detected in the more emphatic “there, in the centre.” “There” is a signifying gesture that leads from an abstract “here”—the here of the narrative, of our reading, of the novel’s existence, of Lily’s here and now in the fictive universe—to the center of the canvas that Lily alone properly sees. Her vision is a private vision.

Lily’s final visionary moment recalls the novel’s cumulative struggles for clarity of perception and identity amid the threats of oblivion and negation, as well as the moments of insight flashing through the vegetative obscurity of consciousness. *To the Lighthouse*, like Woolf’s other novels, is not simply composed in free indirect discourse; in many ways it seems to thematize it. The novels are preoccupied with windows, multiple perspectives, unspoken thoughts and feelings; with the discreteness of physical bodies, the permeability of consciousness, the ceaseless interplay between the mental and the physical and the conscious and

¹¹¹ Ibid., p.103.

unconscious. Amid the interplay of transparency and density arises the question of art, specifically the possibility of visionary aesthetic experience. *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves* are reflexive works that question and test the efficacy, beauty, and communality of art; they embed diegetic encounters with painting and literature in narrative structures that test the efficacy of language and narrative—whether the novel can provide a vision of the protean, preverbal welter of consciousness as narrative consciousness. It is in this vein that Bernard, the most prominent voice of *The Waves*, reflects toward the end of his life, “It is the effort and the struggle, it is the perpetual warfare, it is the shattering and piecing together—this is the daily battle, defeat or victory, the absorbing pursuit. The trees, scattered, put on order; the thick green of the leaves thinned itself to a dancing light. I netted them under with a sudden phrase. I retrieved them from formlessness with words” (269-70).

The famous interlude “Time Passes” and the seascape-interludes of *The Waves* portray uninhabited landscapes in which time passes without reference to a single ego-based subjectivity in order to reflect “the fertility, the insensibility of nature” that Bernard struggles to tame with phrases (TL 138).¹¹² We read that for the empty summer house of “Time Passes”,

Night after night, summer and winter, the torment of storms, the arrow-like stillness of fine weather, held their court without interference. Listening (had there been anyone to listen)... (for night and day, month and year ran shapelessly together)... the stillness and the brightness of the day were as strange as the chaos and tumult of night, with the trees standing there, and the flowers standing there, looking before them, looking up, yet beholding nothing, eyeless, and so terrible (TL 134-5).

¹¹² Cf. Ann Banfield, *The Phantom Table*, p.316: “The interludes contain “particulars such as ‘here’ and ‘now,’ centered but neither ‘egocentric’ nor ‘subject-centered’ because occurring in contexts with no first- or third-person pronouns to attribute them to.”

What I have called the narrative consciousness or intelligence of free indirect discourse withdraws from human drama to articulate nature's insensibility. This perspective appears inhuman, the world it 'sees' formless, strange, and terrible. The possibility of a world seen without a self is explicitly broached as a topic when Andrew explains to Lily that his father's work deals with "Subject and object and the nature of reality": "a kitchen table... when you're not there." From there on, whenever she thinks of Mr. Ramsay's work, Lily pictures "a phantom kitchen table, whose virtue seems to have been laid bare by years of muscular integrity, which stuck there, its four legs in air" (TL 23). In "Time Passes" human presence is effaced, but the language itself retains a humanized trace, just as Lily's imagined table is an absurdly awkward figure.¹¹³ The anthropomorphized flowers of the landscape, however, are not terrible for their state of sightlessness, but for "looking up, yet beholding nothing." In the chapter "The Lighthouse" Lily considers, "For there are moments when one can neither think nor feel. And if one can neither think nor feel, she thought, where is one?" (TL 193-4). In "Time Passes" the terror of the flowers is the absence of thought and feeling amid organic growth; for Lily the loss of thought and feeling in moments where she might be said to resemble the insensible flowers is a question about the nature of the ego, the coherence of the self. In Woolf's version of the Freudian uncanny the material world and its eyeless flowers alternately invoke horror over our fates as material beings, and an 'insensible' ecstasy, an intimation of immortality: "[Mrs. Ramsay] felt, with her hand on the nursery door, that community of feeling with other people which emotion gives as if the walls of partition had become so thin that practically (the feeling was one of relief and happiness) it was all one stream, and chairs, tables, maps, were hers, were

¹¹³ See Gillian Beer's essay "Hume, Stephen, and Elegy in *To the Lighthouse*" in *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground* for a discussion of this passage and the philosophical influences that appear in the novel. Beer establishes *To the Lighthouse* as a "post-symbolist novel" for both using symbolism and "persistently [bringing] it into question," p.41. That is, it questions the ways in which the human uses things to signify.

theirs, it did not matter whose, and Paul and Minta would carry it on when she was dead” (*TL* 113-4). The egoless aspect of free indirect discourse aired in “Time Passes” holds its thematic counterpart in these moments of loss: the loss of walls, thoughts, feelings, and self-identity. Lily arrives at her vision only after producing formless greens and blues.

The Waves is far more unconventional in form than its predecessor: departing from the recognizable and novelistic stream of consciousness of *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, it consists of a series of soliloquies that are not and could not realistically be spoken and do not reflect the empirical process of consciousness. The six seemingly disembodied voices in the later novel are subsumed in a consistent lyrical style—a kind of omniscient style, rather than perspective—organized by allegoric interludes of a seascape and rising and setting sun that do not simply parallel the soliloquies, but ultimately form with them an imagistic confluence. Images of waves and birds by the shore interpenetrate the soliloquies and the interludes; the waves break insensibly on the shore before and after Bernard’s death. The seascapes are occasionally punctuated with anthropomorphic metaphors: “*Erratically rays of light flashed and wandered, like signals from sunken islands, or darts shot through laurel groves by shameless, laughing boys*” (207). The effect is not the humanization of the landscape, but the assimilation of the human into the nonhuman, with both engulfed in the vision of an inhuman eye: “*Rimmed in a gold circle the looking-glass held the scene immobile as if everlasting in its eye*” (208). It is as if the vision—the concrete line—achieved by Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse* after the decay and developments in “Time Passes,” is applied to *The Waves* as its structuring principle: the nonverbal vision becomes an allegory of nonhuman nature and human consciousness.

Many critics have noted that Lily’s vision recalls the formalist art criticism of Roger Fry, a close associate of Woolf’s whose seminal *Cézanne: A Study of His Development* was published

in 1927, the same year as *To the Lighthouse*. Her biography of Fry was published in 1940, roughly around the period she was working on *Between the Acts* (1941), a novel which, like *The Waves*, bears what may be described as a non-organic structure: rather than following the course of human drama, it establishes the acts of a play as the skeleton of the plot. In her biography Woolf describes Fry's study of Cézanne as a "double story" of both the author and the artist for whom "Every element is distinguished and shown to have its necessary part in the composition." It is arguable that, with *The Waves*, Woolf wanted not merely to thematize and depict the process of a formalist aesthetic vision, but to organize all narrated impressions with the kind of abstract exaction and clarity of a microscope, in the way Fry and Cézanne approach their writing and art respectively. Citing Fry's own writing, she writes of their work, "But though the analysis is minute, it is not a dissection... 'The concordance which we find in Cézanne between an intelligence rigorous, abstract and exacting to a degree, and a sensibility of extreme delicacy and quickness of response is here seen in masterly action.' The words are true of Roger Fry himself. The flower has kept its colour and the microscope its clarity." If *To the Lighthouse*, like Cézanne's apple and kitchen table, represents "a victory for the human spirit over matter,"¹¹⁴ *The Waves* presents a vision that is not triumphal, but abstract, scientific, and even inhuman. Lily's line is extended to cut through the human with the indifference of an abstract scientific perspective, to portray the colors of the flower with the clarity and objectivity of a microscope.

Ann Banfield has argued that Woolf's fiction is haunted by the Russellian philosophical goal "to leave one's perspective and imaginatively project oneself into other perspectives, even the *possible* ones inhumanly inoccupied, to experience the world as it would be without the thinker": "Via such reasoning, Woolf is led to the idea of death."¹¹⁵ In both instances of the

¹¹⁴ *Roger Fry: A Biography*, p.285.

¹¹⁵ *The Phantom Table*, p.213.

goal, and on either side of the allegoric demarcation between nonhuman seascape and soliloquy, we arrive at the “world seen without a self” postulated by Bernard; that is, a world seen without a stable self-identity, or a world seen in theory by an absent subject (287). Free indirect discourse is transformed as the impersonal voice in *The Waves*. The immanence inhering in free indirect discourse is figured as an allegory of consciousness— of natural life as the confused site of overlapping subjectivities, permeated by the inhuman, haunted by absence and death.

Between image and sign: Woolf's small perceptions

Gillian Beer has established the importance of wave-particle theory, especially the work of James Jeans and Arthur Eddington, for Virginia Woolf and her intellectual contemporaries. If the key thinkers in the background of *To the Lighthouse* are Hume and Leslie Stephen, *The Waves* expands upon the questions raised by the phantom table—the nature of subject and object, reality and perception—through a narrative structure that more effectively illustrates the scientific claims, as voiced by Eddington in *The Nature of the Physical World* (1928), that “the conception of substance is wholly lacking” because the universe consists of the motions of imperceptible but theorizable waves.¹¹⁶ Beer reminds us that Woolf was also a reader of Darwin and Freud, and is persuasive in arguing that their theories of biological and cultural development enter her work as an emphasis on the survival of prehistory in contemporary existence, rather than on contemporary life as the product of ongoing evolution: “The continued presence of sea, clouds, leaves, stones, the animal form of man, the unchanged perceptual intensity of the senses,

¹¹⁶ Eddington is quoted in “Physics, Sound, and Substance: Later Woolf” in *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground*, p.115. Holly Henry’s *Virginia Woolf and the Discourse of Science: The Aesthetics of Astronomy* provides a more detailed exposition of the general influence of James Jeans’s writings on physics at the time Woolf was writing *The Waves*, which she also links to Fry’s formalism and Russell’s concept of sensibilia. See pp. 93-103.

all sustain her awareness of the simultaneity of the prehistoric in our present moment.”¹¹⁷ Thus Woolf’s novels are not plot-driven like the novels of Eliot, Dickens, and Balzac, which may be crudely characterized in Darwinian terms as the ontogenetic recapitulation of phylogenetic evolution, but contain leitmotifs that bind expanded moments together in their essential sameness.

The idea of the reality of imperceptible and barely perceptible things is everywhere implicit or explicit in Woolf’s writing, but is expressed with greater technical sophistication and self-consciousness in *The Waves*. I will argue that the constellation of scientific and philosophical theories concerned with the existence of nonsubjective perspectives, represented by the new physics and Cambridge philosophy, are translated into the medium of fiction as a thinking of the body as the overlapping of the organic and inanimate or nonhuman, and as an emphasis on the non-semantic foundation of symbolic language. Woolf presents the substance of the body as both sensible and insensible, and analogizes it to the theorized wave-particles composing the universe in figuring it as an entity *through* which impersonal sensations may pass: in the novel, consciousness does not transpire *in* the subject. The body, in its dynamic, ceaseless moments of correspondence with the physical world, is embedded in its immanence. Both the body and its sensations are immanent in the physical world and conceived as our link to the inorganic and prehistoric. The rhythm and motion of human sensations, like wave-particles and the waves of the sea, cannot be restricted to a single substance and follow the rhythm and motions of nonhuman nature. In *The Waves*, sensation, startlingly, comes to affirm the imminence and immanence of organic death, the reinstated sameness of the subject and the material world.

In Banfield’s genealogy of Bloomsbury modernism, the concept of “sensibilia,”

¹¹⁷ “Virginia Woolf and Prehistory” in *The Common Ground*, p.17.

influenced by Leibniz, links Russell's philosophy with Woolf's fiction. Sensibilia constitute "those objects which have the same metaphysical and physical status of sense-data, without necessarily being data to any mind because 'there happen to be no observers to whom they are data.'" Unlike Leibniz' monads, sensibilia are not indivisible. Russell argues, "Leibniz did not carry his monadism far enough, since he applied it only spatially. Not only is a man private from other people, he is also private from his past and future selves."¹¹⁸ Woolf's novels represent the aesthetic translation of Russell's Leibnizian sensibilia, providing the "appropriate linguistic representation of the unobserved, *here* and *now* defining the Russellian perspective, that physical subjectivity which may remain impersonal."¹¹⁹ The here-now of narrative—as in "The sun had now sunk lower in the sky"¹²⁰—conveys a nonpsychological subjectivity, the impersonal perspective of the "*this was now here* [which] bears witness to the existence in the real, i.e. outside any observer, of a grouping of sensible events which the *I* may have once experienced, *but which he no longer inhabits as a subject*."¹²¹ Woolf's project, then, is to provide a language of sensibilia in which the here-now of Lily's canvas suggests the *this was now here* of the unobserved canvas in the attic even after it receives her vision: "*There it was—... It would be hung in the attics, she thought; it would be destroyed.*" The unobserved future is as uncanny and haunting as the empty decaying house of "Time Passes"; both are conveyed by a narrative consciousness that slips into and beyond a character's subjectivity seamlessly and overlays the past tense with present-time deictics.

The soliloquies of *The Waves*, on the other hand, are exclusively composed in the present tense. In my reading of *The Waves* as an allegory of free indirect discourse, of the *this was now*

¹¹⁸ Quoted in Banfield, "Describing the unobserved," pp. 266, 267.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p.274.

¹²⁰ Banfield quotes from the interludes of *The Waves*. Ibid., p.273.

¹²¹ Ibid., p.279. My emphasis.

here of novels generally but singularly effective as thematized in episodes like “Time Passes,” the present tense is not a timeless lyric present but more like Flaubert’s imperfect, which, in Proust’s words, “serves to present not only speech [*paroles*] but also the entire lives of people”: “this eternal imperfect, composed in part of the words [*paroles*] of the characters that Flaubert presents habitually in free indirect discourse so that their words merge with all the rest.”¹²² The present tense of the soliloquies, composed in an omniscient style, reflects the insistent, even monotonous changeability of consciousness. Like Flaubert’s imperfect, it combines, even conflates different perspectives, and condenses the scattered moments and patterns of a lifetime. “Tuesday follows Monday; then comes Wednesday,” Bernard tells us. “The mind grows rings; the identity becomes robust; pain is absorbed in growth” (257). The succession of brief paratactic clauses intensifies the impression that the sentences are reproducing the unconscious, somatic, rhythmic experience of time, and that each occurrence of an “I” in the present tense bears a quantity of rings extending into both past and future. Interwoven with the past tense of the blind and subject-less seascapes, the metabolic present tense expresses the *was of this was now here* along with the *now* implicit throughout the span of life. The present tense expresses what Genette identifies as the iterative: the recounting of habitual episodes in a single narrative instance. Woolf’s novel is suffused with “a sort of *intoxication with the iterative*,” a feature emblemizing not only a sensitivity to the rhythms of habit but also “a feeling of the analogy between moments.”¹²³ The analogy between moments is timeless: the experience of the iterative captured in the rhythmic prose is thematized as the unconscious, constant metabolic progress of experience—the persistence of the prehistoric in the present. “What moves my heart, my legs?” Jinny wonders as a child (13). The answer, Woolf implies, is the same movement driving the

¹²² “A Propos du style de Flaubert” in *Ecrits sur l’art*, p.318. My translation.

¹²³ *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, pp. 116, 123. Emphasis in the original.

measured language of the soliloquies and the impersonal natural cycle depicted in the descriptive interludes.

Just as in Flaubert the characters' words are absorbed in the immanence of free indirect discourse, the soliloquies of Woolf's novel "merge with all the rest" despite the explicit references to a speaker. Each speaker is subject to the rhythm of the waves and the eternal development of natural history, as terrible and eyeless as the flowers "beholding nothing" in "Times Passes." The waves and cycles of nature determine the rhythm of the human organism and inform the insensible rhythm of habit and repetition; these are the habits, not simply of one's life and character, generated by the general rhythms of embodiment. As a child Bernard observes, "The pigeon beats the air; the pigeon beats the air with wooden wings," and as an old man he realizes, "If a bird rose I should no longer make a poem—I should repeat what I had said before" (18, 269). The anaphoric "poem" itself presages the future moment as a moment of repetition with a difference; "with wooden wings" represents the difference that will, in turn, be repeated in the future. Looking back in the last section of the novel, Bernard reflects, "We grew; we changed; for, of course, we are animals. We are not always aware by any means; we breathe, eat, sleep automatically. We exist not only separately but in undifferentiated blobs of matter" (246). Repetition with a difference transpires in both time, in the life of the individual, and in space, in the undifferentiated matter that composes the body. Although we recognize six different personalities emerging in the dense series of soliloquies, they do not consist of six discrete identities or bodies: they constitute different articulations, configurations, or inflections of a limitless materiality, each participating in the impersonal rhythms of nature and the somatic progression of lived time.

The analogy between moments is expressed in the unfolding of the individual

consciousness temporally as repetition reduced to synchronic essence; the synchronic essence structures and synthesizes the consciousness of Bernard, Susan, Rhoda, Neville, Jinny, and Louis alike. The waves represent the communality of the “I” and physical existence for the six characters, their shared material origin and fate. Each represents a unique perspective that is communicable, through narrative, as impersonal sensibilia that circulate among them. The soliloquies are unspoken; the voices compose a single current in which sensibilia transpire as the unspoken and pre- or nonverbal within a collective, unpsychologized consciousness. When Bernard’s thoughts in old-age return to the lifelong companions whose soliloquies partake of the same somatic style as his, he recalls that Susan cried, “I hate; I love” in early childhood; he is able to cite exactly what Susan ‘said’ because the impression represented by this particular phrase is an instance of sensibilia. The instances, recovered through the writerly imaginative sympathy implicit in free indirect discourse, represents in this moment Bernard’s access to privately experienced moments that are nonetheless constitutionally impersonal (248). Bernard even quotes childhood impressions of others whose objective correlative remains unknown: the “women passing with red pitchers to the river,” for example, imaged in one of Louis’s first soliloquies (12). Late in life Bernard laments, “I said life had been imperfect, an unfinished phrase. It had been impossible for me, taking snuff as I do from any bagman met in a train, to keep coherency—that sense of the generations, of women carrying red pitchers to the Nile...” (283). The image is clearly a symbol of coherency and tradition for Bernard, and his own iteration, couched in a more accessible and self-reflective language than that of Louis in the first chapter of life, manages nonetheless to elucidate what the image as statement and sensation meant for Louis. Earlier in the same soliloquy Louis says, “I hold a stalk in my hand. I am the stalk. My roots go down to the depths of the world... I hear trampling, trembling, stirrings round

me” (12). He feels an unspeakable, visceral connection to past generations in the sheer vibrations of things, which Woolf presents as the private experience of the impersonal circulating metaphor.

The written soliloquies combine minute sensations and perceptions with articulate moments of self-consciousness—in most of the characters, or at least the men who aspire to write—but, more markedly than with free indirect discourse, the demarcations between the spoken, thought, and preverbal remain largely hypothetical. The reader cannot ultimately be certain that *anything* in the soliloquies is spoken aloud, or even thought in the same words. The effect is the suspicion that what they express may not, in fact, be rendered in articulate speech, that Bernard’s desperate struggle to tell stories is an attempt to tell the unspeakable. The soliloquies are exemplars of the mysterious “language without words” Woolf posits in her essay “The Cinema,” in which she asks, “Is there some secret language which we feel and see, but never speak, and, if so, could this be made visible to the eye? Is there any characteristic which thought possessed that can be rendered visible without the help of words?” She writes that the visual emotion conveyed by the tadpole-shaped shadow she sees on a movie screen, an accident of projection and not an image recorded on the film reel of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, is “fear itself, and not the statement, ‘I am afraid.’”¹²⁴ From this example we can deduce that Woolf is actually concerned less with film than with the principle or idea of the cinematic. It is a principle that films themselves may fail to reproduce: to reduce the shadow on the screen to the statement “I am afraid” would be to subscribe to the determinism of conventional narrative cinema, in which “A kiss is love. A broken cup is jealousy. A grin is happiness. Death is a hearse.” David Trotter quotes this parodic passage from “The Cinema” to point out that “What Woolf didn’t like about films of this kind was what she didn’t like about novels of a certain kind: their

¹²⁴ Ibid., p.183.

determinism, their reduction of sense to meaning, of suggestiveness to intelligibility.”¹²⁵ In *The Waves* the secret language finds cinematic embodiment in the unspoken soliloquies, written voices that convey preverbal experience, in which sense trumps the rigid, merely rhetorical intelligibility of the statement “I am afraid.”

The free indirect discourse of *To the Lighthouse*, especially the eerie, inhuman “Time Passes,” suggests the consciousness of an impersonal, nonpsychological subject; the allegory of free indirect discourse leads to the secret cinematic language of *The Waves* in which the accent falls on the unobserved as unconscious, preverbal, physical, and uncanny—life as the haunting of the inorganic. Laura Marcus observes in her reading of “The Cinema” that Woolf “found a film aesthetic in the recording of ‘physical realities’, but imagined a future in which ‘emotion and thought’ would be added to this reality.”¹²⁶ Indeed, in the later novel emotion and thought seem to mingle with physical reality to the point where consciousness cannot be defined as a wholly organic process, and is inarticulable insofar as it inheres in the inorganic. The waves, on the one hand, are a metaphor for consciousness; on the other, they exceed a relation of sheer comparison. The final words of the novel, *The waves broke on the shore*, dissolve the allegory: they are literal; they do not represent Bernard’s death, but absorb it. Through the novel’s transit the definition of the inorganic completes a full circle: the waves open as literal waves and emblems of the inorganic. They develop as metaphors, expressive of the way the characters are like the waves, especially in the habitual, unconscious and preconscious states experienced in the quotidian, insensible rhythm of life passed on through each generation. “My children will carry me on; their teething, their crying, their going to school and coming back will be like the waves of the sea to me,” says the earthy Susan (132). As the soliloquies shift their focus from

¹²⁵ *Cinema and Modernism*, p.166.

¹²⁶ *The Tenth Muse*, p.119.

impressions of childhood and youth to mature desires for eloquence, the inorganic signifies the preverbal: we feel and see that we are like waves—that we float on unseen waves, and that they pass through us—but cannot satisfyingly pinpoint and *state* that part of ourselves, in the same way a blot on a movie screen cannot state fear because it seems to be “fear itself.” To say “I am afraid” is inadequate, because in this case the affect has absorbed, or even negated the subject. Because that part of human nature cannot be stated, the soliloquies not only remain unspoken but signify the unspeakable, the inescapable eyelessness of sensations that exceed individual subjectivity. Finally, the waves represent *and* carry our own mortal, inorganic, speechless natures, the “secret language which we feel and see” in *The Waves* as a novel.

The shimmering language of the soliloquies translates that “residue of visual emotion which is of no use either to painter or to poet” into symbols “quite unlike the real objects which we see before us.”¹²⁷ That is, they contain images that hover on the cusp of signification between metaphor and realistic representation, and words that appear at times as sensuous, synesthetic images drifting uncertainly between Peircean symbol and index. It is in this sense that the words on the page are part of a “language without words.” The words of *The Waves* are not simply or necessarily the arbitrary, conventional symbols of Peircean or Saussurean semiotics; they exist on a spectrum between symbolic function, the ordinary usage of language as a symbolic system, and profound indexical connectedness to the egoless experience of materialized visual emotion. There is an insistent sense throughout the novel that words bear some kind of unsymbolical meaningfulness independent of the human subject, just as the deictics and tenses of fictional narrative imply an eyeless, absent observer (“The sun *had now* sunk lower in the sky”). Peirce concisely defines an index as “a sign which would, at once, lose the character which makes it a sign if its object were removed, but would not lose that character if

¹²⁷ “The Cinema,” p.184.

there were no interpretant,” whereas a “*symbol* is a sign which would lose the character which renders it a sign if there were no interpretant. Such is any utterance of speech which signifies what it does only by virtue of its being understood to have that signification.”¹²⁸ The components of the indexical sign are bound in a necessary and logical relationship based on non-subjective phenomena. Within the fictional context of impersonal consciousness, in which one character may observe and sense another’s sensation long after its empirical origin in the material self, the circulating images and phrases come to represent the indexical, material contiguity between all persons and between the self and the waves of inanimate nature. Thus Bernard, made up of the same “undifferentiated blobs of matter” as his friends, is able to ‘cite’ their synesthetic emotions from childhood late in life.

Within the objectively metaphorical equation of linguistic narrative with impersonal consciousness, the repetition of images and words traveling between characters establishes, moreover, the indexical connection between word and emotion. Words begin to resemble natural formations with encrusted meanings when they are *evoked by*, rather than evoke, a synesthetic sensation. Bernard himself appears conscious of this quality of words and phrases when he says, on vacation in Rome,

Leaning over this parapet I see far out a waste of water. A fin turns. This bare visual impression is unattached to any line of reason, it springs up as one might see the fin of a porpoise on the horizon. Visual impressions often communicate thus briefly statements that we shall in time to come uncover and coax into words.

I note under f., therefore, ‘Fin in a waste of waters.’...

¹²⁸ Peirce provides the following example of an index: “Such, for instance, is a piece of mould with a bullet-hole in it as sign of a shot; for without the shot there would have been no hole; but there is a hole there, whether anybody has the sense to attribute it to a shot or not.” From the *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, excerpted in *Peirce on Signs*, pp. 239-40.

Now I shall go and lunch somewhere, I shall hold my glass up, I shall look through the wine, I shall observe with more than my usual detachment, and when a pretty woman enters the restaurant and comes down the room between the tables I shall say to myself, Look where she comes against a waste of waters. A meaningless observation, but to me, solemn, slate-coloured, with a fatal sound of ruining worlds and waters falling to destruction (189).

The fin is not merely a visual impression; the word itself is mysteriously, irrationally tied to an inarticulable synesthetic sensation. For the impression “springs up *as one might see* the fin of a porpoise on the horizon”: here, some “bare” incommunicable impression outside “any line of reason” evokes the word ‘fin’ and *precedes* the symbolic meaning of fin and the image of a porpoise. Words are not only aurally sensuous, they bear traces of the synesthetic “visual emotion” that mysteriously joins on a spectrum the unspoken secret language that belongs to no one person, the language of sensibilia and sensation, with the symbolic language of the I who imagines a porpoise and records “fin in a waste of waters.”¹²⁹ To apply the fin as a metaphor for an attractive woman in a restaurant is a meaningless act, as the fin itself, Bernard’s writerly shorthand for a visual impression, has no clear referent. The implication is that the root of metaphor is not observation but sensation. The original visual impression invokes the word fin

¹²⁹ In *Virginia Woolf and the Madness of Language* Daniel Ferrer usefully points out that Bernard’s vision “only refers to itself” as it “springs up *as one might see the fin...*” In his psychoanalytic discussion of the image of the fin in the novel as well as its appearance in the diaries at the time she was working on *The Waves*, he quotes Woolf, who, nearing completion of the novel, wrote, “I have netted that fin in the waste of water which appeared to me...” Ferrer argues that “what *The Waves* constructs is not a dialectic opposing external reality to the perception of that reality, as in the ‘classical’ interior monologue, but one opposing a perception (or sensation, or affect, or hallucination) and consciousness of the perception.” While I think this is essentially right, I disagree with his following point for reinforcing the reality-perception dialectic: “External reality is relegated to the third person, to a very low rank.” See pp. 86-9. In my reading the hypothetical third person confirms the reality of the vision but not the psychological subject.

because the only certainty of the perceptual moment is that he is looking out onto water—which, of course, is also not quite stable as a referent in the novel, and becomes the waters of self-dissolution in the restaurant. The water suggests the word fin, almost as a dead metaphor, simply because porpoises inhabit water. As it turns the sensation is troped, and in the restaurant it is again uncovered and coaxed into words but emerges as a new sensation—as a sound, mysteriously influenced by the way he imagines the look of wine and a pretty woman.

The word also appears in the interludes when a “*wave of light passed in a sudden flaunt and flash as if a fin cut the green glass of a lake*” (182). Later on, after recording “fin in a waste of waters” in his notebook, Bernard describes moments of human intercourse sinking “into one of those silences which are now and again broken by a few words, as if a fin rose in the wastes of silence; and then the fin, the thought, sinks back into the depths spreading round it a little ripple of satisfaction, content,” (273). Various framed as sensation and index, word and metaphor in the objective interlude and the soliloquies, “fin” comes to represent the complex intermingling of consciousness and physical reality. Similarly, the image of a ring is repeatedly evoked and modified throughout the novel in both the soliloquies and the interludes, to the point where the bare word “ring” appears as a leitmotif that gathers signifying richness even as it gestures toward the sensuousness of Gertrude Stein’s hollowed-out language. Bernard’s first words are, “I see a ring, hanging above me. It quivers and hangs in a loop of light.” The statement reads as an unspoken transcription of preverbal sensory perception. Following Bernard’s observation, each character chimes in turn, “I see” or “I hear.” With the rhythm of repetition the narrative further underscores the non-semantic function of language and thus conveys the residue of visual emotion that suffuses consciousness and resists symbolic language; the first words of each

character are not only a symbolic transcription, but also a sensuous translation of common sensory experience.

The first ring, the ring Bernard sees, has no identifiable external referent, and as the reader encounters numerous other rings—the ring of grass in which the characters sit together as children (40), the glowing purple ring on Miss Lambert’s finger that enchants Rhoda (33, 45), the “forged ring” or “steel ring of clear” poetry Louis craves (94, 128), the “words curling like rings of smoke” for Bernard (132), the “ring after ring of sound” of daily life (210)—the word, with its variety of accumulated images and resonances, functions as a conduit to an aspect of experience that is fundamentally unnameable in symbolic language. Much like Stein’s “a rose is a rose is a rose,” each instance of repetition resonates differently; meaning resides in the ungraspable play of resonance. The ring is a synesthetic image functioning variously, even simultaneously as a metaphor of hardness and continuity, a literal ring, and onomatopoeic sound. In one of the last instances of the ring as image we read, “There was no past, no future; merely the moment in its ring of light, and our bodies” (252). The ring, as a paradigmatic image, comes to symbolize the synesthetic, non-semantic, anti-metaphoric aura of words: here, the ring of light indicates the here-now of the body, but in that here-now it gestures, like the “stirrings” Louis perceives, to the afterlife of the senses—to the *this was now here* in which the interpreting subject is absent, and words assume other possible meanings and readings in other times and places. In Woolf’s allegory, the very fact of a single word’s polysemy suggests that it too partakes of the eerie independence of sensibilia.

There is a self that experiences, there is a world seen and observed, but insofar as “I see a ring” edges into the terrain of the pre- or nonverbal, it is—in the context of fictional narrative—edging into the uncanny domain of the inorganic. The body and its sensations, the very matrix of

The Waves, constitute the overlapping of the organic—vital and conscious—and inorganic, somatic, unconscious, or merely material realms.¹³⁰ Relational and sensuous rather than representative or symbolic, “I see a ring” expresses what Leibniz describes as the “relation between each being and the rest of the universe.” Louis’s first words are, “I hear something stamping. A great beast’s foot is chained. It stamps, and stamps, and stamps” (9). We suppose that Woolf is presenting us with a description or figure of something Louis perceives, a beast or something resembling a stamping beast in a consciousness and language that does not distinguish between figuration and ‘objective’ description: we cannot know what Louis is perceiving. Much later in the novel we read that Louis has actually encountered a beast, an elephant in India stamping its feet, and at a later point in the seascape interludes we read, “*The waves fell; withdrew and fell again, like the thud of a great beast stamping*” (150). This too is an intratextual moment, in which the images, appearing in both what seemed at first to be strictly subjective soliloquy and objective description, tell us that sensation in *The Waves* is not represented by language so much as it is disseminated in the impersonal immanence of narrative.¹³¹ Louis’s stamping and Bernard’s fin represent sensations that inhere in matter itself. The images of the narrative are neither strictly subjective nor objective; language is more a sensuous than signifying phenomenon.

With the melding of nonverbal experience and verbal representation the Woolfian consciousness emerges as a Leibnizian composite of “small perceptions” and apperception—with the fundamental difference that, “unlike Leibniz’ monads, Woolf’s rooms have windows for

¹³⁰ Cf. “Describing the unobserved,” p.280: “Woolf would call this unseeing and unseen look of things, mirroring the universe, variously art and death.”

¹³¹ In this respect Woolf’s cinematic images resemble Deleuzian movement-images. As Deleuze has written of the movement-image in cinema, “The eye is in things, in luminous images in themselves”; “it is the set of images, or the light, which is consciousness, immanent to matter.” *Cinema 1: The Movement-image*, pp. 60, 61.

contact.”¹³² Here, Banfield reinforces her argument that sensations in Woolf are not ego-bound; the rudiments of consciousness are egocentric without being strictly personal, private without being psychological. Lily’s unobserved canvas and Louis’s pseudo-private image of the stamping beast connect the subject to the “very gaze of the missing observer” whose vision and sensations are “blind, insensible, silent, unconscious.”¹³³ The difference between Lily’s canvas and Louis’s beast rests in degrees of awareness and perception: Lily’s vision of her painting in the attic comes to us as an articulable perception (“It would be hung in the attics, she thought; it would be destroyed”), Louis’s as a synesthetic translation of nonverbal sensation. *To the Lighthouse* emphasizes the “phantom table” of Russellian philosophy and the philosophical aspect of perception and aesthetic imagination. *The Waves*, especially in its first half, is more concerned with the darkened half of the “windows for contact.” The gaze of the absent observer is uncanny and insensible, yet it *does* reflect something in us: death and its correlatives, the insensible and nonverbal states experienced by all organic life.

While *To the Lighthouse* juxtaposes Leibnizian monads with windows onto the observed and unobserved, *The Waves* hones in on the elementary contents of the monad, the minute perceptions of the darkness that occasionally pass into the light of articulation and awareness. In his *New Essays on Human Understanding* Leibniz describes the small perceptions of consciousness as an infinity of un- or pre-conscious moments, “changes in the soul that we do not notice.”¹³⁴ He insists that they are “of greater effectiveness than one thinks,” elaborating, “They form this ‘je ne sais quoi,’ these tastes, these images of the senses and their qualities, clear in the assemblage, but confused in their parts, these impressions that surrounding bodies exert on

¹³² *The Phantom Table*, p.111.

¹³³ “Describing the unobserved,” p.279.

¹³⁴ *Nouveaux essais sur l’entendement humain*, p.41. The citations from Leibniz are in my translation.

us, and that envelop infinity: this relation that each being has with the rest of the universe.”

Consciousness is impressionistic, composed of small perceptions that may develop into the higher consciousness of apperception and thought when they become “clear in the assemblage.”

The infinity of unconscious small perceptions may lead to self-awareness, or, just as easily, fall back to its loss. Leibniz thus establishes, according to Daniel Heller-Roazen, “a region of the mind unimagined by both Descartes and Locke: a region in which consciousness and its absence meet in the terrain of incessant and infinitely minute perceptions”—where “living things come to their senses,” and “once sentient” “come to lose them.”¹³⁵ The characters of *The Waves* are their own missing observers, haunted by the flux of small perceptions both within and between them.¹³⁶

But Woolf is not simply painting a Leibnizian prefiguration of the dynamic Freudian unconscious. In her fictional narratives the pre- or nonverbal is figured as the inorganic. When language reaches into the swarm of unconscious or preconscious small perceptions, it retrieves images that cannot be unfolded as signs. The body’s suffering cannot be read as symptoms, but are understood in terms of universal, impersonal, inexorable metabolic processes. Unlike *Ulysses*, *The Waves* does not posit a kind of master-interpreter affirming the endless exegetical possibilities of narrative and the minutest elements of language, but highlights the fine, porous line between the experience of signlessness and an inarticulate, non-conscious physical world. Poetics overrides hermeneutics: Woolf’s images—sensuous signifiers without legible signifieds—do not open hermeneutic possibilities; they are elements of experience that can be recognized and delineated but not meaningfully elucidated. Psychoanalytic meaning as the

¹³⁵ *The Inner Touch: Archaeology of a Sensation*, pp. 190, 205.

¹³⁶ Cf. James Naremore, *The World Without a Self*, p.175: “in place of an omniscient narrator who refines the raw materials of consciousness, six disembodied voices (in the final analysis, one observant spirit) provide their own omniscient analysis.” The voices, however, are arguably not entirely disembodied.

conjunction of signifier and signified is thus foreclosed. The Woolfian psyche, lacking the minimum of independence and coherence posited by ‘psychological’ psychoanalysis, is composed of sensations that constitute in turn a path to a grammar of consciousness rather than a terrain of semiotic potential.¹³⁷ We may read the characters of *The Waves* making pronouncements such as “I am afraid,” but each is essentially experiencing from moment to moment the state of “fear itself”—a private experience that nonetheless underscores that there are no words for a “world seen without a self.”

Grammar here is intended both linguistically and metaphorically, as in Todorov’s *The Poetics of Prose*, where he specifies that by discussing a “grammar of narrative” he is applying the hypothesis of a universal structure transcending individual languages to the study of narrative. As a universal feature of language this grammar would contain a “psychological reality [that] makes plausible the existence of the same structure elsewhere than in speech.”¹³⁸ Todorov acknowledges Freud’s study of dreams as one of the few existing investigations into the grammatical structure of symbolic activities; in his own study, he, like Woolf, posits the subject as filling a grammatical position that is fundamentally empty, contingent on the predicate of the sentence: “The agent cannot be endowed with any property, but is rather a blank form which is completed by different predicates. The agent has no more meaning than a pronoun such as ‘he’ in ‘he who runs’ or ‘he who is brave.’ The grammatical subject is always devoid of internal properties, for these derive only from a temporary junction with a predicate.”¹³⁹ The tadpole-like

¹³⁷ See Chapter 1 for a discussion of psychological vs. nonpsychological currents in psychoanalysis as distinguished by Leo Bersani. Especially relevant here is Bersani’s description of the unconscious of a ‘depsychologized’ psychoanalysis as a “reserve of human being—a dimension of virtuality rather than of psychic depth—from which we connect to the world, not as subject to object, but *as a continuation of a specific syntax of being*.”

“Psychoanalysis and the Aesthetic Subject,” p.169. My italics.

¹³⁸ *The Poetics of Prose*, p.109.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.110-11.

accident of projection described in “The Cinema” presents precisely this universal grammar in which the subject is absorbed in the experience of fear. If the shadow, as “fear itself,” is a substantive rather a verb, it is because Woolf is suggesting that the affect as predicate contains the lasting and essential grammatical proposition of which the subject is merely an agent. The cinematic represents the grammatical structure of consciousness, in which the subject is absorbed in the contents of an impersonal material consciousness; this absorption does not constitute an essence for the subject, for the subject is expressed in the predicate and does not possess fundamental internal properties. In this way the sensations, perceptions, thoughts, and emotions of the subject—the poetics of consciousness—constitute separable sensibilia defined by the subject’s coordinates in space and time, rather than any essential kernel of identity. In *The Waves* the subject becomes his own missing observer in those instants when he receives an intuition or foretaste of his imminent disappearance as subject in the grammatical unfolding of consciousness, or when he remembers or intuits the existence of small perceptions that have already escaped him during insensible states of being.

In Woolf’s novel the poetics of experience precludes the interpretation of signs, but provokes a dynamic exploration of the psychological reality that would inhere in any universal grammar. Sensibilia are nonpsychological in that they are not anchored in the psychology of a discrete subject. The psychological reality I am indicating here is the experience of the subject in the here-now before it is lost from the light of apperception. Sensibilia are abstracted from the subject within the medium of material consciousness and reflect the inorganic aspect of the individual subject. Yet even when the poetics of consciousness become nonpsychological in escaping or passing through the subject, they contain impressions and sensations of loss that originally transpire in the experience of the private here and now.

The psychological reality depicted in *The Waves* is the experience of agoraphobia as described by the philosopher Gillian Rose, in which she writes that agoraphobia should not be considered a fear of open spaces, but rather an “inability to connect signification with the world of objects.”¹⁴⁰ She suggests that Woolf was suffering from agoraphobia when, during an episode of madness, she thought that birds were speaking Greek, because “*Agora* means the market-place, the place of assembly; it implies public, articulate space, space full of interconnections, with which you cannot enter into exchange. You feel as if you were suspended on the sharp rim of the world, of its spaces and of its signification.”¹⁴¹ Agoraphobia is, of course, a clinical term; for Woolf, however, the state described by Rose does not represent an affliction suffered by individuals, a pathology, but a common awareness—a sensation—of the condition of signlessness and selflessness. The precariousness of “articulate space” is the origin of the perennial Woolfian risk of slipping into an indeterminate zone of sensuous images, the chaos of small perceptions that manifest as unsignifying images. In this sense the agoraphobic moment accords with Makiko Minow-Pinkney’s psychoanalytic reading of *The Waves* as the dialectic between the Lacanian symbolic and the *chora* of the Kristevan semiotic, a psychic reality that refers to a “an essentially mobile and extremely provisional articulation constituted by movements and their ephemeral stases” “analogous only to vocal or kinetic rhythm.”¹⁴² *The Waves* privileges the *chora* over the symbolic order of repression and illusory subjective unity, although it also recognizes, especially in the figure of Rhoda, the danger of living entirely without the straight lines and Roman severity that Louis craves.

Risk is a recurring and important notion in Woolf: to expose oneself outside the four

¹⁴⁰ *Love’s Work: A Reckoning with Life*, p.132.

¹⁴¹ *Idem*.

¹⁴² From Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, quoted in Minow-Pinkney, *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject*, p.18.

corners of one's private room invites sensations that may lead to either self-affirmation or self-dissolution on the "sharp rim of the world." The utterances of Rhoda illuminate the palpable anxiety surrounding the human potential to create lasting symbols, to establish meaningful readings of a raw natural world in which the waves precede, outlast, and absorb us: "I attach myself to names and faces; and hoard them like amulets against disaster" (43); "With intermittent shocks, sudden as the spring of a tiger, life merges heaving its dark crest from the sea. It is to this we are attached; it is to this we are bound, as bodies to wild horses" (64); "Walking on the embankment, I prayed that I might thunder for ever on the verge of the world where there is no vegetation, but here and there a marble pillar" (205). The following passage from an adolescent Rhoda reflects directly upon the possibility of articulation:

... in the middle, cadaverous, awful, lay the grey puddle in the courtyard, when, holding an envelope in my hand, I carried a message. I came to the puddle. I could not cross it. Identity failed me. We are nothing, I said, and fell. I was blown like a feather. 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. This is life then to which I am committed (64).

Rhoda's suicide, like Septimus's in *Mrs. Dalloway* (he, too, hears sparrows "sing freshly and piercingly in Greek words") ultimately presents itself not as the expression of a disturbed personality but a dangerous sensitivity to this predicament at the heart of *The Waves*.¹⁴³ To make statements or phrases like Bernard, or even Woolf herself—to attempt to convey messages across a pool of water—is a dangerous act that tragically does not lead to extrication from the waves of organic and inorganic reality: the puddle is a "cadaverous" abbreviation of the vast waters of

¹⁴³ *Mrs. Dalloway*, p.24.

inorganicity ebbing and flowing within us as the experience of death—death, like the waves, as a spectrum representing the total extinction of the organic and the minute sensations of self-loss in everyday life. The “wild horses” to which the body is rudely attached are a reference to the myth of Poseidon’s horses emerging from the white foam of waves; life emerges “heaving its dark crest from the sea,” but its crest is still a point of the wave. Woolf has written that “the present when backed by the past is a thousand times deeper than the present when it presses so close that you can feel nothing else, when the film on the camera reaches only the eye.”¹⁴⁴ Unlike Susan, who feels the continuity of life and for whom each private present moment is generally succeeded by another that has originated in the empirical self, Rhoda’s eternal present is the pressure of the inhuman camera. The cinematic present denies the psychological impression of continuity, replacing the impression of subjective depth with a sense of the horizontal contiguity between the private self and material reality. Both the sensation of continuity and the sensation of loss form part of the limitless waves, as two possible experiences of the material sameness of people and things, but Woolf suggests that only a heightened, frequently terrifying sense of the discontinuity of moments partakes of the aesthetic. For it is the aesthetic impulse that seeks, not to impose order and symbols upon the chaos of experience, but to articulate the correspondences between language and sensation.¹⁴⁵ But sensation is always ringed with death.

Agoraphobia—as both fear of the loss of signification and of the world’s indifferent

¹⁴⁴ *Moments of Being*, p.98.

¹⁴⁵ In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze describes in similar terms the conditions of experience that produce this fear of signlessness, though with the notable difference that this experience is described as exuberant and life-affirming. Each character of *The Waves* “designates a multiplicity... Each is simultaneously in this multiplicity and at its edge, and crosses over into the others... Each advances like a wave, but on the plane of consistency they are a single abstract Wave whose vibration propagates following a line of flight or deterritorialization traversing the entire plane (each chapter of Woolf’s novel is preceded by a meditation on an aspect of the waves, on one of their hours, on one of their becomings),” p.252. Woolf, however, would agree that deterritorialization, the remaking of identity and release of sensation from the preconceived pathways of the psychologized, ossified subject, is an aesthetic gesture.

unconquerable spaces—becomes that which haunts Neville, Louis and Bernard insofar as they are self-conscious writers eager to defy the inescapable risks of consciousness. “I must make phrases and phrases,” says a young Bernard, “and so interpose something hard between myself and the stare of housemaids, the stare of clocks, staring faces, indifferent faces, or I shall cry” (30). Neville’s earliest indication that he will become a phrase-maker, an aspiring poet, takes place in early childhood when he attempts to negotiate the risks of life—here, as his first encounter with the fact of death—with the concretizing act of naming, or at least identifying correspondences:

I will use this hour of solitude, this reprieve from conversation, to coast round the purlieu of the house and recover, if I can, by standing on the same stair half-way up the landing, what I felt when I heard about the dead man through the swing-door last night when cook was shoving in and out the dampers... The apple-tree leaves became fixed in the sky; the moon glared; I was unable to lift my foot up the stair... I shall call this stricture, this rigidity, ‘death among the apple trees’ for ever. There were the floating, pale-grey clouds; and the immitigable tree; the implacable tree with its greaved silver bark. The ripple of my life was unavailing. I was unable to pass by. There was an obstacle. ‘I cannot surmount this unintelligible obstacle,’ I said. And the others passed on. But we are doomed, all of us by the apple trees, by the immitigable tree which we cannot pass (24-5).

Neville seems to intuit the imminent translation of his private experience into sensibilia, those “sensible events which the *I* may have once experienced, but which he no longer inhabits as a subject.” The moment of his paralysis is a ripple in the current of consciousness, an obstacle anchored in the here-now of the stair half-way up the landing, the glaring moon, and the

“implacable” apple tree whose leaves become “fixed in the sky.” The precise moment contains a sensation that will escape him but remain within impersonal consciousness: “Death among the apple trees” expresses not only the private moment of self-alienation and self-loss, but also the “this was now here” specific to the complex temporality of fictional narrative. The stricture of the here-now is unavailing, unintelligible, implacable; it becomes, through its implacability, a sensation to last forever, even outside the self, as mutely as the apple tree. Like Bernard’s fin, the apple tree is another image that circulates between Woolf’s fiction and nonfiction. In “A Sketch of the Past” Woolf recounts the incident upon which Neville’s is based: “We were waiting at dinner one night, when somehow I overheard my father or my mother say that Mr. Valpy had killed himself. The next thing I remember is being in the garden at night and walking on the path by the apple tree... I could not pass it.”¹⁴⁶ The biographical connection unexpectedly reinforces the radical impersonality of the work of art: the apple tree assumes the sense of sensibilia detached from any one subject.

Woolf’s apple tree becomes Neville’s obstacle, the grammatical predicate that dissolves and absorbs him before releasing him to another sensation, another verb. The process of translation occurs when the moment opens to the broader narrative consciousness allegorized in the novel as the immanence of the obdurate natural world containing the waves and the “immitigable tree.” Like Louis’s stamping beast, like Susan’s “I hate, I love,” the sense of the phrase as metaphor or name for an experience is diminished as the words take on the aspect of the egoless, non-signifying experience of matter—for the death in the phrase is not a subject-bound death. The phrase assumes the moment of Neville’s self-dissolution in the rigid frame of the here-now, along with the death of the man that seems to ripple through space and time, and the deaths each character will experience as small perceptions in the impersonal immanence of

¹⁴⁶ *Moments of Being*, p.71.

Woolf's narrative. When Neville hears of Percival's death later in life, he re-enters the sensation he had called "death among the apple trees": "I will not lift my foot to climb the stair. I will stand for one moment beneath the immitigable tree, alone with the man whose throat is cut, while downstairs the cook shoves in and out the dampers. I will not climb the stair. We are doomed, all of us" (152). He has re-entered the past moment, yet also thinks, in his mute soliloquy, of past experiences lost to the psychological present, accessible only to the sinister vision of an inhuman viewer: "Why try to lift my foot and mount the stair? This is where I stand; here, holding the telegram. The past summer days and rooms where we sat stream away like burnt paper with red eyes in it" (151-2).

The Secret Language of the Story

Unlike Proust's epic novel, *The Waves* does not tend to inflection and hypotaxis but to repetition and parataxis. *In Search of Lost Time* unfolds points of our semiotic interpersonal relations with hermeneutic obsession and refinement; the central images of *The Waves*—waves, words, vegetation, death—accumulate mystery with each iteration, in sentences that abandon the subjective interpretation of cause and effect implicit in hypotaxis. In contradistinction to *Ulysses*, it is less a novel about the illumination and interpretation of our linguistic consciousness than a story about the twin mysteries of language and consciousness. It is as if *The Waves* takes up the haunted half of Flaubert's project for the novel: not the model of precision and aesthetic accomplishment exemplified by *Madame Bovary* that captivated Joyce, but the "eternal imperfect" of *Sentimental Education*. In the later novel of Flaubert, as in *The Waves*, "all the parts of reality are converted into the same substance bearing a vast surface, a monotonous

reflection... All that was different has been converted and absorbed.”¹⁴⁷

The Waves is an allegorical universe, an untranscendent setting in which nonhuman nature and human culture mingle through death. Benjamin first investigated the concept of natural history through the lens of allegory and the Baroque mourning play, but later related it to the art of storytelling as well. In his essay “The Storyteller” he opposes the art of storytelling with the form of the novel. Whereas the authority of the storyteller is borrowed from death and natural history—Leskov, as a great storyteller, has “ventured into the depths of inanimate nature”—, the novel is concerned with isolated human beings and the meaning of an individual life.¹⁴⁸ Citing Lukács, Benjamin argues that it is “the form of a transcendental homelessness” in which life struggles against time until it fuses with meaning at its conclusion. *Sentimental Education* ends on a quintessentially novelistic note, with a realization and total sense of closure; *The Waves* is arguably a novel in that it follows isolated beings and arrives at a novelistic meaning of life—Bernard’s defiance in the face of death and the waves—and, like the free indirect narrative of Frédéric, is a thoroughly writerly work, a univocal composite of soliloquies. Nonetheless, its strange allegorical structure in the age of the modernist novel represents a reversion to the art of storytelling, or at least an attempt to relate the inorganic, non-private foundation of human consciousness as a universal story. For Bernard’s tortured preoccupation is not simply with making phrases; he wants not only to articulate his small perceptions in communicable language, but to give his language the shape of an expansive narrative: “But if there are no stories,” he ponders, “what end can there be, or what beginning?” (267).

Bernard sees the potential for stories everywhere, yet when stories are attempted, life in all its indifferent formlessness rushes back. Neville feels as a young adult, “Among the tortures

¹⁴⁷ Marcel Proust, “Contre Saint-Beuve,” quoted in *Flaubert*, p.46. My translation.

¹⁴⁸ “The Storyteller: Observations on the Works of Nikolai Leskov,” p.161.

and devastations of life is this then—our friends are not able to finish their stories” (39). The context of his lament is Bernard’s realization that his storytelling efforts are boring Percival; in retrospect, then, it also reads as a prescient reference to the premature death of their beloved friend. When in his summing-up Bernard’s thoughts return to Percival, he reflects, “What is startling, what is unexpected, what we cannot account for, what turns symmetry to nonsense—that comes suddenly to my mind, thinking of him” (243). If death and loss preclude ring-like order and symmetry, what form, then, could Bernard’s story take? Woolf’s response, it would seem, to the torturous “welter of unrecorded sensation” in an “unfeeling universe that sleeps when we are at our quickest and burns red when we lie asleep,” is an aesthetics of blindness (257, 280):

But how describe the world seen without a self? There are no words. Blue, red—even they distract, even they hide with thickness instead of letting the light through. How describe or say anything in articulate words again?—save that it fades, save that it undergoes a gradual transformation, becomes, even in the course of one short walk, habitual—this scene also. Blindness returns as one moves and one leaf repeats itself. Loveliness returns as one looks with all its train of phantom phrases (287).

Woolf employs language *as* a series of phantom phrases that repeat, like the leaves of inanimate nature and one’s barely sensible habits, and thus approach and engage in—rather than articulate and seize—the universal experience of blindness. The “it” of the third sentence is arguably not the habitual experience of a world seen without a self, but an elevated, acute sense of that experience: that sense fades, and as it fades the “thickness” of words obscures the eyelessness of impersonality. Following the rhythmic pattern of the waves, the heightened sense of selflessness

may arise as terror of agoraphobia, yet when its shock ebbs the loveliness and poetry of sensation—the experience of a world seen without a self—may reassert itself as an aesthetic moment, even in thickened words. At such moments it is, as Jinny says at the last meeting of the soliloquizing figures, “As if the miracle had happened, and life were stayed here and now.” “And,” Rhoda adds, “we had no more to live” (225).

Woolf suggests a spectrum between the terror of egolessness, of eyelessness and wordless dissolution, and the blindness of habit and preconscious states. On the one extreme lies Rhoda’s terrified feeling of self-loss in an amorphous, wildly unreadable reality; on the other, the loss of awareness of this condition, which may be expressed in the beauty of growth, sleep, human attachment, and the rhythms of one’s private existence. For it is at such moments, as when Bernard claims “We grew; we changed; for, of course, we are animals. We are not always aware by any means,” that the aesthetic moment may redeem the negations of sensibilia. Jinny and Susan may be less conspicuous or compelling as overtly feminized, unilliterate characters, coquette and maternal countrywoman respectively, yet they affirm crucially both the mystery and the fact of difference. If the characters “exist not only separately but in separate blobs of matter,” then Jinny’s dreamless vitality and Susan’s homely passions inhere in the original inorganic sameness from which all the characters emerge. In other words, their experiences—pointedly lacking in the struggle for literary expression and a symbolic order to things—subtend the struggles of the four others and remind us that the latter, too, have their moments of dreamless peace and satisfaction in embodiment.

One may feel disillusioned with “articulate words” and prefer to “words of one syllable”—another of Bernard’s motifs—belonging to the language “such as lovers use” or “such as children speak when they come into a room and see their mother sewing” (295). This is a

different incarnation of the younger Bernard who wants eloquence: “I sit here like a convalescent, like a very simple man who knows only words of one syllable... I never wish to prolong these states of detachment; I dislike them; I also despise them... I wish to be harnessed to a cart, a vegetable-cart that rattles over the cobbles” (185). On the eve of death he wants “a howl; a cry. When the storm crosses the marsh and sweeps over me where I lie in the ditch unregarded I need no words... None of those resonances and lovely echoes that break and chime from nerve to nerve in our breasts making wild music, false phrases. I have done with phrases... Let me sit here for ever with bare things, this coffee-cup, this knife, this fork, things in themselves, myself being myself” (295). Words of one syllable, of pure unsignifying sonority embody more expressively the physical world that resonates with the senses. “Blue, red—even they distract, even they hide with thickness instead of letting the light through”: phonemes resemble colors and the concrete particulars of the world in their sensuous purity. The elements of language are returned to sensation and thus reinvested in the material world. Here, through Bernard, Woolf inverts the conventionality of the arbitrary linguistic sign as the premise for meaning, implicitly reconceptualizing it as the iconic basis of meaning-resistant linguistic particles that form the “phantom phrases” of communication.¹⁴⁹ The language of *The Waves* lies

¹⁴⁹ See Wendy Steiner, *The Color of Rhetoric*, pp. 34 and 51-4 for a discussion of the phoneme-color analogy in the context of a semiotic argument against the conventional notion of the essential iconicity of painting. See also pp. 33-5, in which she analyses Stephen Dedalus’s monologue on visibility, reading his meditation on color as “dependent on a semiotic relation between thought and world.” Jean-Michel Rabaté also discusses the question of the “modality of the visible” in Joyce in his chapter “The Master of Colors That Know” in *The Ghosts of Modernity*.

In the introduction “‘The Penultimate is Dead’” Rabaté reads Mallarmé famous prose poem as a “peculiar type of aural obsession” that resembles Bernard’s sense of syllables and phantom phrases: “Poetry, or indeed literature allied with music, holds in reserve this great stock of phrases one is free to quote or let resound silently within oneself. When they ‘return’ in hallucinatory fashion, as a sentence heard in a waking dream, these phrases come back as so many refrains that together constitute an aural horizon. Here this horizon is blurred and

somewhere on this spectrum between pure sound, pure unsignifying syllables, and phantom phrases, whose illusoriness may, paradoxically, illuminate the nature of consciousness. To capitulate to or simply drift with the loveliness of phantom phrases is to experience blindness, but blindness as a train of moments in which one ceases to be one's own absent observer and the rhythmic contiguity of material bodies absorbs the terrors of sensibilia and death. To tell the story of a world seen without a self is to negotiate the sounds of eyelessness with the phantom phrases of blindness.

"Fear no more the heat o' the sun," thinks the aging, nostalgic Clarissa Dalloway again and again as she prepares for her party. "We perished, each alone" haunts the arc of the story that leads to the lighthouse. Each is an example of a phantom phrase that, through sheer insistence and repetition, becomes a mantra, a touchstone in the face of the very dangers and fears they bespeak. As Gillian Beer argues, the materiality of the phantom phrases of *The Waves* "explores a new form of communality and impersonality": "This communal world of the unrecorded—people, parts, cries—is the new writing world of the body, a world which can be represented only by language that is at once silenced and auditory, placing much emphasis on analogous elements."¹⁵⁰ In *To the Lighthouse* and her other novels, from *The Voyage Out* to *Between the Acts*, Woolf describes the movements of consciousness in a dramatic context. *The Waves* does not simply narrate these movements, but conveys them in a secret, unspoken language. It aspires to the condition of the story and its aura of the inanimate, and transforms the meaning of the inorganic to a novelistic and private meaning. Lily, finally, has her vision; Bernard's final vision is of blindness, his last act one of negation and aesthetic defiance. It echoes the negation voiced by Faulkner's Quentin in *Absalom, Absalom!*, and denies Molly

mysterious by the detour of a chance encounter with a meaningless sentence—"The Penultimate is dead" ..., " p.6.

¹⁵⁰ Virginia Woolf: *The Common Ground*, p.71.

Bloom's final affirmation of life—the concluding, summary “yes” to *Ulysses* that affirms the meaningfulness and productivity of language and experience.¹⁵¹ The meaning of *The Waves* as a novel is the story of our permanently secret, speechless selves.

¹⁵¹ I am thinking here of Derrida's analysis of Molly's yes in “Ulysses' Gramophone: Hear Say Yes in Joyce” in *Acts of Literature*.

Chapter 4: The Matter of Style in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*

What repeats itself in the mind is no longer mind: it is, as it were, its flesh; it has become what our first essays at writing have become.¹⁵²
—Paul Valéry

It is relatively easy to describe the distinguishing formal characteristics of Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*—the accretive syntax, mysterious italicized passages, frequent ambiguity over which character is speaking or simply thinking in the breathless and baroque style; more challenging is a reading that approaches this style as integral to the storyline. The novel demands an approach that takes into account the original way in which it unfolds, in the minimally punctuated sentences that seem to unfurl *through* the characters rather than originate with them. The obscure style seems at first at odds with the plot discerned through the lines: *Absalom* invites dialectical readings that see the novel as static and solipsistic, or eminently historical; a statement of existential solitude, or of solidarity. As in *The Waves* a certain passivity and impersonality inhere in the words of the characters, subsumed as they are in the insistent style of the dense prose. Yet, as in the Bible and Greek tragedy, both of which inflect Faulkner's novel heavily, the characters are vivid and their gestures lastingly dramatic.

The obsessively retrospective nature of the narrative creates the sense that time, indifferent to human will and drama, does not pass. Nonetheless, while cyclical repetition dominates *The Waves*, Faulkner's historical consciousness returns again and again to singular, historical events (the very titles are emblematic of this difference) that gather clarity and intensity in the run-on sentences. It is these aspects, I believe, that distinguish Faulkner's novel from the allegorical universe of *The Waves* and link it to the psychoanalytic project. Immersed

¹⁵² From "The Memories of a Poem" in *Selected Writings of Paul Valéry*, p.160.

in the question of genealogical influences and inevitabilities, in the revolt against the father and the latent ‘horrors’ of sexuality, *Absalom, Absalom!* is particularly susceptible to a Freudian interpretation of the novel’s characters and conflicts. What I am interested in illuminating, however, is less the impersonal instincts and universal themes that drive the events of the narrative than the meaningful parallel between one of the ambitions of Freudian psychoanalysis and the palpable pulsion of Faulkner’s language, the particular form the novel takes: both attempt, not only to account for our destiny as material beings, but also to represent the materiality of consciousness itself.

I want, then, to turn to the “Freud before Freud, still struggling to think the unconscious in a language borrowed from Helmholtz and Fechner” identified by T.J. Clark in his essay “Freud’s Cézanne,” the Freud of 1895 who wrote the “Project for a Scientific Psychology.” Clark acknowledges there is “a sense in which Freud never stopped struggling to convert his insights back into systems of neurons and quantities of excitation.”¹⁵³ In singling out the 1895 essay, he emphasizes the origins of Freud’s project to “furnish us with a psychology which shall be a natural science... to represent psychical processes as quantitatively determined states of specifiable material particles and so to make them plain and void of contradictions.” This citation from the 1895 essay reappears throughout Clark’s essay to illuminate the historical moment of Cézanne’s *Bather* paintings, particularly the intellectual context of two of *Les Grandes Baigneuses*, worked on from approximately 1895-1906 and 1904-6 respectively.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ “Freud’s Cézanne,” p.106.

¹⁵⁴ Clark writes, “Certain works of art, I should say, show us what it is to ‘represent’ at a particular historical moment—they show us the powers and limits of a practice of knowledge. That is hard to do. It involves the artist in feeling for structures of assumption and patterns of syntax that are normally (mercifully) deeply hidden, implicit, and embedded in our very use of signs... I think that such work is done with real effectiveness—maybe can only be done—at the level of form,” pp. 115-6. My argument about the syntax and form of *Absalom*, I hope, will echo Clark’s point here about Cézanne’s bathers and illuminate how Faulkner, like Woolf and James

Clark reminds us that the contemporary reaction to these late paintings was lukewarm at best; even Roger Fry, the British art critic who was one of his first notable champions, was unenthusiastic. What is one to make, after all, of the figure on the extreme right of the latter painting (referred to here as the Philadelphia painting), which Clark calls the “double figure” for bearing arms and shoulders that seem to double as legs and buttocks? And how did Cézanne arrive at such a convoluted image of a bather from the wholly, dreamily isolated bathers of the *Baigneurs au repos* of 1875-77?

All this may not immediately seem relevant to a study of Faulkner, but I believe that the evolution Clark traces in late Cézanne offers meaningful analogies with the development the novelist underwent between *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936). The earlier work is divided into chapters that represent the limited point of view of a single character, with the exception of the omniscient voice of the final chapter focusing on Dilsey. The novel predicates a hierarchy of realism, in which Benjy’s incoherent ramblings and raw perceptions build up toward the relative detachment of Dilsey and, finally, the omniscient narrator. As the family’s longtime black servant, Dilsey is at once tied to and detached from the white family, and the omniscient perspective assumes the same tone of intimate detachment and observation that her relationship suggests. The third-person account provides a kind of support or frame for the divergent voices of Benjy, Quentin, and Jason, arriving at the end as a summary vision of the Compson family members entrapped in their respective troubled psychologies. The only daughter/sister of the Compson family of their generation, Caddy, haunts the internal narratives of each of the brothers, but we are not granted access to the stream of her own consciousness; she is the absent center of the novel. The absence of her internal voice, coupled

before him, groped for “patterns of syntax” underlying our use of signs generally and translated their insights into a new type of literary language.

with Quentin and Benjy's intense love and longing for her, intensifies the isolation of the inner voices we do read, as well as the general sense of claustrophobic entrapment in one's alienated subjectivity.

Quentin reappears in *Absalom*, but in the latter novel the object of his imaginative energy is Thomas Sutpen. Quentin's erotic love for Caddy, and Caddy herself, are absent in *Absalom*, but echoes of his incestuous fixation are evident in the relationship between Judith Sutpen and Charles Bon.¹⁵⁵ *Absalom*'s absent center is Thomas Sutpen, but as I hope to demonstrate further on, he is by no means a passively constituted, haunting absent center. He saturates the novel with his language, though he never speaks directly; he is present in the physicality of the style, in the fluid yet viscous sentences in which all voices tend to overlap in a palpable confluence. In *Absalom* Faulkner moves past the impressionistic perspectivism of *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying* of 1930, and manages the same accomplishment Clark attributes to Cézanne's Philadelphia painting. Without abandoning his Impressionist origins or his empiricism, Cézanne, even "when he wants to show us the body's interminable shifting and reconstruction in the space of desire," "wants the space to be literalized and the body's states to be individually solid as a rock."¹⁵⁶

It is this materialist empiricism that links him to the Freud of 1895:

Let me present you, say Freud and Cézanne, with a fully and simply physical account of the *imagination*. Let me show you bodies thoroughly subject, as we

¹⁵⁵ John T. Irwin's oft-cited psychoanalytic reading of Faulkner, *Doubling and Incest/ Repetition and Revenge: A Speculative Reading of Faulkner* argues that the incestuous relationship recapitulates Quentin's love for Caddy, and that this doubling, one among many between *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom*, reflects the essential obsessiveness of Faulknerian narrative. But I believe one must take a much closer look at the forms of the novels to see that *Absalom* does not and cannot "double" aspects of *The Sound and the Fury* because of the entirely different metaphysics it proposes.

¹⁵⁶ "Freud's Cézanne," p.109.

agree they must be, to the play of phantasy; that is, deformed and reconstituted at every point by the powers of mind. But let them appear as they would in a world where all the key terms of our endless debate—‘imagination,’ ‘mind,’ ‘body,’ ‘phantasy,’ and so on—would be grasped, by the bodies and imaginations themselves, as descriptions of *matter in various states*. Then the world would be truly remade in representation.¹⁵⁷

Even the impossible “double figure,” so obviously emblematic of condensation, does not “muffle or overtake the dream of piece-by-piece realization but drive[s] it on to new heights, new naiveties. Out of the whirl of distractions and ambiguities will come the singular *quand même*. The body may never take place anywhere once and for all; but what it is made of—what our imagining of it is made of—*will* take place, and take on its own consistency. Its place is the picture surface.” In *The Sound and the Fury* the object of fixation and fantasy, Caddy, exists in the real world, but her presence in the minds of her brothers is an array of subjective affects. The fantasies she evokes are confined to individual minds, expressed in a series of naturalistic stream of consciousness that define her as an image in the mind, the external, essentially unreachable other to the self who cannot escape his self. André Bleikasten has written that the separate sections of *Sound* and especially *As I Lay Dying* (in which the dead Addie Bundren serves as an analogous absent center) themselves contain a multiplicity of stylistically distinct voices that occasionally raise the question of who exactly is speaking.¹⁵⁸ This discernable multiplicity is presented as functioning dialogically within the language of a single subject interpenetrated by the words and thoughts of others. The language of *Absalom*, on the other hand, establishes a material equivalence between the terms of the “endless debate” described by Clark, of mind,

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p.101. Emphasis in the original.

¹⁵⁸ See *The Ink of Melancholy*, pp. 72-3 and 154-5.

body, imagination, but also self and other. The omniscient style levels the novel's terms—the work of the imagination in the transmission of histories, the uncertain temporal separation and subjective distance between self and other—onto a single immanent plane. In my analogy, the picture surface corresponds to this plane of representation, in which fantasy and reality, self and other are condensed at the level of the sentence. The naturalistic use of stream of consciousness in the earlier novel is eschewed, and with it a sense of psychology and the subject-object split.

The novel does not contain a clear or coherent omniscient perspective in the form of either free indirect discourse or third-person objective narration; no privileged voice or perspective on the Sutpen's legacy emerges in the prose. Like *The Wings of the Dove*, it presents style as the vehicle for an inarticulable, non-perspectivist consciousness that composes and passes through all characters, both absent and present. I will argue that no one speaks behind Faulkner's complex, crowded sentences, in which the materiality of language trumps the question of perspective—in which, as in a painting, the surface provides the depths of meaning. As in Cézanne, the fantasies and consciousness of individual bodies are represented materially in the thickness of the prose narrative that, in the final analysis, does not distinguish between the spoken and unspoken, or even between consciousness and physical reality. In the process, Thomas Sutpen's fantasies do “take place” with those of Quentin, Shreve, and Rosa. Thus Shreve, during his textual enactment of past events with Quentin, speaks of “some things that just have to be whether they are or not, have to be a damn sight more than some other things that maybe are and it don't matter a damn whether they are or not.”¹⁵⁹ Fantasies are not represented as images drawn and distinct from an external, nonsubjective reality; they assume reality and

¹⁵⁹ *Absalom, Absalom!*, p.258. Hereafter cited parenthetically. J. Paul Hurh writes of this passage, and *Absalom* generally, that the “metalinguistic force of ‘just have to be’ comes to supersede existence as a governing principle upon which events of the narrative are conjectured and admitted.” “Metalinguistic Negation in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*,” p.35.

presence, and are everywhere implicit in the tenuously omniscient narrative, which compresses and expresses multiple experiences within an impersonal consciousness through the motions of the weighted sentences. There is thus no psychological depth in consciousness: the opacity of consciousness corresponds to the opacity of matter.

Michael Levenson aptly describes the perspectivist problems introduced in *Sound* that *Absalom*, I will argue, addresses with its deliberately chaotic immanence of voices: “For the discrepant exteriority of the omniscient narrative, far from gathering the pieces together and filling in gaps, as Faulkner himself suggested it did, merely reverses the discrepant interiority of Benjy’s monologue. Both views are impossible: Benjy’s words could not be his own; the omniscient narrator’s words could go omnisciently on forever and still not touch Benjy’s experience. Faulkner’s fable about what is possible by way of identity (in Mississippi in 1928) shuttles fretfully backwards and forwards between those impossibilities.” In other words, the “omniscience forces us to acknowledge the discrepancy between event and meaning,” which correspond to the represented events of the narrative and the language of narration respectively.¹⁶⁰ In *Absalom* Faulkner proposes a different way of representing identity and communal experience at a specific historical moment: its words belong to no one. At first the novel appears as a dialogical text, in Bakhtin’s sense, in which multiple subjective voices and registers of voice engage in the telling of a story. But ultimately style, not voices in dialogical relation, constitutes the narrative dynamic and the omniscient presence. Speech or thought may be represented by quotation marks and italics, but they do little to interrupt the omniscient style in which they are related.¹⁶¹ Rather they function as ripples in an impersonal, materialized

¹⁶⁰ “The Modernist Novel,” p.88.

¹⁶¹ Ross, Bleikasten, and Kartiganer, among others, describe this effect as an “Overvoice.” While my notion of style is similar, the difference as I see it is that the impersonal, unfocalized Overvoice is essentially a modality of narrative that may contain other styles or voices, whereas

consciousness, whose density is reflected in the lexical density of the prose style. Each character thinks, speaks, and writes in this style; moreover, the distinctions between thinking and speaking, listening and telling, do not hold in many important instances.

Chapter five, for example, would seem to be an entirely private stream of consciousness monologue to which Quentin could not have had access—were it not for the opening, “*So they will have told you...*,” and especially the elements of the *fabula*, the events of the story untreated by narrative, contained in the section, which suggests that Rosa’s soliloquy must be treated as a crucial part of the *syuzhet*, the narration of the events of Sutpen’s decline. (I will resort to the terms monologue or soliloquy as shorthand for this passage which, nonetheless, is not properly spoken.) Whereas the structure of *Sound* describes subjectivity as interior and unitary, in *Absalom* Faulkner returns to the materiality of language, which cannot render transparently any one experience, and in the process suggests that expression is not based on point of view. The preverbal experiences conveyed in *Sound* give way to the expressiveness of the nonverbal: through plot, in which the impersonal consciousness communicates knowledge nonverbally between persons, and as meaning and narrative language, which mingle in a style whose uncanny effects bear traces of a nonhuman perspective.

omniscient style is less concerned with representational narration than the sensuous dynamics of material consciousness.

In *Fascination: Faulkner’s fiction, 1919-1936*, Gresset argues that visual fascination dominates Faulkner’s fiction until *Absalom, Absalom!* when the novelist “confronted the Word.” *Absalom*, for Gresset, “takes on the characteristic of an asymptote, as it tends to become the objective correlative of the impersonality of art: it is bloodless, dimensionless, disembodied, impalpable, etc.” While I agree that *Absalom* enacts a confrontation with “the Word” and that the language of narrative in *Absalom* is impersonal, it is also arguably spatial and embodied. In other words, I do not see voice as an escape from the tyranny of the visual, since both voice and vision are alternately abstract and richly physicalized in *Absalom*. It is the impersonality of the self, rather than art, that is represented in the confrontation with the Word. Gresset comes closer to the language of *Absalom* in describing a particular “collective voice” in Faulkner. See pp. 272-4 and n.167 below.

Like the picture surface of the *Bathers*, this narrative domain has “the kind of consistency [that] is hard for us to deal with—that is why we retreat into the world of the imaginary—just because it is ultimately inhuman, or nonhuman, or has humanity as one of its effects.”¹⁶² The work of Faulkner’s prose narrative parallels the effect of the two-dimensional picture surface in creating an aesthetic experience that does not distinguish between phantasy and reality, self and other, or even one body and the next. This is the experience of an aesthetic consistency, a kind of narrative immanence, in which the human, with its concomitant sense of a psychic identity fundamentally separate from the world of real physical things, seems to disappear.

Dust Clouds of Consciousness

The opening pages of *Absalom* amply provide, combine, and conflate the terms of the narrative, self and other, world and consciousness, time past and present space, in sentences that appear at once sinuous and frozen in time. Indeed, the first sentences illustrate how even the products of the imagination will be represented as taking on, in the spatial dimensions of the narrative, the quality of matter:

From a little after two oclock until almost sundown of the long still hot weary dead September afternoon they sat in what Miss Coldfield still called the office because her father had called it that—a dim hot airless room with the blinds all closed and fastened for forty-three summers because when she was a girl someone had believed that light and moving air carried heat and that dark was always cooler, and which (as the sun shone fuller and fuller on that side of the house) became latticed with yellow slashes full of dust motes which Quentin thought of as being flecks of the dead old dried paint itself blown inward from the scaling

¹⁶² “Freud’s Cézanne,” p.117.

blinds as wind might have blown them... and opposite Quentin, Miss Coldfield in the eternal black which she had worn for forty-three years now, whether for sister, father, or nothusband none knew, sitting [...] clear of the floor with that air of impotent and static rage like children's feet, and talking in that grim haggard amazed voice until at last listening would renege and hearing-sense self-confound and the long-dead object of her impotent yet indomitable frustration would appear, as though by outraged recapitulation evoked, quiet inattentive and harmless, out of the biding and dreamy and victorious dust (3-4).

The “dim hot airless” following the dash is applied to “long still hot weary dead” to form a kind of verbal impasto. The weight of these mostly monosyllabic adjectives—which, paradoxically, have a quality of fleetness, short and unencumbered as they are by punctuation—materializes like, or as, or *as constitutive of* the dust motes and flecks of paint that have been blown in and trapped in the room for forty-three years. The adjectives participate in the dust motes in the same way that the figure of Sutpen rises out of the “biding and dreamy and victorious dust”; he is the “nothusband,” but he is not absent; he is there with the sister and the father. The very words “dreamy and victorious” arise to confound and mesmerize us. Dust is decay, but here the dust contains the “victorious” indomitability of Rosa's living rage and of Sutpen's failed dream alike. In the polysyndetic syntax influenced by the King James Bible, nothing past or dreamt in our collective history is lost.

Dust, as well as air and breath, is one of the key motifs of the novel, and reinforces the “material creatureliness of the human condition” which dust symbolizes in the Hebrew Bible. In his study of the influence of the King James Bible in *Absalom*, Robert Alter points out that “Faulkner knew that bones, dust, flesh and blood, are ineluctable, that all the extravagant

fantasies spun out by convoluted consciousness are pulled back to the sheer materiality of mortal existence.” Alter identifies the mixing of flesh and dust with fantasy and memory as “a kind of double zeugma: what is purely mental and perhaps finally insubstantial is locked together with the palpable physical constituents of the body.”¹⁶³ Faulkner translates the biblical tropes of material mortality into language that insists on its own tangible weight and embodies the material consciousness of all bodies. The opening paragraph concludes with the sinister suggestion that we are living dust, that Rosa and Quentin and Sutpen are mere uncanny effects of the victorious motes and flecks blowing through the tragic novel.

The succeeding paragraph recapitulates and intensifies the suffocation of the first:

Her voice would not cease, it would just vanish. There would be the dim coffin-smelling gloom sweet and oversweet with the twice-bloomed wisteria against the outer wall by the savage quiet September sun impacted distilled and hyperdistilled... the too tall chair in which she resembled a crucified child; and the voice not ceasing but vanishing into and then out of the long intervals like a stream, a trickle running from patch to patch of dried sand, and the ghost mused with shadowy docility as if it were the voice which he haunted where a more fortunate one would have had a house. Out of quiet thunderclap he would abrupt (man-horse-demon) upon a scene peaceful and decorous as a schoolprize water color, faint sulphur-reek still in hair clothes and beard, with grouped behind him his band of wild niggers like beasts half tamed to walk upright like men.... Then in the long unamaze Quentin seemed to watch them overrun suddenly the hundred

¹⁶³ *Pen of Iron*, pp. 86, 87, 92. Alter’s study provides one of the most incisive and concise expositions of biblical themes and tropes in *Absalom*. In *On Creaturely Life*, Eric Santner makes an argument similar to Alter’s about the ever-present dust in the novels of W.G. Sebald, linking it to the concepts of natural history and the “creaturely” in Walter Benjamin.

square miles of tranquil and astonished earth and drag house and formal gardens violently out of the soundless Nothing and clap them down like cards upon a table beneath the up-palm immobile and pontific, creating the Sutpen's Hundred, the *Be Sutpen's Hundred* like the oldentime *Be Light*. Then hearing would reconcile and he would listen to two separate Quentins now—the Quentin Compson preparing for Harvard in the South, the deep South dead since 1865 and peopled with garrulous outraged baffled ghosts, listening, having to listen, to one of the ghosts which had refused to lie still even longer than most had, telling him about old ghost-times; and the Quentin Compson who was still too young to deserve yet to be a ghost but nevertheless having to be one for all that, since he was born and bred in the deep South the same as she was—the two separate Quentins now talking to one another in the long silence of notpeople in notlanguage, like this: *It seems that this demon—his name was Sutpen... (4-5).*

Rosa, again, is like an eerie child, “crucified” at the juncture of pastness and revelation that is both imminent (in terms of the reading experience) and immanent—that revelation, the “quiet thunderclap” announcing the already familiar fact of Sutpen’s undying significance. The very air and dust of the room contain the past; thus Sutpen’s appearance though abrupt is quiet, and inspires not astonishment but “a long unamaze.” Even the sensations of the room seem to be atomized, to be “impacted distilled and hyperdistilled” like the tangible gloom. Sutpen as ghost emerges as the emanation of the people, things, and the dust of the room, and gives off an odor as palpable as the oversweet wisteria. We read that Rosa’s voice vanishes “out of the long intervals” like a stream of water in sand. Although nothing has designated that Rosa’s words are represented in free indirect discourse, the prose assumes the function of the voice in its

unimpeded forward movement: it flows on through the silence, winding through Rosa, mixing ghost with substance, and is absorbed into the dust of the room, as water is absorbed into sand. Rosa and Quentin do not need to speak to communicate to one another, only to breathe the same stifling air carrying the electric silence of the long intervals akin to Quentin's "notpeople in notlanguage." Of the two Quentins participating in this silent colloquy, one is preparing for Harvard and the other a ghost like Sutpen, yet the difference between the two is unsettled by the fact that both are "notpeople" who "speak" the same notlanguage of Rosa in which the ghost of Sutpen materializes. This notlanguage, we will see, is not at all qualitatively different from the language that the narrative does attribute to her.

Rosa's voice does not cease in time but vanishes, like a spatial thing before the eyes. But Faulkner is not simply privileging the spatial dimension, nor, as some critics have suggested, setting up a primarily visual narrative.¹⁶⁴ Though he cites Genesis here to illustrate the mysterious establishment of Sutpen's Hundred, the narrative itself resonates more profoundly with the Gospel of John: in the beginning was the Word, and the appearance of each word overreaches metaphor to attain an effect of mysterious, creative materialism. This, I believe, is both cause and effect of the temporal dynamic Sartre identifies in Faulkner's work: "to be present means to appear without a reason and to sink in [*s'enfoncer*]. This sinking in is not an abstract view. It is within things themselves that Faulkner perceives it and tries to make it

¹⁶⁴ See, for example, Peter Lurie's *Vision's Immanence: Faulkner, Film, and the Popular Imagination*, p. 114-5. Lurie accurately observes that Rosa's language is "notable both for its material density and for Faulkner's presentation of it as a sensuous object to be marveled at or even 'seen'": we "'watch' that language perform or experience it in passing, like the shifting imagery on the film screen. It is in this respect that Faulkner's prose with Rosa resembles the sensory, material aspect of cinema." However, Lurie overlooks the glaring fact that Rosa is in some sense addressing Quentin; that the entire novel is a tissue of stories. One cannot, I believe, absolutely privilege any sense, vision or sound or touch, in *Absalom* without diminishing its meaning or quasi-synesthetic impact.

felt.”¹⁶⁵ Present time is marked by the phenomenon of “sinking in” [*l’enfoncement*], a word Sartre nonetheless sees as an inadequate description of the “kind of motionless movement,” the “formless monster” of the narrative temporality. “The present is not; it becomes. Everything *was*.”¹⁶⁶ This barely conceivable temporality is a physicalized dimension that can only be indirectly represented, I argue, by style that embodies a perhaps equally unthinkable, nonpsychological material consciousness. Time passes, yet past and future are also immanent in the material world; the temporal registers are as confused as the private experiences of separate people and the literal and metaphoric. It is as if the narrative, in infusing pastness to particles of dust, re-actualizes both space and time, re-configuring them in a context where metaphor is literalized insofar as it takes up space in things themselves: to be present means to sink into things and metaphors experienced as sensible things that circulate in space between characters and in time between the living and the dead.

Time passes and has passed, but only for the *fabula* of history: the *syuzhet*, the telling of the past in the present moment, is constituted as a temporal immanence in which stories are wordlessly transmitted within the dynamic material consciousness. For Sutpen is not simply a horse-like demonic man whose life has entailed a discrete arc from birth to death; he is a compound “man-horse-demon” who persists, like Rosa herself, in and amid the matter of dust. The grammar enacts the distortion of Sutpen the man through metaphor and endows his equine and demonic aspects with the same weight as his human incarnation. Indeed, pages later we read that, “as though in inverse ratio to the vanishing voice, the invoked ghost of the man whom she

¹⁶⁵ “L’autre caractère de ce présent, c’est *l’enfoncement*. J’use de ce mot, faute de mieux, pour marquer une sorte de mouvement immobile de ce monster informe... être présent, c’est paraître sans raison et s’enfoncer. Cet enfoncement n’est pas une vue abstraite: c’est dans les choses mêmes que Faulkner le perçoit et tente de le faire sentir,” *Situations I*, p.67. “On *The Sound and the Fury*: Time in the Work of Faulkner,” p.88, 89.

¹⁶⁶ “Le présent n’est pas, il devient; tout *était*,” *Situations I*, p.68.

could neither forgive nor revenge herself upon began to assume a quality almost of solidity, permanence” (8). Sutpen survives as a fantastic, demonic figure that does not simply outlast his physical historical being. He takes on solidity in the medium of Faulkner’s narrative, the words of the story Rosa conveys to Quentin and those of its novelistic context, although he never speaks for himself. The grammar melds ghost, horse, demon, and man, thus doubling linguistically Sutpen’s permanent presence as experienced by the living figure of Rosa. Sutpen is no mere image or ghost from time past, but a ghost, exuding the scent of sulphur to its spectators, vivifying a situation in which Rosa is a crucified child and Quentin himself a ghost. His ghost haunts not a house, but a living, spatialized voice: the dust of the past clouds the present, but the past inheres in both the physical room and the forward-movement of the living, dreaming, decaying things in it. In a narrative for which words and figurative language have the quality of matter—matter as unaccountable and metaphoric as Sutpen’s Hundred—spoken language is as substantial, as audible as the “garrulous” language of the undead. Both vision and hearing are distorted and attuned to the functionally absent; the “long silence of notpeople in notlanguage” is as sensible as Rosa’s voice inhabited by Sutpen’s solid ghost. The senses do not render things transparently; they are clotted with the dust of consciousness, and collectively produce a synesthetic language transmitted to other bodies through the inhalation of dust.

Faulkner’s infamous lexical density is fully manifest from the first sentences of the novel. The collective voice embodied in the style, as Michel Gresset observes, represents “something nondescript, hybrid, neither human nor inhuman, which partakes in the ‘sourcelessness’ of the bird song.” This voice “is conveyed in the vexing word ‘myriad’ (perhaps the arch-Faulknerian word) as in the ‘hushed myriad life of night things.’”¹⁶⁷ The hybrid consciousness of the collective voice surfaces in the crowded current of the prose, with each word suggesting the

¹⁶⁷ *Fascination: Faulkner’s fiction, 1919-1936*, p.272.

“*mote to mote of obscurity’s myriad components*” (115). Robert Alter has argued that the influence of the King James Bible in *Absalom* is less apparent in the style than in its themes and the adaptation of the story of David’s sons: Amnon’s incestuous rape of Tamar and Absalom’s murderous revenge for his crime in 2 Samuel 13. For him, the clear, forceful cadences of the King James edition survive only in the repetition of the monosyllabic leitmotifs dust, breath, flesh, bone, house, and curse, which add substance to the Latinate abstractions and negations—irrevocable, indomitable, inviolate, imperviousness, inescapable—flooding the text.¹⁶⁸ Yet I want to argue that the syntactic juxtaposition of abstractions and concrete nouns, negation and presence, fantasy and matter, spoken and unspeakable, creates a texture that ultimately conveys, like the spare paratactic rhythms of the Bible, the sense conveyed thematically by “dust”: the polysyndetic or frequently ungrammatical syntax of lexically repetitive run-on sentences establishes an equivalence for all the terms at stake, for the human and for matter in material consciousness. Faulkner’s style denies the visibility of psychology and, like the Old Testament writers, affirms consciousness as complex, layered, and essentially opaque.¹⁶⁹

The style thus converges with Quentin’s “notlanguage”: it is a common language, although it appears, in the ensuing italicized passage, as Quentin’s internal dialogue. For, as the narrator insists, Quentin “was not a being, an entity” but, like every other of *Absalom*’s characters, “a commonwealth” through which “notlanguage” becomes a common consciousness (7). Hence the tempo and erratic rhythms of the prose convey a sense of obscure, universal somatic processes that descriptive language can represent only crudely. This process and

¹⁶⁸ See *Pen of Iron*, pp. 35 and 84-85. Alter does not specifically mention negations.

¹⁶⁹ See Eric Auerbach’s classic distinction between Homeric and biblical depictions of character in “Odysseus’ Scar” in *Mimesis*: “in Homer, the complexity of the psychological life is shown only in the succession and alternation of emotions; whereas the Jewish writers are able to express the simultaneous existence of various layers of consciousness and the conflict between them,” p.13. Thus one may only analyze Homeric character, but *interpret* biblical character and action.

rhythmic experience is thematized in the haunting and strangely rapturous monologue of chapter five—itself composed in language hovering between articulation and subconscious experience—in which Rosa returns to the opening pages of the novel: *“Once there was—Do you mark how the wisteria, sun-impacted on this wall here, distills and penetrates this room as though (light-unimpeded) by secret and attritive progress from mote to mote of obscurity’s myriad components? That is the substance of remembering—sense, sight, smell: the muscles with which we see and hear and feel—not mind, not thought: there is no such thing as memory: the brain recalls just what the muscles grope for: no more, no less: and its resultant sum is usually incorrect and false and worthy only of the name of dream.”* But this dream is not unreality; the passage is preceded by an affirmation of the possibility of *“that true wisdom which can comprehend that there is a might-have-been which is more than truth”* (115). Rosa returns to the events mentioned in the first pages in which she does not speak—here, she speaks of the wisteria in terms that ‘borrow’ the language of the omniscient narrator. The omniscient perspective is more precisely a common notlanguage in which words, descriptions, metaphors, and even percepts and sensations circulate among different characters. The basis of the communality and impersonality of these circulating elements is the materiality of language and consciousness, in which dreams are concretized and intermixed with thought and sensation. The pressure of the Faulknerian dream in the overblown, breathless prose corresponds to the picture surface of Cézanne’s bathers in that it is the place where what the body “is made of—what our imagining of it is made of—*will* take place, and take on its own consistency.” The false dream and the might-have-been are both valid and vital. As Arnold Weinstein argues, “Erroneous interpretations, in fiction as in life, are real; they may be discredited, but they cannot be erased”; even “the wildest details of [Rosa’s] Gothic account are relevant to an understanding” of her or

Sutpen as “a medium through which the story is told.”¹⁷⁰ The prose of the novel lends the same consistency to Rosa’s outsize rage and the true events of the past: both are composed of “obscurity’s myriad components,” in which the empirical truth of muscle memory inevitably informs historical truth.

The wisteria outside Rosa’s room anticipates Mr. Compson’s description of Sutpen’s estate in the West Indies, an island where “a soil manured with black blood from two hundred years of oppression and exploitation” that returned “with an incredible paradox of peaceful greenery and crimson flowers and sugar.” As with the plantations of the antebellum South, with the “planting of men” in the West Indies “the yet intact bones and brains in which the old unsleeping blood that had vanished into the earth they trod still cried out for vengeance” (202). Just as the wisteria penetrates the room with motes of the past, the sugar crops contain the blood of past lives. The substance of memory survives in the things that persist today. The dreams of power and illusions of dynastic continuity, too, survive in the wisteria and the sugar: the bones and brains of dead slaves, like Sutpen’s ghost, remain intact. The dead do not represent the “might have beens” of history; their deaths are facts. But their dreams for revenge, like Sutpen’s ambitions, inhere in the language of matter.

Dreams are not unreal, solipsistic, or otherworldly; rather dreaming is a condition of material existence. It is “*the fate of the burgeoning and incorrigible I which is the meed and due of all mammalian meat*” to experience “*a metabolism of the spirit as well as of the entrails, in which the stored accumulations of long time burn, generate, create and break some maidenhead of the ravening meat*” (117, 132). The “metabolism of the spirit” enacted in Faulkner’s prose,

¹⁷⁰ *Vision and Response in Modern Fiction*, pp. 146, 138. Weinstein is persuasive in stating, “The style [of *Absalom*] itself is a protest against verbal enclosure, an attempt to extend the confines of the fictional statement. Not only those long, unending sentences with their hosts of present participles, but also the circling, weaving account of specific events is designed to keep them reverberating.”

especially in Rosa's monologue, is the un- or pre-conscious burning and generation of experience. The impressions of consciousness generate and are generated by a process analogous to the physics of energy. And as the matter of sense-perceptions is never lost, only processed and transformed, so the very air, dirt, and water absorbed through one's surroundings is constantly recycled in the physical world, within and without the body. Faulkner's materialism accords with the mystical view of light and matter often recalled by theorists of film and photography: the light we see has been active for millennia, and reflects the fact that we are made of the dust of millennia of organic and inorganic things. In Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida*, for example, he refers to Susan Sontag's *On Photography* in noting, "The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here; the duration of the transmission is insignificant; the photograph of the missing being, as Sontag says, will touch me like the delayed rays of a star... light, though impalpable, is here a carnal medium..."¹⁷¹ It is in this very literal and physical sense that the dead endure after death and the wisteria on the wall grows from "mote to mote of obscurity's myriad components."

Because these processes of decay and generation take place without active participation or conscious knowledge, they, like the power exerted by the past, cast lived experience in an uncanny light: the dust of the room, the detritus of the past, the cumulative weight of the prose transform direct percept and phantasmal metaphor alike into elements of an impersonal, physical yet invisible process. The omniscient style of the novel, then, reflects not only the characters' consciousness as a material phenomenon, but also this impersonal metabolism that drives each one and unites them in their blindness. The visual world, paradoxically, bespeaks opacity: the surfaces that we see do not disclose the development and decay of things until we turn away and

¹⁷¹ *Camera Lucida*, pp. 80-81.

back again. The visual world is of surface-transparency only; it represents, finally, the same intractability as the body in its involuntary, deep-seated motions. In her monologue Rosa declares herself to be “*like that blind subterranean fish, that insulated spark whose origin the fish no longer remembers, which pulses and beats at its crepuscular and lethargic tenement with the old unsleeping itch which has no words to speak with other than ‘This was called light’, that ‘smell’, that ‘touch’, that other something which has bequeathed not even name for sound of bee or bird or flower’s scent or light or sun or love;... equipped only with that cunning, that inverted canker-growth of solitude which substitutes the omnivorous and unrational hearing-sense for all the others...*”(116). Faulkner’s novel, composed of multiple interbleeding narratives, struggles to express what names, or words as names, cannot—to reproduce the egoless, instinctive “substance of remembering” between the lines of the narrative, distinct from the illusory “I” they produce. This substance is consumed and generated by an omnivorous appetite for reality—for the changes and effects one senses but cannot properly hear or see—and underlies the stories told and retold in the novel. It determines the origin and shape(lessness) of their transmissions and cultivates the sense that consciousness is a collective substance and organic process, rather than the private experience of a discrete, subjective ego; it is the stuff with which mind, body, and phantasy of both self and other are rendered equivalent, converted to representation in sensuously dense narrative.

Rosa’s monologic chapter, like the soliloquies of *The Waves*, is composed in an unspoken, emphatically writerly language that attempts to convey what is properly unspeakable: “that other something” we read in italics emphasizing that some sense—simultaneously sensuous and emotional, visual, tactile, and aural—is missing from the bare denotative sense of the words and sentences. Rosa’s lyrical declarations of a fundamentally blind and inarticulate state, of the

metabolic evolutions that result ineluctably in dreaming, recall Roland Barthes's definition of style in *Writing Degree Zero*. Style, he writes, "works as does Necessity, as if, in this kind of floral growth, style were no more than the outcome of a blind and stubborn metamorphosis starting from a sub-language elaborated where flesh and external reality come together." It "achieves its opacity from a certain experience of matter" and yet is "never anything but metaphor," representing in its depths "fragments of a reality entirely alien to language."¹⁷² The reality represented in *Absalom*, and especially in Rosa's chapter-long monologue, is the subterranean growth and decay of dreaming physical existence for which the language one normally speaks is inadequate. These fragments resonate with the "secret language" of *The Waves*, with the difference that in Faulkner's case it is more emphatically a language we feel, see, *and* hear, but do not speak. In both novels the stylized language captures the synesthetic cast of embodied experience, but where *The Waves* tends to figure each percept with imagistic visual immediacy, *Absalom*'s images are simultaneously pictures and echoes.

At one point Quentin meditates—or perhaps his father is telling him, or the author-as-narrator is translating an intuition—to himself, "*But you were not listening, because you knew it all already, had learned, absorbed it already without the medium of speech somehow from having been born and living beside it, with it, as children will and do so that what your father was saying did not tell you anything so much as it struck, word by word, the resonant strings of remembering*" (172). Each image, each literalized metaphor seems to confound time in condensing fantasy and pastness in the present sweep of the narrative; yet each dream-image and metaphor is essentially an echo on the "strings of remembering," recalling that the present narrative is fueled with the unconscious material of past experience. The style and idiosyncratic syntax conjure the metabolism of the spirit and the flesh—the way the characters invisibly,

¹⁷² *Writing Degree Zero*, pp. 11-12.

mysteriously assimilate the words and lives, even identities, of others through all the senses—and manages to express echoes of this unspeakable formation in written language. Here again Woolf's essay on the cinema bears mentioning: this formation is as unspeakable as the fact of the tadpole-like fluke of projection on the screen that does not merely illustrate fear, but seems to participate in it materially, to be "fear itself." Indeed, the novel abounds in passages, voiced or imagined by various figures, that resonate with the collusion of physical and spiritual metabolism: Rosa, as Mr. Compson relates his father's description of Rosa, is one "who would not grow from one metamorphosis—dissolution or adultery—to the next carrying along with her all the old accumulated rubbish-years which we call memory, the recognisable *I*, but changing from phase to phase as the butterfly changes once the cocoon is cleared..." (159). When Quentin and Shreve imagine the drama of Henry, Charles, and Judith during the war, they ventriloquize "*since the three of us are just illusions that he begot, and your illusions are a part of you like your bones and flesh and memory*" while speculating on "*the old mindless sentient undreaming meat*" of humanity (276, 279). Here, Faulkner describes humanity as "undreaming" precisely because dreams are not mental phenomena, or dreaming separable from breathing.

In expressing "the long silence of notpeople in notlanguage" infiltrating Quentin's mind in the form of voices, and approaching the "*name for sound of bee or bird or flower's scent or light or sun or love*" in narrative, Faulkner dismantles the conventional positioning of narrator and narratee. This deconstruction ripples, in turn, as the dissolution between feeling and speaking, listening and imagining, even reading and writing—for the reader, too, is implicated in the distorted schema of narrative transmission and dissemination through the experience of *Absalom's* narrative immanence.¹⁷³ Quentin's "notlanguage" is the language of communal

¹⁷³ Peter Brooks makes the same point in *Reading for the Plot*, p.304. In the chapter "Incredulous Narration: *Absalom, Absalom!*" he writes of the scenes imagined by Quentin and

solitude, and not the distinct language of a solitary, self-contained, psychologized consciousness. It reflects a preconscious, nonverbal level of bodily experience common to humanity, an experience coursing indiscriminately from one character to the next in the same way Rosa's voice is "like a stream, a trickle running from patch to patch of dried sand." The ill-defined zone between self and other is articulated in both theme and form. The questions answered through the narration of the past—who or what is Sutpen and his history—becomes the question, What is the common (physical, material, spiritual) source of their dreaming? Is their material fate atavistic or contracted through a common experiential history, through environmental propinquity or the fate of blood? The novel does not provide a clear answer to these questions, and the narrative design reflects the ambiguity formally: it is not always clear who is speaking, or who is speaking through another, or whether the past is chronological or immanent.

Put differently, the novel's mystery concerns the ways in which the plot of the past persists in the present, and in the very origins of the urge to narrate stories fusing fact and fantasy. *Absalom* reproduces Zeno's paradox of the arrow in a restless narrative that returns obsessively to the past. It is in this sense that *Absalom* is arguably most cinematic: while several passages, notably Rosa's monologue and the later scenes imagined by Quentin and Shreve appear 'cinematically,' like a material presence to be seen, as Peter Lurie and Cleanth Brooks argue, the deeper mystery of the novel is how change takes place between two frames of experience, two successive moments: what kind of development, for example, does Rosa

Shreve in Cambridge, "Here, as narrators, narratees, and characters become compounded and interchangeable—and the narrated and the narrating occupy shifting positions—we have very nearly a literal realization of Barthes's point: the distance between telling and listening, between writing and reading, has collapsed; the reader has been freed to speak in the text, toward the creation of the text."

undergo, from knowing child to woman to “crucified child”?¹⁷⁴ The image of Rosa is only one among the images in *Absalom* that constitute both pictures and echoes.

The very words on the page, too, sound echoes in the streaming sentences. The real figures of the drama—Sutpen, Ellen, Henry, Judith, and Clytemnestra—do not speak—yet Sutpen, the towering central dreamer, permeates and animates the narrative style. His dream of a racially pure dynasty has scarred his family; his “bombastic phrases” are assimilated by Quentin’s grandfather, father, and Shreve, and haunt the restless, dream-like drift of the novel in a kind of chemical reaction: as Quentin and Shreve muse, “*Yes. Maybe we are both Father. Maybe nothing ever happens once and is finished. Maybe happen is never once but like ripples maybe on water after the pebble sinks, the ripples moving on, spreading, the pool attached by a narrow umbilical water-cord to the next pool which the first pool feeds, has fed, did feed, let this second pool contain a different temperature of water, a different molecularity of having seen, felt, remembered, reflect in a different tone the infinite unchanging sky, it doesn’t matter: that pebble’s watery echo whose fall it did not even see moves across its surface too at the original ripple-space, to the old ineradicable rhythm*” (210). When the reader encounters the few moments where Quentin claims to be relaying via his father Sutpen’s words to his grandfather, the style of the novel instantly affirms itself as a revelation of Sutpen’s undying influence. His grandfather mentions a book “out of which [Sutpen] taught himself the words, the bombastic phrases” with which he “even asked you for a match for his cigar or offered you the cigar,” and quotes Sutpen’s account of the books at school that inspired him to dream: “‘I learned little save that most of the deeds, good and bad both, incurring opprobrium or plaudits or reward either, within the scope of man’s abilities, had already been performed and were to be learned about

¹⁷⁴ See Cleanth Brooks, “The Working of Narrative in *Absalom, Absalom!*: A Textual Analysis,” p.248.

only from books. So I listened when he would read to us... That was how I learned of the West Indies” (195). The vibrant and violent dream registers in his absurd language: ““So I went to the West Indies. I had had some schooling during a part of one winter, enough to have learned something about them, to realise that they would be most suitable to the expediency of my requirements”” (194). Sutpen’s rough, bombastic language is commensurate with the wild scope of his dream to lift himself from abject poverty and establish a wealthy dynasty. Both his expansive dream and language infiltrate the conscious and unconscious lives of the characters in this drama of Biblical or tragic Greek proportions, reaching even to Quentin’s frigid dormitory room at Harvard. The Civil War and its aftermath form the historical context of the novel’s event; the mysterious unnamed books from which Sutpen learns to read and learns of the West Indies provide a historical context to the novel’s peculiar language. The language with which the characters tell of the past, even the most non-mimetic lyrical passages of Rosa’s monologue, also has a genealogy and bears traces of the passions that have led up to the present tense. Sutpen’s language ripples endlessly and as dramatically as his actions, and survives to the “old ineradicable rhythm” of embodied existence.

Barthes defines language as the indifferent and familiar horizon of writing, its net capacity, and writing as the “formal reality” between common language and solitary style. It “links the form of [the writer’s] utterance, which is at once normal and singular, to the vast history of the Others,” and is “an act of historical solidarity.”¹⁷⁵ While *Absalom* frequently overwhelms with the claustrophobia experienced by and emanating from the ghostly players in the drama, the insistent drive to express a finite story with undying ramifications in history retrieves the narrative from the edges of solipsism. In bringing his writing closer to Barthes’ definition of style, Faulkner emphasizes the somatic basis of the writing and narration of history.

¹⁷⁵ *Writing Degree Zero*, pp. 13-14.

Indeed, while there is no strict delineation of transmission in this novel where (auto)biographical reminiscence intermingles flagrantly with the work of the imagination, the dynamism, even inevitability of narration is everywhere in evidence. Rosa's monologue returns again and again with undisguised erotic longing to the image of Charles Bon, whom she has never even met; she participates in Judith's love and Henry's erotic admiration. The urge to tell and the desire to realize the past in the present constitute the basis of the ethical relationship in *Absalom*, and the *raison d'être* of the opaque novel itself. Quentin cannot escape from Sutpen's story even in Cambridge, where it infects his Canadian roommate with the same instinctual demand to know and engage in the story of another place and past. "*Nothing matters but breath, breathing, to know and to be alive,*" Quentin imagines Judith telling Charles's son (168). To inhabit a living body is to absorb and transmit the stories of material consciousness.

The Primal Fantasy of Material Consciousness

The simultaneous division and collapse of dreaming subject and phantasmal object is nowhere clearer than in the scenes in which Quentin and Shreve jointly tell the Sutpen story in Cambridge. The two take turns at role-playing and inventing the drama of Judith's love, Charles's parentage, and Henry's ambivalence under Sutpen's shadow, and at first their alternating narratives stand simply as imaginative accounts mixed with Mr. Compson's stories; Shreve especially is driven by obsessive curiosity. The narrator then emerges to tell us explicitly that the two are somehow fused in their imagining, their thoughts and voices intermingling: "it might have been either of them and was in a sense both: both thinking as one, the voice which happened to be speaking the thought only the thinking become audible, vocal; the two of them creating between them... shadows not of flesh and blood which had lived and died but shadows

in turn of what were... quiet as the visible murmur of their vaporising breath” (243). Here again the ghosts of the past become a physical presence that fills both the room and the very lungs of the storytellers. As their joint narrative progresses, the two also merge with the objects of their fantasies and fixations: “Because now neither of them was there. They were both in Carolina and the time was forty-six years ago, and it was not even four now but compounded still further, since now both of them were Henry Sutpen and both of them were Bon, compounded each of both yet either neither, smelling the very smoke which had blown and faded away forty-six years ago from the *bivouac fires burning in a pine grove, the gaunt and ragged men sitting or lying about them...*” (280). The passage contains one of the most striking instances of italics in the novel, breaking as it does in mid-sentence without any indication, as most past instances of it do, of what it represents—the joint fantasy of the roommates, or the ‘objective’ narrator’s account interleaving their fantasy. The scene presents us with Henry called to meet his father at camp. Sutpen informs Henry that Charles is not only his brother, but is of mixed race. While the italics are maintained, the scene breaks and leads us to Henry’s climactic confrontation with Charles before returning to standard print and to Shreve’s voice. We are given to understand, at first, that Shreve has narrated the two scenes in the collective language all the characters share with the authorial narrator. But when we consider the events presented, it becomes clear that the italics do not and could not convey separateness between the teller and the tale, nor pure distinction between imagination and reality. For, as Cleanth Brooks points out, *Absalom* “contains no scene in which someone *tells* Quentin the secret” of Bon’s heritage, in which case Quentin obviously could not have told Shreve.¹⁷⁶ Shreve, with Quentin, imagines a scene so vividly and

¹⁷⁶ “The Narrative Structure of *Absalom, Absalom!*” in *William Faulkner: toward Yoknapatawpha and beyond*, p.324.

passionately that, as Claudia Brodsky writes, “imagination replaces vision; it composes reality.”¹⁷⁷

For Brodsky, the “process of multiple narration” creates “a single voice, distilled from all narratives collectively, which conveys an immediate, present reality. Overstepping individual subjectivity and the distances of time and space, the passage arises through the roommates’ direct sensory experience.”¹⁷⁸ The entire novel, I have argued, is more or less distilled from a transpersonal (un)consciousness that embeds each character in the dimensions of a narrative voice that ultimately precludes transcendence: in places literally containing time past, and in the sweep of a chronology ordered by the process of metabolism, of ingesting and burning the dust and impressions surrounding the characters. In the scenes of Henry at camp during the war, which seem to transpire between breaths, what is most striking, and unsettling, for the reader is that one of the central knots of the novel—the threat and secret of miscegenation in the figure of Bon—simply appears, rather than being revealed and resolved diegetically. There is fact without revelation. If, as I agree, the scenes arise from a collective “direct sensory experience,” what exactly transpires in the italics?¹⁷⁹

The scenes in the context of the wintry dorm room most clearly dramatize the point made by Cézanne’s bathers: the fantasy has taken place, and will be represented as matter. As a product of spiritual *and* physical metabolism, the imagination will be represented as materially equivalent to the body in its constant, invisible flux. Freud’s dream “to represent psychical processes as quantitatively determined states of specifiable material particles” is here alive as

¹⁷⁷ “The Working of Narrative in *Absalom, Absalom!*: A Textual Analysis,” p.248.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p.253. Brodsky, however, describes this scene as a moment of transcendence, which counters my argument that the novel represents an immanence.

¹⁷⁹ My argument here echoes Peter Brooks’s analysis of Quentin’s meeting with Henry Sutpen in *Reading for the Plot*, p. 306: “Does anything happen here? The passage reads as nearly a palindrome, virtually identical backward and forward, an unprogressive, reversible plot... It generates no light, no revelation.”

Faulkner's ambition to define the process of fantasy as being as concrete as the body: "*your illusions are a part of you like your bones and flesh and memory*," Quentin and Shreve imagine Henry claiming together with Charles. Fantasies, dreams, and the imagination permeate not only the concepts of flesh and blood, most dramatically illustrated in the novel as the delusions of racial purity; like the opaque material body itself, fantasy is inseparable from the process of living, breathing, and speaking.

To represent fantasy authentically is to represent it as consubstantial with the body in its shifting matrix of time and place. The imagined scene takes place as matter insofar as it transpires ceaselessly in the impenetrable density of Quentin's material being and resonates with the equally obscure rhythms of the roommate raised in a distant place: the convergence of their metabolisms produces a vision, a synesthetic experience, "a might-have-been which is more than truth." The truth of the fantasy is what Quentin, provoked by Shreve, realizes he has 'known' all along in his lifelong absorption of the stories, dirt, and air of Yoknapatawpha County. Quentin realizes the South lost the War because of the racist dynastic ambitions of figures like Thomas Sutpen, and that Sutpen's own perverse fantasies, like his language, continue to affect and torment the following generations. The fantasies of the older generation may not have been transmitted intact to Quentin, they may not be shared by Quentin, but they are still being metabolized by him and his own generation.

Because representation must be absolute for Faulkner and Cézanne, repression plays no part in either the narrative or the late paintings. The truth of the dormitory fantasy undergoes a physical process like condensation, distilled from the Sutpen-inflected prose, to pool finally into a statement of facts: Bon and Henry are aware, not only of Bon's racially mixed background, but that, as the culmination of the family's tragedy, Henry will kill Bon to stop him from committing

miscegenation with Judith. Even the final moment of the novel, Quentin's rabid repeated denial that he hates the South, ironically confirms that Quentin *cannot* repress the South: he is left "panting in the cold air, the iron New England dark" in which "he could taste and feel the dust of the breathless (rather, furnace-breathed) Mississippi September night" (303, 290).

The truth of Quentin's joint fantasy with Shreve, its inherence in the matter of the human and the dust to which it returns, recalls the confusion of the literal and figural registers in Freud's theory of the death drive that also surfaces in the uncertain nature of his theory of primal phantasies—the unstable relation between lived experience and ontogenetic psychological structures, phylogenetic evolution and phantasy—as sketched in his case study of the Wolf Man and in *Totem and Taboo*. According to Freud, whether or not the Wolf Man actually witnessed intercourse between his parents as a child is ultimately irrelevant. He may indeed have stumbled upon the primal scene or, just as well, encountered the truth of the occluded event in the copulation of animals. The psyche, Freud argues, contains biologically determined structures that have evolved since prehistory to receive the truth of the necessary event for the development of individual sexuality. In the absence of such determining moments in the Wolf Man's actual history, the primal phantasy would have assumed the reality of the event and, moreover, produced the same effects in psychological life as the actual primal scene. Phantasy, in its efficaciousness, contains a reality: it corresponds to the reality of primitive psychological structures and fulfills the biological instinct to meet this factual reality of sexuality in the self and in others. One could compare the reality of the primal phantasy [*Urphantasie*] with Quentin's fantasy (to use the less clinical term for the literary context), reading the latter as the imaginary construction of an event that must, in some sense or form, have occurred to have resulted in the tragedies of the historical present. The kind of syntactic continuity between body and world established in

the correspondences between phantasy, individual biology, and the truth of the primal event parallels structurally the metaphors of impersonal material consciousness: in the same way that the primal phantasy draws upon an impersonal, physical reality to respond to a preexisting biological faculty or tendency in the subject, the metaphors of dust, air, blood, and spiritual metabolism in *Absalom* are grounded in the materiality of style to establish the reality of mental processes and their interconnectedness with the reality of human biology and of the physics of the material world.

In this sense, Quentin's joint fantasy is produced through the recomposition of the historical past whose reality has left material traces in the particles of dust and even air he has absorbed and been absorbing throughout his life. The truth of the reality may be unconscious; it requires Shreve's analyst-like presence in the room, therefore, to render the truth legible in the different air of Cambridge to which Quentin brings his own body, which has been nourished and developed in the South.

But there remains an imaginary aspect to his fantasy, which Faulkner however does not consequently frame as invalid or untrue in the reconstitution of the past. Within the narrative immanence, the fantasy is as materially real as the dust of things past and Sutpen's living presence. If we reject entirely the implied metaphysics of the style and the italics and focus on the events that take place in the dormitory room—two students imagining a past event in history—then the fantasy seems, by definition, a fantasy extracted from stories of Sutpen distorted by time and rage. In situating the story of Sutpen and his disastrous legacy firmly and concretely within the history and landscape of the American South, however, Faulkner grants even for this second reading of the fantasy a certain objectivity. To return to Freud, if the truth of the primal phantasy and its efficaciousness in the individual psyche can be confirmed in

analysis, the truth of the primal patricide of prehistory posited in the anthropological study *Totem and Taboo*—the origin of phylogenetic psychical development—cannot. This clinical limitation, however, does not mean that the theorized patricide is wholly unreal and imaginary. Freud arrives at the theory of an originary murder of the father by analyzing the truth of the state of things in the historical present. The theory, like the language of dreams, represents an opaque truth about the human. It, like the primal phantasy and Quentin's fantasy in fiction, is rooted in observable truths about the state of things in the historical present, truths secreted, as it were, through the observation of bodies and assimilation of things. The materialization of Quentin's fantasy in the omniscient style of the novel becomes itself a form of knowledge about the material self shaped by its natural, social, and cultural environment. Like Woolf's tadpole, the fantasy bears the shape of an impersonal reality that constitutes Quentin himself.

The novel finally tells us that we will see the truth of things, of ourselves, if we, like archaeologists, physicists, and doctors, look for evidence of it in the material world. The scientific project to recreate the past and know the future is not a mystical project. Truth resides immanently in ourselves and the world, and through scientific observation may become legible, become knowledge. *Absalom* ultimately represents Faulkner's amazing way of conveying the simple idea that if we look for knowledge we will find it in the world.

Conclusion

Style as imagery, syntax, lexicon, and narrative form, I have argued, can serve not only to reinforce theme and mood, but also to establish new meanings for narrative perspective, consciousness, and the knowledge in and of art. Style frames a particular metaphysics in creating images that circulate freely between characters and between characters and authorial narrator, depleting them of metaphoricity, and investing them with a sense of material indexicality. Creating a context in which language and images are materialized and carry the same weight and presence as things, it concurrently proposes the elements of consciousness as thing-like, as concrete as the body embedded in the material world.

We have seen how in James thought is externalized; in Woolf, sensation is disseminated; fantasy inheres in the physical world in Faulkner. We have also seen how each of these mental functions overlaps within an impersonal, material consciousness that saturates people, animates things, and not only responds to the world, but also corresponds to and assimilates thoughts, sensations, and fantasies immanent in the material world. Ultimately, for each, thought, sensation, and fantasy alike are externalized, disseminated, contained in a material immanence. Each of the authors conceives of this dynamic consciousness as inarticulable from the isolated perspective provided by psychology. Style assumes the conventional function of the omniscient narrator, with the difference that instead of presenting us with a detached perspective endowed with superior reflections on the world of the fiction, it absorbs the narrator into the somatic impersonality embodied in the characters. It casts knowledge as the effect of synesthetically mixed thoughts, sensations, and fantasies, belonging to no perspective but implicit in every

sentence as a species of insight that is not told to us by the novel, that can only take shape as the organic whole of the narrative, as a kind of picture of the world and in the world.

Style takes on the function of material consciousness itself. The words within narrative, therefore, carry a problematic double function as abstract signifiers representing drama and as material entities melding with perception, expressing nothing but itself. But the immanence of consciousness, a narrative immanence, is based less on the abstractions and impersonality of language that present us with the themes, than on the materiality of style. The themes of *The Wings of the Dove*, *The Waves*, and *Absalom, Absalom!* are also to be found in other writings of the authors, but they are conveyed less through style than through the perspective of an authorial narrator. Thus, one may read *The Portrait of a Lady*, *To the Lighthouse*, and *The Sound and the Fury* as works about the experiences of the psychological subject that may anticipate the more formally experimental novels to follow but do not offer the necessary kind of style through which the later works effectively convey the unspeakable language of non-perspectivist material consciousness.

The authors provide us with the aesthetic translation of a physics of consciousness, in which time present and even future leaves its traces in the world in processes that recall the Freudian project to determine the biologically determined prehistory and individual history, function, and fate of the psyche and the body. As in Freud's theories of the primal phantasy and the death drive, the distinctions between the mental and the physical, the organic and the inorganic, are unstable and untraceable. Paralleling the tension between word as signifier and word as thing, the stories of Milly, Bernard, and Quentin in their interpersonal dramas are also stories concerned with how to live and derive private meaning from the experience of an

impersonal self, for which the present is defined as a moment in which the past determines the future, the future is a has-been.

The novels thus emphasize the meaning of life as the meaning of death. They point to an incoherence and demonstrate an oscillation between material consciousness and the empirical temporality of narrative, between the individual as a figure of radical impersonality and as an agent in drama and in the world, even as they simultaneously propose style as the embodiment of meaning. My reading of James, in whom the tension between psychology and impersonality is most palpable, has thus served as a point of literary relief to Woolf and Faulkner, in whom the nonpsychological is more explicit, and as an example of the transition from the psychologism of nineteenth-century narrative to the different kind of problematization of perspective and consciousness encountered in modernism. In James, perhaps the most influential of early Anglo-American theorists of the novel, we have seen how despite his professed conception of narrative as the representation of multiple perspectives within a dramatic scene, his late style produces consciousness as a function and as a picture-like effect of the scene itself.

The aesthetics of the omniscient style celebrates the boundlessness of consciousness; the dramas represented in the style depict the experience of this consciousness as tortured. The narratives arguably do not illuminate so much as reproduce the opacities of people, images, and things, and this frustration, this opacity is expressed in theme. Thus, though the metaphysics of this style corresponds strikingly to a Deleuzean immanence, and the images of the texts bear close resemblance to the movement-images he describes in his work on cinema, I have chosen here to privilege Freud and Benjamin with de Man and Barthes, in whose work I have found a closer correspondence to the problems of depicting the immanence of consciousness within language. Nonetheless, in my development of this project I plan on considering more fully the

work of Deleuze, as well as the writings of Beckett, Proust, Djuna Barnes, and Blanchot, whose thinking on the narrative voice is also highly relevant to my discussion of James, Woolf, and Faulkner. In the three authors I want to treat in the next phase of my research, style with theme also arguably presents the interpenetration of the body and consciousness as material consciousness. This dynamic has been analyzed perhaps most frequently and with greater insistence in the criticism on Proust, for whom Benjamin, for one, has recognized the importance of sensation and of the “physiology of style” in which the “sentences are the entire muscular activity of the intelligible body.”¹⁸⁰

If I have devoted this dissertation exclusively to close readings of single novels by James, Woolf, and Faulkner, it has been to focus on highlighting the secret languages of a specific modern literary context; that is, to emphasize, through minute analysis of novels relatively isolated in terms of form, how the secret languages of modernism are produced and become legible within a particular conjunction of theme, form, metaphor, and style. I plan, however, to build on my current work with more detailed readings and references to *The Portrait of a Lady*, *What Maisie Knew*, and *The Sacred Fount*; *Mrs. Dalloway*, *Between the Acts* and *Jacob's Room*; *As I Lay Dying*, particularly the voice of the dead Addie Bundren; as well as a more sophisticated thinking of the social, cultural, scientific context in which the authors were working. Such comparisons would illustrate more fully how the secret languages of modernism have developed and emerged within the three bodies of work. The dominant note in the criticism of the Anglo-American writers has, I believe, been psychologist, and thus I have concentrated on explicating the nonpsychological and used writings on the *Recherche* and Proust on fiction to help me illuminate the development and fictional exposition of the non-psychological in his modern counterparts. I hope that with the close readings I have presented here as the foundation of

¹⁸⁰ “On the Image of Proust,” pp. 246-7.

future research, I will be able effectively to bring in other writers in a comparative study that would convey more authoritatively my reading of material consciousness as an important current in the modern thinking of art, language, and style.

Bibliography

- Abel, Elizabeth. *Virginia Woolf and the Fictions of Psychoanalysis*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989.
- Albright, Daniel. *Impersonality and Personality: Lawrence, Woolf, and Mann*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.
- Alt, Christina. "Virginia Woolf and the Changing Conceptions of Nature," in *Virginia Woolf's Bloomsbury, Vol. 1: Aesthetic Theory and Literary Practice*, ed. Gina Potts and Lisa Shahriari. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- . *Virginia Woolf and the Study of Nature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Alter, Robert. *Pen of Iron*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010.
- Andrew, Dudley. *Concepts in Film Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.
- . *The Major Film Theories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976.
- Armstrong, Paul B. *The Phenomenology of Henry James*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983.
- Armstrong, Richard H. *A Compulsion for Antiquity: Freud and the Ancient World*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005.
- Auchard, John. *Silence in Henry James: The Heritage of Symbolism and Decadence*. University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986.
- Auerbach, Eric. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.
- Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009.
- Banfield, Ann. *The Phantom Table: Woolf, Fry, Russell and the Epistemology of Modernism*. Cambridge: 2000.
- . "Describing the unobserved," in *The linguistics of writing: Arguments between language and literature*, ed. Nigel Fabb et al. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987.
- . "Remembrance and Tense Past," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Modernist Novel*, ed. Morag Shiach. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

---. *Unspeakable Sentences: Narration and Representation in the Language of Fiction*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982.

---. "Tragic Time: The Problem of the Future in Cambridge Philosophy and To the Lighthouse," *Modernism/modernity*, Volume 7, Number 1, January 2000, pp. 43-75.

Barnes, Djuna. *Nightwood*. New York: Dalkey Archive Press, 1995.

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2000.

---. *The Pleasure of the Text*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1975.

---. *The Rustle of Language*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1986.

---. *S/Z: An Essay*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1974.

---. *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967.

Baudelaire, Charles. *Les Fleurs du Mal*, trans. Richard Howard. Boston: David R. Godine, 1983.

---. *Critique d'art*, ed. Claude Pichois. Paris: Gallimard, 1992.

Bazin, André. *What is Cinema? Vol. 1*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

Beck, Warren. "William Faulkner's Style," in *Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Robert Penn Warren. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966.

Beer, Gillian. *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996.

Benjamin, Walter. "The Storyteller: Observations on the Works of Nikolai Leskov" in *Selected Writings: Volume 3, 1935-1938*, ed. Michael Jennings et al. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.

---. "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," in *Selected Writings: Volume 1, 1913-1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004.

---. "On the Mimetic Faculty," in *Selected Writings: Volume 2, 1927-1934*, ed. Michael Jennings et al. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

---. "On the Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproducibility," in *Selected Writings: Volume 4, 1938-1940*, ed. Michael Jennings et al. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

---. "Painting, Or Signs and Marks," in *Selected Writings: Volume 1, 1913-1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004.

---. "On the Image of Proust," in *Selected Writings: Volume 2, 1927-1934*, ed. Michael Jennings et al. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

---. "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Selected Writings: Volume 4, 1938-1940*, ed. Michael Jennings et al. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Benveniste, Emile. *Problèmes de linguistique générale, I*. Paris: Gallimard, 1966.

Bergson, Henri. *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*. New York: Dover Publications, 2001.

Berman, Jessica. *Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism and the Politics of Community*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Bersani, Leo. "Psychoanalysis and the Aesthetic Subject," *Critical Inquiry* 32 (Winter 2006), pp. 161-184.

---. "The Narrator as Center in *The Wings of the Dove*," *Modern Fiction Studies*, 6:2 (1960: Summer), pp. 131-144.

---. *A Future for Astyanax: Character and Desire in Literature*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1976.

---. *The Freudian Body: Psychoanalysis and Art*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

Bersani, Leo and Dutoit, Ulysse. *Forms of Being: Cinema, Aesthetics, Subjectivity*. London: British Film Institute Publishing, 2004.

Blanchot, Maurice. *L'Espace littéraire*. Paris: Gallimard, 1988.

Bleikasten, André. *The Ink of Melancholy: Faulkner's Novels from The Sound and the Fury to Light in August*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.

Borges, Jorge Luis. "The Wall and the Books" in *Borges: Selected Non-Fictions*, ed. Eliot Weinberger, New York: Penguin, 1999, pp. 344-46.

Bowie, Malcolm. *Freud, Proust and Lacan: Theory as fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Bowlby, Rachel. *Feminist Destinations and Further Essays on Virginia Woolf*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997.

---. *Freudian Mythologies: Greek Tragedy and Modern Identities*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Bradbury, Malcolm and McFarlane, James. *Modernism: 1890-1930*. London: Penguin Books, 1991.

Bresson, Robert. *Notes sur le cinématographe*. Paris: Gallimard, 1988.

---. *Notes on the Cinematographer*, trans. Jonathan Griffin. Los Angeles: Green Integer, 1997.

Britzolakis, Christina. "Technologies of Vision in Henry James's 'What Maisie Knew,'" *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Summer 2001), pp. 369-390.

Brodsky, Claudia. "The Working of Narrative in *Absalom, Absalom!*: A Textual Analysis," *American Studies* 23, no. 2 (1979).

Brooks, Cleanth. "The Narrative Structure of *Absalom, Absalom!*" in *William Faulkner: toward Yoknapatawpha and beyond*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1990.

---. *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963.

Brooks, Peter. *Henry James Goes To Paris*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

---. *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991.

---. *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995.

---. *Psychoanalysis and Storytelling*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994.

---. "The Storyteller," *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 1.1 (2003).

Brown, Bill. "The Secret Life of Things (Virginia Woolf and the Matter of Modernism)," *Modernism/Modernity*. 6.2 (1999), pp. 1-28.

Cameron, Sharon. *Thinking in Henry James*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989.

---. *Impersonality: Seven Essays*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007.

Caughie, Pamela L., ed. *Virginia Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. New York: Garland Publishing, 2000.

Cavell, Stanley. *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Charon, Rita. "The Great Empty Cup of Attention: The Doctor and the Illness in *The Wings of the Dove*," *Literature and Medicine*, 9 (1990), pp. 105-124.

Chatman, Seymour. *The Later Style of Henry James*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972.

Clark, T.J. "Freud's Cézanne" in *Representations*, No. 52 (Autumn, 1995) pp. 94-122. Reprinted in *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.

Cohn, Dorrit. *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.

Crary, Jonathan. *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1992.

Cross, Mary. *Henry James: The Contingencies of Style*. London: Macmillan Press, 1993.

Culler, Jonathan. *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, Poetics and the Study of Literature*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975.

Cutting, Andrew. *Death in Henry James*. Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

De Lauretis, Teresa. *Freud's Drive: Psychoanalysis, Literature and Film*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 1: The Movement-image*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

---. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

---. *Proust and Signs*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

---. *Bergsonism*. New York: Zone Books, 1991.

De Man, Paul. *Allegories of Reading*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979.

---. *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.

Derrida, Jacques. "Ulysses' Gramophone: Hear Say Yes in Joyce" in *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge. New York: Routledge, 1992.

---. *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.

DiBattista, Maria. *Imagining Virginia Woolf: An Experiment in Critical Biography*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.

---. *Virginia Woolf's Major Novels: The Fables of Anon*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980.

Donadio, Stephen. *Nietzsche, Henry James, and the Artistic Will*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Eastham, Andrew. "'Conventional Signs and Consecrations: Henry James's Theatrical Forms, from 'The Théâtre Français' to *The Portrait of a Lady*'" in *The Henry James Review* 28.3 (2007), pp. 269-280.

Edel, Leon. *The Psychological Novel: 1900-1950*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1955.

Eliot, T.S. "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *Selected Essays*, ed. Frank Kermode. New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1975.

Ellison, David. *Ethics and Aesthetics in European Modernist Literature: From the Sublime to the Uncanny*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Ellmann, Maud. *The Poetics of Impersonality: T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound*. Brighton, Sussex : Harvester Press, 1987.

Eysteinsson, Astradur. *The Concept of Modernism*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990.

Faulkner, William. *Absalom, Absalom!*. New York: Vintage International, 1990.

---. *The Sound and the Fury*. New York: Vintage International, 1990.

---. *As I Lay Dying*. New York: Random House, 1964.

---. *Light in August*. New York: Modern Library, 1959.

---. *The Wild Palms*. New York: Random House, 1939.

---. *Sanctuary*. New York: Vintage International, 1983.

---. *Conversations with Faulkner*, ed. M. Thomas Inge. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999.

Fergusson, Francis. "James's Idea of Dramatic Form," in *Henry James*, ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987, pp. 15-25.

Fernihough, Anne. "Consciousness as a stream," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Modernist Novel*, ed. Morag Shiach. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Ferrer, Daniel. *Virginia Woolf and the Madness of Language*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby. London and New York: Routledge, 1990.

Flaubert, Gustave. *L'Education sentimentale*. Paris: Garnier, 1963.

---. *Madame Bovary*. Paris: Garnier, 1971.

Fleishman, Avrom. *Virginia Woolf: A Critical Reading*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975.

Foltz, Jonathan. "The Laws of Comparison: H.D. and Cinematic Formalism," *Modernism/modernity*, Volume 18, Number 1, January 2011, pp. 1-25.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

Freud, Sigmund. "The Uncanny." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works Of Sigmund Freud, Vol. XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*, pp. 217-56.

---. "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psychoanalysis II). *The Standard Edition, Vol. XII (1911-1913): The Case of Schreber, Papers on Technique and Other Works*, pp. 145-156.

---. *Totem and Taboo*, trans. James Strachey. *The Standard Edition, Vol. XIII (1913-1914): Totem and Taboo and Other Works*, pp. 1-255. London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1955.

---. *Three Case Histories*, ed. Philip Rieff. New York: Collier, 1963.

---. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. James Strachey. New York: W.W. Norton, 1961.

Friedman, Melvin J. *Stream of Consciousness: A Study in Literary Method*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955.

Fry, Roger. *Cézanne: A Study of His Development*. New York: The Noonday Press, 1963.

---. *Vision and Design*. New York: Peter Smith, 1947.

Genette, Gérard. *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, trans. Jane E. Lewin. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.

---. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980.

---. *Figures III*. Paris: Seuil, 1972.

Godden, Richard. *Fictions of Labor: William Faulkner and the South's Long Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Goode, John. "The pervasive mystery of style: *The Wings of the Dove*," in *The Air of Reality: New Essays on Henry James*, ed. John Goode. London: Methuen & Co, 1972.

Gresset, Michel. *Fascination: Faulkner's fiction, 1919-1936*, trans. Thomas West. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989.

Hale, Dorothy. "Henry James and the Invention of Novel Theory," in *The Cambridge Companion to Henry James*, ed. Jonathan Freedman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Hansen, Miriam. "Benjamin, Cinema, and Experience: The Blue Flower in the Age of Technology," *New German Critique*, No. 40, Special Issue on Weimar Film Theory (Winter, 1987), pp. 179-224.

---. Introduction. *The Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* by Siegfried Kracauer. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.

Hanssen, Beatrice. *Walter Benjamin's Other History: Of Stones, Animals, Human Beings, and Angels*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Haralson, Eric. "James's Elusive *Wings*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Henry James*, ed. Jonathan Freedman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Harper, Howard. *Between Language and Silence: The Novels of Virginia Woolf*. Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1982.

Harrington, Evans and Abadie, Anne J. *Faulkner, modernism, and film*. Jackson : University Press of Mississippi, 1979.

Heath, Stephen. *Questions of Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981.

Heidegger, Martin. "The Age of the World Picture," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, ed. J. Glenn Gray and Joan Stambaugh. New York : Harper & Row, 1977.

Heller-Roazen, Daniel. *The Inner Touch: Archaeology of a Sensation*. New York: Zone Books, 2007.

Henry, Holly. *Virginia Woolf and the Discourse of Science: The Aesthetics of Astronomy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Holland, Laurence Bedwell. *The Expense of Vision: Essays on the Craft of Henry James*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964.

Humphrey, Robert. *Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1954.

Hurh, J. Paul. "Dirimens Copulatio and Metalinguistic Negation in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*," in *Style*: Vol. 42, No. 1, Spring 2008, pp. 22-47.

Hussey, Mark. *The Singing of the Real World: the Philosophy of Virginia Woolf's Fiction*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1986.

---. "To the Lighthouse and Physics: The cosmology of David Bohm and Virginia Woolf," in *New Essays on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Helen Wussow. Dallas: Contemporary Research Press, 1995.

Jacobs, Karen. *The Eye's Mind: Literary Modernism and Visual Culture*. Ithaca, N.Y. and London : Cornell University Press, 2001.

Ian, Marcia. "The Elaboration of Privacy in *The Wings of the Dove*," *ELH*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (Spring, 1984), pp. 107-136.

---. "Immaculate Conceptions: Henry James and the Private Sphere," *Henry James Review* 22.3 (2001) pp. 239-47.

Irwin, John T. *Doubling and Incest/ Repetition and Revenge: A Speculative Reading of Faulkner*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

James, Henry. *The Wings of the Dove*. New York: Modern Library, 2004.

---. *The Portrait of a Lady*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1975.

---. *What Maisie Knew*. London: Penguin, 1985.

---. *The Bostonians*. New York: Dial Press, 1945.

---. *The Golden Bowl*. London: Penguin, 2009.

---. *The Ambassadors*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

---. *The Sacred Fount*. New York: New Directions, 1983.

---. "Is There Life After Death?" in *The James Family*, ed. F. O. Matthiessen. New York: Knopf, 1961.

---. "Gustave Flaubert," in *Henry James: Literary Criticism: French Writers, Other European Writers, The Prefaces to the New York Edition*, ed. Leon Edel. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1984.

---. "Introduction to *The Tempest*," in *Henry James: Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers*, ed. Leon Edel. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1984.

---. "The Art of Fiction," in *Henry James: Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers*, ed. Leon Edel. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1984.

James, William. *Essays on Radical Empiricism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.

Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981.

---. *The Prison-House of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972.

Joyce, James. *Ulysses*. New York: Vintage, 1986.

Kappeler, Susanne. *Writing and Reading in Henry James*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.

Kawin, Bruce F. *Faulkner and film*. New York: F. Ungar, 1977.

King, Kristin. "Ethereal Milly Theale in *The Wings of the Dove*: The Transparent Heart of James's Opaque Style." *Henry James Review* 21 (2000), pp. 1-13.

Kodat, Catherine Gunther. "William Faulkner: an impossibly comprehensive expressivity," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Modernist Novel*, ed. Morag Shiach. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Kracauer, Siegfried. *The Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.

Krook, Dorothea. *The Ordeal of Consciousness in Henry James*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962.

Lacan, Jacques. *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan. London: Routledge, 1977.

---. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis. The seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI*. ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan. New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1978.

Lakoff, George and Johnson, Mark. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980.

Laplanche, J. and Pontalis, J.-B. *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1973.

Lee, Hermione. *The Novels of Virginia Woolf*. London: Methuen, 1977.

Leibniz, Gottfried. *Nouveaux essais sur l'entendement humain*. Paris: Flammarion, 1990.

Levenson, Michael. "The Modernist novel," in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, ed. Michael Levenson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 70-99.

---. *Modernism and the Fate of Individuality: Character and Novelistic Form from Conrad to Woolf*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

---. *A Genealogy of Modernism: A study of English literary doctrine 1908-1922*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Lockyer, Judith. *Ordered by words: language and narration in the novels of William Faulkner*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991.

Lodge, David. *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Literature*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977.

Lukács, Georg. *The Theory of the Novel*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1971.

---. *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*. London: Merlin Press, 1979.

---. "Thoughts Toward an Aesthetics of Cinema," in *German Essays on Film*, ed. Richard W. McCormick and Alison Guenther-Pal, New York and London: Continuum, 2004.

Lurie, Peter. *Vision's Immanence: Faulkner, Film, and the Popular Imagination*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004.

Marcus, Laura. *The Tenth Muse: Writing about Cinema in The Modernist Period*. Oxford University Press, 2007.

Matthews, John T. *The Play of Faulkner's Language*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1982.

Matthiessen, F.O. *Henry James: The Major Phase*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1944.

Matz, Jesse. *Literary Impressionism and Modernist Aesthetics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

McConnell, Frank D. "'Death Among the Apple Trees: *The Waves* and the World of Things,'" in *Virginia Woolf*, ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986.

Meissner, Collin. *Henry James and the Language of Experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*. Johnson, Galen A., ed. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993.
- Miller, J. Hillis. "What Do Stories about Pictures Want?," *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 34, No. 5, Special Supplemental Issue for W. J. T. Mitchell (2008), pp. S59-S97.
- . *Reading Narrative*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998.
- . *Literature as Conduct*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2005.
- Minow-Pinkney, Makiko. *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject*. Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1987.
- Mitchell, Juliet. "What Maisie Knew: portrait of the artist as a young girl," in *The Air of Reality: New Essays on Henry James*, ed. John Goode. London: Methuen & Co., 1972.
- Mitchell, W.J.T. "There Are No Visual Media," *journal of visual culture*, August 2005, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 257-266.
- . *Picture Theory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Moreland, Richard C. *Faulkner and Modernism: Rereading and Rewriting*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990.
- Muller, John P. and Richardson, William J. *Lacan and Language: A Reader's Guide to Ecrits*. International Universities Press, 1982.
- Mulvey, Laura. *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image*. London: Reaktion Books, 2006.
- Naremore, James. *The World Without a Self: Virginia Woolf and the Novel*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973.
- Nicholls, Peter. *Modernisms: A Literary Guide*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. "On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense," in *Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language*, ed. Sander L. Gilman et al. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Parker, Robert Dale. *Faulkner and the Novelistic Imagination*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985.
- Peirce, Charles. *Peirce on Signs*, ed. James Hoopes. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991.
- Pasolini, Pier Paolo. *Heretical Empiricism*, ed. Louise K. Barnett. Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing, 2005.

Poirier, Richard. *The Comic Sense of Henry James: A Study of the Early Novels*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1960.

Porter, Carolyn. "Absalom, Absalom!: (Un)making the Father," in *The Cambridge Companion to Faulkner*, ed. Philip M. Weinstein. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Posnock, Ross. *The trial of curiosity: Henry James, William James, and the challenge of modernity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Propp, Vladimir. *Morphology of the Folktale*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968.

Proust, Marcel. "A Propos du style de Flaubert" in *Ecrits sur l'art*, ed. Jérôme Picon. Paris: Flammarion, 1999.

---. "Contre Saint-Beuve," in *Flaubert*, ed. Y. Martial. Paris: Librairie Marcel Didier, 1970.

---. *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*. Paris: Gallimard, 1999.

Quick, Jonathan R. "Virginia Woolf, Roger Fry and Post-Impressionism," *The Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 26, No.4 (Winter, 1985), pp. 547-570.

Rabaté, Jean-Michel. "Surviving or Reviving Modernism," *Journal of Modern Literature*, XXIII, 3-4 (Summer 2000), pp. 583-587.

---. *1913: The Cradle of Modernism*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.

---. *Ghosts of Modernity*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1996.

Rantavaara, Irma. *Virginia Woolf's The Waves*. Port Washington, NY and London: Kennikat Press, 1960.

Righter, William. *American Memory in Henry James: Void and Value*, ed. Rosemary Righter. Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2004.

Ringuette, Dana. "Imagining the End: Henry James, Charles Sanders Peirce, and the 'Reach Beyond the Laboratory-Brain,'" *The Henry James Review*. Louisville: Spring 1999. Vol. 20, Iss. 2, pp. 155-162.

Roe, Sue. "The Impact of Post-Impressionism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, ed. Susan Sellers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Rose, Gillian. *Love's Work: A Reckoning with Life*. New York: Shocken, 1995.

Ross, Stephen M. *Fiction's Inexhaustible Voice: Speech and Writing in Faulkner*. Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1989.

Rowe, John Carlos. *The Theoretical Dimensions of Henry James*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984.

---. "The Symbolization of Milly Theale: Henry James's *The Wings of the Dove*." *ELH*, vol. 40, No. 1 (Spring, 1973), pp. 131-64.

Santer, Eric. *On Creaturely Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. "On *The Sound and the Fury*: Time in the Work of Faulkner," in *Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Robert Penn Warren. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966.

---. "A propos de 'Le Bruit et la Fureur': La Temporalité chez Faulkner," in *Situations, I: Essais Critiques*. Paris: Gallimard, 1947.

Schwartz, Sanford. *The Matrix of Modernism: Pound, Eliot, and Early Twentieth-Century Thought*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985.

Schleifer, Ronald. *Modernism and Time: The Logic of Abundance in Literature, Science, and Culture, 1880-1930*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Schwenger, Peter. "Words and the Murder of the Thing" in *Things*, ed. Bill Brown. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Scott, Bonnie Kime. "The Word Split Its Husk: Woolf's Double Vision of Modernist Language," *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 34 No. 3, Fall 1988.

Seltzer, Mark. *Henry James and the Art of Power*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984.

Shklovsky, Viktor. *Theory of Prose*. Elmwood Park, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1990.

Shone, Richard. *The Art of Bloomsbury: Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant*. London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1999.

Silverman, Kaja. *The Subject of Semiotics*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.

---. *World Spectators*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.

Singer, Alan. "The Horse Who Knew Too Much: Metaphor and the Narrative of Discontinuity in 'Nightwood,'" *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Spring, 1984).

Sitney, P. Adams. *Modernist Montage*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990.

- Slavet, Eliza. *Racial Fever: Freud and the Jewish Question*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2009.
- Sontag, Susan. *Against Interpretation*. New York: Picador, 1966
- . *Illness as Metaphor and Aids and Its Metaphors*. New York: Picador, 1989.
- . *On Photography*. London: Penguin, 1979.
- Stein, Gertrude. "Poetry and Repetition," in *Lectures in America*. London : Virago Press, 1988.
- . *How to Write*. New York: Dover Publications, 1975.
- Steiner, Wendy. *The Colors of Rhetoric: Problems in the Relation between Modern Literature and Painting*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- Stevens, Hugh. *Henry James and Sexuality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Stowe, William. "James's Elusive *Wings*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Henry James*, ed. Jonathan Freedman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Terada, Rei. *Feeling in Theory: Emotion after the 'Death of the Subject.'* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.
- Thurschwell, Pamela. *Literature, Technology, and Magical Thinking, 1880-1920*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Poetics of Prose*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977.
- Tompkins, Jane. "'The Beast in the Jungle': An Analysis of James' Late Style," *Modern Fiction Studies*, 16:2 (1970:Summer), pp. 185-191.
- Topia, André. "*The Waves*: l'oeil et le monde," *Etudes anglaises*, 48:4 (1995: oct./déc.), pp. 430-441.
- Torgovnikc, Marianne. *The visual arts, pictorialism, and the novel: James, Lawrence, and Woolf*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985.
- Trotter, David. *Cinema and Modernism*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.
- . *The English Novel in History: 1895-1920*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Urgo, Joseph R. "Absalom, Absalom!: The Movie," in *American Literature*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (Mar., 1990), pp. 56-73.

Vandivere, Julie. "Waves and Fragments: Linguistic Construction as Subject Formation in Virginia Woolf," *Twentieth Century Literature*, 1996 Summer, 42 (2), pp. 221-33.

Valéry, Paul. "The Memories of a Poem" in *Selected Writings of Paul Valéry*. New York: New Directions, 1950.

Warner, Eric. *Virginia Woolf: The Waves*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965.

Weber, Samuel. "Genealogy of Modernity: History, Myth, and Allegory in Benjamin's *Origin of the German Mourning Play*" in *MLN*, Vol. 106, No. 3, German Issue (April 1991).

Weinstein, Arnold. *Vision and Response in Modern Fiction*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974.

Weinstein, Philip. *Faulkner's Subject: A Cosmos No One Owns*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

---. *Unknowing: The Work of Modernist Fiction*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005.

Westling, Louise. "Virginia Woolf and the Flesh of the World," *New Literary History*, Vol. 30, No. 4, Case Studies (Autumn, 1999), pp. 855-875.

White, Allon. *The Uses of Obscurity: The Fiction of Early Modernism*. London: Routledge, 1981.

Williams, Merle A. *Henry James and the Philosophical Novel: Being and Seeing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Wood, Michael. *Literature and the Taste of Knowledge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

---. "Modernism and Film," in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, ed. Michael Levenson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Woolf, Virginia. *The Waves*. San Diego and New York: Harcourt Inc., 1959.

---. *To the Lighthouse*. San Diego and New York: Harcourt Inc., 1981.

---. *Mrs. Dalloway*. San Diego and New York: Harcourt Inc., 1981.

---. *Between the Acts*. San Diego and New York: Harcourt Inc., 1969.

---. *Jacob's Room*. San Diego and New York: Harcourt Inc., 1960.

- . *Roger Fry: A Biography*. London: Hogarth Press, 1940.
- . *Moments of Being*, ed. Jeanne Schulkind. San Diego and New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985.
- . *A Writer's Diary*. San Diego and New York: Harcourt Inc., 1981.
- . "The Cinema," in *The Captain's Death Bed and other Essays*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company: 1950.
- . "On Being Ill." Ashfield, MA: Paris Press, 2002.
- . "Modern Fiction," in *Selected Essays*, ed. David Brashaw. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- . "Movies and Reality," in *Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume I, 1904-1912*, ed Andrew McNeillie. San Diego and New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986.
- . "Mr. James's Latest Novel," in *Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume I, 1904-1912*, ed Andrew McNeillie. San Diego and New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986.
- Yeazell, Ruth Bernard. *Language and Knowledge in the Late Novels of Henry James*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976.
- Zender, Karl F. "Faulkner and the Politics of Incest," *American Literature*, Vol. 70, No. 4 (Dec., 1998), pp. 739-765.
- Zwerdling, Alex. *Virginia Woolf and the Real World*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.