

AFFECTIVE TRANSNATIONALISM: WRITING ANGLO DECLINE IN THE AFRO-  
CELTIC WORLD-SYSTEM, 1880-1980

By

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## PREFACE

### WORLD-SYSTEMS THEORY AND LITERARY STUDY: A DEFINITIONAL PRELUDE

Why write about literature and the world-system? The question is certainly a valid one. After all, isn't world-systems theory passé, a clunky model for navigating world space and a reductive one for literature to boot? What value could its abstracting notions of core, periphery, and semiperiphery hold for literary study? Or, for that matter, what interest do its quantitative analyses of long waves and cycles of accumulation hold for a discipline more prone to treat numbers with a healthy dose of skepticism than jubilant celebrations? Where, in the disciplinary chasm separating the social sciences from the humanities, does world-systems theory find the space to speak to humanistic categories like culture, art, and emotion?

The most obvious answer to these questions would be that world-systems theory offers a comparative lens to literary study. By treating the world as an interconnected system, we can begin to see homologies, parallels, and dialogues that are obscured by reading literature within national paradigms or through lines of direct influence. Thus *Affective Transnationalism* uses a world-systemic model to compare two literary traditions rarely placed into dialogue with one another: Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South African literature. I argue that by placing these two literatures within a fading Atlantic plantation/mine economy we can gain an insight into how literary and economic forms spoke to one another during the “long” twentieth century (1880-1980).<sup>1</sup> If literary history has traditionally treated generic forms as containers of particular class interests, rising, falling, and struggling on alongside the fortunes of those particular classes,<sup>2</sup> the genres I study here – the Anglo-Irish Big House novel, the South African *plaasroman*/farm



novel, and the South African mine novel – demonstrate a much more discontinuous trajectory, emerging, disappearing, and reemerging at periodic intervals closely tied to the economic cycles of the world-system. I propose that these discontinuous histories can best be explained by attending to Anglo settler classes' roles within the British Empire's Atlantic economy: as semiperipheral *mediators* between metropolitan commodity markets and peripheral labor reserves and, later, between rising nationalist movements and a modernizing British financial-professional sector with little use for their services, these classes were more directly tied to the *formal networks* binding together the world-system than to the narrative of progressive modernization that has undergirded both capitalist ideology and the history of the novel.

As I show, twentieth-century Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South African literature familiarized readers with the *emotional* forms of mediation that replaced transatlantic trade when the world-system transitioned from a British imperial Atlantic economy to a post-imperial global economy. If plantation and mine novels emerged in periodic waves – the 1880s/1890s, the 1930s, and the 1970s/1980s – I contend that this speaks to their efforts to formulate emotional dispositions that could reconcile subjects to both autonomous nation-states and a transnational global economy, binding these contradictory institutions into a systematic network through the space of the individual subject. This project therefore looks at a series of Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South African writers from across the long twentieth century – Bernard Shaw, Olive Schreiner, William Plomer, Sarah Gertrude Millin, Elizabeth Bowen (by way of J. M. Keynes), and J. M. Coetzee – showing how their fiction developed a set of stylized, mediatory affects within the vocabulary of a fading Atlantic plantation/mine economy. Tracing these fictions alongside a shifting amalgamation of economic and political institutions, I argue that Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South African fiction provided the formal epistemology of emotion that organized a disparate

group of contradictory economic systems into a functional *world*-system. Thus, this dissertation speaks back and forth across the literary/economic divide, revealing how world-systems theory can provide a philosophy of history for semiperipheral literary activity and at the same time illustrating how literature contributes to the construction of economic forms.

A second way to answer the question, “Why write about literature and the world-system?” would be to defend the relevance of world-systems theory’s methodology to literary study. I have already alluded to world-systems theory’s concern with economic cycles, which plays a central role in the following chapters, and which I will deal with on a more extensive and theoretical level in chapter 1. But on a more general level, world-systems theory is most often associated with a structural model of cores, peripheries, and semiperipheries. In this model, “core” zones are those which possess the most highly developed, powerful, and influential economies – the locations where profits abound, and from which elite classes can impose their vision of economic life onto the rest of the globe. In contrast, the periphery includes those zones whose labors and products are continually co-opted by core interests, whether this entails providing raw resources for core consumption, cheap labor for industrial manufacturing, or illicit commodities foreclosed from formalized economic networks (e.g., recreational drugs, migrant labor). The semiperiphery stands poised between these two zones, acting as a buffer zone communicating between incompatible economic systems, social mores, and ideologies. It is the network that translates persons, goods, and ideologies into forms that can be passed across the core/periphery divide: money, commodities, credit, and so on.

In the field of literary studies, two persistent critiques have dogged this methodology: that it is too abstract and thereby reduces the complexity of literary works, and that it confirms the very divide between center and periphery that it seeks to describe. Susan Stanford Friedman

supplies an excellent summation of these critiques in “World Modernisms, World Literatures, and Comparativity.” In the first case, the center/periphery model “articulate[s] patterns and forces underlying literary history [that are] decontextualized from any other historical conditions” (502). The “laws” that govern these patterns seem too abstract for the sort of historicization that New Historicism enshrined in literary studies: a narrativized historicism built around the singularity of the anecdote. As Stephen Greenblatt explains, “The anecdote has at once something of the literary and something that exceeds the literary, a narrative form and a pointed, referential access to what lies beyond or beneath that form. This conjunction of the literary and the referential... functions in the writing of history not as the servant of a grand, integrated narrative of beginning, middle, and end but rather as what ‘introduces an opening’ into that teleological narration” (*Learning to Curse*, 5).<sup>3</sup> According to New Historicism, narrative supplies detail, nuance, and particularity to history, while macrocosmic history merely “integrates” texts *as* details into a larger narrative. As for the second critique – that world-systemic models reinforce distinctions between the center and periphery – Friedman is once again illustrative: “The danger for modernist studies of the center/periphery model of world literature should be self-evident: at its heart lies the reassertion of the ‘old’ internationalism... The West... is the site for discursive creation, while the non-West is ‘local materials,’ a center/periphery binary that ignores the long histories of aesthetic production among the colonized” (502-3).

I do not want to dismiss Friedman’s skepticism about certain uses of world-systems theory – indeed, I find her critiques of Franco Moretti and Pascale Casanova’s literary “Darwinism” to be both insightful and productive. But I would like to make a case for the *descriptive* power of world-systems theory, especially when it is placed into a firmer historical

context than studies like Moretti's *Graphs, Maps, Trees* or Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters* provide. Core, periphery, and semiperiphery are not static, geopolitical terms operating as shorthands for "the West and the rest." Instead, these terms describe inequitable power relations existing on a myriad of spatial and institutional levels, power relations which are themselves constantly shifting across the granulated surface of the globe. Thus we can think of the core and periphery as geopolitical (the West and the rest, or the global North/South), national (say, England vs. Zimbabwe), regional (urban vs. rural), classed (venture capitalists vs. migrant laborers), familial (husband/father vs. wife/children), occupational (managers vs. unskilled/semi-skilled labor), and so on. The result is a palimpsest of multiple cores and peripheries intersecting in singular ways that cannot be reduced to a reified binary opposition, e.g. "the West and the rest." Even in the larger geopolitical climate of macroeconomics, multiple cores jockey for hegemony at any given moment – say, the United States, the European Union, and China today; or Britain, France, and Germany during the late-nineteenth century Scramble for Africa. In actual practice, even megalopolises like London and New York contain multiple cores and peripheries: the city's own "core" business zones and "peripheral," poverty-stricken inner city; the class divide between cosmopolitan business executives and minimum-wage service jobs; migrant laborers whose wages support families still living in "peripheral" countries; and shifting populations and business communities that are constantly realigning how these cities interact with transnational flows of people, commodities, and capital. This is in large part why I focus on the semiperiphery and not "core" or "peripheral" zones. In a changing world, where every space is an uncertain conglomeration of core and periphery, the semiperipheral networks joining these heterogeneous relationships together more accurately reflect the ambiguities and transformative potential of the world-system than do the polarizing terms "core" and "periphery." A truly

*historical* exploration of the world-system, such as Immanuel Wallerstein constructs in *The Modern World-System*, or as I attempt in this dissertation, thus aims at “a contingency-filled account [of] what a system *is*,” refusing to reify the world-system into static categories or teleological narratives, as Friedman fears center/periphery models may do, and instead using world-systems theory as a descriptive vocabulary for talking about contingency in a theoretical manner.<sup>4</sup>

Cultivating such a vocabulary is particularly pressing in our current critical climate, when a depoliticized “world literature” has to a great extent replaced postcolonial studies as the central critical frame for reading non-Western literature. As elaborated by David Damrosch, Emily Apter, Wai Chee Dimock, John Pizer, and Franco Moretti, the “new” world literature builds upon Goethe’s call for a *weltliteratur* characterized by foreign contact and exchange.<sup>5</sup>

Eschewing the national context that informs much of postcolonial criticism – devoted as it is to delineating empire’s retreat and the rise of national particularism – these critics focus instead on the circulations of texts, international collaboration, and networks of exchange that are obscured by nation-centered postcolonial models. Implicit in each of their respective approaches is a sense that postcolonialism’s binary distinction between colonizer and colonized fails to supply a *global* model for literary activity. None necessarily argue that postcolonialism is “wrong” in its reading of decolonization and lingering imperial influence, but they do suggest that, in a globalizing world where colonizer/colonized distinctions are murky, networks of circulation may allow for a more nuanced articulation of world literary space.

But what is lost in this transition from postcolonialism to world literature is the politicized undertone to postcolonialism, which saw the diagnosis, investigation, and rectifying of national, ethnic, and gender inequalities as its primary mission. Networks, after all, may

decenter the privileged centers of literary production, relativizing cultural meccas as ephemeral way stations in literature's *longue durée* (Dimock), or relativizing canonical texts as mere blips in a sea of literary texts (Moretti), but they lack postcolonialism's transformative vision of a world where structural inequalities between colonizer and colonized would be finally swept away and sequestered in the past. World-systems theory, as I treat it in this dissertation, supplies a vocabulary for returning a political valence to world literature's circulatory networks. Its central terms diagnose inequitable distributions of economic power within global networks, showing how transactions among the core, periphery, and semiperiphery are a source of continuing material inequality. More important, they expand this political vision outside of the direct, military dominance imposed by imperialism and the postimperial hegemony discussed by postcolonial discourse analysts like Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.<sup>6</sup> Inequalities are not only produced by direct imperialism, or the "colonial mentality" investigated by Franz Fanon and Albert Memmi,<sup>7</sup> or lingering imperial influences in the economy or the state; according to world-systems theory, these disparities are *encoded within the structure of networks themselves*, as systemic constraints. The network-centered language of core, periphery, and semiperiphery thus enables us to talk about networks as having a politics of their own, a politics whose technologies (trade, immigration, economic modernization, international investment, artistic influence, global Anglophone publishing) exceed the singular apparatus of empire.

A third and final way to answer the question, "Why write about literature and the world-system?" would be to state the case for world-systems theory's relevance to our own historical moment. Emily Apter makes the case that "Wallerstein's world-systems theory... assumes enhanced relevance in the post-9/11 era, in which the militarization of border patrol, information,

and intelligence further compounds economic definitions of oneworldedness” (“On Oneworldedness: Or Paranoia as a World System,” 365). We might add to Apter’s claim the observation that the globe also *feels* more interconnected than in the past. After all, despite the celebratory rhetoric of globalization that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, global flows of capital, goods, and persons only reached their pre-World War I levels in the late 1990s.<sup>8</sup> It seems, rather, that the “time-space” compression David Harvey attributes to “postmodernity” has internalized the world’s closeness within our very consciousnesses (Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 201-325). The speed with which persons, capital, and commodities cross borders lends a sense of nearness to even remote quarters of the globe, while the proliferation of digitized images seems to eradicate vast distances and flatten them into a set of circulating representations. We might, that is, point to how globalization has become less about “projections of the world as an ideologically bicameral, yet fatally integrated single community,” or about “the homogeneity of culture produced under capitalism,” and more about “a delirious *aesthetics* of systematicity... [a] match between cognition and globalism that is held in place by the paranoid premise that ‘everything is connected’” (Apter 366).

This aesthetic dimension to globalization has generated a surge in ambitious models of world literary space, a trend that speaks to the resonance world-systems theory holds within a “globalizing” world. And yet, most of these studies have used world-systemic models to isolate literature from the social, economic, technological, and even *cultural* developments driving globalization. For example, Casanova’s *The World Republic of Letters* transparently employs world-systemic notions of center and periphery in constructing a “rivalrous” model of world literary space, but she then abstracts literature away from the material social and economic realities that had generated world-systems theory in the first place. “This world republic of

letters has *its own* mode of operations: *its own economy*, which produces hierarchies and various forms of violence; and, above all, *its own history*, which, long obscured by the quasi-systemic national (and therefore political) appropriation of literary stature, has never really been chronicled. Its geography is based on the opposition between a capital, on the one hand, and peripheral dependencies whose relation to this center is defined by their aesthetic distance from it” (Casanova 10; my emphases) World literary space, in Casanova’s eyes, perfectly *parallels* global economic space, but remains “autonomous” from its workings. When mixing between the literary and the economic does occur – such as among those wicked materialists, the British, whose Booker Prize, according to Casanova, ratifies a cultural recreation of empire through the economics of Anglophone publishing – this interaction is dismissed as insufficiently “literary” (120-1). Though without voicing his move away from the social and economic determinants of literary production in such stark terms, Franco Moretti’s program of “distance reading” echoes Casanova’s belief in the autonomy of literary space.<sup>9</sup> By looking *only* at quantitative charts of the novel’s growth and dissemination, Moretti removes novel writing from the socioeconomic conditions that nurtured its development, making it appear that aesthetic production has its own internal laws free from socioeconomic determination. In a slightly more guarded vein, Wai Chee Dimock also cordons off literature’s *longue durée* from the world-systems theories from whom she borrows the term: “Only a ‘world-system’ can bear the explanatory weight of deep structural transformations... I would like to suggest, [in contrast to Wallerstein], that there are other phenomena, not reducible to capitalism, that also unfold against long durations, requiring scale enlargement for their analysis... This is the case with long-lasting genres, such as epic and novel” (*Through Other Continents*, 5).



The reasons for the gap separating literary and economic models of the world-system might best be understood in the terminological distinction between the “transnational” and the “global.” The recent “transnational turn” in literary studies can certainly be traced to a general feeling that we are living in an increasingly globalized world, and that literary criticism therefore needs to develop a methodology capable of explaining culture’s international circulations, flows, and exchanges.<sup>10</sup> But while globalization may be an impetus to investigating “the transnational,” most literary and cultural accounts of the transnational stress how its circulations *differ* from the perceived homogenizations of globalization. Thus Arjun Appadurai’s *Modernity at Large: The Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* distinguishes the “transnational” “micronarratives of film, television, music, and other expressive forms” from the economic “Globalization [that] has shrunk the distance between elites, shifted key relations between producers and consumers, broken many links between labor and family life, [and] obscured the lines between temporary locales and imaginary national attachments” (9-10). For Appadurai, “globalization” is the homogenizing, systemic politico-economic branch of modernity, while the “transnational” is its pluralized cultural sphere, the site for “the mobilization of group identities” – the site, that is, of “*difference*... difference in relation to something local, embodied, and significant” (12-3). Appadurai’s scale of value is quite clear: transnational “culture” is the embodied form of particularity cultivating individuated identity and habits, whereas the “global” destroys the singular nuances that are the object of literary study. Globalization’s culture is McDonaldization; transnationalism’s cultures are the new, hybridized identities produced through the collision of discrete national spaces. The two therefore must be kept rigidly separate, lest the exciting new cultures created by transnationalism become swallowed up by McDonaldization.

But, as I have been arguing, economic globalization is not necessarily homogenizing. Indeed, the world-system's structural networks *depend* on difference: class differences, national differences, regional differences, occupational differences, ideological differences, and so on. The very fact that a global network can preserve and entrench economic inequalities indicates that globalization has always been as much about difference as about sameness – even if, as Walter Benn Michaels has often pointed out, we tend to be much more aware of cultural differences (“diversity”) than economic ones (“inequality”).<sup>11</sup> The following project therefore takes as its starting point the insistence that the social sciences and the humanities can speak to each other, and that literary study is the better for this. The “harder,” more abstracting language of world-systems theory can provide us with insight into the material conditions of production that helped shape literary production – especially the transnational literary productions of the British Atlantic – while literary studies can reveal the cultural forms that accommodated individuals, classes, and nations to particular economic forms.

My dissertation thus agrees with Franco Moretti in one respect: abstraction is good. “Distance,” Moretti explains, “is... not an obstacle, but a *specific form of knowledge*: fewer elements, hence a sharper sense of their overall interconnection” (*Graphs, Maps, Trees*, 1). *Interconnection*, in my view, is the central theme to take away from Moretti's “abstract literary history.” By widening our perspective to the literary and economic *forms* – the global networks tying together discrepant national economies; the ebb and flow of genres across time – we can begin to see how they interconnect on the more abstract plane of the world-system. After all, as Fredric Jameson famously argues in *The Political Unconscious*, literary form is inherently social, and so we might expect the more abstract level of literary and economic form to be the site where the two meet and interact. But in contrast to Moretti, I focus more on what Immanuel

Wallerstein calls “the unexcluded middle”: that perspective from which one can see both the individual particularities of history (individual texts, persons, cultures) *and* the deep structures underlying them (“Time and Duration,” 160). Moreover, I contend that literary texts are constantly moving back and forth between the two – that the intimate, affective space of narrative molds economic forms as much as economic forms mold literary ones. This affective space is what literature, and literary studies, tackle best; and it is the space where the following pages linger in the hopes of describing a literary world-system.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> My years for the “long” twentieth century are taken from Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century*, which I discuss in chapter 1.

<sup>2</sup> Some of the more influential of these study would include György Lukács, *The Historical Novel*; Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*; Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740*; and Ian Watt, *The Rose of the Novel*.

<sup>3</sup> Greenblatt is glossing Joel Fineman, “The History of the Anecdote: Fiction and Fiction.” Eric Hayot notes that neither the singularity of the anecdote nor its referential status should be taken at face value: “One need only image the effect of [the] same sentences cited and commented on separately over the course of a few pages to get some sense of how the experience of these sentences as a “single event” depends on the way in which Greenblatt cites them and makes them such a shocking, powerful thing to read” (*The Hypothetical Mandarin*, 43).

<sup>4</sup> David Palumbo-Liu, Bruce Robbins, and Nirvana Tanoukhi elaborate on what a “contingency-filled account” of the world-system might look like in their introduction to *Immanuel Wallerstein and the Problem of the World: System, Scale, Culture*.

<sup>5</sup> See Damrosch, *What is World Literature?*; Apter, *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature*; Dimock, *Through Other Continents*; Pizer, *The Idea of World Literature: History and Pedagogical Practice*; Moretti, “Conjectures on World Literature” and “More Conjectures”; and Valishini Cooppan, *Worlds Within: National Narratives and Global Connections in Postcolonial Writing*.

<sup>6</sup> See Said, *Orientalism and Culture and Imperialism*; Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*; and Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics and A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*.

<sup>7</sup> See Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks and The Wretched of the Earth*; Memmi, *the Colonizer and the Colonized*.

<sup>8</sup> Kevin H. O’Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *Globalization and History: The Evolution of a Nineteenth Century Atlantic Economy*, and Harold James, *The End of Globalization: Lessons from the Great Depression*, present two of the more comprehensive and insightful accounts of nineteenth and early twentieth-century “globalization.”

<sup>9</sup> Moretti lays out his project of “distance reading” in “Conjectures on World Literature” and “More Conjectures.” For examples of “distance reading” in action, see Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800-1900* and *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History*.

<sup>10</sup> The transnational turn was heavily influenced by work in sociology, geography, and economics, including David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*; Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: The Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, and Michael Hardt and Antonio

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Negri, *Empire*. Within literary studies, important contributions to the transnational turn include Bruce Robbins, *Feeling Global: Internationalism in Distress*, and Franco Moretti, *The Modern Epic*. For an excellent overview of the transnational turn, see the essays collected in Liam Cornell and Nicky Marsh, eds., *Literature and Globalization*.

<sup>11</sup> See in particular Michaels's *The Trouble with Diversity: How We Learned to Love Identity and Ignore Inequality*.

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## CHAPTER I

### AFFECTIVE WORLD-SYSTEMS AND THE ATLANTIC ECONOMY

We can always pinpoint differences, it is the easiest of all scholarly tasks, since everything is always different in some ways from everything else across time and space. What is harder and takes priority is to discover similarities.

- Immanuel Wallerstein

In 1960, Aidan Higgins returned from a two-year stay in South Africa to his native Ireland. Higgins's journey to South Africa had been a formative one: there, he had met his first wife, Jill Anders; and his imagistic diary of these years, *Images of Africa*, would remain one of his finest pieces of travel writing. But Higgins's trip to South Africa more than likely would number among the lost annals of literary history if not for the fact that it while there he began drafting his first novel, *Langrishe, Go Down* (1966). Though most famous for being blisteringly attacked by Seamus Deane as an index of "the poverty of the Irish novelistic tradition," *Langrishe, Go Down* was also the opening salvo in a widespread reinvention of the Anglo-Irish plantation house novel – more commonly known as the "Big House" novel (*Celtic Revivals*, 32). For Higgins, the Big House was less the fading "aristocratic" fantasy Deane condemns than the epicenter of the final death throes of European cultural supremacy. Borrowing liberally from his diaries and travel sketches, Higgins translated what he viewed as an aging, "carbonized," Afrikaner civilization "at world's end" into the setting of the 1930s Anglo-Irish plantation (*Images of Africa*, 17). Projecting the traits he found in the Dutch-Germanic Afrikaners onto the figure of Otto Beck, a self-exiled German intellectual with fascist leanings, Higgins hints that arid scholasticism, like European colonialism, has finally reached a decadent impasse. As the

narrative progresses and Otto initiates an affair with Imogen Langrishe, the youngest daughter of the ailing Langrishe line on whose estate Otto is living, Higgins increasingly draws out the overlap between Otto's studies and an imperialist mindset. Imogen's masochist desire to be the "abject slave of her foreign conqueror" mixes together with Otto's prejudices about "culturally inferior nations" and "'culturally insignificant' individuals" to produce an image of a culture eagerly awaiting violation (159-60). Imperialism, racism, and misogyny are all shown to be the predicate of an intimate will-to-destruction whose prime exemplar may have been Nazi ideology, but whose logical correlates include European imperialism. And the consequences of this death drive are the familiar hallmarks of twentieth-century Irish and European history: the end of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy (Imogen is the only member of her family alive at novel's end), the retreat of European imperialism, and a cultural legacy that, post-Holocaust, seems untenable as a universal model of Enlightenment.

At the same time, Higgin's reworking of Afrikaner colonialism within the confines of the Anglo-Irish farm produces an ambivalent tension between the end of imperialism and the Anglo-Irish plantation's continued sociocultural relevance. On the one hand, press clippings from the novel's final pages narrate the end "of the mighty Empire of the Habsburgs" and its new "existence as a Nazi state," drawing a parallel between the decline of the Austrian aristocracy, the twilight of Big House culture, and the rise of the rationalized nation-state (245). Neither ethnically Irish nor a modern, rationalized professional class, the Anglo-Irish appear doomed to be "wiped out" entirely in the transition from territorial empire to an economic world-system structured around autonomous nation-states (250). On the other hand, Otto and Imogen's sadomasochist relationship ultimately points to a détente between global institutions – whether politico-imperial or economic – and the sovereign nation-state. Symbiotically wounding one



another while also wanting to be wounded in turn, Otto and Imogen's alternating destructiveness and asceticism reconcile Nazism's global (and racist) pretensions with Ireland's isolationism, allowing each ideology its insistent, totalizing sway while syncopating their exchanges into a harmonious, if volatile, balance. And by enacting this titanic yet intimate struggle in the plantation's isolated expanses, Higgins suggests that these rhythmic negotiations take place, not in Europe's urban metropolises, but "at world's end" – at those outposts suturing together Europe and the colonial periphery.

What Higgins's novel seems to intimate is that even if the Anglo-Irish plantation and British imperial enterprise have collapsed, other types of *emotional* mediation have surged in to fill the void between global and national institutions in the former British Empire. These emotional syncopations may differ in kind from the sorts of transactions that had dominated life for centuries on the colonial plantation, but they nevertheless possess a structural kinship with their imperial predecessors. We could label this kinship "neocolonialism," as has been done by a Marxist-revolutionary tradition stretching from Kwame Nkrumah's *Neo-colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism* to *dependista* theory. Or we could understand it under the heading "modernization," as the gradual generalization of capitalist institutions first established in Europe, spread to the colonies via imperialism, and now ensconced as the norm for economic activity across the globe. Or we might even think of it as the Freudian uncanny come back to haunt the decolonizing British Empire at the very moment it begins to disavow its imperial nature.

*Affective Transnationalism* investigates this structural kinship between emotional mediation and the economic transactions of certain transnational colonial enterprises – plantations and mines foremost among them. My aim in doing so is not simply to show how

globalization restages imperialism, or how imperialism had always been a cipher for capitalist practices of accumulation, but rather to specify the ontology behind such formal similitudes: What forces shape radically disparate objects (imperialism, the national welfare state, the global economy) into common formal arrangements within the capitalist world-system? What temporalities govern the emergence of these structures in and across epochal revolutions in statecraft, economic organization, and technological development? Under what terms can we conceive of the dialectic of unity and difference present in structures which seem to have their own logic independent of content? And most important, through what objects, activities, or persons do these formal structures materialize?

In pursuing this line of inquiry, I argue that Higgins's translation of South African colonialism into the Big House plantation testifies to the mutual role both nations and their literatures played in developing and maintaining the *formal networks* binding together an Atlantic imperial and, later, post-imperial economic world-system. If, in Higgins, the Big House novel and the Anglo-Irish plantation produce emotional dispositions capable of mediating between rising nation-states and an international politico-economic order, this syncopation revisits what might be considered the founding gesture of settler colonialism: the installation of transnational Anglo classes joining labor-intensive, export-oriented ventures (plantations, mines) together with metropolitan commodity markets. Following world-systems theorists like Immanuel Wallerstein, Giovanni Arrighi, and Stephen Shapiro, I will be calling both these plantations and mines and the Anglo classes managing them "semiperipheries"<sup>1</sup>: transitional zones that translate one economic logic (racialized, coercive, hierarchical) into an incompatible economic logic (liberal, egalitarian, individualistic) by building up trade and communication networks.

Under British imperialism, this Atlantic semiperiphery was neatly spatialized into a mercantile economy: the imperial metropole was consolidated in Britain, the periphery was located in the hostile expanses of Africa and the Americas, and the semiperiphery included those coastal outposts and developed stretches of the colonial interior joined to them.<sup>2</sup> But after decolonization, the symmetry between political and economic geographies waned at the same time as new technologies of speed waxed,<sup>3</sup> creating a more ambiguous space in which global economic flows traveled within and across national borders. Mediations between the periphery and metropole now entailed less a spatial journey back and forth across the Atlantic than a *subjective* journey through asymmetrical institutions and their associated ideologies: Keynesian welfare states tying economic life to national wealth; international trading blocs like the British Commonwealth that imposed regional trade patterns on national economies; international monetary systems like Bretton Woods and the sterling bloc that tied national currencies to international exchange mechanisms; and a finance capitalism speculating on and investing in industries across the globe without respect for national class borders or class hierarchies.

This study proposes that navigating between national political life and an economic world-system required ambivalent emotional dispositions that were first codified within the literature of two fading Anglo settler classes: the Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South Africans. If this pairing seems surprising, or the scope of my claims incommensurate with the place these literatures have traditionally occupied in literary history, I will be arguing that this has less to do with these texts themselves than with our own critical preconceptions about what the world-system is, how it evolves, and how twentieth-century literature participates within it. Where the canonical accounts of twentieth-century modernity have stressed capitalism's progressivist ontology,<sup>4</sup> world-systems theorists from Immanuel Wallerstein to Andre Gunder Frank to

Giovanni Arrighi proffer a model of capitalist history characterized by formal repetitions, cyclical expansions, and structural unevenness.<sup>5</sup> That is to say, the “creative destruction” championed by Marxist and Schumpeterian critics is only one half of a dialectic,<sup>6</sup> the other half of which shapes economic institutions, trade flows, and class systems into consistent *forms*: a stable North/South geography dividing the haves from the have-nots, oscillations between imperial and national-corporate organizational structures, and periodically recurring stages of production. By comparing Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South African literature, I will be suggesting, we can uncover a general set of aesthetic technologies directed more at molding the world-system into recurring *structures* than with the endless march of new styles, movements, and innovations.<sup>7</sup> And by turning to the economic forms underlying the trade, communication, and, most of all, emotional networks cultivated by these transnational settler classes, we can see how literature helped to produce the epistemological conditions of possibility necessary for such forms to flourish.

My archive consists of three literary genres rarely treated in relation to one another, despite their concern with similar semiperipheral spaces: the Anglo-Irish Big House novel, the South African *plaasroman*/farm novel, and the South African mine novel. Each of these genres provides numerous examples of authors developing new structures of feeling in order to mediate between nascent nation-states and economic globalization, from Bernard Shaw and Olive Schreiner’s concerns with harnessing sentiment in the interests of impersonal state economic institutions (chapter 2), to Sarah Gertrude Millin’s use of envy to claim inclusion in a transnational financial community (chapter 3), to Elizabeth Bowen’s use of affective fluctuations to rationalize a cyclical, nation-centric historiography for the Anglo-Irish plantation (chapter 4). But what makes these texts central to a literary-critical analysis of the world-system is the way in

which they *allegorize* emerging transnational structures of feeling within the vocabulary of older, more familiar networks. By “allegory,” I mean to allude to the narrow definition Walter Benjamin assigns this term in his “Theses on the Philosophy of History”: aesthetic images that seize on a similitude between past and present and eradicate the distance between them (“Theses on the Philosophy of History,” 263). Such allegories, by their very nature, hypothesize a philosophy of history centered around repetition, and identify artistic forms as the media which visualize these repetitions (Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic*, 14-31). In other words, if Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South African writers might be accused of nostalgically clinging to the old spaces of imperial rule, their stoic descriptions of the collapse of the Atlantic economy in which they thrived also posit an historical similitude between the *formal structure* of this economy and nascent transnational structures of feeling. And as these texts flood across the long twentieth century in regular waves – the 1880s/1890s, the 1930s, and the 1970s/1980s – they provide an archive for tracing the fluctuations of the world-system’s formal networks – for tracing, that is, the temporality guiding the world-system’s deep structures.

The authors I treat in the following pages have often been associated with a British-based literary tradition held together by an openness to colonial writers, an unsteady mixture of dissenting and privileged politics, and an often-feminized interest in the novel form. This line first takes shape in the middle-class socialism of the Fabian Society (Bernard Shaw) and New Woman feminism (Olive Schreiner), finds its high point in Bloomsbury’s welcoming salons (Elizabeth Bowen, J. M. Keynes, William Plomer, and, to a lesser degree, Sarah Gertrude Millin), and gradually migrates to the Anglo-American academy (J. M. Coetzee).<sup>8</sup> I focus on these authors for two reasons. The first reason is geopolitical. As the Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South Africans were cut adrift from a fading Atlantic plantation economy, they faced a troubling

double-bind. Unlike majoritarian settler classes in Australia, Canada, or the United States, nationalism spelled marginalization for the Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South Africans. At the same time, Britain's modernizing transformation from imperial power to financial hub and medium-sized welfare state was one of the engines driving the destruction of its imperial plantation economy. Fortunately for writers from these classes, aesthetic enclaves like the Bloomsbury Group supplied havens from which to express a cosmopolitan sensibility spanning both Britain and its colonies, a sensibility that was rapidly vanishing in the colonies themselves. To the extent that colonial writers' attraction to the Fabians, Bloomsbury, or the Anglo-American university reflected an investment in the continued existence of colonial cosmopolitanism, it might be categorized as a broadly conservative effort to reinvent class hegemony within cultural, rather than economic, networks. But as the heterogeneous collection of political positions held by these authors reveal – from Bowen's Burkean conservatism and Millin's racial prejudices to Schreiner's feminism and Shaw's socialism – these class-consolidating gestures proved efficacious precisely because they were able to negotiate between metropolitan and colonial, progressive and conservative, and dissenting and privileged political positions.

My second reason for looking at these authors concerns the specific mechanisms through which they negotiated this transnational position, and speaks to the literary dimension of this dissertation. The British literary tradition I investigate here is noteworthy for having developed a formalist approach to emotion best emblemized by Clive Bell's notion of "significant form." "Significant form," for Bell, was a formal arrangement of lines, colors, and objects that produced a specific emotional response in its viewer. Valuing abstraction in their principles, Bell's art writings pushed art away from representation and toward a Platonic understanding of affective response. *What* figure one saw was less important than *how* one felt upon seeing the painting's

formal system of colors and shapes. For the colonial and ex-colonial elites associated with the Fabian-New Woman-Bloomsbury matrix, this formalist understanding of emotion provided a way to establish, in theoretically nuanced terms, the changed substance of their transnational position. No longer economic brokers between metropolitan and peripheral economies, they were now *emotional* brokers between, to quote Elizabeth Bowen, the “democratic” colonies and “the European idea” – a transnational class teaching English and colonists alike how to “subdue their feelings” to the “impersonal” institutions governing social life (“The Big House,” 29). As Bowen intimates, institutions, like art, have their own formal arrangements, particularly those dictating the relationship between “democratic” national-political institutions and universalizing “European ideas” like imperialism and the global economy. And like Bell, Bowen and her fellow Anglo settlers viewed art in general, and literature in particular, as the ideal medium for revealing the significance of emotion to its audience. We are “creatures of feeling,” remarks Bowen, and “Creative art...cannot but illuminate, intensify and to a degree transmute what it dwells upon” (“The Bend Back,” 58-9).

The world-system that I am describing here is what Lauren Berlant would call a “post-traumatic” one (*Cruel Optimism*, 1-21). In contrast to the numerous excellent studies that have taken Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic* as their model for an Atlantic world-system,<sup>9</sup> this project focuses on the non-traumatic affects that orient subjects toward political and economic institutions and help them to cope with the clashing ideologies these often profess. The risk in such a gesture is that it may obscure Gilroy’s central breakthrough in *Black Atlantic*: that because, for Gilroy, modernity *is* trauma, the African diaspora’s dislocations can be seen as *the* representative image of modernity. The more ambivalent emotions I am discussing, then, would perhaps appear as the legacy of a class who provoked, rather than experienced, racialized

exploitation; and a modernity based on these emotions might, perforce, distance colonized peoples who were violently conscripted into modernity. As a response to this sort of critique, I would point to a heterogeneous collection of philosophers, literary critics, and anthropologists who have begun to conceive of modernity more as an affective promise than as either trauma or material development. Ian Baucom, for example, argues that modernity should be understood as a dialectic between “an abject ... horizon of expectation and desire” simultaneously “distanced *and* no longer distant” from its observers (“Township Modernism,” 237). For Baucom, that is, modernity *is* the promise of a modernization that can be seen and desired but not inhabited, or what he calls “the view from the township” – those shantytowns surviving on the edge of developed metropolises (237). The anthropologist James Ferguson makes a similar point when he observes that “modernization theory [has] become a local tongue” on the Zambian Copperbelt: workers structure their work-lives around the promise they detect in “western-style industrial modernity” (*Expectations of Modernity*, 84). My study builds on these critical provocations while expanding their scope beyond individual subject positions to a more systemic and historicizable structure. Using the insights of affective theory to talk about the structures of feeling underlying the world-system, I characterize economic structure as an ongoing dialectic between institutions (economic, political, and cultural) and emotional life. As I show, even if modernity is, at its most basic, an affective promise, the form this promise takes shifts alongside the world-system’s rhythmic tempos; consequently, investigating the world-system entails analyzing the “structure of relationality” secreted in each phase the world-system passes through (Berlant 13).

If the dialectic between institutions and emotion forms the core of this project, the discontinuous history of literary genre we can glean from the Big House novel, the



*plaasroman*/farm novel, and the mine novel constitutes its central payoff. Many recent studies of twentieth century, postcolonial, and world literature have employed discontinuous, multiple, or conflicting temporalities as a way of rewriting the canonical histories of the novel. This dissertation suggests that the world-system's structural rhythms provide an understudied materialist supplement to the utopian and psychoanalytic methodologies that usually drive analyses of non-linear literary histories.<sup>10</sup> In a sense, this project resonates with Wai Chee Dimock's observation that "different investigative contexts might need different time frames" (*Through Other Continents*, 5). But where Dimock is primarily concerned with changing the *scale* through which we read literary history, I am proposing we alter the temporal *structure* through which we do so. As I show in the remainder of this chapter, the world-system evolves according to a cyclical temporality variously described as waves, repetitions, and oscillations. By tracing Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South African literature against the world-system's movements, I argue that we can uncover an essential connection between literary form and such world-systemic oscillations. Big House novels, farm novels, and mine novels appear when the world-system abruptly changes course, providing a medium through which writers can develop the emotional orientations necessary for new structural alignments between local, national life and the global economy. And if this philosophy of history seems a touch deterministic, we might recall, along with Slavoj Žižek, that in capitalism it is "the form of the relation of production which drives the development of productive forces – that is, of its 'content'" (*The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 52). In other words, if these genres flood in as convenient tools through which to imagine new affective mediations in the language of older transatlantic networks, the solutions they develop are not given in advance, but instead form the epistemological conditions of possibility for the world-system's new dispensation.<sup>11</sup>

The remainder of this chapter sketches the historical and theoretical narrative that will underlie the close readings contained in my subsequent chapters. The first section notes how nationalist class narratives have provided a muddled template for Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South African historiography. Treating these classes as condemned to a steady decline, such narratives fail to explain why Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South African degeneration appears to repeat at regular intervals across twentieth century, nor why this decline should be focalized in a small set of conventional genres. The second section introduces world-system theory as a corrective to nationalist class narratives. I focus in particular on how and why the semiperiphery is uniquely responsive to the world-system's structural rhythms and what exactly these rhythms look like. The third and fourth sections then offer a world-systemic reading of the Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South African classes, showing how they acted as a transnational semiperiphery under British imperialism, the changes decolonization wrought during the twentieth century, and the ways in which their literature paralleled the world-system's oscillations. The final section then steps back to consider the epistemology of emotion found in plantation and mine novels. Tracing their representations of emotion to a modernist epistemology of form and emotion, I conclude by showing the relevance of present-day affect theory to world-systems analysis.

### **The Twilight of Settlement: Problems in Literary Historiography**

Theorizing the literature of the semiperiphery requires us to see the Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South Africans as transnational classes. And yet, cultural analysis in the Anglo-American academy has been resistant to reading class across national borders. The postwar New Left enshrined class at the heart of the Cultural Studies movement, but their nativist frame also indigenized working class culture and the class system as uniquely English objects. For

Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, and E. P. Thompson, class could only be read as a totalizing *national* system cordoned off from a larger world-system.<sup>12</sup> Thus Thompson makes a concerted effort in *The Making of the English Working Class* to celebrate the “peculiar resonance” the class system acquired in English life (831). England’s “traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional forms” were all shaped, according to Thompson, by a working class that “was present at its own making” – an indigenous, autotelic culture sequestered from foreign influences (9-10). This reluctance to see how imperialism and national culture dialectically informed one another – not to mention a similar myopia to gender and racial inequalities – encouraged a younger generation of political and cultural theorists (Stuart Hall, Etienne Balibar, and Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe) to relativize class as one among an array of markers of social difference. But while many of these studies were directly sparked by Soviet imperialism, their broader effect was to align class with identity politics. In the wake of the second-wave New Left’s critique of class, the concept ossified into one term in a longer string of contested identities – the famous trio of race, class, and gender/sexuality around which late-century radical politics have revolved.<sup>13</sup> Peter Hitchcock’s description of class is representative of this wider turn: “To the extent that no human subject is formed along a single trajectory of identity, working-classness is partial being” (“They Must Be Represented?” 29).

In keeping with this turn to identity, transnational literary studies have tended to approach class through the lens of the individual and his or her relation to culture. Indeed, while one of the critical truisms of class analysis is that it has enjoyed much less attention than race, gender, and sexuality, it might be more accurate to say that literary studies have internalized class to the point that historicizing authors and their work *demand*s declaring their class entanglements. To take an exemplary case: Rebecca Walkowitz’s *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the*

*Nation* identifies in cosmopolitanism a modernist stylization of the subject, one in which “cultural strategies of posture” “coincide with new ways of thinking about political critique” (17, 8). Walkowitz’s focus on narrative posture juxtaposes official “social categories” – of race, gender, nation, and morality – against the subject’s ability to manipulate his or her commitments to these categories (36). But despite her turn to aesthetic self-fashioning, which would seem to eschew objective social conditions in favor of individuated political stances, Walkowitz meticulously positions her authors within twentieth-century Britain’s social hierarchies. For example, according to Walkowitz Virginia Woolf’s evasive narration captures her material privileges and dependencies as an upper-class woman writer: “the mundane activities of an upper-class woman, but also the activities and existence of servants, immigrants...educated working women...and the dissident or angry” (81). Self-stylization in Woolf, then, becomes a matter of refining the visibility of one’s class determinants, in effect claiming them *as* components of one’s identity and producing a political ethic *from* that observation.

However, as a corollary of this turn to identity, the broader class narratives deployed by humanist scholars in the last several decades have been largely imported from nation-based historiographic and sociological models. When situating Woolf in the dissenting upper-class milieu of Bloomsbury, or early-twentieth century African writers as a professionalizing intelligentsia centered around missionary schools, or present-day Indian and African anti-globalization writers in the context of the “invisible” labor being done on tea plantations and gas works,<sup>14</sup> literary critics frame their discussions of class within tried and true Marxist divisions of labor. These models often differ in the particular weight given to certain social strata or in their structural dynamics – by focusing, for instance, on the rise of indigenous colonial bourgeoisies and their development of the nation-state, or on the subaltern classes passed over by national

development through a Gramsci interpretation of hegemony<sup>15</sup> – but they share a class paradigm determined by, conditioned alongside, or contested through the nation-state. This has especially been the case after the fall of the Soviet bloc, after which internationalist and universalist approaches to class lost their prestige in academic circles.<sup>16</sup> In the absence of an alternative international arrangement to global capitalism, the nation-state has become, as Pheng Cheah observes, “a normative source for defending peoples in the South against the vicissitudes of capitalist globalization” at the same time as it has been “contaminat[ed] by [inequitable/classed] economic and political forces” (*Inhuman Conditions*, 12).

#### Anglo-South Africans, the *Plaasroman*, and the Mine Novel

For the Anglo settler classes investigated in this study, such nation-centered class narratives have produced a series of incoherent historical trajectories. For example, Anglo-South Africans have always been something of a lacuna in twentieth-century South African historiography. The triumphalist versions of nationalist history celebrating the country’s passage from apartheid to the democratic “Rainbow Nation” represent the last century as a titanic struggle between a racist, totalitarian, and *Afrikaner* state and a black resistance movement slowly growing toward political consciousness and full-scale revolution.<sup>17</sup> Within this narrative, Anglo-South Africans appear less as a distinct class or ethnicity than as citizens of a pan-white South African state or as followers of a discredited liberalism. This failure to distinguish between Anglo-South Africans and Afrikaners derives in large part from the emergence in the early 1900s of “South Africanism,” which substituted a common Anglo-Afrikaner national project for the ethnic tensions, imperial loyalties, and Afrikaner republicanism that had divided Anglo and Afrikaners for the previous half-century. As nationalism deepened, Anglo ethnic ties

were deemphasized by Anglo-South Africans and Afrikaners alike, each of whom stressed their common “European” (read: white) heritage as the foundation for a South African state protective of Afrikaner culture but amenable to other “European” ethnicities.<sup>18</sup> Because of this dispersal of ethnic identity within a pan-white *national* identity, when a sizeable portion of Anglo-South Africans began to actively question apartheid’s racialized nationalism and totalitarian governmental structure in the 1950s and 1960s, they differentiated themselves from Afrikaners by emphasizing an alternative political tradition – constitutional liberalism – rather than ethnic characteristics.<sup>19</sup> As the most vociferous liberal advocate during these years, Alan Paton’s definition of liberalism is emblematic of an Anglo-South African social bloc struggling to find terms to articulate their dissent: “By liberalism...I mean a generosity of spirit, a tolerance of others, an attempt to comprehend otherness, a commitment to the rule of law, a high ideal of the worth and dignity of man, a repugnance for authoritarianism and a love of freedom” (Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 383).

But if liberalism seemed a feasible political goal for midcentury thinkers like Alan Paton, it has more frequently been critiqued for failing to deliver South Africa from apartheid to majority-rule democratic governance. Indeed, if liberalism has traditionally served as a metonym for Anglo-South Africans, the most remarkable trope present in popular narratives of liberalism is their encoding of failure and decline as constitutive components of liberalism and Anglo-South Africa, but without being able to specify a singular moment when liberalism definitively capitulated. This can be seen quite clearly if we look at three texts – Nadine Gordimer’s 1970s interviews with Johannes Riis and Diane Cassere, Zakes Mda’s *Heart of Redness* (2000), and Olive Schreiner’s *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* (1897) – which disagree as to when liberalism in fact collapsed.

According to Gordimer, Anglo liberalism deteriorated during the 1970s, when black radicalism began to highlight liberalism's inability to alter apartheid's socioeconomic edifice. As she explained in a 1979 interview with Johannes Riis: "You see, during the 1950s, we [liberals] believed very strongly in the personal relationship, in the possibility that in changed circumstances blacks would view us as fellow human beings – *face to face*, acknowledging all of us as individuals: the Forsterian 'only connect' lay behind what we did and believed in. But we underestimated the strength of the government, we floated I rarefied air; we did not recognize the economic forces we were up against and willy-nilly represented" (Bazin and Seymour 102). Gordimer is more sympathetic to her youthful liberalism here than in the early 1970s, when she categorically dismissed liberalism as a "failure" that "contained only our goodwill" (Bazin and Seymour 56); but even with the benefit of retrospect, she acknowledges that liberalism's greatest boom – its sympathetic handling of interracial relationships – was also its constitutive limitation. Liberalism rejected the language of racial typification present in apartheid ideology, finding in sentiment a way to "connect" with individual black Africans outside of racial stereotypes, but only insofar as it shifted focus away from the systemic and toward the personal. In other words, *because* liberalism isolated the "personal relationship" from systematizing racial descriptions, it restricted its field of effectivity to the inner realm of the emotions, where "goodwill" seemed the ultimate measure of political accomplishment. Indeed, by the 1970s growing radicalization among both white students and black Africans (e.g., the Black Consciousness movement, which I examine in chapter 5) had identified liberalism's limitations for all to see: the "government" and "economic forces" liberalism struggled against operated on a more widespread, systemic plane than did individual emotion, and it remained unclear whether noble feeling could translate into meaningful political action on this scale.

Mda's *Heart of Redness* echoes Gordimer's skepticism about liberalism, but traces its decline to the early apartheid era. The lone Anglo-South African in Mda's novel, John Dalton, rails against his fellow Anglos for fleeing South Africa after the first democratic elections in 1994, seeing in their retreat an indictment of midcentury liberalism. "'Yes, you prided yourselves as liberals,' admits Dalton. 'But now you can't face the reality of a black-dominated government. It is clear that while you were shouting against the injustices of the system, secretly you thanked God for the National Party which introduced and preserved that very system for forty-six years'" (140). Dalton's tirade unravels rhetorical utterances from their social effects in order to discredit liberalism at the supposed height of its popularity. Far from distancing Anglo-South Africans from Afrikaners, liberalism, according to Dalton, eradicates the ideological differences separating the two white ethnicities, enabling Anglos to voice their dissent but still reap apartheid's material advantages. From this perspective, liberalism's failure is coextensive with the post-WWII establishment of apartheid legislation: its inability to propose an alternative social, political, or economic frame to apartheid signals a hollowing out of the liberal project, its extinction as a viable political system and translation into mere rhetoric. The paradox, then, that Dalton locates at the heart of midcentury liberalism is that liberalism morphed into an oppositional language at the same time as it *stopped* being an oppositional political system in practice: its oppositional rhetoric displaced political activism onto language, which the apartheid government used to harmlessly co-opt liberal unrest into itself.

Our last history of liberal degeneration comes from Olive Schreiner, who locates liberalism's demise all the way back in the late nineteenth century. In *Trooper Peter Halket*, the narrative's eponymous protagonist spends the novella's first half defending Rhodesian imperialism to a Christ-like "stranger." As Peter explains to the "stranger," "We don't come out



here to work...we've come out here to make money; and how are we to make it, unless you get the niggers to work for you?" (28). Peter assents to removing political rights from black Africans because he associates political liberalism with economic inefficiency: "If we get the British Government here, they'll be giving niggers the land to work on; and let them have the vote, and get civilised and educated and all that sort of thing; but Cecil Rhodes...he's going to parcel them out, and make them work on our lands whether they like it or not" (28). As the novella progresses, the Christ-stranger eventually wins Peter over to his side by demonstrating the superiority of Christian-liberal principles to brute economic greed, but in the process he confirms Peter's sense that political liberalism and *laissez-faire* capitalism undermine each other's aims. And while Peter ultimately chooses political equality over economic opportunity, the shift in narrative focalization from Peter (in the novella's first part) to the members of his company (in the second part) suggests that acquisitiveness has triumphed over liberal egalitarianism. In the story's final pages, Schreiner even goes so far as to bury (political) liberalism alongside Peter, whose death at the hands of his regiment signals the foreclosure of liberalism in southern Africa and its relocation within a Messianic future of collective redemption, one in which, as an unnamed Englishman reflects, "I hardly know...whether it is better for him than for us" (69).

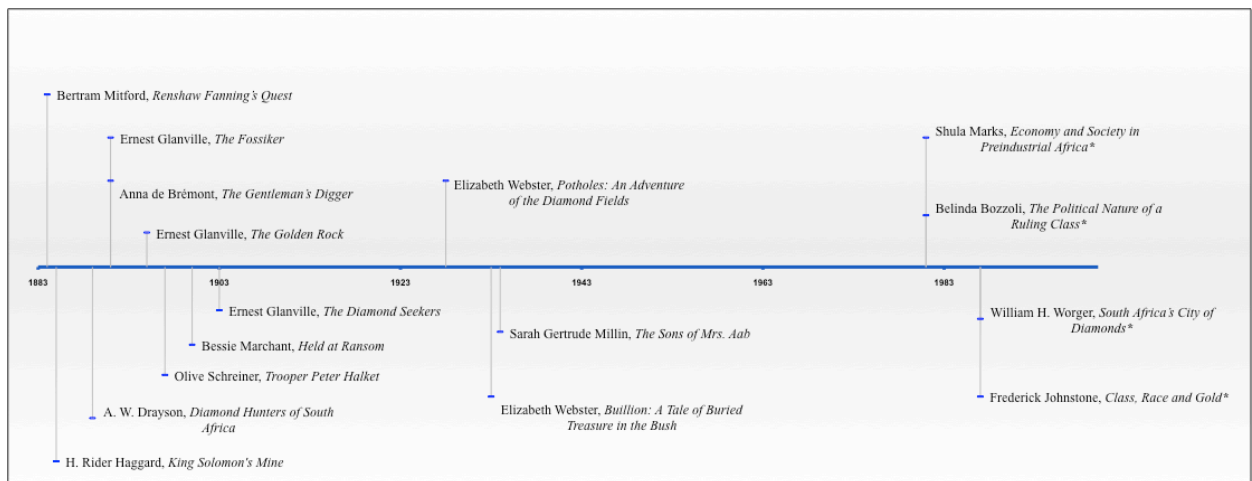
Schreiner's fiction marks a turning point for Anglo liberalism in South Africa. Not only does she initiate a self-critique of liberalism's founding mythology that will resonate throughout the twentieth century, but she does so by repurposing two genres intimately linked with British adventure-imperialism: the farm novel and the mine novel. During the same period Schreiner published *Trooper Peter Halket* (a novella revolving around Rhodes's incursion into Mashonaland to secure mining rights), *Undine* (1929; published posthumously, and set on the

Kimberley diamond mines), and *Story of an African Farm* (1883), her celebrated farm novel, popular romances turned to African farms and mines in order to legitimate British rule by imagining idyllic landscapes eagerly awaiting European domestication. The paradigmatic example of this trend is H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), in which Allan Quatermain and his fellow adventurers stave off war among the Kukuana, defeat the venomous, nightmarish mother-figure Gagool, and are rewarded with the bountiful riches contained in King Solomon's mines, whose fruits spring, without the application of labor, directly from the earth, and in which the Kukuana apparently have no interest. Similarly, if *King Solomon's Mines* can be said to aestheticize the 1880s' New Imperial expansionism by making military excursions look desirable and by effacing the labor performed on diamond mines, farm novels like Harriet Ella Ernle Money's *A Little Dutch Maiden* (1887) and Mary Ann Carey-Hobson's *The Farm in the Karoo; or, What Charley Vyvyan and His Friends Saw in South Africa* (1883) confirmed Africa as a site for masculine adventure and added a sense of its amenability to English-style country estates. Less grandiose than their metropolitan models, but also supplying a more robust testing ground for aspiring English patriarchs, Money and Carey-Hobson's farms blend domesticity and titillating danger, indigenizing the English estate within Africa while retaining the mysterious allure Africa entertained in the late Victorian imagination.

While Schreiner may have been the first to expose the critical potential inherent in the farm and mine novel genres, her recourse to these genres was far from unique. What is so remarkable about twentieth-century farm and mine novels is the extent to which they shadow one another's development, each erupting in a series of waves corresponding to moments of perceived liberal decline (see figures 1 and 2).



Figure 1: *Plaasromans*/Farm Novels, 1880-1990



\* Designates an academic text.

Figure 2: South African Mine Novels, 1880-1990. Note how both the farm novel and the mine novel disappear from roughly 1900-1925 and 1945-1970.

For example, while Schreiner's novels demonstrate a deep-seated anxiety over the compatibility of adventurist imperialism and liberal ideology, the post-WWII collusion between Anglo liberalism and the apartheid state Mda identifies in *Heart of Redness* was foreshadowed by 1930s-era Afrikaner *plaasromans* and English mine novels that circumscribed the scope and

efficacy of liberalism in South Africa. As I show in chapter 3, mine novels like Sarah Gertrude Millin's *The Sons of Mrs. Aab* (1934) intimated that liberal notions of credit, personhood, and recompense faltered when confronted with the boom-and-bust economics of mining. This disjuncture between South Africa and commercial liberalism was deepened in the contemporaneous *plaasroman*, in which Afrikaner novelists like C. M. van den Heever (*Laat Vrugte*, 1939), D. F. Malherbe (*Die Muelenaar*, 1926), and Jochem van Bruggen (*Ampie*, 1924-1942) framed a competing vision of South African pastoralism that stressed its Romantic-nationalist ties to the land and disavowed any participation in liberalized trade networks. Chapter 5 traces the same overlap between mines, farms, and liberal decline forward to 1970s and 1980s, when writers like Gordimer (*The Conservationist*), J. M. Coetzee (*In the Heart of the Country*; *The Life and Times of Michael K*), and André Brink (*A Chain of Voices*) parodied the *plaasroman*'s exclusionary tropes and limiting vision, and South African academics began investigating the capitalist system underpinning mines' racialized labor system. In doing so, both novelists and academics proffered a metacritical analysis of the systemic features (generic, linguistic, economic) informing apartheid at the same moment as liberalism was coming under attack for its failure to provide just such an assessment.

Farm and mine novels might be said to operate as inverted but conjoined genres, the former imagining an oasis untouched by liberalism's failures and the latter materializing them for all to see. This relationship should be thought of less as a stable opposition than as a shifting matrix migrating across ideological, national, and generic boundaries: the farm novel drifts from English pastoralism to Afrikaner nationalism to anti-apartheid critique, while the mine novel progresses from fictionalized complaints about liberalism's shortcomings to social scientific treatises on the mine's deep structural forms. Through all these permutations, each evidences a

continued concern with liberalism's terminal decline, and each stages this decline in discontinuous waves spread across the long twentieth century.

### The Anglo-Irish and The Big House Novel

A similar confusion between a pervasive sense of decline and an uncertainty about when, exactly, degeneration teetered over into death, haunts Anglo-Irish historiography. However, in contrast to Anglo-South African liberalism, there is little doubt as to what precipitated Anglo-Ireland's decline or what its most spectacular events were. The Protestant Ascendancy, first established in the wake of the Elizabethan Nine Years' War (1594-1603) and entrenched during the English Civil War, replaced an older Anglo-Norman settler class (the "Old English") who had more or less assimilated to native Irish customs and culture with a new wave of English and Scots landlords. These landlords were granted large plantation-style estates by Elizabeth I, Cromwell, and, later, William of Orange for their loyalty, as well as with one eye toward punishing the "Old English" for rebelling alongside the Irish and the other toward taming the combative Irish themselves. In their initial years, the Anglo-Irish governed these plantations from the comfort and security of Dublin, where the English had maintained a tenuous purchase in Ireland for centuries. During the eighteenth century in particular, Dublin became the center of a flourishing commercial, political, and intellectual culture. Edmund Burke and Jonathan Swift, two of the eighteenth century's most celebrated writers, were both born in Dublin and educated at Trinity College; revolutionary republican movements, sparked by the American and French Revolutions, garnered significant support from fellow Anglo-Irish Dubliners like Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmet; and under Henry Grattan's leadership, the Anglo-Irish wrested limited parliamentary autonomy from England for a short spell between 1782 and 1800. But as

commercial success bred fantasies of lavish living amid aristocratic splendor, the Anglo-Irish began to erect immense Georgian mansions on their estates and migrate into the country, styling themselves as a country aristocracy overseeing feudal plantations manned by Irish laborers (see figure 3). This mass retreat from Dublin to the “Big Houses” of Anglo-Irish lore culminated in the 1800 Acts of Union, in which Grattan’s Parliament dissolved itself and merged into the English Parliament in return for more lands and financial considerations from England.



Figure 3: Bowen’s Court. An excellent example of the Georgian-style Big House, Bowen’s Court was the family estate of Elizabeth Bowen (pictured here).

If Anglo-South Africans have been treated under the label “liberalism” rather than class or ethnicity, twentieth-century Anglo-Irish historiography shapes itself around this aristocratic dream. Heavily influenced by the literature of the Celtic Twilight and Irish Literary Revival –

Standish O’Grady’s monumental *History of Ireland* (1878-81), W. B. Yeats’s poetry and plays, and Douglas Hyde and Lady Augusta Gregory’s translations of Irish folklore – literary critics, historians, and novelists have read Anglo-Irish history as a steady narrative of decay centered around three spectacular moments: the Acts of Union; the late nineteenth century Land War and subsequent Land Acts, which abolished Anglo-Irish control over by funding tenant purchases of land; and the burnings of Big Houses that took place during the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921). The general parameters of this vision of decline were first consolidated in Yeats’s paean to the Big House, “Ancestral Houses”:

Surely among a rich man’s flowering lawns,  
Amid the rustle of his planted hills,  
Life overflows without ambitious pains...

...though now it seems  
As if some marvelous empty sea-shell flung  
Out of the obscure dark of the rich streams,  
And not a fountain, were the symbol which  
Shadows the inherited glory of the rich...

...What if the glory of escutcheoned doors,  
And buildings that a haughtier age designed,  
The pacing to and fro on polished floors  
Amid great chambers and long galleries, lines  
With famous portraits of our ancestors;  
What if those things the greatest of mankind  
Consider most to magnify, or to bless,  
But take our greatness with our bitterness?

Like O’Grady’s *History of Ireland* and later *Story of Ireland*, which hypothesized Ireland’s degeneration from the “heroic age” of Irish folklore to its present disenchanting state,<sup>20</sup> Yeats represents Anglo-Irish history as a degeneration from an “overflowing” “fountain” – with all its connotations of fertility, abundance, and continuity – to an emasculated, barren, “empty sea-shell.” Yeats’s goal, in this respect, would appear to be to circumvent English colonialism and

dispossession so as to fashion Anglo-Ireland as an Ireland in miniature: its aristocratic mien restages the nobility of Ireland's mythic heroes; its decline into bourgeois philistinism, Ireland's own fall into modernity.

But rather than convince his fellow Irishmen that Anglo-Irish were not only Irish but, moreover, a metonym for the Irish nation writ large, Yeats's history of aristocratic decline has more often been used as a rationale for *excluding* the Anglo-Irish from Irish history post-independence. After all, if the Land War and the War of Independence focalized Anglo-Irish regression, these were also the valorized events upon which the modern Irish state staked its claims to popular support and modern political consciousness. During the first years of the twentieth century, as Irish politics swung from cultural nationalism and its Romantic stylizations to a modern-oriented, mass political movement, writers, politicians, and activists began to deemphasize backward-looking projects of cultural recovery and stress instead the evolution of the modern Irish state. As a result, Yeatsian distinctions between an aristocratic past and a philistine mob reversed their critical valences, with modernity now appearing the valued term and aristocracy an anachronistic holdover from feudalism. Julian Moynahan encapsulates how this line of thinking marginalized the Anglo-Irish from modern Irish nationalism when he reflects that the Land Acts "assured the virtual extinction of the [Anglo-Irish] proprietors as a distinct, privileged, and exploitative class" (*The Anglo-Irish*, 11). Nor is he alone in contrasting a Yeatsian history of the Anglo-Irish to an evolving Irish nation-state. The canonical histories of modern Ireland – Terence Brown's *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History*, J. J. Lee's *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society*, and R. F. Foster's *Modern Ireland, 1660-1972* – all fall silent about the Anglo-Irish shortly after independence, implicitly endorsing both the nascent Irish state's sense of itself as Gaelo-Catholic and the story of endemic Anglo-Irish decline.



However, despite the broad currency given to this historical trajectory, Anglo-Irish novelists have returned again and again to purported scenes of their demise, seeking to answer a single question: if Anglo-Ireland perished, most spectacularly in the Big House burnings, what do we make of their apparent living-on in the Irish nation? These investigations take place primarily within the confines of the Big House novel, which in the years following Union had become a shorthand for Anglo-Irish identity, ideology, and class history. Early Big House novels like Maria Edgeworth's *The Absentee* (1812) and Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) used marriage between an English lord and an Irish woman to figure Union as a benign consummation between the two nations. In doing so, they voiced a self-interested and aestheticized alibi for Anglo-Irish hegemony at the same time as this class was retreating from national political leadership. This contradiction was jarring even to Anglo-Irish writers, leading later Big House novelists to introduce an ominous, Gothic atmosphere to their tales. As Vera Kreilkamp and Margot Gayle Backus argue, marriage, patriarchal descent, and the Big House edifice itself all demonstrate debilitating weaknesses in the post-Union Anglo-Irish novel. Marriage degenerates from sentimentalized romance to institutionalized violence, rape, and the (often literal) consumption of women by men in sensational Gothic tales like Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, Sheridan Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas*, and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Sexual reproduction stalls out in the arid lines of deracinated landlords in Charles Lever's *The Martins of Cro' Martin* and Edith Somerville and Martin Ross's *The Real Charlotte*. And the Big House itself crumbles through profligate spending and neglect in Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*.

Twentieth century Big House writers seize on this Gothic imagery and concentrate it through recent traumas (the Land War, Big House burnings). But these texts spread across the late nineteenth and twentieth century in regular waves, distending the narrative of decline found

in Yeats and Gothic fiction and relativizing its totalizing explanatory power (see figure 4). Thus we find an explosion of Big House texts in the immediate wake of the 1880s Land War: Somerville and Ross's *The Real Charlotte*, George Moore's *A Drama in Muslin*, Anthony Trollope's *The Landleaguers*, Bernard Shaw's *John Bull's Other Island*, and even, in a more allegorical form, Stoker's *Dracula*. As I show in chapter 2, these *fin-de-siècle* Big House novels differed from their predecessors in the attention they displayed to the economics of Anglo-Irish life, often finding in transnational institutions (dilettantish consumerism, British and colonial parliaments) a paradoxical source of renewal offsetting Gothic decline. As I show in chapter 4, this amalgamation of Gothic decline and (potential) rebirth surfaces again in the 1930s. For example, Elizabeth Bowen and Molly Keane each elliptically reference Big House burnings in their fiction, Bowen engulfing the country estate of Danielstown in flames in a disconnected epilogue to *The Last September* (1929) – implying that the enervated social class whose self-enclosed tennis parties and balls she has documented over the course of the novel cannot even summon the energy to destroy itself – and Keane razing Aragon to the ground in *Two Days in Aragon* (1941) as a conscious “atonement for her [Keane's] contemporaneous attitude” toward the Irish independence movement (Devlin ix). Most notable, Bowen and Keane's Big House fictions were generated not by despair, but by a sense that the Big House could play a vital role in post-independence Ireland. Bowen makes this case in her 1940 article “The Big House”: “I believe [the Big House] could [justify its existence] now as never before... [Th]e idea from which these houses sprang was, before everything, a social one. That idea, although lofty, was at first rigid and narrow – but it could extend itself, and it must if the big house is to play an alive part in the alive Ireland of today” (29). *Two Days in Aragon* confirms this recuperative impulse by fantasizing about a rebuilt Aragon in a utopian future moment – the mythic “second day” absent

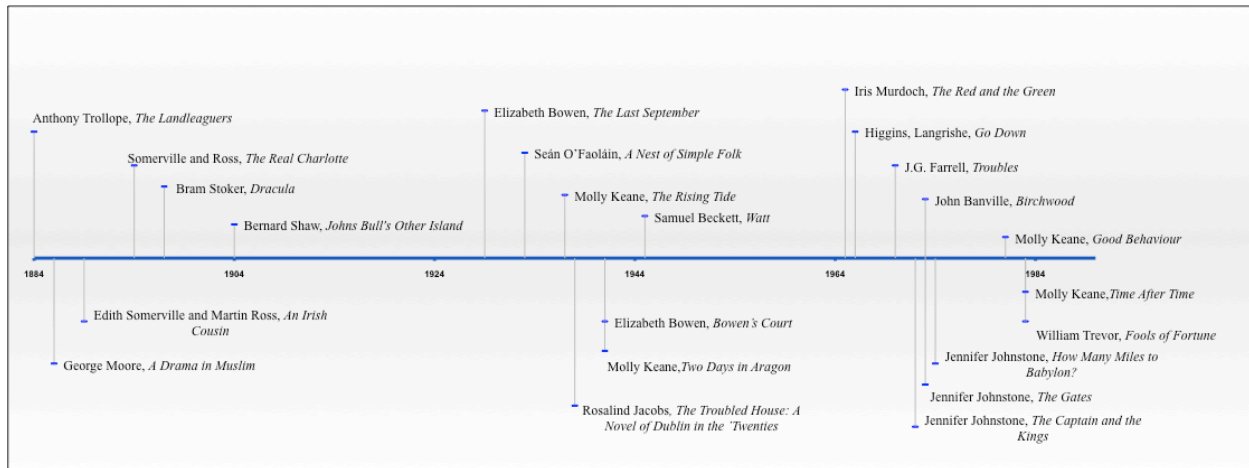


Figure 4: Big House Novels, 1880-1990. Similar to the South African farm and mine novel, Big House novels virtually disappear from 1900-1925 and from 1945-1965.

from the space of the narrative itself – and this refrain would later be taken up by a younger generation of Anglo-Irish writers in the 1970s (John Banville, J. G. Farrell, William Trevor, Jennifer Johnstone), each of whom employed the Big House frame as a way of reassessing Catholic-Protestant relations during the Northern Irish Troubles. We might say, then, that whereas Anglo-South African liberalism’s failure cannot be identified with one dramatic event, and is therefore continually pushed backward or pulled forward in time, Anglo-Irish literature grapples with an inverse problem: if the Land War and Big House burnings supposedly exterminated the Anglo-Irish, how does one explain their continued existence?

Making sense of these convoluted temporalities requires us to shift our perspective away from the nation-state and onto the multi-part capitalist *system* in which Anglo-South African and Anglo-Irishman alike operated – importing British political, social, and economic institutions into the colonies, “modernizing” indigenous production, linking metropolitan and colonial economies through trade, and channeling local nationalisms into economically “efficient” forms. As even this (admittedly brief) overview of Anglo-South African and Anglo-Irish historiography

reveals, these two groups shared not only a common preoccupation with narratives of decline, but also a common set of years around which these narratives clustered. Schreiner's rapacious Rhodesian capitalist finds its correlate in the Land War's tumultuous redistribution of farmland; Mda's cordoning off of liberalism in the pre-WWII period, Bowen and Keane's interwar depictions of (already destroyed) Big Houses; and the 1970s radicalization of Anglo-South Africans, the Northern Irish Troubles that lent an impetus to reassessing Anglo-Irish marginalization. By taking the modern world-system as our scale of investigation, we see how its *formal structures* provided a fertile ground for these (highly literary) narratives of decline, one in which deterioration was less a teleological goal in its own right than a medium through which transnational Anglo classes negotiated a shifting set of economic and political systems: nationalism and imperialism, the national-welfare state and economic globalization, territorialized industrialism and disembodied finance capital.

In other words, in making the leap from the nation-state to the world-system, we abandon those terms firmly ensconced in nationalist teleologies and replace them with structural categories more responsive to discontinuous temporalities. Where aristocratic decline immediately summons images of the transition from feudalism to capitalism, or liberalism the progression from imperialism to paternalistic liberalism to anticolonial militancy, a world-systemic perspective positions these same occurrences within circulatory, dialectical, or cyclical temporalities: the back and forth of translation and communication, the cyclical expansion of capitalist production, and the alternation between intensive and expansive modes of production. If Anglo-South Africa and Anglo-Ireland seem especially sensitive to these world-systemic flows, I will be suggesting that this was primarily a consequence of their being wedged between metropolitan and peripheral economies – by acting, that is, as a “semiperiphery.” But first, we

need to step back and say a little more about world-systems theory in general and the role the semiperiphery plays in it.

### **Long Waves, Repetitive History: Structure and Temporality in the World-System**

World-systems analysis, as described by its most influential practitioners, is all about structure. The first rudiments of world-systems theory were developed during what Eve Sedgwick calls the “structuralist moment”: “not...*that mistaken thing that happened before poststructuralism but fortunately led to it*, but rather...a rich intellectual ecology, a Gestalt (including systems theory) that allowed it to mean more different and more interesting things than have survived its sleek trajectory into poststructuralism” (*Touching Feeling*, 105).

Reflecting on his four-volume *Modern World-System* – in essence, the founding manifesto for world-systems theory – Immanuel Wallerstein suggests that the détente it inaugurated between history and structuralism may be its most lasting contribution to social science: “Social reality is always and necessarily both historical (in the sense that reality inevitably changes every nanosecond) and structural (in the sense that social action is governed by constraints deriving from the historical social system within which the described activity occurs)” (*The Modern World-System IV*, xi). For Wallerstein, the shifts from the nation-state to the world-system and from episodic, personal, and generational time frames to capitalism’s *longue durée* presuppose a sedimented structure evolving according to its own rhythms and tempo. Events that, when approached in national contexts or shorter historical spans, appeared to indicate a profound rupture – the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution, European imperialism, globalization – become in Wallerstein’s world-system mere blips, “no more significant than several previous and several subsequent blips” (*The Modern World-System IV*, xv). Drained of their singularity,

these events constitute instead a means for tracking “blips,” for speaking about them as having their own historical ontology and their own systemic structure.

In the larger architectonics organizing these blips, Wallerstein’s world-system is permeated by Marxian concepts and theory: it demonstrates an “axial division of labor” between core and peripheral “zones,” is wracked by “structural crises,” and driven by class divisions (xiii, xvii). And as with any good Marxian paradigm, its philosophy of history is broadly dialectical: diachronic history – the content of modernity, its new technologies, political creeds, and social customs – conforms to structural constraints: the form of modernity, its geographic and class hierarchies, and long-term cyclical trends. At the same time, content pushes back against those forms, slowly refining the world-system’s structure into new dispensations. Wallerstein’s “structure,” then, is not the timeless framework posited by Saussurian linguistics or Straussian anthropology, but the formal pole in a dialectic that is constantly moving through historical time. Wallerstein calls this understanding of structure “an unexcluded middle”: a “duration...that time affects only slightly and maintains over a long period” (“Time and Duration,” 162, 164-5). Though *of* a different time scale from chronological history, which Wallerstein calls “duration,” structure is nevertheless a form that slowly, imperceptible changes as it dialectically interacts with what we normally think of as diachronic “time.”

This dialectical component has been central to recent literary-critical analyses of the world-system. As Franco Moretti explains, world-systems theory “allowed us to ‘see’ a new literary genre [the modern epic] – and not just any genre, but the one trying to represent *the world as a totality*: a possibility that our discipline had never envisioned, because it lacked the concepts to do so” (“World-Systems Analysis,” 67; *Modern Epic*). Fredric Jameson has provided an even more expansive and self-consciously dialectical reading of the world-system,

seeing in the Hegelian concept of totality a way to compare Western and non-Western literatures. Drawing on Ernst Bloch's notion of the "non-simultaneity of the simultaneous" – that is, that multiple stages of social and economic development coexist simultaneously across the globe<sup>21</sup> – Jameson superimposes the famous Hegelian master-slave dialectic onto a mercantile division of labor, wherein peripheral societies produce raw goods for value-adding operations in the metropole.<sup>22</sup> On the one hand, Jameson's metropolitan "master" acquires "material benefits befitting his supremacy" (i.e., material goods from the periphery), but because he has no experience in producing these objects for himself he lacks a fundamental awareness of "the economic system as a whole" ("Third-World Literature," 85; "Modernism and Imperialism," 157). Cut off from a vital realm of collective economic life, trapped in his own solipsistic subjectivity, the metropolitan writer seeks to compensate for his lack by grasping toward an aesthetic form – "modernist 'style'" – that could "become the marker and substitute... of the unrepresentable totality" ("Modernism and Imperialism," 163).<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, since he toils for his own and his metropolitan "master's" survival, "the slave [i.e., peripheral laborer] can attain some true materialistic consciousness of his situation" ("Third-World Literature," 85). Where the metropolitan-master's version of totality is an enchanting, meticulously polished, but ultimately false illusion, the slave experiences "a grisly and terrifying objective real world beneath the appearances of our own [First World] world: an unveiling or deconcealment of the nightmarish reality of things, a stripping away of our conventional illusions or rationalizations about daily life and existence" ("Third-World Literature," 70). But as with the metropolitan-master, there is a dialectical twist to this insight: for the "objective real world" perceived by the peripheral worker is developed in fictional literature "out of predominately western machineries

of representation,” machineries whose forms impose certain ideological distinctions (private vs. public, poetic vs. political, sexuality vs. economics) common to the global North.<sup>24</sup>

Jameson’s thoughts on non-Western literature have been roundly critiqued for everything from their rash assumptions about the “experience of colonized peoples” (Ahmad 76), to their dismissal of heterogeneous interactions “between categories like gender, sexuality, nationality and class” across “the public-private split” (Howes 11), to their oddly inappropriate choice of exemplary texts.<sup>25</sup> And while I find some of these critiques more persuasive than others, the way in which Jameson filters his Hegelian reading of literary form through a mercantile division of labor has (unjustly, in my mind) seldom been confronted. For Jameson, the formal features of “First-World” and “Third-World” texts can be compared on the basis of their inverse positions in the world-system: as in mercantile economics, the “Third World” produces raw, objective “content” for literature, while the “First World” distances itself from the material operations of the world-system and manufactures unfinished goods into enticing forms – luxury items, the commodity form, and High Literature.<sup>26</sup> Jameson’s critical breakthrough is his insistence that these geo-economic scenarios exist in dialectical tension with one another: since form and content are both present in the Hegelian dialectic, struggling, like the master and the slave, against one another, metropolitan “form” and peripheral “content” will always be connected to one another, even if only as one another’s disavowed “unconscious.” But in developing this argument, Jameson collapses several types of form (capitalist structure, the novel, and the formal pole of the dialectic) and equates them all with one particular geopolitical bloc (the “First World”). And from this confusion flows a string of dubious analogies: “like” the novel form, capitalist form disseminates from the metropole to the periphery; “like” the Hegelian slave’s “objective” relationship to the “real world,” formalism is antithetical to peripheral labors; and



“like” the master-slave dialectic, formalism and concrete reality separate into different objects (different geographical locales, different forms of consciousness, and different types of literature).

Jameson’s dialectical approach to the world-system has been extremely influential, having been taken up by numerous Marxist and formalist scholars and, more implicitly, by Morettian scholars tracing the diffusion of the novel form from Europe to the rest of the globe.<sup>27</sup> But “structure” in world-systems theory proper possesses a much different valence than it does in Jameson’s theoretical reworking of the world-system. For both Wallerstein and the *dependistas* branch of world-systems theory (Samir Amin, Andre Gunder Frank),<sup>28</sup> structure is a holistic, relational phenomenon. As Frank explains in one of the founding statements of world-systems theory, “The Development of Underdevelopment,” capitalist structure relativizes “economic development”: though “regions experience what may...appear as economic development,” the “structure and development of the capitalist system on the world scale as a whole” hierarchizes nations into “underdeveloped” “satellite states” and “now-developed metropolitan countries” (8, 5). If there is a dialectical ontology to this world-system, it is less one in which metropolitan forms meet and converse with peripheral content, than one in which systemic structures provide formal constraints for *both* metropolitan and peripheral modernization projects. So-called “development” in both regions – from feudalism to agrarian capitalism, from agrarian capitalism to industrialism, and from industrialism to service economies – represents one half of a dialectic, the other half of which binds these regions into stable roles: peripheral regions supply the manpower for labor-intensive enterprises (in the eighteenth century, plantations and mines; in the late-twentieth, industrial factories); “core” regions house the markets, finance capital, corporations, managerial professionals, and consumers that buy, sell, and circulate commodities;

and semiperipheral regions translate between the two, exporting commercial products for sale on the world market and importing capital and technology for the development of export-oriented industries.

Most important for Frank, this global structure shapes how and why particular national economies grow, such that peripheral regions will *always* be “underdeveloped” vis-à-vis metropolitan ones. Even as they evolve from feudalism to export agriculture to industrialism, peripheral nations’ export-oriented economies ensure their dependence on more mature metropolitan markets and the continuing impoverishment of their own markets.<sup>29</sup> For this reason, Frank, like Wallerstein, refuses to see a connection between a given country’s dominant mode of production or its socioeconomic institutions and its relative level of “development.” Instead, his argument ignores technological, institutional, and political revolutions in favor of an unchanging set of structural functions that shadow development, as its unacknowledged dialectical twin.

For our own purposes here, world-systems theory’s concern with structure over content signals two broad theoretical breaks, each of which speak to how Anglo-Ireland and Anglo-South Africa become encoded within tropes of decline, and why these tropes proliferate across the twentieth century. We could label these breaks as: 1) a radically new philosophy of capitalist history; and 2) a structuralist account of the world-system’s “semiperiphery” as a mediator between incommensurable economic systems.

In terms of its historical imaginary, world-systems theory replaces “successivist” models of history with primarily cyclical ones: “long” waves, “cycles of accumulation,” and alternating “structures of accumulation.” The most commonly studied and debated of these cycles are so-called Kondratieff – or “long wave” – cycles, which witness a 25-30 year expansionist phase followed by a 25-30 year period of stagnation. But the underlying philosophy remains the same

regardless of whether one is investigating 60-year Kondratieff cycles, two-hundred-year-long “logistics” (Cameron), three-hundred-year-long cycles (Snooks), or five-hundred-year-long cycles (Frank 1992; Frank and Gilles 1993). An initial “A-phase” produces new inventions, new opportunities for investment, and economic expansion, while the subsequent “B-phase” removes impediments (inefficient labor systems, archaic technologies, and ailing industries) that had been preventing the full realization of these new developments. These cycles then recur one after the other in a series of interlocking waves, highlighting the paradox underlying their historical progression: on the one hand, the oscillation back and forth between a creative A-phase and a destructive B-phase drives capitalist expansion; on the other hand, expansion only occurs because of the *regular oscillation* between these phases, their inability to deviate from a rigid historical cycle. Thus we could think of the key works on twentieth century modernity – David Harvey’s *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), Anthony Giddens’s *The Consequences of Modernity*, Arjun Appadurai’s *Modernity at Large*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s *Empire*, and Jameson’s *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* – as documenting the transition from one cycle to another – a rupture ushering in a passage from “imperialism” to “Empire” (Hardt and Negri), or to a world beset by acute “time-space compression” (Harvey), but a rupture that replays, in a newly-intensified form, earlier breaks (the rise of liberal capitalism, the industrial revolution, and so on). In other words, the formal, structuralist epistemology of world-systems theory is not static or ahistorical so much as oriented toward temporal laws of repetition, laws that function irrespective of historical period or content.

Stephen Shapiro and Ian Baucom, two of the few humanistic scholars to extensively engage with world-systems theory’s theoretical foundation, reveal the relevance of this

philosophy of history to literary studies. “Because a world-systems perspective recognizes the spiral of capitalist history, where each long wave has both recurring and particular features,” Shapiro explains, “it allows for a new comparative study based on the analogy of similar moments in different long waves, rather than one anchored to a theory of teleological stage development, temporal continuity, or spatial contiguity” (35). What such a methodology would look like is hinted at in Baucom’s *Specters of the Atlantic*. Glossing Giovanni Arrighi’s *The Long Twentieth Century*, Baucom stresses how the world-system’s oscillations are tied to “epistemological condition[s] of possibility...which enable and clear the ground for...form[s] of capital which are an intensification and a wider practice of [particular modes of representation]” (21). Baucom’s main interest is in what he calls “theoretical realism,” a “speculative culture” that he associates with recurring periods of finance capitalism – in particular, those which took place during the eighteenth century financial revolution and during the latter half of the twentieth century (32). Both eighteenth and twentieth century “theoretical realisms,” he argues, train readers in the types of “fictional” value and objects – money, credit, insurance – necessary for “speculative transactions and mobile property” (32). They therefore coalesce around moments when “capital seems to turn its back entirely on the thingly world, sets itself free from the material conditions of production, and revels in its pure capacity to breed money from money – as if by a sublime trick of the imagination” (27).<sup>30</sup>

But this begs a further question: if one can reconstruct an epistemology of “speculative” objects through the rhythms of the world-system, objects that are nothing more than fictitious forms made visible and endowed with concrete agency, could one do the same for the world-system’s formal structure itself? Could one, that is to say, find in fictional forms a historicizable connection to, and engagement with, the formalized ebbs and flows of the world-system?

I would argue that we can, and that Anglo-South African and Anglo-Irish decline – and the genres in which they are articulated – provide precisely the fictional forms necessary to do so. The reason for this convergence can be found in world-systems theory’s second major breakthrough: namely, its theorization of the semiperiphery. One consequence following from a structuralist world-system divided between “developed” “core” economies and “underdeveloped” peripheral ones is that each region operates according to different economic, cultural, and political principles. For example, while core economies like Britain and France bounded into industrial production during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, peripheral economies not only “remained” mired in feudal agricultural societies; subsistence farmers, communal modes of wealth (agricultural reserves, common grazing land), and alternative trade patterns were forcibly *conscripted* into large export-oriented ventures, supplying dearly-needed produce and minerals to industrial hubs unable to feed their growing populations.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, during the twentieth century Europe and North America leaped into a post-industrial service economy by jettisoning industrial production onto the periphery, where Asian factories mass-produced the computer technologies fueling the finance and informatics revolutions.<sup>32</sup> In each of these cases, different modes of production also entail cultural, political, and ideological divergences: the egalitarian liberal politics emerging alongside European industrialism jar with the hierarchical labor regimes and despotic governance permeating feudal economies, and the mass regimentation present in Asian manufacturing clashes with post-Fordism’s ethic of flexible individualism. And as these examples indicate, if core and peripheral economies evidence a consistent economic, cultural, and ideological gap, what exactly this gap *is* changes across time – the differences between liberalism and feudalism, export agriculture and consumer industrialism,

and post-Fordist flexible labor and mass production cannot be specified under any single rubric.<sup>33</sup>

Enter the semiperiphery. As Stephen Shapiro explains,

Because the social action of the core is too incommensurate with that of the periphery, the world-system requires a calibrating zone that can mediate and “translate” the cultural and commodity economies of one sphere to another. It receives, monetizes, and forwards two kinds of commodities: the core’s “fictional” ones of credit, insurance, and contractual property and intellectual rights and the periphery’s labor power and natural resources. (37)

The semiperiphery in effect resides in the interstices between metropolitan and peripheral economies, guiding their disparate economies into a single, holistic structure. Better yet, the semiperiphery *is* the world-system’s form: its translations channel metropolitan and peripheral products into outlets that will be useful for one another (usually for the benefit of the metropole), and so provide both the means and the structure through which the globe’s economies can be unified into a world-*system*. As a result, the semiperiphery, even more so than core or peripheral zones, troubles any attempt to map it onto national space. Nevertheless, such a mapping is slightly easier for the eighteenth and nineteenth century world-system than the twentieth-century one investigated by this study. There, its representative spaces are those isolated outposts joining metropole and periphery into trade and communication networks: the plantations and mines where indigenous labor extracts natural resources for export to Europe and North American, and where settler colonies purchase luxuries from metropolitan merchants in return;<sup>34</sup> or the coastal trading cities where merchant classes exchanged credit and goods in plenty, making possible the flows of goods, money, and property between neofeudal zones of primitive accumulation like the plantation and the laissez-faire, contract-based, money economies found in Europe and North America.<sup>35</sup> Its representative classes are the settler classes and/or professional functionaries

managing mines and plantations and the urban merchant elites directing the distribution of commodities and capital.<sup>36</sup> Its favored industries are sizeable import and export enterprises: the slave trade, sugar and cotton farming, and silver and gold mining.<sup>37</sup> All of which is to say, in extended terms, what Shapiro proposes in a more abstract lexicon: the semiperiphery is the hinge connecting incompatible economies, the zone of communication between systems and persons who fail to speak the same language, the network binding varying modes of production into a total system.

If we combine this notion of the semiperiphery with world-system's cyclical temporality, we find precisely the sort of historical epistemology necessary for uncovering fiction's contributions to, and representations of, the world-system's structural forms. My hypothesis is that, like Baucom's "speculative" objects (insurance, credit), the world-system's formal arrangement also needs to be worked out in advance through fictionalized forms. But where for Baucom's eighteenth century world economy it was fictitious forms of value that needed to be established in order for trade to function across great expanses,<sup>38</sup> distance was no longer an issue in the twentieth century, by which time "speculative" values were already familiar objects, and new technologies of speed had all but eradicated distance (a point which I take up in more detail in chapter 2).<sup>39</sup> Instead, as Baucom observes, "the once emergent [finance capital] restages itself as the now dominant," such that finance capitalism pervades the global economy, bridging time and space and swallowing everyone into a worldwide, hyper-fast global economy that eventually came to be known, in the latter decades of the century, as globalization. Where eighteenth century semiperipheries sutured peripheral labor and resources together with metropolitan commodity markets, the twentieth century world-system witnessed the collapse of British imperialism, the marginalization of minoritarian settler classes Britain had exported to oversee

peripheral spaces and integrate their labor into capitalist trade and production,<sup>40</sup> and the rise of self-governing nation-states. The particular form that semiperipheral mediations took in the twentieth century therefore had less to do with physically transporting natural resources and commodities back and forth between the colonies, than with developing individual subjective orientations that could move back and forth between autonomous nation-states and a transnational global economy, one with seemingly no respect for political borders.

Furthermore, because semiperipheral classes build up the formal networks orchestrating separate economies into a systemic whole, and because this holistic structure conforms to a regular, cyclical rhythm, we can identify the fictional forms refining such subjective orientations within the literature produced by semiperipheral classes, as well as trace these fictional forms against the world-system's cyclical tempos. Specifically, I will be arguing that genres representing an older, fading nineteenth century semiperiphery – the Anglo-Irish Big House novel, the South African *plaasroman*, or farm novel, and the South African mine novel – supplied a conventionalized vocabulary of familiar semiperipheral mediations in order to articulate what were now primarily *affective* mediations between national political life and a global economic space: sentimental attachments that naturalized the global economy as a welcome sublimation of empire (chapter 2), or envious yearnings that indigenized global consumerism within the language of nationalism (chapter 3). In other words, these genres pick up on the formal similarity between two discontinuous historical moments – nineteenth century export production and twentieth century globalization – and encode this similitude within what Walter Benjamin calls an “allegory.” The decline of plantations and mining thus signals an end to nineteenth century settler culture, but also a reinterpretation of transnational mediation within new forms and between new objects. We might say that Big House novels, *plaasromans*, and



mine novels make visible the formal rhythms of the world-system, tracking the parallels between past and present capitalist structures in their return to the mine and plantation. For this reason, their generic histories are closely tied to systemic crises in the world-system, those moments in which the gap between emerging global markets and local nationalism is shifting most violently.

Emotion, genre, decline: these are the three terms through which, I am proposing, we can read the structural rhythms of the twentieth-century world-system. And in order to see the effectivity of these figures most clearly, we need to shift our focus away from metropolitan innovations and peripheral exploitations, and focus instead on semiperipheral locations rarely accorded a world-historical role. Locations like the Anglo-Irish plantation, South African farm, or South African mine.

### **Anglo Settlement and the Atlantic Semiperiphery**

One of the often-overlooked oddities of both South African and Irish literary and historical scholarship is the degree to which systemic accounts have proven more effective than postcolonialist ones in explaining these countries' colonial position. After all, one of the first and most lasting critiques of postcolonial discourse analysis has come from the South African literary theorist Anne McClintock, whose "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Post-Colonialism'" notes how postcolonialism erases "*continuities* in international imbalances in imperial power," subordinates "politics differences *between* cultures...to their temporal distance from European colonialism," and "prematurely" celebrates the passing of imperialism (*Imperial Leather* 13).<sup>41</sup> The relevance of this critique to South Africa is not hard to see. Would the country's "postcolonial" moment begin in 1910, when the Act of Union created a "white colonial state" of Boers and Britons? Or would it rather begin in 1948, when the Afrikaner National

Party came to power, thus completing the project of anti-imperial Afrikaner nationalism? Or could it have started in 1994, when the first countrywide democratic elections finally ended white minority rule? What initially seemed to designate a moment of rupture increasingly slides into the ambivalent repetitions we have already seen in South African liberalism, undermining the explanatory power of “postcolonialism” on two fronts: first, its inability to adequately name a historical period; and second, its inability to draw distinctions between forms of colonialism and how they impacted particular cultures (i.e., presumably the Afrikaner experiences of imperialism and postcolonialism would be quite different from those of black Africans).

The same discomfort with postcolonialism has surfaced in Irish studies debates over whether or not Ireland can be said to be a colony at all. David Lloyd, Declan Kiberd, and Joe Cleary have all advocated for “regarding Ireland in a postcolonial frame,” seeing in postcolonialism a methodology for critiquing “state-oriented nationalisms and their modernizing institutions” (Lloyd, “Regarding Ireland in a Postcolonial Frame,” 41).<sup>42</sup> But their calls for an Irish postcolonial method have been countered by revisionist scholars who see Ireland less as a colony and more as a co-partner in the imperial project. These skeptics point to Ireland’s unique co-constitutional status with Britain under the Union, its participation in the British military and overseas immigration to colonial territories, and its historical tendency to identify dissent in the languages of republicanism and radicalism rather than in anticolonial terms.<sup>43</sup> Others have tried to balance these perspectives, adopting terms like “semicolonial” (Attridge and Howes) and “metrocolonial” (Valente, *Dracula’s Crypt*) to describe Ireland’s ambiguous colonial position. The sticking point in this debate seems to be the *ethical* implications involved in labeling Ireland a colony: that is, whether Ireland can and should adopt a vocabulary of injured subjecthood similar to those present in African and Asian historiography, one which provides implicit

sanction to radical IRA nationalists; or whether such a position obscures their complicitous collaboration in British imperialism.

I find Joe Cleary's approach to this issue to be the most persuasive of the aforementioned critics, in large part because he contextualizes Ireland's colonial status within a multi-national Atlantic economy. As Cleary himself observes, "Atlantic archipelago" historians were among the first to develop a nuanced account of English colonialism in Ireland, years before the rise of postcolonialism as a field. Where nationalist history portrays the English as a foreign occupier,<sup>44</sup> and where revisionist historians point to productive exchanges and collaborations between the two countries,<sup>45</sup> Atlantic historians such as David Beers Quinn and Nicholas Canny show how early modern plantations in Ireland resembled contemporaneous plantation systems in North America.<sup>46</sup> Both Irish and American plantations were managed by minoritarian settler classes overseeing more plentiful Irish, Indian, and African workers; both plantation systems were export-oriented ventures; and both Anglo-Irish and Anglo-Americans were conspicuous consumers of English luxuries items. For Cleary, if Ireland is to be understood as a "colony," it is in this narrow sense of plantation colony, in which Ireland was linked together with a transatlantic plantation economy stretching from England and Ireland to North America, Latin America, and even southern Africa. Or, to be even more specific, if "Ireland is included in the category of settlement colonies...then it evidently belongs to a quite limited set of situations where the settler population did not over time become a demographic majority. South Africa (partially settled in the same historical epoch as Ireland was), Algeria, Rhodesia, Kenya, and Palestine (all settled in a much later epoch, when industrial capitalism had already developed in Europe) are other major examples" (36).<sup>47</sup>

Cleary's observation that South Africa may be the best point of comparison for a world-systemic reading of Irish colonialism is supported by the salience world-systemic models have traditionally held in African studies. Wallerstein began his career as an Africanist scholar and gradually moved toward world-systems analysis as a way to explain the peculiar mix of modernization and backwardness he found in many African societies. During the same period, Samir Amin began to work out his own theories on structural dependency and the world-system in relation to northern Africa. And most important for our own purposes, the first sustained attempts to elaborate on the nebulous concept of the semiperiphery were elaborated in relation to South Africa, in the hopes of defining the social, cultural, and economic conditions that paved the way for apartheid.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, from the postindependence disillusionment that settled upon African intellectuals during the late '60s and early '70s, and which was so perceptively captured in Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters* (1965) and Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), to more recent discussions highlighting the failure of the African "postcolony" to guarantee its subjects' welfare, one of the guiding concerns of Africanist scholarship has been why nation-centric modernization policies have seemingly collapsed in much of Africa, and how a world-systemic model could explain these failures.<sup>49</sup>

So how, then, can we position South Africa and Ireland within a world-systemic frame? The most obvious place to start would be with the transatlantic plantation system that Cleary identifies in his work on Irish colonialism. Prior to English colonization, Irish agriculture had operated according to a Gaelic system of communal landowning known as "*clachan*," in which family land holdings were scattered in a patchwork across numerous different types of farmland: for example, fertile land for potato farming, or mountainous regions where sheep could be grazed.<sup>50</sup> The *clachan* system was ideal for subsistence farming and small-scale, local trading,

providing Irish families with the assorted lands necessary to produce a balanced diet, but was poor for profit-oriented capitalist agriculture, which needed much larger swaths of land to produce agricultural commodities in bulk. For this reason, hostile English observers such as Charles Trevelyan, Assistant Secretary to the Treasury during the Great Famine, denounced the Irish as constitutionally unfit for capitalism. According to Trevelyan, the miraculous nutritive powers of the potato, staple of the Irish diet, ensured that “the people had no incitement to be industrious” (quoted in Bigelow 120). “[A]griculture of every description was carried out in a negligent, imperfect manner,” bemoans Trevelyan, while “the Irish smallholder lives in a state of isolation, the type of which is to be sought for in the islands of the South Sea, rather than in the great civilised communities of the ancient world” (quoted in Bigelow 121). As Trevelyan’s contemporary, Archbishop Richard Whately, observed, what the potato and *clahcan* system seemed to do more than anything was to cultivate an innate aversion among the Irish to “the necessaries, comforts, and luxuries of life...obtained by labor” (*Easy Lessons on Money Matters*, 43). In short, they alienated Irishmen from the sorts of cost-benefit analysis and consumer desires spurring (English) capitalist production.<sup>51</sup>

If the native Irish were viewed as anti-modern holdovers unable (or unwilling) to acclimate themselves to capitalism, settlement solved this difficulty by establishing a mediatory class in between Irish farming and English commodity markets – in other words, what I, following Wallerstein, have been calling a semiperiphery. Because of the potato’s nutritious qualities, Anglo-Irish landlords were able to lease their estates at high costs, which large tenants farmers satisfied by devoting the majority of their labor to market-oriented export crops. In this way, the Anglo-Irish sutured Ireland into British capitalist markets on two levels. First, and most obvious, their system of rent-based landownership encouraged tenants to sell grain and livestock

on English commodity markets. Not only did this nurture more “efficient” production and monetize Irish labor into hard cash; it also exported food products desperately needed by an industrializing Britain, whose population was rapidly migrating from the country to the industrial hubs of London, Manchester, and Liverpool and growing at an astonishing rate.<sup>52</sup> After the American colonies broke away from the British Empire, robbing it of its largest source for agricultural products, Ireland became what Kevin Whelan has called “the larder of the First Industrial Revolution”: the “ghost acres” that compensated for Britain’s shortfall in foodstuffs and thereby enabled massive urban centers to spring up across England, cities which otherwise could not have supported factory production (Whelan, *The Killing Snows*, 5; Belich 445). Shipping, farming, and the livestock trade all shifted toward Britain in the early 1800s, all made possible through the exceptional space of the Anglo-Irish plantation.

Integrating peripheral labor and resources into metropolitan markets and industrial production, export agriculture may be the most recognizable feature of the world-system’s semiperiphery. But Anglo-Irish landowners also – and this is the second level of “mediation” – purchased luxury items from Britain with the cash they obtained from rents, thus expanding the scope of Britain’s markets beyond its borders. Compared to the elevating rhetoric of “labor” and “industry” permeating calls to agricultural production, consumption proved harder to situate within a moralistic vocabulary. Indeed, one of the most infamous characters to haunt Irish literature during the nineteenth century was the absentee landowner, a profligate spendthrift whose sole purpose in life appears to be to indulge in as many hedonistic pleasures as possible among London’s fashionable districts. From Jonathan Swift’s attack on absentees as a “Mongril Breed/who from thee sprung, yet on thy Vitals feed...And waste in Luxury thy Harvests there” to Maria Edgeworth’s Sir Kit Stopgap, who wastes every penny he possesses before bolting to

Bath, absentee landowners drew the collective ire of Anglo-Irish writers, who regarded them as irresponsibly abandoning their (perhaps illusory) enlightened estate governance (quoted in Kreilkamp 53).

At the same time, the hysterical note these pieces strike suggest that the absentee may simply be an extreme caricature of the Anglo-Irish landowning class more generally – their compulsion to endlessly spend less a symptom of degeneration or insanity than a necessary supplement to British industries that were rapidly outgrowing their domestic market. Since the Irish, according to observers like Trevelyan and Whelan, lacked the necessary drive to stimulate either labor or consumption, the Anglo-Irish replaced them as a vibrant consumer class, recirculating the money they obtained in rents and thereby tying Ireland more tightly together with Britain's Atlantic economy. The Anglo-Irish thus staged in miniature what mercantilism and, later, laissez-faire trade enacted on a more global scale: they cultivated a semiperipheral zone containing new outlets for luxury goods outside of Europe's core economies, one which could orchestrate commodity flows back and forth across the metropolitan-colonial divide.

South Africa followed much this same pattern, and thus provides us with a comparative case through which to draw out the semiperiphery's essential features. Britain wrestled control of South Africa from the Dutch in 1806, but Anglo settlement did not take off until 1820, when the first wave of British colonists joined an already flourishing Boer community of Dutch, German, and French Huguenot descent.<sup>53</sup> Despite having lived in South Africa for upwards of a century and a half, the Boer economy, much like the native Irish, was primarily subsistence-based. The original community had replenished Dutch East India Company ships' supplies, but remained otherwise isolated from transnational commodity trades; and when the British seized the Cape of Good Hope and began to prepare its lands for commercial agriculture, the Boers fled

inland in what came to be called the “Great Trek” of the 1830s, choosing isolated autonomy over co-participation in British laissez-faire capitalism. The new Anglo settlers were thus left alone to build an export-oriented semiperipheral economy relying on wool, wine, and, beginning in the late nineteenth century, gold and diamonds. As with the Anglo-Irish, these plantations and mines operated according to a two-pronged principle: on the one hand, they exploited local resources and labor power in order to cultivate agricultural and mineral products desperately needed in Britain’s industrial hubs; on the other hand, they commissioned vast public work initiatives – railroads, housing, steamship transportation – that laid the infrastructure for the young settlements and connected them to global commodity markets (Belich 373-86; Lester, *Imperial Networks*). Once again, then, we see an emerging semiperiphery whose role appears to be translating between incompatible economic systems: Anglo-South Africans direct African labor toward English markets, while at the same time stimulating a colonial consumerism which otherwise would not have existed, given the distance separating black Africans and Boers from modern, luxuries-dominated “civilization.”

Perhaps most surprisingly, pro-settlement boosters represented Anglo emigration less as a “civilizing mission” directed at black Africans than as a response to the *Boers*’ failures as a settler class. Other British possessions in Africa (Nigeria, Egypt) tended to be administered through local tribal chieftains or Westernized elites rather than settler colonialism (Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*). But to the British, the Boers were a perversely regressive European culture who were not only less “civilized” than Britons, but who actively *fought against* modernization. Thus the Reverend C. Usher Wilson, writing during the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), condemned the Boers as “nothing more nor less than a low type of the *genus homo*... In self-sought isolation they have *tried to escape* the tide of civilization” (quoted in Krebs 117). If a



class of Anglo farmers and miners linked to both metropolitan and colonial economies was viewed as a necessity in South Africa, this was in large part because Boers were understood to be diverting black African labor into an inefficient, isolated agrarian economy when they should have been tutoring them in “civilized” market principles. This point of contention became ever more apparent when the British and Anglo-South Africans found themselves in need of plentiful African labor after the discovery of gold on the Rand. As Bernard Shaw acerbically remarked, the “Boers [are]... a small community of frontiersmen totally unfitted to control the mineral assets of South Africa” (quoted in Lawrence James 266). At this time, Boers’ ill-treatment of African workers – beatings, poor wages, and political disenfranchisement – emerged as controversial topics in both the British and South African press (Krebs 1-54). Since the Boers had proved, like the Irish, to be staunchly resistant to capitalist modernization, Anglo settlement and entrepreneurialism became the means through which a world-systemic form was imposed on the South African economy, as the “civilizing mission” that would coordinate between metropolitan and colonial modes of production.

However, as the nineteenth century sped to a close, the British world-system would abruptly begin to transition from a territorial, imperial-based mode of capitalist accumulation – one in which settler classes were an indispensable cog in the flows of goods and services between metropole and colonies – to a post-imperial world-system dominated by sovereign nation-states and a transnational global economy. Within this scenario, the semiperiphery experienced a holistic overhaul not simply in *what* it was mediating – say, agricultural goods and luxury items versus finance capital and industrially-produced crops and commodities – or in *who* it was mediating between – say, scattered farm laborers and industrial barons versus professionally-organized workers and financiers – but, more important, in *how* it was mediating between these

persons and objects. A new, affect-based form of semiperipheral mediation emerged during this period, one in which literature, more than settlement or trade, trained individuals in how to reconcile their proximate environment to a decentered, globe-spanning economic network. And the parameters for this new mode of mediation were first articulated by these same semiperipheral Anglo classes, whose literary productions allegorized affective mediations between local productions and global markets through the representative spaces of an older, nineteenth century semiperiphery.

### **Vanishing Mediators: Transnational Feeling, the Global Economy, and Literature**

The rupture I am proposing to contextualize within the interlocking waves of the capitalist world-system's formal rhythms fits nicely within the standard historical trajectories of both modernism and imperialism. Historians have generally marked the Berlin Conference of 1884, during which statesmen from Britain, Germany, France, Portugal, Belgium, and other European nations parceled out Africa amongst themselves, as a turning point in European imperialism: imperialism now entailed an intensified struggle for a shrinking number of territories, with European empires frequently colliding with one another in skirmishes that augured the global warfare of World War I. Similarly, 1890 or thereabouts has long been seen as the general starting point for British modernism, inaugurated by such diverse figures as Sigmund Freud, Friedrich Nietzsche, the French Impressionists and Post-Impressionists, and British Aestheticism.

But each of these movements was also influenced by, and an indispensable actor within, a contemporaneous economic revolution. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, British investors began to extend their direct control over colonial ventures, to the exclusion of local

settler classes. J. A. Hobson's *Imperialism* (1902) and Rudolf Hilferding's *Finance Capital: A Study of the Latest Phase of Capitalist Development* (1910) each described the mechanics of this process to contemporary audiences: small coteries of British investors exported capital to underdeveloped nations, who in turn modernized their facilities and returned a share of the profits to their foreign investors. This finance-based capitalism proved controversial insofar as it uncoupled a collective national-imperial project from a capitalist one. No longer was British capitalism a single, smooth system clearly benefiting all Britons, albeit in a hierarchical manner – the capitalists who owned and managed factories, the settler classes who supplied them with raw materials from their plantations, and the workers who toiled on the factory floor.<sup>54</sup> Instead, imperialism appeared to be operating exclusively for what Hobson termed a “parasitical” class of investors who themselves did nothing productive for either nation or empire. Profits abounded, but seemed to bypass the multiple levels of mediations that had previously organized trade and production, as investors stretched their hands across the globe directly from a booming financial sector housed in London (John Marx 20; Cain and Hopkins 384-5).

As I show in more detail in chapter 2, Britain's so-called New Imperialism and its finance-based investment schemes placed Anglo-South Africans and the Anglo-Irish in a troubling double-bind. On the one hand, direct investment in overseas enterprises eroded the nuanced class hierarchies upon which Anglo settler classes depended for authority. As David Cannadine argues, “the imperial constructions and transoceanic visualizations that resulted [from imperialism] were primarily (and unsurprisingly) the mirror images – sometimes reflected, sometimes refracted, sometimes distorted – of the traditional, individualistic, unequal society that it was widely believed existed in the metropolis” (*Ornamentalism* xix). In other words, according to the imperial imagination, every nation possessed a parallel class hierarchy, be it the

Indian caste system, African chieftains and their subjects, or, in the case of Ireland and South Africa, small Anglo settler classes governing primitive, racialized working classes, whose elites then in turn traded with one another. But the logic of direct investment constructed an alternative vision of empire, one in which British capitalists, working through new technologies of speed like the steamship and telegraph, could form a proximate, unmediated connection to colonial working classes: for instance, in the gold and diamond mines English adventurer-capitalists founded in southern African, or in the British government's decision to finance and sell Anglo-Irish plantations to native Irish tenant farmers. The anachronistic inflection this lent Anglo settler classes was best summed up by George Moore, whom Herbert Howarth called the "annalist of the death of the landlords": "We are a disappearing class, our lands being confiscated, and our houses are decaying or being pulled down to build cottages. All that has gone or is going" (quoted in Moynahan 144; *Vale*, 245). Where in the nineteenth century Anglo settler classes seemed to mediate modernity, now they were treated more as archaic holdovers impeding further waves of modernization.

On the other hand, an immersion within local nationalisms could not palliate settlers' declining socioeconomic position. Both Boer and native Irish nationalist movements identified the British and their settler enclaves as the source of collective injuries and political suppression. Skilled rhetoricians like Paul Kruger expressed a litany of grievances against the wrongs, injustices, and oppressions Boers had suffered at the hands of "the Britons," using these abuses as a rallying cry for Boer separatism (Giliomee 234). If anything, Irish nationalists were even more aggressive in their rhetoric. The specter of "Captain Moonlight," a mythic figure who was alleged to murder uncooperative landlords and slaughter their cattle, pervaded Fenian speeches in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Though such "outrages" were rare, the violent

rhetoric underlying the “Captain Moonlight” myth nevertheless lent an air of general anxiety and insecurity to Anglo-Irish society.

Chapter 2, “Fictions of Devolution: Olive Schreiner, Bernard Shaw, and the Sentimental Administration of Empire,” focuses on one particularly effective response to this double-bind, a response that will be restaged at regular intervals throughout the “long” twentieth century. As I show, Bernard Shaw’s *John Bull’s Other Island* (1904) and Olive Schreiner’s *Story of an African Farm* (1883) employ the imagery of fading Anglo-Irish plantations and South African wool farms – as captured in the Anglo-Irish Big House narrative and the South African farm novel, respectively – in order to develop a new, transnational vocabulary of sentimental administration founded upon, and mediated through, colonial constitutions. Of course, neither author is so naïve as to suppose that colonial plantations are free from the narrative of decline I sketched in this chapter’s first section. Rather, their imaginative refashionings of these spaces *depend* upon a radical break from the (supposedly) transparent sentimental bonds joining feudal lords and their loyal vassals. Both writers suggest that the different levels of development scattered across the British Empire make it impossible to transparently communicate sentiment between nations, classes, or genders; and as collective sentiment lapses, more immediate, individuated emotions – for Shaw, consumer desire; for Schreiner, personal sympathy – subconsciously connect subjects with a global “organism” of which they form but one part. For both Shaw and Schreiner, such individuated emotions splinter modernity into rival lines of evolutionary development: male and female, parasitic and productive, metropolitan and colonial. But if the decline of sentiment seems to spell disaster for neofeudal plantations, parliamentary devolution supplied an alternative form of local administration, one in which Anglo professionals organize these incongruous sentiments into a well-orchestrated system through their familiarity with liberal

jurisprudence and statecraft. Boers may not “feel” the right way about the English, nor the English the Boers; the commodities the English and Irish want might not be best for them; but the Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South Africans, more familiar with each nation than the other is, can help guide these feelings into an effective system.

The Anglo settlers sketched by Schreiner and Shaw might best be described as “vanishing mediators”: supplemental classes training individuals how to coordinate their feelings toward both national-political and transnational economic institutions – erecting, in the process, an interlocking world-system through emotion’s multidirectional forms – but classes who themselves remain outside the ambit of modernity, fossilized in an eternal stasis of mediation. By invoking the notion of the “vanishing mediator,” I mean not only to call attention once again to the overlap among Anglo settler classes, the semiperiphery, and a formal structure relatively independent of modernity’s specific content, but also to allude to perhaps the most famous “vanishing mediator” in postcolonial studies, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s “native informant.” As Spivak explains, the native informant lends his cultural experience to Western Knowledge-with-a-capital-K, but he can only speak within intellectual circles *as* a fellow academic or *through* another academic voice – his experience of being a “native informant” is foreclosed in the transition from lived experience to factum of knowledge (*A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 6). Shaw’s Anglo-Irish and Schreiner’s Anglo-South Africans present in effect the dialectical inverse of this native informant. For a fading, embattled minority, Schreiner and Shaw’s Anglo settlers are surprisingly visible: their consumerist proclivities and sympathetic affections are almost pathologically reiterated in plays, novels, journalism, and political propaganda. But the very verbosity attending their demonstrations seems designed to counter any lingering suspicions that they might not have anything of their own to say, that their schizophrenic attachments to

nationalism and globalization alike cover over a lack of social, cultural, and economic substance on their own part – that, in Bowen’s words, “Like Flaubert’s ideal book about nothing, [they] sustain [themselves] on [themselves] by the inner force of [their] style” (*Bowen’s Court*, 21).

As both my earlier literary history of Anglo decline and my methodological excursus on world-systems theory show, the transition Shaw and Schreiner document took place through a series of interlocking waves, rather than in any sort of linear fashion. Thus the ambivalent recuperation of Anglo settlers’ transnational class position we find in their writings is worked out again and again throughout the twentieth century, as the world-system progresses through its cyclical historical structure: waves crest and fall, new economic systems emerge as old ones perish, and the emotional dispositions needed to mediate between global economic institutions and national-political ones change accordingly. What I am proposing, in other words, is that those declensionary narratives that repeat in regular waves across twentieth-century Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South African literature – stories of liberalism’s failure to embed itself in the mines and farms peppering the South African landscape, or of the Big House’s destruction at the hands of incensed nationalists or calculating modernizers; stories that echo across the 1880s, 1930s, and 1970s – these narratives provide the staging ground for new emotional stylizations negotiating between autonomous nation-states and a global economy operating without respect for their borders. Decline, that is, becomes a way for these authors to think through new semiperipheral mediations: the Big House novel, the *plaasroman*/farm novel, and the mine novel constitute rhetorical devices through which Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South African writers document the transition away from a trade-based semiperiphery and toward an emotionally-mediated semiperiphery – the destruction of Anglo-centered trade networks and their formal continuity with a decentered, finance-based global economy. From this perspective, the Anglo-

Irish and Anglo-South Africans' tenuous position between nationalism and globalization becomes a sort of *felix culpa*, the reason why they are still able to act as transnational mediators – albeit “vanishing” ones – organizing the world-system into functional formal arrangements.

In mapping these generic histories onto the world-system, I use Giovanni Arrighi's schema of the twentieth-century world-system in *The Long Twentieth Century* as my historical template. According to Arrighi, the capitalist world-system oscillates between two forms of “cycles of accumulation”: a “cosmopolitan imperial” one that expands through *extensive* territorial accumulation, and a “corporate-national” one that expands through *intensive* consolidations of markets and corporate hierarchies. Arrighi explains the back and forth of these by concluding that each cycle of accumulation reaches a certain point at which the existing configuration of capitalist production can no longer profitably expand, at which time capital must remonetarize in order to flow to a new center (and mode) of accumulation.<sup>55</sup> He then charts this dynamic through four distinct cycles: a Spanish/Genoese “cosmopolitan imperial” one, a Dutch “corporate-national” one, yet another “cosmopolitan imperial” cycle (this time British), and finally an American “corporate-national” one just now beginning to fade. Moreover, each of these cycles of accumulation demonstrates its own cyclical temporality, featuring an initial phase dominated by finance capital, followed by a period of material expansion and commodity production, and finally concluded by yet another period of financialization.<sup>56</sup>

Arrighi's model has a much narrower sense of core and periphery than much of world-systems theory (or than the model I have been outlining here), but the cycles he identifies nevertheless prove useful in tracing literature against the world-system's rhythmic tempos. In particular, Arrighi associates the turn from a “cosmopolitan imperial” system emblemized by plantation and mine capitalism and toward the twentieth century's “corporate-national” one with



three moments of crisis. These crises map onto his finance capital-commodity production-finance capital historical structure, and broadly correspond to the moments of decline I have been tracing through Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South African literature – the 1880s/1890s, the 1930s, and the 1970s.<sup>57</sup> The first crisis consists of the Long Depression of 1873-96, when investors began to pull their wealth out of the traditional industrial centers and colonial enterprises that had dominated the British cycle of accumulation and shift it to American- and German-style corporations; second, the Great Depression of the 1930s, during which the last vestiges of extensive-imperialism collapsed, to be replaced by a new Fordist production system and Keynesian welfare state; and third, the sudden fall of Fordism in the 1970s, the ensuing return of finance capital, and the first glimmerings of yet another systemic transition, this time from a “corporate-national” cycle of accumulation back to a (perhaps Sinocentric) “cosmopolitan imperial” one.<sup>58</sup> Each of these crises deepens the transition from imperial capitalism to a corporate-national world-system: the Long Depression signals an initial break between the geographies of capital and empire; the Great Depression, the rise of national self-determination and the welfare state; the 1970s recession, the increasing centrality of global capital over the nation-state and the need to distinguish this form of globalization from that of empire. But the particular historical conjunctures that this post-imperial world-system travels through, and the objects it uses to coordinate discrepant economic activities into a holistic world-system, vary across these periods – a world-system characterized by asymmetrical imperial and economic geographies, after all, is a completely different arrangement than one divided into isolationist welfare states, or one where globalization is seemingly eroding the authority of *any* state form, whether national or imperial. The transition from British imperialism to a post-imperial world-system, that is, takes place neither through a single rupture or a steady tide, but through a

discontinuous series of breaks ushering in new structural relations between the global economy and national political life, a series of breaks centered around, and formed by, global economic crises.

The following chapters use Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South African literature to track these crises across the long twentieth century, showing how Big House novels, *plaasromans*/farm novels, and mine novels generated the emotional dispositions that paved the way for amalgamations of devolved governance and global economic communities, nationalism and transnational economic institutions, and rooted industrialism and global financial flows. I have already mentioned that my second chapter investigates how Olive Schreiner and Bernard Shaw sought to reconcile the New Imperialism and local separatist movements with continued Anglo-South African and Anglo-Irish sovereignty, finding in colonial constitutions a supplemental technology for the sentimental administration of empire. My third and fourth chapters extend this line of inquiry into the 1930s, asking how Anglo settlers accommodated their countries' isolationist and anti-imperial rhetoric within British-centered transnational economic institutions and the inequitable trade relations joining their countries to Britain.

My third chapter, "Envious Professionalism: Literary Internationalism, Anglo Citizenship, and the South African Novel between the Wars," shows how professionalism became a site for debates over the diffusion of British enlightenment to South Africa and Britain's continuing economic influence within the country. Beginning with an analysis of how the term "race" focalized disagreements between middlebrow writers like Sarah Gertrude Millin and avant-garde experimentalists like William Plomer and Roy Campbell over what an African professionalism was and should be, I argue that Plomer's *Turbotte Wolfe* understands this category as an unstable, ontologically ambiguous phenomenon – a fleeting metropolitan form

repeatedly pulverized by the destructive primitive energies native to Africa. At the same time, envy provides Plomer with a subjective orientation capable of installing professionalism in a middle ground halfway between reality and fantasy – as an object absent from one’s immediate environment (and so desired), but one which, in being desired, molds subjects into temporary professional forms, forms which are themselves destined to be eradicated by Africa’s destructive energies and recovered only in the retroactive shine of memory or derangement. The second half of the chapter then shows how Sarah Gertrude Millin seizes on this envious mode of professionalism in order to defend a conservative Anglo brand of South African citizenship at a moment when Afrikaner nationalists were increasingly denouncing transnational, British-centered economic institutions as pseudo-imperial agents. I suggest that Millin’s 1934 novel about the decrepit diamond diggings outside of Johannesburg, *The Sons of Mrs. Aab*, uses envy as a figure for documenting the paradoxical circulation of South African citizenship *through* transnational professional institutions (the sterling bloc, transnational insurance corporations), one in which South Africans’ covetousness toward British wealth sutures them into speculative finance mechanisms. In the process, South African nationality *itself* emerges as a speculative identity, one affirmed and valorized by *feeling* a deficiency vis-à-vis British economic institutions and speculating, within those institutions, upon this very lack.

Where chapter 3 discusses the productive tension between transnational finance and the isolationist welfare state, chapter four explores how the world-system’s cyclical tempos were rhetorically internalized within particular nations, classes, and persons. “Toward a Depressionary Theory of History: *Bowen’s Court*, *The General Theory*, and Gothic Equilibrium” situates Elizabeth Bowen’s memoir about her family’s Big House estate, *Bowen’s Court*, and John Maynard Keynes’s *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* within a joint

British and Irish attempt to recast the global economy's cyclical flows within impermeable national boundaries. Both Bowen and Keynes seize on a Gothic vocabulary of affective fluctuations borrowed from Big House literature to explain the periodic moments of turbulence that characterized both the British world economy and colonial classes. For these writers, I argue, the fact that economic downturns could be attributed to hysterical outbursts aligned them with the isolationist rhetoric of national self-determination, while also making such disturbances familiar, comforting, and open to correctable action by a knowledgeable professional elite. But where Keynes's theory of emotional oscillation envisions an advanced, cosmopolitan class of intellectuals, Bowen uses the same rhetorical maneuvers from a conservative perspective to proffer the Anglo-Irish as a group whose experience of affect-induced successes and setbacks prepared them for social and political leadership. By placing these two figures together, then, I highlight the degree to which the affective terminology elaborated by Keynesian welfare economics owes a debt to the Gothic tropes and temporalities of the Anglo-Irish Big House novel.

Chapter 5, "From the *Plaasroman* to Neomodernism: J. M. Coetzee and Formalist History," concludes this project by turning to 1970s South Africa and the fiction of J. M. Coetzee. I place Coetzee's attraction to modernist aesthetic practices and ideologies within a post-Fordist redistribution of industrial labor and language-centered services across the world-system, one in which industrialism was increasingly jettisoned onto peripheral locales while metropolitan production co-opted the modernist language of individualism, autonomy, and liberation within new service occupations. If the anticolonial language of liberation continued to hold sway in South Africa long after it had fizzled out in Europe, the United States, and the rest of Africa, I argue that this utopian discourse has to be seen as structurally distinct from its earlier

manifestations. Using Coetzee's lecture on the Eliotic classic, "What Is a Classic?", and his neomodernist homage to Beckett, the parodic *plaasroman* *In the Heart of the Country*, I show how poetic ecstasy provides Coetzee with a way of bridging racial, class, and linguistic divides – namely, through a modernist vocabulary of transcendence cast within the mold of the '60s radical movements. At the same time, as this ecstatic language mediates between separate races, classes, and genders, it manages to communicate between the modernist-inflected service economy centered in Europe and the United States and the racialized labor hierarchies present in South Africa, suggesting, by association, that liberation from racial-industrial capitalism is also a liberation *to* a post-Fordist language economy, one characterized by the modernist stylistic brilliance of a Coetzee. But if this seems to implicate Coetzee and his fellow exilic/post-exilic intellectuals with the sort of conservative Anglo mediation I have described in my earlier chapters, I argue that his writings also relativize the lure of modernity by calling attention to the formal similarity between his socioeconomic position and that depicted in the interwar *plaasroman*. To put it another way: his parodic use of genre uncovers the repetitive temporality guiding the world-system and stages it for all to clearly see, revealing how, for the semiperiphery, modernity is only ever a transient object passing through it.

These chapters do not exhaust all the world-systemic motions that can be found in any given period or country; nor do they aim at comprehensively documenting how any one literary genre functions within the world-system. Instead, I treat different aspects of the world-system and distinct genres in each chapter, in order that a full understanding of the world-system's formal motions may emerge from their intersection. Thus chapter 2 focuses on the growth of autonomous national-political institutions and their relation to a globalizing economy; chapter 3 situates transnational professionalism alongside the development of the welfare state, while

chapter 4 reverses the previous chapter's extra-national perspective and asks how the world-system's cyclical rhythms were internalized in turn by the nation-state; and chapter 5 explores the ontology behind semiperipheral mediumhood. Each chapter also deploys different terms for the world-system's rhythmic tempos: syncopation (chapter 2), circulation (chapter 3), cycles (chapter 4), and repetition (chapter 5). My purpose in using this varying set of terms is to bridge individual authors' own partial perspectives on the world-system and my own theoretical apparatus. For this reason, I phrase each writer's engagement with the world-system in terms that would have been familiar to them, or in terms that are compatible with their own, allowing the conceptual similarities between them to speak for their common insights into the world-system.

### **Formalist Emotion: Literature in the World-System**

This leaves us with one last theoretical question, a question that might be considered the knot tying together literature and the world-system in my project. If, as I have been arguing, the disjuncture between a post-imperial global economy and self-governing nation-states called for emotions that could orient individual subjects toward both of these objects simultaneously, why was *emotion*, specifically, able to negotiate between these objects, and why would *literature* be the central medium through which individuals did so? I have already hinted at two answers – namely, that emotion is able to feel toward multiple objects in the same space, and that fiction allegorized new emotional mediations within the language of older, spatial ones. But we still need to specify how the internal, personal, and individuating tenor traditionally associated with emotion operates on anything like a systemic scale and, similarly, how individual literary works possess anything like a systemic field of effect. The answers to these questions, I will be

suggesting, are one and the same, and concern the epistemology of emotion developed by a particular strain of literary modernism closely associated with the Bloomsbury Group, its precursors, and its disciples – one in which emotion conveys implicit stances toward particular objects, stances which themselves are conceived and captured in the work of art.

The figures who developed, codified, and disseminated this epistemology of emotion read like a who's who of modernism. Arthur Symons and W. B. Yeats's symbolist aesthetics first recuperated a neoromantic discourse on emotion, defining emotion as an ineffable, transient experience given form and solidity by the artwork. As Yeats put it in "The Symbolism of Poetry" (1900): "Because emotion does not exist, or does not become perceptible and *active* among us, till it has found *expression*, in color or sound or in form, or in all of these, and because no two modulations or arrangements of these evoke the same emotion, poets, painters and musicians...are continually making and unmaking mankind" (137; my emphases). In other words, for Yeats art does not just express emotion; it concretizes emotion into a form and, in doing so, frees feeling from its monadic interiority and unleashes it upon the social world, where it can become "active among us." Moreover, in a move anticipating the later arguments of Roger Fry and Clive Bell, he suggests that art does so through its formal "arrangements": particular collections of colors, sounds, and forms elicit specific emotions, thus implying an essential connection between interior affect and one's external environment.

The emotional expressions championed by Symons and Yeats gained even more traction in the wake of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism. Writing in dialogue with one another, Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford each produced "impressionist" manifestoes that insisted fiction "appeal to [the reader's] temperament" and endow its subject matter with "the emotional atmosphere of the place and time" (Conrad, "Preface to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus,'*" 132).

Ford in particular, like Yeats, saw literature as recording a palimpsestic conglomeration of “superimposed emotions.” But Ford departed from Yeats’s belief in the absolute equivalence between form and emotion by hypothesizing that emotions were habitually layered one upon the other, exploding in multiple directions at once: “It is, however, perfectly possible that a piece of Impressionism should give a sense of two, of three, of as many as you will, places, persons, emotions, all going on simultaneously in the emotions of the writer. It is, I mean, perfectly possible for a sensitized person, be he poet or prose writer, to have the sense, when he is in one room, that he is in another, or when speaking to one person that he may be absent-minded or distraught” (“On Impressionism,” 325). Though Ford does not go quite so far as to deny the Yeatsian dictum that one particular form will command one given emotion, even the minimalist scenarios he narrates are too cluttered with places, persons, and emotions to disentangle one from the other. Rather, Impressionism seems to presuppose for him an author and his audience’s being irretrievably embedded in a complex environment, one in which the writer does not evoke ideal, Platonic emotions so much as lead his reader through a morass of multivalent emotions.

If Yeats, Conrad, and Ford all contributed to a budding discourse on art and the emotions, the authors, artists, and art critics associated with the Bloomsbury Group produced the most definitive and lasting statements on art and the emotions. Bloomsbury has been both embraced and critiqued for the Kantian formalism propagated in their art criticism, relying as it did on a distinction between the “pure” emotions imparted by art’s purposeless purposiveness and political, social, and economic “actions.”<sup>59</sup> But Bloomsburians also shared an interest with Yeats and Ford in how objects could be construed not simply as physical containers but also as formal arrangements of emotion. Clive Bell’s thoughts in “The English Group” are representative: “Forms and relations of form have been for them [the Post-Impressionists], not means of



suggesting emotion, but objects of emotion. It is this emotion they have expressed” (193). What in Yeats and Ford was an intersubjective dialectic between a work and its audience here becomes an inherent property *of* the artwork; and if Bell’s article descends into vagueness at times – it remains uncertain how a form could “be” emotion without an audience to supply that feeling – it also paradoxically detaches emotion from the self and places it onto form itself. Rather than being a medium through which emotion is evoked, form *is* emotion for Bell: their unity exists in a transcendental, Platonic realm outside of everyday life.

However, while Bloomsbury’s engagement with form and emotion entailed a multidisciplinary dialogue between artists, poets, and fiction writers, the colonial precursors who influenced their work and the colonial disciples who adopted their program did so most frequently (though not exclusively) through the novel. Thus, while the texts I investigate range from journalism and propaganda to memoirs and economic treatises, most of the authors treated in this study were novelists first and foremost, or were so during the period I am looking at: Olive Schreiner, William Plomer, Sarah Gertrude Millin, Elizabeth Bowen, and J. M. Coetzee. And for good reason. British poetry was much more firmly rooted in the exclusive halls of Oxford and Cambridge, and those colonials who managed to gain entrance to these circles tended to come from the heavily Anglicized echelons of colonial society. (Oscar Wilde, Cecil Day Lewis, and Louis MacNeice would probably be the best-known examples, but Roy Campbell also gravitated toward Oxford before failing to gain admittance.) In contrast, Bloomsbury presented a much more open, egalitarian, and fluid institutional space, one in which ex-colonial transplants like Elizabeth Bowen could move freely in spite of their gender, race, or education, and in which aspiring authors like William Plomer could publish work for which their native countries lacked a domestic market. Furthermore, by the time that Bloomsbury had become a

well-known critical orthodoxy across the empire, Virginia Woolf's novels and her and Leonard Woolf's Hogarth Press had shifted the Group away from art criticism and toward fiction and nonfiction prose.<sup>60</sup> When for example Plomer sized up Bloomsbury as "a more variegated world in which ideas and talent counted more than property or background," he was reacting more to its 1930s prose culture than to its earlier forays into the art world (51).

As a result, as this modernist epistemology of emotion migrated from Britain to its colonies, it became more tightly associated with the novel form and with the Bloomsburian aesthetics popularizing it in the colonies. We can see this Bloomsburian legacy operating quite explicitly in this project's latter three chapters: Plomer and Bowen moved and worked within Bloomsbury's circle; Millin corresponded with many of Bloomsbury's leading figures; and Coetzee's female heroines openly claim inclusion in a Woolfian tradition of female authors. But we can also trace this genealogy backwards to Shaw's Fabian Society, whose middle-class socialism anticipated Bloomsbury's own dissenting attitudes toward nationalism, imperialism, and patriarchy, and to New Woman writers like Olive Schreiner who paved the way for Woolfian feminism.<sup>61</sup> Compared, then, to poetry and drama, each of whose institutions of circulation and canonization tightly conform to national contours in Ireland and South Africa, the colonial/postcolonial novel is a more transnational object, but also one more firmly tied to socially, economically, and culturally privileged cosmopolitan aesthetes.<sup>62</sup> One need only think of the Abbey Theatre's role in Gaelic cultural nationalism, Johannesburg's Market Theater's antiapartheid activist productions, or the *izibongo* ("praise poetry") lauding national heroes and their exploits to witness poetry and drama's nationalist orientation<sup>63</sup>; but one could also point to the relatively belated rise of the novel across the colonial world, which left novel writing mainly in the hands of settler elites during nations' colonial periods.<sup>64</sup> Regardless of the social, cultural,

and political reasons for this bifurcation, its lasting consequence was that a Bloomsburian epistemology of emotion coalesced within a particular class (Anglo settler elites) and within a certain genre (the novel).

By tracing this epistemology drift outwards from the British metropole to the colonies, I am proposing a spatial correlate to Tyrus Miller's argument that late modernism opened up modernist aesthetic forms to history (*Late Modernism*). As I show in the following chapters, what differentiated the Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South Africans' adaptations of emotion from their Bloomsburian counterparts was how they translated this discourse from the realm of aesthetics and philosophy to that of socioeconomic life. Where for Bloomsbury, Conrad, Ford, and Yeats emotion possessed an ideal connection to certain formal arrangements of persons, objects, and social situations, the writers I investigate deploy emotion as a way of negotiating between formal arrangements of concrete, historically-contingent economic and political institutions. My understanding of emotion as a social phenomenon thus owes much to Raymond Williams's notion of "structures of feeling." For Williams, a structure of feeling is a "social experience which is still *in process*" and not yet "built into institutions" (*Marxism and Literature*, 132). Because of their ability to express inchoate social investments, structures of feeling appear frequently during a "contraction, fracture, or mutation within a class," such as the one I have been arguing occurred to minoritarian settler classes in the transition from imperialism to a post-imperial world-system (134). Since imperialism's retreat removed the political institutions connecting a transnational economy with particular nations, structures of feeling flooded in to fill this role, particularly among those transnational classes that decolonization cut adrift from both a modernizing economy and anti-Anglo nationalization projects. At the same time, as Williams notes, these structures of feeling also reflect "emergent formations" struggling to develop; or, to

put it in the language I used earlier when discussing Ian Baucom, structures of feeling could be said to be the epistemological conditions of possibility upon which later capitalist institutions are built, the types of mediation necessary in the absence of a formalized imperial world-system.

For Williams, literature reveals these inchoate social experiences by presenting “a significant number of cases of this present and affective kind, which cannot without loss be reduced to belief-systems, institutions, or explicit general relationships” (133). But the particular epistemology of literary emotion I am interested in *orients* individual subjects toward existing institutions in a way that remains undertheorized in Williams. Not simply a linear, developmentalist evolution from one type of object (affect) to another (institution), the emotional discourse I analyze here is more concerned with acclimating individuals, classes, and nations to certain formal configurations of economic and political institutions.

To this end, I follow affect theorists like Sara Ahmed and Lauren Berlant and critics of professionalism like Bruce Robbins and Lisa Fluet who describe social, economic, and cultural institutions as soliciting particular emotions and emotional orientations.<sup>65</sup> My methodology can therefore be said to be descriptive and phenomenological. Like Sara Ahmed, I treat emotion as “an orientation toward something” that affects how “we move toward and away from objects” (*The Promise of Happiness*, 24). In other words, emotions incorporate the objects we feel *something* toward, while pushing other objects outside their field of effect. And like Ford’s blurred impressionist jumble, affects can orient persons toward multiple, contradictory objects at one and the same time in ways that codified ideologies simply cannot. In particular, ambivalent emotions like the ones I confront in the following pages – envy, hysteria, ecstasy, and even sentiment – tend to cement weaker attachments to objects than revolutionary passions like anger, hate, or love, and therefore are more susceptible to lasting structural contradictions (Sianne Ngai,

*Ugly Feelings*, 3-8.). But despite these weaker attachments, ambivalent emotions still possess a structural logic, imparted through the orientations they make possible, that can be used to chart how individual subjects inserted themselves into the interstices of political and economic institutions. They can, that is, be used to trace how groups resolve competing attachments to, investments in, and desires for the nation-state and the global capitalist economy into a workable formal arrangement.

As my preceding discussion may indicate, my project is less concerned with theoretical distinctions between emotion and affect than in how the two intersect in subjective orientations. Where Brian Massumi and other affect theorists distinguish affect – an immediate, subconscious, and indescribable “intensity” – from affect’s subjectivization and insertion into narrative meaning as *emotion*, I deal with the self-stylizations transforming affect into emotion – that is, with the circuit joining the two together.<sup>66</sup> In this respect, this dissertation builds on recent scholarship by Amanda Anderson, Rebecca Walkowitz, and Leela Gandhi that analyzes how aesthetic or *asketic* self-cultivation influences larger political, scientific, or ethical commitments.<sup>67</sup> But my approach to a specifically *emotional* process of subjective orientation entails that these stances are filtered through a phenomenological lens capable of reading the retroactive temporality Massumi assigns to emotion. Because emotion retroactively names diverse intensities gathered into a given subjective orientation, it remains a trace through which we can read the labor of orientation itself, but only when we understand that orientations *produce* the world we see, inhabit, and most of all *feel*. They provide the formal substratum guiding radically incommensurate objects, intensities, and ideologies into human worlds – personal worlds, national worlds, classed worlds, and even capitalist worlds.

In drawing a connection between emotional orientations and the formal movements of the world-system, I am not suggesting a deterministic model so much as a dialectical one produced in the collision between individual activity and the world-system. In the Hegelian logic underlying dialectic materialism as well as in affect theory, the owl of Minerva flies at dusk: knowledge is acquired in retrospect and tends to represent what *did* happen as the only foreseeable outcome. But if the Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South African classes I investigate in the following chapters were the pyrrhic victors of modernity, successful in reinventing their transnational position within an emotional lexicon even as this shift signaled an end to their commercial hegemony, theirs were not the only emotional stylizations present during the long twentieth century. Indeed, much of the existing scholarship on affect and early twentieth century literature has focused on how modernist and colonial melancholia resuscitated past social formations that had been marginalized by the onrush of modernity: indigenous systems of agriculture and communal housing (David Lloyd), or forms of racialized subjectivity (Jonathan Flatley).<sup>68</sup> But my project *does* suggest that by paying too close attention to melancholic attachments to failed social forms, we have yet to develop a fully realized narrative about the role emotion played in defining the contours of the twentieth-century world-system – and, as a consequence, the role that literature also played in capitalism’s twentieth-century evolution.

If such a project entails giving attention to a more conservative set of emotions than the messianic, utopian overtones informing recent work on modernism and the emotions, it also risks unifying a diverse set of ideological persuasions, writings, and political activities under a broadly conservative rubric. Within such a framework, Shaw’s imperialist socialism meets Bowen’s Burkean communitarianism, Millin’s pro-apartheid racism meets Coetzee’s anti-apartheid pan-racialism, and Schreiner’s intimate, feminist economics meets Keynes’s nation-centric

macroeconomics. But this, after all, is precisely what emotions do. They articulate complicit, ambiguous, and sometimes unwanted investments, disrupting political idealism and activism but also habituating us to the time of the world. They describe how we live, feel, and act in situations whose complex dynamics exceed the individual, institutional, or ideological. In short, they orient us toward systems beyond our own selves.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Wallerstein deals with the specificities of the semiperiphery in his classic *The Modern World-System*. See esp. vol. 1, ch. 2, for an in-depth historical examination of the emergence of the semiperiphery. A more targeted overview of the semiperiphery can be found in Stephen Shapiro, *The Culture and Commerce of the Early American Novel*, 35-40.

<sup>2</sup> See Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System, vol. 2: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600-1750*.

<sup>3</sup> By “decolonization,” I mean the longer period from 1880-1970 when Britain ceded independent governance first to the white Dominions and then later its Indian and African colonies, rather than the narrower period of Indian and African decolonization from 1945-1970. Some of the more important mercantile technologies were the telegraph, which created a decentered, international news network (Simon Potter, *News and the British World*); the steamship and railroad, which linked distant lands through shipping lanes and rail lines rather than physical contiguity (James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, 94-99); and computer technologies, which made possible a decentered network of transnational finance capital (Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 284-307).

<sup>4</sup> Which is not to say that there is any consensus about *why* capitalism is progressive, or whether this is desirable. The most common approach argues that capitalism is, at its most essential, perpetual innovation, a system of “creative destruction” marching ever onward (Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*). Marxists critics like David Harvey (*The Spaces of Global Capitalism*) and Fredric Jameson (*The Political Unconscious; Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*) stress instead capitalism’s inherent contradictions, which drive capital to an ever-evolving series of ephemeral solutions. Others turn instead to teleological readings of the self-realization of an ideal “free market,” such as Francis Fukuyama does in *The End of History and the Last Man*.

<sup>5</sup> The central works of world-systems theory include Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System*; Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age*; Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times*; and Giovanni Arrighi and Beverly J. Silver, *Chaos and Governance in the Modern World System*. Other noteworthy works include Janet Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350*, and Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy*.

<sup>6</sup> Both Marxist and Schumpeterian critics discuss creative destruction but often draw entirely inverse conclusions from it. According to David Harvey, “Both Karl Marx and Joseph Schumpeter wrote at length on the 'creative-destructive' tendencies inherent in capitalism. While Marx clearly admired capitalism's creativity he [...] strongly emphasised its self-destructiveness. The Schumpeterians have all along gloried in capitalism's endless creativity while treating the destructiveness as mostly a matter of the normal costs of doing business" (*The Enigma of Capital*, 46).



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<sup>7</sup> Fredric Jameson notes that the modernist ideology of literary form advocates an “inner dynamic of perpetual innovation, which – like the restless and irrepressible expansion of capitalism itself – necessarily pushes ever further beyond its own boundaries, into new ‘techniques’ as well as new kinds of content” (*A Singular Modernity*, 151). This is the definition of modernity typically deployed in investigations of world literary space, as for instance in Pascale Casanova’s *World Republic of Letters*: “Modernity’s connection with fashion is a sign of its instability. It is also inevitably an occasion of rivalry and competition: because the modern is by definition always new, and therefore open to challenge, the only way in literary space to be truly modern is to contest the present as outmoded – to appeal to a still yet more present present, as yet unknown, which thus becomes the newest present” (91).

<sup>8</sup> Even for male writers like Shaw and Coetzee, feminism, or a women’s tradition of novel writing, are central concerns of their politics and fiction. In addition to Shaw’s strong female protagonists (Major Barbara, Saint Joan, Ann Whitefield), one could point to his *Intelligent Women’s Guide to Socialism and Capitalism* as a sustained, if sometimes patronizing, attempt to connect socialism with feminism. As for Coetzee, his female narrators and protagonists (Magda, Susan Barton, Elizabeth Curren, Elizabeth Costello) actively rewrite the masculine canon (Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, Joyce’s *Ulysses*) in the hopes of discovering an alternative, female novelistic tradition.

<sup>9</sup> The essays collected in the South Atlantic Quarterly special issue on “Atlantic Genealogies” (ed. Ian Baucom) contains a representative sampling of recent work on the black Atlantic. Laura Chrisman criticizes Gilroy’s black Atlantic for “a new form of new World or diasporic vanguardism” that obscures the “circuits of capital within and against which African and diasporic black peoples operated.” Of particular concern to Chrisman is how Atlantic “influence was heavily mediated, modified, and interrogated by local and national strains in South African political cultures” (an interested shared by the present project) (*Postcolonial Contraventions*, 8-9). Peter O’Neill and David Lloyd’s recent collection *The Black and Green Atlantic: Cross-Currents of the Africa and Irish Diasporas*, attempts to place Ireland into dialogue with Gilroy’s black Atlantic.

<sup>10</sup> Specific approaches to non-linear literary history differ, but some of the more prevalent include psychoanalysis (Cooppan, *Worlds Within*), the *longue durée* (Dimock, *Through Other Continents*; Peter Hitchcock, *The Long Space: Transnationalism and Postcolonial Form*), Benjaminian historicism (Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic*; David Lloyd, *Irish Times: Temporalities of Modernity*; Jonathan Flatley, *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism*), textual circulation (Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?*), and millennialism (Jennifer Wenzel, *Bulletproof: Afterlives of Anticolonial Prophecy in South African and Beyond*).

<sup>11</sup> While the structural has normally been understood as a deterministic frame effacing contingency and individual agency, scholars working on both gender/queer studies and world literature have begun to outline a more nuanced, dialectical notion of structure. For example, Joseph Valente argues that Victorian masculinity functioned as a “*discordia concors*... which

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can only be understood in structural terms... [It is] a deep structure irreducible to the contents that it organizes... [But] it is not impossible to delineate, provided one finds the appropriate level of abstraction” (*The Myth of Irish Manliness* 4). It is precisely this sort of flexible, auto-organizing structure that I will be tracing across Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South African literature.

<sup>12</sup> For a fuller discussion of the English exceptionalism present in the Cultural Studies movement, see Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island*, 182-98, and Peter Kalliney, *Cities of Affluence and Anger*, 11-20.

<sup>13</sup> Laclau and Moufée’s *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* is usually taken as the canonical example of the move away from class and toward identity politics. But a full history of this turn would trace it both backwards to Louis Althusser and Nicos Poulantzas’s uncoupling of Marxism’s historical ontology from class and forward to Balibar and Wallerstein’s *Race, Nation, Class* and Hall’s “Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance.”

<sup>14</sup> My examples allude to the New African petit-bourgeois intelligentsia within which Tim Couzens and Jennifer Wenzel situate H. I. E. Dhlomo (Couzens, *The New African*; Wenzel, *Bulletproof*) and Rob Nixon’s excellent literary-critical study of environmental damage and poverty, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*.

<sup>15</sup> I have in mind Ranajit Guha (*The Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency*) and the Subaltern Studies movement that he helped inspire. We might also note that a presumed isomorphism between the middle-class, the nation, and the novel has become a dominant paradigm for much of literary studies – for example, in Michael McKeon’s *The Origins of the English Novel*, Ian Watt’s *The Rise of the Novel*, and Nancy Armstrong’s *Desire and Domestic Fiction*.

<sup>16</sup> We seem to be exiting this period in the last decade or so. Slavoj Žižek, Alain Badiou, Etienne Balibar, and Jacques Rancière have all embraced universalism as a foundation for radical democratic politics. Badiou’s work on St. Paul best sums up this critical trend and calls attention to the Christian undertones often inflecting such works: “What matters, man or woman, Jew or Greek, slave or free man, is that differences *carry the universal that happens to them like a grace*” (*Saint Paul: The Foundation for Universalism*, 106).

<sup>17</sup> Some of the more popular and influential of these studies include Nancy L. Clark and William H. Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*; Heather Deegan, *The Politics of the New South African: Apartheid and After*; Leonard Thompson, *A History of South Africa*; and William Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa*.

<sup>18</sup> According to Saul Dubow, “Geared to the needs of a unified white nation-state, [South Africanism] stressed virtues of moderation and conciliation. Emphasis was laid on the need to create broadly based institutions and to nurture a shared national culture as a counterpart to successful state-building” (*A Commonwealth of Knowledge*, 5-6). See also Belinda Bozzoli, *The*

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*Political Nature of a Ruling Class*, and M. Cardo, “Culture, Citizenship and White South Africanism, c. 1924-1948.”

<sup>19</sup> Of course, I am not arguing that *all* Anglo-South Africans were liberals – such a statement would be patently absurd, and would contradict the very real segments of Anglo-South Africa who supported apartheid. But I *am* claiming that to the extent that Anglo-South Africans *did* distance themselves from a more general, and usually pro-apartheid, “white South African” community, this was done through the trope of liberalism.

<sup>20</sup> The turning point in Irish history, according to the Unionist and anti-Catholic O’Grady, was the arrival and dissemination of Christianity in Ireland. The early Christians, he avers, demonstrated “a lack of straightforward, bold and honest dealing, which afterwards became a national vice, so that many of our great saints were also great liars, and fell under the scorn and contempt of those who had no religion at all but simply preserved the old instinctive Pagan abhorrence of falsehood and doubledealing” (*The Story of Ireland*, 64).

<sup>21</sup> Jameson’s “singular modernity” model is often compared to the “alternative modernities” model popularized by Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, ed., *Alternative Modernities*. The main point of contention between Jameson and Gaonkar is whether a “singular modernity” model conscripts non-Western nations into a Eurocentric modernization project, or whether “alternative modernities” in fact cover over systemic inequalities by erasing them underneath the figure of multicultural “difference.” The Jamesonian position would argue that, as Nicholas Brown observes, “the identification of capitalism with ‘the West’ – the elevation of a heuristic into an explanatory concept – is a mystification that serves to moralize what is an essentially systemic phenomenon” (*Utopian Generations*, 7). I will be arguing that, since the semiperiphery’s “modernity” involves mediating between disparate economic systems, it necessitates a singular modernity approach. But rather than claiming that the singular model is the *only* acceptable way to read capitalist modernity, I would point out that the singular and alternative modernity models possess different heuristic values in different national contexts. See n. 49 for one such comparison.

<sup>22</sup> This value-adding can take many forms: the polishing of raw materials into finished goods, the transformation of mere objects into salable commodities, or the consumption of agricultural goods as fuel for other forms of industrial production.

<sup>23</sup> Jameson takes E. M. Forster’s *Howards End* as his exemplary metropolitan text. His full explication of Forster’s “modernist style” is as follows: “The other pole of the relationship that defines him fundamentally and essentially in his “imperial” function – the persons of the colonized – remains structurally occluded, and cannot but so remain, necessarily, as a results of the limits of the system, and the way in which internal national or metropolitan life is absolutely sundered from this other world henceforth in thrall to it. But since representation, and cognitive mapping as such, is governed by an “intention towards totality,’ those limits must also be drawn back into the system, which marks them by an image, the image of the Great North Road as infinity: a new spatial language therefore – modernist “style” – now becomes the marker and substitute... of the unrepresentable totality. With this a new kind of value emerges (and it is this

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which is generally loosely and misleadingly referred to as modernist aestheticism): for if “infinity” (and “imperialism”) are bad or negative in Forster, its perception, as a bodily and poetic process, is no longer that, but rather a positive achievement and enlargement of our sensorium” (“Modernism and Imperialism,” 163).

<sup>24</sup> I am combining two of Jameson’s essays here: “Third-World Literature in an Era of Multinational Capitalism” and “Modernism and Imperialism.” Because each of these essays concerns only one half of the world-system’s dialectic, extrapolating a unified model of the world-system from them requires treating them together. Indeed, I would argue that the tension in Jameson’s work between sweeping generalizations and individual close readings *demands* such cross-referencing. At the risk of over-systematizing a complex oeuvre, we could trace Jameson’s more recent writings on literature and the dialectic all the way back to *The Political Unconscious*, as Nicholas Brown does when he notes that “Third-World... ‘social allegory’” is not substantially different from the mode of interpretation as ‘socially symbolic act’ that he recommends for European texts in *The Political Unconscious* (Brown, *Utopian Generations*, 8).

<sup>25</sup> One of the most puzzling aspects of Jameson’s influential “Modernism and Imperialism” essay is his use of Forster’s *Howards End* as his prototypical modernist text – a stretch, given Forster’s fairly conventional narrative style vis-à-vis more canonical modernists like Conrad, Woolf, and Joyce. For persuasive critiques of Jameson’s overly rigid distinctions between First and Third World, see Aijaz Ahmad, “Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and the ‘National Allegory’” and Majorie Howes, *Yeats’s Nations: Gender, Class, and Irishness*, 10-15. For guarded defenses of Jameson’s readings of imperialism and non-Western literature, see Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island*, 23-28, and Nicholas Brown, *Utopian Generations*, 7-12.

<sup>26</sup> For an overview of mercantile economics and their role in peripheral underdevelopment, see Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System, vol. 2: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600-1750*; and Samir Amin, “Underdevelopment and Dependence in Black Africa – Origins and Contemporary Forms.”

<sup>27</sup> For Jamesonian treatments of literary form and the world-system, see Neil Lazarus, *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World*, and Nicholas Brown, *Utopian Generations: The Political Horizon of Twentieth-Century Literature*. For diffusionist models of the literary world-system, see Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees*; and Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*.

<sup>28</sup> See Samir Amin, *Unequal Development: An Essay on the Social Formations of Peripheral Capitalism; Eurocentrism; The Law of Worldwide Value*; and Andre Gunder Frank, *World Accumulation, 1492-1789; The World System: Five Hundred Years or Five Thousand?* (with Barry K. Gills); and *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age*. Because he believes the world-system preexists capitalism and is more Sinocentric than Eurocentric, Frank prefers the singular “world system” to Wallerstein’s plural “world-systems” label. This difference has implications for pre-capitalist history – does it conform to cycles of development, just like capitalism does? – and future prognostications – are we exiting the parenthetical “European age”

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and returning to the normative “Asian age”? – but few for capitalist history proper (c. 1450-present).

<sup>29</sup> See Frank, “The Development of Underdevelopment,” 14, and Samir Amin, *Unequal Development: An Essay on the Social Formations of Peripheral Capitalism*.

<sup>30</sup> Baucom aligns his work with a long tradition of scholarship linking the novel to mobile property, the middle class, and emerging capitalist markets. See Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740*; Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody’s Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820*; Leonard J. Davis, *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel*; and Deirdre Shaun Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning*.

<sup>31</sup> See Belich 437- 55; Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy*. Belich and Pomeranz’s work is to some extent anticipated by Rosa Luxemburg, who in *The Accumulation of Capital* describes the integration of peasant agricultural economies into metropolitan grain markets during the nineteenth century.

<sup>32</sup> On the dispersion of production throughout the developing world, see Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital*.

<sup>33</sup> Other, one might say, than the rubric of “difference” itself; or, of course, the definition of structure that I am describing here.

<sup>34</sup> For an example of how colonial luxury consumption revolutionized the Atlantic economy, see William Gervase Clarence-Smith and Steven Topik, eds., *The Global Coffee Economy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, 1500-1989* (esp. Topik, “The Integration of the World Coffee Market”).

<sup>35</sup> On the importance of port cities to the Atlantic economy, see Franklin W. Knight and Peggy L. Liss, eds., *Atlantic Port Cities: Economy, Culture, and Society in the Atlantic World, 1650-1850* and David Harris Sacks, *The Widening Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy, 1450-1700*.

<sup>36</sup> John Darwin characterizes the British Empire as “the core of a larger British ‘world-system’ managed from London,” one which directed investments and credits outward from London across the Empire (*The Empire Project*, 1). Like Darwin, P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins locate British imperialism’s lasting legacy in London’s financial district, in which London “became the center of a system of global payments that continued to expand right down to the outbreak of war in 1914” (Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000*, 468).

<sup>37</sup> On slavery in the Atlantic, see Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*; on sugar and cotton farming, see Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History*; on silver and gold mining, see Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient*.

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<sup>38</sup> Adam Smith captures the psychosocial dynamics underlying credit's fictional values in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*: "The fall from riches to poverty, as it commonly occasions the most real distress to the sufferer, so it seldom fails to excite the most sincere commiseration of the spectator" (144). In a transnational mercantile economy premised on credit, Smith believes that all merchants must possess a sympathetic connection to one another; otherwise, profit-mongering would tempt merchants to disregard credit and effectively ruin one another. Of course, such considerations are not extended to the lower classes: "We despise a beggar; and, though his importunities may exhort an alms from us, he is scarce ever the object of any true commiseration" (144). Smith's focus is on a transnational bourgeoisie who transfer credit between each other, rather than with economic equality or blanket human compassion.

<sup>39</sup> On the newly intensified speed of the global economy, and the technologies that made it possible, see Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, and Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics*.

<sup>40</sup> As I will explain in more detail below, I mean to distinguish these minoritarian settler classes from ones in which Anglo settlers eventually became the governing majority, as they in the United States, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.

<sup>41</sup> Interestingly, McClintock uses Northern Ireland as one of her three primary examples of a location for which the term "postcolonial" seems entirely unsuited (the other two being South Africa and the West Bank) (*Imperial Leather*, 12).

<sup>42</sup> See Lloyd, "Regarding Ireland" and *Anomalous States*; Cleary, *Outrageous Fortune: Capital and Culture in Modern Ireland*; and Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*.

<sup>43</sup> See Thomas Bartlett, "What Is My Nation?", and Joe Cleary, *Outrageous Fortune* 20-22, for an overview of these objections.

<sup>44</sup> Irish nationalist history has often been a more popular than academic discipline. Much of Irish nationalist history is taken from the work of Eoin MacNeill, the "father" of modern Irish historiography. But MacNeill's work was usually vulgarised by non-academic historians eager to fit it into a tidy narrative of Irish patriots fighting heroically against English colonialism. John Hutchinson explains that "teachers in the new state were instructed to stress the continuity of the separatist idea from Tone to Pearse and to imbue their pupils with the national idealism of Thomas Davis and Patrick Pearse" ("Irish Nationalism," 100).

<sup>45</sup> See Conor Cruise O'Brien, *Writers and Politics: Essays and Criticism*; F. S. L. Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine*; and R. F. Foster, *Paddy and Mr. Punch: Connections in English and Irish History*.

<sup>46</sup> Some of the more relevant of Quinn and Canny's works include Quinn, *Ireland and America: Their Early Associations, 1500-1640* and Canny, *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800* and *Kingdom and Colony: Ireland and the Atlantic World, 1560-1800*.

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<sup>47</sup> Amy Clukey places Anglo-Irish literature within a transatlantic plantation culture in “Plantation Modernism: Irish, Caribbean, and US Fiction 1890-1950.” For a more economic analysis of Ireland’s role in an Atlantic world-system, see Denis O’Hearn, *The Atlantic Economy: Britain, the US, and Ireland*.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, R. Milkman, “Contradictions of Semiperipheral Development: The South African Case.”

<sup>49</sup> The resonance world-systemic models find in South Africa and Ireland points to a world-systemic explanation for the uneven success singular and alternative modernity models have achieved in different geographical regions. In countries like Ireland and South Africa, where the gap between highly developed and underdeveloped economic formations are glaringly apparent, it is hard not to see the contradiction that Nirvana Tanoukhi identifies in alternative modernities discourse: “If...the ethos of development is the historical condition that allowed the two terms “alternative” and “modernity” to be sensibly conjoined, what seems most troubling about the anachronistic redeployment of “alternative modernities” is that it should bear some trace of the actual decomposition that befell the paradigm of development, and which broke the once reassuring tie between cultural ascendance and economic progress” (“The Scale of World Literature,” 17-8). In contrast, Pheng Cheah observes that alternative modernities discourse has been most successful in Asia, where a newly reascent China has sought to articulate its growing economic strength within an image of modernity that circumvents the traditionally Eurocentric overtones of “modernity” (*Inhuman Conditions: On Cosmopolitanism and Human Rights*, 120-141).

<sup>50</sup> My discussion of the *clachan* system is indebted to David Lloyd, *Irish Times*, 40-45, and Kevin Whelan, “Pre- and Post-Famine Landscape Change,” 19-33.

<sup>51</sup> Whately’s economic writings first returned to critical attention with Thomas A. Boylan and Timothy P. Foley’s *Political Economy and Colonial Ireland*, which remains one of the best analyses of Whately’s thought and its relation to colonial economics. For a comparison of Trevelyan and Whately’s views on Irish consumerism, see Bigelow 61-4 and 119-22.

<sup>52</sup> In a fascinating and ambitious study, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo World, 1783-1939*, James Belich describes how settler colonies and urban metropolises reinforced one another’s growth during the long nineteenth century. According to Belich, urban metropolises like New York and London funded “Anglo booms” – sudden colonial expansions to new territories – which soon “busted” and were afterwards developed into niche markets for urban consumers. The two thus acted as a sort of feedback loop: the more metropolises invested (in funds and colonists), the more territories became niche producers for cities, and the more those cities themselves grew. I talk about the periodic waves governing these expansions in more depth in chapter 2.

<sup>53</sup> In this study, I use the labels “Boer” and “Afrikaner” when historically accurate for the time period. The terminological change from “Boer” to “Afrikaner” took place in the early decades of

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the twentieth century, coinciding with the rise of the South African Union and Afrikaner cultural nationalism.

<sup>54</sup> One of the common anti-imperial critiques of the British working class is that it was buoyed by imperial prosperity and thereby co-opted into the British imperial mission. See Troy M. Boone, *Youth of Darkest London: Working-Class Children at the Heart of Victorian Empire*.

<sup>55</sup> See *The Long Twentieth Century*, esp. pp. 15-31.

<sup>56</sup> For Arrighi, these moments are intended to map onto Marx's formula for capital expansion, M-C-M<sup>1</sup> (money-commodity-money<sup>1</sup>). Periods of finance capitalism correspond to M and M<sup>1</sup>, while periods of commodity production correspond to C. Marx's famous analysis of the formula M-C-M<sup>1</sup> can be found in *Capital*, vol. 1, ch. 4.

<sup>57</sup> Ernst Mandel cites similar periods of capital growth and economic crisis to Arrighi's in *Long Waves of Capitalist Development*, 28-48. Arrighi distinguishes his "systemic cycles" from the Kondratieff cycles Mandel, Frank, and Wallerstein employ, but this theoretical distinction has more importance for earlier, longer cycles of accumulation than it does for the twentieth century. Since Arrighi and Mandel agree on the broad contours of capitalism's twentieth century history, I will be using Arrighi's cycle of accumulation and other world-systems theorists' Kondratieff cycles interchangeably.

<sup>58</sup> Both Arrighi and Frank believe China is in the process of supplanting the United States as the global economic power. See Frank, *ReOrient*, and Arrighi, *Adam Smith in Beijing*.

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, Roger Fry's "An Essay in Aesthetics." On the Kantian formalism underlying this essay, see Rachel Teukolsky, *The Literature Eye: Victorian Art Writing and Modernist Aesthetics*, 192-234.

<sup>60</sup> See John H. Willis, *Leonard and Virginia Woolf as Publishers: The Hogarth Press, 1917-41*.

<sup>61</sup> The essays collected in Ann L. Ardis and Leslie W. Lewis, *Women's Experience of Modernity, 1875-1945* reconstruct a line of women's fiction stretching from the New Women to Bloomsbury and beyond. See also Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity*; and Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing*. On the Fabian influence on Bloomsbury, see Michael Holroyd, "Bloomsbury and the Fabians."

<sup>62</sup> For studies that tie the novel to transnational institutions rather than national ones, see Margaret Cohen and Carolyn Dever, eds., *The Literary Channel: The Inter-National Invention of the Novel*; Margaret Cohen, *The Novel and the Sea*; Mary Helen McMurrin, *The Spread of Novels: Translation and Prose Fiction in the Eighteenth Century*; and Rebecca Walkowitz, "The Location of Literature: The Transnational Book and the Migrant Author" and "Comparison Literature."



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<sup>63</sup> There is a growing body of scholarship on the Abbey Theatre's nationalist politics. See Cathy Leeney, "Violence on the Abbey Theatre Stage"; Lionel Pilkington, "The Abbey Theatre and the Irish State"; P. J. Mathews, *Revival: The Abbey Theatre, Sinn Féin, the Gaelic League, and the Co-operative Movement*. On the connection between South African theater and nationalism, see Loren Kruger, *The Drama of South Africa: Plays, Pageants and Publics Since 1910*. The link between Irish nationalism and poetry has been explored most thoroughly in relation to W. B. Yeats. See Marjorie Howes, *Yeats's Nations: Gender, Class, and Irishness*, and Anthony Bradley, *Imagining Ireland in the Poetry and Plays of W. B. Yeats: Nation, Class, and State*. The scholarship on South African poetry and nationalism is much sparser, but the nationalist orientation of South African verse comes across clearly in the anthologies seeking to define a peculiarly "South African" poetic tradition. See, for example, Denis Hirson, *The Lava of This Land: South African Poetry, 1960-1996*.

<sup>64</sup> Much of the reason for this revolved around the colonial publishing industry. After the Act of Union, the Irish book trade effectively collapsed and would not recover until well into the twentieth century (Charles Benson, "Printers and Booksellers in Dublin 1800-1850"; Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, 145-7). Meanwhile, printing in early twentieth-century Africa revolved around small missionary presses circulating magazines and newspapers rather than books; and even today African printing produces far more trade and technical manuals than novels (Charles Larson, *The Ordeal of the African Writer*).

<sup>65</sup> Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness and The Politics of Emotion*; Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*; Robbins, *Upward Mobility and the Common Good: Toward a Literary History of the Welfare State*; Fluet, "Hit Man Modernism" and "Immaterial Labors: Ishiguro, Class, and Affect."

<sup>66</sup> Massumi develops this argument in *Parables of the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, 23-45. Lawrence Grossberg makes a similar distinction between emotion and affect: "Unlike emotion, affective states are neither structured narratively nor organized in response to our interpretations of situations" (*we gotta get out of this place*, 81).

<sup>67</sup> Anderson, *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment*; Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation*; Gandhi, "After Virtue: Notes on Early-Twentieth-Century Antimaterialism" and "Spirits of Non-Violence: A Transnational Genealogy for Ahimsa."

<sup>68</sup> Lloyd, *Irish Times: Temporalities of Modernity*; Flatley, *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism*. Both Lloyd and Flatley's studies are working off of Benjamin's outline of a messianic historical scholarship in "Theses on the Philosophy of History" and *The Arcades Project*.

## CHAPTER II

### FICTIONS OF DEVOLUTION: OLIVE SCHREINER, BERNARD SHAW, AND THE SENTIMENTAL ADMINISTRATION OF EMPIRE

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, writers from across the British Empire became widely preoccupied with a most *unliterary* topic: colonial constitutions. In Ireland, debates over whether Ireland should be granted its own devolved parliament (the so-called Home Rule controversy) spilled over into literary works by Edward Mæve (*The Town*), George Moore (*A Bending of the Bough*), and Anthony Trollope (*The Landleaguers*), while important historical and literary works (such as Standish O’Grady’s monumental *History of Ireland: Heroic Period and Early Bardic Literatures of Ireland*, Douglas Hyde’s *The Necessity of De-Anglicizing the Irish Nation*, and Lady Augusta Gregory’s retellings of Irish folklore) provided a vocabulary of national particularity that political activists like Maud Gonne and Arthur Griffith exploited in their calls for Irish legislative autonomy.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in the build-up to the second Anglo-Boer War, Olive Schreiner – then the leading artistic and intellectual voice in the Cape Colony – authored a number of pamphlets and journal articles condemning British mining magnates’ erosion of the liberal principles contained in the Cape Colony’s constitution. In this, she was countered by a flood of propagandistic fiction from pro-imperial Britons who pointed to the Boers’ inability to treat Africans humanely as an index of their inability to be ruled by any other than despotic measures. Arthur Conan Doyle, for instance, lauded the chivalry of British soldiers during their occupation of the independent Boer republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State in *The War in South Africa: Its Cause and Conduct*, and Rudyard Kipling took similar stands in his equally jingoistic “A Sahib’s War” and “The Captive.”<sup>2</sup>

However, despite the pervasive presence of constitutionalist discourses in *fin-de-siècle* colonial fiction, literary critics have had a difficult time contextualizing the more progressive elements of Home Rule. In short, Home Rule constitutionalism entailed a demand by settler classes and rising native bourgeoisies from across the British Empire that legislative control over domestic matters be ceded to devolved local parliaments. Most often, critics treat the individual Home Rulists who made these demands as cultural nationalists uneasy about majority rule (Moore, Yeats, Schreiner) or as closet imperialists (Bernard Shaw, Bram Stoker, John X. Merriman). Otherwise they are seen as idiosyncratic mixtures of contradictory or archaic political factions, such as “Tory radical” (Roy Foster’s term for Charles Stewart Parnell), “Anglo-Celtic” (Valente’s for Stoker), or “colonial feminist” (McClintock’s for Schreiner).<sup>3</sup> The reason for this incoherence, I suggest, is that scholars have read Home Rule constitutionalists within the frameworks of nationalism, postcolonialism, modernization theory, or humanitarian internationalism, frameworks which themselves obscure the transnational networks informing these movements.<sup>4</sup> Reading constitutionalism as a harbinger of the nation-state precludes from discussion the alternative, non-teleological temporalities instituted by devolution – what Derrida would call the “*non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present*” (*Specters of Marx*, xviii). Indeed, if we are to see constitutionalism outside of its most pejorative, limiting terms – as a problematically conservative movement, either “not yet” fully nationalist or troublingly “derivative” of imperial political forms (Chakrabarty and Chatterjee) – we have to recognize constitutionalism as a contested, liminal, and creative site whose dialectical engagement with fictional forms (both borrowing from and contributing to) reflects its geocultural role. This is not to suggest that geopolitics and global economics take precedence over local nationalist concerns, or that they overdetermine fictional productions. Instead, a geocultural perspective analyzes how

the contradictions contained within colonial constitutionalism, and particularly those ambivalences worked through in fictional engagements with constitutionalism, act as cultural hinges translating the incompatible values, ideas, and socioeconomic vocabularies of one region to another while imagining those discrete systems as an orchestrated totality.

Colonial constitutionalists were at least as concerned with articulating a continued place for local Anglo elites within Britain's late-nineteenth century "New Imperialist" expansionism as they were with laying the legal foundation for future nation-states. Citing John Burrow, Saul Dubow explains that "the attachment of the new English settlements across the Atlantic to ancient constitutionalism was to be perhaps more deep-seated and lasting than in England itself," adding that "respect for parliamentary sovereignty was closely bound up with recognition of and respect for [the colonies'] status and achievements" (Burrow 236-7; Dubow 130). Given that colonies were held in a state of exception outside British legal norms and subject to the arbitrary power of autocratic decisions from the Colonial Office, the rights and powers designated by colonial constitutions served as an important check on British despotism in the colonies.<sup>5</sup> Though Britain still oversaw the foreign affairs, military obligations, and international trade arrangements of these colonies, constitutional devolution provided them with authority over domestic issues, curtailing Britain's legal right to interfere in the day-to-day proceedings of local administration.

Over the period stretching from roughly 1879 to 1903, however, the British government increasingly removed social, economic, and political power from local Anglo elites and took a more direct hand in administering the subject peoples and material resources of numerous colonies, foremost among them Ireland and South Africa. While the form in which this was accomplished differed drastically from country to country, the underlying concept was

nevertheless the same. For example, in Ireland the Land Acts that ended the widespread agrarian unrest of the Land War (1880-1892)<sup>6</sup> stripped the Anglo-Irish gentry of final say over the distribution of Ireland's farmland, establishing in its place the British government's right to guide transactions between tenants and landlords. Likewise, in South Africa imperial protection for capitalist adventurers such as Cecil Rhodes tacitly endorsed the right of "foreign" or "Uitlander" Englishmen to expropriate South African wealth for the metropole without regard for local imperial hierarchies. It is important, in this regard, to understand that when Anglo-Irish and English South Africans complained about autocratic imperial decisions – such as when Isaac Butt lamented that "misgovernment has driven [men] into revolt" – the anger was rarely directed against imperialism in itself but rather against a particular guise that, like the Land Acts and adventurist capitalism, circumvented Anglo settler institutions in its search for a more profitable imperial dispensation (quoted in Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine*, 141).

And yet paying too much attention to the admonitory quality of many pro-constitutional utterances risks effacing the utopian promise embedded in constitutionalist discourse, which existed in an uneasy tension with its language of dissent. During the final three decades of the nineteenth century, and in response to the mounting imperial competition from Germany, Russia, and the United States, British and colonial pro-imperialists began to reconceive of the British Empire as a plural "network of [quasi] self-governing nations" known as "Greater Britain." In doing so, they initiated a debate as to whether all Anglo settler colonies could accede to responsible government in a multi-national Greater Britain and, if so, what form such a collectivity would take. Significantly, if devolution was to be seen as a first step on the path to a new, second-order, post-imperial unity, Greater Britonists believed that in the absence of common governmental institutions a "strong" "connection between our Colonies and ourselves"

could exist, as Joseph Chamberlain put it, as “a sentimental tie, and a sentimental tie only” (quoted in McMahon 186). Unsurprisingly, among Greater Britonists there were serious doubts, most of which revolved around the troublesome territories of Ireland and South Africa, as to whether colonies with a minimal Anglo presence could develop the sentimental competency necessary for self-government. For example, for Sir George Campbell, the former Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, Ireland possessed “race difficulties in the way of self-governing institutions with which we are familiar in other colonies, but in a more aggravated form” (quoted in Dunne 163). Ireland was thus “in a position more analogous to that of the South African colonies, in which only British authority prevents collision between a colonist majority and a native minority” (Dunne 162).

This chapter explores the role that Home Rule constitutionalists’ fiction played in reconciling the multiple – and often conflicting – valences in which constitutionalism was articulated: as a utopian promise of imperial regeneration whose political form was unsuitable to semiperipheral regions; as governmental decentralization that was the obverse of socioeconomic expansion; and as a sentimental community whose claims to reciprocal affection seemed to falter outside of racially homogenous British settlements. But rather than treating these ambivalences as a pathology particular to Anglo-South Africans’ and the Anglo-Irish’s “metrocolonial” (Valente, *Dracula*) position vis-à-vis British imperialism, I focus instead on how Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South African fiction mediated between liberal-devolutionary ideology and economic neocolonialism. By articulating a complex synchronization of asymmetrical sentiments, Anglo-South African and Anglo-Irish writers were able to translate these incoherencies into a unified image that allowed Britons and colonials alike to conceive of the empire as a dynamic but nevertheless integrated whole. To this end, I compare Irish and South African affective

economies as opposite extremes of a boom-and-bust cycle that consolidated the British world-system at the same time as it differentiated particular territories into varying asymmetrical relationships with the British metropole. The intensity with which these two regions were thrust into new socioeconomic co-dependency with British capitalism highlighted the failure of constitutionalism to construct the sentimental bonds necessary for an organic, neo-British global community; but, by exacerbating those deficiencies, Britain's "syncopated" economic expansionism in Ireland and South Africa also enabled Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South African writers to imagine a "devolved" modernity whose varying levels of development, liberal institutions, and asymmetrical sentimental attachments could be managed by the very object they seemed to preclude: local Anglo constitutions.

The fiction of two progressive Anglo constitutionalists—George Bernard Shaw and Olive Schreiner—dramatizes sentiment's inability to mold disparate classes, races, and regions into a homogenous and equitable totality. Both understood emotional deficiencies as expressive of a more fundamental impasse between "parasitical" and healthy occupations: in Shaw's case, the "parasitic" landlords who siphoned off wealth without working versus the productive worker; in Schreiner's case, "parasitic" women living off the spoils of men's activity. This organic imagery provided each with a vocabulary for explaining how and why modernization appeared to be failing, as well as for explaining how colonial devolution could eliminate "parasitical" groups. In order to contextualize the overlap between organicism, parasitism, and constitutionalism in Shaw and Schreiner's writings, the first part of this chapter explores the historical and theoretical concerns informing *fin-de-siècle* constitutionalism. It highlights in particular the urgency constitutionalism assumed in South Africa and Ireland during the period between the two Anglo-Boer Wars (1880-1881, 1899-1902). I then turn to Shaw's "post-Big

House” play, *John Bull’s Other Island* (1904), and Schreiner’s *Story of an African Farm* (1883). These texts attempt to rehabilitate liberal notions of individualism, labor, and self-government by shifting their vantage from spontaneous bursts of emotion to impersonal institutions tasked with managing asymmetrical affections: the liberal-socialist state, global consumer markets, and secularized humanitarianism. But they do so by simultaneously staging emotional management on a thematic level and self-consciously performing fiction’s singular affinity for orchestrating affective responses. Both demonstrate how certain stock forms – particularly the marriage plot and the parable – transform “parasitic” leisure classes into “productive” cogs in the social organism. By suggesting that the marriage plot can direct England’s erotic energies toward building up Ireland, or that the parable can express sympathy across gender, class, and “civilizational” divides, Schreiner and Shaw suggest that parasitical formations can be eradicated through the enlightened coordination of sentiment. Fiction, like the state, can syncope emotions and mold them into a “healthy” organism, blending together sentiment and aversion, advanced civilization and stunted primitivism. Poised in between “parasitic” and healthy classes, nations, and genders, Schreiner and Shaw’s fictions stage the sort of asentimental guidance they believed colonial constitutions could interpose between discrepant levels of metropolitan and colonial development – and, naturally, between the sentiments these levels of developments entailed.

### **Constitutionalism Between the Anglo-Boer Wars**

The final decades of the nineteenth century were a time of great anxiety for pro-imperial apologists. The Long Depression of 1873-96 sent prices plunging and sparked fears that the long period of the *Pax Britannica* was finally coming to an end. At the same time, increased



competition from cheaper-produced American and German goods put pressure on Britain to find new outlets for its industrial commodities and to maximize efficiency. Britain responded by aggressively expanding its imperial reach in Africa and Asia in hopes of finding new markets for its products, bringing it into conflict with emerging rivals Germany and Russia. But this geopolitical competition only deepened anxieties that Germany would establish its own global empire and ultimately undermine the British Empire's international security. Even more troubling, the highly publicized failures of the first and second Anglo-Boer Wars and the Battle of Khartoum highlighted just how tenuous Britain's occupation of its colonies territories was, as well as raised questions about the potential degeneration of the English racial stock.<sup>7</sup>

One result of this interlocking series of crises, as evident in "imperial Gothic" tales like Stoker's *Dracula* and Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, was a pervasive concern with the degeneration of Britain's empire.<sup>8</sup> But this was far from the only reaction to imperial unrest. Many political economists, historians, and travel writers also began to consider what form a rejuvenated empire might take, and how the traditional strengths associated with the British people – liberty, individualism, and the entrepreneurial spirit – might be able to create new form of empire.

The solution that a number of (mostly conservative) writers seized on was a multinational conglomeration of (white) self-governing nations known as "Greater Britain." For thinkers like Sir Charles Dilke, J. R. Seeley, and J. A. Froude, the colonies were budding "little Britains" whose youth and vibrancy provided a much needed counter to the enervation permeating the British metropolis. But these colonies' natural "courage, national integrity, steady good sense, and energy" were impeded by the hierarchical administrative structure of the empire, which, according to Dilke, more resembled the "democratic autocracy of Russia" than the

“constitutional democracy of Great...Britain” (Dilke, *Problems of Greater Britain*, 2). For Dilke, Seeley, and Froude, this contradiction lay at the heart of the British Empire’s decline during the latter half of the nineteenth century, and this obstacle could only be surmounted, they believed, through the transfer of legislative authority to local parliamentary bodies. While there was some disagreement regarding the process of parliamentary devolution – Seeley believed that a federal world state was necessary to bind the British Empire into a supra-national collectivity; Dilke, in contrast, assumed that British racial ties would unite the settler colonies with Britain more effectively than state structures<sup>9</sup> – all agreed that a network of autonomous nations would preserve the key liberal principle of self-government for the constituent parts of “Greater Britain.”<sup>10</sup> By breaking the empire apart into a decentered network of autonomous nation-states and unburdening them of the clunky administrative apparatus of empire, these nations would be free to pursue their interests in a more efficient manner without sacrificing the numerical advantage that a community of British nations possessed over even massive imperial states like Russia.<sup>11</sup>

Countering the threat of a centrifugal drift away from Britain, Greater Britainists believed that sentimental ties could reconcile conflicting interests between newly-independent colonies and Britain itself. “We laugh at sentiment, but every generous and living relationship between man and man, or between men and their country, is sentiment and nothing else,” writes J.A. Froude. “If Oceana [his name for Greater Britain]<sup>12</sup> is to be hereafter” received “as an accepted article of faith,” then this “organic union” will have to be bound by sentiment (*Oceana*, 349). That sentiment was seen as a medium capable of establishing a harmonious relationship between distant countries implies not just that each nation feels an affinity for the other, but also that each has been schooled in the emotional responses necessary for self-government.<sup>13</sup> That is, far from

indicating the “breakup of Britain” into cultural particularism, as Tom Nairn prophesized with respect to the United Kingdom in the 1970s, devolution for Greater Britainists entailed parallel projects of self-governance that confirmed each country as a modern nation: sentimental attachments retroactively legitimated these nations as worthy of self-government (*The Break-Up of Britain*). One could theoretically become “independent” of Great Britain through parliamentary devolution, but unless one’s sentimental regard for the freedom-loving character of Great Britain and other former British colonies encouraged one to continue working for their collective best interests, self-governance was more chimerical than actual.

We can thus think of Greater Britainism as a geopolitical analogue to Slavoj Žižek’s postmodern theory of “*individualization through secondary identification*.” For Žižek, the modern subject individualizes him- or herself by shifting allegiance from an “organic” community to an “artificial” or “mediated” one, but this very shifting of allegiances allows the subject to define him- or herself as an individual vis-à-vis his former “organic” community (even while he or she is becoming a type of that second, “artificial” community).<sup>14</sup> Under postmodernism, and in response to the universalizing of the world market, Žižek believes that secondary identifications are becoming increasingly “formal,” with individuals looking for identification in smaller, more proximate forms of identification, such as religion or ethnicity (“Multiculturalism,” 166-8). But rather than restrict this formalization of secondary identification to a postmodern historical moment, we might generalize Žižek’s thoughts on the nation-state’s failure to engender a meaningful sense of community to include *all* periods when governmental institutions suffer from decreasing ideological legitimacy. After all, as Arrighi notes in *The Long Twentieth Century*, the waves of globalization experienced by the world-system in the latter decades of the nineteenth century and in the 1970s and 1980s (the heyday of postmodernism)

were strikingly similar in content: both created new world markets (grain/electronics), both saw an upsurge in global financial speculation, and both corresponded to a renewed series of imperial/neo-imperial military conflicts (238-40). In the case of Greater Britainism, the increasing angst over potential imperial degeneration felt by both Britons and pro-empire colonials encouraged them to view the empire as a formal system of governance lacking the “organic” sentimental allegiances shared by individuated nation-states. Devolution, then, represented a way to replace the increasingly reified – and “inauthentic” – political structures of empire within local communities with a more naturalized connection to them. In doing so, responsible government divided British liberalism into multiple nationalization projects, but only to the extent that the sentiment legitimating devolved governance refashioned these colonies into a second-order totality, Greater Britain. But Žižek is more interested in how the nation- or imperial-state *fails* to elicit the same “primordial” identifications as more proximate entities than in how these are recuperated. If, as he claims, the transnational movements of a universalizing world market undermine the chimerical universality proffered by particular sociopolitical institutions, then turning to the specific movements of the world market during the *fin de siècle* might help us to trace the way in which varying tempos of development paradoxically called into question the foundational premises of British liberal imperialism *through* their centripetal force.

As both Mike Davis and James Belich have argued, nineteenth-century imperial consolidation occurred in periodic waves that belie the evolutionary rhetoric of nineteenth-century liberal idealism. In *Late Victorian Holocausts*, Davis outlines how the devastating famines of the last third of the nineteenth century depended on “a host of nonlinear social factors” and *not* on simple climate variability (19). For Davis, New Imperialist “colonial expansion uncannily syncopated the rhythms of natural disaster and epidemic disease,” as

“[e]ach global drought was the green light for an imperialist landrush” (12). Similarly, Belich traces a “boom mentality” which dictated the spectacular demographic and economic growth of “Anglo” territories (Australasia, Canada, the United States, and South Africa) over the course of the long nineteenth century. As Belich makes clear, “booms” demonstrated a “syncopated” tempo of their own, with the heady expectations greeting new settlements quickly dovetailing into a bust phase: investors poured capital into budding settlements, which soon became oversaturated and “busted”; they were then drawn back into metropolitan markets (“recolonized”) as specialized producers in niche goods (wheat, wool, livestock). If, then, telecommunication and transport technologies extended British control more completely over its colonial possessions, these were less the driving force of integration themselves than supplementary objects that advantageously co-opted independent natural cycles and psychological dispositions in order to impose a global market on resistant regional political economies.<sup>15</sup>

The contradictions between a rapidly-globalizing world-imperial market and constitutional devolution became glaringly apparent in Ireland and South Africa during the period spanning the two Anglo-Boer Wars (1880-81, 1899-1902). Calls for legislative independence in both countries had begun independently in the 1870s and 1880s, but were resisted by Anglo mining magnates and Anglo-Irish landowners who feared that devolution would eradicate their economic privileges. As the nineteenth century crept toward a close, Irish and South African constitutionalists increasingly used the victories and defeats of the other as a rallying cry for their own aspirations. In the case of Irish nationalists, the Boer states’ rebellion against England provided an issue through which Irish nationalists were able to disseminate separatist propaganda to a popular audience, as well as a physical battleground through which to

galvanize their own political “battle.”<sup>16</sup> In effect, the Boer War supplied radical nationalists and Home Rulers alike a framework for viewing separatism as a morally-mandated political goal, and the ensuing uproar over England’s treatment of the Boers enabled John Redmond to reunite the Home Rule-oriented Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) for the first time since the Parnell divorce scandal.<sup>17</sup> On the flip side, Boer politicians and pro-Boer English pointed to Ireland as a harbinger of what was to come in South Africa if hostilities continued. Pro-Boer liberals noted that, even if England succeeded in its war aims, they would have “set up a government that is Ireland all over again, with what is called a loyal district, and outside of that an enormous territory...saturated with sullen disaffection” (John Morley, *The Times*, 6 September 1899).<sup>18</sup>

Olive Schreiner and Bernard Shaw were particularly active in this debate, though not always on the same side. Shaw supported Irish Home Rule but scandalously came out in favor of British imperialism in his pamphlet *Fabianism and the Empire* (1901), in large part because he believed that Boer abuses of black Africans necessitated a more despotic form of government than was needed in Ireland. In contrast, Schreiner supported both the IPP’s legislative tactics, modeling her own program for a South African Progressive Party in *The Political Situation* (1895) on the IPP’s political strategy, and the Boer cause, contributing regular journal articles to British and South African periodicals lauding the noble qualities of the Boer.<sup>19</sup> But both authors acknowledged that Ireland and South Africa were two focal points of imperial constitutionalism and that their condition contained significant parallels: sizeable non-British ethnicities (the native Irish and Boers),<sup>20</sup> a small Anglo minority who controlled key industries, and an economy in a drastic state of flux. The problem facing both in their analyses of their respective countries was how to reimagine constitutionalism in such a way that it could account for the turbulent economic rhythms drawing together the British world-system without recourse to an idealistic

narrative of mutual sentiment that was belied by the militaristic rhetoric of British, Boer, and Irish alike. This answer, as it happens, was much the same for both Schreiner and Shaw: rather than attempt to build a more “natural” political structure that would elicit the failed primordial identifications Žižek outlines, Shaw and Schreiner both embraced the impersonal formalism of constitutions and their associated state institutions as a way of regulating clashing sentiments into a dynamic totality.

### **Shaw, the State, and the Rejection of the Politics of Sentiment**

Given the recent critical interest in literature and the state, it is somewhat surprising that Bernard Shaw has not garnered significant critical attention in recent years.<sup>21</sup> Shaw and the Fabians were one of the first, and most insistent, theorizers of the welfare state; and even if their writings on statecraft are often confused, contradictory, or downright insensible, their sheer volume and their influence on later Labour legislation holds a relevance for present-day scholarship. One reason for this neglect may be how the Fabians talked about the state. As liberal-socialists, the Fabians described a state that was halfway in-between global capitalism and a nation-state. Their analyses were indebted to Marx’s writings on the international labor movement and often appealed to global capitalism as their target object, but the discussions themselves usually revolved around English legislation and the march to nation-centered socialism. Consumer economics, filtered through the insights of the marginalist revolution, lent the Fabians a global frame, but their concrete platform revolved around local governance: the English state and, increasingly, municipal elections. What has not been remarked upon in the scholarship on Fabianism and the state, however, is the degree to which Irish landlordism and Home Rule affected how the Fabians reconciled local governance with transnational

capitalism.<sup>22</sup> If Fabian statism has been difficult to contextualize within existing paradigms of literature and the state, this may be because the Fabian state is in actuality a devolved one, with complaints against cosmopolitan stockholding and international consumerism being funneled through a more local set of figures – the Anglo-Irish landlord foremost among them.

In his 1896 article “Socialism for Millionaires,” Shaw attempted to explain his opposition to stockholding by comparing it to the widely unpopular Anglo-Irish landlord. Demonized by Irish nationalists as a spendthrift who had illegitimately seized Irish land, the Anglo-Irish landlord presented an easy shorthand for idleness, dissipation, and an unfair economic dispensation:

the typical modern proprietor is not an Irish squire but a cosmopolitan shareholder; and the shareholder is an absentee as a matter of course. If his property is all the matter managed for that, he himself is all the more completely reduced to the condition of a mere parasite upon it; and he is just as likely as the Irish absentee to become a center of demoralization to his family connections. (394)

Having worked as a land agent’s clerk for three years in Dublin before emigrating to London, Shaw was intimately familiar with the specifics of landlordism. Indeed, when Shaw, Sidney Webb, Graham Wallas, William Clarke, Sydney Olivier, and Annie Besant published the first manifesto of the Fabian Society, *Fabian Essays in Socialism*, part of the reason for the collection’s success was that Shaw and Webb managed to find a shared vocabulary in ground rent that lent the volume a coherence the essays themselves did not necessarily possess. As Shaw recounted in the May 1889 issue of the socialist journal *To-Day*, despite the group’s socialist sympathies, there was little consensus on how socialism worked in theory or practice: “F.Y. Edgeworth as a Jevonian, and Sidney Webb as a Stuart Millite, fought the Marxian value theory tooth and nail; whilst Belfort Bax and I, in a spirit of transcendent Marxism, held the fort recklessly, and laughed at Jevons and Mills. The rest kept an open mind and skirmished on



either side as they felt moved” (“Bluffing,” 129). Describing the Fabian Society as an idealized public sphere defined more by its methods of argumentation and common object of interest than by a dogmatic platform, Shaw anticipates later Marxists critiques of the Fabians that indict them for relying on the forms of liberalism (consensual politics, bourgeois morality, and evolutionary progress) while parroting the language of socialism.<sup>23</sup> But what ultimately molded Marxist, Millite-liberal, and Jevonian-economist methodologies into a semi-coherent position on British socialism articulable within liberal conventions was a tacit agreement about how landlordism manufactured socioeconomic inequalities. In contrast to industrial production, where the particulars of value were vigorously disputed, landlordism presented a clear moral parable: landlords profited solely by virtue of their ownership over the land, and for this reason it was a socialist state’s duty to tax ground rent and redistribute it to more productive members of society. Webb, as was most often the case, formulated the theoretical basis for the Fabian perspective on rent, drawing his conclusions from Mill’s later radical writings, but it was Shaw who popularized them through his voluminous writings on economics and socialism, including his submissions to the *Fabian Essays*, his journalism in *The Pall Mall Gazette*, *To Day*, and *The Clarion*, and his work on dozens of Fabian election manifestos and topical pamphlets. As Shaw’s biographer Michael Holroyd puts it, “Webb’s arguments began to command an audience” only after “Shaw had become his loudspeaker” (*Bernard Shaw*, 102).

Webb and Shaw’s partnership has been the subject of much study, and my aim here is not to retread familiar ground concerning Shaw’s aestheticization of Fabian social policy.<sup>24</sup> Rather, my interest in the Fabians’ thoughts on landlordism concerns the imaginative role this institution – and, in particular, its progressive constitutionalist variant – played in constructing an aesthetic form capable of differentiating “parasitical” from healthy occupations, as well as how this form

in turn galvanized (socialist) liberalism at a moment of economic depression. That Shaw hailed from Ireland was of no small importance in this regard. Indeed, as Shaw's knowing allusion to "Irish squires" indicates, landlordism was a more central element of political discourse in Ireland than anywhere else in the British Empire. Terry Eagleton and Marjorie Howes have observed that, in the absence of urban industry in Ireland, modernity was localized in the countryside, with the result that land and agriculture assumed a more predominant place in Irish political debates than in English ones during the *fin de siècle* (Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*; Howes, *Colonial Crossings*). Under the leadership of the Land League (and, later, the Nationalist League), Irish nationalists had used tenant rights in the 1880s and 1890s to rally popular support for Home Rule. Tenant evictions were a particularly sore point, as most tenants believed rented land to be the rightful property of the native Irish, landlords acting more as custodians than property-owners; but the confluence of rising expectations among the tenantry and the global agricultural depression of the late nineteenth century more directly fuelled agrarian unrest.<sup>25</sup> Declaring a "Land War" against Anglo-Irish landlords for the high rents they charged and for what was perceived by nationalists to be their illegitimate control of the land, the Land League wove demands for economic self-determination (i.e., the right to decide what land to farm and how much to pay for it) with calls for an Irish parliament and political self-governance.<sup>26</sup>

Though the League was more successful with respect to its dealings on behalf of Irish tenants than in the parliamentary realm – it convinced, for instance, the British authorities to pass a series of Land Acts making it possible for tenants to purchase their land through loans from the British government – the debates the Land War sparked over landlordism and Home Rule raised serious questions about the application of liberal self-governance in Ireland. On the one hand, the tactics adopted by the Land League during the Land War – rent negotiations, boycotts, and

threats of violence (rarely carried out) – seemed to undermine liberal market principles such as competition, the law of contract, and individual choice. On the other hand, there was nothing technically illegal about negotiating rent or boycotting, and this parodic use of liberal legal and economic principles could just as easily signify Irish nationalists’ successful tutelage in British liberalism, and thus their right to self-government (Laird, *Subversive Law in Ireland*, 32-36). Indeed, as historians such as F.S.L. Lyons have shown, the way in which the IPP latched onto the Land War as a means for mobilizing support for Home Rule can be seen as a conservative appropriation of radical populist energies within the stable structure of liberal governance. The Land War, as Lyons explains, “gave notice that the Protestant Ascendancy was no longer immutable and invulnerable... Angrily and nervously some of them began to reconsider their position and to cast about for an alternative stay and prop” (*Ireland Since the Famine*, 137). Home Rule provided this prop: discarding Union with Britain and the exploitative system of landlordism, the IPP and the Land League sought to rearticulate Irish grievances against British rule within a liberal political form wherein enlightened Anglo-Irish politicians like Charles Stewart Parnell and Isaac Butt could constrain the “unbridled (mob) passion” of Irish nationalism with the “impeccable (national) self-control” of Home Rule constitutionalism (Valente, *Myth of Manliness*, 43).

Shaw’s own ambivalences about Irish Home Rule take clearest shape in what could be termed his “post-Big House” play, *John Bull’s Other Island* (1904). As I observed earlier, Big House novels experienced a brief renaissance in the closing years of the nineteenth century, with major works by Somerville and Ross (*The Real Charlotte*), George Moore (*A Drama in Muslin*), and Anthony Trollope (*The Landleaguers*) documenting landlordism’s apparent collapse as a viable socioeconomic order.<sup>27</sup> Though these novels shared a sense that Anglo-Irish neofeudal

estate management was on the retreat, most attempted to reimagine Anglo-Irish landlordism within a modern economic lexicon. In contrast, Shaw's play appears eager on the surface to abandon landlordism: its focus on a town whose landlord has been bankrupted by the new Land Acts seems to support his belief that Home Rule was "an inevitable order of social growth" that would usher in a post-Big House era ("A Crib," 23). But Shaw also insisted that devolution was only an intermediate step on the path to a British-led "Federation of the World," and this continued investment in an Anglo-Irish imperial connection transforms the play's post-landlord outlook into a parodic repurposing of Big House social relations not far removed from Trollope and Somerville and Ross's more conservative fictions (*Fabianism and the Empire*, 24).

Like Butts, Parnell, and other Anglo-Irish Home Rulists, Shaw both critiqued the Union and expressed a desire for British-style liberal governance on a global scale.<sup>28</sup> *John Bull's Other Island* interrogates the tension inherent in this position by layering a narrative of post-landlord modernization over the generic conventions of the Big House novel. The play revolves around two self-identified "Liberal" civil engineers, the English Tom Broadbent and the Irish Larry Doyle, who travel from their London offices to Larry's native Rosscullen in order to foreclose on the property of the former Anglo-Irish landlord, Nick Lestrangle. Lestrangle has lost his land through a combination of his own sumptuous living habits – a common failing attributed to absentee landowners in nineteenth-century Anglo-Irish literature – and the series of Land Acts which ended the Land War by supplying loans to Irish tenants to buy farmland. For Broadbent and Doyle, Lestrangle's bankruptcy provides an ideal opportunity to buy up Rosscullen's land for their syndicate and transform the town into a tourist resort for English visitors, thus transitioning it from a neofeudal agrarian society to a modern, "efficient" consumerist paradise.

However, while Lestrangle's marginalization would seem to indicate we have entered into a post-Big House, post-Anglo-Irish era, Shaw juxtaposes this modernization narrative with a marriage plot between Broadbent and Doyle's former sweetheart, Nora Reilly, that resurrects one of the most conventional tropes of the Big House novel. Sentimentally gushing over "the melancholy of the Keltic race," Broadbent becomes infatuated with Nora at first sight – as he does with all of Rosscullen, including its Home Rulist politics, picturesque ruins, and "patriotic" citizens – and convinces her to marry him despite her own reluctance (129). Shaw here replays a scene that Big House novels compulsively returned to over the course of the nineteenth century: an English or Anglo-Irish lord marries an Irish woman, their sentimental bond thereby erasing national, class, and gender inequalities and guaranteeing the legitimacy of the lord's control of his estate (Corbett 53). So pervasive was this romance narrative that, in addition to novels like Maria Edgeworth's *The Absentee* (1812) and Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806), which aestheticized Big House culture through their marriage plots, Ireland and England themselves were habitually referred to in common parlance in gendered terms, the "John Bull" of the play's title and the "Erin" of Irish lore designating England and Ireland respectively (see figure 5). "Union," in this regard, served as an ideologically-loaded term collapsing the political unification of England and Ireland with notions of gender complementarity, in the process naturalizing imperialism and an ethnically-stratified feudal division of labor between feminized Irish tenants and masculinized English/Anglo-Irish lords.<sup>29</sup>

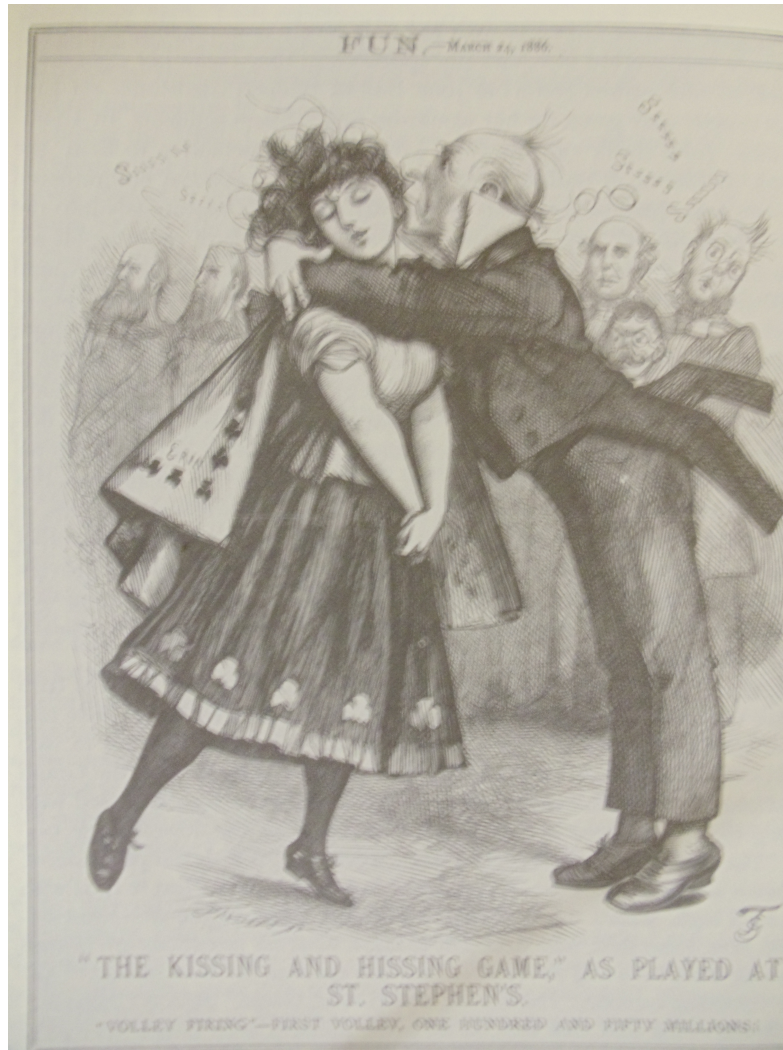


Figure 5: J. G. Thomson, *'The Kissing and Hissing Game,' as Played at St. Stephen's Green*. William Gladstone Embraces Erin, the iconic embodiment of Ireland. The masculine Gladstone and feminine Erin deploy a common gendered image of the two countries' Union.

Shaw emphasizes that Broadbent's affection for Nora is a displacement, in semi-allegorical mode, of his political investments in Irish Home Rule. While wooing Nora, Broadbent refers each of her individual traits to metonymic stand-ins for the Irish nation, mediating his attraction to her individual person through a nationally-gendered set of tropes (e.g., "all the harps of Ireland are in your voice") (151). In doing so, he neglects Nora's individual character in favor of her typicality as Irishwoman. When explaining his affection for the Irish to

Doyle at the beginning of the play, Broadbent employs the same romantically-charged lexicon to talk about Irish aspirations for Home Rule, this time to collapse any sense of distinction between England and Ireland: speaking of the Irish [Parliamentary] Party, he praises it for showing “the genuine old English character and spirit” in “its independence, its determination, its defiance of bad Governments, its sympathy with oppressed nationalities all the world over!” (130)

Significantly, Broadbent combines two distinct sentimental traditions in his revisionist reading of the IPP as “more English than the English.” On the one hand, his enthusiasm for devolution echoes Greater British theorists who argued that sentiment would replace a top-down system of imperial institutions with a lateral network of emotional bonds. He describes Ireland as an elder settler colony “peopled just as England was...its breed...crossed by just the same invaders” – thus aligning Ireland with English liberalism by tracing a homogenous racial ancestry back to pre-modern times – and cements its claims to Home Rule by appealing to the humanitarian sympathy that joins Ireland together with “oppressed nationalities” in a project of universal enlightenment (130). On the other hand, this ethical humanitarianism – a hallmark of Liberal policy that first emerged during Gladstone’s support for the IPP and Irish Home Rule (Biagini) – was highly indebted to a patronizing chivalric rhetoric of providing “protection against oppression and wrong” that was often used to justify military operations across the Empire: for instance, in liberal imperialists’ insistence that the Anglo-Boer War was morally necessary in order to mitigate, in the words of one *Daily Mail* article, “Boer barbarity towards loyal coloured subjects” (Lord Alfred Milner, quoted in Pakenham 120; “The Native Question,” 5). Broadbent invokes the ambiguous distinction between these two sentimental traditions when he qualifies his support for Irish Home Rule by adding, as if in an afterthought, “under English guidance” (131). This passing observation sutures together Greater British ideals of imperial devolution, where

youthful responsible governments would reinvigorate liberalism, with older beliefs in a British “civilizing mission” by regarding their sentimental rhetorical forms as equivalent. “English guidance” comes to mark, at the same time as it obscures, the gap separating Anglo-led devolution (such as occurred in Australia, New Zealand, or Canada) from Celtic devolution, whose supplemental humanitarianism, as Valente observes, advocated a continuing subordination of Celtic/colonial political immaturity to English imperial authority (Valente, *The Myth of Manliness*, 8-11).

As soon becomes apparent in the play, Shaw remains skeptical about sentimentalism’s ability to fulfill the political role asked of it by Big House fiction. Where earlier works from Edgeworth and Owenson had attributed to romantic sentiment the capacity to bridge any number of antithetical divisions – England/Ireland, man/woman, upper/lower class, capitalism/feudalism – the absurdity of Broadbent’s sentimentalism undermines the consensus-generating claims of this emotion and suggests that disinterested economic structures tie together unlike objects better than do romanticized political discourses. Despite Broadbent’s admiration for all things Irish, his sympathy for Irish political aspirations fails to elicit any fellow-feeling from Rosscullen’s residents, who are more prone to “laugh at him for being a fool like the rest” than to express any emotional solidarity with English liberalism (135).<sup>30</sup> In this, Broadbent appears to be the victim of the “mass, self-enforced withdrawal of affect” Valente traces to the Land War’s collective boycotts, which ushered in the post-Big House dispensation Shaw documents in *John Bull’s Other Island* (*The Myth of Manliness*, 44). Parnell voiced this project of affective withdrawal quite bluntly before a group of Land League followers at Ennis in the autumn of 1880:

When a man takes a farm from which another has been evicted [known as “land-grabbing”], you must show him on the roadside when you meet him, you must show him in the streets of the town, you must show him at the shop-counter, you must show him in the fair and at the marketplace, and even in the house of



worship, by leaving him severely alone, by putting him into a sort of moral coventry, by isolating him from the rest of his kind as if he were a leper of old, you must show him your detestation of the crime he has committed, and you may depend upon it if the population of a county in Ireland carry on this doctrine, that there will be no man so full of avarice, so lost to shame, as to dare the public opinion of all right-thinking men within the county and to transgress your unwritten code of law. (Cited in Lyons, *Charles Stewart Parnell*, 134)

As Parnell makes clear, what was being boycotted was not simply a single good or a set of goods. Rather, an entire set of social and economic relations was being withdrawn from a single, isolated individual: whether in the “streets of the town,” or at the “shop-counter,” “marketplace,” or even “house of worship,” the boycotted individual was cut off from affective communities that were vital to his survival. By doing so, the Land League effectively undermined the neo-feudal fiction that landowner/tenant relations were solidified through mutual sentiment rather than a series of unequal economic transactions.

In contrast, Larry Doyle holds up his occupation as a civil engineer as one whose “international” mission is to “join countries” through state institutions in a deeper, more authentic manner than sentiment. Doyle is not completely opposed to nationalism per se – though disdainful of those, like his father, who elevate nationalism to their highest priority, he acknowledges that British imperialism has “gorged on [the] flesh” of Irish tenants – but he does fear that emotion-laden investments in national separatism obscure particular class-, religious-, and ethnic-based hierarchies that contribute to material inequalities even while aping egalitarian language (165). For example, during a debate with his father, Corny’s friend Mat Haffigan, and other small landowners who have recently acquired properties through the Land Acts, Doyle describes them as an intensified version of Anglo-Irish landlordism, profiting off the labor of Patsy Farrell in the same manner as Lestrangle had: “Nick Lestrangle,” insists Doyle, “would not have been tempted as hard by a hundred pounds as you’d be by five shillings... Nick was too

high above Patsy Farrell to be jealous of him; but you, that are only one step above him, would rather die than let him come up that step” (164). Doyle’s solution to this continued inequality is to pass a law that would “prevent any of you from giving Patsy less than a pound a week,” as well as to establish the Catholic Church as the official religion of Ireland so that the state could limit the amount of tithes it demanded from its parishioners (165). For Doyle, the state exists as a paragon of what he and Broadbent call their “gospel of efficiency” (200). Unlike sentiment, which blends individuals together in an affective community while foreclosing material disparities from its framework, the state, according to Doyle, can “efficiently” – i.e., non-sentimentally – rectify capitalism’s worst excesses. In making this distinction between nationalist sentiment and state “efficiency,” Doyle voices what Robbins and Fluet have shown to be a guiding trope of the emergence of the welfare state: its capacity to shatter the emotional bonds uniting particularized groups and establish in their place a collective, anti-social standard of universal care (Robbins, *Upward Mobility and the Common Good*; Fluet, “Hit Man Modernism,” “Immaterial Labors.”).

Where Home Rulists like Corny Doyle and Mat Haffigan envision devolution as a guarantor of their class’s commercial and political interests, Doyle regards it as the imposition of an English-style liberal state that would pave the way for Fabianesque socialism in Ireland. Indeed, in his contribution to *Fabian Essays in Socialism*, “The Transition to Social Democracy,” Shaw perversely suggests that the English liberal state was *already* a socialist one, insofar as legislation such as the Factory Acts (1844-66) and the Income Tax (1842) marked its commitment to an embryonic project of state welfare (184-5). But more so than Shaw’s attempt to collapse liberalism and socialism into each other – a guiding concern of much of his fiction and criticism<sup>31</sup> – what is unique about *John Bull’s Other Island*’s oddly socialist-liberal statism is

that it enables Shaw to finesse the problems raised by Broadbent's enthusiasm for Irish Home Rule – does devolution foretell the creation of a sentimental Greater Britain, or, rather, a paternalistic reappropriation of English imperialism? – by projecting these ambiguities onto the state itself. In other words, the English liberal state form is characterized by Shaw as itself a paternalistic institution imposing socialism from above; but in this case, the disinterestedness he associates with a sentimental “efficiency” embeds “English guidance” within state forms themselves, as an expression of their inner logic, rather than via a supplemental discourse of sentimental attachment.

### **The Marginal Recuperation of Sentiment in *John Bull's Other Island***

It is important, in this respect, that Doyle still adopts an “international” perspective as the proper one through which to view statist efficiency. If the Fabians were to exploit the negative imagery surrounding Anglo-Irish absentee landlordism in order to distinguish a “parasitic” form of capitalism for the state to abolish through progressive taxation policies, they had to rationalize why an archaic mode of production rooted in pre-capitalist, feudal, and primarily local forms of labor could simultaneously serve contradictory ends: as an impediment to socialist growth; as the inefficient, sentimental-laden, and backward-looking estate represented in *Big House* fiction; *and* as the unacknowledged template for advanced, “cosmopolitan” finance capitalism. Indeed, though much of Doyle's discussions revolve around poverty and land ownership in Ireland, he makes it clear that Ireland's exploitative labor practices have repercussions far beyond its national borders. Specifically, Shaw, via Doyle, identifies in individualistic consumption the medium through which inequalities become transmitted across national frontiers, as well as the

sphere in which an otherwise productive capitalism becomes infected by parasitic classes “not dependent on their own industry” (Olivier 116).

Somewhat surprisingly, given Shaw’s almost religious faith in the value of labor and his ethically-loaded distinction between producers and “idle” rentiers,<sup>32</sup> Doyle despises Mat Haffigan for his inefficient overworking of farmland. As Doyle sneeringly remarks, as a tenant under Lestrangle, Haffigan and his brother “made a farm out of a patch of stones on the hillside...making two blades of wheat grow where one grew before” (157). Lestrangle, in response, priced the land according to Haffigan’s “inefficient” overworking, and as the land gradually becomes more profitable he evicts Haffigan and rents it at a higher price. Doyle blames Haffigan for being willing to pay (in the form of rent) for a barren piece of farmland as the cause of his poverty, since this both undervalued the work he was performing on the land and overvalued the land itself. But the vehement nature of his response has less to do with a personal distaste for Haffigan himself – after all, such proximate emotions are the exact phenomena which “efficient” statism is designed to supersede – than it does with the ramifications Haffigan’s naïve transaction with Lestrangle has for the value of *English* labor. As Doyle explains, it was by using Haffigan’s over-industriousness and “Patsy’s poverty to undersell England in the markets of the world that we drove England to ruin Ireland” (165). Because Irish laborers like Haffigan and Patsy will “undersell” their labor to idle landlords, they lower the price English workers can demand for their labors without destroying their employers’ profits. Within this scenario, an international market for goods and labor generalizes individual acts of consumption (i.e. employers’ “purchasing” of labor) into circuits for the creation and transmission of value by taking the single lowest “selling” price as the site with respect to which all other valuations are compared. Furthermore, by subtly collapsing Haffigan and Patsy into typical examples of Irish

“underselling,” Shaw suggests that these individualistic transactions between landlord and tenant exert greater influence over other countries’ working classes, who become sucked down into Irish levels of bare subsistence, than one’s fellow countrymen, who tend to hold similar ideas about employment and value.

Shaw here rehashes a debate over the nature of value that captivated English socialism in the latter years of the nineteenth century. According to Marxist economics, the physical act of labor endowed commodities with value, after which capitalists took advantage of the gap between the amount of wages workers needed to survive and the amount of value they had instilled into the commodities they produced for him – the commodities’ “surplus value” – to generate more capital (*Capital*, Part III). However, with the advent of marginalist economics in Britain, socialist circles in general – and the Fabians in particular – began to move away from the labor theory of value Marx had inherited from Smith and Ricardo and to turn toward consumerist models of value advocated by William Stanley Jevons, among others.<sup>33</sup> In short, “marginalist economics” refers to a mathematical-oriented departure from classical political economy that argued that “cultivation at the margin” – that is, by the value attributed to the cheapest or most efficiently made product – dictated what consumers would pay for any given good: for example, even if one bushel of wheat harvested by modern technologies requires half the labor of one harvested without such machines, the wheat would still sell for the same price, as the consumer would not differentiate between them based on invested labor but on their equivalent utility.

After some wrangling among Shaw, the Reverend Phillip H. Wicksteed (the first Englishman to synthesize Jevons’s work with socialist ideals), and H.M. Hyndman (the leader of the Social Democratic Federation) in the pages of *To-day* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Shaw proclaimed himself a “convert” to Jevons’s marginal theory of value and began to insist that

*purchasers* produce inequalities by treating all products as equivalent regardless of the sort of labor involved in making them, the “law of indifference” dictating that “no man will give fifteen shillings for an article which he can get for eight and sixpence” (“Bluffing,” 131). Two important repercussions followed from this shift in focus from production to consumption, both of which speak to Shaw’s attempts to transform a post-landlord, pro-Home Rule Irish state into a liberal-socialist center for the “efficient” redistribution of parasitic wealth. The first, as we have seen, is that in Shaw’s work laborers accede to an international position not through political-revolutionary solidarity as an international proletariat (as Marx would have it), but instead through their mutual participation in a “cosmopolitan” market subject to suprapersonal economic “laws.” These laws level off regional specializations, gaps in purchasing power, and varying levels of consumerist demand by treating the individual consumption of marginally-produced commodities as the origin for *all* value across the globe. By parasitically living off of the labor of their tenants, then, landlords fashioned Irish labor into the epitome of “cultivation at the margins.”

In contrast, the state, as Shaw makes clear in *Fabianism and the Empire* (1900), rectifies the asymmetries channeled through individualistic consumerism by instituting an “effective organization” of “democratic” and “bureaucratic” governmental models managed by a liberal-imperial state and its knowledgeable civil service.<sup>34</sup> Since, for Shaw, colonial populations in Africa and India had already demonstrated their inability to manage capitalist forms – “The democratic institutions that mean freedom in Australia and Canada would mean slavery in India and the Sudan” – liberal institutions were more likely to throw these regions into chaos than integrate them more firmly into British political modernity (15). “Efficient” governance, then, designated for him an ideal coordination of incommensurate political logics that would transform

uneven social spaces into a smooth-functioning “Imperial federation” – the first step toward a socialist “Federation of the World” (24).<sup>35</sup>

But in the case of Ireland, ambiguity attended its semiperipheral place in the British world-system. It was a site where capitalism and liberalism functioned together, but only “at the margin,” within a “metrocolonial” territory existing both inside and outside Britain itself; but it was also a potential site for a devolved, but still imperial, Irish parliament. This ambiguity meant that Ireland, unlike other colonies, required an “efficient” layering of paternalistic English guidance and responsible self-government. Otherwise, Ireland’s increasing integration within world markets – a sign of its budding political modernity and liberalism – would undermine English production and make Ireland’s penurious and hierarchically-rigid socioeconomic structure into the paradigmatic model around which more advanced nations would mold their own institutions. Shaw thus viewed English imperialism as a liberal project charged with mitigating the negative consequences following from economic globalization by doubling the world market within a political framework, one whose “efficient” mechanisms could compensate, in a sort of economic “civilizing mission,” for Irish farmers’ inability to properly value their labor.

However, Shaw’s passion for marginalist economics entailed a second consequence that threatened to subvert the state’s ability to efficiently manage incommensurable political logics. As Regenia Gagnier notes in *The Insatiability of Human Wants*, marginal utility theory discarded notions of value “comparable across persons” and established in its place an “individual, subjective, [and] psychological” understanding of value in which consumers’ needs and desires, internal to their mental outlook, varied between persons, and were opaque to outside observers (4). In the play’s final scene the “mad” Father Keegan sums up Broadbent and Doyle’s

“efficiency” as chimerical in its claims to rationality and profitability. He foresees the venture going bankrupt, with Doyle and Broadbent “efficiently” buying up the property afterwards “for a few shillings on the pound,” and proposes that the real reason for Broadbent’s victories is his “English sentiment,” which miraculously transforms setbacks into advances (201). As Keegan explains, Broadbent most notably excels when his words and sentiments contradict his ultimate goal. He “inefficiently... admir[es] the thoughts of great men” (i.e. Irishmen), prompting the more grounded Irish to misunderstand him and laugh at him (201). But because the Irish see him as bumbling and comical, they fail to notice that Broadbent’s actions “efficiently serv[e] the cupidity of base money hunters” and not the “great men” he sentimentalizes, causing them to unknowingly become ever more tightly tied to his business schemes (201). Keegan’s point is not that Broadbent is a dissembler: during their first meeting, Keegan informs Broadbent that though “there was a time, in my ignorant youth, when I would have called you a hypocrite,” that is no longer the case (182). Instead, he articulates the central paradox around which Shaw attempts to erect his defense of the English liberal state: since all economic transactions, according to Shaw’s marginalist philosophy, are facilitated by individual, subjective preferences, sentiments dictate *what* each person will consume, even as the laws of the market insure that, regardless of what these sentiments may be, they will ultimately serve “the cupidity of base money hunters.” The fact that Broadbent “admir[es] the thoughts of great men” – i.e., the nationalists in the Irish Party and English liberals like Gladstone<sup>36</sup> – makes little difference. Within the context of consumerist economics, his pro-Irish sentimentality operates only on a formal level, distinct from any particular content. It does not matter whether his sentiments are pro- or anti-Irish, or pro- or anti-liberal, just so long as they induce him to ascribe value to a given object and so set the laws of economics into motion. The result is a version of what Lauren Berlant calls “consumer



citizenship,” which associates “aesthetic recognition and redemption” through the consumption of sentimental narratives with fundamental changes in global inequalities, but which in fact tends to reinforce existing inequalities (*The Female Complaint*, 20).

Shaw anticipates this point in *John Bull's Other Island*, but from a laudatory rather than a censorious position. Exasperated at Broadbent's sentimentalizing of the Irish, Doyle attempts to demystify his attachment to Nora by noting that her “aristocratic” appearance is really just that of “the woman who eats wisely but too little,” i.e. an effect of her poverty (160). Doyle, for his part, sees his own near proposal to a waitress in Whitechapel as a side-effect of his having grown up Irish, where he never witnessed “Englishwomen who wolf down from three to five meat meals a day” (160). Doyle here reintroduces the economic realities underlying the sentimentalization of national types: the exotic appeal Nora holds for Broadbent, and the English waitress for Doyle, stem from Nora and Doyle's poverty, which transforms her into an ethereal, beautiful sublimation of starvation and him into a bumbling romantic. Shaw emphasizes that these sentiments are decidedly *not* reciprocal: Nora believes Broadbent to be either drunk or ungentlemanly when he first professes his affection for her and seemingly only agrees to marry him because she despairs of Doyle ever proposing to her. But the fact that Shaw caricatures these romanticizations as false sentiment matters little: while Broadbent's illusions about Nora and Irish nationalism gain him the (secret) ridicule of Rosscullen's citizens, they also fashion the individuated attachments to Ireland that fuel Broadbent's business and political dealings. In a circular logic that establishes the cultural particularities produced by economic disparities as the *cause* for those same disparities, here sizeable economic gaps between individuals are coded as beneficial: by being alien in both class and nationality, Nora and Doyle's English waitresses appear as exotic outlets for money and investment (in the form of marriage). And like Berlant's

“consumer citizen,” Broadbent refuses to let structural inequalities penetrate his sentimental sphere, condemning Doyle as “disgusting” for suggesting an economic element to his affection (160). Broadbent hopes to isolate economic motivations from his sentiments by rejecting Doyle’s critique as “disgustingly” unemotional. But sentiment, by its very failure to deliver on its promise of reciprocal emotional recognition and abetted by its impermeability to a more authentic economic explanation, nevertheless internalizes emotion within the act of individualistic consumption. Since Nora does not return Broadbent’s feelings, his sentiment’s only lasting impact is felt through the objects he consumes: Nora, Rosscullen, and Irish patriotism.

But if sentiment actually increases economic inequalities by encouraging the consumerist transactions Shaw viewed as the source of value distinctions, these inequalities also paradoxically form the foundation upon which Shaw’s English-style liberal state distinguishes between “parasitic” rentiers and their more productive counterparts. Even though, in keeping with Shaw’s focus on the post-landlord dispensation instituted by the Land Acts, Lestrangle himself never appears in the play, Broadbent and Doyle’s syndicate operates as a thinly-veiled metaphor for the generalization of the absentee landlord’s “parasitic” position within “cosmopolitan stockholding” that Shaw traces in “Socialism for Millionaires.” The subtle homoerotic undertones to Broadbent and Doyle’s relationship – Shaw describes their rooms as “bachelor” lodgings “no woman would ever tolerate” – and Doyle’s willingness to substitute Broadbent’s desire for Nora for his own former desires effectively meld the two into a corporate personality.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, Shaw implies that this partnership will reinstate many of landlordism’s key features: absentee ownership, steep disparities in wealth, and the spectacular consumptions of the “idlers” who “will bring money from England to Ireland” (201). But as opposed to landlordism,

which isolated these phenomena within Ireland, Doyle and Broadbent's cosmopolitan syndicate does so without respect for national borders.

It is far from accidental that the syndicate, when viewed in this light, begins to look suspiciously like the Fabians' model for an "efficient" state staffed by an enlightened bureaucracy. Indeed, the opposition between sentiment and statist efficiency in *John Bull's Other Island* operates as a virtual, rather than an actual, divergence: sentiment is not, as Big House narratives and Parnellite boycotts would have it, a collective emotion holding social and national groups together in a generalized sphere of public emotion; instead, it is an individuating emotion whose most authentic expression takes place in economic transactions. The path to socialist equality for Shaw, therefore, did not entail the disciplining of sentiments into correct, egalitarian forms – national, international, or otherwise – but instead a retroactive redistribution of "parasitical" wealth into more "efficient" outlets *after* it had already been collected, transforming it into a "common or social wealth...used, as revenues raised by taxation are now used, for public purposes" ("Economic," 27). Landlordism – and its reincarnation in the syndicate's "cosmopolitan stockholders" – thus rendered visible the purely exploitative, "idle" wealth that could not be easily disentangled from the "productive" aspects of other capitalist enterprises. For this reason, landlordism acted as both *the* type for parasitism and as the vehicle for its rectification through the progressive taxation policies of a paternalistic, English-style liberal state – or, according to Shaw's idiosyncratic take, Home Rule.

### **Schreiner's Sympathetic Constitutionalism**

To the extent that a critical consensus has emerged about a figure whose work mixes distinct genres, political programs, and intellectual interests as much as does Olive Schreiner's,

scholars have tended to emphasize her New Woman feminism, her progressive – or ambivalent, depending on the critic – racial politics, and her contradictory class position as a middle-class woman writer.<sup>38</sup> But none of these studies so much as mentions one of the intellectual touchstones of Schreiner’s fiction and nonfictional writings: her participation in, and impassioned defense of, Cape constitutionalism at a moment when it seemed in danger of being eradicated by British mining capital and Boer separatism. Schreiner’s passion for the liberal precepts she believed to be cemented within the Cape’s devolved constitution was a guiding thematic in the formal elements of her work throughout her career; but her explicit engagement with constitutionalism on a political level began soon after she returned to the Cape from Britain in 1889. Upon arrival, she quickly became involved with Cecil Rhodes, the infamous mining magnate whose De Beers corporation controlled most of the diamond fields in South Africa and Rhodesia and who at that time was also Prime Minister of the Cape Colony. Rhodes exerted a tremendous personal fascination for her – the two were even rumored to be engaged at one point – but Schreiner increasingly became disillusioned with his repressive policies toward black Africans and his willingness to circumvent the Cape’s constitutional legalities when it suited him (First and Scott 225-35). Throwing her support behind liberals such as James Rose Innes, J. W. Sauer, and, to a lesser extent, John X. Merriman,<sup>39</sup> Schreiner charged Rhodes and his fellow “Monopolists” with “the demoralisation of our institutions, and the retrogression [of] our legislation” (*The Political Situation*, 54). Under the cover of “Anglicizing Africa,” Rhodes and his followers were perpetrating “evils” and “injustices” under the name of “British rule” that were antithetical to what Schreiner viewed as the most lasting product of English imperialism in southern Africa: the “fragile constitutional integrity of the Cape parliament,” which was the most

visible institutional legacy of a strain of Anglo liberalism in the Cape (*The Political Situation*, 46; Dubow 130).<sup>40</sup>

By 1895, Schreiner had so far split with Rhodes that she co-authored a pamphlet with her new husband, Samuel Cron Cronwright-Schreiner, condemning Rhodes' political alliance with the Afrikaner Bond (the primary Afrikaner political party in the Cape) as a "Retrogressive Movement" spearheaded by "alien Monopolists" and the most conservative elements of the Bond. Entitled *The Political Situation*, this tract bemoaned the backward direction in which the Cape's liberal governmental institutions seemed to be moving:

While in all civilised countries where representative institutions prevail the tendency is to move without intermission in the direction of a broadened electoral base, so that in several of the English colonies to-day we find manhood suffrage, or one man one vote, or adult suffrage; and while even the most backward of European countries are rapidly tending year by year towards these same conditions – we, I believe alone among civilised people have deliberately, during the last few years, narrowed our basis, and undone the progressive work of the last generation. (10-11)

Schreiner is here referring to the Franchise Act of 1892, which aimed to limit the "native vote" by raising the monetary qualification from £25 to £75. In addition, Schreiner worried about the ambiguous legality surrounding the annexation of Mashonaland and Matabeleland – Rhodes's treaties with these countries were dubious at best – which in her mind did nothing to "increase the wealth of the men and the women of the Cape Colony" (55). Instead, it appeared that a small group of "speculators" had "obtain[ed] complete control over the political machinery...of the Cape Colony" and were perverting its institutions for "increasing their [own] wealth" (37).

By characterizing the Cape's representative government as being "undone," "regressing" when it should have been evolving, Schreiner invokes the same imagery of stunted development that we saw in the Fabians' discussions of "parasitism"; and, like Shaw, she suggests that the forces impeding modernization take clearest shape in local governmental institutions charged

with importing English liberalism to the colonies. But where Shaw employs a fairly static model of English and Irish national asymmetries – albeit ones produced by very real differences in forms of labor, diet, and relative wealth – to differentiate an idealized “parasitic” rentierism from a state-managed, redistributive form of “productive” capitalism, Schreiner’s investigation of colonial constitutionalism is much more nuanced in its approach to the temporal dynamics underlying “retrogressive” class formations. In *The Political Situation*, she refuses to essentialize either Boer conservatism or English imperialism as unadulterated “parasites” on South Africa, preferring instead to see each group as being subject to a too-rapid process of acculturation that has not yet had time to organically synchronize their sentiments. For Schreiner, the Afrikaner Bond, despite its “retrogressive” policies, is in fact an organization fostering an embryonic form of English liberal constitutionalism: “It banded together, and aroused to a healthy interest in the State, a large body of men who, hitherto unorganized and isolated, had not taken that share in the government of the State which their numbers would have justified” (23).<sup>41</sup> But, while “for 200 years,” Boer and English “progress...has been slow” but “healthy” and “deeply rooted...because of its gradual and natural development,” Schreiner believed that the sudden intensity with which the mining boom thrust together foreign English industrialists like Rhodes and Boer conservatives led to an association of “convenience” rather than a “union of affection” (28, 43). In other words, if the Rhodes-Bond alliance seemed to be undermining the steady evolution of liberal constitutionalism in South Africa, this was less an instance of the degeneration of English liberalism within an African environment – a common assumption voiced by such thinkers as Jan Smuts to rationalize English imperialism and to quell demands for self-government (Mamdani 3-34) – than a debilitating mixture of monopolists who, though well-versed in the progressive nature of English liberalism, owed their primary allegiance

to England and so cared little for local South African institutions, and Afrikaners whose “childlike simplicity” had not yet acceded to a full understanding of liberalism and its project of universal equality (42). The problem, as Schreiner saw it, was that by intermingling uneven levels of development one risked generalizing in an entire nation anachronistic legislation that would never have occurred in *either* an advanced “civilization,” to whom such measures would be “repugnant to his own common sense and shrew modern outlook,” *or* a less developed ethnic institution like the Bond, which would have been unable to put such policies into practice on account of its undeveloped “weakness” (42). It was, rather, the *layering* of these two political formations on top of each other that enabled the degeneration of constitutional governance in the Cape.

Schreiner’s analysis of Cape constitutionalism thus acts as a cautionary parable about the syncopated imperial expansionism Davis and Belich trace to the late nineteenth century. By outlining the potential for “regression” inherent in forcefully integrating a more “primitive” people directly into British economic institutions through hyper-intensive mining capitalism, Schreiner suggests that, while regional disparities in development may enable imperial expansion, they risk replicating these asymmetries within local institutions. But though Schreiner utilizes many of the same tropes Shaw does in his ambivalent rehabilitation of Anglo-Irishness, the assimilation into British markets she experienced was in many respects the exact inverse of that which Shaw documented in *John Bull’s Other Island*. Where Ireland’s extreme poverty demonstrated its inability to sustain a prodigal landowning class – and its need, in Shaw’s eyes, to be incorporated more directly into English consumerist markets – South Africa underwent perhaps the single most intense boom of any British territory in the late nineteenth century, with money and goods flooding into the country in hopes of extracting huge profits from

the diamond and gold mining industries (Feinstein 90-112; Worger). South Africa's valuable mineral resources became synonymous in the late Victorian imagination with spectacular wealth, colonial adventuring, and muscular imperialism.

The aesthetic consequences attendant upon South Africa and Ireland's divergent economies coalesce most clearly in Schreiner's well-documented intellectual debt to Herbert Spencer's *First Principles* (1862), an optimistic defense of the unavoidable, beneficent evolution of the "social organism."<sup>42</sup> As Douglas Mao explains, Spencer's philosophy, "at once dazzlingly ambitious and magnificently reductive," proposed that "all processes in the universe conform to the rule that systems proceed from unorganized homogeneity to organized diversity" (*Fateful Beauty*, 36). For Spencer, a libertarian defender of *laissez-faire* capitalism, a powerful interventionist state of the sort Shaw and the Fabians advocated was not only unnecessary, but potentially disruptive. Schreiner's Spencerian vision of, as she put it, a "humanity intimately in its nature a solidarity and a whole with all its parts reacting to each other" signals in large part her alienation from metropolitan centers of intellectual and cultural life: Spencer's organismic philosophy supplied a way of embedding herself and her South African environment within a British culture from which they seemed to be both intellectually and geographically distant (*From Man to Man*, 188-9). But Spencer's holist philosophy also recapitulated for Schreiner the foundational premises of Greater British constitutionalism within an evolutionary paradigm. Although he was critical of imperial federation, fearing that it "would...have the effect of encouraging aggressive action on the part of the colonies, with a still more active appropriation of territories than is at present going on," Spencer's work nevertheless replicated Greater British images of linked, devolved nation-states organically joined together in a mutual project of global enlightenment (Spencer to D. Duncan, 20 June 1893). "In time to come," he argues in *The*



*Principles of Sociology*, “a federation of the highest nations, exercising supreme authority (already foreshadowed by occasional agreements among ‘the Powers’), may, by forbidding wars between any of its constituent nations, put an end to the rebarbarization which is continually undoing civilization” (600). Moreover, Spencer’s unwavering faith in humanity’s evolutionary progress rearticulated constitutionalism within an optimistic register highly amenable to the buoyant economic expectations greeting South Africa’s mining boom. If Schreiner was much more complaisant about humanity’s “gradual and natural development” into ever-higher forms of “civilization” than was Shaw, this had as much to do with her vision of South Africa as “a country of vast resources” whose “temperate, stimulating climate...favours the health and energy of Europeans” and endows them, quite effortlessly, with “precious stones and minerals of all kinds” (*The Political Situation*, 27). That is to say, though the specific form in which *political* liberalism operated in South Africa troubled Schreiner, the project of economic modernization that endangered liberal proceduralism testified to the progressive developmental tendencies contained within the South African nation and its natural environment.

In her overt political statements on constitutional politics, however, Schreiner proved unable to reconcile her Spencerian holism with the sentimentalizing register in which she sought to obviate the political difficulties generated by mining capitalism. In *An English-South-African’s View of the Situation*, a follow-up tract to *The Political Situation* written on the eve of the Anglo-Boer War, Schreiner proposed that English-South Africans could mediate the “childlike simplicity” of the Boers to “affectionate” Englishmen through their own sympathy toward both peoples. “We, English South-Africans of to-day, who are truly South African” attests Schreiner in *An English South-African’s View of the Situation*,

loving the land of our birth, and men inhabiting it, yet bound by intense and loving ties, not only of intellectual affinity, but of personal passion, to the homeland from which our

parents came, and where the richest formative years of our life were passed, we stand today mid-way between these two great sections of South African folk, the old who have been here long and the new who have only come; between the homeland of our fathers and the love-land of our birth, and it would seem as though, *through no advantage of wisdom or intellectual knowledge on our part*, but simply as the result of the accident of our position and our *double affections*, that we are fitted to perform a certain function at the present day, *to stand, as it were as mediators and interpreters between those our position compels us to sympathize with and to understand them, as they may not, perhaps, be able to understand each other.* (73-4, my emphases)

Much like the melodramatic sentiments of Shaw's *John Bull's Other Island*, which evidenced a causality distinct from their bearers' conscious intentions, the sympathy Schreiner detects in Boers and Englishmen for each other fails to coalesce into a pragmatic coalition: the vague referents and uncertain motivational energy of these affects cloud important differences between the sociopolitical position of Boers and English. That is to say, what, exactly, is one sympathizing with when one expresses affection for another group of people? Their physical health? Their economic wellbeing? Their cultural achievements and social institutions? Or, as Sara Ahmed contends, is one merely participating in a rhetorical strategy that labels myriad emotional states as equivalent without regard for the concrete differences in their wants and needs (Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, 22-6)? Within this scenario, Schreiner claims that in place of a natural, centuries-long sympathetic understanding between Boer and Briton – one which the mining boom had made impossible – English-South Africans could form a prosthetic affective bridge mediating unintelligible emotional investments across this regional and ethnic divide.

But despite Schreiner's best efforts to rehabilitate English-South Africans as a class of transnational mediators – that is, as a class who could counterbalance the rapid pace of modernization and imperial consolidation in South Africa with an organic sentimental link to Boer and Briton alike – the circular logic contained in this passage calls attention to the

rhetorical sleight-of-hand she performs. Anglo-Boer animosities, Schreiner constantly reiterates, result from no fundamental difference between “freedom-loving,” embryonic Boer liberals and the English, but instead represent the civilizational adolescence of the Boers, whom she describes as seventeenth-century Englishmen just learning how to govern their “gallant little Republic” (27). Schreiner explains the very problem she set out to elucidate in the first place – the incommensurability of sentiment between “childlike” and adult nations – through recourse to emotion as a *solution* to national differences. That is, Schreiner’s Spencerian reading of Greater Britain as a multi-part organism whose diverse parts were coordinated by mutual sentiment effaces her complementary argument that, far from being a discrete, unique component of a larger sociopolitical organism, Boers were the same as the English, just more “childlike.” At the heart of this contradiction is an uncertainty about how national political and economic asymmetries should be coded: do they embody national particularities within a single relational system/organism, or do they instead indicate differing levels of development whose layering can turn disturbingly parasitic?<sup>43</sup>

### **Recursive Sentiment and the Administration of Affect in *Story of an African Farm***

Though in her political writings Schreiner is ultimately unable to rehabilitate liberal constitutionalism through a sentimental register, a more nuanced account of sentiment emerges from her fiction, in which the tensions between her Spencerian holism and her developmentalist analysis of “retrogression” are more effectively resolved. Indeed, despite the fact that Schreiner’s fictional works confront Anglo liberalism far less directly than her nonfiction, its formal features play out the same representational dilemma that motivates her work on South African constitutionalism: how can one establish a mediatory position for English-South

Africans that preserves liberalism as a universal frame of reference and yet still accounts for the emergence of “retrogressive” social formations?

Bearing this context in mind, I want to turn to Schreiner’s *Story of An African Farm* to investigate how its debates over labor, art, and “sex parasitism” use the parable to articulate a sentimental coordination of diverse developmental lines into a single, universal project. As even a quick reading will reveal, *Story of an African Farm* is preoccupied with doublings and failed pairings. The first half of the novel contains a cynical satire on colonial prejudices, while the second features several disconnected allegories and polemical arguments about religious doubt, the value of labor, feminism, and philosophical truth. This two-part structure immediately raises the question of whether the novel is a seamless analysis of a core group of themes through two different generic approaches or a subversion of its readers’ expectations regarding novelistic continuity and coherence. This ambiguity also plays out in the plot: Lyndall, Em, and Waldo, the three Anglo children who populate the unnamed farm of the novel’s title,<sup>44</sup> each try (unsuccessfully) to position themselves within wider communities whose brutish social mores alienate the sensitive youths. In the first half of the novel, the arrival of the conman Bonaparte Blenkins reveals the oppressive – and asymmetrical – disciplinary institutions present in the home and estranges the children from the emotional security and fulfillment offered by the hegemonic narrative of family. Blenkins usurps Waldo’s father’s occupation as overseer, insinuating himself into the good graces of Tant’ Sannie (Lyndall and Em’s stepmother), and then takes it upon himself to punish the (to him) rebellious children, locking Lyndall in her room, destroying Waldo’s sheep-shearing machine, and beating Waldo for reading J.S. Mill’s *Political Economy*. In the novel’s second part, Blenkins has been exiled from the farm for flirting with Tant’ Sannie’s niece, and the narrative shifts to a more detailed consideration of Lyndall and

Waldo's inner thoughts and feelings and their incongruity with colonial values. Once again, the narrative shapes itself around a series of non-complementary pairs: Waldo leaves the farm hoping to find meaningful work and intellectual companionship, only to find that the townsfolk's petty self-interest is completely antithetical to his existential soul-searching; Em becomes engaged to an Englishman, Gregory Rose, who subsequently becomes infatuated with Lyndall and vacillates between the two sisters; and Lyndall declares her equality with men by refusing to marry an unnamed "stranger" with whom she has had a romantic liaison and choosing to have their child on her own.

We find here the same twinned narrative structure that Schreiner employs in her political pamphleteering. Christopher GoGwilt argues that such doubling undermines the *Bildungsroman*'s universal narrative by splitting it into three different stories: namely, Lyndall, Em, and Waldo's respective "spiritual awakenings (115). GoGwilt thus reveals an isomorphism between the novel's multiple protagonists, the inability of its *Bildungsroman* frame to provide a single universal narrative of enlightenment, and the story's colonial setting. But I want to add to GoGwilt's analysis a sense of how this disgregation is indebted to Schreiner's liberal constitutionalism and its rhetoric of localized devolution.

This commitment becomes crystallized in Schreiner's treatment of Blenkins in the novel's first section. Though Blenkins has most commonly been read as an object of outright satire, the specific ruses he develops to conciliate Tant' Sannie's distrust of strangers invokes the same ambiguities that Schreiner was attempting to elucidate in her political writings on constitutionalism. When he first arrives at the farm, Blenkins invents a fantastical genealogy for himself in which he is related to both Napoleon Bonaparte and the Anglo-Irish Duke of Wellington, and the sheer improbability of this mixture is matched only by the contradictory

ideological programs to which he applies this ancestry. On the one hand, Blenkins identifies himself as an Irishman so as to claim solidarity with the Boer Tants' Sannies as mutual victims of English imperialist aggression. On the other hand, Blenkins's avowed relation to the Duke of Wellington also associates him with one of the greatest moments in British imperial militarism, and most of his stories concern the supposed Duke of Wellington's nephew and how Blenkins displayed more courage and muscular might than this close relative of one of the most famous military figures in British history. (His favorite story describes his saving of the Duke of Wellington's nephew from a horde of bears in Russia.) Even though Blenkins is eager to dissociate himself from Englishness and its abuses, he nevertheless wants to claim a part in the imperial glory of British militarism and its cult of masculinity, and he therefore seizes on the Anglo-Irish Duke of Wellington as the medium through which he can perform this double feat of victimized dissent and muscular self-possession.<sup>45</sup>

Blenkins's absurd genealogy resonates deeply with the problems facing colonial constitutionalism, especially the humanitarian constitutionalism championed by Schreiner. England, as the imperial metropole and the source of liberalism, was at once a site of identification *and* the potential instigator of violence against local communities who, like the Boers, were partly dissociated from the claims of imperial citizenship. By labeling himself an Irishman, Blenkins supplies a mimetic solution to this dilemma that was heavily associated in the late nineteenth century with the Irish *Sinn Féin* movement's aping of English militarism: styling themselves as more "manly" than the English, *Sinn Féin* nationalists were able simultaneously to assert their own potency for self-rule and national-imperial military aggression through an English model and to construct a sentimental rhetoric of victimization based on martial martyrdom. However, as seductive as this message is to Tants' Sannies, Schreiner's agonized

descriptions of the violence perpetrated by Blenkins towards Waldo and Lyndall repudiates his militarism as a viable model of devolved authority. Minutely detailing the pain of the lash falling onto Waldo's back and the "wild, fitful terror" it invokes, Schreiner calls attention to the senseless violence inherent in any militarized system of authority and instead proposes, as in her political writings, that the capacity to sentimentalize other people's virtues and pain constitutes a more lasting and authentic basis for political community than the brute force associated with imperialism and monopoly capitalism (125). Indeed, to the extent that the novel's multiple narrative threads become interwoven into a unitary "universal history," this occurs through the children's sentimental regard for each other's plight, rather than through a final subsumption of their individual concerns (marriage, feminism, art, labor) into a single narrative frame. Unable to imagine how she could assist Waldo in his "day of bitterest need," Lyndall can only "look at [him] and wonder" at the pathos contained in his "agony," "pityingly" regretting the pain consequent upon life's "little battles" but certain that "when the hour comes to lean hard...all souls are alone" (102).

In contrast to Schreiner's political writings, *Story of an African Farm* embeds its analysis of sentimental liberalism within a series of Spencerian-inflected parables that complicate the spatialized model of affective mediation she deploys in *The Political Situation* and *An English-South African's View of the Situation*. Starting with the opening chapter of its second part, the novel transitions from an investigation of the limitations of muscular imperialism to a looser narrative structure revolving around several disconnected parables and abstract philosophical discussions. As Schreiner explained to Ernest Rhys, allegory enabled her to "condense" her thoughts "with no loss, but a great gain to clearness" (quoted in Rive, *Letters*, 136). Unlike "argumentative prose," in which "it is easy clearly to express abstract thoughts," "whatever

emotions those thoughts awaken I have not found myself able to express except in [allegory]” (*Woman and Labour*, 16). The first and perhaps the most famous of these allegories is the “Times and Seasons” interlude that bridges the novel’s first and second parts. Here, Schreiner narrates a soul’s journey from ignorant youth to knowledgeable adulthood, explicitly comparing the soul’s spiritual time to the physical development of a living being: “The soul’s life has seasons of its own; periods not found in any calendar, times that years and months will not scan, but which are as deftly and sharply cut off from one another as the smoothly-arranged years which the earth’s motion yields us” (137). Moreover, she generalizes this soul’s journey by referring to its growth within a first-person plural form of address, synthesizing an agonized and isolated personal trajectory with a Spencerian ideal of organic community wherein singular experience slides into a collective social position harmoniously:

This thing we call existence; is it not a something which has its roots far down below in the dark, and its branches stretching out into the immensity above, which we among the branches cannot see? Not a chance jumble; a living thing, a *One*. The thought gives us inner satisfaction, we cannot tell why. (153)

In part, Schreiner’s comparison of the soul to a living organism reflects a contemporary predilection, popularized largely by Spencer, for representing the social polity as an organic body. But what is most noteworthy about her allegorical reading of the soul’s evolution is how it employs the emotional intensity she attributes to allegory to achieve the exact *opposite* result implied by her Spencerian holism. Initially an amorphous bundle of desire – “and oh, we want it, we want – we do not know what” – this collective soul soon starts to differentiate its emotions from those of the “old wise people” (138-9). “They” (the referent is just as vague as the collective “we” of the soul) censure the anguish that the soul feels when it hears a preacher speak of God’s wrath, and the soul subsequently begins to revolt against “their” religion. What the soul loses in inherited knowledge, however, it makes up for in sentiment: “You never shed a tear



or create a beautiful image, or quiver with emotion, but you pay for it at the practical, calculating end of your nature. You have just so much force: when the one channel runs over the other runs dry” (151). Schreiner is able to make these distinctions between a hostile “they” and a benevolent “we” precisely by abandoning the exterior social forms of knowledge and religion and retreating inward to sentiments whose phenomenological horizon is that of the individual, not the collective. But this move inward is not necessarily one of unqualified dissent. As numerous critics have argued, the imperial romance – the most popular and prevalent genre of South African fiction during this era (e.g., by H. Rider Haggard and John Buchan) – used entrepreneurial individualism as an alibi for British appropriations of colonial wealth, typically by eliminating from their narratives the systemic elements of imperialism and by justifying transfers of wealth in terms of choices by individuals, the ideological *sine qua non* of liberal capitalism.<sup>46</sup> If individualism was a potent rhetorical figure in *fin-de-siècle* South Africa, then, this had much to do with its ability to differentiate individual agents from certain modes of collective association – imperialism, knowledge, religion – and to bind them into alternative, more local, but nevertheless privileged communities: entrepreneurs and liberals with a continued connection to communities from which they had partially disengaged themselves. This, in sum, is what I have been calling an aesthetic of devolution.

Significantly, Schreiner’s parable-form uses individualism’s complex interplay of identification and dissociation to craft a Spencerian social organism out of failed, asymmetrical sentiments that are more reminiscent of *John Bull’s Other Island* than the reciprocal sympathy permeating her political writings. In *Story of an African Farm*’s other major parable, the fable of the hunter, a “French-looking” stranger glimpses a wooden post that Waldo has decorated with carvings and proceeds to narrativize the anguished feelings that went into its production (156).

The hunter, the stranger explains, sets out in search of “a vast white bird,” Truth, and spends his entire life trying to reach it (160). However, his quest ends without the realization of his goal: he finds only one feather from the bird and dies cut off from the rest of his people. The moral of the tale is that striving toward Truth will blaze a path that can be followed by the rest of humankind only in later generations – any comfort has to be found in the value of the labor itself and not in sympathetic support, since the hunter cuts himself off through his advanced pursuits. “But they will mount [the mountain in search of Truth],” reflects the hunter, “and on *my* work; they will climb, and by *my* stair! They will find her [Truth], and through me! And no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself” (168). Note how different this scenario is from Schreiner’s spatial model of Anglo-Boer sympathy in *A South African’s View of the Situation*: where in the latter piece Schreiner suggests that physical and intellectual proximity can bridge emotional disparities, in *Story of an African Farm* Schreiner’s holism *forecloses* sympathetic attachment from the hunter’s experiences. That is, his status as an intellectual avant-garde implicitly joined to the rest of humanity through the shared pursuit of Truth indicates continuity with the rest of his community, but the uneven pace at which they progress toward that Truth – the hunter foraging ahead, the rest following in his wake – codes sentiment as anterior to philosophical development. Nature, Truth, the mind: all of these are described by Schreiner as holistic phenomena transcending the individual and molding humanity into a single object, but sentiment – the limited, surface manifestation of commonality – is represented instead as a chimerical medium of association that obscures the more lasting links between individuals and communities at different stages of (intellectual) modernization.

However, as was the case with Shaw, sentiment maintains a more central role in Schreiner’s work than the absence of collective sympathy in this passage would lead us to

believe. Even as she abandons the consolations associated with sentimental citizenship, Schreiner displaces the rhetoric of sentiment onto the elaborate recognition scene played out between Waldo and the stranger. Rather than being a straightforward moment of mutual pleasure in intellectual and spiritual affinities, the scene duplicates the uneven tempo of modernization characterizing European and South African development by slowly bringing unlike feelings into harmony through their common basis in sentimentality. Distraught at his alienation from the monotony of farm life, Waldo's "huge, unwieldy figure...hurt[s]" the stranger with "something between pity and sympathy" (158). Translating the inchoate feelings Waldo has poured into his sculpture into a parable, the stranger alleviates his own injured sensibility by reassuring Waldo that his nearly unbearable emotional pain is socially productive, an inconvenience necessary for intellectual development.<sup>47</sup> We find here a recursive use of sentiment, in which the stranger's initial ease, his blasé "tast[ing of] joys mental and physical," is disrupted by Waldo's spiritual agony and can only return after he has eased Waldo's unrest through a parable that doubles his angst within a fictional narrative. Waldo, for his part, progresses through a similarly recursive pattern. "The suspense [of experience] fills [him] with [a] pain" that is mitigated by learning he is not alone in feeling alienated from the world, that this is a disposition held by all spiritual revolutionaries (172). But, even if this knowledge momentarily relieves his discomfort, the affinity he cherishes with the hunter of the tale is premised upon them both *rejecting* sympathetic social bonds. As Schreiner puts it elsewhere in the book, on a personal level their labor appears to be "a striving and an ending in nothing," a striving whose significance is noticed by the rest of humanity only after their deaths (107).

Waldo and the stranger's sentiments never coalesce into an alternative counterpublic of dissent, one in which their collective scorn for colonial prejudices would be reinforced by like-

minded individuals.<sup>48</sup> In fact, the specific trajectory of their recursive emotions actively militates against this, since the stranger returns to his complacent hedonism by convincing Waldo of the social necessity for his suffering. Their sentiments *do*, however, work in tandem, productively supplementing each other, and it is this synchronization to which I want to call attention. If, as we have seen, Schreiner's recourse to a spatialized model of sentiment in her political writings faltered in the face of her developmentalist rhetoric, the stranger's storytelling translates this deficiency into a boon. Through the complex interplay between his and Waldo's divergent but compatible sympathies, the telling of the parable itself schools their emotions into productive outlets. Thus, even though Schreiner depicts the stranger as a "civilized" European whose tastes and refinements are utterly inconceivable to Waldo's "unskilled" mind, his parable of the hunter manages to rescue Waldo's inability to sympathize with his fellow colonials as a trope for modernization in general. In other words, colonial "striving" to reach the more "advanced" civilizational level inhabited by Europeans – "How did you know it?" Waldo plaintively beseeches the stranger after he has finished his tale (169) – provides an allegorical image of the evolution of the social organism *as a whole* that can then be universalized within the abstract terminology of the parable form – voiced, of course, from the more knowledgeable, self-assured, and patronizingly sympathetic vantage-point of the stranger. Furthermore, the allegorizing language of the parable, Waldo's isolated existence in the Karoo, and the negotiations of sentiment that elicit this narrative valorize the liberal precepts of which Shaw made so much: the bourgeois individual and the inherent worth of his/her industrious labor.

Schreiner's thus fiction succeeds where her political writings failed. By dramatizing in Waldo and the stranger's exchange a devolved modernity splintered between European enlightenment and a modernizing colonial hinterland, Schreiner suggests that Greater Britain

functions as a Spencerian social organism to the extent that its constituent, devolved parts fulfill specialized roles essential to the growth of “civilization” as a whole; and these roles are themselves dependent on each region’s level of development, and their asymmetries must be managed through the incongruent sentiments they produce.

### **Mothing Devolution**

To conclude, I want to look briefly at one last instance of Schreiner’s devolutionary rhetoric that renders this sentimental administration in slightly more concrete language. Over the course of the second section, as Lyndall’s thoughts on the dangers of “sex parasitism” seem to work out the anxieties expressed by Waldo and Em over labor and marriage within a gendered discourse of masculine and feminine development, Lyndall’s narrative gradually begins to assimilate Em’s and Waldo’s. As this takes place, the distinctions Schreiner has gradually been exploring in the earlier stages of the novel – an uneven Spencerian social organism made up of evolved and primitive parts, the inward retreat to emotional alienation, and the syncopating activity of the parable form – suddenly collapse into a single figure: the Anglo-South African mother. Thus, after discovering she is pregnant, Lyndall diagnoses what the child’s father believes is his love for her as an index of his own will to power: “you love me because you cannot bear to be resisted, and want to master me” (238). Lyndall is not necessarily averse to being “mastered” – after all, she hopes to find something “before which [she] can kneel down” (279).<sup>49</sup> But she *is* wary that romantic sentiment stunts female development by sacrificing women’s adversarial disposition – the isolated “striving” that fuels modernization – in return for the emotional consolations of marriage. “You call into activity one part of my nature,” Lyndall explains. “[T]here is a higher part you know nothing of, that you never touch. If I married you,

afterwards it would arise and assert itself, and I should hate you always, as I do now sometimes” (237). For Lyndall, striving toward a superior form of civilization involves a pseudo-Darwinian struggle between partners whose positions are always in a sense asymmetrical, whether as reflected in one person’s desire to master someone greater than himself or in the other person’s hatred for the parasitical leisure attendant upon marriage. In a sense Lyndall extrapolates the implications encoded within Waldo’s encounter with his stranger – that an intellectual avant-garde cultivates an antagonist affective stance toward the world around him – and generalizes this insight across two monolithic gender blocs.

But instead of exerting their inchoate dissatisfactions toward nature in a sort of Hegelian synthesis of externalized culture and reappropriated Truth, men and women, Lyndall suggests, direct their labors against each other – to the detriment of both. “You are our goods, our merchandise, our material for operating on; we buy you, we sell you, we act the wily Jew with you...” (192). In other words, men and women evolve under hyper-imperial capitalism by reifying each other into static, raw material for commodification, each undermining the other’s claim to a developmentalist historical trajectory through this objectification. Such a claim resonates with contemporary scholarship on the African “postcolony” that stresses how the abuses of the postcolonial state can be traced to imperialism’s nonconsensual model of governance, which treated Africans as objects to be acted upon by brute “power” rather than as co-participants in an administration of collective welfare (Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*; Comaroff and Comaroff, *Law and Disorder in the Postcolony*; Mamdani). As opposed to Indian and Irish instantiations of the colonial state that treated subject populations as adolescent pupils slowly advancing toward liberal self-governance,<sup>50</sup> “Africa” was more often understood as a negative signifier designating an “absolute otherness” unable to participate in the project of

modernity (Mmebme 2).<sup>51</sup> Within this discourse, African subjects could only become “modern” through the objectifying violence of state power, which transformed them into a surplus of docile, “modern” bodies open to the state’s control.

Yet Schreiner’s optimism about constitutional liberalism – in particular, its ability to coordinate incommensurable lines of development into a mutually-progressing whole – leads her to the exact *inverse* conclusions as those articulated by critics of the postcolony. Where Achille Mbembe, Jean and John L. Comaroff, and Mahmood Mamdani all fear the tendency of an authoritarian state apparatus to bolster its collective modernization project at the expense of analogous efforts by its own citizens, Lyndall paradoxically argues that it is the *disenfranchised* who objectify their more cultured brethren. Since they “are not able to expend [their power] in tunneling mountains, nor healing diseases, *nor making laws, nor money, nor on any extraneous object,*” women foreclose *men’s* evolution by fashioning them into finished images of idealized modernity, sought-after “merchandise” that has been fetishized into the sole exemplum of value (192, my italics). The parallelism between the modernization efforts expounded in the first half of the sentence and the legal-commercial language that ends the passage exemplifies the connection between developmentalism and liberal self-governance in Schreiner’s thought: one develops precisely by participating in the social, legal, and economic forms of civil society. When isolation cuts women off from these outlets, *male* development also suffers, since men are frozen into static pieces of “merchandise” for female labor.

Thus Schreiner’s version of the New Woman ideal of marriage as a co-equal partnership employed calls for marital devolution as a means of both clearing a space for feminine independence *and* preserving masculine accomplishments (the two being, within this lexicon, virtually inseparable).<sup>52</sup> But even more important, Schreiner suggests that women’s

manufacturing of men can be recuperated as a progressive force if translated from the economic language of reification to an organic one of enculturating mothering. As Lyndall explains to Waldo, “the woman who does women’s work [i.e., child-rearing] needs a many-sided, multiform culture ... *We* bear the world, and *we* make it” (193). Here, Schreiner reappropriates the language of labor and production (“*we* make the world”) from political economy and applies it instead to the domestic sphere. By doing so, she jettisons commercial exchanges’ objectifying transactions and instead represents masculine and feminine modernization as cultural projects overseen by a benevolent mother figure who “makes” her children by educating them.<sup>53</sup> Like Waldo’s agonized “striving,” mothers’ strenuous labor (“*We* bear the world”) borrows from a sentimentalized register of pain and sympathy only to subordinate that emotional rhetoric to depersonalized notions of culture, education, and “the world”-as-social organism. That is, Schreiner literalizes Spencer’s claim that societies act “like” a social organism: by physically giving birth to the individual men and women who constitute the social organism, mothers, according to Schreiner, serve as a sort of non-governmental civil service guiding their children into the most efficient possible dispensation in civil society. Most significant, because mothers in this framework function as mediators *par excellence*, giving life and knowledge to *both* men and women, their “catholicity of sympathy” allows them to coordinate male and female development so as to productively supplement each other, thus circumventing the difficulties normally presented by male and female attempts to commodify the other in the service of their own developmental aspirations.

As numerous critics have noted, the male characters in *Story of an African Farm* are almost exclusively English and/or European: the father of Lyndall’s child, Waldo’s “French-looking” stranger, and Gregory Rose all hail from “civilized” regions of England and the



Continent (GoGwilt; Chrisman, *Rereading the Imperial Romance*). Less commented upon, though, is the fact that mothers in Schreiner's fiction are just as emphatically Anglo-South African in nationality. In *Story of an African Farm*, discussions of gender politics and child care revolve around Lyndall and Em as actual and potential mothers, while Tant' Sannie's childless throughout most of the novel points to an inability on Schreiner's part to imagine Boer women as providing the same enculturating education as English women.<sup>54</sup> It is this connection with motherhood that enables Schreiner in her nonfiction to locate Anglo-South African constitutionalism as a necessary mediator between British capitalism and more "primitive" social forms which could rehabilitate British civilization. "Who can say," wonders Schreiner in *From Man to Man*, "that, in destroying the child of nature with his perhaps simpler organization and untried nerves, we are not destroying that of which humanity may yet in æons to come have need to keep the race upon the earth" (206)? As with most *fin de siècle* writers, there was little question for Schreiner that these social practices could still be found among "native African women in their primitive society," where "woman [is] often the only builder" (*Woman and Labor*, 5, 41). Schreiner attributes this same rustic, labor-oriented condition present in black Africans to Boer women as well, who "after two thousand years [appear] not wholly to have forgotten [their] ancestral tactics" (*Woman and Labour*, 93). By utilizing African and Boer women's toils as a metaphor for motherhood's creative work, Schreiner establishes a formal similitude between physical labor and maternal education. At the same time, though, as with Waldo's stranger's appropriation of his angst as a trope for universal modernization, this correlation is *only* formal: manual and intellectual occupations may both involve labor, with the first providing an image through which to understand the effort involved in the second, but Schreiner makes it clear that imaginative exercises take place among civilized Europeans, with

their “refined, discriminative” tastes, and not among black Africans and their “animal appetites” (194).

But according to Schreiner, this translation is exactly what Anglo-South African mothers provide for the British world-system: as overdetermined tropes for constitutional devolution, mothers cultivate the best properties of each “devolved” line of development – whether these be male and female, European and African, or imperial and national – and mediate them through the abstracting language of constitutionalism. In this way, they coordinate incommensurable political and economic circumstances into an orchestrated global totality. What both Schreiner and Shaw demonstrate in their fictional and nonfictional investigations of colonialism is that the procedural peculiarities of local constitutional governance evacuate the content of particular sentiments even as they exploit the structural effects of those sentiments through alternative disciplinary instruments (e.g., the liberal-socialist redistributive state and domestic education). In doing so, they envision capitalist modernity as split into multiple lines with varying developmental tempos, with its only unifying feature a common formal language of egalitarian self-government.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> The ambivalence felt by many of these figures toward Irish Home Rule is too extensive to go into in any detail here. For example, Lady Gregory began her life as a “soft” Unionist (a support of British rule in Ireland) before later turning Republican (a supporter of Irish independence).

<sup>2</sup> For more on Doyle’s understanding of imperialism as “chivalry” and Kipling’s imperial jingoism, see Paula M. Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire: Public Discourse and the Boer War*.

<sup>3</sup> Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*; Joseph Valente, *Dracula’s Crypt: Bram Stoker, Irishness, and the Question of Blood*; and Roy Foster, “Parnell and His People: The Ascendancy and Home Rule,” in *Paddy and Mr. Punch*, 62-77.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Cleary details the pitfalls of modernization theory in *Outrageous Fortune: Culture and Capital in Modern Ireland*, 14-46. David Lloyd has probably been the most instrumental figure in championing the use of postcolonial frames to interpret Irish literature, but his work is notable for its focus on the linguistic politics of Irish nationalism and marginalized subcultures, which it could be argued postcolonialism is more amenable to than proceduralist constitutionalism. See for example, *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment* and *Irish Times: Temporalities of Modernity*. Roy Foster provides an excellent overview of historians’ (largely unsuccessful) attempts to categorize Charles Stewart Parnell, the Anglo-Irish leader of the Home Rule movement, in “Interpretations of Parnell: The Importance of Locale,” in *Paddy and Mr. Punch: Connections in English and Irish History*, 40-61.

In the South African context, less attention has been paid to constitutionalism than in Irish studies, particularly among literary critics, but important new work on Cape loyalism by Alan Lester (*Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth-Century South Africa and Britain*) and A. Thompson (“The Languages of Loyalism in Southern Africa, c.1870-1939”) has begun to shed light on South African investments in British institutions. Saul Dubow presents the most thorough analysis to date of South African constitutionalism in *A Commonwealth of Knowledge*, 121-57.

<sup>5</sup> The term “state of exception” comes from Agamben’s work on the development and normalization of extra-legal space in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries (*Homo Sacer; State of Exception*).

<sup>6</sup> I take here a long perspective on the Irish Land War. Although the official Land War lasted from 1879-1882, the minimal gains that the Land War won for Irish tenant-farmers led to the resumption of land agitation under the 1886-1891 Plan of Campaign, which featured the boycott as its primary means of mass political engagement.

<sup>7</sup> Fears of racial degeneration were bound up with the large number of recruits found to be unfit for service during the Boer War. According to then Surgeon-General Sir William Taylor, there

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were signs of a “growing deterioration of the physique of the working classes”; General Sir Frederick Maurice claimed that more than three out of every five men wishing to enlist were either turned away on medical grounds or failed to last two years in the army (“Where to Get Men”; “National Health: A Soldier’s Study”).

<sup>8</sup> See, for instances, Arata, *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siècle* and Brantlinger on the “imperial Gothic” in *Rule of Darkness*.

<sup>9</sup> Seeley, *The Expansion of England*; Dilke, *Problems of Greater Britain*.

<sup>10</sup> As Seeley put it, liberal governance was “a leading characteristic of England over [the] continental countries” with which it was in competition (Seeley 7). Similarly, Froude insisted that “One free people cannot govern another. The inhabitants of a province retain the instincts which they brought with them. They can ill bear that their kindred at home shall have rights and liberties from which they are excluded” (Froude 12).

<sup>11</sup> Dilke supposed that “no possible series of events can prevent the English race itself in 1970 numbering 300 millions of being...Italy, Spain, France, Russia, become pygmies by the side of such a people” (*Greater Britain: A Record of Travel in English-Speaking Countries During 1866 and 1867*, 546).

<sup>12</sup> Froude borrows the term “Oceana” from James Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656).

<sup>13</sup> The schooling of sentiment, often through fiction, has occupied a central place in narratives about the rise of capitalism in eighteenth-century Britain (Deirdre Lynch, *The Economy of Character*; Barbara Benedict, *Framing Feeling*). In a sense, we could think of Greater Britainism as extending the emotional principles that Adam Smith and Anthony Ashley Cooper, earl of Shaftesbury, had hoped would govern newly-commercialized social relations in Britain to an imperial setting.

<sup>14</sup> Žižek is leaning heavily on Hegel’s *Elements of a Philosophy of Right* in this passage, esp. 339-53. Edward Said makes a similar argument about filiation and affiliation *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, 1-30.

<sup>15</sup> There is some overlap here with Ernest Bloch’s notion of the non-synchronous synchronous, which has been an essential concept for Marxist thinkers seeking to theorize capitalism as a singular global modernity (for example, Jameson in *A Singular Modernity* and Harvey in *The Limits of Capital*). But Davis and Belich’s work is unique in tracing specific rhythms that “synchronize” these discrepant modes of production into an orchestrated totality, rather than locating this in an abstract world-system or world market, usually connected by trade, imperialism, or neoliberal neocolonialism. The point of deviation in Davis in particular (the more Marxist of the two critics) lies in his intellectual debts to Rosa Luxembourgh, whose *The Accumulation of Capital* embodies an alternative strain of Marxist criticism more interested in the traumatic integration of alternative subsistence economies into a Europe-based world market

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than the progressivist historical narrative of the necessary destruction of archaic labor practices Marx supplies in *Das Capital*.

<sup>16</sup> Donal P. McCracken, *The Irish Pro-Boers, 1877-1902*; Elleke Boehmer, *Empire, the National, and the Postcolonial, 1890-1920: Resistance in Interaction*; P.J. Mathews, *Revival: The Abbey Theatre, Sinn Féin, and the Cooperative Movement*.

<sup>17</sup> Charles Stewart Parnell, the longtime head of the IPP, was revealed to have been engaged in a years-long affair with Katherine (Kitty) O'Shea when her husband sued for divorce in December 1889. Upon learning of the affair, the Catholic clergy and Gladstone repudiated Parnell, causing a rift in the IPP between Parnell supporters and anti-Parnellites that would cripple the party for the next decade.

<sup>18</sup> W.T. Stead's Stop the War Committee echoed Morley in its promotional literature, insisting "WE DO NOT WANT ANOTHER IRELAND IN SOUTH AFRICA." From a more conservative angle, J.A. Froude also believed in South Africa the "history of Ireland is repeating itself – as if Ireland was not enough" (68).

<sup>19</sup> These writings were collected posthumously in *Thoughts on South Africa* (1923).

<sup>20</sup> Of course, even for progressives, devolving governance to the black majority of South Africa was usually seen as unconscionable. (Though Schreiner, as one of the few exceptions to this rule, resigned from the South African Women's Suffrage League when it refused to make black enfranchisement part of its platform.) Indeed, the series of frontier wars that the British embarked on in southern Africa in the second half of the nineteenth century tightened rather than loosened imperial control over black Africans.

<sup>21</sup> In *The Dream Life of Citizens: Late Victorian Novels and the Fantasy of the State*, Zarena Aslami does discuss the writings of Shaw's Fabian compatriot Sidney Webb, whose thinking heavily influenced Shaw's own (11-4, 92-4). Aslami's study participates in a widespread turn toward the state in Victorian literature, as seen for example in Lauren Goodlad, *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State: Character and Governance in a Liberal Society*, and Laura Berry, *The Child, the State, and the Victorian Novel*. Other recent studies of the state and literature include Robbins, *Upward Mobility*; Michael Szalay, *New Deal Modernism*; Michael Rubenstein, *Public Works: Infrastructure, Irish Modernism, and the Postcolonial*; John Marx, *Geopolitics and the Anglophone Novel, 1890-2011*, and Matthew Hart and Jim Hansen, eds., *Contemporary Literature and the State*.

<sup>22</sup> Carl Levy articulates what has become the consensus view on Fabians and the state in "Historiography and the New Class": Fabian socialists "combine[d] an appeal for 'social service' with schemes that substituted for traditional elites and capitalist entrepreneurs a stratum of managers and experts" (275). More recent work on Fabianism, e.g. Mark Bevir's *The Making of British Socialism* and James Alexander's *Shaw's Controversial Socialism*, has stressed how the Fabians finessed liberal individualism and representative democratic institutions within what was supposedly a Marxist-collectivist theory of the state.

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<sup>23</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, for example, argues that the Fabians had “quite failed” to notice that “an element of Socialist reform and non-laisser [*sic?*] faire ideology” could be reconciled to liberalism sans socialism, demonstrating a “striking lack of political sense” in their political endeavors (“The Fabians Reconsidered,” 253, 251). Hobsbawm and other scholars skeptical of Fabianism’s grandiose claims to success (e.g., A. M. McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics, 1884-1918*) were responding to a version of Fabian history first popularized by Edward Pease’s *History of the Fabian Society* and extended in Henry Pelling’s *Origins of the Labour Party, 1880-1990*, which argued that Fabian permeation of the Liberal Party eventually led to the construction of the modern Labour Party and its socialist platform.

<sup>24</sup> See especially Holyrod, *Bernard Shaw*.

<sup>25</sup> Cormac Ó Gráda, *Ireland: A New Economic History*, 255-64. The global agricultural depression was in large part caused by the creation in the latter half of the nineteenth century of the first truly “global” commodity market: the grain market (Pomeranz and Topik, *The World That Trade Created*, 175-214).

<sup>26</sup> Foster details the adoption of the Land War by IPP in *Modern Ireland*, 373-99.

<sup>27</sup> McCormack notes that the term Big House became *the* dominant term for Anglo-Irish estates in this period (“Setting and Ideology”).

<sup>28</sup> Compare Shaw’s statements on Home Rule to those of the Anglo-Irish nationalist Erskine Childers: “Home Rule is an indispensable preliminary to the closer union of the various parts of the empire” (*The Framework of Home Rule*, 148).

<sup>29</sup> On the gendering of English imperialism in Ireland, see Elizabeth Cullingford, *Ireland’s Others: Gender and Ethnicity in Irish Literature and Popular Culture*, 37-56.

<sup>30</sup> It is rarely commented upon in scholarship on *John Bull’s Other Island* just how much laughter is associated with Broadbent (normally at his expense): Doyle, Nora, and Father Keegan all either laugh at Broadbent or marvel at his ability to induce cynical laughter in others. In his “Preface for Politicians,” Shaw calls special attention to this aspect of Broadbent’s character: “Writing the play for an Irish audience, I thought it would be good for them to be shewn very clearly that the loudest laugh they could raise at the expense of the absurdist Englishman was not really a laugh on their side; that he would succeed where they would fail; that he could inspire strong affection and loyalty in an Irishman who knew the world and was moved only to dislike, mistrust, and even exasperation by his own countrymen; that his power of taking himself seriously, and his insensibility to anything funny in danger and destruction, was the first condition of economy and concentration of force, sustained purpose, and rational conduct” (vi).

<sup>31</sup> Alexander provides a thorough analysis of the tensions between liberalism and socialism in Shaw’s nonfiction. For a broader investigation of Shaw’s nonfiction that places his socialism

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and liberalism into dialogue with feminism and Irish nationalism, see Gareth Griffith, *Socialism and Superior Brains*.

<sup>32</sup> On the religious element to Shaw's Fabian socialism, see Stuart E. Baker, *Shaw's Remarkable Religion*.

<sup>33</sup> Though the marginalist movement was most heavily associated in Britain with Jevons, Carl Menger (founder of the Austrian School of economics) and Marie-Esprit-Léon Walrus also developed marginalist economic theories of economics around the same time as Jevons (Regenia Gagnier, *The Insatiability of Human Wants*, 1-18).

<sup>34</sup> Shaw was particularly invested in the reorganization of the consular service through the use of specially-designed trade schools and a new, more practical exam structure (*Fabianism and the Empire*, 7-13).

<sup>35</sup> In this respect, Shaw's "efficiency" differed from German and American corporatist business models. German and American corporatism were normally noted for the efficient "uniformity" guiding their manufacturing, which helped multiple business activities to work in tandem. Shaw, in contrast, believed that a mixed global space that needed multiple conjoined political models in order to function optimally.

<sup>36</sup> In addition to his affirmative remarks about "that great Englishman Gladstone," Broadbent's affection for the Liberal politician can be seen in the "*impressive portrait*" hanging on his and Doyle's office wall (124, 120).

<sup>37</sup> The secondary literature on the legal fiction of corporations as persons is vast. For one astute reading that traces corporate personhood to the operations of the *Bildungsroman* genre in the postcolonial world, see Joseph Slaughter, *Human Rights, Inc.*, 86-139. Cullingford also notes the homoerotic undertones to Doyle and Broadbent's relationship, but she sees this as an index of their co-participation in the colonial project rather than as a reinvention of Anglo-Irish socioeconomic forms (38-42).

<sup>38</sup> For example, in her pioneering study of Schreiner's fiction in *Imperial Leather*, "Olive Schreiner: The Limits of Colonial Feminism," Anne McClintock labels Schreiner as a "colonial feminist" who developed a radical critique of British patriarchy through her experiences in South Africa, but whose "elision [of black African women] creates an abiding paradox, for it fractures [her] monism and her yearning for a universal feminism" (273). In a slightly more utopian reading, Carolyn Burdett argues that "Schreiner's colonial status meant that she increasingly understood, and sought to represent, the connections between the emancipatory claims being made by middle-class women in the 'dominant' West, and the impact on peoples elsewhere of the dominance" – particularly her adaptation of "the language of evolutionary biology...into a language of social life...fundamentally *unfixed* and very much contested" (6). Similarly, Laura Chrisman suggests that Schreiner's experience of the mining industry in South Africa led her to "refuse the conceptual boundaries that allow metropolitan readers to remain at a safe distance

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from the violent expansionism of Rhodesian monopoly capitalism” (*Rereading the Imperial Romance*, 141).

<sup>39</sup> Schreiner was concerned about Merriman’s misogyny, which prompted him to describe her collection of short stories, *Dreams*, as “short rhapsodies by a very clever woman who would be happier if she believed what the rest of her sex believe” (Lewsen, ed., *Correspondence 1890-1898*, 29). Initially she hoped that, regardless of his antiquated views with regard to women, he would defend liberal policies against Rhodes; however, she quickly became disillusioned with Merriman and focused most of her efforts on influencing Rose Innes and Sauer (First and Scott 202-206).

<sup>40</sup> The most thorough analysis of Cape constitutionalism’s trouble relationship with British imperialism is Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge*, 121-57.

<sup>41</sup> There is also a distinct racial component to Schreiner’s thinking about the Boers. According to her, the Boers, like the English, were “a colony of Teutonic folk” whose supposed liberalism sprung at least in part from a myth of common Germanic origins. Conservative pro-Boers also tended to characterize the Boers as hereditarily predisposed to English politics. For example, Froude claims in *Oceana* that “The two races [English and Boer] were drawing together, and, if the treaties of 1852 had not been broken, South Africa would have by this time been reunited, and the Dutch farmers would have been loyal subjects of the Crown... The Boer is a born Conservative, and the Fee States, if let well enough alone, would have naturally rejoined their kindred” (44).

<sup>42</sup> Some of the numerous treatments of Schreiner’s intellectual debt to Spencer can be found in Mark Sanders, *Complicities: The Intellectual and Apartheid*; Carol L. Barash, “Virile Womanhood: Olive Schreiner’s Narratives of a Master Race”; and Margaret Lenta, “Racism, Sexism, and Olive Schreiner’s Fiction.” Schreiner fictionalizes her youthful encounter with Spencer’s *First Principles* in *Story of an African Farm*, where Waldo receives a book from his stranger that, though unnamed, is clearly Spencer’s famous treatise.

<sup>43</sup> Schreiner’s texts in a sense anticipate theorists of underdevelopment who have shown there to be a spatial component to industrial development. According to Samir Amin, a nation’s attempts to modernize can be constrained by its peripheral role in the world-system, since these countries are forced to rely on foreign loans (resulting in huge deficits) that impede growth of the industrial sector. At the same time, Schreiner’s organicism makes its plea for a more efficient development trajectory in terms of its benefit to the system as a *whole*, rather than on the basis of the inequitable allocation of wealth *among* countries.

<sup>44</sup> Waldo is the son of the “German” overseer, but is constantly linked to English culture through his political and intellectual interests (e.g., Mill and Spencer).

<sup>45</sup> Among the many studies to draw a correlation between ideas of masculinity and empire are Joseph Kestner, *Masculinities in British Adventure Fiction, 1880-1915*; Radhika Mohanram, *Imperial White: Race, Diaspora, and the British Empire*; Joseph Sramek, “Face Him Like a



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Briton': Tiger Hunting, Imperialism, and British Masculinity in Colonial India, 1800-1875"; Anne M. Windholz, "An Emigrant and a Gentleman: Imperial Masculinity, British Magazines, and the Colony That Got Away"; and David Alderson, *Mansex Fine: Religion, Manliness and Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century British Culture*.

<sup>46</sup> Some of the numerous studies that investigate the relationship between the imperial romance, liberal individualism, and the mystification of imperialism include Nicholas Daly, *Modernism, Romance and the Fin de Siècle*; Francis O'Gorman, "Speculative Fictions and the Fortunes of H. Rider Haggard"; McClintock; and Chrisman, *Rereading the Imperial Romance*.

<sup>47</sup> The child of Nonconformist missionaries, Schreiner's valorization of Waldo's suffering is clearly indebted to the representational strategies of the sentimental slave narratives favored by abolitionist Nonconformists. At the same time, as John Kucich observes, Schreiner's texts often transform victimhood into agency, a characteristic often lacking from abolitionist texts (*Imperial Masochism*, 86-135).

<sup>48</sup> In this, Schreiner's novel differs from the communities of pacifists, vegetarians, and spiritualists who gathered together into counterpublics of anticolonial dissent in London during the late-nineteenth century (Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities*).

<sup>49</sup> As a number of critics have noted, Schreiner displayed a masochist disposition similar to that voiced here by Lyndall in both her personal life and her fiction. John Kucich provides a concise summary of the criticism that second-wave feminists leveled against the masochism pervading Schreiner and other late-century feminists' fiction: "Second-wave feminists were repelled by a number of seemingly perverse constraints some "New Woman" writers placed on themselves: a rigid code of sexual self-denial, often presented as a politicized gesture; a programmatic defeatism, which transformed disappointment with women's social prospects into postures of saintly martyrdom; and an idealization of self-sacrifice (particularly maternal self-sacrifice), which has been viewed either as a concession to eugenics or a residue of mid-Victorian gender ideology" (87). The scholars who Kucich is summarizing include Elaine Showalter (*A Literature of Their Own*), Sheila Rowbotham (*Women, Resistance and Revolution*), Gail Cunningham (*The New Woman and the Victorian Novel*), and Patricia Stubbs (*Women and Fiction*).

<sup>50</sup> For example, in *Provincializing Europe* Dipesh Chakrabarty claims that European imperialists held out a lure to subject peoples that they could one day become modern but constantly deferred that promise into an unreachable future, exiling colonized peoples to the eternal limbo of the "not-yet" modern.

<sup>51</sup> On the absolute alterity ascribed to Africa by European thinkers, see also V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*.

<sup>52</sup> For a more complete analysis of the role that "equal" marriage played in New Woman thought, see Sally Ledger, *The New Woman*, and Angelique Richardson, *Love and Eugenics in the Late Nineteenth Century*. In addition to Schreiner, Sarah Grand and Mona Caird are the two New Woman writers most frequently credited with rethinking the bounds of the marriage contract.

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<sup>53</sup> This may answer in part the difficulty in reading *Story of an African Farm* according to the generic codes of the *bildungsroman*. The novel's problem with stunted or doubled narratives of *bildung* (Esty, *Unseasonable Youth*; GoGwilt) testifies to its refusal to endow teleology in a developmental narrative of self-actualization. Instead, it suggests that mothers nurture individuals' growth to maturity, thereby providing a supplemental discourse of development outside of the narrative of individualistic self-possession.

<sup>54</sup> Similarly, in *From Man to Man* Bertie never bears children while being kept as a mistress in London, but Rebekah is so overwhelmingly maternal that she not only raises her own children but also her husband's illegitimate child with a servant of theirs (apparently without any input from her biological mother!).

### CHAPTER III

#### ENVIIOUS PROFESSIONALISM: LITERARY INTERNATIONALISM, ANGLO CITIZENSHIP, AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN NOVEL BETWEEN THE WARS

Where the last chapter investigated literary dialogues with colonial constitutionalism, this chapter unfolds a literary-historical genealogy of professionalism, citizenship, and the welfare state. As a point of departure, we might observe that literature and professionalism are uneasy bedfellows. Since the early years of modernism, writers as diverse as Conrad, Joyce, and Woolf have all identified professional craftsmanship as a central component of their work.<sup>1</sup> But even if, as Roland Barthes has argued, professional “[l]abour replaces genius as a value” in modernist literature, the relatively small audience for modernist writing generated anxiety among these writers over the influence their works possessed (*Writing Degree Zero*, 63). Compared to the mass-market appeal of an Arnold Bennett, literature with artistic pretensions often passed unheralded, little read, and certainly not monetarily rewarded. As modernist writers sought to distinguish their mode of professional writing from more popular figures like Bennett, they stressed how, to quote Virginia Woolf, their “way of telling the truth” was more true to life but also “bound to reach us in a chaotic condition” not amenable to popular taste (“Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown,” 22). One of the constant refrains of modernist literature, then, is a partially disavowed envy for the wider audience available to more recognizably “professional” writers and a countervailing assertion of their own superior craftsmanship. This turbulent mixture can be seen in anywhere from *The Secret Agent*, where Conrad worries over the greater reach of vulgar newspapers vis-à-vis his own experimental fiction, to Joyce’s support for a socialist state that, he believed, would fund his writing despite its small audience. Wealth, influence, and

material comfort appeared to be the sacrifices demanded by the modernist craft, sacrifices which could only be recovered in a utopian political project (socialism) or through the resentful language of envy.

This unsteady balance of professional aspiration and envious yearning was even more of a problem for modernist-era South African authors whose investment in professionalism was much more ambivalent than was that of their metropolitan counterparts. As was apparent to many Anglo-South Africans, professionalism was intimately wedded to both the emerging welfare state and global capitalism. On the one hand, in the interwar period a modernized, state-funded university system had begun training professionals en masse, professionals who were then given employment within the welfare state's growing civil service sector (Perkin 155-70). On the other hand, professionalism educated workers in a uniform set of vocational principles that allowed businesses to communicate more effortlessly in and across national borders, and which also encouraged workers to associate themselves less with national and class identities than with international professional communities (Perkin 9-17). Hostile to any transnational institutions that might replicate empire's fading structure, Anglo-South African writers like William Plomer and Sarah Gertrude Millin greeted professionalism with a mixture of fascination, disdain, and, most of all, envious emulation. But in doing so, they also reveal the ways in which envy was an essential ingredient to transnational professionalism – how, that is, envy's ambivalent attachments to objects enabled it to connect professionalism with *both* nationalizing welfare states and a budding global economy. This chapter therefore turns to interwar Anglo-South African fiction in order to show how it provided a laboratory for working out an envious brand of professionalism that could image national citizenship within a transnational economy.

Geopolitically, perhaps *the* definitive characteristic of the interwar period was the consolidation and gradual turning-inward of the sovereign nation-state. Whether instituted under the rubric of national self-determination, economic protectionism, or an organic national culture, nation-states slowly retreated from the highly globalized economy of the pre-Great War world and from the “Great Game” of inter-imperial competition and statecraft, directing their energies instead toward strengthening their physical and ideological control over the populations inside their own borders.<sup>2</sup> Corresponding to this shift, though without being fully reducible to it or determinative of it, was a transition from what Giovanni Arrighi calls the “cosmopolitan imperial” economic organization of the “long” nineteenth century world-system (1780-1914) to the “corporate-national” one of the “long” twentieth-century world-system (circa 1880-present) (224-6). In the nineteenth century large territorial empires (the British, French, Ottoman, Russian, and, later, German) expanded their economic reach through military interventions in and formalized political rule over distant countries in Africa, Asia, and the South Pacific, securing trading rights and opportunities for investment in local industries; in the twentieth century capitalism was driven more by the maximization of profits through multi-part corporations that could both handle the manufacturing, distribution, and selling of their products all by themselves and cultivate mass consumer markets for these goods. By the end of the Second World War, this development would be cemented by the emergence of the Keynesian welfare state – which helped to stimulate a mass consumer market based on medium-term growth – and the Bretton Woods system of monetary management, which tied currency exchange rates to the U. S. dollar and ensured that trade would not be subject to protectionist policies from individual nation-states or imperial/commercial trading blocs.

However familiar this historical narrative has become, it is important to remember that the passage from empire to a post-imperial world-system was quite fraught both politically and ideologically. Far from a foreordained step toward the “end of History,” the interwar period might more properly be understood as what Antonio Gramsci terms “the interregnum”: “The old is dying, and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum there arises a great diversity of morbid symptoms” (*Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 276). During the 1930s in particular, early progenitors of the welfare state were just beginning to take shape across Europe, the United States, and the British dominions: in the form of pro-state intervention treatises like Keynes’s *General Theory*, the socialist reformism championed by Britain’s Labour Party, and exercises in centralized state planning like the New Deal and its Works Progress Administration.<sup>3</sup> But praise for these measures was balanced by those who, like Ayn Rand, saw the national-collectivist policies of welfare statism as endangering the autonomy of the individual, the *sine qua none* of laissez-faire capitalism, or who, like Samuel Chamberlain and Daniel Moffet, saw national retrenchment as a rejection of the Enlightenment project of civilization that had underpinned imperialism in its many guises.<sup>4</sup> Even committed liberals like Keynes feared that a sovereign, unchecked state would eradicate the individualism of its citizens by reproducing the abuses of imperialism in the domestic sphere, a misgiving that led him to advocate a government composed of semi-autonomous bodies loosely connected to a centralized bureaucracy.<sup>5</sup>

More important, attention to the shift from competing global empires to “corporate-national” consumerism illuminates how the post-World War II world-system exhibits the same spectral, discontinuous temporality that Derrida theorizes in *Specters of Marx*. Given the unsteady juxtaposition of national autonomy, global consumerism, and professional corporatism they experienced, postwar writers were faced with a series of challenging questions. What

narrative tropes and stylizations of the subject were necessary to reconcile the immanent, organicist versions of national culture that had supported the rise of national self-determination with a hauntingly present global economy that continued to cut across national borders? How could a model of rationalized technocratic management be indigenous to the peripheral territories just beginning to struggle out from under the imperial shadow *and at the same time* a lingering remnant of colonialism? And from what locations, and through what genealogical lines of emergence, did imaginative resolutions to these dilemmas first take shape?

Among British territories, the ideology of professionalism helped to mediate between conflicting movements toward democracy and elitism, nationalism and globalization, and centralized authority and peripheral autonomy. As Saul Dubow argues, because professionalism was viewed as a politically-neutral form of technocratic management, it sublimated the imperial civilizing mission into a decentered project of universal modernity. Thus pro-Empire nostalgists could claim professionalism as “the acceptable face of the imperial connection” while distancing themselves from the empire’s retreating political edifice (*A Commonwealth of Knowledge*, 165, 201).<sup>6</sup> But unlike the settler colonies of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, which vociferously claimed their British heritage, or the Anglo-Irish, who increasingly clung to their British descendant as a means of antagonistically consolidating their withering sociocultural standing in Ireland, Anglo-South Africans faced an intractable Afrikaner nationalism that was suspicious of any hint of lingering imperial influence. Even among Anglo-South Africans there was disagreement as to what constituted an “African” form of professionalism or how a specifically Anglo professional community was distinct from a closet return to imperialism. During the interwar period, for example, South Africa’s three most accomplished writers—Plomer, Campbell, and Sarah Gertrude Millin – all frequented the edges of the British

Bloomsbury Circle in person (Plomer and Campbell) or through their correspondence (Millin). But while Plomer idealized Bloomsbury as a “grand” world of “ideas and talent,” Campbell attacked the Group as effete bisexuals whose literary experiments privileged ultra-liberal, professionalized modes of disputation above empirical truths (“Far happier with a complicated lie/ Than with a simple truth that hits the eye”): Millin in turn chastised Plomer and Campbell’s work as inauthentically nationalist, merely “a branch of a well-defined overseas group” (*The Georgiad*, IV.112-3; “South African Magazine,” 8).

At the same time, South African uneasiness over professionalism is less an index of the country’s resistance to modernity than to the turbulent emotions that welfare-state professionalism called into being. Foremost among those emotions, as I show, is envy. As Carolyn Steedman dramatizes to spectacular effect in her memoir of her South London childhood, *Landscape for a Good Woman*, the welfare state both elicited yearnings for the material signifiers of the “good life” – the commodities that drove mass consumerism – and stepped in to intervene in lower-class lives that failed to achieve the “good life” on their own. The result, emblemized by Steedman’s own mother, was a pervasive envious disposition among lower-class workers that could only conceive of one’s connection to the state as one of deprivation – as an intimate affiliation with objects and institutions that nevertheless remained noticeably absent in one’s everyday life.<sup>7</sup>

Investigating South African novels and social criticism from the interwar years, I trace how Anglo-South African authors crafted an envious perspective toward British-based professional institutions. Appealing to their country’s perceived economic deficiencies, envy enabled writers like Plomer and Millin to represent professional institutions as distant, external to their selves, but as nevertheless exerting a profound force in South Africa. Turning first to the



furor surrounding Campbell and Plomer's short-lived magazine *Voorslag* and Plomer's controversial novel *Turbott Wolfe*, I show how Plomer in particular deployed a series of modernist stereotypes about the destructive power of black African sexuality and the overly-rigid social forms of industrial modernity in order to develop an anti-presentist ontology of professionalism. For Plomer, an African professionalism is a phantasmatic object confined to fantasy, an irretrievable past, or an unrecognizable future, but which still exerts a force on the present through its productive of envy. The second half of the chapter then pursues the migration of this image from marginal avant-garde circles to a central position in political debates over post-imperial economic communities. As South Africans argued over whether or not to join the British-based trading bloc known as the "sterling area" or "sterling bloc," the popular Anglophilic writer Sarah Gertrude Millin struggled to articulate an envious mode of South African citizenship wherein participation in foreign, Anglo institutions, far from undermining South African autonomy, were in fact constitutive of a newly-valored South African identity. In doing so, Millin harnessed Plomer's ontology of professionalism to a more conservative political program of Anglo-South African citizenship. Her writing thus reveals how the welfare state's emotional vocabulary was co-produced in tension with global regimes of "flexible" economic citizenship that would not be fully articulated until the final decades of the twentieth century.

### **Envy, European Modernity, and the *Voorslag* Controversy**

Interwar discussions of South African professionalism were permeated by the rhetoric of envy. Agricultural depressions had made increasingly visible the plight of "poor white" Afrikaners, whose scanty education and poor living environments resembled black Africans'

circumstances more than their fellow-European English. In the view of most Anglo-South Africans, Afrikaners appeared as “the poor, uneducated railway worker, the ignorant policeman...vacant lower-class beings. A stigma of poverty and ignorance was attached to the whole group” (Salomon 117). This economic divide was deepened as many Afrikaners moved from the country to the city, where they found the professional and civil service positions available there already filled by Anglo-South Africans or English-speaking immigrants. In response, Afrikaner politicians railed against Anglo control of the education system and professions, pointing to the disadvantage Afrikaners possessed in “having to speak a foreign language – English – like a conquered race” in order to gain entrance to the professions (Salomon 106). For Afrikaners, urban professionalism appeared as an Anglo-European enclave more tightly connected to international business, scientific, and educational institutions than to the needs of South African citizens. Moreover, the language of technocratic universality espoused by professional institutions belied the centrality of *English* to their operations, a fact which seemed to reinscribe the geography of empire within them (John Marx, *The Modernist Novel and the Decline of Empire*, 1-24). Afrikaners feared becoming what the Rev. Marchland famously described as “hewers of wood and drawers of water” to incoming European immigrants, and seethed at how what they believed to be their rightful wealth was absconded by international, British-based professional networks (quoted in Giliomee 319).

In his seminal study “Structures of Feeling,” Raymond Williams notes the difficulty inherent in reading “meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt” as opposed to “formally held and systematic beliefs” (*Marxism and Literature*, 132). Since these “structures of feeling” define “a social experience which is still *in process*,” they are habitually “not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating” (132). While

Williams's main concern in his essay is to differentiate between the sedimented ideologies codified in institutions and the more fluid affective and experiential relationships embedded in everyday life, we might extend his thoughts on the dominant cultural tendency to subjectivize affect in order to reflect on the unevenness of this process with respect to particular emotions. For example, as we saw in the last chapter, imperial apologists embraced sentiment precisely for providing an affective foundation for the supra-institutional community of British nations into which they hoped the empire would evolve. Far from isolating its bearer from social life, sentiment might more properly be thought of as an "aesthetic technology of belonging" cultivating a voluntarist ideal of affective community.<sup>8</sup> Like other emotions associated with sociality and belonging,<sup>9</sup> sentiment declares its own rhetoric of intersubjective association – as inner-motivated, organic, and humanistic – to be more authentic than the objectifying class relations thrust upon individuals from outside of themselves by impersonal socioeconomic institutions.<sup>10</sup>

In contrast, envy has traditionally been almost exclusively couched within the individuating terms Williams debunks in his analysis of "structures of feeling." As Sianne Ngai explains,

we tend to perceive envy as designating a passive condition of the subject rather than the means by which the subject recognizes and responds to an objective relation ... [This] suggests that the dominant cultural attitude toward this affect converts its fundamentally other-regarding orientation into an egocentric one, stripping it of its polemicism and rendering it merely a reflection of deficient and possibly histrionic selfhood. (129)

For Ngai, then, a politically-nuanced treatment of envy would seek to return envy's "other-regarding orientation" – that is, its primary concern with another person or group's possessions, attributes, or social esteem – to a central position within both cultural representations and critical

discourse. Doing so involves collapsing the distinction between subjective emotion and collective political action through which reactionary theories of *ressentiment* have discredited envious critiques of inequitable social conditions as “private dissatisfactions” free from any genuine egalitarian element (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 202). But this endeavor also entails rethinking how identification, emulation, and collective association operate. In particular, envy troubles the predisposition, especially prevalent in psychoanalytic thought, to regard these activities as either synonymous or causal effects of one another. As Ngai goes on to argue,

We could also argue that envy enables a strategic way of *not* identifying which, in facilitating and encouraging [the transition from admiration to antagonism], preserves a critical agency whose loss is threatened by the full-blown idealization of the attribute admired. In this sense, it could be said that a subject might envy and emulate not just as a safeguard against fully identifying herself with the quality emulated – say, “femininity” – but precisely in order to convert her admiration into polemicism, qua critical force or agency. (161)

Ngai’s championing of envy as a critical tool facilitating limited attachments to the material signifiers of satisfaction, though persuasive, raises two questions central to this study. First, if the political potency of envy stems from its capacity to disengage individuals from the fetishized markers signaling inclusion within a particular group without sacrificing that community itself, can we assume (as I take Ngai to assume) that the political effects of its critique are of necessity progressive? Or, to put it another way: if we regard envy as an emotional *technē* whose tactical effects are transferrable across ideological persuasions, how do we read envious yearnings that are simultaneously critical of imposed racial, gender, and national hierarchies *and* complicit in the retention of those same hierarchies in another form? To what degree can we approach such compromised political projects without either reducing their complex dynamics to the suspect moral code motivating them or idealizing them as countercultural solutions to social normativity?

Second, what are the actual material effects envy both reacts to and produces? Ngai's analysis of envy stresses its metacritical interrogation of reified objects but has little to say about the actual material disparities inciting envious desires in the first place. In the context of the interwar period, why did envy accrue around certain objects – the economy, race, professionalization – rather than others? Why were these particular phenomena in need of the limited disarticulation Ngai finds in envy, and what new allocations of commodities and identities resulted from envious attachments to these objects?

Perhaps the best place to start such an investigation is by turning to the professional literary sphere that was first beginning to emerge in South Africa in the 1920s and 1930s. Professional literary magazines, a sophisticated book review and publicity network, and a local market for books all coalesced during this period, forming the rudiments of an indigenous literary culture. Most important for our purposes, contemporaneous debates over what this professional literary culture should look like were repeatedly phrased in the language of envy and through the object of race. The parameters of this discussion were set by two distinct aesthetic programs jockeying for local and international public support. On the one hand, William Plomer, Roy Campbell, and Laurens van der Post envisioned themselves as an African avant-garde come to “lash,” in the words of Campbell's introductory remarks in the first issue of *Voorslag* [Afrikaans for “Whiplash”], the South African public into taking notice of international aesthetic and political movements.<sup>11</sup> Though ostensibly apolitical in its content, under the editorship of Campbell *Voorslag* characterized white South Africa as “three hundred years behind modern Europe and five hundred years behind modern art and science” and deliberately antagonized conservative opinion by publishing provocative pieces with pro-“native” messages (63). So hostile was the reaction to *Voorslag* that its sponsor, Lewis Reynolds, removed

Campbell's editorial control after only three issues, and without him the magazine quickly fell apart. Campbell for a brief time planned a successor volume, but van der Post and Plomer both left South Africa soon after the "*Voorslag* controversy" erupted, leaving Campbell without his two co-collaborators. Dissatisfied with his work's reception in his homeland, Campbell soon joined van der Post and Plomer in England and completed the group's physical and aesthetic drift toward Europe, where the three found more sympathetic audiences (at least initially) within Bloomsbury's literary circle.

On the other hand, Sarah Gertrude Millin emerged as the leading voice of a middlebrow strain of fiction seeking to document South African society for a growing local and international audience. Millin's novels were usually sociological in their approach, presenting a detached narrator objectively focusing on such representative national spaces as the farmstead, the missionary encampment, and the shantytowns springing up around mineral diggings. Millin was not alone in adopting a sociological perspective in her work, and English as well as South African writers often responded to demands for detailed accounts of South African life from English and American audiences: Francis Brett Young, to name perhaps the most popular writer of such novels in England, was widely praised for his (questionable) insights into the "Boer mentality," the Great Trek, and urbanization in *They Seek a Country* and *City of Gold*. But Millin was certainly the most prolific and critically-acclaimed social critic among popular and middlebrow authors in South Africa, her novels enjoying spectacular sales in the U.S. in particular and commendations by General Jan Smuts and J. H. Hofmeyer, South Africa's leading liberal politicians. As Smuts explained in a congratulatory letter to her after the publication of her nonfiction study *The South Africans*, "South Africa is, and remains, a mystery and this you have brought out" (1 October 1926).

Relations between Millin and the Campbell/Plomer/van der Post set during this period were tense, to put it mildly. Campbell did include one of Millin's short stories in the third issue of *Voorslag*, but privately he and Plomer mocked the "restraint" critics in Britain and the U. S. attributed to her work:

You praise the firm restraint with which they write –  
I'm with you there, of course:  
They use the snaffle and the curb all right,  
But where's the bloody horse? (Campbell, unnamed poem)

Campbell's point is that restraint in Millin becomes an end in itself: the tools used to control Millin's prose ("the snaffle and the curb") are well developed as techniques, but her fiction lacks any underlying vitality ("the bloody horse") that would require obstruction. From the perspective of Campbell and Plomer, both of whom possessed a Lawrentian interest in how black Africans could infuse a restorative – and at times threatening – energy to European civilization through their martial and sexual practices,<sup>12</sup> Millin's "economical" writings failed to recognize the promise inherent in South Africa's racially mixed demography.<sup>13</sup> As her biographer Martin Rubin observes, despite the important role sexual passion plays in her plots, Millin's novels tend to deal with sex in an abstract, disembodied manner (150). Indeed, even though her anxious descriptions of interracial miscegenation garnered her international success as a novelist, Millin's fiction directed its focus at the social forms reining in excessive emotion, rather than the urges inducing transgressions of the color bar, as she was unable to "conceive...an abandonment of all restraints" (*God's Stepchildren*, 31).

Millin, for her part, complained that "for all [*Voorslag*'s] South African flavour" it was more "a branch of a well-defined overseas group" than an authentic South African production ("South African Magazine," 8). Insofar as the *Voorslag* writers advocated importing European avant-garde techniques to South Africa, this was certainly a fair criticism; but it also presented a

reductive reading of literary nationalism as in conflict with cosmopolitan experimentalism and, more important, identified attitudes toward the color bar as the issue separating these positions.<sup>14</sup> In *God's Stepchildren* (1924), her first and most extended treatment of miscegenation, Millin satirized European “negrophilia” through the liberal Englishwoman Nora, who pleads that her “Coloured” husband Barry “must take me away from here – back to England, where I need not see these brown creatures, and think about how they came into the world, or be made to remember all the time that my own little baby...” (288). Millin suggests all English “negrophiles” were like Nora: thousands of miles removed from contact with Africa, they could safely indulge in anti-normative sexual and aesthetic practices, including interracial marriage and anti-realist representational techniques. But in South Africa, where black Africans and European settlers came into contact daily, racial proprieties had to be maintained to prevent the creation of a mixed-race community who would carry all of the “vices and failings” of their parent races and none of their advantages (251). Violations of social norms here become hereditary traits passed down to one’s descendants: the fact that one would ignore the color bar – for Millin, the most fundamental social taboo – retroactively assigns a poor character to oneself and condemns one’s children to ethical shortcomings. By expressing “negrophilistic” views originating in bohemian Europe, the *Voorslag* set, according to her, undermined a tenuous social structure incapable of absorbing heterogeneous aesthetic forms and political opinions.

However, for all the discord between Plomer, Campbell, van der Post, and Millin over the correct attitude to adopt toward black Africans, their vocal differences over miscegenation obscure the extent to which they shared a common understanding about how blackness threatened the constrained social forms of a Eurocentric professional society. As numerous critics have argued, primitivism provided the modernist art and literature that Plomer in



particular emulated with a means of critiquing the rationalist, mechanistic, and overly-conventionalized ethos of Western modernity.<sup>15</sup> D. H. Lawrence and the cubists in particular valorized African and Native American cultures for their intuitive connection to the deep, animalistic intensities covered over by decadent Western institutions.<sup>16</sup> (Often, it should be noted, with the misogynistic implication that Western culture was overly “feminine” and in need of a corrective swing to the “masculine” blood-rites of primitive cultures.<sup>17</sup>) In his bombastic defense of Plomer’s first novel, *Turbott Wolfe*, in the inaugural issue of *Voorslag*, Campbell explicitly aligns the magazine’s work, and Plomer’s writing in particular, with the primitivism inflecting literary and academic production in the interwar period:

What Mr. Plomer has yet to learn is that we in our mental bondage are almost as much the victims of circumstance as the natives in their physical bondage ... The work done by Sir James Frazer, Freud, Trotter, Le Bon and others has given us a very different idea of ourselves [*sic*] from that entertained by our ancestors, namely that the white man having ascended from the apes is automatically proceeding, a purely rational creature, by leaps and bounds to a higher plane of existence. We have been revealed to ourselves in a more tragically heroic but less comfortable, light: individually we see man as a creature, far more emotional than rational, trying to impose the laws of his reason on the more powerful emotions and lusts which tow him through life; a creature armed with the weapons for his own salvation and destruction but unable to tell which are which: a small and desperate figure warring with the titanic shadows of his own heredity, superstition and imagination. (42)

Emphasizing the irrational “emotions and lusts” overwhelming attempts to reach “a higher plane of existence,” Campbell portrays European cultural and scientific achievements as tenuous bulwarks against the excessive energies of the animalistic unconscious. But he does so by racializing the unconscious as an atavistic “native” whose inability to control his own body condemns him to “physical bondage” to his emotions and transforms him from a “man” into a “creature.” Indeed, the analogy between “mental” and “physical” bondage becomes solidified

through a series of slippages, overdetermined symmetries, and racialized metaphors that consolidate a neo-Cartesian dualism of European rationality and African embodiedness even as they seek to overcome the opposition between the two. Structurally, the parallelism between “native” enslavement and “superstition and imagination” in both the logic of the argument and its rhetorical presentation – “native” bondage is taken to be analogous to the tyranny of “superstition and imagination,” with the two images opening and closing the passage – enables Campbell to demystify European claims to “the laws of...reason,” but only by thrusting these epiphenomena back into the “titanic shadows” of “heredity” that govern the (implicitly black) body. Furthermore, the use of “shadows” to represent this hereditary unconscious and its unruly emotions concludes a sequence of highly racialized tropes for the unconscious and its primitive urges: enslavement, apishness, darkness. The result, as Campbell’s juxtaposition of “white” rationality with the “shadowy” realm of superstition makes clear, is a scenario in which Europeans are coded as “tragically heroic” for their attempts to “impose the laws of [their] reason” onto resistant affects; but in which Africans, by contrast, remain exiled from the cathartic consolations of tragedy, since their raw emotional energy is precisely the vehicle for the ongoing eradication of enlightened cultural forms. As a thin veneer permeating Western Europe, modernity appears in Campbell’s review as an inauthentic social project rigidly constraining turbulent animalistic passions – a project whose dialectical confrontation with primitive founts of energy pushes it toward a “higher plane of existence” at the same time as it obscures which is “destructive” and which “salvation,” powerful emotions or modern rationality.

### ***Turbott Wolfe* and the Paradoxes of South African Professionalism**

The fact that Campbell finds Plomer deficient in treating his white characters with “individual and comparative decency” speaks to Plomer’s refusal to idealize Europeans’ postwar loss of faith in industrial modernity and highlights his more progressive stance vis-à-vis black Africans’ civilizational aspirations (43). Still, when *Turbott Wolfe* was first published by Leonard and Virginia Woolf’s Hogarth Press in 1925, its sensationalistic account of Afro-European miscegenation struck hostile South African reviewers as remarkably similar in its aims to those Campbell would elaborate soon afterwards in *Voorslag*. As one particularly negative review described it, the novel “introduces some strain of actual or potential degeneracy into characters he toys with; as if the sight of a sunlit land . . . had wrenched out of position the foundations on which conventionality rests” (“A Nasty Book on a Nasty Subject”). Like Campbell, Plomer was understood to be deconstructing “conventionality” through what the reviewer characterizes as the “degeneracy” of black primitivism. But unlike Campbell, Plomer would engage directly with how, and in what form, Africa could develop a modern professional culture of its own.

*Turbotte Wolfe*, critics agree, is about miscegenation.<sup>18</sup> Plomer’s protagonist, the eponymous Turbotte Wolfe, says as much: “miscegenation is the only way for Africa to be secured for the Africans” (77). But discussions of miscegenation in the novel have often clouded how race and, in particular, racial *envy*, combine to reveal both the shortcomings and utopian potential of the sort of indigenous professionalism Plomer, Campbell, and Millin all desired. Indeed, Plomer’s depiction in *Turbotte Wolfe* of the “Young Africa” organization that propagates miscegenation to a hostile South African audience displays a clear debt to emerging black African professional movements, most notably the contemporaneous New African movement

launched by Pixley ka Isaka Seme and later championed by Solomon T. Plaatje, John Langalibalele, and H. I. E. Dhlomo.<sup>19</sup> The New Africans were organized and run by a mission-educated, petit bourgeois intelligentsia who, tired of waiting for a constantly-deferred assimilation into European civilization, turned to African civilizations as a model for an alternative professional tradition. In “The Regeneration of Africa” (1905), a manifesto of sorts for the budding movement, Seme called for a “spiritual and humanistic” African renaissance based on a widespread “industrial and educational initiative” (408). In the face of the “influence of contact and intercourse, the backward with the advanced,” Seme believed that Africans could foment a “new spirit” of modernity among Africans while still demonstrating the “unimpaired genius” of African particularity (407-8). The New African program thus stressed the cross-fertilization of ideas between Europeans and Africans: professional organizations like the Bantu Men’s Social Centre (BMSC) and journals like *Bantu Studies* and *The Critic* disseminated secular ideals about the institutionalization of literature in the university and professional journals, while New African thinkers traced the genesis of such African-based organizations to fallen Zulu civilizations. The central thesis underlying the New African movement, then, was that the modern, technocratic forms of intellectual professionalism they were trained in at missionary schools were not incompatible with African society (as Campbell believed), but rediscoveries of an older, African form of modernity.

*Turbotte Wolfe* is at once an investigation into New African professionalism and a critique of its founding claims. As a good Lawrentian, Plomer could not condone New African hopes for a fully realized African professionalism; for him, as for Campbell, modernity was an “obscene civilization that conquers everything,” a taint radiating outward from Europe to the colonies which destroyed indigenous cultures (*Turbotte Wolfe*, 31). Africans could not be

professionals in the same way as Europeans because to be a professional was to be rationalistic, technocratic, and *European*, and *not* African. But this did not mean that professionalism was entirely absent from Africa. Instead, Plomer uses the limited disidentification Ngai finds in *Envy* to distance professionalism from his characters without entirely removing it from South Africa. *Envy*, I will be suggesting, relocates professionalism in the novel to a time and place anterior to his characters' immediate environment: in the realm of fantasy, the utopian time of the future, or in a glimpse of retrospective recognition that only notices it after it is already gone. While his characters may not "be" professionals in the European sense, they are nevertheless shaped by a professionalism that intermittently appears and disappears, one made present to them in flashes of envious fantasy and in fleeting, doomed professional societies. And the epitome of these fleeting professional societies is Wolfe's Young Africa movement.

Wolfe arrives in South Africa distraught at the "degeneration" of colonial society, which appears to him to be mostly made up of small-minded, racist, and effeminate brutes. After discussion with some of the more liberal settlers and Africans – the Rev. Friston, the "Kaffir intellectual" Zachary Msomi, and the beautiful Mabel van der Horst – he proceeds to found the fledgling "Young Africa" movement who, reminiscent of the New Africans, aim to "regenerate" Africa (19). From the manifesto the group publishes ("Young Africa"), to their connections with the native newspaper *the Morning Star*, to the clear rules and procedures laid down for debate, Young Africa demonstrates all the central characteristics of a model professional society. But in contrast to the New Africans, who saw such organizations as indicative of a renewed African civilization, Plomer's Young Africans biologize regeneration within the figure of "miscegenation." For Wolfe and his compatriots, "miscegenation" between the colonizing Europeans and "the hidden force" secreted within black Africa is the only path to laying the "true

foundations for the future Coloured World” (65, 77-8). This tenet is put into practice when Mabel marries Zachary, but the marriage quickly unhinges the sanity and principles of the group’s other members, mixing utopian potentiality with titillating danger (119). By the end of the novel, Rev. Friston (Mabel’s other suitor) has gone mad, Wolfe has dismissed miscegenation as “a nightmare” he was only “glibly...fool[ing] about with,” and the Young Africa movement has fallen apart, leaving the reader with an ambivalent juxtaposition of dynamic but destructive African sexuality and narcissistic European achievements in such backward-looking disciplines as “archæology,” “church architecture,” and “mediæval domestic economy” (the pursuits that Wolfe suggests he may embark on after his disillusionment with Africa) (96, 76, 125) (see figure 6).

The irony behind this collapse is that even as Plomer shifts his focus away from professionalism and toward sexual reproduction, Young Africa becomes more visible as a framework that could *itself* circumvent the difficulties presented to miscegenation by both European enervation and African sexuality. Indeed, though most scholarship on *Turbott Wolfe* emphasizes the interracial sex that caused a veritable literary scandal after its publication, as the novel progresses the utopian promise originally contained in the sexual act of miscegenation gradually becomes displaced onto Young Africa as the institution that had made such propositions possible in the first place. When Wolfe informs Caleb, his employee and one of the members of Young Africa, that he will be leaving Africa for England, their debate over Wolfe’s admission of defeat revolves around the status of Young Africa without him, rather than the message it propagated:

“And what is to become of Young Africa?”

“Young Africa, Caleb,” I said, “was a device of Miss van der Horst’s to justify her marriage to Zachary. But it was also Mr. Friston.”



Figure 6: Edward Wolfe, *Untitled*. Plomer loosely based Turbotte Wolfe on Edward Wolfe, a painter whom Plomer had met as a youth in South Africa. The highly sexualized black bodies in Wolfe's paintings anticipate Turbotte Wolfe's obsession with black sexuality.

“But why, sir, did you have anything to do with Young Africa if it is only what you say? And why did you encourage me--?”

“...With Young Africa I allowed myself to be cheated into the idea that politics would give me what I sought. Now, under the barren pear-tree, I see that Young Africa was a monstrous farce...” (124-5)

Caleb yearns to view Young Africa as an abstract sociopolitical program exceeding its own instrumentalizable message – i.e., as more than the mere “device” that Mabel exploits to fulfill her own sexual desires. However, even as Caleb articulates this longing for a modern, professionalized political movement located in the “barren” stretches of southern African, Plomer’s narrative immediately cordons off Caleb’s impulse from his immediate material environment by subtly shifting from the present to the past tense – “Young Africa...*is* only what you say”; “I see that Young Africa *was* a monstrous farce” – coding it in a nostalgic register that recognizes Young Africa’s promise only *after* it has already collapsed. Where Wolfe, Friston, Mabel, Zachary, and Caleb initially invest their aspirations for “Eurafrica” in the regenerative power of miscegenation, it is the *failure* of interracial marriage to produce any lasting model for collective association that ultimately opens up what Benjamin would call the “messianic” promise contained within Young Africa itself (“Theses on the Philosophy of History,” 263). But in a dialectical twist parallel to the one we found in Campbell’s review of the novel, even as black sexuality provides the motive force necessary to unhinge “our obscene civilization” and its enfeebled conventions, “the almighty violence of Africa” shatters the “regenerated” institutions upon which the Young Africans had hoped to establish a new global order (31, 54). “Even the vast fabric of government, the preposterous structure of officialdom,” observes Wolfe, “had been set up to conceal or control what could not be ordered: it was denied by the mere existence of that which it sought to restrict” (55). A pure force of destruction that deploys many of the worst modernist stereotypes about Africa as the negation of rational enlightenment, miscegenation undermines its own institutionalization in civil society by its “mere existence” as that which “could not be ordered,” restricting its utopian potential to a past moment “out of joint” with the living present (Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 1).



*Turbott Wolfe's* foreclosure of modern professionalism in South Africa can be read in two contrasting – but not necessarily incompatible – ways. The more familiar critical interpretation would invoke modernist writers' fetishization of Africa as the anti-modern antithesis to European industrialism.<sup>20</sup> But we might also reflect on the ontology of professionalism elaborated by Plomer's novel. Rather than seeing Young Africa's collapse as an index of its exclusion from modernity, we could note how the organization's tenuous existence within the novel displaces professionalism from the institutional structures built up by groups like the New Africans and onto mythic, utopian futures and personal fantasies. Thus, on the one hand Young Africa evidently cannot establish firm, abiding roots in civil society. Plomer's descriptions of the vulgar Europeans peopling his novel stress how Africa's brute, apocalyptic physicality precludes the ratification of *any* lasting cultural tradition. Unable to cultivate Africa in Europe's image, the Fotheringhays (the local minister and his wife) "caress...only the ghosts of memory and tradition," while Wolfe's neighbor Nordalsgaard's "conquests were like land reclaimed for a time, and afterwards choked with weeds" (55). But on the other hand, the rhythmic alternation encapsulated by Nordalsgaard's farming – his slow tilling of the land, followed by nearly instantaneous ruin – suggests an ephemeral, transient mode of being that gradually infects the fantasies of the Young Africans. Indeed, when Wolfe rejects Young Africa as a viable organization, the mad missionary Friston attempts to rehabilitate the movement through this same language of oscillation, claiming that by "using [his] nerves instead of [his] brains" he has "reached a pitch of understanding" capable of synthesizing "the great compromise between white and black; between civilization and barbarism; between the past and the future; between brains and bodies; and, as I like to say, between habit and instinct" (114-5).

Friston's vision of ecumenical receptiveness strains to grasp antithetical concepts in a single ecstatic epiphany, but his manic shuffling between a series of binaries – black and white, mind and body, past and future – implies that he can only approximate such transcendence by sublimating his overstimulated “nerves” into a model for interracial communion.<sup>21</sup> Young Africa, then, does not represent for Friston an empirically present object available to conscious manipulation, but instead an unstable palimpsest of immanent bodies and distant space-times (“the past and future”) whose unity is communicated to him by subconscious affects. That is, for Friston's “nervous” materialism, Young Africa need not be manifestly present to shape his experience of reality: even isolated in the distant past or the inscrutable future, its ideal of a professional, interracial political organization moulds him into a Young African proselyte.

That being said, the sexual jealousies that motivate these utopian fantasies of collective institutional regeneration highlight the equivocal effects attending African professionalism. In the novel's penultimate chapter, Friston describes to Wolfe scattered, drug-addled dreams that despairingly cling to Young Africa as a concrete possibility even after Mabel and Zachary's relationship has discredited the organization in Wolfe's eyes: “And then there were dreams again. Young Africa. Eurafrika. Miscegenation. What uncomfortable ideas for a missionary. And I am a missionary. Perhaps I shall be a patriarch. The father of a half-caste nation, the father of Young Africa; of Eurafrika” (107). Folding Young Africa's institutional organization into its polemic assertions concerning biological miscegenation, Friston attempts to rescue the fading luster of the movement by locating it in a visionary future cut off from the problems posed by the physical act of reproduction. At the same time, Plomer makes clear that Friston's idealized “half-caste” nation is largely a response to his envy over Zachary's success with Mabel: after Mabel brazenly admits her love for her “Othello,” “the emotional strain” unhinges

Friston's "nerves" and sends him off into a delusional trance glorifying his own virile potency and effacing Zachary's romantic conquest (104-5). Far from being a moment of singular eccentricity, though, Friston's hallucination is merely the paradigmatic example of a logic of envious emulation that orients all of the Young Africans toward collective political action: for instance, Wolfe's envy for "the almighty violence of Africa," as embodied in "the grace of Zachary; the beauty of Nhliziyombi [an African woman he is infatuated with]; and even the trustworthiness of Caleb," encourages him to found Young Africa, while Caleb's emulation of European education – his "illusion that he could talk and write English," as Wolfe acidly remarks – thrusts him into the role of eager disciple (55, 78).

It is not so much that envy undermines the utopian aspirations of this inter-racial professional society, tainting them with its invidious personal resentments, but rather that envy is *productive* of the spectral, shimmering form professionalism adopts in *Turbott Wolfe*. As we saw in Ngai's work, envy simultaneously identifies one with a particular community and dissociates oneself from the cherished objects or properties valued by that community. In Plomer's novel, this tension allows the characters to embrace Young Africa in spite of its troubling associations with an atavistic, racialized primitivism and an imperializing "structure of officialdom." As a liminal feeling stretching between both embodied vitalism and conservative containments of that (highly sexualized) energy – a feeling which externalizes both bureaucratic management *and* fetishized (black) bodies from the more proximate realm of sentimental emotions – envy loosens Plomer's characters' investments in these objects by regarding them as contingent, phantasmic epiphenomena of a transhistorical Young African professional society at the same time as it evades any particular relation to them.

In the case of Wolfe's ambivalent commitment to Young Africa, the multivalent attachments provoked by envy can be seen most clearly in his inexplicable expressions of negrophilic and negrophobic sentiment. As Nadine Gordimer recognizes in her introduction to the Modern Library reissue of *Turbott Wolfe*,<sup>22</sup> Wolfe "tends, at first, to idolize the blacks in apposition to loathing the whites" before "losing [his] balance" in a "suffocating sensation of universal black darkness" (xv-xvi). We might go a step further than Gordimer's (largely affirmative) analysis of the novel and note that, far from just "losing [his] balance," Wolfe descends into outright racism near the end of the novel, confronting Mabel for "go[ing] and marry[ing] a nigger" and so "break[ing] the whole thing [Young Africa] up" (111). If, then, Wolfe represents "the new, post-colonial man," as Gordimer calls him, this recuperation must take place largely through a paranoid reading strategy that privileges his late admissions of prejudice – "I knew it was she [Mabel] who was right" – over his more explicit racist utterances (xvii, 118). My point is not that Wolfe is revealed to be every bit as narrow-minded as the "obscene" European settlers he attacks throughout the novel<sup>23</sup>; rather, I want to emphasize how envy as a mode of political critique is constitutively unable to elaborate a stable progressive position in *Turbott Wolfe*. Its limited, ambivalent attachments to blackness and European civilization disrupt the idealizations that supported liberal, communist, and fascist ideologies in the interwar period: consensual democracy, the collective *volk*, and the noble worker. By locating Young Africa as a spectral entity traversing blackness and (European) modernity,<sup>24</sup> Plomer brackets these objects' ideological effects without substituting a new positivist object around which to orient the characters' politics. The result, as Wolfe himself seems to intuit, is a schizophrenic cacophony of diverse opinions, prejudices, and epiphanic insights that never pin

down *what* an African professionalism is or whether it is a benefit to society – unsure, even, whether or not it really does, or could, exist.

### **The Sterling Area and South African Citizenship**

If *Turbott Wolfe* lingers hesitantly over blackness, modernity, and professionalism, unsure as to the ethical value or ontological classification of any of these phenomena, by the 1930s debates over professionalism had migrated from the avant-garde fringes of South African society to a more central location in mainstream politics. Where during the decade following World War I professionalism had exerted a unifying force upon Afrikaners and English settlers – the sole voices of dissent coming from the anti-modern stylings of neo-Romantic modernist literature<sup>25</sup> – the economic distress following from the Great Depression of the 1930s brought into question the cosmopolitan “universality” of the technocratic brand of professionalism disseminated by transnational business, scientific, and literary institutions. As the British government took a more active, interventionist role in the national and global economy under the rubric of social “planning,” Afrikaners began to fear that their hard-earned “nationalization” of the civil service and parastatal organizations would be overridden by international professional networks that were merely a cipher for a renewed British imperialism.<sup>26</sup> “The chief objection,” as Millin observed in her nonfictional work *The South Africans*, “was that it [international economic institutions] meant a subservience to England ... [which] was denounced, with passionate derision” (154).

Foremost amongst those institutions suspected of impinging on local South African autonomy was the global monetary and trading system known as the “sterling area” or “sterling bloc.” As Charles te Water, the South African high commissioner in London, recorded in his

diary in October 1931, “The gold standard – depreciated sterling – to remain or not to remain – this is the only topic of conversation” (quoted in Drummond 75). In short, the sterling area was an international economic community that insulated its members from the worst of the depression by strengthening ties between the fairly stable economies of the Commonwealth nations.<sup>27</sup> While banking crises in Eastern Europe and the stock market crash in the United States sent those currencies pegged to the gold standard on a deflationary spiral, the sterling area severed the fixed exchange rate between troubled currencies and those of the Commonwealth, protecting them from further market volatilities.<sup>28</sup> Because the majority of Commonwealth nations’ trade was with other Commonwealth nations,<sup>29</sup> the concept behind the sterling area both made a certain logical sense and forced reluctant countries to follow Britain’s lead or risk losing cherished markets for exports.<sup>30</sup> The result, as I. M. Drummond notes, was that the “idea of a sterling bloc could easily become entangled with the idea of an Empire bloc” (14).

At stake in discussions over whether to abandon the gold standard and join the sterling area, then, was less South African economic policy than the definition of and proper orientation toward international economic institutions. To what degree were “international,” “imperial,” and “British” mere synonyms for each other? How could South Africans immerse themselves in a British-based economic community without sacrificing national autonomy or tainting their South African national identity with an imperial supplement?

To anticipate the specifics of my argument, I will be proposing that the ontology of professionalism developed by Plomer in *Turbott Wolfe* becomes popularized in middlebrow literature of this period in order to reconcile international economic institutions with a plastic, transnational ideal of South African citizenship. Doing so requires shifting our focus away from the cosmopolitan avant-garde writers of the *Voorslag* group and toward popular writers like

Sarah Gertrude Millin who were more directly concerned with consolidating a cultured, expansive, *Anglo* national identity in South Africa. Born to a Lithuanian Jewish family and brought to South Africa as an infant, Millin unapologetically presented herself as a South African citizen through and through, obsessively following the latest political and business news (much of which often found its way into her fictions), writing histories of South Africa and biographies of its major liberal politicians (Cecil Rhodes, Jan Smuts, and J. H. Hofmeyer),<sup>31</sup> and defending South Africa's retrograde racial politics to her international audience of readers. In a refrain already habitual to Afrikaner nationalists,<sup>32</sup> Millin agreed with Katherine Mansfield's assessment that the South Africanness of her fiction could be seen in the way in which it "draw[s] upon one's *familiar* life," replacing the "falseness" of "literary society" with a more "intensely personal" subject matter (undated letter). At the same time, however, she also "regarded London as [her] cultural mecca" despite being English in adopted language alone (Rubin 88). Millin aggressively befriended many of the leading literary celebrities in London – including Mansfield, Arnold Bennett, Vera Britten, Storm Jameson, Rebecca West, and even, for a brief time, T. S. Eliot<sup>33</sup> – and maintained long communications with them until her increasingly illiberal pronouncements on white supremacy alienated even ardent supports like Britten and West.<sup>34</sup> Millin's writings would bounce back and forth between these two poles. Staunchly chauvinist, she never completely abandoned a vision of English cultural achievement that cut across national borders.

Most scholars have approached Millin's work through the lens of her troublingly racist depictions of black Africans, and in particular her almost hysterical denunciations of miscegenation as an immoral crime against humanity.<sup>35</sup> In fact, Millin's eugenicist racism is one of the few threads that runs throughout nearly her entire oeuvre, from the early *God's*

*Stepchildren* (1924) to the late *King of the Bastards* (1949), fictions that otherwise range from sympathetic recuperations of Judaism (*The Coming of the Lord*) to Christian allegories of Hammitic ideology (*God's Stepchildren*) to sensationalistic murder mysteries (*Three Men Die*). However, too heavy an emphasis on what Coetzee calls the “metaphorics of blood” in Millin’s fiction – that is, her belief that an “invisible” blood “flaw” transmits racialized traits across generations, only to have them “erupt in the future” and “[throw] off [their] white disguise” – can also obscure the specifics of how Millin negotiated between her Anglophilic cultural predilections and her national loyalties at particular historical moments, especially during the fraught 1930s (“Blood, Taint, Flaw, Degeneration,” 146).<sup>36</sup>

In this regard, it is far from accidental that Millin’s novels and nonfictional writings from this period repeatedly return to the intimate consequences attendant upon impersonal financial and trade mechanisms. For instance, in *Three Men Die* (1934) – partly inspired by the trial of Daisy de Melker, a woman accused of killing her two husbands and son for the insurance money – Julia Taplin’s calculated murders of her first two husbands and her eventual arrest for poisoning her son mimic the ebb and flow of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange during the controversy over the gold standard and the sterling area. Julia poisons her first husband, Alexander Bishop, in order to marry the wealthier Henry Biddington, with whom she shares a passion for the Stock Exchange. But when Henry’s parsimony proves oppressive even to Julia’s own prudent sense of household economy, she gambles on the Exchange herself, losing, despite her business acumen, the majority of her inheritance from Alexander through what Millin portrays as a tragic divine mandate inciting the “great American collapse” (i.e., the Black Monday stock market crash) at precisely the moment that Julia invests her ill-gotten funds (71). Millin finally brings her semi-allegorical *roman à clef* full circle by having Julia discovered and



arrested just before South Africa leaves the gold standard and sends “shares...[rising] to remarkable heights,” thus linking her necessary exclusion from the national community – as an immoral succubus dislocating the ethical and familial conventions of polite society – with financial stability (277). Similarly, in *The Sons of Mrs. Aab* (1931), which I take up in more depth below, the plot revolves around the fraudulent insurance claim taken out by Gideon Aab on his handicapped brother’s life, a narrative device Millin exploits to chart the perverse interdependencies between English actuaries speculating on South Africa’s mining industry and the fictitious, melancholic personhood through which actuarial accounting represents South African citizenship.

If, as I have been arguing, the sterling area became a nodal point for ambivalences over the potential global dimensions of professionalized economic institutions, Millin’s writings from the 1930s suggest that the foreign, inauthentically “African” nature of the sterling area paradoxically provided a circuit through which South African citizenship was stripped of its parochial deficiencies and valorized as a newly-legitimated nationality. For Millin, the sterling area could miraculously multiply money and, in doing so, transform those who speculated in it into South African “citizens.” This process was made most explicit in Millin’s 1934 revised version of her widely popular “nonfictional” work, *The South Africans*. Part social history, part political treatise, and part ethnographic fantasy, when *The South Africans* was first published in 1927 it finally garnered for Millin the same acclaim in her homeland that she had already received in the United States and Britain for fictional works like *God’s Stepchildren* and *Mary Glenn*. Millin made only small changes from the first edition of *The South Africans* to the second, mainly updating the historical sections to account for the seven years that had intervened between the two publications. But the one notable exception to her otherwise scanty corrections

involves a lengthy and perceptive analysis of South Africa's gradual decision to abandon the gold standard and devalue their currency alongside Britain and the other Commonwealth nations. After detailing the parliamentary debates that eventually resulted in South Africa's admittance into the sterling bloc, Millin enthusiastically relates an accounting trick whereby she and other knowledgeable South Africans took advantage of the intricacies of devaluation to make a substantial profit. Since "South Africa's pound stood forty-two percent higher than England's pound," while after entrance into the sterling bloc "it would equal England's pound," many South Africans "sent their money to England – there to swell the measure of sterling, thence to be returned to South Africa, enhanced by forty-two percent" (156). That is to say, because South Africa's pound would lose 42 percent of its value vis-à-vis the British pound when South Africa tied its currency to Britain's, by exchanging her South African pounds for British ones prior to the transition Millin found herself 42 percent richer when she retransferred the funds back to South Africa after devaluation.

Significantly, Millin explicitly rejects that this tactic was a specialized project undertaken by "businessman and speculators" and instead characterizes it as a collective project undertaken by "ordinary little citizens." In representing the sterling area as a magical fount of money through which South Africans grow wealthy without any effort or work on their own part, Millin allays fears that it would usurp South African sovereignty by assuring her readers that any losses in national power over currency and trade are offset by the increased spending power it bestowed. In order to do so, she suggests that Great Britain's professionalized financial machinery actually *created* a South African national identity in the first place by routing what would otherwise be an incoherent conglomeration of discrete class interests through the abstracting medium of money, returning it to South Africa in a newly-appreciated state. The

“earners, rentiers, pensioners” who “hated to see their money cheapened” and “debtors” who could now “[pay] their creditors with delightfully cheap money” rejoice at a miraculous solution that can satisfy both of their needs; but the sterling area also benefits both the (primarily Afrikaner) farmers who under the gold standard “could not even sell the little their land produced” (Britain being the prime market for South African agricultural exports) and the (substantially English) mine owners whose stock rose “not forty-odd percent, but a hundred, two hundred, six hundred percent” – thus accommodating the Afrikaner-agrarian and Anglo-industrial factions that Belinda Bozzoli has shown to have been instrumental in forging a united South African patriotism (154, 156, 152, 157).<sup>37</sup> Indeed, Millin’s “ordinary citizens” become just that – ordinary citizens – by virtue of their participation in the international financial network that raised South Africa’s fortunes as a country to a new high. Literally trading local autonomy (South African pounds) for robust citizenship (British pounds), currency speculation provides an exhilarating, amnesiac rush that makes South Africans “all but [forget] that everything could have been like this fifteenth months ago” by equating sectarian investments with a communal national wealth encompassing them all (158).

But in aligning citizenship with financial speculation, Millin introduces an indeterminacy into the very referent that she is trying to consolidate. As she is quick to note, “the virtuous conservative folk who abhorred the stock exchange and made a merit of earning their money in the sweat of their faces” failed to capitalize on this nation-building surge in ready cash, and as often as not lost their money by only “plung[ing]” after “shares [had risen] to a point when it was no longer profitable to buy them” (158-9). Performing the transition Michael Tratner has documented from a Victorian discourse of fiscal restraint venerating “saving or accumulation” to a modernist one advocating excessive spending to unleash “pent-up demand,”<sup>38</sup> Millin’s moral

imperative for South Africans to “gamble” on the market distances citizenship from the privileged tropes around which it had been deployed during the eighteenth, nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries: the family (wives “taunted their husbands for their cowardice”), productive labor (“for nothing is so worth having as what one has not worked for”), and, increasingly during the interwar period, ethnicity (*Deficits and Desires*, 5; *The South Africans*, 158-9). Where earlier models of liberalism had represented the citizen as a being abstracted away from the intimate labors of the domestic sphere into the universal rationality of public life, Millin’s citizens are conglomerations of fantasy, money, and aspiration characterized more by their idleness and imagination than bourgeois work ethic.<sup>39</sup> At the same time as South Africa’s speculative frenzy gestures away from local particularities to a dynamic, circulatory form of citizenship, though, Millin’s championing of process over properties – her belief, that is, that speculation, and not intimate attachments to family, ethnicity, or work, makes citizens – implies that in order to *be* a South African citizen one must actively *participate* in the financial networks driving South Africa’s boom. This not only means that South African citizenship will always rely upon a supplemental British institution (the sterling area) and will never evolve to autotelic belonging, but also that those unwilling or unable to “plunge” into currency speculation or the stock market are deficient in their national identity – the “virtuous folk” who refuse to swerve from their frugal habits, the poor mineworkers and small-scale farmers unable to fund speculations, the black Africans so noticeably absent from this passage.<sup>40</sup> Since citizenship is not encoded in or around bodies as a static property endowed by the state, *The South Africans* is able to establish a two-tiered national hierarchy between valorized – and valorizing – individuals enmeshed in international Anglo economic institutions and marginal social groups whose distance from the

centers of high finance blurs the boundaries between rights-bearing citizen and passive subject of state power.

Millin's notion of "ordinary citizens" is in this regard quite close to what Aihwa Ong has theorized under the rubric of "flexible citizenship." As Ong argues in a critique of Agamben's biopolitical reading of undocumented workers, asylum seekers, and war refugees, viewing citizenship as either a prerogative of the nation-state or as the effect of a "unified human condition" risks losing sight of "the validity of other universalizing moral discourses ... that pose alternative ethical norms of humanity" (22). In particular, Ong claims that late twentieth century neoliberalism ushers in "a detachment of entitlements from political membership and national territory, as certain rights and benefits are distributed to bearers of marketable talents and denied to those who are judged to lack such capacity or potential" (16). Like Millin's ecstatic gamblers and dreary misers, Ong suggests that present-day citizenship claims are granulated, differing between individuals on the basis of *what* they do (low-skilled labor, high-end investing) rather than *who* they are (male/female, black/white, native/immigrant). As "flexible" citizens, immigrants and "non-resident" workers are uncomfortably balanced between two separate and increasingly disjunctive systems – a rights-giving sovereign territory and an instrumentalizing world economy – with their citizenship claims reducible to neither of the two.

Ong's regime of "flexible citizenship" – with its emphasis on the receding nation-state and globalized capital flows – may seem an odd framework through which to approach the insular, nationalist 1930s. But both Ong and Millin seek to answer the same question, albeit from different historical circumstances: what happens when the "national" becomes unhinged from the "professional," whether through incomplete nationalization (South Africa in the 1930s) or burgeoning globalization (the post-Cold War neoliberal dispensation)? How is citizenship

articulated when it circulates, like money and bodies, through multiple environments, but is still a possession of particular subjects? The reverberation of “flexible citizenship” across the interwar period and the present-day thus signals those moments of “terminal crisis” when global-imperial citizenship is no longer viable but an equilibrium between sovereign nation-states and inter-state commerce not yet solidified (or vice-versa). Indeed, one of the consequences of Millin’s speculative model of citizenship is that money is forced to stand in as a synecdoche for South Africans, since the circulation of currency can dramatize their uncertain position between professionalized (Anglo) economic institutions and a rooted nation-state. Traveling to England to “swell” before returning “luxuriantly increased,” money both *allegorizes* South Africa’s interwar predicament (an autonomous state whose fortunes are dependent on external trade mechanisms) and *facilitates* the suturing of South Africa together with the sterling area, as the wealth created by currency speculation draws South Africa into sterling’s orbit at the same time as it produces a vibrant sense of national prestige (158).

What Millin leaves out of her analysis of the sterling area, though, is the psychosocial angst over professionalism that *Turbott Wolfe* displays to such spectacular effect. The “flexible” nature of Millin’s speculative citizenship makes it every bit as ephemeral and ontologically ambiguous as Plomer’s *Young Africa* – and, one might say, as fleeting as the evanescent exchange value of money itself, a value present only in its own consumption. But Millin’s self-assured chauvinism and objective descriptions in *The South Africans* gloss over the ideological weight that the sterling area, cosmopolitan professionalism, and nationalism carried in her home country, as she traces the sterling area more through its repercussions than in its existential properties. For a sustained engagement with the relative materiality of these objects, we need to look instead at how Millin revised Afrikaner nationalism’s ruralist response to the problem of

“poor whiteness” within an urban, Anglocentric environment in *The Sons of Mrs. Aab*. Discarding Afrikaners’ fetishization of pastoral indigeneity, Millin proposes an opposing form of melancholic citizenship that is buttressed by an emotion familiar to readers of *Turbott Wolfe*: envy.

### **From Poor Whites to Envious Citizens: Insuring Character in *The Sons of Mrs. Aab***

Where the 1920s literary scene had been split between avant-gardism and middlebrow writing, the 1930s saw the collapse of avant-gardism and the rise of a professional Afrikaans discourse on literature. Centered primarily in the major Afrikaner universities (University of the Witwatersrand, Stellenbosch University), Afrikaner intellectuals like N. P. van Wyk Louw, D. J. Opperman, and Gerrit Dekker shared with Millin and her Anglo colleagues a sense that South Africa needed to be approached through an international lens. As Mark Sanders has shown, pre-apartheid intellectuals like N. P. van Wyk Louw and R. F. A. Hoernlé argued that “the ‘abstract principles’ of liberalism have to be thought through ‘with a view to our concrete situation’” as a “‘multi-national state,’” one possessing multiple cultural/ethnic groups living in the same space (Sanders 66; quotations from Louw, *Versamelde prosa* I: 504, 506). Claiming liberalism, “humanism and reason” as their “European heritage,” Louw and Hoernlé championed South Africa’s “multi-national” constituency for its ability to transcend the parochialism of Europe: where European nations remained mired in almost mythic *Gemeinschafts*<sup>41</sup> that nurtured individual rights within homogenous ethnic communities, the collection of races and ethnicities peopling South Africa forced races/*volks*<sup>42</sup> to transcend their own centripetal insularity and articulate “limited claim[s] for specific ‘liberties’” alongside “an absolute claim ... for unrestricted liberty for ‘all’ men” (Hoernlé, *South African Native Policy and the Liberal Spirit*,

viii). This cosmopolitan injunction, as Sanders explains, holds up South Africa as an exemplary site demonstrating “what a globalizing Eurocentrism means locally, in a space where ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ are differently constituted,” revealing to Europe what its future may look like in a rapidly modernizing world where distances are increasingly abolished (75-6).<sup>43</sup>

Without too rapidly collapsing Millin, Louw, and Hoernlé together,<sup>44</sup> the nationalism that each attempted to harness in his or her reappraisals of the liberal tradition was largely a construction of a complex array of international research networks and comparative analyses that placed South African phenomena in dialogue with British, American, and European variants. Take for instance the *ur*-genre of Afrikaner fiction, the *plaasroman* or “farm novel.” Bursting on the scene in the 1930s in works such as C. M. van den Heever’s *Laat Vrugte* (*Late Fruit*, 1939), D. F. Malherbe’s *Die Muelenaar* (*The Miller*, 1926), and Jochem van Bruggen’s *Ampie* trilogy (1924-1942), *plaasromans* portrayed Afrikaner settlers’ painful, violence-ridden efforts to domesticate the “wild” lands of Africa, usually through a narrative of martyrdom that used labor and suffering as ideological tools to legitimate their ownership of the land.<sup>45</sup> Stressing how Afrikaner farmers’ love for the land provided them with a measure of autochthony that could be mobilized in service of a nationalist project, the *plaasroman*’s turn to the countryside in large measure responded to fears over the so-called “poor white” problem visible in urban centers, where migrant laborers from overpopulated farms had flooded with little prospect of finding remunerative work.<sup>46</sup> But while discussions of “poor whiteness” stretched back all the way to the 1880s, it was not until the Carnegie Corporation sponsored a commission to travel from New York to South Africa to investigate white poverty that the *plaasroman*’s ruralist – and highly aestheticized – solution to the issue came into perspective.



The Carnegie Corporation's report on *The Poor White Problem in South Africa* exploded the myth that penury was an intractable condition for certain populations inclined to idleness or inefficiency and suggested that it was rather a social problem open to professionalized state intervention (Giliomee 344-9; Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge*, 221-7). When the report was first published in 1932, Louw himself recognized the importance of its rejection of "scornful reproaches" toward Afrikaners for a newly emerging intelligentsia eager to shape their "volk" into a modern people ("The Carnegie Commission," n.p.). In this respect, international social science research networks like the one managed by the Carnegie Corporation possessed a twofold benefit for Louw and his fellow intellectuals. On the one hand, they ratified a view of South Africa as, in the words of E. G. Malherbe (the primary voice behind the Carnegie Commission), a site where "the issues (which are really world issues) are thrown into relief more clearly ... than in the older countries where they are often obscured by the complexities of tradition and deep underlying prejudices which parade under the name of Western Civilization." According to Malherbe, South Africa acted as an "experimental station and laboratory" where the same objective perspective elicited by professionalized research was immediately present in the object under investigation (the country being free from "deep underlying prejudices"), a scenario which allowed these networks to pass through South Africa, generate knowledge in an ideal state, and return to their own countries to apply their findings (*Educational Adaptations*, iv).

On the other hand, the Carnegie report also encouraged Louw, van den Heever, and D. F. Malherbe to champion literary works such as the *plaasroman* for their ability to exert a *social* influence through professionalized literary activity. For example, in an adaptation of the culturalist arguments popularized by German Romanticism, van den Heever's *Die Afrikaanse*

*gedagte* (“The Idea of Afrikaans”) proposed an organic theory of nationality [*volk*] in which the farm operated as at one and the same time the site “where the slumbering might of all national cultures lie” and an ideal fantasy whose representation and dissemination would inculcate Afrikaner workers into self-sufficient, anti-modern forms of agrarian labor, thereby making such an organicist nationalism possible (16).<sup>47</sup> By locating a pure national culture in the countryside, van den Heever and other *plaasroman* writers foreclosed urban poverty from their narratives, as many scholars have noted.<sup>48</sup> But in doing so they also applied the detached observational techniques of sociology to their own fictional endeavors. Like the ideal object of social scientific analysis described by E. G. Malherbe, the presumed cultural homogeneity of the Afrikaner farm made it into both the formative exemplum of Afrikanerdom *and* an object for the anthropologizing gaze of South African intellectuals. Blurring cultural purity with the preinterpretive completeness that Mary Poovey has shown to be one of the defining conditions of the “modern fact,” the author of the *plaasroman* remained both a detached observer wedded to international standards of aesthetic value and a professional reformer whose fictions were a form of educative interventionism that, to quote Louw, “justif[ied] the existence of our folk” to Afrikaners themselves *and* to an international audience of fellow professional literary scholars (Poovey 1-28; *Versamelde prosa* I:164).<sup>49</sup>

My purpose in making this digression through Afrikaner cultural history is to emphasize how Millin’s Anglocentric vision of South African nationalism differs from Afrikaner chauvinisms not so much in its sociological orientation or its appreciation of international economic institutions, but rather in its identification of South African citizenship with the procedural *forms* of transnational finance and not the rooted *objects* of sociological analysis.<sup>50</sup> For Louw, literary representations invest their referent with a stable “separateness” [*apartheid*],

while international research networks like the Carnegie Corporation cultivate a distanced mode of spectatorship that enables intellectuals to grasp phenomena in their transcendental “separateness,” as both “complete” facts and (racially) “pure” examples (“Carnegie Commission,” n.p.). For Millin, in contrast, citizenship is a fluid, contingent identity that, like money, actively circulates through supranational financial institutions. Citizenship is neither the sterling area nor the “virtuous, conservative folk” who “sweat” to build their fortunes but the “swelling” produced at their intersection. Thus the act of speculating itself seems to be the only cognate available to Millin to describe a mode of citizenship that is not fully present to itself, a subject position defined more by the dialectical effects produced by the collision of South African nationalism with the global economy than by a coherent ontological identity.

Millin expands upon the ambiguous materiality of speculative citizenship in her own treatment of poor whiteness in the 1934 novel *The Sons of Mrs. Aab*. Written in the wake of the 1931-33 depression and the post-sterling boom in finance and the mining industry, Millin’s text turns its attention to the urban poor who failed to capitalize on the boom and were excluded from the contemporary *plaasromans*: the indigent miners barely making ends meet in ramshackle mining communities on the outskirts of Johannesburg. In the mining town of Sheba, *everyone* covets something unachievable: a massive diamond that would lift them out of poverty, a mysterious stranger to rescue them from spinsterhood, or a miraculous cure to ill health and disease. As the novel progresses, this pervasive envy increasingly becomes associated with the fraudulent insurance contract that Gideon Aab takes out on his brother’s life. A poor and luckless digger saddled with caring for his aging mother (Caroline) and handicapped brother (Hercules), Gideon’s insurance contract acts as both the formalization of envy and its negation: it promises him the riches he and the other miners envy, but only in a future moment allegorically associated

with the contract itself. Equally important for our own purposes, Gideon's insurance contract is issued by the British-based Anglo-African Life Assurance Corporation, enabling Millin to reflect, as in *The South Africans*, on how transnational professional institutions help shape South African citizenship. Only here, in focusing on a mining community distant from Johannesburg's financial hubs, Millin asks how *desiring* a new, more valuable identity might produce a similarly speculative sense of South African citizenship.

The novel's plot revolves around Gideon Aab and his fraudulent insurance claim. Gideon's decision to submit a fraudulent claim is borne out of a lifetime of frustration, over the course of which he has been repeatedly asked by his mother to "sacrifice" himself for his brother in a literal, almost metaphysical sense: Gideon's meager earnings pay for his brother's room and board (since his disability prevents him from caring for himself), his mother's affections and inheritance are diverted away from his care and toward Hercules's, and his bodily health deteriorates as he unsuccessfully labors toward an uncertain future when the discovery of a prize diamond might allow him to escape the shanty-town of Sheba. In staking his expectations on Hercules's death rather than "luck" at mining, Gideon seeks to reverse the sacrificial logic enshrined in Caroline Aab's love for Hercules – that because Hercules is a virtual non-entity, a blank slate possessing none of the vices of the rest of humankind, he is "better than us," worthy of sacrificing "anything – anybody – for," including her other son – and make Hercules's debilities into the medium for Gideon's own upward mobility (80). Instead of sacrificing his own welfare in a futile attempt to "make another human being of [Hercules]," Hercules's death would finally return all of the investment that Gideon and Caroline had wasted on him for years (73).

At the same time, beneath Gideon's personal misfortunes lies a deeper structural impasse endemic to the South African mining community as a whole. As the local drunk and one-time gentleman George Redmarsh explains to the insurance agent who sells Gideon the policy for his brother's life, "What use is insurance to people like us? ... If we're in luck we can make more in a day than your policy'd be worth to us in thirty years. And if we're not in luck we can't keep ourselves in mealie-pap, let alone insurance companies" (11). While Redmarsh mocks the agent for thinking that miners might possess the necessary resources (e.g., excess money and a steady income) to speculate on the insurance market, his most damning critique of insurance is that it merely duplicates the aleatory nature of mining on a more abstract plane. Why, after all, should miners "gamble" on insurance when their livelihood depends upon a similar wager: that they will discover a precious diamond before starving to death on the diggings (122)? Indeed, if, as I argue in my introduction, the mine and the plantation are the two prototypical spaces of a semiperiphery translating high value-added activities into low-cost, highly industrious systems of labor and local labor into capitalist value, then the mine indigenizes the global system of speculation conjured by such mechanisms as insurance and currency exchange within the everyday realities of labor itself. Freed from the mediating institutions and ideologies (health care, education, social security) that Randy Martin argues blunt and obscure risk for First World subjects – enabling them, paradoxically, to "take risks," since they are no longer "at risk" – miners like Gideon experience the fluctuations of the world market in both their immediate wages (as their income is determined by the market value brokers will pay for diamonds) and their lack of job security (since their income is *directly* tied to unearthing commodities, and not indirectly tied to high value-adding services) (Martin 41, 61).

In placing an insurance claim on his brother's life, then, Gideon raises a question that will overdetermine his own notions of value and personhood as well as Millin's nascent theory of South African citizenship: how can individual subjects be generalized into a corporate "national citizenry" when the particular mechanisms averaging their "luck" and "sacrifices" are intimately intertwined with the abjections of the mining industry, as its obverse and enabling twin?

As Michael Szalay observes in the context of the United States, the "various security practices" that undergirded welfare legislation in the 1930s – "from the private insurance company to the WPA [Works Progress Administration] – ... affiliated individuals with manifold population groups, heuristic constructs all," through the abstracting "econometrics" of statistics (14). Like the United States (1935), South Africa (1928) implemented its first countrywide insurance program of social security much later than Britain (1911),<sup>51</sup> but private insurance corporations like Old Mutual had been active in the country since the 1840s and had been especially profitable during the mining booms of the late nineteenth century, providing guarantees on anything from machinery to land. However, as Millin makes clear, the spectacularly discrepant fortunes generated by the mining industry made aggregative calculations of citizenship almost unthinkable in South Africa. For example, Gideon regularly reflects that John Tomory, a now-successful engineer with whom he went to school, "was no better, no more deserving, than he: he only hadn't a brother Hercules" (83). Gideon here voices a critique of laissez-faire capitalism that has been instrumental in developing the imaginative framework of the welfare state and its project of the "common good" (Robbins, *Upward Mobility*). As a man of talent and intelligence, Gideon believes himself to be entitled to substantial rewards from an economic system valuing entrepreneurial initiative and diligent labor. But on account of his adverse circumstances, Gideon can paradoxically receive just compensation only from a

parastatal institution (insurance) that would alleviate his burden by effacing his individuality and bundling John and him together as an aggregate subject whose profits would be redistributed among its constituents. For Gideon, the logic behind this passage from (meritorious) individuality to collective welfare is disrupted by the inhumanity of Hercules. A “something unnatural . . . neither a human being nor an animal, but a sort of distasteful half-way creature,” Hercules comes to stand in (as both cause and metonym) for Gideon’s outrageously bad “luck” in the novel, such that John Tomory recognizes that “There was no comparison between him and the people of Sheba . . . For one man to measure himself against another they had to stand on a level” (79, 284-5).

Yet if an aggregative rendering of national citizenship is an impossibility within South African mining communities, Gideon’s nearly fetishistic insurance policy envisions a competing, alienated, *financialized* mode of citizenship founded upon the very abjection that seemed to foreclose national citizenship in the first place. Indeed, one of the guiding concerns of the novel is how, to what extent, and through what epistemological lens Gideon or his mother Caroline could “make another human being of [Hercules]” (73). Caroline for her part places her faith in science, extolling the ability of advanced medical technologies in Europe to cure the unspecified degeneracy eating away at Hercules’s mind and body. According to Millin’s eugenicist philosophy, Caroline’s “sexual abandonments” with Hercules’s father – her unnatural, excessive love for the beauty of a man from another race (an Afrikaner) and class (he is a “poor white” working on her father’s wealthy estate) – “resulted in the begetting of so many dead children, and Hercules” (30, 65). Millin here echoes numerous interwar medical tracts and pieces of legislation that drew a connection between lack of sexual control and feeble-mindedness (C. F. K. Murray’s “The Care of the Feeble-Minded”; J. T. Dunston, “The Mental Disorders Act”), as

well as studies on intelligence testing that linked mental disease to racial degeneracy (C. T. Loram, *The Education of the South African Native*; E. G. Malherbe, *Educational and Social Research in South Africa*). But while Caroline's "melting passion" and Hercules's ensuing "Mongol" physique can be traced to the racialized scientific discourses then in vogue in South Africa, the very factualness that hereditarian mental disability assumes in the novel prevents it from being an object open to scientific intervention (27, 49). As Hercules's physician Dr. Gillingham explains to Gideon, "she [Caroline] might as well expect a cut-off limb to grow again" as hope that European doctors could "cure" Hercules (73). Science can chart Hercules's physical and mental abjection, even narrate its historical antecedents, but its reach ends at the descriptive. As a discourse solely interested in the materiality of the body, scientific reason can only baulk at how far Hercules's body falls short of the normative standards of humanity: its lack of "stamina," as Dr. Gillingham puts it, its passive tendency to let "everything happen to [it]," its orientation toward "death" rather than life (72).

In contrast, Hercules's insurance policy monetizes his deficiencies into a statistical measure of *positive* worth, assigning a numerical value for Hercules's life only *after* it has been lost and in direct proportion to that loss. In an analysis of the intersections between slavery, finance capitalism, and insurance, Ian Baucom notes that the "genius of insurance, the secret of *its* contribution to finance capitalism, is its insistence that the real test of something's value comes not at the moment it is made or exchanged but at the moment it is lost or destroyed" (*Specters of the Atlantic*, 95). When formulating his scheme, Gideon imagines Hercules as an exemplum of the "melancholic" personhood that Baucom finds in insured slaves, who are only endowed with value as an abstract, speculative "what would have been" and not as an immediate property of their selves. "If, indeed," Gideon reflects, "Hercules who, as Dr. Gillingham always



said, had so little chance to struggle far through life, if, indeed, Hercules could be insured and repay him in death what he had cost him in life!” (97). Hesitantly progressing through his syllogistic argument, Gideon defers naming his plot through a series of awkward clauses, almost as if to replicate on the level of his syntax the anti-presentist modality of insurance, in which value can only be confirmed in the future when the object has been lost. Furthermore, by twice repeating the conditional “if, indeed,” Gideon collapses Hercules’s disability, with its connotations of subhuman lack and impending death, into the policy claim by paralleling them in the sentence’s structure. Reversing Gideon’s line of thought, we might say that Gideon only learns Hercules’s “cost” after he has failed “to struggle through life” through the prosthetic form of the insurance policy, which transforms the utterly abject (Hercules’s person) into substantive value.

Despite Millin’s close interweaving of value, speculation, and personhood, though, the monetary value of a person does not designate citizenship *for* that person in *The Sons of Mrs. Aab*. Amidst growing concern that Gideon will abandon her and Hercules to join Bernard Carey in his missionary work, in the final pages of the novel Caroline shoots herself and Hercules to prevent him from being committed to an institution. But Gideon’s hopes of finally receiving his thousand-pound disbursement are dashed by the legal coda that ends the novel. Written by an unnamed barrister, the opinion finds the contract null and void in spite of an “incontestability clause” permitting fraudulent claims, since “On the other side [of the contract], there was nothing – merely a name representing no person who desired, or was capable of desiring, to contract with anybody. One of the two essential minds was thus absent. No contract could, accordingly, result” (339). In other words, insurance’s retroactive temporality (its privileging of the “what would have been” over the “is”) precludes Hercules from gambling on his own life (since he

was, at the time, less than a full Freudian “desiring” subject). The ideal insured subject, valueless in life but speculatively inflated on paper, Hercules points out the enabling contradiction contained within Millin’s speculative citizenry: that “miraculously” “swelling” the South African pound and gold shares through devaluation also involved the increased abjection of those cut off from international finance and stock-trading, the urban poor, black Africans, and mentally ill whose citizenship rights had been restricted in the first decades of the twentieth century through governmental legislation restricting the franchise and state violence against worker demands.<sup>52</sup>

In contrast, Gideon presents all of the formal markers of participatory citizenship: he works in the diggings, both as a self-employed miner and as a contracted worker for John Tomory; he joins the South African infantry during the Great War; and he enters into legal contract (albeit under false pretenses) with the Anglo-African Life Assurance Corporation.<sup>53</sup> But all of these activities are made possible by Gideon’s jealous certainty that Hercules’s death will bring him the money necessary to close the seemingly unbridgeable gap separating him from the successful, educated, *professional* society emblemized by John Tomory. As Gideon observes while reflecting on his life with Caroline and Hercules, “What he felt now was not his real life. His real life was this expectation he had lived with for four years” (178). These “expectations” are not a realist guarantee of a future event but rather a speculative fiction designed to counter the unbearable poverty foreordaining Gideon’s life. Indeed, Gideon learns early in life that his lack of professional knowledge damns him to Sheba’s diggings: even when he happens to chance upon a valuable diamond and escapes to Kimberley, his inexperience at any particular profession (besides digging) forces him to return to Sheba soon afterwards.

In this respect, Gideon's "real life" is an *affective* one – he "feels" that his expectations are real, while his immediate – and limiting – environment is a false one. His speculative citizenship is therefore haunted by two contradictory but nevertheless mutually enabling characteristics: on the one hand, the excessiveness of his envy toward those who, like John Tomory, achieve professional distinction without being "sacrificed" to Hercules's all-consuming deficiencies demonstrates the desirous disposition that the Anglo-African Life Assurance Corporation equates with full citizenship; on the other hand, the sedimentation of that envy within a single particular object (the insurance claim) directs it outside of himself to a distant (Anglo) economic institution in which he cannot *act* – since agency is ceded to the Anglo-African Life Assurance Corporation to "swell" the claim's worth, while the claim itself is a mere object of legal fiction – but toward which he can *feel*. If Gideon's decision to embrace his "expectations" as his real life allows him to transcend an environment of utter abjection, it also ensures that that environment will always only be an abject object acted upon by distant economic actuarial institutions that transmute physical deprivation into a (fictitious) monetary value.

The importance of the distinction Millin draws between the mining community's essential connection to loss and ill fortune and a value-inflating distant horizon cannot be overstated. Gideon's envious attachment to Hercules's insurance claim is mimicked by almost every other character in the story, uniting them in an atmosphere of collective desire: the other diggers dream about a future "luck" (i.e., diamond) that could lift them out of Sheba; Caroline's faith in European science locates the defining forms of human personhood abroad; and even Dr. Gillingham hopes Gideon will flee to Europe if he ever "has any luck again" (73).

But perhaps nowhere is this dynamic more explicitly staged than in Gideon's short-lived wife Fanny's love for George Redmarsh, a one-time drunk who returns to South Africa an English gentleman. A comparatively minor character in *The Sons of Mrs. Aab*, Fanny's fantasy of a romantic détente with Redmarsh seems to interrupt the novel's momentum, deferring for a short time the consequences of Gideon's fraudulent activities. However, to reduce Fanny's story to a simple narrative interlude would be to miss the formal continuity between Gideon's dreams of future wealth and Fanny's externalization of her unfulfilled love onto an "unnamed metropolis": "She saw herself walking beside him in a large town. She saw, that is to say, someone she called herself, whom no one else would have recognized as herself, walking with someone she called George Redmarsh whom George Redmarsh would not have recognized as George Redmarsh, in some metropolis unidentifiable" (181, 150). The almost Steinian repetitions of "herself" and "George Redmarsh" suggest Fanny's inability to articulate her and Redmarsh's physical bodies onto the glittering promise of the (implicitly European) metropolis, a disembodying doubling encapsulated in the city's own indeterminacy. Completely antithetical to South Africa, the abstract, fictitious value conferred by the metropolis is so caught up in the dialectic of (object) matter and (disembodied) speculation that Fanny *cannot even conceive of her and Redmarsh's bodies as recognizable bodies* in her fantasy. But while "ordinary citizens" like Fanny remain physically and geographically exiled from the splendors of the metropolis, they can still penetrate this magical horizon of modernity *through* (financial) speculation – through the very fantasies that place them within the "metropolis unidentifiable." By traveling through the spectacle that, for South Africans, *is* the metropolis, they can return to South Africa transfigured, but still persisting in the metropolis ephemerally, spectrally – and, most of all, emotionally.

For Millin, then, as for Plomer, envy is not simply the auto-critical emotion Ngai finds it to be. If for Ngai envy “enables a strategic way of *not* identifying which, in facilitating and encouraging [the transition from admiration to antagonism], preserves a critical agency whose loss is threatened by the full-blown idealization of the attribute admired,” for Millin and Plomer envy conversely allows subjects *to* identify with less-than-idealized objects (161). The professional networks through which Millin and Plomer’s characters direct their envious complaints become an acceptable feature of South African life precisely *because* envy distances them spatially, ideologically, and affectively from South Africa. By casting transnational professional institutions as objects with a dubious ontology within South Africa – one that is more “speculative” than substantive, distant rather than proximate – Anglo-South African writers were able to jettison fears surrounding undue European influence and neo-imperial control. Envy accrues to professional institutions, suggest Millin and Plomer, because those institutions are *not* indigenous to South Africa, and can only be instantiated within South Africa through speculative fantasies that, paradoxically, point out the *lack* of professionalism within the country. But, as Millin shows, by directing South Africans’ emotions towards British-based professional institutions, collective fantasies of the wealth and prestige professionalism *could* provide South Africa molds the (white) peoples of South Africa into a collective group of national “citizens.” Envy thus *produces*, rather than critiques, an expansive notion of South African citizenship spanning speculative British economic networks and the abject conditions of South African life.

Millin’s novels and nonfiction in particular might be said to occupy an unstable position between two distinct moments in the history of economic thought. On the one hand, her externalization of financial institutions onto spatially and emotionally distant locales differentiates her work from late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century “panic” novels that, like

those of her close friend and correspondent Theodore Dreiser, sought “to quarantine the infectious hysteria of feminist mobs” by teaching individuals how to regulate “*mass emotions*” uncomfortably close to the stock market (Zimmerman 3, 5). On the other hand, her focus on the material deprivations with which financial institutions work in dialectical concert retains a closer grip on concrete phenomena than the “autonomous” affects that Brian Massumi claims structure “the late capitalist system”: amorphous affects more readily observable in the workings of the stock market than in individuals (much less crowds), and which cannot be retroactively traced back to a theory of the subject (45). Millin’s work stands poised between these two philosophies of economics, struggling to imagine an economic world-system alienated from individual subjects but not yet stabilized in a national welfare state through a system of Keynesian equilibrium economics. The next chapter pursues this genealogy in the Ireland and Britain of the 1930s, asking how the externalization of economic institutions from everyday life contributed to new representations of history, as well as what role Irish gothic narrative conventions played in the formulation of Keynesian equilibrium economics.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> For a thorough explanation of the specific images and techniques Conrad, Woolf, and Joyce used to cultivate an air of professional craftsmanship, see John Marx, *The Modernist Novel and the Decline of Empire*.

<sup>2</sup> The most extended analysis of this process in the literary realm is Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island*.

<sup>3</sup> On the explosion of social planning initiatives during the interwar period in Britain, see Richard Overy, *The Twilight Years: The Paradox of Britain Between the Wars*, 50-92.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Samuel Chamberlain and Daniel Moffet, *This Realm, This England...*, and Ayn Rand, *Anthem*.

<sup>5</sup> In this regard, see Raymond Williams's analysis of the Keynesian Art Council in *The Politics of Modernism*, 141-50.

<sup>6</sup> In Dubow's words, professionalism became the "means of diffusing the transcendent values of a supposedly benevolent Empire devoted to universal truth and shared brotherhood" (*A Commonwealth of Knowledge*, 201).

<sup>7</sup> Steedman's work is a touchstone in many studies on affect and the welfare state, especially Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture*, and Bruce Robbins, *Upward Mobility and the Common Good: Toward a Literary History of the Welfare State*.

<sup>8</sup> I take the term "aesthetic technology of belonging" from Berlant's introduction to *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, 5.

<sup>9</sup> Some of the more notable works in a substantial body of scholarship on "social" affects are Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*; Berlant, ed., *Compassion*; Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*; and Eric Hayot, *The Hypothetical Mandarin: Sympathy, Modernity, and Chinese Pain*.

<sup>10</sup> For critiques of sentiment that view it as complicit with the same institutional hierarchies that it aims to elide, see Kathleen Woodward, *Statistical Panic: Cultural Politics and Poetics of the Emotions*; Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*; Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship*; and Janet Staiger, Ann Cvetkovich, and Ann Reynolds, eds., *Political Emotions*.

<sup>11</sup> Though van der Post was a member of the group, as "Afrikaans editor" he contributed little to the magazine's extant issues, being mostly conceived of as a force for future expansions. For this reason, I focus my discussion on Campbell and Plomer.

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<sup>12</sup> In the “The Crown” and other essays, D. H. Lawrence elaborated the notion of a highly-sexualized “blood-consciousness” that acted in parallel and opposition to “mental-consciousness.” For Lawrence, non-European peoples (especially Native Americans) were more in touch with their “blood-consciousness” than Europeans, while Europeans had lost almost all touch with their “blood-consciousness.” The most systematic explication of Lawrence’s cosmology can be found in Frank Kermode, *D. H. Lawrence*.

<sup>13</sup> Numerous reviewers at the time praised Millin for the “economy” of her prose. For example, writing in the *New York Tribune* Hershel Brickell noted how “With striking economy and what appears to be no particular effort, she manages to catch and hold the reader’s sympathy,” and anonymous reviewer in the *Manchester Guardian* observed that her “style is definite and economical: she exhibits the moods and circumstances of her characters in a series of flashes suggesting the kinema” (4 August 1929; 30 August 1929).

<sup>14</sup> In contrast, Kwame Anthony Appiah suggests that there is “no conflict between local partialities and a universal morality – between being part of the place you [are] and a part of a broader human community,” since one’s ethical commitments are “multiple and overlapping” (*Cosmopolitanism*, xviii). Like Martha Nussbaum’s fantasy of a cosmopolitan subject caught up in a “series of concentric circles,” Appiah’s is a liberal-humanist philosophy that focuses on the spheres in which the individual subject acts and thinks, rather than the more materialist global cultural and economic networks with which this essay is concerned (Nussbaum, “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism,” 3). For the purposes of clarity, I will use “cosmopolitan” to refer to individual writers’ supranational commitments and “global” or “transnational” when designating supranational institutions.

<sup>15</sup> Campbell, though just as outspoken in his radical political assertions (both anti-racist and, later, fascist) as Plomer, was fairly conservative in his poetic form. Reviewers in Britain were undecided on how to regard such traditional poetry vis-à-vis the products of modernism, some, like Francis Carey Slater, seeing Campbell’s verse as an energetic corrective to the “formlessness” of modern poetry, with its “weakness and a lack of true originality,” while others echoes Hamish Miles in finding Campbell’s verse as merely “the full-throttled mode of twenty, thirty years ago” (Slater, Preface, *Centenary Book of South African Verse*, xii; Miles 423). For a full discussion of the reception of Campbell’s poetry, see Andrew van der Vlies, *South African Textual Cultures: Black, White, Read All Over*, 49-58.

<sup>16</sup> See Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives*, and Andrzej Gasiorek, “War, ‘Primitivism,’ and the Future of ‘the West’: Reflections on D. H. Lawrence and Wyndham Lewis.”

<sup>17</sup> I use “Western” here to designate Western European cultures because this was the term most prevalently used by European writers and artists during the 1920s to differentiate Europe from the African and Native American cultures that they emulated (a trend popularized by Oswald Spengler’s *Decline of the West* [1918-1922] and later adopted by Henri Massis in “Defence of the West” [1926]). I shift to “European” below to describe the same general geographic location when discussing South African writings about Europe, since in South Africa the operative binary



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at the time (and through much of the twentieth century) was Africa/Europe rather than East/West.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Peter Blair, “That ‘Ugly Word’: Miscegenation and the Novel in Preapartheid South Africa”; Michael Chapman, *Southern African Literatures*; Gareth Cornwell, “The Early South African Novel of Race”; and David Rabkin, “Race and Fiction: *God’s Stepchildren* and *Turbott Wolfe*.”

<sup>19</sup> The most substantive analysis of the New African movement can be found in Tim Couzens, *The New African: A Study of the Life and Work of H. I. E. Dhlomo*.

<sup>20</sup> For two of the earlier examples of this type of interpretation, see V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa*, and Abdul JanMohammed, *Manichean Aesthetics: The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa*.

<sup>21</sup> On the “innervation” produced by new technologies that forced modernists to rethink the bounds of public experience, see Justus Nieland, *Feeling Modern: The Eccentricities of Public Life*.

<sup>22</sup> *Turbott Wolfe* had been out of print for 20 years before the Modern Library’s reissue 2003 helped to rekindle interest in Plomer’s career, particularly his South African fictions. The reinvigorated interest in Plomer’s writings can be seen in Van der Vlies’s recent work on Plomer in *South African Textual Cultures* and works-in-progress by Laura Winkiel and John K. Young.

<sup>23</sup> In contrast to Blair, who sees Wolfe’s renunciation of miscegenation as the novel’s “undoing [of] its own indictment of antimiscegenation prejudice,” I view his later racist statements as an ironic reflection by Plomer about Wolfe’s inability to think through miscegenation on rational terms.

<sup>24</sup> I should note that I am in no way endorsing Plomer’s equation of modernity with Europe. Indeed, my analysis of Plomer’s dialectical image of professionalism is intended to highlight how certain of the dominant tropes of modernity were in fact produced *across* the networks of the capitalist world-system. For a further discussion of how a world-systems perspective on literature presupposes a “single modernity” model of global space, see the discussion of Jameson, Lazarus, and Nicholas Brown in my introduction.

<sup>25</sup> On the unifying force professionalism played in South African politics during the 1920s, see Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge*, 158-202. The label “anti-modern Romantic” fits Campbell, who idealized the martial aspects of French, Spanish, and African peasant cultures, more than the urbane Plomer. Still, Plomer’s early Lawrentian leanings embrace an anti-modern primitivism that puts *Turbott Wolfe* firmly in this category, even if his later English and Japanese writings depart from it.

<sup>26</sup> For an excellent overview of Afrikaner nationalism in this period, see Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*, 355-402. As Giliomee explains, the South African

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government's language policy was the primary arena in which Afrikaner nationalism was articulated: the National Party (the ethnic Afrikaner political party) demanded bilingual training for civil servants, compulsory teaching of Afrikaans as well as English in schools, and official recognition of the Afrikaans language (granted in 1925).

<sup>27</sup> Although Canada and Hong Kong remained on the gold standard and Iraq, Portugal, and the Nordic countries joined the sterling area despite not being part of the empire, the empire and the sterling area were inextricably intertwined in most minds. As Peter J. Henshaw puts it, "Membership of the area signified a commitment to sustain a world-wide monetary and trading system that was the economic counterpart to and underpinning of the British empire and commonwealth" (197).

<sup>28</sup> Barry Eichengreen traces the origin of the Great Depression to the flaws of the gold standard in *Golden Fetters: The Gold Standard and the Great Depression, 1919-1939*, arguing that the gold standard transmitted contractions in a number of countries (the United States, Germany, Austria) across the globe. For this reason, according to Eichengreen, those countries which abandoned the gold standard the earliest (particularly those who left gold for sterling) recovered from the depression quicker than those who remained on the gold standard well in the 1930s (e.g., the United States and central Europe). In *The End of Globalization: Lessons from the Great Depression*, Harold James proposes an alternative explanation for why the sterling area was an effective economic policy: since most countries reacted to the depression by withdrawing from the global mechanisms and institutions that kept the international economy intact, the countries that retained serviceable international circuits of trade and investment (such as those of the sterling area) faced less of a drop-off in productivity than their counterparts.

<sup>29</sup> Though Britain did not export products to its current and former colonies on anywhere near the level that it imported from them, British financial investments in Commonwealth industries ensured that it had a vested interest in maintaining favorable trade and financial relations with the rest of the Commonwealth (P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism 1688-2000*). For a comprehensive discussion of how British markets for food in particular stimulated Commonwealth and American industries, see Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*.

<sup>30</sup> Since sterling's value was over 40% lower than gold's, it encouraged exports from the sterling area (as the gold-backed currencies for which these would be paid would carry a greater value vis-à-vis sterling) and discouraged imports (which would only be received a fraction of what they could obtain outside of the sterling area). The result was a sort of neo-mercantilism that protected Commonwealth markets and generated a favorable balance of trade between the sterling area and the rest of the world.

<sup>31</sup> Millin's short biographical sketch of Hofmeyer was circulated through numerous South African and British newspapers in the 1920s. In contrast, her works on Rhodes and Smuts were much more substantial affairs: her two-volume biography of Smuts was released in 1936, while her large one-volume biography of Rhodes was published concurrently with Plomer's more critical study in 1933.

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<sup>32</sup> As J. M. Coetzee glosses it in his Jerusalem Prize acceptance speech, Afrikaner nationalists' "love [for] South Africa has consistently been directed toward *the land*" and its formative influence on Afrikaner character rather than the various peoples of South Africa ("Jerusalem Prize Acceptance Speech," 97).

<sup>33</sup> Millin seems to have split with Eliot over objections to what she perceived as the anti-Semitism of *The Waste Land*. She was also introduced to Lawrence, but – unsurprisingly, given her aversion to the *Voorslag* group's Lawrentian aesthetic – they found each other fairly unpalatable.

<sup>34</sup> Vera Britten was perhaps the most frank in her explanations to Millin about why she was breaking off their friendship: "You may...recall that in my reply to your last letter after George and I visited South Africa, I questioned whether it was really wise for us to meet in light of our totally different views on racial questions, which seem so difficult to avoid in conversation. Once they arise, they inevitably arouse controversy, with devastating effects on one's work. So I suggest, dear Sarah, that we remain on each other's Christmas lists for the sake of Auld Land Syne, but avoid meeting until racial politics become less acute" (14 June 1962).

<sup>35</sup> See Blair, "That 'Ugly Word'"; Coetzee, "Blood, Taint, Flaw, Degeneration: The Novels of Sarah Gertrude Millin"; and Michael Green, "Blood and Politics/Morality tales for the Immorality Act: Sarah Gertrude Millin in Literary and Social History."

<sup>36</sup> Though Coetzee associates Millin's racial imaginary with "the form of race-consciousness exalted by National Socialism," Millin in fact wrote tirelessly against Nazi propaganda in both her essays and fiction ("Blood, Taint, Flaw, Degeneration," 141, 165). This is not to discount the troubling continuity between Millin's white supremacism and Nazi ideology, but rather to note that Millin's exposure to eugenic thought would have come from respected Anglo anthropologists like Harold B. Fantham and J. E. Duerden (both of whom taught in South Africa) rather than the German eugenicists who influenced Afrikaner social theory. See Saul Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa*, 120-65, and Paul Rich, "Race, Science, and the Legitimation of White Supremacy in South Africa, 1902-1940," for a more complete analysis of the intellectual debates surrounding eugenics in South Africa.

<sup>37</sup> See Bozzoli, *The Political Nature of a Ruling Class: Capital and Ideology in South Africa 1890-1933*.

<sup>38</sup> Tratner is quoting from Keynes's biographer Robert Skidelsky, "The Revolt Against the Victorians," 6. Keynes introduced the concept of "pent-up demand" in his *General Theory*. I take up Keynesian economics in greater detail in chapter 4.

<sup>39</sup> Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.

<sup>40</sup> Millin's only mention of black Africans is *as laborers, not speculators*: "More and more people and goods came to Johannesburg; more white miners by the thousand, more black miners by the ten thousand" (158). Given the parallelism in the sentence between "people" and "white

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miners” and “goods” and “black miners,” Millin makes it unclear whether the black miners traveling to Johannesburg should be included under the category of actively migrating “people” or passively circulated “goods.”

<sup>41</sup> Ferdinand Tönnies distinguished between *Gemeinschaft* (“community”) and *Gesellschaft* (“society”) in *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* [*Community and Civil Society*] (1887). The corporatist verbiage present in Germanic works like Tönnies’s was instrumental to Afrikaner political thought as it sought to distance itself from British liberalism.

<sup>42</sup> Although the meaning of race and *volk* is similar – biological ideas of race having been produced in dialogue with the concept of *volk* – the two terms have slightly different connotations. *Volk* possesses the sense of a common culture being upheld by a racial or ethnic group, while the term race (especially when approached from a biological angle) lacks any necessary connection with culture. (Though biological racism was often used as a rationalization for regarding black culture as inherently more primitive than white European cultures.)

<sup>43</sup> I am glossing over numerous distinctions between the Louw and Hoernlé in order to note their commonalities. For Hoernlé, segregation was necessary to prevent white domination: “the concrete historical setting in which the classical doctrine of liberalism was evolved, did not include the setting of a *multi-racial society*, such as we have here in South Africa, in which, moreover, one racial group, and this one a minority group, is, and is determine to remain, the dominant group...Hence, I hold that liberal ideals have to be reexamined and re-thought in their application to a society of this type” (*South African Native Policy and the Liberal Spirit*, vii-ix). For Louw, in contrast, segregation was means of preserving an essentialized Afrikaner culture’s right to exist [*bestaansreg*]. See Sanders 57-92.

<sup>44</sup> In a sense, their internationalisms move in diametrically opposite directions. Millin proposes that citizenship is founded upon a supplemental community of international finance, while the Louw and Hoernlé view South Africa’s racial demography as holding a transcendental solution to European globalization.

<sup>45</sup> For various articulations of this reading, see Coetzee, *White Writing*, esp. chapters 3 and 4; Rita Barnard, *Apartheid and Beyond: South Africa and the Politics of Place*, esp. 15-38; Jennifer Wenzel, “The Pastoral Promise and the Political Imperative: The Plaasroman Tradition in an Era of Land Reform”; and Christopher Warnes, “‘Everyone is Guilty’: Complicitous Critique and the Plaasroman Tradition in Etienne van Heerden’s *Toorberg* (*Ancestral Voices*)”.

<sup>46</sup> Much of this rural poverty was caused by the Roman-Dutch law governing Afrikaner inheritance, which split properties between all descendents – a huge problem in an agricultural economy that needed wide swaths of land to be profitable (Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*, 321; Feinstein 22-46).

<sup>47</sup> On the culturalist assumptions of German nationalism and their application in colonial and postcolonial societies, see Cheah, *Spectral Nationality*.

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<sup>48</sup> See, for example, Coetzee, *White Writing*, and Warnes, ““Everyone is Guilty.””

<sup>49</sup> For Poovey, though, the preinterpretive data of the fact is only one half of the “modern fact.” At the same time, facts, for Poovey, were paradoxically inextricable from the theories which gave voice to them (1-28). As Mark Wollaeger observes, this made the modern fact a particularly useful tool for propaganda like the writings of Louw and Malherbe, which “amplify [the fact’s] rhetorical appeal even while insisting on [its] value-free neutrality” (22).

<sup>50</sup> This distinguishes Millin from the anthropological perspective that has been so influential in modernist studies in the past decade or so, as exemplified by the work of Torgovnick and Esty.

<sup>51</sup> Of course, in both these cases, minority coverage was restricted. Black Africans were not covered by social security until 1944 in South Africa, and even then white compensation was 7.5 times that allocated to blacks.

<sup>52</sup> Most memorably in the government’s crushing of the 1922 “Rand Rebellion” miners’ strike that killed 81 miners, injured over 650, and ended in 853 workers being charged with everything from murder to treason.

<sup>53</sup> Voting would seem to be one citizenship right that Gideon does not engage in. Indeed, in keeping with her view of citizenship as determined by foreign financial institutions, Millin never even introduces voting (with its connotations of national exceptionalism and transformative democracy) as a suitable channel for her characters’ aspirations.

## CHAPTER IV

### TOWARD A DEPRESSIONARY THEORY OF HISTORY: *BOWEN'S COURT, THE GENERAL THEORY*, AND GOTHIC EQUILIBRIUM

Gothic decadence, professional cultivation: on the surface, these two narrative forms could not be further apart. From its heyday in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century, to the “imperial Gothic” fictions of the 1880s and 1890s, to present-day adaptations of the genre across a range of media, the gothic has represented a history of ongoing dispossession (of traditional rights, property, and national sovereignty), social and bodily disintegration, and gradual national and racial degeneration. In contrast, narratives of professional development have treated what we might think of as the observe side of gothic violence, championing modernity’s eradication of superstition and aristocratic privilege and its replacing of them with a (theoretically) egalitarian universalism. Indeed, the inverse tropes characterizing gothic and professional narratives – slow, violent degeneration versus rapid, self-sustaining progress – highlight the incompatible, even rivalrous, philosophies of history underwriting these genres. To use Walter Mignolo’s evocative term, the feminine, racial, and colonial subjects who people gothic fictions embody the “darker side of modernity,” those figures who either had to be superseded for modernity to become the hegemonic mode of social and economic life across the globe or who were the disavowed victims of modernity’s systemic inequalities, and who therefore could not be included in professionalism’s narrative of progress (*The Darker Side of Western Modernity*).

During the 1930s, however, something odd happened to this opposition. While the distinction between a regressive gothic temporality and a progressive professional one did not disappear, many writers began combining gothic and professional tropes in their work in order to

construct a more cyclical, contingent representation of time. This mixture was particularly pervasive in Irish literature, where alternating ebbs and tides of individuals, cultures, and classes were explored in texts ranging from Joyce's juxtaposition of linguistic degeneration and renewal in *Finnegans Wake*, to the downward mobility of an ailing middle class in Beckett's *Murphy*, to the circular logic of Anglo-Irish decline and renaissance in the works of Elizabeth Bowen and Molly Keane. Each of these texts contain an explicitly gothic narrative of decline: the sexual misconduct of HCE that tears his family apart (for a time) in *Finnegans Wake* (Joyce sets the majority of his novel in Chapelizod, a clear allusion to Sheridan Le Fanu's gothic tale *The House by the Churchyard*); the irreverent degeneration of Irish mythology from heroic lore into the grounds for a prosaic middle-class culture in *Murphy*<sup>1</sup>; and the overtly gothic Big House estates that hide a history of violence against servants and women in Bowen's *The Last September* (1929) and Keane's *The Rising Tide* (1937) and *Two Days in Aragon* (1941). But these are balanced by an optimistic (sometimes fantastic) faith in a countervailing narrative of ascension: HCE's rebirth at the "end" of *Finnegan's Wake*, Beckett's translation of gothic degeneration into a medium for a gradual paring away into blissful non-being, Keane's phantasmatic images of a restored Big House in *Two Days in Aragon*, and Bowen's rescuing of Lois Farquar from the doomed Big House through her training abroad as a professional artist.

The gothic tenor of these tales is far from surprising. As I outlined in the introduction, the gothic form has a long historical association with Irish literature in general, and Anglo-Irish literature in particular. But the oscillation between an optimistic reading of the progressive march of history and a pessimistic interpretation of its current downward trajectory was not unique to either Ireland or literature. In light of the global depression that wracked Europe during the 1930s, many economists also began to formulate theories of technological innovation,

monetary policy, and employment that wove together progressive and regressive motifs, as for example in Joseph Schumpeter's adaptation of the Marxian concept of "creative destruction" to explain the economic stagnation besetting the '30s (*Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*). Similarly, the mass unemployment that affected many of Britain's traditionally strong industries (shipbuilding, mining, textiles) encouraged the British economist John Maynard Keynes to rethink the dynamics of the trade cycle and the government's response to it. Detailing a policy of equilibrium economics in his *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936), Keynes suggested that the government had to prevent violent swings in economic cycles by doing its best to bring investors and consumers' emotions into a healthy middle ground of rational expectations. This, Keynes believed, would put a halt to the downward trajectory much of the world-economy was experiencing and provide a corrective swing to a stable growth managed by knowledgeable professionals.

This chapter is concerned with the intersection of gothic and professional forms of history we find in both literary works like Keane and Bowen's fiction and nonfictional writings and in economic treatises like Keynes's *General Theory*. Both of these sets of texts grapple with what we might call the contradictions of "depressionary history": the periodic decline of a class or economic system and its future renaissance in a confident narrative of professional ascent. By "depressionary history," I mean to indicate not just the history of "The Depression" – the economic crisis of the 1930s, or severe economic crisis in general – but also the understanding of history underlying *any* momentary setback that is relativized within a larger narrative of slump and boom. More specifically, I am interested in showing how the gothic narrative devices that had dominated Anglo-Irish literature for over a century contributed to a narrative of oscillating



equilibrium that was instrumental both in reinventing Anglo-Ireland as a viable class and in rehabilitating capitalist economics after the Great Depression.

In this regard, it is essential that we differentiate the concept of depression from its close rival, “crisis.” Marxist criticism in particular has relied on a rhetoric of crisis as a way of interrogating failures in the ideological and material substructures of Western capitalism, seeing in such crises a glimpse of the eventual supersession of capitalism – or, at the very least, of a utopian longing to transcend the contradictions inherent in a capitalist division of labor. Present-day critics such as David Harvey, Fredric Jameson, and Antonio Negri have all theorized “the crisis” as both a disturbing disruption of modernity and a potential passage to a more equitable system of economic distribution, and in this regard they follow Marxist writers of the ’30s who, like Christopher Caudwell, saw economic crises as symptoms of a terminal “illness” internal to the workings of capitalism, and for whom such crises hearkened to a new mode of production whose first incarnation (the Soviet Union) was just starting to emerge.<sup>2</sup> What separates “depression” from “crisis” is depression’s insistence that moments of economic downturn are just that – *momentary* deviations from a fundamentally progressive capitalism that, however disastrous on the surface, will eventually return to a normal, healthy state of growth. Jani Scandura explains that “depressive modernity...does not refer to a separate or oppositional modernity; instead, it might best be seen as *modernity at a standstill*” (11). According to a logic of depression, the massive industrial stagnation that took place across the world in the 1930s did not herald either the beginnings of a new socioeconomic dispensation, whether fascist or communist, or the terminal decline of Western capitalism; rather, it signaled a baffling period of exceptional stasis in capitalist progress that would sooner or later resume its dynamic tempo.

Central to the construction of this historical imagination was a certain epistemological configuration in which affect, economics, and history were welded together in order to rationalize short-term fluctuations in personal health, class stability, and global capitalist modernity. The 1930s were the first time in which the term “depression” was used without a modifier in both the field of economics and the field of psychology, and this etymological coincidence was far from accidental: in both popular discourses and in scholarly works on economics and psychology, affective and economic depression were understood to have a symbiotic relationship with each other, in which losses in consumer confidence could induce economic slumps and economic slumps could cause melancholic disorders (Scandura 4). Despite this apparent symmetry, though, the relationship between economic depression and affective depression was quite complex in its particulars. In the early twentieth century, affective depression, or melancholia, as Jonathan Flatley defines it in his reading of Walter Benjamin, “is no longer a personal problem requiring cure or catharsis, but is evidence of the historicity of one’s subjectivity, indeed the very substance of that historicity...As such, melancholia forms the site in which the social origins of our emotional lives can be mapped out...” (3).<sup>3</sup> *Affective* depression, in other words, appeals to past social structures that are no longer immediately present to its former constituents, but to which these individuals have a continuing attachment. For classes like the Anglo-Irish, or Keynes’s own liberal-professional class faction, for whom the (economic) depression was a catastrophic blow to their socioeconomic position, this melancholic attachment suggested the need to construct models of history that could envision the persistence of socioeconomic structures beyond their apparent extinction – indeed, that could paradoxically see superseded class hierarchies within new social organizations that seemed to marginalize such hierarchies as archaic precursors.

In the remainder of this chapter, I trace how two particular writers, Elizabeth Bowen and John Maynard Keynes, used fluctuations between violent gothic emotionality and stoic professionalism to rehabilitate the Anglo-Irish and British liberal capitalism within cyclical narratives of rise and fall. Both Bowen's family history, *Bowen's Court* (1942), and Keynes's *General Theory* suggest that the oscillation of collective affects between hyper-emotionality and restraint led to a corresponding back and forth in the social sphere: between neo-feudal institution-building and professional management (Bowen), or between economic depression and full employment. Unlike the melancholic attitude Flatley diagnoses in modernist literature, Bowen and Keynes were able to claim a living place for fading and endangered socioeconomic structures – the Anglo-Irish landowning class and the three-tiered capitalist class system – by proposing that emotion itself molded particular class configurations, and that past social systems could be reborn simply by reorienting classes' emotions in the right direction. The first half of this chapter focuses on *Bowen's Court*, showing how the Anglo-Irish's transnational position – their transversal of Irish-agrarian and British-industrial economies – enabled Bowen to characterize fluctuations in the Ascendancy's class position as internal to their emotions. The second half of the chapter then turns to Keynes's *General Theory* in order to show how his notion of “animal spirits” partook of the same philosophy of history as Bowen's family narrative. For each, the language of gothic emotionality provides a way of reading decline as contingent, transient, and easily rectifiable through professional management.

### **The Consolations of Professionalism**

Bowen published her first work of fiction, *Encounters*, in London in 1923, during the heyday of modernism. Though she was Anglo-Irish by birth, her well-received fiction admitted

her to several exclusive English literary circles, including the Bloomsbury Group and the Oxford set of Maurice Bowra, Isaiah Berlin, and Cyril Connolly. Because of her experimental techniques and her London residence, scholars initially read Bowen's work as exhibiting a feminine strain of late modernism (Lassner, *Elizabeth Bowen*; Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen*). However, the critical focus has recently shifted toward Bowen's Irish heritage. For all that she lived and moved in the London literary scene, Bowen always considered herself Irish, and her regular use of Irish settings testifies to their formative role in shaping her social and literary sensibilities. In particular, *Bowen's Court* has become a touchstone for scholars contesting or hoping to establish her Irish literary and intellectual heritage.<sup>4</sup> Written between the summer of 1939 and December 1941, *Bowen's Court* departs in important ways from Bowen's experimental fiction, eschewing the convoluted syntax and elliptical narrative frames of the latter in favor of a realistic, linear depiction of Big House life. Built primarily in the eighteenth century, these Georgian mansions had by Bowen's time become emblems of Protestant hegemony. But house burnings during the Irish War of Independence created doubts in many minds about how long Anglo-Ireland could endure. *Bowen's Court* escaped destruction, but Bowen and her mother permanently emigrated to England when Bowen was twelve, and the ensuing exile reinforced her fears that her gentry class was in permanent decline. "[The] Protestant Ascendancy...had become...a ghost only" (430).

Credited by many as a uniquely systematic theorization of the Big House,<sup>5</sup> *Bowen's Court* follows Bowen's ancestors from their initial settlement in Farahy, County Cork, through the turn of the twentieth century. In the process, Bowen posits a close analogy between her family members' innermost thoughts and feelings and the evolution of Anglo-Irish society as a whole. Referring somewhat tongue-in-cheek to her forebears with pseudo-monarchical titles

(John II, Henry V, etc.), she endows their personalities with a typicality reminiscent of that given to the “Elizabethan” or “Victorian” era. Significantly, Big Houses themselves are seen to mold this analogical relationship by shaping similar psyches among distant people through their architectural peculiarities. “A Bowen, in the first place, made Bowen’s Court,” writes Bowen. “Since then, with a rather alarming sureness, Bowen’s Court has made all the succeeding Bowens” (32). As with Bowen’s Court, so with all Big Houses: “I know of no [such] house (no house that has not changed hands) in which, while the present seems to be there forever, the past is not pervadingly felt” (19). The Big House thus distills Anglo-Irish history into the representative figure of a single family.

Clearly indebted to earlier fictional portrayals of the Big House, *Bowen’s Court* nevertheless displays great deal skepticism about the Irish gothic tradition as related through Maria Edgeworth, Charles Maturin, Sheridan Le Fanu, and Bram Stoker.<sup>6</sup> As we have seen, early Big House narratives replaced political with aesthetic rationales for Ascendancy rule. By describing country life in ideal terms, they stressed how neo-feudal social forms could weld landlords and tenants into an organic community. For example, in Edgeworth’s *Absentee* (1812), an early progenitor of the Big House form, the young Lord Columbre abandons his parents’ hedonistic London life and returns to his Irish estate, Clonbrony, as a responsible landlord. In a reversal of causality, his tenants’ happiness after his arrival legitimates his prior ownership of Clonbrony and effaces the long history of dispossession underlying his rule. In addition, by locating modern consumerism in London, Edgeworth insulates Clonbrony from modern capitalist labor and champions rural Ireland’s feudal status.

But like any aesthetic production, a Big House novel never completely resolves the ideological contradictions it sets out to manage, and misgivings over landlords’ leadership

failures on the national level introduce a gothic strain to these works. As Vera Kreilkamp explains, Big House novels represent the Anglo-Irish gentry as a dying class even as they reproduce its ideological justifications, by drawing on such stock tropes as a decaying house, a degenerate aristocratic line, and a deracinated landowning class (20-25). Hereditary lines and impregnable mansions encode decline as solipsistic and suggest that neo-feudalism collapsed from internal debility, not through English policy or tenant unrest.<sup>7</sup> The gothic undercurrent to Big House novels encouraged the view, endorsed by later writers like W.B. Yeats, Edith Somerville and Martin Ross, and Molly Keane, that the violent emotions instilled by country solitude explained the increasingly-constrained social position of this class.

Bowen certainly was not averse to admitting gothic elements into her fiction, and Margot Gayle Backus, W.J. McCormack, and Neil Corcoran persuasively place her novels in a tradition of “Irish Protestant Gothic.”<sup>8</sup> But the trajectory of the gothic fit poorly with her hopes for an Anglo-Irish renaissance. In an article written for Sean O’Faolain’s journal *The Bell* in 1940, Bowen proposed that broadening the demographic base of Big House social forms could renovate the culture they supported into a modern institution. The Big House “idea,” she writes,

was at first rigid and narrow – but it could extend itself, and it must if the big house is to play an alive part in the alive Ireland of today. What is fine about the social idea is that it means the subjugation of the personal to the impersonal. In the interest of good manners and good behaviour people learn to subdue their own feelings. (“The Big House,” 29)

In keeping with her optimistic – one might say fantastical – belief in the long-term viability of Big House culture, Bowen distances her family history from gothic tropes while acknowledging their conventional presence in Big House literature. “There is no ghost in this house” (28), she insists enigmatically, not more than 10 pages before tracing the origin of Bowen’s Court to Colonel Henry Bowen, the first Bowen to settle in Ireland, and his demonic appearance before

his God-fearing third wife and their children. A confirmed atheist, he was reputed to have materialized before her and spewed vulgar, anti-Christian invectives at her as he did so. Bowen emphasizes that Colonel Bowen was still alive at the time of the Apparition (an oddity that earned him a place in Richard Baxter's *Worlds of Spirits*, a study of early modern witchcraft) and that it took place in Wales, not in Ireland, where the children of his second marriage would become the Bowens of Bowen's Court. "I cannot but be glad," reflects Bowen, "that we County Cork Bowens descended from the second marriage, not from the haunted third" (48). By locating the Apparition among a defunct line, Bowen jettisons many tropes common to gothic histories and free herself to associate the Bowen family's evolution with the professional soldiering of the living Henry Bowen.

In contrast to accounts that defend the Anglo-Irish as a benevolent, if decaying, aristocracy,<sup>9</sup> Bowen emphasizes that her family's lands were attained through professional aptitude, even if it was deployed in a flawed cause. While the many differences between hereditary elitism and professionalized egalitarianism encapsulate antithetical positions on social mobility, access to education, and state interventionism, Bowen consistently focuses on their affective discrepancies. Where under a hereditary class system one's emotions are invested in proximate personal, familial, and class ties, professional society rests on "looser, half-formed relationships" to impersonal bureaucratic structures and an abiding belief in the "common good" of collective welfare.<sup>10</sup> In this regard, professionalism entails<sup>10</sup> a sort of anti-social sociality that places pleasure in one's work and commitment to distant persons above immediate, personal demands.<sup>11</sup> Thus, when recounting how Colonel Bowen earned the land on which Bowen's Court would be built through military service, Bowen stresses that he demonstrated no deep emotional attachment to either of the parties for which he fought during the English Civil War:

running afoul of the king's party while in Ireland, he simply took up with Parliament's army. As Bowen puts it: "I doubt whether Henry Bowen ever cared much for either King or Parliament: he may hardly have distinguished between the two" (39). According to Bowen, Cromwell's arrival in Ireland changed the Civil War from "a barons' war" fought "with fierceness and with virtuosity" to a "very businesslike" conflict (61). For his fellow officers Colonel Bowen holds no special affection – his hawks were "the only creatures, perhaps, with which he was intimate" – but his abilities as a "useful fight" entitle him to substantial compensation (67). Secretive, anti-social, and atheistic, he lives in self-imposed isolation from the rest of the Cromwellian army but prospers nevertheless because of his professional demeanor.

Bowen traces the peculiarities of her family's history and the history of their Anglo-Irish class from Henry. She uncovers a drive to professionalization in several ancestors, from Henry III's "vocational" devotion to the construction of Bowen's Court, to Henry V's disinterested pursuit of road-building, to Robert Cole Bowen's "business"-oriented management of the family's estate, and finally to her father's dual commitment to the life of a solicitor and Bowen's Court's landlord (167; 289; 316; 375). In the process, Bowen uses her family as a template to analyze the rise and fall of professional management among the Anglo-Irish gentry as a whole. Early Bowens' dreams of fantastic wealth, far from a family failing, reflect the self-centeredness of their class in its infancy; Henry III's construction of Bowen's Court stems from their embrace of rational tactics of organization and national leadership during the mid- to late eighteenth century; and Bowen's father's descent into mental illness symbolizes the failure of elite managerialism and the slow decline that it inaugurated for Anglo-Ireland (129, 158, 248). Bowen's family can act as a stand-in for the Ascendancy as a whole because "isolation is innate" to this group, which embraced "abstract ideas," discarded "the bonds of sex and class and



nationality,” and pursued individual accomplishment instead of a collective mission (20, 173, 125). Thus each Bowen’s personal idiosyncrasies reflect the lack of communal structures tying together the Anglo-Irish, their drift into isolated estates from which class-wide generalizations can be made only on the basis of representative readings of individual figures.

However, isolation had resonances beyond the local ones Bowen gives it. Jonathan Cape found *Bowen’s Court* too pro-Irish and “subversive” to print in light of disputes over Ireland’s protectionist economic policies and its wartime neutrality. Cape’s hostility to “isolation,” “independence,” “secrecy,” and the “hope” for “an undivided Ireland” may sound excessive now, but these were loaded terms that implied sympathy for *Sinn Féin* and its ethic of “ourselves alone” in the late 1930s.<sup>12</sup> In “Eire,” a contemporaneous piece in *The New Statesman*, Bowen describes the “abnormal isolation” imposed by the declaration of neutrality as Ireland’s “first independent act,” echoing *Sinn Féin*’s belief that Ireland must develop outside English influence (31-2). But on account of her English audience, Bowen eschewed the nativism of most *Sinn Féin*-influenced ideas and suggested instead that autonomy would help disinterested professional institutions flourish. The need to “look to herself only for necessities” would erode “the idea of privilege” and class antagonism and erect in their place impersonal bureaucratic organizations: parish councils, the Local Security Force, rationing services, and agricultural societies (34-5). Bowen’s Ireland looks suspiciously like England in this reading, with wartime rationing, gasoline shortages, health epidemics, and industrial production all managed by an enlightened government and its civil service. Most important, professionalized institutions would heal the bitter divisions and violent emotional attachments familiar to Ireland’s recent history and to gothic fiction alike and replace them with what she calls in *The Bell* “the subjugation of the personal to the impersonal” (29).

But Bowen's idealistic narrative of professional development falters when in the face of Anglo-Ireland's tragic rise and fall as a socially and politically relevant class. After the 1800 Acts of Union, she remarks, the Anglo-Irish, who considered their class "on the decline," succumbed to "Gothic feeling" and retreated "back upon a tract of clouds and of obsessions that could each, from its nature, only be solitary" (258-9). Yet the failure of the Anglo-Irish leadership facilitated the emergence en masse of a professional class. For now, according to Bowen, physical separation gave way to psychological and social barriers – a state of affairs that she attributes to the rise of "democracy" (258). Gothic and professional histories appear to supplement each other as Bowen vacillates between belief in professionalized, egalitarian progress and regret that Anglo-Ireland was abandoning its responsibilities as a social elite. The two historical narratives are bound together by their concern with emotion, whether of the tragically expressive gothic variety or the subdued professional sort. Ultimately, gothic and professional traits rectify each others' deficiencies but cannot sublimate the contradictions into a stable set of social structures. Why this is the case, and how Bowen attempted to resolve this dialectic through a cyclical historical narrative, becomes more clear if we turn to Anglo-Ireland's position in the British world-system.

### **Caught Between Two Economies: The Anglo-Irish in Global Perspective**

The first step in approaching *Bowen's Court's* convoluted temporal framework is to explain how narratives of gothic decline and professional development relate to economic and cultural modernization. Though professionalism has long been associated with modernization and in particular with discipline-forming specialization, the gothic has typically been viewed as treating spaces outside or at the margins of modernity (Backus 15).<sup>13</sup> But in the context of a

capitalist world-system, gothic narratives seem to participate in modernity. Indeed, Moretti's "Dialectic of Fear" suggests that the gothic actually expresses, rather than retreats from, the dynamics of modernity, arguing that *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* reflect "the terror of a split [capitalist] society" that nineteenth-century industrial capitalism had produced between capitalists and workers.<sup>14</sup> Following Moretti, Stephen Shapiro relates Gothic fiction to the capitalist separation of laborers "from any means of production (agricultural, crafts-oriented) that might sustain them outside of or in tension with a system that produces commodities only for their profit-generating potential," especially when a new distribution of power within the "core-zone" (i.e. Euro-America) generated new means of accumulation and unexpected capital flight ("Transvaal, Transylvania: *Dracula's* World-System," 30). For Shapiro, gothic fictions surge in popularity during transitional moments, giving them an internal generic periodicity with which to chart imaginative responses to changes in global capitalism.

But Anglo-Ireland's unique position in the world economy led to the dominance of gothic conventions in Anglo-Irish fiction from the nineteenth well into the twentieth century.<sup>15</sup> As we have already seen, transnational networks of financial and commercial exchange make possible transitions between systemic "cycles of accumulation," since they allow different economic systems to communicate and, eventually, to translate their capital from one organizational logic to the next (Arrighi, 1-27; Shapiro 30-35). And as we have also seen, the Anglo-Irish did not merely participate in these networks – they lived in them as a condition of their very existence as a class. After the Acts of Union, Irish agriculture began to split into two spheres: a subsistence sector maintained by the Catholic masses, and an export sector catering to British demand.<sup>16</sup> Like elites in other plantation house economies (the American South, the Caribbean, the system of Spanish *haciendas*), Ascendancy landlords thrived on transnational networks of exchange,

selling agricultural commodities produced in a racialized, neo-feudal system of labor to fund lavish expenditures in metropolitan consumer economies.<sup>17</sup> Within this scenario, capital flight and alienation from agricultural modes of production did not constitute a momentary phase but were the very *raisons d'être* of the Ascendancy's socioeconomic position. Absenteeism became a hotly debated subject in the nineteenth century precisely because the spectacular consumption of British luxury items in London made visible Anglo-Ireland's liminal status in two separate economic systems. Though defenders like Yeats and Somerville and Ross stressed the feudal aspects of landlordism,<sup>18</sup> the revenue generated from these estates was spent almost exclusively on British luxury goods: clothing, furniture, and carriages. But as George Moore makes plain in his late-nineteenth century novel *A Drama in Muslin* (1886), nonabsentees spent their incomes on the same dresses, books, and social activities, only in Dublin shops instead of through London-based merchants. Indeed, since Irish industrial manufacturing was minimal before the twentieth century, the sole outlets for Anglo-Irish wealth during these years were Britain's consumer markets.<sup>19</sup> Thus the Anglo-Irish were caught between a "split society" of Irish workers and British markets, an agricultural economy and an industrial-consumerist one.

In the late 1930s, when Bowen was writing *Bowen's Court*, the world-system was in the final stages of a half-century long reorientation. Increased competition and the consequent waning profitability of traditional small family firms favored German and American-style corporations that handled their own distribution and sales along with production, leading capitalists to abandon mining, shipbuilding, and textile production for corporate businesses (Arrighi 277-308). The greatly expanded ranks of professional managers needed to run these multi-tiered businesses "laid the foundation for a global class of specialists linked more securely to their overseas colleagues than to their home countries" (Marx 22). But this specialist class

also threatened to displaced colonial class structures once seen as “mirror images – sometimes reflected, sometimes refracted, sometimes distorted – of the traditional, individualistic, unequal society that it was widely believed existed in the metropolis” (Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, xix).<sup>20</sup> Professional corporatism, rather than neofeudal agricultural production, became the central economic framework tying together the world-system.

The move toward corporatized professionalism hit the Anglo-Irish hard, especially when the Irish government reduced international trade through protectionist tariffs in the hopes of mitigating American and British hegemony and freeing a space for local industries to grow in (O’Hearn 113-19). Ireland was not alone in erecting barriers to outside trade during the 1930s, the Great Depression having made many nations wary of globalization.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, Éamon de Valera’s goal of a “self-sufficient” Ireland attacked the networks on which Anglo-Ireland’s wealth and elevated social status had depended, and this goal – along with an aggressive policy of Catholicization and Gaelicization, including new statutes against contraception (1935) and divorce (1937) that Yeats and Samuel Beckett famously lampooned<sup>22</sup> – encouraged roughly one-third of the Anglo-Irish living in the South of Ireland to emigrate during the interwar period (T. Brown 130-34).

The emigrants to Britain often took advantage of their internationalist outlook to find new roles in the world economy that were similarly transnational in focus. For example, a number of Anglo-Irish writers found the international orientation of British intellectual life amenable to their tastes. Louis MacNeice and Cecil Day Lewis, to name only the two most famous, settled at an early age in England and established high reputations in professional literary circles.<sup>23</sup> Relocated to England and educated at Downe House, Bowen associated herself with the Bloomsbury Group, which by the 1930s had outgrown its early family-like solidarity and

functioned as a cosmopolitan fellowship of professional intellectuals with shared cultural views and artistic styles.<sup>24</sup> Nor was professionalization confined to literary figures: Day Lewis's father brought the family to England with the aim of climbing higher in the Anglican ranks than the dwindling Protestant population of Ireland would allow, and Iris Murdoch's family crossed the Irish Sea in order for her father to continue his career as a military bureaucrat.<sup>25</sup>

Despite sharing a transnational perspective, gothic and professional narratives offer very different orientations and make nearly opposite legitimization claims. Gothic fiction thrives on the disjunction between profit-generating enterprises and alternative subsistence economies: in traditional Big House novels the Ascendancy's connection to a global capitalist economy undermines neo-feudal rhetoric by representing the ideology it supports as degenerative. On the other hand, professionalism assumes as a matter of course an advanced capitalist economy capable of organizing large corporate businesses and adequate training facilities for their employees. While the gothic is connected to transnational forces exclusively through exchanges of money and commodities and remains locally rooted in ideology, professionalism fashions a cosmopolitan class out of isolated individuals having in common only their education, career, and socioeconomic position. From the vantage of professionalism's commitments to abstract institutions and occupational accomplishments, the gothic's obsession with neo-feudal social structures seems archaic, while for the gothic the loss of local authority and social solidarity appears just as troubling.

Bowen differentiates these competing genres in *Bowen's Court* on the basis of their participation in distinct affective economies. Raymond Williams shows how "structures of feeling" organize social experience for particular classes in lieu of advanced institutions, for instance during the "rise of a class" or a "mutation within a class" (*Marxism and Literature*,

134). The Anglo-Irish were more stable as a class than Williams's examples, but their position between two class systems meant that affect could supply a connection to contradictory social structures. In letters and reviews Bowen characterizes herself as a member of a "non-group group" joined by "vague affinities" to more noticeable "coteries" (a euphemistic term, in Bowen's writing, for upper-class assemblages), claiming simultaneous membership in an (Anglo-)Irish gentry and a rising class of professionally-oriented Britons (letter to William Plomer, 6 May 1948; "Orlando," 131). With greater nuance *Bowen's Court* equates loose groupings with a tendency to value affective social formations over ideas. The Bowens inherited "the received ideas of their class," but "character – ruling passion, innate predisposition – stays a long way below the level of 'ideas' – such a long way that often no connection exists. Where ideas were concerned, the Bowens tended to show themselves fractious and changeable – they did not really care much for them" (277). Two points stand out among these observations: first, the family history does not strictly conform either to the gothic's regressive narrative or to professionalism's evolutionary one but traverses drastically different forms (or "ideas") that reflect a constant submerged presence; second, affect ("ruling passion, innate predisposition") is the "deep" undercurrent that can explain the changeable surface of "ideas" throughout Bowen's narrative and whose faintness makes it a long-lasting response to structural social impasses.<sup>26</sup> While the British and native Irish possessed clear ideological platforms – the empire and *laissez-faire* free trade for the one, Home Rule and tenants' rights for the other – the absence of a guiding idea differentiates Bowen's Anglo-Irish from these two potentially antagonistic classes. With no innate ideas, the Anglo-Irish are free to declare themselves at one moment "Irish in being," at another "no more than England's creatures" (129, 223). But, underlying these shifting loyalties, the "style" with which the Anglo-Irish lived, the way that they felt and responded to

transient ideas, remained constant over generations of Anglo-Irish rule: “Like Flaubert’s ideal book about nothing, it [the Anglo-Irish Big House] sustains itself on itself by the inner force of its style” (21).

To explain why her family, like the Anglo-Irish generally, failed to live up to their professional aspirations, Bowen employs the gothic tropes that for most of her history she carefully avoids. She reports a recurring “fantasy” about a treasure buried in their in-laws’ estate at Kilbolane that was rightfully theirs and that threw the Bowen finances into disarray on account of the court costs and lawyers’ fees incurred to wrest control of it (100). Bowen here uses an economy of hysteria to diagnose both the successes and the failures of an export-oriented, neo-feudal transnationalism. As a gothic fantasy of wealth literally buried in the soil, the “Kilbolane obsession” reflects what Bowen elsewhere in the book calls the “inherent wrong” of Irish landlordism – that is, the wealth and privilege gained from dispossessing the “old” Irish – but it does so at a level of affect-induced powerlessness (353). Here the need to convert landed assets into money overcomes any rational control on the Bowens’ part. The neo-feudal myth that the Anglo-Irish have a contractual right to their property under British law and that profitable estate management legitimates ownership is unmasked as a desire for hard cash and the British luxury items it can purchase. Hysteria, then, marks the location where Anglo-Ireland traverses multiple economic systems.

At the same time, Bowen acknowledges one advantage that hysteria has over professional decorum. Because the Ascendancy had dispossessed the native Irish, “to enjoy prosperity one had to exclude feeling, or keep it within prescribed bounds” to cope with the injustice of Anglo-Irish affluence (248). But the heightened feeling that hysteria lent the Ascendancy enabled its proponents to begin to share sentiments with each other and with the native Irish. To mitigate



the hysterical element of their feelings, the Anglo-Irish turned from “exploitation” to “development,” showing “at least a *wish* to organize, to better things and to rule” (158). For Bowen, the classic example of this movement is Grattan’s Parliament, the short-lived Irish Parliament (1782-1800) that represented the high point of accountability for the Anglo-Irish. Their active leadership in forming “responsible” institutions fostered a collective sense of themselves as a race and a class and established an alibi for Anglo-Ireland’s transnational position:<sup>27</sup> while continuing to monetarize agricultural produce for British luxury items, they cast themselves as mediators between British modernity and “traditional” Ireland by importing modern political institutions from Britain and using them to develop Irish autonomy.<sup>28</sup> By representing this connection as an even exchange of wealth for institutional paradigms, Bowen locates institution building as a fortuitous byproduct of a hysterical affective economy and as a legitimating ground of Anglo-Irish hegemony.

Professionalism abandons the collectivist mentality underpinning the gothic, imagining instead a group of accomplished individuals released from emotional ties to nation, class, and family. Though sharing with Bowen’s gothic discourse an interest in institutions, professionalism values institutions’ abstract standards as a way to limit local ties. When recounting a conflict between her father and her grandfather over her father’s desire to study law, Bowen suggests how incompatible these two frames are, despite the verbiage common to both: “Robert [her grandfather] felt – and in this he was not unreasonable – that one cannot have two professions. Fate had selected Henry’s [her father] profession for him: he was to be Henry Cole Bowen of Bowen’s Court, landowner” (375). To Robert, Henry’s choice to pursue a career in addition to landlord was a “betrayal” of his hereditary “role” for “accomplishment” in law (375). Bowen emphasizes the semantic gap between “role” and “accomplishment,” with the first

indicating holistically personal and public life and the second limiting one to “lonely reflection” about occupational issues (375). The argument between Robert and Henry over “role” versus “accomplishment” is presented as a choice between two modes of being wholly dependent on affective orientation, not on global processes in relation to which they are merely passive respondents. In effect, Bowen domesticates British professionalism to Irish circumstances: the professional modes of affective disposition that form the guiding operational logic of British capitalism in the 1930’s have been available in Ireland in one shape or another since the seventeenth century. Of course, such a perspective leads one to ask why proto-professionalism never emerged into a full-fledged professional society. This problem, I suggest, is in essence the obverse of the gothic historical form that Bowen tries to avoid in her narrative. By internalizing gothic and professional narratives to Anglo-Ireland via their affective economies, Bowen plays them off against each other, so that the failings of one cause a corrective swing to the other. In doing so, she constructs a historical form capable of relativizing Anglo-Irish setbacks within a cyclical *longue durée*.

### **Affect and Periodic History**

Both *Bowen’s Court* and world-systems theory regard history as conforming to a cyclical pattern. However, Bowen’s desire to reimagine her class in the terms dictated by Ireland’s isolationist economic policy led her to attribute periodic repetitions to developments internal to Anglo-Irish life, not to the global capitalist processes that world-systems theory investigates. As Arrighi explains in *The Long Twentieth Century*, systemic cycles occur because capitalism alternates between two basic models, “cosmopolitan imperial” and “corporate national,” neither of which can expand indefinitely without being supplemented by the other. The deficiencies of

the “cosmopolitan imperial” frame – an inability to properly coordinate exchange on a mass level, as seen in the failure of small-firm capitalism and the ideological limits of neo-feudalism – are overcome by “corporate nationalism’s” larger business model, while “cosmopolitan imperialism” guards against increasing atomization in national and professional spaces. But the dialectical progression between these models worked less easily for the Anglo-Irish, who were wedged between discrepant economic systems in a spatial, rather than a temporal, manner. Indeed, since Irish protectionism was dismantling transnational networks during Bowen’s time, she found herself having to rationalize her class’s socioeconomic role, and its oscillating social ethics, without alluding to extra-Irish affairs or global transitions. Affect, for its part, provided the medium through which she could do so.

Bowen constructs her chapters around seven periods of Anglo-Irish history: the Cromwellian conquest and the early Bowen settlers, the first generations of Bowens born in Ireland, the era of Grattan’s Parliament; the first decades of the Union, the years leading up to the Great Famine and its aftermath, the Irish Land War, and the present day.<sup>29</sup> The narrative frame oscillates regularly: the Cromwellian conquest, Grattan’s Parliament, the Famine, and the present day demonstrate tendencies toward proto-professional development, while the other chapters follow a gothic narrative of class and familial decline. In her afterword to *Bowen’s Court*, Bowen attests that this rhythm was a self-conscious choice: because the “aspect of their [the Bowens’] behaviour that interests me the most” was the “involuntary, or spontaneous” workings of emotion, she could describe “the pattern they unconsciously went to make” only by “suggest[ing] a compulsion they did not know of by a series of breaks, contrasts, and juxtapositions” (452). Bowen attributes apparent discontinuities to the turbulent nature of affects, which can slide between different relative states. Because emotions possess internal

regularity and elude conscious control, they enable her to explain historical reversals without sacrificing Anglo-Irish self-possession. Far from being passive respondents to economic realities, the Ascendancy dictated its own cyclical history.

To explain the consistent rhythm of gothic decline and professional development, Bowen presents each affective economy as having inherent deficiencies balanced by the other. For example, she emphasizes how each wave of professionalism comes about after, and partly as a result of, a moment of obsession, serving as a corrective to mass hysteria. Both “step-down[s] in power” [i.e. gothicized declines] carried with them a “romantic phase” that destroyed the Anglo-Irish’s previous class solidarity and replaced it with a “dire period of Personal Life” (399, 359). Unable to cope with the obsessions troubling their class position, the Anglo-Irish retreat into individualistic occupations to manage their agitations. While professionalism does not entail a complete withdrawal from affect, it does allow Bowen’s ancestors to displace debilitating emotions toward house and road-building, technocratic management of their estates, or legal studies. Like “only children,” the Anglo-Irish “are sterner in their refusal to suffer, in their refusal, even, to feel at all” (419);<sup>30</sup> but the only way that Bowen’s ancestors can mitigate their tensions is to disperse them throughout the institutional structures they erected during periods of class solidarity and neo-feudal governance, in effect disciplining their emotions by transferring them from personal expressions to impersonal institutional systems.<sup>31</sup>

But professionalism cannot persist indefinitely. Insofar as the Anglo-Irish retreat into individuated professionalism, they lose coherence as a recognizable social class, abandoning both the political power and the institutional infrastructure associated with their position. At the same time, as professional-style management restores the gentry to their fortunes, class sentiment and a desire to function as a political leader once again begin to fuse the Anglo-Irish into a

collectivity. When “human feeling” heightens, “latent energy” develops their childish attributes into adult responsibility, and “the Anglo-Irish [become] aware of themselves as a race” (158). The change in valence from childlike professionalism to responsible engagement with adult institutions shows just how reversible Bowen’s terminology is. While isolated individualism (and its association with childhood) is offered as the palliative for gothic decadence, Bowen also views collective adulthood as a corrective measure for the hedonistic pursuit of wealth and pleasure.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, by ignoring their sociopolitical role as benevolent landlords, the Anglo-Irish gentry abandon not only the neo-feudal ideology underpinning their ownership of the land but also the institution-building necessary for the self-sufficient development envisioned by both de Valera and Bowen. Ironically, this leads Bowen back to where she began: professionalism’s inability to foster a social ethic induces a return to feeling and to collective institutional association, the latter made possible, in turn, by the managerial proficiencies that the Anglo-Irish acquired through professional advancement. In this regard Bowen’s narrative oscillates between collective institutional structures and individual professionalism, each of which supplies the inadequacies of the other but also lays the foundation for its later reemergence.

For Bowen, the eventual rehabilitation of the Anglo-Irish gentry depends on the dialectical movement between neo-feudal institution building and individualistic professionalism, and in particular on the resistance of this movement to any attempt to sublimate its alternating stages into a new mode of production. In contrast to many classic accounts of British class history, which have stressed the gradual movement from agricultural to industrial modes of production, and from amateur entrepreneurialism to professional corporatism, Bowen insists that the Anglo-Irish gentry always evidenced a proto-professional element. But she also suggests that it never evolved into a full-fledged “professional society” because of Anglo-Ireland’s connection

to multiple economic systems. By translating their transnational position into a historical account, Bowen constructs a prehistory for the institutional autonomy and individualistic professionalism that together seemed to spell irreversible decline for the Anglo-Irish, a prehistory internalizing such threatening developments as expressions of Anglo-Irish emotionality. The key point is that Bowen's institutional prehistory operates through an extended metaphor comparing Irish socioeconomic circumstances – the emergence of national, Anglo-Irish-led institutions and proto-professional individualism – to transnational ties between Ireland and Britain. Just as Anglo-Ireland swung back and forth between moments of collective action and individualism, so too did the economic system in which the Anglo-Irish precariously balanced: the Cromwellian invasion and the Acts of Union strengthened links between Britain and Ireland, while Grattan's Parliament and the Land War pulled them apart. (The parallel associates Grattan's Parliament with later Irish separatism – a dubious claim in light of Anglo-Irish loyalties.) In turn, this dynamic sets up a strict isomorphism between proto-professional labor and Irish isolationism, and Anglo-Irish political structures such as Grattan's Parliament establish a clear national precedent for the autonomous institutionalism that replaced transnational imperial networks in the 1930s. Ultimately, Bowen proposes that these two modes of organization cannot coexist: professionalism tears apart the class unity of the Anglo-Irish, while Anglo-Irish collectivism is frighteningly self-destructive, subject to hysteria and infighting. But her insistence that Anglo-Irish affects explain the cyclical oscillations transfers the responsibility for this turbulence from an ominous global market to a national context in which the Anglo-Irish can continue to mediate between Irish agricultural production and neo-British consumerism.

No longer buoyed by British support for their hegemony, but also no longer bound as tightly to Britain, Bowen translates the contradictions of Anglo-Ireland's transnational position into a historical narrative that internalizes these features within an analysis of the affective foundations for periodic booms and declines in Anglo-Irish social and political ascendancy. By delineating an internally consistent field that treats Anglo-Ireland's history rather than its overlapping material connections to Britain or Ireland, Bowen focuses on collective emotions and their role in producing and maintaining institutional infrastructure. In this manner, she locates class-wide, generational fluctuations in temperament, providing a powerful image for short-term oscillations within Anglo-Ireland's relative standing. Contradictions emanating from Anglo-Ireland's transnational position become in Bowen's narrative paradoxes internal to group affects, and this shift in perspective refashions Anglo-Ireland's historical role in terms of Irish autonomy. Bowen envisions Anglo-Ireland not as some alien class for whom Irish self-sufficiency foretells imminent decline but as an autonomous community whose independence parallels that of the young Irish Free State. According to Bowen, the ups and downs of Anglo-Irish social, economic, and political power have little to do with global flows of commodities and finance capital. Instead, the symmetry between Anglo-Ireland's post-independence decline and its collective fantasy-induced withdrawal from social leadership is accidental, a failure on Anglo-Ireland's part to reconcile professional management adequately with collective institution-formation.

In developing this historical imaginary, Bowen shows a fascination with cyclical time that many of her modernist predecessors shared. But where figures like Yeats and T. S. Eliot used mythic cycles to endow early twentieth-century life with a cultural continuity,<sup>33</sup> Bowen suggests that it was the more proximate workings of affect that caused Anglo-Irish history to

move in a repetitive manner. Bowen's text is closer in this regard to those of her Bloomsbury associates, who valued individualism and personal ties more than monumental cultural forms. Yet Bowen departs from Bloomsbury aesthetics by assigning a central value to collective action and impersonal social structures. While many in the Bloomsbury set had begun to engage with a collectivist sensibility prior to World War II, their projects tended to represent national communities as bound together by a common culture.<sup>34</sup> Given Anglo-Ireland's tenuous position as a transnational class, Bowen could not take for granted the same isomorphism between nation, culture, and geographic locale as other modernists, and so she presented her class as united by the concrete institutions they established and the common emotional dispositions these fostered.

At the same time, Bowen's cyclical history *does* provide us with an insight into the emotional dynamics that made possible the historical imaginary of Keynesian equilibrium economics. In contrast to the culture-centric histories of Yeats and Eliot, Keynes' *General Theory* sought to explain short-term fluctuations in employment as an immediate consequence of collective emotions. Rather than appeal to mythic structures that molded human destiny from outside of history, Keynes proposed that economic cycles exist as the clearest indicator of a collective affective temperament that can both destroy modern classes and build them up again. In the remainder of this chapter, I sketch how Keynesian economics represent an abstract recapitulation of the cyclical history developed by Bowen in *Bowen's Court*. Though not directly indebted to *Bowen's Court*, Keynes's *General Theory* reflects a pervasive internalization among British writers of the gothic Irish historiography that Bowen amply demonstrates.



## **On the Whims of “Animal Spirits”: The Irrational Survival of Liberalism in *The General Theory***

In 1945, just as World War II was ending and the postwar welfare state was on the verge of emerging, Evelyn Waugh and Henry Green each published novels centered around declining country estates. Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* narrates the fall of the Catholic Marchmain family as seen from the eyes of Charles Ryder, a classmate of the Marchmains' son Sebastian Flyte and a budding landscape painter. Over the course of the novel, Ryder watches the aristocratic family decay around him and gradually come to be replaced, during the War, by what Ryder calls the Hoopers of the world: efficient middle-class professionals who lack the poetry that Ryder finds in the Marchmains. In both its gothic imagery and juxtaposition of aristocratic and Catholic decline with rising professionalism, Waugh's novel is clearly indebted to Irish Big House novels like Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* and Bowen's own *The Last September* (1929) that characterized the country estate as a dilapidated locale condemned to decline and obsolescence, less the bearer of a conservative Burkean tradition than an archaic remnant out of step with capitalist modernity. As Ryder observes in a moment of retrospection, “Englishmen seemed ... to salute their achievements at the moments of their extinction ... The financial slump of the period, which left many painters without employment, served to enhance my success [at selling paintings of country estates], which was, indeed, itself a symptom of the decline” (227).

Similarly, Green's *Loving* manages to rescue the country estate novel by moving it to Ireland, where Irish neutrality during the War opened the possibility of a last gasp of neo-feudal hierarchy. As Charlie Raunce, the grasping butler, explains to Kate Armstrong, another servant, if one returned to Britain one risked “[being] called up in the Army when you land on the other side” and subsequently forced into its professionalized hierarchies (98). Much like in *Bowen's Court*, England becomes a synecdoche for professionalism and Ireland for feudalism, and the

intercourse between the two (in *Loving*, the transfer of an entire English household across the Irish Sea to Ireland) the grounds for a reinvention of the conventions of the country estate novel. But as in *Brideshead Revisited*, there is little doubt that this is a mere interlude before the triumph of professionalism: when the Tennants leave the estate, chaos erupts among the servants, and the first glimpses of what rule “under the masses” may be like is shown in blistering severity. By the close of the novel, we intuit that the aristocracy has been doomed by the War, and all that is left of the country estate is, on the one hand, a series of small, sheltered enclaves degenerating into gothic decadence, and, on the other, fictions like Green’s and Waugh’s that preserve aristocratic culture in an ideal image.

I mention Waugh and Green’s novels because they are indicative of the extent to which a historiography of gothic decline and rising professional expertise had already become enshrined in England by the end of World War II, as well as the degree to which these relied upon the Irish Gothic’s settings (*Loving*) and tropes (the decaying house, Catholicism). And, as numerous critics have noted, the transition from the interwar period’s debates over fascism, communism, and liberalism to the postwar consensus over the professional-managed welfare state was in large part made possible by the conceptual apparatus supplied by the work of John Maynard Keynes, in particular his *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*.<sup>35</sup> In this respect, it is significant that both *The General Theory* and Waugh and Green’s novels deploy images of steep decline and ambiguous ascent: the fading aristocracy and deepening unemployment versus the professional middle-class and a future surge in employment. Indeed, we might say that if Waugh and Green’s novels overtly display their debt to an Irish historiographic tradition of intermingled decline and ascent, Keynes’s text provides an early example of this combination that abstracts away from the specifics themes of Anglo-Irish historiography to develop this historical dynamic

into a truly “general theory.” And while I will not be arguing that Keynes explicitly borrowed from Bowen and Anglo-Irish fiction, I do want to suggest that Keynes absorbed on an intuitive level a cyclical theory of history that was dependent on a parallel understanding of (gothicized) economic history, one which would in the War years become explicitly identified with Ireland.

Central to Keynes’s *General Theory* was the thesis that, if the economy entered periodic depressions such as it did in the 1930s, this indicated less of a failure on the part of economists to correctly understand rational economic mechanisms than it did the permeability of socioeconomic institutions to irrational social affects. In contrast to classical economists like Arthur Pigou and Keynes’ mentor, Alfred Marshall, whom Keynes believed to have mistaken optimal economic conditions as a universal state of affairs, Keynes insisted that he could explain the worldwide depression of the 1930s and the mass unemployment that it brought about in Britain as something other than an unavoidable fluctuation in prices: “Thus writers in the classical tradition, overlooking the special assumption underlying their theory, have been driven inevitably to the conclusion, perfectly logical on their assumption, that apparent unemployment (apart from the admitted exceptions) must be due at bottom to a refusal by the unemployed factors to accept a reward which corresponds to their marginal productivity” (16). In order explain Pgou and Marshall’s errors, he proposed that depressions were, at their most fundamental level, expressions of swings in group affects that, while opaque on the level of these collectivities themselves, could be observed by knowledgeable economists in the effects that they produced within financial and corporate institutions: “It is the return of confidence, to speak in ordinary language, which is so insusceptible to control in an economy of individualistic capitalism. This is the aspect of the slump which bankers and business men have been right in emphasizing, and which economists who have put their faith in a “purely monetary” remedy

have underestimated” (317). This model of cyclical economics managed to represent depression as a short-term anomaly that would soon be corrected through an upsurge in positive affects. As opposed to the long-historical scales of mythopoetic cycles like Yeats’s *Vision* or Oswald Spengler’s *Decline of the West* (1918-1922), affect-induced cycles suggested that downturns within socioeconomic institutions could be rectified within the space of months, years, or at worst a generation – not centuries.

In “Keynes and the Capitalist Theory of the State,” one of his most theoretically nuanced articles, the Marxist critic Antonio Negri argues that the lasting impact and true novelty of Keynes’ work was less its break with classical economics than its recognition of what Negri terms “social capital.” “Social capital,” for Negri, denotes “the interiorization of the political element within the economy” – that is, the recognition that class divisions, the demands of labor, and generalized antipathy against capitalist modes of production could all impact upon the state of the economy (34). According to Negri, Keynes parted ways with classical economists’ insistence that fluctuations in the economy were entirely the result of pricing mechanisms internal to the market – a naïve view in light of the Russian Revolution and the 1929 U.S. Stock Market collapse – and acknowledged that sociopolitical circumstances could – and did – influence the trajectory of the economy (Negri 30-38). Given the nature of the *General Theory* as precisely that, a general theory constructed so as to be independent from any specific context, Keynes spends little time in elaborating on how specific sociopolitical scenarios could affect trends in pricing and employment.<sup>36</sup> But unlike classical economists like Pigou and Marshall or high modernists like Yeats, Keynes insisted that the deep, theoretical principles that he had uncovered in his *General Theory* were neither disembodied mechanisms relatively autonomous

from civil society nor transhistorical spiritual realities that overdetermined the cultural and political lives of individuals.

Instead, Keynes introduces social factors to his theory under the curious heading of “animal spirits,” a term that he borrows from early modern philosophy.<sup>37</sup> “[A] large proportion of our positive activities,” writes Keynes, “depend on spontaneous optimism rather than on a mathematical expectation, whether moral or hedonistic or economic. Most, probably, of our decisions to do something positive, the full consequences of which will be drawn out over many days to come, can only be taken as a result of animal spirits – of a spontaneous urge to action rather than inaction, and not as the outcome of a weighted average of quantitative benefits multiplied by quantitative probabilities” (161). Part of Keynes’ polemic here is against classical economists who believe that economic decisions can be reduced to a calculus of hedonistic self-interest – Keynes repeatedly stresses his wariness in regard to the utility of mathematical formulas, and his use of qualifiers such as “probably” invests his own language with a parallel uncertainty<sup>38</sup> – but even more important is his argument that “spontaneous urges” dictate decisions within the economic realm. If this is the case, then economic analyses must be open to investigating the sociopolitical contexts that shape human emotion in minute and often unobservable ways: not just how the interest rate affects investment, but also how governments, wars, and the media affect investor confidence.

Keynes’ characterization of the individual investor as prone to “spontaneous urges” echoes the Freudian-inflected psychologism of Bloomsburys like Leonard Woolf, Virginia Woolf, and Clive Bell, complete with its assumed “sovereignty of the civilised individual” and its trepidation over the subconscious libidinal forces lurking just underneath civilized facades (Williams, “The Significance of Bloomsbury,” 62).<sup>39</sup> In this regard, Keynes would seem open to

the criticism that Eve Sedgwick directs at psychoanalytic theories of affect: namely, that they collapse a multitude of affective states into a homogenous “libido” that cannot conceive of “*finitely many ( $n > 2$ ) values*” (108). Such is certainly true of Keynes’ “animal spirits,” which act as an opaque fount of irrational urges that cannot be attributed to any visible cause. But, in the case of Keynesian economics as a whole, the relationship between Freudian-influenced “animal spirits” and empirically observable expressions of affect is much more complex. In “My Early Beliefs,” an essay presented before the Memoir Club in 1938,<sup>40</sup> Keynes observed that “Though one must ever remember Paley’s *dictum* that ‘although we speak of communities as of sentient beings and ascribe to them happiness and misery, nothing exists or feels but individuals,’ yet we carried the individualism of our individuals too far” (96). I am less interested in Keynes’ renunciation of individualism than I am in the non-coincidence between individual feelings and their asymmetrical expression in collective institutions.<sup>41</sup> Michael Szalay has argued that the 1930’s and 1940’s witnessed the rise of a widespread resistance to reading collective economic and governmental institutions as personifications of individual agents, a position that he traces to the work of Keynes, Ayn Rand, William Carlos Williams, and Wallace Stevens (*New Deal Modernism*). As such, we need to recognize that the affects which Keynes observed in economic institutions, though the product of a unitary fount of “animal spirits,” each evidenced a distinct phenomenology and set of effects separate from their sources in individual irrationalism. While individuals may be subject to inchoate urges, their expression in collective institutions takes on a determinate form.

Take for example Keynes’ analysis of the depression that befell the U.S. after the October 1929 stock market, one of the few historical events that Keynes deals with in any depth in his *General Theory*. According to Keynes, the source of the U.S. depression can be found in the

way in which “animal spirits” affected investor confidence in the years prior to and after the stock market’s collapse. In the years leading up to the 1929 crash, investor confidence exceeded what was rationally foreseeable, creating a situation in which “speculative excitement” led to new investment “on so enormous a scale in the aggregate that the prospective yield of further addition was, coolly considered, falling rapidly” (323). (In layman’s terms, the excitement surrounding investments caused a massive influx of capital which, in its turn, saturated the market and engendered a smaller proportional profit for each particular investment.) This scenario was exacerbated by the parallel loss of confidence felt by investors after the crash, a state of affairs that Keynes viewed as continuing in the U.S. up to the moment of his writing (as opposed to Britain, where at least consumer industries had recovered). In this account, “animal spirits” operate as a sort of “fudge-factor” that accounts for why an entire class of people (investors) can behave irrationally on a large enough scale to send the economy into periodic booms and slumps. It is not simply that investors act irrationally that interests Keynes: such conduct could easily be accounted for through mathematical formulas that allowed for a certain deviation in rational conduct (and Keynes was nothing if not skeptical of econometric formulas). More important is the fact that recognizable groups like investors (or employees, for that matter) act irrationally *in a uniform matter*, and that this uniform irrationalism can be detected most clearly in economic institutions like the stock market. Where one individual irrational act is a mere blip in the data, whole-scale irrationalism can disrupt the normal functioning of the economy for good or ill, and for this reason its effects are more visible in fluctuations within the economy than in the inscrutable emotions of individual actors. Keynes here displaces specific, discrete affects – speculative excitement, loss of confidence – from the specific groups who experience those emotions and onto a series of prosthetic financial and industrial institutions.

Keynes was not alone in seeking to explain group behavior through an analysis of irrationalism. The modernist period was replete with attempts to elucidate mass psychology from the perspective of atavistic drives, and these projects gained significantly in popularity when used as tools to explain the successes of fascism in the 1930s, as for instance in the work of William Reich (*The Mass Psychology of Fascism* [1933]).<sup>42</sup> However, his work differed from that of scholars such as Reich in its insistence that mass irrationalism is a product of modern capitalism and not the atavistic regression of a barbaric working-class mass that can often be found in studies of mass psychology.<sup>43</sup> In place of atavistic drives, Keynes builds his theory of economic irrationalism and its affective foundations around the notion of individuals' "propensity to consume." Keynes defines the "propensity to consume" as the "relationship between the community's income and what it can be expected to spend on consumption," which in its turn "will depend on the psychological characteristic of the community" (28).<sup>44</sup> By invoking this "propensity to consume" alongside investor confidence as unanalyzable variables present in all capitalist economies, Keynes proposes that group psychology – and the affective "animal spirits" that underlie it – governs the amount of wealth generated by a society and, consequently, what the level of employment will be.<sup>45</sup> That is, the more that consumers' "animal spirits" can induce them to buy, and the more that investors' "animal spirits" can induce them to invest, the more capital employers will have to devote to workers' wages (*General Theory*, 30-1). The key to mitigating the mass unemployment of the '30s therefore hinged on the capacity of economic institutions and the professionals who managed them to elicit positive affects and to raise the community's "propensity to consume."

In this regard, Keynes' affect-centered *General Theory* echoes Bowen's *Court's* optimistic belief in a return to past class configurations. Though Keynes carefully eschews any



mention of upper, middle, or working classes in the *General Theory* – terms which would have connoted Marxist leanings within the political climate of the 1930's – his prevalent use of “employment,” “investors,” and “consumers” implicitly recreates a three-tiered model of class within the work.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, so close is Keynes' model of class to contemporary Marxist models that we can easily map his terms onto Marxist descriptions of capitalism without much loss of meaning: “investors” clearly indicates the same bourgeois capitalists whom Marx analyzes at great length, the upper class of aristocratic landowners and upper-middle class industrial magnates<sup>47</sup>; “consumers,” in contrast, designates those for whom their earnings are sufficient that they can be spent on luxury items, i.e. the middle classes; and “employment,” which for Keynes signifies industrial employment within a factory setting, functions as a shorthand for the working class.<sup>48</sup> As unstable as these class groupings may have seemed during the 1930s under the combined pressure of mass unemployment, corporatization and professionalization, and transformations within the British world-system's transnational networks, Keynes nonetheless persisted in attributing a certain conservative equilibrium to the affects that dictated the relative strength, roles, and economic security of these classes. “Fluctuations may start briskly,” Keynes argues, “but seem to wear themselves out before they have proceeded to great extremes, and an intermediate situation which is neither desperate or satisfactory is our normal lot” (249-50). Moreover, “since these facts do not follow out of logical necessity, one must suppose that the environment and *the psychological propensities of the modern world* must be of such a character as to produce these results” (250). For Keynes, affects are inherently inclined to swing back and forth between extremes before settling into a healthy middle, which helps to ensure that any drastic fluctuation – such as the worldwide depression of the 1930s – will be rectified through the defining characteristics of collective affect. Nor should such corrections be confused with

institutional mechanisms internal to the market, as classical economics would have it<sup>49</sup>: Keynes is quite explicit that it is the “psychological propensities” of human beings, rather than autonomous market mechanisms, which cause fluctuations in the economy.

In championing the return of this “intermediate state,” Keynes uses the affect-based model of the *General Theory* to rationalize the existence of auto-corrective, short-term socioeconomic cycles, a use to which we have already seen affect being put in *Bowen’s Court*. As Jennifer Wicke explains in “*Mrs. Dalloway Goes to Market*,” Keynesian economic theory attempted to make sense of the confusion of modern consumerist markets and the uncertain future that they produced.<sup>50</sup> The main obstacle to accurate foresight was, in Keynes’ view, the cyclical oscillation of boom and bust generated by swings in emotional states.<sup>51</sup> But if the source of economic cycles, affect, was impenetrable to critical analysis and incompatible with definite future predictions, the fact that Keynes ties affect closely to the trade cycle suggests that emotions exhibit a regularity in their “spontaneous” expression that can be found more readily in economic indicators than in psychological analysis. Despite the fact that the trade cycle can be traced to oscillations in investor and consumer emotions that are totally independent of economic realities, Keynes does not dismiss the empirical observations of classical economists that trade cycles demonstrate “a regularity of time-sequence and of duration” (313). Instead, he discards the steady confidence that classical economists placed in the smooth operation of the trade cycle and adopts in its place a view of trade cycles as “subject to sudden and violent changes” on account of their origin in irrational affects. On the one hand, this affective foundation suggests a debt to gothicized hysteria of the sort we saw in Bowen’s work: excitable, violent emotions topple the stable socioeconomic institutions (here, capitalism) that make collective association possible. On the other hand, it also provides a medium through which Keynes can hypothesize a

return to pre-depression levels of employment and investment. Since affects evidence a regularity in their institutional effects – confidence leads to greater investment and employment, panic to depression and unemployment – Keynes can argue that a return to a past affective arrangement will bring about a return to a previous moment of institutional and class organization, thus maintaining some sense of constancy over discrete periods of time. In particular, the equilibrium between affects, investment, and employment that Keynesian economics strives to define ensures that an identical affect will be greeted by identical roles for the working, middle, and upper classes. And the short duration and “sudden and violent” fluctuations of affects imply that such cyclical returns to past moments of class configuration can take place within correspondingly short, year to decade long swings.

It is this departure from a linear, Marxist-based model of class to one stressing cyclical continuity and the reemergence of class systems which most clearly aligns *The General Theory* with the philosophy of history underlying Bowen’s historical imaginary. And just as in *Bowen’s Court* Bowen insisted that professionalism’s emotional decorum could mitigate gothic hysteria and revive the fortunes of the Anglo-Irish, Keynes also embraced a more technocratic version of professionalism for its ability to rescue middle-class liberalism – centered, for him, in the Liberal Party – from its apparent decline. According to Keynes, the Liberal Party could recover from its “extinction” as a mass political party and reinvent itself as a professional elite of “technical knowledge” and “ideas” (“Am I a Liberal?” 186-7). Eschewing both the class-based politics of the Labour Party<sup>52</sup> and the lack of “intellectual [and] spiritual edification” proffered by the Tories, Keynes proposed that Liberals could serve as a managerial technocracy who would regulate affect-induced economic cycles through their disinterested professional activity.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, if affects could only be viewed in their prosthetic institutional expressions, then

professional, disinterested management would seem to be the only way to affect affects, and to this end the presence of a group able to disengage themselves from the immediate tug of emotional investments was an indispensable necessity. Keynes saw this policy of permeation as the best way to revive an Eton- and Cambridge-educated intelligentsia that, between the failure of the Liberal Party as a viable political option and the imminent end of the imperial civil service, appeared to be in a state of unavoidable decline.<sup>54</sup>

Keynes' vision of an elite-educated, upper-class technocracy would ultimately not survive World War II: the postwar welfare state was known more among its critics for its banality and dreary uniformity than for the sort of enclashed oligarchy that Keynes advocated for in his work.<sup>55</sup> But his theoretical writings do give us an insight into the gothic historical form that made possible a depressionary history premised on emotional equilibrium, as well as into the abstraction of this gothic form away from its central place in Irish historiography and toward a "general" theory of economic life. After World War II, equilibrium economics would gradually lose the connection to gothic emotionality secreted in Keynes's notion of "animal spirits," moving instead toward the certainty of mathematical formulations. But the underlying concept that the economy was constituted by violent cycles that needed to be held in check would persist well into latter decades of the twentieth century, testifying to the enduring power of the depressionary history elaborated in both *Bowen's Court* and the *General Theory*.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> On the satirical use to which Irish mythology is put in *Murphy*, see Patrick Bixby, *Samuel Beckett and the Postcolonial Novel*.

<sup>2</sup> See especially Christopher Caudwell, *Studies in a Dying Culture* and *Further Studies in a Dying Culture*. For sustained analyses of capitalism as a system in “crisis,” see David Harvey, *The Limits to Capital*, and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*.

<sup>3</sup> Flatley is drawing on *The Arcades Project*, in particular the section “N: On the theory of knowledge, on the knowledge of history.”

<sup>4</sup> The most thorough examination of the relationship between *Bowen’s Court* and Bowen’s Anglo-Irish nationality can be found in Foster, “Prints on the Scene.” Though Foster emphasizes the element of fantasy that enters into Bowen’s family history, he notes its Irish provenance to defend her against those who would see her as inauthentically Irish.

<sup>5</sup> Critics who treat *Bowen’s Court* as a theoretical reflection on the Anglo-Irish condition include Vera Kreilkamp, *The Anglo-Irish Novel and the Big House*, 141-73; Moynahan 76-8; Kiberd 364-80; and Corcoran, *Elizabeth Bowen: The Enforced Return*, 21-30.

<sup>6</sup> Bowen often expressed a critical interest in this tradition. Her thoughts on the gothic can be found in introductions to Le Fanu’s *Uncle Silas* and *The House by the Church-Yard*.

<sup>7</sup> Kiberd draws this connection in *Inventing Ireland*, 69-82, 364-80.

<sup>8</sup> See Margot Gayle Backus, *The Gothic Family Romance: Heterosexuality, Child Sacrifice, and the Anglo-Irish Colonial Order*; and W. J. McCormack, *Dissolute Characters: Irish Literary History Through Balzac, Sheridan Le Fanu, Yeats and Bowen*. The term *Protestant Gothic* comes from Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, 149.

<sup>9</sup> Yeats was the most well-known and influential figure to hold this view. Deane traces the impact of Yeats’s representations had on later generations in “The Literary Myths of the Revival,” in *Celtic Revivals*.

<sup>10</sup> Robbins, *Upward Mobility and the Common Good*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Lisa Fluet details the anti-sociality of professionalism in “Immaterial Labors.”

<sup>12</sup> John Hayward to Frank Morley (June 1942), quoted in Heather Jordan, *How Will the Heart Endure?: Elizabeth Bowen and the Landscape of War*, 114.

<sup>13</sup> For various articulations of this view, see Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*; Anne Williams, *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic*; and Maggie Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*. For studies that trace the rise of professionalism to the

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early modernist period, see Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society*; Marx, *The Modernist Novel and the Decline of Empire*; David Trotter, *Paranoid Modernism: Literary Experiment, Psychosis, and the Professionalization of English Society*; Fluett, “Hit-Man Modernism”; and Amanda Anderson and Joseph Valente, eds., *Disciplinary at the Fin de Siècle*.

<sup>14</sup> For another astute reading of gothic narratives as attempts to grapple with new developments in capitalism, see Jennifer Wicke, “Vampiric Typewriting: *Dracula* and Its Media.” For a more local analysis of Stoker’s tale that attributes its narrative oddities to the “metrocolonial” condition Stoker inhabited as an Anglo-Irishman, see Valente, *Dracula’s Crypt*.

<sup>15</sup> For a quantitative analysis of gothic popularity in 1790-1810 and 1870-1900 see Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees*, 12-20.

<sup>16</sup> Cormac Ó Gráda, *Ireland: A New Economic History 1780-1939*; Denis O’Hearn, *The Atlantic Economy: Britain, the US, and Ireland*; James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939*, 445.

<sup>17</sup> For a sustained analysis of “plantation modernism,” see Amy Clukey, “Plantation Modernism: Irish, Caribbean, and U.S. Fiction 1890-1950.”

<sup>18</sup> Kreilkamp 16-20 provides an excellent history of Anglo-Irish feudal mythology.

<sup>19</sup> Both Eagleton (*Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*) and Marjorie Howes (*Colonial Crossings: Figures in Irish Literary History*) argue that an appreciable urban industry did not exist in Ireland until the twentieth century, with the result that modernity was often localized in the countryside rather than in the city.

<sup>20</sup> On the role played by corporate hierarchies in developing a professional class see Perkin 17-26.

<sup>21</sup> For a sustained analysis of the rise of protectionism across Europe and the United States see Harold James, *The End of Globalization: Lessons From the Great Depression*.

<sup>22</sup> Yeats attacked the statute against divorce in a speech before the Irish *Seanad* on June 11, 1925 and condemned the Censorship Bill in “Censorship in Ireland.” Beckett’s objections to the same measures appear in “Censorship in the Saorstát” and in his satirical novella *First Love*. Patrick Bixby provides a thorough overview of Beckett’s hostility towards this legislation in *Samuel Beckett and the Postcolonial Novel*, 8-19. For a survey of Anglo-Irish dissent over the governing of the Irish Free State, see Terence Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History*, 91-125.

<sup>23</sup> The best accounts of MacNeice and Day Lewis’s involvement in the so-called Auden coterie are Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties*, 12-35, and Samuel Hynes, *The Auden Generation: Literature and Politics in England in the 1930s*.

<sup>24</sup> John Xiros Cooper, *Modernism and the Culture of Market Society*, 246.

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<sup>25</sup> Peter Stanford, *C Day-Lewis: A Life*; Peter J. Conradi, *Iris: The Life of Iris Murdoch*.

<sup>26</sup> For an assessment of how faint emotions attempt to work through social impasses, see Ngai, esp. 1-37.

<sup>27</sup> For Bowen, “responsibility” is one of the keywords that indicate her neo-Burkean conservatism. She uses it frequently in such pieces as “Eire,” “Ireland Makes Irish,” “How They Live in Ireland: Conquest by Cheque-Book,” and *Bowen’s Court*.

<sup>28</sup> In *Bowen’s Court* Bowen cites “the new wish in the new Irish to see Ireland autonomous” (160).

<sup>29</sup> *Bowen’s Court* has ten chapters: one introductory, one on how Colonel Henry Bowen earned his Irish estate (which could easily be combined with the subsequent chapter on John Bowen I as an account of “early settlers”), one on *Bowen’s Court’s* construction, and seven on these historical periods.

<sup>30</sup> For an extended analysis of the role that only children play in Bowen’s fiction, see Elizabeth Cullingford, “‘Something Else’: Gendering Onlinness in Elizabeth Bowen’s Early Fiction.”

<sup>31</sup> On the difficulty of transferring affects from the personal to the institutional, as well as the role of distance in constituting particular affects, see Luc Boltanski, *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media and Politics*; Robbins, *Upward Mobility*; and Robbins, “Blaming the System.”

<sup>32</sup> Jed Esty also associates Bowen’s ambivalent attitudes toward childhood with Ireland’s contradictory place in British imperial capitalism in *Unseasonable Youth* 179-94.

<sup>33</sup> Eliot’s most articulate explanation of cultural continuity appears in “Tradition and the Individual Talent.” Nicholas Allen documents how cultural cycles provided Yeats with a sense of stability in his *Vision in Modernism, Ireland, and Civil War*, 66-88.

<sup>34</sup> See Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island*.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Alan Brinkley, “The New Deal and the Idea of the State.”

<sup>36</sup> In this regard, Keynes embodies what Arjo Klamer terms a “modernist” theory of economics in its preference for abstract accounts over detailed studies of historical and institutions processes (“Modernism in Economics”).

<sup>37</sup> E.g. Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1632) and René Descartes *Traité de l’Homme* (1664), both of whom had borrowed the term from ancient philosophy (Akerlof and Shiller, 178n3). Though most popular in the early modern period, the term “animal spirits” was still in frequent popular usage in the 1870’s.

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<sup>38</sup> “It is the great fault of symbolical pseudo-mathematical methods of formalising a system of economic analysis...that they expressly assume strict independence between the factors involved and lose all their cogency and authority if this hypothesis is disallowed” (*General Theory*, 297). Keynes details the specifics of trying to substitute mathematical models of limited certainty for inherent unanalyzable phenomena in his *Treatise on Probability*, which, as Jennifer Wicke notes of Keynes’ work generally, is skeptical of realist or rationalist representations of the market (“*Mrs. Dalloway Goes to Market: Woolf, Keynes, and Modern Markets*”).

<sup>39</sup> Christine Froula argues that Freud’s thoughts on civilization were indispensable to the Habermasian-style arena of dissent that dominated the Bloomsbury Group’s own theorization of civilization (*Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde*).

<sup>40</sup> Though not strictly speaking a division of Bloomsbury, the Memoir Club counted among its members most of the artists and intellectuals who had been associated with Bloomsbury in the first decades of the century, including Leonard and Virginia Woolf, Keynes, Lytton Strachey, Desmond McCarthy, and Clive and Vanessa Bell.

<sup>41</sup> For an analysis of Keynes’s move away from individualism, see Jed Esty’s work on Keynesian economics and the “national object” in *A Shrinking Island*, 166-82.

<sup>42</sup> The connection between emotion and mass psychology has been especially prevalent in critical discussion of the emergence of popular cinema in the first half of the twentieth century. For a representative study, see Michael Tratner, *Crowd Scenes: Movies and Mass Politics*.

<sup>43</sup> In *Strange Country*, Seamus Deane notes how elitist writers with fascist inclinations like Yeats (and Wyndham Lewis could also be included here) represented the working class as an unruly mass whose atavistic emotions needed to be controlled lest they tear about the rational public sphere.

<sup>44</sup> As Tratner explains, the Keynesian turn departed from Victorian political economy in its emphasis on the beneficial consequences of spending versus saving (*Deficits and Desires* 3-7).

<sup>45</sup> As Esty observes, Keynes was more interested in communal wealth than individual profit: “*The General Theory* proposes a return to more stable and fixed relationships between capital and plant, between enterprise and investor. By slowing down the velocity of exchange in modern stocks and bonds, Keynes wants to create an investment system that is based more on communal wealth than on individual profit” (171).

<sup>46</sup> For an explanation of the three-tier model of class, see David Cannadine, *The Rise and Fall of Class in Britain*.

<sup>47</sup> Nicola Humble documents the convergence of these two classes in *The Feminine Middlebrow*, 57-108.



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<sup>48</sup> Negri is particularly adamant that “employment” is a cipher for proletariat in “Keynes and the Capitalist Theory of the State.”

<sup>49</sup> Pigou argues this point in *Industrial Fluctuations* (1927), which claims that the fluctuations of commodity prices and of the expectations of profits cause “wave-like swings in the mind of the business world between errors of optimism and errors of pessimism” (397).

<sup>50</sup> Amariglio and Ruccio, in their “postmodernist” reading of Keynes’s *Treatise on Probability*, note how uncertainty about the future is mitigated in Keynes’ work through the construction of a discursive set of economic conventions (*Keynes, Knowledge, and Uncertainty*).

<sup>51</sup> There is a whole literature on Keynes and probability that deals with his differentiation between those things which we can and cannot predict with certainty. I do not have the space here to go into this topic at any length, but for some of the more thorough and insightful analyses of Keynesian probability, see B. W. Bateman, “Keynes’s Changing Conception of Probability”; T. Lawson, “Uncertainty and Economic Analysis”; and R. M. O’Donnell, *Keynes, Philosophy, and Economics*.

<sup>52</sup> Keynes claimed that, not being “one of the working class” himself, the Labour Party held no place for him (“Am I a Liberal?” 185). Though the Labour Party certainly disagreed with Keynes’s belief that it was a class-bound party, this view nevertheless prevented him from embracing the Labour Party during the ’20s and ’30s.

<sup>53</sup> The resemblance to the Fabian policy of “permeation” is far from coincidental. Keynes’s defense of a professional elite brought his theories quite close to those of the Fabians, as did his interests in liberalism and the welfare state. For a useful comparison of the economic thinking of the Fabian Society and the Bloomsbury Group, see Adam Trexler, “Economic Ideas and British Literature, 1900-1930.”

<sup>54</sup> On the end of Liberalism after World War I and its aesthetic consequences, see Vincent Sherry, *The Great War and the Language of Modernism*. On Keynes’s connections to Eton and Cambridge, see Pierre Mini, *Keynes, Bloomsbury and the General Theory*.

<sup>55</sup> The so-called Angry Young Men of the 1950s (John Osborne, Kingsley Amis, and Alan Sillitoe, among others) were perhaps the most vocal critics among British writers of the limitations of the postwar welfare state (Peter Kalliney, *Cities of Affluence and Anger*).

## CHAPTER V

### FROM THE *PLAASROMAN* TO NEOMODERNISM: J. M. COETZEE AND FORMALIST HISTORY

In 1991, during the first years of the post-Cold War new world order and the final years of apartheid, the South African writer J. M. Coetzee presented a lecture in Graz, Austria, entitled “What Is a Classic?” Alluding to T. S. Eliot’s 1944 lecture of the same title,<sup>1</sup> Coetzee’s speech sets out to answer what appears to be a fairly straightforward question: how, and why, does a classic “speak” to its admirers? How can we explain the way in which artistic objects seem to transport their audiences beyond themselves, through a species of aesthetic ecstasy, to a time and place not their own?

Over the course of the talk, Coetzee reflects movingly on his first exposure to Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier*, recalling how “As long as the music lasted, I was frozen, I dared not breathe. I was being spoken to by music as music had never spoken to me before” (9). Feeling the first twinges of artistic consciousness, Coetzee experiences what he calls “a moment of revelation...of the greatest significance in my life: for the first time I was undergoing the impact of *the classic*” (10). For Coetzee, there are two different critical lenses through which this moment can be read:

The question that I put to myself, somewhat crudely, is this: is there some non-vacuous sense in which I can say that the spirit of Bach was speaking to me across the ages, across the seas, putting before me certain ideals; or was what was really going on at that moment that I was symbolically electing high European culture, and commands of the codes of that culture, as a route that would take me out of my class position in white South African society and ultimately out of what I must have felt, in terms however obscured or mystified, as an historical dead end...? (11).

The problem facing Coetzee is that neither of these alternatives is altogether palatable. On the one hand, the transcendental reading captures the rapture he felt upon first hearing Bach, but also associates him with a discredited Eliotic project of conservative nation- and culture-building. On the other hand, the “socio-cultural” debunking of art’s transcendental qualities demystifies his ecstatic consumption of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* as mere economic self-interest (8). Much like Bowen’s reading of Anglo-Irish decadence as a *felix culpa* laying the foundation for their future renaissance, Coetzee acknowledges that the reinvention of a dying class (white South Africa) may be a motivating force behind his response to Bach. But he remains reluctant to either divorce himself from this class-consolidating process or to naively defend art as a preserve free from social or political content. Poetic ecstasy may be a cipher for class distinction, as Pierre Bourdieu has long argued,<sup>2</sup> but does this mean that such transports are by definition “false”? Is a “socio-cultural” methodology possible that could read ecstatic transcendence as something other than false consciousness? That could, for instance, read ecstatic transcendence as delineating something like a transhistorical sociology, one in which ecstasy identified and consolidated particular social groups across time and space?

As with all of Coetzee’s writings, the lecture’s self-reflexivity lends an added dimension to these questions. In order to dramatize the impasse between “socio-cultural” analysis and ecstatic transports, Coetzee calls attention to the parallel between his own encounter with Bach and Eliot’s response to Virgil and Dante in his own “What Is a Classic?” lecture. Like Coetzee, Eliot “leave[s] the door open to the suggestion that Virgil was being used by an agency greater than himself for a purpose of which he could not have been aware”: namely, a “Western Christian civilization” that transcends texts’ moment of production and allows them to “bear the weight of having read into it a meaning for Eliot’s own age” (5). Here, the poetic ecstasy

Coetzee felt toward Bach is formalized within a modernist ideal of culture. According to Eliot, because culture creates timeless, mythic forms that draw together an otherwise incoherent amalgamation of nations, languages, and classes, it frees one from one's immediate social environment. As Coetzee stresses, there is a highly self-interested component to this definition of culture: by resituating culture "within a specific...brand of internationalism or cosmopolitanism," Eliot can "redefine and resituate nationality in such a way that he...could not be sidelined as an American cultural *arriviste*" (6-7). In other words, a transcendentalist understanding of culture allows Eliot to forge new national and transnational communities (English, Western, Christian) even as it encodes those new communities within a conservative, patriarchal, and elitist philosophy.

Coetzee acknowledges that his own ecstatic reaction to Bach may replay Eliot's conservative modernism – that, much like the neoclassical composers who, for Germanic-nationalist reasons, revived Bach in the early nineteenth century, his ecstasy may be a *neomodernist* appropriation of Eliotic transcendentalism. But surprisingly, this reverberation between Eliot's modernism and Coetzee's own aesthetic inclinations actually enables him to reconcile poetic ecstasy and "socio-cultural analysis" under the category of professional criticism. The classic, he suggests, "speaks" to him as a professional artist whose vocational interests align him with a long line of other artists who, like Eliot, have "tested" the classic and found it valuable. The classic is therefore "social" not in the sense that it joins him to a conservative faction of Eurocentric aesthetes; rather, the classic is "social" because it brings him into contact with "hundreds of thousands of intelligences before me" that have felt the same ecstatic communion with the classic and have fashioned it into a professional criterion for artistic merit (18-19). The feeling of transcendence that was suspect when viewed from the totalizing,

European perspective of Eliot becomes rehabilitated, according to Coetzee, when it is understood as a limited transhistorical movement joining a professional community together “across the ages.” Listening to Bach carries Coetzee beyond his own time and place, but only insofar as that transcendence is *itself* socio-culturally determined as the product of a distinct class that has persisted across a number of different time periods.

This chapter takes Coetzee’s rehabilitation of modernist ecstasy as its starting point in tracing the contours of a late apartheid historiographic project centered on literature, language, and historical repetition. Navigating between the Scylla and Charybdis of quasi-religious aesthetic autonomy and sociological demystification, Coetzee’s lecture outlines a class of professional artists drawn together by the force of certain objects (art, language, modernity) rather than through social, geographic, or temporal proximity. Implicit in this formulation is a sense of art and class as *mediums* for one another, the former shaping a transhistorical class of professional intellectuals around itself while the latter translates art into Art, the mundane into the classic. I am more interested in the first half of this movement than the second: that is, with how the medium of art enables Coetzee to imagine a class of professional critics who would not be bound by the limitations of time and place, but who would still demonstrate a common vocation, one that speaks to a discontinuous – but still very present – historical trajectory outside the modes of causation familiar to historical studies proper. But we also need to be attentive to the doubling of media that takes place in Coetzee’s lecture: professionals determine what artworks are passed down to posterity, while those professionals *become* a Europeanized intelligentsia through their common interest in art. Art mediates life, while life mediates art.

The significance of Coetzee’s gestures toward historical analysis becomes apparent when we place them within the context of the literary-critical and economic atmosphere of late

apartheid (1970-1994) South Africa. As I show in the first section of this chapter, Coetzee was far from the only writer in 1970s South Africa to seize on modernism as a means of avoiding the obstacles presented by “realist” historicisms: Lewis Nkosi, Njabulo Ndebele, André Brink, Nadine Gordimer, and Etienne van Heerden, among others, all embraced modernist techniques for their ability to circumvent what was to white South Africans the self-evidence of apartheid’s social structure and to imagine new, more equitable living arrangements. Joycean internal monologue, Falkernian perspectivism, surrealist poetics, and Beckettian solipsism become tools in these writers’ fiction for expanding representation beyond apartheid’s totalizing racial epistemology. However, as Fredric Jameson stresses in *A Singular Modernity*, to value modernism as the “inner dynamic of perpetual innovation, which – like the restless and irrepressible expansion of capitalism itself – necessarily pushes ever further beyond its own boundaries, into new ‘techniques’ as well as new kinds of content” – to make this critical move, even (or perhaps especially) in an ethically-motivated attention to a democratic future, risks validating (and normalizing) a teleological understanding of history as endless modernization (151).

But the turn of South African writing toward modernism in the 1970s had less to do with an implicit endorsement of the steady tide of capitalist modernization than with the specifics of how a global transition from Fordist industrialism to a post-Fordist “language economy” was experienced in South Africa. Emerging in the 1970s as a response to economic stagnation and workers’ complaints against the deadening routine of factory labor, the “language economy” promised to “free” workers from the factory’s intellectually- and affectively-limiting environment by training them for seemingly self-motivated communication work, or what Robert Reich has called the “symbolic-analytic services” of “problem-solving” and “strategic brokering”

(*The Work of Nations*, 117). As Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello argue, these services both internalized modernism's critique of industrial production *within* the logic of capitalism itself through the strategic adaptation of key modernist concepts – freedom, autonomy, individualism – and overcame the exhaustion of Fordist mass production by paving the way for a more flexible, network-driven, and communicative form of production (*The New Spirit of Capitalism*). But unlike the European nations Boltanski and Chiapello investigate, in South Africa international economic sanctions against the apartheid regime stalled the transition from Fordism to a post-Fordist language economy, cutting the (white) business community off from the global finance and service sectors driving the language economy. This placed South Africa in a singular position: on the one hand, as the final bastion of the institutionalized segregation that Mahmood Mamdani associates with European imperialism in Africa,<sup>3</sup> the modernist language of liberation continued to hold sway in South Africa during the final decades of apartheid, years after it had seemed to evaporate in the wake of May 1968;<sup>4</sup> on the other hand, that very language clearly beckoned to an emerging services-oriented economy that still demonstrated the gendered, racialized, and geographic divisions of wealth against which the Communist-inspired antiapartheid movement was fighting.

This paradox, I suggest, is the same one Coetzee is struggling to unravel in his “What Is a Classic?” lecture: how can the language of modernism be harnessed to *both* a transcendent realm of aesthetic or political liberation and an instrumental one of situated economic life? One place where we can begin to look for a solution to this conundrum is in Coetzee's parodic reworkings of the Afrikaner *plaasroman*. As Coetzee and other South African writers turned away in the 1970s from political liberalism and toward more radical investigations of representation and social convention, they began to treat language and genre less as passive tools for art than as

objects with their own histories. As I show in the following pages, South African neomodernists understood the *plaasroman* as a sort of sedimented history – that is, as a set of formal conventions that both represented and consolidated certain racial, social, and economic hierarchies. According to Coetzee in particular, the *plaasroman*'s central figure was *mediation*: its 1930s variants effaced the mediations the South African farm was performing between racialized labor hierarchies and laissez-faire free markets, while its neomodernist 1970s variants dramatized their translations between, on the one hand, metropolitan theory and modernist style, and, on the other hand, national liberation movements and deadening, poorly-paid labor. For Coetzee, this generic continuity provides the basis for what he calls a “rivalrous” mode of history, one in which fiction’s *formal* operations demonstrate their own, repetitive temporality. History, that is, becomes in Coetzee’s *plaasroman* less a passage from one stage to another than a series of mediations repeating across different times (the 1930s/1970s), uniting distant persons, like the artwork in his “What Is A Classic?” lecture, into a transhistorical professional community of mediators.

Within this historical imaginary, ecstasy acts at one and the same time as a mediator between discrete racial, economic, and aesthetic systems *and* as a historical tool abstracting away from these mediations and illustrating their formal continuities with other types of mediation. As such, I argue that it can be used to construct an alternative genealogy for how post-Fordist globalization happened. Where most theorists consider globalization as a process that began in the service sectors of Europe and North America and gradually imposed its logic on other nations and industries,<sup>5</sup> Coetzee’s formalist history shows how, for certain classes, spaces, and even genres, mediation is a continuous *raison d’etre*. As I have been arguing throughout this study, this sort of mediation is what distinguishes the semiperiphery from core and peripheral



notions of modernity. By contextualizing Coetzee's fiction and criticism within the global post-Fordist turn, then, we can construct a representation of South African history in which modernity is something always passing *through* the space of the South African farm, but never present *to* it.

### **The Modernist Turn in South African Literature**

To speak of a modernist "turn" in South Africa flirts, perhaps, with overemphasizing what was doubtless a relatively small movement in late apartheid literature. Literary historians from Michael Chapman (*Southern African Literatures*) to Stephen Gray ("Some Problems of Writing Historiography") to Louise Bethlehem ("A Primary Need as Strong as Hunger") have documented how the political urgency to mobilize public opinion against apartheid nurtured conventional realist forms such as the documentary and the literature of witness, which together constituted the majority of the literary productions (especially among black writers) during the apartheid period. But while neomodernist writings were smaller in number than their realist counterparts, the very fact that experimental literature was being produced *at all* signaled a decisive break from the previous three decades of South African literature. In the wake of Roy Campbell and William Plomer's *Voorslag* magazine and B. Walel Vilakazi and H. I. E. Dhlomo's contemporaneous efforts to fashion new meters and rhyme schemes within isiZulu poetry, South African fiction was dominated by realist forms – most notably, by the energetic, edgy accounts of black urban culture contained in *Drum* magazine, and by Alan Paton's liberal novels.<sup>6</sup> Compared to these stylistically conventional pieces, the 1970s witnessed a veritable explosion of experimental literature: André Brink's *A Chain of Voices* (1982), with its Faulknerian experiments with point of view; Breyten Breytenbach's surrealist poetics in *Lotus* and *In Other Words*; Njabulo Ndebele's translation of Joycean internal monologue into isiZulu;

and Coetzee's adaptation of Beckettian monologue in *Dusklands* (1974) and *In the Heart of the Country* (1977).<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, this experimental turn was even more noteworthy for taking place during the height of apartheid, at a time when stylistic novelty was being asked to defer to accessibility and political engagement. If, as Nadine Gordimer observes, writers were increasingly regarded as "mouth-pieces" for "ideals" that "demand the sacrifice of everything to the struggle put up on the side of free men," why should so many writers at this exact moment veer away from realism ("A Writer's Freedom," 106)?

The case for modernist experimentalism was made most provocatively by Lewis Nkosi, who in a 1967 article entitled "Fiction by Black South Africans" scathingly attacked the writings of several prominent black South African writers (Richard Rive, Bloke Modisane, Ezaekiel Mphahlele, and Alex La Guma) as "journalistic fact parading outrageously as imaginative literature" that failed to coalesce into "artistically persuasive works of fiction" (222). Nkosi would temper his aggressive stance as years went by, and his more nuanced account in "Postmodernism and Black Writing in South Africa" is perhaps more representative of his goals for South African literature. Using Amos Tutuola's *Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952) as an exemplary text, Nkosi observes how Tutuola's text develops a modernist aesthetic out of the animating conditions of its own history and culture, and not through a derivative translation of European techniques. *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* is "an amalgam of styles and genres, neither strictly a novel nor a traditional novel, but a heterogeneous blending of folk-tale, heroic adventure, and dilemma tale, moral fable, quest romance, discourses on law, finance, and commerce, a perplexing potpourri of symbolic codes and languages cutting across any strict generic boundaries and cultures" (85).<sup>8</sup> According to Nkosi, in other words, African modernism, though not *of* the modernist moment or directly imitating Joyce and Woolf's representations of

modern subjectivity or the self-conscious *bricolage* of Eliot's *Waste Land*, ventures outside of a confining realism whose main referent seems to be political discourse rather than artistic merit.<sup>9</sup>

As the 1970s and 1980s wore on, several writers echoed Nkosi's thoughts on modernism and South African literature, though rarely with the same vehemence or stark dismissal of realism. Njabulo Ndebele complained that a sensationalistic focus on the "spectacle" of apartheid produced "an art of anticipated surfaces rather than one of processes" and urged writers to "rediscover the ordinary" through a renewed focus on the surprising details of popular experience ("Turkish Tales," 45; "Rediscovery of the Ordinary," 143, 152). Though more guarded about making pronouncements as to what black writers should or should not do, Nadine Gordimer also tried to suture her own experimental leanings onto more popular forms of black literature by subordinating both realism and experimentalism to a part-Marxist, part-Romantic theory of history.<sup>10</sup> For Gordimer, the "essential gesture" of writing is its "*transformation of experience*," a definition that enables her to regard critical realism within a modernist rubric of innovation and artistic sensibility without necessarily requiring formal experimentation ("The Essential Gesture," 298). Where modernists seek "to transform the world by style," demonstrating their "responsibility ... to human destiny" by way of an Adornian refusal "to be morally useful to the community," realists "truthfully describe" "the complex, contradictory nature of historical evidence" through "the re-establishing of meanings" (296; quoting Sontag, "Approaching Artaud," 15, in the middle quote; 299, 295).

One might question whether Gordimer simply relocates the infamous division between European experimentalism and African realism on a higher level, uniting realism and modernism only to emphasize the broader significance of European art, its universal message not answerable "to any local cell of humanity" (297). But while acknowledging the cultural conservatism

intermingled here with radical politics – a combination we can also see in Nkosi’s venomous dismissal of “the breadline asceticism” of “petty realism” and in Coetzee’s appeal to the canon-forming “classic” in “What Is a Classic?” – I want to set aside this issue for the moment in order to focus on why modernism held such a potent ideological weight for antiapartheid writers during this period.

By far the most important impetus to anti-mimetic representational techniques was South Africa’s realist epistemology of racial categorization, which sought to assign racial labels based entirely on outward appearance and observable social habits. Unlike the pre-Civil Rights era United States’ system of racial classification, which used the percentage of one’s ancestry to determine race, South Africa’s 1950 Population Registration Act appealed to “the judgment of society – conventions which have grown up for the hundreds of years we have been here... The intention of the legislature was... that the classification of a person should be made according to the views held by the members of that community” (House of Assembly Debates [HAD], March 17, 1967). The reasons for this more “commonsense,” unscientific definition of race were complex, mostly having to do with the inordinate cost that research into citizens’ ancestry would entail and misgivings over the racial purity of white lineages, many of whom had interbred with black Africans in the early days of settlement when white women were scarce.<sup>11</sup> (“Which of the honorable members,” questioned one MP, “is prepared to say that he knows of no white person in South Africa who has no tinge of non-European blood somewhere?” [HAD, March 17, 1967]). What this meant in practice was that “ordinary untrained” census workers were tasked with classifying people’s race based on whether they were “generally accepted” as “white,” “native,” or “Coloured”: where one lived, one’s religion and customs (e.g. whether one paid *lobolo* [the “bride price”] or not), one’s level of education, and, of course, one’s physical appearance all

contributed to what race one “was” (HAD, March 13, 1950; Population Registration Act, Section 1 [xv]). Significantly, this classification scheme assumed that visible habits – not just skin color, but a whole social environment of customs, education, and labor – made race immediately detectable as a category to the “untrained” eye, and that this recognition in turn fixed a person’s racial designation into an immutable essence. In contrast to the invasive medical exams of the pre-apartheid period, which had used the pigmentation, shape, and size of genitalia to determine race, apartheid classifications assumed that *anyone* could “see” race. If race mirrored one’s environment, that environment was clear for all to see, resting as it did on the conventions binding society together.<sup>12</sup>

Apartheid racial classifications were therefore “realist” in the sense that they valued empirical, intuitive perceptions as a means for moving seamlessly between multiple levels of description, from the body to the community to a formalized epistemology of race. For antiapartheid writers, then, modernist experimentation provided one logical solution to this constraining classification system. For example, Coetzee’s evasive narration in *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983) and *Foe* (1986) withholds key details en route to establishing an ethic of limited knowledge that would outflank apartheid’s totalizing epistemological claims: *Michael K* refuses to disclose its eponymous protagonist’s race (he appears to be a “Cape Coloured”); *Foe* demurs from representing Friday’s speech or disclosing the source to his silence (Has his tongue been cut out, as Crusoe suggests? Is he mute? Does he “speak” in a nonverbal language?).<sup>13</sup> A similar strategy can be discerned in André Brink’s *A Chain of Voices*, where the interweaving of the partial viewpoints of the slave-owning van der Merwe family with those of their slaves produces an ecological philosophy of sociality in which, in the words of Ma-Rose, “all together yet all apart, all different yet all the same; and the separate links may lie but the chain is the

truth” (441); or in the work of Black Consciousness writers like Steve Biko and Muthobi Mutloatse, who aimed to “kick and push and pull and drag literature into the form we prefer” in order to free themselves from the mental slavery imposed on them by white characterizations of black Africans, pro-apartheid and liberal alike (Mutloase 5).

Implicit in these experimentations with form was a dialectic of provocation and punitive response between writers and the state censors who struggled to enclose fictional representations within the social imaginary of apartheid. The series of censorship bills that culminated in the 1975 South African Publications Act had banned texts that were deemed to be “indecent or obscene or offensive to public morals” – in effect, novels, journalism, and images that depicted interracial sex, acts of terrorism against the South African state, or critiques of apartheid (Van Rooyen 7). The result, among creative writers, was a polarization between those who openly courted the wrath of the censors (the Black Consciousness writers, protest fiction, Brink’s *Looking on Darkness*<sup>14</sup>), viewing provocation as the most direct route to social change, and those who, in Coetzee’s words, cultivated a language of “euphemism” that sought to speak against apartheid within the vocabulary dictated by the South African censors (*Giving Offense*, 35).<sup>15</sup> As the 1970s wore on, the limitations of this scenario became quite apparent: either one courted the political capital following from censorship, in which case one ceded to the apartheid censor the authority to deem what was and was not engaged literature; or one tried to outpace the censor by admitting censorship’s sovereignty over the common meanings of language and developing instead a language of euphemistic indirection. At the same time, as Coetzee observes, censorship implies that “real assaults have taken place, not only on moral norms and indeed on norms of human conduct, but on the limits of representation itself, or at least the idea that representation must have limits” (*Giving Offense*, 30). In his analysis, neomodernist

experimentalism acts as censorship's obverse twin, broadening the scope of representations even as censorship tries to encase them within a rigid set of moralized parameters. By disrupting the very logic on which censorship is grounded, modernism offers an escape from the double-bind of provocation and evasion overdetermining apartheid-era writing: the expansion of representation beyond the narrow realism of apartheid legal discourse clears a space for new "fictions of [human] dignity" to emerge without becoming embroiled in a circular cycle of protest and punishment (14).

We are very close here to the form of qualified transcendence that Coetzee champions in his "What Is a Classic?" lecture, one in which the anti-presentist modality of art – its ability to reverberate across time and to intuit everyday phenomena rendered invisible by realist techniques of perception and representation – is harnessed to a historically-rooted sociopolitical project. But while this understanding of formal innovation has informed many defenses of the "late modernist" aesthetics of Coetzee in particular,<sup>16</sup> it does so by reproducing terms long associated with a more conservative strain of modernism: art's "freedom" from a fallen world of rationalized labor and instrumental reason (modern industrialism, apartheid), its ability to transcend the limitations of history and language through the creation of new forms, and its ability to forge new national and transnational communities through the force of mythopoesis. As Jameson notes in *A Singular Modernity*, these very attributes allowed modernist formalism to be institutionalized "as a specifically North American cultural imperialism" within the U.S. academy and art world (167-8).<sup>17</sup> The question this leaves us with, then, is to what extent this cultural conservatism is accidental to South African neomodernism, a lingering remnant of an older modernist vocabulary, and to what extent it is fundamental to the claims being made on behalf of democracy, racial solidarity, and economic equality by antiapartheid writers?

This intersection of political radicalism and cultural conservatism is especially apparent in Anglo-South African writers' retellings of their first exposure to modernism.<sup>18</sup> English-language schooling in apartheid-era South Africa was still heavily based on a British imperial curriculum that emphasized early modern, Romantic, and Victorian over modernist writing. Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Dickens, and George Eliot were the key figures in secondary literary education, while the Leavisite university curriculum found a place for Lawrence and T. S. Eliot's philosophical aesthetics but not for the linguistic experimentations of a Joyce or Woolf.<sup>19</sup> As Derek Attridge observes, "the pleasure I took in Joyce's works...stemmed in large part from their *resistance* to the literary model I had been schooled in" (*Joyce Effects*, 4). Coetzee's early admiration for Ezra Pound echoes Attridge's sense that modernism resisted contemporary critical orthodoxies rather than constituting them (as it did, for example, in the postwar American academy).<sup>20</sup> At the same time, his detached third-person narration of this admiration in his autobiography *Youth* ironizes his juvenile belief in the anti-establishment radicalism of conservative writers like Pound and Eliot: "His passion for Pound is shared by only one of his friends...Eliot and Pound have lived lives of sorrow and sometimes of ignominy...Like Pound and Eliot, he must be prepared to endure all that life has stored up for him, even if that means exile, obscure labour, and obloquy" (20). Clearly parodying Stephen Dedalus's heroic self-image at the close of Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* ("I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defense the only arms I allow myself to use, silence, exile, and cunning"), *Youth* suggests that the disengaged, abstracting qualities of modernism – those same aspects which enabled it to be disaggregated from its early twentieth century social context and ensconced as depoliticized "individual expression" in the Cold War United States – also provided a means for South African



artists to negate apartheid's deadening social and intellectual environment. As Europe does in Joyce's *Portrait*, Attridge and Coetzee's modernist pantheon supplies a defamiliarizing set of stylistic techniques whose claim to transcendence seems to derive as much from their dissonance with postwar South Africa as from any inherently transcendental quality. But with regard to form itself, this difference is indistinguishable: whether one is an arch conservative like Eliot or an antiapartheid writer like Coetzee, neomodernist practices employ the same abstracting lexicon present in modernist conservatism.

That the resonance between antiapartheid politics and modernist abstraction was most directly articulated by Anglo-South Africans is certainly not accidental. The quote with which I began this chapter hypothesized that apartheid was a "dead end" for white ("liberal," we might add) South Africans like Coetzee, and that Eliotic modernism supplied a way out of this historical impasse. We can now specify this attraction to a greater degree: modernism's *formalist abstraction* enabled Anglo-South African writers to venture outside a constraining environment of simultaneous privilege and dissent. As Coetzee remarks, to young colonials "the high culture of the metropolis may arrive in the form of powerful experiences which cannot, however, be embedded in their lives in any obvious way, and which seem therefore to have their existence in some transcendent realm" ("What is a Classic?" 7). The point here is not simply that European culture has been christened High Culture for so long that it has stagnated into an abstract universal. Rather, Coetzee's reflections suggest that Anglo-South Africans' social, economic, and cultural distance from Europe fashions *all* responses to European culture products into abstract feelings, and that disenfranchised aesthetes can escape from reified social groups by "resituating nationality within a specific...brand of internationalism," as Eliot does (7). Indeed, the utopian element Attridge and Coetzee find in formalism seizes on and reverses this cultural

transmission from metropole to periphery: just as Eliot, Pound, and Joyce draw antiapartheid Anglo writers into a professional academic community, so too might neomodernist formalism produce new communities of its own, communities which would escape the deadlock of privileged complicity and potential marginalization in a democratic South Africa.

However, as Coetzee and Attridge's debts to an Anglo-South African education system and access to metropolitan literature imply, the belief that new communities could be forged through formalist aesthetics was a highly class-bound phenomenon. Why, we might ask, should formalism emerge as a rallying cry in this particular site (the South African semiperiphery) and among this particular class (Anglo-educated white South Africans)? What was formalism's social effectivity in these contexts? I pursue these questions in the following two sections by turning to Coetzee's most overtly modernist novel: *In the Heart of the Country*.

### **The Neomodernist Politics of Ecstasy: J. M. Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country***

Before we can say with any certainty what ideological work formalism performed for Anglo-educated South Africans, we first need to specify what neomodernism entailed in practice. Coetzee's early career is an ideal site to do so for several reasons. In the first place, no South African writer has been more tightly associated with modernist aesthetics than J. M. Coetzee. David Attwell, Derek Attridge, and Neil Lazarus have all labeled him with some variation on the moniker "late modernist" (often on the basis of his critical interest in Samuel Beckett, Franz Kafka, and Robert Musil); while Coetzee's early fiction (*Dusklands*, *In the Heart of the Country*) openly parades its debts to a modernist-inflected French existentialism. According to Attridge, for example, Coetzee "does not merely employ but extends and revitalizes modernist practices, and in doing so develops a mode of writing that allows the attentive reader to live through the

pressures and possibilities, and also the limits, of political engagement” (*J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*, 6). At the same time, if the label “late modernist” conjures up images of colonial belatedness, Coetzee often deploys modernist techniques with an eye toward recent academic, intellectual, and economic trends. (A fact that, in turn, may account for his popularity in the American academy.) Foucault, Lacan, and Barthes all make thinly-veiled appearances in his novels: literally undertaking an “archaeology of knowledge,” the Magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians* excavates indecipherable barbarians hieroglyphs for his amateur amusement; in *In the Heart of the Country*, Magda’s father’s explicitly allegorizes the Lacanian “law of the father” through his patriarchal demands and confining grammatical norms; and Coetzee’s (often female) narrators revel in self-referential language games, concretizing the “pleasure of the text” into sexual urges.

Many critics have noted Coetzee’s interest in poststructural linguistics, from Teresa Dovey’s *The Novels of J.M. Coetzee: Lacanian Allegories* (the first monograph published on Coetzee) to Attridge and Michael Marais’s more recent work on his writings.<sup>21</sup> But the professional literary, academic, and business communities with which these concerns have associated him have rarely been discussed in detail. Coetzee’s first exposure to poststructuralist philosophy came as a graduate student and English professor in the U.S. academy, where he specialized in the generative-transformational linguistics popularized by Noam Chomsky. With work ranging from analyses of the “middle voice” to grammatical tenses in Kafka,<sup>22</sup> his criticism honed in on linguistic rules as one way of thinking through inequitable social hierarchies. His most extensive engagement with this topic was his doctoral thesis at the University of Texas-Austin, which employed a computer-generated stylistic analysis of Beckett’s fiction. Significantly, this project combined Coetzee’s prior job as a computer programmer with his new

profession. “There seemed to be something in the air,” recalls Coetzee, “a possibility that linguistics, mathematics, and textual analysis might be brought together in some vague way” (*Doubling the Point*, 26). Whether or not this promise was ever realized is debatable, but it does point to Coetzee’s familiarity with a Euro-American economy in which language was playing an increasing central role. On the one hand, the computing industry valued proficiency in communication and the ability to perform what Robert Reich has called “symbolic-analytic services” – the “immaterial labors” of “problem-solving” and “strategic brokering” (*Empire*, 291). On the other hand, left-wing academics were also turning to language in order to contest the way in which computing technologies enabled employers to trim their workforces, in particular via a finance capitalism that divorced profits from production. Deleuze and Guattari, the Italian post-*operaismo* (Christian Marazzi, Paolo Virno, “Bifo,” and Antonio Negri), Barthes, and even, in a more abstract vein, Derrida all characterized language as, to quote Berardi, “the primary tool for the production of value.”<sup>23</sup>

If modernism is a key interlocutor for Coetzee, then, it is one that he articulates with and through a post-Fordist move away from industrialism and toward language. Under post-Fordism, and particularly among academics devoted to the linguistic turn, linguistic experimentation and proficiency were no longer simply avenues to *cultural* production, as they had been in the modernist period, but now were understood to be capable of explaining *social* life – history, anthropology, sociology, and, of course, capitalism. The Coetzee we see in this context differs markedly from the one habitually presented to us in academic criticism: the rarefied, existentialist theorist of the human condition, the Coetzee whose imbrication with economics is usually limited to an Adornian critique of literature’s resistance to instrumental reason.<sup>24</sup> Instead, Coetzee’s professional attachments to both computing services and the

academic “linguistic turn” allow us to see how central modernist tropes and technical devices functioned within a “globalizing” capitalist world-system. How, for example, did formalist interrogations of the medium look when they were placed against the abstractions of computer programming? Or against poststructuralist philosophy, with its long line of modernist aficionados, from Derrida to Cixous? Moreover, since Coetzee deployed these neomodernist techniques against a South African backdrop in his fiction, we might ask how the passage from metropolitan universities to peripheral settings transformed such linguistic projects, as well as what insight these changes might hold as to how globalization was understood structurally and historically in South Africa.

*In the Heart of the Country* (1976), Coetzee’s second novel, is particularly well-suited for this task. We have already seen in chapter 1 that the South African farm teetered between metropolitan markets and peripheral production, making the farm novel an ideal site through which to trace the collision between discrepant economic systems. In addition, more than any other of his novels, *In the Heart of the Country* mimics modernist techniques (i.e., the Beckettian monologue) and actively resists being drawn into a realist narrative – or, for that matter, into any coherent story at all. Taking place on an unnamed farmstead, Coetzee’s parodic *plaasroman* is composed of 266 short narrative segments whose versions of events continually contradict one another. In tune with Attridge’s belief in the progressive politics of modernism, the novel’s narrator, Magda, understands her endless monologue – and its hallucinatory imaginings and narrative contradictions – as a “rebellion” against her domineering father, a thinly-veiled allegory for the Lacanian “law of the father.” A spinster with seemingly no contact with the outside world, Magda’s resistance to her father is sparked by his “affair” with his black foreman Hendrik’s wife Anna. (It remains unclear, based on Magda’s narration, whether this affair

actually happens or is just a fantasy of her father's.) To Magda, her father's violation of the legal statutes and social taboos against interracial sex "corrupt[s] my speech," robbing words of their sacralized meanings and substituting for them a "private language" of self-serving desire (38-9). In response, she murders her father (or imagines herself doing so) several times over, literally "killing" the language of her (fore)father(s) by multiplying it into a heterogeneous conglomeration of fantasies, distorted accounts, and philosophical meanderings.

One way to interpret Magda's narrative would be to draw a causal connection between the novel's plural structure and *democratic* pluralism: after the "death of the father" – master discourses, language, patriarchy, authoritarian governance, or what have you – new representational techniques are able to emerge that are more attuned to "minor" literatures and cultures.<sup>25</sup> But Coetzee is actually quite guarded about the possibilities that her monologue presents for a revolutionary transformation of South African hegemony. As Magda tries to imagine a new, more equitable living arrangement with Hendrik and Anna, she repeatedly finds herself unable to do so through the words and concepts available to either English or Afrikaans. As she explains, "the language that should pass between myself and [Hendrik and Anna] was subverted by my father and cannot be recovered... I was born into a language of hierarchy, of distance and perspective. It was my father-tongue" (106). It is important to note that the language "passing" between these characters in the original Ravan Press edition of the novel is Afrikaans, which contains a much more formalized system of address than does English.<sup>26</sup> In Afrikaans, "intimate" pronouns like those Magda's father speaks to Anna – "*Ons*" (we), "*ons twee*" (We two), "*ek and jy and hier and nou*" (I and you and here and now) – were reserved for one's social superiors in the public marketplace (33/38). Children, workers, and black Africans were instead required to address their elders and employers in the third person as "die baas" (the

boss) or “die mies” (the miss).<sup>27</sup> As Magda quickly realizes, the distancing and objectifying syntax of Afrikaans is not amenable to her subversive linguistic project. Despite the assaults she conducts in English upon her paternal language, Hendrik and Anna insist on using the formal “die mies” to address her for most of the novel; and when they finally deign to adopt the intimate “jy” (you), it is to condemn her as “jou pa se dogter” (your father’s daughter) (97/106).

Moreover, given that the entire narrative possesses an ambiguous ontological status – somewhere between a partial historical account and groundless fantasy – we also cannot say for certain that Hendrik and Anna’s use of intimate pronouns toward Magda signals their ascension as the farm’s legitimate, indigenous owners and Magda’s (perhaps well-deserved) marginalization. Our enclosure within Magda’s voice suggests that any violence perpetrated against her – linguistic or otherwise – may be as much an index of Magda’s masochist fantasies of victimization as it is of genuine social transformation.<sup>28</sup>

To underscore this uncertainty, the novel ends with a surrealist visit from flying machine-gods who quote Hegel and Simone Weil to Madga in a “universal language” that sounds suspiciously like Spanish, before returning to the farmstead, where Magda’s father is suddenly and inexplicably alive once again, leaving us to wonder how much of the preceding action actually took place. “How can I say,” wonders Magda, “that these are not the eyes of the law that stare from behind my eyes, or that the mind of the law does not occupy my skull, leaving me only enough intellection to utter these doubting words, if it is I uttering them, and see their fallaciousness?” (92) Fearing that when all is said and done she is in fact “her father’s daughter,” Magda’s flying machine-gods seem one last attempt on her part to overcome linguistic hierarchies *within language itself*. If, that is, the progressive potential of linguistic experimentation encounters its limit in language’s grammatical norms, a language of “pure

meanings” or “universal meanings” would circumvent this difficulty by tying language directly to meaning (137). Furthermore, the juxtaposition of Hegel, Spanish, and flying machines that, looking “like narrow silver pencils with two pairs of rigid wings, a long pair in front and a short pair behind,” resemble nothing so much as fighter jets, points to a specifically Communist ideal of “universal meaning” (138). In the years during which Coetzee wrote *In the Heart of the Country*, South Africa was engaged in a lengthy border war with then-South-West Africa (now Namibia) and Angola, the two of whom received weapons, tactical support, and troops from Communist Cuba. Antiapartheid militancy and utopian universality thus converge through the transcendental properties a Communist-inflected “Spanish [of]...universal meanings” (137). The egalitarian liberation championed by antiapartheid Communism is transformed into an object of (utopian) language itself, where Magda would be freed from Afrikaans’s restrictive conventions to a realm where “things are their own names,” unencumbered by their historical lineage or semantic dissonances (*White Writing*, 9).

Magda’s attraction to the flying machine-gods articulates the same species of ecstatic transcendentalism that Coetzee voices in his “What Is a Classic?” lecture. If her dazzling technical displays founder against language’s grammatical rules, Magda imagines that she could *herself* be a superior medium bridging black and white, self and other, and art and politics through its internal harmonies. She expresses a desire to be “the medium, the median...neither master nor slave, neither parent nor child, but the bridge between, so that in me the contraries should be reconciled” (145). Like the insects, animals, flowers, and corpses that revel in the “ecstasy of their pure being,” Magda fantasizes that she could refine her mediatory nature to the point where no residual static would be left to language, allowing like and unlike to



communicate as seamlessly as mute objects “ecsta[sticly]...communicating with [themselves]” (53).

Raymond Williams has shown that the modernist valuation of the artistic medium functioned along very similar lines: when early twentieth-century immigration to large urban centers produced multilingual environments in which artists lacked a common language or national tradition, language became more evident *as* a medium that could itself forge an artistic community around its specific properties (*The Politics of Modernism*, 37-48). But Coetzee translates these (largely urban) practices into the ruralist framework of the *plaasroman*, where the farm’s alleged isolation from Europe, the city, and capitalism can function as a symbol for Magda’s *social* isolation from the farm’s servants, her inability to communicate with them in an equitable and reciprocal language. By discarding words (debased “coins” that “alienate” rather than exchange) in favor of a more abstract sense of self-mediation, Magda implies that the constitutive occlusions characteristic of the *plaasroman* genre – its refusal to portray black labor or to recognize its own participation in a global capitalist economy – instill a fundamental separateness (literally, “apartheid”) to its subject matter (28). The farm’s isolation thus generates the sort of mutual opacity that immigration and multilingualism produced in early twentieth-century Europe: a radical disconnect between persons, cultures, and languages that reduces the efficacy of “chronicle” and elicits instead “lyric” “rapture” as a means to bridge radical difference (77, 28).

Coetzee’s own description of the novel’s episodic form as a literary distillation of filmic montage suggests another way to think about modernism, ecstatic mediation, and language in his novel. Implying a debt to Sergei Eisenstein, Coetzee points out that *In the Heart of the Country* lacks “the scene-setting and connective tissue that the traditional novel used to find necessary”

(*Doubling the Point*, 59). “There was a moment in the course of high modernism,” Coetzee explains, “when first poets, then novelists, realized how *rapidly* narration could be carried out: films that used montage effectively were connecting short narrative sequences into longer narratives much more swiftly and deftly than the nineteenth century novel had thought possible” (59). As David Bordwell and Jacques Aumont have demonstrated,<sup>29</sup> Eisenstein’s own theory of spectatorship can be considered a kind of ecstasy, one designed to overcome the subject/object dichotomy familiar to Western art and philosophy through “union with a transcendental object” (Aumont 59). According to Eisenstein, filmic montage could create an aesthetic experience in which the audience would completely identify with the images before them, abandoning their distance from the unfolding sequence in an ecstatic burst of collective thought. As Eisenstein put it, “Ecstasy is a sensing and experience of the primordial 'omnipotence' - the element of coming into being - the 'plasticness' of existence, from which *everything* can arise” (*Eisenstein on Disney*, 46). In the strictest sense, *In the Heart of the Country*’s episodic structure and Magda’s desire to be a medium both seize on Eisensteinian ecstasy as a tool for bridging the barriers erected by apartheid: each imagines that the linguistic proprieties, labor hierarchies, and sexual taboos separating white and black subjects can be superseded through their immersion in a linguistic medium that would dissolve these differences in an ecstatic moment of self-transcendence.

But despite its homology with filmic montage, Coetzee’s novel is deeply indebted to the poststructuralist “linguistic turn” of the 1970s and 1980s. Since the linguistic nature of Coetzee’s ecstatic transcendentalism will be instrumental to my reading of South African semiperipherality, it will be useful to compare Coetzee’s brand of ecstasy to that of another South African, the avant-grade artist and filmmaker William Kentridge. Like Coetzee,

Kentridge's work possesses a special interest in modernist aesthetics (he cites Beckett, Eisenstein, and Brecht as significant influences on his films),<sup>30</sup> early twentieth century South Africa (his films are littered with Bakelite telephones, ribbon typewriters, and counting machines [see figures 7 and 8]),<sup>31</sup> and neomodernist experimentations with both artistic and filmic mediums.<sup>32</sup> In *Drawings for Projection* (1989-2003), a series of nine films Kentridge produced by sketching, erasing, and re-sketching short narrative sequences in charcoal drawings, the intercutting between Soho Eckstein (a mining magnate), Felix Teitlebaum (Soho's artistic alter-ego [see figure 9]), and queues of black mineworkers invites viewers to draw parallels and lines of causation among the narratives (see figure 10). Responding to the films' internal rhythms, viewers experience the indistinction between persons and objects as a sort of ecstatic transcendence: as the charcoal sketches morph from bedsheets to an elevator shaft to an entire mining complex, these objects' spatial and temporal separateness dissipates. This technique enables Kentridge to present a series of loaded questions: Who are apartheid's beneficiaries – the black workers stuffed into overcrowded barracks, the mine owners profiting from them, or the artists who transform black suffering into art? Does art incite its viewers to social action and critical reflection, or is it merely the observe side of Soho's profiteering (as implied by Soho and Felix's similar appearances) (see figure 11)? And how can we conceive of a form of temporality that pulls the past into the films' present, in a giddy palimpsest of archaic mining equipment and modern medical technology (see figure 12)? It also, not coincidentally, encourages its audience to abandon preconceived notions about their own ability to make distinctions between their lives and the films' images. If solid objects (telephones, elevators, beds, mines) and times (the 1930s/1990s) exhibit a radical interdependence, their viewer finds him- or herself drawn into the same deconstructive critique.

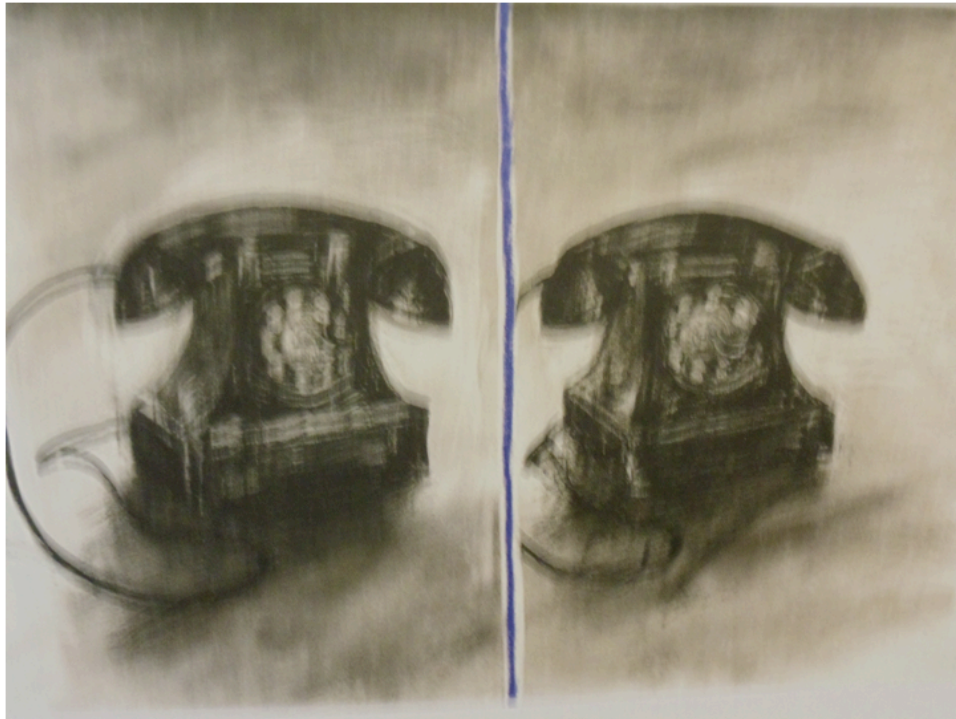


Figure 7: Image from *Mine*. A Bakelite telephone.

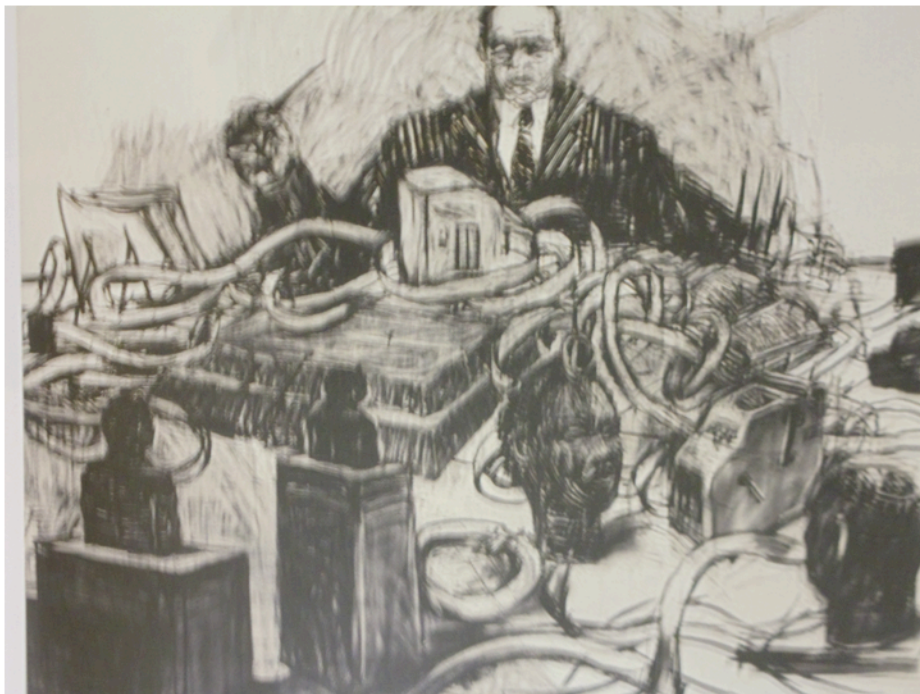


Figure 8: Image from *Mine*. Soho Eckstein at his counting machine.



Figure 9: Image from *Felix in Exile*. Note Soho and Felix's similar appearances, as well as their triangulation through Mrs. Eckstein.



Figure 10: Image from *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*. A queue of mine workers.



Figure 11: Image from *Felix in Exile*. The crowds of political protestors disperse, leaving Felix alone with his music.



Figure 12: Image from *History of the Main Complaint*. The old-fashioned radio (left, on top of monitor) clashes with the modern technology in Soho's hospital room.

The difference between Kentridge's films and Coetzee's novel is the self-reflexivity of Magda's monologue. To the extent that Kentridge's *Drawings for Projection* conform to Eisenstein's belief in montage-as-ecstasy, the films ask the audience to substitute the cinematic rhythm and fluid images for their own subjective reflections. In contrast, Magda is intensely self-aware about language's inherent tendency toward solipsism. If anything, her monologue becomes less and less grounded in South African social history as the narrative moves from her father and Anna's affair to her "conversations" with the flying-machine gods. The problem, as Magda notes, is that if her machines have truly discovered a "universal language," they will more than likely be "flying in an ecstasy of self-absorption" than disseminating that message among new disciplines (142). In direct opposition to the filmic object, language appears to transcend its grammatical hierarchies by further *subjectivizing* itself, weaving its discourse inward until it is mediating itself to itself: "I am I" (128). In the process, Magda's belief in a "universal language" recapitulates one of the foundational Marxist debates over modernist literature: Are modern novels mediums *to* a new, egalitarian mode of production in which they cannot themselves participate, as Adorno suggests in "Reconciliation Under Duress"? (The "solitary consciousness potentially destroys and transcends itself by revealing itself in works of art as the truth common to all men" [166].) Or do they instead *reflect* the alienating conditions of modern industrial society, mediating a purely subjective universe solely for the sake of retreating from historical realities, as Lukács argues in "The Ideology of Modernism"? ("The protest expressed by this flight into psychopathology is an abstract gesture; its rejection of reality is wholesale and summary, containing no concrete criticism. It is a gesture, moreover, that is destined to lead nowhere." [150])

Language's reflexivity provides a third answer to this debate. To adopt the Hegelian language spouted by the flying machine-gods, language can act at one and the same time as a medium *for another* (Adorno) and as one *for itself* (Lukacs). By styling herself as a "medium" between contraries, Magda seems to relegate herself to being "used as a tool" for the coming postapartheid order (44). But by locating that new order *in* a transcendental language (with Magda as its representative), linguistic dexterity becomes both the means *and* the goal of Magda's scattered imaginings. In doing so, Magda develops a novel solution to the dilemma of the "vanishing mediator" that I outlined in the introduction. Instead of holding the dialectic between metropolitan and colonial economies in stasis, as an endless oscillation between globalization and nationalism (as we saw with Bowen in chapter 4), Magda suggests that her ecstatic mediations supply a template for a generalizable condition of hyper-mediation.<sup>33</sup> Just as she can speak about linguistic mediation *through* language, mediation can self-reflexively mediate *mediation* to the farmers, maids, overseers, and spinsters sparsely populating Coetzee's novel. And if this position looks back to debates over modernist subjectivism, alienation, and autonomy, it also looks forward to an emerging language economy valuing communication and linguistic proficiency for their own sakes. Indeed, Coetzee's novel stands poised at the precipice of a shift from Fordist industrialism to a post-Fordist global economy built on language's "immaterial labors," a transition that formalizes the semiperiphery's communicative nature into an instrument for seemingly self-motivated communicational work by internalizing modernist critiques of industrialism within capitalist economic structures. The tensions inherent in this transition, and the oddly disjointed temporality they seem to entail, are played out in one of the central themes pinning the novel together: Madga's ambivalent relationship with her father.



## Communities of Mediums, Communities of Ecstasy: From the *Plaasroman* to the Language Economy

The increasingly prominent role linguistic mediation plays in *In the Heart of the Country* sheds light on one of the novel's most enigmatic developments. After Hendrik and Anna have disappeared from the farm and the flying machine-gods' voices have retreated to a dull din in Magda's ears, Magda's father miraculously returns to the narrative without any explanation on the part of Magda. Mute, uncomprehending, and entirely dependent on Magda's care, this aged body is a far cry from the domineering authoritarian Magda describes in the novel's earlier sections. Where initially Magda had been concerned to declare her distance from her father, now he suddenly becomes the locus of a nostalgic commemoration of the 1930s-era *plaasroman* farm:

... 'Do you remember Jakob and Hendrik and Ou-Anna and Klein-Anna? Do you remember that son of Ou-Anna's who was killed in an accident and brought back to the farm to be buried, and how Ou-Anna wanted to throw herself into the grave?

'Do you remember the years of the great drought, when the sheep all had to be sold because there was no grazing within two hundred miles, and how we had to struggle to build the farm up again? Do you remember the great old mulberry tree that stood on the other side of the chicken-run, and how one summer the trunk cracked down the middle under the weight of all the fruit? Do you remember how the earth around it would be stained purple with the juice of fallen berries? Do you remember...'

For the first time, the prosaic events underlying Magda's delirious monologue come into clear focus: the physical dangers lurking for servants on the farm (here, displaced onto Ou-Anna's ["Old Anna"] son), the farm's fecundity, and the economics informing its operations (draughts, sheep sales, etc.). By ventriloquizing her own memories through her father's ("Do you remember...?"), Magda still distances herself from the realist descriptions contained in this passage – more apropos, she implies, to her father's all-encompassing desire than her own

narrative techniques. But she does so almost condescendingly, acknowledging the potent weight these objects and events held in her father's time even while disavowing her own dependence on them ("I have uttered my life in my own voice throughout") (151).

What to make of this final *détente*? If for most of the novel Magda strains toward a transcendental vocabulary of ecstatic mediation that would dissolve the social, cultural, and economic barriers separating her from Hendrik and Anna, her final reminiscences suggest that lyric ecstasy bridges the differences between herself and her father – gendered, political, and generational – more effectively than it does those between her and the farm's black servants. Indeed, as Magda gradually abstracts away from the racialized power dynamics present on the farm, she reaches a point at which Hendrik and Anna refuse to follow. When Magda fails to pay them for their work on the farm (being completely ignorant of "colonial economics"), Hendrik responds by slaughtering the farm's sheep, "raping" Magda,<sup>34</sup> and abandoning her to survive by her own devices. Where Magda had hoped for goodwill and a sense of community with her (former) servants, she receives instead callous mockery for poor farm management, vindictive assaults on her body ("sometimes I think it is my humiliation he wants"), and a brute sense of material deprivation to counter her airy abstractions (122). In effect, Hendrik reveals money to be the furthest abstraction he is willing to countenance: righting apartheid's material disparities by tearing down the social hierarchies that subordinate black workers is one thing, but dissociating completely from material circumstances risks obscuring his and Anna's labor under the rubric of an undifferentiated holism.

What Coetzee seems to be doing here, I would like to argue, is calling attention to a class of Anglo professionals whose coherence lies less in their historical proximity to each other than in their common concern with *mediation*. Like the professional artists in "What Is a Classic?",

who form a transhistorical community through their similar labors, Magda and her father both serve as mediums ecstatically communicating between incompatible objects, systems, and persons. And even if these labors take vastly different objects, their *formal* similarity points to a continuity between their socioeconomic positions. After all, as we have seen throughout this study, semiperipheral locations like the South African farmstead mediate between incompatible economic systems: neofeudal production and *laissez-faire* trade, metropolitan and colonial structures of feeling, and autonomous nation-states and a global economy. As an overdetermined symbol for the 1930s agricultural economy romanticized in the *plaasroman*, then, Magda's father, like Magda, acts as a medium – specifically, as a medium between the global commodity markets upon which South African farms depended for financial stability and coercive regimes of labor regulation at odds with free trade principles. We saw in chapter 3 that the tension between South African nationalism and international monetary policy sparked heated debates as to whether South Africa should remain on the gold standard or join Britain in the sterling bloc. South Africa's agricultural economy was at the center of this discussion, and not just for ideological purposes. During this period, estates like Magda's were struggling to resist the encroachments of larger, more profitable estates run by what W. M. Macmillan called “cheque-book farmers” – lawyers and agents who secured large quantities of land by foreclosing on debts and mortgages (*Warning from the West Indies*). In order to stay afloat, these smaller farms focused their resources on cultivating products for sale on international (especially British) agricultural markets, including sugar, wheat, and especially the merino wool that was highly sought after in England (Beinart 59; Feinstein 135-42). But export production deepened, rather than mitigated, the disconnect between South Africa's racialized labor system and global commodity exchange: the wool trade in particular required large swaths of land and cheap black

labor, while the absence of a steady market for wool in South Africa increased farmers' dependence on international agricultural markets that were especially volatile in the 1930s (Perren 37-51). The result was an economic system in which the location of commodity markets *outside* of South Africa, in the metropolitan markets of Britain, made the achievements of labor completely unrecognizable in their local environment – farmers' profits seemed linked to international markets rather than local labor, and the meager wages paid to black workers possessed no obvious relationship to the trade cycle.

In this respect, Hendrik's insistence that he be paid in money reflects his continuing investment in an economic system defined by a radical dissociation between global trade and local labor – a gap that Magda's father traverses through his control over money and commodities. Though not as willfully ignorant of black labor or global capitalism as the earlier *plaasroman* novels it parodies, *In the Heart of the Country* struggles to place the work being done on farms into larger regional, national, or global contexts. To Magda, the farm's African workers appear as “hewers of wood and drawers of water and shepherds and body-servants” who labor “in perpetuity” for no clear purpose, while money and commodities seem to magically appear from some unknown realm (“Where am I going to get my hands on money? Where did my father keep it?”; “How am I to explain the economics of my existence?”) (21, 102, 20). Of course, as an academic Coetzee would have been well aware that Marxist historians like Frederick Johnstone (*Class, Race and Gold*), Belinda Bozzoli (*The Political Nature of a Ruling Class*), and Shula Marks (*Economy and Society in Preindustrial Africa*) were beginning to develop a critical methodology capable of explaining South African racial segregation within the terms of global capitalism.<sup>35</sup> But Coetzee suggests that fiction can instead capture the ideological, affective, and material *gaps* endemic to life on the South African farm – the

productive “silences,” as Coetzee calls them, that suture together economic systems which on their own terms can only be regarded as unintelligible (*White Writing*, 84). Moving against the sociological impulse to comprehensive description, *In the Heart of the Country* locates mediation between these systems in the figure of Madga’s father, whose access to banks, postal institutions, and trade connections grants him contact with a money form that can abstract away from local racial-industrial hierarchies and into global commodity markets. If, then, Hendrik’s desire for payment seems crass by Magda’s lofty, universalizing platitudes, his commitment to money stems in large part from an attraction to the forms symbolizing and mediating a more egalitarian space of equitable trade – a space made present to South Africa through money’s abstracting form.

Approached from this perspective, Magda and her father’s reunion appears less as a capitulation to “colonial philosophy” on Madga’s part than as a recognition of the formal similarities between their positions (20). Though couched in a language stressing liberation from her father’s authoritarianism, Magda’s lyric ecstasies repeat and intensify his monetary mediations, shifting them from the language of economic instrumentality and abstraction to one of transcendent union and social equality. But this is not to say that they escape the economic logic of semiperipheral mediation present in her father’s time. Indeed, Magda’s neomodernist reflections on language correspond quite closely to the communication-driven mode of production that we have seen Coetzee to be participating in, and which Christian Marazzi has termed the post-Fordist “language economy” (*Capital and the Affects*). As elaborated by Marazzi and fellow Italian post-*operaismo* (“post-worker”) theorists like Antonio Negri, the post-Fordist language economy was a concerted response on the part of capitalists during the 1970s and 1980s to mitigate rising production costs and shrinking markets for goods.<sup>36</sup> The

reasons for this stalemate were many, but the most salient included rising wages, the growth of the welfare state, and (somewhat paradoxically) neoliberal assaults against the welfare state (since these depressed real wages and compressed the state's social expenditures, in the process limiting middle- and lower-class purchasing power). According to post-*operaismo* writers, capitalists found the solution to this impasse by co-opting workers' critiques of Fordist industrialism into the very logic of capitalism.<sup>37</sup> Factory workers had long lamented the lack of upward mobility in Fordist production – one could ascend from unskilled to semi-skilled wage work, but not to the white collar work characterizing the upper echelons of the corporate hierarchy – and had “demand[ed] an education that would provide an alternative to a life sentence served on the factory floors” (Marazzi 27). For advocates of the “language economy,” such “reengineering” introduced the possibility of retraining workers for communicational work that would identify and respond to consumer demands at an almost instantaneous rate, allowing companies to produce less merchandise for more targeted groups. (One need only think of sites like Google and Facebook that store and sell user information to see the mechanics of this process at work, as well as the way in which computer technologies have helped make the “language economy” possible.)

Where Magda's monologue most clearly intersects with Marazzi's “language economy” is in its use of a neomodernist vocabulary to reject racialized labor hierarchies. As Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello have shown, the post-'68 global economy subordinated what they call the “artistic critique” – but which we might more properly label as a strain of Romantic modernism – to its own purposes. The modernist critique of capitalism, they explain, “takes the dehumanization of the capitalist sphere as its particular target”: “the manifestation of human beings in their full authenticity was regarded as difficult to achieve unless they were emancipated

from the constraints, limitations, even mutilations inflicted on them by capitalist accumulation in particular” (xiii, 419). Most important for our purposes, these critiques coalesced around a specific interpretation of “liberation” as “*emancipation* from any form of *determination* liable to restrict the self-definition and self-fulfillment of *individuals*,” one which stressed such central modernist tropes as “autonomy,” “*uncertainty*,” “*a multiplicity of identities*,” and “freeing oneself from any *endowment*” (433-4). As post-Fordist production began to take shape in the 1970s, advertisements and employee training literature shrewdly equated such individual liberations with the operations of mass consumerism and flexible labor. Where in the immediate postwar period promises of steady, remunerative work and fantasies of “the good life” had buoyed faith in Western capitalism – a combination enshrined in the two-parent nuclear household of American lore – in the ’70s and ’80s commodities and labor became valued for their capacity to express multiple identities (racial, sexual, regional, etc.) and to expose individuals to new experiential horizons. Flexible labor allowed workers to expand their activities in new settings and directions (even, as Boltanski and Chiapello note, it colonized more of their intellectual and affective lives), while consumer products either freed time for personal pursuits (washing-machines, microwaves, ready-prepared meals) or *were* those interests (the internet, tourism, the entertainment industry).

Like the training literature from which Boltanski and Chiapello draw their conclusions, Magda’s rambling discourse associates personal, racial, and economic liberation with communicational labor and production. From the novel’s earliest pages, Magda revels in her ability within the bounds of language to “expand to infinity just as I can shrivel to the size of an ant,” boasting that “Many things I lack, but freedom is not one of them” (55). As the novel wears on and she increasingly struggles to make her own liberation from realist language into a

vehicle for Hendrik and Anna's emancipation from undervalued agricultural and domestic occupations, language becomes more and more tightly interwoven with notions of the redemptive properties of labor. Forced to scrub floors, repair the farmhouse, and dispose of her father's body alongside Hendrik and Anna, labor instills a concrete, experiential quality to her coalition with the farm's servants – I have done what you do, I have felt what you felt, I know what you know. But what starts out as excruciating physical labor gradually morphs into an allegory for the labor present in language work, with Magda “trundl[ing] wheelbarrows full of stones across the veld” in order to spell out messages to her flying machine-gods (144). Not only is language represented here as a newly-valorized subset of labor (complete with the emancipatory trajectory labor assumes in Marxist philosophies of history in particular), but language's activities are shown to be in and of themselves freedom from any form of social, cultural, or racial determination. After all, since language's reflexivity enables it to be treated as both a means and an end (as we saw in the last section), linguistic liberations *from* apartheid's racial industrial hierarchies can all too easily veer into liberations *to* an emerging language economy.

But something more interesting is happening here than just the old adage that capitalism co-opts all critiques into itself, or that critique is always-already contaminated by its own will to power. If ecstatic mediation seems to unite across time individuals with similar formal socioeconomic roles – in “What Is a Classic?”, professional art critics; in *In the Heart of the Country*, Magda and her father's translations of African labor into the ideology of the language economy and *laissez-faire* trade – we have to treat skeptically Magda's belief that she can ultimately incorporate Hendrik and Anna into this communication-based economy. Indeed, rather than join Magda in her linguistic acrobatics and abstract philosophizing, Hendrik adopts



the trappings and demeanor recently vacated by Magda's father, wearing his old clothes, sleeping in his house, having sex with his daughter, and claiming proprietorship over his livestock. His aspirations seem much more fixed on the minutiae of a fading agricultural economy – hard money, rooted territoriality, and direct command over others' bodies – than in the disembodied informatics that Magda's monologue gestures toward.

In the process, Hendrik dramatizes one of the central aspects of the new language economy: its relocation of industrial production onto the periphery. Today, industrial production's rapid migration away from the United States and Europe and toward developing Asian and Latin American countries is viewed almost as a *fait accompli*, an unfortunate (for Americans) corollary to globalization.<sup>38</sup> But in late apartheid South Africa the transition from industrialism to the language economy was neither as immediately apparent nor as blatantly spatialized as it seemed from the First World's perspective. Instead, international sanctions had cut off South Africa from the economic restructurings found in Europe and the United States, leading to two interrelated consequences.<sup>39</sup> On the one hand, the apartheid economy and the antiapartheid resistance continued to articulate their ideological platforms through the rhetoric of Fordist industrialism, as can be seen in the aforementioned rise in Marxist scholarship in 1970s South Africa (most of which focused on the mining industry) and in the antiapartheid African National Congress's belief that seizing and nationalizing key industries could fund anticipated social projects (e.g., installing sewage and electric facilities in the townships and reserves).<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, an older utopian discourse of collective emancipation which had lost much of its luster after the disappointments of May 1968 and postcolonial disillusionment persisted in South Africa throughout the apartheid period.<sup>41</sup> As Neil Lazarus recalls, "the disjuncture between the politics of time in South Africa and the continent at large" – and, we could add, between South

Africa and the global language economy – implied that “*our* decolonization, when it came, would not prove to be the neocolonization that it had been elsewhere; *our* nationalism really *would* correspond to the ‘all-embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of the whole people’” (“The South African Ideology,” 611). This combination encouraged antiapartheid writers and activists to simultaneously give voice to a modernist critique of Fordism (as apartheid’s oppressive economic wing) *and* to see Fordism as the limit case for economic aspirations, the fount of economic opportunity that had been denied to them under apartheid and which, like Hendrik, they would soon capture as their own.

The point I wish to emphasize is that, even as desires like Magda’s to reconcile black and white through lyrical transports of language overcome the specific content of apartheid industrialism, they also reinscribe in formal features the dialectic between transcendent global markets and retrograde local environments that had been present in her father’s time. By increasingly equating Hendrik with mass production’s forms and functions, Coetzee allegorizes a paradigm shift in the world-system that was transplanting industrial production from the core to the periphery. At the same time, he suggests that Magda’s ecstatic language can mediate between Hendrik-as-peripheral-industrialist and the disembodied voices constituting the global language economy. This double movement is obscured by how readily one form of communication – the linguistic proficiencies valued by the language economy – slides into a second form of communication – the translation of peripheral and metropolitan economic systems into one another – thereby generalizing mediation as a goal in itself and solidifying it within language. Nevertheless, just as her father’s semiperipheral status had forced him to mediate between serf-like African labor and a capitalist market premised on self-possessive individualism and equitable exchange, Magda rejects that role by juxtaposing degrading racial

hierarchies against language's liberatory qualities. In neither case does global modernity become a single pervasive system. Instead, Magda and her father, like the professional critics in "What Is a Classic?", negotiate a shifting set of historically-contingent – and clashing – socioeconomic systems: industrialism, the language economy, apartheid, Communism, and so on. Ecstasy thus makes visible a class continuity between Magda and her father by refining away the particularities of their historical contexts and highlighting the formal structure of mediation itself. And as such ecstasies echo from generation to generation, they raise one final set of questions: What sort of temporality is guiding these mediations? What would a history of South African ecstasy look like?

### **On Semiperipheral History and the *Plaasroman*; or, Against Lukács**

Read as a reflection on contemporary economics and the antiapartheid movement, *In the Heart of the Country* strikes a note of pessimistic resignation. But it's also doubtful whether Coetzee's goal in writing the novel was anything so programmatic as a platform for white South African participation in the antiapartheid movement.<sup>42</sup> Coetzee was writing in the wake of the student-led Black Consciousness movement, a radical black intellectual movement that dismissed Anglo-South African liberalism for, in the words of Steve Biko, "verbalizing all the complaints of the black beautifully" and expecting blacks to merely "echo" what the "Liberal" had said (*I Write* 21; *Black Consciousness* 57-8). Influenced by Fanon, W.E.B. Du Bois, and the *Négritude* movement, the Black Consciousness movement was particularly vehement in their opposition to the "common-society liberalism" of Alan Paton's Liberal Party (1953-68), which had advocated the gradual extension of citizenship rights to black South Africans through sentimental appeals to blacks' and whites' common humanity.<sup>43</sup> This critique placed white

antiapartheid writers in an untenable double-bind: according to the logic of the Black Consciousness movement, any liberal demands for racial equality deepened blacks' dependence on white liberals and prevented blacks from becoming "co-architects of a normal society," but saying and doing nothing lent tacit endorsement to apartheid (Biko, *I Write*, 21). Stripped of the liberal platitudes around which they had defined themselves, many white South African writers responded by flocking to the Communist Party (as a radical alternative to liberalism) or by engaging in self-critical evaluations that sought to "set our society free of the lies on which it is built" (Gordimer, *Essential Gesture*, 101-2).

Coetzee inclined toward the latter of these two options. In a speech at the 1987 *Weekly Mail* book festival entitled "The Novel Today," he laid out what he saw as literature's foundational vocation. Fiction, he argued, refuses to "supplement" the "Grand Narrative of History" – academic scholarship that treats history as a cumulative catalogue of unfolding events and literature as a passive reflection of those events – and instead erects a "rivalrous" mode of historical perception (3). Though remaining vague as to particulars, Coetzee is quite clear about what literature's historical consciousness does *not* do: "There is a game going on between the covers of a book, but it is not always the game you think it is. No matter what it may appear to be doing, the story is not really the game you call Class Conflict or the game called Male Domination or any of the other games in the handbook" (3-4). In thus making his case for literature's historicist sensibility, Coetzee threads his argument between two antithetical positions. On the one hand, he is neither declaring the radical autonomy of the novel nor denying that it is a historically-rooted document with social, economic, racial, and gendered determinants. On the other hand, he *is* suggesting that modernist formalism can develop ways of encountering history that are able to approach certain phenomena foreclosed by a linear

historicism he associates with both Marxism and liberalism. “I happen to think Lukács’s judgment [about modernist decadence] wrong,” Coetzee added in an interview several years later, “conditioned by more than a little moralistic prejudice” (*Doubling the Point*, 202). In contrast to Lukács’s tight equation of historicism with realism in *The Historical Novel* and *Studies in European Realism*, Coetzee suggests that turning inwards to the novelistic medium itself might open up new vistas for a South African historical imaginary that has too often focused exclusively on a linear march from point A to point B: from British imperialism to Afrikaner nationalism, from liberalism to radicalism, and from apartheid to democracy.

During the ’70s and ’80s, Coetzee’s discomfort with Marxist historicism migrated back and forth between his critical and fictional writings. In *In the Heart of the Country*, Magda’s Hegelian vocabulary rehearses the dominant tropes of a crudely mechanistic form of Marxism – dialectical conflict, teleological progress, and historical inevitability – only to evacuate their linear trajectory. “Is the following the key,” wonders Magda: “through the agency of conflict with my father I hope to lift myself out of the endless middle of meditation on unattached existence into a true agon of crisis and resolution?” (67-8) Certainly the African National Congress (ANC) and South African Communist Party (SACP) believed this to be the case. According to the official party line circulated in *The African Communist* and *Umsebenzi*, black emancipation would result “from a series of set piece battles between the apartheid state and the ANC/SACP alliance with the latter learning a valuable lesson from each engagement and elevating the struggle to a higher plane” (Adams 7). But even allowing for the ANC and SACP’s reductive, anti-theoretical approach to Marxism, which was less than representative of the more nuanced methodologies being developed in South African academic circles,<sup>44</sup> Coetzee’s novel shies away from the “arrow-straight paths” Marxist and liberal historiography associate with “the

true time of the world” (39). For all that Magda strives to transform herself through dialectical conflicts with her father and the authoritarian systems he embodies – apartheid, patriarchy, capitalism – her solipsistic enclosure within her own monologue prevents her from ascending to an elevated plane of self-consciousness. Instead, the seemingly endless recurrence of the same clash with her father congeals into “an eternal present,” making visible mediation as its own mode of historical being (126). (Unlike Marxist theories of history, for which mediation is an instrumental tool for further social, cultural, and economic development.) From Magda’s perspective, the content of capitalist modernity – whether it be neofeudalism, industrialism, or language work – seems less essential than the demand to mediate, forever mediate: to let people, objects, even “tears [that are not my tears]...pass through me” (60).<sup>45</sup>

Another way to put this is to suggest that we take seriously the historical imaginary sketched by Coetzee in both his “What Is a Classic?” lecture and “The Novel Today.” As a form more amenable to repetitive temporalities – one could cite anything from magical realism’s use of popular mythological cycles to the inherited defects obsessed over by naturalist fiction – and increasingly self-reflexive about its own mediations from the modernist period on, the novel would seem an optimal medium through which to construct a “rivalrous” account of South African history based on repetitious mediation. In this respect, rather than retreating from material conditions of production into subjective fantasies of omnipotence – an accusation Lukács leveled at modernist mythopoetic projects like Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Yeats’s *Vision*, and Eliot’s *Waste Land*<sup>46</sup> – Coetzee’s neomodernist novel takes socioeconomic *structure* as a phenomenon that repeats across generations. Like Bach’s neoclassical and neomodernist aficionados, whose mutual object (Bach’s music) and similar formal structure (professional criticism) is subtended by radically different socioeconomic contexts – in the first case, the

Protestant revivalism and Germanic nationalism that made Bach into a “vehicle” for “a tide of communal feeling”; in the second, the shrinking social and economic prospects for Anglophilic aesthetes in the United States (Eliot) and South Africa (Coetzee)<sup>47</sup> – Magda and her father reveal transnational mediation between globalizing and “peripheralizing” economic systems to be a formal structure echoing across South African history (“What Is a Classic?” 15). Their parallel experiences within South Africa’s 1930s agricultural economy and its 1970s (post-)Fordist variant show that structure itself possesses a history all of its own, a history located in the semiperipheral interstices of the world-system.

As a philosophy of history, this reading of structural repetition ventures outside the well-worn cliché of capitalist-history-as-perpetual-innovation, the “permanent revolution” that, as Marshall Berman observes, entails “a process of continual, restless, open-ended, unbounded growth” (95, 98). But it also raises questions equally germane to socioeconomic analysis as those posed by Lukácsian and liberal historicism, but which approach the intertwining of economics and literature from a slightly different angle. Not the least of these is the paradox haunting the doubling of mediation across Magda and her father’s generations: If mass production through cheap African labor was seen as the solution to South Africa’s backward socioeconomic status in the 1930s, what do we make of the injunction in the 1970s to modernize *yet again* toward a global language economy, especially when the benefits of (industrial) modernization have failed to reach the country’s black majority?

As we have already seen in Coetzee, the Afrikaner *plaasroman* and English farm novel provided an ideal setting for working out this contradiction, in large part because of their close connection to the (heavily Afrikaner) 1930s agricultural industry. The renaissance the *plaasroman* experienced in experimental circles during the ’70s and early ’80s indicates a

growing sensitivity to what I have been calling semiperipheral history – the discontinuous repetition of socioeconomic forms, functions, and aspirations across discrete historical moments. Nearly every major white South African novelist devoted a novel to the South Africa farmstead during this period, and oftentimes these were among their most stylistically elaborate texts: Gordimer's *The Conservationist* (1974), Brink's *Rumours of Rain* (1978) and *A Chain of Voices* (1982), Etienne van Heerden's *Toorberg* (1986), and Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country* (1976) and *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983).<sup>48</sup> Certain differences did, of course, exist between Gordimer's and Coetzee's English fictions and Brink's and van Heerden's Afrikaans ones. (English novels tend to be more concerned with the economic and political history of the farm, whereas Afrikaans ones are more directly interested in the history of Afrikaner settlement and migration and the role played by the mythology surrounding the farm in Afrikaner culture.) But both English-speaking and Afrikaner writers agreed that the chauvinistic pieties contained in the *plaasroman* urgently needed parodic debunking, as well as (somewhat counter-intuitively) that the *plaasroman* "may speak more loudly now than [it] did fifty years ago" (Coetzee, "Farm Novel and *Plaasroman*," 84). For Coetzee, this is in fact the singularity of the farm novel: "I would ask whether it is in the nature of the ghost of the [South African] pastoral ever to be laid to rest" ("Farm Novel and *Plaasroman*," 83). Like the murdered body of the anonymous black freedom fighter that keeps surfacing in Gordimer's *Conservationist*, refusing to stay buried beneath the idyllic wetlands and tranquil veld of the South African farm, the farm novel appears to return at regular intervals to name the abuses, silences, and repetitions upon which the South African nation was founded.

South African neomodernism thus assumes that past styles, genres, and texts can become mediums for the inarticulate feelings and social aspirations of future generations. Less nostalgic



for a fading pastoralism than attuned to parallels between the 1930s farm and the late apartheid era, Coetzee, Gordimer, and Brink's parodic *plaasromans* call attention to the degree to which black African demands for political rights were increasingly intertwined with a vocabulary of economic modernization shared by an earlier Afrikaner nationalism. In Brink's *A Chain of Voices*, for example, this rhetorical convergence becomes the narrative's guiding thread, as the slave Galant provokes a small uprising in early nineteenth century South Africa by co-opting the language of Afrikaner exceptionalism into his own calls for black emancipation. Galant's original owner, the crippled landowner Piet van der Merwe, regards the farm Houd-den-Bek [literally: "Shut-Your-Trap"] as "a place destined to be mine, ordained by God and my forefathers" as a liberation from the British-controlled Cape (34). As we saw in chapter 3, this rationale that isolated farming would allow (or already had made possible) Afrikaners' development into a distinct, self-sufficient nationality had long been a staple of *plaasroman* fiction. But where Brink departs from generic conventions is in his displacement of this rote statement from the internal monologue of the mute Piet to Galant's own thoughts and speeches, which posit a competing divine mandate designating the farm's untamed "wildness" as "mine," "denied me" by the van der Merwes (46, 59). Piet and Galant remain blissfully unaware of the parallels between their aspirations toward "freedom," but Brink's Faulknerian weaving together of their subjective, partial accounts with those of the farm's other inhabitants emphasizes their common features: anger against an oppressive usurper (British, Dutch), an indigenizing "wildness" that simultaneously weds one to the land and allows for a more authentic domestication than that of a feminized British consumerism, and a forward-looking teleology equating liberation from a restricting socioeconomic environment (Cape liberalism, Dutch farming) with political maturity. Furthermore, by placing his novel 150 years in the past,<sup>49</sup>

Brink's formal structure engages in a meta-stylization of such repetitions that develops a wider narrative context for Galant's more local ones. As Galant echoes Piet's sanctimonious claims for an ethnically-driven modernization – from the British Cape to the Afrikaner Houd-den-Bek, and from Dutch slavery to black emancipation – so does the novel's historical setting imply the recurrence of these modernization projects across large time spans: the 1820s Cape Colony (where the novel takes place), the 1930s Afrikaner farm (from which it inherits its generic form), and the 1970s antiapartheid movement (from which it borrows its political message).

However, despite the triumphal tone Piet and Galant each in turn displays, the legal codas that begin and end the novel ironize their belief in a definitive transformation from dependent primitivism to political and economic modernity. These texts overlay an abstracting lexicon of liberal jurisprudence onto Galant's failed uprising and so limit both parties' claims to self-determination. As the British High Court acknowledges, according to liberal principles of free contract they cannot argue "for slavery in the abstract" (514). Such a ruling would be anathema to English law, which had banned both slavery in England and the slave trade across the empire (1807). But because the Cape Colony possessed a feudal agricultural economy ratified "by the laws from the earliest period of its colonization," which in turn allowed "free Inhabitants...to invest a very important part of their means and their welfare in the purchases of slaves," Galant's rebellion threatens "the good order and well being of the State" (514). By this logic, both Piet and Galant's appeals to "freedom" imitate liberal rhetoric but lack the economic development necessary for genuine autonomy. The Court's ruling may ultimately side with the van der Merwes and their fellow slaveholders, but it does so only by demystifying their *own* mythology of Dutch self-sufficiency as a disguise for economic backwardness. Characterizing Galant's "disappointed hopes of freedom" as a form drained of content, an inauthentic glimpse of liberal

equality unsuited for the Cape Colony, the Court's verdict implies that liberalism remains a closed horizon for Dutch settlers and black slaves alike (517). Given the complex interpenetration of British, Dutch, and African legal and economic systems, the Court concedes that liberal *forms* are readily available to Piet and Galant, but only *as forms*. Feudal agriculture is still assumed to be the dominant mode of production on Cape farms, and feudalism and liberal "freedom" antithetical concepts. For this reason, Galant's rebellion can only be a "treasonous" revolt against that form of forms itself, "the State," and not an expression of his (or Dutch farmers') passage to liberal modernity: "In a Country where slavery exists, a rising of the slaves is *nothing else* than a state of war...for hence States can be, and we know have been, totally overthrown" (522, my emphasis).

We are now in a much better position to specify exactly *how* neomodernist experimentalism constructs a "rivalrous" historical narrative. If, as Coetzee argues in his "What Is a Classic?" lecture, from South Africa's perspective metropolitan culture "appears to...exist in some transcendent realm," this stems in large part from the country's semiperipheral position in the world-system (7). As Brink's novel makes clear, metropolitan "modernity" remains an abstract form in the semiperiphery, present as an aspiration ("freedom") and overarching legal-economic framework (liberalism) but not as a concrete mode of production that the semiperiphery could ever ultimately inhabit. Both Afrikaner and black African nationalisms seize on *particular* modernization projects (e.g., plantation agriculture) as routes to cultural and political growth, but they remain out of synch with metropolitan "modernity" (*laissez-faire* liberalism, the language economy). Late apartheid *plaasromans* thus dramatize what Andre Gunder Frank has called "the development of underdevelopment": the notion that, though peripheral economies may "develop" more advanced economic institutions, the *structural*

relations between core and peripheral states ensures that Third World modernization is always a belated modernization vis-à-vis that of the First World (“The Development of Underdevelopment”). Afrikaner laws governing slave labor may make possible mass export production, but only when they are acknowledged to be archaic anachronisms being unevenly incorporated into *laissez-faire* trade; Galant may find in liberalism rhetorical forms for African resistance, but those forms have no effective standing in a feudal slave economy; Hendrik may assume control over Magda’s farm and its resources, but only after material production has been displaced onto the periphery and a new language economy enshrined in the metropole.

All of this is to say in more detail the proposition with which I started this chapter: modernity is something that passes *through* the semiperiphery without ever being present *to* it. Nevertheless, because the semiperiphery is the site where metropolitan and peripheral economies meet and communicate, global structural relations become more visible there *as such* than in either the metropole or the periphery. Where “modernity” appears self-evidently as the need to develop to new, more advanced economic institutions in both metropole and periphery, the semiperiphery’s role in mediating between a series of discrepant economies (feudalism/*laissez-faire* trade, industrialism/the language economy) reveals a disavowed formal structure repeating within each of these dispensations. Mediations that are normally covered over by the glittering promises of modernity here become visible for all to see, emptying modernity of its substantive content and ossifying it into a repetitious structure.

If the *plaasroman* became the favored genre for white South African experimentalism, then, this was in large part because it presented a formal container that could track the changing set of economic systems Anglo-South Africans found themselves mediating. Neither a subjective retreat from history (à la Lukács) nor a medium for social transformation (à la

Adorno), the turn to modernism allegorizes formal *economic* structures through formal *fictional* ones. After all, as Magda observes, being a medium involves being “refabricated...[as] something else”: one can see what the medium has transformed into, the message it now carries, but the medium itself remains opaque when it is approached solely in terms of content – say, industrialism, or post-Fordism. By using a conventional generic form to demonstrate the structural parallels between 1930s export agriculture and late twentieth century globalization, antiapartheid writers substantiate Coetzee’s claim that South African history can best be narrated through literature’s formalist mode of historicism. Where economic communication is the *raison d’etre* of the semiperiphery, so too can self-reflexive musings on the novelistic medium, or mediumhood in general, show the scope and shape of formal continuities across historical periods. And if the language economy’s premium on linguistic dexterity and communicative labor make nemodernist *plaasromans*’ mediations more visible than in past farm novels, this self-consciousness is merely an intensification and generalization of what was always true of the semiperiphery: there, modernity is experienced as communication, information, and signs, and not as a material reality.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Eliot's lecture took place before the Virgil Society and was published as *What Is A Classic?* the next year.

<sup>2</sup> See in particular *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*.

<sup>3</sup> Mamdani goes so far as to claim that apartheid is only the last, and therefore the most anachronistic, instance of "indirect rule" (7).

<sup>4</sup> For an analysis of how leftist politics and theory deemphasized liberation from capitalism and the state after 1968, see Simon During, "Refusing Capitalism? Theory and Cultural Studies After 1968" in *Exit Capitalism: Literary Culture, Theory, and Post-Secular Modernity*.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Stiglitz's view is representative: "even when not guilty of hypocrisy, the West has driven the globalization agenda, ensuring that it garners a disproportionate share of the benefits, at the expense of the developing world" (*Globalization and Its Discontents*, 7).

<sup>6</sup> See chapter 3 for a discussion of *Voorslag* magazine. On Vilakazi and Dhlomo, see Attwell, *Rewriting Modernity*, 77-110.

<sup>7</sup> To give a sense of just how jarring modernist and postmodernist techniques were in 1970s South Africa, Frances Bowers, writing in the *Cape Times*, believed Coetzee's *Dusklands* showed "evidence of careless editing" because it narrated two separate deaths scenes for one of its characters (5 June 1974). Nor was Bowers the only reviewer to be confused by this: both of Ravan Press's readers were similarly puzzled by the contradictory deaths, and Ravan Press's director, Peter Randall, urged Coetzee (unsuccessfully) to explain what was going on in the scene.

<sup>8</sup> I should point out that I am using Nkosi here as exemplary of a trend in South African literary criticism, not as a model of South African literary history. Nkosi favors a linear, developmentalist framework for literary historiography: "At the risk of being accused of supporting some version of a linear history of development, I think we ought to take seriously the idea that black South African writers may not in fact become postmodernist before they have brought to completion their modernist agenda" ("Postmodernism and Black Writing in South Africa," 84). As will become increasingly apparent, I, in contrast, view modernism more as a transferable set of aesthetic practices that has served a concrete sociopolitical function in multiple time periods. My interest in Nkosi, then, stems more from the cultural currency modernism began to accrue in this period than in his specific version of modernism.

<sup>9</sup> Neil Lazarus's "Modernism and Modernity: T. W. Adorno and Contemporary White South African Literature" develops a similar argument about South African neomodernism. For Lazarus, even though South African modernism is temporally and geographically distant from European high modernism, it nevertheless conforms to Adorno's understanding of modernism as an oppositional set of aesthetic practices critiquing instrumental reason "in the antinomies of its

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own formal language” (quoted in Lazarus 143). Though less polemically stated than in Nkosi, we can see here a parallel move away from programmatic political discourse to an emphasis on the formalism of Gordimer, Brink, Breytenbach, and Coetzee.

Furthermore, Nkosi and Lazarus’s championing of formalism suggests that South Africa played a key role in consolidating an ethics of late modernism in literary criticism. Nkosi, Lazarus, David Attwell, Michael Chapman, and Derek Attridge all use an Adornian notion of modernism or “late modernism” to defend an “engaged” experimental literature primarily written by white artists (Attwell, *J. M. Coetzee: South African and the Politics of Writing*; Chapman, “Campbell Then and Now: The Case of the Politically Incorrect Poet”; Attridge, “Modernist Form and the Ethics of Otherness” in *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*). Because Western intellectuals were highly invested in South Africa at the time most of these studies were written (the 1980s), we might hypothesize that the need to write “committed” experimental literature in South Africa – and to recuperate experimental writing there *as* “committed” – provided an essential test case through which literary critics were able to shed formalism’s conservative overtones and rebrand it within an oppositional register.

<sup>10</sup> I realize that treating Gordimer as an experimentalist may seem counter-intuitive given her close connection with critical realism (see, for instance, Stephen Clingman’s Lukacsian reading of her novels in *The Novels of Nadine Gordimer*). But in her 1970s fiction, and especially in her Booker Prize-winning *The Conservationist*, she frequently employs symbol and myth as ways of moving outside a more narrow sense of engaged realism.

<sup>11</sup> I borrow the notion of a “commonsense” definition of race from Deborah Posel’s analysis of the 1950 Population Registration Act in “Race as Common Sense.” Posel is writing against Saul Dubow’s argument that South Africa possessed a pseudo-“scientific” definition of race with ties to eugenic discourse. For Posel, such scientific debates never penetrated into the substance of apartheid legislation, even if they did contribute to a general sense of racial hierarchy.

<sup>12</sup> This at times reached the tragically absurd. In 1955, a rail worker named Willie Vickerman was reclassified as a “native” after living his entire life as a “Coloured” because the census worker believed that “in Buchuanaland [where Vickerman was born] there are no coloureds” (Posel 23). The decision completely turned Vickerman’s life and finances upside down: he lived in a neighborhood reserved for Coloureds with his five Coloured children, paid the same taxes as other Coloureds, and worked in a job designated for Coloureds, all of which he was no longer allowed by law to do.

<sup>13</sup> Friday’s silence has long been a controversial topic in criticism on *Foe*. The general parameters of this debate are best represented by Benita Parry and Gayatri Spivak’s responses to the novel. For Parry, “homages to the mystical properties and prestige of muteness undermine the critique of that condition where oppression inflicts and provokes silence” (“Speech and Silence in the Fiction of J. M. Coetzee,” 158). In contrast, for Spivak “it is Friday rather than Susan who is the emphatic agent of withholding in the text. For every territorial space that is coded by colonialism *and* every command for the native to yield his ‘voice,’ there is a space of withholding, marked by a secret that may not be a secret but cannot be unlocked. ‘The native,’

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whatever that might mean, is not only a victim, but also an agent. The curious guardian at the margin who will not inform” (*A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 190).

<sup>14</sup> Brink’s *Looking on Darkness* (1974) was the first novel by an Afrikaans writer to be banned. Censors claimed that the novel “harmed race relations by dealing ‘in an improper manner with the abuse of non-whites’” (Peter McDonald, *The Literature Police: Apartheid Censorship and Its Cultural Consequences*). In general, censors banned white South African writings far less frequently than black South African ones, in large part because white writers were given some leeway for “artistic considerations.” As Gordimer explains, the censorship system used the fiction of “the likely reader” to ban black novels that were “generally of a high quality” on the pretense that black novels were more “likely to reach the black masses” than avant-garde white writing (“Censors and Unconfessed History,” 254-5).

<sup>15</sup> Like Coetzee’s writings in *Giving Offense*, Gordimer also wrote extensively on censorship. See “Censored, Banned, Gagged” (1963), “Speak Out: The Necessity for Protest” (1971), “The Unkillable Word” (1980), “Censors and Unconfessed History” (1980). For a useful survey of apartheid censorship and writers’ responses to it, see Peter D. McDonald, *The Literature Police*.

<sup>16</sup> The most influential example of this is Derek Attridge, *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*, 1-31.

<sup>17</sup> Jameson is leaning on Serge Guilbaut’s *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, which argues that abstract expressionism valorized a depoliticized sense of “individual expression” during the Cold War. At the same time, this very “depoliticization” was itself a highly politicized gesture designed to contrast American “freedom” with Soviet social realism. Aijaz Ahmad also characterizes postwar modernism as an effort to “squeeze a particular ideological meaning out of each literary text.” Ahmad continues: “The peculiar blend of formalist detachment and deliberate distancing from forms of the prose narrative, with their inescapable locations in social life, into reified readings of short lyrics was, so to speak, the objective correlate of other kinds of distancing and reification required by the larger culture” (*In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*, 52-3).

<sup>18</sup> Black and Afrikaner writers’ autobiographies seldom contain a similar recognition scene, perhaps because for black writers political exile meant something very different from modernist ideals of cultural exile, while Afrikaans had been isolated from modernism much more than writing in English. Even André Brink, one of the more self-consciously modernist of the *Sestigers* – a dissident group of Afrikaans writers who sought to “modernize” Afrikaans literature by importing European avant-garde techniques – speeds over his youthful enchantment with Ionesco and Beckett, acknowledging the fascination they held for him but refraining from drawing a genealogical connection between their work and his own (*A Fork in the Road*, 77-7).

<sup>19</sup> The most extensive treatment of the history of South African literary schooling can be found in David Johnson, *Shakespeare and South Africa*.



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<sup>20</sup> This sense of modernism's oppositional status may also stem from the disrepute modernism was suffering from during the postwar period. Britain's "Angry Young Men" (John Osborne, Kingsley Amis, Alan Sillitoe) attacked modernism for its social elitism and anti-realist aesthetic, championing in its place social realism and a focus on working-class life (see Alan Sinfield, *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain*, 60-85; James English, *Comic Transactions: Literature, Humor, and the Politics of Community in Twentieth-Century Britain*, 128-59; Kalliney, *Cities of Affluence and Anger*, 112-145). J. Dillon Brown argues that Caribbean writers like George Lamming embraced modernism precisely *because* it was in disrepute, finding in modernist difficulty a means for both resisting assimilation into postwar literary orthodoxies *and* claiming affinity with a highly intellectualized aesthetic tradition. I would propose that modernist held a similar appeal to South African writers, who prized both modernism's cultural capital and its outsider status ("Exile and Cunning: The Tactical Difficulty of George Lamming").

<sup>21</sup> In addition to Dovey, see Attridge, *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*; Marais, "'Little enough, less than little: nothing': Ethics, Engagement, and Change in the Fiction of J.M. Coetzee" and "Accommodating the Other: Derek Attridge on Literature, Ethics, and the Work of J. M. Coetzee."

<sup>22</sup> These essays are collected in *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*. See, in particular, "A Note on Writing" and "Time, Tense, and Aspect in Kafka's 'The Burrow.'"

<sup>23</sup> Many other pro-modernist South Africans had similar connections to Euro-American academic circles. Lewis Nkosi, for example, taught at several American universities (University of Wyoming, University of California-Irvine) during his forced exile from South Africa, as did many of his fellow exiles.

<sup>24</sup> Rita Barnard would seem to be one of the few exceptions to this trend. Her work on Coetzee draws attention to how "the idea of payment and the concomitant ethos of monetary exchange, debt, ownership, and the like, is an extraordinarily important motif in Coetzee's work, even though it has in large measure escaped critical notice" (*Apartheid and Beyond: South African Writers and the Politics of Place*, 39).

<sup>25</sup> I take the term from Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. The idea of "minor literature" has been highly influential in theorizing postcolonial literature, having first been adapted to a colonial setting in David Lloyd's *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism*.

<sup>26</sup> The history behind the publication of *In the Heart of the Country* is quite complex. Coetzee initially signed a contract with Ravan to publish an edition of the novel that contained an English narrative interspersed with Afrikaans dialogue, but the edition was embargoed while censors decided whether it was "undesirable" or not. During the time that the novel's status was in limbo, Coetzee secured Secker & Warburg to distribute an international edition written solely in English. The South African embargo was eventually lifted and the Ravan edition published, but only after the international edition had already been distributed in Britain and the United States.

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For this reason, the original bilingual edition of the text received less attention than the English-only version both at the time of its publication and in subsequent criticism. When quoting the novel, I take all Afrikaans quotes from the 1977 Ravan Press edition. English quotes are taken from the later Vintage edition.

<sup>27</sup> In an interview with Lawrence Rainey, David Attwell, and Benjamin Madsen, Coetzee explicitly draws a connection between grammar and ethics: “Languages certainly do articulate in their very grammar a disposition toward the other that is language-specific. One obvious example would be the treatment of address and of the second-person pronoun. In this sense one might say that language embodies an ethics” (“An Interview with J. M. Coetzee,” 849).

<sup>28</sup> This is especially true of the scenes in which Hendrik “rapes” Magda. Though Magda initially expresses a fear that Hendrik will “plot” a “deeper invasion and possession... leav[ing] me nothing of myself,” she subsequently entreats Hendrik to tell her if she is “doing it right” and if she makes him “feel happy” (117, 120). Magda admits to being “humiliated” by the rapes, and even suggests that “it is my humiliation he wants” (122). But her fascination with the rapes – and her almost eager willingness to suffer such humiliations – makes one wonder whether she may actively *want* to be humiliated for her privileged position as a white South African woman.

<sup>29</sup> See Aumont, *Montage Eisenstein*; Bordwell, *The Cinema of Eisenstein*. For a perspective the links Eisenstein’s thinking on ecstasy to his work as a graphic artist, rather than as a filmmaker, see James Goodwin, “Eisenstein, Ecstasy, Joyce, and Hebraism.”

<sup>30</sup> E.g., “A reference to Eisenstein does not convey a nostalgic yearning to be in Russia in 1924, but rather attempts to chart the connection between Eisenstein’s imagery and the failure of his project... In my work that vocabulary and the dramatis personae haven’t changed much, but there is no longer the triumphant ending you see in the cinema of Eisenstein” (quoted in Cameron et al., *William Kentridge*, 14-5).

<sup>31</sup> “I think...there is a sense of trusting childhood more than adulthood, that provides a reason for a lot of the objects that I draw. These come from the images of those objects that I saw in childhood – not necessarily 1950s objects, but maybe 1930s objects that would have been illustrated in books I was looking at in the 1950s.” (quoted in Neal Benezra et al., *William Kentridge*, 71)

<sup>32</sup> Rosalind Krauss associates Kentridge’s art with a turn away from the “post-medium” condition of postmodern art – i.e., its concern with disembodied images – and toward a more modernist-style concern with medium specificity. “Kentridge is not pursuing film as such but is, rather, building a new medium on the technical support of a widespread and mostly mass-cultural cinematic practice, welcoming its condition as a popular rather than a high-art” (“The Rock’: William Kentridge’s Drawings for Projection,” 14).

<sup>33</sup> If the term “hyper-mediation” seems to conjure up images of Baudrillard’s postmodern simulacrum, it might be more useful to focus on the contrast between these two forms of “hyper-mediation.” After all, Baudrillard is a neo-Platonist who believes the “political economy of

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signs” cuts subjects off from a more authentic reality (see, e.g., *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*). Magda’s solipsistic monologue also distances her from the “real world,” but for her hyper-mediation is a *liberating* gesture that frees her from her own thoughts and establishes a more reciprocal connection with other characters. In other words, Coetzee reverses the political valences found in Baudrillard’s work on mediation, valorizing mediation for its progressive potential.

<sup>34</sup> As I have already intimated, Magda’s fantasies of self-mortification – not to mention the uncertain ontological status of her narrative – make it difficult to say whether these rapes are “really happening” or only fantasy. Coetzee returns to rape as a troubling solution to past abuses in *Disgrace*, where David Lurie and his daughter Lucy debate not so much fantasies of victimization as whether willing accepting abuse can rectify the apartheid past.

<sup>35</sup> After the shock of the National Party’s victory in the 1948 elections and the establishment of apartheid legislation, liberal historians excluded class from their studies and focused instead on race relations. For an explanation of how South African historiography shift to a class-based notion of race, see Christopher Saunders, *The Making of the South African Past*.

<sup>36</sup> The foundational post-*operaismo* texts include Marazzi, *Capital and the Affects*; Franco “Bifo” Berardi, *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy*; Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*; and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*.

<sup>37</sup> This dialectic of innovation and response is one of the key features of *operaismo* and post-*operaismo* thought. For post-*operaismo* thinkers, the working class is the sole engine of history, production, and capitalism, while capitalists merely co-opt this productive capacity for their own purposes. At stake in this distinction is a rejection of the Marxian dialectic, in which capital and labor, the state and the masses, sublimate their difference into a new totality, thus evolving to a new mode of production. Adopting the Spinozan notion of “immanence” (by way of Deleuze), the post-*operaismos* view “transcendentals” (the state, capital, God) as metaphysical fictions imposed on the productive “multitude.” Thus, instead of history being produced from the collision between “transcendental” (capital) and “immanent” (labor) forces, post-*operaismos* believe history to be generated solely by the “immanent” “multitude,” whose labors are then circumscribed by “transcendental” forms. For a full exploration of this process, see Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 69-92. On Spinoza’s influence on post-*operaismo* thought, see Negri, *Subversive Spinoza*.

<sup>38</sup> See Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital*.

<sup>39</sup> International sanctions mainly consisted of banks and countries divesting their shares in South African businesses, rather than trade embargoes. Thus South Africa continued being able to provide mineral and industrial products to the rest of the world but was cut off from modernizing their services and technologies sectors (Rodney Davenport and Christopher Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern History*, 535-40).

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<sup>40</sup> As late as 1990, when he was released from prison, Nelson Mandela affirmed that “the nationalization of the mines, banks, and monopoly industry is the policy of the ANC and a change or modification of our views in this regard is inconceivable” (quoted in Marais 146).

<sup>41</sup> On postcolonial disillusionment in Africa, see Glen Retief, “Homoeroticism and the Failure of African Nationalism in Ayi Kwei Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones*”; T. Kitenge-Ngoy, “The Novel of Postindependence Disillusionment in Central Africa”; and Esty, “Excremental Postcolonialism.”

<sup>42</sup> Many of his Coetzee’s other fictions express skepticism about the political efficacy of the manifesto’s polemical messages. For example, in *The Master of Petersburg* Sergey Nechayev bests Dostoevsky by provoking him into writing a manifesto denouncing Nechayev and his fellow Nihilists. As Dostoevsky soon discovers, the content of his manifesto is less important than the very fact that he has written one about the Nihilists, who use it to popularize their movement.

<sup>43</sup> For a dissenting view that characterizes Black Consciousness as a competing form of liberalism, see Mark Sanders, *Complicities: The Intellectual and Apartheid*, 159-96. Regardless of whether or not Black Consciousness reinstated some version of liberalism pluralism, Black Consciousness thinkers like Biko were unequivocal about this disdain for white liberalism: “They have been doing things for blacks, on behalf of blacks, and because of blacks. When the blacks announce that the time has come for them to do things for themselves and all by themselves all white liberals shout blue murder!” (Biko, *I Write*, 25).

<sup>44</sup> Monica Popescu, *South African Literature Beyond the Cold War*, 61; Patrick Bond, “Introduction: Two Economies – Or One System of Superexploitation,” 7. Though literary readings of Communism and South African literature have been sparse, Popescu’s book is one welcome exception. Academics influenced by the New Left were especially critical of the ANC’s tacit assumption that the Marxian class struggle could be transparently juxtaposed onto black and white Africans. After all, most of the resistance leaders were part of a budding bourgeoisie who had been educated at elite black universities like Fort Hare; few shared the same socioeconomic background as the impoverished Africans they claimed to represent.

<sup>45</sup> For a fuller discussion of how the dialectic is being read differently here than in Marxist criticism, see my discussion of Jameson in chapter 1. As I make clear there, my differences from Marxist theories of modernization concern not so much the centrality of the dialectic to capitalism as analyses of the dialectic that read it as a *solely* successivist march through time, rather than as an amalgamation of progressive modernization and stable structure.

<sup>46</sup> Lukács’s most direct attack on these figures can be found in “The Ideology of Modernism.”

<sup>47</sup> Coetzee’s observation that Eliot’s “narrowly academic, Eurocentric education had prepared him for little else but life as a mandarin in one of the New England ivory towers” could just as easily apply to Coetzee’s own position in an Afrikaner-dominated South Africa, where life as a university professor (Coetzee worked in the English department at the University of Cape Town

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before turning to full-time novel writing) would have appeared to be the only option available to an English-speaking white South African with cultural pretensions. Most of the state-subsided publishing industry's efforts were focused on fostering Afrikaans, rather than English, productions. In contrast, occupational opportunities for South Africans abroad were much more common in business and technology, not to mention the tantalizing prospect that London and New York's vast Anglophone publishing networks presented to aspiring writers.

<sup>48</sup> Though some black writers did engage with the space of the farm, black Africans' focus tended to be directed at the city rather than the countryside during the apartheid years. Urban meeting spots like the shebeen, American cars, the stylized gangsterism of *tsotsi* youths, and modern fashions were all more interesting and pressing topics for a rapidly urbanizing black workforce than the rural reserves they were leaving behind. In addition, the official apartheid line that black Africans were "traditionally" rural, and therefore should be isolated from "European" urbanization as much as possible, lent a politicized edge to urban fiction. Thus many of the more politicized black writers from the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s (Lewis Nkosi, Bloke Modisane, Can Themba, Ezekiel Mphahlele) worked closely with *Drum* magazine, the central venue for urban-inflected fictions within the black literary scene. Even for those writers who *did* portray rural farmlands – Bessie Head, for example – the main emphasis of their fictions was on industrial modernization and its impact on impoverished communities, and not on the pastoral vision that dominated white farm novels.

<sup>49</sup> By placing his novel in the past, Brink was also able to avoid the censorship that had plagued many of his other novels. Topics that were taboo in texts with ostensibly present-day settings, such as the racial violence that Gallant and his fellow slaves perpetrate against the Van der Merwes, was deemed acceptable when it was displaced onto other time periods or more abstract settings.

## CODA: NEOLIBERALISM, MAGICAL REALISM, AND THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY WORLD-SYSTEM

My concern in this study has been with a particular class fraction of Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South African writers who understood the world-system in affective terms. In confronting this literary tradition, my goal has been less to narrate a comprehensive history of these affective representations than to provide an analysis of certain representative moments and authors: Olive Schreiner and Bernard Shaw's sentimental constitutionalism, Sarah Gertrude Millin and William Plomer's envious professionalism, Elizabeth Bowen and J. M. Keynes's affect-driven, cyclical historiography, and J. M. Coetzee's ecstatic mode of formalist history. This approach has been particularly appropriate given the discontinuous historical trajectory through which Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South African literature have evolved, with key genres like the Anglo-Irish Big House novel, the South African *plaasroman*/farm novel, and the South African mine novel disappearing and reappearing at periodic intervals. But such a discontinuous narrative also raises one final question: If semiperipheral literature conforms to a cyclical framework of periodic waves, how and where do transitions from one cycle to the next occur? What comes after the twentieth-century world-system I have described in this project? Through what literary forms, and in what geographical locations, can we trace its continuities with – and divergences from – the post-imperial world-system Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South African writing negotiated?

The 1970s seem a good place to start. Radical, liberal, and conservative thinkers agree that the 1970s ushered in a radically new economic order. For Daniel Bell, the decade saw the “coming of post-industrial society,” a new information-oriented society that would shed industrialism's weighty skin and ensconce in its place a hierarchy of technical elites (*The*

*Coming of the Post-Industrial Society*). In contrast, for Giovanni Arrighi the 1970s' break was less about new technologies and services than new forms of social and economic organization. According to Arrighi, a "multilayered subcontracting system" began to flourish across the world during this period, replacing post-World War II assurances of steady work and a social safety net with "informalization" and "flexible" labor (*The Long Twentieth Century*, 355). At the same time, conservative thinkers like Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman carried gleeful tidings of the end of the welfare state and the rise of a transnational business world unfettered by government regulation or burdensome taxation. Such policies were first put in place in Latin American countries and gradually imported to European and American countries during the 1980s, with their most visible instantiations taking place in Pinochet's Chile, Thatcher's Britain, and Reagan's United States.<sup>1</sup>

These phenomena are usually grouped together under the label "neoliberalism," a somewhat ambiguous term that is often employed to simultaneously describe a specific set of governmental practices (reductions in entitlement programs, deregulation, minimal government interference in the economy, reduced taxes, and reductions to public expenditure on infrastructure-building) *and* a collective disenchantment with the welfare state. Thus business interests and popular unrest converge in neoliberal thought in the amorphous concept of "freedom": a catch-all term that can cover individual "freedom" from "totalitarian" governance, a burgeoning ethic of self-reliance, and the "freedom" for businesses to pursue profit without regard for social uplift or collective well-being. The most obvious – and theatricalized – expression of neoliberal "freedom" would of course be the present-day Tea Party, which co-opts the rhetoric of the American Revolution to hypothesize a connection between personal freedom, government tyranny, and the tax codes funding welfare programs. In the eyes of the Tea Party,

*all* government activity becomes an unwanted imposition: taxation becomes socialism, socialism becomes totalitarianism, and the only solution is to do away with the welfare state. That such a project may erode the social services many Tea Partiers themselves utilize, or may contribute to income inequalities that the Keynesian welfare state tried to reduce, seems less important than the need to assert a form of radical individualism in the face of government collectivism. Privatization is the gold standard of neoliberalism; individual entrepreneurs like Ayn Rand's John Galt, its folk heroes; the welfare state, its nemesis.

A healthy dose of skepticism should greet any such call to a radical break, especially one which, like the Tea Party's, indulges in the sort of historical allegorizing we have already seen in plantation and mine novels. After all, even neoliberalism does not do away entirely with government; instead, it alters the technologies through which government operates, often consolidating police powers, military strength, and the surveillance of citizens and illegal immigrants at the same time as reducing welfare spending. It promises the same specter of modernization that had motivated such contradictory programs as imperialism, decolonization, global capitalism, and the welfare state itself. Our task as critics, then, is to disentangle the affective investments underlying neoliberalism from its specific technologies of governance, showing how the intimate emotions developed in popular culture acclimate individuals to the neoliberal market – or, in many cases, how these emotions identify the continuities and contradictions present in this new phase of modernity, namely, its failure to deliver on its promises of universal uplift.

Magical realism provides an excellent venue through which to analyze the affects co-produced alongside neoliberalism. Though my remarks will be more allusive than comprehensive for reasons of space, it is not difficult to see the degree to which magical realism



has shadowed the spread of neoliberalism across the globe. If we look simply at a small collection of some of the most influential magical realist novels from the past 40 years – Gabriel García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) and *Autumn of the Patriarch* (1975), Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1980), Ben Okri’s *Stars of the Night Curfew* (1988) and *The Famished Road* (1991), and Zakes Mda’s *Ways of Dying* (1995) – we can see how uncannily they overlap with the years leading up to and immediately following the implementation of neoliberal policies. García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was one of the heralded Latin American “Boom” novels that flooded European and North American publishing houses in the 1960s and 1970s, and whose emergence has been closely tied by Latin American critics to the fall of dictatorships and the rise of “*el consenso neoliberal*” (“the neoliberal consensus”) in the region;<sup>2</sup> Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* was written just after the end of the Indian Emergency, when India was just beginning to provide subcontracting for European and American businesses; Okri’s fictions take place during the 1970s and 1980s oil boom, which introduced neoliberal market policies to Nigeria; and Mda’s *Ways of Dying* was written immediately after the end of apartheid, when the ANC shifted course from their earlier socialist platform and embraced a neoliberal economic platform.

We can therefore trace neoliberalism’s wave-like migration across the globe through magical realist novels, from 1970s Latin America to 1980s India, and from late-1980s Nigeria to mid-1990s South Africa. Like Coetzee’s *In the Heart of the Country*, these novels hollow out the promises of developmental rhetoric, revealing how a supposedly “past” moment of modernization (e.g., the welfare state) still appears as a desirable object even as newer, more “advanced” forms of economic modernization are being touted. This homology between Coetzee’s and magical realism’s critiques of modernization is not accidental: as we have seen,

the world-system evolves in a series of interlocking waves, and what is an end to one cycle (the Anglo semiperiphery) intersects with newly emerging cycles (e.g., neoliberalism). Indeed, the convergence between modernism and social critique we find in Coetzee has long been regarded as a central component of magical realism. As David Mikics puts it, “The magical realists’ project to reveal the intimate interdependence between reality and fantasy is shared by the modernists” (372). Magical realists, Mikics continues, use these modernist techniques to “will a transformation of the object of representation” – i.e., to spark social change (372). But where Coetzee focuses this critique inwards, to the conventions and historicity of the *plaasroman* genre, magical realism gestures outward, seeking to explain the puzzling palimpsests of different forms of development it witnesses through what Franco Moretti calls “stor[ies] of incorporation”: “When the pressure of the world-system... forces your country into a more complete – and hence more rigid integration... [a] thousand and one possibilities then really do become a thousand and one dead ends: the multiplicity of possible developments, a set route” (*Modern Epic*, 245). In other words, we can view magical realist novels as swansongs for alternative development, testaments to the *affective* force non-neoliberal modernization continued to hold even as the generalization of neoliberalism prevented those other paths from being realized.

García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is a multi-generational epic that revolves around the exploits of the Buendía family and the fictionalized settlement of Macando, an isolated town located in the Latin American interior. Best known for its juxtaposition of magical happenings (flying carpets, levitations, ancient curses) and modern technology (pianolas, telescopes, guns), the novel’s most striking aspect, as Moretti observes, is how modern technology appears as more magical than the town’s indigenous marvels: magic “belongs to the

*future*: to the West, to the core of the world-system. Compared with the compass or the mechanized pianola – not to speak of ice – flying carpets and spooks are irrelevancies” (*Modern Epic*, 249). Furthermore, as Moretti also notes, there are two “phases” to the novel. During the first, the possibilities of modern technology “pervade every page of the story”: the items the gypsies bring “enrich the life of Macando: [they] make it more varied, more open” (244). In the second phase, however, war reaches Macando, and with it the autocratic dictates of the centralized nation-state. Like other “Boom” writers, García Márquez was highly critical of the totalitarian bent to Latin American politics, and so his portrayals of the state are tinged with hostility, stressing the senseless violence behind the state’s assassination of all but one of Colonel Aureliano Buendía’s children as punishment for his rebellion. But the war’s end also opens Macando to banana developers, drawing it closer to the international markets and laissez-faire economic programs that would eventually come to be known as neoliberalism. Macando is increasingly caught between these two blocs, forced to either submit to the government’s autocratic decisions or to labor as a peripheral satellite economy for American developers.

In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, no decision is possible between neoliberalism’s “banana republics” and the dictatorial nation-state. Both alternatives are equally undesirable, and each jars with the heady expectations of the novel’s first phase. Faced with this impasse, the novel’s magical objects and events attempt to rescue the utopian promise contained in each of these modernization projects. By hearkening back to alternative scenarios in which trade with traveling gypsies brought magical wonders to Macando, or in which the establishment of a cohesive community spawned similar wonders (ghosts, prophecies), García Márquez suggests that development could have occurred otherwise, that the dictatorial state and neoliberal economics are not the only two endpoints to modernization. But the novel can only imagine

such alternatives in their anterior realm of magic, where modernization retains its alluring promise but is cut off from the disenchanting world of modern reality. The novel brings this point home by in effect eating its own tail, concluding with a prophecy that contains the entirety of the novel's narrative, and which ends in the destruction of both Macando and the prophecy's manuscript. As García Márquez explains in the novel's final line, "races condemned to one hundred years of solitude [do] not have a second opportunity on earth" – the very magicalness of this narrative means that it cannot be revisited except in the self-immolating space of the narrative itself (422). Alternative development is a possibility, but one which "actually existing modernity" has cordoned off into the fantastical realm of narrative.

Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* makes a similar equation between magic and failed modernization; only in Rushdie's case, this missed opportunity is definitively associated with the Indian nation-state as it recedes under the pressures of neoliberal globalization. Saleem Sinai is an Indian who is born at the stroke of midnight on August 15, 1947, the day of India's independence. Saleem is blessed with a preternaturally acute sense of smell and a telepathic connection to 1,000 other "midnight's children": the children who were born between midnight and 1 am on India's day of independence. Rushdie parades the openly allegorical nature of the children, as Saleem himself claims to be "handcuffed to history" (3).<sup>3</sup> Saleem finds echoes between India's history and his own life at every turn, and if even he at times wonders whether these resonances are the paranoid imaginings of a deranged narcissist, the way in which he and his family recreate the central events of post-independence history provides a compelling case for his allegorical function. The Partition, the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965, and Bangladesh's secession from Pakistan are all translated into intra-familial squabbles, while the 1,001 children

establish a parliament-style forum, “The Midnight’s Children Conference,” styling themselves as a shadow government representing the Indian people.

As in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the exuberant promise these magical children represent gradually falls apart, this time under the twin pressures of free market individualism and totalitarian governance. Cracks begin to form in the Conference when Saleem’s rival, Shiva, rejects Saleem’s Communist-inflected collectivism (“Do not permit the endless duality of masses-and-classes, capital-and-labour, them and us to come between us”) and replaces it with an ethic of self-interested individualism: “No, little rich boy, there is only money-and-poverty, and have-and-lack, and right-and-left; there is only me-against-the-world” (292-3). Class, religious, and ethnic differences begin to plague the Conference, leaving them with little sense of a collective national mission. Soon after, in a fictionalization of the sterilization campaign led by Sanjay Gandhi during the India Emergency, the children are forced to undergo sterilization procedures that also remove their powers. According to the Indian government, the children pose a threat to the state: their very multiplicity endangers the fiction of a unified state, one in which a single representative individual would embody the totality of the nation – as in the refrain “India is [Prime Minister] Indira [Gandhi] and Indira is India” (483). Pulled between an individualist ethic in which the Conference, like the state, has no meaningful role to play, and a totalitarian state that crushes any diversity, Saleem literally “cracks” into 1,001 pieces. The unity-within-diversity that the children and their magical powers had represented, the fantasy of a state expansive enough to nurture multiple types of modernity simultaneously, becomes disaggregated into a singular state and the “four hundred five hundred six” individuals bursting from its seams (533). By the end of the novel, the magical moment when state and individual

advancement were intertwined has passed, and the only available options appear to be either an autocratic state or crass self-interest.

If Rushdie's novel details the state's recession as an engine of collective development, Ben Okri's fiction emphasizes the flip side of neoliberal privatization: its illusory, ungrounded notions of value. For example, in "Stars of the Night Curfew" the "powerful" potions marketed by a travelling salesman promise fantastic cures to almost any ailment imaginable: "I said that it could cure anything from headaches to elephantiasis... [that] it was good for children and old people, that it gave more power, more iron, than any existing drug" (104). In a powerful reading of the story, Sarah Lincoln argues that the very magicalness of the potion – an ordinary object whose value is "inflated" by believing that it can "act on the world in ways that exceed its material substance" – allegorizes the inflationary wealth produced by the Nigerian oil boom ("Petro-Magic Realism': Ben Okri's Inflationary Economy," 256). Like the Nigerian economy, which expanded at an astounding rate following the discovery of oil, the potion's value is a "fetishistic misrecognition of the social and ecological relations on which the wealth was founded" (251). As crowds gather to see the potion's healing capabilities, the story's narrator is increasingly disillusioned with an economy that prizes spectacle over substance: "It went on like that, one spectacle on top of another, leaving us perplexed by the mindless excess and drained of any sense of wonder" ("Stars of the Night Curfew," 139). The massive building projects that the oil boom funded presented just such a spectacle, convincing the Nigerian population that "modernity" had arrived even as a small elite gathered most of the oil profits to themselves. As Lincoln explains, "the phantasmagoric organization of political life, [Okri's text] suggests, has been evacuated of the affective quality necessary for genuine political embodiment, turning the political body into a serial assemblage of devalued individual actors who are becoming

increasingly extraneous to the health of the whole” (259). Economic value has been uncoupled from collective modernization, reducing modernity to an illusory spectacle rather than an enduring set of social and political institutions. The narrator’s disenchantment with such “spectacles” thus appeals to an alternative definition of modernity, one in which a more recognizably modernist investment in infrastructural development, and not the fantastical fetish of petro dollars, would define what it is to be “modern.”

For Zakes Mda, as for Okri, neoliberal modernity entails magical, otherworldly spectacles. In *Ways of Dying*, his first postapartheid novel, Mda pushes the logic of neoliberalism’s entrepreneurial ethic to the point of absurdity by imagining a new vocation: the “professional mourner.” In the most basic sense of the concept, Toloki, the “founder of [this] noble profession,” is a niche entrepreneur (17). Seeing a need for organized responses to the widespread mortality rocking South Africa – the result of AIDS, undernourishment, and poor living conditions – Toloki offers his own theatricalized brand of mourning to funeral processions for whatever small change they can afford to pay him. As Rita Barnard notes, by styling his work as a sort of monkish asceticism, Toloki is able to transform his poverty into a culturally meaningful activity endowed with a certain social respectability – his malnourishment and meager possessions are not indicators of entrepreneurial failure, but are instead the normal trappings of a committed ascetic (*Apartheid and Beyond*, 155). But in presenting Toloki’s occupation in this manner, the novel undermines the neoliberal rhetoric of personal responsibility and individual initiative on two levels. On the one hand, the fact that Toloki views death as the best avenue for entrepreneurship implies that South Africa is so materially destitute that death and poverty are the only commodities it mass-produces.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Toloki’s continuing poverty suggests that entrepreneurship fails to deliver on its promises of upward mobility and

material comfort. Unwashed, ill-clothed, and effectively homeless, Toloki parodies the forms of neoliberal individualism without experiencing any substantive improvement within his daily life.

What follows is a split between the spectacle of modernity and continuing material inequalities eerily reminiscent of Okri's "Star of the Night Curfew." When Toloki brings his "homegirl" Noria home to live with him in his dilapidated shack, he plasters glossy magazine advertisements onto its walls, metamorphosing its interior into a "Mediterranean-style mansion" with expansive bedrooms and cultivated gardens. As with Okri's potions, the "magical" nature of this episode is found in the gap between Toloki and Noria's imaginative transformations and the continued poverty of their actual surroundings. By collapsing the distinction between having (i.e., the mansion itself) and wanting (i.e., the advertisement for the mansion), Mda blurs the boundaries between infrastructural development and affect-laden fantasies, locating in the affective realm a utopian potential for material comfort absent from Toloki and Noria's everyday experiences. Within the fashion magazines consecrated to the "newness" of commodities exists an implicit reference to those materials endowed with the protection and sustenance of bare life: beneath the "crisp white" "arbour" of Toloki and Noria's mansion is a stable home not subject to the vagaries of transient living; underneath the pools and ponds of their flowing garden is regular water and electricity; and delicious cakes, as luxurious as they may be, allude to a sufficiency of food that is utterly absent from the more "realist" moments of the novel. In *Ways of Dying* as in "Star of the Night Curfew," the tragedy is that these basic necessities can only be recovered in Toloki and Noria's desires, and not in a more "realist" environment. But these affective investments in material security and plenty, over and against neoliberalism and the disembodied value of spectacles, gesture toward a more grounded, infrastructure-oriented notion of modernization than neoliberal understandings of modernization seem to provide.



Magical realism, then, returns us to the central concerns that this dissertation has shaped itself around. As I have argued throughout, the intimate workings of the emotions are not as far removed from the institutional structures of the world-system as we might believe. The sheer variety of economic, social, and political institutions spanning the world-system require a sort of calibrating zone that can bring often incompatible persons, objects, and ideologies into contact with one another: nationalism and globalization, the welfare state and transnational finance capital, or, as in magical realism, neoliberal triumphalism and a desperately needed infrastructure-building state. If magical realism seems to present a more nostalgic, politically incendiary set of affects than the ones we have seen in Anglo-Irish and Anglo-South African literature, then this may point to a certain exhaustion of the aesthetics of emotion I have traced in the preceding pages. After all, if we have begun to see affect everywhere – in movies, novels, paintings, television, advertisements, and so on – maybe it really *is* nowhere anymore. In other words, affect may not “wane,” as Jameson has famously proposed that it does in the postmodern artwork, but may instead become so pervasive and empirically *apparent* that it can no longer perform the work it had in the past. What Bruce Robbins says of infrastructure could just as easily be applied to affect: when working, it remains invisible as a “minimum threshold,” but when it breaks its existence becomes clear for all to see (“The Smell of Infrastructure: Notes Toward an Archive”). And affect, as I have argued, is a kind of infrastructure, a formal one coordinating between incommensurable economic systems, providing the foundation upon which they can be drawn together in a systemic arrangement. As magical realism generalizes such affective mediations in the periphery, this may provide us with the means to chart a twenty-first century world-system emerging out of the ashes of the twentieth-century one charted in this study, revealing the structural tempos residing underneath everyday emotions.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> For a concise overview of neoliberalism's emergence, see David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*.

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of Latin American critics' response to neoliberalism, see Brett Levinson, *The Ends of Literature: The Latin American "Boom" in the Neoliberal Marketplace*.

<sup>3</sup> The allegorical nature of *Midnight's Children* has been exhaustively analyzed. See Vilashini Cooppan, *Worlds Within*, 41-54; Michael Reder, "Rewriting History and Identity: The Invention of Myth, Epic, and Allegory in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*"; M. Keith Booker, "*Midnight's Children*, History, and Complexity: Reading Rushdie after the Cold War"; and Todd M. Kuchta, "Allegorizing the Emergency: Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Benjamin's Theory of Allegory."

<sup>4</sup> In a case of truth being just as strange as fiction, Rosalind Morris relates how funeral insurance has become a budding industry in South Africa. With the country's high mortality rate and widespread poverty, communities have scarcely been able to afford to pay for burials without purchasing funeral insurance. The irony, as Morris observes, is that in buying such insurance one is effectively betting *against* one's life, profiting more by an early death than a long and healthy life. See Morris, "Rush/Panic/Rush: Speculations on the Value of Life and Death in South Africa's Age of Epidemic."

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