Introduction: Realism and Its Antinomies

I have observed a curious development which always seems to set in when we attempt to hold the phenomenon of realism firmly in our mind's eye. It is as though the object of our meditation began to wobble, and the attention to it to slip insensibly away from it in two opposite directions, so that at length we find we are thinking, not about realism, but about its emergence; not about the thing itself, but about its dissolution. Much great work, indeed, has been done on these lateral topics: on the former, for example, Ian Watt's canonical *Rise of the Novel* and Michael McKeon's monumental *Origins of the Novel*; and on the latter, any number of those collections entitled "problems of realism" (in which Lukács deplored the degeneration of realistic practice into naturalism, symbolism and modernism), or "towards a new novel" (in which Robbe-Grillet argued the unsuitability of Balzacian techniques for capturing our current realities). I will later explain how these slippages determined the form of the theory about to be presented.

First, however, we must enumerate a number of other possibilities which are not explored here (but which this particular theoretical exercise is by no means intended to exclude). Thus, the most ancient literary category of all—mimesis—still inspires work and thought, enshrined as anthropology and psychology in the Frankfurt School's idiosyncratic notion of the mimetic impulse; and provocatively worked out, following Lenin's reflection theory (*Widerspiegelung*), by scholars like Robert Weimann.[1] (Auerbach's use of the term, not exactly classical, will be mentioned below.) Aristotle did not, of course, know that form we call the novel, a product of Hegel's "world

[1] Robert Weimann, "Mimesis in Hamlet," in Geoffrey Hartman and Patricia Parker, eds., *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, New York: Routledge, 1985; and see also Dieter Schlenstedt, ed., *Literarische Widerspiegelung*, Berlin: Aufbau, 1981.

of prose"; nor are we taking theatrical practice into account in the present book (so much the worse for it!); and indeed, my suspicion is that later discussions of this term tend to be contaminated by those of the visual arts, and to be influenced either in the direction of representationality or abstraction (in painting) or that of Hollywood or the experimental in film.

This is the moment at which to assert the inevitability, in the realism debate, of what has just been illustrated by the turn to visuality, namely the inescapable operative value, in any discussion of realism, of this or that binary opposition in terms of which it has been defined. It is this, above all, which makes any definitive resolution of the matter impossible: for one thing, binary opposites make unavoidable the taking of sides (unless, as with Arnold Hauser, or in a different way, Worringer, one sees it as some eternal cyclical alternation[2]). Realism, for or against: but as opposed to what? At this point the list becomes at least relatively interminable: realism vs. romance, realism vs. epic, realism vs. melodrama, realism vs. idealism,[3] realism vs. naturalism, (bourgeois or critical) realism vs. socialist realism, realism vs. the oriental tale,[4] and of course, most frequently rehearsed of all, realism vs. modernism. As is inevitably the case with such a play of opposites, each of them becomes inevitably invested with political and even metaphysical significance, as, with film criticism, in the now somewhat antiquated opposition between Hollywood "realism" and formal subversions such as those associated with the *nouvelle vague* and Godard.[5] Most of these binary pairs will therefore arouse a passionate taking of sides, in which realism is either denounced or elevated to the status of an ideal (aesthetic or otherwise).

The definition of realism by way of such oppositions can also take on a historical, or periodizing, character. Indeed, the opposition between realism and modernism already implies a historical narrative which it is fairly difficult to reduce to a structural or stylistic one; but

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[2] I refer to Arnold Hauser's *Social History of Art* (1954) as well as Wilhelm Worringer's influential and rather cosmological oppositions in *Abstraction and Empathy* (1907).

[3] The provocative concept of an idealist novel was developed by Naomi Schor in her study of George Sand and elaborated by Jane Tomkins in her work on the American western, where it also involved Christian religious and familial traditions (which the traditional western functioned to undermine).

[4] See Srinivas Aravamudan, *Enlightenment Orientalism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012.

[5] And with *Screen* magazine in its heyday in the 1960s and '70s.

which it is also difficult to control, since it tends to generate other periods beyond its limits, one of postmodernity, for example, if some putative end of the modern is itself posited; or of some preliminary stage of Enlightenment and secularization invoked to precede the period of realism as such, in a logic of periodization bound to lead on into the positioning of a classical system or a pre-capitalist system of fixed modes and genres, and so forth. Whether such a focus on periodization necessarily leads out of literary history into cultural history in general (and beyond that to the history of modes of production) probably depends on how one situates capitalism itself and its specific cultural system in the sequence in question. The focus, in other words, tends to relativize realism as one mode among many others, unless, by the use of mediatory concepts such as that of modernity, one places capitalism uniquely at the center of human history.

For at this point another combination comes into play, and that is the tendency to identify realism with the novel itself as a uniquely modern form (but not necessarily a "modernist" one). Discussions of either concept tend to become indistinguishable from the other, at least when the history of either is invoked: the history of the novel is inevitably the history of the realist novel, against which or underneath which all the aberrant modes, such as the fantastic novel or the episodic novel, are subsumed without much protest. But by the same token, chronology is itself equally subsumed, and a Bakhtin can argue that "novel-ness" is itself a sign, perhaps the fundamental sign and symptom, of a "modernity" that can be found in the Alexandrian world fully as much as in the Ming dynasty.[6]

Indeed, Bakhtin is himself among the major figures for whom the novel, or realism as such, is both a literary phenomenon and a symptom of the quality of social life. For Bakhtin, the novel is the vehicle of polyphony or the recognition and expression of a multiplicity of social voices: it is therefore modern in its democratic opening onto an ideologically multiple population. Auerbach also invokes democracy in an analogous sense, even though for him the opening is global and consists in the conquest and achievement of a "realist" social life or modernity around the world.[7] But for Auerbach "realism," or mimesis in his sense, is a syntactic conquest, the slow

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[6] See, for example, his essay, "Epic and Novel," in Michael Holquist, ed., *The Dialogical Imagination*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994.

[7] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953, 552, "a common life of mankind on earth."

appropriation of syntactic forms capable of holding together multiple levels of a complex reality and a secular daily life, whose twin climaxes in the West he celebrates in Dante and in Zola.

Lukács is more ambivalent in his reading of the novel's formal and historical record: in the *Theory of the Novel*, the form is essentially distinguished by its capacity of registering problematization and the irreconcilable contradictions of a purely secular modernity. The latter becomes reidentified as capitalism, in the later Lukács, and the novel with realism, whose task is now the reawakening of the dynamics of history.[8]

But in all three apologists for the realist novel as a form (so to speak), it is never very clear whether that form simply registers the advanced state of a given society or plays a part in society's awareness of that advanced state and its potentialities (political and otherwise). This ambiguity (or hesitation) will characterize the evaluative approaches to realism I want to outline in this initial survey, and which grasp the problem in terms of form and content respectively.

Realism as a form (or mode) is historically associated, particularly if you position the *Quijote* as the first (modern, or realist) novel, with the function of demystification. It is a function which can take many forms, in this foundational instance the undermining of romance as a genre, along with the use of its idealizing values to foreground features of the social reality they cannot accommodate. I have mentioned a first period of modernity in which the tasks of enlightenment and in particular secularization were fundamental (in a kind of bourgeois cultural revolution): these are for realism essentially negative, critical or destructive tasks which will later on give way to the construction of bourgeois subjectivity: but as the construction of the subject is always an intervention supported by taboos and inner restrictions of all kinds (one model of which is Weber's "protestant ethic"), the eradication of inherited psychic structures and values will remain a function of realist narrative, whose force always comes from this painful cancellation of tenaciously held illusions. But later on, when the realistic novel begins to discover (or if you prefer, to construct) altogether new kinds of subjective experiences (from Dostoyevsky to Henry James), the negative social function begins to weaken, and demystification

[8] The most succinct summary of Lukács' formal views is to be found in "Narrate or Describe?" in George Lukács, *Writer and Critic*, London: Merlin, 1970. We will see that this opposition is fundamental in explaining his (equally political) rejection of Zola's naturalism.

finds itself transformed into defamiliarization and the renewal of perception, a more modernist impulse, while the emotional tone of such texts tends towards resignation, renunciation or compromise, as both Lukács and Moretti have noted.

But the very ideology of realism also tends to stage it in terms of content, and here clearly the realist mode is closely associated with the bourgeoisie and the coming into being of bourgeois daily life: this, I would like to insist, is also very much a construction, and it is a construction in which realism and narrative participate. Sartre argued that mimesis is always at least tendentially critical: holding up a mirror to nature, in this case bourgeois society, never really shows people what they want to see, and is always to that degree demystifying.[9] Certainly the attacks on realism which have already been mentioned are based on the idea that the literature of realism has the ideological function of adapting its readers to bourgeois society as it currently exists, with its premium on comfort and inwardness, on individualism, on the acceptance of money as an ultimate reality (we might today speak of the acceptance of the market, of competition, of a certain image of human nature, and so forth). I myself argue elsewhere in this collection that the realistic novelist has a vested interest, an ontological stake, in the solidity of social reality, on the resistance of bourgeois society to history and to change.[10] Meanwhile, it could also be argued that in a stylistic and ideological sense, the consumerism of late capitalism is no longer a bourgeois society in that sense, and no longer knows the forms of daily life that emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: so that realism inevitably gives way to modernism insofar as its privileged content has become extinct. This argument thus makes a fundamental distinction between a bourgeois class culture and the economic dynamics of late capitalism.

I have outlined these multiple approaches to realism not only to make the point about its contextual variability as an object, but also to admit, finally, that I plan to do none of these things here. Realism, as I argued elsewhere, is a hybrid concept, in which an epistemological claim (for knowledge or truth) masquerades as an aesthetic ideal,

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[9] Jean-Paul Sartre, *"What Is Literature?" and Other Essays*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988, 91: "The mirror which he modestly offers to his readers is magical: it enthralls and compromises."

[10] See "The Experiments of Time: Providence and Realism," in Part Two of this volume.

with fatal consequences for both of these incommensurable dimensions.[11] If it is social truth or knowledge we want from realism, we will soon find that what we get is ideology; if it is beauty or aesthetic satisfaction we are looking for, we will quickly find that we have to do with outdated styles or mere decoration (if not distraction). And if it is history we are looking for—either social history or the history of literary forms—then we are at once confronted with questions about the uses of the past and even the access to it which, as unanswerable as they may be, take us well beyond literature and theory and seem to demand an engagement with our own present.[12]

From a dialectical standpoint it is not hard to see why this is so. Both sociology and aesthetics are superannuated forms of thinking and inquiry, inasmuch as neither society nor what is called cultural or aesthetic experience are in this present of time stable substances that can be studied empirically and analyzed philosophically. History, meanwhile, if it is anything at all, is at one with the dialectic, and can only be the problem of which it claims to be the solution.

My experiment here claims to come at realism dialectically, not only by taking as its object of study the very antinomies themselves into which every constitution of this or that realism seems to resolve: but above all by grasping realism as a historical and even evolutionary process in which the negative and the positive are inextricably combined, and whose emergence and development at one and the same time constitute its own inevitable undoing, its own decay and dissolution. The stronger it gets, the weaker it gets; winner loses; its success is its failure. And this is meant, not in the spirit of the life cycle ("ripeness is all"), or of evolution or of entropy or historical rises and falls: it is to be grasped as a paradox and an anomaly, and the thinking of it as a contradiction or an aporia. Yet as Derrida observed, the aporia is not so much "an absence of path, a paralysis before roadblocks" so much as the promise of "the thinking of the path."[13] For me, however, aporetic thinking is precisely the dialectic itself; and the

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[11] See Jameson, "The Existence of Italy," in *Signatures of the Visible*, New York: Routledge, 1992.

[12] It is not only the content of literature which is itself profoundly historical (and necessarily has its own shaping influence on the form), it is also the sensory medium itself; it is always instructive to recall Marx on the history of the senses (*Early Writings*, London: Penguin, 1975, 351–55).

[13] Jacques Derrida, *Memoires for Paul de Man*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1989, 132.

following exercise will therefore be for better or for worse a dialectical experiment.

But we need to have a better idea of what Deleuze might have called the image of the concept, the shape of some new dialectical solution, before continuing. Hegel's thoughts certainly had some distinctive shapes, but it is not a question of adopting any of those forms here and today; nor does the word "dialectical" give us much help except to revive antiquated formulas, many of which are not even historically accurate.

The unity of opposites, for example, will certainly characterize a situation in which what brings a phenomenon into being also gradually undermines and destroys it. But the content of these fundamental categories is not identifiable: what is negative and what is positive in the trajectory of realism (it being understood that the struggles over its ideological value are not yet even in play here)? Indeed, on any responsible reading of Hegel it will have been clear that what is positive in its own eyes is negative from the standpoint of its opposite number, and vice versa: so nothing much is gained here except the notion of unity—unity not as synthesis but rather as antagonism, the unity of attraction and repulsion, the unity of struggle.

What is also gained—but it may well simply have been some unconscious structuralist premise, smuggled in avant la lettre—is the sense that we still have to do here with a binary opposition. I have argued elsewhere that the play of oppositions we have grown accustomed to since structuralism is not some newfangled linguistic supplement, but already exists fully developed in Hegel's own time and work, who derives them from ancient philosophy.[14] But now what we need to do is not only to give some literary content to this abstract form, but also to demonstrate such an opposition at work within realism itself (and not externally, between realism and some other kind of discourse). Meanwhile, the superficial traits that come at first to mind—the new plain-language écriture versus the language of dialogue, for example—must not only be specific to realism itself but must also entertain some relationship to the seemingly more external question of realism's coming into being and going hence.

Taken all together in bulk, the heterogeneous materials that somehow end up coalescing into what we call the novel—or realism!—include

[14] See Michael N. Forster, *Hegel and Skepticism*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989, 10–13, on "equipollence."

the following: ballads and broadsheets, newspaper sketches, memoirs, diaries and letters, the Renaissance tale, and even popular forms like the play or the folk- or fairy-tale. What is selected from such a mass of different types of writing is its narrative component (even when, as for Balzac or Dickens, that component is first offered as a seemingly static description of characteristic types or activities, of picturesque or costumbrista evocations). To put it this way is to isolate something like a narrative impulse which is also realized in the novel as a form, but perhaps does not exhaust the novel's energy sources.

What could then constitute the opposite of the narrative impulse as such? Taken thus abstractly and speculatively we could surely think of any number of non-narrative sentence types: judgements, for example, such as the moral a storyteller might want to add on at the end, or a bit of the folk wisdom with which George Eliot liked to regale her readers. But the most inveterate alternative to narrative as such reminds us that storytelling is a temporal art, and always seems to single out a painterly moment in which the onward drive of narrative is checked if not suspended altogether. The shield of Achilles!: this is the most famous instance of that suspension of narrative which still remained to be theorized as late as Lessing's *Laocoon* in the late eighteenth century. Will the ancient rhetorical trope of ekphrasis be sufficient to fold this descriptive impulse back into narrative homogeneity?

Everyone knows the patience one must bring to his novels as Balzac slowly sets in place his various components—description of the town, history of the profession, the loving enumeration of the parts of the house, inside and out, the family itself, the physiognomy of the protagonist and his or her favorite clothes, his or her favorite *emploi du temps*—in short, all those different types of discourse which as raw material were to have been fused back together in this new form, but which Balzac unapologetically requires us to plow through on our way to the story itself (which will eventually satisfy any taste for reckless momentum, suspense and action we may have had to hold in check during those opening pages).

But if all it accomplished was to lead us back to Lessing and the status of ekphrasis today, this search for the opposite of the narrative impulse will not have been very productive. Perhaps, indeed, the more satisfactory identification of narrative's opposite number is better sought at the other end of the history of the genre, namely at the moment of realism's dissolution, which we always seem to

call modernism, without feeling the need to rummage among the innumerable modernisms, not all of them reducible to a single denominator in the first place.

But this procedure, which assumes that by subtracting the modern from narrative we will be left with the essence of realism, assumes that some general definition of what modernism is (or was) is available, an optimistic assumption which generally results in a few stereotypical formulae (it is subjectivist—the inward turn; reflexive or conscious of its own procedures; formalistic in the sense of a heightened attention to its own raw materials; anti-narrative; and deeply imbued with a mystique of art itself). Roland Barthes took a wiser and more prudent position on the matter: "When it comes to the 'modern,' you can only carry out tactical-style operations: at certain times you feel it's necessary to intervene to signal some shift in the landscape or some new inflection in modernity."[15] But his own experience, to be sure, expressed the preoccupations of the post-war period, in which, in what I have called the "late modern," the effort to theorize and to name what had happened in the first half of the twentieth century became a dominant theoretical ambition.

There are also more paradoxical trajectories to be followed: as for example in film, where Tom Gunning has identified what in our present context might be described as a movement from modernism to realism. D. W. Griffith, who rightly or wrongly is traditionally credited with having invented the modern (fiction) film as we know it (relying indeed very heavily on literature and in particular on Dickens), began with atmospheric sketches (of a photographic nature) which it was his mission to develop into plots and narrativity as such.[16]

The example suggests that, whatever thematic clue we choose to follow in our identification of the opposite number to the narrative impulse, its theorization will ultimately involve that most paradoxical of philosophical problems, namely the conceptualization of time and temporality. In the world of art, it is a dilemma compounded by our limited vocabulary: for even the *récit* or tale, whose events are already over and done with before the telling of it can begin, is experienced by

[15] Quoted in Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Why I Love Barthes*, trans. Andrew Brown, London: Polity, 2011, 39. My own proposals on modernism can be found in *A Singular Modernity*, London: Verso, 2002.

[16] See Tom Gunning, *D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film*, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991.

listener or reader (and above all, of course, by the viewer) as a present of time, but it is of course our present, the present of reading time, and not that of the events themselves.

So in what follows I will approach the question of realism from the angle of temporality; and I will suggest that the opposite number of that chronological temporality of the récit has somehow to do with a present; but with a different kind of presence than the one marked out by the tripartite temporal system of past-present-future, or even by that of the before and after. For all kinds of reasons, to be developed in the following pages, I will identify this present—or what Alexander Kluge calls the "insurrection of the present against the other temporalities"[17]—as the realm of affect.

As the rather crude misuse of this term will be explained later on, I might as well generalize our other impulse with equally decisive approximation and replace the very general word "narrative" with a far sharper and more limited *Fremdwort*, which is the French "récit," and which transforms narrative into the narrative situation itself and the telling of a tale as such.

This means that we now have in our grasp the two chronological end points of realism: its genealogy in storytelling and the tale, its future dissolution in the literary representation of affect. A new concept of realism is then made available when we grasp both these terminal points firmly at one and the same time.

A number of images come to mind for the shape of this thought: the electrical one of negative and positive currents is perhaps not the most reassuring one. But one can also imagine the strands of DNA winding tightly about each other, or a chemical process in which the introduction of a fresh reagent precipitates a combination which then slowly dissolves again as too much of the element in question is added. But it is the dialectical formulation which, taken as an image of thought rather than a philosophical proposition in its own right, still strikes me as the most suggestive: for in it positive force becomes negative (quantity changing into quality) without the determination of a threshold being required, and emergence and dissolution are thought together in the unity of a single thought, beyond all-too-human judgements that claim to separate the positive from the negative, the good from the bad. Still, what I will want to insist on

[17] The title of one of his books: *Der Angriff der Gegenwart gegen die übrige Zeit*, Frankfurt: Europaeische Verlagsanstalt, 1985.

in such images is the irrevocable antagonism between the twin (and entwined) forces in question: they are never reconciled, never fold back into one another in some ultimate reconciliation and identity; and the very force and pungency of the realist writing I here examine is predicated on that tension, which must remain an impossible one, under pain of losing itself altogether and dissipating if it is ever resolved in favor of one of the parties to the struggle.

What we call realism will thus come into being in the symbiosis of this pure form of storytelling with impulses of scenic elaboration, description and above all affective investment, which allow it to develop towards a scenic present which in reality, but secretly, abhors the other temporalities which constitute the force of the tale or récit in the first place.

The new scenic impulse will also detect its enemies in the hierarchy of characters who people the tale, which can scarcely be conceived without a protagonist. In particular, it will wage a ceaseless muffled battle against the structures of melodrama by which it is ceaselessly menaced; in the process also throwing off other genres such as the *Bildungsroman*, which for a while seemed so central to it as to define it. Its final battle will be raged in the microstructures of language and in particular against the dominance of point of view which seems to hold the affective impulses in check and lend them the organizing attribution of a central consciousness. Engaging this final battle will however exhaust and destroy it, and realism thereby leaves an odd assortment of random tools and techniques to its shrivelled posterity, who still carry its name on into an era of mass culture and rival media.

So Part One of the present text is by way of offering a phenomenological and structural model, an experiment which posits a unique historical situation without exploring the content of that situation, as so many indispensable studies of the various realisms have already done. Of the two chronological sequels to the moment of realism—modernism and postmodernism—only the latter outcome will be briefly sketched in conclusion. The essay that comprises Part One is followed by three monographs on the relationships of narrative possibility to its specific raw material. *The Antinomies of Realism* constitutes the third volume of the sequence called *The Poetics of Social Forms*.

April 2013

PART I

THE ANTINOMIES OF REALISM

Chapter 1

The Twin Sources of Realism: The Narrative Impulse

> A happy denouncement has at least as much justification as an unhappy one, and when it is a matter of considering this difference alone, I must admit that for my part a happy denouncement is to be preferred.
>
> Hegel, *Aesthetics*

If there is anything distinctive to be discovered about realism, then, we will not find it without somehow distinguishing between realism and narrative in general, or without, at least, mapping some vague general zone of narrative which lies outside it (at the same time including it as well, since the realisms are presumably narratives themselves). Single-shot answers always seem possible: the fantastic, for example, or so-called primitive myth (the very word *mythos* means narrative); or in some narrower and more literary sense, the epic (insofar as we distinguish it from the novel), or the oral tale, insofar as we distinguish it from the written one.

This is not the solution I want to begin with here, for I am looking for a storytelling impulse that precedes the formation of the realist novel and yet persists within it, albeit transformed by a host of new connections and relationships. I will call the products of this impulse simply the tale, with the intent of emphasizing its structural versatility, its aptness for transformation and exploitation by the other forms just enumerated. The tale can thereby be pressed into service by epic performance fully as much as by tribal and mythic storytelling, by the Renaissance art-novella and its equivalents in the Romantic period, by the ballad, by sub-forms and subgenres like the ghost story or SF, indeed by the very forms and strictures of the short story itself, as a specific strict formal practice in its own right with its own history.

At the level of abstraction at which we are working, then, the tale becomes the generalized object of which narration is the generalized production process or activity, but this generic specification also becomes a convenient way of evading psychological or anthropological analysis of that activity, which would be a distraction in our present context.

Yet we may retain one feature from traditional or modern psychological theories of the faculties and/or functions, in which narrativity might be opposed to cognition for example, or emotion to reason; and that is the requirement that the storytelling function, if we want to call it that, must form part of an opposition, must be defined against something else: otherwise the potentiality we are trying to circumscribe risks extending over the entire field of mental activity, everything becoming narrative, everything becoming a kind of story.[1]

So it is that in an influential pronouncement of the 1920s, Ramon Fernandez developed an opposition between the tale and the novel—or rather, to use the more precise and only imperfectly translatable French terms, between the récit and the *roman*.[2] It was a distinction that proved useful for several generations of French writers from Gide to Sartre; and that will remain helpful for us here, particularly since the same general opposition has taken somewhat different forms in other national traditions.

In effect, Fernandez organized his distinction around two distinct genres, which may be taken as markers for either historical developments or structural variations. Translators have tried to render "récit" in English with its cognate, the recital, which is suggestive only to the degree to which someone might recite an account or even a chronicle of events. But even the word "tale," which I prefer here, bears a weight of generic connotation, and can easily crystallize back into historical forms such as the Renaissance novella or the Romantic art-story.

This is the sense in which the active content of Fernandez' theory lies in the opposition itself and the differentiation it generates. For in itself, the term "novel" is even less structurally operative here than that of the récit: the latter can be more rigorously specified, particularly with the use of those national variants I mentioned. As for the

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[1] Jack Goody's stern rebuke to pan-narrativists (such as myself) overlooks the distinction between a restricted use of the term for a generic type of discourse (songs, divinations, orations and the like) and a more general, dare I say hermeneutic use of the term in which the object of analysis is temporal movement of a more musical kind (in which, for example, mathematical problems are solved or one follows the adventures of a named concept through a technical philosophical argument): Jack Goody, "From Oral to Written," in Franco Moretti, ed., *The Novel, Volume 1: History, Geography, and Culture*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.

[2] My impression is, however, that the fortunes of this opposition were in fact based on a misunderstanding: Fernandez, in his essay on Balzac (in *Messages*, 1943) seems to have meant "récit" to mean the background and "backstory" passages which accompanied the various characters, and not a distinct form of discourse in its own right.

novel itself, however (not to speak of the realist novel which interests us here), very little is to be deduced from Fernandez' opposition, and writers have tended to fill in their own blank check according to their aesthetic and their ideology.

So it is that Gide, conceiving of the récit as the tale of a unique personal existence or destiny (mostly, for him, a tale told in the first person), is able to draw the conclusion that the novel ought then to be a "*carrefour*," a crossroads or meeting place of multiple destinies, multiple récits. The only book of his own that he was willing to call a novel, then, *Les faux-monnayeurs* (*The Counterfeiters*), offers just such a convergence of a number of different life stories; and it may be agreed that many writers, particularly those specializing in the short story, have thought of the novel in this general way, as a sort of formal Everest to be confronted.

Sartre, on the other hand, has a much more philosophical and ideological conception of this opposition, which he grasps in temporal terms and wields with no little critical and polemic power. Here is his evocation of the Maupassant short story, which he grasps as a kind of bourgeois social institution and translates into a concrete after-dinner situation set in the den of cigar-smoking affluent men:

> The procedure is nowhere more manifest than in Maupassant. The structure of his short stories is almost invariable; we are first presented with the audience, a brilliant and worldly society which has assembled in a drawing-room after dinner. It is night-time, which dispels fatigue and passion. The oppressed are asleep, as are the rebellious; the world is enshrouded; the story unfolds. In a bubble of light surrounded by nothing there remains this élite which stays awake, completely occupied with its ceremonies. If there are intrigues or love or hate among its members, we are not told of them, and desire and anger are likewise stilled; these men and women are occupied in *preserving* their culture and manners and in *recognizing* each other by the rites of politeness. They represent order in its most exquisite form; the calm of night, the silence of the passions, everything concurs in symbolizing the stable bourgeoisie of the end of the century which thinks that nothing more will happen and which believes in the eternity of capitalist organization. Thereupon, the narrator is introduced. He is a middle-aged man who has "seen much, read much, and retained much," a professional man of experience, a doctor, a military man, an artist, or a Don Juan. He has reached the time of life when, according to a respectful and comfortable myth, man is freed from the passions and considers with an indulgent clear-sightedness those he has experienced. His heart is calm, like the night. He tells his story with detachment. If it has caused him suffering, he has made honey from this suffering. He looks back upon it and considers it as it really was, that is, *sub specie aeternitatis*. There

> was difficulty to be sure, but this difficulty ended long ago; the actors are dead or married or comforted. Thus, the adventure was a brief disturbance which is over with. It is told from the viewpoint of experience and wisdom; it is listened to from the viewpoint of order. Order triumphs; order is everywhere; it contemplates an old disorder as if the still waters of a summer day have preserved the memory of the ripples which have run through it.[3]

Gide practiced both "genres"; Sartre has nothing but contempt for the kind of anecdote which forms the structural core of the récit and which he associates with the oppressive cult of "experience" wielded by the older generation over the younger (see *La nausée*). But it is precisely that judgement that allows him to formulate what the novel ought to be—the authentic, existential novel—in temporal terms.

The time of the récit is then a time of the preterite, of events completed, over and done with, events that have entered history once and for all. It will be clear enough what a philosophy of freedom must object to in such an inauthentic and reified temporality: it necessarily blocks out the freshness of the event happening, along with the agony of decision of its protagonists. It omits, in other words, the present of time and turns the future into a "dead future" (what this or that character anticipated in 1651 or in 1943). Clearly enough, then, what Sartre calls upon the novel to reestablish is the open present of freedom, the present of an open, undecided future, where the die has not yet been cast, to use one of his favorite expressions. The aesthetic of the existential novel will then bend its narrative instruments to the recreation of this open present, in which not even the past is set in stone, insofar as our acts in the present rewrite and modify it.

We will not fully appreciate the force of this conception of the novel until we recall the devastating critique of François Mauriac's novels, with their sense of impending doom, their melodramatic rhetorical gestures ("this fatal gesture," "she was not then to know," "this encounter, in retrospect so full of consequences," etc.), their built-in predictable mechanisms of sin and judgement. All this, Sartre tells us, is narrated from above, with a God-like omniscience of past and future alike. "Dieu n'est pas bon romancier," he concludes, "M. Mauriac non plus."[4]

But just as surely, even though more subtly, the Sartrean recipe for

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[3] Jean-Paul Sartre, *"What Is Literature?" and Other Essays*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988, 125–126.

[4] Sartre, *Situations I*, Paris: Gallimard, 1947, 67.

the novel is shaped and determined, preselected, by its own historical content: the time of the momentous decision and the impending Event, the effacement of everyday life and the iteratives of peacetime, the pressure of what he called extreme situations. The Sartrean taboo on foreknowledge will be replicated in a somewhat different way by the Jamesian ideology of point of view, and both will be appropriated, as we shall see, for far more inauthentic purposes after the end of realism as such, in what I will call a more commercial realism after realism.

What we can retain of the Sartrean perspective on the récit, however, is its insistence on irrevocability, on which a somewhat different light is shed by the German tradition, relatively poor in novels as it may be, but extraordinarily rich in storytelling of all kinds, particularly in the Romantic era. We have, for example, Goethe's memorable encapsulation of the content of storytelling as an "*unerhörte Begebenheit*"[5]—an unheard-of event or conjuncture, one thereby itself memorable and worthy of retelling over and over again, and of being passed down in the family and even the community: the time of the single lightning bolt that killed three people at once, the time of the great flood, of the invasion of the barbarians, the time Lizzie Borden took an axe, and so forth. It is then this time of the memorable event, of the traditional tale or story, that Walter Benjamin memorialized in his great essay "The Storyteller" (on Leskov).

Indeed, Benjamin makes it clear what so many examples of the "*unerhörte Begebenheit*" have in common: namely death. "Warming your hands on a death that is told" is the way he characterizes the récit[6]; and if we feel that this is too bleak, we may substitute for death simply the mark of the irrevocable. This irrevocability adds a new dimension to Sartre's critique of the inauthenticity of the récit: the temporal past is now redefined in terms of what cannot be changed, what lies beyond the reach of repetition or rectification, which now comes to be seen as the time of everyday life or of routine. The

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[5] Johann Peter Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe*, Vol. I, Basel: Birkhäuser, 1945, 210 (January 25, 1827): "denn was ist eine Novelle anders als eine sich ereignete unerhörte Begebenheit."

[6] Walter Benjamin, "Der Erzähler," *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 2, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989, 457: "Das was den Leser zum Roman zieht, ist die Hoffnung, sein fröstelndes Leben an einem Tod, von dem er liest, zu wärmen." It will be remembered that earlier in the same section he compared the construction of a novel to the building of a fire.

irrevocable then comes to stand as a mark of one specific temporality which is separated off from another kind; and Goethe's definition may then be reread to designate, not strangeness or uniqueness, but precisely this shock of a marked time brutally differentiating itself from ordinary existence.

It should be added that for Benjamin, this ordinary existence is itself grasped as collective and historical, as the time of peasants or of the village, in which, as opposed to the great industrial metropolis of a later date, the tale as such flourishes.[7] Indeed, we may further point out that for Benjamin, the opposite number of the tale or récit is not the realistic novel at all: it is the dissolution of the memorable and the narratable in Baudelaire's modernism, or the technological and political recuperation of Baudelaire's fragments in Eisensteinian montage, in the so-called reproducible work of art.[8]

Meanwhile, in a paradoxical turn-about, this new notion of the irrevocable mark as the very basis of the récit is also susceptible of a Sartrean authenticity very different from the bourgeois inauthenticity of the Maupassant smoking den. Indeed, the irrevocable also comes in Sartre to define the heroic, the freely chosen act, one that marks you forever and from which there is no turning back: the act one drags about with one like a ball and chain (again a Sartrean figure). It is then the recoiling in horror before such a choice that is inauthentic; and we may draw on *Peer Gynt* for a comic example. For when Peer is welcomed into the kingdom of the trolls, he is promised everything: the troll king's daughter, riches beyond price, a life of leisure and pleasure, the succession to the throne—and all this, the king assures him, on the most minimal condition, namely, that you let yourself—painlessly, to be sure—undergo hideous defacement as a pledge of solidarity with us and a guarantee that you will never seek to return to the world of ordinary humans. Peer draws the line at that kind of guarantee, that mark of irrevocability, preferring to keep his options open and his "Sartrean freedom" untouched by any such binding commitments.[9]

We may thus grasp the lightning bolt of the récit as the marking

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[7] The "origin" of storytelling, according to him, lay in the intersection of travelling seamen and merchants with the sedentary life of the villagers.

[8] I believe that Benjamin's three essays, on Leskov, on Baudelaire, and finally on Eisenstein and film, make up a trilogy that stages history as the rise and fall of narrative as it symptomatizes experience itself.

[9] Henrik Ibsen, *Peer Gynt*, Act II.

of a body and the transformation of an individual into a character with a unique destiny, a "life sore," as one American novelist puts it, something given to you uniquely to bear and to suffer[10]: something "*je mein eigenes*," as Heidegger described individual death. This brings our account of the récit or the tale a little closer to the destinies once offered in spectacle by tragedy as a form. In modern times, however, such destinies at best mark a character as one of Todorov's "*hommes-récits*," the Thousand-and-One-Nights characters who *are* their own stories,[11] at the high tide of the récit as a form; while at worst, in yet more modern times, they are taken to be little more than bad luck. Still, I will retain the category of "destiny" or "fate" as the deeper philosophical content of this narrative form, which might also be evoked as the narrative preterite, the mark of irrevocable time, of the event that has happened once and for all. What has happened in the course of our discussion—it will be important later on—is that this mark has slowly been turned or rotated in the direction of other people: it is not only my act, for myself, which defines my destiny: the latter also becomes my scar, my sore or limp, my being-for-other-people, which is also to say my existence as a character in a story.

It will not have escaped notice that in this lengthy discussion of the récit, we have completely lost sight of its opposite number, namely the *roman*. Sartre seemed to have made a place for it in that existential present in which the choice was in the process of being made or being refused: a time before destiny, in other words, and perhaps before the récit itself. We need to retain this notion of an existential present as it is opposed to the irrevocable past tense of the récit; but we now need to approach it in a different way, and for this I will turn to yet a third tradition, that of English-language narratology or rather, to be more precise about it, the American tradition.

Here, of course, the fundamental theoretician is Henry James in his *Prefaces*, its ideas codified and popularized in Percy Lubbock's *Craft of Fiction*. And here the distinction between récit and *roman* takes on a much more familiar appearance: it is simply that between "telling" and "showing." You tell, you *recite*, the events; you show them happening in the present of the novelistic scene. To be sure, the novel includes both types of discourse; indeed, the very passage from one

[10] See Susan Willis, *Specifying: Black Women Writing the American Experience*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987, 70. (The writer referred to is Paule Marshall).

[11] Tzvetan Todorov, *Poetics of Prose*, Ithaca: Cornell, 1977, chapter 5, "Narrative Men."

to the other is itself stylistically and even metaphysically significant—that "choice," as André Malraux put it, "of what is to become scene or to remain récit, the emplacement of those porches where a Balzac or a Dostoyevsky lie in wait for their characters as destiny itself waits on man."[12]

Yet Malraux, along with James himself, is biased in favor of showing rather than telling; and we must factor this prejudice in favor of scene, this commitment to Jamesian "point of view," into their theorization of the opposition.

For James himself, it would seem that mere telling—the récit part of what he describes as a "double pressure" on the novel—means shirking his job.[13] The narrative summaries and foreshortenings are in effect sheer laziness, they are the sign he has not lived up to his calling, the august vocation he invented for himself (and for others). "One's poor word of honor has *had* to pass muster for the show."[14] "The poor author's comparatively cold affirmation or thin guarantee"[15] he calls such passages, on the point of drawing the whole process into an economic transaction (as he does so often), while calling on the literary critics to live up to their vocation and denounce all the "dodges" (his word) the novelist has thereby had recourse to. The more modern language of discourse versus story does not really modify this bias, which I hope my own dual model will redress, giving some of the honor back to the great storytellers and the framers of the great art-novellas.

But James is very clear about the antagonism between the two modes of récit and presence. He characterizes it as

> the odd inveteracy with which picture, at almost any turn, is jealous of drama, and drama (though on the whole with a greater patience, I think) suspicious of picture. Between them, no doubt, they do much for the theme; yet each baffles insidiously the other's ideal and eats round the edges of its position; each is too ready to say, "I can take the thing for 'done' only when done in *my* way."[16]

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[12] André Malraux, *Les voix du silence*, Paris: Gallimard, 1951, 353.

[13] Henry James, *The Art of the Novel*, New York: Scribners, 1934, 300. James's foundational distinction between telling and showing now finds confirmation in the light of David Kurnick's remarkable *Empty Houses*, Princeton UP, 2012, which, documenting the theatrical failures at the heart of much of the modernist canon now grasps modernist showing as a formal and structural nostalgia for theatricality.

[14] Ibid., 298.

[15] Ibid., 301.

[16] Ibid., 298. (The quotes are all part of the Preface to *The Wings of the Dove*.)

In defense of telling, however, and by way of redressing the scales so heavily weighted by Sartre against the extraordinary storytelling art of Maupassant, it may be well to insist on the relative insignificance of "showing" in the narratives, not only of the great oral practitioners, but even in that of more sophisticated practitioners such as Boccaccio. Many are no doubt the candidates for the most beautiful story in the world, but I am not far myself from endorsing the view of the distinguished German writer Paul Heyse,[17] who based his so-called *Falkentheorie* on the ninth tale of the fifth day of the *Decameron*, whose "moral" or summary I herewith append:

> 9. In courting a lady who does not return his love, Federigo degli Alberighi spends the whole of his substance, being left with nothing but a falcon, which, since his larder is bare, he offers to his lady to eat when she calls to see him at his house. On discovering the truth of the matter, she has a change of heart, accepts him as her husband, and makes a rich man of him.[18]

Heyse thought that the perfection of this little tale lay in the way in which its convergences were crystallized in a single object, namely the hawk of the title, in such a way as to concentrate the temporality of narrative into something the mind could uniquely appropriate and hold to itself, time made space, in other words, the event materialized, in a fashion perhaps not so distant after all from Benjamin's conception of a moment which becomes "memorable."[19] This object is not a symbol; it is not its meaningfulness which is essential but rather its unity and density.

Heyse is here clearly enough specifying the properties of the most usable anecdotal starting point (or "subject" as Henry James liked to call it), rather than a structural law of some kind: in contemporary stories objects tend to be far more contingent, resembling Barthes' *punctum*[20] more than they do his *studium*. What gives his theory its plausibility is, however, the part of the story Boccaccio has dropped, either by negligence or by design, from his little summary. For the hawk—in this, paradigmatic of most twist or trick endings, even those which do not turn on a single object—is double-valenced, which is

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[17] Paul Heyse, "Einleitung," *Deutscher Novellenschatz*, Munich: Oldenbourg, 1971.

[18] Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, London: Penguin, 1995, xiv.

[19] Benjamin, "Der Erzähler," 453–54, section xiii on *Erinnerung*.

[20] Roland Barthes, *La Chambre Claire*, *Œuvres completes, tome III*, Paris: Seuil, 1995, 1126.

to say that it can serve a different function in each of the contexts in which it appears, switching back and forth in a kind of Gestalt effect.

What is curious here is that Boccaccio has omitted both contexts, both storylines which converge here, from his brief outline. For the hawk is not only his master's prize possession (and not merely his only one, as the summary suggests), it is something of a substitute for the desperate and forlorn passion he nourishes for the pointedly indifferent and uninterested Monna Giovanna, so that he will have sacrificed with it everything that still gives any meaning to his sad existence.

But the hawk also stands at the center of the other storyline, the reason for Monna Giovanna's unusual visit to a man she has every reason to avoid, inasmuch as its possession also constitutes the passionate desire of her beloved son, deathly ill and unlikely to recover even if he is able to have this last wish satisfied.

The story shows us that Federigo is willing to do anything she wants, and the banquet with which he regales her is intended to dramatize that willingness. The hawk thereby unites the tragic failure of three passions, and its story thereby triumphantly wins its nomination, not only for the saddest story ever told but also for the most perfect.

But it is a tale that needs no "showing," no scene, no present of narrative at all; and this is the point of its introduction here, as the purest form of the récit. The anecdote not only needs no dialogue and no point of view (it has all these in Boccaccio's brief "telling"), but the whole art of storytelling lies in this possibility of the anecdote, the *fait divers*, to be expanded and contracted at will, and according to the practical necessities of the situation. Even more important from our perspective is the palpable fact that the tale cannot exist in the present, its events must already have happened: this is the "moment of truth" of Sartre's analysis, for whom in this sense the absolute past, what has already happened, the irrevocable, cannot exist, for it can always be rewritten, reevaluated, revised by the power of a new act in the present or the future. The mode of the récit now seals this event off and makes such revision impossible (and the death of the hawk is the figure for this irrevocability of death in general). What confuses the issue is of course the eternal present of the reader, who brings a different temporality to the process.

This is then the moment to distinguish two kinds of time, two systems of temporality, which will be the basis for the argument that follows. The distinction is one between a present of consciousness and a time, if not of succession or of chronology, then at least of

the more familiar tripartite system of past-present-future. I want to assert that the present of consciousness is somehow impersonal, that consciousness is itself impersonal; while it is the subject of consciousness or the self that is the locus of personal identity in the ordinary sense. That self, however, is itself only an object for the impersonal consciousness of the present; and in a way all the personal identifications of past-present-future in the other sense are distinct from the impersonal present, mere objects in it, no matter how inseparable they are from it. You can say that theories of this kind reflect the famous "death of the subject" or that they articulate the split subject of poststructuralism or Lacanianism: we won't follow those debates any further here, but will only draw some interesting consequences for the narrative theories in the process of elaboration. In particular, it becomes clear that the regime of the past-present-future and of personal identities and destinies is at its outer limit the realm of the récit; while the impersonal consciousness of an eternal or existential present would at its outer limit govern pure scene, a showing that was altogether divorced and separated from telling and purified of it. Let's see what an event might look like from this second temporal perspective:

> Lunch went on methodically, until each of the seven courses was left in fragments and the fruit was merely a toy, to be peeled and sliced as a child destroys a daisy, petal by petal.

This is a rather different lunch from many we can remember reading about: the one which makes Mr. Bloom belch with satisfaction in *Ulysses*; the immense two-hundred-page lunches in Proust, from which all the gossip and anecdotes fan out like a rhizome; the truly abominable lunch break that sets everything in motion at the beginning of *La bête humaine*; some elegant English luncheon in which, according to the newspapers, someone ingests a virulent particle of radiation; or that infinitely sad lunch to which Boccaccio's impoverished hero invited his beloved. All of those—and I will treat you to yet another lunch later on, a truly wondrous well-nigh salvational one—all of those are inserted into one or another kind of narrative time; the anonymous lunch in which one course is peeled off after another is not.

Many are to be sure the theories of metaphor from time immemorial, from Ricoeur's identification (based on Aristotle) of metaphor

as the very source of Being itself[21] to any number of tropological systems, let alone systems of resemblance and recognition. In our context, however, what is inescapable is the function of metaphor to detemporalize existence, to dechronologize and denarrativize the present, indeed, to construct or reconstruct a new temporal present which we are so oddly tempted to call eternal. The word is evidently an attempt to escape the temporal overtones of the normal vocabulary for experiences of time, and is consistent with the "eternity" of individual consciousness itself as long as it lasts (inasmuch as in that sense, consciousness has no opposite and we are in it, even in sleep, in some absolute and inescapable fashion).

What we can at least conclude from this discussion is that we have here finally located the definitive formulation for the discursive opposition we have been trying to name. Now it can be articulated not as récit versus *roman*, nor even telling versus showing; but rather destiny versus the eternal present. And what is crucial is not to load one of these dies and take sides for the one or the other as all our theorists seemed to do, but rather to grasp the proposition that realism lies at their intersection. Realism is a consequence of the tension between these two terms; to resolve the opposition either way would destroy it; James's guilt feelings are not only justified, they are necessary. And this is also why it is justified to find oneself always talking about the emergence or the breakdown of realism and never about the thing itself, since we will always find ourselves describing a potential emergence or a potential breakdown.

[21] Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, Toronto: University Press, 1977, 307.

Chapter II

The Twin Sources of Realism: Affect, or, the Body's Present

We have, to be sure, ourselves omitted something significant from our account of "The Hawk," and it is the happy ending: the boy recovers from his illness (despite the absence of his beloved falcon), Monna Giovanna relents, and, although she fails to develop any genuine passion for Federigo, consents to the marriage, in which "they all live happily ever after" and so forth. But this involves a lowering of tone, and as it were a decompression, a return to the flatlands of everyday life, a slow disengagement from the intensities of the Event (the narrative or récit itself) and a consent to the less exhilarating yet ultimately more humanly bearable comfort of the everyday (using this last word in Auerbach's heightened sense, with its connotation of a realism to come).

The shift, then, from tale to daily life simply confirms the point being made about the two temporalities at stake here. Yet also to be noted, if not unduly stressed, is the mild desolation that accompanies this narrative, whether in its major mode as a récit or in the coda. I have used the word "sad" (to which we will return in a more official context): is this feeling only to be attributed to the reader or is it possible that it suggests a dimension of narrative we have not yet taken into consideration?

This observation will then serve to introduce the second agency in my story, and the other impulse—affect—I want to associate with the emergence of realism as such. I will first stage this second impulse as the opposite of the narrative one: that is to say, I will approach it from the standpoint of temporality, for which the récit has seemed to embody a temporality of the past and of the preterite, a temporality of the chronological, in which, everything having happened already, events succeed each other in what is today loosely called "linear time" (a rather faddish expression I believe we owe to Marshall McLuhan).

Is it possible to imagine a temporality so different from this conventional one that the word "time" ceases to seem altogether appropriate for it (something we already mused about in connection with the term "eternal")?

In the hindsight of the theory (and historical experience) of the postmodern, and of what I have called "the end of temporality," perhaps we can add greater specificity to the kind of temporality (or lack of it) at stake here. "The End of Temporality" theorized a shrinking of contemporary (bourgeois) experience such that we begin to live a perpetual present with a diminishing sense of temporal or indeed phenomenological continuities[1]: this perpetual present was, I believe, what Deleuze and Guattari described as a schizophrenic present (in the *Anti-Oedipus*)[2], but theirs was an altogether Utopian account which takes its place in a tradition of literary celebrations of temporal immediacy from Wordsworth's imbeciles and Flaubert's "simple heart"[3] on down to modern times. I believe that the contemporary or postmodern "perpetual present" is better characterized as a "reduction to the body," inasmuch as the body is all that remains in any tendential reduction of experience to the present as such. But I would not necessarily want to argue that in such temporal isolation the body's senses gain a heightened existence, something that is more likely to happen when, for whatever reason, one sense is given priority over the others (as in the evolving specializations of nineteenth-century painting and music). Rather, the isolated body begins to know more global waves of generalized sensations, and it is these which, for want of a better word, I will here call affect.

It is a technical term which has been strongly associated with a number of recent theories which alternately appeal to Freud or to Deleuze and which, like the theory of postmodernity, also take this phenomenon as evidence for a new turn in human relations and forms of subjectivity (including politics).[4] I do not here mean to

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[1] See Jameson, "The End of Temporality," in *Ideologies of Theory*, London: Verso, 2009.

[2] See the first chapter of Deleuze and Guattari's *L'Anti-Œdipe* (Paris: Minuit, 1972), as celebrated, for example, in the following account: "Il y a une expérience schizophrénique des quantités intensives à l'état pur, à un point presque insupportable—une misère et une gloire célibataires éprouvées au plus haut point, comme une clameur suspendue entre la vie et la mort, un sentiment de passage intense, états d'intensité pure et crue dépouillés de leur figure et de leur forme" (25).

[3] To Felicité's blessed simplicity should be added the very different longing expressed in Saint Antoine's final cry: "Être la matière!"

[4] Various conceptual streams meet in this concept: Deleuze's commentaries on

appropriate it for a different theory of all these things, nor do I mean to endorse or to correct the philosophies of which it currently constitutes a kind of signal or badge of group identity. Indeed, I want to specify a very local and restricted, practical use of the term "affect" here by incorporating it into a binary opposition which historicizes it and limits its import to questions of representation and indeed of literary history.

I will therefore begin by distinguishing affect (in my sense of the word) from emotions as such. The opposition between feelings and emotions is a long-standing one, based mostly on tradition rather than any successfully articulated structural difference. The replacement of the vague word "feeling" by the more technical if not clinical term "affect" does seem to promise a little more rigor in the debate, if not indeed to promise some renewal of it in the reconsideration of an old problem, which has become the unexamined sedimentation of common sense thought.

I will clarify it by modifying the terminology of the opposite number as well: for I wish to redefine emotion as "named emotion," and thereby not only to mark a structural difference between emotion and affect but also to underscore yet a further dimension of this problem, which involves the intervention of language as such. The new implication is that affect (or its plural) somehow eludes language and its naming of things (and feelings), whereas emotion is preeminently a phenomenon sorted out into an array of names. Traditionally those names—love, hatred, anger, fear, disgust, pleasure, and so forth—have been grasped as a system of phenomena (like the system of the colors, for example); and like colors, the system is a historical one which varies from culture to culture and from period to period. Many are the handbooks which seek to map out the then current systems of emotions, from Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* to Descartes' *Treatise on the Passions*.[5] But what needs further clarification in our context—

Spinoza, Eve Sedgwick's meditations on Sylvan Tompkins, trauma theory, queer theory and a whole new generation of work, which is usefully summarized by references to Jonathan Flatley, *Affective Mapping*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2008—but see his bibliographic note on 198–99—or to Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005.

[5] I have not found a suitable structural history; but see Amélie O. Rorty, ed., *Exploring Emotions*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980; Daniel M. Gross, *The Secret History of Emotion*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006; and, in order not to omit the humors from this picture, Noga Arikha, *Passions and the Tempers*, New York: Harper Collins, 2007.

for such systems eventually seem to dissolve in the era of affect, and yet to survive residually like so many traditions—is not so much the system as such as rather the reifying effects of the name itself.

It is indeed a delicate philosophical problem, if not a false one altogether, to distinguish between a phenomenological state of being—say, the experience of anger—and the word by which it is named: "Sing, Muse, the wrath of Achilles"—*thumos*. The philological dialectic deflects our interest in the thing itself—how the ancients felt anger—to the history of the word: but is the existence of the word altogether foreign to the experience of the emotion? If it does not bring it into being in the first place, as some absolute constructivism might claim, then at least the articulation language brings to the as yet unexpressed feeling will surely open all kinds of new channels into which it can spread and thrive.

By habit and tradition, the notion of reification now strikes us as a negative or critical one; and the implication that the name necessarily reifies the emotion at once suggests the possibility of some more authentic experience that preceded the baleful spell of nomination (and that could in a pinch perhaps be recovered). But this is to forget Hegel's judiciously ambivalent deployment of the original concept: humans objectify their projects and their desires, thereby enriching them: life is itself then a series of reifications which are themselves reabsorbed and enlarged by way of the new project. Naming is a fundamental component of such objectification, and alienation is only one possible fate for what is a universal process.

"If the word love comes up between them I am lost!" Count Mosca's famous apprehension (on seeing Gina and Fabrice together) is perhaps only the most dramatic expression of the way in which the name can suddenly bring a whole new world into being (for good or ill!).[6] Meanwhile, many are the examples of words which have historically articulated undiscovered states of being which, while perhaps not newly emergent, were at least dormant if not unconscious in everyday human existence, and which then begin to play their own role as agents in a reorganization of life. Such was, for example, the appropriation of the old word "*ennui*" for the new state of nineteenth-century boredom, which brought all kinds of new questions about activity and even existence into being around it. Such was also, in my opinion, the word "anxiety," which rescued a daily and unnerving experience

[6] Stendhal, *La Chartreuse de Parme*, Paris: Cluny, 1948, 165 (chapter 8).

from the melodramatic and quasi-religious grandeur of words like "anguish." Such finally is also the designation of an ancient scholastic term for that register of feeling we now call "affect" itself, not to speak of medicalization.[7] Yet the onto-philological dilemma remains (or is it the Sapir-Whorff hypothesis?): were there affects before this name raised them into the light of consciousness, or did the word somehow slowly begin to modify the field of existential reality itself in such a way as to endow us with a bodily dimension absent from the bodily experience of, say, the ancient Greeks?

As I suggested, I believe that the problem is unsolvable in that form, but also that, if we specify a restriction on what the historical language can and cannot express at any given point, the ontological question will not disrupt the historical one. (Meanwhile, the question of whether affects cannot themselves be reified in the naming process must also remain open: Did the medieval term "acedia" not modify the experience of medieval clerks? Does the word "melancholia," itself long present in Western discourse, not do something significant to our own internal subjectivities? And does not the very word "affect," itself henceforth powerfully reorganize the latter's force field?)[8]

At any rate, it will have become clear that by positing the named emotion (rather than emotion tout court) as the binary opposite of affect per se (or at least as the term whose difference allows us best to articulate the latter's identity), I am also insisting on the resistance of affect to language, and thereby on the new representational tasks it poses poets and novelists in the effort somehow to seize its fleeting essence and to force its recognition. For in its insatiable colonization of the as yet unexplored and inexpressed (it is an impulse in which realism can be said to share the telos that modernism only more stridently affirms and sloganizes), the system of the old named emotions becomes not only too general but also too familiar: to approach the emotions more closely is microscopically to see within them a Brownian movement which, although properly unnamable in its own right, calls out imperiously for all the stimulation of linguistic innovation. It is towards mid-century, let us say in the 1840s of the bourgeois era, that such linguistic demands begin to become audible and inescapable, at least for the most alert arts that scan the era for the new.

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[7] See Ivan Illich, *Limits to Medicine*, London: Marion Boyers, 1995.

[8] We will see that the very word "body," unifying and totalizing as it is, can itself scarcely escape the reproach of reification either.

But now we must introduce another feature of affect: I provisionally follow Rei Terada's idea (derived ultimately from Kant) that affects are bodily feelings, whereas emotions (or passions, to use their other name) are conscious states.[9] The latter have objects, the former are bodily sensations: it is the difference between the *coup de foudre* and a state of generalized depression. But this is then to endow the concept of affect with a positive content: if the positive characteristic of the emotion is to be named, the positive content of an affect is to activate the body. Language is here opposed to the body, or at least the lived body (which may itself be a "modern" phenomenon). And therefore, alongside a crisis of language, in which the old systems of emotions come to be felt as a traditional rhetoric, and an outmoded one at that, there is also a new history of the body to be written, the "bourgeois body" as we may now call it, as it emerges from the outmoded classifications of the feudal era. (Foucault's historical periodization of the emergence of "life" or of the new biosciences offers one possible context for what I here mean to be an existential and class-social phenomenon, related to the emergence of new forms of daily life.[10])

One has only to compare the descriptions in Balzac's novels, concocted by someone who came of age in the Restoration, to the organization of narrative discourse in Flaubert only a generation later, to grasp the truly historical changes in what is asked of language by each novelist, and what is represented in the way of the representation of subjectivity, and of its perceptions.

In that case, it will be appropriate to associate rise of affect with the emergence of the phenomenological body in language and representation; and to historicize a competition between the system of named emotions and the emergence of nameless bodily states which can be documented in literature around the middle of the nineteenth century (literary representation furnishing the most comprehensive evidence as to a momentous yet impossibly hypothetical historical transformation of this kind). Flaubert and Baudelaire can stand as the markers for such a transformation of the sensorium, which can perhaps best be demonstrated by way of Balzac's dealings with the senses in the previous generation. Balzacian descriptions are well-known: here is the most famous, of the salon of the Maison Vauquer:

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[9] Rei Terada, *Feeling in Theory: Emotion After the "Death of the Subject,"* Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2001, 82.

[10] See also Donald Lowe's pathbreaking *History of Bourgeois Perception*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

> Cette première pièce exhale une odeur sans nom dans la langue, et qu'il faudrait appeler *l'odeur de pension*. Elle sent le renfermé, le moisi, le rancé; elle donne froid, elle est humide au nez, elle pénètre les vêtements; elle a le goût d'une salle où l'on dine; elle pue le service, l'office, l'hospice. Peut-être pourrait-elle se décrire si l'on inventait un procédé pour évaluer les quantités élémentaires et nauséabondes qu'y jettent les atmosphères catarrhales et *sui generis* de chaque pensionnaire, jeune ou vieux.
>
> This room gives off a smell for which our language has no special word; it can only be described as a *boarding house smell*. It smells stuffy, mouldy, rancid; it is chilly, clammy to breathe, permeates one's clothing; it leaves the stale taste of a room where people have been eating; it stinks of backstairs, scullery, workhouse. It could only be described if some process were invented for measuring the quantity of disgusting elementary particles contributed by each resident, young or old, from his own catarrhal and *sui generis* exhalations.[11]

Everything would seem to confirm the first impression, that it is an affect that is at question here: it is nameless and unclassifiable, the senses are mobilized, Balzac is keenly aware of his linguistic and representational problem and fusses with his recording apparatus. But this description is not the evocation of an affect, for one good reason: namely that it *means* something.

The passage makes clear why the elaborate descriptions in Balzec do not invalidate the historical proposition I want to advance about the body in literature. For in Balzac everything that looks like a physical sensation—a musty smell, a rancid taste, a greasy fabric—always means something, it is a sign or allegory of the moral or social status of a given character: decent poverty, squalor, the pretensions of the parvenu, the true nobility of the old aristocracy, and so on. In short, it is not really a sensation, it is already a meaning, an allegory. By the time of Flaubert, these signs remain, but they have become stereotypical; and the new descriptions register a density beyond such stereotypical meanings.

Roland Barthes, a keen amateur of the new vibrations modernity brought with it, has spoken authoritatively of the irreconcilable divorce between lived experience and the intelligible which characterizes modernity, between the existential and the meaningful.[12]

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[11] Honoré de Balzac, *Le père Goriot*, in *Oeuvres III*, Paris: La Pléiade, 1976, 53. Note the wistful longing for a quantitative turn in this description. English translation by A. J. Krailsheimer, Oxford, 1991, 4–6.

[12] Roland Barthes, "L'Effet de réel," in *Oeuvres*, Vol. II, Paris: Seuil, 1994, 483. And see my own commentary in "The Realist Floor Plan," in *Ideologies of Theory*, London: Verso, 2009.

Experience—and sensory experience in particular—is in modern times contingent: if such experience seems to have a meaning, we are at once suspicious of its authenticity. Balzac, however, will not give up on meaning: he continues energetically to deploy the twin weapons of metaphor ("Old Goriot was a lion!") and of metonymy, as in this passage and indeed everywhere in his work, where the nameless smell is composed of the decent or desperate miseries of pensioners who have deposited their traces in this haven.

To this we might well oppose the contingencies enumerated by Flaubert in his descriptions (Barthes terms them "l'effet de réel" or the "reality-effect"). Baudelaire is just as useful:

> dans une maison déserte quelque armoire
> Pleine de l'âcre odeur des temps, poudreuse et noire.
>
> "Le flacon"

where the musty smell of time drifts in indeterminable synesthesia across the grimy tactility of the armoire. These unnamable sensations have become autonomous, as Balzac's odor might have been had it been converted into some distasteful melancholia. At any rate they no longer mean anything: states of the world, they simply exist.

Yet this is a historical proposition which raises serious philosophical problems. Are we to suppose that before the construction of the secular or bourgeois body in the course of the nineteenth century, affects simply did not exist, and an older pre-modern humanity had to make do with the various systems of emotions referenced above? But it is not exactly this kind of sweeping and peremptory affirmation which I am advancing here, but rather a hypothesis that, with the change in nuance, differentiates it absolutely from this or that statement about human nature. For what I suggest is that before this mid-century, such affects had not been named, had not found their way into language, let alone become the object of this or that linguistic codification. To be sure, this is also a historical proposition, but one about language itself and the way in which the nomination of an experience makes it visible at the very moment that it transforms and reifies it. And what is presupposed is that affects or feelings which have not thus been named are not available to consciousness, or are absorbed into subjectivity in different ways that render them inconspicuous and indistinguishable from the named emotions they may serve to fill out and to which they lend body and substance. This is to say that any proposition about affect is also a proposition about the body; and a historical one at that.

We have so far (in our examples) characterized affect in terms of physical sensation or sensory perception. Odor, the most repressed and stigmatized of the senses as Adorno pointed out,[13] seems everywhere, from Baudelaire to Proust, to be a privileged vehicle for isolating affect and identifying it for a variety of dynamics (we should not forget Teresa Brennan's startling proposal that the contagion of affect—its interpersonal transmission—is historically the result of smell, of which sexual pheromones are only a particularly dramatic example[14]). But these sensory vehicles of affect present a representational problem inasmuch they are easily confused and identified with the bodily senses as such, and thereby reduced to merely physical perceptions or sensations. It is clear, for example, that the usefulness of smell as a vehicle for different types of affect derives at least in part from its marginalized status, its underdevelopment, so to speak, as a symbolic element.

We need then, before continuing, to enumerate some of the features affect seems to present (or to require): the variety of such features then begins to suggest the multiplicity of ways this new element can pervade nineteenth-century realism and open up its narratives, not only to scene and consciousness as such, but above all to some new realism of affect, some heightened representational presence.

We have already insisted on the namelessness of this new reality. It can certainly be constructed, and not only in literature but also in the other arts; but that very operation is dialectical and expresses both faces of a tenacious representational nominalism, for the name, whatever its vocabulary field—the celebration of the *body* or the positing of something like *melancholy* as the fundamental ground-tone of human existence—necessarily turns the affect into a new thing in its own right. The *symboliste* doctrine of suggestion here betrays a deeper truth, that of a radical distinction between naming and representational construction, which, distantly evoking our more fundamental distinction between telling and showing, explains why affect cannot be present in the regime of the récit.

Yet the temptation to name is encouraged by another feature of affect, namely its autonomization. It seems to have no context, but to float above experience without causes and without the structural relationship to its cognate entities which the named emotions have

[13] T. W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007. See the chapter "Elements of Anti-Semitism."

[14] Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, Ithaca: Cornell, 2004.

with one another.[15] This is not to say that in reality affect has no causes whatsoever, no relationship to its situation of emergence: for any number of chemical, psychoanalytic, or interpersonal factors may well plausibly be proposed or experimentally tested. But its essence is to remain free-floating and independent of these factors (which only exist for other people), and this is obviously a function of its temporality as an eternal present, as an element which is somehow self-sufficient, feeding on itself, and perpetuating its own existence ("all joy wants eternity!"). This is then the point at which we must evoke another feature (explored in recent times by Deleuze and Lyotard)[16], namely intensity: that is, the capacity of affect to be registered according to a range of sonority, from minute to deafening, without losing its quality and its determination. Indeed, Lyotard's usage makes it clear that we could just as well substitute the term "intensity" for that of "affect" itself, provided we use it in the plural—yet here too it is no longer a matter of form and content, but rather of that other contemporary verbal-fetish, which is singularity. Affects are singularities and intensities, existences rather than essences, which usefully unsettle the more established psychological and physiological categories.

This was indeed what Roland Barthes meant by his notion of the "reality effect," a formulation designed to replace any substantive idea of realism (and in particular those based on its content) by a semiotic one, in which "realism" is only one of the possible signs and signals given off by the text in question. That texts designed to be called "realism" and recognized as such give off signals or connotations of the type Barthes described in *Writing Degree Zero* (and which he called "*écriture*" as such) is unquestionable, even though the type of realism they may have wanted to convey necessarily had a historical and ideological status. Yet I believe there is a more satisfactory way of dealing with realism than its reduction to signs alone (this book attempts to justify that belief).

For with his uncanny sense of intellectual consequences, Barthes then at once historicizes his position: "In the ideology of our time, the obsessive reference to the 'concrete'... is always trained like a

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[15] But who says autonomization also necessarily implies differentiation and institutionalization: just as music became an autonomous art with it own rules and properties, so also the musical institutions and material instruments developed around it, from music schools to orchestras, from new instruments to new kinds of municipal funding, etc.

[16] See, for example, Jean-François Lyotard, *Economie libidinale*, Paris: Minuit, 1974.

weapon against meaning as such, as though, de jure, what lives could not signify—and vice versa."[17] This irreconcilable divorce between intelligibility and experience, between meaning and existence, then can be grasped as a fundamental feature of modernity, particularly in literature, whose verbal existence necessarily inclines it to idealism. If it means something, it can't be real; if it is real, it can't be absorbed by purely mental or conceptual categories (the ideal of the "concrete" then attempting an impossible synthesis of these two dimensions: clearly enough phenomenology conceived the most strenuous modern vocation to achieve it.) Yet what Barthes in fact describes here already has another name, it is "contingency"; for the intellectuals of his generation, the novel that gave its discovery the most indelible expression was Sartre's *Nausea*, a unique and unrepeatable solution to an endemic form-problem. Barthes has himself here reincorporated it by transforming Flaubert's non-meaningful non-symbolic objects into so many rhetorical signs (signs of realism). But we can also keep faith with the aims of phenomenology by suggesting that the affect released in Flaubert by the disappearance of Balzac's symbolic and allegorical possibilities shares with Barthes' contingency the "property" of being unassimilable to meaning, to verbal and intellectual abstract (names) and to rational conceptualization as such. So in reality, it is not existence and meaning which are incompatible here (although they may well be in the context of some other philosophical inquiry), it is allegory and the body which repel one another and fail to mix.

And as we shall show elsewhere,[18] allegory in this traditional sense means personification, it means naming and nomination; and it is therefore words themselves (the medieval universals) which are incompatible with the body and its affects. Such is then the first lesson we will want to draw from this foray into the affective realm, namely, that we need a different kind of language to identify affect without, by naming it, presuming to define its content. Metaphor and the metaphorical are not themselves a reliable guide; that the lunch-flower of Virginia Woolf[19] that has been quoted above has an affective dimension is little more than a presumption, the reader must somehow introduce it from the outside; yet we can nonetheless retain at least one feature from its temporality, in which, with each petal

[17] Barthes, "L'Effet de réel," 483.

[18] The second volume of the *Poetics of Social Forms* will be devoted to allegory.

[19] Virginia Woolf, *The Long Voyage Out*, New York: Random House, 2000, 143.

plucked the lunch disintegrates into a pitiable collection of ruined and inedible objects.

For affect to achieve a genuine autonomization, either in its experience or in its representation, however, it must somehow achieve independence from the conventional body itself (which as Sartre taught us is the body of other people). This is why I have for some time found suggestive Heidegger's inaugural invocation of affect—the starting point, not only of Sartrean phenomenology but also of Merleau-Ponty's attempts to formulate embodiment—and that turns on the German word "*Stimmung*,"[20] of which the English "mood" is but a pale and one-dimensional equivalent. Heidegger wanted to show that *Stimmung* was neither subjective nor objective, neither irrational nor cognitive, but rather a constitutive dimension of our being-in-the-world; and his term goes well beyond the characterization of a cloudy sky as "ominous" or a particular kind of lighting as "sinister," as in Gaston Bachelard's psychoanalysis of the elements (joyously rippling streams, stagnant pools)[21]—although the primacy of light is significant here, as we shall see later on.

In fact, Heideggerian or Sartrean *Stimmung* adds something like an object-pole to the subject-pole suggested by the word "affect" (thus demonstrating in the process how difficult it is for us to escape this fatal prejudice by which we are obliged to decide whether something is subjective or objective from the outset). For us, in the present context, however, the alternative opens up a welcome enlargement of the field, in which it is either the world or the individual subject who is thereby the source of what we have until now simply called affect.

The German term has the additional advantage of introducing an auditory dimension, not so much in its relationship to *Stimme* or voice, as rather to what the term suggests of musical tuning, of the according of a musical instrument (as well as the jangling of the unharmonized)—not for nothing does German use the expression "*das stimmt!*" for "it's true!" or "it's correct!" (and their opposites).

More extensive musical reference suggests not only the moods of major and minor (and of the variety of the old Greek modes as well[22]), it also moves us on to the matter of affect's chromaticism, its

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[20] Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1967, 134, Par. 29.

[21] The first in his series of explorations was *La psychanalyse du feu* (1938).

[22] On the other hand, the Greek system of the seven modes (which are even referenced in Plato and Aristotle's political theories) might well be considered an equivalent of

waxing and waning not only in intensity but across the very scale and gamut of such nuances. Not for nothing is Wagner's *Tristan* (1865) counted (along with Flaubert and Baudelaire, and with Manet) as a fundamental date in modernism's liberation from tradition and convention, in this case, I am tempted to say, from the musical récit and that completion into which Beethoven led sonata form and instrumental music. Chromaticism here means a waxing and waning of the scale, a slippage up and down the tones which dismisses all respect for their individual implications (their inner logic of tonic and subdominant), and which also develops each tone into its own specific coloration (articulated by the material development of the instruments themselves).

The evolution of music is thus a vivid way to describe the logic of affect, and indeed the very notion of a sliding scale seems already to suggest quarter-tones and their eventual disaggregation of the Western tonal system (at one, according to Max Weber, with the emergence of Western modernity and "rationality").[23]

But in this mid-century period, it is best to limit ourselves to the disaggregation of the "rationality" of the sonata form (or its completion and exhaustion by Beethoven), in order to appreciate the Wagnerian innovations—the reorganization of sonata-form temporality into the repetitions of the *Leitmotiven*, the transformation of heightened dissonance (the diminished seventh and ninth) into vehicles for affect rather than simple preparations for resolution; chromaticism itself and the very conversion of the key system into precisely that sliding scale of which I have spoken. In all this, there is perhaps a strange regression into the modal systems of pre-Western music; while the Wagnerian "endless melody" itself projects a temporality notably distinct from the past-present-future of the sonata, indeed it brings into being very precisely that "eternal present" we have already evoked in another context. Wagner's own remark about "an art of transitions"[24]

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the traditional systems of named emotions to which we have alluded (and also to have their analogues in other cultures as with the Indian ragas). Yet the reappearance of unfamiliar modes in a modern music from which all traces of that systematicity have long since disappeared might well offer suitable occasions for the registration of uncodified affect.

[23] Max Weber, *The Rational and Social Foundations of Music*, trans. Don Martindale, Johannes Riedel and Gertrude Neuwirth, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1958.

[24] Richard Wagner, *Selected Letters*, trans. S. Spencer and B. Millington, New York: Norton, 1988, 475: "The characteristic fabric of music ... owes its construction to

not only uncannily anticipates what modern critics have had to say about Flaubert's style, but itself constructs a pure present in which little by little transition itself replaces the more substantive states (or musical "named emotions") that precede and follow it.

None of this, to be sure, takes into account that immense material development and expansion of musical coloration (and material instruments) which Wagner pioneered along with Berlioz and which would seem the most essential, but also the most obvious, way of characterizing everything that is proteiform, metamorphic, shimmering and changeable-ephemeral about affect itself, not excluding its immense (but unmotivated) crescendoes and diminuendi. Meanwhile, Wagnerian affect determines a crisis and a revolution in external form (and the very conception of the music drama) which, although without any immediate analogy with the realistic novel, nonetheless portends significant formal changes to come.

But Wagnerian chromaticism offers a useful staging of the concept (and the new bodily reality?) of affect in yet another way than in its tension with sonata form, for its continuities (the so-called "endless melody") can also be seen as the systematic exclusion of closed entities and episodes essential to the more traditional Italian opera Wagner wished to displace: namely, the aria. It is enough to recall the occasional "songs" that punctuate Wagner's musical continuities—either the official songs of *Meistersinger* or *Tannhäuser*, or the "Du bist der Lenz" of *Walküre*—indeed, it might also be argued that Wagner's long retrospective storytelling passages are something of a replacement for the old aria as such—to understand that the aria was designed to express what we have called the named emotion as such (love! vengeance! grief!); and indeed, to express that expression: ideologically to stage the existence of the emotion and to draw attention to itself as that emotion's embodiment. Whence the flourishes that offer the voice its properly rhetorical vehicle, combining material sound with emotional content. Wagner's repudiation of the aria is thus a profound critique and repudiation of the "named emotion" as such,

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the extreme sensitivity which gudes me in the direction of mediating and providing an intimate bond between all the different moments of transition that separate the extremes of mood. I should now like to call my most delicate and profound art the art of transition." (October 29, 1859, to Mathilde Wesendonk). One might well juxtapose this remark with Jean Rousset's study of "l'art des modulations" of Flaubert, in *Forme et signification*, Paris: Corti, 1963; and, on the strength of Charles Rosen's *Romantic Generation*, Cambridge: Harvard, 1998, add Chopin into the picture.

both in reality and in its concept; and what he replaces it with is very precisely affect as such.

The very notion of orchestral coloration, to be sure, reminds us of the tendency of such accounts of one art to borrow the terminology and logic of another, and return us to the parallel developments in painting, where Manet's attention to material color (Gertrude Stein would say, material oil paint) surreptitiously drains his storytelling content of its primacy. Indeed, the word "chromaticism" itself is derived from the Greek *chroma*, which first means "skin" or "skin color," thereby reaffirming the constitutive relationship with the body itself, and not merely one of its reified senses.

Time is thus famously eternalized by Monet's impressionism, as the latter painted his haystacks or cathedrals at every moment of the day from dawn to dusk, seizing each shade of light as a distinct event which the surfaces in question are but a pretext for capturing. It is the intimate relationship between this new conjuncture of light and temporality with Wagner's chromaticism that we now need to grasp, as it constructs a virtually imperceptible passage of perception from one level to the next. Here then, in impressionism as well, an absolute heterogeneity of the elements is translated into some new kind of homogeneity in which a new kind of phenomenological continuum is asserted.

The vogue of the pseudo-scientific experiments with perception (and of such mythical concepts as the meaningless "sense-data" from whose combinations our sense-perceptions are allegedly derived) also suggests this double movement whereby the body is analytically broken down into its smallest components and then scientifically reconstructed as an abstraction, all the while releasing a flow of affect hitherto stored and bound by its traditional unities and their named feelings. Yet it would be wrong to see this development as the exclusion of narrative, as does the conventional account, grasping narrative only in the representational or storytelling content of the painting. This new "pure present" of the visual data of paint and painting in reality harbors new kinds of narrative movement and awakens new trajectories in the movement of the eye and new conceptions of the visual event and its new temporalities.

At any rate, in all these contemporary symptoms, a certain sensory heterogeneity is disguised as that absolute homogeneity we call style, and a new phenomenological continuum begins to emerge, which is that of the play and variations, the expansion and contraction,

the intensification and diminution, of that nameless new life of the body which is affect. Affect becomes the very chromaticism of the body itself.

Such changeability endows the dimension of affect with a capacity for transformation and metamorphosis which can register the nuances of mood fully as much as it can mutate into its opposite, from the depressive to the manic, from gloominess to ecstasy. And the Greek derivation then ultimately returns us to the body itself, along with its temperatures, from the feverish to the deathly chill, from blushing to the pallor of fear or shock.

Affect thus ranges chromatically up and down the bodily scale from melancholy to euphoria, from the bad trip to the high—from Nietzsche's most manic outbursts to the unquenchable depression and guilt of a Strindberg. And this is, as I have stressed, to be radically distinguished from the play of the named emotions as such, even though as modernism develops, their representations will not fail to be tinged and colored, as it were tuned and orchestrated, by the new affective phenomena and the new registering apparatuses designed to capture them.

This puts us on the track of a temporality specific to affect, which I will call the sliding scale of the incremental, in which each infinitesimal moment differentiates itself from the last by a modification of tone and an increase or diminution of intensity. The reference to the other, more material arts is unescapable in this context, not only because it is here a question of the body and its sensations, far more tangibly deployed in music and the visual arts; but also because such an account must necessarily remain external to the thing itself, a language from the outside, which must necessarily be called upon to characterize the structure of language effects, let alone the lived experiences of the body as such.

Impressionism and post-impressionism in painting, the Wagnerian revolution in music—these are only the most obvious analogies to the new affective styles invented by Flaubert and Baudelaire: all are indeed contemporaneous with that historic emergence of the bourgeois body which I want outrageously to affirm here as a historical fact and date. (And if we follow the now conventional story of the emergence of existentialism as a revolt against Hegelianism, then both Kierkegaard's discovery of anxiety and Marx's dramatization, by way of his theory of alienation, of "naked life" can also be summoned to document this radical transformation of the experience of the body

in the European 1840s.) At its outer limit, then, affect becomes the organ of perception of the world itself, the vehicle of my being-in-the-world that Nietzche and after him phenomenological philosophy begin to discover at much the same time.

I now want to explore some of the forms such affect can take, it being understood that our primary interest here lies in what this affective dimension of the new existential present does to the novelistic and in particular the scenic possibilities it opens up and begins to undermine at one and the same time.

But the content of affect is of course itself variable, and even if melancholia remains a kind of constant, in Flaubert, in *Tristan*, in Munch, in Gogol, its opposite is very different in all these cases, as also in Zola, where an expected excess of orgiastic excitement is far less authentic than the domestic shelter and metaphysical comfort of what the French call "*bonheur*," something again quite different from the trivial and truly petty-bourgeois state which English names "happiness." Here, for example, is the truly wondrous moment, in all the heat and dust of the campaign, the fatigue of endless forced marches and the confusion of rumor and fear, in which the protagonist of Zola's *Debacle* is able to know "*un dejeuner rêvé*" in a little garden as yet spared from the sound of artillery and the whistling of flying bullets:

> Dans la joie de la nappe très blanche, ravi du vin blanc qui étincelait dans son verre, Maurice mangea deux oeufs à la coque, avec une gourmandise qu'il ne se connaissait pas.
>
> In his delight at the snowy tablecloth and the white wine sparkling in his glass, Maurice ate two soft-boiled eggs with such an appetite that he surprised himself.[25]

It is an interlude in white utterly distinct in tone from the sad debris of Virginia Woolf's luncheon, and confirmed later on by the luxuriation of his fellow soldier, Jean, when, for one single solitary night of rest and quiet, he is able to sleep in a real bed:

> Ah! ces draps blancs, ces draps si ardemment convoites, Jean ne voyait plus qu'eux … C'était une gourmandise, une impatience d'enfant, une irrésistible passion, à se glisser dans cette blancheur, dans cette fraicheur, et à s'y perdre.

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[25] Émile Zola, *Les Rougon-Macquart*, Volume V, *La Débacle*, Paris: Pleiade, 1967, 446. English translation by Elinor Dordray, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, 54.

> Oh! All Jean could see were those white sheets, the sheets he'd longed for so fervently! … He was greedy and impatient as a child, feeling an irresistible passion urging him to slip into the whiteness, the freshness, and lose himself inside it.[26]

Many more will however be the metamorphoses of white in this work before we have done with it. Indeed, it is with the development of Zola's extraordinary bodily and linguistic sensibility that the realistic novel is able to deploy the possibilities of what James was to call "the scene as such."

We may conclude this introductory discussion of affect with a table in which the variety of its forms is systematically contrasted with those of the older named emotions:

EMOTION	AFFECT
system	chromaticism
nomenclature	bodily sensation
marks of destiny	perpetual present/eternity
generalized objects	intensities
traditional temporality	singularities
human nature	diagnosis, medicalization
motives	experiences, existentialisms
arias	endless melody
representation	sense-data
closed sonata form	the problem of endings
narration	description

[26] Ibid., 555; Dordray, 161–2.