

# A Single Man of Good Fortune: Postmodern Identities and Consumerism in the New Novel of Manners

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A SINGLE MAN OF GOOD FORTUNE: POSTMODERN IDENTITIES  
AND CONSUMERISM IN THE  
NEW NOVEL OF MANNERS

By

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Marquette University,  
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ABSTRACT  
A SINGLE MAN OF GOOD FORTUNE: POSTMODERN IDENTITIES  
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Bonnie McLean, B.A., M.A.

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In my dissertation, I argue that the novel of manners, while sometimes considered a moribund genre, presents itself as a genre relevant to contemporary criticism of social change from consensus politics to privatization both at governmental and domestic levels. I establish both key terms, cultural and theoretical trends, and define the novel of manners in context as a historical genre and a contemporary one. I further explore the novel of manners as a commentary on social and moral problems, particularly in tensions between social morality and individual morality that emerge when manners break down, a concept originally highlighted by Henry James. I interrogate the interplay between nostalgia, manners, and national identity, highlighting the recreation of moribund social and moral values as a means of exerting authority over the family unit and generating profit out of national heritage. Finally, I highlight the means by which literary texts cast consumerism as literal and figurative pornography that transforms the citizen into a consumer. I specifically examine the breakdown of manners through scenes of pornography and material consumption that illustrate moral depravity at the individual and national levels.

The seven texts selected for my study in the new novels of manners—Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), Jeffery Eugenides' *The Marriage Plot* (2011), Alan Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty* (2004), Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* (1989), Ian McEwan's *The Child in Time* (1987), Martin Amis's *Money* (1984), and Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991)—engage with neoliberalism and its social effects on individuals. Because citizens were redefined as consumers during the 1980s in both the United States and Britain, I contend that the novelists and novels in my study formulate a critique of social amorality in the same way Henry James's literary criticism established in the novel of manners' early study: in viewing the domestic as a politicized space, we can better understand the tensions between social morality and individual morality when the manners of a society break down in public or private spaces.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Bonnie McLean, B.A., M.A.

“It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.” When I first read the opening lines of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) as a middle-school student, I had no idea that my adolescent passion for Jane Austen would lead me, almost 18 years later, to a doctoral degree and a commitment to academic research and education. Many others besides Ms. Austen have helped me in this academic quest, and I am deeply indebted to all of them.

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Finally, I send eternal thanks to my Lord and Savior, through whom all things are possible.

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## Chapter 1: What happened to Silas Lapham? : Defining and Defending the Novel of Manners in Past, Present, and Future

My study of the new novel of manners began when I compared usage of the literary genre “comedy of manners” in the back cover copy of two late twentieth-century British novels. The back cover blurb for Hanif Kureishi’s *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1991) asserts that the novel is a “high-spirited comedy of sexual manners and social turmoil.” A similar phrase, excerpted from Anthony Quinn’s review in *The New York Times* Sunday Book Review appears on the back cover of Alan Hollinghurst’s *The Line of Beauty* (2004): “Although it gathers ominously in mood, “The Line of Beauty” [sic] feels more blissful than baleful in its anatomy of the era because it is, among other things, a magnificent comedy of manners” (par. 10). The term “comedy of manners” implies a reliance on character types and tropes, with a heavily moral or didactic tone used by the author.<sup>1</sup> In my study of neoliberalism in late twentieth-century literature and culture, such a term would seemingly fit the ideological stance of both Reagan’s administration in the United States or Thatcher’s in Britain, because both governments promoted morality and the nuclear heterosexual family as a means to achieving a specifically *national* morality. Yet both novels, instead of adhering to such didactic moral stances, parody or flout them in order to critique the moral depravity simultaneously occurring in the 1980s. Both Kureishi and Hollinghurst portray the decade as a time of moral confusion, particularly in relation to the individual’s sense of ideology and behavior. Therefore, I argue for a different term to be employed: the novel of manners.<sup>2</sup>

As scholars Bege K. Bowers and Barbara Brothers are quick to note, the novel of manners is popularly associated with nineteenth-century female writers and readers.<sup>3</sup> And

yet associating the novel of manners with texts from 1990 and 2004 sparks the question at the heart of my dissertation: Why is the novel of manners, a genre considered to have been focused on women during the nineteenth-century and long considered outdated, now associated with male writers in the 1980s and beyond? In this dissertation, I explore the relationship between the novel of manners as a revived fictional form in contemporary novels and the societies from which it emerged: neoliberal Britain and the United States. I argue that an understanding of the social and cultural expectations set forth for the individual by government authority provides an explanation for a genre that highlights this tenuous relationship through the appropriation of historical texts and revisions of postmodern and contemporary texts. By the way it highlights tensions in morality present in a morally bankrupt society, the novel of manners clarifies the relationship between individual and society, ultimately demonstrating the influence each holds over the other in policy-making, establishment of moral values, and personal values at the domestic level. Through this mutual influence, the individual can better learn how to enact change at microcosmic levels in order to change public social institutions.

### **What is a novel of manners, and why should we care about it?**

Put simply, the novel of manners explores the relationship between an individual and his or her society. More specifically, the novel of manners examines a particular subset of culture in order to examine the norms and mores that influence the manners and morals of the individual. This relationship helps authors depict the significance of social and moral issues upon the individual's identity, and it also formulates the tension that arises when an individual conforms to or subverts social values and expected codes of conduct. Therefore, the novel of manners becomes a frame within which to explore the



tensions that occur when individual values clash with social values. Scholarship surrounding the novel of manners defines the genre in terms to explain its structure and motivation. The most concise definition to date emerges from Bowers' and Brothers' study *Reading and Writing Women's Lives*, which the authors declare, "We the editors and authors of the present study perceive the novel of manners as focusing on the individual in relation to society" (4).<sup>4</sup> Therefore, a novel of manners, when condensed to its most basic form, is a novel that explores the relationship between an individual and his or her particular society. James W. Tuttleton further describes this relationship as one that can be tense or conflicted: "To formulate a definition of the American novel of manners, let us regard as polarities the concept of the individual and the concept of the group, of society. Neither of these extremes can of course be the focus of the novel. Yet every novel locates itself somewhere between these extremes" (9). For Tuttleton, as with Bowers and Brothers, it is neither the individual nor the society that comprises the focus of the novel of manners, but their *coexistence* that brings this genre into focus. This relationship, therefore, distinguishes the novel of manners from other subgenres (including the novel of ideas or the *Bildungsroman*) by highlighting the effects of society upon the individual and vice versa.

Such a definition, of course, is complicated by varying definitions of manners, society, and the individual into an understanding of this genre. Tuttleton expands on Bowers' and Brothers' definition by declaring, "If we are inclusive, we may define the novel of manners as a novel in which the closeness of manners and character is of itself interesting enough to justify an examination of their relationship" (10). He implies that a study of manners reveals the nature of the individual's character and can thus lead to an

understanding of the morality present within that society. He also amplifies the definition of the novel of manners to include the kinds of generic markers that must be present in order to distinguish this genre from other novels:

By a novel of manners I mean a novel in which the manners, social customs, folkways, conventions, traditions, and mores of a given social group at a given time and place play a dominant role in the lives of fictional characters, exert control over their thought and behavior, and constitute a determinant upon the actions in which they are engaged, and in which these manners and customs are detailed realistically—with, in fact, a premium upon the exactness of their representation. (10)

The author and the society he or she depicts therefore formulate an equally important relationship as the characters and society he or she represents in fiction. By representing a particular time and place and the emergence of manners in that era, the author provides a commentary on the values held, yielding possible opportunities to criticize either that time period or the present moment in which he or she writes.

Further, most definitions or explorations of the novel of manners as a genre rely on the scholarship of Lionel Trilling, who identifies a specifically moral purpose for the novel of manners. While not providing an explicit definition for the novel of manners, his writing on the juxtaposition of the manners and the novel nevertheless inspires his scholarly successors to attempt a definition by integrating his commentary on the novel as a reflector of society.<sup>5</sup> The novel's purpose, he claims, is "a perpetual quest for reality, the field of its research being always the social world, the material of its analysis being always manners as the indication of the direction of man's soul" (Trilling 17). This definition of the novel of manners would seem to entail a realistic reflection of society in order to understand the moral nature of humanity. And, if we see the novel of manners as serving a moral purpose, then we imbue manners with the capacity to reveal the values of

a society and of the individual. Thus, manners are not merely superficial codes of outward behavior; they also manifest an individual's values and the extent of influence social values holds over the individual. When we examine manners, we can understand the individual's moral standards or those espoused by his or her society.

Attention to this novelization of morality and human nature prevails in late-twentieth century scholarship on the novel of manners, as well. Just as Trilling emphasized the importance of morals to understanding individual character, other scholars also identify morality as a means of discerning society's character. Gordon Milne particularly focuses on the moral nature of the novel of manners in American fiction. In his discussion of exemplary novelists of manners, he declares, "Their books have talked of principle as well as of fatuity, and they have cogently revealed the role of manners in giving substance to moral vision" (275). Such a statement builds on Tuttleton's assertion that a novel of manners depicts a society at a certain time and place by adding the moral character of this specific society. Therefore, Milne suggests, if we comprehend the manners of a certain character, we can also infer the moral values espoused by such a society. This concept affects the novel of manners, because it implies that while we can recognize moral values espoused by the society and the individual, those values may not be the same.

Therefore, in order to establish that a novel of manners is, in fact, a novel of manners, scholars have outlined traits that a novel of manners possesses in order to highlight the tensions of morality present between individual and society. The most frequently mentioned trait is this relationship between the individual and the society in which he or she finds himself or herself situated. This concept yields a new

comprehension of society, for it traces the real-life workings of a group of individuals collected under a tacit social authority we define as “society.” Tuttleton briefly defines society as “ordinarily refer[ring] to the structure of ‘classes’, cliques, or groups by which specific American communities are organized” (13). Distinguishing society as a subset of a nation’s people thus implies that uniformity may not be possible within the state, and different manners may help us differentiate divergent ideological practices between these groups. Society also contains a moral component, in which values and ideologies are both highlighted and enacted by individuals who identity as members of this subset. Milne declares, “Adherence to convention—called ‘social morality’ by society—requires the correction of ‘ideals’ that are regarded as fanatical or impractical and thus at odds with the necessary compromises and imperfections but essential rightness of the social order” (12).<sup>6</sup> How we perceive society assists in the way we fathom the individual and understand the tensions that appear between the two. Such a collective influences the morals and behavior of its citizens. Ultimately, this understanding of society pushes the genre beyond a characterization or caricature of people and forces us to comprehend an author’s reason for representing this collection of people in a certain way.

Just as society must be redefined in the context of the novel of manners, so must our understanding of the individual—for it is the individual who enacts social and cultural values, thus creating the tension with the society that espouses and enforces such ideologies. The novelist of manners thus creates individual characters—and not the character types populating the comedy of manners—who respond to social pressures through manners that they either display or even adapt in public and private settings.<sup>7</sup> The individual’s manners reveal a sense of their beliefs or even their dissent from social

values. This exploration of behavior allows the novelist to critique either social and cultural values, or the way the individual is perceived by society, particularly from a moral standpoint. Milne notes, “At the root of the novelists’ discussion is often to be found a conflict between individual self-fulfillment and social responsibility the attempt on the part of the person to achieve fulfillment at the cost of the frowns of society” (Milne 12). While a *Bildungsroman* depicts the individual as separate from society—and thus formulates a different kind of novel altogether—the novel of manners juxtaposes society and the individual in a mutually-inclusive relationship, one that demonstrates a simultaneous intersection and conflict of values.<sup>8</sup> For a novelist of manners, the individual cannot be understood apart from society, but must be placed within a historical, social, or cultural context in order to interpret values, motivations, and manners.<sup>9</sup> This concept of the individual, then, works with a dynamic character instead of a trope or a type in order to emulate the workings of social change in a specific “society.”

By placing the individual and a particular society in conversation with each other, the novelist of manners posits that this relationship reveals a complicated process by which a society adapts and enforces its ideologies, particularly in the individual’s response through accession or dissent. The novel of manners reveals a mutual process of influence—the society requires a collective of individuals in order to establish and enforce its values, just as the individual requires social morality in order to adhere to or subvert such values. Milne declares, “The testing of social appearances, involving as it does an exposure of hypocrisy and artifice, of the weaknesses of pride and vanity that are so often at odds with an ethical core, surely has universal application” (16). The novel of manners utilizes the relationship between the individual and society to critique hypocrisy

or oppression occurring at the ideological level and explains that such problems are not only present in political settings but extend to private domestic settings as well.

Further, when novelists of manners utilize the relationship between the individual and society as a means of reflecting individual and social values, they depict the “domestic” as a microcosm of the cultural values their respective societies uphold.

Bowers and Brothers argue that the domestic forms the crux at which social and cultural tensions are reflected in broader public issues. They first undermine the domestic as a strictly feminine space in a historical survey, in order to claim that the novel of manners extends beyond private feminine concerns.<sup>10</sup> Responding to scholarly claims that the novel of manners can focus only on a female-driven domestic, they rebut, “But society is not kind to male desires, either, unless those desires conform to accepted conventions. Part of what the novel of manners examines is those accepted conventions, their artificiality as well as the ways in which they thwart individual desires” (Bowers and Brothers 8). In my dissertation, I highlight these “desires” to demonstrate that they are neither exclusively “male” or female, but instead provide a means of understanding manners at the individual level and the effects of social authority upon individual morality. My research examines seven male authors—Hanif Kureishi, Jeffery Eugenides, Alan Hollinghurst, Kazuo Ishiguro, Ian McEwan, Martin Amis, and Bret Easton Ellis—because they engage with neoliberalism and its effects on the individual during the 1980s.<sup>11</sup> Thus, gender matters less to novelists of manners than the set of cultured norms circulating in the 1980s, which yield to a critique of morality (or lack thereof) present in the era.

Therefore, just as a novel of manners explores the relationship between the individual and society, it must also define “manners” as we note their usage and meaning in a “novel of manners.” Scholars have defined manners in a variety of ways, though ultimately noting that their usage in a novel of manners transcends the mere correct usage of a teacup or a fish fork.<sup>12</sup> Manners refer to a set of values, as expressed by behavior. Jerome Klinkowitz explains, “Manners, in short, are implicit signals of value—never broadcast openly except in the case of a *parvenu* (who would thus be considered ill-mannered), but rather insinuated within a people’s customs of dress, tones of speech, and standards of conduct” (2).<sup>13</sup> Manners, defined as unspoken codes of conduct, imply more than mere etiquette: they indicate commonly believed modes of behavior and a cultural or moral value assigned to that behavior. Therefore, the individual and society together explain the values inherent within the manners assumed by that society and individual.

Manners are thus utilized within a novel of manners to explore the ideological issues present in society, particularly within the tension between individual and society. Trilling, though never explicitly identifying the novel of manners, focuses on manners as the impetus for writing about the individual and society. He claims that the novel’s function is to examine how manners affect reality and social values:

The characteristic work of the novel is to record the illusion that snobbery generates and to try to penetrate to the truth which, it assumes, lies hidden beneath all the false appearances. Money, snobbery, the ideal of status, these become in themselves the objects of fantasy, the support of the fantasies of love, freedom, charm, power, as in *Madame Bovary*, whose heroine is the sister at a three-centuries’ remove of Don Quixote. (Trilling 16)

Here, he alludes to the stratification of class as represented in fiction and points to the novel as a measure of how we perceive class in society, and then how class, money, and

manners influence the ideologies enacted by the individual. For Trilling, manners intersect with other social markers—status, money, idealism—as a means of indicating the individual’s place within or attitude towards a particular society. This broad definition of manners, then, leads other scholars to highlight the importance of manners in comprehending the problems or tensions present within both fictional and actual societies.

Novelists utilize manners within their fiction to demonstrate the influence of social values over individual behavior, and in turn, the impact that these actions have on unspoken codes of conduct. When viewing manners through an ideological perspective, we better understand how society inculcates values in individual citizens, particularly through the seemingly private space of the domestic. The novelist of manners utilizes these codes of conduct or behavior to explain a society’s values, as well as those of the individual, and he or she further conveys how manners imply ideological values of that society. Bowers and Brothers explain, “Manners reveal not just how a society conducts its business but also what it considers that business to be” (4). Therefore, manners serve to identify the ideological values being depicted, and they illuminate how those values are externally manifested.

Further, novelists use manners to reveal social values in order to reflect on or critique the social and cultural norms of an established society. Tuttleton’s claim demonstrates such a purpose: “But more often the portrait of manners is put to the service of an ideological argument” (10). In this ideological argument, the novel of manners thus illustrates how ideology operates on a personal and social level. He argues that manners serve to reveal morals. His study focuses on authors who “are more centrally concerned



about how manners reflect the moral condition of humanity” (xii). Yet for other scholars, manners reveal other codes of ideological value, made known by the external, unspoken codes of conduct that make up manners in the novel. Klinkowitz, relying on language of semiotics and deconstruction, explains, “The traditional novel of manners took for granted manners would parse grammatically, but with the new interest in what systems are and how they work—how the arbitrary nature of forming signifiers creates its own reality apart from what is being signified—manners in the novel are now a compositional as well as a characterizational affair” (7-8). Thus, the novel of manners is just as concerned with the construction of manners in the text as the meaning behind these codes of conduct.

Just as manners comprise an important component of the novel of manners, so does the domestic setting. Novelists of manners rely upon private space (understood to be the domestic or home) in order to relay the individual’s sense of identity and value formation, especially when contrasted with the kinds of manners displayed in public settings. Further, by exploring an individual’s manners in private, novelists of manners suggest that the domestic functions as a microcosm of society—that is, the kinds of tensions in private echo the kinds of tensions or problems inherent in public institutions or spaces (such as churches, government institutions, businesses, the market, or educational institutions). Susan Fraiman defines the domestic within a literary context, noting that traits of “domestic settings, ordinary people, plots centred on courtship and kinship” are traits that typify the domestic in fiction (169).<sup>14</sup> Michael McKeon diverges slightly from this conception of the domestic by describing the concept of *domesticity* as “both a species of modern privacy and unintelligible apart from our modern experience of

publicity; its story can only make sense within the more general story of modern privacy and its separation out from the realm of the public” (xxi). Here, public and private are distinct, but McKeon refers to the domestic as an ideological concept in which the private is supposed to be separate from the public.

Therefore, the domestic functions in a novel of manners as a space in which to understand the effects of manners, gender, and class upon the individual’s sense of morality, especially in light of society’s desired sense of morality. Novelists offer readers a view of private life within a certain society, which allows readers and scholars to understand the workings of class, gender, and identity, particularly if we see the domestic as a microcosm of the public sphere.<sup>15</sup> In comparing the novel of manners to a comedy of manners, Milne notes, “They evoke the same upper-class world as well, carefully describing its handsome drawing rooms, using appropriate imagery...to suggest its flavor, and adroitly reproducing the brittle dialogue of its inhabitants” (13). This “brittle” dialogue suggests stilted or censored manners, performing a set of expected behaviors, even in the private sphere. While the domestic offers a sense of security apart from the public’s governing gaze, the novel of manners suggests that manners are nevertheless governed by larger social forces and link to problems present in the public sphere.<sup>16</sup>

The novel of manners, when defined and examined by its components, reveals that the divide between public and private is arbitrary, tenuous, or even nonexistent where manners are concerned. Though the *kinds* of manners may differ in various settings, they still function to convey individual and social values, govern behavior within the private sphere. Thus, the domestic may operate as a space not separated from the public sphere but as an extension of that sphere.<sup>17</sup> Bowers and Brothers note, “Certainly,

part of the recent renewal of interest in the novel of manners is the heightened perception, stimulated by Marxist and feminist critics in particular, of the interplay of forces inside and outside the individual such that the very categories ‘private’ and ‘public’ are called into question” (13). Even the manners of the domestic contradict the ideal of private space, particularly in the exchanges that occur in marital relationships.<sup>18</sup> While marriage is a public social institution, with exchanges in either dowry or living situation to cement the economic arrangement, it is also a private institution—the manners of marriage tell just as much about the relationship in private as they do in public.<sup>19</sup> Further, the kinds of behaviors established in private reveal a tension between the individual and society just as poignant as public conflict—because the self is supposed to be “free” in private space, the inability to thwart or escape social norms reveals the reach of society’s influence upon the individual. When a novelist of manners thus critiques social norms or values he or she can do so by crafting the happy and unhappy private lives of the individuals who comprise this society.

**The death of the novel (of manners): scholarly commentary in the late twentieth-century**

While the new novel of manners emerging in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries holds value for scholars and readers in its commentary on the nature of the individual within a certain society, the genre has nevertheless faced a dearth in current scholarship, particularly vis-à-vis novels written in or about the late twentieth century. Two possibilities emerge to explain this absence: either the novel of manners itself is a moribund genre, or the novel of manners remains relevant and the scholarship has not caught up with the literature. Existing scholarship supports the first theory—that the

novel of manners is a historical and not a contemporary genre.<sup>20</sup> Trilling—whose work was instrumental in novel of manners scholarship during the 1970s—claims, “Some of the charm of the past consists of the quiet—the great distracting buzz of implication has stopped and we are left only with what has been fully phrased and precisely stated. And part of the melancholy of the past comes from our knowledge that the huge, unrecorded hum of implication was once there and left no trace” (12). Utilizing the same word “buzz” to describe earlier manners, Trilling sees the past as an ideal to configure the relationship between individual and society.

The historicity of the novel of manners thus becomes a keystone of the scholarship of the genre. Bowers and Brothers note that the history of the novel of manners leads back to the writings of Jane Austen and George Eliot, the latter relying on the past to reproduce English society: “Both Eliot and Austen attend to the customs, manners, and habits of particular social groups and the mundane details of everyday life. They do so because they portray the self as understanding itself through social realities” (14). These “social realities” in Eliot’s case were not contemporary, but often historical.<sup>21</sup> The most contemporary author cited in Bowers’ and Brothers’ collection is Barbara Pym, whose work is situated in the mid-twentieth century and is often seen as historical in focus.<sup>22</sup> Yet this historical focus takes a penetrative glance as it recreates an era or past set of manners more than a sentimental tone. Bowers and Brothers note that such nostalgic novels have been easily and erroneously labelled as novels of manners:

That nostalgic desire [for community] is, of course, reflected in other novels labeled by reviewers as novels of manners, novels that are set in the past or the present and that seriously or comically depict a pseudo-historical social world—for example, the novels of Angela Thirkell. In such novels, manners have become mannerisms, superficial and lacking

the power to inflict personal harm, and thus the novels are essentially sentimental or farcically comical. (15)

Manners, therefore, do not necessarily entail nostalgia, nor is nostalgia a key component of the novel of manners. The “superficiality” of past modes of conduct, unless recreated for the purpose of reflection, does not forge the same purpose as in a novel of manners. Therefore, without the express intent of examining an individual’s relationship with society, the historical scope and imitation of manners do not signify a novel of manners. With its focus in historical authenticity of the genre, scholars such as Bowers and Brothers help distinguish a purpose for the novel of manners.

More recent scholarship on the novel of manners, however, implies the waning of the genre, which may no longer have any social or literary relevance. Trilling, Tuttleton, and Klinkowitz all point to a decrease in output in the twentieth century, after noting the genre’s success in the United States in the nineteenth century. Trilling argues that novel writing never became successful in the United States: “The fact is that American writers of genius have not turned their minds to society” (18). His claim leads to the position that American fiction is dead, and the future of the novel is found in other genres, particularly during the early stages of postmodernism.<sup>23</sup> Klinkowitz counters Trilling by noting that society has become too complex to contain a novel of manners: “Our age, however, had dawned with the hopefully Jamesian author—in this case Philip Roth—despairing of American culture as a field for the novelist of manners, not because it was too rough and new but because it had fully eclipsed his ability to record” (4). Here, Klinkowitz posits that our interest in manners remains, but society has moved beyond the novel’s scope. Both contradictory positions lead back to the claim that the novel of manners is irrelevant to the representation of contemporary society.

In order to understand this claim more fully, one must remember the social and literary conditions that lead the novel of manners to seem like an irrelevant genre, beyond the empirical and subjective evidence that the genre isn't being written or the scholarship being produced. Because the novel of manners has been seen as a historic genre, scholars argue that the genre does not accurately represent twentieth-century changes from a citizen-oriented model to a consumer-oriented model. Therefore, if society is built around consumerism, and not a community of individuals, a novel of manners would seem a poor fit for the social and economic changes roiling in late-twentieth-century United States and Britain. Tuttleton posits, "The image of American social life manufactured by television, movies, pulp fiction, and the press is that of bland middle-class affluence, of comfortable mediocrity, of easily disposable values. The media seem generally indifferent to the real pluralism of our national life, and we passively prefer to be indoctrinated in the belief that there are not any real social differences among us" (262). The tension between individual values and social values seems to have been erased by mass-marketing and product placements.

Further reinforcing the idea that the novel of manners poorly describes a seemingly homogenous society is the debate surrounding the survival or relevance of literature in the late twentieth century. Barth alludes to the "death of the novel" in his 1967 essay, but a more heated debate had already been waged. Robert Clark Young points to "The Literature of Exhaustion" as a moment when scholars began to see narrative as an irrelevant textual representation of social issues, but still notes that other writers, such as Norman Mailer, had already decried publishing in the 1950s.<sup>24</sup> Scholars of the novel of manners particularly point to social factors in twentieth-century Britain

and America that oppose the social conditions of past novels of manners. Tuttleton declares, “A surprisingly large number of serious novelists and critics of the past century and a half have contended that American social experience is and has been too meager and limited to nourish a fiction that portrays men involved in the social world and perhaps even establishing through it their personal identities” (14). To this, Bowers and Brothers add that gendering the novel of manners by James has led contemporary authors to shy away from a genre often labelled as “feminine,” thus calling into question the relevance of the novel to today’s social issues.<sup>25</sup> Finally, with the rise of technological advances in the twenty-first century, such as the digitizing of media, the “death of the novel” debate changed from an abstract philosophical debate to a more literal question of existence.<sup>26</sup> Scholars who acknowledge problems of relevance question the novel’s ability to reflect current social conditions—in particular, if scholars and readers view the novel of manners as a historical genre that recreates a past era, then it would seem like an irrelevant genre in contemporary fiction.

Just as the late twentieth century saw a “death of the novel” debate arise in scholarship, trends in postmodern literary writing have also seemed to undermine the novel of manners’ efficacy as a literary genre representative of late-twentieth and early twenty-first century society. Because postmodern writing fragments and appropriates traditional forms and styles, it would seem to oppose the stylistic concerns of a novel of manners. Within a postmodern context, literary form elides the individualistic characteristics that populated earlier twentieth-century literature. Ursula K. Heise states that postmodernism has ushered in a “demise of character, of human experience, as the central organizing parameter of narrative” (7). Yet this demise in character provides the

novelist an opportunity to examine the society that erases and attempts to conform the individual to a mass-produced model of identity. Consequently, a literary form that focuses on the individual's success apart from society, like the *Bildungsroman*, makes less sense than one that presupposes a social context and explores the individual's tensions to maintain a private domain while trying to create and conform to an assumed public persona, as the novel of manners does.

Various expressions of literary postmodernism help explain why the generic conventions of the novel of manners have changed. Further, framing this change through a discussion about the study of genre also provides context for why writers in the late twentieth century transformed the novel of manners. In *The Ideology of Genre*, Thomas O. Beebee documents ancient and modern attitudes towards genre, loosely defining it (through Ferdinand Brunetière) "to trace and classify the growth and hybridization of texts" (12). Some theorists, such as Frederic Jameson, argue that genre is a socially-instituted concept sublimated into mass culture.<sup>27</sup> Others, such as Charles Jencks, point to a multiplicity of influences that create and recreate genre.<sup>28</sup> Postmodernism, therefore, provides an interesting dilemma, for it destabilizes the rigidity associated with generic conventions, even as its fluidity allows the very notion of genre to emerge and become unmoored from its historical incarnations to reflect a very different social and cultural context. Linking postmodernism to genre thus allows for historically-associated texts to be freed from rigid historical context and adapted to fit a different cultural context.

Theorists posit divergent views as to what literary postmodernism *is* and how it becomes useful (or divisive) in literary discourse. While prominent feminist scholars including bell hooks and Donna Haraway view literary postmodernism as a means to



evade traditional forms, other scholars such as Fredric Jameson and Jean Baudrillard concern themselves with the tension that emerges from the individual's relationship to a larger authority, and how that tension plays out in literary texts. Joseph Brooker exposes an "epistemological scepticism" in the writings of Jean-François Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard, which questions the irreverent and experimental nature of texts written by John Barth, Donald Barthelme, John Fowles, and Don DeLillo (104). This skepticism towards new forms, then, leads critics back to traditional forms of expression, and thus a return to historicized modes of exploring societal paradigms. A novel of manners, with its presupposition of societal authority, provides a means for exploring the tensions of the individual's identity against his or her role in a consumerist globalized society, as well as gendered expressions of that individuality.

Literary genres, within a postmodern context, function to critique or undermine the values and structures described in earlier incarnations of those genres. Christine Berberich notes, "Old values, traditions and institutions are often evoked when compiling lists of Englishness, or of the prerequisites of the gentleman, and a sense of nostalgia is often inevitable" (27). Yet this idea of nostalgia sours once the Thatcher-Reagan era is underway. Disillusioned writers process the past in the construction of the present, or they project future fears or concerns onto their fiction. Ultimately, authors utilize the novel of manners as a means of destabilizing the political equilibrium and prosperity that the Thatcher and Reagan governments sought to achieve through de-regulation of business and the implementation of certain social policies designed to ensure a more unified population exemplified by model citizens.

**The novel of manners in contemporary fiction: a 1980s resurgence**

Trends in literary theory and fiction pointed toward a return to genre, albeit revised and merged with other genres to reflect consumer tastes and social changes, just as the 1980s saw a return to “traditional” values, which invoked a shift in expectations of individual behavior within society. Rather than seeing the individual as a citizen, consumer shifts to privatized economic models transformed individuals into consumers as part of a national system. Therefore, the behaviors of the individual were expected to conform to a specific notion of individualism, as espoused by the Thatcher and Reagan administrations in the United States and Britain. These governmental forces ushered in economic neoliberalism, in which morality, nationalism, and free-market capitalism merged into the idea of the perfect individual in a capitalist country. On an ideological level, the ideals of Thatcher and Reagan and their respective governments espoused an anachronistic sense of “family-oriented” values.<sup>29</sup> Such values invoked a nostalgia for a past that never truly existed, but was formulated as a part of national heritage.<sup>30</sup> Though both Thatcher’s and Reagan’s administrations encouraged individualism, this definition called for a specific kind of individual who would inhabit the society dreamed of.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, this kind of individualism would conform to the economic, gendered, and classist norms set by the society (in this case, the governmental authority). Further, since the most comfortable and affluent individuals were upper-class and white, conformity and adherence to these social values promised a sense of wealth and comfort for choosing to accede to this set of values. Such a social context hints at moral tensions between the individual and society, a condition that began to emerge in fictional writings about the 1980s, especially in depictions of Thatcher herself.<sup>32</sup>

In creating her idealized portrayal of herself and the society she envisioned, Thatcher linked her often-quoted “Victorian values” to privatization, arguing that economics provided the means to traditional values and transformation of morality.<sup>33</sup> Because Thatcher associated “Victorian values” with *family values*, her claim that privatization and economic capitalism would augment morality and save the individual was based in the idea that the government needed to deregulate economic interference in order for the individual to develop his or her role in the capitalist economy and government.<sup>34</sup> While privatization had existed in some form or another in the United States ever since World War II had ended, it was relatively new to twentieth-century Britain, which had relied upon consensus politics to guide its social and economic policies.<sup>35</sup> This new economic system, developed from Milton Friedman’s economic theories, called for the government to reduce its interference in and financial support of public goods and services—such as energy, media outlets, and utilities.<sup>36</sup> This system of economics brought more products and more motivation to generate business by privately-owned corporations. For Thatcher, this new sense of material wealth should be encouraged if the individual wanted to create it and obtain it, especially within the context of the family—those who had obtained wealth should want to help the less fortunate, thus rendering the government’s role in regulating the economy redundant. Individuals who achieved affluence would be seen as patriotic, and this sense of nationalism is linked to the industries generating products or goods linked to an “English” identity.<sup>37</sup> With moral values ascribed to this system of economics, the individual was encouraged to conform to such social values—this way, he or she could attain some of the promised wealth, and his or her ready compliance could ensure that the

system would remain intact and continue to generate private revenue for the institutions that would benefit the “Victorian” family<sup>38</sup>

Within such an economic, social, and moral system, literary responses proliferated and continue to do so, particularly as a means of critiquing the moral depravity writers associated with materialism and focus on appearances more than actual adherence to morals that emerged out of such consumer-oriented culture. Novels in the United States tend to focus less on Reagan as a character or figurehead of social ills and more on the rampant consumerism and materialism present in culture. Novels such as Bobbie Ann Mason’s *In Country*, Don DeLillo’s *White Noise*, and Bret Easton Ellis’s *American Psycho* examine the effects of consumerism and materialism upon the individual and trace the effects of individual-as-consumer identity in American society.<sup>39</sup> Because privatization has been integrated into American culture in some form throughout the twentieth century, the change has surfaced gradually, and the effects hard to track until the 1980s, when Reagan’s economic system took full effect.<sup>40</sup> Conversely, the British literary response was much more immediate and volatile, with particular vitriol targeted at Thatcher herself. Privatization was a drastic break from the consensus politics that had dominated political culture in Britain since World War II; and, since Thatcher’s initiatives often addressed cuts to arts programs, writers and artists responded by depicting an unflattering and uncompromising vision of Thatcher as both hyperfeminine and hypermasculine.<sup>41</sup> Further, contradictions in Thatcher’s own rhetoric presented the political Left with opportunities to critique British culture under a neoliberal government.<sup>42</sup> The politics of Thatcher and Reagan together, therefore, galvanized writers frustrated by the political Left’s inaction. These authors criticized neoliberal

societies that claimed moral virtue but ultimately cherished manners and behavior that would generate more income.

It is in this social climate that the novel of manners began to reemerge, with authors examining the relationship between individual and society in order to criticize the effects of materialism upon the individual and his or her sense of morality. Further, the novel of manners serves as a genre by which the author can critique the consumerism rampant in 1980s neoliberal society. Novelists in both the United States and Britain began to notice the hypocrisies of a morality-based society alongside a materialistic and consumer-oriented economy. Often, these two disparate ideas intersected, so that acquiring material goods or products became a tangible means of seeming to adhere to social morality.<sup>43</sup> The seven authors chosen for this study—Kureishi, Eugenides, Hollinghurst, Ishiguro, McEwan, Amis, and Ellis—have all responded to the complex moral expectations for individuals living in neoliberal Britain or the United States by examining the relationship between the individual and society through the role that manners play in constructing one's identity and moral values.<sup>44</sup> Each of these authors reveals that the domestic helps us understand the way manners function in private, as opposed to public.<sup>45</sup> Consumer identities become apparent in the domestic, as the way individuals configure manners in order to appear a certain way.

The novelist of manners also constructs this relationship between individual and society as a commentary on consumer culture itself. This reflection exists in order to critique the social, economic, and moral changes wrought by Thatcher's and Reagan's governments. Therefore, the novel of manners moves beyond a simple re-creation of an era to an intense examination and criticism of the problems present during the time. In

particular, because the genre seeks to interrogate the relationship between the individual and society, the new novelist of manners seeks to examine the effects of amorality or moral depravity upon this relationship. Such a view is not new to the 1980s, but it forms a relevant means to interrogate the moral depravity present in late twentieth-century British and American capitalist societies.<sup>46</sup> The novel of manners, with its depiction of manners as an indicator of a society's values, therefore forms an ideal means by which to explain and develop the tension between individual identity and social morality, particularly in an era where a specific kind of individualism is espoused.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the novel of manners, while not a form of protest, becomes a form by which authors examine the lack of morality and individuality in society and critique the means through which identity is formed and influenced by neoliberal capitalism in the late twentieth century.

**The novel of manners in the 1980s: *The Buddha of Suburbia* and a pre-Thatcher society**

While the historical novel of manners was not neatly and concisely defined, collective scholarship has established traits of the genre in order to examine how a novel may be identified as a novel of manners. Identification of a novel as a novel of manners helps readers and scholars understand how the author may critique or examine aspects of the society depicted, and how this society affects the individual and the sets of values he or she enacts. Because Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* depicts a specific society—late 1970s Britain—and the relationship an individual develops with this society as a means of understanding this society's social and moral values, it serves as an instructive example of a new novel of manners. Though the novel of manners has been characterized as a historically white, upper-class novel, Kureishi's deliberate changes to

the novel of manners force readers and scholars to view manners as more than just fish forks and table etiquette, but as a system by which our behaviors reveal our values.<sup>48</sup> Further, Kureishi's adaptation of and revisions to the novel of manners helps explain the resurgence of a genre considered to be rigid and irrelevant—if the novel of manners can be adapted to accurately reflect literary and social trends, then it can also effectively critique a society that prioritizes appearance over actual values.<sup>49</sup> In this section, I will engage in an analysis of *The Buddha of Suburbia*, in which I explain the traits of a novel of manners and what we glean from a novel of manners when these manners break down. This analysis will foreshadow the kinds of application towards other primary texts that will occur throughout this study. In subsequent chapters, I will examine other novels of manners against the constellation that comprises the genre, and then analyze manners, the domestic, and the moral insights we gain when these manners break down.

Kureishi depicts a pre-Thatcher, end-of-consensus Britain in order to reflect the complexity of the relationship between individual and society in the novel of manners. The late 1970s saw a huge cultural, political, and social schism in English society—from the increased population of immigrants into London, to the collapse of the political Left, to changes in dress and music, Kureishi utilizes the 1970s as a means of explaining the political dissonance into which Thatcher emerged and developed a morality-based government.<sup>50</sup> Social justice issues and political upheaval marked the 1970s as a time of change, preceding the supposed stasis that would occur in Thatcher's era.<sup>51</sup> Kureishi's protagonist, Karim, declares, "I read Norman Mailer's journalism about an action-man writer involved in danger, resistance and political commitment: adventure stories not of the distant past, but of recent times" (62). The danger involved is ideological—instead of

fighting wars outside national borders, the individual and society find themselves in conflict. Kureishi encapsulates this conflict through Karim's sentiments: "Fuck you, Charles Dickens, nothing's changed" (63). While society has undergone change, some problems, including racism and classism, remain the same, or are even exacerbated by the Conservative rise to power.<sup>52</sup> In this way, Kureishi utilizes the structure of the novel of manners to demonstrate the analogous symbiosis between the individual and society, a complex relationship that does not change, whether occurring in Wharton's New York or Austen's rural England.

Yet Kureishi complicates the concept of "society" by portraying a hybridized society in his novel through his biracial protagonist, Karim. One of the biggest cultural shifts occurring in the late 1970s was the influx of immigrant families whose children came of age and identified as English in a formerly-white Britain.<sup>53</sup> Such a cultural phenomenon led to tensions in society and an identity crisis for individuals. Because they lived in two worlds simultaneously, their manners would constantly shift and thus require at times a different set of values, depending on the domestic or public setting. Kureishi begins his novel by introducing Karim through a first-person point of view: "My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred, almost. I am often considered to be a funny kind of Englishman, a new breed as it were, having emerged from two old histories" (Kureishi 3).<sup>54</sup> This statement introduces Karim as developing a hybrid identity. Because he is depicted as half-Indian, half-white, his relationship to society cannot be easily identified.

Another way Kureishi identifies the relationship between individual and society is through the identification of social and individual values, especially in their dissonance.



These values often clash, as identified in Karim's shifting identities and cultural divides.<sup>55</sup> On the one hand, his father and uncle, after years of struggling to be assimilated and recognized as Englishmen, seem to reject English values in favor of their birth cultures. Karim notes, "Now, as they aged and seemed settled here, Anwar and Dad appeared to be returning internally to India, or at least to be resisting the English here" (Kureishi 64). His father and uncle, identified as immigrants by white English society, initially adopted English customs and values, but their aging has shown reversion back to the cultural and social values they had identified with before moving to England. On the other hand, Karim and his cousin Jamila find themselves at odds with their parents' culture of birth, and their adopted English culture.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, their values are constantly shifting in line with their sense of nationhood and selfhood.

Yet even as Kureishi highlights the complexity of cultural values through the eyes of a second-generation Englishman, he notes that the tensions in value formation between individual and society remain tenuous, particularly when these values appear at odds. Kureishi refers back to more traditional novels of manners when he invokes Karim's set of values and its opposition to the social moral codes of England in the 1970s. In an argument about cultural representation and artistic license, Karim protests, "No. Truth has a higher value" (181). Here, the appearance Karim maintains and the conformity he wishes to adapt as an English man collide with his sense of self. This clash occurs in every novel of manners, for it displays the disparity between individual values and social codes. The crisis in this novel of manners occurs when Karim recognizes that his moral values have changed to accommodate social expectations, yet he finds no satisfaction in his conformity:

As I sat there I began to recognize that this was one of the first times in my life I'd been aware of having a moral dilemma. Before, I'd done exactly what I wanted; desire was my guide and I was inhibited by nothing but fear. But now, at the beginning of my twenties, something was growing in me. Just as my body had changed at puberty, now I was developing a sense of guilt, a sense not only of how I appeared to others, but of how I appeared to myself, especially in violating self-imposed prohibitions. (186)

This sense of guilt invokes the moral dilemma with which Karim finds himself confronted. Because he *appears* to be English, his morality seems to be intact. Yet his individual sense of morality cannot reconcile his new English values to his personal values.<sup>57</sup>

In order to depict morality more fully through a novel of manners, Kureishi uses manners to explain social mores and how they become disguised as moral codes. While manners can be conveyed through table etiquette or polite gestures, Kureishi, as with other novelists of manners, expands the definition to include unspoken codes of conduct that convey a certain idea. He depicts manners as clothing choices or styles, thus conveying the values, identities, and class affiliations his characters espouse or adapt throughout the novel. For Karim, bright, flamboyant, fashionable clothing marks his indeterminate sexuality and his desire to conform to the fashions of white English men and women at the forefront of the popular music scene.<sup>58</sup> His idol and love interest Charlie, however, explains that less flamboyant clothing would convey a subtler effect, noting, “You see, Karim, you tend to look a bit like a pearly queen” (Kureishi 16). The right clothes yield happiness and satisfaction, whereas the wrong clothing conveys a sense of unbelonging and displacement from social norms.<sup>59</sup> Though these manners are social mores, Kureishi recreates the idea that good manners are moral virtues, by

dichotomizing conformity and disregard for convention. This line of moralizing through marketable products, such as clothing, has come to characterize Thatcher's England.

Further, manners, as seen by clothing in *The Buddha of Suburbia*, convey class status and money. Those who dress smartly are seen as wealthy, but the wealthy appropriate ragged or rough clothing in order to seem rebellious or individualistic.

Kureishi points out such disparity through characters of different classes. Eva, a social climber, envies the affluence and fame that Karim's girlfriend, Eleanor, grew up with, yet Eleanor wears clothing that codes "below" her social class:

I was misled by my ignorance of London into thinking my Eleanor was less middle class than she turned out to be. She dressed roughly, wearing a lot of scarves, lived in Notting Hill and—sometimes—talked with a Catford accent. My mother would have been appalled by Eleanor's clothes and manners, and her saying 'shit' and 'fuck' every ten seconds. This wouldn't have perturbed Eva: she would have been disappointed and perplexed by Eleanor's concealment of her social origins and the way she took her 'connections' for granted. Eva would have given much to edge her body into the houses Eleanor had played in as a child. (173)

While Eleanor's circumstances of birth and upbringing allow her access to "connections" with fame and fortune, she appropriates the manners of a lower class—yet another marker of her privilege.<sup>60</sup> Because she already obtains the status desired by so many, she has no need to dress like a member of the upper class, as Eva must, in order to appear wealthy and affluent.<sup>61</sup> These manners, conveyed by the upper class, seem to rebel against convention, but ultimately reveal a greater kind of privilege in being allowed to rebel—because these individuals come from moneyed backgrounds, they can question authority in ways that Karim's family and contemporaries cannot.

Yet these manners break down, revealing a disparity between the appearance of good manners and the values that actually lie behind the appearance of conformity or rebellion.<sup>62</sup> The breakdown in manners, as seen by Kureishi, occurs in one of two ways:

either the individual breaks with social convention to pursue his or her moral views; or he or she abolishes his or her moral codes in order to identify with social convention. In either case, Kureishi points to the kinds of tension between individual and society that occur when these slippages in manners take place. When Karim accepts a relationship with Eleanor only to find that she has been using him to recover from her previous breakup, the breakdown in manners occurs when he tries to align with social convention by treating her like a lover instead of a casual sexual partner. His play director, Matthew Pyke, declares, “My prediction is that Eleanor will fuck [Karim], it’ll basically be a mercy fuck, but he’ll fall hard for her and she’ll be too kind to tell him the truth about anything. It will end in tears” (245). Truth is cruel and precipitates the breakdown of manners that already occurred when Karim and Eleanor agreed to a four-way sexual encounter with Matthew and his wife, Marlene. This lapse causes the individual to reject social norms in order to retain personal integrity.

The breakdown in manners occurring when the individual chooses conformity over integrity demonstrates a lack of morality that also causes a loss of personal identity. This disruption reveals the influence society retains over the individual. Karim first realizes this disconnect with his personal identity when reflecting on his upbringing as violently opposed to Matthew Pyke’s manners: “Pyke’s morning began with breakfast and essential gossip around the table, the cruelty and extremity of which I’d never experienced before. My mother would never have let us talk about anyone like that” (168). Here, the manners that Karim has been taught by his mother have broken down to reveal a casual cruelty, a disregard for the lives of others. Yet Karim most fully recognizes the effects of conformity to social norms and disregard for others when he

betrays his own family. An occasional sexual partner to Jamila, he does not understand his indiscretion until they are caught by Jamila's husband Changez, a man who identifies Karim as his best friend. Karim reflects, "I'd often wondered what I would do in such a position, but it was simple. I scuttled out of the flat without looking at my friend, leaving husband and wife to each other and feeling I'd betrayed everyone—Changez, Mum, Dad, and myself" (109). Karim's manners have broken down to reveal a unfeelingness for his family, and a selfishness for his own sexual needs without regarding the complications of familial relationships.

Just as manners reveal much about morality, Kureishi depicts a domestic setting in transition in order to show how morals and manners change the individual's behavior and identity in private. Because Karim's family has appropriated several domestic traditions in their family heritage, his identity is confused by a multiplicity of domestic histories.<sup>63</sup> His father, having come from India, is used to being served within his home and not worrying about the vagaries of everyday life. Karim explains, "It was only later, when he came to England, that Dad realized how complicated practical life could be. He'd never cooked before, never washed up, never cleaned his own shoes or made a bed. Servants did that" (23). Because Haroon had associated his status as middle-class or even noble in India, he expects such status will be analogous in England. Yet his identity as an immigrant in England confers no respect, and in fact reveals that he is considered to be an ethnic outsider in a whites-only England.<sup>64</sup> This immigrant's sense of the domestic reveals unease with identity and a shift in thinking required to assimilate to a new set of domestic rules.

The ideal “English” domestic focuses on the appearance of conformity, and manners thus reveal the ability or inability to conform to principles of propriety and morality as set forth by society. Karim’s mother, Margaret, exemplifies this anxiety about appearing to be “normal.” When Haroon practices complex yoga moves—without supportive undergarments—in the living room with the curtains open, she protests, “Oh, God, Haroon, all the front of you’s sticking out like that and everyone can see!” (4). Whether Haroon practices yoga or not is irrelevant—but he maintains the appearance of nonconformity, and she does not wish to publicly announce that her husband is anything but a conventional English husband. Karim likewise understands the contrasts in his chaotic family life with the seeming affluence and orderliness of “traditional” English homes in the suburbs.<sup>65</sup> He observes, “I rode slowly and watched the men hoovering, hosepiping, washing, polishing, shining, scraping, repainting, discussing and admiring their cars. It was a lovely day but their routine never changed. Women called out that dinner was on the table. People in hats and suits were coming back from church and they carried Bibles. The kids had clean faces and combed hair” (39). The domestic is associated with orderly behavior and material gain, thus foreshadowing the kinds of nuclear family life encouraged by Thatcher’s government. The domestic reveals the transformation of society from an individual space to a morally-driven home constructed by material goods and social expectations.

Through *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Kureishi utilizes the novel of manners to help track social changes and critique the norms by which society governs the individual. The novel of manners reveals the kinds of tensions present in society, particularly when multiple cultures collide in the late twentieth century. Manners, as Kureishi points out,

are less about good etiquette than they are about the *appearance* of certain social values which then become coded as moral values. In the late twentieth century, manners become a means by which we mark the superficiality of behavior and ideology vis-à-vis consumerism. Because this vision of morality can be acquired or purchased through goods or money to adapt to a certain set of manners, one need only appear to conform (as with the case of Eleanor and her wealthy friends) in order to be considered an upstanding person. Yet Kureishi reveals that such behaviors are shallow and conceal the hollowness of materialistic existence. He demonstrates that the novel of manners can track change to society and it can criticize the problems of identity and morality that have plagued individuals in a capitalist-oriented culture.

### **The novel of manners as a genre of contemporary fiction:**

#### **function and purpose today**

The novel of manners therefore functions as a genre by which authors can criticize social problems that complicate and intensify the relationship between the individual and his or her society. Ranging from issues of class, education, or appropriateness of dress, behaviors, and custom, such issues illuminate the nature of a society and help the novelist of manners highlight the problems of manners and mores that arise in a particular time, location, and mindset.<sup>66</sup> As with the instance of *The Buddha of Suburbia*, the novelist of manners recreates a specific society in order to criticize problems that affect the individual's sense of identity. Since the novel of manners focuses on an individual's relationship to a specific society, the setting of a particular society helps us understand the social dimension of individual identity, as well as the cultural and moral issues that make up the milieu in which the author writes.

Kureishi reconstructs suburban London in the late 1970s in order to point to the coming social and cultural changes that would transform Britain from an activist and consensus-oriented culture into one sedated by consumerism and moral depravity disguised by specific morals. These social issues explain the presence of manners forced by society upon individuals, whether in public or private. Manners serve both a private and public function, as they illuminate the values of the individual and simultaneously highlight priorities of the society that enacts or rejects unspoken codes of conduct. Such social issues also illuminate the tensions that arise between the individual and society—because the individual may accede to social morality (again defined as adherence to convention), he or she may not agree with a stance on a social issue. Manners would then serve to conceal individual ideological values. If the individual agrees with such values, however, his or her manners explain the social values of the day. Failure to concede to social values leads to disownment or exile, forcing the individual to consider his or her “place” in society.

Social issues also lead into moral issues that novelists of manners explore through the inner conflicts of the individual within a particular society at a particular period of time. The novel of manners provides a means by which we understand the importance of moral conflict to individuality and the stakes it holds for an individual’s moral development. In Kureishi’s novel of manners, the character of Karim serves to examine the moral depravity that is occurring with the rise in consumer culture. Karim himself finds that with the increase in sexual freedoms, his own sense of morality and tradition is confused by conflicting customs and cultures. Such a confusion is highlighted through Jamila’s marriage to Changez—it is pre-arranged by their parents, yet Jamila refuses to



have sexual intercourse with her husband. She claims that their marriage is legal only. Changez retorts, “You will always be my wife. The legal is nothing, I understand that. But in my heart you are my Jamila” (215). The moral question embedded in this scenario involves whether defying tradition—which can provide personal fulfillment or happiness—is morally correct, or if adhering to tradition—while sometimes bringing personal unhappiness or lack of fulfillment—is the morally correct attitude. In cases of morality, manners reveal or conceal individual or societal values, thus hinting at tension if the individual’s manners do not reflect his or her moral views.

The novel of manners also provides a means of connecting gender and sexual identities with conflicting views of the domestic. While the domestic was historically seen as a space in which women’s home-oriented concerns were completely divorced from public social issues, novelists of manners have proven that such an argument narrowly defined manners by gender.<sup>67</sup> Rather, manners reflect ideological value that cannot be divided strictly into gendered roles, but are marked by willingness or unwillingness to enact or emulate society’s set of values. The domestic functions as the space in which this personal sense of agency either comes to fruition or is frustrated by social conventions. Kureishi describes the Amir family domestic in such a sense: “But divorce wasn’t something that would occur to them. In the suburbs people rarely dreamed of striking out for happiness. It was all familiarity and endurance: security and safety were the reward of dullness” (8). While Margaret and Haroon find their personal fulfillment lacking, their marriage provides a sense of conventional and financial security—that inducement causes their willingness to remain in a social institution that neither one finds personally fulfilling or satisfying.

Further, the domestic acts as a microcosm of society—thus, larger social and moral problems can be viewed and understood through domestic family life. Kureishi sets the conflict of his novel within many domestic scenes, in order to demonstrate the influence of society's moral codes upon the individual in private. The tension between individual and society occurs when one is forced to accede to society's moral values, or when one willingly adopts society's moral values, despite an individual sense of wrongdoing or being false to one's personal set of codes. The domestic, as a private space, becomes another location in which these values become apparent, but the so-called privacy further allows the individual to realize how confined or conflicted she is by values set forth by societal institutions (whether government, marriage, education, or work). Kureishi points to the domestic as a space in which social tensions become amplified in the home: "I pulled the curtains on the back garden. The room immediately seemed to contract. Tension rose. I couldn't wait to get out of the house now. I always wanted to be somewhere else, I don't know why" (4-5). Karim's restlessness echoes a larger social restlessness brought on by cultural change and the collapse of the political Left.<sup>68</sup> While this unrest can be described in vast, sweeping public scenes, Kureishi's choice to place it within the domestic provides a specific image of suffocation and helplessness. Therefore, the domestic magnifies social and moral issues, for it details the effects of authority, ideology, and morality upon the individual.

The novel of manners places importance on the individual as a crucial component of society, because it hints at the possibility of the individual to subtly change or subvert social authority. The individual cannot exact major changes, but he or she can question the nature of authority and its effects on the individual's sense of morality and agency.

When this interrogation occurs, the individual can then influence his or her personal ideology and the domestic to form a personally fulfilling space. Further, the ability to control personal circumstance and find fulfillment in one's value system leads to a more authentic set of manners, one that can call attention to the hypocrisy present in a consumer-oriented culture. Ultimately, the novel of manners in the 1980s and beyond depicts the individual as a person who can exert small choices to effect subtle change in a society that promotes the individual as an easily manipulated consumer in a capital-oriented economy.

### **The implications of the new novel of manners**

Because the twentieth-century novel has seen shifts from Modernism to reflecting times of war and crisis, to experimenting with the novel as a literary form in the first place, the novel of manners provides a means of questioning the influence of society upon the individual. Because the 1980s promoted an ideology of individuality yet vanquished that individuality with oppressive social morality, the novel of manners exposes such hypocrisy by unfolding the complex relationship between individual and society. This exchange allows the author to criticize society and the problems or moral stances it imposes upon the individual. We see this force through manners both in public institutions and the private domestic. In this way, the novel of manners illuminates the self and the society in literary form, providing a new means by which we can understand society and culture in literature.

The novel of manners, with its interrogation of society and morality, provides a new frame for literary study. While it has been considered moribund or irrelevant to society after World War II, contemporary novelists of manners recreate the "traditional"

novel of manners to illuminate the problems of a consumer-oriented society. The writers in this study recreate moral stances that accede to the Thatcherite or Reaganite sense of morality and then explain how such views harm the individual through his or her repressed sense of manners. Ultimately, the novel of manners allows for readers and scholars to reconfigure postmodern and contemporary literature through a new frame. Contemporary authors have shown that formal experimentation, coupled with reliance on a historically established genre, yields a novel of manners that effectively frames social changes and questions the means by which individuals interact with society and fit into social and cultural movements. Rather than recreating the past to inculcate nostalgia, novelists of manners recreate a specific society in order to explore the moral problems of an era, suggesting a possibility in which social and individual change can be modeled in literature.

Throughout this project, I argue that the novel of manners, while sometimes considered a moribund genre, presents itself as a genre relevant to contemporary criticism of social change from consensus politics to privatization both at government and domestic levels. My second chapter specifically focuses on Jamesian adaptations of *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881) as a novel of manners, especially considering the takeover of individual morality in neoliberal society. I further interrogate the interplay between nostalgia, manners, and national identity, highlighting the recreation of moribund social and moral values as a means of exerting authority over the family unit and generating profit out of national heritage.

My third chapter explores Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* (1989) and Ian McEwan's *The Child in Time* (1987) as critiques of the British heritage industry and

Thatcherite family values. I define nostalgia in terms of nationalism and heritage as a means of understanding how national identity affects the individual's sense of identity. I examine "nostalgic manners" as a specific subset of manners in order to argue that the breakdown of manners may actually force the individual to confront a state-enforced identity caught up in materialism and excess at the sacrifice of self-monitored morality.

In my fourth chapter, I specifically examine the breakdown of manners through scenes of pornography and material consumption that illustrate moral depravity at the individual and national levels in Martin Amis's *Money* (1984) and Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991). Because citizens were redefined as consumers during the 1980s in both the United States and Britain, I contend that the novelists and novels in my study formulate a critique of social amorality in the same way Henry James's literary criticism established in the novel of manners' early study: in viewing the domestic as a politicized space, we can better understand the tensions between social morality and individual morality when the manners of a society break down in public or private spaces.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Bowers and Brothers briefly define the comedy of manners as a novel in which a problem or social issue is "stylized or exaggerated," often for comedic effect (2). A text that exemplifies this genre is Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*, in which the dastardly Squire Thornhill is disgraced and punished for his deceptive sham marriage to the vicar's daughter Olivia, and the Primrose family finds its wealth restored, a reward of virtue. Such plots often result in marriage, with the virtuous held in esteem and the wicked disgraced or dead.

<sup>2</sup> No hard and fast definition for the novel of manners exists, but Henry James is largely acknowledged to have coined the term in his review of George Eliot's *Felix Holt*, in which he declares that her writing belongs to "that clever, voluble, bright-colored novel of manners which began with the present century under the auspices of Miss Edgeworth and Miss Austen" (911). I will delve into James's specific implications for the novel of manners in my second chapter. I allude to this definition at the present, since it provides inspiration for other novelists and scholars to base their knowledge of the novel of manners upon.

<sup>3</sup> See Bowers and Brothers, pp. 8-12, for a historical survey of the novel of manners and its evolution as a historical genre.

<sup>4</sup> No other so concise definition exists, even in the OED, as of the time of writing this project.

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<sup>5</sup> Trilling's now-famous definition of manners as "a culture's hum and buzz of implication" has been utilized by Tuttleton and Milne to define manners within the novel of manners, particularly when juxtaposing the individual with a particular society (12).

<sup>6</sup> Trilling adds that the traits of a society have moral implications, as well: "Somewhere below all the explicit statements that a people makes through its art, religion, architecture, legislation, there is a dim mental region of intention of which it is very difficult to become aware (11).

<sup>7</sup> As Bowers and Brothers note, "Novels of manners are concerned with selfhood and morality within a cultural context and thus depict the inevitable conflict between private and public personas and between illusion (imagination and desire) and the actualities of daily existence" (4). These "actualities" may belie resentment over strictures imposed upon behavior, or they can reveal the kinds of behaviors seen as "moral" and "right" by the society in question.

<sup>8</sup> Tuttleton observes, "Whenever religious, philosophical, or economic 'ideas' tend to be blown up out of proportion, the novel of manners becomes something else—the propaganda novel advocating religious opinions, philosophical systems, or economic dogmas" (12).

<sup>9</sup> Bowers and Brothers declare, "While the self as depicted in the novel of manners does not transcend its social milieu and is interpreted through the community's understanding of what is right and proper, the individual does not necessarily define his or her being as would the community within which that individual interacts and by which that individual is judged" (4).

<sup>10</sup> Bowers and Brothers identify dissonant claims about earliest practitioners (whether Fielding, Burney, or Richardson wrote the first novel of manners) and for whom the novel of manners was written. They invoke Fred Millett, who argues that the novel of manners is strictly domestic in scope and completely separate from the public and political spheres—assuming, of course, that such spheres are male (2). While refuting Millett's claim, Bowers and Brothers nevertheless focus their study on women in the novel of manners in a historical survey, seeming to imply that we can only understand the novel of manners through a female-oriented historic lens.

<sup>11</sup> Female American and British authors writing in the 1980s, such as Jeanette Winterson, have used the setting to signify social changes towards sexuality, gender, and orientation, thus removing self from society. Of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985), Nick Bentley declares that the novel "clearly tapped into the increasing popular interest in the way in which gender and sexual identities were constructed in mainstream British culture. It attempted to do this by breaking down prescribed attitudes (especially religious ones) to sexuality and to the role of the nuclear family in maintaining established gender roles" (108). Because the novel focuses on the protagonist's quest to leave her society, instead of depicting and sustaining the tensions she retains with it, I classify the novel as a *Bildungsroman* and find it more useful as a contrast for the generic markers in my research. Other authors, such as Anita Brookner, could classify as novelists of manners, but Brookner's *Hotel du Lac*, while written in 1984, focuses on an earlier time period and does not engage with neoliberalism in the same way my selected authors do.

Further, when understanding neoliberalism at the individual level, the figure of the "yuppie" emerges in the 1980s, one deliberately constructed to appeal to men in their twenties. John Beynon notes, "Although the term 'yuppie' was also applicable to women, its connotations were (and remain) essentially masculine" (105). Therefore, consumer-oriented materials in the 1980s were explicitly marketed towards men and help explain the masculine response to consumerism in neoliberal Britain and America. My fourth chapter more fully explores the effects of consumerism on the individual's sense of identity.

<sup>12</sup> Martin Price argues, "While manners may be a self-sufficient code, more a game than a system of signifiers, still at their most important they imply feelings and beliefs, moral attitudes which stand as their ultimate meaning and warrant. Both passion and principle are stable. When they change, the change is slow and massive. When they are in conflict, the conflict is sharp and convulsive" (267). Manners take on a significance beyond good or bad behavior, for they signify unspoken codes with moral implications.

<sup>13</sup> This definition echoes Lionel Trilling's definition of manners: "It is that part of a culture which is made up of half-uttered or unuttered or unutterable expressions of value. They are hinted at by small actions, sometimes by the arts of dress or decoration, sometimes by tone, gesture, emphasis or rhythm, sometimes by the words that are used with a special frequency or a special meaning" (12). For Trilling, behavior, through subtle codes, comprises social values and is thus important to study within a novel of manners.

<sup>14</sup> Fraiman's argument centers on the domestic novel, which is itself a different subgenre of the novel. She points to a "domestic aesthetic," which she defines as "authors and characters alike [who] attend closely and fondly to everyday domestic details, concerns, and values" (173). Thus, this strict focus on the domestic and everyday does not elevate the concerns of the moral and ideological, as do novelists of manners and their scholars.

<sup>15</sup> Frank W. Shelton notes that the domestic and the family residing within holds ideological interest for the novelist of manners: "Generally speaking, the novelist of manners is conservative in his belief that the conventions and traditions of society are the stronghold of important values. The family itself is a conservative institution, functioning as the perpetuator from generation to generation of stability and heritage. Yet an interesting pattern is evident in the careers of the novelists of manners with whom I have been dealing. All to some extent write about the conflict between the individual with his desire for freedom and the obligations which society and in particular the family embody. For to be a member of a group means giving up some freedom in deference to group requirements. The novelists of manners are certainly aware of the danger of rigidity in the family, the danger that the family's conservatism might become resistance to all change and all individual freedom" (39).

<sup>16</sup> Milne points to "a carefully patterned structure" to depict the domestic within a novel of manners, demonstrating that the order we associate with public sphere manners may also exist in private (13). Tuttleton also reminds us that while large social issues comprise a novel of manners, the exploration or execution of such an idea occurs within the domestic: "The center of the novel of manners, that is, may be an idea or an issue—for example, the idea of social mobility, of class conflict, of professional ambition, of matchmaking, of divorce. But if, in the development of such 'ideas,' significant attention is paid to a realistic notation of the customs and conventions of the society in which these ideas arise and are acted out, then we are dealing with a novel of manners" (10).

<sup>17</sup> I clarify this distinction in my second chapter, where I examine sexual manners in the domestic in Alan Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty* (2004). Because the protagonist lives in a Conservative Tory home, he extends his public persona to their home in order to be seen as "acceptable" in a homophobic Thatcherite world.

<sup>18</sup> Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence* (1920) proves that even within the confines of the domestic, manners regulate the individual's behavior and preclude fulfillment or happiness. When confessing his futile love to Ellen Olenska, Newland Archer admits, "I have never made love to you...and I never shall. But you are the woman I would have married if it had been possible for either of us" (144). His private behavior, including encouraging Ellen to relinquish her divorce, has proven that he has entrapped himself into a domestic unhappiness of his own making.

<sup>19</sup> Price notes that the playful or gamelike way in which courtships or marriage are depicted by novelists of manners speaks to the ideological exchanges that occur in the relationship: "To the extent that manners allow us to negotiate our claims with others, they become a system of behavior that restrains force and turns aggression into wit or some other gamelike form of combat" (267).

<sup>20</sup> Embedded in this line of reasoning is a concern over the "death of the novel" that populated scholarly discussion in the 1950s and 1960s, especially in American fiction. Louis D. Rubin, Jr., notes, "Yet it seems to me that for better or for worse we tired folk of the 1950s and 1960s may be dwelling, for the time being and until otherwise demonstrated, in a time of transition between one period of major literary

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accomplishment and the next, a time in which there are many good writers but few or no great ones, in which there is a great deal to admire but not too much to astound" (314).

<sup>21</sup> In an essay on Eliot, Bowers notes that "it is Eliot's depiction of the general nature of manners, rather than her picture of pre-Reform England, that constitutes her most telling contribution to the novel of manners" (Bowers 114). Therefore, while her novel is situated in social history, her sense of manners recalls a social tradition extending beyond her time. Further, Milne points to the heritage left by Austen, as other writers sought to emulate her style or criticism of the era in their writing: "the writers that followed [Austen] took their cues primarily from Miss Austen, devoting themselves, in similar fashion, to the social dimension, to an examination of the class structure" (11). This statement firmly places Austen within a historical, and not contemporary, tradition.

<sup>22</sup> Annette Weld, a Pym scholar, notes that Pym's variation of the novel of manners, while varying on the nineteenth-century historical forms, still retains a conservative approach to the genre: "Pym's middle-class, mid-century milieu lends itself more to tea than titillation, and the conventions of the novel of manners fit her like a pair of yellowed kid gloves. Everything from her choice of setting and character to her consistent ideologies and themes aligns her in the tradition; even the substitution of a middle- for the upper-class world usually characteristic of this form is appropriate for her carefully detailed Britain of the 1950s and 1960s" (15).

<sup>23</sup> While the debate about the state of the American novel extends beyond the reaches of this project, it nevertheless deserves a mention, particularly when discussing genres and forms that seem to have been "exhausted." John Barth, in his now-famous essay, "The Literature of Exhaustion," alludes to an overuse of form that has led scholars to declare the American novel "dead" or moribund: "By 'exhaustion' I don't mean anything so tired as the subject of physical, moral, or intellectual decadence, only the used-upness of certain forms or the felt exhaustion of certain possibilities—by no means necessarily a cause for despair" (64). Barth's argument towards American fiction can certainly direct a possibility as to the scarcity of the novel of manners—if the form is seen as "used up," then ennui-laden authors may choose not to write in such a form. This chapter will further discuss the experimentation with form and style that occurs during the postmodern literary era, as well.

<sup>24</sup> Young declares, "*Pace* Barth's aesthetic, the clarification of this distinction has not succeeded in stymieing the publication, over the past forty years, of novels with straightforward story lines." He argues that an informal survey of MFA students eagerly seeking publication would lead to a consensus that "today it's the *postmodern* novel that's in trouble with commercial presses, that the conventional literary novel is the way to go, and that anybody who's still trying to write like John Barth is a fool" (164). This statement adds another dimension to the debate surrounding contemporary American fiction.

<sup>25</sup> Arguing that Henry James defined the novel of manners as exclusively feminine, they posit, "While not questioning the literary qualities of the novel of manners, James nevertheless relegates it to the ranks of a lesser and 'feminine' art, something like the painting of teacups" (11). They track James's influence on other male scholars such as Fred Millett, who differentiates between novels of manners and realistic social novels (or novels with a "purpose") in the eighth edition of *A History of English Literature* (1964). Thus, Bowers and Brothers view Millett as limiting the novel of manners to the domestic sphere and addressing only issues of social manners; that domain, then, would be separate from the public (and male) comprising politics, values, and a society's means of classing individuals and setting forth expectations of behavior (2).

<sup>26</sup> Will Self argues that a different death of the physical novel may already be occurring, particularly as the establishment of digital texts collides with resistance to adaptation of form and fear that digital form may lead to the abolishment of the novel in the future: "There is one question alone that you must ask yourself in order to establish whether the serious novel will still retain cultural primacy and centrality in another 20 years. This is the question: if you accept that by then the vast majority of text will be read in digital form on devices linked to the web, do you also believe that those readers will voluntarily choose to disable that connectivity? If your answer to this is no, then the death of the novel is sealed out of your own mouth" (Self par. 9). Young counters that the argument about technology has been killing the novel has been



around for the entirety of the twentieth century: "Eighty years before the release of the newest version of 'Grand Theft Auto', the written word was supposedly destroyed by *silent movies*" (Young 169).

<sup>27</sup> In *The Political Unconscious*, Jameson declares, "Genres are essentially literary institutions, or social contracts between a writer and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of a particular cultural artifact" (106). Further, he notes that genres really do not die but "persist in the half-life of the subliterate genres of mass culture, transformed into the drugstore and airport paperback lines of gothics, mysteries, romances, bestsellers, and popular biographies, where they await the resurrection of their immemorial, archetypal resonance at the hands of a Frye or a Bloch" (107). For Jameson, the postmodern era in literary fiction signals an appropriation of genre into subgenres or subtexts that utilize the form for mass consumption.

<sup>28</sup> Citing the example of Leon Krier in architecture, Jencks declares, "I bring him up as a borderline case and because he shows how different traditions may influence each other in a positive way" (22). While he echoes Jameson's claim that postmodernists "are inevitably concerned with abstraction and the basic reality of modern life, that is, a secular mass-culture dominated by economic and pragmatic motives," he nevertheless finds a plurality in postmodernism that allows genre to be replicated and appropriated by artists, and by extension, authors (30).

<sup>29</sup> Colin Hutchinson points out that both Reagan and Thatcher allied themselves with rightwing groups in order to bolster a "family-oriented" set of values: "Although both leaders broadly subscribed to the principles of monetarism, their approval of economic libertarianism did not extend to its social equivalent and, despite insisting on the need to roll back the powers of the state, neither was sympathetic towards liberal legislation regarding drug use, pornography, abortion, and homosexuality. Reagan fostered close relationships with ultraconservative pressure groups, most of which, like Christian Voice and the Moral Majority, had an evangelical Christian basis, while Thatcher made suitably understated references to prayer and church-going intended to please (or, at least, not to offend) middle England" (18).

<sup>30</sup> My third chapter delves into this nostalgia for the past ideal of individualism, specifically in the case of Thatcher, whose writing and speeches pointed to a sense of individual achievement independent of government assistance: "As our people prospered, so they used their independence and initiative to prosper others, not compulsion by the State. Yes, I want to see one nation, as you go back to Victorian times, but I want everyone to have their own personal property stake. Property, every single one in this country, that's why we go so hard for owner-occupation, this is where we're going to get one nation. I want them to have their own savings which retain their value, so they can pass things onto their children, so you get again a people, everyone strong and independent of Government, as well as a fundamental safety net below which no-one can fall" ("TV Interview" par. 108).

<sup>31</sup> The kind of individualism espoused by neoliberalism is the kind forwarded by capitalists generating profit from private business enterprises. David Harvey argues that "exchange value considerations increasingly dominate the use value aspects of social life. The story we hear everywhere repeated, from our classrooms to throughout virtually all media, is that the cheapest, best and most efficient way to procure use values is through unleashing the animal spirits of the entrepreneur hungry for profit to participate in the market system" (24).

<sup>32</sup> One depiction of Thatcher was in her self-constructed middle-class narrative, which she encouraged her citizens to follow. Louisa Hadley and Elizabeth Ho note that her notion of her upbringing belied the stratifications of class that emerged from the strict meritocracy of Thatcherism: "Thatcher crafted her own life-story to exemplify the social values she sought to instill through her government's policies. In speeches, biographies, and her own carefully crafted autobiographies, *The Downing Street Years* (1993) and *Path To Power* (1995), repeated emphasis was placed on Thatcher's roots as a "grocer's daughter" and her rise from Oxford scholarship girl to a Member of Parliament for Finchley (1958), Education Secretary (1970-4), Leader of the Conservative Party (1975), Prime Minister (1979-90), and Baroness Thatcher of Kesteven (1992). The narrative was unmistakably one of upward mobility, akin to the

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nineteenth-century *bildungsroman*, and was used as evidence that Britain was now controlled by meritocracy rather than aristocracy—a useful Conservative fiction” (4).

<sup>33</sup> In her now-famous 1987 interview for *Woman’s Own*, Thatcher declared, “There is no such thing as society. There is living tapestry of men and women and people and the beauty of that tapestry and the quality of our lives will depend upon how much each of us is prepared to take responsibility for ourselves and each of us prepared to turn round and help by our own efforts those who are unfortunate” (par. 107). In Thatcher’s view, society is replaced by the family, and it is through the family that we achieve our set of morals, manners, and modes of existence.

<sup>34</sup> For Thatcher, economics provide the means of hard work and thus achieving wealth, which is a sign of enterprise, giving, and the ability to help the less fortunate: in the aforementioned interview, she claimed that wealth was not about greed at all: “Most of us work so that our children can have a better life than we do. Most of us work so that if grandma needs help we can have something in our pockets ready to help or to give them a treat they might not otherwise have” (“Interview for *Woman’s Own*” par. 101). For Thatcher, this kind of generosity manifests from the individual and upholds society, because it is not mandated but a voluntary act of goodwill. Therefore, capitalism in Thatcher’s view provides a means to achieving this wealth to support oneself and one’s family.

<sup>35</sup> In documenting four perceptions of the 1970s in Britain, Claus-Ulrich Viöl declares that one theme, economic failure and depression, is a common interpretation of the era by political Conservatives: “A second approach to the 1970s focuses on Britain’s economic problems in that period, eschewing questions of moral degeneracy and concentrating on the ‘material’ developments underlying the perceived socio-cultural disorder” (151). Conversely, others have viewed the 1970s as a time of social progress: “What to some observers appear(ed) to be the symptoms of crisis and division will be seen by others as indicators of beneficial social change and progress. The 1970s were the time when the social effect of the permissive legislative reforms of the 1960s was widely felt, when the legalisation of homosexuality, abortion, birth control and divorce reform had an impact on the everyday lives of countless individuals” (152).

<sup>36</sup> E.S. Savas defines privatization as “relying more on the private institutions of society and less on government to satisfy people’s needs. It is the act of reducing the role of government or increasing the role of other institutions of society in producing goods and services and in owning property” (3).

<sup>37</sup> Nowhere is this assertion clearer than in the heritage industries that sprouted in the 1980s. In explaining this industry of cultural heritage and nostalgia, Robert Hewison declares that “whatever the true figures for production and employment, this country is gripped by the perception that it is in decline. The heritage industry is an attempt to dispel this climate of decline by exploiting the economic potential of our culture, and it finds a ready market because the perception of decline includes all sorts of insecurities and doubts (which are more than simply economic) that makes its products especially attractive and reassuring. Looking at a Laura Ashley catalogue, it is possible that we imagine ourselves living in a museum already” (9-10).

<sup>38</sup> Harvey points out that while this system is utilized to provide better services to the individual, apart from government interference, it is a system that only works when the individual has money to begin with: “But it is a system that works for the entrepreneurs, who by and large make hefty profits, and for the affluent, but it penalizes almost everyone else to the point of somewhere between 4 and 6 million foreclosures in the case of housing in the US (and countless more in Spain and many other countries)” (24).

<sup>39</sup> Stephen doCarmo declares, “Consumerism has become, in short, just as inescapable and untranscendable as the ‘metaphysics of presence’ we have heard Landry and Maclean, Derrida and Spivak describe” (32).

<sup>40</sup> Harvey reminds readers that liberalism within a Keynesian economic system had been implemented after the Second World War and was effective until the 1960s. He explains, “Signs of a serious crisis of capital accumulation were everywhere apparent. Unemployment and inflation were both surging everywhere, ushering in a global phase of ‘stagflation’ that lasted throughout much of the 1970s” (12).

<sup>41</sup> Hadley and Ho note that Thatcher's removal from office prove what a polarizing figure she turned out to be in the British political and cultural landscape: "When Thatcher was ousted from office, she cultivated a powerful myth of martyrdom: she was wounded femininity personified, betrayed by a male cabal thirsting for power and requiring the protection of her mostly male ministers." This patriarchal character is sharply contrasted by the figure of a "puppet, a hideous latexcast caricature of a cigar-smoking Thatcher in a man's suit, [which] this contradictory blending of male and female attributes and underscores the spectacle of Thatcher moving easily between various incarnations of femininity, depending on the current political advantage" (5). Thatcher's determination to see her political and economic vision forward caused the people to either ascribe fully to her ideas or to lash out with *ad hominem* attacks on her person and gender.

<sup>42</sup> In her now-famous 1983 interview, Thatcher discussed a return to "Victorian values," in which the nuclear family and Christian principles were prioritized: "As our people prospered, so they used their independence and initiative to prosper others, not compulsion by the State. Yes, I want to see one nation, as you go back to Victorian times, but I want everyone to have their own personal property stake. Property, every single one in this country, that's why we go so hard for owner-occupation, this is where we're going to get one nation. I want them to have their own savings which retain their value, so they can pass things onto their children, so you get again a people, everyone strong and independent of Government, as well as a fundamental safety net below which no-one can fall" ("TV Interview" par. 106). Thatcher espoused a specific, Judeo-Christian sense of individualism, one that could not be enforced on every single individual without persuading the individual—through affluence or comfort—to accede to such values.

<sup>43</sup> In an essay about his sense of British identity, Kureishi explains, "In Britain today, among the middle class, thinking and argument are almost entirely taboo. The other taboo, replacing death in its unacceptability, is money. As our society has become more divided, the acknowledgment of that division—which is a financial division, a matter of economic power—is out of the question. So money is not discussed. It is taken for granted that you have it that you have means of obtaining it that you are reasonably well off and gain status and influence over others because of it" (97). The acquisition of goods equates to social acceptability.

<sup>44</sup> Nowhere are manners as a performed or adapted act more obvious than in Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991), where the protagonist behaves in a proper, refined way in public, yet kills and tortures sexual partners in his apartment, because he cannot stand the vapidness and depravity of his era. This sense of materialism as moral decay forms a major argument in my fourth chapter.

<sup>45</sup> Perhaps the most domestically-charged novel in this study is Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* (1989), in which the protagonist, a butler for an English estate, finds his impeccable manners do not lead to a strong sense of morality, nor does good etiquette signal a strong sense of virtue. It is only when he leaves the confines of the English estate that he can begin to critique the nostalgic domestic atmosphere of Darlington Hall. This tension forms the crux of my third chapter.

<sup>46</sup> Harvey warns, "This concern on the part of the United States to protect liberty and freedom has, unfortunately, been used systematically to justify the imperial and neocolonial domination of much of the world" (201).

<sup>47</sup> Hutchinson notes that "it can be argued that the older institutions of the left—particularly trades unions and nationalized industries—came to be perceived as authoritarian and outmoded at a time when the diffuse, libertarian impulses of the British and American electorates coincided with the 'new broom' rhetoric of Thatcher and Reagan and their frequent appeals to individual freedom" (22).

<sup>48</sup> In an interview with Anna Kiernan, Kureishi declares a deliberate intent to write about the 1970s and 1980s from a hybrid perspective: "But I wanted to link the material to what I considered then to be bigger stuff. It was only a story about Mum or Dad and my family. I wanted to write about immigration. I wanted to write about Islam. I wanted to write about the social change in Britain that I'd been aware of in the fifty years I've struggled through life. So I began to see that I might have a book there" (qtd. in Kiernan 132).

<sup>49</sup> Klinkowitz points to fiction as creating meaning by setting up the content of the novel: “Humans create their own meanings—in religions and in novels, each of which must remain properly *fictional* for the magic to work. Meaning resides not in the content of a novel or in a religion’s material beliefs, but rather in the business of setting those things up” (246). Therefore, the novel of manners in a postmodern context recreates the genre but adapts and changes it from its historical settings in order to reflect different cultural and social values.

<sup>50</sup> Viol declares, “Probably more than that of any other decade, the style of the period has of late been used as a reservoir for postmodern eclectic revivalism, by whose carefully ironic detachment it is treated as a tacky—though far from uncool—joke. From a modern point of view, the 1970s are often seen as the decade that style/taste forgot. Thus, the styles of flower power, punk, and disco have all had their tongue-in-cheek, ephemeral, and—if meant seriously—largely epigonic revivals” (Viol 153).

<sup>51</sup> Kureishi deftly explains the cultural context for late 1970s England: “This was the English passion, not for self-improvement or culture or wit, but for DIY, Do It Yourself, for bigger and better houses with more mod cons, the painstaking accumulation of comfort and, with it, status—the concrete display of earned cash. Display was the game” (75). This cultural paradigm foreshadows the individualism via consumerism that will mark the Thatcher era.

<sup>52</sup> Kureishi’s personal experience informs his depictions of racism in late twentieth-century Britain: “And when I said, with a little unnoticed irony, that I was an Englishman, people laughed. They fell about. Why would anyone with a brown face, Muslim name and large well-known family in Pakistan want to lay claim to that cold little decrepit island off Europe where you always had to spell your name? Strangely, anti-British remarks made me feel patriotic, though I only felt patriotic when I was away from England” (81).

<sup>53</sup> C.L. Innes points to a decades-long process of immigration that led to a hybridized identity of British men and women with multiple cultural identities: “The generation of writers who came to England in the 1950s and 1960s were typically male and single, and often believed themselves to be transient. Twenty years later, a new generation of authors, male and female, write out of the experience of being located in Britain, many of them either born in the United Kingdom or arriving as young children. Their fiction often focuses on the attempt to make a home in Britain, and frequently the protagonists are women, seeking to hold their families together and establish some sense of permanence” (237).

<sup>54</sup> The issue of Karim’s heritage becomes a recurring theme, especially once his parents separate. Karim’s mother Margaret takes responsibility for his heritage as an Englishman: “What about me?...Who gave birth to you? You’re an Englishman, I’m glad to say” (232). It is not his being in England that marks his right as an English man, but his mother’s whiteness.

<sup>55</sup> Rita Felski notes, “Karim’s cultural dislocation forces him to become a kind of class detective, hypersensitive to the complex and often confusing codes of class distinction” (38).

<sup>56</sup> Kureishi succinctly outlines the experience of an “ethnic” British individual: “And we pursued English roses as we pursued England; by possessing these prizes, this kindness and beauty, we stared defiantly into the eye of the Empire and all its self-regard—into the eye of Hairy Back, into the eye of the Great Fucking Dane. We became part of England and yet proudly stood outside it. But to be truly free we had to free ourselves of all bitterness and resentment, too. How was this possible when bitterness and resentment were generated afresh every day?” (227).

<sup>57</sup> Janet Wilson declares, “Karim’s in-between state—acquired by negotiating spaces, positioning and repositioning himself, to achieve a both/and rather than an either/or location—can be read as a radical reaction to troubled family affairs” (115).

<sup>58</sup> Kureishi describes Karim’s outfit in painstaking detail, echoing the deliberate fashion choices made by characters in Ellis’s *American Psycho*: “It took me several months to get ready: I changed my entire outfit

three times. At seven o'clock I came downstairs in what I knew were the right clothes for Eva's evening. I wore turquoise flared trousers, a blue and white flower-patterned see-through shirt, blue suede boots with Cuban heels, and a scarlet Indian waistcoat with gold stitching around the edges. I'd pulled on a headband to control my shoulder-length frizzy hair. I'd washed my face in Old Spice" (6). Here, Karim's attempt to be seen as fashionable and knowledgeable about English culture collides with the sense of materialism pervading English culture—this trend will only become more pronounced as the 1980s proceed, and Kureishi, writing retrospectively is aware of such a trend.

<sup>59</sup> Kureishi depicts two contrasting ideas of happiness and unhappiness through the clothing choices made by his characters. In one instance, Haroon and Margaret feel out-of-place and patronized at her sister and brother-in-law's home. Their appearance gives them the effect of not belonging to such money-associated gatherings: "Mum and Dad always felt out of place and patronized on these grand occasions, where lives were measured by money. They were of no use to anyone and there was nothing they sought from any of the guests. Somehow they always seemed to wear the wrong clothes and look slightly shabby" (42). Yet the right clothing gives the appearance of comfortable status and happiness. When Haroon begins cohabitation with Eva, for instance, their evenings out are punctuated by chic designer clothing: "How smart and glamorous they looked when they went off to London in the evenings, Dad in his suits and Eva with shawls and hats and expensive shoes and handbags" (113). Their proper clothing conveys a sense of moneyed status and the happiness that follows such conformity to manners.

<sup>60</sup> Kureishi notes this appropriation of wealthy and educated individuals of clothing "beneath" their status through his satirical description of Matthew Pyke's son Percy, who is described as "a pale and moody-looking boy with a shaved head, earrings and filthy clothes, far too rough and slovenly to be anything other than a member of the liberal middle class" (199). He further observes, in an interview with Susie Thomas, that clothes prove a productive means by which he can examine character traits: "If you ask me about my clothes, I don't have anything to say about them. Is there a difference? They're both areas in which men and women are creative; their work or the way they look or the way others see them. They are fields of creativity. It's as though we are trying to hunt down the line between men and women so we can say that's what the women are and that's what the men are, only nobody has been able to find where the line is" ("Something to Ask You" 8).

<sup>61</sup> Again, Kureishi notes, "Eleanor's set, with their combination of class, culture and money, and their indifference to all three, was exactly the cocktail that intoxicated Eva's soul, but she could never get near it. This was unforced bohemia; this was what she sought; this was the apogee" (174).

<sup>62</sup> My second chapter will look at the breakdown that occurs in manners more in-depth, particularly because of Henry James's vested interest in such a breakdown. For it is only when manners break down that we understand they existed in the first place.

<sup>63</sup> Wilson declares, "Kureishi's alternative images of the family—fluidly shifting sexual liaisons and ambiguous parenting roles—to the ties of blood, marriage and children of the nuclear family, have some basis in alternative Western life-styles like squats and communes, familiar since the 1960s" (116).

<sup>64</sup> Karim's status as simultaneous insider-outsider explains his willingness to perform an exoticized version of his home culture and to invoke Changez as an inspiration for his role: "The way in which Karim makes up the better part of himself by turning Changez into a fiction can be read as an allusion to the made-up nature of identity—arguably the trait that representation most strives to emphasize. The point about representation is after all not what sort of fictions are 'truest', but which are most persuasive under what circumstances" (467).

<sup>65</sup> The suburban setting, as part of a novel of manners, informs Karim's motivations and moral codes. Todd Kuchta suggests "that despite the novel's apparent celebration of a performative or improvisational self, Karim's suburban origins resist his conscious attempts at styling a new persona. At the same time Karim develops a mode of performance that does justice to his imperative of linking his suburban origins to his behavioral, affective, and bodily disposition. Indeed, Charlie's and Karim's divergent responses to the punk

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concert anticipate the opposed performative personae they eventually develop in their respective avatars as rock star and actor” (208).

<sup>66</sup> Klinkowitz points to specific social issues from the 1960s and 1970s as providing fertile opportunity for novelists of manners: “In the sense that impending military, economic, and ecological disaster were daily concerns, these recent years have shared with primitive times the notion that unless we do something, life as a meaningful experience will die. Radical changes in terms of worldly experience have swept away our comfortable understandings of life and left us with an existence sometimes chaotic and most times insipidly imaginative and dull” (244).

<sup>67</sup> Shelton argues that the domestic is crucial to understanding the individual’s relationship to society: “Novelists of manners, whatever differences may exist among them, have in common a concern with how social conventions, customs, and institutions affect and even shape character. Since family is virtually the first, and certainly the most basic, social institution the individual encounters, it is a useful plot device and thematic center for social fiction” (33).

<sup>68</sup> Kureishi bookends Karim’s restlessness at the beginning of the novel with Britain’s unrest at the end of the novel, predicating the enormous social change the 1979 election of Margaret Thatcher was to bring. Karim’s friend Terry declares, “You may have noticed, Karim, that England’s had it. It’s coming apart. Resistance has brought it to a standstill. The Government were defeated in the vote last night. There’ll be an election. The chickens are coming home to die. It’s either us or the rise of the Right” (258). While written as a prediction, Kureishi writes from the present to reflect on the paradigm shift that had been slowly building and would reach fruition with Thatcher’s terms in office.

Chapter 2: A Jamesian Reluctance: The Significance of Domestic Manners in  
*The Portrait of a Lady* and Two Contemporary Transformations

In my previous chapter, I established the history and conventions of the novel of manners, as debated by scholars of nineteenth- and early twentieth- century texts. I rebutted the implicit claim that the novel of manners is a moribund genre by applying established criteria to a contemporary text, Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*. I also noted different scholarly interpretations of a novel of manners, particularly in terms of gender and sexuality. While some scholars, such as Fred Millett, have forwarded the novel of manners as a strictly feminine genre, I argue that the debate over this genre frames gender as a metaphor for authority and agency within the domestic. Such a metaphor establishes the kinds of manners that emerge in the text, as well as the kinds of manners expected in both public and private, thus delineating class and status within a particular society. Ultimately, metaphors of gender within a novel of manners serve as frames through which social constructions of power and authority can be viewed, particularly when these structures and metaphors intersect within domestic settings. These metaphors of gender further interrogate past expectations for moral codes and social behavior. In this exploration of morality and social conduct, the return to a past genre in a different style of writing recreates the novel of manners within the 1980s—an era when the textual experimentation associated with postmodernism reached its apex.<sup>69</sup>

Two contemporary texts configure gender as a means of discussing manners and moral codes that break down in the face of capitalism and consumer culture. Both Jeffrey Eugenides' *The Marriage Plot* (2011) and Alan Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty* (2004) use metaphors of gender and the disruption of manners as a means of explaining why

society prioritizes social mores over individual morality, particularly in expressions of sexuality. Both novels engage with Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881) to study manners, morals, and social breakdowns in order to question the schism between morality and social behaviors. Beyond superficial similarities in plot, both Eugenides and Hollinghurst highlight James's ideal of using the novel of manners to explore social morality and its effects on the individual.<sup>70</sup> In so doing, they also offer a critique of consumerism and neoliberalism in the 1980s domestic scene. While Eugenides provides a focused critique of academia and the "traditional" marriage plot, and Hollinghurst delves into the social morals and mores of Margaret Thatcher's England, they both examine the effects of neoliberalism and consumerism upon individual morality. Further, while Eugenides writes about neoliberalism from a general cultural perspective and Hollinghurst distinctly responds to Thatcherism in Britain, these authors share a common critique of moral depravity and the effects on the individual within the novel of manners. Both authors ultimately reveal that the self, when attempting to conform to social morality in order to attain affluence and social capital, experiences a loss of genuine identity.

### **The Jamesian Novel of Manners: Tensions between the Individual and Society**

While early novelists of manners depicted tensions between the individual and society as a conflict to move the marriage plot forward, Henry James argues that such tensions, beyond driving the conflict in the plot, convey additional insight into how a society's moral codes affect the conduct (understood as manners) of the individual.<sup>71</sup> *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), one of his most famous novels, traces this conflict between the individual's sense of morality and the social expectations that guide manners or conduct



in public and private spaces.<sup>72</sup> James adapts the plot of an Austenian novel of manners (a young woman's "coming out" into society as a marriageable woman) and diverges from marriage as a fictional endpoint to marriage as yet another societal infrastructure that enforces specific moral codes upon the individual. Thus, James suggests, the individual must adapt her own manners to match the moral conduct dictated by society. Conversely, if her sense of personal morals and social conduct do not align, she has little choice but to leave society in order to fulfill her personal sense of identity—when society and the individual clash, James implies, it occurs from a sense of the individual's repression by society, which he depicts through the interior workings of the individual's mind. Though *The Portrait of a Lady* highlights social concerns about marriage and the decadence of Old World Europe, it illustrates the psychological aspect of individuality by showing the naïveté of an unguided woman in a sexually charged atmosphere through parlor scenes, tête-à-têtes, and seemingly insignificant mannerisms. These conventions comprise some requisites for the novel of manners in that significance is attributed to those scenarios because they reveal the workings of the larger world and its effects on a state's citizens.<sup>73</sup>

Therefore, because James's novel of manners focuses on the individual's decision to change his or her manners or be forced into exile by society, the psychological aspect of James's writing—often cited as a common leitmotif to his novels—forms a logical means of understanding the impact of morality upon the individual's behavior.<sup>74</sup> While the psychological is attributed to the development of the individual in fiction, James appropriates it for the novel of manners to frame the tension between individual and society. He utilizes interiority and self-reflection to highlight the individual's response to social pressures.<sup>75</sup> While other novelists of manners—notably Austen, in her use of free

indirect discourse—depict characters’ interiority, James prioritizes the psychological as a way to demonstrate the effects of social conditioning on the individual’s sense of morality. The routines of daily life help readers understand the individual’s need for self-actualization and agency amidst the pressures to conform within society. Therefore, the psychological impact on the individual formulates, for James, a model for the social in his novels.<sup>76</sup> In this way, the psychological establishes the fractures occurring in a novel of manners—the need for social well-being versus that of personal well-being.

Further, theories of psychology, which provide a way of representing the interior life of an individual, help James craft two distinct sets of manners: those the individual displays towards family members or inhabitants of the domestic, and those enacted towards the general public as a set of social behaviors in society. This differentiation in manners helps James highlight the psychology of the individual, just as it explains the various functions that manners serve in the individual’s interactions with the larger world. In one sense, particularly within domestic space, manners act as an expression of the individual’s moral character—that is, how he or she behaves indicates the kind of moral codes he or she espouses and enacts in life. In another sense, manners help the individual conform to social codes of conduct—these expressions of behavior acknowledge a commonly-held set of values (whether moral or social) and mark the individual’s complicity with these values. While manners do not always indicate a moral value, some codes of conduct—such as Isabel’s refusal to abandon her marriage to the morally corrupt Gilbert Osmond for the sake of experiencing the consequences of her poor choices—denote a merging of selfhood and social compliance through the expression of manners.<sup>77</sup> James thus explores the merging and separation of social and

individual morality through manners, since the kinds of manners that the individual enacts will ultimately denote whether he or she has adhered to social custom. Further, manners act to indicate just what moral values society holds and how these moral codes affect the behavior of the individual. While manners and morals do not always indicate the same kinds of values, they do overlap in their influence over the individual's behaviors and identity formation, both in public and private. This overlap creates the tension between individual and social morality, providing the novelist of manners with a conduit in which to explore the channels by which the individual formulates a sense of identity and interacts with his or her society. The kinds of morals inculcated in the individual, whether aligning with or defying social values, thus make the psychological a matter of importance. As utilized by James, the psychological helps us understand social morality, and it evaluates the novel of manners as a text focused on the individual.

James's depiction of the individual in a novel of manners provides a means to understand the psychological conflict of manners and morality within the individual. Ascribing momentous importance to the weight that manners carry within the domestic, he implies that manners serve to highlight the similarities or contrasts between the way the individual behaves and the way society expects the individual to behave.<sup>78</sup> Since the individual acts mostly in accordance to standards set by society, James suggests that manners become most useful for novelistic study when they break down—that is, when the individual uses manners considered uncouth or poor by social standards, or when he or she deliberately breaks with expected codes of conduct to convey a nonverbal message.<sup>79</sup> In order to understand when, how, and why manners break down in a domestic or public context, James makes use of the psychological to develop his

characters' motivations for misusing or breaking from "good" or accepted manners. By positing that the individual chooses his or her manners, James implies that morality is individually-based and can differ with each person and society. The psychological interrogates the means by which we understand society's influence upon the individual. In utilizing the psychological, James forwards the novel of manners as a genre that explores larger issues of morality and social character in society. Such a distinction changes the motivations for writing, reading, and studying the novel of manners. James—who in his writing, reading, and literary criticism readdresses all three—transforms the genre through his delineation of social morality and individual psychological exploration of morality through the breaches in manners that reveal such tensions in both public and domestic spheres.<sup>80</sup>

With his emphasis on individual psychology as a means of exploring the tension between manners and morality, James's use of manners functions as a way to understand a time period and the kinds of morality present within that period. As he sets up one of the most sexually charged moments in *The Portrait of a Lady*, James utilizes small, seemingly insignificant gestures as a means of explaining to his readers the meaning that emerges from the breakdown of manners in domestic environments. The individual's sense of morality clashes with social codes that call for adherence to social custom, whether or not they support the individual's sense of right and wrong. Thus, in the scene where Isabel Archer happens upon a tête-à-tête between her husband, Gilbert Osmond, and her friend Serena Merle, we find that the breakdown of manners reveals an inconsistency about social mores—while social mores publicly uphold fidelity within the marriage relationship, discreet infidelity that maintains the appearance of adhering to

social convention will not cause disgrace or exile. Therefore, appearances matter more than the actual values themselves.<sup>81</sup> Those who uphold social conventions over individual morality display behaviors considered acceptable codes of conduct and decry public sexual indiscretion, yet they regard private affairs or indiscretions forgivable, so long as these transgressions do not become public. Isabel's thoughts focus on the manners displayed by both Merle and Osmond leading her to contemplate the complexity of her marriage:

Madame Merle was standing on the rug, a little way from the fire; Osmond was in a deep chair, leaning back and looking at her. Her head was erect, as usual, but her eyes were bent on his. What struck Isabel first was that he was sitting while Madam Merle stood; there was an anomaly in this that arrested her. Then she perceived that they had arrived at a desultory pause in their exchange of ideas and were musing, face to face, with the freedom of old friends who sometimes exchange ideas without uttering them. There was nothing to shock in this; they were old friends in fact. But the thing made an image, lasting only a moment, like a sudden flicker of light. Their relative positions, their absorbed mutual gaze, struck her as something detected. (342-43)

Based on body cues and eye contact alone, Isabel realizes that the nature of Gilbert's relationship with Madam Merle is more intimate and extensive than she had been previously led to believe by their behaviors towards each other in her presence. Their manners had merely conveyed a casual acquaintance, as fitting a man and woman not married to each other. Good manners dictated that Gilbert stand when Madam Merle, a lady and a guest, stood. In mixed company, a seated or reclined position would be taken by an adult male only in front of women with whom he shared the closest familial or conjugal relationship. Thus without Isabel's having previous knowledge about the nature of their relationship, their intimate and familiar behavior strikes Isabel as particularly *unmannerly*.<sup>82</sup> James utilizes the notion of manners, previously introduced in earlier

novels of manners, in order to explore societal issues—including marriage inequality and moral decay—that become most apparent when such codes are broken in domestic spaces.<sup>83</sup> By drawing the reader’s attention to discordant domestic manners, James provides a frame through which to understand the problems inherent in conforming to social morality, especially vis-à-vis the individual’s sense of selfhood and moral codes.

In his construction of individual identity and morality, James argues that gender comprises one mode of highlighting the psychological dimensions of manners. In his literary criticism and writing, he contextualizes gender in two ways: in the female author’s use of manners, and in the female character’s manifestation of manners. A review of George Eliot’s *Felix Holt* illustrates his critique of the “feminine” novel of manners, in which the (typically female) author is particularly suited to remark on domestic life and manners in small communities as a commentary on a larger selection of society. In this review, he declares, “George Eliot has the exquisitely good taste on a small scale, the absence of taste on a large...the unbroken current of feeling and, we may add, of expression, which distinguish the feminine mind” (“George Eliot” 912).<sup>84</sup> He criticizes Eliot and *Felix Holt* for a *lack* of the “large” focus of society present in other novels. Rather than denigrating the female author for her use of the domestic, he impugns the general use of the everyday to plot daily life for its own sake rather than using the everyday in order to wrestle with larger issues, such as identity and morality.<sup>85</sup> In his own novels, he reveals an aspect of manners that is imposed upon the individual based on constructions of gender and expectations for behavior that conforms to social mores associated with this gender identity. He moves beyond the everyday to point to the psychological dilemmas of conformity in the construction of individual identity. Thus,

his seeming brushoff of “feminine” attention to detail stems not from snobbery associated with gendered writing but instead a frustration with the stagnation of the novel of manners.<sup>86</sup> Instead of viewing it as a faithful depiction of the everyday, James challenges himself and his peers to impart aesthetic style with more substance—that is, to use certain writing choices in depictions of the everyday to highlight tensions between individual morality and socially constructed moral codes.

These tensions between the individual’s sense of morality and socially-accepted morality come to light when the individual’s manners break down and this lapse is recognized by others. Here, James finds most interest in manners displayed in public (defined also as social mores) when it becomes apparent that they are no longer being followed. Gender again becomes useful as a category for analysis, as it highlights the kinds of manners expected by society of the individual, and it formulates the kinds of mannerly breakdowns that occur in a novel of manners—for instance, the kinds of manners expected of a man differ from those expected of a woman. Likewise, the breakdown in manners differs by the way each individual breaks the gendered nonverbal codes according to which his or her behavior is measured. Here, James sets himself apart from other novelists in that he moves beyond the circumstantial to the psychological.<sup>87</sup> His autobiographical writing reflects the nature by which we self-fashion identity out of our younger selves, and psychological study reveals the extent to which we are “constructed” by our own sense of memory or self-perception.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, a lapse in manners may be a deliberate attempt to break from past modes of conduct or past perceptions of self and identity in order to refashion one’s identity.

The breakdown of manners also serves to highlight the social problems influencing individual morality, and, in turn, the individual's formulation of his or her personal values influenced by and apart from social morality. In his reviews and commentary, James argues that the novel of manners implicitly reformulates generic codes to understand better the disintegration of manners and society, thus distinguishing himself from prior practitioners.<sup>89</sup> That is, we cannot understand manners until they cease to operate, because they function when their usage is commonly understood by other individuals conforming to the same standards of conduct. Therefore, these breakdowns only become apparent in their schism from accepted codes of conduct.<sup>90</sup> Thus, it is when manners lapse that the moral problems inherent in society become apparent and urgent.

Therefore, James simultaneously redefines generic codes of the novel of manners and the criteria by which the genre should be measured. He argues that the novel of manners should be used not to represent ordinary life but to show how the everyday masks a deeper conflict regarding social and moral values. One such trait is "the firm and elaborate delineation of individual character" that he forwards in his own novels ("George Eliot" 907). Aesthetic style to draw the individual focuses on craft, which puts sentences together in order to convey a mood, feeling, or idea that leads to the setting or the mind of the character, rather than reporting facts or simply moving the plot along.<sup>91</sup> The individual matters, James argues, because it allows the author to exercise "that extensive human sympathy, that easy understanding of character at large, that familiarity with man," which he attributes to women novelists ("George Eliot" 907). This understanding of the individual provides the reader with a character of similar class, social standing, or situation, and thus makes the novel of manners a relatable genre. In



this way, James's fascination with the psychological provides us a frame for understanding social and moral conflicts at war within the individual. These conflicting ideas thus create a hierarchy of conduct and ideological values, which then affect the individual's sense of identity.

Just as the novel of manners represents social and moral problems, it also depicts a certain society at a certain time or historical period. Such a representation of society more accurately represents the kinds of conflicts the individual faces when conforming to social morality or breaking from accepted codes of conduct within institutions such as marriage, religion, or education.<sup>92</sup> James again utilizes the psychological aspects of individuality in order to illustrate conflicts in construction of morality from a social and individual standpoint—together, these perspectives provide the reader with context for the author's characterization choices of the individual.<sup>93</sup> This aspect of a Jamesian novel of manners thus elevates the genre to a more moral-minded text, as opposed to a novel dedicated to restoring the traditions of a bygone era.<sup>94</sup> Because of various factors that changed society in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—the rise of the middle class, industrialization, and the waning of the nobility—James identifies manners as a means to identify class in England and, to some extent, the United States (whether the individual lives there or is an expatriate in Europe). His specific use of marriage as a social institution demonstrates how manners reinforce class and hierarchical institutions in society.<sup>95</sup> Because marriage is both a personal domestic construct and a public social contract, James draws our attention to the marriage plot as a particular example of a moral and social problem as seen through the eyes of the individual. The focus of the domestic, then, becomes particularly crucial, for it exemplifies the moral problems faced

by the individual but through a specific example, and manners formulate just *how* the psychological and social struggles comprise moral conflict. For James, manners and marriage shape a greater understanding of the everyday beyond a mere reporting of ordinary events and move the novel towards the kind of value-driven texts he esteems.

In order to understand the ways in which manners identify class and marriage, James also points to manners as a means of understanding social authority. He suggests in his novels that when society imposes a set of nonverbal codes upon the individual, the value inherent in these codes is not based upon ideals of morality but upon maintaining the *appearance* or artifice of moral value.<sup>96</sup> In his critiques of prior novels of manners, James expresses frustration with novelists' inability to describe the individual beyond the parameters of their respective social milieus.<sup>97</sup> He argues that manners were more important than marking an era—rather, he finds that their usage reinforces social norms and implicitly identifies the kinds of moral values (or lack thereof) present in society as expressed by manners.<sup>98</sup> James ascribes the power of the novel to “range through all the individual relation to its general subject-matter, all the varieties of outlook on life, of disposition to reflect and project...” (“Preface to *Portrait*” 45). The novel, while a fictional text, reflects a larger truth, and James sees manners as one means of achieving such a truth.<sup>99</sup>

James thus differentiates himself from prior novelists of manners by pointing to manners as markers of tension between social and individual morality, particularly when these manners break down. What we glean from such disruptions, he argues, is an understanding of how implicit codes of conduct reinforce social norms. Thereby, the manners that cultivate interpersonal contact reproduce hierarchical authority and in this

way create a domestic space void of the individual's moral decisions in favor of society's deemed moral codes. This cultural reproduction is apparent only through the breakdown of manners, because issues of social morality or individual morality become most clear in the absence of the social mores we associate with manners. When these social norms are no longer upheld, we see how they are valued and enacted in the individual's formation of values in the domestic. While James plots conflicts of manners in the domestic to include minutia such as dress and dinner etiquette, he focuses on how flaws or slips in behavior reveal a greater understanding of our cultural values and norms than when they are appropriately executed. In the instance of Gilbert Osmond's conversation with Madame Merle, it is only when his manners slip that Isabel comes to understand better the true nature of his relationship with Serena Merle, as well as his sense of moral values. Gilbert's faux pas reveals an adherence to social values and moral hypocrisy—he belongs in a society that values Isabel's chastity and fidelity to him while holding no value in his fidelity to her. The burden of proof thus rests on Isabel for her discovery and her decision not to disrupt the façade of their marital happiness, rather than acknowledging the truth behind Gilbert's momentary unmannerliness.<sup>100</sup> Thus, James argues that manners reveal the social morality that places more value in the *appearance* of virtue than the *presence* of it. Manners only become noticeable when they falter, slip, or break completely from the societal norm; and it is these gaps in behavior that more interestingly depict the set of codes forced on a group of people by structures of authority. This tension comes to light in an era when traditional morals are obscured by social mores based on consumerism.

Jeffrey Eugenides, in *The Marriage Plot* (2011), and Alan Hollinghurst, in *The Line of Beauty* (2004), adapt the plot of *The Portrait of a Lady* in order to expose the

façade of social mores disguised as moral values. Because societal norms narrowed the meaning of individualism to a consumer-oriented model, individuals use manners to *appear* to conform to these values for the sake of self-interest and competition, whether or not they personally believe in such conduct. Both authors utilize James's notion of manners breaking down in order to challenge the divide between public and private values, as seen in the 1980s. Ultimately, as each author uses the genre to track the construction of social norms, he posits a challenge to representations of manners as a means to constructing moral values. Through their interaction with both Jamesian construction of manners and postmodern novelization, Eugenides and Hollinghurst assert that beyond the dissolution of moral codes, the breakdown of manners signals a society reinforced by values, but prioritizing the appearance of morality above the moral character of its citizens.

### **Henry James and the Novel of Manners**

*The Portrait of a Lady* illustrates James's criticism of moral hypocrisy in society, as seen through his psychological characterization in the novel of manners. We view this social critique through the plotting of Isabel's marriage choice and the consequences of it. Rather than ending with the marriage itself, James presents the psychological forces behind the choice of marriage partner to reveal tensions between social and individual expectation of the institution of marriage. Isabel continually impresses upon herself the strength of Osmond's intellect and his lack of possession over her spirit and sexuality, as seen by her other suitors.<sup>101</sup> Yet while her choice is socially acceptable and her outward behaviors conform to social morality—not publicly exposing Osmond or Madame Merle for their dalliance, returning to Osmond instead of running away with Caspar

Goodwood—James uses the breakdown in manners to convey Isabel’s psychological torment in confusing manners with morality. The problem in her marriage, then, is largely psychological, since her individual morality both seeks Osmond’s intellect and rejects his coarse immorality without truly desiring it to change.<sup>102</sup> When Gilbert’s manners break down, James sees the opportunity for psychological development within the individual and creates an opportunity to depict the chasm between the *appearance* of morality in public spheres and the *presence* of it in the domestic within the human mind. He argues ultimately, that social institutions such as marriage demonstrate how private morality affects social manners and morality on a larger scale.<sup>103</sup>

James suggests that through the psychological, the novelist of manners can explain the motivations for public manners and social behaviors. He also unpacks the conflict between social morality and individual morality through the depiction of manners and interiority. Through intricate descriptions of mental processes and responses to outward stimuli, James sets up a pattern of manners and proper decorum in order to define social norms. When manners break down, James provides cues for his readers that certain moments or behaviors highlight the social problems that manners had heretofore concealed. Here, the individual’s psychological self-awareness heightens the sense of conflict between society and self, since it desires both to belong to the outside world and maintain integrity to its principles for moral behavior. By utilizing free indirect discourse to drive the conflict, James is able to flesh out a problem that affects the individual’s understanding of societal norms and how she must then adjust her behavior accordingly.<sup>104</sup> Free indirect discourse further allows readers to gain insight into Isabel’s motives while simultaneously assessing her sense of morals in an increasingly corrupt

domestic and larger social circle. This interior speech reveals Isabel's ideology—as seen through her individual personal decisions—and these choices reflect the tensions present in the larger social world of the novel.

Further, James suggests that scenes occurring within the domestic reveal intimate knowledge about the individual that formal public spaces conceal. By setting scenes and personal conversations within sitting rooms and bedrooms—spaces associated with intimate family relationships—he implies that the individual's character can be truly revealed, as opposed to the more formal sets of manners that occur in public spaces, such as salons or lecture halls. In the aforementioned tableau featuring Osmond and Madame Merle, the domestic allows the individual to behave without the pressure to conform to social mores, or, at least, the appearance of following social codes. Their intimacy, shown through the casual familiarity of their manners, reveals some past indiscretion, and one that can only come to light when they are alone in the Osmond home. In this setting, therefore, we gain a clearer picture of Isabel's social predicament. James utilizes such private manners not only to demonstrate the historical and social context for the behaviors but also to illuminate for his contemporary and future readers a greater understanding of the larger world that is seen only through the gaze into the domestic.<sup>105</sup> This greater understanding yields what seems like a simple truth: social morality is most often defined by a complete lack of what we call “moral” or “virtuous” behavior. But it is only through these breakdowns in manners that we view the effects of such pretenses at morality. The impasse between social morality and individual morality thus forces a choice upon the individual: either conform and face the psychological torment of repressing one's true morality for social acceptance and stability, or accede to personal

morality at the cost of social status, financial security, or even life.<sup>106</sup> Isabel's private moments of reflection help readers weigh the choices ahead of her and comprehend the gravity of her domestic dilemma.<sup>107</sup> Thus, James uses the domestic to reflect the wrongs of society and explain their effects upon the individual.

Ultimately, James' critique of the novel of manners provides him a means to revise and reshape the genre to reflect tensions in the social behaviors labelled as "morality" and the individual's sense of morality. Some scholars had argued that James's comments about Eliot, Austen, and other female writers were gendered in nature, and thus his way of denigrating the novel of manners as a feminine genre.<sup>108</sup> Yet James was less interested in gender as a division in society than in gender as approached through the psychological and individual filters of the domestic.<sup>109</sup> Morality transcends gender, for James, and here he diverges from gendered constructions of the domestic in the novel of manners in order to get at the transformation of society from one that upholds a philosophical morality to one that uses social codes to construct a separate morality based on appearance more than ideals. He thus creates a model for other novelists of manners to follow by depicting an individual through a metaphor of gender to analyze the effects of social authority on the individual's sense of moral codes.

### **The Portrait of Social Morality in a Jamesian Novel of Manners**

Just as *The Portrait of a Lady* seeks to highlight pressures of both social and individual morality within the individual's manners, two contemporary novels evaluate a society bent on enforcing a morality informed by materialism, which prioritizes the consumer over the individual. Just as the Jamesian novel of manners utilizes this gap between society and the individual, both Jeffrey Eugenides and Alan Hollinghurst

highlight this same disparity in *The Marriage Plot* and *The Line of Beauty*. In this way, they showcase the breakdown of manners in domestic spaces in order to interrogate the enforcement of social values promoted by neoliberal governments in the 1980s. Both novels update James's plot in *Portrait of a Lady* even as they focus on the 1980s, illustrating the individual-as-consumer metaphors for selfhood towards more corporate-centered values that prioritize social conduct, reinforcing these manners and devaluing self-constructed individuality altogether. A consumer-oriented society values wealth or commodities over the moral values espoused by James; therefore, Eugenides and Hollinghurst utilize the relationship between social morality—again, manners of society disguised as virtue—and individual psychology in order to reveal the same kinds of individual pressures to conform that are highlighted when such manners break down.

Within the constellation of novel of manners, as well as James's definition of novel of manners, both *The Marriage Plot* and *The Line of Beauty* demonstrate and revise conventional traits of the genre in order to reflect a changing society in the late twentieth century. By distinguishing the characteristics that make each text a novel of manners, and more specifically, a *Jamesian* novel of manners, the scholar can trace the changes wrought in this genre by these authors. This distinction also explains the importance of manners in understanding tensions between social and individual morality. As mentioned earlier, one of the most important facets of a novel of manners is the depiction of the relationship between the individual and his or her society, both in characterization, and in reconstruction of a certain location and a certain time period. Eugenides portrays social problems occurring in the 1980s to demonstrate the shifts in social expectations and individual behavior.<sup>110</sup> Through his characterization of Leonard Bankhead's mental



illness, Eugenides illustrates how an individual's choices in public and private affect his or her identity, one that either conforms to social norms (as seen in the way Madeleine configures her romantic relationship to Leonard) or one that chooses isolation and freedom from social pressures (as Leonard ultimately does when he annuls his marriage to Madeleine).<sup>111</sup> Eugenides examines the social setting as a means of explaining the psychology of the individual and how it affects his or her reaction to social norms.

In this way, Hollinghurst also relates the psychology of the individual to the time period and manners being depicted in the novel to forge a relationship between the two. Through the psychological workings of his character, Nick Guest, he depicts the tensions of the 1980s, both for the individual and in society: as an individual, Nick wishes to pursue his artistic vision of love with a man in a largely homophobic society, yet he also wishes to partake in the splendor of the bourgeois domestic of Thatcher's England, as embodied by the Conservative Fedden family.<sup>112</sup> Here, the setting of the 1980s in England illuminates the struggle between social and individual morality, especially when Thatcher's standards of morality coincide with economic principles of capitalism.<sup>113</sup> The tension in this novel of manners deals not just with finding an appropriate mate but also with the *kind* of mate one is expected to find and maintain in such a conservative community. Failure to comply means exile from the luxury and privilege of the bourgeois class if Nick does not at least appear to conform—because Thatcher's social values called for a “return” to morality, open homosexuality defies such an admonition. Thus, Nick must conceal his sexual orientation for the sake of self-interest, since he wishes to enjoy the affluence of the Feddens and their social circle. Admission of his sexuality would

banish him from their acquaintance, since it does not align with their social codes of conduct.

Linked to this relationship between the individual and society is the means by which manners manifest social mores disguised as moral virtues. Both authors focus on situations in which people are prevented from having good manners, thus utilizing the breakdown of manners to reveal the moral decay occurring in the 1980s. Here, manners appear to dictate moral virtue, but ultimately reveal a lack of morality altogether.

Eugenides explores this chasm between morality and the appearance of it through the manners employed by his female protagonist's parents. Concerned by Madeleine living—unmarried—with her boyfriend, her parents use manners in an attempt to regulate her behavior, but conveniently neglect to mention the complexities of their own relationship.<sup>114</sup> In this way, Eugenides suggests that manners disguise the lack of values espoused by a society that prioritizes appearance over actual adherence to social codes. Similarly, Hollinghurst deliberately employs manners in several public and private contexts, in both straight and gay relationships, in order to highlight the chasm between manners and morals in a neoliberal society. Because the Thatcher administration called for a return to Victorian values, social morality consisted of appearing to uphold such values, even if, as Hollinghurst repeatedly points out, no such values actually existed.<sup>115</sup> In this way, the novel of manners functions to expose the disparity between social and individual morality, especially in highlighting that morality in a society that never truly existed. Therefore, these breakdowns in manners serve to guide our thinking away from appearances and towards the presence—or lack—of morality in society.

These relationships and manners also work within the domestic to configure the individual's personal sense of morality. Both authors engage with James to demonstrate how the individual's psychological development reveals his or her sense of morality. This individuality causes friction with the outward social persona, because the individual must decide how and when to conform or diverge from social expectations. Eugenides constructs a domestic space that constantly shifts in order to depict more clearly a morality hampered by social mores and values. He illustrates such a change through Leonard's mental haze as a bipolar individual. Leonard's choice to subvert social morality and remain true to his ideals causes him to exile himself from the socially acceptable marriage to Madeleine. Conversely, Madeleine's indecision places her in a situation akin to Isabel Archer's—marrying Leonard because of his ideals and not the eligibility or respectability it will bring solidifies her freedom of choice, even as the institution of marriage causes her to chafe against the manners expected of her. In a similar manner, Hollinghurst creates tension within the domestic in order to depict these warring values in Thatcher's Britain. Nick, a single gay man, wishes to recreate the same kind of traditional domesticity he admires in the Fleddens—the material happiness, that is. He engages in a series of romantic and sexual encounters, both as a subversion of the “Victorian values” and as an attempt to remain true to his individual morality about love and sex. His psychological makeup is doubly tormented by this conflict between his individual morality and his public manners. Not only is his romanticized vision of love and sex compromised by his choice in partners, but his wish to also partake in a society that forces him to remain closeted creates a schism in his identity: because he wishes to partake in the pleasures of a consumerist society, he sacrifices the freedom of his sexual

identity, yet his adherence to social convention causes personal unhappiness and dissatisfaction with his closeted domestic life. Hollinghurst demonstrates that the tensions in social and individual morality that arise from this clash in values can only be explored when the manners of Nick's ordered and secretive world disintegrate. Hollinghurst ultimately depicts a domestic fragmented by a social morality of appearances and a consumer-oriented value system that diminishes the individual entirely.

**‘Literarily speaking, back in time’: Revisiting the Jamesian Novel of Manners in *The Marriage Plot***

In *The Marriage Plot*, Eugenides invokes *The Portrait of a Lady* in order to examine the social tensions at play between the individual and a society that simultaneously rejects and enforces traditional heterosexual values.<sup>116</sup> By utilizing James's psychological exploration of the individual's deployment of manners, Eugenides illustrates how the individual domestic realm influences the public social sphere. He engages specifically with the 1980s, as it presents a time of great instability, both for the individual and the family unit.<sup>117</sup> He presents manners as a socially-constructed set of codes that guide one series of behaviors while concealing a different set altogether: it is in this simultaneous process of revealing and concealing that the psychological aspect of manners comes to light. These manners, Eugenides suggests, shape the individual as he or she is influenced by social custom, and collide with the personal sense of moral values he or she upholds within the domestic. In his adaptation of James, he views the novel of manners as more than a mere imitator of *The Portrait of a Lady* adapted with acid-wash jeans and a spiky haircut.<sup>118</sup> He therefore utilizes a “marriage plot” in the traditional sense to engage with manners as society understands them, and he unmakes this plot in

order to reveal tensions in morality between society and the individual, particularly in the 1980s.<sup>119</sup>

The breakdown of manners thus reveals an increasing tension between socially sanctioned forms of fulfillment and personal happiness, which affects the kinds of morality enacted by both the individual and society. In borrowing from *The Portrait of a Lady*, Eugenides positions his novel of manners to argue a similar point to James: psychological exploration of the individual grants the novel of manners an urgency, for it points to tensions between society and the individual that a simple plotting of the everyday lacks. These tensions ultimately force the individual to realize that social fulfillment does not, in fact, yield personal happiness, and that personal happiness often assumes a secondary importance to the individual's sense of belonging to a social order. In depicting the social and moral breakdowns occurring in the neoliberal world in his novel, Eugenides thus takes on the Jamesian novel of manners to engage with these tensions: he adapts the plot of *The Portrait of a Lady*, invoking techniques of postmodern metafiction to reference the text and to engage with the novel of manners as both historical and contemporary genre; he tracks changes within the domestic and establishes tensions of morality between the individual and society in order to illustrate the importance of manners; and he reveals a disparity between social and individual fulfillment in a consumer-oriented society that can best be seen when manners lapse, particularly through the contrasts in insider and outsider mindsets in his characters. In his novel, Eugenides questions the means by which social institutions influence the individual and his or her standards of living within the domestic.

In order to wrestle with notions of morality and social tensions, Eugenides first reconstructs the genre that allows such tensions to come to light. To invoke a novel of manners that is distinctly Jamesian, he adapts the plot of *The Portrait of a Lady* by utilizing metafictional techniques that both recall and revise the original text in his own. Postmodern metafiction, known for its self-reflective use of past narrative forms, not only references other works but demonstrates its awareness of itself as a text within a reader's grasp.<sup>120</sup> Eugenides' adaptation of *The Portrait of a Lady* represents an act of metafiction designed to engage with the social and moral problems developed by the text. Self-referencing the genre illuminates issues of morality and domesticity in a plot that ostensibly deals with marriage but ultimately tackles the idea of fulfillment within a social sphere.

One way Eugenides revisits the genre through metafiction involves his self-invocation of the genre as he reconstructs it. This new text thus forges a relationship between an understanding of manners in the Jamesian novel and in contemporary texts. In recounting the perceptions of the novel of manners through a fictional professor, he engages in an act of metafiction by intentionally recreating a supposedly moribund genre, thus disproving the claims of the fictional K. McCall Saunders and his real-life counterparts:

In the days when success in life had depended on marriage, and marriage had depended on money, novelists had had a subject to write about. The great epics sang of war, the novel of marriage. Sexual equality, good for women, had been bad for the novel. And divorce had undone it completely. What would it matter whom Emma married if she could file for separation later? How would Isabel Archer's marriage to Gilbert Osmond have been affected by the existence of a prenup? As far as Saunders was concerned, marriage didn't mean much anymore, and neither did the novel. Where could you find the marriage plot nowadays? You couldn't. (22)

Eugenides utilizes the character of Saunders to expose the tensions within the genre, first by proving that the genre exists at all. The fictional Saunders stands in for flesh-and-blood scholars who have mourned the demise of the novel of manners, but Eugenides suggests that its existence still matters, though its *form* may have shifted.<sup>121</sup> Further, references to *The Portrait of a Lady* and the use of the psychological within the novel of manners prove not only James's importance to the novel of manners but also the role of social institutions to our understanding of contemporary society. If, as Saunders declares, the marriage plot is dead, then its occurrence and recurrence in the society of the novel provides an interesting tension: the presence of a marriage plot in the novel disproves Saunders' initial point about fiction, but its dissolution in the end reinforces the tension between social expectations and individual fulfillment. Here, Eugenides mines the uncertainty of the 1980s through a text in which marriage is an outcome expected to provide personal fulfillment but (as proved by *The Portrait of a Lady*) instead outlines tensions between society and the individual.

Eugenides' use of metafiction revises and questions the role of social institutions such as marriage in neoliberal society. This revision forms a crucial component of the Jamesian novel of manners, because it exposes the hindrances to achieving personal fulfillment and reveals the exchanges that occur to enact the social function of marriage. While marriage still exists and still enacts a kind of economic exchange within the domestic, Eugenides points out that it no longer consists simply of a man marrying a woman for a certain dowry.<sup>122</sup> Rather, options such as cohabitation and divorce point to a diverging set of choices from the ones ascribed to Isabel Archer in the late 1800s. These choices highlight the tensions in social and individual morality: The wedding itself is

seen as a social contract, one that needs to *appear* suitable—whether or not the circumstances or couple are socially acceptable—while divorce or cohabitation invite personal fulfillment at the cost of social fulfillment.

In this way, Eugenides recreates the marriage plot in order to reveal the lapses in manners that occur in contemporary marriages. These breakdowns become most apparent when the economic and material exchanges involved rely on an anachronistic sense of tradition in order to enact the arrangement. This distinction matters, for it reveals the social fulfillment that invokes the past, just as it clashes with personal fulfillment that relies on both an idealism of societal “tradition” and a need to adhere to personal happiness that may or may not conform to social morality. In reconstructing a “traditional” text only to unmake it, Eugenides reveals a genre that can critique social norms and question social values as they impinge on the individual’s set of beliefs.<sup>123</sup> Here, he questions the construction of manners that invoke “Victorian values” and instead highlights the changes that manners must take for the individual to remain faithful to his or her personal morality.<sup>124</sup> He sets up the novel of manners to highlight the contrasts in the domestic between social expectations and the individual’s need for personal expression of morality, as evidenced in the marriage plot that plays out in the novel.

Just as postmodern metafiction invokes the novel of manners as a genre that questions social morality, Eugenides also constructs changes in domesticity and marriage as a means of critiquing the manners that comprise social morality. He accomplishes this task by first tracking changes in domesticity from traditional incarnations to its transitions in the 1980s. In depicting two *gendered* responses to the domestic, Eugenides offers two



separate readings of the domestic and thus invokes the psychological as a means to understand the social. Because both men and women in the novel respond to pressures of domesticity, albeit with slightly different expectations of manners, he argues that the domestic allows the novelist of manners to set up tensions between social and individual. In crafting a feminized domestic, Eugenides parodies patriarchal concerns for a woman's freedom of choice within the domestic, highlighting residual social expectations for a woman's codes of conduct in the early 1980s.<sup>125</sup> After hearing her mother's argument against living with Leonard, Madeleine realizes that her free-spirited sister unwittingly corroborates this theory of family life. In discussing her role as a mother, Alwyn declares, "If you want to have a career...my advice is don't get married. You think things have changed and there's some kind of gender equality now, that men are different, but I've got news for you. They're not. They're just as shitty and selfish as Daddy was. Is" (188). The feminine view of the domestic in the 1980s, rather than idealizing marriage and a family, portrays conflict between traditional ideals and the desire for independence and self-expression. The manners of the domestic for a woman in the 1980s involve a series of choices, ones that become intensely personal and psychological, as Eugenides explores throughout the novel.

Conversely, the representations of masculinity he constructs within the domestic sphere involve a different psychological struggle. Eugenides utilizes contrasting perspectives through his male leads, Mitchell and Leonard, using each to demonstrate a different problem of domesticity. For Mitchell, the domestic is a space of personal fantasy and romance. He idealizes and pursues the idea of a nuclear family in neoliberal America while failing to understand the social issues being brought to attention by the

second-wave feminists. His own sexism, which constructs his version of the domestic, is constantly interrogated by the women around him.<sup>126</sup> Therefore, his psychological struggles inform his sense of the domestic and help him develop a more complex sense of his personal desires.<sup>127</sup> Leonard finds the domestic constricting his sense of social purpose, and here Eugenides explores the psychological aspects at play within the individual most clearly. Because his mental illness renders his employability uncertain, he finds his public life unstable. Consequently, his private time consists of a joyless routine in an attempt to curb his manic depression and thus craft himself into a productive member of society. His domestic rituals are unpleasant: Eugenides describes him “taking his lithium and Ativan, spreading a dollop of Preparation H between his buttocks every morning and night, drinking a glass of Metamucil with his morning O.J., swallowing, as needed, an antinausea pill he forgot the name of. All alone in his splendid apartment, among the geniuses and would-be geniuses, at the end of the spiraling land” (270). His sense of the domestic is solipsistic, because it consists of private turmoil caused by his own disease and disregards the effects of his illness upon his domestic partner or the burdens she has borne for his sake. His blunt manners, while conveying a sense of independence, also isolate him from the sympathy or compassion that Madeleine could provide, leaving him alone to fight an illness he knows he can never conquer. Here, Eugenides uses the psychological to explain the struggles between society and the individual within the domestic, setting the scene for conflict in social and individual morality.

Like James, Eugenides depicts a society in an era of cultural history in order to explain *how* social morality affects the individual. His use of the 1980s works to explore

problems of social morality, while he simultaneously critiques the moral depravity present at the time. The Reagan administration promoted a version of Milton Friedman's supply-side economics, in which privatization of public services continued, and tax breaks to the wealthy increased—this adaptation earned the name “Reaganomics.” Simultaneously, Reagan drew support from right-wing Christian groups by proposing to unite economic conservatism with social conservatism, in order to generate his ideal version of society, one run by honest people with limited government, and opportunities for education and individual success.<sup>128</sup> Thus, society expected the individual to adhere to the ideals set forth by Reagan's administration, particularly in order to receive access to the benefits ascribed to Reaganism—freedom, affluence, and individualism, especially related to family life and religion.<sup>129</sup> Therefore, a society that promotes conformity to social customs seeks to maintain this lifestyle through consumption of ideas, products or goods that perpetuate the *idea* of that lifestyle's continued existence: it ultimately promotes a specific kind of individualism that comes through uniformity of identity. Though changes to the domestic—such as cohabitation, open homosexual identification, and feminist sex wars—threaten this conformity, Reagan's administration saw its legacy perpetuated in a Christian Conservative nuclear family and thus sought to recreate such family through rhetoric of freedom, patriotism, and personal liberty.<sup>130</sup> In the case of Madeleine and Leonard, cohabitation is a choice made to instill personal fulfillment and facilitate economic stability at the individual level, but without any of the social recognition of their marriage or the consumption of goods associated with a wedding, society has nothing to gain from the match. Social mores dictate that their relationship be sanctioned through marriage—consequently, the moral virtue ascribed to chastity and

marriage is purchased through the ceremonial rites of a wedding and purchasing of material goods to signify matrimony. These consumable trappings accompanying matrimony will cause the couple and their social peers to acquire this moral value, while perpetuating the perception that they adhere to social morality.<sup>131</sup> And even in the marriage itself, the question is not about suitability but about the assets each individual brings to the marriage.<sup>132</sup> Thus, Eugenides uses the social institution of marriage as a means of establishing the façade of morality under the trappings of materialism and consumerism to simulate personal happiness—while actually achieving social fulfillment.

Social morality also entails the enactment of a certain kind of manners that seems to reinforce moral character, but rather relies on the *appearance* of morality to maintain such an idea. In the contrasting manners of Phyllida Hanna and Leonard Bankhead, Eugenides explains how social morality is fulfilled by the *idea* of returning to “Victorian values” without ever actually defining them clearly. In their first meeting, Leonard unwittingly commits the faux-pas of extending his hand for Phyllida to shake. Madeleine explains, “My mother’s old-fashioned. She doesn’t usually shake hands with men. If she does, she’s the one to initiate it,” forcing Leonard to acknowledge that his codes of conduct vastly differ from the Hannas’ sense of manners (281). Phyllida’s supposed primness belies a worldly knowledge of sexuality, and Leonard’s boldness covers a sense of ignorance of reading and replicating social niceties, contributing to a feeling of being entrapped by social convention.<sup>133</sup> Thus, social morality perpetuates an idealism of virtue, without actually defining what that virtue is, and demands that individual behavior fall in line with its precepts.

The individual's enactment of morality, conversely, relies on his or her internalization of personal values and decision between fidelity to self or conformity to society. James had relied on the psychological for his depictions of Isabel Archer in order to explain her conflicts of interest between her personal choice in marrying Gilbert Osmond and her social responsibility in remaining faithful to him. Eugenides also delves into the psychological to explain personal motivation, and he also highlights the personal values that clash with social morality through his characterization of Mitchell. Though he desires an intimate relationship with Madeleine, he also adapts a set of manners reminiscent of chivalry, and this prevents him from seducing her physically. He bows to social morality and chooses not to make a move on her at her parents' house: "For a moment he thought that Madeleine might kiss him. And then, because Madeleine didn't, because he was a houseguest and her parents were sleeping downstairs, because, in that glorious moment, Mitchell felt that the tide had turned and he had all the time in the world to make his move, he did nothing" (76). This behavior stems from the good etiquette required of genteel houseguests, a code that Mitchell does not break out of a sense of honor towards the Hannas' implicit rule of hospitality—they provide him shelter and he, in turn, does not take their daughter's virginity. Mitchell denies his personal fulfillment and bows to social convention.

Yet Eugenides highlights this conflict to show how a personal sense of fulfillment informs individual morality, particularly in the struggle between social morality and personal desire. In order to understand the workings of his social life, Mitchell turns his gaze inward and focuses on his philosophy for existence and understanding Madeleine's motives for choosing Leonard instead of him.<sup>134</sup> Eugenides utilizes free indirect discourse

to depict Mitchell's motivations for adhering to manners as a means of finding personal fulfillment: "He decided that his believing that Madeleine would marry him stemmed from the same credulity that had led him to think he could live a saintly life, tending the sick and dying in Calcutta" (Eugenides 392). He recognizes that social conventions have not delivered his promised happiness but instead constricted his behavior. He has not recognized his personal desires, and Eugenides utilizes his psychological musings as a means of illustrating the conflicts between individual and social morality informing Mitchell's decisions.<sup>135</sup>

Thus, when the manners of social expectations disintegrate, the tensions between the social and individual senses of morality collide. Here, as in *The Portrait of a Lady*, Eugenides demonstrates the importance of the psychological to explain the motive for manners breaking down and why they impact the individual and the domestic. To explain the breakdown of manners occurring, he uses disparate examples through Leonard and Mitchell to illustrate the breaks with society that must occur in order for the personal to be fulfilled apart from the societal. In Mitchell's case, breaking his code of chivalry and verbally propositioning Madeleine will grant his personal wish. As she visits his guest room one last time, he "got the courage to do what he'd been too scared to do at nineteen years of age...when Madeleine looked at him, he reached up and pulled her down onto the bed" (403). Eugenides uses Mitchell's break in manners as a means of demonstrating the shift in sexual relationships within the domestic—neither Mitchell nor Madeleine has premeditated any sort of relationship, but rather sees their liaison as an endpoint to their relationship, free of the economic exchanges that have filled Madeleine's relationship with Leonard. As seen in James's psychological exploration in *The Portrait of a Lady*,

this break in manners signals a change in the way men and women relate sexually to one another within the confines of the domestic. Further, in fulfilling his desire, Mitchell begins to recognize that his individual sense of morality has been replaced by a desire to possess Madeleine. When his manners break down, he recognizes that he has imparted the domestic with a fantasy that values its perpetuation more than its fulfillment, and the breakdown in manners allows Mitchell to relinquish his fantasy in order to develop a healthier and more self-actualized domestic.

Yet when social institutions such as marriage take over the domestic, the breakdown in manners allows the individual to understand how he or she is influenced and made unhappy by these forces. Leonard uses his breakdown in manners in order to disengage himself from the domestic dissatisfaction cultivated by his in-laws' money and expectations for his own behavior. Because his mental illness occludes his sense of social morality, Leonard sees his individuality as being simultaneously hampered by his manic depression and the strictures of social mores. Therefore, his abandonment of Madeleine, a breakdown in the manners he has cultivated as part of the behaviors of the socially adept, signals a shift to find individual fulfillment.<sup>136</sup> Like Isabel Archer, he seeks personal fulfillment, but he makes a vastly different choice, one that will socially isolate him from the society in which he has been entrenched. Pushing Madeleine away on a subway platform, he decides to jettison their marriage, to save her future and to continue to focus on his illness: "In a soft voice edged with pity, with sadness, Leonard said, 'I divorce thee, I divorce thee, I divorce thee'" (383). He chooses to abandon his socially acceptable marriage out of self-desire and pity. Thus, his individual fulfillment is idealized as a kind

of loneliness, disguised as nobility in sacrificing himself for Madeleine.<sup>137</sup> Here, the breakdown of manners reveals an individual morality not echoed by society.<sup>138</sup>

Social morality, when seen through the breakdown in manners, reveals a construction of morals based on the appearance of morality. This sense of social morality ultimately diminishes the individual's sense of conduct and beliefs, even as it appears to encourage a sense of individualism.<sup>139</sup> Because the *appearance* of good conduct matters more than the actual behaviors or beliefs themselves, Eugenides points to a disconnect between manners and morals hinted at in Jamesian texts. Milne reminds us that James had borrowed from Emerson's definition of manners, which is "good-nature or benevolence: manhood first, and then gentleness" (Emerson qtd. in Milne 45). Therefore, in depictions of his protagonists, James idealized manners as a manifestation of man's character. Yet Eugenides demonstrates that manners do not equal morality in the same way that James had correlated them. He instead exposes the disparity between manners and morals by demonstrating how social manners imposed on the individual directly clash with a sense of right and wrong or purpose for the individual. Eugenides suggests that this clash exists in his novel of manners, because the nature of morality has changed in society. Whereas James suggested that social morality did actively engage—for better or worse—a moral ideal, Eugenides implies that such moral values do not actually exist, and these social mores work to conceal the irrelevance of morality in neoliberal society. When these manners lapse, he utilizes the psychological to reveal insights into the individual's working through these social problems.

Further, the breakdown of manners reveals a society that transforms the moral from an intangible principle of action into an economic prospect or material good.



Eugenides traces this transition in Mitchell's so-called spiritual quest in India, where his forms of altruism ultimately come back to winning Madeleine's heart and being seen as a "worthy" suitor. Here, Eugenides links the good deeds and the "manners" of missionary work into something less noble. He enters the psychological workings of Mitchell's moral processes in order to show us that these morals are a public show, a means of obtaining material gain—or, in this case, Madeleine's heart.<sup>140</sup> When revealed apart from the show of good conduct guiding his behavior, Mitchell's manners are consumption-oriented, and focus on the externals, rather than the intrinsic moral values he has openly espoused throughout the novel.<sup>141</sup> Eugenides, while not engaging in larger political discourses, utilizes individual psychological narratives in order to echo the tensions of social and individual morality occurring within the 1980s. These tensions, he argues, change the way we configure individuality and personal fulfillment within the domestic. As he illustrates, the novel of manners is just as much a novel about the individual's decisions about personal morality as it is about his or her "place" in society.

Thus, *The Marriage Plot* employs the Jamesian novel of manners to comment on social change and the new economies of the domestic. Like James, Eugenides interests himself in the breakdown of manners within the domestic, pointing to such breaches as a means by measuring society's influence over the individual and the kinds of capital exchanges that thus ensue over the domestic. Unlike James, who believed in some form of morality that could be internally dictated beyond the means of social mores, Eugenides notes that in the 1980s, this morality became charged by economics of consumerism. The individual, swayed by material goods and gain, can exchange his or her sense of personal fulfillment for one of social fulfillment—which includes profit. Therefore, the novel of

manners, for Eugenides, documents the absence of morality in social codes of conduct, and these manners ultimately imprint an image of morality upon the individual. Manners conceal this lack of value, and it is not until manners break down, as he notes, that we can begin to understand the ways in which we relinquish personal values to conform to an idea that never existed.<sup>142</sup> In his merging of Jamesian ideas of manners and postmodern metafiction, Eugenides imparts new life to a form that warns us against social morality and consumerist greed.

**‘A great deal of gilt’: Manners as Morals in *The Line of Beauty***

Like Eugenides, Alan Hollinghurst acknowledges a debt to Henry James and the novel of manners in the way he depicts manners, morality, and the individual in his 2004 Booker-winning novel, *The Line of Beauty*. Just as Eugenides uses postmodern metafiction and the Jamesian novel to explore the breakdown of manners in the 1980s, Hollinghurst employs similar narrative techniques while engaging in larger political commentary.<sup>143</sup> He deliberately invokes Thatcherism—including Thatcher herself in a cameo—as a means of exploring the tensions between social and individual morality. His protagonist, Nick Guest, is a lover of beauty and art, who also enjoys the promiscuity and excess of the consumer-oriented 1980s. Hollinghurst builds on James’ discussion of the *appearance* of morality in society by adding another complication: Nick is gay, and living during what is often considered the most homophobic era in Britain since the 1890s.<sup>144</sup> He thus alternately seeks out romantic attachments in queer public spaces, such as bars, public bathrooms, and bathhouses, while retaining a sexually neutral appearance in the domestic space of his Conservative patrons, the Feddens. Here, Hollinghurst utilizes the psychological to show the means by which explicitly gay men endorsed

political movements that directly or indirectly oppressed their individual senses of morality and forced them into a kind of manners that maintain the *appearance* of heterosexuality.<sup>145</sup> The tension between social and individual morality thus becomes blurred when the individual becomes complicit with the social forces that oppress him or her.

Hollinghurst frames these tensions not only within the domestic, but around the political turmoil emerging from Thatcher's England in order to critique the moral decay he sees as defining the era. Because Thatcher equated economic policy with morality, he suggests in his novel that the manners expected of her acolytes would thus ascribe a moral value to capitalist endeavors that promoted Thatcher's ideals, nostalgia, or economic policies.<sup>146</sup> Those, like Nick, seeking individual moral authority would find themselves at odds with a society who equate profit with virtue. Ultimately, this disconnect causes a breakdown in the carefully crafted manners of capitalism and forces the individual to reevaluate his or her choice to succumb to social pressure and relinquish his or her sense of morality.

When these manners break down, Hollinghurst illuminates a twofold dearth in morality: first, in the society that values the appearance of it over the actual presence of morality; and second, in the young men such as Nick who knowingly relinquished their individual moral authority for the materialism and power promised by the neoliberal world actively oppressing them.<sup>147</sup> He relies on similar narrative techniques as Eugenides, albeit with a more urgent political and social focus: he adapts *The Portrait of a Lady* to reflect the time period of the 1980s and shifts the protagonist's role to that of a young gay man, and he also utilizes postmodern metafiction to engage with questions

about the novel of manners as a genre; he tracks changes within the domestic by queering the heterosexual marital exchanges and highlighting the tensions that ensue between society and the individual vis-à-vis morality and manners; and he deconstructs the breakdown of manners in order to highlight the amorality of the individual and society, particularly in regards to the hypocrisy and materialism that clouded individual moral conduct. In unravelling the marriage plot and the insufficiency of manners to cover cultural hypocrisy in the 1980s, Hollinghurst crafts a searing indictment of cultural consumerism and its devastating impact on the morality of both society and individual.

Like *Eugenides*, Hollinghurst utilizes the psychological characterization of the individual, as well as postmodern metafiction, in order to grapple with problems about morality in 1980s culture and society. He employs metafiction by recasting Isabel Archer through a male protagonist—Nick Guest—and thus interrogates the impact of the social upon the individual through the ways Nick both adapts to and resists heteronormative modes of behavior. He codes these responses as manners in different public and private settings.<sup>148</sup> In contrast to *Eugenides*, he politicizes his commentary on Thatcherite society, particularly in his construction of the insular Conservative world and of Thatcher's followers themselves. This reconstruction of Thatcher as a character in the novel recreates the sharply divided attitudes towards her persona as Prime Minister and a woman, just as it questions her authority over social forces in the novel.

In outlining Nick's own quest for love, Hollinghurst revises the Jamesian narrative in order to examine the kinds of manners that emerge and ultimately break down in light of queer identities and domestic performances. The metafictional references to James characterize Nick as an idealist and a lover of aesthetics, especially in the way

he views art and literature. James becomes an implied character, so that Hollinghurst may draw upon the Jamesian novel of manners as he creates it, thus emphasizing the novel of manners as a lens with which to critique social issues.<sup>149</sup> He connects Nick's quest for beauty and truth in love with Isabel's, and points to Nick's poor choice in partner as a means by which his own idealism—like Isabel's—betrays him and ultimately points to the psychological as a means of processing and critiquing larger moral problems.<sup>150</sup> This continual sense of self-awareness and self-consciousness is complicated by Nick's sexuality and uncertain sense of “outness” in public *or* private spaces. His secrecy and manners become crucial to understanding his individual sense of morality, since his eagerness or ambivalence towards his sense of morality dictates his behavior.<sup>151</sup> Thus, Hollinghurst recreates *The Portrait of a Lady*, not merely as an adaptation, but a revision and interrogation of how we depict and understand ideals of manners and social depravity in contemporary writing.

While focusing on James as a figure in the reader's mind, Hollinghurst evokes a certain image of the 1980s in order to create a self-conscious picture of the time period. In so doing, he engages us in a discussion of manners; that is, how they function similarly or in contrast to those in James's novels, and how our consideration of manners may well be a nostalgic notion, one that does not accurately represent the codes of behavior routinely occurring in social exchanges.<sup>152</sup> Hollinghurst places the era itself under self-reflexive scrutiny by creating a character naïvely and deeply invested in the excesses of consumer culture, while simultaneously searching for beauty and meaning.<sup>153</sup> As a self-described “aesthete,” Nick longs to cultivate beauty in his worship of James, but also in his relationship with Wani Ouradi, whom he privately recognizes is “rather a philistine”

(Hollinghurst 266). Having established Nick's love of beauty and his psychological fixation on beauty, the contrast in Wani reminds us of Gilbert Osmond's vulgarity: "[Wani] knew very little about art and design, and his pleasure in the place was above all that of having had something expensive done for him" (175). Wani's pleasure comes from commerce, and it again alludes to Osmond's money-oriented mindset. This metafictional depiction of Nick's love interest does not merely recreate the struggles in a poor matrimonial choice; rather, Hollinghurst invokes the Isabel-Gilbert mismatched relationship in order to highlight the struggle between the individual's sense of morality and the society's focus on appearances. In this way, he critiques the moral implications of neoliberal capitalism and its effects on the individual's psychological workings.<sup>154</sup>

Just as Hollinghurst recreates the 1980s to demonstrate the effects of capitalism upon individual morality, he also tracks changes in the domestic in order to highlight the gap between social and individual morality. This gap creates a tension in the individual's manners, particularly how he or she decides to behave in public. Through the psychological, Hollinghurst illustrates the harmful effects of social amorality upon the individual's psyche and moral behaviors. He sets up several domestic environments in order to show contrasts in ideology and manners—though the domestic is a private space, Nick's identity as a gay man in a homophobic society and his desire to conform to the Conservative values of his affluent patrons requires that he behave in a certain way in order to remain a desirable member of society.<sup>155</sup> This rule even applies within the domestic space of the Fedden home, and Nick finds that his twin desires—finding love with another man and achieving affluence by association—clash and collide in a society

that will not allow both. Therefore, the domestic becomes a place where Hollinghurst can utilize the psychological in order to explore these tensions.

In the Conservative, wealthy Fedden home, Nick's manners must retain a guarded, careful neutrality, if he is to escape their notice as an open homosexual. He cannot espouse any of the "queenish" or "camp" traits that comprise the identities of other open homosexuals (Paul or "Polly" Tompkins is one such individual identified by his "camp") and expect to be included in the Feddens' circle and, therefore, close association with the Prime Minister herself.<sup>156</sup> Because this portion of society espouses Thatcher's values, the citizens within strictly adhere to the manners that are sanctioned or considered forgivable and impose their manners on those who wish to enter the circle. As an outsider wishing to become part of this society, Nick recognizes that he must maintain a neutral appearance, even if the family knows or suspects that he is a homosexual.<sup>157</sup> Though the family does not consider itself openly homophobic, Nick recognizes the dangers in pushing any boundaries, particularly where the Prime Minister's "family-oriented" values collide with his own behaviors.<sup>158</sup> Complicating the idea of the homosexual as both insider and outsider is the behavior of the Feddens and their peers, who stratify the kinds of indiscretions that are considered acceptable and unacceptable, thus forcing gay men to either out themselves and force themselves to leave affluent society or accept the codes of conduct and maintain a façade of overt heterosexuality.

It is in this show of heterosexual manners, so to speak, that Hollinghurst highlights the social morality at play in this society. He depicts Wani Ouradi's farce to illustrate this choice. Wani's private, addictive behaviors lead him to binge on cocaine, alcohol, and sexual encounters with strange men, just as his public manners find him

docile and submissive to his father's repressive Lebanese upbringing and act the part of the son and heir to the family fortune. His promiscuous lifestyle in his penthouse above the *Ogee* magazine headquarters yields to his more traditional upbringing when he returns to his parents' home and perpetuates his heterosexual manners.<sup>159</sup> In his parents' domestic space, Wani performs the role of a heterosexual male eager to inherit his father's business (and fortune), and thus keeps a fiancée on his payroll in order to remain with the favored social circle. Failure to comply with his father's expectations would cut off his money supply, so for social and personal preservation, Wani plays along in order to secretly maintain the lifestyle he publicly wishes to hide. Torn by fear of losing Wani and resentment of being forced into the closet, Nick must help construct the charade of friendship between them to reinforce the notion that Wani is not a homosexual.<sup>160</sup> These changes in manners precipitate an understanding of social order and a need to comply for the sake of material and personal gain.

Thus, as money influences the individual's behavior in public, it also influences the way society treats the individual, especially regarding the presentation of manners as moral codes. As Prime Minister, Thatcher had ascribed moral value to privatization and her system of economics.<sup>161</sup> Therefore, society treats money as its own virtue, regardless of taste—directly opposing Nick's aesthete views of beauty and morality.<sup>162</sup> The influence of money changes manners, just as it changes morals—because the individual with money dictates taste and how that money will be allotted, those wanting to receive that money will align their manners to find favor with the wealthy. Wani, as the son of a grocer-turned-millionaire, views money as a means to exert his influence over others, thus becoming a proficient capitalist in his social circle. He wants to appear affluent, so



he purchases the most expensive-looking flat he can find and furnishes it in the manner of a hotel: “It was what you did if you had millions but no particular taste: you made your private space like a swanky hotel; just as such hotels flattered their customers by being vulgar simulacra of lavish private homes” (357). Social morality assumes that “taste” is actually a lack of original taste, and those who seek originality, such as Nick, are forced to forbear with the vulgarity “as almost everything postmodern was” (175).<sup>163</sup> Thus, for Hollinghurst, capitalism takes on the implication of money replacing taste and decorum in an era where individuality is erased.<sup>164</sup>

Social morality also wields its influence over marriage and sexual identity, especially in the formulation of manners in public. Social morality dictates that appearances mean more than the actual values themselves. Thus, any number of men who may actually be gay can escape notice so long as their manners do not lead to the assumption that they are gay. In the case of Lord Lionel Kessler, manners that maintain neutrality—that is, neither overtly homosexual nor heterosexual—retain the idea of respectability, even if Kessler has not married or produced children. The text notes, “Kessler had never married, but there was nothing perceptibly homosexual about him” (46). His cautious social behaviors, coded as manners, allow him to retain his bachelor lifestyle and affluence without being coded a “queen” like Pat Grayson or a disgrace, like Hugh Maltby, who was caught with a rentboy. Thus, his manners conform to social expectations and help him avoid the pitfalls of being labelled a homosexual, including harassment, censure, or exclusion from elite social circles.<sup>165</sup>

In a different example, marriage serves to protect a flamboyant homosexual and provide him entry into social circles, so long as he conforms to the idea of what it means

to be a heterosexual man. Paul (crudely nicknamed Polly at Oxford) Tompkins recognizes that marriage can more fully serve as an entry point to a political career than his casual exploits with a variety of men. Though a certain kind of homosocial bonding was acceptable at Oxford, the men of the Conservative circles expect these rituals to end in adulthood.<sup>166</sup> Just as Nick direly predicts “the huge heterosexual probability that a twenty-first would be followed soon enough by a wedding,” Polly adroitly shifts his manners from that of a sexually available gay man to a respectable, heterosexual married Conservative (62). His appearance wins him a seat in Parliament on the Conservative ticket—the very political party that would condemn his past sexual liaisons. Nick notes after the announcement of his electoral victory, he brings his new wife and celebrates with a kiss, “not wedding-style, but as one might kiss an aunt” (364). Thus, social morality based on appearances can cause the individual to relinquish his or her identity or sense of self and abandon it to reap the benefits that come from adhering to Thatcher’s “Victorian values.”

This sense of social morality impinges on the individual, and Hollinghurst illustrates the conflict that emerges when the individual, seeking to express his sense of morality, attempts to elude social values in order to remain true to self. Nowhere is this conflict more clear in the novel than in Nick’s relationship with Leo, a working-class black man who is a second-generation Briton (and thus not given notice by members of the Feddens’ social circle). Here, the psychological workings of Nick’s attraction to Leo provide readers with the gravity of the choice Nick must make: either he must reject any possibility of individual happiness in order to retain acceptability by Thatcher’s society, or he can employ a set of manners with double-meaning and live a shadowy private life

as an outcast in London. Hollinghurst couples this conflict with a sense of confusion that Nick does not understand a certain covert set of “gay manners” enacted by men wishing to evade societal attention and still hoping to attract others like them.<sup>167</sup> Therefore, the manners of the individual morality matter in understanding his or her moral development, because they signify a sense of identity, or an understanding of how these behaviors that code as manners create an appearance of an identity.<sup>168</sup>

Further complicating this sense of individual morality and sexual identity is the classism that persists in the narrative, further dividing the individual from any sense of direction and choice, pre-destining one’s placement into a social caste. In Nick’s relationship with Leo, this sense of class conflict divides them in social circles, private as well as public. In trying simultaneously to impress and to woo Leo, Nick realizes that the matter of money may separate them. His comments about the house set him apart from the Feddens in an attempt to become more like Leo: “‘God, I don’t come from that sort of background. No, I just live there. It belongs to Toby’s parents. I’ve just got a tiny little room up in the attic.’ Nick was rather surprised to hear himself throwing his whole fantasy of belonging there out of the window” (28). Though Nick is himself an outsider, he realizes that his social behaviors and manners are dually focused—first on being accepted as a member of the Feddens’ elite circle, and second on being seen as an acceptable sexual partner to Leo or other men who are openly gay, but, as a consequence, outside his social class.<sup>169</sup> Therefore, Nick finds himself changing identities and values in order to remain both *inside* the comfortable affluent class and *outside* to find a lover.

Hollinghurst depicts the liaisons with Leo to illustrate the shifts in values and identities that occur, but he also demonstrates how one’s sense of manners and freedom

change within each domestic or private environment he encounters. Just as Nick has to repress any outward expression of sexuality at the Feddens, he also must remain sexually neutral in Leo's family home, where Mrs. Charles calls Thatcher "Mrs. T" and adheres to strict principles of Christianity in the same vein as Thatcher's own "Victorian values." Here, Nick realizes that his freedom to express any love or sexual desire for Leo cannot be fulfilled in either his or Leo's private space, as both have enacted Thatcher's social values and wish to appear compliant.<sup>170</sup> The classism that pervades his relationship with Leo also becomes clearer in the Charles home, where there is no comfort or privilege to mediate his sexually restricted manners.<sup>171</sup> In contrasting the two homes, then, Hollinghurst provides psychological motivation for Nick to remain as he is—since he wishes to retain the comfort and privilege of association with the Feddens, his sacrifice is a reciprocal relinquishment of individual identity and an outward show of conformity as a perpetuation of Thatcher's ideal society.

Hollinghurst creates a series of conflicts with different resolutions as a means of critiquing Thatcherism for its hypocrisy and emphasis on consumerism over morality. To actualize this conflict in his text, he utilizes the breakdown of manners to reveal that Thatcher's "Victorian values" simulate morality without actually enacting such moral values. One such instance involves the denouement of Nick's relationship with the Fedden family, in which he is cast out from the house for having a sexual relationship with Wani, just as Gerald's own sex scandal comes to light.<sup>172</sup> Though Gerald's own sense of family values has been compromised by his own affair, he accuses Nick of being unfaithful to his family through his sexual orientation.<sup>173</sup> The breakdown of Gerald's manners reveals a moral vacuity derived from placing value in materials over actual

morals, and this failing is never acknowledged by anyone except Nick, who recognizes his own complicity in the society that ultimately casts him out—presumably to die of AIDS, though the novel only alludes to a vision of this fate.<sup>174</sup> Here, Hollinghurst indicts the moral vacuity and places emphasis on the individual's sense of freedom and choice.<sup>175</sup> Such a choice does not necessarily lead to happiness, though personal fulfillment—as seen with Isabel Archer's sacrifice of happiness in remaining married to Gilbert—helps the individual remain true to his or her sense of morals and identity.<sup>176</sup>

The breakdown of manners also becomes clear in Hollinghurst's treatment of the AIDS crisis, signifying a collapse in the stratifications between social and individual morality, and cutting across class to affect individuals of all social spheres. Pat Grayson, the beloved television actor and Rachel's best friend, dies of AIDS and is denied the truth that he was openly gay, in an attempt to perpetuate his social caché with the Feddens.<sup>177</sup> Leo's diagnosis and death are given little notice except after his death, when his sister comes to warn Nick of infection risk. Here, class still matters, since Leo was not related to anyone of prominence—therefore, society sees his death as unfortunate but “brought on” by his own sexual behaviors.<sup>178</sup> Hollinghurst lingers on his ethnic Otherness as an example of the kinds of stratification occurring in Thatcher's England. While both Rachel Fedden and her brother Lord Kessler qualify as Other (they are both Jewish, and Kessler possibly a homosexual), their money and status protect them from the kind of sequestration Leo faces as a poor, gay black man dying of AIDS.<sup>179</sup> Wani's diagnosis causes a moral crisis in the Feddens' social circle, and in the Ouradi home. Because he has maintained an appearance of strict heterosexual manners, even keeping a fiancée on payroll to protect his image, his very outward manifestation of homosexual acts causes

these manners to have been voided and reveals that the *appearance* of “traditional” family values covers a lack of individual sense of morality.<sup>180</sup>

Ultimately, the breakdown in manners forces the individual to determine how he or she will face the moral bankruptcy prevalent in an era of excess and consumption. For Nick, who has had a vision of his own early death, this means facing the truth about his situation and recognizing the society for what it is—a simulacrum of good taste and virtue, masking an emptiness made only of goods, money, and materials. Hollinghurst utilizes the AIDS crisis and Nick’s confession to the Tippers that he is gay as a psychological turning point: like Isabel, his future life and happiness hinge on a choice to remain true to himself or to continue to deny his sense of morality for social happiness or those of others. Like Isabel, Nick chooses to remain true to himself, but the consequences for Nick are graver than a mere return to an emotionally unavailable and vulgar man like Osmond. Rather, his choice to retain his individual morality calls for his exile from elite society and the protection of the Feddens.<sup>181</sup> Thus, the breakdown in manners reveals an ugly injustice against those who choose to remain individuals true to their vision of life and morality—nonconformity results in alienation and, likely in Nick’s case, an ignominious death.

Hollinghurst thus utilizes the Jamesian novel of manners to interrogate the break in manners that occurs when conflicting sexual identities and manners merge in a capital-oriented, materialistic society. He critiques the phenomenon of openly gay men, at odds with Thatcher’s high-minded, Victorian values-oriented society, willingly voting for individuals and policies that force them to remain closeted, because they desire to partake in the extravagances and banalities of consumer society. Thus, the domestic manners of

the time reveal a bargain between society and the individual: in order for social stability to be maintained, the individual relinquishes his or her political and moral independence, in order to participate in the affluence and excesses of consumer culture. Nick's expulsion from such a world signals the price the individual must pay in order to partake in such a culture—loss of self and moral acuity in exchange for empty material comforts. The individual, when complicit with the demands of social morality, eclipses his or her sense of individual morality in order to achieve some measure of the affluence present in society.<sup>182</sup> Yet Hollinghurst points out that this affluence is an illusion with no spiritual, aesthetic, or deeply meaningful value beyond the confines of money.

The manners of the domestic, when seen in a novel of manners, also demonstrate the striations of a society demarcating social classes from one another. As an outsider to both the working and wealthy classes, Nick finds himself at an impasse—should he out himself publicly to be exiled to poverty and obscurity, or should he remain semi-closeted and resort to farces and behaviors as Wani does in order to appease his restrictive peers? Ultimately, Hollinghurst notes, the quest for beauty and truth, when sought naively, ends, not just with an unfaithful partner or spouse, as seen by both Isabel and Nick, but with a failed domestic fantasy. The novel of manners, while setting up the manners and climate of a society, also reveals the fantasies and expectations set forth for a domestic environment, and in turn, that climate influences the success or failure of domestic happiness within a private space.

### **What the novel of manners reveals about morality and the individual**

Henry James's literary criticism on the novel of manners centers on the collective failures of previous novelists of manners to engage with the individual and morality in

society. His own ideas regard the novel of manners as representing everyday life in order to understand social and moral problems in society, particularly as they affect the individual and his or her sense of morality. Therefore, he represents the domestic as a space where tensions of social and individual morality collide and force the individual to decide whether conformity or remaining true to one's ideals will prevail. The novel of manners, as a genre that depicts the relationship between individual and society, particularly documenting the effects of social morality upon the individual, best represents the struggle to conform. James adds the psychological workings of the individual to particularly enrich this battle and track the tensions that emerge between society and the individual. While *The Portrait of a Lady* traced its manners to the moral decay of Europe, both Jeffrey Eugenides and Alan Hollinghurst trace a specific set of social manners found in the 1980s in order to comment on the moral vacuum of manners that masquerade as virtues, especially through the culture of consumerism and excess.

Through the domestic, the novel of manners reveals the sets of expectations the individual needs to conform to in order to enjoy the material comforts of society, disregarding morality or value in ideas that are intangible by definition. By constructing a set of manners that either conform to societal expectations for behavior or break the patterns set forth, the authors' depiction of manners helps readers to understand how society influences the individual, and how the individual in turn responds to pressures of behavior and standards within the home and indirectly affects the shifts in societal policy and public behavior. Thus, the domestic encompasses the kinds of behavior seen within the home that reflects a larger society's values and morals. The author depicts this



influence of society through a character's interiority to reflect such state-oriented values on a personal day-to-day level.

Rather than providing a mere contrast to the kinds of manners that prevail in public spheres, the domestic mirrors the kind of economic or sexual exchanges occurring in public and critiques the nature of hierarchy present in society. These series of exchanges, because they influence the kinds of behavior that people invoke, reveal an engagement with social expectations, and these expectations in turn reveal social or moral problems of the time period. Therefore, because the novel of manners concerns itself with the domestic as a lens for larger social problems and the manners that reveal or possibly conceal such issues, the psychological makeup of the individual takes on importance in understanding how such societal issues affect the individual and the expression of his or her identity. This shift in characterization demonstrates how manners are enacted in both public and private spaces, becoming a means of revising the novel of manners and granting it a relevance to a genre once considered meaningless to larger literary movements in contemporary writing.

In their novels, Eugenides and Hollinghurst scrutinize the kinds of manners that society passes for morals, critiquing the means by which morals are elided in behaviors that instead promote prosperity at the cost of individuality. Their depictions of psychological conflict within the individual to remain true to the self in an era of conformity, materialism, and consumerism, reveal clashes of identity and morality, especially when "truth" becomes a relative or marketable concept. The individual's complicity in relinquishing ownership over his or her self-guided morality becomes a further source of analysis, even if the characters in the novels partake in the cultural

excesses. Ultimately, like James, both Eugenides and Hollinghurst view the individual as a means of criticizing the decline in morality, and they update the era to reflect growing concerns during the 1980s, particularly as the commercial overtook society, the domestic, and the individual.

***The Marriage Plot* and *The Line of Beauty* converse with Henry James**

When discussed as individual novels of manners, both *The Marriage Plot* and *The Line of Beauty* expose a society in the process of transition from individual to consumer-oriented social norms—through manners, domestic expectations, and individual conformity to these norms. *The Marriage Plot*, while not an explicitly political novel, still engages with the 1980s through its use of manners and their breakdown in order to reveal a tension between social expectations and the construction of individual morality. The individual, when seen through the lens of the psychological, proves to be ambivalent about his or her ability to differentiate between personal and social fulfillment. In the quest to achieve social fulfillment, individual morality must be cast aside, no matter the consequence, even if personal happiness proves impossible to attain. Yet the ability to gain personal fulfillment comes at the cost of social fulfillment, and possible exclusion from the affluence and material wealth associated with neoliberal society. The lack of a “happy” ending proves that in its exchange of power, the domestic cannot fulfill the fantasy of possession in the way men were promised throughout history, and it signals a shift in the genre itself. Eugenides reinvents the generic form in order to delve into the complexities of individuality, morality, and society that he argues comprise the contemporary novel.<sup>183</sup> Thus, the “failure” of the marriage plot, as seen in Eugenides’ revision of *The Portrait of a Lady*, represents a society that questions the social

institutions, such as marriage, that regulate and influence private spaces such as the domestic.

While both Hollinghurst and Eugenides were clearly influenced by James, Hollinghurst invokes a more politically-driven commentary on the tensions between individual and society. In so doing, he develops a specific critique about Britain during the 1980s for its attitudes towards the less elite and the exiled gay men who were forced to die in disgrace and as criminals. Domesticity becomes complicated by the individual's ambivalence towards social morality, his own morality, and his wavering sense of identity in the face of moral relativism. Further, *The Line of Beauty* as a novel of manners reveals the varying manners that come into play when one's sexual identity must be concealed or performed in order to remain secure within the auspices of desirable, affluent society. Utilizing the AIDS crisis allows Hollinghurst to explore tensions between public and private spheres, the social and the individual, to criticize the lack of rectitude shown by society, particularly Thatcher's government, in abandoning a generation of young men. The moral compass in *The Line of Beauty*, while seemingly more ambivalent than in a Jamesian novel, ultimately points to the means by which society thrived off individual complicity of maintaining an appearance of virtue in order to perpetuate its excess. In light of the intense homophobia and ensuing AIDS crisis, Hollinghurst argues that the individual who stands outside social morality is forced into complicity and then punished for bearing external representations of "difference."<sup>184</sup> In this distinction, he highlights the consequences of social morality overshadowing individual morality.

When we discuss these texts together in a more comprehensive discussion about the novel of manners, however, we find that a common pattern emerges beyond a mere replotting of James and *The Portrait of a Lady*—rather, both texts utilize postmodern metafiction in order to invoke a self-conscious reflection of the novel of manners, of the 1980s, and of the way we configure morality in contemporary society. By replotting and re-engaging *The Portrait of a Lady* as a commentary on the novel of manners, both writers emerge as critics of the genre, in an era when the genre is considered to have died, and they inscribe new importance on the novel of manners as a means to comprehend the social changes roiling in neoliberal society.<sup>185</sup> Their novels thus recreate the genre as a critique of the social and moral problems occurring in the 1980s.

Eugenides and Hollinghurst share a suspicion of privatization and neoliberalism in the 1980s. Though Eugenides is an American and Hollinghurst British, their suspicion of capitalism's influence over the domestic and the individual unites them in a common conversation about materialism and consumerism. They point to manners as a means of tracking social decline, particularly as manners become a marker of understanding gendered behavior within the confines of the domestic. Eugenides and Hollinghurst not only track the changes in the cultural climate but also critique the social excesses and changes to consumerism as a moral decline from the consensus-oriented politics and individualism of earlier generations. They each depict a society undergoing a transformation from consensus-oriented to corporate-oriented policies and politics—such a distinction matters, because it shifts the state's priorities from the person to the business, thus turning each individual into a faceless consumer. This change then turns the domestic into another commodity for marketing. Eugenides and Hollinghurst thus

utilize the 1980s as a means of critiquing a capitalistic, consumer-oriented society and its corrosive effects on the private sphere.

In their characterizations of the individual's psychological processes, both Eugenides and Hollinghurst yield insight into the tensions of social and individual morality that ensue when the manners of society break down. They utilize the psychological as a means of understanding the individual's inner conflict, as well as the oppressive nature of social morality.<sup>186</sup> When social morality prevails over the individual, personal fulfillment accedes to social fulfillment, and the psychological insight yields an understanding of the loss that ensues—both a sense of individual morality and personal happiness. Yet when personal happiness wins out over social fulfillment, the psychological reveals the cost that comes from defying social morality. And it is in this sense of the psychological that both Eugenides and Hollinghurst find a sense of purpose for exploring morality within the novel of manners. In their study of their respective societies and their influences over the individual, these authors critique society's principles—or lack thereof—by chronicling the damaging effects on the individual, as well as the consequences of passing off social mores as moral values. Therefore, the novel of manners can be a genre meant to expose problems, and not merely reflect the attitudes of a time period. James argued for a sense of purpose within the novel of manners, and both Eugenides and Hollinghurst demonstrate a need for such a genre in amoral times.

### **Implications of a Jamesian novel of manners: why do we need it today?**

Because scholarship surrounding the novel of manners has died, the most recent scholars (Milne, Tuttleton, Klinkowitz, Bowers and Brothers) assumed that the novel of

manners had died with it, yet the resurgence of the genre in the 1980s proves that such is not the case. If we understand *The Portrait of a Lady* as a novel of manners and Henry James as a theorist of the genre, we can then understand why the scholarship and novel form may have languished—because prior practitioners had focused on representing events, instead of representing psychological motivations for such events, the genre lacked a purpose. James found a need to explore mores and morality through a psychological lens, thus throwing insight into the individual's relationship to society, as well as his or her reason for adopting a certain set of manners and moral codes. In their remaking of *The Portrait of a Lady*, both Eugenides and Hollinghurst look to the psychological depiction of the individual in order to understand social morality. Thus, in exposing social morality, they find a society set on consumerism, materialism, and a lack of moral codes that had dictated manners in the past. The genre proves a useful form for critiquing an emphasis on mores over morals and forcing the individual to relinquish his or her set of values for an empty and consumer-driven set of manners.

Consequently, these contemporary revisions revisit binaries of conformity and exile in order to explain motivations for the individual's behavior and explain why the study of manners matter in a post-consensus neoliberal society. While manners do not convey the same ideas as in Jane Austen's novels, we do understand manners as an exhibition of a certain kind of behavior or code that holds an ideological or moral value. Thus, manners can demonstrate an individual's accession to social codes, or they can represent the failure or refusal to submit, and display a sense of remaining true to one's sense of morality and value. While past novels of manners focused more on the society than the individual, James and his successors emphasize the individual to explain *how*

society affects the individual. Their emphasis on the psychological demonstrates an ideological function of the novel of manners: to depict the tensions that exist between social and individual morality, and explain that they matter as a means of describing an individual's conflict in choosing to remain within society or stay true to self. Eugenides and Hollinghurst, in adapting James's form, argue that binaries of conformity and exile are not nearly so simple—one may be ambivalent in his or her self-identity or wish to enact social codes in public, while renouncing them in private. Their depictions of the individual show the effects of such ambivalence and also show how consumer-oriented manners destroy the sense of individual values.

Further, the dissolution of the traditional marriage plot and the rise of gay domesticity demonstrate that our understanding of marriage and the domestic have also changed. Marriage as an institution changes because the economy of marriage has shifted—no longer does it serve the same purpose, namely in household economy and childrearing. Rather, people entering marriages seek a different kind of companionship and legal rights than those in previous societies and decades, and this changes the novel of manners, particularly in the way the domestic is structured. Rather than utilized as a means of securing financial stability or social footing, marriage and cohabitation are sought for the pursuit of “happiness,” an ideal often denigrated as irrelevant to the eligibility of a match (and this tension is explored most fully in the novels of Austen). Therefore, the failure of marriage in the contemporary novel of manners takes on different dimensions than the ones that fail in earlier societies—malaise, indifference, or boredom, or infidelity include just some of many self-centered reasons that encompass

the failure of the marriage plot, in contrast to earlier novels that featured spousal infidelity or abuse as reasons to flee.

Ultimately, a Jamesian novel of manners upholds the divide between public and private spaces, while Eugenides' and Hollinghurst's novels of manners reveal through their novels that such a divide in a postmodern, consumer-oriented society is no longer possible. By blending aesthetic traits of a traditional novel of manners with the kind of postmodern novel configuration present in the 1980s and beyond, these authors demonstrate the genre's flexibility, particularly in reflecting trends of a current society, whether literal or literary. Such plotting tactics, rather than crafting a nostalgic novel that encourages a look backward, challenges notions of stasis by critically and dispassionately depicting a consumer-oriented society that functions on the will of the corporation. Jeffrey Eugenides and Alan Hollinghurst further depict male individuals of varying masculine identities in order to demonstrate how a novel of manners can frame our discussion about gender and identity. By using a genre that does not "fit," they illustrate that manners frame our outward behaviors and our inner conflicts, thus affecting how we will be perceived and identified by society. This change grants more freedom of individual expression, and can dispel notions of domestic fantasy that are unattainable or undesirable in a society that has shifted drastically towards capitalistic endeavors.

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#### NOTES

<sup>69</sup> David Brauner characterizes postmodern writing by "self-reflexivity, tonal ambiguity, generic hybridity and intertextuality," traits that evade genre specifications and plot (19).

<sup>70</sup> Gordon Milne defines social morality as "adherence to convention," which "requires the correction of 'ideals' that are regarded as fanatical or impractical and thus at odds with the necessary compromises and imperfections but essential rightness of the social order" (12).

<sup>71</sup> Colm Tóibín points out that James' interest in morality was less ethical and more pragmatic, particularly in novelizing the psychological workings of his characters' minds: "James was not a moralist, although he



had a special interest in morality as a kind of poetics. He relished what right and wrong looked like and sounded like; he became a connoisseur of these concepts for their shape, their aura. And of course he loved what he could do with them. Someone who, in another novelist's hands, could be presented as a villain was, once captured by James's all-embracing and all-forgiving and oddly ironic gaze, a trapped heroine until terms such as 'villain' and 'heroine' melted into meaninglessness" ("All a Novelist" 287).

<sup>72</sup> Joseph Hynes describes individual morality as an idea where "each of us is called upon to determine the good according to how well our experience, imagination, or sensibility judges the possible effects of this or that choice. We must be moral, but we're reliant on our good intentions and sophistication, rather than on any objective code, to guide us" (30). These contrasting concepts allow the novel of manners to reflect these variations of moral behavior, particularly when they do not prescribe the same behavior from the individual. Hynes further notes that James's skill as a novelist lies in the way he treats this tension: "What James as modern psychological giant among fiction-writers is renowned for, among many qualities, is the subtlety with which he delineates his principal characters' struggle to pinpoint the good or evil effects of actual and potential choices, theirs and other characters'" (30).

<sup>73</sup> For instance, an author's depiction of a woman's conversation with a strange man on the street may reveal her sexual activity, her socioeconomic status, or even the level of education she has received. It can be the means of critiquing social problems, such as social inequality, poor education for women, or even the gender performativity forced upon men and women in the nineteenth century. Thus, a small matter of discussion reveals a larger problem inherent within a particular body of individuals governed by a larger state authority.

<sup>74</sup> *The Portrait of a Lady* is frequently cited as a psychological novel, which enhances its study in individual morality and social status. Milne claims that the novel engages "well beyond the social surface and offers a more significant analysis of the manners-morals problems lying beneath the surface" (55).

<sup>75</sup> Sarah Blackwood reminds us that "the nearly thirty years that intercede between the novel's first publication and its revision as a part of the New York Edition proved to be significant in the development of psychological thought in the United States and Britain. During this period, the physiological psychologies of the nineteenth century—from popular fads such as phrenology and mesmerism to the materialist approaches of thinkers such as Herbert Spencer and G. H. Lewes—were becoming supplemented by increasingly non-physiological psychoanalytic modes of inquiry into the inner life." She further points out, "James did not simply incorporate or reflect these changing scientific notions about consciousness into *The Portrait of a Lady*. Rather, the novel actively hypothesizes new forms of consciousness and explores the potential and limitation of both the physiologically embodied mind and the wandering consciousness enabled by the progressively more influential "talking cure" (271-72).

<sup>76</sup> The individual, for Henry James, becomes a subject of fascination, even in his own autobiography, *A Small Boy and Others*. Here, as Meghan Marie Hammond notes, the rise of psychology as a discipline and his interest in the individual, dovetail through his writing: "James witnessed the rise of psychology as a discipline in the late nineteenth century—in the United States that rise was spearheaded by men of his own generation like his brother William at Harvard and E. B. Titchener at Cornell. In Europe, Wilhelm Wundt founded the world's first psychology lab in 1879 and thinkers like Ernst Mach and Franz Brentano published influential texts on the workings of the human mind. What Millgate describes as James's understanding of autobiographical memory actually reflects theories on sense perception and memory that the educated public of 1913 knew thanks to these scholars" (340). Thus, knowing that William's work influenced Henry's ideas of the self and the psychology of the self provides insight into Henry's depictions of the self and his interest in the psychological within the novel of manners.

<sup>77</sup> Milne proficiently highlights this contrast and conflation as he describes the way that manners illuminate social customs and expectations, thus leading to its assumption of also dictating moral codes: "At the root of the novelists' discussion is often to be found a conflict between individual self-fulfillment and social responsibility, the attempt on the part of a person to achieve fulfillment at the cost of the frowns of society. The independent action of the individual may lead to punishment or even expulsion from the circle to

which he belongs, the 'club' rejecting the 'sensitive soul'. Adherence to convention—called 'social morality' by society—requires the correction of 'ideals' that are regarded as fanatical or impractical and thus at odds with the necessary compromises and imperfections but essential rightness of the social order" (12). Notice that Milne points to the positioning of social ideals conflicting with individual ideals, and the conformity to these social ideals comes at the cost of the individual.

<sup>78</sup> For James, the manners and morals of a location served to further his discussion about morality in general. Cora Diamond notes, "The moral character of places is intensely felt by James. The contrast between America (or New England) and Europe is for James not just the contrast between moralism and aestheticism but often the more specific contrast between rigor as to truth and enjoyment of appearance. Another important connection between the content of a morality and its being moralistic concerns the significance attached to sexual morality and the particular character of the sexual morality itself" (par. 17).

<sup>79</sup> Though instances of both "bad manners" do occur continually in the novel of manners, the deliberate breaking from accepted codes of conduct formulates a more fruitful glimpse at the breakdown of manners in this particular study. Diamond declares, "For philosophers: right and wrong, good and bad, duties, rights and obligations, notions of virtue and of particular virtues. These hardly drop out of the picture for James: consider, for example, his interest in the very particular kind of courage shown by his cousin Minny Temple, and how he turns and returns to the representation of forms of courage like Minny's. James, though, isn't interested in the judgment that someone or some action is courageous but in the exhibition and appreciation of this or that particular striking form." (par. 3). Thus, for James, morality moves beyond issues of right and wrong and ultimately encompasses fidelity to one's individual vision of life.

<sup>80</sup> While separating the public from private (more specifically, the public from domestic, tacitly considered private) seems an arbitrary categorization, novelists of manners makes this distinction repeatedly. Understanding this discrepancy in a Jamesian context adds another layer of importance, for we can then understand *why* the psychological informs the social. As Bege K. Bowers and Barbara Brothers declare, "While the self as depicted in the novel of manners does not transcend its social milieu and is interpreted through the community's understanding of what is right and proper, the individual does not necessarily define his or her being as would the community within which that individual interacts and by which that individual is judged" (4). Therefore, the manners displayed by the individual in private (his or her domestic space) will change in public, particularly if the individual chooses to uphold social morality.

<sup>81</sup> Tuttleton declares that *The Portrait of a Lady* marks a turning point for James's fiction: "Partly to avoid the problem of recreating social history, James gradually turned from the novel of manners to what might broadly be called the 'psychological novel'. He shifted the field, that is, from the external world of manners and customs to the impact of manners on the consciousness of his personae" (82). Even Tuttleton's commentary on James's transition to psychological novels implies a general perception of the novel of manners as a genre that deals in the everyday and minute, not the complex social problems of more morals-oriented novels. Left unsaid in this critique is the implication that James's turn *towards* the psychological transforms the novel of manners into a morally-complex genre, a text that allows problems of a moral and social nature to be explored by characters within everyday settings.

<sup>82</sup> Tuttleton notes, "It is, in fact, Osmond's failure to observe a form, a point of manners, that provides James with his first major occasion to explore the psychology of Isabel, to begin working his way toward the novels of 'the major phase'" (83).

<sup>83</sup> I use the word "performativity" to particularly highlight the kinds of manners adopted by the individual to conform to social morality. In her deconstruction of gender, Judith Butler acknowledges that "acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause." Butler thus encompasses performativity this way "in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means" (173). Butler's use of performativity thus implies a putting-on of manners for public consumption without actually signifying the manners as part of the value system in

private. Thus, Butler's deconstructive language helpfully frames performativity in the context of the domestic, because it demonstrates the process of public mannerliness and private *lack* of mannerliness. When these public manners breakdown, James investigates the tensions of public and private morality through manners.

<sup>84</sup> This "feminine" focus is not assigned merely to women; James also prescribes this label on the writing of Anthony Trollope, saying, "[Trollope's] great, his inestimable merit was a complete appreciation of the usual. This gift is not rare in the annals of english fiction; it would naturally be found in a walk of literature in which the feminine mind has laboured so fruitfully" ("Anthony Trollope" 1333).

<sup>85</sup> James's critique of such writers as Eliot concerns not the "feminine" focus, but the characterization of the ordinary without connecting events and rituals into a larger philosophical conversation. Hence, he praises Trollope's style for characterizing the individual in a deeper way: "If he was a knowing psychologist he was so by grace; he was just and true without apparatus and without effort. He must have had a great taste for the moral: he evidently believed that this is the basis of the interest of fiction" ("Anthony Trollope 1335-36). Here, James connects the everyday with the moral in his writing on Trollope, also denoting his interest in the psychological vis-à-vis characterization as a narrative technique.

<sup>86</sup> James argues that Eliot "has the microscopic observation, not a myriad of whose keen notations are worth a single one of those great synthetic guesses with which a real master attacks the truth" ("George Eliot" 911). This review simultaneously praises Eliot's attention to lower-class manners and critiques the lack of connection to the moral or philosophical that he praises in other authors, including Charles Reade.

<sup>87</sup> Tóibín reminds us that James did not write in a vacuum but instead utilized the works of other novelists against which to set his ideals for a novel of manners. George Eliot's writing proved most fruitful for his own: "James had in front of him then for his contemplation a novel that he viewed, as did his brother William, as a failure but whose central image of marital tyranny, pursued with such skill and brilliance by Eliot, could offer him an idea for his own novel. The drama surrounding the marriage of a passionate woman to a bully had appeared in scenes in other novels too, such as Trollope's *Phineas Finn* (1867), in which Lady Laura confesses to an unmarried man her deep unhappiness and sense of entrapment in marriage, much as Gwendolen does to Daniel Deronda, much as Isabel finally does to Ralph Touchett. James had merely to set about refining the passion, the bullying, the entrapment, the unhappiness, the confession, but he did not dilute them. Instead, by playing a game between what is unspoken and what is unspeakable, he made his drama more powerful" ("A Death, a Book" 263-64).

<sup>88</sup> Hammond again relies on *A Small Boy and Others* in her claim regarding the influence of the psychological in James's writing. She declares, "Turned inward upon its own processes by James's omnipresent meditations on the slippery nature of memory, *A Small Boy* becomes a rich, if not always transparent, analysis of the autobiographical pursuit as a negotiation with the "other" who is the past self. James is acutely aware of the ways in which his young self, the 'small boy', is a construct of his present self. For the narrating James, the small boy is a character mediated by the present self's creative engagement with memory" (340).

<sup>89</sup> In "Anthony Trollope and the Unmannerly Novel," James R. Kincaid outlines such a code and notes that Trollope followed such a pattern in his novels of manners—such a connection will thus help us understand *why* James's investment with the novel of manners and divergence from the pattern has affected our own relationship to the genre: "Take a character about whom we are made to care and whose values and integrity we are, at least in some measure, made to respect; then put him (or her, of course, though in Trollope it is quite often a him) in a situation where he is, for one reason or another, severely isolated from the social group and culture he thought was supporting him. Through this isolation and the problems it causes, raise questions about the values, the behavior, the manners not only of the individual but also of the culture as a whole. Then, dispel the questions, or, rather, resolve them in favor of a set of traditional assumptions made more flexible and lively through a comfortable resolution for all but the scoundrels and reformers" (96). Kincaid's explication of this setup of the novel of manners thus sets a certain kind of expectations for the novel of manners, and also contextualizes James's own critique, not only of female

novelists, but of Trollope himself. Such criticism thus enables James, in opposing Trollope's claims to the novel of manners, to posit his own stance on what the novel of manners *does* for the novel itself, and it allows him to create such texts that most accurately represent this vision.

<sup>90</sup> Alexander Nemerov points to the deceptions involved in fiction, and this breakdown in manners, for James, also reveals a certain truth while concealing other artistic deceptions: "The contrast between priest-artist and popular showman was not that distinct, however. Leja's view is correct: ambitious artists and writers sought a kind of truth to oppose the culture's hucksterism and grand-scale illusion-making. James was only one such figure aspiring to make Art a place of religious revelation in a prevailing atmosphere of deception and skepticism. Yet there was a common ground between the deceiver and the truth-teller. Art, James knew, was itself a manipulation, a con, a spell" (215-16). Therefore, James's plotting a breakdown in manners also conveys an artistic deception, as seen in his portrayal of Osmond's private conversation with Madame Merle. We are meant to see something out of the ordinary, but the level of Osmond's cruelty is concealed in this tableau.

<sup>91</sup> In his preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*, James specifically notes, "I might show what an 'exciting' inward life may do for the person leading it even while it remains perfectly normal" ("Preface to *Portrait*" 56-57). Here, the seemingly average inner life of the individual formulates a major characterization technique for him. The emphasis on the individual's interiority leads us back to the psychological, which creates a divide between the individual and society—one accepted trait of the novel of manners. His insistence on highlighting the individual thus distinguishes him from other novelists of manners, particularly for his use of the individual to highlight conflicts between social and individual morality.

<sup>92</sup> Tuttleton reminds us, "What is important to this genre is that there be for analysis groups with recognizable and differentiable manners and conventions. Those groups need not be stable, in the sense of enduring for centuries.... They need not even be typical of the general culture of a particular country... For the novel of manners it is necessary only that there be groups large enough to have developed a set of differing conventions which express their values and permanent enough for the writer's notation of their manners" (13).

<sup>93</sup> Calling *Felix Holt* a "broad picture of midland country life in England," James praises Eliot for her use of specific locations and kinds of individuals to convey the different kinds of manners across social strata in England ("George Eliot" 909-10). Here, James links the psychological to external surroundings, forging a relationship between the society of a time period and location and the individual's mental state-of-mind in choosing his or her actions.

<sup>94</sup> While my third chapter focuses on the nostalgia present and combatted in the novel of manners, it bears noting that James's own criticism is decidedly not nostalgic. Tuttleton cites one letter in James's correspondent with fellow novelist and critic W.D. Howells, in which his perception of the novel of manners becomes more complete: "I sympathize even less with your protest against the idea that it takes an old civilization to set a novelist in motion—a proposition that seems to me so true as to be a truism. It is on manners, customs, usages, habits, forms upon all these things matured and established, that a novelist lives—they are the very stuff his work is made of" (James qtd. in Tuttleton 25). Here, James notes the importance of manners to the novelist, just as he posits that contemporary manners are more meaningful than endless recreations of the past, as with nostalgic romances, such as Sir Walter Scott's *Waverly*.

<sup>95</sup> As Kathy Psomiades notes, "Domestic novels of this period are engaged with the Victorian theory of the sexual contract, and thus they use sex/domesticity/marriage less as a disguise for the political than as a theoretical tool for thinking about political life" (58).

<sup>96</sup> Eileen John notes that for James, morals are influenced just as much by social convention and the desire to appeal to others as to the individual's set of personal convictions: "Often the characters are making up a standard to fit the peculiar predicament at hand. The standard will involve moral value to an extent, perhaps in the goal of not hurting people more than they have already been hurt, but that goal will be much overlaid

with concerns of social convention, strategies for social power, safety of various kinds, ingenuity, and elegance of appearance and action" (240).

<sup>97</sup> In his commentary on the works of George Eliot, particularly *Felix Holt*, *Adam Bede*, and *Romola*, James denies that their documentation of the everyday denies them the title of "masterpiece," a term to which his own work aspires: "They have none of the inspiration, the heat, nor the essential simplicity of such a work. They belong to a kind of writing in which the English tongue has the good fortune to abound—that clever, voluble, bright-colored novel of manners which began with the present century under the auspices of Miss Edgeworth and Miss Austen" ("George Eliot" 911). He saw Eliot's depiction of manners as serving merely to indicate the time and place in which her novels were set. His distinction regarding the meaning behind manners imparts these codes of conduct beyond social capital and conveys a moral value in the behaviors and patterns of each person.

<sup>98</sup> Milne notes that beyond understanding manners as a means of knowing the individual's place or context in society, they serve "as an exposure of man's moral fiber" (44).

<sup>99</sup> Tuttleton notes that "it is difficult to exaggerate James's preoccupation with polite manners in dramatizing and testing values in conflict" (Tuttleton 52). Thus, manners provide the means to highlight conflict in a narrative, especially when the conflict is internalized over social morality versus individual morality.

<sup>100</sup> Sandra A. Zagarall notes that Gilbert's relationship to Isabel appears to be healthy, because his manners publicly adhere to social morality. Yet she highlights the tensions present in the novel: "It also demonstrates some of the costs of the collision between characters' senses of self and the socio-cultural hegemony of gender. The novel's marriages fail because the partners are incompatible. By implication the heterosexual family itself is fragile, and it cannot be relied upon to perform its assigned work—reproducing social institutions, genealogical lineages, and gendered persons; cultivating properly American citizens; and so forth" (25).

<sup>101</sup> In her Lacanian interpretation of *The Portrait of a Lady*, Phyllis van Slyck notes that Gilbert's attraction to Isabel is signaled by his *lack* of attraction to her. Her desire is fueled by the absences of his: "Another important reason that Osmond performs this function, when Isabel's other suitors do not, is that Goodwood and Warburton literally overwhelm Isabel with the *presence* of their desire; Osmond offers, precisely, its absence. It is absence, emptiness, lack, therefore, that defines the real nature of Isabel's desire: she seeks the object that can never be attained—something that will postpone, rather than grant, her satisfaction" (van Slyck 639).

<sup>102</sup> Van Slyck notes, "Isabel's discovery of love through the ideal image of herself she finds mirrored in Gilbert Osmond's gaze leads to a reversal of her most noble impulses. Her choice of a suitor also points to something that would seem the opposite of desire, but which is, in fact, its foundation. In choosing Gilbert Osmond, Isabel seeks to experience, however unconsciously, what Jacques Lacan defines as *jouissance*, or "painful pleasure" (1986/1992, p. 185). This is the pleasure that arises when the individual goes beyond what is bearable, testing the limits of desire, seeking an object, and a self, that can never be found" (Van Slyck 635).

<sup>103</sup> As Donatella Izzo claims, "One of the great achievements of *The Portrait of a Lady* is the way James takes up the...conflict between a woman's desire for freedom and self-determination and the pressure of social and ideological forces, and gives it a whole new, much subtler and deeper turn" (Izzo 351).

<sup>104</sup> Robert MacFarlane states that "the exceptional potential of the free indirect style to the novelist-moralist is that it permits twin compulsions to be contained within a single utterance: that it allows a character's consciousness or action to be simultaneously traced and judged" (171).

<sup>105</sup> Alice Gavin declares, "By implication, Isabel is imprisoned both inside and out, confined to an interiority—her husband's 'habitation'—that she is inside but which is not inside her" (878).

<sup>106</sup> Zagarell declares, “The reason is not mysterious: her formidable and not attractive image of giving herself completely testifies that sexual intimacy would require abandoning her self, her consciousness—what *Portrait* itself most values. In this light her choice to marry Osmond, for whom she is not shown to feel desire, appears partly as an attempt to strike a bargain. She will follow the womanly social script and will enrich her life as she enriches her husband’s” (30).

<sup>107</sup> Gavin notes, “Isabel’s ‘suffocation’ in Chapter XLII of *The Portrait* seems especially poignant when we consider interiority as a stream of breath. Asphyxiation or apnoea (the suspension of breathing) does not so much stifle her inwardness—the chapter is evidence against that – as seizing it, holding it in suspense. Isabel is poised inside Osmond’s ‘habitation’; her inwardness, her being-inside, is not completely inside her. It is as if the dim and ‘dumbness’ associated with her dwelling are equally her own resistance to the environment she finds herself in” (Gavin 887).

<sup>108</sup> Bowers and Brothers argue that, based on James’s reviews of Eliot’s work, James saw the novel of manners in a feminine (and thus negative) light: “While not questioning the literary qualities of the novel of manners, James nevertheless relegates it to the ranks of a lesser and ‘feminine’ art, something like the painting of teacups” (11). Such a critique, however, neglects to account for James’s criticism regarding Anthony Trollope’s forays into the genre. In his reviews of Trollope’s work, James regards Trollope with the female novelists of manners he has reviewed, noting that “they hold fast their noses close, as it were, to the texture of life” (“Anthony Trollope” 1333). This examination of the novel of manners has more to do with its purpose for writing and its message conveyed than *from whom* the message is conveyed.

<sup>109</sup> Zagarell de-genders Isabel, and in so doing, reinforces the notion that James sees the individual through a non-gendered lens and takes interest in their individual motives as much as their sociological constructions: “Gender may condition Isabel’s sense of self when she seeks to be a good wife in the early years of her marriage, but *Portrait* avoids chronicling those years, featuring her when she is not married and then when the marriage has become untenable. For her as for Ralph, this selfhood is to a great degree interior, and, like his, it is largely uncolored by gender” (27).

<sup>110</sup> With the implementation of “Reaganomics” (known also as supply-side economics) came cultural shifts that changed the face of the American lifestyle. Alan Bilton declares, “The most obvious consequence of Reagan’s policies was massive social inequality, a widening of the gap between rich and poor.” In fiction, he notes the characterization of “the decline of traditional industry and the hard-times of its blue-collar workforce,” which “inspired a range of realist, stripped down narratives of economic recession.” Conversely, Bilton notes, “The other side of the equation however—the rise of the yuppie and an extreme flaunting of wealth and consumerism—simultaneously produced a drive to hyperbolic excess” (422). Andrew R. Murphy adds that the ascension of the Christian Religious Right to power, with the support of Reagan, also brought “its rhetoric of sin, repentance, renewal, and national chosenness—to mobilize those unified by a deep concern for the moral health of the nation and a deep dissatisfaction with the moral status of post-1960s America” (146).

<sup>111</sup> Laura Savu points out that Leonard’s isolationism, coupled with his nontraditional manners—doffing bandanas and chewing tobacco—has yielded comparisons to the late David Foster Wallace. She cites an interview with Eugenides, who denies the connection. She adds, “Whether intended or not, the resemblance between Leonard and Eugenides’s late contemporary is there, particularly in the way the former exposes and excoriates the model of the selfish and calculating individual that has become central to the workings of American society” (par. 21).

<sup>112</sup> Speculation has long swirled around Thatcher’s *personal* stance on homosexuality, ever since the passing of Section 28 in 1987, which prohibited the “local authority” from “promot[ing] the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.” This bill, actively promoted by Thatcher’s Conservatives is attributed to Thatcher’s *political* stance on homosexuality in Britain. Her remarks on the matter came to light in an October 9, 1987 speech at the Conservative Party Conference in Blackpool. She declared, “Children who need to be taught to respect

traditional moral values are being taught that they have an inalienable right to be gay.” Here, Thatcher equates homosexuality with the lack of morality she sees as necessary and proper to a “traditional” Britain. It seems like no mere coincidence that Hollinghurst sets a majority of the novel in 1987, the year Section 28 was passed, and the year attributed to be one of the most homophobic in British history.

<sup>113</sup> In the earlier cited speech from 1987 for the Conservative Party Conference, Thatcher declared, “It is our passionate belief that free enterprise and competition are the engines of prosperity and the guardians of liberty,” thus investing capitalism with a moral authority that will return Britain to the “Victorian values” she openly espoused. These values included a set of “perennial values” she listed: “We were taught to prove yourself; we were taught self-reliance; we were taught to live within our income. You were taught that cleanliness was next to godliness. You were taught always to give a hand to your neighbour. You were taught tremendous pride in your country. All of these things are Victorian values” (Thatcher qtd. in Brooker 15-16).

<sup>114</sup> Eugenides utilizes tradition not in the form of Thatcher or her American peer, Ronald Reagan, but instead through the voice of the protagonist’s mother, Phyllida Hanna. At the beginning of the novel, she voices her disapproval of Madeleine’s living with Leonard unmarried, declaring, “I don’t mean the propriety of it. I’m talking about the practical problems. If you move in with Leonard—or any young man—and *he’s* the one with the job, then you begin at a disadvantage. What happens if you two don’t get along? Where are you then? You won’t have any place to live. Or anything to do” (12). Yet upon finding out that Leonard has visited a brothel on a manic spree during his honeymoon, Phyllida merely remarks, “If that’s the only thing you have to worry about in your marriage, you’ll be lucky” (368). The narrator adds, “It struck Madeleine that Phyllida was speaking from personal experience, that her parents’ marriage was more complicated than she’d ever suspected” (368). These statements create a set of values, both idealistic and utilitarian in nature—while Phyllida maintains the guise of “traditional” marriage through her manners, her actual behavior reflects a more complex and practical mindset, particularly regarding male infidelity.

<sup>115</sup> Hollinghurst constructs an ideal nuclear family (the Feddens) in *The Line of Beauty* as a contrast to the kind of familial life Nick can never have—and then he unmakes it through Gerald Fedden’s infidelity to Rachel. Such an act, while betraying Thatcher’s “Victorian values,” nevertheless remains a forgivable offense, as evidenced by Barry Groom’s “horrible humility” to Thatcher after “bouncing back from a low point with a call girl in the spring” (Hollinghurst 329). Nick’s sexual encounters, however, are seen as deviant and disturbing, since they skirt Thatcher’s heteronormative values, and his manners also do not take on the appearance of heterosexuality, as with “Polly” Tompkins.

<sup>116</sup> In an essay for *The Millions*, Eugenides declares, “Instead of writing a marriage plot, I could deconstruct one and then put it back together, consistent with the religious, social, and sexual conventions prevailing today. I could write a novel that wasn’t a marriage plot but that, in a certain way, was; a novel that drew strongly from tradition without being at all averse to modernity. That’s the intellectual background of *The Marriage Plot*. But you don’t write a novel from an idea, or at least I don’t. You write a novel out of the emotional and psychological stuff that you can’t shake off, or don’t want to. For me, this had to do with memories with being young, bookish, concupiscent, and confused. Safely in my 40s, married and a father, I could look back on the terrifying ecstasy of college love, and try to re-live it, at a safe distance” (“How I Learned” par. 5).

<sup>117</sup> In an interview with *Slate*, Eugenides notes the 1980s—when he was graduating college—was a time of great personal and economic instability post-graduation: “If you’re in the humanities, something where you can’t make very much money, if you don’t go into investment banking, suddenly you’re confronted with temping or whatever people did. That didn’t bother me. It was a recession when I graduated, but I was so unequipped to have a job anyway, I don’t think it would have mattered if the economy was booming. I think I was expecting bad jobs. But as it went on through my 20s, I began to wonder how things were going to turn out” (“Questions for” par. 18).

<sup>118</sup> In a 2002 interview with Jonathan Safran Foer, Eugenides argues, “Influence isn’t just a matter of copying someone or learning his or her tricks. You get influenced by writers whose work gives you hints

about your own abilities and inclinations. Being influenced is largely a process of self-discovery. What you have to do is put all your influences into the blender and arrive at your own style and vision" (Foer and Eugenides 78).

<sup>119</sup> Eugenides admits that part of his plotting as a "marriage plot" deliberately invokes bygone novels in order to understand their continued sense of value in contemporary society, as well as a knowledge that our values have shifted. He notes, "When the narrative ceased to be a pallid replica of a 19th-century novel and became a novel about a young woman obsessed with the 19th-century novel, and about what such an obsession does to her romantic expectations, the book jumped forward a century. It became contemporary and sounded contemporary and allowed me to write about all kinds of things I hadn't been able to write about before, religion and **Mother Teresa**, manic depression, the class system as it operated at an Eastern university in the 1980s, **Roland Barthes**, **J.D. Salinger**, the Jesus Prayer, and **Talking Heads**" ("How I Learned" par. 2).

<sup>120</sup> Patricia Waugh defines postmodern metafiction as "a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (2). Mark Currie describes it "as a borderline discourse, as a kind of writing which places itself on the border between fiction and criticism, and which takes that border as its subject." This interplay between fiction and criticism proves important to understanding how an author uses it, because it describes the changed nature of fiction, especially in postmodernity: "For fiction it has meant the assimilation of critical perspective within fictional narrative, a self-consciousness of the artificiality of its constructions and a fixation with the relationship between language and the world" (2).

<sup>121</sup> Eugenides himself maintains a self-awareness towards postmodern style and borrowing from James in his writing of *The Marriage Plot*, but does so in order to change perceptions of gender and sexuality, challenging stereotypes and perceptions of the domestic: "Reusing classical motifs is a fundamental of postmodern practice, of course, but telling a story isn't always. I like narrative. I read for it and write for it" (Foer and Eugenides 76).

<sup>122</sup> In describing Madeleine's wedding to Leonard, Eugenides portrays the marriage as "the grip of a force much like mania," thus questioning its stability or potential for personal happiness (339). He reinforces this notion by describing Phyllida Hanna's reaction: "Phyllida, aware of appearances, wanted to throw the kind of grand wedding she would have thrown had Madeleine been marrying somebody more suitable" (353). The marriage described here is not one based on personal happiness but on fulfillment of societal expectation. Further, the show of sexual chastity espoused by Phyllida occurs merely to perpetuate the idea that Madeleine is still a virgin when she and Leonard marry, echoing the kind of economic exchange occurring when daughters were still given dowries for their assumed sexual chastity. This exchange forms the heart of the marriage plot, which Nancy Armstrong notes explores the relationship of this domestic sexual contract and public social contract: "It seems to me that the novels which best exemplify the genre for us today are indeed those which translated the social contract into asexual exchange" (45).

<sup>123</sup> As Waugh declares of metafictional texts, "[i]n providing a critique of their own methods of construction, such writings not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction, they also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text" (2). Eugenides uses a nineteenth-century "marriage plot" in a contemporary context to explore the fictionality of societal ideals and thus question the traditions set forth by neoliberal societies.

<sup>124</sup> Just as Eugenides began the novel with a monologue on the "demise" of the marriage plot, he ends with Mitchell's monologue on whether or not the marriage plot exists in a different disguise: "Was there any novel where the heroine gets married to the wrong guy and then realizes it, and then the other suitor shows up, some guy who's always been in love with her, and then *they* get together, but finally the second suitor realizes that the last thing the woman needs is to get married again, that she's got more important things to do with her life? And so finally the guy doesn't propose at all, even though he still loves her? Is there any book that ends like that?" (406). Eugenides' awareness of utilizing metafiction emerges strongly in this monologue, since the entire novel's narrative trajectory has followed this exact scenario. Using Mitchell's



voice signals an awareness of the exchanges that have historically taken place in marriage, and the kinds of relationships emerging in the late twentieth century. While women make choices that take them outside marriage, men also reconfigure their relationships towards women and marriage, proving that the domestic is a more flexible institution than previously suggested.

<sup>125</sup> Lisa Duggan's and Nan D. Hunter's book *Sex Wars: Sexual Dissent and Political Culture* chronicles the issues faced by second-wave feminism, which began in the 1960s and ended in the early 1980s, coinciding with the 1982-1983 timeline of *The Marriage Plot*. They outline societal and culture dilemmas facing the woman in the 1980s: "During the decade from 1980 to 1990, a series of bitter political and cultural battles over issues of sexuality convulsed the nation—battles over the regulation of pornography, the scope of legal protections for gay people, the funding of allegedly 'obscene' art, the content of safe-sex education, the scope of reproductive freedom for women, the extent of sexual abuse of children in day care centers, the sexual content of public school curricula and more" (1). Madeleine's domestic dilemmas are encapsulated within an era of great change, and Eugenides is fully aware of the problems, as he depicts her attempts to juggle graduate school with the "wifely" duties her mother impresses upon her.

<sup>126</sup> In this passage, Eugenides outlines a fight that Mitchell engages with a friend's girlfriend who is in the midst of reading French feminist theory. He begins to realize that sexism takes on more forms than just refusing to help with domestic chores; rather, the *idea* of the domestic begins to come into question: "Mitchell had always assumed that his father's generation were the bad guys. Those old farts who'd never washed a dish or folded socks—they were the real targets of feminist rage. But that had been merely the first assault. Now, in the eighties, arguments about the equitable division of household chores, or the inherent sexism of holding a door open for 'a lady', were old arguments. The movement had become less pragmatic and more theoretical" (159). The old manners of domesticity are slowly being exchanged for new systems, though exactly what these include is still unclear, especially for heterosexual men.

<sup>127</sup> During a visit to the Hanna family home, Mitchell first mentally articulates his desire for the future. Seeing Madeleine in a bathrobe and wearing glasses, Mitchell creates a false sense of domesticity and mentally expresses a vision: "Mitchell suddenly thought, 'I'm going to marry this girl!' The knowledge went through him like electricity, a feeling of destiny" (75). For Mitchell, seeing Madeleine comfortable in her parents' home makes him believe that he will one day see her naked and in his bed—thus, his view of the domestic idealizes the privacy and intimacy of the home, particularly for sexual exploration. Yet his inability to seduce her leaves him with this vision for the next four years.

<sup>128</sup> In dissecting the similarities between Reagan's conservative vision and William F. Buckley, Jr.'s, Paul Kengor notes, "Both Buckley and Reagan saw the conservative tent as wide enough for both social and economic conservatives. Neither should bar the other; both belonged—they were siblings" (7). As with Thatcherism, Reaganism was a concept that viewed social morality through fidelity to Reagan's perceived view of supply-side economics.

<sup>129</sup> David Harvey reminds us that this buy-in occurs because countries such as the United States rely on ideas of individualism and freedom in order to ensure cooperation from its citizens: "The assumption that individual freedoms are guaranteed by freedom of the market and of trade is a cardinal feature of neoliberal thinking, and it has long dominated the US stance towards the rest of the world" (7).

<sup>130</sup> Harvey notes that personal liberty is a motivating ideology behind neoliberalism, which "is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (2). He declares that the state exists to promote personal liberty by creating an institutional framework that would support these economic practices. Harvey also points out that neoliberalism, in its twentieth-century inception, found inspiration from the European "liberal" scholars and philosophers "because of their fundamental commitment to ideals of personal freedom" (20).

<sup>131</sup> Even the choice in wedding venue invokes questions of social mores posing as “morality.” Eugenides describes the Hanna parents’ choices, along with Madeleine and Leonard’s final decision, noting the implications of each option: “[Phyllida] proposed holding a traditional wedding ceremony at their local parish, Trinity Episcopal, followed by a reception at the house. Madeleine said no. Alton then suggested an informal ceremony at the Century Club, in New York. Madeleine tentatively agreed to this. A week before the invitations were to go out, however, she and Leonard chanced upon an old mariner’s church on the outskirts of Provincetown. And it was there, in a stark, lonely space at the end of a deserted peninsula, a landscape befitting a Bergman film, that Madeleine and Leonard were married” (353).

<sup>132</sup> In trying to broker an annulment once Leonard has abandoned Madeleine, Alton Hanna alludes to the prenuptial agreement Madeleine almost refused to sign, and Madeleine bristles at the mention of filthy lucre: “Thank God I didn’t lose any money! My whole life is ruined but at least I didn’t lose any of my capital! This isn’t a board meeting, Daddy. This is my life!” (398).

<sup>133</sup> While the Hanna family’s gentility has been cultivated over generations, Laura Savu reminds us that “in the absence of traditional role models, Leonard had only himself to rely on” (par. 23).

<sup>134</sup> Savu notes, “For the most part of *The Marriage Plot*, Mitchell undergoes a crisis of meaning that reflects his fragile grasp on truth—the truth about himself, about Madeline [sic] and Leonard, and about God. Seeking answers to the riddle of existence, he turns to such spiritual visionaries as Saint John of the Cross, Meister Eckhart, Saint Teresa of Avila, Leo Tolstoy, and Thomas Merton” (par. 29).

<sup>135</sup> This conflict of idealism and manners comes to a head when Mitchell’s friend’s girlfriend Claire catches him ogling women in Paris. She claims that he looks at women “because you want to fuck them.” This was more or less, true. Suddenly, in the castigating light of Claire’s gaze, Mitchell was ashamed of himself. He wanted women to love him, all women, beginning with his mother and going on from there. Therefore, when *any* woman got mad at him, he felt maternal disapproval crashing down upon his shoulders, as if he’d been a naughty boy” (158). Here, Mitchell’s personal desires become public, and he must privately analyze his motives for his romantic and less romantic ideals. The intrusion of Freud becomes fascinating, especially in light of the psychological advancements made in the early 1900s, a time when William James’s own writings came to prominence.

<sup>136</sup> In his analogy of separation, Leonard relies on his scientific knowledge of yeast cells, thus eliding his romantic hyperbole of manic phases: “The diploids break into haploids again. Solitary little haploids. Because, in a crisis, it’s easier to survive as a single cell” (382). Here, his psychological workings remind the reader of Isabel’s decision whether to abandon her marriage or remain with Osmond, unhappy but free to make her own choices.

<sup>137</sup> It is precisely this belief that his sacrifice will save others that invite the clearest comparisons to Isabel than the other characters, I argue. Van Slyck declares, “A nostalgia for what is already lost, disguised as aesthetic idealism, informs Isabel’s responses as she continues to compose herself so as to match her suitor’s vision of life as a work of art,” and it is in this observation where Leonard’s own nostalgia for what has been lost to him becomes clearer (643). Both he and Isabel seek to distinguish themselves from their peers, just as they desire to relinquish control over others in their social lives.

<sup>138</sup> In an interview for *Gapers Block*, Eugenides notes that the conversation Leonard has held with Mitchell about mysticism and religious experiences fuels his ideas about morality. This tête-à-tête, which culminates in Leonard’s abandonment of Madeleine, stems from a moment of enlightenment about his future. Here, Eugenides argues, “Leonard does what I think is his most heroic [act]” (par. 10).

<sup>139</sup> When configuring morality, D.M.E. Roskies uses the word “moral” in order to “point to the necessity for taking a deliberate stance...on the question of how we should conduct ourselves with each other; of taking an interest in, and being concerned with, the way in which a person develops...those standards which would seem to be truly in the person’s best interests, and so on” (139). Individuality matters, therefore, in constructing our personal senses of morality and how we view others’ best interests.

<sup>140</sup> As he gets his hair cut before volunteering at the Home for Dying Destitutes, Mitchell looks in the mirror to understand what he is seeing before him: “He saw his pale face, his large eyes, his nose, lips, and chin, and something the matter with it all. The defect wasn’t even physical, not a vote of nature so much as people, or not people so much as girls, or not girls so much as Madeleine Hanna. Why didn’t she like him enough? Mitchell studied his reflection, searching for a clue” (303). In this passage, Eugenides demonstrates that Mitchell, concerned more with his external qualities than his intrinsic value, believes that his appearance is lacking. Yet his experience at the Home will show him that his inner qualities make him a poor suitor for Madeleine, and it is the manners of appearances that Eugenides ultimately critiques.

<sup>141</sup> In discussing the “kind” of person Mitchell is, Eugenides references William James’s psychological categories, again revealing the influence of the psychological upon the novel of manners: “If Mitchell was a sick soul, according to William James’s categories, then the beekeeper was definitely healthy-minded. (‘I mean those who, when unhappiness is offered or proposed to them, positively refuse to feel it, as if it were something mean and wrong.’)” (309).

<sup>142</sup> Savu points out several philosophical questions that emerge from *The Marriage Plot*, including, “Does the pursuit of happiness free us of the obligation to think of others, or does it speak to a more profound, even spiritual longing? Finally, what impact do both deconstructionism and feminism have on the representation of love on the contemporary novel?” (par. 3). Savu’s questions lead us back to the tensions of social and individual morality, particularly in relation to the romantic entanglements that comprise the domestic within the novel of manners.

<sup>143</sup> Andrew Eastham notes, “Hollinghurst has transposed the position of Isabel Archer from the gender politics of the 1880s into the sexual politics of the 1980s, but he has also given a contemporary context to James’s exploration of Aestheticism, aspiration and cultural conservatism” (202).

<sup>144</sup> In a review of the adaptation of *The Line of Beauty* for BBC2, Dion Kagan points to the context that makes the novel (and subsequent miniseries) so poignant and timely: “In the moment of AIDS panic, with press and powerbrokers colluding in homophobic hatred, Nick’s status shifts from privileged guest to *Homo Sacer*, the most radical form of alterity, “bare life” (Agamben). The degenerate homosexual body, the repository of AIDS scandal, is ejected from the heritage house, the privileged space of national fantasy. However, not before a revisionist, baroque presence has inhabited this genre, working to queer heritage style, a genre closely associated with (a reactionary, homophobic) British nationalism” (277).

<sup>145</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick notes, in delineating male homosocial desire from homosexual desire—a fine line, particularly with the word “desire” substituted for “love” or “friendship”—that “much of the most useful recent writing...about patriarchal structures suggests that ‘obligatory heterosexuality’ is built into male-dominated kinship systems, or that homophobia is a *necessary* consequence of such patriarchal institutions as heterosexual marriage” (3). Therefore, the enforced heterosexuality carries with it patriarchal implications, and influences the kinds of manners men are expected to enact if they wish to be given any kind of agency in a patriarchal society.

<sup>146</sup> In her 1987 speech to the Conservative Party, Thatcher herself asserted, “Civilised society doesn’t just happen. It has to be sustained by standards widely accepted and upheld. And we must draw on the moral energy of society. And we must draw on the values of family life” (par. 107-108). For Thatcher, morality and society standards would mean the betterment of “traditional” family life, so she framed privatization as an opportunity for free choice and character growth as a means of developing family morality.

<sup>147</sup> Daniel Hannah notes that his interest in *The Line of Beauty* as a Jamesian text lies “in how Hollinghurst traces style’s concealment of the codes of heteronormative, imperial-capitalist citizenship and interrogates style’s coercive, yet attractive, management of public space. Jamesian style, as a product, critique, and even celebration of wealth, class, and waste, as an ongoing wrestling with sexual confession and repression, haunts this novel and Nick’s ambivalent negotiation of the private and the public spheres of Thatcherite Britain. (85).

<sup>148</sup> Hannah, in discussing the influence of James on Hollinghurst, notes that what he has turned to “is precisely this unstable, ambivalent play with the constructs of private and public, this queering of the tenuous demarcations of private and public space” in *The Line of Beauty*. Further, he adds, “it is the passing between public performance and private withdrawal, between the stage and the study, the drawing-room and the bedroom, the expensive party and an impossible domestic privacy, that motivates and structures [this novel]” (71-72).

<sup>149</sup> During a dinner conversation about James, Nick admits to himself that he “felt he was prostituting the Master, but then there was an element of self-mockery in these turns of phrase—it was something he was looking at in his thesis. He was at the height of a youthful affair with his writer, in love with his rhythms, his ironies, and his idiosyncracies, and loving his most idiosyncratic moments best of all” (Hollinghurst 183). Beyond a clever nod to James, the references to the Master belie a sexual connotation. Hannah argues, “On one hand, Nick’s academic discipleship appears to function here as code for his own homosexuality — the phrase “a James man” seems to take on connotations akin to the modern “Friend of Dorothy.” But Jamesian “style,” the subject of Nick’s doctorate, is invoked here as a “style that hides things and reveals things at the same time,” and, accordingly, Nick’s “coming out” in this scene also nods at the concealments behind his devotion to James (Hannah 85). Therefore, the metafiction embedded reflects not only on questions of Nick’s sexuality, but on James’s private and public personae, as noted in his style and personal details.

<sup>150</sup> David James suggests that “precisely because he fails to fulfil the homage that his fiction seems to promise,” Hollinghurst’s sense of metafiction actually yields more potential: “By virtue of that failure, he yields something far more vital. For it’s not against James’s *oeuvre* that we should measure Hollinghurst’s work, but against James’s theories of what fiction can still become” ( 504).

<sup>151</sup> Hollinghurst himself admits the reticence to discuss gay private life in the 1980s marks a significant shift from his own coming-of-age as an openly gay man in the 1970s: “The Sexual Offences Act had been passed in 1967 and changed what could be said about the private lives of gay people. Michael Holroyd’s biography of Lytton Strachey came out with uncanny timing a few months later, and it was the first book that was openly and unembarrassedly about the life of a gay writer. A new freedom to talk about these things was very much a part of the atmosphere of the seventies” (“The Art of Fiction” par. 53).

<sup>152</sup> In his first chapter, Tuttleton delineates the novel of manners from the American romance, the latter of which he ascribes to nostalgia, the former, “based on everyday actualities was merely imitating, unimaginatively, what men did.” The manners in this genre, then, provided an unvarnished, unromanticized view of life and society, unlike the romance, which he notes finds “abstractions or idealizations of social types” (18-19).

<sup>153</sup> Anthony Quinn notes in his interview with Hollinghurst, “Hitherto, the great novels about the 1980s—*Money*, *What a Carve-Up!*, *The Bonfire of the Vanities*—have been sulphurous satires on greed and excess. Granted hindsight, *The Line of Beauty* offers a more considered, but no less piercing scrutiny of the age, with Nick propelled to the hub of the Tory revolution while ever mindful of his uncertain insider-outsider status” (par. 8)

<sup>154</sup> Robert MacFarlane declares, “We realise that what Hollinghurst truly loathes about the Thatcher years is not the social consequences of its economic policy, but the coarseness of taste which it licensed. The true crime of the age, according to Hollinghurst’s audit, is its combination of so much appetite with so little taste” (179). In this way, the metafictional aspect of the narrative serves to invoke Gilbert Osmond and critique the nature of consumerism as it diminishes the individual.

<sup>155</sup> Joseph Brooker notes, “The novel deliberately presents Thatcherism from the inside, cleaving to the insularity of the moneyed, Conservative centre of power” (106).

<sup>156</sup> Hollinghurst lights on two examples of queenish manners in the text: the first is *The Face* magazine cover of Boy George, known for his androgynous appearance and made-up face. It appears in a fashion spread with “sexy half-naked models in a camp pretence of a pillow fight” (89-90). The second is in the characterization of Pat Grayson, a notorious exception to the homosexuals barred from the Feddens’ elite circle. Though he is known to be “a famous man who was a fool, a silly old queen,” he is the star of a popular soap opera, one of Rachel Fedden’s friends pre-marriage, and Catherine Fedden’s godfather (72). His death from AIDS provides a discussion point for the AIDS crisis to enter the Conservative social world, and it provides Nick the chance to openly out himself as a gay man in the 1980s.

<sup>157</sup> Hollinghurst chronicles Nick’s psychological process of understanding and then ignoring homophobic slurs or careless, hurtful jokes: “It was often like this when the homosexual subject came up, and even in the Feddens’ tolerant kitchen he stiffened in apprehension about what might be carelessly said—some indirect insult to swallow, a joke to be weakly smiled at” (22).

<sup>158</sup> Kaye Mitchell notes, “Although Hollinghurst’s worlds may appear to be almost exclusively homosexual, in showing the gay man as *simultaneously* insider and outsider, visible and invisible, he introduces an ambivalence into homosexual identity which threatens its coherence and intelligibility while also asserting its presence, even its ubiquity” (49).

<sup>159</sup> Nick defines the contrast in Wani’s libertine persona and his “traditional” one: “On other nights of the week [Wani] might be in and out of the lavatories of smart restaurants with his wrap of coke, and roar home in WHO 6 for a punishing session of sexual make-believe; but on the family nights he went off to Knightsbridge in a mood of unquestioning compliance, almost of relief, to have dinner with his mother and father, any number of travelling relations, and, as a rule, his fiancée” (178).

<sup>160</sup> Denis Flannery notes, “Very crucially, the love between Nick and Wani is not only kept in the closet by the demands of Wani’s family and what we might term the sexual-political ethos of Thatcher-era Conservative Party circles but also by Wani’s own refusal, even as his death approaches, to reciprocate Nick’s repeated verbal declamations” (301).

<sup>161</sup> In her aforementioned speech at the Conservative Party Conference, Thatcher declared, “And fourth, it is our passionate belief that free enterprise and competition are the engines of prosperity and the guardians of liberty. These ideas have shaped free political institutions and brought unimagined wealth to countries and continents” (par. 28-29). Here, her ideas of virtue and freedom are aligned with the end of consensus politics and the beginning of privatization and free market capitalism.

<sup>162</sup> A Keats-like argument about truth and beauty bears weight for another project, but it is worth noting that scholars of both James and Hollinghurst have connected aesthetics and morality in various ways. Consider Andrew Eastham’s argument, which positions Nick’s sense of aestheticism in postmodernity and Thatcherism together: “According to Hollinghurst’s representation of the 1980s, then, there are two problems with irony and Aestheticism. The first is in relation to the aristocracy—the Aesthete attempts to reclaim a posture of independence and detachment from the aristocracy but remains bound to the object it mimics; where it aspires to autonomy it remains in a position of patronage - an obliging guest. The second problem is in the arena of postmodernism, where the Aesthete manages an ironically detached appreciation of contemporary culture but fails to assert any independence from capital and commodity consumption. In the first sense Aestheticism is compromised by its specious claim to autonomy, while in the second sense it is not autonomous enough. Hollinghurst maps the aesthetic and political condition of the 1980s according to these torn halves—an aristocratic retreat and a consumerist dispersal of artistic energies. According to this symptomatic representation of postmodernity, there appears to be no independent space for the aesthetic” (202).

<sup>163</sup> Again, Eastham notes, “The moment of the novel coincides precisely with the Conservative government’s attempt to debilitate the public status of the arts, which began with the 1983 cuts to the Arts Council’s budget increases. This exacerbated the political antagonism to Thatcherism within the arts and led to increasing politicization of the National Theatre, the RSC and other central cultural institutions.

Hollinghurst is peculiarly reticent in detailing the particular cultural conflicts that emerged in the wake of Thatcherism and the art's-budget cuts, and to this extent his own Jamesian strategy threatens to disable the novel's critical potential" (198). Here, artists find themselves threatened by Thatcher's lack of funding to public arts, which spawns the prolific literary and artistic responses to Thatcher's time in office.

<sup>164</sup> MacFarlane argues, "It is clear that Hollinghurst conceived of his novel as an inquest into the complicated relationship between beauty and goodness as it played itself out at the high noon of Thatcherism. Clear, too, that he trusted his novel not only to investigate but also to censure what one character calls the 'bloated excess' of those years" (171).

<sup>165</sup> As Daniel Hannah notes, "Lionel Kessler's ambiguous sexuality, his artful management of bachelorhood within the heteronormative and homosocial constraints of high capitalism, resonates...as a reminder to Nick of the exclusions and exposures he must bear as an officially "out" homosexual. (88). Kessler's manners, carefully crafted, help him retain the label of "bachelor" and avoid the kind of censure that Nick's openly homosexual identity brings.

<sup>166</sup> Consider Badger Brogan's allusion to "Oxford days" as a rationale for continuing to call Gerald "Banger" (itself a highly sexual connotation, if you consider the imagery of sausages or the American slang), or Polly's brag of "anyway, they're all tarts, these boys, they've all got a price. Get Toby at two in the morning, when he's had a bottle of brandy, and you'll be able to do to what you want with him. I promise you" (127; 58).

<sup>167</sup> During their first date, Nick realizes that there are secret gestures alluding to sexual liaisons, interest, or other covert signals, and he has no idea what they represent. In one instance, "Leo hooded his eyes for a second, a signal, secret and ironic, and Nick wondered if it meant he could see he was drunk" (31). Hollinghurst denotes a kind of manners involved in a gay relationship, and Nick, new to the subculture present in London is ignorant of the behaviors in this semi-public, semi-private society. After their first sexual encounter, in the gardener's hut behind the Fedden home, Nick recognizes there is some form of manners needed to close their first date: "Leo sat down beside Nick and there was a sense that some last, more formal part of their date was to be enacted" (36).

<sup>168</sup> Kaye Mitchell continually seeks to define the difference between behavior and identity, vis-à-vis homosexuality. Using Sinfield's claim that we are entering a "post-gay" era, where defining (and thus limiting) our sexualities is unnecessary, she argues, "This raises the possibility of homosexual *behaviour* which does not entail a homosexual *identity*" (50). This claim, while it separates manners from identity, becomes more complex in the face of the novel, which operates on several levels—the individual, the psychological, the social, the sexual. She notes, "Hollinghurst's work seems in thrall to the idea of a homosexual identity, while simultaneously problematizing that identity; as such, it stimulates debate on the future of such an identity—the future as regards our thinking of sexuality *as* identity" (50).

<sup>169</sup> José M. Yebra notes that while Nick's social status is unclear, as his own ambivalence dictates his simultaneous insider-outsider position in the Fedden home, the homosexual community, and Thatcher's England, Leo's is painfully clear and restrictive (and, in the end, so is Wani's): "Both Leo and Wani are gays and non-whites, which makes them doubly marginal in Thatcher's England. As such, they are the ideal infectors, invaders—in Sontag's military imagery—and transmitters of decomposition and trauma" (202). Their death sentences by AIDS render them outsiders in Thatcher's England in a way that equalizes them from an economic perspective, yet their treatments are again divided by class. While Wani can hide behind his family's money, status, and protection, Leo dies off-screen, his death mentioned after the fact.

<sup>170</sup> In this dinner scene, Nick negotiates his lust for Leo by indulging in the forbidden nature of his own conquest: "Here in a tiny flat in unknown Willesden, he was talking to the mother of the man who called him not only a 'damn good fuck' but also a 'hot little cocksucker' with 'a first-class degree in arse-licking'...Nick gazed at [Mrs. Charles] in a trance of revelation and gratitude" (Hollinghurst 135).

<sup>171</sup> Hollinghurst deftly contrasts the two domestic environments that ultimately carry the same ideals, to show the damage wrought by classism, as well as the pervasiveness of Thatcherism through all social classes: "At Kensington Park Gardens they ate three hours later [at 8:45], and dinner was sauntered towards through a sequence of other diversions, chats, and decantings, gardening and tennis, gramophone records, whisky and gin. In the Charles household there was no room for diversions, no garden to speak of, and no alcohol. The meal came on straight after work, a wide-ranging grace was declaimed, and then it was eaten and done with, and the whole long evening lay ahead" (138-39).

<sup>172</sup> Hollinghurst foreshadows this infidelity of Gerald's by placing it against others of men in his social circle. Badger Brogan, in describing his new flat, "a little pied-à-terre" is accused of using it as a "fuck flat," in Barry Groom's "illusionless phrase," yet no one responds beyond a gasp or a horrified look (127-28). In these instances, such behavior is considered unacceptable, but the secrecy prevents society from having to directly deal with their indiscretions. Hollinghurst discusses these heterosexual breaches in order to contrast the sharp intolerance faced by homosexuals.

<sup>173</sup> Gerald declares, "I've been giving it some thought. It's the sort of thing you read about, it's an old homo trick. You can't have a real family, so you attach yourself to someone else's. And I suppose after a while you just couldn't bear it, you must have been very envious I think of everything we have, and coming from your background too perhaps...and you've wreaked some pretty awful revenge on us as a result" (420). Gerald places himself in a position of moral superiority, though his only stated superiority is in social status and wealth. He makes no direct accusation of wrongdoing to Nick, nor does he actually state a crime or moral failing that Nick has committed against the Feddens.

<sup>174</sup> Yebra claims, "Despite his attempts at aesthetizing his world, Nick and his gay peers are simply tolerated by society, even apparently valued as connoisseurs. But, once the abject returns, threatening and exposing the incongruities and weak points of the *status quo*, they are labelled as invaders and shameful sinners" (203). Nick comes to realize that his own ambivalence leads to his downfall, just as his refusal to admit that such a downfall would happen once he became visible to the public eye.

<sup>175</sup> Citing the work of Karl Polanyi, Harvey concludes that the idea of personal freedom has actually led to corporate freedom and restricted social mobility, in opposition to capitalism's purported goals: "Thirty years of neoliberal freedoms have, after all, not only restored power to a narrowly defined capitalist class. They have also produced immense concentrations of corporate power in energy, the media, pharmaceuticals, transportation, and even retailing (for example Wal-Mart). The freedom of the market that Bush proclaims as the high point of human aspiration turns out to be nothing more than the convenient means to spread corporate monopoly power and Coca Cola everywhere without constraint" (38). This kind of freedom, promised to the individual, ultimately frees corporations from responsibility and restricts the individual who readily accedes to such private sources of power.

<sup>176</sup> Sarah Brophy argues, "Nick's falling out with the Feddens demands to be read as more than a cruelly enforced expulsion, for it inaugurates the possibility that Nick might now relinquish his naïve desire to immerse himself in the splendours, material and imagined, of English heritage" (197). Though Brophy's reading is optimistic, given that we do not even know if Nick will live long enough to formulate such an interpretation of these events, she highlights the damages wrought by a domestic that has been invaded by the vulgar excesses of popular culture in the 1980s.

<sup>177</sup> In an attempt to gentrify Pat's death, Rachel uses phrases like "It was Terry" to explain who called, without mentioning a relationship, or explaining "It was pneumonia, I'm afraid. But he hadn't been well, poor old Pat," because she dreads the judgmental Tippers finding out the truth (290; 292). For Rachel, the palatable lie becomes a more socially acceptable story than the truth that Pat Grayson liked anonymous sex with other men. Catherine's outcry that "surely the least we can do is tell the truth about him?" echoes Leonard Bankhead's need to be truthful and forego the social morality of evasive storytelling in place of the truth (292).

<sup>178</sup> Yebra observes that Nick's conversation with the financially corrupt Maurice Tipper and his wife Sally throws insight into how the affluent heterosexual Thatcherites view gay sex and the ensuing AIDS diagnosis for so many young men. Tipper's conclusion, he tells us, is that "gays are guilty of sexual deviancy and, therefore, deserve death, while heterosexuals and, especially, babies are passive victims deserving pity instead" (203). Here, Yebra argues that the moral corruption of the Thatcher era becomes most complete, as it lacks a distinct sympathy for the ways in which gay men were shamed into heteronormativity and then punished for failing to comply, though the same kind of treatment was not leveled at men for their heterosexual infidelities.

<sup>179</sup> Flannery declares, "If Leo 'bounces' Nick into life through writing, then both Nick and Hollinghurst's novel troublingly owe their futurity and their impact to the sacrifice of a black man" (303).

<sup>180</sup> Wani's sense of moral vacuity comes as no surprise to the readers, for the text has set him up to be an epitome of the Thatcher era. Joseph Brooker comments, "As Thomas Jones notes, the contrast between Nick's dance with Thatcher and his subsequent coke-sniffing with Wani and a waiter upstairs is not necessarily so stark: 'Wani is the rawest embodiment of Thatcherism in the novel: brutally rich, peerlessly selfish, with a rapacious, insatiable appetite—for cocaine, sex, pornography, power, money'" (Jones qtd. in Brooker 108).

<sup>181</sup> Yebra declares, "His status is always ambiguous, both inside and outside the world of the Feddens. Indeed his role is only well defined towards the end of the novel. Once his actual identity is revealed, he turns out to be an invader of moral and political values, particularly those represented by the traditional family. He defies its logic and is ejected as an alien, destabilising force" (204).

<sup>182</sup> In the case of Nick, Eastham reminds us, "the Aesthete attempts to reclaim a posture of independence and detachment from the aristocracy but remains bound to the object it mimics; where it aspires to autonomy it remains in a position of patronage—an obliging guest" (202). His brief pun alluding to Nick Guest's own name as a secret code aside, Eastham deftly points to Nick's dilemma in the Fedden circle—his wish to carry out his aesthetic vision is hampered by his lack of capital, and his need for influence in their circle, though his sexuality can preclude him from entry, as it ultimately does in the end.

<sup>183</sup> In his analysis of Henry James, Eugenides acknowledges his debt to James's "anti-marriage plot" as presented in *The Portrait of a Lady*, noting that Isabel Archer's decision to remain in her marriage takes a different turn than prior novels of manners: "It's much darker than anything Austen did, and it leads straight to the moral ambiguities and complexities of the modern novel." ("By the Book" par. 4).

<sup>184</sup> Hannah declares, "James might have seen through the contradictory understandings of private and public underpinning Hollinghurst's vision of Tory 1980s England but academic developments during this period—new interests in discourses of sexuality, class and power—also allowed scholars to "see through" James in previously unexpected ways" (91).

<sup>185</sup> Currie argues, "A metafiction is not definitively a novel whose author is both a writer and a critic, but a novel which dramatises the boundary between fiction and criticism, and to unify metafiction under this definition requires a rather loose interpretation of 'criticism'" (3). By configuring Hollinghurst and Eugenides as novelist-critics, we can then shape their novels of manners as commentary on the genre and the literary movements surrounding the time period.

<sup>186</sup> In her writing about James and the sense of psychological surprise, Kate Stanley argues that a sense of potential in *The Portrait of a Lady* is psychologically contrasted "by an oppressive old-world past and drawn into lockstep with two inexorable fates: literal death or the death of the vital world of the present with their retreat into isolated, unchanging misery" (17).



Chapter 3: “A Repository of Collective Fantasy”: Nostalgic Manners in Kazuo Ishiguro’s  
*The Remains of the Day* and Ian McEwan’s *The Child in Time*

In my previous chapter, I distinguished Henry James’s view of the novel of manners from those of his peers whom he critiqued as being too “feminine.” His seemingly gendered sense of the novel of manners, I argued, stems from a wish to separate the novel of manners from a discussion of the ordinary and mundane in domestic fiction, instead focusing on the use of the everyday to critique social and moral problems. James suggests that we only notice manners when they break down; within this moment of breakdown, we best understand how manners convey morals or social conventions through the individual. Manners, therefore, create tensions in the individual by causing disparity in private and public settings—while the individual is expected to behave a certain way, maintaining the *appearance* of conformity matters more than actual adherence to values. This distinction matters, as Jeffrey Eugenides and Alan Hollinghurst illustrate, because they reveal the kinds of manners expected by a capitalist, neoliberal society. When social authorities seek to create and enforce a homogenous consumer identity upon the individual, these authors use lapses in manners to reveal the nature of authority and influence over the domestic. They further unveil the tensions between social and individual morality that occur in public and within the domestic, signifying the importance of manners as a means of understanding the choice to face exile from society or conform at the cost of personal fulfillment and adherence to personal values.

In this chapter, I will draw from the Jamesian model of viewing manners through their breakdown, but I will instead examine the manners associated with national heritage, or bygone eras—that is, nostalgic manners.<sup>187</sup> Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The Remains of*

*the Day* (1989) and Ian McEwan's *The Child in Time* (1987), while both written in the 1980s, only indirectly represent the era. Rather, both authors contend with the sense of Englishness and heritage as presented within the 1980s as a means of inculcating nationalism and thus governing the manners of the individual. They utilize manners in order to invoke nostalgia for an idealized bygone era, one crafted by society in order to generate conformity in the individuals peopling the society. For Ishiguro and McEwan, the breakdown of manners signals a criticism or reflection on the era being idealized by nostalgic individuals and their social authorities—that is, it is only when manners break down that we can understand the manipulation of ideology that social authorities use to maintain class boundaries and generate profit through the guise of nationalism vis-à-vis “manners.” Thus, these authors develop the literary critique surrounding neoliberalism by specifically examining nostalgic manners as they relate to ideologies of nationalism and their effects upon the individual.

### **Introduction: What is nostalgia, and how does it engage with manners?**

Scholarship identifies the novel of manners as a genre that represents a society within a specific time period, and, in so doing, tracks the kinds of manners associated with the era, as well as notions of “heritage” derived from the time period being idealized or recreated.<sup>188</sup> This concept of periodization is significant not only because it links the novel to a specific temporal setting but also because it reconstructs a set of moral and ideological *values* of a time, as manifested by the manners (that is behavior, conduct, and etiquette) of the characters crafted in the text. The manners of past time periods or eras, when seen from the perspective of the present or future, invoke ideas of national heritage and a sense of homogenous national identity. In the 1980s, the Thatcher government

evoked the idea of heritage to enforce political policies through the guise of ideological value formation, and this enforcement of manners affected not only the public realm, but the individual through the lens of the domestic.<sup>189</sup>

When recreating the manners of a certain era, the novelists in this chapter often utilize nostalgia as a means of critiquing the idealization of the past. Depicting nostalgia as a means of manipulating individual behavior for political gains, they draw on the commonly held assumptions about nostalgia as a concept. Svetlana Boym notes that the word itself is drawn from two Greek terms (“from *nostos*—return home, and *algia*—longing”) and defines it as “a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one’s own fantasy” (xiii). Citing Susan Stewart’s *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, John J. Su notes, “What began in the seventeenth century as a physiological disease had become in the twentieth century a social ailment that leads to an obsession with kitsch and heritage in its most benign forms and fascism in its most extreme versions” (1).<sup>190</sup> The sense of longing and a return to a homeland of past centuries has been replaced in the era of late capitalism by reproducible products and salable goods, reducing the romantic yearning for an intangible feeling or sense to a simulacrum of itself. Therefore, nostalgia serves as a reminder of this marketing process and allows for authors to utilize it in order to critique the nature of consumerist culture in neoliberal society.<sup>191</sup>

Social authorities, envisioned by Ishiguro and McEwan as government leaders such as Margaret Thatcher, utilize nostalgia for an idealized version of a past Britain in order to stimulate the private-sector economy and create a conformed set of manners

upon which to enforce upon the individual.<sup>192</sup> These manners are adapted from archaic or nonexistent codes of conduct but are passed off as nationalism or patriotism. People enacting these nostalgic codes of conduct thus recreate them as a way to simulate a sense of belonging to that past time within the present moment.<sup>193</sup> These sets of “nostalgic manners” differ from the ordinary kinds of manners established in my first chapter; they recreate a moribund set of manners from a past era, as opposed to utilizing or subverting the sets that exist in the author’s present moment of writing or publication. While manners serve as a nonverbal manifestation of a social group’s codes or values, nostalgic manners deliberately invoke a different set of values in order to return the social order to an *idealized* time or place.<sup>194</sup> Manners in themselves are not inherently nostalgic, though they are associated with bygone eras in literary fiction.<sup>195</sup> Therefore, the nostalgic manners to which I will refer throughout this chapter are a specific set of codes or behaviors no longer relevant to the societies depicted in these novels; rather, they try to use the past as a means of generating social authority in the present. Nostalgia thus affects manners in that the individual adapts a different set of behaviors or codes of conduct in order to assimilate his or her conduct to those of another time, particularly under the pressure of social influence. Ultimately, nostalgic manners serve an ideological and moral function in that those manners put on for public performance reflect a mindset that is bent on adopting the codes of another time and grafting a bygone set of moral and social values upon the individual’s sense of morality.

Therefore, authors and artists often deliberately utilize nostalgia as a means of critiquing the ideological or moral values of the time being reflected, positing such criticisms to contemporary audiences. One such contemporary text is Matthew Weiner’s

2009 AMC television series, *Mad Men*. In recreating the 1960s, Weiner's storylines resurrect fashions, cultural artifacts, and ideological values prevalent in the time in order to reposition such values for Millennial audiences. He utilizes nostalgia to contrast the idealized reminiscence of history with darker and less morally inclined values than have been attributed to the Eisenhower and Kennedy years. While Weiner filters much of the deliberately constructed nostalgia through setting and recreation of inventions or manners that seem redundant or dangerous now (such as smoking while pregnant), he most consciously engages with nostalgia during a moment of crisis for his protagonist, Don Draper. In "The Wheel," the thirteenth episode of the first season, Don—the Creative Director for the erstwhile Sterling Cooper Advertising Agency—finds himself at odds with his wife, Betty, over his alleged multiple infidelities and traceability of his personal identity.. Just as his domestic crises have risen to a head, he must pitch a Kodak Carousel marketing campaign to the company. In this episode, Weiner even alludes to nostalgia in Don's speech, providing the audience a different definition.

In this particular scene, Weiner and co-writer Robin Veith invoke nostalgia to market a product as a symbol of the American dream—the nuclear family, the acquisition of goods, the development of a domestic set deep within suburbia. Yet this nostalgia forces protagonist Don to reminisce inward, since he utilizes his own family photos in his advertising pitch. Using a former colleague's definition of nostalgia as derived from Greek and representing "the pain from an old wound," Don gazes at slides of his seemingly happy family, from swinging a child on the swingset to cupping his pregnant wife's belly. This scene directly contrasts with the backstory of the episode, in which Don and Betty are in the process of separating. Thus, Weiner and Veith's decision to

juxtapose Don's sales pitch with his personal nostalgia for an idealized domestic space demonstrates the relationship between the idealization of a "perfect" domestic as part of a national landscape, and the nostalgia that conceals a broken family held together by strict codes of conduct. Thus, these codes of conduct, when tinged by nostalgia, affect the individual's behaviors in the present day and create conflict with others not affected by the same longing for the same time.

Just as Weiner utilizes manners as a means of channeling nostalgia towards a certain era in *Mad Men*, two contemporary novels of manners implement the juxtaposition of manners and nostalgia not to reflect our views on the past, but to expose the way nostalgia is reconfigured in neoliberal systems of government. These systems cultivate and rely upon romanticized notions of the past in order to enforce potentially harmful and controlling (albeit profit-generating) policies upon unsuspecting citizens, ones that ultimately allow domestic spaces to become regulated by the state. Both Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* and McEwan's *The Child in Time* construct manners linked to a nostalgia for an era that is either bygone or only existed within the national imagination; in so doing, both Ishiguro and McEwan critique the idea of "heritage" within the English national imagination, particularly as it influences the kinds of contemporary manners enacted in both domestic and public environments. By reconstructing a moment in English history, they engage with the notion of national identity, particularly as constructed by or linked to government authority, and they interrogate the relationship between this identity and the domestic space inhabited by the individual.<sup>196</sup> Thus, the novel of manners reveals the influence of politics over the

domestic, and it questions the individual's agency in light of such far-reaching authority within the private sphere.

In order to portray more fully this relationship, both novels deliberately utilize nostalgia in their depictions of nostalgic manners as a series of codes that reveal a desire to return to a bygone era of social and moral values. While Thatcher and her political followers used nostalgic manners as a means of enforcing her belief that "Victorian values" would best serve society, Ishiguro and McEwan recreate this specific set of manners in order to critique the ideologies of privatization and nationalism endorsed by the social mores of nostalgic manners. When these nostalgic manners ultimately break down through a breach in behavior or a confession of disillusionment with individual morality or conduct, the authors can track the damaging effects of nostalgia upon the individual's relinquishment of morality to ascribe to a narrow view of nationalism.<sup>197</sup> Ishiguro accomplishes this by utilizing an unreliable narrator named Stevens, a butler in an English country house, whose deep longing for the glory days of the manor and the manners of the past guarantees his complicity with hierarchical authority and regulation of domestic space. Yet when Stevens' manners break down, Ishiguro reveals that beneath the sheen of nostalgia is a sense of regret for the inability to deal with personal matters and the individual happiness that Stevens repressed through proper manners. Likewise, McEwan presents domesticity through a nostalgic view, especially in explaining how nostalgia shapes our ideas of the domestic. The setup differs from Ishiguro's country house premise: instead, he depicts the breakup of a family whose sense of good conduct and appearance of normalcy prevent the acceptance of their daughter's disappearance and likely death. In crafting manners associated with nostalgia for the past, along with a

commentary on the neoliberal idealism for the family unit, McEwan critiques the limiting means by which the family is constructed in Thatcher's England.<sup>198</sup> Only when manners break down, he suggests, can the individual accept the past and become open to a future of possibility and limitless identity orientation.

Ultimately, both authors construct an illusory domestic sphere reliant upon nostalgia for a sense of rightness and good manners—that is, good etiquette and morally sound conduct combined—a space that conceals deep flaws inherent in society and individual lives. These flaws only become apparent when manners break down and expose the kinds of moral and social problems affecting the individual at the domestic level. Ishiguro depicts a domestic that can exist only for the wealthy upper class, while the working class must invest in such an ideal and deny their own sense of agency in order to maintain the hierarchy of nationalism within the home. McEwan reveals a domestic that has been ravaged by neoliberal policies through enforcement of family laws. Simultaneously, individuals can destroy domestic and personal fulfillment by their refusal to break the traditional domestic codes, even when those codes are rendered meaningless through traumatic devastation. Both novels of manners ultimately unveil a fragility within the domestic that has always existed, one that remains vulnerable to nostalgic manners linked to national identity and consumerism. These enforced codes of conduct that call for a return to the past create a simulacrum of the society of the past in order to recreate the “perfect” home sphere. It is only when such nostalgic manners break down that the social and moral problems of the era become most apparent within the domestic, and it is only when we relinquish nostalgia that these problems can be addressed and resolved.



### **The relationship between manners and nostalgia in the novel of manners**

Because the novel of manners reflects or recreates a specific era and geographic location, novelists depict nostalgia by importing manners in that time and place to the present moment. To implement this, they utilize their characters' manners as a means of depicting neoliberal society's transferral of morals or virtues from that past to the present moment. One form of nostalgia that has proliferated in contemporary fiction is the neoliberal conception in the 1980s in both Britain and the United States—in Britain, this form of nostalgia or recreation of neoliberal England takes root in the author's response towards Thatcherism, a complex form of political ideologies based on the persona of Margaret Thatcher. Thatcher personally espoused Judeo-Christian values, which she transformed into nostalgia for the "Victorian values" in which she believed herself to have been raised.<sup>199</sup> By equating Victorian "family values" with moral good, Thatcher then worked to implement social policies that reflected her personal beliefs and upbringing. Thatcher deliberately made use of this nostalgia to implement social and economic policies that would recreate a kind of prosperity, though its fruition has since been called into question.<sup>200</sup> The texts and artifacts reflecting the nostalgia surrounding the rhetoric and ideology of Thatcherism either indulge in this same ideology or depict the author's negative response to such development of morality as an act of privatization and takeover of the individual's moral codes.

The 1980s, therefore, comprise a key component in linking the novel of manners to a study of nostalgia, because they make apparent the nostalgic manners emergent from Thatcherism, as well as the impact of ideological values upon manners as social codes of conduct. When pressed to accede to the idea of privatizing a hospital, for instance, the

individual accepts an economic principle as a moral value (according to Thatcher). Therefore, his or her manners dictate that he or she support the hospital, either through financial donation or patronage, and accept the ideology of individualism that comes through use of private goods and services. Therefore, the individual's economic behaviors underlie adherence to a moral principle, one gained through a series of economic behaviors (again, as asserted by Thatcher). The relationship between ideology and the behavior manifested reveals a moral conflict first noted by Henry James in his own novels of manners. The individual's manners ultimately affect his or her sense of morality, because they influence his or her decision to accede to such social pressure in the guise of nationalism and thus relinquish personal morality, or else disavow social morality and face exile from social affluence. Consequently, the juxtaposition of morals and money provides motivation to relinquish individual manners for a more socially normed set of behaviors.

While debates about the intents and effects of Thatcherism continue into the twenty-first century, scholars agree that Thatcher and her supporters wedded economics and morality into their policies to implement an idealized version of Britain.<sup>201</sup> This ideal Britain called for a return to "Victorian values," as outlined by Thatcher herself, but it also declared that consensus politics and Keynesian economics deterred the British people from reaching their full moral potential. This phenomenon contributed to a cultural and moral nostalgia, while simultaneously transforming the individual from a civic participant into a passive political consumer. Therefore, nostalgic manners in a Thatcher-like context involve a repudiation of individual morals in order to maintain the social order set forth by society. Yet with this relinquishment of individual morals comes

an adoption of a sense of nationalism tied to this moral order—and it is in this abandonment of individuality that nostalgia becomes most potently powerful in stratifying society and generating the most profit for systems of authority. Further, since the novel of manners depicts a certain era and a specific geographic location, that time and place could be set within the past and therefore would reflect a specific set of ideological and social values attributed to that time and place. The novel of manners recreates the past, not necessarily to idealize it or create longing within the reader, but to accurately convey a sense of the ideological and social values being espoused at the time. The reader should not mistake this depiction for nostalgia, argues James Tuttleton, but rather view it as an excavation of moribund views.<sup>202</sup> Thus, the past serves as a literary device, and it also recreates values and social morals as they existed, not as the author wishes them to exist. In this way, manners function as a manifestation of such values and ideals.

Nostalgia, then, transports past forms of manners into the present, as a means of grafting past sets of *values*, manifested by these manners, into the present. These values affect the individual's behavior, particularly when associated with ideas of nationalism and a personal identity affiliated with one's state.<sup>203</sup> In order to conform to his or her society's values, the individual must relinquish personal morality and adapt the values and manners of society. This conflict of social and individual morality, highlighted by Henry James, comes to a head when nostalgic manners are involved. The society in question—in this case, neoliberal 1980s Britain—displaces social and moral values of a past society onto the present, in order to recreate the values and behaviors of the past. Yet the industry of nostalgia highlights a lucrative motivation for engaging nostalgic

manners—in creating a new set of products, the individual can access nostalgic manners through purchase. The industry and capitalism of the Thatcher government are bolstered by the consumer’s acquisition of goods masquerading as moral values. Thus, when these manners break down, we recognize the illusory nature of nostalgia as a virtue, particularly when it becomes a purchasable good.

Therefore, nostalgia takes on national importance for leaders who utilize a sense of idyllic or idealized history to recreate and simulate a set of values that enable them to control or homogenize society. There are several means by which nostalgia is framed within society that then manifest themselves in contemporary novels of manners: the emergence of the heritage industries in literary and cultural artifacts is one such means.<sup>204</sup> The heritage industry relies upon the nostalgia of others to be funded and reproduced as a profitable enterprise. The Conservative social policies, thus hearkening to a version of Victorian values, find a marketplace within the heritage industry, as these values can now be purchased or attained. Therefore, the neoliberal values espoused by Thatcher, while cultivating a sense of heritage, also creates a sense of consumerism in “purchasing,” reproducing, or simulating a very narrow and anachronistic definition of Victorian moral and social values and enacting them as a means of inculcating a homogenized national identity.<sup>205</sup>

### **Understanding nostalgic manners in *The Remains of the Day* and *The Child in Time***

Within the constellation of the novel of manners, both *The Remains of the Day* and *The Child in Time* exemplify traits of the genre to create and question the relationship between nostalgia and manners.<sup>206</sup> One such means by which both texts accomplish this commission is in their depiction of the relationship between the individual and his or her

society. Ishiguro depicts this relationship through the strict hierarchy of authority upheld at Darlington Hall and the kinds of manners that espouse such hierarchy within the climate of the estate. Using Stevens, a butler, reinforces the ideals of authority set forth in a past Britain. Stevens himself reinforces his “place” in the house by describing the kinds of ways in which everyone fits in at the Hall. Though the servant class must answer to the authority of its employers, it establishes its own hierarchies and traditions within which to uphold the values of the ruling bourgeois classes.<sup>207</sup> Thus, class formulates the values of a society, and it enforces these values upon those individuals dependent upon the bourgeois class.

Likewise, the individual finds himself or herself situated within a hierarchy of authority in *The Child in Time*. McEwan’s protagonist, Stephen Lewis, realizes that when jostled from the everyday, authority becomes apparent and community closes ranks on its citizens. When he summons help to find his missing daughter within the supermarket, men emerge from their corporate positions to create a sense of family: “There were other members of the supermarket hierarchy, in brown coats, white coats, blue suits, who suddenly were no longer warehousemen or submanagers or company representatives, but fathers, potential or real” (McEwan 14). The society becomes one of a universal family, reinforced when Stephen notes that “the lost child was everyone’s property” (15). The fear Stephen feels is echoed by the other families surrounding him, and they assimilate similar anxieties to make his search theirs, as well. In this way, McEwan draws a communal society, one that contrasts with the sharply divided classes present within Thatcher’s neoliberal world.<sup>208</sup>

Within the respective societies depicted, Ishiguro and McEwan draw on several sets of manners in order to analyze and critique the kinds of ideologies and moral values imputed to their respective societies. Studying manners, each argues, provides an inlet to understanding social and moral flaws through the breakdown in manners that inevitably occurs. Ishiguro's depiction of manners or the idea of mannerliness (established through socially accepted behaviors, dress, or etiquette) becomes important for understanding the stratification of individuals at Darlington Hall and, in Stevens' case, personal validation. Stevens' manners repress his true thoughts and feelings, instead reinforcing the hierarchy within which he finds himself. He wishes to tell his new employer, Mr. Farraday, that he and colleagues see more of England than their employers within a great house, but chooses instead to think it, noting, "I could not have expressed this view to Mr Farraday without embarking upon what might have seemed a presumptuous speech" (4). Stevens' manners belie a sense of servility and obeisance that are due the ruling class, even if *their* manners do not always properly signify their stations in life.<sup>209</sup> His respect for his master creates an expectation that such a reverence will exist among his guests and equals, and the manners he imputes himself and expects of his superiors reveals an expectation of reverence towards the persona he believes resides within Lord Darlington.

McEwan, conversely, relates class and manners to nostalgia to demonstrate how domestic breakups affect both the individual and society in the text. Here, nostalgic manners formulate a sense of routine within the domestic to mask the sense of loss that has changed or destroyed the home space. In order to demonstrate the change in manners, from individual grief to nostalgic behaviors, McEwan depicts several sets of manners enacted in separate homes and highlights the contrasts in each. Stephen's own flat is a

space of chaos and disorder, and his lack of sociable manners reflects an unwillingness to conform to social expectations for his family. His manners, therefore, revolve around finding his daughter and mourning her loss.<sup>210</sup> His manners become more malleable and compliant within the space of his parents' ordered home, however, as they work in pre-arranged roles to complete the washing up: "When the three began to do the dishes, they followed the old routine. His mother made a start at the kitchen sink, while Stephen and his father cleared away....This operation had about it elements of dance, ritual, and military maneuver" (McEwan 103). In this instance, McEwan deliberately employs a militaristic metaphor to reflect a domestic being homogenized as a nationally compliant unit in Thatcher's privatized and ordered world. Stephen's grief gives way to the manners he adopts in his parents' home, and a similar expectation is placed upon him when he enters the outside world. Thus, the depiction of the elder Lewis home reflects the kind of dispassionate, militaristic childrearing encouraged by the nation to instill a sense of duty within its citizens.

Just as manners affect the individual's relationship to his or her society, tensions in social and individual morality also impact the individual's sense of identity and gender expression. When state authority enforces a particular set of moral codes through social mores, the individual must decide whether to ascribe to society's moral values or to forge an individuated path and face dire potential consequences, including exile or infamy. Nostalgic manners further contort this tension, especially when associated with nostalgia for a sense of nationalism in an era gone by. Because nostalgia reinforces outdated gender roles, authorities recreating such an era force the individual to ascribe to moribund ideas and relinquish any sense of self within the home and in public. Nostalgic manners,

therefore, recreate rigid gender binaries in order to maintain the illusion of reliving the past. Ishiguro notes that when tensions between duty and moral certitude arise, staying true to one's personal moral beliefs proves more difficult than ignoring individual morality for a sense of duty or patriotism. If, as in the case of Stevens, the individual hides behind his social (or national) duty, he has no time to question the motives for his actions or the moral consequences to his individual identity. In allowing himself to convey a sexual education to young Reginald Cardinal, Stevens ascribes to the nostalgic manners of the bourgeois classes. He buys into the idea that young men are sexually ignorant and ill-prepared for a sexual life, though his own individual notions of gender and sexuality are at best vaguely expressed.<sup>211</sup> In this instance, Ishiguro highlights the profound irony behind nostalgic manners, as they relate to gender—bourgeois men and women are expected to maintain a sense of sexual purity and chaste conduct, so they are not informed of sexual behaviors. They expect their servants to remain chaste in their conduct, but ultimately defer to them in matters of sexual education. Thus, the nostalgic manners of sexuality in *The Remains of the Day* require sexual ignorance on the part of the bourgeois and chaste knowledge on the part of the working class, though the working class must remain childless to keep their jobs, and the landed gentry must produce heirs in order to maintain their style of living. Such nostalgic manners ultimately obscure the ability to decide one's gender identity, based on class and social roles.<sup>212</sup>

McEwan utilizes nostalgic manners as a means of exploring stereotypes of gender, particularly in society's expectations for behavior. These stereotypes, he argues, inhibit the individual expression of moral identity and thus harm the morality needed and lacking in our societies. Nostalgic manners harm gender identity, he suggests, because



they return society to expressing gender through rigidly hierarchical norms, instead of allowing the individual to enact the kinds of gender roles that best correlate with his or her moral vision. Therefore, McEwan uses gender to approach this tension, for it is a clear manifestation of how social morality imposes on the individual. Using Stephen's inner monologue, McEwan highlights the dilemma of understanding stereotypes as desired behaviors or identities.<sup>213</sup> He recreates a rigid gender identity to interrogate this stereotype, particularly in light of feminine gender identities. These, he notes, contrast with the desired fixity of men by opening the possibilities to masculinities that reflect the same fluidity as that embodied by women.<sup>214</sup> Rather than being consumed by doing, McEwan argues for masculinities based on being, much as women are seen to function. Such a complexity of identities erodes confidence in the "Victorian values" of the Thatcher era by questioning the means by which men create their gender identity and perform it.<sup>215</sup>

Thus, in their explorations of gender identities, both Ishiguro and McEwan re-envision the domestic as a public space inhabited by the individual to reify or defy the authority present in these spaces. Ishiguro highlights class tensions within the domestic as a means of destabilizing idealized notions of the sanctified space of the private sphere within the home, stratifying the home to show the privilege granted to the wealthy and denied the less fortunate. When Stevens expresses his indignation at the idea of members in service getting married to form families of their own, he elides his sense of self and personal stake in the domestic for the family with whom he is employed. He declares, "I have always found such liaisons a serious threat to the order in a house...such marrying among senior employees can have an extremely disruptive effect on work" (51). Here,

Ishiguro points out a different irony within the world of Darlington Hall—while marriage and family are to be preserved for the nobility and the staff marriages throw the domestic equilibrium into chaos, Lord Darlington himself appears to be a bachelor without the ability or design to marry, and the servants who do marry set up homes for themselves. While Stevens’ nostalgic view of the domestic holds the domestic sacred for the nobility, it is the working class that actually upholds marriage and domesticity within the novel.

McEwan constructs a domestic that utilizes nostalgia and nostalgic manners in order to demonstrate the effects of neoliberalism’s social morality through capitalism and the chasm of amorality beneath a seemingly ordered and value-driven society. Stephen’s parents’ home represents an ideal of domestic order, built on rituals and routines he had found restricting as a teenager: “Indoors and out, there was an orderly concern for objects, their cleanliness and disposition, which he no longer took to be the exact antithesis of all that was human, creative, fertile...” (97). This domestic invokes a nostalgic glance at the “good old days” as advocated by Thatcher and her followers, pointing to order and simplicity coupled with the consumption and care for material objects. While his parents represent consumers demonstrating manners of virtue, Stephen’s own domestic habits and consumption patterns in his filthy and desolate flat represent a more typical consumer. The narrator tells us, “At night the drinking increased. He ate in a local restaurant alone. He made no attempt to contact friends. He never returned the calls monitored on his answering machine. Mostly he was indifferent to the squalor of his flat, the meaty black flies and their leisurely patrols” (6). McEwan contrasts the nostalgia for an ordered and peaceful home with the chaos that ultimately comes from consumption without moral order or individual investment in the domestic.

Such a life as Stephen's solitary existence is more likely to ensue than the wealth and ease promised by capitalism.

In their constructions of the novel of manners, then, Ishiguro and McEwan explore the relationships between nostalgia and manners in both domestic and public contexts in order to critique the nature of authority present in identity constructions in the twentieth century. Nostalgia figures as a means for bringing back the past, yet both novelists argue that when seen through the light of manners, nostalgia has dangerous implications, particularly in the way the domestic is recreated to homogenize gender performance and identity construction so as to align with a specific ideological value. That class and gender intersect along these lines also causes both authors to caution readers about the nature of nostalgia, particularly in its influence over the agency of the individual. When a post-consensus, neoliberal society engages nostalgia and enforces nostalgic manners, they ultimately suggest, the individual ceases to function as a member of a social order and instead becomes a consumer, a passive being that accepts his or her role as a purchaser of goods that replace morality and independent thinking. While neither Thatcher, her government, nor neoliberalism are explicitly named, as with other contemporaneous novels of manners, both Ishiguro and McEwan implicitly critique the means by which government claims authority over the domestic.

**“An unmistakable nostalgia for Darlington Hall”: *The Remains of the Day* as an Exercise in Nostalgic Manners**

In *The Remains of the Day* (1989), Kazuo Ishiguro critiques the ideals of a Thatcher government and the yearning for an era gone by through an unreliable narrator, a butler in a country estate. By utilizing Stevens and his strict set of manners, Ishiguro

highlights the nostalgia occurring during the Thatcher era, in which a desire to return to "Victorian values" motivated a series of social policies that attempted to further concentrate power within the upper classes and forced all strata within society into a homogenized form of behavior.<sup>216</sup> Stevens' class, that of a butler in a country estate, complicates the novel of manners, as his nostalgia for the glory days of Darlington Hall and its strict code of conduct ultimately upholds the class that is oppressing him. It is only when these manners break down that Ishiguro subtly critiques this system of class hierarchy and heritage to examine the moral problems of national identity and justice towards the less fortunate as depicted within the novel.

The novel of manners, for Ishiguro, serves to highlight social tensions between the individual and society, particularly a society that utilizes nostalgic manners in order to exert control over its citizens. By examining codes of conduct from previous eras that have been grafted onto neoliberal society, we can understand the sense of "heritage" that pervades nostalgic manners and national identity, as well as the tenuous morality ascribed to the past. Such social morality espoused by Thatcher and her government becomes an idea to decry in its influence over the individual's sense of identity and morality. Ishiguro critiques the nostalgic manners of Thatcherism through his use of several narrative strategies: he recreates a past era in British history in order to evoke a sense of nostalgia and construct the "Victorian" values espoused by Thatcher; he resurrects the manners of that particular era in order to demonstrate the nostalgic manners being currently enacted by Thatcher's kind of society and their impact on the individual; and he critiques the hypocrisy of social morality by depicting the breakdown of nostalgic manners that had previously concealed any moral vacuity in the individual or society. In this way, the

novel of manners serves to interrogate modes of manners enforced upon a society that no longer espouses the kinds of Victorian morals and ideologies accompanying such manners.<sup>217</sup> This contrast is significant, Ishiguro implies, because it demonstrates a disconnect between governmental values and the morals of a consumerist society.

In order to exemplify how nostalgia functions within society, Ishiguro recreates a past era as a reference point for the ideological values now espoused by the novel's society and the characters present within. One means by which Ishiguro constructs nostalgia for the past is through a deliberate simulation of a past era to demonstrate the process of appropriating some version of the past for personal usage or profit. He utilizes the character of the American purchaser of Darlington Hall, Mr. Farraday, for such purposes. Upon Lord Darlington's death and his acquisition, he writes Stevens with the injunction to "recruit a new staff 'worthy of a grand old English house'" (6). Aware of the estate's heritage and affluence, Farraday believes that his purchase of Darlington Hall will, by proxy, grant him the same kind of affluence and noble status that Lord Darlington was born with.<sup>218</sup> The house represents the ideal of an English house, but it becomes an obtainable commercial good for Mr. Farraday to appropriate for his own purposes.<sup>219</sup> Further, by inculcating the same kind of household run by Lord Darlington, Farraday wishes to return to the Hall's glory days and ultimately recreate kind of grand estate he admires and wishes to obtain.

In his fictionalization of the early twentieth-century nobility to recreate the past, Ishiguro constructs Darlington Hall and its inhabitants not as beloved relics of the past but as simulacra of the heritage ideals sold as commodities in neoliberal society. Because such recreations exist mainly in the minds of its enforcers and enactors, nostalgic

manners function as a simulacrum of the manners seen in every identifiable society and they serve as a form of heritage in the novel.<sup>220</sup> The cultural tourism that occurs in the novel with Mr. Farraday's purchase of Darlington Hall exemplifies the simulation of "Englishness" and heritage that later is aped in Thatcher's society. Thus, it is no accident that Mr. Farraday and his visitors, the Wakefields, are Americans knowledgeable about British estates and manners.<sup>221</sup> Darlington Hall in the novel's present moment represents a bygone era for Farraday and the Wakefields, a set of quaint, outmoded traditions that their enthusiasm simulates and recreates for sheer enjoyment.<sup>222</sup> The Americans graft their enthusiasm onto a nostalgia that is not inherent in their cultural makeup, but instead consume a different national identity for their personal entertainment. This sense of nationalism, one that can be purchased and sold, reveals a set of values based on acquisition rather than innate understanding of right and wrong.

That Mr. Farraday can *purchase* this enjoyment turns the estate into a sort of amusement park for his personal pleasure and makes him a consumer of goods, much as heritage functions in the neoliberal consumerist society. Farraday himself is highly aware of his acquisition as he confronts Stevens' reluctance to answer direct questions about the age of the house and his own professional practices: "This *is* a genuine grand old English house, isn't it? That's what I paid for. And you're a genuine old-fashioned English butler, not just some English waiter pretending to be one. You're the real thing, aren't you? That's what I wanted, isn't that what I have?" (124). Though Farraday insists on authenticity, it is a simulated version of authenticity, one that fits his notions of the past and can be obtained through his purchase as a customer of English heritage.<sup>223</sup>

While Ishiguro constructs a simulated past through the estate, he also develops a specific idea of moral character and value that accompanied the servant class and their employers in the past in order to forward the ideological values inculcated by nostalgia.<sup>224</sup> Stevens notes that his generation of butlers, now passing, searched for a family of good character: “We tended to concern ourselves much more with the *moral* status of an employer. I do not mean by this that we were preoccupied with our employers’ private behavior. What I mean is that we were ambitious, in a way that would have been unusual a generation before, to serve gentlemen who were, so to speak, furthering the progress of humanity” (114). In reflecting on the past, Stevens recreates it, attributing moral value to be applied today from an idealized version of the past he has recovered for such a purpose. His sense of morality dovetails with the “Victorian values” so casually alluded to and appropriated by the Thatcher administration.

Ishiguro thus associates nostalgia in his novel as the *restorative* nostalgia that seeks to recreate a past era and imprint “truth” from the past onto the present.<sup>225</sup> Nostalgia, for Stevens, is two-fold—a tradition and order of past ways, undergirded by the strong moral values that make the character of the nobility great, and thus pass to their servants by proxy.<sup>226</sup> In the traditions Stevens longs for, he ascribes importance to the domestic as a balm and solace to public troubles or worries. He uses the instance of Lord Halifax to prove this point. Having described Lord Halifax’s troubled worry over an incoming meeting, Stevens marks a turning point when, upon seeing the silver polished and sparkling to perfection, Halifax exclaims in delight to Lord Darlington and turns the subject. Later, Darlington recounts, “Lord Halifax was jolly impressed with the silver the other night. Put him into a quite different frame of mind altogether” (135). This statement

creates the illusion that a bygone domestic tradition and proper manners can alter the course of a crisis and even avert it altogether. Ishiguro uses this anecdote of Steven's to demonstrate how nostalgic manners are used to ascribe importance to proper, "mannerly" domesticity as a means of regulating the home.

With this focus on the domestic comes an adherence to moral tradition—that is, morality as understood in the present and reinterpreted through the past. Ishiguro illustrates such a disparity in moral ideal and practice through Stevens' wish to be morally distinguished from his peers—fellow butlers in English country houses. He filters Stevens' discussion through a nostalgic lens to highlight the argument that the employer's moral fiber passes down greatness and character to his servants: "A 'great' butler can only be, surely, one who can point to his years of service and say that he has applied his talents to serving a great gentleman—and through the latter, to serving humanity" (117).<sup>227</sup> This form of nostalgia ascribes the kind of moral rightness of a past era to the nobility and can only be achieved by the servant class through their faithful service. Further, he decries the superficial traits of butlers (good accent, dress, and other aesthetic qualities) that constitute greatness, in favor of a less tangible moral quality. He declares, "The obsessions with eloquence and general knowledge would appear to be ones that emerged with our generation, probably in the wake of Mr Marshall, when lesser men trying to emulate his greatness mistook the superficial for the essence" (34). His father, not a man of aesthetic quality, is nevertheless seen as a great man by Stevens for possessing those intangible qualities that constitute greatness. Thus, in recreating the morals of the past for his profession, Stevens revives the past to cultivate a longing for it



and move his nostalgic views into the present. This form of restorative nostalgia implants past values as perceived by the present onto the present for enactment.

Ishiguro also constructs nostalgic manners as a means to reveal tensions present in social and individual morality. Neoliberal society utilizes nostalgia to enforce conformity to social norms, particularly when reinstating manners of a past society. Thus, when authorities enact such codes of conduct, the costs include a loss of personal agency. Social authority—associated in *The Remains of the Day* with the landed gentry—constructs and enforces these manners to uphold the class system and the means by which society remembers and configures the past. Stevens, a member of the working class, accedes to the ideologies accorded to nostalgic manners and therefore enacts them as a means of becoming more like the society that has bound him in a position of servitude.<sup>228</sup> As a butler, he maintains nostalgic notions about what it means to be great, and to be great within his profession. Quoting the Hayes Society, which declares that “the most crucial criterion is that the applicant be possessed of a dignity in keeping with his position. No applicant will satisfy requirements, whatever his level of accomplishments otherwise, if seen to fall short in this respect,” Stevens uses the term “dignity” as a means of exploring the kinds of behaviors he feels are expected of his profession (33). The term “dignity” comes up throughout the novel, and it becomes a trademark of a kind of manners that, for Stevens, involve never “breaking character” as a butler or being seen apart from the professional persona he cultivates for his peers or employer.

Further, nostalgic manners maintain the façade of acquired nostalgia for those enforcing the manners, and they signal a change in behavior for the individual. Such a change can also lead to a shift in ideology, which also yields a loss in the individual’s

sense of personal identity. Ishiguro demonstrates how such a change yields to this loss through the renegotiation of Stevens' behavior with the change in employers. Because Mr. Farraday holds only the predispositions towards the English country estate that a tourist would have, Stevens must adapt a set of nostalgic manners in order to behave the way he is expected as a "real" English butler. One such set of behaviors he must engage in is the witty banter that Mr. Farraday aims at him on the job. After receiving several seemingly crude or overly personal gibes, he realizes that his employer is joking: "It is quite possible, then, that my employer fully expects me to respond to his bantering in a like manner, and considers my failure to do so a form of negligence" (16). With a change in culture, Stevens believes he is expected to behave simultaneously like the "genuine" English butler Mr. Farraday paid for, and the gibing, crude landlords and taxi drivers he has heard populating the United States. The shift in cultural contexts means that Stevens finds himself expected to play a variety of roles and tap into differing forms of cultural nostalgia, as a result: both the nostalgia from the national tradition of his career, and of the recreated past that Mr. Farraday has purchased.<sup>229</sup>

Though the nobility or the wealthy enforce manners upon members of the working class, as evidenced by Stevens, they too confront expectations of manners for themselves. These genteel manners become particularly crucial in defining the responsibilities of their class and social standing. We see this paradox formulate within the construction of Lord Darlington's character as a gentleman and the kinds of manners he sanctions, even as a different set is enforced. Ishiguro characterizes the mannerliness expected of Lord Darlington through the idea of the "gentleman," a term that conjures up nobility, good etiquette, and the kinds of conduct that represent an idealism and sense of

honor.<sup>230</sup> Lord Darlington himself describes how he exercised these manners during World War I towards Herr Bremann, ostensibly a representative of his national enemy: “We treated each other decently over six months of shelling each other. He was a gentleman doing his job and I bore him no malice” (73). Lord Darlington’s attitude towards honor and dignity is a form of nostalgic manners, for he chooses to trust that his enemy is as honorable and altruistic as he—but his error comes from his willingness to trust that others engage in the same nostalgic manners as he does. His agreement to engage in the First World War comes from a nationalistic sense of duty, but his refusal to view the Germans as the enemy signals a shift in both national identity and in the manners of the gentry. Lord Darlington relies on nostalgic manners and moribund codes of honor, in order to maintain his respectability, but he falls out of step with the kinds of manners his peers expect of his station in life. Just as Lord Darlington imposes nostalgic manners on others, he finds himself expected to enact a different kind of identity in his own manners.<sup>231</sup>

Further, the nostalgia regarding honor affects the kinds of manners imposed on the nobility. Lord Darlington, in rebutting the claims of Mr. Lewis that he and his noble peers are naïve and amateurish in their approach, utilizes the sense of traditions previous generations had upheld and enacted to guide his behavior and response. He declares, “What you describe as ‘amateurism’, sir, is what I think most of us here still prefer to call ‘honour’” (103). He recognizes that his manners may not aggressively respond to the urgency of international relations present in the cultural climate.<sup>232</sup> He prefers a genteel approach, because his nostalgia for “honour” rejects Lewis’s proclaimed “professionalism,” which he decries as “cheating and manipulating...serving the dictates

of greed and advantage” (103). Even within the nobility, an imposed nostalgic set of manners exists and is then enacted on other classes, though manifested in different forms.

The nostalgic manners, administrated by social authorities, are executed by various individuals in society. Nostalgia becomes the means of reinforcing an ideology of class stratification and English imperial superiority on both the nobility and the working class, alike. Therefore, nostalgic manners signal compliance with society at the risk of losing personal identity, as Ishiguro depicts through Stevens. As a member of the working class and a man who links his professional ambition to an English national sense of identity, Stevens displays these manners with a sense of accountability towards his superiors and peers alike.<sup>233</sup> As he reflects on having to adapt some of his demeanor and responses to fit Mr. Farraday’s preferences, he notes, “Now naturally, like many of us, I have a reluctance to change too much of the old ways. But there is no virtue at all in clinging as some to do tradition merely for its own sake” (7). Thus, for him, enacting these nostalgic manners holds importance for the wellbeing of society, even though the authority to which he defers is the same authority that imposes order upon his own individual manners.<sup>234</sup>

With such an ingrained sense of duty, Stevens relies on his manners to avoid dealing with personal desires or the sense of individuality that cause others to interrogate the nostalgia and traditional workings of the estate. Miss Kenton, one such individual, challenges Stevens’ sense of tradition by suggesting that he cannot entangle his personal morality from social mores, and he uses nostalgia in order to link the two together. Deferring her attempts to draw out his individuality beneath his professional veneer, Stevens utilizes his nostalgic manners to echo his duty and obligation to Lord Darlington:

“The day his lordship’s work is complete, the day *he* is able to rest on his laurels, content in the knowledge that he has done all anyone could reasonably ask of him, only on that day, Miss Kenton, will I ever be able to call myself, as you put it, a well-contented man” (173). He uses this specific set of manners to defer his own feelings and hide behind the façade of good behavior in order to avoid dealing with his own domestic void.<sup>235</sup>

Thus, these nostalgic manners function to create a self-sacrificing component of the individual in order to deceive him into sacrificing personal fulfillment for the seeming betterment of the nation. Ishiguro, through the characterization of Stevens, suggests that nostalgic manners reveal a sense of obligation to national identity, and they require the individual’s sacrifice of self-identity and domestic happiness in order to generate the sense of contribution to social welfare.<sup>236</sup> To cause an individual to relinquish self, these manners require conformity to social morality and entail the individual’s accession to such norms, even if they directly clash with his or her personal sense of moral behavior. Such a nationality-oriented mindset implies that society matters more than the individual. Because *The Remains of the Day* chronicles a tumultuous period in British history—specifically, the decline and fall of the British Empire—nostalgic manners provide a frame for understanding the changes to reconfiguring class and moral values, since their usage helps the reader to understand how social authority sought to reaffirm Britain at its zenith of power.

Ishiguro utilizes these manners in order to argue that their usage in an era of the British Empire’s collapse signals anxiety about national identity and the tensions that ensue when an individual seeks an identity outside the one prescribed by social authorities. The society depicted in *The Remains of the Day* demonstrates concerns over

global influence and a new social order fueled by money over nobility, echoing the materialism and a new national identity through a privatized economy in Thatcher's England.<sup>237</sup> To illustrate resistance to change in English global economy, Ishiguro constructs French ambassador M. Dupont as a vocalization of English nobility's nostalgic manners. By praising Lord Darlington's hospitality and openly defaming Mr. Lewis's more politically manipulative tactics, M. Dupont affirms the gentlemanly stereotypes espoused by British nobility, though the morals guiding these manners will ultimately cause Lord Darlington's downfall and will fail to prevent a second world war.<sup>238</sup> For these dignitaries and members of nobility, there is a sense of honor and hospitality involved in matters of state; thus, people like M. Dupont argue that the manners present within the domestic affect world events.

Therefore, Ishiguro's construction of a view requires the depiction of nostalgic manners in order to demonstrate the futility of such moribund codes of conduct to global conflict—because other countries do not espouse the same ideological views as England, nostalgic manners prove to be effective only when all individuals understand the ideology represented by these unspoken codes of conduct.<sup>239</sup> Contemporary readers know that, contrary to creating peace and improving foreign relationships, the appeasements of Lord Darlington and his peers only prolonged the period of peace before war again struck Europe.<sup>240</sup> While World War II is never directly alluded to in the novel, Ishiguro provides a sense of foreshadowing through the character of Reginald Cardinal, who engages in a vehement disagreement with Lord Darlington towards the end of his life. Reginald, in venting to Stevens, argues that another war will happen despite Lord Darlington's best efforts, particularly because his manners hearken a bygone era that relied on a moribund

code of honor no longer being acknowledged in an age of commerce and industry: “His lordship is a gentleman. That’s what’s at the root of it. He’s a gentleman, and he fought a war with the Germans, and it’s his instinct to offer generosity and friendship to a defeated foe. It’s his instinct. Because he’s a gentleman, a true old English gentleman” (223).

Ultimately, Reginald hints at the futility of the nostalgia imbuing the manners of the men in power in his country, and their behavior thus affects the social and cultural expectations for people across all social classes.<sup>241</sup>

Since nostalgic manners have consequences at the national level, they affect and influence the social and cultural practices within a community to re-enact traditions associated with the past. In this way, they set forth a moral or ideological ideal. Ishiguro highlights the manifestation of nostalgic manners in both gender and class through the confusion over whether or not Stevens’ conduct makes him a gentleman. The nostalgia surrounding the “gentleman” involves ideals of high birth, good demeanor, etiquette, and dress, as well as money and an education that enlightens society. Thus, viewing Stevens as a gentleman challenges the idea that good manners only belong to the upper classes, particularly if the behaviors they enforce upon their subordinates are then imitated and assimilated by those individuals to become more mannerly than their superiors.<sup>242</sup> Aware of how his dress changes others’ perceptions of him, Stevens notes that his landlady for the evening “appears to regard me as a rather grand visitor on account of Mr Farraday’s Ford and the high quality of my suit” (26). Here, Stevens’ appearance assumes that he knows a certain type of manners, and these are the manners of gentility and nobility.

Just as Stevens’ physical appearance leads to the assumption of his nobility, his mien and overall deportment lead his social peers to accept without question that he is

their social peer, calling into question the socioeconomic boundaries of class and status.<sup>243</sup> The middle-class citizens of Moscombe, unaware that they are in the presence of a social subordinate, believe they are entertaining a fine gentleman, based merely on Stevens' conduct and his clothing.<sup>244</sup> Ishiguro constructs such a scenario to argue that gentility, perceived by those in this small town to be innate characteristics of nobility, is simply a byproduct of nostalgic manners. Such a revelation suggests that gentility, as a part of nostalgic manners, is no innate trait but rather one that can be acquired through mimicry or attained through the purchase of education or goods in order to be perceived as genuine. Therefore, nostalgic manners simulate the kind of heritage espoused by the Thatcher government in that they do not need to be inherited but only acquired or purchased—therefore, the individual who purchases or attains such a set of manners relinquishes selfhood to conform to the ideology espoused through such manners. Stevens performs these manners which function as a social cue for gentility, proving that manners involve an aspect of adaptation rather than innate knowledge or intuition. Only a social peer in service, such as the chauffeur in Dorset, recognizes that Stevens is in service, but still holds distinction above him.<sup>245</sup> Stevens' good manners, then, provide the opportunity for others in his social position to *learn* the behaviors expected of their social superiors, and these manners, when adopted by people not of noble birth, may deregulate the class strata present in society. Ishiguro uses these manners to question their veracity and sign of good breeding—if they can be simulated by someone who lacks the education and opportunities given to Lord Darlington, one must naturally question if they are a true indicator of strong moral character.



Stevens' own manners provide an example of the impact nostalgic manners has on the individual, particularly in the way nostalgia diverts attention from ideals of patriotism and national loyalty. In accepting his social position, Stevens also accepts the social authority of the state and in so acceding to national ideals of his identity, he renders his individual moral agency void. Amidst his nostalgia for the traditions of his employers is the realization that his enactment of these nostalgic manners as a butler is entirely at the mercy of his employers' whims: "The hard reality is, surely, that for the likes of you and I, there is little choice other than to leave our fate, ultimately, in the hands of those great gentlemen at the hub of this world who employ our services" (244). Former employers such as Lord Darlington had invoked the nostalgia of nationalism, demanding a moribund set of moral codes from their servants and peers. Yet employers such as Mr. Farraday invoke a cultural nostalgia, demanding that Stevens retain the appearance of dignity and (most importantly) "Englishness" without considering the ideological values behind these codes. His economic authority as Stevens' employer thus influences Stevens' manners and ideological values. Thus, the individual receives no protection for his or her sense of morality in the enactment of nostalgic manners.<sup>246</sup> Nevertheless, despite the recognition of helplessness within social classes, many individuals still enact nostalgic manners as a means of buying into the ideological and moral values set forth by the enforcers of these manners.<sup>247</sup> His acceptance of his fate means that he aligns with the enforcers of his manners and eliminates any agency for himself, choosing instead to become a reproduction of himself, a simulated butler serving an employer who reenacts a bygone era for his amusement rather than an attachment to the values of that era.

Therefore, as a simulation of an idealized member of a moribund society, Stevens subsumes the self to fully inhabit the nostalgic manners he believes are expected of him, convinced that his work will yield contentment with his lot in life. He declares, “A butler of any quality must be seen to *inhabit* his role, utterly and fully; he cannot be seen casting it aside one moment simply to don it again the next as though it were nothing more than a pantomime costume” (169). Thus, he denies any romantic feelings for Miss Kenton, the chance for a relationship, or personal satisfaction apart from his employment, because he buys into the nostalgic notion of merging his work and personal life. Fearing that the intimacy of his relationship with Miss Kenton, her insight into his life, and the feelings they have for one another will detract from his duties to Lord Darlington, he determines to turn “our professional relationship on a more proper basis” and hides his feelings behind the manners he expects of himself as a great butler (169).<sup>248</sup> Ishiguro portrays a character that hides behind a nostalgic persona in order to critique the kind of individual praised in a neoliberal society, one who relinquishes selfhood for a misguided notion of national pride and sacrifice for country and a seemingly noble ideal.

Ishiguro critiques this diminishment of the individual through nostalgic manners by depicting the appropriation of morality for commercial and material gain. As a means of analyzing nostalgia, Ishiguro utilizes the Jamesian method of the breakdown of manners in order to explore the ideological and moral values that influence the individual. In one such instance, the breakdown in manners highlights global problems of foreign relations that Lord Darlington’s manners cannot let him understand. With his principles of honor and decency, he cannot see that his relationship with Germany endangers his credibility as a British citizen and a diplomat for his country. The

American ambassador Mr. Lewis, however, understands the stakes for global relations, and breaks with the decorum associated with a dinner party in order to defend his stance. Calling Lord Darlington and his associates “a bunch of naïve dreamers,” Lewis breaches the nostalgic code of conduct in order to demand different professional relationships of the men involved in foreign relations. His critique of amateurism particularly hints at the different kinds of manners needed to solve foreign relations crises with proficiency:

And if you didn't insist on meddling in large affairs that affect the globe, you would actually be charming. Let's take our good host here. What is he? He is a gentleman. No one here, I trust, would care to disagree. A classic English gentleman. Decent, honest, well-meaning. But his lordship here is *an amateur*. (102)

Lewis's harsh criticism illuminates the problem of gentility—it provides a sense of entitlement and competence for dealing with major issues, when nobility is often not enough to count one as an expert. His refusal to adapt the genteel, appeasing manners for the sake of world peace signals a break in decorum and a rejection in the nonverbal codes that govern Lord Darlington's morality, and it further renders manners—as understood by Lord Darlington and his peers—to be susceptible to obscurity in the face of new economic and moral ideologies in the world. Lewis's rejection of nostalgic manners signals a break in the way we understand these codes of conduct: though Lord Darlington's conduct prioritizes gentlemanly behavior and an ideology of appeasement and proper decorum, Lewis points out that such behaviors, formerly understood to be simply manners, no longer govern other states in power. Rather, he notes that such manners are antiquated, and the actual codes of conduct he and his peers engage in denote a change in the way manners will be configured in an era of war, industrialization, and commercialism. Here, the breakdown of manners reveals a frustration with diverging

ideologies on diplomacy and politics at the global level, and missteps could lead to war.<sup>249</sup>

Ishiguro also demonstrates the breakdown of manners at the domestic level through the individual's recognition of being manipulated or coerced into adopting societal social norms. When forced to acknowledge that his service to Lord Darlington ended futilely, and his hard work has seemingly been for naught, Stevens' professional façade cracks, and he admits to personal emotions and insecurities that his inhabitation of his professional identity as a butler will not allow. He confides in a fellow man formerly in service, further effacing his identity:

Since my new employer Mr Farraday arrived, I've tried very hard, very hard indeed, to provide the sort of service I would like him to have. I've tried and tried, but whatever I do I find am far from reaching the standards I once set for myself. More and more errors are appearing in my work. Quite trivial in themselves—at least so far. But they're of the sort I would never have made before, and I know what they signify. Goodness knows, I've tried and tried, but it's no use. I've given what I had to give. I gave it all to Lord Darlington." (243)

This admission of feeling leads to a further breach in manners—Stevens cries as he recounts his life experience and mourns his loss of excellence as a professional. His breakdown signifies a failure to distinguish himself as an individual and a recognition that his choice, to exemplify his profession, has cost him an individual sense of integrity, one not complicit with Lord Darlington's faulty moral judgment. Here, the lapse in manners shatters the illusion that Stevens' manners have positively impacted the moral makeup of the nation, and that his own morality must be linked to Lord Darlington's. He further recognizes that his dedication to his career on moral principle has elided any chance at a personal life of individual domestic agency, including the love of a woman who had once loved him.<sup>250</sup>

The breakdown of manners, while forcing the individual to confront his or her feelings and face up to denial of agency, also reveals the social or moral problems masked by nostalgic manners. One such social problem highlighted through the breakdown of manners is the anti-Semitic culture that infiltrated Britain and forced several people out of jobs and the country. Here, Ishiguro highlights several different kinds of breaches to illustrate the complexity of the issue for readers. Lord Darlington's breach in conduct is ideological, with far-reaching national consequences.<sup>251</sup> The ideological fascist influence, with a strong anti-Semitic rhetoric, causes Lord Darlington to retract his hospitality and gentlemanly behavior towards his Jewish employees as he orders Stevens to dismiss the two Jewish housemaids on his staff for no good reason. Stevens responds with surprise: "I have remembered these remarks because they truly surprised me at the time, his lordship never previously having shown any antagonism whatsoever towards the Jewish race" (146).<sup>252</sup> This break fully reveals the complex and troubled political climate of the day and hints at the far-reaching nature of World War II about to arrive.

For the servants, this social problem reveals a different moral dilemma. Stevens, surprised by Lord Darlington's breach, nevertheless executes his orders and ignores his personal convictions, noting, "Nevertheless, my duty in this instance was quite clear, and as I saw it, there was nothing to be gained at all in irresponsibly displaying any personal doubts" (148). His loyalty to Lord Darlington, and his refusal to break his manners reveals that his conscience is ultimately guided by Lord Darlington's manners—that is, he allows Darlington's set of moral codes to shape and guide his own. He subsumes his individual sense of rightness in order to best serve Darlington and thus appropriate

another's morals for his own use.<sup>253</sup> Miss Kenton, conversely, breaks with the proper demureness demanded of a housekeeper to exercise her conscience. She retorts to Stevens' high-minded loyalty, "Does it not occur to you, Mr Stevens, that to dismiss Ruth and Sarah on these grounds would be simply—*wrong?*" (149). While her silence is the mannerly response to being told by her superior that her maids will be dismissed, she cannot accept the moral obligation of exiling the maids to be possibly persecuted elsewhere. Yet she does not make good on her threat to leave the Hall, which constitutes her "simple cowardice" (152). Faced against the threat of poverty by losing her own employment, Miss Kenton retreats back into the accepted manners of her social circle, though she does not accept them herself. Her subservience to her employer's moral demands causes her to lapse into a different kind of nostalgia—one tinged by regret for relinquishing her individual morality. Ishiguro uses the break in manners to illustrate the fault lines of power in the nobility and the kinds of moral obligations to personal conscience that were silenced for the sake of nostalgia, loyalty, or faulty idealism.

While Ishiguro highlights the struggle between conscience and loyalty he also depicts the break in manners as a means of reconciling domestic problems concealed by nostalgic manners. Stevens represses any thought of personal domesticity for himself and determines to keep his relationship with Miss Kenton strictly professional, but it is only when he approaches Miss Kenton, known now as Mrs. Benn, about her domestic relationship that he can begin to acknowledge the voids he has wilfully created in his own life. He admits in reflection, "Indeed it might even be said that this small decision of mine constituted something of a key turning point; that that decision set things on an inevitable course towards what eventually happened"—which we later understand to be

Miss Kenton's marriage (175). Ishiguro once again uses Stevens' sense of manners to reconstruct the ideal that nostalgic manners may change the course of fate, when these manners merely reveal a diminishment of the individual for a misguided dedication to nostalgia. This recognition finally occurs when Stevens is reunited with Mrs. Benn, who confesses, "And you get to thinking about a different life, a *better* life you might have had. For instance, I get to thinking about a life I may have had with you, Mr Stevens" (239). Her sense of loss, coupled with his, creates a different kind of nostalgia, one tinged with grief and a longing not for what was or could be, but what *might have been*.<sup>254</sup>

In reconciling the domestic with the nostalgic, Ishiguro posits an individual identity that thwarts the nostalgic manners repressing the individual and breaks down manners to create a self-aware domestic space. Though Stevens cannot return in time to recreate a domestic, he can mourn what he has lost and learn to move on with the time he has left. Ishiguro creates a brief moment of recognition to explain the damage wrought by nostalgic manners and posit an individual morality: "Naturally, when looks back to such instances today, they may indeed take the appearance of being crucial, precious moments in one's life; but of course, at the time, this was not the impression one had" (179). In this moment of mourning, Stevens can also learn to refashion his moral vacuity and not depend on men in power to guide his thinking. Ishiguro utilizes such a moment in the text in order to reveal the damaging effects of nostalgic manners upon the individual's sense of morality, and provide a rationale for individual morality as a means to questioning social problems.<sup>255</sup>

Ishiguro's critique of nostalgia interrogates the structure of authority within our society, questioning the manner of recreating history and mannerly conduct, especially in

the way it is enforced upon those subordinated in the hierarchical class systems. His unsentimental conclusions highlight the damage to the individual, particularly in the way the domestic is shaped and twisted by state authority.<sup>256</sup> Stevens' confessions at the end of the novel reveal the ironies of adapting someone else's nostalgic manners and assimilating them into one's moral identity:

Lord Darlington wasn't a bad man. He wasn't a bad man at all. And at least he had the privilege of being able to say at the end of his life that he made his own mistakes. His lordship was a courageous man. He chose a certain path in life, it proved to be a misguided one, but there, he chose it, he can say that at least. As for myself, I cannot even claim that. You see, I *trusted*. I trusted in his lordship's wisdom. All those years I served him, I trusted I was doing something worthwhile. I can't even say I made my own mistakes. Really—one has to ask oneself—what dignity is there in that? (243).

In recognizing that he does not exist as a self, Stevens can then begin to critique his own process of self-fashioning and understand his relationship to authority and national pride not merely as a butler, but as a person.

Ultimately, Ishiguro revives the novel of manners in order to interrogate the means by which nostalgic manners shape the identity and morality of the individual. He critiques a consumer-driven society that enforces nostalgia as nationalism in order to generate profit through the obsequious manners of the lower-class individual. In recreating Stevens as a butler who enacts such nostalgic manners, he demonstrates the damaging power of authority and nostalgia over the individual's moral fiber, over domestic happiness, and over self-guided agency.<sup>257</sup> In recreating nostalgic manners in *The Remains of the Day*, he depicts the damage of nostalgic manners and highlights the moral problems inherent in a society bent on recreating an idealized version of the past—namely, that gentility and manners do not condone discrimination or abuse of privilege.



Through the novel of manners, Ishiguro places culpability on a society more set on materialism than moral clarity by illuminating the means by which our unspoken codes of conduct betray our ideological values and moral beliefs.

**“What was and what might have been”: *The Child in Time***

**Critiques Nostalgic Manners**

Like Ishiguro, Ian McEwan engages with nostalgia and manners in his 1987 novel, *The Child in Time*. Yet instead of drawing from the past to recreate a sense of manners, McEwan utilizes the Thatcher-era nostalgia for Victorian ideology and projects it into the future, setting the novel in an indeterminate era in order to critique the 1980s and the Thatcher government in particular. His focused appraisal of the Thatcher administration and the possible future for England has caused several scholars to refer to *The Child in Time* as either an “ecofeminist parable” or a “condition of England” novel.<sup>258</sup> McEwan depicts nostalgic manners through an examination of both the domestic family unit in neoliberal Britain and the state of childhood or childrearing through Thatcher’s return to “Victorian values.” He recreates the Thatcher era in order to demonstrate how nostalgic manners establish moral codes that govern the domestic, and particularly the nuclear family. These nostalgic manners erase individuality and ultimately diminish the domestic as an individually-determined space.<sup>259</sup>

Yet McEwan argues that when these nostalgic manners break down, the seeming order and moral purity of a Thatcherite society reveals instead a repressed sense of identity and morality. Further, his use of the child or adult-as-child motif inverts nostalgia for “better days” by revealing the pain, trauma, and grief associated with childhood. Thus, by interrogating the process of nostalgia and nostalgic manners as a means of

inculcating a specific kind of morality in society, McEwan decries social morality and its authority over the individual's sense of morality and identity. Like Ishiguro, he constructs and critiques nostalgic manners through several narrative techniques within the novel of manners: he recreates contemporary society at the writing of his novel (in 1987) in order to project Thatcher's influence upon nostalgic manners in an England of the future; he constructs nostalgic manners as a means of understanding the commercialization of the family unit and domesticity, particularly in the construction of individual morality through social authority; and he critiques the social reality driving these nostalgic manners as they break down, ultimately revealing a dearth of morality in society and the individual that can only be resolved through subversion of social morality. McEwan's novel of manners, then, proffers a subversive domestic space that transgresses the simulated Victorian ideals of Thatcher's England, looking to the future instead of trying to recreate the past and present.<sup>260</sup>

Instead of looking to the past, McEwan takes his present moment in the 1980s to project the nostalgic manners of his contemporary time onto the future. He recreates the 1980s in the waning years of the twentieth century, projecting global anxieties of the 1980s into the future, thus making the "present" a hyper-real reconstruction of the past.<sup>261</sup> Further, setting his novel as a recreation of the 1980s helps McEwan project what kinds of manners emerge and progress from the neoliberal society idealized by Thatcher. Because of Thatcher's espoused "Victorian values" for the present, McEwan exaggerates such manners by making them nostalgic for a past in which neoliberal governments championed individualism through privatization.<sup>262</sup> In his opening sentence, McEwan satirizes this individualism through the defunding of public transportation: "Subsidizing

public transport had long been associated in the minds of both government and the majority of its public with the denial of individual liberty” (1). The novel’s opening lines illustrate neoliberal rhetoric and nostalgia for an ideal that never existed. McEwan thus employs this idealism as a form of nostalgic manners, in order to set the time period and establish the values of the era. Therefore, McEwan inverts the recreation of nostalgia through manners employed by Ishiguro—instead of drawing from the past, he meta-fictively engages in nostalgia for the present, as a pre-emptive means to historicizing Thatcher’s England and neoliberal society.<sup>263</sup> And it is through this contextualization that McEwan anticipates the outcome of neoliberal manners—public services are transformed into private goods, available to those who can pay for such services. This shift to privatization echoes the political Right’s notion that individualism exists when the government facilitates the individual’s right to choose and right to pay for the service of his or her preference.

Despite being set in the future, the present moment of writing overshadows the novel, as McEwan draws from events—or apprehensions of events that might occur—to create a world that did not yet exist. McEwan draws on domestic, national, and global conflicts alike through the disappearance of Stephen’s daughter Kate, the increased privatization of national government, and the as-yet-unrealized Cold War fears over nuclear warfare.<sup>264</sup> McEwan simulates actualization of these cataclysmic events feared to have happened in the twentieth century by once again making them likely or possible—in this way, he creates a future that repeats events of the history as to be replications of that history. McEwan then utilizes this sense of history in order to craft the nostalgia already present for Thatcherism and cultivated by Thatcherism in the 1980s. The character of

Charles Darke most eloquently represents the mindset of those who accepted conservatism and defined their careers as political conservatives. As a man who did not initially embrace political conservatism, he took on the political stances to further his career, because the opportunity came to him: “At a time when the government was in difficulties with its own back benches, Darke was a ferocious defender. He sounded reasonable and concerned while advocating self-reliance for the poor and incentives for the rich” (39). McEwan taps into the rhetoric surrounding New Conservative discourse by creating a character that embodies such traits as a means of success, rather than through personal ideology.<sup>265</sup>

The nostalgia of the present moment McEwan concerns himself with is the return to “Victorian values” championed by Thatcher and specifically geared towards family life in neoliberal society. McEwan echoes Thatcher’s childcare policies by plotting a child-care handbook released to the public in the novel.<sup>266</sup> He uses snippets from the fictional handbook as epigraphs to open each chapter, and demonstrates how the handbook reifies a heteronormative, hierarchical domestic environment that calls for loyalty above familial individuality. Further, the handbook reinforces the committee work of the Official Commission on Child Care, which loosely parodies various offices based on the Prime Minister’s interests. McEwan uses this particular committee to make note of the various commercial endeavors driving contemporary family life:

Their real function, it was said cynically, was to satisfy the disparate ideals of myriad interest groups—the sugar and fast-food lobbies; the garment, toy, formula milk, and firework manufacturers, the charities; the women’s organizations; the pedestrian-controlled crosswalk pressure group people—who pressed in on all sides. (4)

Despite the moral value ascribed to family life in the handbook, the committee recognizes the profit gained by certain interest groups, and the sway they can hold over the domestic. While such profit motives have been recognized earlier in domestic novels or novels of manners, McEwan highlights the union between profit motive and morality in neoliberal England—therefore, he notes the link connecting ideas of profit to individualism, virtue, and morality in Thatcher’s England.<sup>267</sup> Thus, in reconciling these committees with a simultaneous release of the handbook, McEwan acknowledges the tensions inherent in a government that tries to regulate both public and private spheres.<sup>268</sup> The handbook itself serves as “a return to common sense, and the government was being asked to take a lead,” which again connects individualism with neoliberal ideas of economics (214). Instead of influencing economic policies, though, the handbook holds direct consequences for the raising of children in individual homes. Ultimately, McEwan recreates the social policies led by moral values in order to explain the process of individualism fueled by a sense of nostalgia for an earlier era.

One outcome of simulating the present era for the future is the projection of Thatcher’s influence on British politics, particularly in the relationship between the Prime Minister’s establishment of social mores and his or her sense of the moral values driving these social policies. McEwan constructs a genderless Prime Minister as a means of simultaneously reflecting on Thatcher as a Prime Minister and envisaging her influence on her successors.<sup>269</sup> Such a de-gendering allows these sly allusions to recreate a historical association, as well as calculate Thatcher’s influence on the men who took her office afterward.<sup>270</sup> Even Stephen, who has mocked Charles for his conservatism, finds himself wanting “to be civil, to be liked, to protect the nation’s parent, after all, a

repository of collective fantasy” (93). Such a response echoes the attraction to Thatcher, who, despite her vociferous opposition, generated artifacts of historical, cultural, and literary imagination for generations to come.<sup>271</sup> In these responses to authority, McEwan thus points out the kinds of nostalgic manners for authority present in this futuristic neoliberal world.

Like Ishiguro, McEwan also constructs nostalgic manners, but his version of such manners entails a process of loss and mourning. Here, nostalgia is used to provide a means of returning directly to the past in order to elide the loss at hand.<sup>272</sup> Consequently, those who enact those manners and engage in the nostalgia of the era find themselves struggling to match the longing for a better time with the grief accompanying the present moment in a time of loss or transition. Reflecting on his childhood, Stephen reminisces about the days that inculcated both a sense of duty and a sense of fun for his boyhood, one that affects his adult manners:

Children had to know their place and submit, as their parents did, to the demands and limitations of military life. Stephen and his friends—though not their sisters—were encouraged to call their fathers’ colleagues ‘sir’, like the American boys from the airbase. They were taught to let ladies precede them through doors. But they were generously indulged, encouraged, virtually ordered, to have fun. (82)

These manners rely on a longing to return to courtly behavior, chivalry, and military duty to one’s country. Therefore, Stephen’s consequent nostalgia throughout the novel stems from a certain set of social codes that then fortify his upbringing and sense of family values, priorities that are challenged with the disappearance of his daughter and seeming dissolution of his family unit.<sup>273</sup> These manners matter, McEwan argues, because they emphasize or mask the morals we prioritize and enforce in our respective social circles.

Thus, construction and enforcement of nostalgic manners depend on the working relationship between government and individuals within society to buy into these manners and then enact them not merely as social mores, but as moral values. The manners assumed by both yield to a better understanding of the social values that then become moral values in this society. The hierarchy of power becomes most apparent in the committee Stephen finds himself on at Charles' bidding. As a figurehead of democracy, he realizes that his involvement is honorary, not an invitation to enact change: "All that was required of Stephen was that he should appear plausibly alert for two and a half hours" (7). Stephen's inertia is both encouraged and required by the government authority placing him in the committee position, since his indifference will only make the committee run the way the figures of authority wish. The chair, Lord Parmenter, constructs a vastly different set of manners that reflects his sense of authority over the proceedings. While his title assumes a certain kind of gentility, his behaviors belie ideals of nobility, instead boldly asserting his contempt for good etiquette or sagacity: "Parmenter's banality was disdainful, fearless in proclaiming a man too important, too intact, to care how stupid he sounded. There was no one he needed to impress. He would not stoop to being merely interesting. Stephen did not doubt that he was a very clever man" (6). McEwan composes such manners as a means of establishing hierarchy and the kinds of manners enforced on others by those members in power.<sup>274</sup>

Further, the manners the individual enacts as moral values play out within the domestic, to create a regulated private space subject to the moral order of the day. The rituals and behaviors that comprise the manners found in the domestic contribute to the kind of nostalgia being propagated and enacted by the individual. McEwan demonstrates

this trend through the slow disruption of his protagonist's marriage and subsequent navigation between nostalgia and acceptance of the present. The old domestic lifestyle, tinged now with grief and nostalgia for the past, fades as the couple adapts a new set of manners and is forced to abandon the old: "Being together heightened their sense of loss. When they sat down to a meal, Kate's absence was a fact they could neither mention nor ignore. They could not give or receive comfort, therefore there was no desire. Their one attempt was routine, false, depressing for both of them" (57). The family life they feel obligated to perform is lost amidst their sense of mourning for their daughter—here, the manners of nostalgia actually disrupt the domestic by forcing a continual sense of loss into the daily life of the childless parents.<sup>275</sup>

Because nostalgia changes the manners present within the domestic, it becomes a means of attempting to recreate what has been lost or transformed through death or loss. McEwan demonstrates this loss in his attempt to reconstruct a marriage that has been slowly dying. Describing marriage in plainspoken terms, McEwan nevertheless depicts the attraction to routine and its familiar sequences: "The homely and erotic patterns of marriage are not easily discarded. They knelt face to face in the center of the bed undressing each other slowly" (70). The manners of the domestic, seen in conjugal rituals within marriage, provide a sense of comfort, as if a return to some previous routine or life.<sup>276</sup> Yet these manners are easily disrupted by the newness of loss and new habits that intrude upon the past. Here, McEwan depicts nostalgia as a complex set of manners that both provides comfort and precludes it:

Even as the animated talk proceeded they were uneasy because they knew there was nothing underpinning this cordiality, no reason for bathing together. There was an indecisiveness which neither dared voice. They were talking freely, but their freedom was bleak, ungrounded. Soon their



voices began to falter, the fast talk began to fade. The lost child was between them again. The daughter they did not have was waiting for them outside. (72)

Stephen and his estranged wife, Julie, try to graft their old domestic habits onto the new nostalgic manners, but find their sense of unity disrupted by the warring ideas of home that have influenced both old and new sets of manners. In this instance, grief and manners collude and clash to create dissonance within the home.<sup>277</sup>

These manners, while masking the social and moral problems of the day, do reveal what sorts of values this Thatcherite society places on social custom and moral codes, as well as revealing the relationship between the values of the individual and those of the society he or she inhabits. McEwan uses the character of Charles Darke to highlight the tensions between individual morals and social morals. While Stephen struggles against the nostalgia for his lost child, Charles, in contrast, indulges the nostalgia for his lost childhood by framing Stephen's book as to a past child: "It was your ten-year-old self you addressed. This book is not for children, it's for a child, and that child is you" (32). For Charles, nostalgic manners entail a return to childhood, a hearkening back to a set of put-away manners and making them part of one's present behaviors and ideology. By using nostalgic manners to regain his childhood, Charles returns to a similar place of longing that he cannot recover from the passage of time.<sup>278</sup> But, in so doing, he creates a divide between his personal values and those of his social peers. As he fantasizes about his childhood, he recognizes the social implications of such fantasies and chooses to flee them in his public life. His wife, Thelma, admits, "He longed for all this, talked to me about it endlessly, got depressed, and meanwhile he was out there making money, becoming known, creating hundreds of obligations for himself

in the adult world, running away from his thoughts” (238). Consumed by nostalgia for his lost childhood, Charles overcompensates for his private fantasies of boyhood by engaging in socially acceptable work and reinforcing the social mores of the Prime Minister’s Administration.<sup>279</sup> These social codes then enforce the moral values of the day, which yield a sense of profitability, and a strict hierarchy between parent and child, as well as rigid heteronormativity between a husband and wife. Nostalgia damages the individual by cleaving him or her to a certain set of socially enforced values, while separating him or her from individually based morals.

Therefore, in order to track the transference between individual and social moral codes, McEwan forges a relationship between loss and nostalgia as they influence individual values. He argues that our treatment of loss reveals our relationship to a larger social order, particularly in our manners towards others. For Stephen, the grief is initially an isolating process, one that divorces him from the rest of the world.<sup>280</sup> He continually loses his place and time as he fantasizes various scenarios of his daughter’s kidnapping and eventual return to her home: “Stephen ran memories and daydreams, what was and what might have been. Or were they running him?” (5). His inability to function in grief without the nostalgia for his lost past and future creates a void in his individual existence. Consequently, he grafts his loss onto the morals of others, since his individual sense of morality has been stunted.

This grief and nostalgia insulate Stephen from reality, as he recreates his daughter’s birthday as an act of remembrance. He makes a decision to purchase a toy in honor of Kate’s sixth birthday, admitting, “It would be play-acting, a pretense to a madness he did not really feel” (145). McEwan simulates this sense of sorrow as a means

of understanding the theoretical and nebulous nature of nostalgia. When Stephen's idea of a gift turns into an obsession with buying her presents and thinking of how she would use them, he turns his nostalgia into a false reality. This simulated reality, however, cannot erase his daughter's departure, or his grief: "By dementedly living through the very reunion that preoccupied him constantly, Stephen came to feel that if he had not exorcised his obsession, he had blunted it. He was beginning to face the difficult truth that Kate was no longer a living presence, she was not an invisible girl at his side whom he knew intimately..." (179). McEwan recreates and simulates a reunion that can never exist—a means by demonstrating the breaks in manners that can occur and work to begin purging the nostalgia that has plagued the individual.<sup>281</sup>

McEwan thus utilizes the breakdown of these nostalgic manners as a means of critiquing the social order of the day, particularly in the way he depicts nostalgia as an endeavor that is no longer personal, but a national undertaking. The collapse of the domestic is one such side effect of social morality, particularly as grief pressures the family to stay together and simulate the values they can no longer enact or espouse. After the loss of their daughter, Stephen and Julie find their domestic rituals breaking down, the manners they have cultivated replaced by grief: "Suddenly their sorrows were separate, insular, incommunicable. They went their different ways, he with his lists and daily trudging, she in her armchair, lost to deep, private grief. Now there was no mutual consolation, no touching, no love. Their old intimacy, their habitual assumption that they were on the same side, was dead" (22).<sup>282</sup> The domestic manners, formerly cultivated by the couple, have been deconstructed by nostalgic manners which attempt to recall the

past. Therefore, their lives separate and their manners break down to reveal an inability to accept their daughter's likely death.

A different break in manners reveals a longing for an idealized version of childhood innocence, one which highlights the split in personal ideology and duty to social mores. McEwan utilizes the figure of Charles as a means of returning backwards in time, to confront the problems of adulthood and the nostalgic manners that mask the individual's moral dilemmas. Thelma tells Stephen that Charles' agreement to write a child-care manual was indicative of the moral quandary he faced: "It was his fantasy life that drew him to the work, and it was his desire to please the boss that made him write it the way he did" (242).<sup>283</sup> Charles longs to become a child again, but he finds the pressures of his adult life and need to earn income quell his desire to return to childhood. Therefore, he breaks with his adult manners to recreate his boyhood and relive his child life:

It was his wide-open manner, the rapid speech and intent look, his unfettered, impulsive lurching, the way his feet and elbows flew out as they swung round a corner to take a second, even narrower path, the abandonment of the ritual and formality of adult greetings, that suggested the ten-year-old. (124)

It is only when Stephen examines Charles' mien that he can understand how he has moved back into his childhood. By embodying a his literal boyhood self and indulging in the nostalgia he has repressed, Charles can return to his personal convictions apart from the ones he has personified for political success.<sup>284</sup>

McEwan depicts the lapse of nostalgic manners in order to reveal the kinds of social mores and moral problems that have previously been concealed or repressed in favor of nostalgia—which he exposes as a repressive ideology that restricts individual

behavior.<sup>285</sup> These issues, not merely a dilemma with society, pertains to the individual's personal morality as he or she formulates a series of values to then express in a series of individualized codes of conduct.<sup>286</sup> Charles's return to childhood highlights such a contrast between individualized modes of being versus the societal expectations for one's behavior as a minister of Parliament. Thelma relates to Stephen, "When I told him I thought it was extraordinary for a man with such powerful conflicts as his to refuse any process of self-examination, he flew into a terrible rage, a grown-up tantrum. He actually lay on the floor and beat it with his fists" (241). While Charles has fully inhabited the role he has tried to recreate, his disavowal of adult, professional manners signals a devaluing of his highly socialized public life. His need for interiority and a return to his childhood marks his individuality and ultimate break from society—as well as reality.<sup>287</sup>

While McEwan utilizes Charles' nostalgic break from reality as a moral problem raised by the breach in manners, he also highlights the changes to the domestic when repressed social norms and moral problems collide. Stephen discovers that his own family was spliced together by a break in his parents' nostalgic manners; this discovery, however, comes after trying to cajole both parents to acknowledge the memory he inadvertently stumbles upon.<sup>288</sup> His mother finally admits, "[Your father] says he doesn't remember, so we never talk about it" (195). This sense of forgetting masks the guilt of hiding the indiscretion leading to Stephen's conception. Therefore, this break in manners reveals an urgency towards sexual education and awareness in young adults—because Stephen's parents planned to marry after the war had ended, the pregnancy forces them to conform through marriage or face exile. Choosing to reinforce nostalgic manners, Mr. Lewis modifies the past to paper over his part in the sexual indiscretion, until Stephen's

vision of their faces in a pub opens the truth up. This premonition reveals a domestic that is revised and reconfigured to hide disgrace and indiscretion. Such a domestic ultimately reproduces a set of nostalgic manners—behaviors that conform to the moral values through social norms.

In this way, McEwan resolves the tensions of his novel by reconciling public and domestic problems that nostalgic manners have forced into oblivion. Only when the individual can transcend the social morality for a sense of his or her own, McEwan posits, can the harm of nostalgic manners towards grief and loss be abolished for acceptance and a move forward into time. Julie abandons her previous domicile in order to purge herself of the nostalgia poisoning her peace: “I had to stop aching for her, expecting her at the front door, seeing her in the woods or hearing her voice whenever I boiled the kettle. I had to go on loving her, but I had to stop desiring her” (255). Recognizing that her nostalgia has interfered with her domestic routines and disrupted her marriage, Julie forces herself into isolation in order to reorder her domestic chaos.<sup>289</sup>

Further, when the public and private spheres can be reconciled, and nostalgia abolished for the sake of looking forward in time, McEwan argues that grief can enable such a move forward and encourage individual moral codes to be developed. As Stephen and Julie reconcile at the novel’s end, quickly anticipating the birth of an unexpected child, they voice the grief that nostalgia had stopped them from expressing:

It was then, three years late, that they began to cry together at last for the lost, irreplaceable child who would not grow older for them, whose characteristic look and movement could never be dispelled by time. They held onto each other, and as it became easier and less bitter, they started to talk through their crying as best they could, to promise their love through it, to the baby, to one another, to their parents, to Thelma. (256)

Their late reconciliation with one another and their past allows them to look to a future, a new child, and a different domestic environment they self-construct—they reject nostalgic manners and transcend societal expectations for a more flexible and individual-oriented set of manners.<sup>290</sup> Further, they can together face the moral problems that have driven them apart in order to reunite as a family successfully. Their reunion eclipses the rigidity forced on them by the Thatcher-like government, and their break from nostalgic manners allows them to rebuild their domestic life apart from the materialism and repression associated with Thatcher's neoliberal England.<sup>291</sup>

McEwan points to the novel of manners as a marker not only to critique the capitalistic world he finds himself living in but also to posit a view for the future that highlights individual morality as a guide for actualization and happiness. He utilizes social values as a means of discussing larger enforced moral codes, ones that do not precipitate individual happiness but conformity to a larger social ideal. But only within the individual domestic can reconciliation between tensions of private and public social and moral codes take place. For McEwan, the domestic serves initially as a space in which the individual enacts a set of manners to highlight the kinds of moral tension present in society, but he revises this domestic to become, ideally, a place of healing power, as evidenced by the vows that Stephen and Julie make to one another and their new child.<sup>292</sup> Such a passage at the novel's conclusion highlights a return not to nostalgia, but towards individual morality, as idealized by James in his novel of manners.<sup>293</sup> Such a stance weakens the power of nostalgia and, indirectly, the government trying to enforce its moral values upon the behaviors of its citizens.

Thus, McEwan utilizes the novel of manners, coupled with a reconstructed nostalgia in the present moment, as a means of commenting on the tensions of morality through the lens of social norms. These norms, he argues, are constructed by authorities and serve as a means of controlling or repressing the individual to fit a certain homogenous mold of existence. While such a life can be successful or lucrative, the pressure to reach this ideal can strain personal boundaries of existence, as with the unsuccessful return to childhood in Charles Darke. Therefore, McEwan recreates nostalgia in *The Child in Time* to highlight the dangers of being guided by social norms instead of the individual sense of morality. Like his peers, McEwan highlights the dangers of becoming assimilated into a materialistic society, but unlike them, he sees individual human achievement as possible and attainable through subversion of authority.<sup>294</sup> Through the novel of manners, McEwan forwards a vision of the domestic that protects the individual and guards morality, ultimately combatting consumerism through a return to the need for a private domestic space within which to make one's home.<sup>295</sup>

### **Understanding nostalgic manners through the novel of manners**

When analyzing the novel of manners and its representations of nostalgic manners, we understand how nostalgia recreates a simulated, idealized version of manners from the past. When figures of authority in government, such as Thatcher, utilize these manners, they do so in order to enforce a set of ideological values vis-à-vis the private domestic space.<sup>296</sup> The implications of this seemingly harmless concept entail an unprecedented authority over the individual and the domestic, because the individual his or her personal life vision to fit a model based on an ideal that may never have really



existed.<sup>297</sup> Therefore, the hierarchy imposing an outlook on the individual also imposes or influences a specific set of manners on the individual and the domestic—such a set of manners influences the social practices the individual engages in, and these practices, in turn, highlight a specific set of moral values espoused by this society. An individual knowingly or unwittingly takes on these moral values through the simple guise of nostalgic manners encouraged or enforced by a social authority.

Nostalgia, when seen in a novel of manners, proves to be a dangerous concept, since social authorities utilize it carefully to construct an idea of the past as a means of constructing and shaping the present into a certain model. Thus, nostalgia, when associated with manners to create nostalgic manners, represents a means of attaining and enforcing power over the individual, using the guise of morality to do so. Government figures of authority recognize that nostalgia represents a specific view of the past, so they utilize it to slant historical events and contexts, occluding the complex construction of events and polyphony of perspectives on the past. It recreates a certain select view of the past as a means of constructing an idealized version of events in order to achieve a specific outcome—while these outcomes vary, Ishiguro and McEwan point to a neoliberal society's usage of nostalgia as a means to turn the past into profit and to homogenize society to accept this view of history. As a result, the individual becomes lost as part of a larger social and cultural norm, especially considering consumerist culture in the 1980s.<sup>298</sup>

The novel of manners further helps readers understand the significance of nostalgic manners as an indicator of both social and individuality morality in the 1980s. Because authors who write within this genre configure manners as a marker of the social

and historical context, nostalgic manners depicted in the 1980s form a deliberate commentary on the way individuals and government authorities, such as Thatcher, idealized morality and the domestic. Thus, nostalgic manners become a means of understanding social authority and hierarchy, particularly when considering the effect of social authority upon the individual's sense of morality.<sup>299</sup> Just as the temporal period configures the context for manners, narrative trends during the 1980s also transform the novel of manners from a text that reflects on a certain society into one that illustrates social and moral problems within that society. Both Ishiguro and McEwan utilize some form of writing style associated with postmodernism—reconstruction of a bygone era through metafiction (as with Ishiguro), or deconstruction of narrative style altogether in order to depict a possible future (as with McEwan)—in order to criticize the changes to society in Thatcher's Britain.<sup>300</sup> Just as postmodernism in narrative destabilizes the nature of text, it enables writers to recreate a past set of values in order to interrogate such values in their respective societies.<sup>301</sup> Further, with its shift from consensus politics to privatized neoliberal management of government, society focused away from the experimentation to more conforming sorts of narrative.<sup>302</sup> This shift mirrors government authorities' enactment of nostalgia to enforce sets of bygone manners and codes of conduct within the domestic. These nostalgic manners become a crucial component of neoliberal heritage industries as a means of generating profit for industries and corporations that benefit from privatization.

When these nostalgic manners break down, however, both Ishiguro and McEwan point to the personal and domestic problems that prevent the individual from asserting more agency. They then posit a new domestic space that allows for flexibility of gender

identity and expression. The novel of manners highlights social and moral problems, including the use of nostalgia to recreate a certain era for specific means—often lucrative ones, at that. Therefore, the novel of manners not only recreates a certain era as a means of marking a specific time, but it also critiques the means by which society historicizes or romanticizes that time. Such an analysis of societal influence serves to subvert structures of authority by prioritizing individual codes of morality, and it also implicitly questions heteronormative codes of behavior by allowing the individual to decide upon his or her identity and conduct.<sup>303</sup>

***The Remains of the Day* and *The Child in Time* in conversation**

Each text, when viewed as an individual novel of manners, critiques the nature of authority granted to a neoliberal, consumer-oriented government that utilizes nostalgia in order to generate a sense of control over its citizens. Each novel highlights the workings of nostalgic manners in order to demonstrate how government authority exerts power over the individual—by inculcating nostalgia for a bygone era, including ideology and manners, this social authority seeks to recreate social institutions (such as marriage, family, education, and healthcare) as an idealized version of the past institution. This idealized institution requires the individual to accept such a system, and the government makes access to such a system a privilege, one granted by the relinquishment of certain individual rights in order to attain certain privileges.<sup>304</sup> Consequently this system of authority causes the individual to cede agency and authority within the domestic—which reflects national tensions and moral crises on a microscopic and individual scale—and yield to an institutionalized nostalgia that occludes complex history for a selective view

of the past. This selective view of the past accepts only a certain kind of morality, and prohibits the individual from dissent.

To illustrate the compromised morality that occurs through nostalgic manners, Ishiguro utilizes the nostalgia of English imperial heritage as a means of questioning the nationalist use of nostalgic manners within a narrative.<sup>305</sup> Because the character of Stevens is constructed as an unreliable narrator, we interrogate the means by which authority is structured and forced upon the individual, particularly as the past is mined for profit within a neoliberal system. The individual's sense of morality, when restricted by nostalgic manners, becomes lost in the face of "duty" and "honor," terms utilized by social authority in order to cultivate nostalgia and obedience within the individual. Thus, Ishiguro employs a set of nostalgic manners in order to examine the effect of nostalgia upon individual morality, particularly in the confines of the domestic, considered to be a "safe" and private space, yet infiltrated by consumerism and greed in neoliberal Britain.

Similarly, McEwan employs nostalgia cultivated in the present moment to predict the reach of Thatcher's nostalgic manners on the individual into the twenty-first century. Through his depiction of a neo-Thatcher government, McEwan questions the means by which nostalgia restricts the individual's sense of progress, particularly in dealing with loss.<sup>306</sup> For McEwan, nostalgic manners occlude the self-actualization process that can engender agency and happiness within the domestic. Further, he suggests, through this extension of Thatcherism in the twenty-first century, these kinds of manners doom history to repeat itself and force the individual into compliance with governmental moral codes. He utilizes metafiction and the fluidity of time in order to both subvert the nostalgic narratives employed by Thatcher and interrogate the means by which we

recognize morality and manners in fiction.<sup>307</sup> Therefore, he posits a more hopeful view of humanity than his peers, and offers a post-Thatcher world in which the self can subvert nostalgic authority.<sup>308</sup>

When seen together, however, both authors enter a larger conversation about heritage and authority utilized by the British government. Ishiguro and McEwan deliberately construct a domestic approved by a conservative Thatcher government in order to deconstruct its ideological origins and nostalgic roots. Through this narrative strategy, they demonstrate the fragility of a heteronormative masculinity rooted in such a traditional and restrictive domestic environment. Both texts, while not deliberately making use of Thatcher by name, nonetheless subtly evaluate the neoliberal systems of government that were taking over society during the writing of their texts.<sup>309</sup> They construct nostalgia as a means of critiquing the reproduction of national heritage for profit and thus giving rise to the heritage industries rising at this time.

Further, both authors employ postmodern metafictional narrative technique as a means of destabilizing the nostalgic narratives of past or present being proliferated by Thatcher's government. Ishiguro utilizes an unreliable narrator whose own nostalgia for what he perceives as a "great" era in his employer's life occludes his moral judgment. While McEwan does not utilize a first-person narrator, he muddles the chronological sequence of time to interrogate the hierarchy of authority present within a text. As Waugh notes in *Metafiction*, "Fiction is here a means of explaining a reality which is distinct from it," and this declaration remarks on the nature of reality that both Ishiguro and McEwan construct as a means of commenting on the nature of nostalgia and nationalism present in Thatcherite society (89). By employing metafiction in their works, both authors

can analyze their culture and the sense of heritage being cultivated in society, which is propagated by social forces in power.

In so doing, they question the nature of hierarchy brought on by nostalgia. Such a subversion of authority provides a commentary within the text about hierarchy present outside the text, making a metafictional commentary on the nature of the novel in contemporary culture. These texts move a configuration of the past away from the nostalgia present in Thatcher's government and towards a more individual-oriented schema that allows for individual morality. While such a rhetorical move harkens back to the novelistic choices employed by Henry James, especially in *The Portrait of a Lady*, it does not do so out of longing, but as a different kind of heritage altogether.<sup>310</sup> Such a heritage, both authors suggest, is constructed out of nostalgia for an idea of Britishness that never existed; in each of their novels of manners, both authors undermine this ideal of British national identity and separate loyalty to a nation from a sense of morality as an individual—two concepts merged by nostalgic manners.

### **Implications of nostalgic manners in the novel of manners**

The novel of manners, when deconstructing the nostalgia that recreates and simulates a past set of manners, reveals an idealistic mindset towards heritage. This sense of history then sets expectations for the social behavior and moral values of contemporary society that constructs a state-oriented sense of heritage that then sets expectations for contemporary society. Authors ascribe nostalgic manners to a corporate-oriented sense of authority in contemporary society, and they utilize this set of manners in order to inculcate a sense of commercialism towards cultural heritage and national history.<sup>311</sup> When a sense of national history and heritage becomes a marketable good,

anyone can become the purchaser and thus obtain something not rightfully theirs. Both Ishiguro and McEwan mask this purchase of heritage to more subtly critique the consumerism rampant in neoliberal society. Consequently, heritage becomes yet another marketable good for purchase. Such a product further divorces history from fact into a product that can be obtained, manipulated, or purchased by anyone. Therefore, heritage becomes increasingly unstable when simulated in the light of such a profit-oriented process.<sup>312</sup>

Further, the novel of manners provides a new frame for understanding authority within society, as evidenced by the enforcement and enactment of nostalgic manners in contemporary fiction. Both Ishiguro and McEwan highlight the relationship between the individual and his or her social authority (whether specifically a particular government, as with Thatcher's England, or a more vague moral authority often present in Jamesian novels of manners) as a means of demonstrating the influence of authority not only upon society but upon the individual's domestic space. As a means of exerting control, social forces posit nostalgia as a way to obtain or recapture a sense of lost heritage—they make heritage or nostalgia a profitable venture, packaged as a return to a better time.<sup>313</sup> By reconfiguring interiority within characters as nostalgia, Ishiguro and McEwan track the influence of nostalgic manners over the individual as it influences personal morality and individual social values. In so doing, the novel of manners marks the change of social mores and moral values within the individual to larger circles of influence.

Breaking down manners ultimately facilitates a means for critiquing structures of authority that homogenize gender roles within the domestic. Because both novels focus on male protagonists, their interpersonal interactions point to masculine constructions of

gender performance in public and private.<sup>314</sup> This novelization of masculinity within the domestic departs from previously held notions of a feminized domestic space and brings the struggle between the individual and social authority into the domestic. In this way, both Ishiguro and McEwan ultimately question the means by which we reconstruct history and enforce past codes of conduct (that is, manners) in a society that does not have a frame or useful reference for such manners within the domestic. Ultimately, both authors look to more individualized modes of domestic existence and posit alternative means by which to configure a sense of heritage and national belonging.

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#### NOTES

<sup>187</sup> In this chapter, I distinguish between manners as a *form of nostalgia* and a deliberate set of *nostalgic manners* as seen in the rhetoric and policies of the Thatcher government and used in order to regulate the behavior of its citizens. The former delineates the novel of manners as a nostalgic genre, an assumption that directly undercuts its importance as a text that engages with social and moral issues—and would lead to a further assumption that the novel of manners has thus died, since it only represents a bygone era. The latter definition, therefore, is necessary to my claim that the novel of manners has been resurrected and serves to critique and inform social problems related to capitalism and privatization, since it claims that a specific set of manners invokes a particular set of behaviors and values apart from manners as a general concept.

<sup>188</sup> In their introduction to *Reading and Writing Women's Lives*, Bege K. Bowers and Barbara Brothers utilize Holman's definition of the novel of manners as marking the "social customs, manners, conventions, and habits of a definite social class at a particular time and place" (Holman, qtd. in Bowers and Brothers 1). The very genre seems to demand faithfulness to period and authenticity, a trait that Henry James criticizes in his female peers and predecessors. Calling women "delicate and patient observers" he nevertheless complains that "they hold their noses close, as it were, to the texture of life," ignoring the larger moral concerns with which a novel must engage (*Literary Criticism: Essays* 1333).

<sup>189</sup> Heather Nunn provides more specific details on the reach and influence of Thatcherism on formulating British identity and values in the 1980s and beyond in her book *Thatcher, Politics and Fantasy: The Political Culture of Gender and Nation*. Some of these included a shift from post-war consensus models of economics towards a free-market capitalism, as well as more intangible "socially aspirant ideals— independence, property, and financial security" (52). Consequently, these ideals held stake in the home, particularly in the way male and female gender was constructed by Thatcher herself—she outlined the typical domestic haven for a Conservative canvasser as secured by "a plethora of consumer and financial goods: videos, deep freezes, telephones, the possession of privatized company shares" (106).

<sup>190</sup> Su's deliberate employment of the word "kitsch" becomes a helpful term later in this chapter, especially in the discussion of the burgeoning heritage industry in twentieth-century British culture. Robert Hewison's *The Heritage Industry* (1987) closely examines this industry through the lens of nostalgia as an economic endeavor to produce goods representing a bygone era of British culture and living: "The look back in nostalgia has become an economic enterprise, as the commercial interests of manufacturers and advertising have recognised. This nostalgia is in part one for a lost sense of authenticity, a nostalgia that consumes ploughman's lunches and campaigns for real ale" (29).



<sup>191</sup> Jean Baudrillard's essay "The Precession of the Simulacrum," from *Simulacra and Simulation*, links simulation of a "real" object to nostalgia: "When the real is no longer what it was, nostalgia assumes its full meaning" (6). Hewison also links postmodernism and the process of simulation to the heritage industry and the nostalgia being cultivated, in that "they both conspire to create a shallow screen that intervenes between our present lives, and our history. We have no understanding of history in depth, but instead are offered a contemporary creation, more costume drama and re-enactment than critical discourse" (135).

<sup>193</sup> Boym declares, "Nostalgia is paradoxical in the sense that longing can make us more empathetic toward fellow humans, yet the moment we try to repair longing with belonging, the apprehension of loss with a rediscovery of identity, we often part ways and put an end to mutual understanding" (xv). The manners induced by nostalgia, then, invoke more than a sense of longing, but a desire to *belong*. Those in authority therefore use manners to create and enforce that sense of belonging.

<sup>194</sup> Boym argues, "The danger of nostalgia is that it tends to confuse the actual home and the imaginary one. In extreme cases it can create a phantom homeland, for the sake of which one is ready to die or kill. Unreflected nostalgia breeds monsters. Yet the sentiment itself, the mourning of displacement and temporal irreversibility, is at the very core of the modern condition" (xvi).

<sup>195</sup> Gordon Milne points out that "one may point specifically to George Washington Cable's account of the New Orleans Creole aristocracy, to Howells's and James's depiction of the Boston Brahmins and/or expatriates, to Edith Wharton's New York Old Guard, or to Ellen Glasgow's Richmond cavaliers as testimony that American society did stand still, in certain regions, long enough for manners to become readily identifiable" (14-15). Manners in these niches of society, therefore, take on an aspect of nostalgia in the current moment, since they no longer exist and can lead to the assumption that all manners—if seen as associated with these kinds of societies—are themselves inherently nostalgic. Yet the resurgence of the novel of manners in the 1980s directly contradicts this assumption and forces this separation between nostalgic manners and manners themselves.

<sup>196</sup> Boym refers to two different kinds of nostalgia—restorative and reflective—and these definitions are simultaneously invoked by both Ishiguro and McEwan in their respective texts: "Restorative nostalgia stresses *nostos* and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home. Reflective nostalgia thrives in *algia*, the longing itself, and delays the homecoming—wistfully, ironically, desperately. Restorative nostalgia does not think of itself as nostalgia, but rather as truth and tradition. Reflective nostalgia dwells on the ambivalences of human longing and belonging and does not shy away from the contradictions of modernity. Restorative nostalgia protects the absolute truth, while reflective nostalgia calls it into doubt" (xviii). In utilizing the restorative nostalgia invoked by Thatcherism, both authors engage a reflective nostalgia that interrogates the nature of nationalism and heritage to English identity.

<sup>197</sup> The breakdowns in manners depicted in these novels differ from those of James, Eugenides, and Hollinghurst in the previous chapter. In the previous chapter, the breakdown in manners signaled a loss of individual morality and concealment of the lack of morality in social values through the guise of social mores. Yet this chapter examines the breakdown of manners as a means of interrogating faulty national identity on the individual level and notes how nostalgic manners destroy the individual, as well as his or her set of moral codes.

<sup>198</sup> In a 1995 interview with Liliane Louvel, Gilles Menegaldo, and Anne-Laure Fortin, McEwan notes his interest in "trying to find connections between the public and the private, and exploring how the two are in conflict, how they sometimes reflect each other, how the political invades the private world" (McEwan qtd. in Louvel 76).

<sup>199</sup> In a January 16, 1983 interview with London Weekend Television's Brian Walden, Thatcher declared, in response to Walden's claim that she championed "Victorian Values," that "those were the values when our country became great," espousing the kinds of social policies—voluntary schools, hospitals and prisons built out of benefaction, and independent wealth fueling the country's prosperity—that recreate an

idealized Victorian England, where the wealthy took care of the poor and the government detached itself from the wellbeing of its citizens ("TV Interview" par. 108). Such nostalgia for Victorian England elides the corruption and extremes of poverty, disease, and judicial injustices enacted, while turning the national imagination to a time when life was better.

<sup>200</sup> As Louisa Hadley and Elizabeth Ho note, "Cultural and literary texts imaginatively reconstruct the moment of Thatcherism making it available to a forgetful or nostalgic present" (2). In their novels, Ishiguro and McEwan recreate these moments of nostalgia in order to critique it more fully to an audience that is either immersed in it (during the 1980s) or has been separated from it (as in the moment of writing, 2014).

<sup>201</sup> Richard Vinen points out that Thatcherites "argued that their attitudes to economics, foreign policy and morality fitted together," though their moral consensus did not actually exist as cohesively as thought by the loose use of "Victorian values" (282). Vinen further observes, "Thatcher's opponents often presented the battle against her as a battle between the market and morality. Thatcherites, however, thought that the market was moral. The free market encouraged individual virtue. It produced people who were robust, independent and willing to take responsibility for the consequences of their own actions" (Vinen 283). Therefore, morals so closely linked to economics calls for manners and mores that reinforce such moral values.

<sup>202</sup> In his study of the novel of manners, Tuttleton clearly outlines the *raison d'être* for the novel of manners as a depiction of realistic, everyday life as a means to explore human character, whereas writers indulging in nostalgia wrote romances that depended on archetypes and involved complex plots (18-19). This distinction helps us better understand why, according to him, the novel of manners was often snubbed in favor of the romance—earlier considered a superior genre (14).

<sup>203</sup> Brooker notes that "the reassertion of Britishness by the Conservative government that presided over the decade" predominated cultural consciousness during the 1980s. Thatcher's government established a set of moral values that centered on a particular idea of Britishness, what Brooker calls a "reassertion of British pomp, as aspiration and achievement of her government, was virtually constant" (143). The sense of nationalism pervading social morality thus affects the individual's sense of morality.

<sup>204</sup> Robert Hewison explains that heritage industries consist of museums and other locations or industries manufacturing goods and services devoted to preserving or reproducing English heritage. He declares, "Instead of manufacturing goods, we are manufacturing *heritage*, a commodity which nobody seems able to define, but which everybody is eager to sell, in particular those cultural institutions that can no longer rely on government funds as they did in the past" (9).

<sup>205</sup> Hewison further links Thatcher's Conservatism to the national appeal of heritage, particularly as it espoused a certain set of social values: "Conservatism, with its emphasis on order and tradition, relies heavily on appeals to the authority of the past - typically in Mrs Thatcher's reference shortly before the 1983 general election to the recovery of 'Victorian values'. During the miners' strike she made much blunter political use of 'the enemy within'" (47).

<sup>206</sup> Of all the articles, chapters, and books written about *The Remains of the Day*, only Meera Tamaya's explicitly refers to the novel by the generic label of novel of manners: "Ishiguro is unique among post-colonial writers because unlike Rushdie, for example, who writes at such unwieldy length and with much obtrusive polemics about the consequences of history, Ishiguro uses that consummately economical and British literary form—the novel of manners—to deconstruct British society and its imperial history" (45).

<sup>207</sup> Stevens notes, "Not so long ago, if any such points of ambiguity arose regarding one's duties, one had the comfort of knowing that before long some fellow professional whose opinion one respected would be accompanying his employer to the house, and there would be ample opportunity to discuss the matter" (Ishiguro 17). The individual, employed by a great house, would defer to a senior staff member, though such a society, Ishiguro demonstrates, has largely been abolished in the twentieth century.

<sup>208</sup> Joseph Brooker argues, “McEwan seeks to articulate connections between private and public spheres” and the supermarket scene melds both spheres through the disappearance of Kate and subsequent search for her whereabouts (202).

<sup>209</sup> In one such instance, Ishiguro sets a scene during a dinner party, in which Stevens observes the boorish behavior of those in a social station above him. During a speech of Lord Darlington’s, which is an attempt to reconcile various European consuls and dignitaries towards reconciliation with Germany, Stevens notes that the toast is drowned out by murmurs of restlessness and boredom, and the level of noise “perhaps on account of the liberal amounts of wine that had been consumed—struck me as bordering on the ill-mannered” (99). His very use of the word “ill-mannered” suggests a connection between good manners and moral character.

<sup>210</sup> As he moves through his commute in London, Stephen keeps a watch for a child of Kate’s age, noting, “It was more than a habit, for a habit could be broken. This was a deep disposition, the outline experience had stenciled on character” (McEwan 2). This code of conduct imprints his grief and affects his relationship towards others and society as a whole.

<sup>211</sup> This education, supposed to be conferred by his father, is delayed because Reginald’s godfather, Lord Darlington, notes, “Sir David himself finds the task rather daunting” and has chosen to defer to Lord Darlington as godfather (Ishiguro 82). Both men ultimately shirk their duties to the young gentleman, as Lord Darlington casually asks Stevens, “You are familiar, I take it, with the facts of life” without consideration of his own responsibility to Reginald.

<sup>212</sup> Brian Shaffer reminds us that sexual repression and ignorance was not limited to Stevens’ own sense of repression, but signaled a larger set of cultural values and manners (71). Further, Tamaya implies that overall lack of sexual education or responsibility has national implications for the English nobility in this scene: “Passing on the task of sex education to his butler along with other menial tasks, puts sex in its proper place, so to speak. The empire and its discontents rest on sublimation and, predictably Stevens takes his cue from his master” (50).

<sup>213</sup> Stephen declares, “Past a certain age, men froze into place; they tended to believe that, even in adversity, they were somehow at one with their fates. They were who they thought they were. Despite what they said, men believed in what they did and they stuck at it” (McEwan 59).

<sup>214</sup> In this passage, for which McEwan is both lauded and decried, we find an alignment with feminine gender expression by a male narrator, not commonly seen in the 1980s: “It was not so easy to persist when you could not believe that you were entirely the thing that you did, when you thought you could find yourself, or find another part of yourself, expressed through some other endeavor. Consequently, women were not taken in so easily by jobs and hierarchies, uniforms, and medals. Against the faith men had in institutions they and not women had shaped, women upheld some other principle of selfhood, in which being surpassed doing. Long ago men had noted something unruly in this. Women simply enclosed the space that men longed to penetrate” (59-60).

<sup>215</sup> In his critique of both *The Child in Time* and Martin Amis’s *Einstein’s Monsters* (1987), Adam Mars-Jones argues that McEwan appropriates maternity through his depiction of Stephen’s gender role as a father. Declaring that “Stephen becom[es] in effect his own father, and overruling the wishes of his biological father to boot,” he points to McEwan’s use of birth and pregnancy metaphors as a male desire to create life: “It becomes rather too evident that the desires of a man so taken up with the processes and privileges of reproduction actually move towards doing without women, or certainly minimising their part in the creation of life” (24). Noting this interpretation of the novel as an appropriation of female parental roles, Brooker contends that parenthood itself is de-gendered and interested in breaking heteronormative gender roles: “The novel seems rather to investigate the relatively new dispensation in which men’s right to be more involved with their children brings corresponding responsibilities. Stephen is indeed implicated in parenthood to a peculiar degree” (203).

<sup>216</sup> In a September 11, 2009 interview with Sebastian Groes, Ishiguro declared that he did not write *The Remains of the Day* as a direct response to Thatcher or Thatcherism but as a more general cultural critique: “I was never consciously addressing the government of the day. In *The Remains of the Day*, I was conscious of the heritage industry and the English attitude towards Englishness, but perhaps more of how the world outside England viewed England. If I was trying to subvert or distort anything, it was the romanticized tourist vision of England, rather than anything to do with the Thatcher government” (250).

<sup>217</sup> In the article “Anachronistic Periodization: Victorian Literature in the Postcolonial Era or Postcolonial Literature in the Victorian Era?” for *Postcolonial Text*, Chu-chueh Cheng argues that Ishiguro should be considered both a Victorian and postcolonial author simultaneously, for the way he draws on colonial legacy and empire in *The Remains of the Day* (5-6).

<sup>218</sup> Here, Farraday enacts the kind of nostalgia that Janelle L. Wilson describes as being “prepackaged and sold as a commodity” (30).

<sup>220</sup> Again, a distinction between manners and *nostalgic* manners becomes crucial, because each term carries with it different implications in this study. When we consider manners, we rely on definitions established in prior chapters—namely, codes of conduct (whether spoken or unspoken) that society condones or condemns and that carry with them certain ideological values. Nostalgic manners, therefore, specifically focus on those manners now considered moribund but are being revived by society in an attempt to recapture an idealized version of a past society. Nostalgic manners, in the context of Margaret Thatcher, carry a moralistic and nationalistic weight, as the individual engaging in nostalgia is seen to be exemplifying the citizen’s role in Thatcher’s government.

<sup>221</sup> Stevens, the observer to this enthusiasm notes that Mr. Farraday’s discussion of the Hall to the Wakefields “which, despite the occasional infelicity, betrayed a deep enthusiasm for English ways. It was noticeable, moreover, that the Wakefields... were themselves by no means ignorant of the traditions of our country, and one gathered from the many remarks they made that they too were owners of an English house of some splendour” (Ishiguro 123).

<sup>222</sup> Weihsin Gui argues, “The Americans’ shallowness is emphasized by their amateurish desire for an authentic Englishness and their unwillingness to dedicate any labor and effort to achieving it” (63).

<sup>223</sup> Monika Gehlawat argues “that Stevens’s future success with his American employer rests not on his ability to adopt and perfect the new skill of bantering, but on his commitment to reproduce the relic he was purchased to be” (497). Because Mr. Farraday has become a consumer of English heritage, he expects the manners of those he has hired to enact the kind of nostalgia he is openly and unashamedly imbibing.

<sup>224</sup> In *The Image of the English Gentleman in Twentieth-Century Literature*, Christine Berberich points to Ishiguro’s use of nostalgia to convey moral values, noting, “The novel is constructed around quintessential gentlemanly values, such as tradition, honour, loyalty, dignity and duty, and questions their validity” (136). Such values align with those of Thatcher’s England, as Berberich notes in a different essay, “Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The Remains of the Day*: Working through England’s Traumatic Past as a Critique of Thatcherism”: “These values included replacing the Welfare State with private philanthropy, promoting the concepts of self-reliance and a firm moral compass, and advocating the virtues of hard work. The tone of this agenda was set by her nostalgia for the glorious days of Empire and an intractable belief in the nation” (127).

<sup>225</sup> This form of nostalgia, alluded to in my footnote #194, seeks to create a universal truth from nostalgia, as opposed to interrogating it, as Ishiguro ultimately does through his deliberate employment of restorative nostalgia.

<sup>226</sup> The restorative nostalgia that Ishiguro depicts within Stevens vastly differs from the reflective nostalgia he himself ascribes to be healthy and normal. In a synthesized interview with Francois Gallix, Vanessa Guignery, Catherine Pessio-Miquel and Paul Veyret over a seven-year period, Ishiguro notes, “So nostalgia,

quite rightly I think, is viewed with suspicion but I am very interested in the actual pure human emotion of nostalgia. Of course it is used and manipulated but we all recognise that this feeling of nostalgia is quite a deep feeling. To me, in its purest form, it has something to do with this childhood that we have all had, that we have not quite said goodbye to, and that is why we feel a tug there. There is a nostalgia that is actually a very profound emotion that is worth exploring in our thoughts, in our fiction, because to some extent, it is almost like the emotional equivalent to idealism” (qtd. in Guignery 49)

<sup>227</sup> Su notes Ishiguro’s deliberate word choice in the word “great” towards which Stevens relies upon his sense of mannerliness as a butler: “In an unconsciously ironic deflation of Thatcherite rhetoric, Stevens defines greatness as a purely negative quality, a ‘lack’” (131).

<sup>228</sup> In her essay “‘One word from you could alter the course of everything’: Discourse and Identity in Kazuo Ishiguro’s Fiction,” Krystyna Stamirowska notes that Stevens’ values are those acquired from his employers: “Since he has little or no sense of self, his instinct is to emulate those whom he considers infinitely superior—not in order to become like them, but to be worthy of the privilege of acting in their service” (57). He unquestioningly takes on the values of the era, because that will yield him the opportunity to be of service to Lord Darlington and other “great” men of the age.

<sup>229</sup> David James notes that, for Stevens, “colloquialisms and witticisms are devices, equivalent to a ‘duty’. ‘Bantering’ is held at arm’s length, a ‘manner’ contrived rather than owned” (64). Thus, he sees a natural form of human communication as a different set of manners ascribed to a different national identity and adapts his own self-effacing behavior to meet the standards he believes are expected of him. Lilian Furst reminds us, however, that such a switch in manners entails porting into a different set of social mores, as “jocularity had not been the appropriate tone for a master addressing his butler. Lord Darlington certainly does not speak to Stevens in anything other than a formal, almost solemn mode, giving his orders with brevity and authority. Stevens therefore harbors a well-defined notion of the behavior proper to a gentleman, based on his memories of Lord Darlington and of the other men (and a few women) of that commanding class whom he has encountered” (542).

<sup>230</sup> In *The Image of the English Gentleman in Twentieth-Century Literature*, Berberich more fully fleshes out the definition and expectations behind the term “gentleman,” providing socio-cultural and historical origins and executions of the concept. Chapter 1 is particularly useful for understanding what a “gentleman” meant and means today (8-10).

<sup>231</sup> In “Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The Remains of the Day*: Working through England’s Traumatic Past as a Critique of Thatcherism,” Berberich declares, “Lord Darlington feels impelled to stand up for the rights of Germany and its people out of a liberal reflex that leans towards appeasement. It eventually leads, however, to his involvement with the Nazis and fascists. His optimistic misjudgement of those regimes seals his political fate and turns him into an open anti-Semite” (= 122). Impelled by past codes of conduct, Lord Darlington’s manners ultimately betray the moral values expected of a gentleman and reveal the kinds of changes required of manners to uphold morality in twentieth-century society.

<sup>232</sup> James Lang declares, “Both Senator Lewis and Cardinal suggest that Lord Darlington is holding on to a lost historical ideal, one in which men of power can settle their international affairs with informal and honest deliberations. Lord Darlington sees the Nazi government as he sees the British government: a power with which one can reason, negotiate, and compact bargains.” Lang accurately notes the nature of appeasement politics as depicted through Lord Darlington, just as he reminds us that Lord Darlington’s view is idealistic and naïve: “Senator Lewis and David Cardinal have a far more accurate—and accurately prophetic—picture of the Nazi government” (157).

<sup>233</sup> Christopher Henke comments that “such a concept of ‘inhabiting’ a role is tantamount to internalising it so perfectly that it comes naturally: an identity construction established and sustained by total self-discipline” (84). The idea of inhabiting, then, takes on national significance, as Stevens must maintain his manners to effectively partake in the sustenance of the British Empire.

<sup>234</sup> Ryan S. Trimm points to the acquisition of both Darlington Hall and Stevens himself as a further sign of the British Empire's collapse: "The history that had happened elsewhere returns to redirect and temporally fracture the English inward gaze. The fall of Darlington, both in the form of the now disgraced aristocrat and the now deserted house possessed by an American...reflects the disintegration of the imperial network that had supported these treasure houses and their servants" (151) Stevens' manners and deference to Faraday also carry national significance—they form a subtle marker to the end of the British Empire.

<sup>235</sup> Hewison notes, "Nostalgic memory should not be confused with true recall. For the individual, nostalgia filters out unpleasant aspects of the past, and of our former selves, creating a self-esteem that helps us to rise above the anxieties of the present. Collectively, nostalgia supplies the deep links that identify a particular generation; nationally it is the source of binding social myths" (46). It is this sense of nostalgia that prevents Stevens from seeing the lack in his life, particularly regarding any possible future of domestic happiness with Miss Kenton.

<sup>236</sup> Eric Evans notes the ironies of individualism during Thatcher's administrations, particularly in relationship to her goals of privatizing social industries formerly controlled by the government: "Privatisation had three main aspects, all designed to reduce state interference, regulation and control. The first was denationalisation of publicly owned assets; the second, sub-contraction of government-financed goods and services such as refuse collection and hospital meals provision to private providers; and the third, the reduction of removal of state monopoly or supervision in areas such as transport regulation, telecommunications and the like. The perceived benefits of privatisation were intended to be economic, political and moral. Although from the earliest days of her government Thatcher spoke of 'less public ownership', there was no developed plan for wholesale privatisation (as opposed to making it easier for the public to own shares in private companies and 'freeing' individual industries) until after the 1983 election" (35).

<sup>237</sup> Su notes, regarding Thatcher's use of nostalgia for political purposes, "Her evocations of national 'greatness'—the very term that Ishiguro makes central to *The Remains of the Day*—represented a tacit but widely recognized code for white England" (131). Divisions of race and class, while erased by global conflict, quickly became reinforced by Thatcher's view of a more Victorian England.

<sup>238</sup> M. Dupont calls Mr. Lewis deceitful and accuses him of "abominable behaviour," calling him a man who has "come here to abuse the hospitality of the host" (100-101). This strong language echoes Mr. Lewis's own accusations of naiveté and amateurism that will be discussed later in the chapter.

<sup>239</sup> Trimm notes, "Such receding retrospection then highlights postwar and postimperial transformations: the leveling of social hierarchy and the establishment of a social welfare net; the loss of imperial identity and world power status; the attempts of Margaret Thatcher to rip up the postwar social contract and reclaim imperial greatness" (136).

<sup>240</sup> Lang points out that Ishiguro's deliberate illustration of history has a distinct purpose for readers: "Ishiguro explicitly lays out contrasting portraits of the world-making events of the novel: one sketched by Stevens in his narration, and one laid out for the public record in the form of postwar perceptions of Darlington's role in the war" (151).

<sup>241</sup> Here, Reginald uses the nostalgic association of the term "gentleman," but as earlier pointed out by Berberich, it holds a *sad* connotation, particularly since the society in which Lord Darlington came of age no longer exists or seems to hold the same values as he.

<sup>242</sup> Both Berberich and Brian W. Shaffer point to the appearance of gentlemanliness as one means by which Ishiguro critiques the concept. Shaffer notes, "Stevens's clothes conceal yet also reveal his identity because clothes hide nakedness and conceal true constitutions, yet they also serve as vehicles of self-expression in that something about identity is divulged in one's choice of attire. Similarly, Stevens's narrative "thread," his public presentation of his private life, functions as an attempt to clothe his sexual and political repression, however much it finally reveals about both" (66). Berberich more specifically points to the

irony behind mistaking Stevens for a gentleman: "Ishiguro's irony is twofold. On the one hand he ridicules the villagers' preoccupation with clichéd ideas of gentlemanliness, which makes them judge others by appearances only. On the other hand, he also highlights Stevens's shortcomings" (154).

<sup>243</sup> Jane Austen constantly makes use of manners to interrogate the rigidity of nobility and class determinism, most particularly in *Pride and Prejudice*. Her protagonist, Elizabeth Bennet, most clearly questions the pre-determined social spheres to Lady Catherine de Bourgh, her potential suitor's imperious aunt: "In marrying your nephew, I should not be quitting that sphere [to which I was born]. He is a gentleman; I am a gentleman's daughter; so far we are equal" (357).

<sup>244</sup> In their evening discussion, Mr. Taylor declares, "You can tell a true gentleman from a false one that's just dressed in finery. Take yourself, sir. It's not just the cut of your clothes, nor is it even the fine way you've got of speaking. There's something else that marks you out as a gentleman. Hard to put your finger on it, but it's plain for all to see that's got eyes" (Ishiguro 185).

<sup>245</sup> The chauffeur tells Stevens, "And so you are, guv. Really posh, I mean. I never learnt any of that myself, you see. I'm just a plain old batman gone civvy" (Ishiguro 119). Ishiguro uses language and dialect to more finely delineate the manners of Stevens and his social peers, particularly those of less refined houses or of less honored household statuses.

<sup>246</sup> Wilson notes that history is relived not for the sake of reliving the actual events but the idealism of the past that imbues us with such longing: "We may look back through rose colored glasses, but few want to live in the past for the sake of authenticity" (Naughton and Vlastic qtd. in Wilson 26). Ishiguro utilizes Stevens' admission as a means of ripping away the nostalgia towards country-house culture.

<sup>247</sup> Stevens resigns himself to servitude, noting, "Surely it is enough that the likes of you and I at least *try* to make our small contribution count for something true and worthy. And if some of us are prepared to sacrifice much in life in order to pursue such aspirations, surely that is in itself, whatever the outcome, cause for pride and contentment" (Ishiguro 244).

<sup>248</sup> Berberich notes, "In the pursuit of his professional dignity, Stevens neglects his dignity as an individual. His quest for dignity costs him his personal freedom and individuality" (144).

<sup>249</sup> Su explains that Lewis's own break in manners undercuts his credibility and prevents him from providing political influence: "Mr. Lewis, the senator from Pennsylvania, fails to provide a viable alternative vision, though he has the courage to challenge Lord Darlington publicly. Lewis' own bungled and heavy-handed attempts to disrupt Lord Darlington's conference, however, undermine his own claims to expertise" (133). His manners make him off-putting and cause him not to be listened to in a world where manners provide a key means of influence and moral importance.

<sup>250</sup> Both Furst and the writing team of James Phelan and Mary Patricia Martin focus on this breakdown as a pivotal moment for Stevens. Furst reads the confession as a moment revealing the true nature of the relationship between Lord Darlington and Stevens: "This confession is at once touching and devastating, for Lord Darlington lacked wisdom. Stevens blocks the recognition that he has himself been a victim and a victimizer" (547). Phelan and Martin, conversely, engage in more rhetorical dialogue as a means of discussing the relationship between the text and the reader. They note, "In providing this figure of the narratee and this rough recapitulation of Stevens's story, Ishiguro also provides us some consolation after the deeply painful experience of the climactic scene. Since the narratee is only minimally characterized, he functions as a stand-in, first, for the authorial audience, and, second, for flesh-and-blood readers. Thus, the butler is ultimately a stand-in for us. When Stevens not only listens to but heeds the advice we would like to give him, some of our desire is finally satisfied" (107).

<sup>251</sup> The influence of Carolyn Barnett and what Stevens refers to as the 'blackshirts' represents an influx of fascism in the British nobility, particularly through the rise of the British Union of Fascists from 1932-40. Michael Spurr notes, "While some have viewed this development as a mimicry of Nazi racism, the BUF's

anti-Jewish policy is best understood as ethnocentric in character and an outgrowth of the party's ultra-nationalism. It should also be noted that the anti-Jewish policies of the BUF did not supersede the earlier economic and social aspects of party policy. Rather this new platform was incorporated as an additional element in the BUF's often sophisticated critique of liberalism, free market capitalism and communism" (307). When the BUF was banned by the government in 1940, several political careers dissolved, aligning with Lord Darlington's own downfall in *The Remains of the Day*. While a causal link is never explicitly discussed, his participation in the BUF may well have factored into the libel suit that caused his convalescence and death.

<sup>252</sup> Berberich reminds us, "The dismissal of the Jewish girls irrevocably taints Lord Darlington's reputation as a gentleman" and "in trying to make his gentlemanly notions of fair play work towards world peace, Lord Darlington sadly omits to give what small-scale help and protection is in his power" (151, 153). Lord Darlington's benevolence is sadly lacking, revealing an ugly racism in his sense of helping the less fortunate.

<sup>253</sup> Here, as Berberich notes, "His own weakness, in failing to stand up to Lord Darlington, clouds the rest of his life, and seriously undermines his claim of being a truly great butler" (152). Ultimately, Stevens becomes complicit with Lord Darlington's beliefs and ideological practices by failing to answer his individual conscience.

<sup>254</sup> Phelan and Martin again involve the reader in their interpretation of this scene, particularly in sympathizing with Stevens' own emotions as he asks if Miss Kenton, now Mrs. Benn, has been ill-treated by her husband: "Miss Kenton's additional remarks about the life she might have had with Stevens then constitute her answer. That question, of course, is "Do you still love me?" and Miss Kenton's answer is "I used to love you, and, indeed, I loved you more than I love my husband now, but my feelings have altered and it's now too late for us to think about a future together." Stevens's heart breaks precisely because, in the 'moment or two [it took] to fully digest these words of Miss Kenton', he is registering their subtext. He not only still loves Miss Kenton but his trip and his reminiscences have made his feelings more acute even as they've led him to value those feelings more" (98).

<sup>255</sup> Su reminds us that "the real danger of nostalgic narratives is that they offer readers the illusion of utopian idealism without providing knowledge of legitimate alternatives to present circumstances" (8). Ishiguro highlights this problem fully, as Stevens, bereft of his idealism, realizes that he has nothing to live for and no one to serve in the capacity he believes would have made him "great" by proxy. Nostalgia has clouded the reality that British Imperialism has ended, and individuals seeking greatness cannot do so through the rhetoric of nationalism and imperialism.

<sup>256</sup> Cynthia F. Wong declares, "Like his father who searches for something concrete in order to understand what precipitated his fall, Stevens's own present narration becomes an attempt to explain to himself the impact of past events. Hoping to find 'some precious jewel' he may have dropped is an effective metaphor for describing lost opportunity and the futility of its recovery" (57).

<sup>257</sup> Gui declares that Ishiguro's depiction of nostalgia is deliberate as a means of invoking his purpose for writing: "Ishiguro makes a similar move by revising nostalgia chiasmatically, reversing its conventional associations of halcyon recovery and historical evasion. His novels exceed their narrators' attempts to reconcile their present disillusionment with past optimism and engage with the cultural politics of the heritage industry and national identity in late twentieth-century Britain" (47).

<sup>258</sup> Greg Garrard's essay, "Ian McEwan's Next Novel and the Future of Ecocriticism," explains why he labels the novel an ecofeminist parable: "in the main plot, Stephen must learn from Julie the wisdom that will enable him to come to terms with the loss of their daughter Kate, while in the subplot, Charles Darke epitomizes the fatality of a masculinity fractured by the division between a repressed, aggressive public self and the fantasies of childhood that possess it in private" (698). This distinction allows the relationships between ecocriticism and feminism to more fully emerge in the criticism of the novel. Further, by referring to the novel as a "condition of England novel," Steve Hardy, Dominic Head, and David Malcolm



acknowledge the temporal connections present in the novel as a commentary on Thatcher's government. Further, Head notes that "McEwan produces a unique way of tracing the connections between the personal and the political, most notably through a poetic application of post-Einsteinian physics" as a means of approaching the political ties to the authoritarian government styled on Thatcher's example (Head 70).

<sup>259</sup> Brooker expands on these "Victorian values" espoused by Thatcher, in a followup to her infamous 1983 television interview: "We were taught to prove yourself; we were taught self-reliance; we were taught to live within our income. You were taught that cleanliness was next to godliness. You were taught always to give a hand to your neighbour. You were taught tremendous pride in your country. All of these things are Victorian values. They are also perennial values" (Thatcher qtd. in Brooker 15-16).

<sup>260</sup> McEwan inverts Wilson's claim that "expressing and experiencing nostalgia require active reconstruction of the past—active selection of what to remember and how to remember it" (25). In reconstructing the present and projecting it onto the future, McEwan thus predicts the far-reaching influence of Thatcherism upon contemporary society and its potential dire effects.

<sup>261</sup> As Jack Slay, Jr. notes, "In some instance, the future is so near that, for all practical purposes, it is *now*. In his vision of the future, McEwan portrays an England controlled by a post-Thatcher conservative extremism" (207).

<sup>262</sup> Malcolm notes, "The interest in history and in the connected area of public, national life is very marked in *The Child in Time*, which is, in many ways, a head-on engagement with the dominant political ideology of 1980s Britain and a denunciation of what Conservative Party politics have brought (and might yet bring) to the country" (7).

<sup>263</sup> Ronald Weidle reminds us that "where metafiction radically undermines our notions of stable realities," he interprets McEwan's text as a metanarration, which "confines itself to thematizing and reflecting upon narrative processes and structures" (59). Regardless of how one interprets McEwan's narrative strategies, his use of realism and postmodernism alike create questions and controversy over the efficacy of his prose and the place within which he fits into the contemporary literary canon.

<sup>264</sup> McEwan draws on fears of nuclear warfare and global war to create this future moment through a simple altercation at the Olympic Games between an American and Russian athlete that spiraled into a larger fight that ends with an American soldier's death. Here, McEwan invokes Cold War narratives to recreate a hypothetical fantasy as actual eventuality in the future: "In the United States this act was blamed on the prevarications of a docile president, who now silenced his critics by bringing his country's nuclear forces to their most advanced state of readiness. The Russians did likewise. Nuclear submarines slid quietly to their allotted firing points, silos gaped open, missiles bristled in the hot shrubbery of rural Oxfordshire and in the birch forests of the Carpathians" (35). Brooker notes, "The nuclear arms race had become a prevailing fact of life in the early 1980s, and deeply infiltrated McEwan's fears and dreams" (200). Not only nuclear warfare is hinted at in this passage, but the overall decline of the earth and nature, as Greg Garrard declares, "And yet it is the enmeshed degradation of both society and the environment that is subtle but pervasive," listing examples of extreme climate change, begging by license, and school privatization as examples of a world in the throes of dystopia (698).

<sup>265</sup> Tellingly, Charles' personal convictions take a backseat to the political and social capital he earns by becoming a Conservative. In one debate, Stephen argues, "If you had decided to go with the other side...you'd be arguing just as passionately now for taking the stock market into public ownership, lower defense spending, and the abolition of private education," ultimately echoing the Left's criticism of the New Right: those defending or backing Thatcher did so less out of ideological belief than out of greed or attraction to Thatcher (McEwan 40). McEwan thus satirizes Charles' rise to power and devotion to Thatcher as one motivated by personal gain rather than by moral attraction to Thatcher's "Victorian values."

<sup>266</sup> Katherina Dodou argues that McEwan utilizes the fictional handbook to suggest “that the wish to mould the child into the ‘desired citizen’ propels the endeavours to address childcare. The government in the novel aims to discipline children into ‘responsible’ and ‘independent’ adults and thus reconstitute Britain” (245). Head adds, “McEwan projects his authoritarian childcare handbook as the logical extension of unchecked Thatcherism. The epigraphs to each chapter, comprising extracts from this fictional government handbook, serve two purposes: first to satirize Thatcherite policies, making explicit the fear that a government concerned with promoting individual self-interest and competition probably *is* in the business of infiltrating private consciousness with ideological propaganda; and, second, to offer an ironic contrast with aspects of the narrative development, which sometimes undermine the position taken in the handbook” (Head 84). McEwan himself reinforces these ideas when he references Christina Hardyment’s *Dream Babies* in a 1987 interview with Martin Amis after the release of *The Child in Time*: “It was quite clear that if you wanted to look at any age, any generation, any particular time, you could do worse than to look at the kinds of advice that people were being given to raise their children. (qtd. in Amis 47).”

<sup>267</sup> In his examination of neoliberalism, David Harvey declares that the United States especially links profit to morality: “In the US, conscience and honour are supposedly not for sale, and there exists a curious penchant to pursue ‘corruption’ as if it is easily distinguishable from the normal practices of influence-peddling and making money in the marketplace. The commodification of sexuality, culture, history, heritage; of nature as spectacle or as rest cure; the extraction of monopoly rents from originality, authenticity, and uniqueness (of works or art, for example)—these all amount to putting a price on things that were never actually produced as commodities” (166). Here, the pursuit of corruption and simultaneous peddling of sexuality, culture, or art forms a paradox: virtue is seen to be of value, yet intangible items not actually marketable are commodified by the free market.

<sup>268</sup> One of the handbook’s excerpts reads, “We could do worse than conclude, as have many before us, that from love and respect for home we derive our deepest loyalties to nation” (McEwan 76). In this parodied snippet from the fictional handbook, McEwan explicitly alludes to the imagery of parent and child through the government and the individual domestic environments.

<sup>269</sup> The novel tells us, “Stephen had heard that there was a convention in the higher reaches of the civil service never to reveal, by the use of personal pronouns or other means, any opinion as to the gender of the prime minister. The convention undoubtedly had its origins in insult, but over many years it had passed into a mark of respect, as well as being a test of verbal dexterity and a display of good taste” (92). In these manners, gender forms a means of contextualizing the way gender is framed in the novel and in the future society upon which McEwan IS projecting.

<sup>270</sup> The very physical references to the Prime Minister (“This was a neat, stooped sixty-five-year-old with a collapsing face and filmy stare, a courteous rather than an authoritative presence, disconcertingly vulnerable,” on page 93) echoes other authors’ treatments of Thatcher herself (see Hollinghurst’s description in *The Line of Beauty*, where Nick “peered at the necklace, and the large square bosom, and the motherly fatness of the neck,” on page 329). These echo the sorts of physical descriptions of Thatcher as a person through the guise of political reverence or disagreement. Garrard counters, however, “McEwan’s decision not to portray the prime minister as, simply, Margaret Thatcher might also be seen as a kind of evasion” (705). Whether McEwan’s “evasion” is a matter of political savvy is a matter of interpretation. In his April 8, 2013 piece for *The Guardian*, McEwan himself does admit, “There was always an element of the erotic in the national obsession with her. From the invention of the term ‘sado-monetarism’ through to the way her powerful ministers seemed to swoon before her, and the constant negative reiteration by her critics of her femininity, or lack of it, she exerted a glacial hold over the (male) nation’s masochistic imagination” (“Margaret Thatcher,” par. 11).

<sup>271</sup> In his essay on concepts of beauty and beastliness as associated in cultural representations of Margaret Thatcher, Su notes that physical descriptions of Thatcher’s beauty or ugliness stems from political anxieties about the end of postwar consensus: “The turn to beauty in contemporary British fiction then, does not represent a flight from politics or a facile utopianism. Rather, it provided authors the means to examine the increasing disillusionment with the postwar consensus since the 1970s” (“Beauty and the Beastly” 1085).

<sup>272</sup> Wilson posits, “I believe there is a shift from longing for a particular place to longing for a particular time” (22). This distinction takes us out of the present and into a forgotten or grafted past or into the deep future, as with *The Child in Time*. In returning to a particular time, one can forget or seemingly prevent the loss, as Stephen tries to do over and over in the text.

<sup>273</sup> Peter Childs points to McEwan’s deliberate framing of Stephen’s past and present as a literary response to anxieties about Thatcher’s legacy and far-reaching influence across the decades in Britain: “The novel’s social context is thus shaped as a projection of the state of the nation towards the millennium if the authoritarianism of Thatcher were to endure—a projection that was partially echoed in the ‘Back to Basics’ family-values campaign of the Major government in the early 1990s” (127). Michael Byrne adds that “Stephen’s habitat is the past” and “at this point in the novel, memory is the medium through which Stephen moves” (102). Reminiscing about his own childhood reinforces the loss of Kate’s.

<sup>274</sup> Further, the *kind* of committee Stephen finds himself on augments the notion of the government’s control over its citizens—the childcare committee echoes what the Thatcherite government intends to do to its citizens: “The result of authoritarianism is to recreate citizens as children in response to parental control and patronage” (Childs 128). Childs points to McEwan’s subtle critique through the committee, and ultimately, the childcare manual itself. Emily Horton also notes that Lord Parmenter’s disdainful behavior is not unique to the kind of society depicted in the novel: “Set in a dystopian future Britain, in which the self-interested and competitive values of Thatcherism have led not only to an increase in internal socio-economic divisions but also to the exacerbation of Cold War tensions and ecological disaster, this cruelty is public as well as private: indifferent to human sentiment, time appears to be steadily pushing Britain, as well as Stephen, toward a violent end” (689).

<sup>275</sup> Derek Wright uses the loss of the child to comment on McEwan’s larger political themes in the novel. He explains, At a broader social level, the stolen child serves as an image of unfulfilled political hopes, particularly the thwarted welfare state idealism and egalitarian utopianism of the 1960s, now abruptly shut down by a reactionary government which is committed to the social engineering of a new disciplined, repressed child as set out in its Authorized Handbook. (222-23). Therefore, the nostalgia engaged by both Stephen and Julie can be read as a more general nostalgia for an era before Thatcherism took hold of Britain. That McEwan mediates this sense of loss through the family unit proves crucial to understanding the kinds of manners taking place within the home. Steve Hardy notes, “McEwan’s novel, like many British fictions of this period, is dealing too with loss, loss of role, purpose and identity, a loss which appears to be retrieved on the private, family level in this book” (114).

<sup>276</sup> Just as Stephen and Julie’s sexual encounter invokes a kind of nostalgia for their past life, the same familiarity can importune their sense of loss without Kate. The text tells us, “The awkwardness grew when they were back in their clothes. The habits of separation are not easily discarded” (McEwan 72). Byrne adds that McEwan critiques adults like Stephen and Julie “whose guardedness... has replaced unconditional love” (105). Their failure in the text to utilize their copulation as a means to reconciliation, particularly in their mutual haunting by their lost daughter, suggests a larger political problem, particularly as the strain in their marriage is a domestic representation of political strain in Thatcherite England. Paul Edwards points out that the “the blights are not unconnected,” particularly in nationalist rhetoric towards the family unit. (41).

<sup>277</sup> Dodou notes, “The image of the lost child provides a thematic and rhetorical opportunity here to negotiate the notion that children and childhood are disappearing from the home and from society” (243).

<sup>278</sup> Edwards claims, “The character of Charles Darke is radically divided; his ‘child’ self is truly separated by an ‘abyss’ from the adult self that flourishes erratically but successfully in the public world. Before dropping out he has been an up-and-coming government minister, a protégé of that Prime Minister whose policies are shown as inimical to those human qualities that childhood represents” (43). In this way, Charles represents the vast divides between public gender identity and private desires that force rigid masculine identities within the domestic and homogenize the home.

<sup>279</sup> Charles' divided personality further renegotiates his relationships with his wife and his boss, the Prime Minister. Garrard notes that Charles finds himself "in a tragicomic predicament, unable either to continue the charade of aggressive adult masculinity or to indulge forever his desire to be Thelma's son and husband at once" (699). Angela Roger adds, "His infantilism casts Thelma clearly in the role of substitute mother" and in so doing, inverts the hierarchy of the domestic to recast Thelma as parental authority and himself as the subordinate child that he recreates in the childcare manual (Roger 21). The manual itself becomes a public document of Charles' deeply personal conflict: "It was his fantasy life that drew him to the work, and it was his desire to please the boss that made him write it the way he did" (McEwan 242).

<sup>280</sup> Stephen's sense of timelessness coincides with his painful remembrance that he exists within a temporal moment and causes him to lose himself in fantasies that help him forget. Caroline Lusin states, "In this context, McEwan is primarily interested in the issue of time and in how the experience of trauma affects our relation to reality and time" (144).

<sup>281</sup> Weidle declares, "He finally learns to separate fact from fiction and to accept the loss of his daughter. *The Child in Time* underlines, even more so than *The Comfort of Strangers*, the implicit author's criticism of an imagination turned inward" (65).

<sup>282</sup> A sense of regret accompanies this new, more cynical set of manners. We see this most clearly when McEwan reconstructs the past through Stephen's daydreams, particularly when, on the day of Kate's disappearance, Stephen chose domestic duty over conjugal enjoyment: "Later, in the sorry months and years, Stephen was to make efforts to re-enter this moment, to burrow his way back through the folds between events, crawl between the covers, and reverse his decision....He deferred pleasure, he caved in to duty" (McEwan 10).

<sup>283</sup> Wright differentiates between the public demands and private dreams of Charles' personality, thus causing an irreconcilable rift in his identity, forcing him to suicide: "His split consciousness fails to bring the needs of his private consciousness, associatively, into the public, political world—a world which, since it is but the sum and systematization of private wishes, has inevitably been conditioned and determined by such needs. The Prime Minister who fails in love with him experiences the same dilemma, though her position does not allow her to opt out as he does....The result, in her case, is extreme loneliness; in his, schizophrenia and suicide" (226). The Prime Minister's language, though not mediated by gender, as in Wright's analysis, nevertheless reveals a similar dilemma to Charles' own. Stephen reminds the PM, "But he is someone's husband. And you are the upholder of family values," a notice that such private desires cannot be appropriately mediated in public. While Charles retires from public to recreate his childhood, the genderless PM cannot develop any more excuses to construct a personal attachment to Charles.

<sup>284</sup> McEwan tracks the transformation of public politics into Charles' personal demeanor, particularly the "certain weary authoritativeness" in his manners. This makes Stephen question "whether his friend had finally succumbed to the opinions he had effortlessly assumed" (41).

<sup>285</sup> My second chapter develops this notion of the "breakdown of manners." By this, I refer to the deliberate change in behavior that defies the social mores enacted by a certain society (in this case, the neoliberal, neo-Thatcher world of the future) and highlights the ways in which the individual's moral codes differ from society's.

<sup>286</sup> McEwan himself is deeply interested in using fiction to explore morality, much as James did in his novels of manners. In his 1995 interview with Liliane Louvel, Gilles Menegaldo, and Anne-Laure Fortin, he declares, "Fiction is a deeply moral form in that it is the perfect medium for entering the mind of another. I think it is at the level of empathy that moral questions begin in fiction" (qtd. in Louvel 70).

<sup>287</sup> McEwan notes, on the characterization of Charles, "Charles was someone who could always join either party—he was not someone who held consciously political beliefs. He was an ambitious man. I was more concerned with the contradictions of public and private life, the dangers of keeping them in separate

compartments. I think the moral and political consequences of that are dire” (qtd. in Amis 52). Jack Slay, Jr. further implies that Charles’ death reveals that “it is dangerous, even suicidal to become wholly that child-self or to surrender entirely to that desire” (Slay 212).

<sup>288</sup> Because the Lewis family ascribed to the kinds of nuclear family creation and sexual propriety espoused by the post-war society in England, their sexual indiscretion reveals a disconnect between the nostalgia they espouse and the danger of their failure to adhere being exposed by Mrs. Lewis’s physical signs of pregnancy.

<sup>289</sup> Julie’s characterization imparts with remarkable healing power, as Roger points out: “McEwan attributes to Julie the capacity not only to heal herself, to remake herself, but also to heal Stephen, to remake their relationship, and to create a new family through their new child” (22). Slay adds, “By leaving—but not abandoning—the marriage, Julie is able to preserve (although at first unwittingly) the love that allows them to reunite” (215). David Malcolm further remarks on the psychological aspects of the novel in which Julie’s grief process enables her to recover and enable Stephen’s recovery in the process (95).

<sup>290</sup> Lynn Wells reminds us that their second meeting at the cottage is punctuated by a difference in their relation to each other—here, the focus is on mutual desire, need, and love: “At their last meeting, conversation had ruined their intimacy, as they had spoken disparagingly of others; this time, with their focus on their lost child, the coming baby, and their commitment to one another, they connect more deeply. The emphasis in their lovemaking here is on Julie’s pleasure, which moves them beyond language as she cries out ‘something joyful he could not make out, lost as he was to meaning’ (257)” (54). Here, McEwan depicts a domestic restored by the unmannerliness of individuality and a mutual turning away from the nostalgia that had kept Kate alive in their fantasies.

<sup>291</sup> Lionel Warner sees the birth of a new child, genderless like the Prime Minister, as a beacon of hope. He notes, “But the novel does not portray the fading of childhood as total, nor is the state’s social conditioning triumphant. McEwan ingeniously describes Stephen and Julie’s new child without revealing whether it is a boy or girl, just as even more ingeniously he never reveals the gender of the Prime Minister. There is hope” (54). Yet Wells reminds us that the bucolic site of Stephen and Julie’s reunion does not signal a longterm change for the London scenes of Thatcher’s reach: “Yet this idyllic ending, the culmination of the novel’s fantasy passages, implies that such harmonious understanding is possible only in the country, away from the harsh conditions of the intractable city. Despite Stephen’s dawning appreciation of others’ needs, there is nothing to suggest that the heartless world of neo-conservative London has changed at all” (55).

<sup>292</sup> In one of the more optimistic passages of his writing career, McEwan writes, “In the wild expansiveness of their sorrow they undertook to heal everyone and everything, the government, the country, the planet, but they would start with themselves; and while they could never redeem the loss of their daughter, they would love her through their new child, and never close their minds to the possibility of her return” (256). In his interview with Amis, shortly after the novel was published, McEwan admitted, “I’d found a subject that encompassed the intimate and the social. I had been looking for a long time to bring these two threads in my writing together” (qtd. in Amis 48).

<sup>293</sup> McEwan himself invokes James in a 2002 interview with Adam Begley: As James famously asked, “What is incident but the illustration of character? Perhaps we use these worst cases to gauge our own moral reach. And perhaps we need to play out our fears within the safe confines of the imaginary, as a form of hopeful exorcism” (qtd. in Begley 97). McEwan thus sees the novel of manners as James did—a means of exploring moral values through the contexts of social mores, particularly when these mores enable or condone behavior that directly contradicts or hampers the individual’s personal morality.

<sup>294</sup> Head notes, “Neither is the political realm beyond the reach of the novel; but it is best approached through the interweaving of public and private worlds: ‘by measuring individual human worth, the novelist reveals the full enormity of the State’s crime when it sets out to crush that individuality’ (*MA*, pp. xi, xii).

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This is actually a very good account of *The Child in Time*; or, perhaps it is more accurate to say that *The Child in Time* itself serves as an exploration of how successfully the novel can treat this conflict” (71).

<sup>295</sup> Kiernan Ryan admits, about the novel’s seemingly happy ending, “No doubt McEwan leaves himself vulnerable to the charge of sentimentalism by exciting our nostalgia for that state of grace before the tide of history stole in and snatched us from the sandcastled beach. But maybe sentimentality is the minefield any attempt to touch the heart must cross” (54). Here, Ryan claims that McEwan invokes a different kind of nostalgia, one motivated by feelings of security and safeness, not governed by an authority for personal gain. Perhaps he suggests, as done by Ishiguro himself, that not all forms of nostalgia are bad.

<sup>296</sup> One such example can be found in sectors of service, such as healthcare or education. Harvey notes, “Individual success or failure are interpreted in terms of entrepreneurial virtues or personal failings (such as not investing significantly enough in one’s own human capital through education) rather than being attributed to any systemic property (such as the class exclusions usually attributed to capitalism)” (65-66).

<sup>297</sup> Su reminds us, “Nostalgia provides a mode of imagining more fully what has been and continues to be absent” (9). The novel of manners, in thus tracking the kinds of social mores portrayed through the guise of moral values, depicts a society that is ultimately lacking the kind of moral values being portrayed—rather, nostalgia imagines these virtues as recreated when they never existed.

<sup>298</sup> Hewison decries the supposed memorialization of culture through museums and industries that generate profit from a certain view of history or historical/cultural artifacts: “In the nineteenth-century museums were seen as sources of education and improvement, and were therefore free. Now they are treated as financial institutions that must pay their way, and therefore charge entrance fees. The arts are no longer appreciated as a source of inspiration, of ideas, images or values, they are part of the ‘leisure business’. We are no longer lovers of art, but customers for a product. And as the marketing managers of the heritage industry get into full swing, the goods that we are being offered become more and more spurious, and the quality of life more and more debased” (129).

<sup>299</sup> Harvey argues, “To live under neoliberalism also means to accept or submit to that bundle of rights necessary for capital accumulation. We live, therefore, in a society in which the inalienable rights of individuals (and, recall, corporations are defined as individuals before the law) to private property and the profit rate trump any other conception of inalienable rights you can think of” (181).

<sup>300</sup> Bo G. Ekelund points to Ishiguro’s sense of writing style as a means of relying on other genres, while simultaneously creating a new text divorced from other novels of the era: “The innovation here is that Ishiguro lets the butler be his own sleuth, carefully weighing the evidence in retrospect. He is the private eye, the gentleman’s gentleman detective, but he is also the criminal, who tries to avoid being caught, who fiddles with the evidence, who finds excuses for being in the wrong place at the wrong time, who provides emotional alibis. But no matter how he tries to elude the tendency of the leads, he is driven to confession” (par. 30). Ishiguro’s merging of several styles through Stevens hints at an interrogation of British fiction, just as it does of ideology.

<sup>301</sup> Helmut Illbruck notes, “Postmodernism’s rhetoric of localization should not just be sentimental but, as it certainly is in Baudrillard: imaginative and eccentric” (211). Chapter 9 “Postmodern Reencounters” further illustrates the tensions of nostalgia and narrative or lack of narrative in the postmodern theories of Baudrillard and Lyotard.

<sup>302</sup> Wilson sees nostalgia as a means of abutting the postmodernism that deconstructs linear narrative: “In these postmodern times, when so many threats and obstacles to constructing and maintaining a coherent, consistent self abound, the acts of remembering, recalling, reminiscing, and the corollary emotional experience of nostalgia may facilitate the kind of coherence, consistency, and sense of identity that each of us so desperately needs” (8).

<sup>303</sup> McEwan's reflection after Thatcher's death notes the kinds of literary responses that emerged to Thatcherism and to the persona of Thatcher herself in his works and those of his peers, including Martin Amis, Julian Barnes, and Kazuo Ishiguro: "It is odd to reflect that in Thatcher's time, the British novel enjoyed a comparatively lively resurgence. Governments can rarely claim to have stimulated the arts but Thatcher, always rather impatient with the examined life, drew writers on to new ground. The novel may thrive in adversity and it was a general sense of dismay at the new world she was showing us that lured many writers into opposition. The stance was often in broadest terms, more moral than political. Her effect was to force a deeper consideration of priorities, sometimes expressed in a variety of dystopias" ("Margaret Thatcher" par. 5).

<sup>304</sup> See my note 299, in which Harvey uses the example of education to demonstrate neoliberalism's focus on individual merit, as opposed to institutional reform.

<sup>305</sup> Ishiguro's employment of nostalgic tropes is deliberate, as Berberich points out: "Ishiguro's novel uses quintessentially English stereotypes, such as the gentleman, the butler, and the trope of the country house, in order to reflect on national identity and, crucially, national consciousness" (135).

<sup>306</sup> Head argues that *The Child in Time* is McEwan's prediction "about how far the attack on society could be taken. He projects an unchecked Tory regime in the Thatcher mould, still in power in the mid-1990s for a fifth term of office, and now seeking to fashion from birth the citizen receptive to authoritarian government, through the publication of an illiberal HMSO Childcare Handbook" (37).

<sup>307</sup> Horton notes, "Challenging Thatcher's strident individualism and pragmatism, which designates 'no such thing as society' and which proposes to prioritize science over cultural values, Stephen's dynamic temporality becomes a figure for alternative, community-centered thinking, rejecting neo-liberal isolationism in favor of improved social, political, and environmental awareness" (698-99).

<sup>308</sup> Even so, Wells admonishes that McEwan's optimistic vision is tempered by a fear of totalitarianism through the guise of Thatcherism: "By tying the gradual process of coming to see others on their own terms to scenes of otherworldly experience, McEwan insists on a divide between a fantasized moral life and a ruthless contemporary reality, without offering any means of reconciling them. The dream city of compassionate human interaction remains an elusive fiction in *The Child in Time*" (55).

<sup>309</sup> In reflecting on Thatcher's legacy, McEwan outlines the price of privatization for late-twentieth-century society: "We have paid for that [societal] transformation with a world that is harder-edged, more competitive, and certainly more intently aware of the lure of cash" ("Margaret Thatcher," par. 4). He deliberately engages in a conversation about privatization and social policies in his novel, though he never explicitly mentions Thatcher by name—an omission that seems rather deliberate than accidental.

<sup>310</sup> David James points to McEwan's own Jamesian preference for *showing* instead of telling to reveal manners within the narrative; in this instance, he uses Thelma's allusion to Charles' regression of childhood: "Even then, he was manoeuvred by Thelma Darke into a visual and spatialized agenda for receiving the couple's 'many changes' (p. 47) and for which '[i]n fact', as Thelma qualifies, 'we think we'd rather show you than tell you' (ibid.). Belying his nodding acquaintance with Percy Lubbock's *The Craft of Fiction* (1921), this is McEwan's Jamesian preference for the associative *showing* over the narrational *telling*" (87).

<sup>311</sup> Berberich reminds readers that Ishiguro utilizes nostalgia in order to warn us "of the dangers of a nostalgia which whitewashes the past" (138).

<sup>312</sup> Other texts that engage with heritage industries and nostalgia, though not explicitly with the neoliberal worlds of Thatcher and Reagan are Julian Barnes' *England, England* and Shannon Hale's *Austenland* (though Hale's is less effective in its analysis, ultimately subsuming to the fantasy it sets out to parody). American texts that directly or indirectly interact with Reagan neoliberalism and cultural appropriation and commercialism are Don DeLillo's *White Noise* and Bobbie Ann Mason's *In Country*.

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<sup>313</sup> Hewison recognizes that heritage sites, in addition to generating profit, forward ideologies of the present: “As such they do not merely preserve certain values of the past: hierarchy, a sturdy individualism on the part of their owners, privilege tempered by social duty, a deference and respect for social order on the part of those who service and support them. They reinforce these values in the present. (53).

<sup>314</sup> David James’s essay “‘A boy stepped out’: migrancy, visuality, and the mapping of masculinities in later fiction of Ian McEwan” discusses the problems of masculinity mapped out by McEwan in *The Child in Time*, particularly in relation to dual criticisms related to the novel: on the one hand, critics like Greg Garrard are calling it an ecofeminist parable (as noted earlier); on the other, Adam Mars-Jones, in *Venus Envy*, claims that McEwan, in utilizing Stephen to question heteronormative masculine identity, actually usurps the role of childbirth and fecundity in women through Stephen.



Chapter 4: 'I am addicted to the twentieth century': Manners, Morals and the  
 Pornographic Domestic in Martin Amis's *Money* and  
 Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*

In my previous chapter, I examined domestic space through a lens that both employed and critiqued nostalgic manners as markers of moral codes, particularly in representations of heritage and futurity in Thatcherite England. When seen through this lens, the domestic takes on national significance for its response to state-oriented rhetoric and ideals for its citizens. Of particular interest to my research is the commercialization of the domestic through nostalgic rhetoric employed by the Thatcher administration regarding family life and childrearing. Both Kazuo Ishiguro and Ian McEwan engage with industries and cultures centered around heritage and nationalism by deliberately utilizing nostalgic manners in their novels. They highlight their usage by social authorities to generate profit and demonstrate the effects—neoliberal society thus transforms the domestic into an extension of the public marketplace. Such nostalgic manners, they suggest, denigrates individual morality and turns social mores into moral codes for society, thus demoralizing society as a whole.

In this chapter, I will once again scrutinize the domestic as representative of larger state changes, but instead utilize a different approach—one that seems to exist in opposition to the family-oriented physical space we expect to find in novels of manners.<sup>315</sup> The pornographic, with its focus on purely sexual practices and fragmented bodies, seems to subvert the assumed sexual prudery of the domestic sphere in a novel of manners.<sup>316</sup> In fact, most scholars have treated them as separate concepts that do not coincide in life or in fiction.<sup>317</sup> Yet two novels written about the 1980s view the domestic

through a pornographic gaze to represent and critique a society taken over by corporate greed and consumerism. Such a gaze replaces schemas of citizenship and individuality of earlier eras with consumerism and corporate domestic models. Martin Amis's *Money* (1984) and Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991) reframe the novel of manners by using the pornographic gaze as an extension of the domestic. To do this, they craft domestic scenes through descriptions of explicit sexual behavior and greedy consumerism in bizarre fantasies and character interactions. These descriptions thus interrogate the economies of exchange occurring within the domestic in the late twentieth century. Their depictions of manners undergoing drastic change also help us to understand how individual morality has been shaped by commerce and capitalism during and after the 1980s. These illustrations become especially relevant in light of a consumer-oriented identity responding to neoliberal economic systems in the United States and Britain. Further, the pornographic within the domestic highlights the breakdown of manners that occur in the domestic and subvert the authority of a neoliberal government, ultimately calling for a return to individual morality in an age of social and moral bankruptcy.

### **Condoms in Mr. Verloc's General Store: introducing the pornographic domestic**

A cursory study of the pornographic and domestic seems to render these concepts incompatible within the same text, particularly because pornography aims to titillate and expose forbidden sexual fantasies, while the domestic serves to represent a home within a particular time period as functioning under a certain set of gender codes normative within that time.<sup>318</sup> The pornographic seemingly destroys or subsumes the domestic through execution of fantasies, while the domestic appears to occlude the taboo fantasies detailed

in the pornographic gaze. Yet one early twentieth-century text questions the binary between the pornographic and the domestic in fiction, implying that the pornographic functions as a perverted extension of the domestic. Joseph Conrad's novel *The Secret Agent* (1907) demonstrates in one scene how the pornographic and the domestic can coexist, presenting a new view of the domestic in fiction—one that questions the manners and expectations for the twentieth-century home. Therefore, forging a relationship between these two diverse concepts redefines how the domestic functions in contemporary fiction.<sup>319</sup>

Although *The Secret Agent* operates as a larger political commentary on terror and Othered identities in Britain, Conrad focuses on the relationship between the pornographic and the domestic in one scene. In connecting them in his opening chapter, Conrad claims that their co-existence is a natural occurrence and that the pornographic is, in fact, merely a perversion of the idealized domestic sphere.<sup>320</sup> Juxtaposing the Verloc general store with the home behind it, he places Winnie Verloc, the wife of the proprietor, in the store as an employee as a means of demonstrating how the pornographic informs our preconceived notions of the domestic:

Sometimes it was Mrs Verloc who would appear at the call of the cracked bell. Winnie Verloc was a young woman with a full bust, in a tight bodice, and with broad hips. Her hair was very tidy. Steady-eyed like her husband, she preserved an air of unfathomable indifference behind the rampart of the counter. Then the customer of comparatively tender years would get suddenly disconcerted at having to deal with a woman, and with rage in his heart would proffer a request for a bottle of marking ink...which, once outside, he would drop stealthily into the gutter. (Conrad 4)

This “unfathomable indifference” of Mrs. Verloc's does not allude to any knowledge of all Mr. Verloc's merchandise—or even whether she *cares* about such sexually charged wares, which provokes more curiosity than her ignorance of the goods.<sup>321</sup> She performs

her professional duties with no regard to any womanly conduct or manners that might preclude her from selling pornography to men. Her customers, however, seem fully aware that they would be purchasing pornography from a woman, as opposed to another man, which forces a change in behavior. Conrad highlights a contrast in manners between Winnie Verloc and her customers—Winnie retains none of the prurient Victorian approach to sexual wares, whereas her clients see her presence as a reminder that domesticity has intruded upon their sexual proclivities. While domestic and pornographic fiction treat pornography and domesticity as disparate constructs, Conrad conjoins these disparate views to depict a novel where the domestic is informed by the pornographic. Such a fictional representation of the domestic involves noting the exchanges in economic, social, and sexual power that occur in such a society, and it enables the novelist to interrogate the means by which such power affects manners and morality at the individual, domestic, and social levels.<sup>322</sup>

### **Constructing and Exemplifying the Pornographic Domestic in the Novel of Manners**

Though a pornographic lens seems counterintuitive for analyzing the novel of manners, both *Money* and *American Psycho* demonstrate characteristics associated with a novel of manners. By studying these texts as novels of manners, we can reconsider how individuals find themselves placed within a neoliberal society, and how their responses to authority at the domestic level illuminate authority through privatization and commercial ventures. One important feature of the novel of manners is the author's depiction of the individual's affiliation to a particular society in a certain time period and geographic location.<sup>323</sup> To forge this relationship, an author may use setting, plot, or character development—among a wide set of techniques. Amis characterizes John Self, his

protagonist, as a man caught up in the trappings of consumer society—he is ignorant, ill-educated, gluttonous, and pornographic in his sexual tastes. Yet Amis argues that such an individual is not anomalous to neoliberal society but formulates the natural outcome of consumerism on individual identities. The individual's choice to accede to the retrospective social changes wrought by a Thatcher's neoliberal government implies acquiescence to the creation of a publicly acceptable persona through the acquisition of goods or materials that conform to the "Victorian values" espoused by Thatcher herself. Thus, Self's desire to fit in leads to an obsession with accumulating goods and income. Ellis also constructs a character so obsessed with popular culture and "fitting in" that he kills people in order to retain some individualism or sense of autonomy. *American Psycho*'s protagonist, Patrick Bateman, creates endless lists of restaurants, music, and possessions, cataloguing an existence spliced together by goods and not ideas. Thus, each author demonstrates a social hierarchy that devalues the individual and prioritizes a persona that seeks to belong to an "exclusive" world by buying his way in. Each novel shows the dehumanizing effects of consumerism upon the individual, particularly in the way morality is traded for commerce, and the individual for consumer.

Part of this societal hierarchy, Amis and Ellis suggest, manifests itself in the manners imposed on these characters to yield this homogenous behavior and market-driven identity formation. Amis portrays John Self as a particularly *unmannerly* man. From his rude treatment of women to his pandering to those with more money than he has, Self emulates the self-absorption perpetuated by consumers who embody the aphorism that "the customer is always right." In his relationships with women, Self also displays the manners of a man caught between the fantasy of "owning" a woman for

money and recreating a traditional domestic relationship with one who provides stability and affluence. These sexual manners, Amis illustrates, ultimately provide insight into the way the domestic and pornographic intersect and have transformed each other. Similarly, Ellis utilizes manners as a means of exploring character failings within society. He portrays Patrick Bateman as a yuppie, the American counterpart to the New Man, who focuses on his looks and business acumen to collect gourmet restaurant experiences, popular music, and sexual partners. Bateman's manners are publicly impeccable, but his private asides about killing women or sexually manipulating them reveal a private unmannerliness that comes to light within intimate scenes. By depicting Patrick's torture and murder of various women and a male coworker, Ellis reveals a chilling set of behaviors or manners that seek to achieve control or feeling through the brutal mistreatment of others. Worse, Ellis demonstrates, Patrick's cruelty towards the women in his life goes unremarked, but his constant insults and demeaning slurs indicate a more subtle unmannerliness—the sexism latent in his publicly desirable nature. In replicating Patrick's unmannerly “manners” through other men, Ellis implies that such anti-manners are not the exception, but the norm.<sup>324</sup>

Just as the novel of manners configures identity through a gendered perspective, Amis and Ellis also explore problems of gender in their novels of manners, albeit through a pornographic perspective. Such a view of gendered identity helps the reader understand the influence of society upon the individual, particularly during the consumer-oriented era of the 1980s. John Self's inability to experience sexual fulfillment, despite his apparent voracity, calls into question the success of his pornographic gaze and consumer identity.<sup>325</sup> Likewise, Ellis characterizes Patrick Bateman by a rigid sexual identity,

though he engages in sexually deviant behaviors: while he encourages women to perform sexual acts on each other, he expresses repulsion for homosexuality and imposes a demanding and unyielding hierarchy in relation to his sexual partners. Thus, Patrick embodies the conservative gender values espoused by the Reagan administration, even as his deviant manners would seem to set him apart from his peers.<sup>326</sup> In this way, Ellis explores the destructive ends that emerge from restrictive gender expectations.

Just as *The Secret Agent* deliberately juxtaposes the pornographic with the domestic, both *Money* and *American Psycho* portray a pornographic and domestic that coexist in order to transform the nature of the domestic environment. Amis and Ellis reflect the changes wrought by a 1980s society focused more on commercialism and corporate capitalism than individuality. They both utilize domestic scenes, particularly in the way they depict their protagonists' sexual and pornographic proclivities, in order to demonstrate that a relationship between the domestic and pornographic emerges when placed together. What transpires is a critique of the fantasies construed around domestic spaces, whether a need to conform to social morality or the desire to subvert social morality through excessive reliance upon pornographic fantasies. Ultimately, Amis and Ellis construct the pornographic domestic in order to demonstrate the moral vacuity brought on by consumer-oriented social values, and they suggest that the individual cannot be both a consumer and a personal entity within the Reagan or Thatcher governments.

Both Amis and Ellis employ the genre of novel of manners but revise it to reflect changing sexual norms within the domestic sphere, as well as the way in which novels are configured in a postmodern, consumer-oriented culture. *Money* satirizes the manners

of a consumer unmoored from the niceties of a bourgeois, tradition-oriented society—instead depicting the grossness of his tastes as a means of critiquing the shallowness of popular culture. Further, Amis's novel uses the plotting (or lack of plotting) in a postmodern narrative to demonstrate the inability to “resolve” the contemporary issues of personal identity and domestic fantasy within a narrative-oriented plot, instead using the novel of manners as a means to show the ways in which a consumer society has failed its citizens. Likewise, *American Psycho* chronicles two extremes of manners—that of conformity through immersion in shallow yuppie culture and, conversely, the desire to exert some authority through deviant, murderous actions—to present the dehumanizing effects of consumerism and sexism on the individual's sense of morality and identity. Ellis employs postmodern style to great effect, showing how deemphasizing characterization and plot in a narrative reflects the problem of homogenizing culture in larger Western society. Both texts demonstrate that the novel of manners, far from dying out, can utilize contemporary textual elements and marry them with the style and concerns of precursor texts, to show the problems present between an individual and society.

Further, since both Amis and Ellis utilize aesthetic qualities of postmodern style (especially in the way they characterize protagonists and plot the novels through endless replications with no “clear” conclusion), their texts do not readily identify as novels of manners. Within the constellation of the genre's conventions, however, both *Money* and *American Psycho* demonstrate aesthetic qualities, albeit in a revised form, which reflect changes in literary form throughout the 1980s. What we glean from these texts as novels of manners also speaks to the flexibility and longevity of a genre considered moribund by



scholars since the 1990 (notably Tuttleton, Milne,. Bowers, Brothers, and Klinkowitz); the new novel of manners gives us a new frame by which to study contemporary novels.

Amis and Ellis also employ a pornographic lens to highlight the traits of a consumer society and demonstrate how constructions of domestic fantasy prove to be illusory and faulty in depictions of gender and sexuality. As with *The Secret Agent*, in which the domestic and pornographic co-exist within a text, both *Money* and *American Psycho* appropriate elements of the pornographic in order to construct an attitude embodied by the New Man/yuppie persona during the 1980s. Stripped of the patriotic rhetoric and adherence to family values present in post-war identity constructions, the New Man focuses on his appearance and bachelor identity, which encourages sexually promiscuous manners and a need for money to maintain an affluent, easygoing lifestyle. Depicted as an authoritative figure in society, the New Man is wealthy and influential, so long as he aligns with the consumer society's ideal of how he should appear. Each novel explores the nature of power through a wealthy consumer protagonist who ultimately fails to achieve the strict hierarchical authority his money, gender, and position promise. In these failures, Amis and Ellis demonstrate the futility of strict gendered models of identity and behavior in men, particularly when these rigid sets of manners break down.

I argue that the pornographic, when viewed within the domestic scenes of a novel of manners, does not destroy the domestic but instead exposes a much more destructive force that has come to be indicative of it. Further, the intersection of the pornographic and domestic in a novel of manners reveals a new means by which we understand the public and private spheres. When seen through a pornographic lens, the domestic becomes public, regulated by social niceties, and the pornographic becomes private, thus

allowing secret, taboo fantasies to retain their shapes within the individual's mind. Yet the implication of such a divide means that society has a greater grasp on spheres formerly considered private and beyond the reach of society. The shift toward consumer-oriented roles marks a change in expressions of gender and citizenship within the state. Thus, the individual retains an interest in the domestic, and the novel of manners is the genre by which we can best understand the relationships among gender dynamics, the domestic, and state authority.

### **What is a pornographic domestic? Defining the Terms of Neoliberal Domestic Space**

In order to make the case for a pornographic gaze that illuminates our understanding of domestic space, one must define such concepts to understand how each has diverged and intersected in this study, and will thus bring new light to the pornographic domestic—a new concept altogether. As discussed in my first chapter, the domestic in a novel deals in the ordinary, everyday lives and routines of a specific society's citizens, often the middle or bourgeois classes.<sup>327</sup> Susan Fraiman identifies characteristics typical of the domestic novel as “domestic settings, ordinary people, [and] plots centred on courtship and kinship” (169).<sup>328</sup> Therefore, scenes of homes, everyday life, and special events in the middle-class family life take precedence, especially in developing the intimacy of the family within the home. Such scenes do not occur in public, because intimacy occludes the kind of social mores and values enforced by society.<sup>329</sup> Thus, the domestic acts as a social institution that is both beyond the sphere of public reach and paradoxically still influenced by ideology and national social policy. This distinction matters in understanding domestic fiction, because it explains the way writers configure character behavior as a means of reflecting on how society is

constructed. Further, writers who create domestic fiction (or the domestic in fiction) use plotting to demonstrate the influence of domestic spaces (and domesticity as an ideological construction) on both everyday life and public policy and morality.

Scholars also categorize the domestic novel by certain plotting and characterization choices that set it apart from other subgenres of literature. The plot of a domestic novel entails scenes of everyday life, especially within the home, referred to as the domestic. Fraiman describes the domestic novel as including a “domestic aesthetic,” defined as “authors and characters alike [who] attend closely and fondly to everyday domestic details, concerns, and values” (173).<sup>330</sup> These everyday details, for novelists of manners, formulate the means by which to illustrate the influence of society over the individual, as well as the moral problems that comprise the tension between individual and society. Thus, the domestic within a novel of manners acts as both a theoretical concept and a physical space to explore tensions of morality and identity within the individual’s formation of self.

The domestic setting in the novel of manners similarly utilizes a microcosm of society, but does so in order to examine social problems. If not to critique society, the domestic offers the reader a glimpse of a larger political scene from the perspective of seemingly insignificant domestic or intimate scenes.<sup>331</sup> Because the novel of manners focuses on social critique or commentary through small-scale lenses, namely that of small communities or the individual’s home, the construction of the domestic and the various factors that affect the realm of the domestic figure largely in a novel of manners. Though representations of the domestic vary, certain regional, socioeconomic, and other

identifying factors that include—but are not limited to—religious affiliations, historical context, ethnicity, and, of course, gender, comprise traits of the domestic in literature.

On a simplistic level, domestic space represents an individual's home, commonly associated within a private space out of the public sphere.<sup>332</sup> The domestic requires knowledge of itself as a construct, one that avoids the public eye and the market, preserving itself as a privileged site, known only to the members of the household. Yet avoidance of the public eye is more easily claimed than actually enforced.<sup>333</sup> Thus, notions of secrecy, privacy, and interiority within the domestic are complicated by the complex relationship to the public sphere, especially considering that social authority fashions itself after the nuclear familial relationship—rendering the “private” family into a public and national relationship.<sup>334</sup>

Yet the domestic functions as more than a physical space within a late twentieth-century novel of manners. The increasing privatization of social institutions in both the United States and Britain, such as phone companies, schools, and hospitals, demonstrates the influence of social authority and corporations over the domestic.<sup>335</sup> In tracking the breakdown between binaries of public and private in social space, Jürgen Habermas notes the intrusion of social authority has always been present within the domestic: “The shrinking of the private sphere into the inner areas of a conjugal family largely relieved of function and weakened in authority—the quiet bliss of homeyness—provided only the illusion of a perfectly private personal sphere” (159). This “illusion” becomes more apparent in the face of privatization, which began to manifest itself as early as the 1970s in the United States and the 1980s in Britain.<sup>336</sup> Since the domestic was never really a completely private place occluded from public reach, it becomes a natural extension of

the marketplace. The domestic as a space in fiction tracks social and cultural changes in the very way authors portray it in fiction. Because privatization has changed the nature of social services in the home, it invokes a new kind of consumption and identity within the home, just as it invites non-romantic relationships to form this portion of society.<sup>337</sup> The domestic novel, in tracking the family, shows how our understanding of the domestic as a space and concept has been permuted and diffused, along with the broader society in which it is embedded.

Thus, the domestic novel has changed as a literary form, since the physical space comprising this genre has been transformed by globalism and capitalism in the late twentieth century. The domestic as both physical space and theoretical concept is an important category for the novel of manners, and the individual's relationship to society is a quality that sets this genre apart from other literary forms.<sup>338</sup> These conventions and customs are echoed within the domestic, which acts as a microcosm for larger societal forces. Therefore, by viewing the domestic, we can better grasp how a society expects its citizens to behave, particularly in understanding the indeterminacy of "public" and "private" spaces in a late twentieth-century domestic environment. Novelists of manners thrive in this indeterminate space and demonstrate the tensions of manners that must shift in various public and private settings.

Contrasting the view of the domestic as a space in which to understand social and moral problems, the pornographic in literature views the domestic as a physical space in which the individual accedes to society's moral values—and where such morals impede on the individual's true values. Further, the pornographic views the domestic as the physical space in which sex occurs outside cultural norms of heterosexual marital

relationships—therefore, sex can be deviant, filthy, or exert authority against women in a manner considered unacceptable by social mores. Therefore, authors who create pornographic texts evade the moral strictures of the domestic in traditional novels as a means for readers to indulge forbidden fantasies and desires. The pornographic contains a twofold definition: either the materials sold for sexual arousal or sexual materials designed to objectify women.<sup>339</sup> This second definition also categorizes pornography as a deviant and harmful activity, again influencing the way it is interpreted. In establishing the pornographic through its deviancy, we can then understand how a pornographic extension of the domestic reveals a private sphere that has been perverted and exposed for its complex depiction of social morality and individual desires.

The pornographic in literature provides a sense of titillation for its readers, and it gives an outlet for mediating deviant fantasies considered unspeakable or taboo.<sup>340</sup> Within the pornographic, men and women are considered as equally eager to engage in sexual activities and both are treated as sexual beings in pornographic literature. This sense of equality only relates to sexual readiness, however.<sup>341</sup> The body becomes an entity and not an individual, needed only for sexual functions and not characterization. By distinguishing an individual from a sexual being, the pornographic diverges from the kind of character development found in the novel of manners and uses stereotypes of heterosexual men and women in order to produce a good that achieves sexual desires—these desires do not emerge from the established life of the individual within the domestic, but instead become a product for private consumption.

The intense de-personalization that occurs in pornographic texts, as with postmodern literature, mirrors the transformation of the individual from citizen to

consumer in 1980s neoliberal society. Just as the pornographic abandons characterization of the individual, the postmodern also places emphasis on breaking down the boundaries of literature, and it seeks to magnify the abstract and de-personalized self within a text. Therefore, a pornographic text illuminates the changes wrought by postmodern fiction upon the literary tradition. And within the pornographic gaze utilized by postmodern authors, particularly Amis and Ellis, we return to the domestic in order to understand why the novel of manners best highlights the changes wrought to society by privatization and neoliberal social policies.

We see the pornographic merge with the domestic in order to generate sexual fulfillment. In this incarnation of the domestic, the extensive descriptions of sex scenes render the domestic as a physical space to facilitate forbidden fantasies. This space therefore facilitates an exchange of sexual services without the expected economic exchanges that occur in a traditional home. Steven Marcus refers to this space as a “pornotopia”:

Pornotopia is literally a world of grace abounding to the chief of sinners. All men in it are always and infinitely potent; all women are fecundate with lust and flow inexhaustibly with sap or juice or both. Everyone is always ready for anything, and everyone is infinitely generous with his substance. It is always summertime in pornotopia, and it is a summertime of the emotions as well—no one is ever jealous, possessive, or really angry. All our aggressions are perfectly fused with our sexuality, and the only rage is the rage of lust, a happy fury indeed. (273)

The concept of the pornotopia reinforces the fantasy that the man is always desirous of sexual activity and that the woman is always receptive or game.<sup>342</sup> In the pornotopia, the fantasy becomes a means of expressing a kind of reality that does not exist, particularly for those individuals who do not have the time, resources, or imagination to enact such sexual scenes at any time of day and with any number of partners without the fear of dire

social consequences. Ultimately, pornotopia functions as a setting that exists only to create sexual opportunities, implying that the domestic functions solely as a space to mask or enact these sexual scenarios.

Thus, the domestic becomes a site where identity is mediated solely through sexual behavior and the exchanges of power that occur through sexual acts. While a sexual relationship in domestic fiction promises fulfillment, the pornographic seeks to delay this fulfillment and perpetuate the fantasy of sexual desire.<sup>343</sup> The pornographic is a private, highly interior space for the individual to enact his or her fantasies that would not be appreciated or understood within the public sphere. This sense of highly interior private space ultimately appeals to the fantasy of a private sexual life unregulated by manners or niceties associated with marriage and domestic institutions increasingly under state influence. Further, the pornographic illuminates the ways the domestic has changed so drastically as to force pornographic behaviors and sexual identities upon the individual, particularly in response to the commodification of the body.

When associated with late capitalism in the 1980s, the pornographic illuminates the ways in which the domestic is perverted by commercialism and simultaneously perverts the authenticity of the pornographic. When seen through a pornographic gaze, the domestic restricts the freedom of sexual expression desired in pornography. Yet the domestic also becomes a regulated space, its morals guided by the economic exchanges occurring in interpersonal relationships in an era of privatization. Within the economic system, pornography functions as a capitalization of the domestic. Since exchanges of money, power, or sex occur within the home space, rendering the domestic as an extension of the marketplace, the commodification of the domestic highlights the social



and moral problems inherent in a consumer-oriented society. With consumption comes loss of identity, and this consumption overtakes both the moral safety of the domestic and the fantasy-driven individuality of the pornographic. With a new definition of the domestic, then, the pornographic transforms the concept of the home and reflects how postmodernity and capitalism have changed conceptions of the domestic and the individual in literature.

### **Breaking the Narrative Frame: the Pornographic Domestic as a Novel of Manners**

Definitions and descriptions of the pornographic and domestic genres separately set up economies of power occurring within the domestic sphere: gender, sexuality, class, and domesticity all become intertwined in representations of the novel. The domestic novel uses domestic space as a means of exploring larger social issues through the home, whereas the pornographic subsumes the domestic in order to reduce the interpersonal and social exchanges to one of sexual activities. Yet within both genres, a series of manners begin to emerge, whether through the enactment of everyday activities or fulfilling a sexual command or request. Each genre reveals a set of unexpressed nonverbal codes, cues that prompt a series of behaviors, though each set of behaviors is prompted by a different set of codes. In the pornographic world, the man is always-already engaging in sexual activity, and the woman is always willing to provide sex, especially when related to deviant or fetishized behaviors. Such a setup echoes the heteronormative economy of societal gender roles, in which the man initiates intimacies and financially establishes the household, and the woman reciprocates and maintains the home. The pornographic, then, seems to parody or hyper-emulate the domestic by short-circuiting the home-oriented plot in domestic fiction and revealing only sexual liaisons.<sup>344</sup> Unlike the domestic novel, in

which sex occurs outside the fictional setting, the setting in a pornographic novel consists only of sexual liaisons that occur within the moment, without regard to its place in time and history. This contrast highlights the differing attitudes towards explicit sex in literature—historically forbidden or unmentioned in domestic novels, such graphic fantasies comprise the sole purpose for pornographic fiction, albeit at the cost of other plot elements.<sup>345</sup>

Sexual play further highlights the male-oriented power hierarchy for both pornographic and domestic elements in texts. Because sexual fantasies related to auto-eroticism, lesbianism, sodomy, and activities related to BDSM are frequently featured in historical and current pornographic texts, the heterosexual male's power receives more attention and development, especially if the woman functions as an object of desire and not a partner in the acts. In this schema, the male's assumed sense of authority over the woman is accepted and not questioned. In Victorian English society, the pornotopia takes on the form of anonymously published literature, such as *My Secret Life*. In this literary context, men seeking to maintain a publicly acceptable sexual demeanor could discreetly cultivate fantasies of sexually deviant behavior not condoned within the marriage relationship. Late twentieth-century changes to society, namely those in economic structure and government authority, have enabled the pornographic to become a mainstream feature of cultural artifacts. The rise of a masculine identity in the 1980s—the New Man, or his United States counterpart, the yuppie—has made pornographic features in literature and film culturally acceptable.<sup>346</sup> The materially-driven, consumer-oriented New Man persona renders pornographic material both socially acceptable and normal as part of the young man's initiation into adult society.<sup>347</sup>

The pornographic relates to the domestic, then, by further obfuscating the binaries of public and private constructed in domestic texts. Novelists of manners position the domestic as an autonomous space where the individual can enact his or her sense of morality beyond the surveillance of the public sphere. Likewise, novelists of pornographic fiction argue that in order to create personal identity, the individual must navigate his or her secret desires away from the mores and morals of society. The values espoused by society demand uniformity of sexual expression, adherence to social mores, and restriction of individual expression—ultimately, such values influence the domestic in ways that forbid sexual freedom of desire or expression. Therefore, the pornographic exposes the domestic as a space regulated by moral values of the society depicted, and it enables a different set of social exchanges through sexual politics and authority structures involving both the body and sexual acts.

One such exchange that alters when the pornographic introduces itself into the domestic is that of marriage and the family structure. In the negotiation for individual authority, marriage indicates the kinds of hierarchy present within a familial structure and presents the exchanges taking place within the home—whether economic, authoritative, or even sexual—in a way that underlines the nature of authority present in society.<sup>348</sup> Within a domestic environment, social status is earned by an exchange for sex and wealth, whether through dowry or inheritance. Novelists of manners explore the tensions inherent in such contracts to provide commentary on the larger socio-political issues roiling in the national sphere.<sup>349</sup> The pornographic, in erasing the social institution of marriage, lays bare the kinds of exchanges taking place within the domestic sphere, revealing the kinds of hierarchies prevailing in sexual relationships.<sup>350</sup> Yet the liberation

promised by the pornographic also gives way to the sense of hierarchy that occurs through sexual acts, desires, and fantasies demanded by the consumer (assumed to be heterosexual men) and produced by the marketplace to meet such demands.<sup>351</sup> As a result, the pornographic becomes a means of revealing those power struggles within the domestic and may in fact illuminate a domestic environment susceptible to transformation by social forces in a consumer-driven world.

The importation of pornographic elements into the domestic reveals a shift to consumer-oriented structures of authority in the late 1980s, especially in relation to sexual identities and exertion of power within the home. Further, the transformation of the domestic in postmodern culture, especially in simulations of the real world, can best be seen through a pornographic gaze. In this view, sexual acts and exchanges of money, sex, or power occur to mask the absence of reality in the setting depicted.<sup>352</sup> Through their depiction of both the pornographic and domestic together, Amis and Ellis demonstrate a cultural shift from domestic ideals and their achievement or failure to an era of consumerism and replication until no original ideals or morals seem to exist for a sustained length of time.<sup>353</sup> The pornographic domestic produces an economy of excess—in which supply trumps demand and saturates the market with more product than needed by the consumer—which mirrors the cultural exchanges occurring in the public markets. Ultimately, the pornographic renders meaningful domestic experiences null, replacing them with simulations of domestic fantasy that are enhanced by sexual acts forbidden by social norms.

Because the pornographic enacts the consumption process seen in 1980s neoliberal society, its presence as a marketable good forms a natural extension of the

marketplace by transferring ideals of consumption into domestic spaces. Whether the pornographic product features women or men, the idea behind the artifact becomes a commodity for the consumer.<sup>354</sup> The pornographic product becomes the property of the consumer, so the person objectified (typified as a woman in scholarship by Robert Jensen, Tara Baxter, and Andrea Dworkin, among others) is a “good” to be used at the consumer’s discretion or pleasure.<sup>355</sup> Thus, the pornographic as a good becomes another means of demonstrating the authority some men still try to assume in the twentieth century. In the commodification of power through material goods, the pornographic reveals a domestic space appropriated by free-market capitalism. While consensus politics formerly rendered individuals as citizens within a somewhat democratic system, government authority transformed the home into a market. Two consequences have emerged from this system of enterprise: material goods take precedence over intangible, unquantifiable relationships; and existing relationships have been subsumed for fantasy images and commerce to create sexual fulfillment.

When viewed through a pornographic lens, the domestic becomes a more transparent economy by which we understand the means of gender and power. The pornographic demonstrates the fragile nature of power and identity in the so-called private spheres. When domestic space becomes pornographic, it must ultimately compete with Habermas’s ideals of the marketplace and the intellectual institution.<sup>356</sup> Such a transformation causes social morality to pervade the intellectual freedom of the domestic and forces the individual to evaluate the impact of their consumer identities in light of moral vacuity. The consequences of consumerism and moral disorder become most

apparent when the pornographic gaze enacts its view of society in two novels: *Money* and *American Psycho*.

### **“My Pornographic Sheen”: Martin Amis’s *Money* as a Novel of Manners**

Martin Amis experiments with the novel of manners by imposing a pornographic gaze upon the domestic sphere as a commentary on the privatization of the home and commercialization of the individual’s sexual identity. Through the character of John Self, Amis constructs the pornographic as an unstable concept with which to view the domestic, particularly in light of the socioeconomic conditions roiling in Thatcher’s Britain.<sup>357</sup> Amis highlights the commercialism, materialism, and consumerism present, using the neoliberal era as a means of depicting change in gender and identity. He implies that in the 1980s, gender roles found themselves shifting from a more communal sense of domestic establishment to a more commercial and impersonal identity. With the emergence of privatization, the domestic becomes another arena of economic influence. Self’s pornographic domestic thus functions similarly to capitalism’s destructive influence on all relationships, especially the most intimate ones. Amis’s characterization of Self further illuminates the struggle wrought by New Man masculinity to find itself amidst the acquisition of material goods.

Amis constructs a pornographic domestic as a means of critiquing the emphasis on consumerism in society, particularly as it changes and perverts the home. Through the overuse of pornography, Amis satirizes the economies of exchange that occur within the domestic. In order to analyze the moral and social problems present in his contemporary society, Amis relies on a variety of narrative strategies that simultaneously construct and challenge the frame of the novel of manners: he develops a pornographic gaze applied to

the domestic to clearly delineate materialism and gender hierarchy; he tracks changes to the domestic and traditional manners; and he uses that pornographic lens to reveal a breakdown in manners that reflects the kinds of moral and social values held by society. Ultimately, Amis utilizes the novel of manners to demonstrate the influence of the consumer society over individual morality and identity, even in the private confines of the domestic. Amis's critique of social shallowness decries the era of privatization and neoliberalism that changed a society from consensus to consumerism.

To apply a pornographic gaze to the society constructed in the novel, Amis first characterizes John Self as a consumer and producer of pornography. We see this consumption through an active seeking out of pornography and developing a taste for certain kinds of materials, which dominates Self's daily life. Self concedes, "Pornography is habit-forming, you know. Oh yes it is. I am a pornography addict for instance with a three-mag-a-week and at-least-one-movie habit to sustain. That's why I need all this money. I've got all these chicks to support..." (44). He admits to having mostly shallow relationships with women, while he forms his most lasting liaisons with the images in the magazines.<sup>358</sup> He legitimizes his pornographic tastes by cultivating false relationships with the women in the magazines, and tries to make his real-life acquaintances fit the pornographic perspective he has cultivated. The implications of such a distorted mindset will yield disappointment when his attempts to dominate in his relationships ultimately fail.<sup>359</sup>

The failure to achieve control of the domestic through the pornographic comprises most of *Money's* conflict. Most of Self's attempts at making his relationships pornographic end unsuccessfully, as his own habits undermine his authority as a

pornographer. He woefully ruminates, “Why do they happen to me, these numb, flushed, unanswerable, these pornographic things? Well, I guess if you’re a pornographic person, then pornographic things happen to you” (174). Amis makes the connection between Self’s identity and habits by collapsing them into the same—thus, he identifies as a pornographic person, and as a result, pornographic opportunities and images fall into his path.<sup>360</sup> Such a mindset prioritizes the pornographic over real life, and it gives a point-of-view that biases his outlook and brings in a new “contract” for his domestic environment. Just as John Self conflates his sense of selfhood with a pornographic mindset, so he conflates his vision of the domestic with a pornographic atmosphere.

Through the pornographic sense of domination, Amis implies that gender dynamics also shift from subtle authority of the pornographer to one that is exaggerated and overt. He depicts Self with an unapologetic gaze at his sexual objects (in this case, women) and a sense of ownership over their bodies—in this way, Amis links Self’s status as a consumer and connoisseur of pornography to that of the citizen’s consumption of private goods in a market-driven economy.<sup>361</sup> As Self and Fielding Goodney cast women for the film *Money*, they order those auditioning to strip completely naked and dance, ostensibly to display their sexual attractiveness. Self admits, “I watched through a sheen of shame and fear, of lust and laughter. I watched through my pornographic sheen. And the girls submitted to it, the pornography. Professional city-dwellers, they were experienced in the twentieth century” (185). In this scene, Amis skews the power hierarchy even more overtly towards the New Man—the “experienced” women realize that in order to receive recognition, they must sell their bodies for male consumption. In this instance, they offer their bodies as goods, and men consume the bodies as



pornographic products. John particularly notices the “pornographic sheen” through which he watches the women, which denotes a gaze that skews his perception of them and transforms their naked bodies into something pornographic for his entertainment. Amis depicts John as self-aware of his own mental traps but nevertheless compliant of such snares. This trait marks him as a passive consumer of pornography and middlebrow culture in general.<sup>362</sup>

Amis constructs Self’s relationship with Selina Street as a means of exploring the changes in gendered relationships through this pornographic gaze. Because Self is most concerned with consuming that which brings him pleasure, Selina the *individual* matters less than her body parts fragmented into the ones that bring him sexual pleasure. One domestic tableau illustrates this shift proficiently: while watching Selina undress, he notes that her clothing accentuates her body and makes her look like a sexually charged version of herself. He muses, “Her sexual features aren’t particularly full or plump. They’re just incredibly prominent. Bum, box, belly, breasts—just incredibly prominent. She looked so pornographic in her gimmicks that I wanted her to take them off again, or better, much better, push bits of them aside” (161). Self uses the image of his real-life girlfriend to create a fantasy image of her, in which she reveals only those parts of her body that bring him sexual pleasure. Selina has been reduced from a person to a series of fragmented images—a simulacrum of a woman—in his mind, because of his pornographic gaze. Amis reminds us that the pornographic resides within this mindset and diminishes the individual’s morality, mirroring the same kind of consumption occurring in public.

With the use of this pornographic gaze, Amis illustrates how the pornographic transforms both the domestic and the sense of manners that traditionally accompany the domestic within the novel of manners. While these transformations have caused scholars to claim other narrative forms besides the novel of manners, Amis still utilizes a kind of manners—albeit different from the genteel kinds associated with the genre—to demonstrate the change in social values. In *Money*, Amis uses the pornographic to depict a domestic consumed by the materialism present both in pornography and in culture at large. Selina Street exemplifies this new domestic environment, negotiating her pornographic performances in Self's bedroom in order to earn capital for herself. Rather than behaving like a domestic goddess or submissive wife, she fuels a series of cuckolding fantasies for him: "She behaves like someone who is hyperunfaithful. But she behaves like that because she knows I like it" (125). Her sexual services in turn provide her with a kind of power over Self and transform the domestic into an exchange of services. *He* wants a sexual being to enact his fantasies, and *she* wants to be compensated for her services. Her lack of her own money renders her helpless within a capitalist system. Therefore, in order to attain any wealth, she must be able to sell her services to a consumer with ready money—and that consumer is John Self, seeking pornographic services.<sup>363</sup> In this exchange, Self and Selina emulate the marital relationship—through her sexual favors, she receives the security of a home, while John uses his money to achieve her sexual favors.<sup>364</sup> This relationship exemplifies the short-circuiting of the domestic environment, because the pornographic gaze reduces Self's domestic setting to the pure exchange of sex and power that always undergirded it. Rather than achieving

some form of mutually beneficial relationship, the pornographic domestic becomes another market in which to exchange services.

Amis contrasts Self's pornographic domestic relationship with Selina by depicting a hyper-traditional domestic scene with Martina Twain, satirizing the heteronormative values expected of heterosexual couples in neoliberal society. Amis simulates the domestic scene to interrogate nostalgia for a domestic that never existed.<sup>365</sup> Amidst even the most raucous sexual encounters, Self recognizes that a publicly acceptable version of sexual manners, including marriage and children, will grant him more status in Thatcher's England, because he will conform to social values.<sup>366</sup> He retreats to this version of the domestic with Martina Twain after discovering that her husband has been sleeping with Selina.<sup>367</sup> In this new setting, Amis depicts the routine, order, and moneyed world of the traditional domestic, albeit sexless in its routine.<sup>368</sup> Martina's bourgeois domestic ideals echoes the sort of domestic ideal highlighted by past novels of manners and seems to defy the capitalist nature of the twentieth-century domestic, even as its very nature depends on an affluence that stems from capitalist enterprises.

The domestic that Amis recreates through John's relationship with Martina simulates the idealism of marriage, while at the same time exaggerating the manners expected within a heteronormative society. While John and Martina engage in domestic and public marital activities—eating together, going to cultural events—Amis exaggerates the scenes for comedic effect, satirizing the domesticity brought on by capitalism. Their meals are punctuated by Martina's effortless etiquette and John's painstaking attempts at table manners, again emphasizing John's displacement from domesticity and gentrified manners.<sup>369</sup> John notes, "I am watching my glass, I am

watching my weight, I am watching Martina Twain. I hold my knife like I hold a pencil. I don't chew right and I talk with my mouth full. It's too late to change. She is a meticulous eater with a modest appetite" (296). Here, manners and routines of the home demonstrate the economies of the domestic—class, money, and the right education bring the expectation that good manners will naturally accompany these desirable traits, whereas those not of the privileged class are assumed to lack the traits necessary for good manners and gentility. John's dream of a pornographic domestic represents a means to attain power without the education or social capital required to do so.

Further, Amis satirizes these domestic manners to critique the Thatcherite ideals of the nuclear family. In so doing, he demonstrates the influence that this neoliberal, pseudo-Victorian society exerts over the domestic. While John and Martina may engage in socially acceptable public activities, Amis describes them in such a way as to simulate domestic bliss and demonstrate social pressure to purchase or obtain goods and services that are considered proper for a bourgeois couple.<sup>370</sup> John's pornographic mindset has turned him into a consumer of sexually explicit goods, alcohol, and junk food, but even the act of going to an opera fills him with the need to enact and "play" a certain role. He refers to the opera through his clothing, making the assumption that if he has the right clothes—that is, purchased or acquired the "right" look—then he will conform to a bourgeois social ideal. In describing the overly flamboyant and mismatched outfit that overdresses John for the opera, Amis calls the reader's attention to the sense of accomplishment tied to the clothing: "She hadn't remarked on my evening wear—the palatinate reefer jacket, the plump-winged bowtie, the pink cummerbund that had taken my fancy, the lacquered spats—so I assumed I looked the part" (276).<sup>371</sup> John's tentative

confidence through his clothing again places him as a consumer within a system. His conformity to a social standard requires him to look a certain part, and his acceptance hinges on his ability to look like he belongs. More importantly, he must have the capital to purchase the goods that will lend him the appearance of conformity.<sup>372</sup>

Therefore, with a domestic simultaneously changed by society and the influence of the pornographic, a new set of manners emerges that still enforces hierarchy upon the individuals within the society. Self's pornographic manners have enabled him to take sexual charge of the individuals within his home—his behaviors recall scenes from a pornographic film. At breakfast with Selina, he interrupts the television and Selina's personal space in order to make the scene as sexually charged as possible: "I was by now straddling Selina's kitchen chair, turning one of her nipples in my hand and rolling the other round my mouth like a peppermint" (225). Though Selina asks for an explanation, she understands his pornographic manners and ultimately manipulates him in order to trick him out of his money. Martina, conversely, keeps her sexual behaviors to the bedroom, and John finds that in the confines of a more traditional domestic, he cannot seem to exercise his same sexual pleasures. He recounts, "We've sacked out together—what is it?—ten nights running. And I've yet to, I haven't, I don't seem to be able to...There. You said it for me. They're very difficult. They're not easy at all. *That's* why they're called *hard-ons*" (298). His sexuality, when constrained to a particular occasion, becomes stunted by the restrictive manners imposed by society.<sup>373</sup>

When these conventional and pornographic manners break down, Amis proposes, the pornographic gaze enables us to see the strictures placed upon the individual by society. Further, this breakdown of manners helps us understand the shifts in moral

values placed by society upon the individual, particularly within the domestic space. Such a shift becomes most apparent in *Money* when the pornographic and domestic collide. Despite his seeming happiness in ordered routines with Martina, John admits to having a fascination for the pornographic liberties he can take with Selina's body.<sup>374</sup> He admits, "Selina, she really has the franchise on these old loins of mine. Authentically corrupt, seriously vulgar, intensely twentieth century, she will always be the ghost writer of my poor pornography" (319). He allows himself to be seduced by Selina, only to have the liaison shattered by Martina's entrance:

A pretty adult situation, and yet Martina looked like a child. She looked like a child who has suffered more reverses in a single day than ever before in living memory, and is now poised between refusal and acceptance of the fact that life might be significantly worse than she thought, that life was unkind in its essence, and no one had given her fair warning. (320)

Here, John realizes that he has breached the decorum of manners expected of him in a heterosexual, monogamous relationship—he has enacted his cuckolding fantasy, but he cuckolds the woman (already abandoned by her cheating husband) who can offer him stability and a way out of the pornographic consumption in which he has been entrapped.<sup>375</sup> In this instance, the moral values for the family unit remain constant, even amidst an era of instant gratification, junk food, and easy access to pornography. John's failure to uphold this family standard ultimately leads to the denouement in the text—the discovery that he has been cheated out of his money by Fielding Goodney and that Selina set him up to be caught by Martina. After a failed suicide attempt, John reverts to traditional domesticity with Georgina, a resolution that appears to abandon the pornographic for a life that conforms to societal norms. While this ending seems to reify the triumph of the domestic, Amis instead implies that the problems plaguing the self in

neoliberal England have not vanished with the disappearance of the pornographic: “Life is pretty good over here in England but this is a tough planet and don’t tell me any different. In the best, the freest, the richest latitudes, it’s still a tough globe” (361). The resolution, therefore, acts as an anti-climax, for Self’s identity has been dissolved, and his personal sense of morality has been replaced by social views of morality.

Beyond the sense of moral values influencing social mores, the pornographic domestic reveals that individual morality has been replaced by commercial values. This sense of commercialism and consumerism simulates the ideals of virtue while actually treating virtue like a purchasable good, rather than an intangible standard for living. Amis depicts this commercial barrage of goods and advertising through John’s tinnitus, which has him hearing things “that aren’t strictly auditory. Jet take-offs, breaking glass, ice scratched from the tray” (7). This aural disease represents the larger cultural malaise when consumerism overtakes individual values.<sup>376</sup> Consequently, when moral values are replaced by consumerism, social mores change and are influenced by the values of capitalism. Because John Self is a figure of money in the beginning of the novel, his bad manners are excused or ignored. He has the money to obtain what he wants, and thus his peers excuse his social transgressions.<sup>377</sup> Therefore, because he exercises bad manners without fear of reproach—that is, until his money runs out—social norms prioritize money over a set of behaviors or virtues.

Further, the pornographic domestic reveals that the demarcations between public and private have been dissolved within the domestic through the rise of commercialism. Amis depicts this new merging of the public and private within the domestic through the way Selina configures her relationship to John and to men at large. Her public and private

selves are closely mirrored by the way she garners attention and favors for herself from men. John explains that his sexual relationship with Selina hinges on who wants to go to bed with whom, and their talk centers on money: “While making love, we often talk about money. I like it. I like that dirty talk” (143). Thus, Selina’s public performance reflects her ability to draw men towards her with their checkbooks, and she mimics her private performances in public, in order to attain the social cachet she desires.<sup>378</sup> The mindset of pornography, which enacts its desires in private, creates a set of pornographic manners and tastes that transform the domestic into another commercial public space. Thus, as seen through John Self, these tastes transform the domestic into a place of commerce, rather than upholding a set of personal values.<sup>379</sup> In creating a pornographic domestic, Amis echoes the kinds of economic exchange occurring on a larger scale in society—people inculcate middlebrow tastes, and corporations seek to earn money cheaply and conveniently, thus using these appetites to earn their incomes. Such a critique of society can only occur in the intimate space of the domestic, which is Amis’s own clever configuration of the novel of manners.

Therefore, the pornographic lens in *Money* helps Amis shape his critique of consumerism and capitalism as their influence shapes domestic space, particularly in charting the effects of consumption upon the individual’s identity. As a practicing consumer in the 1980s, John admits, “I’m not allergic to the twentieth century. I am addicted to the twentieth century” (89). His habits of consumption and his compliance with capitalist ideals craft his consumer identity and his pornographic tastes, which thus shape his sense of self.<sup>380</sup> By also yoking his pornographic habits to his domestic manners, John finds that he cannot experience a relationship beyond the pornographic.



Being hustled by Selina also initiates the loss of any domestic fantasy or realization with Martina, leaving John alone and deprived of any real companionship upon which to base his pornographic visions.<sup>381</sup> Thus, the pornographic manners that John had established for himself prove to be not only unsatisfactory but illusory, never truly existing outside the confines of his imagination. In turn, social morality exercising its influence over the domestic proves inescapable, as Self's resignation to the domestic and Georgina suggests.

In this way, Amis utilizes postmodern writing to convey the pitfalls of a pornographic domestic, particularly when juxtaposed with a consumer-oriented society. By utilizing the instability of narrator, plot, and textual elements typically ascribed to a novel, Amis provides a self-aware voice that can subtly decry the societal shifts towards consumerism and privatization—shifts that ultimately consume the individual and take away his or her agency.<sup>382</sup> Because John's addictions to pornography, junk food, lowbrow culture, and media are doomed to repeat themselves, the text demonstrates that no resolution can be reached. The pornographic gaze, as a perversion of the domestic, turns out to merely be a natural extension of the domestic in an era of commodification and consumption. Both the pornographic and the domestic are susceptible to the control of a capitalist society, and the postmodern elements in Amis's novel of manners reveal a selfhood that can only exist through consumption and acquiescence to Reagan's or Thatcher's prescribed set of values. Self's reversion to the domestic is not a redemption: it is an endless repetition of a cycle that never ends in a privatized economy. This ending reveals a cynicism towards the individualism promoted by Reagan and Thatcher, for even though Self ascribes to such values in the end, he has relinquished every particle of his sense of identity and individual in order to accede to social morality. Through *Money*,

Amis uses the pornographic and domestic together in order to highlight the loss of self (and Self) in an age of commercialism and excess.

**“Dreams that were lit like pornography”: Bret Easton Ellis’s *American Psycho* as a novel of manners**

Like Amis, Bret Easton Ellis sets his 1991 novel *American Psycho* in an age of consumerism, excess, and shallow popular culture, but he utilizes the pornographic gaze to convey a more pointed critique of consumer culture. He constructs the pornographic as a pervasive, consuming force that dehumanizes and de-individualizes, especially in the depiction of his shallow, greedy, and murderous protagonist, Patrick Bateman. Through Patrick, we witness all the material trappings of the 1980s which consume the individual.<sup>383</sup> Ellis further fits Patrick with gourmet tastes and snobbish attention to fashion and popular culture, the markers of a consumer. Ellis takes the traits of a New Man to new extremes by making Patrick a serial killer of his female sexual partners, especially in the contexts of pornography and torture, which take place in his own home. Yet Ellis, in portraying such extremes of torture, uses graphic narratives and fantasies in order to reveal a more subtle cruelty inherent in Patrick and his peers. Because of his sense of authority, he values human life as an abstract concept, but shows little respect for people in subordinate positions. Thus, Ellis positions Patrick as a New Man in order to comment on the cruel nature of this consumer-oriented identity.

Ellis also utilizes a pornographic gaze as a means of exploring the problems of consumer culture in the 1980s, but the graphic violence and torture further serve to demonstrate the deviation from social morality. Patrick treats women like the cultural artifacts he consumes—as obtainable for his personal use, to be infinitely replenished,

and disposable when their “use” has served him—and it is through this attitude that Ellis most subtly points out the misogyny of the New Man persona. The pornographic gaze of the domestic reveals the cannibalistic nature of capitalism on individual identities, and Ellis spares no detail in simultaneously inundating readers with minutiae about middlebrow culture (including lists of popular music and restaurants) and disgusting them with graphic torture and murder scenes occurring within the domestic. Thus, Ellis uses the novel of manners to describe the transformation wrought by the pornographic domestic: he constructs a pornographic gaze to reflect the larger social changes forced upon the individual; he tracks changes to traditional domestic manners, as a means of depicting the shift from moral values to social mores simulating moral codes; and he illustrates how manners break down to reveal the soullessness of a capitalistic society. Recognizing *American Psycho* as a novel of manners thus frames the novel as a searing indictment of amorality and the consumer-oriented manners characterizing the 1980s and New Man masculinity.<sup>384</sup>

Ellis constructs a pornographic gaze through his character Patrick Bateman in order to establish the relationship between capitalism and the domestic, as well as to interrogate the nature of gendered identities present in the time period. By constructing Patrick as a consumer of middlebrow culture, Ellis suggests that the pornographic is the natural outcome of a domestic overtaken by capitalism and relentless exposure to media within the home. In at least two instances, media and consumer culture fuel his sexual fantasies and pornographic sensibility. In the first, he must rely on a “near-naked model in a halter top I saw today in a Calvin Klein advertisement” to achieve orgasm after unsuccessfully relying on memories of his girlfriend Evelyn and her friend Courtney,

with whom he is having an affair (Ellis 24). The advertising becomes pornographic for him, since he fetishizes the details of the model's body, but especially the designer labels she represents.<sup>385</sup> In another instance, Patrick creates pornography from his favorite TV show: "On *The Patty Winters Show* this morning the topic was Beautiful Teenage Lesbians, which I found so erotic I had to stay home, miss a meeting, jerk off twice" (360). He finds the pornographic in the most mundane lowbrow cultural artifacts, thus cementing his desire to instill the pornographic in his domestic environment.<sup>386</sup>

The pornographic gaze, when constructed in the domestic, also changes the nature of gender dynamics in sexual relationships. Because Ellis depicts Patrick as someone looking to recreate the pornographic and subsume traditional domesticity, sexual tensions arise from conflicting ideas about sex and relationships. In his affair with Courtney, Patrick demonstrates a need to dominate her both physically and emotionally. As she tries to stop his sexual advance, asking if the condom is one with a receptacle tip, he hears only, "Luis is a despicable twit" and thinks she is gossiping about her boyfriend Luis to get him sexually aroused. Instead of resolving the conflict by changing condoms, the tension deepens: she insists on having safe sex and becomes hysterical, he begins to lose control by screaming, "See? Happy? You dumb bitch? Are you happy, you dumb bitch?" (104). His insults mask a frustration at his loss of control, and he forces himself on her in a sexual encounter that provides satisfaction for neither. In this scene, Patrick treats Courtney like an object—a woman whose sole purpose is to provide him sexual fulfillment, regardless of her own desires. She functions only as an object of pornographic desire.

Likewise, Ellis depicts this tension in gender dynamics through a more seemingly stable relationship, one in which sex is never depicted in the text. Patrick uses his fiancée Evelyn as a means to merge his fantasy life with his reality, especially in the way he projects his own sexual proclivities onto her. He projects his sexual anxieties onto Evelyn, based on her body language with his friend: “I am fairly sure that Timothy and Evelyn are having an affair. Timothy is the only interesting person I know” (22). To regain control of his relationship, he imagines Evelyn in erotic or sexually pleasurable situations in which he exerts force. One evening at dinner, while he imagines her sleeping with another woman, he muses, “But what if I forced her at *gunpoint*? Threatened to cut them both up, maybe if they didn’t comply? The thought doesn’t seem unappealing and I can imagine the whole scenario quite clearly” (120). His pleasure comes not just through the pornographic fantasies, but in the coercion required to enact them, reinforcing the irrelevance of consent to the pornographic domestic. Thus, the pornographic domestic functions as a means for Patrick to exert his authority.<sup>387</sup>

In this way, Ellis depicts the pornographic to document changes to the domestic, whether through consumption of material goods, social influences, or the new sets of manners that emerge from the pornographic domestic. The consumption of material goods transforms the domestic from a place of familial residence to one of obtaining goods and displaying fashionable trends.<sup>388</sup> For Patrick, this consumption also involves taking advantage of greed—his own and others’ around him—to recreate his pornographic desires. In one instance, Patrick decides to create enjoyment out of Evelyn’s discomfort. He exploits her desire for designer foods by feeding her a frozen chocolate-covered urinal cake disguised as an elegant dessert. Evelyn attempts to show

gratitude and good manners for his secretly cruel gesture, while trying to cover her disgust: “‘It’s just’—she shudders again—‘it’s just...so *minty*.’” Patrick tries to enjoy her discomfort, and creates a fantasy that merges his sense of the macabre with the trappings of consumerism. He notes, “To me she looks like a big black ant—a big black ant in an original Christian Lacroix—eating a urinal cake and I almost start laughing” (337). This image not only dehumanizes Evelyn, but it positions her as a product of consumer culture and not an actual individual.<sup>389</sup> Here, Ellis demonstrates how a pornographic vision takes over the domestic and perverts even the simplest rituals, such as gifts and mealtimes. Because Patrick wishes to control his domestic sphere, he resorts to trickery and macabre spectacles to distinguish his life from the vapid daily existences of his peers.

Just as the pornographic transforms the domestic to a space of material consumption, Ellis suggests that it also highlights the influence society exerts over the individual. A pornographic gaze shows the contrast between the way society expects the domestic to function and the individual’s sense of self that attempts to configure morality and sexuality. We witness this tension between social and individual expectations in a different conversation that Patrick and Evelyn have over dinner. Evelyn flutters about a friend’s wedding, using inane details like “a sit-down dinner for five hundred...no, excuse me, seven hundred and fifty, followed by a sixteen-foot tiered Ben and Jerry’s ice cream cake” with a wedding gown “by Ralph and it was white lace and low-cut and sleeveless” to describe her material ideals for a wedding. Patrick, conversely, tries to dodge social custom by imagining a more horrific scene. He intones, “I’d want to bring a Harrison AK-47 assault rifle to the ceremony...with a thirty-round magazine so after thoroughly blowing your fat mother’s head off with it I could use it on that fag brother of

yours.” He also rebuffs Evelyn’s pleas to get married, telling her, “Because trying to fuck you is like trying to French-kiss a very...small and...lively gerbil?” (124-25). He uses his home as a place to try experiments for new murders, using bones for necklaces and body parts for meatloaf. For Patrick, social expectations become a trend to be defied, in favor of his own self-serving dreams.

Yet the pornographic domestic also illustrates how the commodification of women extends not only to the appropriation of their bodies for pornography, but the utter disregard towards their existence in daily life. Ellis demonstrates such a mindset most clearly in portraying Patrick’s subtle cruelty towards the women who inhabit his domestic spaces in a non-pornographic context—namely, Evelyn, who fills her life with parties and designer clothing, but seems to find happiness in fantasizing about married life with Patrick. Thus, Patrick’s continual pranks, snide remarks, and cruel comments undermine the happiness Evelyn envisions to show a domestic perverted by a pornographic lens influenced by consumer culture.<sup>390</sup> Further, in the way he and his comrades joke about their female partners, Ellis points out that their cruelty is not exceptional, but rather a *normal* part of yuppie life. Therefore, Ellis uses the pornographic to show how society condemns deviant behavior but then condones a different and more subtle kind of misogyny.

Just as society influences manners and practices, it also exerts influence over certain moral values espoused by the individual. In his descriptions of himself, Patrick describes his fit body and the clothes that he wears, but the *kind* of person that he is—whether shallow or thoughtful, cruel or kind—is never given a thought, and his peers similarly focus on purely physical traits.<sup>391</sup> His known life, as described in the novel,

consists of working out, maintaining a semblance of working at banking firm Pierce & Pierce, purchasing the latest entertainment goods, and eating at the newest restaurants that are well-rated by the Zagat guide.<sup>392</sup> Patrick has extra motivation beyond competing with his peers—his murderous twist on the pornographic gaze is not considered socially acceptable, so fully immersing himself in yuppie culture provides a “cover” of sorts—if he appears to be like everyone else, no one will suspect the pornotopia he attempts to construct. Social morality encourages him to reap the fruits of his success even as it forces him to bury his more deviant behaviors and adopt a more publicly acceptable persona.

Such changes to the domestic and public entail a new set of manners influenced by this pornographic perspective. Though manners in the pornographic domestic are understood slightly differently—that is, instead of being asked to carry a teacup, you may be asked to whip someone, but only at their behest and stop when they utter a pre-arranged word—they still imply a sense of hierarchy within the realm of the pornotopia. In his home, Patrick imposes a rigid set of manners upon his sexual partners, revealing a need to achieve control that he may lack as an employee within the corporate world. As he tries to coerce a drugged Elizabeth into having sex with escort Christie, he dictates a series of behaviors that places him in charge of their bodies. As they begin kissing on his bed, he notes, “I sit in the Louis Montoni chair by the side of the futon, watching them very closely occasionally repositioning their bodies.” His sense of order dictates his sexual tastes, and he orders them to execute a series of behaviors that will seemingly maximize their sexual pleasure—but for his benefit. Ellis, in crafting this scene, moves from body positioning to a series of verbal demands: “Now I make Elizabeth lie on her



back and hold both legs up, open, spreading them as wide as possible, and then I push Christie's head down and make her lap at her cunt—not suck on it but lap at it, like a thirsty dog" (288). The word "make" proves crucial in this instance, because it implies a sort of hierarchy to this pornotopia. Though the women are performing sexual acts upon each other, Patrick controls the scene and dictates what kinds of behavior will work best within this pornographic scenario. Here, the manners of the pornographic utilize actions that maximize the sexual pleasure of the viewer—but equality is not guaranteed, particularly within the hierarchy of the sex acts being performed.

When these manners break down, however, the pornographic reveals a disparity in morals present between perceived standards of behavior and those imagined or desired by individuals in a society. Ellis depicts the vapid existence of the characters peopling *American Psycho* in order to decry their indifference to the immorality of a consumer-oriented society. As Patrick recounts his fantasy of killing Evelyn's family at their mythical wedding, he breaks through her endless droning of desires that entail consumption of designer goods for a demand to hear himself as the person he is—a killer.<sup>393</sup> But the tinnitus infecting John Self has spread to other individuals caught up in the junk food, advertising, and media present in the 1980s. Patrick laments, "But she's still talking; she doesn't hear a word; nothing registers. She does not fully grasp *a word* I'm saying. My essence is eluding her" (124). Here, Ellis denounces not only Patrick's murderous self but the refusal by others to acknowledge the breach Patrick is creating in society through his pornographic manners.<sup>394</sup>

Ellis orchestrates this move to deviancy as a response to the commercialized masculinity occurring in the 1980s. This consumer masculine identity, he notes, foists

consumerism upon individuals in order to craft an identity that feeds into a market for its affirmation of selfhood. Patrick's remark that "I've forgotten who I had lunch with earlier and, more important, *where*" develops the character insofar that we realize there is no "depth," no development to be made in an individual who only values seeing and being seen (149). Patrick and his peers prioritize money over moral values, and in the 1980s, their focus on appearances was rewarded.<sup>395</sup> Thus, the 1980s bred a generation of young men to value commercial goods and their desires, as influenced by careful advertising and public relations campaigns, tying them to their individual identities. Here, Ellis demonstrates the shift in moral values espoused by society—rather than upholding a certain set of moral codes, consumer society instead enforces the *appearance* of said values with acceptance of immorality, so long as the guise of virtue is maintained by its citizens.<sup>396</sup> Such a distinction between values and actual observance of morality is significant, for it helps us understand the rampant sense of meaninglessness and emptiness of the era. In a time when material goods are seen to be the only value, morality helps the individual establish a sense of stability in his or her identity. But this stability vanishes when consumerism overtakes individual morality.

Ellis novelizes a culture genuinely obsessed with materialism and creates Patrick Bateman as a response to this sense of desire for goods. Patrick's participation in this commercialism conflicts with his desire for meaning, driving his motivation to kill, and illuminating the struggle for selfhood throughout the novel.<sup>397</sup> As the novel progresses, Patrick realizes that his quest for feeling, even after a series of murders that thrill him, will prove futile. As he watches a woman die, he recites, "I can already tell that it's going to be a characteristically useless, senseless death, but then I'm used to the horror. It seems

distilled, even now it fails to upset or bother me” (329). Because his existence is based on acquiring goods, Patrick must find the value in life elsewhere—thus, he finds meaning in life by taking it. In treating his home as a space to create pornography, Patrick has commercialized himself and gutted the very space he has utilized as a means to escape the banalities of his life.

Because the moral codes of a consumerist society entail privileging appearance over actuality, the domestic also takes on traits of commercialization, a phenomenon that only becomes apparent when seen through the harsh lens of the pornographic. Patrick’s exposure to media and his rabid consumption of it fuel his fervor for the pornographic. He begins transferring pornographic media, imagery, and acts from the videos he watches to his own life, beginning with his dreams. He confides, “Last night I had dreams that were lit like pornography and in them I fucked girls made of cardboard” (200). This particular dream demonstrates that Patrick sees women as commodities, products to be bought and used, nothing more. Pornography defines the function women serve, and they need only be constructed out of raw material to meet that need. This fantasy is significant for how it treats women, and provides an indicator of how Patrick’s pornotopia will look in his home throughout the novel. Ellis uses this dream to show how Patrick relies on women constructed by his own fantasies to meet his sexual desires. Here, the women of his sexual fantasies become commercialized, seen only for their raw physical value and nothing more.

Even in mundane, non-sexual daily routines, Ellis shows that the domestic becomes a commercial for endless lines of products and goods, infusing the domestic with a desire for raw goods—much like a pornographic film. In the second chapter, titled

“Morning,” Ellis describes Patrick’s home and kitchen by brand-naming almost every item used or consumed. In this categorization, the domestic takes on a pornographic appearance, reduced to its raw parts for the enjoyment of the consumer. In the first paragraph, which lasts almost five pages, we find out about Patrick’s beauty regimen, his workout routine, the kinds of clothing he puts on, his new CD player, and the kinds of products he uses and eats for breakfast. But within this dazzling array of goods, no mention is made of his occupation, ambitions, or even individual tics—these traits of the individual, even the routine of his everyday life, are subsumed into name-dropping his material goods.<sup>398</sup> This dizzying array of possessions is just one example of a culture obsessed with buying and owning useless products.<sup>399</sup> Through the character of Patrick, Ellis points to the dehumanizing process involved in commercializing the domestic.

Just as the pornographic gaze in a novel of manners reveals the commercialization of the domestic, it also points to binaries of public and private spheres that become blurred (or no longer exist) when morals and social mores are simulated and enacted simultaneously in public and private. Ellis, in creating a character who embodies the conflict between personal identity and expected public persona, comments on the way the New Man is configured for public consumption—with nothing left for individual expression, particularly in private spaces like the home. The pressure to be like others forces Patrick to hide his behavior and adapt a deliberate set of public manners in order to maintain his extravagant lifestyle.<sup>400</sup> He recognizes the artifice of his public identity, though he cannot seem to escape it. He admits to Bethany, an old college girlfriend whom he eventually tortures and kills, “I...want...to...fit...in,” hesitating over the words to show his deep personal conflict between self-imposed desires and societally-imposed

expectations for his manners (237). Thus, Patrick utilizes commercialism to blend in with his colleagues, and he appropriates pornographic imagery and culture to fuel his personal life. At the same time, Patrick becomes entangled in these trappings, until his sense of true self becomes merged with his public persona, unrecognizable to him and causing a loss in identity.<sup>401</sup> Viewing Patrick's search for identity through a pornographic lens enables us to witness this hyperreal process of futilely searching for meaning until a sense of "death" is achieved, with Patrick's admission that he is not real.

Yet public identity in an age of conformity does not bring more power to the individual from the rigid strictures placed on the domestic, as Ellis demonstrates. Rather, the erasure of personal identity only becomes more complete when the individual recognizes that the power granted to him or her within the pornographic domestic does not transfer into the public sphere. The New Man persona demands that Patrick behave, talk, and dress like his peers, which he does. His manners mirror those of his colleagues in the financial sector, which leads him and his peers to mimic and mistake each other for one another.<sup>402</sup> Thus, by exchanging and interchanging identities, Patrick becomes a nameless, replaceable component of the corporate world. The only way he can retain true distinction in such a homogenized world is to eclipse the domestic and replace it with pornographic fantasies. Yet even in this domestic space, Patrick carries his rigid sense of manners into his sexual relations, further attempting to achieve authority by imposing sexual humiliation on women for his consumption (both in viewing pleasure and in actual eating). Ultimately, Ellis tackles the consumer perspective of the pornographic by demonstrating how simulating relationships and ascribing to a commercial existence

erodes individual power and instead transfers it to corporate authority, which will continue to replicate and reproduce such personae.

By unraveling the narrative so that Patrick's reliability is completely uncertain, Ellis invites readers to question the sustainability of such extreme measures to maintain a sense of self. Without any stable values, the individual becomes lost in a mass market that always changes to meet new demands and desires. Patrick feels a loss of himself that he cannot fully describe: "I had all the characteristics of a human being—flesh, blood, skin, hair—but my depersonalization was so intense, had gone so deep, that the normal ability to feel compassion had been eradicated, the victim of a slow, purposeful erasure" (282). He appropriates pornography as a way to "feel," as a reactionary mode against the loss of control he senses in his own life. By the end of the novel, however, even Patrick realizes that his double-life cannot be maintained, and the failure of his half-confessions demonstrates that no one around him wants to break out of the commercial masculinity they all imbibe.

Such a senseless existence is not the exception, Ellis implies. Rather, by cobbling Patrick Bateman's performed and actual existences together into a life that is murky and indefinable, Ellis illustrates the pitfalls of a masculine identity tied to consumerism and run by it, especially within postmodern culture and identity formation.<sup>403</sup> In making Patrick interchangeable with the other men in his social circle, Ellis demonstrates how the figure of the New Man does not exert as much hegemony as he supposes but is bound by the capitalist culture that grants him the tenuous authority in the first place. Utilizing the pornographic demonstrates how fragmented and inauthentic Patrick's view of the world has become, since he relies on pornography to develop his own art and his existence

becomes blurred by the pornographic and bloody world of his own making. His sense of futility mirrors that of John Self's in that, just as Self finds no redemption in either pornographic manners or traditional domesticity, Patrick loses his identity in his (potentially) imagined existence and the meaningless and impersonal public persona that erase his sense of selfhood. Ultimately, Ellis challenges readers to consider how the individual is bound to the trappings of commerce and capitalism in a post-Reagan economy.

**Revealing Domestic Changes through a Pornographic Gaze in  
*Money and American Psycho***

Through depictions of the pornographic domestic, both *Money* and *American Psycho* highlight an individual morality caught between the dehumanization of self through pornography—itself an extension of the domestic and consumerism prevalent in the late twentieth century—and the repression of a domestic that exists to enact the conservative values of the Reagan and Thatcher governments. Such a domestic idealized by nostalgia never existed, however, and this myth influences manners and social mores to inculcate these conservative values, which are linked to profits and social influence over the individual.<sup>404</sup> Authors of traditional novels of manners utilized the domestic in order to enact tensions of social and individual morality that made up an individual's identity. A shift to the neoliberal corporate model of economics demonstrates that this version of the domestic never truly existed as a private space: just as the public sphere acted as a market for consumer culture to take over, the domestic, too, became idealized by ideas of “traditional” values and was transformed into a profitable space for social authority to enforce a set of manners upon the individual.<sup>405</sup> The shift from consensus

politics to the Chicago school of economics in Britain signaled a shift from citizenship to consumerism, thus treating the domestic as another space in which to enact economic values as moral virtue.<sup>406</sup> While the United States' shift to privatization occurred more gradually and over a longer period of time, a similar change to a consumer-oriented society reached its height in the 1980s (exacerbated by Reagan's implementation of supply-side economics in the 1980s). In this change to consumerism, the pornographic represents a simultaneous desire to retain privacy within the domestic, just as it demonstrates the invasion of consumerism into the domestic. The pornographic domestic, therefore, demonstrates an attempt to subvert social morality even as it subsumes to the consumerism and materialism it attempts to avoid.

The individual who creates a pornographic domestic in order to escape the strictures of a consumerized existence recreates the very materialism he or she has tried to subvert. Just as the consumer-oriented market fragments and reproduces ideas and sells copies or simulacra, the pornographic also reduces the human body to simulated or reproduced parts. This reproduction and fragmentation results in the individual's depersonalization and loss of his or her identity. While pornographic fantasies restore the illusion of selfhood, they deny the presence of consumerism within the domestic by recreating such a marketplace. The pornographic is merely an illusion designed to mask the loss of agency within the individual. In keeping with the times, Ellis and Amis offer no solution to a capitalist takeover, nor do they posit a more optimistic era to come in an age of consumption.<sup>407</sup> Thus, the pornographic comes to represent a more personal invasion into domestic space, without the individual's recognition of it.



The novel of manners, then, provides a means of critiquing not only society but also the means by which we configure or understand society through a constructed pornographic gaze. When Amis and Ellis utilize this pornographic gaze, the novel of manners reveals the formal limits of the genre—the focus on the domestic seems confining, especially when making the claim that authors utilize the genre to push boundaries of gender and identity. Yet a pornographic gaze enables Amis and Ellis to modify and revise the genre to demonstrate its capacity to reflect and critique twentieth- and twenty-first century concerns, particularly the structure of the domestic. Both Amis and Ellis are concerned with the effects of neoliberal economic systems on home life, and they comment on the modes of commercialism and materialism that elide individual morality.<sup>408</sup> Thus, the pornographic reveals a double failure: the individual seeking moral agency becomes consumed by the materialism he or she tries to subvert; and accession to social morality erases identity altogether.

Separately, *Money* and *American Psycho* offer a grim outlook on such a homogenized society built on consumer culture. Amis depicts a culture transitioning from consensus politics to neoliberalism through its excesses, which he channels in one person. John Self, as a consumer of pornography, food, and middlebrow culture, represents commercialism at its most extreme—he's always eating, watching pornography, or seeking sexual attention. Consequently, his health and mind suffer, and he experiences an erasure of the identity that he has worked to maintain throughout the novel. Thus, the concluding idea, that there is—literally—no Self, reflects on Amis's own critique of society in which the self is impossible to maintain or assert.<sup>409</sup> As a novel of manners, *Money* examines the way we configure domesticity and exaggerates both the

pornographic and domestic through consumerism, critiquing the appetites of the individual within the 1980s.

Ellis depicts the individual as disintegrating along with society. His novel of manners focuses on the strictures of hierarchy and the instability of the self in a consumerist environment. The manners enacted by the individual in the pornographic must be effaced in public, where there is an emphasis on conformity and uniformity as a means of generating more income.<sup>410</sup> Patrick's greedy consumption of low culture and commercialism also threatens his very identity. His use of the pornographic shows the negative effects that ensue from an erasure of the individual's identity in a culture that seeks to unify everyone into the same kind of consumer. Through the erasure of the individual, he mirrors a larger social pattern and critiques its effects on the individual's sense of morality and values.

When these texts are viewed together, it is clear that Amis and Ellis critique the destructive nature of capitalism in the domestic by constructing a pornographic capitalist society. In this world, acquiring commodities matters more than relationships or intimacy. Characters who conform and buy into this consumer-oriented society ultimately realize their agency has been sold to corporate powers, and they have become pawns in the vicious cycle of exchange. These novels construct a rigid identity in the New Man persona in order to demonstrate the failures of corporately-affiliated identities and moral codes that shaped the individual in the 1980s. The inflexibility required of such an identity forces the novel's protagonists into adopting consumer manners, behaviors that subsume the domestic into a marketplace for more purchases and more passive reception of a government-dictated culture. In their collective failures to maintain both social and

individual morality, these characters reveal a kind of identity in crisis, one that cannot conform to consumerism entirely or subvert it to retain a sense of selfhood.

As novels in a conversation about the pornographic and domestic in the novel of manners, both *Money* and *American Psycho* reveal the destructive qualities of authority and consumerism upon the individual. Constructing a pornographic domestic, while seemingly an escape from the enacted consumer-oriented manners upon both men and women in the domestic, actually relies on neoliberal culture for its continued existence. Amis, in his construction of John Self, satirizes and parodies the New Man's quest for authority and wealth through mishaps and bad manners that ultimately lead to ruin and an attempted suicide. John's search for the perfect pornographic domestic leads him to become the dupe of both Selina and Martina, destroying any notions of control he had maintained. Ellis, conversely, uses Patrick's extreme misogyny as a means of critiquing the subtler forms of sexism he employs. Patrick values the abstract notion of human life—so much, in fact, that he takes it in order to achieve feeling and a sense of purpose. Yet his treatment of his female acquaintances is continually belittling and cruel—though critics focus on the dead women, the living end up suffering the brunt of his harshest manners. Ellis offers his most pointed criticism of New Man masculinity through Patrick's cruelty to his female peers, namely an unmannerly lack of value for the lives of others in his circle of acquaintance. This arrogance exacts just as much damage on the domestic as a pornographic gaze, and Ellis utilizes Patrick's moral depravity as a reflector of society in the 1980s.

### **The Importance of the Pornographic Domestic to the Novel of Manners**

When seen in the novel of manners, the pornographic domestic reveals a different kind of manners that emerge, especially in the context of 1980s consumer-oriented culture and society. Britain and the United States in the immediate postwar years focused on consensus and community as a way of building a just society. Yet Amis and Ellis track the drastic shift to neoliberalism by depicting a society that is fragmented and values money more than morality. 1980s societies in both Britain and the United States espoused a set of values (including individualism and the triumph of the domestic), but it prioritized the appearance of said values and built a society upon an illusion. In response, Amis and Ellis jolt readers into understanding the immorality of such a community, and utilize a pornographic domestic to decry the excesses of popular culture around them.<sup>411</sup> The implications of this phenomenon, as seen in the novels, are chilling: the real is replaced by endless simulations of the real, until nothing approaching reality is perceived by the individual. Such is the fate, Amis and Ellis warn us, of those with a pornotopic vision of the domestic.

Even with its dangers, a pornographic gaze can also revise the idea of what constitutes the domestic and the manners that men and women adopt within the domestic, especially as the domestic is transformed from a private to a public arena. From a heterosexual, male-oriented viewpoint, a pornographic gaze forces men to confront unachievable fantasies and their relationship to social morality through satirizing or parodying ideals of gender constructed by a heteronormative set of moral values. Conversely, the pornographic can also cause a break with reality by idealizing traits of others that are unattainable, simulated, or imagined. In constructing a domestic through a pornographic view, we read a novel of manners that shows the unmooring of reality and

morality within the domestic. Since a novel of manners is, as Tuttleton reminds us, “primarily concerned with social conventions as they impinge upon character,” the pornographic demonstrates how manners differ from their societies of origin in both *Money* and *American Psycho* (12). The pornographic highlights the impingement of sexuality upon the domestic, as well as the changes wrought to a domestic invaded by a consumer society. Further, the manners of both novels demonstrate how society values consumerism and postmodernism, at the cost of the communal models formerly featured in the novel of manners.

Ultimately, the pornographic domestic illuminates the destruction enacted by corporate capitalism in the home through the dissolution of the domestic and individual morality. Forgoing the exchanges occurring within a marital relationship and creating a purely pornographic schema, the individual cannot sustain such an existence within the public sphere, and finds that the domestic, idealized as a safe private sphere, has been taken over by a different kind of consumerism. The pornographic within the novel of manners highlights the new kinds of sexual manners that take place in the home, diminishing institutions of family and marriage to exalt pornography, capitalism, and consumption. Such a schema also uses hypersexualized manners as a means of critiquing the ways in which men relate to women and use their bodies for personal gain. Just as the narratives of John Self and Patrick Bateman end abruptly—their domestic identities clouded by the haze of corporate greed—so does the cannibalistic nature of consumerism devour the individual and destroy public institutions, such as marriage and the family, that inform the domestic. As novels of manners, Martin Amis’s *Money* and Bret Easton Ellis’s *American Psycho* utilize the titillating imagery of pornography to critique the

widespread reach of capitalism into daily life and warn individuals of the effects of selling out identity for the sake of profit. While most men identifying as yuppies do not become pornographers or cannibals, Amis and Ellis utilize these extremes of social deviance to critique a society more interested in products and profits than individual expressions of morality.

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#### NOTES

<sup>315</sup> To establish the domestic as a core concept in the novel of manners, I have referenced Susan Fraiman's "The Domestic Novel." In this chapter, I differentiate between the theory of domesticity and the actual domestic space in which characters reside. I refer to the domestic as the physical space inhabited by individuals in a particular society. This rendering of the domestic is found in the novel of manners, whereas the domestic novel (also discussed in the chapter) focuses more narrowly on the domestic itself and not the tensions of the domestic and society.

<sup>316</sup> Though pornography in the twenty-first century has undertaken the task of satisfying a vast array of sexual desires, fetishes, and orientation-specific fantasies, I will focus in this chapter on heterosexual male-oriented pornography for two reasons: first, to understand the pornographic *as it existed* in the world of the novels discussed; and second, because the academic scholarship still focuses overwhelmingly on pornography directed towards heterosexual males.

<sup>317</sup> Yet even as it distinguishes itself from the social behaviors expected in public, the pornographic functions at a "secret" domestic level to blur the boundaries of public and private. In *The Other Victorians*, Steven Marcus declares, "At best, pornography may be subversive in the sense that it reveals the discrepancy which exists in society between openly professed ideals and secretly harbored wishes or secretly practised vices—it may act indirectly to 'unmask' society's official version of itself" (230). Therefore, the pornographic does not operate separately from the domestic but works as a natural extension of the domestic to unmask social and moral problems present within society.

<sup>318</sup> See my first chapter for more complete definitions of domestic. Susan Fraiman's chapter, "The Domestic Novel" in *The Oxford History of the Novel in English*, vol. 3 and Michael McKeon's *The Secret History of Domesticity* also provide discussion points regarding the definition of the term "domestic" or "domesticity."

<sup>319</sup> Matthew Oliver's essay "Conrad's Grotesque Public: Pornography and the Politics of Reading in *The Secret Agent*" explains the means by which pornography frames the novel and provides insights into social and moral codes. He notes, "One of the central structural oxymorons in *The Secret Agent* is the pornography shop as home, which, inverting the moral center of the Victorian novel, reveals the sexual drives beneath the moral justifications for the protective exercise of state power embodied in the novel by the police" (216). Here, Oliver highlights the pornographic and domestic united by Conrad in the novel.

<sup>320</sup> Oliver declares, "Pornography in the novel undercuts one of the key narratives of national cohesion in England, the family as the foundation of domestic life (*domestic* as "in the home" and "within national boundaries"). As I have already mentioned, the pornography shop as home is one of the strongest grotesque elements of the novel. Exposing bodily instincts and making private and primitive interiors public and visible, pornographic discourse forms a grotesque mixture with the discourse of the family as the moral center of the nation whose innocence must be protected by violent exercises of state power (as we saw in the case of Michaelis)" (217).

<sup>321</sup> Indeed, it is worth noting that through the description of her “full bust, in a tight bodice,” the pornographic gaze extends to Winnie herself, a shopkeeper’s wife with a sexually suggestive body. In his very description, Conrad alludes to the pornographic as an extension of the domestic in the very way we construct women as sexual beings in asexual settings.

<sup>322</sup> Oliver argues that when we examine the effects of art on an audience, “pornography emerges as a more politically subversive element: it partakes in the novel’s larger practice of using the grotesque to undermine any formation of stable, homogeneous reading publics” (209).

<sup>323</sup> Tuttleton documents the rationales for studying the novel of manners. He particularly hones a definition for “society,” upon which the novel of manners hinges: “‘Society’, as used in this study, ordinarily refers to the structure of ‘classes’, cliques, or groups by which specific American communities are organized.” He notes that society may manifest itself in two separate ways: either through the mass of characters who give the novel the illusion of being populated in a “society,” or through more abstract means, in which a fewer number of individuals inhabit a wider variety of social mindsets (13).

<sup>324</sup> In a June 13, 2011 interview with Annie Coreno for *Publishers Weekly*, Ellis acknowledged that the manners of men became a prevalent concern in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly as related to their public appearance: “Patrick Bateman seems to embody something about masculinity that was blooming at a certain point in the late ‘80s to early ‘90s. This kind of damnification of the male. This obsession with male narcissism and beauty. Men being looked at in a way that women had been looked at for decades” (qtd. in Coreno par. 2).

<sup>325</sup> Various queer readings of *Money* also suggest a sexual fluidity that heralds the kind of diffusion of cultural identities that John Beynon notes make the idea of a fixed masculinity “a diverse, mobile, even unstable, construction” (2). Emma Parker also declares, in response to Laura Doan’s criticism, that “a queer reading of *Money* offers a useful way of rethinking feminist readings of the text. By focusing on the instability and plurality of gender and sexuality, a queer reading prompts a reconsideration of the view that *Money* is a sexist text...” (68).

<sup>326</sup> See David Brauner’s argument regarding Patrick’s sense of morality, particularly as it relates to conformity. He declares, “Conversely, when Bateman confesses to his moral vacuity and claims that he has ‘gain[ed] no deeper knowledge’ about himself, he paradoxically demonstrates a self-knowledge (and a self-disgust) that makes him more human” (53). This argument echoes Stephen do Carmo’s, in that Patrick’s murderous behavior is a call to return to the morality that consumers have abandoned for the sake of material goods.

<sup>327</sup> While a certain class strata is not necessarily a trait required of the novel of manners, Tuttleton does note, “Economic considerations also play a less significant role in the development of the novel of manners, though wealth is often a particularly useful device for the freedom it provides a novelist in dramatizing certain social values. Whenever religious, philosophical, or economic ‘ideas’ tend to be blown up out of proportion, the novel of manners becomes something else—the propaganda novel advocating religious opinions, philosophical systems, or economic dogmas” (12). Therefore, implicit in Tuttleton’s brief discussion of class in the novel of manners is the argument that those in bourgeois or middle classes have more education and money—and thus more leisure time—in order to contemplate the workings of manners and mores. Therefore, more novelists of manners would write about societies in which these manners and mores came most readily to light. While I do not think that such an argument is necessarily true in the twenty-first century, I believe that such an argument towards nineteenth-century novels is valid, particularly when such practitioners as Henry James and Edith Wharton did write about wealthy elite characters and their respective social circles—particularly in the contrast between Old World European values and New World American desires.

<sup>328</sup> While a number of classes are featured, Fraiman argues that the “respectable” middle class is more prevalent within a domestic novel, and authors create a cultural ideal using the middle class as a blueprint (170).

<sup>329</sup> As Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner argue, “The normativity of heterosexual culture links intimacy only to the institutions of personal life, making them the privileged institutions of social reproduction, the accumulation and transfer of capital, and self-development” (553).

<sup>330</sup> Fraiman expands her definition of the domestic novel to include “a domestic aesthetic [that] serves the ideology of bourgeois domesticity by giving it material and emotional texture—by making it synonymous with a look of refinement, an atmosphere of wholesomeness, a feeling of hominess” (173).

<sup>331</sup> Berlant and Warner declare, “A complex cluster of sexual practices gets confused, in heterosexual culture, with the love plot of intimacy and familialism that signifies belonging to society in a deep and normal way. Community is imagined through scenes of intimacy, coupling, and kinship; a historical relation to futurity is restricted to generational narrative and reproduction” (554).

<sup>332</sup> Habermas, in documenting the changes of the bourgeois family over time, notes that such modifications included making smaller large communal spaces and transferring salon activities to public venues, leaving the building itself smaller and more designed for the nuclear family. He declares, “Thus it was a private autonomy denying its economic origins...that provided the bourgeois family with its consciousness of itself” (46).

<sup>333</sup> Michael McKeon reminds us, “Domesticity is both a species of modern privacy and unintelligible apart from our modern experience of publicity; its story can only make sense within the more general story of modern privacy and its separation out from the realm of the public” (xxi). Further, this sense of secrecy formulates an intersection between the domestic and pornographic, since secrecy also enables the pornographic to engage in forbidden fantasies or desires.

<sup>334</sup> Writers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in England encouraged families to model themselves after the hierarchy of reigning sovereigns, and notions of Empire modeled families into productive units for the British Empire (McKeon 113). Such models present interesting contradictions in the male’s relationship to the domestic. While he is not responsible for childbearing or maintenance of the home, he must possess some basic knowledge of his “realm,” and the property he retains blurs the boundary of public and private space. What ensues is a conflict and uneasy sense of ownership without real knowledge of the space he owns—this dilemma leads to a sense of uncertain authority, which then affects the confidence as a man of agency, especially within his “own” home.

<sup>335</sup> In noting domestic implications for privatization, Donahue notes the debate present: “Conservatives typically welcome private delivery of public goods and services as the next best thing to cutting them out of the government budget altogether. Most liberals lament private delivery as a retreat from the principle of collective action” (221). Despite the attempt to privatize public-sector works as a political strategy, the disagreement around corporate involvement in American life still manifests as a political argument.

<sup>336</sup> It is worth noting in United States history that privatization has been a part of American social history since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but its prominence in the home really began in the 1960s, when social services were administered via private corporations instead of state-controlled sectors. In *The Privatization Decision*, John D. Donahue notes that American privatization owes its prominence in the 1980s to two sources: to the “durable American taste for free enterprise [which] has long imposed a bias for the private alternative” and to the British privatization began under Thatcher in the early 1980s (4).

Britain’s adoption of privatization, by contrast, was sudden and swift, precipitated by Thatcher’s election as Prime Minister. Britain had always retained government control of social services until the 1980s, when Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative Party began calling for corporations and private companies to take over the distribution and pricing of social services. While services had been controlled by the public sector



under Labour administration, dissatisfaction with public-sector services led the Conservatives to view privatization as a means of de-politicizing industries and to “stimulate competition in a number of public-sector (and soon to be private sector) activities” (MacAvoy et al. 210). In his *Guardian* opinion piece, written after Thatcher’s death, novelist Ian McEwan notes the limitations to state-governed social services and the contrast to private-sector services: “But if today’s *Guardian* readers time-travelled to the late 70s they might be irritated to discover that tomorrow’s TV listings were a state secret not shared with daily newspapers. A special licence was granted exclusively to the *Radio Times*. (No wonder it sold 7m copies a week). It was illegal to put an extension lead on your phone. You would need to wait six weeks for an engineer. There was only one state-approved answering machine available. Your local electricity ‘board’ could be a very unfriendly place. Thatcher swept away those state monopolies in the new coinage of ‘privatisation’ and transformed daily life in a way we now take for granted” (par. 4).

<sup>337</sup> Fraiman explains, “And if lives are located in the interstices of the local and everyday, so, too, in domestic fiction are characters embedded in intricate systems of relationships—tied to family circles that are tied, in turn, to three or four others. Preferring a limited locale, they assert nonetheless that national debates fall within their purview. Focused on the ‘private’ sphere, they readily acknowledge its intersection with the public” (184).

<sup>338</sup> Tuttleton declares that if “significant attention is paid to a realistic notation of the customs and conventions of the society in which these ideas arise and are acted out, then we are dealing with a novel of manners” (10). Thus, the society itself provides an indicator of the novel’s genre and helps us understand why the domestic is important to note in establishing the novel of manners.

<sup>339</sup> Robert Jensen provides a twofold definition of pornography: “First, there is a widely understood definition of pornography in the culture: Pornography is the material sold in pornography shops for the purpose of producing sexual arousal for mostly male consumers... Second, from a critical feminist analysis, pornography is a specific kind of sexual material that mediates and helps maintain the sexual subordination of women” (3). This second definition places an emphasis on gendered hierarchy in sexual behaviors, which formulates the study of sexual manners within the domestic in both *Money* and *American Psycho*. In the late twentieth century, though, the emergence of gay pornography becomes an intersection point for the pornographic and domestic. For a closeted husband, viewing a subordinate woman does not fulfill his deviant desires; rather, fantasies of same-sex sexual acts, while maintaining a heterosexual domestic role, provides a means to be socially acceptable and still experience sexual desire.

<sup>340</sup> Steven Marcus notes that “there is first the ubiquitous projection of the male sexual fantasy onto the female response—the female response being imagined as identical with the male. In this fantasy, women have orgasms as quickly, easily, and spontaneously as men, and tend to be ready for sexual activity at almost any time” (194). This description of the pornographic refers to the heterosexual male-oriented materials, before pornography diversified in the mid-2000s.

<sup>341</sup> Marcus declares that the woman is only useful for her body, adding, “Regarding women as bodies and then finally as organs results in their abstraction and depersonalization” (194). The pornographic reduces the individual to a body, and then, ultimately, to the parts which bring sexual pleasure.

<sup>342</sup> Such a desire reveals a kind of longing that Marcus notes could only emerge from “extreme deprivation,” though not always in a strictly sexual sense (273). Further, this view of the pornographic restricts sex to heterosexual desire; the male acts as the aggressor, the female the recipient, and it is only in more contemporary iterations of pornography that female-oriented and homosexual fantasies become more mainstream.

<sup>343</sup> Rather than providing fulfillment, they instead try to replicate the scenes previously enacted: “But the idea of fulfillment inevitably carries in its train the ideas of completion, of gratification, of an ending—and the pornographic fantasy resists such notions. The ideal pornographic novel, as everyone knows, would go on forever—it would have no ending” (Marcus 195).

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<sup>344</sup> Marcus declares, “Reality is conceived as the scene of exclusively sexual activities and human and social institutions are understood to exist only insofar as they are conducive to further sexual play” (194-95).

<sup>345</sup> Obscenity laws in the United States have codified pornographic literature as fiction that exists solely to titillate the reader. In a 1965 case, “A Book Named ‘John Cleland’s *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*’ et al. v. Attorney General of Massachusetts” (and decided March 21, 1966), the Supreme Court established a series of criteria in which a book containing sexually explicit material should be labelled obscene:

1. Under the test in *Roth v. United States*, 354 U.S. 476, as elaborated in subsequent cases, each of three elements must independently be satisfied before a book can be held obscene: (a) the dominant theme of the material taken as a whole appeals to a prurient interest in sex; (b) the material is patently offensive because it affronts contemporary community standards relating to the description or representation of sexual matters; and (c) the material is utterly without redeeming social value.
2. Since a book cannot be proscribed as obscene unless found to be utterly without redeeming social value, the Supreme Judicial Court erroneously interpreted the federal constitutional standard.

Because *Fanny Hill* had been deemed obscene before it could be judged obscene, the Court reversed the ruling. This ruling demonstrates the process by which society labels and denigrates pornographic literature, and how obscenity is viewed in public.

<sup>346</sup> Beynon notes that the rise of style magazines and body image, as well as the “heterosexual hedonism” of such magazines as Hugh Hefner’s *Playboy* rendered a “utopian vision” of beautiful, sexually available women, expensive clothes, and high-end cars more socially acceptable to this new version of consumer-oriented man (102).

<sup>347</sup> In *Masculinities and Culture*, John Beynon identifies the New Man through two strands: the “New Man-as-nurturer,” in which the individual rejects the macho masculinity stereotypes and identifies with non-conventional domestic nurturing roles; and the “New Man-as-narcissist” strand that he associates with “commercial masculinity and the spectacular expansion of consumerism since the end of the Second World War” (102). This latter figure is shaped by advertising and access to a proliferation of products aggressively marketed towards a more flamboyant and decorative appearance. This latter strand of New Man masculinity will prove relevant in this chapter, as seen by descriptions of personal care products and advertising that influence the public appearance of both novels’ protagonists I discuss in this chapter.

<sup>348</sup> Marriage was historically established as an economic contract between two individuals, with property merging and acquired by the man. Further, marriage entailed a social contract, as Nancy Armstrong points out: “Domestic fiction represented sexual relationships according to an idea of the social contract that empowered certain qualities of an individual’s mind over membership in a particular group or faction” (Armstrong 37).

<sup>349</sup> Marriage plots serve to critique the economic system present within the time, particularly in the imbalance in social standing or credibility that men and women held. Further, marriage serves as a social institution through which to understand depictions of gender and sexuality, both in literature, and in the time contemporary to the novel in question. Such a custom provides enlightenment about the domestic, and it becomes a means by which to understand gendered authority.

<sup>350</sup> In *The Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels view the influence of capitalism upon the family unit through a metaphor of prostitution: “Bourgeois marriage is in reality a system of wives in common” and to protect women from being used as means of production, the people must release them from “that system, i.e., of prostitution both public and private” (23). Prostitution and exploitation of women, in capitalism functions at both the public (as with common prostitutes) and private levels (as with wives trapped in the capitalist domestic).

<sup>351</sup> In her quest to protest violence against women in some types of pornography, Tara Baxter declares, “As long as women are being raped, tortured, and murdered at the rate that we are, it is imperative that we seriously consider all the strategies that decorticate male dominance. One strategy, is refusing to accept violent, exploitative male fantasy wherever it may be expressed — whether in fiction, art, pornography, in the public sphere, or in our homes. Otherwise we collaborate in our own victimization by remaining silent during this war that men are waging against us” (253).

<sup>352</sup> Jean Baudrillard’s “The Precession of the Simulacra” makes a crucial distinction between representation, as seen in domestic fiction, and simulation, as exemplified in pornographic fiction: “Whereas representation attempts to absorb simulation by interpreting it as a false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation itself as a simulacrum” (6). Such a differentiation matters, because it changes the nature of interpretation in novels of manners that utilize the pornographic in domestic fiction.

<sup>353</sup> Just as simulation occurs with imagery, so it happens repeatedly in culture. In *The Consumer Society*, Baudrillard declares, “Culture is no longer made to last. It keeps up its claim to universality, of course, and to being an ideal reference, doing so all the more strongly for the fact that it is losing its semantic substance” (101).

<sup>354</sup> Until the mid-to-late 2000s, straight men were uniformly considered the consumers and producers of pornography. Building on this assumption, Andrea Dworkin argues, “Men characterize pornography as something mental, because their minds, their thoughts, their dreams, their fantasies, are more real to them than women’s bodies or women’s lives; in fact, men have used their social power to characterize a \$10-billion-a-year trade in women as fantasy” (xxxviii). The figures represented reflect the time period within which Dworkin published her research in 1989.

<sup>355</sup> Ultimately, what is eroticized is not the presence of consent between the sexual partners, but rather the irrelevance of consent in the viewing or use of pornographic goods. The consumer can utilize such materials as often as he (again, resorting to the gender stereotypes of pornography scholarship), and the female being gazed upon does not need to consent—or, in fact, exist at all—in order for the consumer to receive sexual pleasure.

<sup>356</sup> See my note 332 for more on Habermas.

<sup>357</sup> Jon Begley declares, “In essence, Amis situates his protagonist at the intersection of two distinct, but interrelated, narratives of historical transition, registering the condition of a declining, postimperial Britain within an international framework of deregulated finance capitalism, economic globalization, and cultural democratization” (80).

<sup>358</sup> Self’s stalker, Telephone Frank, accuses him, “Women, for you, they’re just pornography” (112). Thus, the women become intensely depersonalized and represent only images and body parts for John, which grants him a sense of agency in directing their movements for his sexual pleasure.

<sup>359</sup> As Brian Finney notes, “His addiction to pornography and masturbation illustrates the extent to which his subjectivity has been formed by the mass media. It also dispenses with the need for live women, offering him the satisfactions of solitary gratification” (46).

<sup>360</sup> As Kaye Mitchell notes, “Arguably, pornography is not just one amongst many examples of ‘consumption’ in which Self participates, it is the model of consumption upon which all others are based: lurid, spectacular, excessive, fetishistic, addictive, but also shameful and (literally) self-abusive” (80).

<sup>361</sup> In defining the hegemonic masculinities described, R.W. Connell (now publishing as Raewyn Connell), distinguishes *hegemonic* masculinity from *hegemony*: “The concept of ‘hegemony’, deriving from Antonio Gramsci’s analysis of class relations, refers to the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life. At any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally

exalted. Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (77).

<sup>362</sup> Walking home one day, John's monologue on his neighborhood reveals a frequent patronage and a taste that is decidedly middlebrow: "Like Selina, this area is going up in the world. There used to be a third-generation Italian restaurant across the road: it had linen tablecloths and rumpy, strict, black-clad waitresses. It's now a burger Den. There is already a Burger Hutch on the street. There is a Burger Shack, too, and a Burger Bower. Fast food equals fast money. I know: I helped" (Amis 71). John's desire is for money, and so he invests in places that make cheap, fast food rather than slower investments that produce higher quality.

<sup>363</sup> Selina's actions demonstrate a willingness to fuel John's imagination, though Amis eventually makes clear that such playacting does not entail sincerity on Selina's part, but a need for the economic stability his money will impart. John admits, "She has fucked for money. No money hurts, it stings. Right, dead right, to give her some. She has always said that men use money to dominate women. I have always agreed. That's why I've never wanted to give her any" (88). John recognizes the power of money and, while admitting he does not wish to dominate her, belies such a claim with his continual purchase of Selina's favor through his monetary gifts.

<sup>364</sup> Another Amis female character recognizes the potential for pornography to achieve her ends. In *London Fields*, Nicola Six muses, "Porno: porno. Yes of course. If you must. Surprisingly, Nicola disliked pornography, or she disliked its incursion into her own lovelife. Because it was so limited, because there was no emotion in it (it spoke straight to the mental quirk), and because it stank of money. But she could do pornography. It was easy" (Amis 222). Here, Amis highlights the woman's use of pornography to achieve money, power, or control of her own, by seeming to acquiesce to male tastes, requests, or demands.

<sup>365</sup> In the same way, Kazuo Ishiguro recreates the domestic in *The Remains of the Day* (1989) to question nostalgia as a means for establishing moral codes in society. My previous chapter more fully connects the shaping of the domestic through nostalgic policies in neoliberal Britain.

<sup>366</sup> In a rare moment of reflection, John admits, "I must marry Selina and settle down and raise a family. I must be safe. Christ, safe sounds frightening" (Amis 163). He finds that this version of the domestic requires him to perform a series of manners that do not lead to pornographic sex.

<sup>367</sup> Brian Finney observes that just as the "Martin Amis" character acts as a moral compass, Martina Twain also acts as "a second (twain) female Martin—who, like 'Martin Amis', is possessed of the culture lacking in Self, which makes him desire her" (47).

<sup>368</sup> Amis describes the Twain home in simple, sterile terms: "The two-floor apartment presented itself as the ordered setting for healthy and purposeful lives" (199). The ordered, moneyed world of the Twains tantalizes John, even as the lack of sexual voracity frightens him.

<sup>369</sup> Just as Martina reforms John's table manners, she also bestows him with a literary inheritance. Providing John with literature to read, she probes his intellect and sharpens it. As James Diedrick notes, "When he does begin to make the effort, under Martina's tutelage, he begins to glimpse the truth: literature and other forms of disciplined thinking and imagining sharpen one's hearing, restores one's responses" (Diedrick 90).

<sup>370</sup> In comparing Self to 1984's Winston Smith, Diedrick notes, "Like Winston, his responses have been conditioned—not by a state apparatus, but by an equally powerful economic system that shapes individual subjectivities, fetishizes objects, and commodifies relationships" (Diedrick 78).

<sup>371</sup> Contrast the garish opera outfit of John Self with the more understated dress of Martina, who is described as “wearing a plain charcoal dress and a single loop of pearls on the narrow column of her throat” (276). John’s clothing strikes the reader as that of the *nouveau riche*, an individual who attempts to purchase his or her way into status (as with Silas Lapham in Howells’ *The Return of Silas Lapham*), while Martina’s speaks of a more established, educated wealth developed from bourgeois upbringing.

<sup>372</sup> Brooker notes, “As a conscious spokesman for the *nouveau riche*, Self represents a significant social development and cultural unease of the period. His combination of wads of cash with coarseness, violence and misogyny make him—even more than Amis may have guessed when he began writing the book—a characteristic period figure” (57).

<sup>373</sup> Further, John’s adherence to social niceties makes him recognize that he is becoming unrecognizable even to himself. His response to the food, the pills, and the items he consumes is telling about his status as an individual: “I feel...prosthetic. I am a robot, I am an android, I am a cyborg, I am a skinjob” (Amis 304).

<sup>374</sup> Cathryn Setz claims, “Symbolically, we can see more complexity in Amis’s arrangement of *Money*’s women. Their bodies are imbued with a kind of militaristic and phallic power” (67). The two kinds of domesticity have converged, and Self’s hegemonic masculine identity has been proven to be impotent, subverted by his own fantasies and simulations of women in his life.

<sup>375</sup> Gavin Keulks highlights the contrasts between the women, and further explains the implications of John’s relationship with both: “As her name conveys, Selina Street epitomizes a downward immersion within such griminess, whereas Martina represents transcendence above it. Street offers Self desire, the pleasures of the body, and baser things, whereas Twain offers him intelligence, the pleasures of the mind, and higher ideals. Martina tries to redeem Self; Selina continues to exhaust him” (180).

<sup>376</sup> Diedrick notes, “John Self’s tinnitus constitutes part of larger pattern of implications that awaits the reader’s discovery.” (75) Here, noise forms the patterns of consumer culture, much like the “white noise” alluded to in Don DeLillo’s *White Noise*, where the protagonist’s wife listens constantly to talk radio and the family watches television, with “its narcotic undertow and eerie diseased brain-sucking power” (16).

<sup>377</sup> Towards the beginning of the novel, for instance, he tells his audience that he is able to finagle his way into another night’s stay at a hotel room: “Back at the hotel I firmed up a deal with the man behind the desk. In exchange for ten bucks and as many minutes’ chat about Lorne Guyland and Caduta Massi, he gave me my room until six without charging an extra day’s whack” (Amis 46-47).

<sup>378</sup> Amis notes that Selina’s clothing, which is tight, gusseted, or reflective of the lingerie she wears in private, grabs the attention of other men to reflect her public sexuality: “She strolls on ahead, wearing sawn-off jeans and a wash-withered T-shirt, or a frilly frock measuring the brink of her russet thighs, or a transparent coating of gossamer, like a condom, or an abbreviated *school uniform*...The men wince and watch, wince and watch. They buckle and half turn away. They shut their eyes and clutch their nuts. And sometimes, when they see me cruise up behind my little friend and slip an arm around her trim and muscular waist, they look at me as if to say---Do something about it, will you? Don’t let her go about the place looking like that. Come on, it’s your responsibility” (19). While John projects the men’s thoughts as granting him ownership over Selina, he really has no control over her private and public selves, thus creating an unstable relationship identity, as ultimately evidenced by her infidelities to him.

<sup>379</sup> Scholars such as Laura Doan have used this economic exchange to criticize constructions of women in *Money*, claiming, “In Amis’s novel, women’s relationship to money must be mediated through men in the form of sexual favors. His resulting equation is thus: woman + money = object” (70). Yet Doan’s equation reduces the complexity of the domestic within *Money*’s plotting, as well as the way Amis depicts masculinity. In his response to Doan, Diedrick counters that the postmodern plotting and style helps Amis counter claims that his writing demeans women: “But his novels have always come to query masculinity, not to praise it” (20).

<sup>380</sup> Diedrick declares, “In this reading John Self is both target and victim, a one-man carnival of junk taste and junk morality who has relinquished most of his free will by embracing commodity culture in all its pornographic excess. The fact that most of Self’s pleasures are solitary and onanistic reinforces the sense that he is a prisoner of his own addictions” (77).

<sup>381</sup> His pornographic lifestyle proves to be empty in the end: “His pornographic taste becomes perceivable if we note the allegorical structures of money and pornographic desire: in pornography, the fetishized object embodies the failure of satisfaction—the surrogate, abstract, empty form” (Bényei 42).

<sup>382</sup> Diedrick reminds us that “postmodern texts typically call attention to their status as fictions, as verbal constructs. The language of such texts calls attention to itself, and the author—or an author surrogate—is often present in the narrative” (Diedrick 14).

<sup>383</sup> Not unlike Nick Guest in Hollinghurst’s *The Line of Beauty*, Patrick finds himself drawn to popular music, sexual opportunity, and cocaine addiction (a particular vice popular amongst affluent New Men of the 1980s).

<sup>384</sup> Pornography, as Marcus argues, “is valuable because it reflects or expresses social history” (44). Because pornography is a reflector of its times, Patrick’s callous treatment of women also mirrors the tense gender relations in the 1980s. Beynon cites the 1980s themselves as “most certainly the decade in which [masculinity] was extensively reconstructed” (98). Therefore, pornography helps us frame the novel of manners for its reactionary response to the new sets of manners emerging in the novel.

<sup>385</sup> David Brauner notes that “each time Bateman notes the designer labels of the clothes he or one of his acquaintances is wearing, or delivers a diatribe on the superiority of Pepsi to Coca-Cola, Ellis is simultaneously mocking his protagonist’s earnest devotion to trivia and participating in it” (48). One of the criticisms that has emerged from *American Psycho* has been the question of whether Ellis is critiquing the consumer system or unwittingly participating in it, and Brauner’s observation still fuels this debate.

<sup>386</sup> Patrick’s willing admission of consumption of such marketed goods demonstrates, as Stephen do Carmo notes, that “though Patrick is on some level conscious of and disgusted by the media’s dissimulating influence...he is just as susceptible to it as everyone he knows” (67-68). Patrick’s knowledge of the pornographic transcends goods marketed as pornography—rather, he sees the pornographic in advertising and marketable products, thus becoming a perpetual consumer of goods in an economy built on creating customers.

<sup>387</sup> James R. Giles reminds us, “The sheer desperation that characterizes Bateman’s assaults on women is perhaps a result of his inability as a true disciple of the superficiality of consumerism to discover a complete, a real, woman anywhere. He can only see expensive clothing covering fragmented body parts. Paradoxically, the hedonistic culture that Ellis depicts is most distinguished by its absence of genuine pleasure” (165).

<sup>388</sup> In the 1980s, pleasure through consumption is a popular theme in literature. In *White Noise*, DeLillo depicts a trip to the grocery store or shopping center as one of experiencing physical pleasure: “People swarmed through the boutiques and gourmet shops. Organ music rose from the great court. We smelled chocolate, popcorn, cologne; we smelled rugs and furs, hanging salamis and deathly vinyl. My family gloried in the event. I was one of them, shopping at last” (83).

<sup>389</sup> Georgina Colby notes, “Women in *American Psycho* exist as commodities, in which role, crucially, they also exert an economic demand” (82). In writing about such shallow subject matter, Ellis recreates the commodification of the home occurring in late capitalist domestic spaces, demonstrating the takeover of the domestic, as seen through a pornographic lens.

<sup>390</sup> Naomi Mandel declares that the violence seen, whether explicit or subtle, forms a commentary on the way we view it from a social perspective: “Born in violence, formed by text, reforming the real by de-

forming it, *American Psycho*'s critique of violence offers violence as critique, confronting sadism with masochism, discourse with practice, literal with literary, word with violent world" (18).

<sup>391</sup> Giles explains, "As resolutely as anyone in Hemingway, the male characters in *American Psycho* follow a code, the central ingredients of which are obsession with designer-name clothing and other consumer items, pursuit of hedonistic pleasure, and ridicule of women and the poor. In drunken conversation they reduce women to female body parts and engage in competitive banter about material possessions" (161).

<sup>392</sup> Beynon notes that these traits, "a conspicuous consumption and a ruthless, cut-throat determination to be seen to be successful," are in keeping with the persona of the yuppie or New Man (105). The terms are synonymous, though the latter, a nickname from the acronym for Young Urban Professional, is more frequently used in the United States.

<sup>393</sup> Evelyn's increasingly opulent and ridiculous requests include "lots of chocolate truffles. *Godiva*. And oysters. Oysters on the *half* shell. Marzipan. Pink *tents*. Hundreds, *thousands* of roses. Photographers. Annie Leibovitz. We'll get *Annie Leibovitz*" (Ellis 124).

<sup>394</sup> As do Carmo notes, "He exists not only to caution us against the inhuman greed capitalism enforces, but to alert us to its increasingly efficient erasure of the real, our need for which must keep resurfacing more violently and insistently the longer it's suppressed" (70).

<sup>395</sup> Beynon reminds us, "Increasingly style marked off young men from old, rich from poor, powerful from powerless, gay from straight. What emerged was a hierarchy of masculinities based on appearance and which abolished more traditional masculine divisions based on work roles, ownership and sexual orientation" (108).

<sup>396</sup> Twenty years after the publication of *American Psycho*, Ellis reflects with Coreno on the sense of immorality and consumerism that pervaded the 1980s and affected his own desire to "grow up": "Whenever I am asked to talk *American Psycho*, I have to remember why I was writing it at the time and what it meant to me. A lot of it had to do with my frustration with having to become an adult and what it meant to be an adult male in American society. I didn't want to be one, because all it was about was status. Consumerist success was really the embodiment of what it meant to be a cool guy—money, trophy girlfriends, nice clothes, and cool cars. It all seemed extremely shallow to me. Yet at the same time you have an urge to conform. You want to be part of the group. You don't want to be shunned. So when I was writing that book as a young man, I was having this battle with conforming to what was then yuppiedom—the yuppie lifestyle—going to restaurants and trying to fit in. I think *American Psycho* was ultimately my argument about this" (qtd. in Coreno par. 4).

<sup>397</sup> do Carmo declares, "He murders because he wants desperately to discover something authentic, something real, in an information-laden, image-poisoned culture where such concepts have lost all meaning" (67).

<sup>398</sup> Patrick's dizzying personal effects include (but are no means limited to) a Panasonic bread baker, a Salton Pop-Up coffeemaker, a Cremina sterling silver espresso maker from Hammacher Schlemmer, a Sharp Model R-810A Carousel II microwave, a Salton Sonata toaster, a Cuisinart Little Pro food processor, an Acme Supreme Juicerator, a Cordially Yours liqueur maker, and a stainless-steel teakettle that whistles "Tea for Two" once the water boils (Ellis 28-29).

<sup>399</sup> do Carmo states, "The novel makes it perfectly clear where the blame for this appalling new culturescape must lie: with the *image*, or the spectacle, as Guy Debord calls it—consumer culture's endless xerography of things that were themselves never real" (69).

<sup>400</sup> As Mark Storey claims, "The things he buys, the friends he keeps, the sex he has, and the violence he perpetrates are all told through a male vernacular particular to the 1980s that he inhabits. Rather than

reinforcing our sense of Bateman's reliability, the form of the novel suggests that the central character is merely an illustration of a particular identity type" (60).

<sup>401</sup> Borrowing from Baudrillard, do Carmo reminds us that such a dilemma is not unique to Patrick: "Patrick and everyone he knows lives, in short, in Baudrillard's hyperreal, a place where images and representations have become so pervasive that the real itself, or 'authentic' perception and emotion is lost, unattainable, or so 'volatilized' it finally 'becomes an allegory of death'" (Baudrillard qtd. in do Carmo 68). Such authenticity in postmodern fiction does not exist, and identity becomes blurred with everyone else's.

<sup>402</sup> A series of hilarious misunderstandings end up in Patrick being mistaken for Marcus Halberstam, Timothy Price, and a series of his colleagues or peers. Brauner points out that the opening gag of Bateman's and Price's matching Armani coats "paves the way for a running joke involving the fact that the men in Bateman's circle constantly mistake, and are mistaken for, one another, the implication being that their (lack of) personalities, their clothes, and all other visual signifiers (ethnicity, age, class) are so homogenous as to make them virtually interchangeable" (Brauner 45).

<sup>403</sup> Alex Blazer states, "Postmodernist culture, habituated to the velocity of life, takes emptiness as its foundation and origin, and is thereby driven by and to images of hyperreality in an exponentially mediated existence. Below the mask is simply another mask, another media" (par. 2).

<sup>404</sup> My third chapter more fully explores the connection between nostalgia and the domestic in neoliberal England.

<sup>405</sup> Daniel Lea remarks, "For Amis the hypocrisy of the Thatcherite dichotomy lies in the *faux-naïf* assumption that an absolute, culturally cohesive national identity can coexist with the sprawling, indiscriminating momentum of capitalism. One central premise of both *Money* and *London Fields* is that traditional conceptions of place-identity, particularly where they are tied to ideas of nationhood, are meaningless, given the increasingly pervasive influence of globalised media and business concerns. The expansion of multinational corporations and the subsequent spread of a competitive free market arguably destabilise conventions of cultural difference" (71).

<sup>406</sup> For Thatcher and her political supporters, privatization took on a moral significance. In *Privatization and Public Partnerships*, E.S. Savas (a former Assistant Secretary of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for President Reagan) declare that "privatization can be profoundly compassionate and humane. Vouchers, for example, can provide more benefits, greater dignity, more choice and a greater sense of personal responsibility than government programs" (300). This defense of privatization prioritizes individualism, while minimizing the profit-fueled motivations for deregulating public-sector services (schools, hospitals, waste management systems, phone companies, and television stations are just a few of many examples of services now controlled by private companies).

<sup>407</sup> Gavin Keulks notes, "*Money* is not an overtly moral or instructional tale. Instead, it is an entropic postmodern allegory that endorses no truth, upholds no transcendent value. In keeping with his postmodern leanings, Martin does not prescribe utopian formulations of gender, capitalistic, and political relations" (182). The same can be said of Ellis, who invokes postmodernism to critique the simulations being enacted in *American Psycho*, for no seeming personal gain or benefits. Thomas Heise declares, "*American Psycho* translates for readers the massive social costs of neoliberal economics into a terrifyingly intimate experience of violence by a psychotic subject who embodies neoliberal theory and performs it through his repeated acts of disembowelment" (135).

<sup>408</sup> Sonia Baelo-Allué alludes to this mode of "serial consumerism, the fact that we are engulfed by an ethic of disposal and repurchase in which consumption is present for the sake of consumption alone" (88).

<sup>409</sup> Nicky Marsh declares, "John Self embodies the lurid co-existence of these two forms of capital. His failed bildungsroman reveals the violent ascendancy of speculative capital, the 'motiveless malignancy' of



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a political power that is wielded not by agents with memories and knowledge but by the short-term and endless movement of money itself" (130-31).

<sup>410</sup> David Brauner reminds us, "Both Bateman and the world he inhabits appear, for much of the novel, to be disintegrating" (45).

<sup>411</sup> Lea particularly hones in on John's conformity: "his independent self is usurped and eviscerated by the imperialistic dictates of profit. Given this colonisation it is redundant to conceptualise a separate identity, whether individual or national, outside money, for such an identity is fatally compromised" (73).

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