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THE REVOLT AGAINST MOURNING: WOOLF, JOYCE, FAULKNER, AND BEYOND

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THE REVOLT AGAINST MOURNING: WOOLF, JOYCE, FAULKNER, AND BEYOND

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

THE REVOLT AGAINST MOURNING: WOOLF, JOYCE, FAULKNER, AND BEYOND

The Revolt against Mourning calls into question the widespread critical alignment of literary modernism with Freudian melancholia. Focusing instead on "mourning," through close readings of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, James Joyce's *Ulysses*, and William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, I demonstrate how their depictions of this notion overturn both its traditional and contemporary understandings. Whereas Freud conceives mourning as a psychic labor that the subject slowly and painfully carries out, Woolf, Joyce, and Faulkner convey it as a destabilizing, subversive, and transformative force to which the subject is radically passive. For Freud, mourning is a matter of severing one's libidinal bond to the lost other and reinvesting the free libido in a new object. But these modernists show that this bond is not in fact something we have the power to sever. Rather, precisely because we must stay internally bound to the lost other, we are always exposed to being usurped and altered by its alterity. Indeed, what my readings disclose is that these novels end up being (dis)possessed by the spectral force unleashed in them. I argue, however, that each writer can be read as attempting a textual exorcism to free his or her novel from this force by invoking a vital, dynamic movement I call "life." But although Woolf, Joyce, and Faulkner seek such liberation, their narrative experiments ultimately fail to achieve it. And yet, for that very reason, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *Ulysses*, and *The Sound and the Fury* further illuminate how mourning both precedes and exceeds our desire to master it and binds us to the others we lose, perhaps for the entirety of our lives.

KEYWORDS: Modernism, Mourning, Grief, Loss, (Dis)possession, Life, Ethics

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Introduction: Of Human Bondage

"This love was a torment, and he resented bitterly the subjugation in which it held him; he was a prisoner and he longed for freedom. Sometimes he awoke in the morning and felt nothing; his soul leaped, for he thought he was free; he loved no longer; but in a little while, as he grew wide awake, the pain settled in his heart, and he knew that he was not cured yet."

W. Somerset Maugham, *Of Human Bondage*[1]

This dissertation is a study of how the experience of mourning is represented in three canonical modernist novels: Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, James Joyce's *Ulysses*, and William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. To use the word "represented" here may be controversial, however, since modernism is known to have emerged from a crisis of representation in art and literature at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. As Pericles Lewis observes: "The modernist crisis of representation was two-fold: a crisis in what could be represented and a crisis in how it should be represented, or in other words a crisis in both the content and the form of artistic representation" (*Cambridge Introduction to Modernism* 2). But while modernism called into question the ability to represent external reality, no strand of it escaped representation altogether. Even art that aimed at pure abstraction was an attempt to *represent* the concept of nonrepresentation. Lewis himself goes on to note that modernist literature "continued to represent reality, sometimes in distorted forms or in nightmarish parody, sometimes in comic detail or with multiple layers of symbolic intention, but usually with some implicit ideal of mimesis underlying all the literary experiments" (*Cambridge Introduction to Modernism* 4). I would go further, however, and argue that,

[1] Maugham, W. Somerset. *Of Human Bondage*. London: Penguin, 1992, p. 299.

far from a complete rejection of realism, literary modernism was an intensification of it. In the novels listed above, Woolf, Joyce, and Faulkner articulate what can be called a psychological realism. Mainly through the narrative techniques of "stream of consciousness" and free indirect discourse, they show that the border between inside and outside, psyche and world, self and other is never pure and secure but always open, unstable, and potentially traumatic. Accordingly, these techniques are less concerned with representing the objective world than how that world, including the body, impinges upon and affects subjective experience. At the core of this realism, then, is a profound sense of vulnerability, of the private sanctum of one's mind being pervaded by everything that is supposedly extraneous to it. As I seek to demonstrate in each of my chapters, these novels all help to develop an original conception of mourning that proceeds from the vulnerability intrinsic to their forms of representation.

I.

A great deal of recent scholarship has attempted to read literary modernism in terms of what Freud called melancholia, which entails a refusal to mourn or let go of the person, thing, or ideal one has lost. For example, Seth Moglen has described the modernism of canonical writers like Faulkner, T.S. Eliot, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Ernest Hemingway as "melancholic," claiming that it is characterized by "its sense of helplessness before [modernization], its acquiescence to a transformation that was perceived to be as irresistible as it was injurious" (*Mourning Modernity* 9). "Melancholic modernism," according to Moglen, records the "catastrophic developments" of advanced capitalism "within literary forms that present a contingent historical process as natural and inexorable" (*Mourning Modernity* 9). Similarly, Greg Forster has analyzed "canonical

modernism as an enactment of melancholia toward the loss of a specific ideal of white manliness" and maintains that "modernist melancholia, … encourages less a remedial remembering than a politics of memorial obfuscation" (*Gender, Race, and Mourning in American Modernism* 11-13). Other readings have been less critical but have also argued that melancholia is the defining feature of modernism. For Sanja Bahun, "historical melancholia was both a reaction to and the very form of modernists' interaction with the maelstrom of modern life" (*Modernism and Melancholia* 3). What Bahun calls "modernist melancholia" is "a historically contingent mood-bending and an affect-trace of problematic relationship with what is, consciously or unconsciously, experienced as loss" and "a social index that, in literature, finds its strategic expression in the problem-reflecting use of language and formal devices that purport to both artistically instantiate the process of mourning and reveal its 'failure'" (*Modernism and Melancholia* 4). Following Bahun, Anne Enderwitz holds that "[m]odernist melancholia is not only historical but also textual: it is a melancholia of signification and meaning as much as a melancholia of lost origins and empty iterations" (*Modernist Melancholia: Freud, Conrad and Ford* 4). On Enderwitz's account, "[m]odernist writing vehemently resists the idea of a happy integration with the loved object. In modernist literature, melancholia attempts the assimilation of the unassimilable, of that which can only be appropriated in a negative mode, *as* lost" (*Modernist Melancholia* 10; emphasis original). Taking a Kleinian perspective, Esther Sánchez-Pardo has added yet another voice to this line of criticism, seeking "to study and characterize the particular modality of melancholia that I am calling 'modernist' at the crossroads where modernism as an artistic and cultural configuration intersects with modernity" (*Cultures of the Death Drive* 13). Finally,

Jonathan Flatley has asserted that "it is this aspect of his argument—that in melancholia an emotional tie is replaced by an internalization of the lost object—that makes the paradigm Freud proposes an apt image for modernist subjectivity more generally" (*Affective Mapping* 42).[2]

There are many reasons to consider the thesis of "modernist melancholia" persuasive. First, it is undeniable that there is a deep melancholic streak in literary modernism. Although it has often been viewed as a continuation of romanticism, the melancholy that runs through modernist texts is darker and more pervasive than that found in the earlier movement. Furthermore, there are quite a few modernist characters and poet-personas who can be read as suffering from melancholia or at least from some of its symptoms. Septimus Warren Smith, Stephen Dedalus, and Quentin Compson, for example, have all been viewed as quintessential cases of the Freudian melancholic. Lastly, there are several aspects about the literature itself that can be associated with melancholia: its emphasis on fragmentation, alienation, and decentered subjectivity; its destabilization of language and communication; and the oppressive sense of loss that permeates it. But to define modernism *entirely* in terms of melancholia is to overlook its affirmative dimension. One can invoke here its belief in aesthetic autonomy and the sacredness of art; its attempt to capture transcendent, mystical, or otherwise spiritual

[2] Contemporary work on modernism, mourning, and melancholia remains indebted to Jahan Ramazani's groundbreaking book, *Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney* (1994), which picks up where Peter Sacks' *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats* (1985) had left off but also critiques Sacks' model of compensatory or successful mourning. Ramazani is particularly important here because he argues that modern (including some modernist) poetry is melancholic in nature, laying the foundation for the critical alignment of modernism with melancholia: "In contrast [to traditional elegists], modern elegists tend to enact the work not of normative mourning but of 'melancholic' mourning—a term I adapt from Freud to distinguish mourning that is unresolved, violent, and ambivalent. They are like the Freudian 'melancholic' in their fierce resistance to solace, their intense criticism and self-criticism, even as they 'mourn' specific deaths, not the vague and unconscious losses of melancholia. Unlike their literary forebears or the 'normal mourner' of psychoanalysis, they attack the dead and themselves, their own work and tradition; and they refuse such orthodox consolations as the rebirth of the dead in nature, in God, or in poetry itself" (*Poetry of Mourning* 4).

experiences; and its various utopian symbols and aspirations, from Woolf's Lighthouse and D.H. Lawrence's rainbow to Ezra Pound's earthly paradise and T.S. Eliot's still point. Such elements are not anomalous in literary modernism but rather constitute an essential part of its legacy. As we shall see, my chapters add another element to this list: the notion of "life."

II.

Melancholia, however, is not conceptually radical enough to describe the phenomenon I examine in the literary writing of these modernists. While I call this phenomenon mourning, it significantly departs from Freud's understanding of the term. In most of what follows, I will seek to develop a conception of it through a critical reading of his essays "Mourning and Melancholia" and "On Transience." As is well-known, in "Mourning and Melancholia," Freud opposes "normal mourning" to "pathological mourning," which he terms melancholia (*On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia* 210). Contemporary theory seems to be split between revising the former and embracing the latter, but it has not sufficiently questioned their shared fundamental dynamic. [3] As Freud observes: "The characteristic of detaching the libido piecemeal [from the lost object] can thus be attributed equally to melancholia and mourning; it is probably based on the same economic relations and serve the same tendencies in both" (*MMM* 216). The crucial implication is that in both mourning and melancholia the lost object is ultimately subject to the self or, more precisely, to its libidinal economy. Indeed, while the self's autonomy may be temporarily threatened by loss, both conditions allow for its full reestablishment: "Just as mourning impels the ego to renounce the object by declaring its death, and offers

[3] For excellent overviews of the field, see Rae, Patricia. "Introduction: Modernist Mourning." *Modernism and Mourning*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2010, pp. 13-49, Forter, Greg. *Gender, Race, and Mourning in American Modernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 17-25.

the ego the reward of staying alive, each individual battle of ambivalence [in melancholia] loosens the fixation of the libido upon the object by devaluing, disparaging and, so to speak, even killing it" (*MMM* 217). As Freud indicates here, mourning and melancholia do not employ the same means, but they work toward and accomplish the same end, namely, severing the bond to the lost object.

In an important move, Freud conceives mourning not in terms of convention or ritual but as a psychic activity through which loss is coped with and eventually overcome.[4] Specifically, he describes it as a type of labor that the self carries out where "[e]ach individual memory and expectation in which the libido was connected to the object is adjusted and hyper-invested, leading to its detachment from the libido" (*MMM* 205). Once mourning is completed—the lost object having been expelled from the psyche—Freud tell us that "the ego is free and uninhibited once again" (*MMM* 205). But was, we must ask, the ego ever not free? To carry out its labor, it had to have retained a certain authority over the lost object. Without this authority, mourning in Freud's sense would never be able to start or finish. Hence, while mourning may certainly inhibit the self from doing other things, it does not inhibit it from working through loss. Such work may be blocked or refused in melancholia but not completely. Like mourning, it gradually becomes its own cure. This is precisely why Freud refers not just to "the work mourning" but also to "the work of melancholia" (*MMM* 215, 217). In neither case, then, is the self's autonomy wholly undermined.

The texts I read, however, demonstrate that such authority is an illusion. They convey mourning as an experience in which loss precedes and exceeds the self, both

[4] According to Tammy Clewell, "Freud resisted the cultural repression of loss by defining mourning as a necessary labor, theorizing the psyche as an internal space for grief work, and bringing a discussion of bereavement into the public domain" ("Mourning Beyond Melancholia" 46).

mentally and physically. This conception entails that it is the self who is subjected to the lost object and not vice versa. Hence, the work of mourning is not the self's gradual overcoming of the object, as Freud posits, but the object's uncontrollable coming and overcoming of the self. It is not something the self carries out but exactly the reverse: something carried out upon the self. Such a reversal re-conceives mourning as an object-driven, rather than a self-directed, phenomenon. According to Adrian Johnston, "[i]n postulating the existence of forces foreign to the territory of reflective consciousness—these forces, while lying outside the sphere of the ego, nonetheless dominate its activity—Freud inaugurates a mental decentering of the human subject analogous to Copernicus' heliocentric displacement of Ptolemaic astronomy" (*Time Driven* 5). Johnson goes on to claim that "after Freud's dethroning of the self-transparent, rational subject, 'man is no longer master in his own house'" (*Time Driven* 5). But despite the revolutionary quality of Freud's psychoanalysis, he assumes that man can master mourning by removing the lost object from "his" house. For this reason, he does not go far enough in thinking how loss further decenters the self-transparent, rational subject.

Central to Freud's understanding of mourning is the influence of "reality." As he formulates it: "So what is the work that mourning performs? I do not think I am stretching a point if I present it in the following manner: reality-testing has revealed that the beloved object no longer exists, and demands that the libido as a whole sever its bonds with that object" (*MMM* 204). Later in the essay, he is more explicit:

> To each individual memory and situation of expectation that shows the libido to be connected to the lost object, reality delivers its verdict that the object no longer exists, and the ego, presented with the question, so to speak, of whether it wishes

> to share this fate, is persuaded by the sum of narcissistic satisfactions that it derives from being alive to loosen its bonds with the object that has been destroyed. (*MMM* 215)

Although "its task cannot be accomplished immediately," Freud maintains, "[n]ormally, respect for reality carries the day" (*MMM* 204-5). Reality-testing amounts to being able to consciously distinguish between reality and fantasy or the external world and one's subjective view of it. It is performed by the self, or what Freud calls the ego, and operates on the side of reason, keeping the psyche from being dominated by emotion and the instinctual urges of the id. In the context of mourning, it enables one to come to terms with the fact that the object is dead or lost. Reality-testing is thus one of the self's most valuable functions. My point here is not to deny this function. On the contrary, being exposed to the reality of loss, regardless of whether it is accepted, is constitutive of what I describe as the force of mourning. But far from leading to the severance of the bond, such a reality can often result in its amplification and the attempt to prolong it. Freud himself admits this to some degree: "An understandable tendency arises to counter this [i.e., reality-testing]—it may be generally observed that people are reluctant to abandon a libido position, even if a substitute is already beckoning" (*MMM* 204). Moreover, even if the self fully accepts reality's "verdict" and seeks to move on, it does not follow that the object itself must or will do the same. It may remain indifferent to reason as well as to all the self's "narcissistic satisfactions." As an entity that is in the psyche but not reducible to it, the object is not governed by what governs it or at the disposal of its functions.

To make such a claim is to insist on the lost object's essential otherness. Psychoanalysis, I would contend, has tried to think this otherness more than any other

discourse and yet has also sought to reduce it. It is instructive here to briefly examine the work of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok. Following Freud, Abraham and Torok oppose mourning and melancholia. Melancholia, they maintain, is defined by "the fantasy of incorporation" in which the self encrypts everything about the loss in the psyche and fails to go through "the painful process of reorganization" that mourning involves (*The Shell and the Kernel* 126-127). In contrast, they characterize mourning as a process of "introjection" in which loss is gradually worked through and, via language, absorbed into the self. Introjection allows us, we are told, "to reclaim as our own the part of ourselves that we placed in what we lost" (*The Shell and the Kernel* 127). As Jacques Derrida describes it: "By including the object—whence the name introjection—the process expands the self. It does not retreat; it advances, propagates itself, assimilates, takes over" (*The Wolf Man's Magic Word* xvi). Incorporation and introjection are different forms of *internalization*, a process whereby the object is taken into the psyche after it is lost. But as much as Abraham and Torok attempt to distinguish them, both phenomena are carried out by the self. Far from radicalizing Freud's notions, then, they also presuppose the self's authority over the lost object. The object is only in the psyche because the self has put it there, be it through fantasy or language. There is potential in their account, however, for thinking the radical otherness of the object in relation to the self. For example, in one striking passage, they write: "Sometimes in the dead of night, when libidinal fulfillments have their way, the ghost of the crypt comes back to haunt the cemetery guard, giving him strange and incomprehensible signals, making him perform bizarre acts, or subjecting him to unexpected sensations" (*The Shell and the Kernel* 130). But this "ghost" is nevertheless watched over and mostly held in check by an

authoritarian figure, "the cemetery guard." Ultimately, Abraham and Torok view melancholia in a negative fashion as the self's "refusal" to mourn and affirm mourning as its ability to conquer the object.

The problem with Abraham and Torok's account, and with the notion of internalization more generally, is that the lost object becomes little more than a possession of the self with no power or energy of its own. The challenge is therefore to think a situation, not where the object is tightly hidden away within the self or in the process of being helplessly assimilated to its identity, but where it is a force beyond the self's control and capable of taking it over. Freud himself cannot think such a situation, since he sees the self, particularly in mourning, as being purely active in relation to the object, working away to dissolve the bond with it. But since one does not solely create the bond, one cannot solely dissolve it either. Rather, one is always at its mercy. Freud also fails to think the bond as being precisely what allows the object to work on the self. The bond between them implies a space across which they are both bound *and* separated. No matter how intimate it may be, then, the bond is not a simple oneness but rather entails an essential heterogeneity. This means that the self can never completely assimilate the object, even in theory, since that would require closing out the very space of the bond. For the same reason, it also means that the self must stay open to being violated, affected, and borne upon by the object. To be bound in this way is thus to be part of a relation that transgresses one's conscious authority and consequently vulnerable, in both mind and body, to its effects. The experience of mourning is the endurance of such passive bondage.

This is not to argue, however, that the self has no ability whatsoever to act on the lost object. But even the most seemingly intentional, voluntary, and deliberate internalization, whether it is a memory, fantasy, or something else, is a response to the object's force being at work within the self. In this sense, then, all the self's activities in relation to the object are preceded and motivated by it. I am also not arguing that the self has no say over how the object gets represented inside of it. But the object is a representation of someone or something external to the self and hence carries an alterity that can never be fully seized and controlled by it. As Derrida says regarding the gaze of the lost other: "It is within us but it is not ours; we do not have it available to us like a moment or part of our interiority" (*The Work of Mourning* 44). In fact, it is *because* the object carries this alterity that it is capable of seizing and taking control of the self. The object's anarchic nature therefore derives from it being necessarily excessive to what is supposed to contain it. This is why Derrida also holds that the self's relation to the lost other is one of "dissymmetry and demastering" and that the other "can be interiorized only by exceeding, fracturing, wounding, injuring, traumatizing the interiority that it inhabits" (*The Work of Mourning* 160). One can try with all one's might to assimilate the object to oneself; but one can never master the risk of being expropriated by it in the ways Derrida describes here.

To be sure, there are places in Freud's analysis of melancholia where he suggests that the lost object overpowers the self. But upon closer inspection, this turns out not to be the case. Consider, for example, the process of identification associated with it, which has become a popular concept in contemporary theory thanks to the pioneering work of Judith Butler. In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud recalls that "we succeeded in explaining …

melancholia by supposing that … an object which was lost has been set up again inside the ego—an object-cathexis has been replaced by an identification" (23). He is more precise in "Mourning and Melancholia," however, observing that it is not actually the object that is incorporated into the ego but rather the libido that has been retracted from it: "Investment in objects proved not to be very resistant, and was suspended. The free libido was not, however, displaced on to another object, but instead drawn back into the ego" (*MMM* 209). Hence, when "identification" takes place, it does not internalize the object itself or its "unconscious (thing-) representation," which has been "abandoned," but rather produces a "substitute," which is why Freud states that only "the shadow of the object fell upon the ego" (*MMM* 209). Tammy Clewell, a prominent psychoanalytic critic, asserts that "[t]hrough this identification, the melancholic creates a figure for the lost other and withdraws this figure into the ego, a means of which a trace of the lost one becomes internalized as a living part of the self" (Mourning beyond Melancholia" 59-60). Clewell seems to overlook Freud's comment in *The Ego and the Id* that it may be via melancholic identification that "the ego makes it easier for the object to be *given up*" (24; my emphasis). But her observation is important here because it indicates both that the melancholic is in charge of this process and that what it internalizes is its own creation. In a perceptive account, Anne Enderwitz claims that melancholic identification can be understood as "a threat to the self," but she nevertheless conceptualizes it as "an appropriation of the object [by the self]" (*Modernist Melancholia* 56-58). Freud himself makes clear that the process is grounded in narcissism, noting that the "substitution of identification for object-love is a significant mechanism for the narcissistic illnesses" ("Mourning and Melancholia" 209). Jennifer Benjamin has thus good reason for claiming

that "the ego cannot leave the other to be an outside entity, separate from itself, because it is always incorporating the other, or demanding that the other be like the self" (*The Shadow of the Other* 79).

Furthermore, in trying to come to terms with the lost object's unruliness but also maintain the self's authority over it, Freud's analysis runs into a series of impasses. For example, he argues that "the love of the object" survives even though the libido has been withdrawn from it (*MMM* 211). The self therefore continues to love an object from which it has supposedly been detached. He also holds that object-investment is "relinquished" but then goes on to say that it can return if melancholia becomes self-destructive (*MMM* 210-212). But how can investment in the object return if that object has in fact been relinquished? Finally, he states, on the one hand, that "the object itself is abandoned" but, on the other, that "[i]n…extreme passion and suicide the ego, … is overwhelmed by the object" (*MMM* 211-12). Perhaps for this reason, he feels the need to qualify his language: "Thus in the regression of the narcissistic object-choice the object *may have* been abolished, but it has proved more potent than the ego itself" (*MMM* 212; my emphasis). Nevertheless, one is left to wonder how an object that "may have been abolished" by the ego turns out to be "more potent than the ego itself." Freud may get around some of these impasses when he asks: "[w]hat part of the psychical processes of the disorder is still taking place in relation to the abandoned unconscious object-investments, and what part in relation to their substitute through identification, in the ego?" (*MMM* 215). But that the object is still unconsciously working on oneself, refusing to go away, is evidence that it has not been abandoned or abolished, even if one consciously thinks that it has.

Admittedly, Freud's evocative description of melancholia as an "open wound" makes it seem as if it were a radically passive condition. "The complex of melancholia behaves like an open wound," he avows, "drawing investment energies to itself from all sides … and draining the ego to the point of complete impoverishment" (*MMM* 212). But, like mourning, what drains the self in melancholia is all the recuperative work it performs. As Freud observes: "It was there [with mourning] that we observed that time is required for the detailed implementation of the reality-testing command, after which the ego's libido is freed from the lost object. We may consider the ego busy with an analogous task during melancholia" (*MMM* 212). Accordingly, to claim that melancholia behaves like an open wound in fact means that it heals like one, which is why Freud concludes that "as in mourning, [the work of melancholia is] a long drawn-out and gradual process" that ends with loss being resolved (*MMM* 215). Once this process is brought "to an end," he tells us, "[t]he ego may enjoy the satisfaction of acknowledging itself to be the better of the two, and superior to the object" (*MMM* 217). It is thus not surprising when he remarks that "[t]he fact that it [i.e., melancholia] passes after a certain amount of time, without leaving any broad or demonstrable changes, is a characteristic that it shares with mourning" (*MMM* 212). Such an observation, however, is diametrically opposed to what I mean by mourning, which is not only not a process but also alters the self in profound ways.

As we have seen, Freud views the completion of mourning as a matter of finally severing the bond to the lost object, which involves detaching the libido, little by little, from this object so that it can be displaced on to a new one. [5] Freud also conceives it in

[5] As Jean Laplanche puts in his remarkable essay "Time and the Other": "What prevails in Freud is clearly the detachment of the libido from the object, or, more precisely, the representation of the object" (253).

economic terms as withdrawing one's emotional "investment" in the other and returning it to the ego. This withdrawal is an extremely difficult task in which "the thousands of connections" that bind the self to the lost object are dissolved (*MMM* 216). But the *telos* of mourning is the liberation of the self from loss, which Freud believes is achievable. [6] He argues that once the libido is detached from the object, it is also "liberated" from it. The self is then free to do what it wants with this libido, while the abandoned object more or less disappears. The liberation of the libido is therefore what liberates the self. But just because one wants to let go of the lost object does not mean that the object will adhere to

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Although he still holds, after Freud, that mourning is a process of unweaving and that it has a duration, Laplanche's reading of "Mourning and Melancholia" goes a long way in thinking mourning as an experience of radical otherness: "What he [Freud] doesn't take account of, but which is rarely absent—precisely is the place for the fabric, the context of those memories and expectations—is the message of the other" (254). See Laplanche, Jean. "Time and the Other." *Essays on Otherness*. Trans. John Fletcher. London: Routledge, 1999. 234-59.

[6] In an insightful essay, Tammy Clewell argues that Freud revised his theory of mourning in the essays he wrote in response to the First World War and in his key work, *The Ego and the Id*. According to Clewell, "Freud's war writings reflect a shift away from the resources of tradition and the sacred, anticipating the kinds of anticonsolatory and anti-idealist mourning practices that have gained widespread currency in the post-World War II era" ("Mourning beyond Melancholia" 57). Although I think that Clewell's assessment of these writings is exaggerated, it is not entirely without justification. In "On Transience," Freud admits that "we are at a loss to understand why this removal of the libido from its objects should be such a painful process, and we have at present no hypothesis to explain the fact" (*On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia* 199). Furthermore, in "Timely Reflections on War and Death," an essay that Peter Gay has described as an "an elegy for a civilization destroying itself," Freud briefly asserts an understanding of mourning that significantly departs from how he conceives it in "Mourning and Melancholia": "We bury our hopes, our demands, our pleasures with that person, we are inconsolable and refuse to replace them. We then behave as a kind of Asra, who die too when those whom they love die" (*On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia* 184; Freud's emphasis). Here, Freud makes no mention of attachments being abandoned, lost objects being replaced, or life being renewed. He articulated an even more poignant description of mourning after the sudden death of his daughter nine years earlier: "Although we know that after such a loss the acute state of mourning will subside, we also know we shall remain inconsolable and will never find a substitute. No matter what may fill the gap, even if it be filled completely, it nevertheless remains something else. And actually, this is how it should be. It is the only way of perpetuating that love which we do not want to relinquish" (qtd. in "Mourning beyond Melancholia" 61-62). Even if her death physically detaches Freud and his wife from their daughter, this detachment only serves to intensify their attachment to her. Such a conception of mourning shatters any illusions about the self being preserved intact after loss and regaining its supposed autonomy through mourning itself. Freud, however, never elaborates this conception into a "revised" theory. Clewell claims that in *The Ego and the Id*, "Freud collapses the strict opposition between mourning and melancholia, making melancholy identification integral to the work of mourning" ("Mourning beyond Melancholia" 61). But while Freud suggests that melancholia may be necessary to subject formation, he says nothing whatsoever about the work of mourning. It is thus hard to see how Clewell can then conclude that Freud "suggests that the grief work may well be an interminable labor" ("Mourning beyond Melancholia" 61).

one's desire. Indeed, the object may have more command over the self's desire than the self does. The problem of loss, as the work of Woolf, Joyce, and Faulkner demonstrates, is not so much that we cling to the object but that the object clings to us or, put differently, that we cling to it because it clings to us. Such exposure to otherness undercuts the colloquial phrase "letting go," which assumes a sovereign position in relation to the lost object. It is also why mourning, as I conceive it, cannot be compared with the mechanical activity of withdrawing funds from an investment. One can try as much as possible to let go of someone or something, but there is nothing that can force the object to conform to one's volition. On the contrary, one's volition is always susceptible to being weakened, coopted, or undermined by it. If this were not an essential possibility, then there would never be a case of the object proving "more potent than the ego itself."

But there is also the question of how exactly the self *could* dissolve the thousands of connections between itself and the lost object. They are not things, after all, that one can destroy, repudiate, or "get over" at will or perhaps at all. Nor can one comprehend all the singular ways in which one is connected to the object. Rather, these connections lie beyond one's authority and understanding precisely because they bear within them the object's alterity. They come from the object as much as from the self. Hence, one can bring them to mind and seek to work through them but never take away their power to act upon and influence oneself, often in ways one does not realize. They can always turn one back toward the object, make one feel its presence again, or reanimate one's desire for it. Wherever one goes, whatever one does, however one changes, one must remain exposed

to the effects of such connectedness. As long as this is the case, one can never say that one has detached oneself from the object or simply abandoned it.

The inability to comprehend how connected one is to the lost object implies that what one loses in it also exceeds one's understanding. Due to the guiding premises of Freud's account, however, he views this lack of understanding as a deficiency and relegates it to melancholia:

> In yet other cases we think that we should cling to our assumption of such a loss, but it is difficult to see what has been lost, so we may rather assume that the patient cannot consciously grasp what has been lost. Indeed, this might also be the case when the loss that is the cause of the melancholia is known to the subject, when he knows *who* it is, but not *what* it is about that person that he has lost. So the obvious thing is for us somehow to relate melancholia to the loss of an object that is withdrawn from consciousness, unlike mourning, in which no aspect of the loss is unconscious. (*MMM* 204; emphasis original)

For Freud, then, it is exclusively in melancholia that a person fails to "consciously grasp" something about the object, whereas in mourning nothing is "withdrawn from consciousness." But he must make the latter claim in order to preserve the self's authority. If something about the object were "unconscious" or, more radically, unknowable, it would have an otherness that would render the self passive to it. This would not only subvert mourning's fundamental orientation but also impede its progressive work. Abraham and Torok make the same move when they argue that melancholic incorporation involves "the refusal to acknowledge the full import of the

loss" and to recognize it "as such," both of which mourning-as-introjection supposedly does (*The Shell and the Kernel* 127).

However, the precision of Freud's language is crucial here. What the melancholic does not know is not necessarily what has been lost (e.g. a parent or beloved) but rather "what it is about that person that he has lost." It is therefore the object's singularity that the melancholic cannot comprehend. But is it ever possible to completely know what one has lost in a person or thing? Despite what Freud says about mourning's total grasp of loss, to answer this question in the affirmative would be to erase the distinction between self and other. Rather, the "full import" of the loss and its meaning *as such* will always elude one precisely because the object's singularity can never be completely known. By making it impossible to fully come to terms with loss, this lack of knowledge also opens one to being haunted anew by the object in the future. Such is the frightening vulnerability of mourning.

III.

In his short essay "On Transience," Freud describes a summer walk he took with two friends. Although the landscape is "blossoming," one of his friends—an unnamed poet—is saddened by it. "The poet admired the beauty of the nature around us, but it did not delight him," Freud writes, "He was disturbed by the idea that all this beauty was bound to fade, that it would vanish through the winter, like all human beauty and everything beautiful and noble that people have created and could create" (*MMM* 197). The poet struggles with the apparent contradiction that what ought to be eternal— "everything beautiful and noble"—is nevertheless doomed to extinction.

Freud points out that there are two primary reactions to loss: "One of these leads to the painful world-weariness of the young poet, the other to revolt against the asserted fact" (*MMM* 197). In the first reaction, one accepts the "fate of transience," but it leaves the person discontent. In the second reaction, one refuses to accept such a fate, adhering rather to the belief that beauty "must be able to go on existing in some way, far from all destructive influences" (*MMM* 197). Freud himself holds that the fact that "things beautiful and perfect" will fade makes them "even more precious" (*MMM* 197). As he puts it in a memorable phrase: "The value of transience is one of scarcity over time" (*MMM* 197). While the "beauty of nature" will be lost to the "ravages of winter," he further observes, it "returns the following year… and that return may be seen as eternal in terms of the length of our lives" (*MMM* 198). Freud turns here to a logic of renewal to solace the poet: yes, the beauty around them will soon suffer a temporary discontinuity but only to partake in a permanent continuity.

These remarks are indisputable to Freud, so he is surprised that they effect no change at all in the poet. After the walk, he concludes that it must have been "the psychical revolt against mourning" that left him so despondent (*MMM* 198). From my perspective, however, the poet does not shrink from mourning but is rather in the grip of objects he knows will be lost and is thus already experiencing it. One does not have to wait for death to be overtaken by the force of its anticipation. This force is what darkens his perception on such a splendid day and makes him despair over "the pleasure of beautiful things" (*MMM* 198). Even though it is never explicitly stated, what bothers Freud is the poet's passivity before the prospect of loss. His remarks are thus meant not merely to console the young man but, more fundamentally, to change his relation to the

threatened object: rather than being disturbed by beauty's transience, he should enjoy it for that reason.

If mourning were a one-way matter of releasing oneself from a lost or soon-to-be lost object, Freud's advice may very well have solaced the poet. But while rational argument may work on the self, there is no guarantee that it will persuade the object. Freud does not realize that he is not talking to the poet, pure and simple, but to someone under the influence of something beyond his control. Such helplessness is certainly disconcerting, but it is also a necessary possibility that follows from being internally bound to others whose alterity can always possess and overpower oneself. As it turns out, the poet's somber views about the fading of beauty proved to be all too prescient: "A year later war broke out and robbed the world of its beauties. . . . it robbed us of so much that we had loved, and showed us the fragility of much that we had considered stable" (*MMM* 199).

Written in 1916, "On Transience" poignantly testifies to the profound sense of loss Europe suffered at the time. The primary aim of the essay, however, is to affirm a freedom from mourning. Freud views mourning as the underlying reason for the poet's mindset becoming a widespread phenomenon:

> But have those other qualities, now lost, really been devalued to us because they have proved be so frail and unresisting? To many of us it appears that way, but again, I think, wrongly. I believe that those who think this way, and who seem prepared for lasting renunciation because that which is precious has not been proved to be enduring, are in a state of mourning over their loss. (*MMM* 199)

Earlier in the essay, Freud claimed that "[w]e see only that the libido clings to its objects and does not wish to abandon those which are lost even when a substitute is ready and available. That, then, is mourning" (*MMM* 199). Although I think that this conception is still too one-sided, it gives the lost object a degree of power over the self, which is the disturbing force that Freud sees working on his fellow Europeans. Hence, he goes on to claim that mourning is nevertheless only a temporary "state": "We know that mourning, however painful it may be, comes to an end of its own accord" (*MMM* 199). In response to those deploring the transience of their ideals, then, Freud asserts the transience of mourning. But he can only make this assertion by reducing it to a process inherently oriented toward complete renunciation: "Once it [i.e., mourning] has renounced everything that is lost, it has also consumed itself, and then our libido becomes free once again, so that, as long as we are still young and active, it is able to replace the lost objects with objects that are, where possible, equally precious, or with still more precious new ones" (*MMM* 199-200). By renouncing everything that has been lost, Freud maintains, mourning severs the bond to the object and thereby frees the self. But how it can renounce an object that the self does not possess or own, and how it can sever a psychical bond as if it were a physical thing, he fails to answer.

The fact, however, that Freud must turn again to a logic of renewal to end the essay shows that he himself is in the grip of the force he is trying to explain away. It had already taken hold of him when he used this logic to rationalize why an object's transience should not lead to despair. It is why he must write "On Transience" to begin with, why he cannot just accept the loss of the world's beauties without comment, and why the thought that they will be replaced by equally or more precious ones is not

sufficient to console him. If the latter were true, he would have ended the essay with the sentence "It is to be hoped that things will be no different where the losses of this war are concerned" (*MMM* 200). But he also needs to believe that "[o]nce mourning is overcome, it will be apparent that the high esteem in which we hold our cultural goods has not suffered from our experience of their fragility. We will once again build up everything that the war has destroyed, perhaps on firmer foundations and more lastingly than before" (*MMM* 200). The kind of secular faith in historical and natural continuity Freud expresses here effectively denies the radical discontinuity that loss leaves in its wake. More specifically, it constitutes his revolt against the passivity to what that discontinuity unleashes in him—that is, against mourning itself. But that this faith consoles him for his own objects suffering "the fate of transience" demonstrates that they are what inspire it. The beauty of Freud's essay is thus a testament to their power over him.

IV.

My reading of "On Transience" serves as a brief example of the readings I pursue in the chapters that follow. Like Freud's essay, the modernist novels I examine are all (dis)possessed by mourning and ultimately revolt against it. And like Freud's essay, they affirm a freedom from mourning through a certain notion of continuity. I call this notion "life" because what these novels try to depict is similar to the German sociologist Georg Simmel's description of the term in his 1914 essay "The Conflict of Modern Culture." The essay is a remarkable document of modernism itself. In words that echo one of its fundamental convictions, Simmel asserts that "the link between the past and the future hardly ever seems so completely shattered as at present, apparently leaving only intrinsically formless life to bridge the gap" ("The Conflict of Modern Culture" 241).

This is not to imply, however, that Woolf, Joyce, and Faulkner had read or were even aware of Simmel's essay. Rather, its critical value here lies in explaining "the idea of life" and its influence during the period in which they lived. Simmel argues that this idea has become central not only to the discourses of art, philosophy, and religion but also to sexual relationships. Having widely rejected the traditional notions of God, nature, and reason, the intellectual current of his age revolves instead around a "metaphysics of life" ("The Conflict of Modern Culture" 227). According to Simmel, "[o]nly at the turn of the twentieth century did large groups of European intellectuals appear, as it were, to be reaching out to a new basic idea on which to construct a philosophy of life. The idea of *life* emerged at the center where reality and values—metaphysical or psychological, moral or artistic—both originate and intersect" ("The Conflict of Modern Culture" 227; emphasis original). Defining life as "the opposite of form," Simmel claims that the conflict of modern culture consists not, as in previous ages, in "the struggle of a new, life-imbued form against an old, lifeless one" but in "the struggle against form itself, against the very principle of form" ("The Conflict of Modern Culture" 225). This conflict has produced "a pervasive cultural malaise," however, since all forms, or artifacts and institutions, have come to be seen as exhausted and "forcibly imposed on life" ("The Conflict of Modern Culture" 225). Hence, rather than new historical forms or the transformation of existing ones, modern culture yearns for the "all-embracing, spontaneous process of life" from which they are believed to derive ("The Conflict of Modern Culture" 239).

Although Simmel is careful to hold that life cannot be conceptually defined, he nevertheless attempts to describe it in various ways. It is a "perpetual dynamism,"

creative and spiritual in nature, with a "constant flow" and "febrile rhythm" that characterize "its fundamental restlessness, evolution and mobility" ("The Conflict of Modern Culture" 224). Furthermore, it is a flux of "incandescent, palpable, spontaneous vitality," apparently indestructible and completely pure of death and division ("The Conflict of Modern Culture" 232). As an "an altogether positive vital impulse," then, it can "break out of any form, not just one specific form or other, … [and] absorb it into its own spontaneity"; and it can "put itself in the place of form, … [and] allow its force and plenitude to gush forth in their primal untrammeled spontaneity, … until all cognition, values and structures can only be seen as the direct revelation of life" ("The Conflict of Modern Culture" 225). Simmel also describes this notion of life in terms of "pure immediacy," since it requires nothing external to be itself and is not bound or limited by any material constraints ("The Conflict of Modern Culture" 229). As he asserts, "[l]ife refuses to be governed by anything subordinate to itself, but it also refuses to be governed at all, even by any ideal realm with a claim to superior authority" ("The Conflict of Modern Culture" 235). However, while life is conceived here as a transcendent force, being absolutely self-sufficient, it does not transcend the world but is, on the contrary, immanent to it.

Simmel claims that the "adversarial" philosophies of Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche gave rise to this modern conception of life. "Schopenhauer is the first modern philosopher," he tells us, "to inquire at the most profound, crucial level, not into any specific contents of life, any conceptions or aspects of existence, but to ask exclusively: what is life, what is its pure significance qua life?" (The Conflict of Modern Culture" 227). Schopenhauer's answer to the meaning of life is "the will," which leads

him, as Simmel notes, to a deeply pessimistic conclusion: "life cannot attain to any meaning and goal beyond itself, because it always follows its own will, albeit in innumerable shapes and forms" ("The Conflict of Modern Culture" 227). Consequently, every goal is destined for failure and one can do nothing more than pursue "an endless series of illusions" ("The Conflict of Modern Culture" 227). In contrast, Nietzsche finds "in life itself the purpose that gives it the meaning which it cannot find outside itself" ("The Conflict of Modern Culture" 227). This purpose is simply life's continual "intensification, increase, growth of plentitude of power, strength and beauty within itself—in relation not to any definable goal but purely to its own development" ("The Conflict of Modern Culture" 227). Despite their philosophical differences, Simmel argues, both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche believe that "[o]nly the fundamental fact of life itself gives to all other things positive or negative value, meaning and proportion ("The Conflict of Modern Culture" 228).[7]

It is surprising, however, that Simmel does not discuss the work of Henri Bergson, whose vitalist philosophy was extremely popular at the time. In language very similar to Simmel's, Bergson argues that "the spontaneity of life is manifested by a continual creation of new forms succeeding others" (*Creative Evolution* 51). This is from his book *Creative Evolution* (1907, 1911), where he seeks to articulate a conception of life beyond both the reductions of the natural sciences and the limitations of finalism and mechanism. According to Bergson, chemistry and physics are only "partial views" of the

[7] Although Simmel does not mention it, Nietzsche's *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life* is also relevant here. In it, Nietzsche argues that the German people have become overly historical at the expense of "life": "For with a certain excess of history life crumbles and degenerates" (14). He does not formally define life but associates it with "vital strength" and activity (28). By opposing life to history and the past, however, he assumes that life is something wholly different from them and, in itself, pure of their influence. It therefore amounts to a living present that the historical can infect and dominate but to which it is essentially foreign.

"real whole," which is "an indivisible continuity" that cannot be reduced to physico-chemical elements: "And, with these partial views put end to end, you will not make even a beginning of the reconstruction of the whole, any more than, by multiplying photographs of an object in a thousand different aspects, you will reproduce the object itself. So of life and of the physico-chemical phenomena to which you endeavor to reduce it" (*CE* 24). In their turn, mechanism and finalism fail to think the "vitality," or creative force, that animates the whole—Bergson's famous notion of the *élan vital*. This vitality, he claims, generates the "continuous movement" and "ceaseless change" that define life: "Roads may fork or by-ways be opened along which dissociated elements may evolve in an independent manner, but nevertheless it is in virtue of the primitive impetus of the whole that the movement of the parts continues. Something of the whole, therefore, must abide in the parts" (*CE* 35). It is important to emphasize here that although Bergson maintains that life proceeds by "dissociation and division," life itself is "the continuation of one and the same impetus" (*CE* 35). This is why he compares it to the "undivided movement" of a hand as opposed to an intelligence or assemblage. Whereas the hand's motion apparently constitutes an "indivisible act," an intelligence lacks mobility and an assemblage is composed of elements (*CE* 53, 55). The movement of life can also be aligned with what Bergson calls "duration," which he describes as "undivided continuity and creation" and "the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances (*CE* xiv, 4). Similar to Simmel's notion, then, Bergson's conception of life is a purely progressive movement that contains nothing negative in itself.

The influence of Bergson's philosophy on modernism is well-known and has been studied by many critics.[8] In terms of the modernist novel, its influence has been mainly focused on the technique of stream of consciousness. But it is precisely this technique, or one comparable to it, that needs to be transcended for Woolf, Joyce, and Faulkner to capture their shared notion of life. Where stream of consciousness is used in relation to the latter, it is only to contribute to a living presence that encompasses it. As radical as the work of Max Stirner and Karl Marx is, Derrida was able to discern in both a metaphysical notion of "absolute life, fully present life, the one that does not know death and does not want to hear about it" (*Specters of Marx* 220). The same can be said about these writers. In trying to represent "absolute life, fully present life," they seek something that is neither limited to the individual psyche nor constrained by its so-called stream of consciousness.

In an important essay, Ann Banfield has argued that the modernist "formalization of temporal change, broken down into a sequence of 'frames' or discrete moments … is not Bergson's *duree*" (*Cambridge Companion to the Modernist Novel* 57). This insight builds off Franco Moretti's analysis of William James's notion of stream of consciousness, where he observes that James's own language is incompatible with the stream metaphor. As Banfield notes, Moretti concludes that "Bloom's experience in

[8] For example, see Levenson, Michael. *A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine 1908-1922.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, Quinones, Ricardo. *Mapping Literary Modernism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985, Schwartz, Sanford, *The Matrix of Modernism: Pound, Eliot and Early Twentieth Century* Thought. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985, Douglass, Paul, *Bergson, Eliot, & American Literature*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986, Quirk, Tom. *Bergson and American Culture: The Worlds of Willa Cather and Wallace Stevens*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990, Antliff, Mark. *Inventing Bergson: Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant-garde*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, Gillies, Mary Ann. *Henri Bergson and British Modernism*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996, Fink, Hilary L. *Bergson and Russian Modernism*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999, Burwick, Frederick, and Paul Douglass, editors. *The Crisis in Modernism: Bergson and the Vitalist Controversy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, Ardoin, Paul., et al., editors. *Understanding Bergson, Understanding Modernism*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013.

Ulysses consists of 'discrete, and almost absolute, moments.' The moment, the hours, night and day, the years, the waves—the titles of Woolf's novels record this conception of time as discrete units in sequence" (*Cambridge Companion to the Modernist Novel* 57). Banfield also remarks that "in *Absalom, Absalom*, Faulkner spoke of a 'forever crystalized instant.' Bergson had invoked crystallization for what was not duration, so the image suggests the modernists' non-Bergsonian conception of time, even at the level of experience" (*Cambridge Companion to the Modernist Novel* 56). But what both Banfield and Moretti fail to notice is that Woolf, Joyce, and Faulkner invoke a notion like Bergsonian duration in order to overcome the profoundly divided, discontinuous nature of their characters' loss-wracked consciousnesses. It is through this invocation that they each attempt what I analyze as a textual exorcism to free not so much the characters themselves but rather the novel from mourning's grip. They must call on a counterforce to expel what takes over their texts and to reassert the aesthetic harmony it undermines. Despite their efforts, however, all three novels, I argue, leave us not with a triumphant freedom from the lost object but with an inescapable bondage to it.

But this negative conclusion does not make these texts "melancholic," as Freud conceives the term. To describe them in such a way would not only miss an entire dimension of the world they present, as mentioned before, but also reduce them to something that cannot wholly explain how they convey loss. The thesis of modernist melancholia thus posits too much *and* too little. Moreover, although Freud called melancholia a "condition," he himself admitted that its various symptoms "do not seem amenable to being grouped together into a single entity" (*MMM* 203). Rather than presupposing that literary modernism adheres to Freud's assumptions about loss and then

reading it in terms of how he understands mourning and melancholia, I have attempted to demonstrate how it overturns these assumptions, albeit unknowingly, and thereby depicts what his still too "ipsocentric"[9] reason cannot think: mourning as something that happens to us, in the innermost part of ourselves, but that is nonetheless not ours and can never be fully mastered by us.

V.

Chapter one develops a close reading of Woolf's most famous novel and modernist masterpiece *Mrs. Dalloway*. The specific critical debate in which I seek to intervene is Woolf's portrayal of loss and mourning. At the center of this debate is the issue of consolation. It is only in contemporary criticism that this notion has been problematized as ethically suspect and politically conservative. The current trend of reading literary modernism as anti-consolatory can be traced back to Jahan Ramazani's influential book *The Poetry of Mourning; The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney* (1994). Ramazani analyzes what he calls "the poetics of melancholic mourning," arguing that the "modern elegy resembles not so much a suture as an 'open wound,' in Freud's disturbing trope for melancholia" (*Poetry of Mourning* 4). His work both follows and challenges Peter Sacks' *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats* (1985), which examines the traditional elegy in terms of what Freud described as the work of mourning. The traditional elegy, as opposed to its modern version, draws on various forms of consolation in order to successfully complete this work. The difficult question, then, is whether Woolf's fiction is consolatory or anti-consolatory in nature, traditional or

[9] Jean Laplanche trenchantly distinguishes between ipsocentric and allocentric psychic mechanisms: "A mental operation in which the subject is himself the agent of the mechanism as against an allocentric mechanism where the other is the agent of a mechanism directed at the subject" (*Essays on Otherness* 245n25). Laplanche's work has challenged what can be called Freud's "ipsocentrism."

modern in its confrontation with death. To date, however, no consensus has been reached in Woolf scholarship. Some critics, like Christine Froula, have argued that her novels seek consolation, while others, like Tammy Clewell, have claimed that they refuse it, and still others have taken a middle position. While I contend that *Mrs. Dalloway* is consolatory in a unique way, I attempt to show that there is a conception of mourning at work in it for which critics have not adequately accounted. To seek consolation and to refuse it both presuppose a certain agency toward loss that this conception undermines. But Woolf ultimately cannot withstand the profound vulnerability that pervades her text and tries to cast it out.

Using his famous short story "The Dead" as its point of departure, Chapter 2 pursues a close reading of Joyce's modernist epic *Ulysses*. Although the novel is known for its pervasive irony, its depiction of loss and mourning have a deeply serious quality. Indeed, these themes are so prevalent in the novel that they raise the question of whether it provides any final liberation from them. In trying to read *Ulysses* as ultimately affirmative, prominent Joyce critics like Richard Ellmann, Colin MacCabe, Christine Froula, and Maud Ellmann have argued that it does provide such liberation. They all maintain, to varying degrees, that the demons that haunt its characters are exorcised. Other critics, like Richard Kearney and John S. Rickard, take more ambivalent positions but nevertheless read *Ulysses* in liberatory terms. Conversely, I argue that the novel does not liberate Stephen Dedalus or Molly and Leopold Bloom from their intractable bonds to the past. Despite its profoundly positive, even spiritual moments, then, *Ulysses* is a work of bondage rather than of freedom. But while Joyce does not free his characters from the past, he does attempt to free his text from it. This is the exorcism of *Ulysses* that has gone

unnoticed by critics. By turning to a notion of life quite similar to the one I discern in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Joyce affirms something that is unbound by mourning's force. From my perspective, one of the most significant and original aspects of the novel is how it conceives mourning as something that releases a transformative energy in both the mind and body. In the final episode, however, Joyce seeks a style with which to expel this energy and reassert the primacy of the living present.

The body takes on particular importance in Chapter 3, where I elaborate a close reading of a third modernist tour de force, Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. Because so much of this novel happens in the mind, it is easy to overlook the significant role that the body plays in it. I demonstrate that the conception of mourning that emerges from its pages is psychosomatic nature. For Faulkner, even more than for Woolf and Joyce, the bond to the lost other is physically constituted and while mourning works on the mind, its repercussions deeply affect the body. I begin the chapter with an analysis of his short story "Pantaloon in Black," using its harrowing depiction of the main character's struggle with loss to illustrate the key features of the more radical conception of mourning found in *The Sound and the Fury*. The central debate on the novel proceeds from the question of whether it affirmatively opposes anything of meaning to the meaningless despair it depicts. Despite this being a long-standing debate, it remains very much unsettled. There are critics like Olga Vickery and Peter Swiggart who claim that the novel promotes the Christianity of one of its main characters. But there are also critics like John V. Hagopian and Myra Jehlen who read it as an extremely negative, even nihilistic, text. And, finally, there are others like Walter J. Slatoff who assert that it is deliberately ambiguous on this score. In my view, however, none of these positions are sufficient, since they do not

come to terms with what Faulkner attempts in the final section. I argue that in order to establish narrative coherence and thereby reach an objective view of life, he tries to rid *The Sound and the Fury* of the disruptive force of mourning to which the novel itself gives rise.

My Conclusion challenges a wide swath of contemporary mourning theory. Critical studies of the relation between modernism and loss have been dominated by the thesis that modernist literature articulates an ethical form of mourning. For example, in her introduction to *Modernism and Mourning*, Patricia Rae contends that literary modernism is characterized by a resistance to the work of mourning that endeavors to keep the relation to loss open and unresolved. What she calls "resistant mourning" is therefore ethical because it insists on affirming the alterity of the lost other instead of negating it in a process of reconciliation (*Modernism and Mourning* 19). In making this claim, Rae follows some of Derrida's writings on the topic as well as the work of R. Clifton Spargo. In his book *The Ethics of Mourning*, Spargo draws heavily on Levinas's philosophy to maintain that elegiac literature embodies a type of mourning that resists consolation in favor of remaining responsible for the lost other. Tammy Clewell's readings of both modernist novels and psychoanalysis provide another powerful elaboration of the ethics of mourning thesis. Extending Judith Butler's notion of the ego as an elegiac formation, Clewell conceives mourning as an interminable labor through which bonds to the dead are acknowledged and sustained. A number of recent books could also be cited here that aim to elucidate modernism's allegedly ethical mourning. The common presupposition underlying this scholarship is that mourning is an activity, a process, or a labor that the subject carries out or ought to carry out. Without realizing it,

these critics assume that the subject's autonomy is not itself compromised by loss. I contend, however, that the conception of mourning Woolf, Joyce, and Faulkner articulate thoroughly undercuts this assumption. Accordingly, I seek to reinforce my central argument that mourning is not something one autonomously works through but a heteronomous force that works through one's mind and body. Far from being a matter of hospitably welcoming the lost other, then, I maintain that mourning involves being exposed to its alterity, whether or not one welcomes it.

Throughout this dissertation, my methodology is mainly deconstructive close reading. The readings I perform involve a theoretical engagement with both the form and content of modernist writing. Such an approach, however, is not to meant to disregard the necessity of historicizing and politicizing literature. The reason why I engage this writing on the level of the text itself is threefold. First, my primary goal in what follows is to illuminate what modernist literature, as literature, reveals about the perennial issues of death, loss, and mourning that other discourses cannot. Second, the basis for the dissertation emerged from a critique of Freud's work that eventually developed into a theory of mourning. But the original inspiration for that theory was my reading of literary modernism, which I found to be marked by a beautiful yet troubling sense of what it means to be vulnerable. And third, since beginning to study literature seriously, I have been trained as a close reader and it is the type of analysis at which I am most adept. This training has cemented in me the guiding conviction that the validity of any interpretation depends on whether it is supported by the text. For this reason, in elaborating theoretical arguments, I always try to privilege the novels themselves and keep my argumentation free of obscure and unnecessary jargon. Precisely because of their closeness, I hope that

my readings enable one to feel the singular experience of mourning that these novels so powerfully articulate.

Chapter 1

Woolf's Revolt: The Exorcism of *Mrs. Dalloway*

"The great hand opened and shut" (*Mrs. Dalloway* 129). Such is Doris Kilman's response to Elizabeth Dalloway preparing to leave her. It forms part of a remarkable scene of mourning. Elizabeth, with her "youth" and "beauty," fills a lack in Miss Kilman's life, which is why the older woman wants "to clasp her, … make her hers absolutely and forever and then die" (*MD* 129). Before Elizabeth goes, the force of mourning is already rising within Miss Kilman: "Miss Kilman could not let her go! This youth, that was so beautiful, this girl, whom she genuinely loved! Her large hand opened and shut on the table. … 'Don't forget me,' said Doris Kilman; her voice quivered" (*MD* 128-9). Once she does go, Miss Kilman, even though she had anticipated it, is overcome "once, twice, thrice by shocks of suffering" because "Elizabeth had gone. Beauty had gone, youth had gone" (*MD* 130). She cannot help feeling the painful effects of Elizabeth's departure whose turbulence shakes her mentally as well as physically: "She got up, blundered off among the little tables, rocking slightly from side to side, and somebody came after her with her petticoat, and she lost her way, … saw herself thus lurching with her hat askew, very red in the face, full length in a looking-glass" (*MD* 130). This seemingly small event leaves her in "disorder; her hair down; her parcel on the floor" (*MD* 131). Although described elsewhere as a character who desires power and dominance, she is here completely undermined by something that she cannot master. Falling back on her faith, she takes refuge in a church where she nevertheless struggles to free herself from mourning's clutches: "still she barred her eyes with her fingers and tried in this double darkness, … to aspire above the vanities, the desires, the commodities, to rid herself both

of hatred and of love" (*MD* 130). As we shall see, Clarissa Dalloway, her archenemy, employs a different means to achieve the same aim.

The dynamic of this struggle will be the focus of my reading of Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. Whereas Miss Kilman turns to religion for consolation, I will argue that the novel itself searches for a different form of consolation. In contemporary work on mourning, the word consolation has become associated with a traditional, conservative approach to loss. This approach has been most powerfully articulated in Peter Sacks' *The English Elegy* (1985) and is grounded in a Freudian conception of "healthy" or "successful" mourning. Following Freud, Sacks understands mourning as "an action, a process of work" and studies "ways in which certain conventions of the elegy, related as they are to a variety of ritualistic social and psychological actions, reflect and carry on such work" (*The English Elegy* 19). In contradistinction to such an approach, Jahan Ramazani has influentially claimed that what he designates as the "modern elegy" is defiantly inconsolable—sustaining its attachments to loss, scorning redemptive claims to transcendence, and defying cultural expectations of recovery. According to Ramazani, "If the traditional elegy was an art of saving, the modern elegy is what Elizabeth Bishop calls 'an art of losing'" (*Poetry of Mourning* 4). Hence, rather than overcoming one's grief, as was traditionally sought, the modern elegy thus becomes "immersed" in it. With impressive verve, Ramazani argues that "[i]nstead of resurrecting the dead in some substitute, instead of curing themselves through displacement, modern elegists 'practice losing farther, losing faster,' so that the 'One Art' of the modern elegy is not transcendence or redemption of loss but immersion in it" (*Poetry of Mourning* 4).[10]

[10] For other work on modernism being anti-consolatory in tendency, see Gilbert, Sandra M. *Death's Door: Modern Dying and the Ways We Grieve.* New York: WW. Norton, 2006, Vickery, John. *The Modern*

Woolf criticism has interpreted her novels in both traditional and modern terms, as seeking consolation *and* refusing it. In her reading of *Mrs. Dalloway*, Christine Froula poses the following question: "Could the elegy rise to this historic moment—mourn war losses of unimaginable magnitude yet everywhere suffered as local, capture contending social forces, work through communal grief toward consolation and hope?" (*Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-garde* 90). Froula argues that Woolf's answer is a resounding yes. Contrary to the First World War poets' "savage ironies [that] all but eclipse consolation," Clarissa Dalloway "embodies the elegy's very principle: the necessity of relinquishing the dead and of forming new attachments in order to carry on with life" (*Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-garde* 91). Similarly, for Karen Smythe, Woolf creates "a poetic which renders both public and private (cultural and personal) grief, and offers a sense of consolation in aesthetic and historical continuity" ("Virginia Woolf's Elegiac Enterprise" 75-76). Conversely, Tammy Clewell asserts that in *Jacob's Room* and *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf attempts to "wrest mourning from the sphere of social regulation, from the public rituals and communally shared values that sought to declare the legacy of war healed, finished, and resolved" (*Mourning, Modernism, Postmodernism* 27). In doing so, her "female characters articulate … a decidedly feminist refusal to accept consolation and finish the work of mourning as the only adequate response to death and wartime destruction" (*Mourning, Modernism, Postmodernism* 27). Theodore Koulouris, for his part, maintains that Woolf's "work betrays a gesture of mourning which does not only seek to monumentalise 'loss' … but also to avoid eliding the singularity of one's loss … thereby respecting his/her

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Elegiac Temper. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006, Zeiger, Melissa. *Beyond Consolation*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.

irrevocable alterity" (*Hellenism and Loss in the Work of Virginia Woolf* 11). He concludes, then, that "in writing about death and loss, in textually mourning 'loss,' Woolf does not seek consolation but a kind of monumentalisation of the singularity of death" (*Hellenism and Loss in the Work of Virginia Woolf* 11). Other readings lie somewhere in between these positions. Susan Smith Bennett, for example, sees *To the Lighthouse* as "describ[ing] varieties of grief work which establish some distance between the dead and the living without completely severing connections" ("Reinventing Grief Work" 318). Finally, George M. Johnson contends that Woolf resists conventional attitudes toward grief but still desires a spiritual form of consolation. The result is ambiguous, however: although Woolf "explores mystical transcendence as an alternative strategy for negotiating loss and accomplishing mourning," mourning in her novels is never fully resolved (*Mourning and Mysticism* 182).[11]

For all their richness, however, these accounts fail to come to terms with the conception of mourning at work in Woolf's novels. What unites the traditional mourner who chooses consolation and the modern mourner who refuses it is the assumption that they have the power to dictate whether their mourning ends or goes on. Neither Sacks nor Ramazani calls this assumption into question and Woolf critics have continued to adhere to it. But particularly in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf shows that mourning is not something

[11] For other contributions to this debate, see Showalter, Elaine. "Virginia Woolf and the Flight into Androgyny." *A Literature of Their own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977. 263-97, Spilka, Mark. *Virginia Woolf's Quarrel with Grieving*. Lincoln; University of Nebraska Press, 1980, Mepham, John. "Mourning and Modernism." *Virginia Woolf: New Critical Essays*. Ed. P. Clements and I. Grundy. London: Vision Press Limited, 1983, Caramagno, Thomas. *The Flight of the Mind: Virginia Woolf's Art and Manic-Depressive Illness*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992, Levenback, Karen L. *Virginia Woolf and the Great War*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999, Bradshaw, David. "'Vanished like Leaves'": The Military, Elegy, and Italy in *Mrs. Dalloway*." *Woolf Studies Annual* 8, 2002, pp. 107-126, Jay, Martin. "Against Consolation: Walter Benjamin and the Refusal to Mourn." *Refractions of Violence*. London: Taylor and Francis, 2003, pp. 11–24, Detloff, Madelyn. *The Persistence of Modernism: Loss and Mourning in the Twentieth Century.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, Hägglund, Martin. *Dying for Time: Proust, Woolf, Nabokov*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012.

over which we preside but is rather the passive experience of a force to which we are always vulnerable. Such vulnerability entails that no matter how much one may try to close oneself off to mourning, this can never be completely accomplished. No amount of consolation can change the fact that since mourning is not entirely within our control, we must remain perpetually exposed to its visitation. Woolf's point, however, is not that we *should* refuse consolation and remain open to loss but that we *must* remain open to it. Being for or against consolation does not alter this necessary openness. In fact, I will argue that *Mrs. Dalloway* is ultimately consolatory in tendency. It vividly illustrates the force of mourning but only to exorcise it through a notion of life that would be free from its trauma. Woolf therefore demonstrates mourning's unmasterability but then attempts to master it. But this latter move is complicated, since it both aligns with and deviates from a Platonic-Christian tradition that has sought to transcend the grief of mortality. In the chapter's conclusion, I suggest that the novel itself may undermine what I read as its problematic *telos*.

I.

When we first meet Clarissa Dalloway, it is on a beautiful morning in June. There is a palpable sense of youthful exuberance in her decision to "buy the flowers herself" (*MD* 3). Indeed, without her willing it, the sound of hinges squeaking brings "Bourton" to mind—her family's country home and the setting of her youth. We can feel her excitement ("What a lark! What a plunge!") but also her anxiety about this adventure into London: "feeling as she did, standing there at the open window, that something awful was about to happen" (*MD* 3). Her feelings of ecstasy and terror follow from doing something on the spur of the moment, as she had done things at Bourton as a young girl.

Clarissa's errand, in this way, reanimates her, especially after having been seriously ill, and sends her plunging into life once again. Yet Bourton also represents a place of irrevocable loss. While it enables Clarissa to recall her youth, it must remind her that it is over in the same stroke. It is not fortuitous, then, that she suddenly thinks of her former lover, Peter Walsh; of something he said on the terrace; of "his eyes, his pocket-knife, his smile, his grumpiness;" and of the utter vanishing of "millions of things" (*MD* 4). As it is here, Bourton will continue to be a source of both nostalgic longing and bitter sadness, constituting the memory of lost innocence and lost love. It is still able to affect her profoundly because she remains emotionally bound to it, or it to her, despite the many years that have passed since living there. There is thus already a hint of mourning in this otherwise vibrant moment. It comes upon Clarissa unawares, in the fresh morning air, "like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave; chill and sharp and yet … solemn" (*MD* 3). Importantly, she is not somber or depressed before this wave hits her. But mourning is nevertheless able to exert a gentle pressure in her, since it is indifferent to one's feelings and not dependent on one's mood. Accordingly, in this opening scene, Woolf shows its power to work subtly on the psyche, not vice versa, and the psyche's susceptibility to it at all times.

This power is continually reinforced on Clarissa's subsequent walk. Once again, the beautiful liveliness of the day is described: "June had drawn out every leaf on the trees. The mothers of Pimlico gave suck to their young. Messages were passing from the Fleet to the Admiralty. Arlington Street and Piccadilly seemed to chafe the very air in the Park and lift its leaves hotly, brilliantly, on the waves of that divine vitality which Clarissa loved" (*MD* 7). As in the opening scene, however, this vitality cannot protect

Clarissa from what she is internally bound to. Even though she is in an active state and enjoying the day, she is gradually re-possessed by Peter from within. "For they might be parted for hundreds of years, she and Peter; …" the narrator tells us, "but suddenly it would come over her, If he were with me now what would he say?—some days, some sights bringing him back to her calmly, without the old bitterness; which perhaps was the reward for having cared for people; they came back in the middle of St James's Park on a fine morning—indeed they did" (*MD* 7).

What gets describes in these lines is actually happening to Clarissa in the moment. She is not deliberately thinking of Peter or melancholically dwelling on him, but nor is this simply a matter of involuntary memory. Rather, his alterity has overtaken her consciousness and is beginning to work on her. That she is not in complete control of this experience is shown by how oppressive it becomes. While Clarissa tries to revel in the beauty around her, she cannot help being subjected to Peter's critical gaze: "But Peter—however beautiful the day might be, and the trees and the grass, and the little girl in pink—Peter never saw a thing of all that. He would put on his spectacles, if she told him to; he would look. It was the state of the world that interested him; Wagner, Pope's poetry, people's characters eternally, and the defects of her own soul. How he scolded her! How they argued!" (*MD* 7). Feeling herself being reduced by this gaze to what Peter predicted she would become— "the perfect hostess," married to a conservative politician—she attempts to assert her authority over it, insisting that "she had been right—and she had too—not to marry him" (*MD* 7). She further rationalizes that whereas Richard, her husband, gives her the "little license" and "little independence" needed between married people, "with Peter everything had to be shared; everything gone into.

And it was intolerable" (*MD* 7). If she had not broken with him, "they would have been destroyed, both of them ruined, she was convinced" (*MD* 8).

Despite the finality of this statement, however, Clarissa's train of thought cannot stop there. Rather, it gives way to Peter's alterity again and to what the loss of their love did to her: "though she had borne about with her for years like an arrow sticking in her heart the grief, the anguish; and then the horror of the moment when some one told her at a concert that he had married a woman met on the boat going to India! Never should she forget all that!" (*MD* 8). The grief, anguish, and horror she feels here, not just remembers, constitute Peter's enduring power over Clarissa and are a culmination of the work it has done on her since the beginning of the novel. Overcome by these emotions and the thought that he was now "happy," she dismisses his "whole life" as "a failure" (*MD* 8). The seeming hypocrisy of telling herself in almost the next moment that "[s]he would not say of any one in the world now that they were this or were that" is in fact evidence that the authority of her consciousness had been temporarily compromised by this lost other (*MD* 8).

Virtually everything Clarissa does is meant to overcome mourning's insidious force, from buying flowers herself and throwing her party to reckoning with the death of Septimus Warren Smith. Each is an attempt, whether conscious or unconscious, to assert her autonomy from something that still subverts it. We can see this in how she grapples with the memory of the First World War early in the novel. Although the war itself is not a lost object, her thoughts on it make clear that it is an object charged with loss: "The war was over, except for some one like Mrs. Foxcroft at the Embassy last night eating her heart out because that nice boy was killed and now the old Manor House must go to a

cousin; or Lady Bexborough who opened a bazaar, they said, with the telegram in her hand, John, her favorite, killed" (*MD* 4-5). For her part, however, Clarissa tries to "plunge" into the living present of London and relegate the war to the past: "For it was the middle of June. The War was over, … it was over; thank Heaven—over." (*MD* 4-5). But that she must reiterate this apparent fact three times already exposes the doubt behind her words. Moreover, like with Peter, the thought of the war grips her here unexpectedly, right in the heart of "life; London; this moment of June," the very thing that, in her eyes, is supposed to evince its being over(come): "It was June. The King and Queen were at the palace. And everywhere, though it was still so early, there was a beating, a stirring of galloping ponies, tapping of crickets bats; Lords, Ascot, Ranelagh and all the rest of it; wrapped in the soft mesh of the grey-blue morning air" (*MD* 5). A bit later, she reads the famous lines from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*: "Fear no more the heat o' the sun//Nor the furious winter's rages" (*MD* 9). Before reading these lines, she had been reflecting on what Peter calls her "transcendental theory" and trying to recover an "image of white dawn in the country," so it is significant that they bring back the war: "This late age of the world's experience had bred in them all, all men and women, a well of tears. Tears and sorrows; courage and endurance; a perfectly upright and stoical bearing (*MD* 9). Clarissa's logic seems to be that the war bred in people the "courage and endurance" to face the "tears and sorrow" with which it also left them. But that she has to use the Shakespeare quote as consolation shows that the force of that "experience" is working on her. Neither the theory nor the image insulates her from it. Not only does this force influence her reading of the quote, but it is also the reason that she must then "[t]hink, for

example, of the woman she admired most, Lady Bexborough, opening the bazaar" (*MD* 9).

Nevertheless, Clarissa seeks to face her mourning as Lady Bexborough does, namely, with "courage and endurance; a perfectly upright and stoical bearing." She thus pursues her endeavors with "indomitable vitality," affirming the hustle and bustle of the city all along the way. But while these endeavors keep her busy with life, the war still plagues her with death. Her openness to the former cannot close her off to the latter. On the contrary, in embracing the energy of Bond Street, 'its flags flying; its shops," she must also confront, or rather be confronted by, what it uncontrollably brings back: "'That is all,' she repeated, pausing for a moment at the window of a glove shop where, before the War, you could buy almost perfect gloves" (*MD* 11). Like a ghost, "her old Uncle William" suddenly returns to her, not simply because of what he had said about a lady's shoes and gloves but more deeply because "[h]e had turned on his bed one morning in the middle of the War. He had said 'I have had enough'" (*MD* 11). Given its dark nature, this memory is out of place in the mostly happy continuity of Clarissa's thoughts here, but it shows that mourning is a discontinuous force that can violate one at any time. Regardless of how one feels, where one is, or what one is doing, the self is always exposed to the coming of a lost other, both from within and without. This is not simply a memory of Clarissa's uncle but rather an experience of being seized by his alterity. Not only does it alter both her inner experience—her stream of consciousness—and outer experience—her perception of the glove shop—but it also arrests her very movement as she walks up Bond Street: "'That is all,' she said, looking at the fishmonger's. 'That is all,' she repeated, pausing for a moment at the window of a glove shop…" (*MD* 11). The internal

pressure of this force is why she quickly thinks of "[g]loves and shoes; she had a passion for gloves," then abruptly switches topics to "her Elizabeth," and keeps walking (*MD* 11). She is reacting against the event taking place within her. To be sure, Clarissa still maintains her stoical bearing through it all. But the need for such a bearing and the need to remind herself of its need both indicate that it springs from what it is supposed to overcome.

Far from being just a thing of the past, then, the war seems to be as "wrapped in the soft mesh of the grey-blue morning air" as "Lords, Ascot, Ranelagh and all the rest of it." Clarissa may believe that it is over, but something is not over simply because one believes it to be. The war, like Bourton, is able to affect her as deeply as it does because she is still in the clutches of its "heat" and "rages," even though she herself is convinced otherwise. It is mourning, however, that releases this object within Clarissa and allows it to overtake her at times. But her idol, Lady Bexborough, is not free from its clutches either. Her opening a bazaar after learning of her son's death is comparable to how Miss Kilman goes to church and Clarissa throws a party.

Clarissa also struggles with a heightened sense of loss in the opening section, but she tries with all her might to stay optimistic. For example, a series of past images, all of them pleasant, suddenly flood her consciousness at one point: "Devonshire House, Bath House, the house with the china cockatoo, she had seen them all lit up once; and [she] remembered Sylvia, Fred, Sally Seton—such hosts of people; and dancing all night; and the wagons plodding past to market; and driving hoe across the Park. She remembered once throwing a shilling into the Serpentine" (*MD* 8-9). The implication, however, is that all these images, like the earlier ones of Bourton, are irrevocably lost and can only be

"remembered." Even though she tells herself that "every one remembered; what she loved was this, here, now, in front of; the fat lady in the cab," the questions she then asks demonstrate that this love is not enough to solace her: "Did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely?" (*MD* 9). This last question, however, does "not become consoling" enough, which is why she follows it up with her transcendental theory. After thinking about how she, Peter, and everyone else "survived," she dreamily tries to recover an image from her time in the country (*MD* 9). Clarissa's nostalgic desire for the past is animated by the sense of those previous images being lost and herself "inevitably ceas[ing] completely" with them. They thus form part of the same experience of mourning—of different objects possessing Clarissa. We can see more clearly now why the Shakespeare lines make her think of the "well of tears" that the war left in its wake. That she insists on courage and endurance is one more attempt to solace herself as well as to regain authority over her consciousness.

Woolf illustrates that one is exposed to mourning in relation to not only the past but also to the here and now. Returning to her house after buying flowers, Clarissa discovers that Lady Bruton invited Richard but not her to a lunch party that day. Although feeling "blessed and purified" only a moment ago, her "disappointment" at this slight now throws her into a fit of self-mourning: "'Fear no more,' said Clarissa. … But she feared time itself, and she read on Lady Bruton's face, … the dwindling of life; how year by year her share was sliced; how little the margin that remained was capable any longer of stretching, of absorbing, as in the youthful years, the colours, salts, tones of existence" (*MD* 29). Thomas C. Caramagno argues that Clarissa possesses "a vital central

core too vulnerable to be exposed" (*The Flight of the Mind* 234). But the reason why this core is so vulnerable is precisely because it *is* exposed. It is not so much the "shock" of disappointment, however, that makes Clarissa rock and shiver here. Rather, it is the shock of mourning's force itself, which seizes her whole being—to the core. What constitutes it, in this instance, is not the alterity of a lost object but rather the fear of her own life being lost. But her life is an object itself that carries an alterity of its own. If it did not, it would not be able to exceed and affect her in the way that it does. The phrase "fear no more" both marks mourning's violent arrival and is meant to defend against it. She continues to do things mechanically, as she tried to carry on before, but its grip is stronger this time: "She put the pad on the hall table. She began to go slowly upstairs, with her hand on the bannisters, as if she had left a party, … a single figure against the appalling night" (*MD* 30). There is a sense in how she goes slowly up the stairs and has to put her hand on the bannisters that she is struggling to keep physical possession of herself. Something is working on Clarissa from within, gradually taking her over, turning her into "a single figure against the appalling night." Although she tries to keep moving against this alteration, it eventually arrests and overturns her: "as she paused by the open staircase window which … let in, she thought, feeling herself suddenly shriveled, aged, breastless, the grinding, blowing, flowering of the day, out of doors, out of window, out of her body and brain which now failed" (*MD* 30).

It is difficult to unpack the radical passivity of this experience more deeply than Woolf does in these lines. As she was earlier in the day ("She felt very young; at the same time unspeakably aged"), Clarissa is "suddenly" confronted by the realization of her own decrepitude again (*MD* 8). But whereas she was able to resist it before, she now

completely shuts down in the face of it. Mourning is able to change Clarissa's relation to her own body, making her feel its bare, lifeless materiality to which her mind cannot respond. Her sense of emptiness, however, is an effect of being filled with its force. Like Miss Kilman, she is jolted by "shocks of suffering" that send her reeling in spite of the "flowering of the day," which offers no solace here. The sense of possession continues in the lines that follow, where the vital "colours, salts, and tones" Clarissa normally gives to life are stripped away. Caught almost in a trance, "[l]ike a nun withdrawing, or a child exploring a tower, she went upstairs, paused at the window, came to the bathroom. There was the green linoleum and a tap dripping. There was an emptiness about the heart of life; an attic room" (*MD* 30). But this possession is also a *dis*possession to which Clarissa, so uncharacteristically, is forced to submit: "Women must put off their rich apparel. At midday they must disrobe. … Narrower and narrower would her bed be. The candle was half burnt down and she had read deep in Baron Marbot's *Memoirs*" (*MD* 30). The transformative power that this (dis)possession has over her is striking, especially because there is almost no trace of the stoical bearing or affirmative spirit she maintained earlier. It is not, however, that she has lost or given up her resolve but that it has been overthrown. As it is traditionally understood, mourning can be compared to a process of digestion, where the lost other is assimilated to the self. But here it is Clarissa herself who is being eaten away at, narrowing and dwindling away.

Clarissa tries to repair her mood, first by reflecting on her adolescent love for Sally Seton and then by mending her party dress, but both attempts more or less fail. Although her thoughts of Sally are filled with pleasure, Peter's troublesome alterity surges forth within her again. On the one hand, she remembers him rudely interrupting

her "moment of happiness" with Sally, a form of masculine tyranny over "infinitely precious" feminine love (*MD* 35). On the other hand, she seems fixated on his return to her life: "What would he think, she wondered, when he came back? That she had grown older? Would he say that, or would she see him thinking when he came back, that she had grown older?" (*MD* 35-36). Implicit in these questions is the worry that he will *not* come back—that he, like Sally and the time of Bourton, may be lost forever. This is partly why the thought of her age and recent illness comes to mind. While just a little while ago she was enraptured in recalling "the revelation, the religious feeling" she experienced with Sally, here, "[l]aying her brooch on the table, she had a sudden spasm, as if, while she mused, the icy claws had the chance to fix in her. She was not old yet" (*MD* 35-36). Clarissa tries, as is her way, to brush the "spasm" aside, reassuring herself that "[s]he had just broken into her fifty-second year. Months and months of it were still untouched. June, July, August! Each still remained almost whole, and, as if to catch a falling drop, Clarissa … plunged into the very heart of the moment, transfixed it, there—the moment of this June morning…" (*MD* 36). But this is an attempt to overcome the feeling of mourning's "icy claws…fix[ing] in her." Clarissa's ecstatic "moment of being" is thus invaded by the threat of non-being in its very event.

A short time later, Clarissa sits mending her dress and begins to enjoy a peaceful moment of privacy only to have it shattered by another unforeseeable return. By "drawing the silk smoothly to its gentle pause, collect[ing] the green folds together and attach[ing] them, very lightly, to the belt," she initially brings a semblance of order to the chaos she has felt: "Quiet descended on her, calm, content" (*MD* 38). In such a mood, there is a temptation to resign oneself to the constant repetition of the sea: "So on a

summer's day waves collect, overbalance, and fall; collect and fall; and the whole world seems to be saying 'that is all' more and more ponderously, until even the heart in the body which lies in the sun on the beach says too 'That is all'" (*MD* 38-39). Indeed, under the spell of this apparent simplicity, there is reason for "the heart" to say "[f]ear no more, …committing its burden to some sea, which sighs collectively for all sorrows, renews, begins, collects lets fall" (*MD* 39). The sea offers consolation against the ravages of time, absorbing all that has been lost in the past, renewing itself in the present, and beginning again for the future. But these words are the narrator's here, not Clarissa's thoughts, and the feeling of invulnerability they convey is directly exposed as an illusion. Such consolation, then, is not to be hers, but not because she deliberately rejects it but because it cannot protect her against what or who comes and the mourning it unleashes: "And the body alone listens to the passing bee; the wave breaking; the dog barking, far away barking and barking. 'Heavens, the front-door bell!' exclaimed Clarissa, staying her needle. Roused, she listened" (*MD* 39). The past, in the shape of Peter, intrudes once more, ruining the order Clarissa had sown and the peace it had momentarily provided.

Clarissa's experience of mourning is certainly disconcerting, showing as it does how she is penetrated, undermined, and changed by something both internal and external to her. Yet, for Caramagno, Clarissa is supposedly immune to the psychic turbulence he ascribes to Septimus, since she supposedly possesses a "freedom" to "sink deep into [herself] to escape the waves of emotion" (*The Flight of the Mind* 235). In fact, however, it is exactly freedom—the power of one's faculties—that mourning disables. Nor is there any place deep enough to fortify one against its force, a point to which Woolf's writing

vividly testifies. No matter how deeply Clarissa sinks into herself, she can always be swallowed by "the waves."

This point is exemplified when Clarissa realizes the "gaiety" that she lost by not marrying Peter. As before, she has the feeling of being eaten away and, in turn, her world suddenly becomes impoverished: "The sheet was stretched and the bed narrow. She had gone up into the tower alone and left them blackberrying in the sun. The door had shut, and there among the dust of fallen plaster and the litter of birds' nest how distant the view had looked, and the sounds came thin and chill" (*MD* 46). To free herself from Peter's hold on her here, Clarissa cries within herself to "Richard, Richard! … as a sleeper in the night starts and stretches a hand in the dark for help" (*MD* 46). But the force from before "came back to her. He has left me; I am alone for ever, she thought, folding her hands upon her knee" (*MD* 46). Rationally, she knows that Richard will return and that she is not alone "for ever," but she has been separated from her reason by something that has also taken control of her body. She even folds her hands as a result of him not being there "in the dark" to save her. Feeling immobilized, she has to tell herself moments later: "Now it was time to move, …" (*MD* 46).

II.

Peter has his own struggles with loss are remarkably similar to Clarissa's. Although he claims that "women live much more in the past than we [men] do" (*MD* 54), Peter lives in the past more than any other character in the novel. Or rather, the past lives in him. And no one from that past more than Clarissa herself. While he may have tried to sever his bond to "[t]he final scene, the terrible scene" with her at Bourton, that scene, and everything it rekindles, has remained bound to him. Clarissa possesses him almost

constantly, from the first moment we see him to the last, preceding and exceeding any supposed power he has to mourn her memory and move on with his life. For these reasons, it is untenable to assert, as Karen Smythe does, that Peter "analeptically 'resurrects'" the past through performative "elegiac think-acts" ("Virginia Woolf's Elegiac Enterprise" 72-73). While this may be true some of the time, as I will demonstrate, his mourning is mainly a matter not of active performance but of nonperformative exposure—not something he does but something done to him.[12]

After five years of not seeing each other, Clarissa and Peter's meeting brings them both to tears. The memory of Bourton clearly still weighs heavily on their minds. Reminded that he wanted to marry Clarissa, Peter, "overcome with his own grief," watches that grief "r[ise] like a moon looked at from a terrace, ghastly beautiful with the light of the sunken day" (*MD* 41). His grief, however, is not simply something outside of him that he looks at sadly but from a safe distance. Rather, it influences the entire scene, as the lines imply, working on them both from within, affecting his mind and body just as it affects hers: "And as if in truth he were sitting there on the terrace he edged a little towards Clarissa; put his hand out out; raised it; let it fall" (*MD* 41). He subsequently becomes upset with Clarissa, thinking "[f]or why go back like this to the past? … Why make him think of it again? Why make him suffer, when she had tortured him so infernally? Why?" (*MD* 41). But he fails to see that she has not so much gone back to the past as the past has come back to her. Therefore, when she asks him "'Do you remember, …how the blinds used to flap at Bourton?' and 'Do you remember the lake?'" (*MD* 41), I do not read her as intentionally recalling these memories. Rather, they come upon

[12] The term "nonperformative exposure" is used by Jacques Derrida to describe his notion of messianicity. See Derrida, Jacques. *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*. Stanford University Press, 2005, p. 91.

Clarissa, as they often come upon Peter throughout the day, before any subjective authority or intent, from an alterity that at once inhabits her and divides her from herself. After all, it is only *because* she is not at one with herself that she can be so affected by the questions she asks: "'Do you remember the lake?' she said, in an abrupt voice, under the pressure of an emotion which caught her heart, made the muscles of her throat stiff, and contracted her lips in a spasm as she said 'lake'" (*MD* 41-42).

This "pressure," however, is more than an emotion; it is the force of an experience that then transforms Clarissa into "a child, throwing bread to ducks, between her parents, and at the same time a grown woman coming to her parents who stood by the lake" (*MD* 43). It is this same force that gets the better of Peter, despite all his resolve and the emotional security his pocket-knife provides: "… running his finger along the blade of his knife, … but I'll show Clarissa—and then to his utter surprise, suddenly thrown by those uncontrollable forces thrown through the air, he burst into tears; wept; wept without the least shame, sitting on the sofa, the tears running down his cheeks" (*MD* 45). Peter is well-aware of how susceptible he is to Clarissa and what her alterity evokes in him, observing that she "still had the power as she came across the room, to make the moon, which he detested, rise at Bourton on the terrace in the summer sky" (*MD* 46). But Clarissa, as we have seen, is also susceptible to that moon herself, since it is partly through him that she is bound to it. As Peter himself discerns: "There above them it hung, that moon. She too seemed to be sitting with him on the terrace, in the moonlight" (*MD* 41).

Like Clarissa, Peter revolts against his mourning and attempts to assert his autonomy from it. For example, during the meeting, in a manner very similar to her

earlier revolt, he repeats "'[y]es, …Yes, yes, yes,' … as if she [Clarissa] drew up to the surface something which positively hurt him as it rose. Stop! Stop! he wanted to cry. For he was not old; his life was not over; not by any means. He was only just past fifty" (*MD* 42). Against the knowledge that he is a "failure" and aging, he "assembled from different quarters all sorts of things; praise; his career at Oxford; his marriage…how he loved; and altogether done his job" (*MD* 43). He emphasizes that he has done "[m]illions of things" and, "urged by the assembly of powers which were now charging this way and that…giving him the feeling at once frightening and extremely exhilarating of being rushed through the air," he tells Clarissa that he is "'[i]n love'…'in love with a girl in India'" (*MD* 44). His love affair with a "young, quite young" woman and his informing Clarissa of it also serve to reaffirm his belief that "he was not old" and that "his life was not over; not by any means." Furthermore, while his frequent memories of Bourton are a source of grief, reminding him of what and who he has lost, they are a way to resist it as well, filling him with the residual feelings and desires of his youth.

But Peter's defenses against mourning are gradually shredded by it. We saw that under the weight of "uncontrollable forces," he eventually broke down in front of Clarissa. He recomposes himself after leaving the house but cannot help being re-possessed by her and discomposed again, "feeling hollowed out, utterly empty within" because "Clarissa refused me, he thought. He stood there thinking, Clarissa refused me" (*MD* 48). If he had eaten away at and immobilized her before, she does the same to him now. Moments later, the sound of St. Margaret's brings her back to him, "with a deep emotion, and an extraordinarily clear, yet puzzling, recollection of her, as if this bell had come into the room years ago, where they sat at some moment of great intimacy, and had

gone from one to the other and had left, like a bee with honey, laden with the moment" (*MD* 49). This is a beautiful thought, filled with Clarissa's singularity as Peter re-experiences it, that makes him "profoundly happy," but he can neither control nor predict the effects of that singularity upon him: "Then, as the sound of St. Margaret's languished, he thought, She has been ill, and the sound expressed languor and suffering. It was her heart, he remembered; and the sudden loudness of the final stroke tolled for death that surprised in the midst of life" (*MD* 49). Mourning's incalculable arrival here demonstrates not only that nothing can protect Peter against the fact that "death surprised in the midst of life," but also how radically the lost other can alter one's emotions. Even though Peter seemed to be merely reminiscing about their love before, he was only doing it because he had already been overtaken by Clarissa and at the mercy of her alterity. In this scene, then, mourning works from the inside, leaving Peter "feeling hollowed out, utterly empty within," but it also springs on him from the outside—at the sound of a clock. As it does so, he cries "No! No!" and walks on, attempting in vain to deny its influence over him once again: "She is not dead! I am not old, he cried, and marched up Whitehall, as if there rolled down to him, vigorous, unending, his future. He was not old, or set, or dried in the least" (*MD* 49).

Peter is also tempted by the appeal of consolation. In his dream, for example, "advancing down the path with his eyes upon sky and branches he rapidly endows them with womanhood" out of "a desire for solace, for relief, …[and] sees with amazement how grave they become; how majestically, as the breeze stirs them, they dispense with a dark flutter of the leaves charity, comprehension, absolution" (*MD* 56). "Such are the visions," the narrator observes, "which proffer great cornucopias full of fruit to the

solitary traveller" (*MD* 56). These visions "ceaselessly float up, pace beside, put their faces in front of, the actual thing; often overpowering the solitary traveller… giving him … a general peace" (*MD* 56). Nearly seduced by what "she" promises, "the solitary traveller" considers renouncing the burdens of life and "walk[ing] on to this great figure, who will, with a toss of her head, mount me on her streamers and let me blow to nothingness with the rest" (*MD* 56).

As with his other defenses, however, these imaginary visions cannot protect Peter against the menace of mourning. The solitary traveler walks beyond the enchanted "wood" and confronts "an elderly woman who seems (so powerful is this infirmity) to seek, over a desert, a lost son; to search for a rider destroyed; to be the figure of the mother whose sons have been killed in the battles of the world" (*MD* 57). This poignant "figure" of loss, with its "powerful…infirmity," shows the sudden influence of the First World War on Peter's consciousness. It also abruptly takes him from an image of feminine plenitude to one of feminine emptiness, the difference of which characterizes his view of Clarissa—a woman who makes him feel both the fullness of love and the emptiness of its rejection.[13] Clarissa's possession of him is thus still detectable even in the depths of his sleep, which cannot unbind him from her or her from him. Mourning

[13] This difference is also implied in "the landlady," who both "takes the marmalade" and "shuts it in the cupboard" and whose outline is "an adorable emblem" but one that "the recollection of cold human contacts forbids us to embrace" (*MD* 57). And yet again in "the battered woman" whom Peter encounters later: "Through all ages," she sang of "love which has lasted a million years…love which prevails," but remembered "he [her lover] had gone; death's enormous sickle had swept those tremendous hills" (*MD* 79). This woman is simultaneously a figure of the endurance of love ("[s]till remembering how once in primeval May she had walked with her lover…'look in my eyes with thy sweet eyes intently' … 'give me your hand and let me press it gently' …and if some one should see, what matter they'?) as well as the absoluteness of death ("and she smiled, pocketing her shilling, and all peering inquisitive eyes seemed blotted out, and the passing generations—…vanished, like leaves, to be trodden under, to be soaked and steeped and made mould of by that eternal spring") (*MD* 80).

violates Peter here from the inside, whether or not he knows it, disrupting and shaping not just his external experience but also his deepest internal one.

To a degree, Clarissa's haunting presence in Peter's mind illustrates her transcendental theory. As he describes it:

> which, with her horror of death, allowed her to believe, or say that she believed (for all her skepticism) that since our apparitions, the part of us which appears, are so momentary compared with the other, the unseen part of us, which spreads wide, the unseen might survive, be recovered somehow attached to this person or that, or even haunting certain places after death…perhaps—perhaps. (*MD* 149)

Peter goes on to recount how Clarissa has come back to him in this way throughout his life: "yet in absence, in the most unlikely places, it [the effect of his meetings with Clarissa] would flower out, open, shed its scent, let you touch, taste, look about you, get the whole feel of it and understanding, after years of lying lost. Thus she had come to him; on board ship; in the Himalayas" (*MD* 149). He adds that this phenomenon happens involuntarily, "always coming before him without his wishing it, cool, lady-like, critical; … He saw her most often in the country, not in London. One scene after another at Bourton…" (*MD* 150). His memories of Clarissa's "coming before him without his wishing it" seems to further bear out her theory. "[H]e saw her most often at Bourton, in late summer, …" we are told, "First on top of some hill there she would stand, hands clapped to her hair, … Or in a wood, making the kettle boil—very ineffective with her fingers; the smoke curtseying, blowing in their faces; her little pink face showing through" (*MD* 150). Earlier in the novel, he muses that "it was extraordinary how vividly it all [his experiences at Bourton] came back to him, things that he hadn't thought of for

years" (*MD* 74). Denying that he is in love with Clarissa, Peter insists that he is just "unable to get away from the thought of her; she kept coming back and back like a sleeper jolting against him in a railway carriage" (*MD* 74).

For important reasons, however, Clarissa's theory is not applicable. First, it is not something transcendent in Clarissa that inspires these memories and allows her to inhabit him. Rather, it is that Peter is still bound to her, whether he wants to be or not, and hence susceptible to her in unique ways others are not. Second, Clarissa's theory does not account for the fact that this experience amounts to a *dis*possession, as it did with Clarissa herself. Peter's own description of his memories demonstrates that he is not fully in charge of them. On the contrary, they often bombard and take charge of him, conducting the train of his thought, affecting him both physically and emotionally. To be recalled to the past by the past in such a way is to be stripped of one's sense of autonomy—to have one's conscious "powers" overpowered. Finally, Clarissa's theory, which is motivated by her "horror of death," constitutes a revolt against mourning. This is made clear when she herself articulates it: "or did it become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely? but that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, … of the trees at home; of the house there, …part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist … it spread ever so far, her life, herself" (*MD*). The "but somehow" belies her conviction "that death ended absolutely." Instead, for Clarissa, people mystically survive in everything and everyone around them. Such a conception, then, is an attempt to reconcile herself to irrevocable loss.

In contrast, Clarissa's (dis)possession of Peter exemplifies why one can never be reconciled to such loss. Even his happy memories of them, for example, emanate from his unresolved grief over having lost the love they conjure up. When Clarissa's letter interrupts these memories, it brings that grief to the surface. "He wished she hadn't written it, …" Peter thinks, "Why couldn't she let him be? After all, she had married Dalloway, and lived with him in perfect happiness all these years" (*MD* 151). Again, he fails to see that she cannot "let him be" because he will not let her be—that she is no more the master of her inner domain than he is. The letter gives rise to something like a revolution within him, completely altering his perception from what it was a moment ago and making him see the cold impersonality of his surroundings: "These hotels are not consoling places. Far from it. … As for the cleanliness which hit him in the face, it wasn't cleanliness, so much as bareness, frigidity; a thing that had to be. Some arid matron made her rounds at dawn … for all the world as if the next visitor were a joint of meat to be served on a perfectly clean platter" (*MD* 151). In effect, Peter's hotel room here becomes Clarissa's attic room. Such is the overpowering power of mourning: "And it was Clarissa's letter that made him see all this" (*MD* 151). Although he "folded the paper; pushed it away" and vehemently asserted that "nothing would induce him to read it again," the letter will continue to work on him until he arrives at Clarissa's party. He cannot reconcile himself to loss if loss does not reconcile itself to him.[14]

III.

[14] Such a conception of mourning has nothing to do with respecting the "irrevocable alterity" of the lost object, as Theodore Koulouris construes Woolf's supposed "poetics of loss" (*Hellenism and Loss* 11). This respect would entail that the mourner does not deny the object's alterity by grieving too much or too little, a claim whose logic presupposes that the mourner is in charge of the alterity. But as Peter's struggle shows, however much one respects the other's alterity, it may not respect one in return. My reading here also casts doubt on J. Hillis Miller's assertion that "repetition" in *Mrs. Dalloway* may indicate the presence of "a transcendent spiritual realm of reconciliation and preservation, … a realm of the perpetual resurrection of the dead" ("*Mrs. Dalloway"*: Repetition as the Raising of the Dead" 190).

At the center of *Mrs. Dalloway* is the "giant mourner," Septimus Warren Smith (*MD* 69). As is well-known, Woolf described Septimus as Clarissa's "double," and the novel's formal unity depends on their connection.[15] But while Clarissa and Septimus are both trauma survivors, Septimus's life experience is quite different from Clarissa's. He was born into a working-class family; is "half-educated, self-educated;" served with great distinction in the First World War; and is now suffering from "the deferred effects of shell shock" or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). "He [Septimus] had gone through the whole show," the narrator intimates, "friendship, European war, death, had won promotion, was still under thirty and bound to survive" (*MD* 85). Although Septimus returns alive from the war, he is a profoundly changed man, having committed what he later feels is an "an appalling crime" (*MD* 94). When Evans, his close friend, "was killed, just before the Armistice, in Italy, Septimus, far from showing any emotion or recognizing that here was the end of a friendship, congratulated himself upon feeling very little and very reasonably. The War had taught him. It was sublime" (*MD* 85). After the war, however, he realizes that something is wrong with him— "he could not feel"—and comes to believe that he has consequently "been condemned to death by human nature" (*MD* 85, 94).

Of all the characters in the novel, Septimus wages the most emphatic revolt against mourning. He has been read as suffering from melancholia, in the Freudian sense, and does exhibit many of its apparent symptoms: narcissism, guilt, isolation, and suicidal impulses. But for Septimus, it is not a matter of refusing to sever his bond to Evans or holding on to the past in a self-destructive way. On the contrary, he tries to sever that

[15] See Woolf, Virginia. *The Virginia Woolf Reader*. Edited by Mitchell Alexander. Leaska, Paw Prints, 2008, p. 11.

bond and move on, affirming life over death, the present over the past. But as much as he wants to be done with his mourning, like Clarissa and Peter, his mourning is not done with him. Melancholia does not adequately explain this experience, which is not directed by the self or its libidinal economy but rather dependent on the lost other. It is thus untenable to oppose, as Susan Bennett Smith does, Clarissa's experience of mourning to Septimus's: "Clarissa represents sane bereavement, whereas Septimus's mourning is pathological" ("Reinventing Grief Work" 317). Septimus, like Clarissa, remains open to the effects of loss not because of a pathology but because of his inescapable vulnerability to past trauma.

The first stage of Septimus's revolt is his initial reaction to Evans being killed and the war ending. It takes the form of a depressive nihilism. After congratulating himself for being mostly unaffected by Evans' death, he watched "with indifference" as the last shells missed him and exploded (*MD* 84). This indifference is not merely the stoicism ingrained in him as an officer of the British army; it is, rather, the result of being unable to bear what the war has taught him about "human nature." One way of responding to such a lesson is to assume that it is the essence of a meaningless world. "It might be possible, Septimus thought, … it might be possible that the world itself is without meaning" (*MD* 86). Believing that everything may be meaningless entails that he need not confront the meaning of Evans' death, the reality of that event, or the war itself. By denying the value of the world, he can deny the value of his loss in an effort to diffuse and tame his grief. While he was once enthralled by Shakespeare, even aspiring to be a poet, "[t]hat boy's business of the intoxication of language—*Antony and Cleopatra*—had shriveled utterly" (*MD* 86). He now perceives what he had failed to see before, namely,

"the hidden message hidden in the beauty of words. The secret signal which one generation passes, under disguise, to the next is loathing, hatred, despair" (*MD* 86). The war, specifically Evans' death, is therefore part and parcel of the "brutality [that] blared on placards" and of the fact that "men were trapped in mines; women burnt alive," and maimed lunatics "displayed for the diversion of the populace (who laugh aloud)" (*MD* 89).

Caught in this flood of misery, life and the creation of life lose all appeal. "One cannot bring children into a world like this," Septimus thinks, "One cannot perpetuate suffering, or increase the breed of these lustful animals, who have no lasting emotions, but only whims and vanities, eddying them now this way, now that" (*MD* 87). Indeed, if, as Septimus supposes, human beings "have neither kindness, nor faith, nor charity" and "hunt in packs. … desert the fallen. …are plastered over with grimaces. … all coldness and clamminess within," their loss is not something to mourn. According to such a misanthropic perspective, death loses its tragic nature. He does not need to feel, then, because there appears to be nothing and no one worth feeling for—or so he tells himself. Let me stress, however, that this attitude is not so much a deliberate choice as a consequence of mourning working on him. He may scoff at mourning as pointless, but this very gesture springs from its dark energy.

Hence, although Septimus's nihilism attempts deny his mourning, this only shows that he is in its grip. Stripping loss of meaning, like giving it meaning, is a response to it that attempts to transcend mourning and liberate oneself from it. Neither response, however, can wholly negate its force. As much as Septimus tries to close himself off to it and maintain possession of himself, this force continually breaks through his repressions.

While he claims repeatedly that he cannot feel, he nevertheless feels something: that he cannot feel. Every time this thought comes to him, then, it is not so much a denial of all feeling as a realization that there ought to be feeling where there is none. But it is *because* that force is pushing at him from within, without him knowing it, that he can have such a realization. Mourning thus makes itself felt in its very absence, piercing the nihilistic veil he has placed over it and seizing him from within: "For now that it [the war] was all over, truce signed, and the dead buried, he had, especially in the evening, these sudden thunderclaps of fear. He could not feel" (*MD* 85). Despite his efforts, Septimus cannot bury an object that can unbury itself. Evans is not explicitly referred to in these lines, but Septimus still feels him, like "sudden thunderclaps," in his "fear."

While in Milan, after the war, Septimus is struck again by this fear, which gradually overcomes him. It is not simply his numbness, however, that frightens Septimus here. More deeply, it is that he feels suddenly exposed to the painful reality that numbness attempts to repress. This is why he desperately seeks a new defense against it: "but something failed him; he could not feel. Still, scissors rapping, girls laughing, hats being made protected him; he was assured of safety; he had a refuge" (*MD* 85). In order to fend off "the panic [that] was on him" and the feeling that "he was falling," he asks Lucrezia to marry him (*MD* 85). But if Rezia is meant as a consolatory substitute for Evans, she cannot save him from mourning's grip any more than his nihilism can. When Septimus least expects it, "[i]n the teashop among the tables and the chattering waiters," with Rezia there with him, "the appalling fear came over him—he could not feel" (*MD* 86). This inability, however, does not mean that Rezia herself is inadequate. Rather, as much as she tries to bring him back to her and "things outside of himself," Evans'

unacknowledged alterity pulls Septimus back within himself (*MD* 21). Consolation is meant to help one transcend one's mourning, but one cannot transcend something that transcends oneself. Although Septimus tells himself that he cannot feel, the other in him refuses to accept such a denial. In this way, then, his traumatic past resists his own resistance to it. With his defenses undermined by what they were supposed to defend against, the "appalling fear" eating away at him becomes too much: "At last, with a melodramatic gesture which he assumed mechanically and with complete consciousness of its insincerity; he dropped his head on his hands. Now he surrendered; now other people must help him; people must be sent for. He gave in" (*MD* 88). His subjective revolt becomes here an objective take over.

Rather than subsuming Septimus's nihilism into his "madness," I view the latter as both an attempted repudiation of the former and the second stage of his revolt. It turns meaninglessness into meaningfulness and fear into elation. Such a condition, however, is just as much of an effect of mourning as his nihilism. The key event in this psychic sea-change is his "revelation." Just when, believing that he is "quite alone, deserted [by Rezia], condemned," with "[t]he whole world … clamouring: Kill yourself, kill yourself, for our sakes," he accepts his place as an "outcast, … who lay like a drowned sailor, on the shore of the world," luxuriating in "an isolation full of sublimity; a freedom which the attached can never know," a force beyond his control is able to penetrate this sublimity: "It was at that moment…that the great revelation took place. A voice spoke from behind the screen. Evans was speaking. The dead were with him" (*MD* 90-91). The ghostly reappearance of Evans here vitiates Septimus's imaginary "freedom." No matter how detached he feels from the world, he cannot simply destroy his attachment to it. This

attachment endures against his will precisely because, even on the farthest shore and in the most sublime isolation, his mourning still binds him to Evans.

But while mourning brings him back to "the attached," it is immediately transformed and displaced by his madness. Hence, instead of causing an upsurge of sorrow, this moment discloses "the supreme secret" that he has been chosen to communicate. "Communication is health," he says to himself, "communication is happiness, communication" (*MD* 91). This secret is that of "universal love"—the mirror opposite of the "loathing, hatred, despair" that had plagued him (*MD* 66). Evans' traumatic return is further pacified by the redemptive image of him coming back not from the battlefields of Italy but from Elysium: "the roses, … had been picked by him [Evans] in the fields of Greece" (*MD* 91). Whereas Septimus's consciousness had abounded with pessimism before, on the day the novel takes place it is overflowing with this newfound optimism. To be sure, his doctors still remind him of the cruelty of "human nature." But humanity takes on new meaning for him after his revelation: "the human voice in certain atmospheric conditions … can quicken trees into life" (*MD* 21). Indeed, he not only sees and affirms life in everything around him but also feels himself intrinsic to it:

> But they [the elm trees] beckoned; leaves were alive; trees were alive. And the leaves being connected by millions of fibres with his own body, there on the seat, fanned it up and down; when the branch stretched he, too, made that statement. The sparrows fluttering, rising, and falling in jagged fountains were part of the pattern; the white and blue, barred with black branches. Sounds made harmonies with premeditation; the spaces between them were as significant as the sounds. A

child cried. Rightly far away a horn sounded. All taken together meant the birth of a new religion—. (*MD* 22)

He now seeks to infuse the world with value, perceiving in it a vital "pattern" that connects all things. Since everything is alive and united around "one center," "[m]en must not cut down trees. … No one kills from hatred … there is no crime …there is no death" (*MD* 24). The sparrow that supposedly delivers this "new religion" to Septimus chirps his name "four or five times over" (*MD* 24). Joined by another sparrow, they "sang in voices prolonged and piercing in Greek words, from trees in the meadow of life beyond a river where the dead walk" (*MD* 24).

Such a vision—of birds singing in Greek "where the dead walk, [about] how there is no death"—serves to deny the mourning that inspires it. In his nihilistic stage, death, like everything else, had no meaning and, for that reason, did not matter. In this stage, however, death apparently disappears into the overwhelming vitalism of his madness. But it is still a vision of "the dead." Accordingly, Septimus's rejection of death, like his embrace of life, springs from his repressed knowledge of its reality—that Evans is, in fact, dead. Evans' alterity, then, is the very shaping force of this vision. As with the fear before, it produces elation here. While it may thus seem that Septimus has found a remedy for what haunts him, the latter is actually intrinsic to its supposed cure.

As this point shows, Septimus's madness, like his nihilism, cannot entirely free him from mourning's grip. It is at the root of his most positive visions, applying a pressure that always threatens to breach the surface of his consciousness and does so at times. For example, although his vision of the sparrows ends with the affirmation that "there is no death," it is superseded, if not ruptured, by death suddenly reasserting its

existence: “There was his hand; there the dead. White things were assembling behind the railings opposite. But he dares not look. Evans was behind the railings!” (*MD* 24). There is no revelation in Evans’ return this time, only fear that death’s reality is becoming real. Septimus does not look because that would make it real, but the point is that death appears even though he is trying to deny it. It is only because Evans is in Septimus, however, that such a vision is able to surge forth. That this vision is so starkly different from the previous one gives it the revolutionary quality that we discerned in Peter’s consciousness. It demonstrates not only that Evans’ presence undermines Septimus’s authority over his own consciousness but also that Septimus is always subject to mourning’s effects upon him.

Like Clarissa and Peter, however, Septimus attempts to maintain a sense of autonomy in the face of this subversive force. When we first see him in the novel, he has “a look of apprehension” in his eyes, revealing that fear still possesses him in his madness (*MD* 14). As he watches the motor car, he discerns “a curious pattern like a tree” on its “drawn blinds” (*MD* 15). This is the same pattern that he observes later in the day. But here, he senses the violent coming of what that pattern covers over: “…and this gradual drawing together of everything to one center before his eyes, as if some horror had come to the surface and was about to burst into flames, terrified him” (*MD* 15). To counter this “horror,” however, he tells himself that “[i]t is I who am blocking the way, …Was he not being looked at and pointed at; was he not weighted there, rooted to the pavement, for a purpose? But what purpose?” (*MD* 15). Under the delusion that he is lord and savior, Septimus envisions himself as “a coverlet, a snow blanket” under which he suffers eternally to protect and “renew society” (*MD* 25). But despite his messianic

ambitions, the "purpose" he assumes is to "block the way" of his own mourning, of his deferred confrontation with loss, of himself being overtaken by its horror. In fact, however, all of this is already happening to him, which is why he feels that "the world wavered and quivered and threatened to burst into flames" (*MD* 15).

Thus, while Septimus may believe that he has overcome death— "I have been dead and yet am now alive" (*MD* 67)— it is death that continually overcomes him. We can further track this power dynamic in the scene with him and Rezia at Regent's Park. *First*, while Septimus is sitting, feeling "very high, on the back of the world," he imagines himself again as part of an all-encompassing natural unity: "The earth thrilled beneath him. Red flowers grew through his flesh; their stiff leaves rustled by his head" (*MD* 67). He not only feels this unity but also hears it. "Music" coming from "a motor horn down in the street… cannoned from rock to rock," transforming into "an anthem, an anthem twined round now by a shepherd boy's piping," which is actually "an old man playing a penny whistle by the public house" (*MD* 67). The anthem that the shepherd boy plays, however, is an "exquisite plaint," an "elegy." Furthermore, the natural unity that he experiences reduces him to "flesh," through which "red flowers grew," and a motionless "head" by which "stiff leaves rustled." The dead thus subtly force their way into Septimus's conscious mind once more here, haunting what is meant as a defense against them—the affirmation of life. Far from being liberated from mourning "on the back the world," its dark energy works through and exceeds his madness, as it did his nihilism, corpsifying his body and filling him with its music.

Next, still sitting, Septimus continues his affirmation by perceiving "beauty" all around him, from "the houses" to "the railings" to "the antelopes stretching over the

palings, beauty sprang instantly" (*MD* 68). Beauty is in "a leaf quivering," the "swallows swooping, swerving, flinging themselves in and out," "the flies rising and dazzling; and the sun spotting now this leaf, now that, … Beauty was everywhere" (*MD* 68). Such a realization moves him to sing "an ode to Time," which "split its husk [and] poured its riches over him" (*MD* 68). But the memory of the perished interrupts the ode's "imperishable words." There is not even a paragraph break to mark this interruption; Woolf puts it in the very same moment as the ode: "Evans answered from behind the tree. The dead were in Thessaly, Evans sang, among the orchids. There they waited till the War was over, and now the dead, now Evans himself" (*MD* 68). Evans is in Greece again but Thessaly this time, the site of the mythical battles between the Titans and the Olympians. The war is also explicitly mentioned. Now that it is over, Septimus must do what he has avoided since it ended. But he still cannot bring himself to do it: "'For God's sake don't come!" Septimus cried out. For he could not look at the dead" (*MD* 68). What he has tried so hard to repress is encroaching increasingly upon his consciousness. This encroachment is thus not a consequence of his madness but of its violation by an otherness that precedes and overwhelms it. We witness Septimus struggle with its frightening power over him.

Finally, against Septimus's conscious desire— "don't come!"—Evans (in the form of Peter Walsh) still comes, but his mourning is again transformed and displaced by his madness: "But the branches parted. A man in grey was actually walking towards them. It was Evans! But no mud was on him; no wounds; he was not changed" (*MD* 68). After such an experience, we can see why Septimus feels that he "must tell the world" that there is no death. But while death seems to be canceled out here and the war's

destruction transcended, the following description is nevertheless filled with images of grief: "like some colossal figure who lamented the fate of man for ages … his hands pressed to his forehead, furrows of despair on his cheeks and now sees light on the desert's edge which broadens and strikes the iron-black figure … with legions of men prostrate behind him he, the giant mourner, receives for one moment on his face the whole—" (*MD* 68-69). This "light" that promises the final resolution of mourning is then promptly extinguished by it: "'But I am so unhappy, Septimus,' said Rezia trying to make him sit down" (*MD* 69). Although Septimus is too traumatized to notice, Rezia also feels "exposed on the heights" to the horror and loneliness of loss and potential loss (i.e., leaving Italy behind and dealing with Septimus's suicide threats). He desires to be "the giant mourner" who receives "the whole" and brings light to all those who despair—except his own wife, apparently. Such a fantasy, however, is just an extreme version of the fantasy behind mourning's traditional conception as something that one does in order to free oneself from loss. Septimus's vision of Evans with no mud on him, no wounds, and not changed at all motivates his desire and is what he would like his "mourning" to achieve. It is also why, being so attended upon by Evans, he cannot attend to Rezia. But this vision itself is motivated by what undoes him, namely, the latent memory of Evans violently changed, *with* mud and wounds.

Critics have noted that Woolf uses Septimus's character "to criticise the social system."[16] As Alex Zwerdling notes, "Septimus Smith is instantly seen as a threat to governing-class values not only because he insists on remembering the war when everyone else is trying to forget it but also because his feverish intensity of feeling is an implicit criticism of the ideal of stoic impassivity" (*Virginia Woolf and the Real World*

[16] See Woolf, Virginia. *A Writer's Diary*. Ed. Leonard Woolf. New York: Harcourt Publishing, 1982, p. 56.

130-31). Septimus's "perpetual turbulence," Zwerdling argues, is anathema to a society that penalizes despair and idealizes "Proportion," self-control, and health. As "a seething cauldron of emotions constantly threatening to overflow," he is "the antithesis to the denial of feeling in the governing class" (*Virginia Woolf and the Real World* 131-36). According to Zwerdling, this class "worships Proportion, by which it really means atrophy of the heart, repression of instinct and emotion" (*Virginia Woolf and the Real World* 124). Citing A.D. Moody, he observes that its impulse is "'to turn away from the disturbing depths of feeling'" (*Virginia Woolf and the Real World* 124). The system therefore commissions people like Dr. Holmes and Sir William Bradshaw to keep such feeling at bay. Analogously, in her study of Septimus as a victim of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), Karen DeMeester asserts that Holmes and Bradshaw "illustrate the dominant culture's attempt 'to appropriate the trauma and . . . codify it in its own terms'" ("Trauma and Recovery" 660). On her account, Bradshaw tries to "silence" Septimus "to protect and perpetuate the world of proportion that his life exemplifies" ("Trauma and Recovery" 661). In so doing, he "ensures that Septimus and others who threaten the social status quo never share their revelations with others in the community" ("Trauma and Recovery" 661). By keeping Septimus from telling the story of his trauma, DeMeester maintains, Bradshaw prevents both Septimus and his own culture from recovering. Thus, whereas Zwerdling sees Septimus's threat in his unruly feelings, DeMeester locates it in his attempt to communicate the "meaning" of those feelings.

Both readings are instructive, but neither one addresses Septimus as a figure of loss and mourning. Nor am I convinced that Septimus threatens the social system simply for the reasons they give. To read him only in terms of "his feverish intensity of feeling"

elides its profoundly bereaved nature. It is also important to understand that Septimus does not insist on remembering the war, as Zwerdling claims, but is rather recalled to it by the scars it has left in him. DeMeester commends Woolf for revealing, through Septimus, that "the potential for recovery [is] within the very nature of trauma" ("Trauma and Recovery" 667). But she criticizes her and other modernists for not helping the world heal after the First World War. In contrast, writers like Ford Madox Ford, Robert Graves, Vera Brittain, and Siegfried Sassoon "attempted to give meaning to the war in cultural terms, and… restore order to the fragmented consciousness of the postwar world" ("Trauma and Recovery" 667). From my perspective, however, this is precisely where the power of Woolf's critique lies. The reason Septimus threatens the system is because he demonstrates that such order can never be entirely restored. As the self-professed "scapegoat" and "eternal sufferer," Septimus tries to heal society through his own pain (*MD* 25). But Woolf shows that healing can be subverted by the wounds it attempts to heal. Recovery is thus not always possible, since it is not wholly in one's power. This insight is especially applicable to Septimus but to Clarissa and Peter as well.

Holmes and Bradshaw, I would also argue, do not oppose Septimus's recovery, as DeMeester implies, but rather his inability to recover. Although they interpret his condition very differently, recovery for both amounts to regaining one's self-possession. But whereas Holmes thinks that Septimus can do this on his own, with the help of a little bromide, Bradshaw insists that it requires his superior knowledge and authority. For example, Holmes proclaims that "health is largely a matter in our own control" (*MD* 89). Septimus can therefore get better merely by "throw[ing himself] into outside interests; tak[ing] up a hobby" (*MD* 89). Holmes himself goes to a music hall when he is "in a

funk" or takes a day off to spend with his wife and play golf (*MD* 88-9). Septimus, then, just needs to get out of bed and do something. He may have lost his volition for some reason, but it can be easily regained through basic activities. The last thing he should do is remain in the passive, unmanly state in which he has been keeping himself.

Bradshaw, on the contrary, has no problem with Septimus staying in bed—just as long as he is the one advising it. "Trust everything to me," he tells the Smiths before dismissing them (*MD* 96). But he has the same goal as Holmes: "six months' rest; until a man who went in weighing seven stone six comes out weighing twelve" (*MD* 97). Sufficient "rest" will re-energize Septimus and give him back his power to act. For Bradshaw, however, one's health is not so much a matter of one's own control but of *his*. Septimus is to be sent to "[o]ne of *my* homes," as he tells him with emphasis, "where we will teach you to rest" (*MD* 95; emphasis original). Upon seeing him, Bradshaw immediately decides, with "his infallible instinct, this is madness, this sense," that he "lacked a sense of proportion" and must consequently be shut away. His social mission, after all, is to control those who cannot control themselves and their "unsocial impulses" (*MD* 99). By being forced to submit to his will, Bradshaw's patients regain their—or, rather, his— sense of proportion: "He swooped; he devoured. He shut people up" (*MD* 100). The possibility that one may not recover with his treatment is unthinkable. Recovery is just a matter of time—six months, to be exact.

Neither Holmes nor Bradshaw, then, can even begin to fathom that Septimus has been (dis)possessed by a traumatic past that precedes and exceeds him physically as well as mentally. The logic of (dis)possession is utterly foreign to their worldviews. They both assume that one is or can become the master of oneself, whether through exercising will-

power or achieving a sense of proportion. They implicitly revolt against the idea that one's will, no matter how powerful, and one's reason, no matter how acute, can be overthrown from within by something neither can master. Holmes' insistence that "there was nothing whatever the matter with [Septimus]" and Bradshaw's denial of madness, "he called it not having a sense of proportion," testify to this revolt (*MD* 90, 94). It is thus little wonder that recovery for them is a foregone conclusion.

The case of Septimus, however, proves otherwise. No amount of physical activity or rest can sever Septimus's bond to his past or enable him to foresee or completely tame its repercussions. This bond is not wholly his but was rather constituted through his relation to another, which is why it exists beyond his control. Nor is there a way to erase the traumas he has suffered or to put himself in charge of them. As long as those traumas survive in memory, he remains bound to them and hence always exposed to their infliction. For example, five years after his death, Septimus is still haunted by Evans' ghost, not because he lacks will-power or a sense of proportion but because Evans has become a part of him now that he cannot revoke or destroy. Septimus's inability to recover undermines not only Holmes' and Bradshaw's fundamental assumptions about health but also the power they assume over themselves and their patients. This is indeed why Holmes responds to Septimus's suicide by first calling him a "coward" and then admitting his own incomprehension: "And why the devil he did it, Dr. Holmes could not conceive" (*MD* 146).

For DeMeester, however, Septimus could recover but is simply prevented from doing so. Recovery, she argues, involves "reestablish[ing] a connection between his pre- and post-traumatic worlds" ("Trauma and Recovery" 652). More specifically, the

survivor "must escape the prespeech chaos of his traumatized psyche and form his fragments of thought into a coherent, communicable narrative" ("Trauma and Recovery" 652). Thus, "[o]nly through communication," DeMeester claims, "could Septimus begin to heal from his trauma" ("Trauma and Recovery" 659). But it is the trauma itself that precludes continuity between pre- and post-traumatic worlds. Even if Septimus were able to communicate the meaning of his trauma, thereby forming its chaos into an ordered narrative, this would not guarantee his recovery, since it would not sever his bond to the trauma or close him off to its returns. Trying to make oneself active in relation to trauma does not reverse one's irreducibly passive exposure to it. While coming to terms with the trauma may subdue it, no such effort can give one power over its intractable alterity. Nor can any amount of narrativization negate the memory of its chaos, which can always come back against one's will. Although one may partly recover, the complete restoration of psychic order is impossible as long as the trauma's dis-order remains possible. That Septimus commits suicide certainly shows how dangerous the inability to recover is. But whether or not one *should* recover does not alter the fact that recovery *can* always be undermined by what it seeks to recover from.

Septimus is a paradoxical character, being most in revolt against the force of mourning and hence most under its sway. The dis-order he consequently embodies threatens and exposes the façade of order that not only Holmes and Bradshaw work to preserve but also Peter, as a figure of British imperialism, and Clarissa, with her attempted emulation of Lady Bexborough's stoicism. As Zwerdling contends, Septimus "is a victim not only of the war but of the peace, with its insistence that all could be forgotten and the old order re-established" (*Virginia Woolf and the Real World* 133). Jay

Winter has shown how the postwar culture of commemoration provided desperately-needed meaning and solace to survivors. According to Winter, war memorials "used collective expression, in stone and in ceremony, to help individual people—mothers, fathers, wives, sons, daughters, and comrades-in-arms—to accept the brutal facts of death in war" (*Sites of Memory* 94). These memorials, along with "the rituals of separation" held at them, thus functioned as vehicles of mourning, offering a sense of hope and "a way of remembering which enabled the bereaved to live with their losses, and perhaps to leave them behind" (*Sites of Memory* 5). By helping large communities of people heal and move on, however, war memorials became a significant means of re-establishing "the old order." They served to diffuse what Jahan Ramazani describes as "the anarchy of grief" and its turbulent effects on the social fabric (*Poetry of Mourning* 13). Both religious and secular commemoration contributed to "the necessary art of forgetting" and, as Winter suggests, provided a way "of avoiding crushing melancholia, of passing through mourning, of separating from the dead and beginning to live again" (*Sites of Memory* 115). Such a form of mourning is as far removed as possible from the anarchic force that grips Septimus. In fact, the memorials' commemorative art was deployed to tame this force, integrate it into a neat process, and give proportion back to the emotional state of society. Individuals like Septimus had to be tamed and returned to proportion with it, "receiv[ing] the impress of Sir William's will" (*MD* 99). Nothing, after all, challenges a culture hellbent on recovery more than the inability to recover.

IV.

Septimus, however, is not only a threat to the social system but also to the novel itself. Indeed, it is the novel, not the system, that expels him from its pages. This move

constitutes Woolf's own revolt against mourning. The novel can ultimately not withstand the critique she articulates through his character and falls prey to it itself. On the one hand, in *Mrs. Dalloway*¸ Woolf depicts death as intrinsic to life and the past as almost perpetually invading the present. And yet, on the other hand, she also seeks to purify life of death and the present of the past. She therefore remains part of a tradition that Henry Staten describes as "Platonic and Christian transcendentalism," which is "tormented by the sense that death burrows its way into the innermost sanctum of life, that death is not something that begins where life ceases but rather something that inhabits life in every moment, that it is the self-consumption of the flame itself" (*Eros in Mourning* 109). But for precisely that reason, this tradition tries to extricate life from death by turning life into something that essentially transcends organic life (*Eros in Mourning* 109). Its aim, however, is to free the spirit of life not simply from death but, more profoundly, from the clutches of mourning.

Woolf attempts such an extrication in *Mrs. Dalloway* but does it by affirming "this life" rather than something more than life.[17] Although she departs from Platonic-Christian transcendentalism in this way, she nevertheless shares its fundamental aim: to transcend the threat of mourning. Accordingly, after showing that "the specter weighs, it thinks, it intensifies and condenses itself within the very inside of life, within the most living life, the most singular (or, if one prefers, individual) life," Woolf seeks to reconstitute life's integrity by ridding it of "the specter" (*Specters of Marx* 136). Her aim is ultimately to give proportion back to life in order to save it from mourning's traumatic

[17] Woolf discusses her notion of life in two famous essays, "Modern Fiction" and "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown." My reading, however, is grounded in the novel itself rather than in Woolf's essays. On the issue of Woolf's vitalism, see Martin, Kirsty. *Modernism and the Rhythms of Sympathy: Vernon Lee, Virginia Woolf, D.H. Lawrence*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

disproportion. If the novel achieves, then, what Christine Froula calls its "idea"—namely, in Woolf's words, "the contrast between life & death"—it does so by exorcising the force that has gripped it from the start (*Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-garde* 102). The crucial question, however, is whether this idea is in fact achieved.

The exorcism ends at Clarissa's party but begins earlier. First, Elizabeth chooses to leave behind the embittered Miss Kilman, "one of those spectres with which one battles in the night," and ride "the stream of the Strand" alone instead. Like her mother, she enjoys the feeling of being "out in the air" and the activities of daily life (*MD* 12, 133). For her, "buildings without architects' names, crowds of people coming back from the city hav[e] more power than single clergymen in Kensington, than any of the books Miss Kilman had lent her" (*MD* 134). Indeed, it is the busy energy "of ships, of business, of law, of administration," she thinks, that "stimulate[s] what lay slumbrous, clumsy, and shy on the mind's sandy floor to break surface" (MD 133-4). Her intense sense of life is why she continues up the Strand even though she knows that "she must go home": "She penetrated a little further in the direction of St. Paul's. She liked the geniality, sisterhood, motherhood, brotherhood of this uproar. It seemed to her good" (*MD* 134-5). Looking around, she finds it "consoling" that "this voice ["that uproar, that military music"], pouring endlessly year in and year out, would take whatever it might be; this vow; this van; *this life;* this procession, would wrap them all about and carry them on" (*MD* 135; my emphasis). If the novel affirms the liveliness of this scene, however, Miss Kilman and her "sufferings" have no part in it.

The same movement in the clouds above Elizabeth lulls Septimus into an oceanic feeling. "Outside the trees dragged their leaves like nets through the depths of the air,"

we are told, "the sound of water was in the room and through the waves came the voices of birds singing" (*MD* 136). As he lies on the sofa, "bathing, floating, on top of the waves," feeling at one with the world, mourning's force seems to leave him: "Fear no more, says the heart in the body; fear no more. He was not afraid. At the very moment Nature signified by some laughing hint like that gold spot which went round the wall—there, there, there—her determination to show, … her meaning" (*MD* 136). This is not madness transfiguring mourning like before, since his madness also leaves him. He begins to notice ordinary objects around him: a gramophone, a plate of bananas, a jar of roses. Momentarily liberated from the spectrality that has haunted him, or so it appears, "reality" re-emerges for Septimus: "None of these things moved. All were still; all were real" (*MD* 139). In this moment, with his sense of "[m]iracles, revelations, agonies, loneliness, falling through the sea, down, down into flames, … burnt out," he and Rezia experience intimacy again and consequently reach, in Septimus's mind, a "warm place, this pocket of still air, which one comes on at the edge of a wood sometimes in the evening, when, … warmth lingers, and air buffets the cheek like a wing of a bird" (*MD* 139-140). With reality being achieved here, Evans and the dead are lost in the process: "'Evans!' he cried. There was no answer. A mouse had squeaked, or a curtain rustled. Those were the voices of the dead. The screen, the coal-scuttle, the sideboard remained to him" (*MD* 142).[18] Septimus even tells Rezia to burn his writings, which revolve around Evans: "Now for his writings; how the dead sing behind rhododendron bushes; odes to Time; conversations with Shakespeare; Evans, Evans, Evans—his messages from the

[18] Woolf writes about "reality" in her diary: "That is one of the experiences I have had in some Augusts; & got then to a consciousness of what I call 'reality': a thing I see before me; something abstract; but residing in the downs or sky; beside which nothing matters; in which I shall rest & continue to exist. Reality I call it" (*A Writer's Diary* 130). See also Hussey, Mark. *The Singing of the Real World: The Philosophy of Virginia Woolf's Fiction*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1986.

dead; do not cut down trees; tell the Prime Minister. Universal love: the meaning of the world. Burn them! he cried" (*MD* 144). But if the novel is trying to bring Septimus to health in its own way, the fact that his heart has to tell his body "fear no more," that he calls for Evans, and that he feels the need to destroy his writings all testify to Evans' continued hold on him. While his suicide can be read as a revolt against a system of force, perpetuated by men like Holmes and Bradshaw, through it the novel revolts against the force in him.

Peter is also seemingly able to overcome the mourning he experienced at the hotel and embrace the "inspiriting" dynamism of city life. Out in the streets of London, he is "astonished by the beauty," by the "rapture" that "flushed" the faces around him. Although having to reassure himself just a few pages earlier that "[h]e didn't mean to die yet," he now feels "young as ever," perceiving the "perpetual movement" of life— "that shift in the whole pyramidal accumulation"— "from the words of a girl, from a housemaid's laughter" (*MD* 153, 158). For him, the "[a]bsorbing, mysterious, … infinite richness [of] *this life*" can be found "in the large square where the cabs shot and swerved so quick, [and] loitering couples, dallying, embracing, shrunk up under the shower of a tree" (*MD* 159; my emphasis).[19] Therefore, like Elizabeth, Peter enjoys the living present, or what she calls the "uproar," in which people are doing things and events are taking place. As he "trip[s]" through London, toward Westminster, observing this "sacred ceremony," we watch him, not fortuitously, get absorbed into a stream of liveliness:

[19] Peter's sense of life can also be discerned in how he conceives beauty: "but it was also windows lit up, a piano, a gramophone sounding; a sense of pleasure-making hidden, but now and again emerging when, … one saw parties sitting over tables, young people slowly circling, conversations between men and women, maids idly looking out … stocking drying on top ledges, a parrot, a few plants" (*MD* 159). Septimus's conception of beauty similarly contains this sense of life. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, beauty for him is "a leaf quivering," the "swallows swooping, swerving, flinging themselves in and out," "the flies rising and dazzling; and the sun spotting now this leaf, now that, … Beauty was everywhere" (*MD* 68).

"Everybody was going out. What with these doors being opened, and the descent and the start, it seemed as if the whole of London were embarking in little boats moored to the bank, tossing on the waters, as if the whole place were floating off in carnival" (*MD* 160). No longer borne back into the past, or so he would like to think, this stream carries him forward to a new "experience"—Clarissa's party.[20]

In these sequences, then, the force of mourning appears to be conjured away and a sense of life free from its possession is conveyed. Clarissa also experiences this sense of life while walking through London. Although it was disrupted by what the novel now seeks to expel, her experience is still illuminating. Standing amid all the goings-on of the city, she is struck by her love for what she sees, hears, and feels: "In people's eyes, in the swing, tramp, and trudge; in the bellow and the uproar; the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs; in the triumph and the jungle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead was what she loved; life; London; this moment of June" (*MD* 4). The city's vibrant movement epitomizes the experience of the living present, which seems, in its apparent immediacy, unadulterated by the stasis of death and the past. It thus radiates with a freshness and dynamism that reinvigorate Clarissa's haunted mind. This movement can be seen in all the motions that fill her stream-of-consciousness here: "And everywhere, … there was a beating, a stirring of galloping ponies, tapping of cricket bats; … the whirling young men, and laughing girls … who … after dancing all night, were taking their absurd woolly dogs for a run; … discreet old dowagers were shooting out in their motor cars … the shopkeepers were fidgeting in their windows" (*MD* 5). She genuinely loves "being

[20] Because this stream takes Peter back to his lost object, it can be rightly argued that he is still borne back into the past here, even in the forward motion of life.

part of it," of "life; London; this moment of June," and has "an absurd and faithful passion" for "the waves of that divine vitality" that she finds in almost everything: on every leaf on the trees, in the mothers of Pimlico feeding their young, in messages passing from the Fleet to the Admiralty, and in the very air.

The sense of life that *Mrs. Dalloway* celebrates is thus life reduced to the continuous, positive, and impersonal movement of its very taking place: unaffected by death, purged of any spectral alterity, and completely present to itself. It is life pure and simple, not dependent on anything outside of its own flowing motion. If mourning takes one *back*, life in this sense takes one *on*: "this life; this procession, would wrap them all about and carry them on, as in the rough stream of a glacier the ice holds a splinter of bone, a blue petal, some oak trees, and rolls them on" (*MD* 135). Whatever life picks up in its perpetual movement, then, does not slow its progress but is rather assimilated to it and carried inexorably forward. It is at Clarissa's party that life receives its deepest affirmation.

Death's violation of the party sets the stage for it to be cast out of the novel for good. Contra Froula, death arrives here not because Clarissa "can admit it; because she lets it in," but because she can never shelter herself from it, even within the warmth and vitality of a party she offers to "simply life": "Oh! thought Clarissa, in the middle of my party, here's death, she thought" (*MD* 118, 178). Clarissa proceeds to reckon with Septimus's death but only because it has reckoned with her first. Standing alone in a little room, the party's splendor suddenly collapses, and she feels herself physically overtaken by this specter in the night: "her dress flamed, her body burnt" (*MD* 179). But she is also overtaken mentally: "He had thrown himself from a window. Up had flashed the ground;

through him, blundering, bruising, went the rusty spikes. There he lay with a thud, thud, thud, in his brain, and then a suffocation of blackness. So she saw it" (*MD* 179). The "blundering," "bruising," and "thud, thud, thud" are not so much actively imagined, then, as mourning's turbulence rocking her from within.

To exorcise that "suffocation of blackness," Clarissa tries to come to terms with why Septimus killed himself. Death, she first reasons, can actually be a way of preserving life's mystical quality, the "thing there was that mattered" (*MD* 180). Instead of being something horrible in its finality, then, a death like Septimus's is an act of "defiance," "an attempt to communicate," "an embrace" (*MD* 180). Perhaps he even died happily, "holding his treasure" (*MD* 180). "Or," she speculates with astonishing clairvoyance, maybe "Sir William had impressed him, … with his power," forced his soul, and made life "intolerable" (*MD* 180). She herself understands the "obscurely evil" nature of doctors like Bradshaw as well the "terror" and "awful fear" that "this life" incites in the depths of the heart. For example, she is certain that, without her husband's support, "she must have perished" (*MD* 180). Still haunted, however, by the thought of men and women sinking into "this profound darkness," she returns for consolation to the mystical quality of life ("it"), the living present itself. She has seen it "as the sun rose, as the day sank," in the sky at Bourton, "between people's shoulders at dinner," and "in London when she could not sleep" (*MD* 181). Whatever exactly this "it" is, death and its profound darkness are supposed to have no place in it. She and the old lady share its presence in the "ashen pale [sky], raced over quickly by tapering vast clouds," the same clouds that raced over Elizabeth, Septimus, and Peter earlier. The fact that she can still experience it appears to compose her ("and the words came to her, Fear no more the heat

of the sun") and enables her to go back to the party (*MD* 180). Although she thinks that "[s]he must assemble," that is what she has been doing since the sequence started: trying to re-assemble the order that Septimus's death disassembled. But she can only do this by reaffirming a sense of life seemingly untouched by mourning.

And yet, Clarissa still feels the need to assemble, which implies that order has not been entirely restored. Thus, even after Septimus "made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun," something remains eating away at her (*MD* 182). The fullness that was meant to replace the emptiness at the heart of life has not quite been achieved. Hence, the exorcism, in the final analysis, fails. Several commentators, however, have nevertheless interpreted the novel's ending in terms of triumphant unity. Maria DiBattista, for example, views Clarissa's party as successfully performing a work of morning in which "her feelings of pain and loss [are transmuted] into the art of life" (*Virginia Woolf's Major Novels* 57). Gillian Beer also argues that "[t]he work finds unity at a level other than that of discredited action, other even than analytical knowledge. It gathers in upon the party-giving solidarity, Clarissa Dalloway; and she has become, for a little while, also Septimus Smith and the unnamed beyond him: 'There she was'" (*Virginia Woolf: Common Ground* 56). But these readings overlook crucial details. As hard as Clarissa tries to explain away Septimus's death, she continues to be pursued by the brute fact that he committed suicide. The phrase "But that young man had killed himself," or a variation of it, comes back to her repeatedly, breaching time and again the defenses she attempts to build against it (*MD* 179-82). She ultimately has no satisfying answer for why he did it and nothing, not even her vital sense of life, completely consoles her. That she has to tell herself twice that "she must go back" suggests that she is not ready to do so and is still

feeling the dis-order of his death. Returning to the party "to combine, to create" and to find Sally and Peter is therefore one more attempt to counter it (*MD* 119). The party goes on, as a celebration of life, but it cannot erase the trace of death that has interrupted its movement and given rise to mourning.[21]

Woolf's novel shows that mourning, as the experience of an uncontrollable force, overpowers us rather than us overpowering it. Critics have argued that she challenges the Freudian conception of mourning as a process of detachment and substitution as well as the adequacy of Victorian mourning rituals to confront the magnitude of loss that her generation encountered.[22] She does more than this, however. Woolf's conception of mourning also undercuts the widely-held view that mourning is a form of psychic labor that allows loss to be slowly worked through and resolved. This view construes mourning as something that we perform or engage in. But for Woolf, on the contrary, mourning engages us. Contra Tammy Clewell, however, this does not mean that Woolf conceives mourning as "an endless activity," "an ongoing experience," or "an endless process" (*Mourning, Modernism, Postmodernism* 26). Rather, Woolf depicts it as a spasmodic event whose comings and goings cannot be fully anticipated or managed. Such a conception, as it gets conveyed in *Mrs. Dalloway*, undermines notions of autonomy, recovery, and consolation that imply power, mastery, and order. But Woolf ends up revolting against her own conception of mourning to save life from death, the present

[21] Koulouris also questions whether the novel should be read, as Froula has done, according to Freud's theory of "healthy mourning," where the survivor gradually moves from loss to consolation and acceptance. His reason is because Septimus's "singularity" somehow prevents the completion of mourning. As Koulouris says himself, however, "she [Clarissa] does not know him [Septimus]," so it is unclear how his singularity could influence her (*Hellenism and Loss* 130-1).

[22] See Bennet Smith, Susan. "Reinventing Grief Work: Virginia Woolf's Feminist Representations of Mourning in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*. *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 41, no. 4, 1995, pp. 310-327, Clewell, Tammy. *Mourning, Modernism, Postmodernism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

from the past. Her attempt to master it, however, only demonstrates mourning's unmasterability.

Chapter 2

Joyce's Revolt: The Exorcism of *Ulysses*

Death arrives uninvited to the Misses Morkan's party in James Joyce's "The Dead." This arrival is usually associated with the ghost of Michael Furey late in the story, but it comes much earlier. It is already apparent in the intrusion of the cold, wintry night into the party's warmth and vitality. Gabriel Conroy tries, however unconsciously, to remove its presence, but it nevertheless clings to and almost envelopes him: "He [Gabriel] continued scraping his feet vigorously… A light fringe of snow lay like a cape on the shoulders of his overcoat and like toecaps on the toes of his goloshes; and, as the buttons of his overcoat slipped with a squeaking noise through the snow-stiffened frieze, a cold, fragrant air from out-of-doors escaped from crevices and folds" (*Dubliners* 120). Gabriel, a man who prides himself on being a sophisticated modern, is "sick of" Ireland, especially its cultural nationalism and romanticization of the country's western region (*Dubliners* 129). As Richard Ellmann observes, "the west of Ireland is connected in Gabriel's mind with a dark and painful primitivism, as aspect of his country which he has steadily abjured by going off to the continent" ("The Backgrounds of 'The Dead'" 379). Like other characters in *Dubliners*, Gabriel wants to break free from the past and its "sad memories." "[W]ere we to brood upon [such memories] always," he tells his fellow partygoers, "we could not find the heart to go on bravely with the work among the living. Therefore I will not linger on the past" (*Dubliners* 139). He eventually realizes, however, that the living cannot be separated from the dead any more than "the bustle and rush of everyday routine" can be separated from "thoughts of the past, of youth, of changes, of absent faces that we miss here tonight" (*Dubliners* 139).

According to Ellmann, Gabriel has this epiphany after succumbing to his wife's dead lover ("The Backgrounds of 'The Dead'" 380). It would be more exact to say, however, that he succumbs to the forces of loss that have been subtly overtaking him from the beginning. Although his character is often contrasted with Michael Furey and his "violent passion," as Ellmann puts it, Gabriel himself is aroused by a violent passion for Gretta ("The Backgrounds of 'The Dead'" 380). He feels "[a] sudden tide of joy" after gazing upon her at the end of party, and this feeling becomes more intense as "[m]oments of their secret life together burst like stars upon his memory" (*Dubliners* 144-45). But his happiness here is inspired by *past* moments of their life together that have become distant memories. He wants to re-experience the "tenderness and joy and desire" they once shared precisely because he fears that "their secret life" may be gone now: "He longed to recall to her those moments, to make her forget the years of their dull existence together and remember only their moments of ecstasy. For the years, he felt, had not quenched his soul or hers. Their children, his writing, her household cares had not quenched all their souls' tender fire" (*Dubliners* 145, 219). His powerful desire for Gretta is thus precipitated by a desire to negate the sense of lost passion that plagues him. Along these lines, his longing "to overmaster her" is an attempt to reverse the fact he is being overmastered himself. If he could just "seize her…crush her body against his," he could thereby quench his fear that the "tender fire" between them has been "quenched" (*Dubliners* 147-48).

The mourning, then, that ultimately brings Gabriel to an understanding of the common finitude of the living and the dead has already set in before he hears of Michael Furey. But after Gretta begins her story and tells him that "I think he died for me," his

fear deepens: “A vague terror seized Gabriel at this answer as if, at that hour when he had hoped to triumph, some impalpable and vindictive being was coming against him, gathering forces in its vague world” (*Dubliners* 220). We are told that “he shook himself free of it with an effort of reason and continued to caress her hand,” but he is then seized by the memory of having “caressed her first letter to him that spring morning” in the same way (*Dubliners* 220). He is therefore still possessed by a desire for the passion that he fears is lost. After hearing Gretta’s whole story and seeing her overcome by it, however, he “held her hand for a moment longer, irresolutely, and then, shy of intruding on her grief, let it fall gently and walked quietly to the window” (*Dubliners* 221-222). Overcome by his own grief now, he lets her hand “fall” and walks away. “[T]he evocation of this figure from the dead” ends up giving him a poignant vision of love, “the full glory” of which he has never felt himself (*Dubliners* 219, 223). But as a figure in whom passion is fatally intertwined with youth, Michael Furey confirms Gabriel’s fear and the triumph of those “gathering forces” over him. In turn, the cold air he had tried to escape at the beginning of the story comes upon him again: “The air of the room chilled his shoulders” (*Dubliners* 223).

To claim, as Ellmann does, that Gabriel sacrifices himself to attain his epiphany implies an agency that the story itself undermines (“The Background of the ‘The Dead’” 382). In the final lines, for example, something is happening *to* him that he is powerless to stop. Enveloped by the snow despite his vigorous efforts to resist it, “[h]is own identity was fading out into a grey impalpable world: the solid world itself, … was dissolving and dwindling” (*Dubliners* 152). This is not a retreat into interiority but, on the contrary, a radical alteration of that interiority by an exterior presence working from the inside. Such

an alteration does not imply transcendence. Rather, it enables Gabriel to realize just how vulnerable he is to "that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead" who, in mourning, hold him hostage (*Dubliners* 152). Thus, far from an active resignation or acceptance, his swoon is a consequence of him having been overmastered by the sense of loss that first inspired his nostalgic remembrance of he and his wife's secret life. But this overmastering is not due to a lack of will or reason, since mourning is something that precedes and exceeds all subjective capacities.[23] As I will demonstrate in a close reading of *Ulysses*, mourning is not just an unsettling experience but, as Gabriel's trial exemplifies, a usurping force.

As many readings testify, Joyce's work conveys, in Daniel Ferrer's words, the "relentless sway of the past over the present" ("Regret and Regression" 244). Studies of mourning and loss in *Ulysses* turn on the question of whether it offers any liberation from this sway. The overarching answer in Joyce criticism has been that the novel's ghosts are more or less exorcised, freeing its main characters, at least to some degree, from their pasts. For Ellmann, these characters are "awakened from the Circean nightmare of history by drawing the past into the present (a timeless present) and making it an expression of love instead of hatred, of fondness rather than remorse" (*Ulysses on the Liffey* 175). Similarly, Colin MacCabe argues that "with the experience of the writing of Circe … the mother's desire can be disinterred, a raising of the dead which allows the possibility of life" (*James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word* 129). While identifying Bloom with the freedom of the signifier over the closure of the signified, MacCabe claims that Stephen is eventually liberated "from time and demand" (*James Joyce and the Revolution*

[23] For an illuminating reading of *Dubliners* and mourning, see Gana, Nouri. *Signifying Loss: Toward a Poetics of Narrative Mourning*. Bucknell University Press, 2014, pp. 47-52.

of the Word 129). Christine Froula, for her part, contends that Stephen "exorcises his complicit ghost-mother and takes revenge on 'the system' on her behalf and his own," enabling him to overcome his melancholia and restore his lost self (*Modernism's Body* 155). In a seminal essay, Maud Ellmann maintains that mourning, defined as "the struggle to release the ego from the very ghosts that it is trying to revive," succeeds in *Ulysses*: "The ghosts disperse [at the end of "Circe"], and the bedrock of the present reemerges from the flood of that which was ("The Ghosts of *Ulysses*" 96). Richard Kearney takes a more ambivalent position, holding at once that Joyce shows "that past wounds are never completely past, no matter how much one prays" and that *Ulysses* is "a work of mourning and recovery. A writing that translates wounds into scars, flesh into fiction. A working through of trauma" ("Writing Trauma" 89-90). John S. Rickard comes to an ambivalent conclusion, as well, asserting that although the novel resists any clear resolution, "progressive, holistic forces … operat[e] throughout the book as a counterforce to the chaotic, destabilizing accidental forces in the text" (*Joyce's Book of Memory* 191). Rickard calls these forces "destiny," which he views as a "gradual process of development" working itself out across the narrative (*Joyce's Book of Memory* 191). Finally, Christy L. Burns and Luke Gibbons try to extricate mourning from the destructive effects of melancholia. Burns claims that "the conclusion [of *Ulysses*] may be read as a tale of open ended mourning, a version not so much of melancholia as of the glimmering possibilities that arise when what is engaged is nostalgia" (*Modernism and Nostalgia* 230). And Gibbons argues that "the workshop of Dedalus … forges a new consciousness, releasing the future from the forgone conclusions of the past … Ghosts

are best seen as 'premonitions,' reminding us of 'infinite possibilities' that have yet to unfold" (*Joyce's Ghosts* 225).

In contrast, I will argue that *Ulysses* does not offer the main characters any liberation from their bondage to the world, but it does ultimately seek to envision a notion of life as free in itself. To be bound to an object is to be held in relation to someone or something that, precisely because it is other than oneself, can affect one in ways that cannot be foreseen or entirely controlled. The gap of difference between self and other is what makes every relation potentially violent. Such violence need not be physical in nature but is entailed whenever the psyche is violated or altered by the other's presence through memory, emotion, or desire. As we shall see, this relation does not end when the object is lost or seemingly on the verge of being so. Nor does one have the power to sever one's bond to it. Rather than viewing mourning as a process or labor in which the self is refigured by severing one's bond to the lost object, Joyce conceives it as a force of alterity that refigures, disfigures, and can completely unconfigure the self through a bond that one cannot sever. In what follows, I will explore how this force possesses and dispossesses Stephen Dedalus, Leopold and Molly Bloom, and even Buck Mulligan. These characters are caught in the grip of a usurpation that works on them from within but that can always seize them from without.

I.

To begin, it is instructive to consider Mulligan's somewhat contradictory responses to the death of Stephen's mother. On the one hand, he makes a few extremely insensitive comments that belittle Stephen's loss. At one point, he says, with Stephen right there, that "[h]e [i.e., Stephen] kills his mother but he can't wear grey trousers" (*Ulysses* 1.122) and

later Stephen reminds Mulligan of what he said the first day Stephen went to his house after her death: "*O, it's only Dedalus whose mother is beastly dead*" (*Ulysses* 1.99-98; emphasis original). On the other hand, he seems appalled at Stephen's refusal of his mother's last wish: "I'm hyperborean as much as you. But to think of your mother begging you with her last breath to kneel down and pray for her. And you refused. There is something sinister in you…" (*Ulysses* 1.92-94). All these comments, however, are linked to Mulligan's apparent indifference to death. He claims that death has no significance, regardless of whether it is "your mother's or yours or my own" (*Ulysses* 1.204). As he tells Stephen, "It simply doesn't matter" (*Ulysses* 1.207). Watching people, as a medical student, "pop off every day … and [get] cut up into tripes in the dissectingroom" has reduced death to "a beastly thing and nothing else" (*Ulysses* 1.205-07). There is no reason, then, for Stephen to stay angry with him for making light of such a trivial matter. In his mind, Stephen should have just humored his mother until it was over, since praying at someone's death is as meaningless as the event itself (*Ulysses* 1.212). By refusing to pray, Stephen therefore gave too much weight to something that is, as Mulligan needs to reiterate, "all a mockery and beastly" (*Ulysses* 1.210). He should have instead treated his mother's death as the joke that it was and given it no more thought: "Her cerebral lobes are not functioning. She calls the doctor sir Peter Teazle and picks buttercups off the quilt" (*Ulysses* 1.210-11).

But Mulligan's words are revealing. They betray not only *that* he is repulsed by death but also *what* he cannot tolerate about it, namely, that its ugliness resists irony. Death is a "mockery" of both the beautiful thing life should be, as Mulligan's words imply, and his own mocking ways. James H. Maddox argues that Mulligan "is a

destabilized play of voices, offering, with a cynical Cheshire-cat smile, the principle that no voice or discourse is really important. For Mulligan, all that is real is the mocking smile itself, left suspended derisively in the air" ("Mockery in *Ulysses*" 132). Beneath his cynical smile and "gay attire," however, is a suppressed fear of death's reality—a fear perhaps as strong as Stephen's. The dark energy of the latter in fact constitutes the impetus of the former. Although he cannot acknowledge it, something is thus acting on him from within here, destabilizing "the destabilized play of voices" with which he tries to hide and deny it.

This fear is why Mulligan opposes that reality so ardently in the first episode and turns to the sea for comfort. For example, rather than telling Stephen in a straightforward manner to not be offended, he says "[c]huck Loyola, Kinch, … Don't mope over it all day, … I'm inconsequent. Give up the moody brooding," focusing on Stephen's emotional disposition (*Ulysses* 1.231-236). The implication is not so much for Stephen to get over the offense as to get over his mourning and not contaminate Mulligan with its "sinister" presence. Indeed, it is interesting that while Mulligan criticizes Stephen for not praying at his mother's death, he also chides him for continuing to wear black ("Etiquette is etiquette"). But this is because Stephen's "cheap dusty mourning" confronts Mulligan with something he wishes to "Hellenise" and sing away, which is also partly why he wants Stephen to change into grey pants (*Ulysses* 1.158, 571). That he tells Stephen to "[l]ook at the sea" and then sings "*And no more turn aside and brood/Upon love's bitter mystery/For Fergus rules the brazen cars*" is therefore more for himself than it is for Stephen (*Ulysses* 1.239-41; emphasis original).

By convincing himself that death is meaningless, Mulligan has sought to protect his psyche against such brooding. It is no coincidence, then, that he goes for a swim shortly afterward, as if to cleanse himself of its presence in what he idealizes, however ironically, as "our great sweet mother" (*Ulysses* 1.80). Hence, if we take "hyperborean" to mean, according to Don Gifford, "a mythical people who dwelt … in a perpetual spring without sorrow or old age," then hyperborean is certainly what Mulligan strives to be (*Ulysses Annotated* 15). But the key point is that this striving is motivated by a phobic relation to death, which indicates that mourning is insidiously dictating much of what he says and does in the episode. All the people he has watched "pop off" and get dissected have not simply been dismissed and forgotten about, as he would like Stephen to think. On the contrary, they are with him now, preceding all his ironic words and gestures and exceeding his attempt to deny their alterity. They are therefore as responsible for the kind of character he is as Mulligan himself. Bound to a life that he does not believe should be reduced to a mockery, it turns out, despite his own remarks, that death has the greatest significance to him.

II.

Stephen is also working against an experience of mourning that works against him. For example, while Mulligan may find solace in the sea, it brings none to Stephen. On the contrary: "Across the threadbare cuffedge he saw the sea hailed as a great sweet mother by the wellfed voice beside him. The ring of the bay and skyline held a dull green mass of liquid. A bowl of white china had stood beside her deathbed holding the green sluggish bile which she had torn up from her rotting liver by fits of loud groaning vomiting" (*Ulysses* 1.106-10). Not long after this, Stephen gazes at the sea again only to be further

overtaken by what it was supposed to transcend or at least relieve (*Ulysses* 1.242). Although it seems that the horrifying image of his mother on her deathbed springs from seeing "[t]he ring of the bay and skyline," mourning is already acting upon him before he looks at the sea, influencing both his inner thoughts and outer perceptions. The "pain…frett[ing] his heart" is what makes him turn to the sea in the first place and transforms it into "a dull green mass of liquid"—that is, into something that evokes his mother's death—before he even thinks of the "bowl of white china [that] had stood beside her deathbed" (*Ulysses* 1.100-109). This pain is also what inspires the memory of his mother coming back to him in a dream as well as the dream itself (*Ulysses* 1.102-105). What happens in both parts of the scene is not just the deliberate work of Stephen's imagination and memory but rather involves these faculties being hijacked by his mother's alterity whose dark energy directs them and not vice versa. If it were the other way around, then the two sequences that begin with him turning to the sea for comfort would presumably not end with him re-experiencing his mother's "loud groaning vomiting" and him "trembling at his soul's cry" (*Ulysses* 1.110, 282). It is important, however, that Stephen seeks comfort, since it shows that he desires solace and tries to attain it. But the object in him neither accords with his desires nor yields to his authority. Hence, instead of him overcoming the pain, the pain overcomes him. This is not simply a matter of him experiencing an emotion but rather of being increasingly (dis)possessed from within by something over which he lacks control. Stephen can hardly "no more turn aside and brood" if what he supposedly broods upon does not turn aside from him.

We can elucidate this dynamic in more detail by examining the second sequence. Gazing "seaward" into "the morning peace," Stephen thinks of how he sang "Fergus'

song" when his mother was dying, which sets in motion a stream of memories that "beset his brooding brain" (*Ulysses* 242-67). While he appears to calmly recall these profoundly personal memories, they are evidence that his consciousness is being gradually outstripped by a presence foreign to it. He remembers "[h]er secrets: old featherfans, tasselled dancecards, powdered with musk, a gaud of amber beads in her locked drawer." Her remembers what brought her joy: "A birdcage hung in the sunny window of her house when she was a girl. She heard old Royce sing in the pantomime of *Turko the Terrible* and laughed with others when he sang: *I am the boy/That can enjoy/Invisibility*" (*Ulysses* 1.256-63; emphasis original). And he remembers objects that are as intimate to her as they are to his memory of her: "Her glass of water from the kitchen tap when she had approached the sacrament. A cored apple, filled with brown sugar, roasting for her at the hob on a dark autumn evening. Her shapely fingernails reddened by the blood of squashed lice from the children's shirts" (*Ulysses* 1.266-69). So far, the sequence seems to align with what Freud describes as "the work of mourning" whereby "each one of the memories and expectations in which the libido is bound is brought up and hypercathected, and detachment of the libido is accomplished in respect of it" ("Mourning and Melancholia" 245). This work supposedly follows the "orders" of "reality" ("Mourning and Melancholia" 245). But these orders are upended when Stephen's haunting dream of his dead mother suddenly takes hold of him again, interrupting the "phantasmal mirth" and stripping him of his apparent composure. While, for Freud, the lost object is subject to the economic work of the psyche, that logic is reversed here with Stephen being subjected to the un-economized otherness of the "her." The sequence starts with a repetition of the word "I," which suggests self-possession—

"Fergus' song: I sang it alone in the house, … Silent with awe and pity I went to her bedside..."—but the "I" disappears and the word "her" asserts itself more and more, eventually taking over Stephen's thoughts: "Her glazing eyes, … her agony. … Her hoarse loud breath … Her eyes …" (*Ulysses* 1.273-76). That Stephen is left in emotional as well as physical disorder is evidence of "her" power over him. This power reverberates in his "soul's cry": "No, mother! Let me be and let me live" (*Ulysses* 1.279).

Stephen recomposes himself and carries on with his day, but the effects of his mother's power over him are still perceptible in the next episode, "Nestor." Although his mood is affected by the fact that he feels trapped in the very subject he is teaching (history), it is clear that he has no passion for what he is doing and gains little enjoyment from it. The few thoughts that he has about his students are mostly bitter and cynical. He sees blankness in their faces and describes their laughter as "mirthless high malicious" (*Ulysses* 2.27). "In a moment," he thinks, "they will laugh more loudly, aware of my lack of rule and of fees their papas pay," and the narrator tells us that "[w]ith envy he watched their faces: Edith, Ethel, Gerty, Lily. Their likes: their breaths, too, sweetened with tea and jam, their bracelets tittering in the struggle" (*Ulysses* 2.28-9, 36-8). Cyril Sargent is Stephen's most pathetic and helpless student. "Futility" is how he initially dismisses him. Stephen's view Sargent, however, unexpectedly takes a sensitive turn: "Ugly and futile: lean neck and thick hair and a stain of ink, a snail's bed. Yet someone had loved him, borne him in her arms and in her heart" (*Ulysses* 2.139-40). According to Benjamin Boysen, "love…is equal to accepting death, vulnerability, and alienation toward the other—and oneself. But Stephen has not yet experienced love and the resulting transubstantiation of experience" ("The Mother and *the word known to all men*" 162).

But it is precisely because Stephen *has* experienced love and the need for it that he can relate to Sargent in a more compassionate manner, allowing him to see that "like him I was" (*Ulysses* 2.168). In particular, he realizes that their mothers' love rescued them both: "But for her the race of the world would have trampled him underfoot, a squashed boneless snail. She had loved his weak watery blood drained from her own" (*Ulysses* 2.141-43). As the past tense of these lines indicates, however, what attunes Stephen to the vital importance of this love is that it is something he no longer has. That his mother is "no more" makes him wonder now if her love was the only "real" and "true thing in life" (*Ulysses* 2.143). The felt absence of that love is mourning unwittingly working on Stephen. It is what moves him to help Sargent with his sums in spite of his supposed "futility." Seeing in the boy the same "death, vulnerability, and alienation" he feels in himself, Stephen shows Sargent the care and patience that his mother once showed him. By transforming Stephen's philosophical indifference into maternal concern, her alterity in him effects a touching "transubstantiation of experience" here.

The debt Stephen feels he owes to his mother is a large component of the bond that opens him to her alterity. Its workings thus partly constitute the force of mourning that seizes him throughout the day. On the one hand, as we saw in the previous scene, this debt leads to a positive alteration within Stephen, changing his attitude toward his students from cynicism to empathy and pushing him to treat the hapless Sargent with more understanding. Even if the change does not last, it nevertheless has a revolutionary quality there, overturning the way he perceives his world and acts toward it. On the other hand, this debt often gnaws and pulls at Stephen elsewhere, filling his consciousness with guilt and remorse. As he thinks on Sandymount Strand: ""I could not save her. Waters:

bitter death: lost'" (*Ulysses* 3.329-30). What agonizes him about his mother's death is not only that he failed to repay her for her love but, more deeply, that he can never repay her now. It is only after her death that he realizes what her love meant and how indebted he is to her. If he felt indebted to her when she was alive, it did not stop him from fleeing to Paris while she "drowned" in Dublin. But this is the fact with which her loss ineluctably confronts him—that he could not, or would not, save the woman who saved him.

Such indebtedness exceeds the financial logic of the headmaster where Stephen teaches, Mr. Deasy. Unknowingly citing Shakespeare's Iago, he advises Stephen to "*Put but money in thy purse*" (*Ulysses* 2.239; emphasis original). Deasy's most venerated ideal is to be debt-free, which he thinks a person can attain by saving money. As he condescendingly tells Stephen, "the proudest word you will ever hear from an Englishman's mouth … [is] *I paid my way. I never borrowed a shilling in my life.* Can you feel that? *I owe nothing.* Can you?" (*Ulysses* 2.245-53-54; emphasis original). Being able to say that "I owe nothing" gives Deasy a satisfying feeling of freedom from others as well as from the past, thereby confirming for him the absoluteness of his authority. He believes that because he is debt-free, he is not bound by anything or anyone beyond himself. But Deasy is blind to the fact that debt is also accrued in non-monetary ways. If debt includes being loved, helped, and cared for, then no one can say that "I paid my way" or that "I owe nothing." Even if it is not recognized or acknowledged, debt accrued in this fashion binds one to those on whom one has depended through the memory and feeling of that dependence. As Stephen learns, such a debt survives beyond loss and

intensifies the force of that loss. What is more, contrary to Deasy's worldview, it cannot be paid off by "symbols soiled by greed and misery" (*Ulysses* 2.227-28).[24]

Whether or not he knows it, however, Stephen's autonomy is undermined by the heteronomy of this debt. It is always already there, prior to his self's most seemingly voluntary thoughts and actions, and can give rise to mourning at any time. In "Nestor," his students read part of Milton's "Lycidas," which ends with Lycidas, having drowned, rising from the dead and journeying toward "fresh Woods, and Pastures new."[25] "*Weep no more*," Talbot recites, "*woful shepherds, weep no more/ For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead, Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor*…" (*Ulysses* 2.64-66; emphasis original). In his Shakespeare lecture, Stephen affirms the idea of turning loss into gain that "Lycidas" exemplifies, and his conception of "the postcreation" is premised on this idea. It is thus very much on his mind in the novel and something into which he puts a great deal of deliberate, conscious thought. One may expect him, then, to be solaced upon hearing "Lycidas" and subsequently fortified by it. As the quote above from "Proteus" demonstrates, however, in the very next episode, Stephen is overcome by the knowledge of gain being irrevocably turned into loss (""I could not save her. Waters: bitter death: lost'"). Rather than him simply saying those words to himself, mourning speaks them to him. Before they come upon him, he is thinking about "the man that was drowned nine days ago off Maiden's rock" (3.322). But it is the guilty memory of his mother's death that is already working on him unawares and that brings this man to life in his consciousness. It is her gaze that looks at him through the man's eyes and her voice that

[24] For an insightful analysis of the connection between mourning and debt in *Ulysses*, see Reichman, Ravit. "Mourning, Owning, Owing." *American Imago*, vol. 64, no. 3, Fall 2007, pp. 433-449.
[25] Milton, John. "Lycidas." The John Milton Reading Room. Dartmouth College, 1997-2018, www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/lycidas/text.shtml.

he hears in his scream (*Ulysses* 3.328). In this moment, Stephen is overtaken by the sense of "the tide flowing quickly in on all sides" and the word "lost" abruptly ends his train of thought (*Ulysses* 3.326). If "Lycidas" solaced him at all before, it cannot protect him against the lost object's traumatic return. While he will go on to espouse a theory of postcreation, of loss being turned into gain, mourning shows here that it is indifferent to his intellectual ideas and that it can break through even a psyche fortified against it.

It is thus important to stress that Stephen's loss is indeed real and not hypostatize it as a fundamental lack or imaginary wound. The latter is exactly what Christine Froula does in her reading of *Ulysses*. According to Froula, "The Joycean artist does not, then, turn to symbolic creation to compensate for an actual wound; he asks—only apparently masochistically—to be wounded at the hands of a nightmare-woman such as his theory prescribes so that he might awaken to fiction's dream" (*Modernism's Body* 112). Throughout her account, Froula puts the word wound in quotations to suggest that it is "fantasized, courted, fetishized" by Stephen (*Modernism's Body* 116). "The Joycean artist," she argues, "unlike Freud's model fetishist, does not deny his 'wound,' the substantial lack that the accidental fetish dissembles, but self-consciously courts and flaunts it in his art" (*Modernism's Body* 126). Froula adheres to a psychoanalytic notion that holds that once the subject enters the symbolic order, which is governed by the law of the father, it is forever cut off from its original oneness with the mother. This lost oneness is the "substantial lack" that Stephen "self-consciously courts and flaunts," or so Froula's argument runs.

But while Stephen's principle of "*amor matris*: subjective and objective genitive" implies a oneness between mother and son, when he actually thinks about it in relation to

both Sargent's mother and his own, it is not plenitude he emphasizes but deficiency: "She had loved his weak watery blood drained from her own. … She had saved him from being trampled underfoot and had gone, scarcely having been. A poor soul gone to heaven" (*Ulysses* 2.141; 2.146-147). Nor is it his mother's "symbolic body and voice" that touch his memory but rather her physical frailty: "With her weak blood and wheysour milk she had fed him and hid from sight of others his swaddlingbands" (*Modernism's Body* 96; *Ulysses* 2.166-167). There is nothing transcendent or idealized about the images filling his consciousness here. On the contrary, they haunt him with the weakness of his mother's mortality and that she "had gone, scarcely having been." This point may seem surprising, to be sure, given Stephen's artistic and philosophical convictions. But mourning need not answer to or accord with the self's convictions, no matter how strong they may be. Stephen is experiencing something of which he is not in charge. Rather than acting on the lost object, the object is acting on him. His mother's alterity is able to gradually infiltrate his psyche, take over its faculties, and separate him from himself, which allows for the softening in him to occur that we analyzed before. The force of this infiltration, however, not only emotionally moves him but also physically moves him. Hence, a moment that started with Stephen considering Sargent "[u]gly and futile" ends with him "[s]itting down at his side" (*Ulysses* 2.139-151). Far from fetishizing a fake wound, then, he is (dis)possessed by a real one.

But this experience does not mean that Stephen abhors death any less. As Boysen contends, "Stephen's compulsory preoccupation with the death of his mother is, to a large degree, is an expression of his *own* fear of death and destruction" ("The Mother and *the word known to all men*" 153; emphasis original). Boysen further argues that "Stephen

identifies exclusively with the purely spiritual, patriarchal institution, which cannot accept the body, the sensuous, and ultimately death" ("The Mother and *the word known to all men*" 156). In "Proteus," however, Stephen clearly admits the existence of time ("the *Nacheinander*") and space ("the *Nebeneinander*"). "Open your eyes now," he tells himself, "I will. One moment. Has all vanished since? If I open and am for ever in the black adiaphane. Basta! I will see if I can see. See now. There all the time without you: and ever shall be, world without end" (*Ulysses* 3.25-28). He is also too much of an Aristotelian to completely deny "the body, the sensuous, and ultimately death." But he does struggle to accept death's finality. Rather than "identifying exclusively" with the spiritual, then, Stephen desires its transcendence over the body, the sensuous, and death. As Margaret McBride observes, he believes that "through the postcreation, the poet, or 'maker,' can transform the temporal into the eternal" (*Ulysses and the Metamorphosis of Stephen Dedalus* 49). "Mark me now," he intones in "The Oxen of the Sun," "In woman's womb word is made flesh but in the spirit of the maker all flesh that passes becomes the word that shall not pass away. This is the postcreation. *Omnis caro ad to veniet* [All flesh shall come unto thee]" (*Ulysses* 14.292-94; emphasis original). McBride goes on to assert that Stephen "rejects mere procreation, an act that is too much part of the temporal process, an act that creates only more death. Stephen vows not only not to die himself but not to create anyone or anything that will die. When Stephen creates, what he creates will be immortal. It will be art" (*Ulysses and the Metamorphosis of Stephen Dedalus* 49). But his affirmation of art is precipitated by a religious affirmation of "the spirit" over "flesh," of the eternity of postcreation over the death of "procreation."

Stephen's mourning undermines this affirmation, however, and asserts its authority over his consciousness in the process. Rather than passing into the purity of "the word," his mother confronts him with her decaying corporeality: "…she had come to him after her death, her wasted body within its loose brown graveclothes giving off an odour of wax and rosewood, her breath that had bent upon him, mute, reproachful, a faint odour of wetted ashes" (*Ulysses* 1.103-05). Similarly, when he remembers her deathbed scene, all the bodily details of her suffering overwhelm him: "A bowl of white china had stood beside her deathbed holding the green sluggish bile which she had torn up from her rotting liver by fits of loud groaning vomiting" (*Ulysses* 1.108-10). If Mulligan feigns indifference to deal with such a reality, Stephen turns to a metaphysical vision of postcreation that transcends it. But while a belief in eternity may be consoling in the face of loss, it cannot make him invulnerable to the object or neutralize its effects. Mourning can therefore give rise to a vision that is not his own creation and so contrary to everything he believes in and desires, namely, of his mother in the clutches of her own dying body: "Her glazing eyes, staring out of death, to shake and bend my soul. … The ghost candle to light her agony. Ghostly light on the tortured face. Her hoarse loud breath rattling in horror. … Ghoul! Chewer of corpses!" (*Ulysses* 1. 273-78). What makes Stephen himself rattle in horror here is the total absence of any transcendence in his mother's "glazing eyes," "tortured face," and "hoarse loud breath." But in this struggle with her alterity and the fact of death that it forces upon his consciousness, he is the one being eaten away at from within. His eyes must also be glazing; his face tortured; and his breath hoarse and loud. When he screams inside of himself, "No, mother! Let me be and

let me live," mourning finishes its takeover and the inner and outer transformation it has brought about in him (*Ulysses* 1.279).

Even in his own art, Stephen cannot escape mourning's grip. As the previous paragraph showed, the fear that his mother's death generates in him is that there is no postcreation transcendence but only the raw physicality of death. The same fear is also at work in the short poem he conceives in "Proteus." Before writing anything down, Stephen thinks "…Bridebed, childbed, bed of death, ghostcandled. *Omnis caro ad te veniet*. He comes, pale vampire, through storm his eyes, his bat sails bloodying the sea, mouth to her mouth's kiss" (3.396-98; emphasis original). We learn in "Aeolus" that the actual poem he writes reads: "On swift sail flaming/from storm and south/He comes, pale vampire, /Mouth to my mouth" (7.522-25). But the words that precede these ones in his mind are key because they demonstrate what motivates the poem itself. He is first re-possessed by the scene of his mother's death where there was "the ghost candle to light her agony. Ghostly light on the tortured face." He does not so much imaginatively appropriate these details for his poem as their dark energy comes back and expropriates his imagination. Rather than "all flesh that passes becom[ing] the word that shall not pass away," his words imply that all flesh that passes ("Bridebed, childbed, bed of death") becomes death that shall not pass away. Like a "pale vampire," after sucking the life-blood from his mother, death continues "bloodying the sea." Hence, *omnis caro ad te veniet* does not refer to God or spirit here but to that which it is supposed to transcend. Although "my mouth" in the written poem may refer to Stephen's mouth, not his mother's, the operative fear is still that the pale vampire holds "an everlasting dominion that will not pass away" (*New International Version*, Dan. 7:14). On the face of it,

Stephen's poem may seem to be a thoroughly voluntary and self-directed act—the creation of an artistic genius who is in full command of what he is doing. It would thus be here where, through the word, he gets a handle on loss. But instead, it is he who is being commanded again by the lost object. Poetry, then, does not enable him to overcome mourning. On the contrary, the force of the latter shapes its very conception.

But Stephen revolts against mourning precisely because it has such power over him. When he screams at the other within him "No, mother! Let me be and let me live," it is not just a moment of complete (di)possession; it is also a desperate attempt to re-take possession of himself. Driven by the desire to be free from the binds of time and the flesh, his theory of the postcreation is another part of his revolt. Gian Balsamo leaves out this desire in his account of Stephen's "poetic agenda," which he argues is aimed at "inconsolable grief" ("Mourning to Death" 417). According to Balsamo, "Stephen is willing to renounce the normalising effects of intellect and will in order to pursue the unintelligible and unmediated expression of the grief which is sedimental in his memory" ("Mourning to Death" 431-32). Balsamo has it backward, however: Stephen does not renounce his will and intellect to mourning, which would still be an act of will and intellect; rather, as we have seen, mourning takes control of his will and intellect even though he does not want it to. It is also surprising that Balsamo suggests that Stephen is willing to renounce his subjective freedom, since, in my view, nothing is more important to him. Stephen's highest aspiration, as Cranly recalls in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, is "[t]o discover the mode of life or of art whereby [his] spirit could express itself in unfettered freedom" (180). He believes, as he himself puts it in *Ulysses*, that "[t]he soul is in a manner all that is: the soul is the form of forms. Tranquility sudden,

vast, candescent: form of forms" (2.75-76). Commenting on this passage, Richard Ellmann remarks that the "essential virtue of the soul [for Stephen] is not embattlement but freedom" (*Ulysses on the Liffey* 22). Vicki Mahaffey is thus correct to point out that despite rebelling against seemingly all forms of authority, "the authority Stephen consciously acknowledges is the authority of will, of intentionality" (*Reauthorizing Joyce* 54-55). As he says of the dog that runs past him on the strand in "Proteus:" "Respect his liberty. You will not be master of others or their slave" (3.295-96). It is this absolute liberty that is the aim of his revolt against what internally masters him.

But as powerful as Stephen's desire for such liberty is, as much as it consciously drives him, it is also vulnerable to the force against which it revolts. This point is made clear in his meditations on Sandymount Strand that we examined before. Stephen is wondering if he is a genuine savior or just another pretender. He asks himself if he would, like Mulligan, save someone from drowning and, after putting it off, tentatively answers that "I would want to. I would try. I am not a strong swimmer" (*Ulysses* 3.323-24). But he changes his mind a moment later, thinking that "If I had land under my feet. I want his life still to be his, mine to be mine" (*Ulysses* 3.327-28). This last line follows from his desire to "not be master of others or their slave." Given that the individual soul is "all that is," as Stephen believes, he struggles to risk that soul for another and cannot quite bring himself to do it. It is at this moment, however, that his mother's alterity gets the better of him, remarkably overturning his will-to-freedom as a result. Therefore, rather than saving himself, he drowns from within with the man he could not, or would not, save: "A drowning man. His human eyes scream to me out of horror of his death. I

… With him together down…" (*Ulysses* 3.328-29). He comes face-to-face here with an authority that no amount of intentionality can resist.

III.

Joyce critics tend to oppose Stephen and Bloom, seeing in the latter a symbolic father figure for the wayward, melancholic artist. For example, according to S.L. Goldberg, "Where Stephen can slip free of the dead hand of the past and accept the necessity of death only fitfully and with difficulty, Bloom accepts death easily and transforms it into life … Bloom's comparative freedom from … nightmares of history is to be contrasted with Stephen's bondage" ("Homer and the Nightmare of History" 35). Similarly, Daniel Ferrer connects Bloom with what he calls "the forces of integration" and Stephen with "the forces of disintegration" ("Regret and Regression" 243-44). And Christy L. Burns contends that Bloom's "nostalgic memory helps him to approach [and work through] mourning," whereas Stephen is "arguably stuck in melancholic gloom" (*Modernism and Nostalgia* 218). But although Bloom's maturity, light-heartedness, and practicality may give him more resources against mourning, he is nevertheless vulnerable to its usurpation. To be sure, he is a character of movement, physically but especially mentally. As Goldberg remarks, Bloom "engages with everyday life," has an "active consciousness," "does not remain fixed in his pain. … He moves on always, rejecting the false stasis of imprisoning frustration" ("Homer and the Nightmare of History" 29-31). Burns also describes him as "the buoyant everyman, traveling past the emotional torments of the day, although this is while he engages his own ongoing grief" (217). But these readings fail to discern that it is mourning that engages him and propels his constant movement.

We can begin to track this movement in Bloom's contradictory responses in "Calypso" to "Agendath Netaim," an advertisement for a Zionist settlement in Palestine. He first thinks romantically about such a place, with its "silver heat," "silverpowdered olivetrees," "citrons," and "oranges" and luxuriates in the possibility of escape it appears to provide (*Ulysses* 4.201-04, 207-13). It reminds him of "pleasant evenings" that he and Molly had with a few Jewish acquaintances (*Ulysses* 4.205-07). Perhaps for this reason, the words "Agendath" and "Netaim" find their way into his consciousness throughout the day. Edwin W. Williams even claims that "Agendath Netaim is a symbol of Bloom's dream of fertility and abundance" ("Agendath Netaim"). But this symbol suddenly becomes here, as Bloom imagines, "a barren land, bare waste" that rains "brimstone;" and "a dead land, grey and old" with a "vulcanic" sea that has no "no fish, weedless, sunk deep in the earth … [and] grey metal, poisonous foggy waters" (*Ulysses* 4.219-223). Having "bore the oldest, the first race," he thinks, "It lay there now …. Dead: an old woman's: the grey sunken cunt of the world" (*Ulysses* 4.423-28). While the land of promise just a moment ago, Agendath Netaim now holds only "desolation" (*Ulysses* 4.229).

The difficult question, then, is what causes such a drastic change of perception. It is usually attributed to a cloud covering the sun "slowly, wholly"— "the same cloud," as Ellmann notes, "which made Stephen see the ocean as a 'bowl of bitter waters' (*Ulysses* 4.218; *Ulysses on the Liffey* 36). From my perspective, however, this explanation is insufficient. It is only because Stephen and Bloom have been so damaged by loss that the cloud can affect them in such a way. The unruly alterity of that loss is what first grips and moves them from within, not the cloud itself. Accordingly, I read Bloom's thoughts as a

mournful reaction against valuing the past over the present that must be understood in the context of his life. Under an influence that was dormant a moment ago, the promised land becomes to him a relic of the Jewish past that has lost any vitality it once had: "the cities of the plain: Sodom, Gomorrah, Edom. All dead names … Old now … The oldest people … it could bear no more" (*Ulysses* 4.222-27). Analogously, in "Hades," under this same influence, he criticizes Queen Victoria's protracted mourning for her dead husband at the expense of her living son: "All for a shadow. Consort not even a king. Her son was the substance. Something new to hope for not like the past she wanted back, waiting. It never comes" (*Ulysses* 6.551-54). Bloom himself will spend the latter part of the day looking for "something new to hope for not like the past." But the desolation of that past—the tragic deaths of both his father and infant son—is why the idea of putting hope in it depresses him. The deadness he sees in the Jewish past is thus influenced by the deadness he sees in his own. Desolation, then, does not simply describe the advertisement. Rather, it is the force of that influence spreading through Bloom and an effect of being passively bound to those he has lost. Instead of being a purely intentional statement, this force is what motivates his rejection of the apparent escape Agendath Netaim offers: "No, not like that" (*Ulysses* 4.219). His father and son are not explicitly mentioned, but mourning has seized him here, transforming "a symbol of… fertility and abundance" into "the grey sunken cunt of the world." Yet it is not Agendath Netaim that has been so violently altered but Bloom himself.

It follows that Bloom's response to the advertisement is not a conscious and voluntary act but rather the work of a force acting through him. This is made more evident in the anxiety that floods his body immediately afterward: "Grey horror seared

his flesh. Folding the page into his pocket he turned into Eccles street, hurrying homeward. Cold oils slid along his veins, chilling his blood: age crusting him with a salt cloak" (*Ulysses* 4.230-32). In these lines, he is desperately struggling with the aftermath of what has overtaken him. Such a struggle could not have ensued had he been in full possession of himself and dictating the experience. Rather, his anxiety is produced from being (dis)possessed by something that exceeds his subjective faculties. Despite having dismissed Agendath Netaim, he cannot dismiss what it has unleashed in him. Even within the supposedly solitary recesses of one's own mind, where one seems to be in absolute proximity to oneself, one is capable of being usurped. Bloom's anxiety directly springs from a sense of his mortality ("age crusting him with a salt cloak"), but the latter is a consequence of mourning's infiltration and a manifestation of its power over him. The deadness he feels in himself is precipitated by the deadness that marks his past whose dark energy overwhelms him both internally and externally. "Folding the page into his pocket" and "hurrying homeward" are thus not self-willed actions but rather driven by the "grey horror sear[ing] his flesh" and "the cold oils slid[ing] along his veins."

Mourning dictates not only how Bloom behaves but also the very form and content of his thinking:

> Well, I am here now. Yes, I am here now. Morning mouth bad images. Got up wrong side of the bed. Must begin again those Sandow's exercises. On the hands down. Blotchy brown brick houses. Number eighty still unlet. Why is that? Valuation is only twentyeight. Towers, Battersby, North, MacArthur: parlour windows plastered with bills. Plasters on a sore eye. To smell the gentle smoke of

> tea, fume of the pan, sizzling butter. Be near her ample bedwarmed flesh. Yes, yes. (*Ulysses* 4.230-39).

Here, he tries to move past his sense of deadness and repossess himself, but his very resistance is shaped by what it resists. The staccato, fast-paced nature of his thoughts, for example, betrays the influence of that deadness upon them. It is because he fears that he is being overcome by this influence that he anxiously denies it and tries to put it out of his mind. His attempted liberation from mourning is therefore inextricable from his bondage to it. He asserts twice that he is "here now" but only to curb the feeling that he is not far from death; and he wants to begin exercising again but only to exorcise the "bad images" plaguing him. When he looks at the "[b]lotchy brown brick houses," it is the power of that feeling and those images that motivates him to do so. This power, more than Bloom himself, is what turns his eyes toward the houses and impels his inner dialogue: "Number eighty still unlet. Why is that? Valuation is only twentyeight." Far from having authority over his own consciousness, then, it is guided by something other than himself, which is what gives it a suddenly mechanical tone: "Towers, Battersby, North, MacArthur: parlour windows plastered with bills. Plasters on a sore eye." Bloom's desire for warmth further demonstrates that he still in the grip of mourning's cold desolation. The "Yes, yes" of Molly's "ample, bedwarmed flesh" is a response to the "no more" not merely of Agendath Netaim's barren wasteland but, more deeply, of his own barren past.

Mourning is central to the "Hades" episode, where Bloom's irreligious perspective gives him a critical distance from the funeral proceedings, enabling him to see through the Christian rituals in which the others around him are likely absorbed. As R.M. Adams notes, "Bloom has his share of graveyard pluck" ("Hades" 99). But like

Mulligan's indifference, his graveyard pluck dissimulates a repulsion to death. As a non-believer, Bloom has no faith in the postcreation or, for that matter, "metempsychosis" (*Ulysses* 4.339). Instead, he lives with a straightforward view of death as the permanent negation of life. "Once you are dead you are dead," as he bluntly puts it (*Ulysses* 6.677). Precisely because he does not idealize death, however, Bloom is all the more sensitive to its presence. But he is also particularly sensitive to it from having endured the deaths of his father and son. Indeed, despite his apparent acceptance of death, Bloom is haunted by its ugly reality in "Hades" *because* it confronts him with their fate. His repulsion to death is therefore not just a basic fear but a symptom of mourning. While he moves through the episode with quite a bit of humor, his humor, like the funeral rituals, serves as a defense mechanism against the force of mourning's assault. Humor and repulsion, then, are necessarily intertwined in his psyche. If humor keeps death's reality at bay, his repulsion indicates that it is too close. Both of them show, however, that Bloom is dominated from within by what he is trying to evade.

For example, at one point, Bloom comically imagines Paddy Dignam's corpse being thrown from its coffin onto the road: "Bom! Upset. A coffin bumped out on the road. Burst open. Paddy Dignam shot out and rolling over stiff in the dust in a brown habit too large for him" (*Ulysses* 6.421-23). But this image immediately gives rise to horror: "Red face: grey now. Mouth fallen open. Asking what's up now. Quite right to close it. Looks horrid open. Then the insides decompose quickly" (*Ulysses* 6.423-25). Unable to withstand such an openness to death, he quickly asserts that it is "Much better to close up all the orifices. Yes, also. With wax. The sphincter loose. Seal up all" (*Ulysses* 6.425-26). But it is not enough to "close up all the orifices;" everything must

also be sealed "with wax." The fact that comedy suddenly turns to horror here shows that his humor responds to something that has power over him. At another point, he makes fun of "[t]hat last day idea" so important to Christianity: "Knocking them all up out of their graves. Come forth, Lazarus! And he came fifth and lost the job. Get up! Last day! Then every fellow mousing around for his liver and his lights and the rest of his traps. Find damn all of himself that morning" (*Ulysses* 6.678-81). This humor, however, is an attempt to downplay the thoughts that provoked it about the tragically fragile nature of life: "Broken heart. A pump after all, pumping thousands of gallons of blood every day. One fine day it gets bunged up: and there you are … Old rusty pumps: damn the thing else" (*Ulysses* 6.673-76). While the idea that "*I am the resurrection and the life*" may touch a living "man's inmost heart," Bloom mournfully reflects that there is "[n]o touching" the heart of "the fellow in the six feet by two with his toes pushing up daisies" (6.670-73; emphasis original). In yet another instance, Bloom jokes about using the dead as fertilizer (*Ulysses* 6.771-75) only to be struck by the repressed horror of this thought: "I daresay the soil would be quite fat with corpsemanure, bones, flesh, nails. Charnelhouses. Dreadful. Turning green and pink decomposing. Rot quick in damp earth. The lean old ones tougher. Then a kind of a tallowy kind of a cheesy. Then begin to get black, black treacle oozing out of them. Then dried up. Deathmoths" (*Ulysses* 6.776-80). While thinking just a moment earlier that "[i]t's the blood sinking in the earth gives new life," he is now beset by images of the body's cells eating each other "for ever practically" and the soil "swirling with" maggots (*Ulysses* 6.780-84). Once again, the reality that Bloom's humor is meant to defend against overtakes him, which is why he averts his gaze to the caretaker and tries to flee the subject: "But they must breed a devil

of a lot maggots. Soil must be simply swirling with them. ... He looks cheerful enough over it. Gives him a sense of power seeing all the others go under first. Wonder how he looks at life. Cracking his jokes too: warms the cockles of his heart" (*Ulysses* 6.783-85).

To be sure, Bloom does seem to have a grim fascination with death during the episode. This is especially noticeable when he thinks about the "obese grey rat" feasting on the "[s]altwhite crumbling mush of corpse: smell, taste like raw white turnips" (*Ulysses* 6.973, 993-94). But such fascination should not obscure his repulsion. It is often mixed with humor to undercut death's gravity and is a result of being (dis)possessed by the very force he is resisting. We should also remember that the rat, as a grotesque reversal of "I am the resurrection and the life" idea, troubles him long after he leaves the cemetery. His making light of corpses being consumed like "ordinary meat," then, can be read as a response to the threat of being consumed by this reality himself, especially in light of his lost others (*Ulysses* 6.981). As a whole, "Hades" shows that what specifically repulses Bloom is the fact that death renders one "no more," whether through physical decomposition, being eaten by rats, or being forgotten by the living. Although he does not want to reckon with this fact and tries to fend it off, it springs from a force he lacks the power to completely repress and continues to reckon with him.

Such a dynamic can be seen in the conduct of Bloom's stream-of-consciousness in the cemetery. While he initially thinks that the dead fortunately "[f]eel no more" after "the death struggle" and then fantasizes somewhat comically about a person's final moments, he is suddenly saddened by the thought of being "[g]one at last": "People talk about you a bit: forget you. … Even Parnell. Ivy day dying out. Then they follow: dropping into a hole, one after the other" (*Ulysses* 6.842-56). Characteristically, he

attempts to move past this thought with mocking humor ("Hoping you're well and not in hell. Nice change of air. Out of the fryingpan of life into the fire of purgatory"), but the dead reassert their hold on his consciousness: "Does he ever think of the hole waiting for himself? … Mine over there towards Finglas, the plot I bought. Mamma, poor mamma, and little Rudy" (*Ulysses* 6.857-63). It is thus no accident that when the "gravediggers took up their spades and flung heavy clods of clay in on the coffin [,] Mr Bloom turned away his face" (6.864-65). Furthermore, although Bloom says to himself that it is "[j]ust as well to get shut of them [the dead] as soon as you are sure there's no [life]," he cannot help being moved by what this entails: "The clay fell softer. Begin to be forgotten. Out of sight, out of mind" (*Ulysses* 6.870-72). Not long after, he scoffs at the idea of "pray[ing] for the repose of the soul": "Does anybody really? Plant him and have done with him. Like down a coalshoot. Then lump them together to save time" (*Ulysses* 6.931-33). But he is nevertheless impelled to criticize the generic, impersonal language used to describe the dead, since it already implies forgetfulness: "Who passed away. Who departed this life. … Who kicked the bucket. More interesting if they told you what they were. So and So, wheelwright. I travelled for cork lino. I paid five shillings in the pound. Or a woman's with her saucepan. I cooked good Irish stew" (*Ulysses* 6.936-40). His desire to personalize the language expresses a deeper desire to resist the tendency to "plant him and have done with him." Finally, he hilariously quips about putting "a gramophone in every grave or keep[ing] it in the house. After dinner on a Sunday. Put on poor old greatgrandfather. Kraahraark! Hellohellohello amawfullyglad kraark awfullygladaseeagain hellohello amawf krpthsth" (*Ulysses* 6.963-66). But this thought springs from an agonizing fear of forgetting the dead: "Remind you of the voice like a

photograph reminds you of the face. Otherwise you couldn't remember the face after fifteen years, say. For instance some fellow that died when I was in Wisdom Hely's" (*Ulysses* 6.866-69).

The force that works on Bloom in the cemetery is set loose within him on the ride there, where he is confronted with his father and son being no more and at risk of being forgotten. In the carriage, he says to himself: "If Rudy had lived. See him grow up. Hear his voice in the house. Walking beside Molly in an Eton suit. My son. Me in his eyes" (*Ulysses* 6.75-76). Rudy's precious alterity unfolds before his eyes here, but Bloom's envisioning of what his son could have been is motivated by the force of what he could not be. Later, the carriage passes a funeral for an illegitimate child: "White horses with white frontlet plumes came around the Rotunda corner, galloping. A tiny coffin flashed by. In a hurry to bury. A mourning coach. Unmarried" (*Ulysses* 6.321-23). The men riding with Bloom note its sadness but are unaware or have forgotten that he had to bury his own child in a "tiny coffin." He is left to ruefully observe how a death of this kind is explained away and thought of no more: "Meant nothing. Mistake of nature. If it's healthy it's from the mother. If not from the man. Better luck next time" (*Ulysses* 6.328-30). Shortly thereafter, the men discuss how "the man who takes his own life" is "the worst of all" (*Ulysses* 6.335). Again, most of them are unaware or have forgotten that Bloom's father committed suicide. Small wonder, then, that he recalls how his demise was officially dismissed and also thought of no more: "Verdict: overdose. Death by misadventure" (*Ulysses* 6.363-64). The words that then assail his mind echo with the nothingness that will continue to haunt him: "*No* more pain. Wake *no* more. *Nobody*

owns" (*Ulysses* 6.365; my emphasis). Thus, if Bloom is vulnerable to the dead in the cemetery, he is even more so in the carriage ride to it.

As critics have observed, when Bloom leaves the cemetery, he affirms life in opposition to death in an attempt to leave behind "that other world": "The gates glimmered in front: still open. Back to the world again. Enough of this place. Brings you a bit nearer every time. … Plenty to see and hear and feel yet. Feel live warm beings near you. Let them sleep in their maggoty beds" (*Ulysses* 6.995-96, 1003-05). Adams argues that "Hades" is "undeniably a test of moral courage that he [Bloom] has passed" ("Hades" 99). Similarly, Goldberg holds that "At the end of 'Hades,' after he has faced the shadow of death, his thoughts 'turn aside and no more brood'" ("Homer and the Nightmare of History" 31). These readings suggest that Bloom achieves autonomy from death at the close of the episode. The truth is, however, that mourning's influence on him is perceivable all the way through it. It is because he still feels its pressure and wants to escape it that the gates "glimmered," that "the world" becomes something separate and apart from the cemetery, and that he longs for "[w]arm beds: warm fullblooded life" (*Ulysses* 6.1006). In the very way that it pulls him back toward the "maggoty beds," this influence also pushes him forward and away from them: "Give you the creeps after a bit. I will appear to you after death. You will see my ghost after death. My ghost will haunt you after death. There is another world after death named hell. I do not like that other world she wrote. No more do I. Plenty to…" (*Ulysses* 6.999-1003). His humor here masks what prompts it, namely, the sense that he *is* haunted. Hence, although Bloom physically leaves the cemetery, he cannot so easily leave it behind.

While Bloom is at times critical of taking refuge in the past, he does exactly that in "Sirens." But this apparent inconsistency is a consequence of mourning affecting him differently at different times and further evidence that he is in the grip of something beyond his control. In "Sirens," he is vulnerable to it mainly because he fears that he may be losing Molly to Blazes Boylan. This is subtly illustrated in the way that he stretches an elastic band until it snaps. Stretching the band is also not a conscious, voluntary act, but rather the force of potential loss acting through him, which is why downplaying that loss and trying to rationalize it only make him stretch it more: "Thou lost one. All songs on that theme. *Yet* more Bloom stretched his string. Cruel it seems. Let people get fond of each other: lure them on. Then tear asunder. Death. … *Yet* too much happy bores. He stretched more, more. Are you not happy in your? Twang. It snapped" (*Ulysses* 11.802-04, 810-11; my emphasis). While in the Ormond Hotel, Bloom's fear about Molly and, to a lesser extent, his grief for Rudy leave him susceptible to what Joyce called "the seductions of music" (*Selected Letters* 242). The music is only able to bind and enchain him, then, because he is bound and enchained by mourning first. It follows that music's seductive power over him is derived from the deeper power of loss preying upon him and not inversely. As Bloom himself observes, "Words? Music? No: it's what's behind" (*Ulysses* 11.703).

Molly's alterity takes hold of him throughout the episode, sending his thoughts nostalgically back to their past love. Nostalgia is generally understood as an avoidance of mourning and often condemned as a dangerous tendency to idealize the past rather than come to terms with it. Tammy Clewell, for instance, defines it "as a substitute for grief work. As distinct from mourning and melancholia, nostalgia entails an inability in some

cases and a deliberate refusal in others to reconfigure the self in light of the past" (*Modernism and Nostalgia* 6). Burns departs from this view somewhat, asserting that "Bloom's ability to dip back into sweeter nostalgia helps him move toward mourning and look forward without the bitter refusals of a melancholic, if princely, stance" (*Modernism and Nostalgia* 220). In contrast to both these conceptions, however, I read Bloom's nostalgia not as an ability but as another symptom of mourning, that is, of his self being worked over and reconfigured by the past.

Importantly, it is not that Bloom desires to get wrapped up in nostalgia. He is quite critical, in fact, of Richie Goulding's nostalgia for a certain night: "Coming out with a whopper now. Rhapsodies about damn all. Believes his own lies. Does really" (*Ulysses* 11.613, 626-27). But like Richie, he is preceded by a past now lost and cannot prevent being seized and altered by it. As he listens to Richie whistle the notes to the aria "All is Lost Now," the words echo through Bloom's thoughts, whether or not he wants them to, permeating his consciousness with their "plaintive woe": "Richie cocked his lips apout. A low incipient note sweet banshee murmured: all. … Is lost. … All… is lost … all. … All lost now. … lost" (*Ulysses* 11.630-636). But these words penetrate and work on him because a sense of loss is already doing so. Although just having criticized Richie's "rhapsodies," Bloom, internally and externally guided by his woe, falls into a rhapsody of his own: "Bloom bent leopold ear, … Yes, I remember. Lovely air. In sleep she went to him. Innocence in the moon. Brave. Don't know their danger. Still hold her back. Call name. Touch water. … Too late. She longed to go. That's why. Woman. As easy stop the sea. Yes: all is lost" (*Ulysses* 11.637-41). He here recalls the plot of the opera whose aria Richie is whistling and grapples with Molly's presumed infidelity. The point, however, is

that the threat of her loss has become an active part of himself, shaping his reception of the world around him, as the narrative itself implies: "A beautiful air, said Bloom lost Leopold. I know it well" (*Ulysses* 11.642). His disposition, having been transformed from when he first sat down with Richie, opens him to being similarly affected by the music that follows.

Bloom, however, does not simply give in to the music. Rather, his ever-alert mind is gradually, albeit momentarily, "charmed" by it (*Ulysses* 11.720). Let us examine how this happens. As Simon Dedalus begins to sing "M'appari," Bloom "wound a skein round four forkfingers, stretched it, relaxed, and wound it round his troubled double…" (*Ulysses* 11.683-84). The force acting through him here proceeds from the threat of loss that took charge of him a moment earlier. If it altered his perception and memory then, it infuses his imagination in the shape of Molly now: "Jing. Stop. Knock. Last look at mirror always before she [Molly] answers the door. The hall. There? How do you? I do well. There? What? Phial of cachous, kissing comfits, in her satchel. Yes? Hands felt for the opulent [curves]" (*Ulysses* 11.689-92). Thus, rather than Bloom actively imagining losing his wife to another man, this moment is the work of him being engaged by Molly's alterity from within. Such work is what motivates his response to the song playing, not vice versa. Engaged in this way, "what's behind" the music—a story of love lost and regained—is able to invade and enrapture him: "Bloom looped, unlooped, noded, dismoded. / Bloom. Flood of warm jamjam lickitup secretness flowed to flow in music out, in desire, dark to lick flow invading. … Flood, gush, flow, joygush, tupthrob. Now! Language of love" (*Ulysses* 11.704-09). But it is because their love, he fears, is on the verge of being lost that Bloom suddenly desires it more than ever and becomes

enwrapped in nostalgia, remembering when he first met Molly at Mat Dillon's (*Ulysses* 11.725-28). Burns argues that "Bloom uses the remembrance of happier days to de-center the scenes of trauma, betrayal, and disaster that his imagination invokes" (*Modernism and Nostalgia* 221). Such a claim, however, gives too much agency to him. Rather, the dark energy of these scenes themselves inspire his passive remembrance of happier days. It is because Bloom is de-centered by mourning that he is, as Burns herself puts it, "drawn into a crystalline experience" of nostalgia (*Modernism and Nostalgia* 223). This experience reaches its climax in the song's finale: "Quitting all languor Lionel cried in grief, in cry of passionate dominant to love to return … In cry of lionel loneliness … *Co-ome, thou lost one!* Alone. One love … return! … *Come ...! ... To me!* / Siopold! / Consumed (*Ulysses* 11.736-53; emphasis original). Bloom's "[o]ne hope" for Molly's "return" is animated by his fear that she will not "come"—by the surging grief that he has lost her. The song may leave him "consumed" but only because that grief is consuming him itself.

Like at the funeral, however, Bloom does gain some critical distance from the drunken nostalgia of his fellow Dubliners in the Ormond. Joyce commentators have paid particular attention to this point. According to John S. Rickard, "Bloom does not drink, and he seems to recognize the dangerous attractions of nostalgia and sentiment more fully than the other men in the bar do" (*Joyce's Book of Memory* 79). Colin MacCabe asserts, too, that the episode "can be read as the dramatisation of the materiality of language and it is Bloom as the writer in the drama who acts for the reader as the de-composer of the voice and music into material sounds" (*James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word* 83). To be sure, Bloom is able to discern how the nostalgia surrounding him eclipses reason.

As he says of Father Bob Cowley: "Cowley, he stuns himself with it: kind of drunkenness. Better give way only half way the way of a man with a maid. Instance enthusiasts. All ears. Not lose a demisemiquaver. Eyes shut. Head nodding in time. Dotty. You daren't budge. Thinking strictly prohibited" (*Ulysses* 11.1191-94). He is also able to deconstruct the music, understanding that "[n]umbers it is. All music when you come to think. Two multiplied by two divided by half is twice one. … Musemathematics. And you think you're listening to the ethereal" (*Ulysses* 11.830-35). Lastly, he readies to leave as soon as "The Croppy Boy" begins, apparently refusing to take part in Irish nationalism.

But Bloom lingers and ends up listening to "The Croppy Boy," not leaving until the end of the song and even hearing "the growls and roars of bravo" from the Ormond hallway (*Ulysses* 11.1143). This fact cannot be entirely attributed to having to wait for Pat, the deaf server. While Bloom continues to shrewdly pick apart what he sees and hears, he cannot avoid being held "like birdlime," not by the song's Latin, but by "[t]he voice of penance and of grief" (*Ulysses* 11.1031). It is grief not for the Irish past, however, that overthrows his desire to leave but for his own past: "I too. Last of my race. Milly young student. Well, my fault perhaps. No son. Rudy. Too late now. Or if not? If not? If still? … Rudy. Soon I am old" (*Ulysses* 11.1066-69). Derek Attridge has argued that in "Sirens," Joyce "liberates the body from a dictatorial and englobing will, and allows its organs their own energies and proclivities" ("Joyce's Lipspeech" 61). Bloom's body, however, is not liberated from mourning. He *physically* stays for most of the song, not necessarily because he wants to but because he is compelled to. This immobilization is not due, then, to "the power of the voice," as MacCabe puts it, but to the power of

Rudy's alterity that gives the voice its power over Bloom (*James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word* 82). He may leave the Ormond before "The Croppy Boy" ends and travel beyond its musical seductions but only to flee the force of having "no son," which is what nevertheless moves him.

But Bloom revolts against this haunting negation by becoming a father figure for Stephen. His revolt is already emergent in the lines above when he thinks "Too late now. Or if not? If not? If still?," which demonstrate that he has not given up all hope. The desire expressed here for another son, however, is concomitant with the torment from having lost one. Just because this torment has hitherto kept him from having another child with Molly does not mean that it cannot influence him in the opposite way. In "Hades," he thinks about how Molly "[g]ot big then. Had to refuse the Greystones concert. My son inside her. I could have helped him on in life" (*Ulysses* 6.82-84). The pain of this "could have" is what gives rise to the hope of "I could. Make him independent. Learn German too" (*Ulysses* 6.83-84). The present tense of "make" and "learn" imply that Bloom "could" still have a son ("him") to help on in life. This is precisely the help that he provides Stephen with, from "Oxen of the Sun" through "Ithaca." His paternalism toward the younger man, then, is both motivated by his mourning for Rudy and an attempt to overcome it. According to James H. Maddox, "Insofar as Bloom is able at least to accept the unhappy circumstances of his father's death, he is able to move tentatively toward the vision of himself as a father" ("Mockery in *Ulysses*" 142). Putting aside the questionable claim about Bloom accepting those circumstances, however, Maddox fails to see that Bloom's movement "toward the vision of himself as a father" is propelled by the fact, as he thinks in "Oxen of the Sun," that

"[n]ame and memory solace thee [Bloom] not. That youthful illusion of thy strength was taken from thee—and in vain. No son of thy loins is by thee. There is none now to be for Leopold, what Leopold was for Rudolph" (*Ulysses* 14.1074-77). It is because Bloom wants "something new to hope for not like the past" and because he wants "[l]ife, life" to replace the rat "scrap[ing]" inside of his mind that he takes care of Stephen as if he were his own son (*Ulysses* 6.90, 11.1036). The hope with which he "darts forward suddenly" into Nighttown is thus charged with the pain that grips him before he leaves the Ormond (*Ulysses* 15.184). Such interdependence is exemplified at the end of "Circe" when Bloom's vision of Rudy arises moments after "[h]e looks down on Stephen's face and form" (*Ulysses* 15.4947).

IV.

In his seminal essay on "Circe," Hugh Kenner argues that the episode serves "cathartic" needs for Bloom as well as for Stephen: "[Bloom] needs to undergo purgation by pity and terror , … As for Stephen, he must exorcise the ghost of his mother" (*Ulysses* 118). Margot Norris follows Kenner, asserting that "[t]he layered fantasy-pretend world of 'Circe' has in this way served cathartic functions for both Stephen and Bloom, albeit individually rather than in interaction" (*Virgin and Veteran Readings of Ulysses* 181). Ellmann reads the episode in even more liberatory terms as "free[ing] mankind from its graveclothes": "Against the corruption of life and death which had been specified by Stephen in the first part of the book, this second part concludes with resurrection. Freed from supernatural trappings, Bloom and Stephen offer profane salvation, The New Bloomusalem" (*Ulysses on the Liffey* 145, 149). In fact, however, while some catharsis may take place, there is no release from loss in "Circe." Despite their attempts at re-

empowerment, both Stephen and Bloom remain subject to the usurping force of mourning.

Consider, first, Stephen's supposed exorcism of his mother. It is the culmination of his revolt against mourning when he screams "*Nothung!"* and "*lifts his ashplant high with both hands and smashes the chandelier*" (*Ulysses* 15.4242-4244; emphasis original). According to Norris, Stephen here "banishes his tormenting demons from him with a defiant act of will" (*Virgin and Veteran Readings of Ulysses* 168). But unlike the chandelier, his mother is a psychic object that is at once other than himself and internal to him; she cannot be shattered at will. Not long after she "rises stark through the floor" in his mind, he asserts his freedom from her and all forms of authority. But while they talk, he cannot resist a certain gravity between them (*Ulysses* 15.4157). Indeed, despite the same overwhelming physicality of death being present in her again—of rotting flesh refusing to pass into pure spirit—he does not try to flee but rather stays held in place as she "comes nearer, ... and nearer" (*Ulysses* 15.4182, 15.4217). What holds him there, like birdlime, is his desire for her love and his remorse over her death. Both these feelings, however, emanate not simply from himself but rather from her alterity stirring within him, shaking and bending his resolve to be free. Hence, he continues to stand still as "she raises her blackened withered right arm slowly towards [his] breast with outstretched finger" (*Ulysses* 4217-4219; emphasis original). The pull of her alterity ultimately proves stronger than his horror of death, and he physically feels her (dis)possession of him like "claws" sticking "deep" into his "heart" (*Ulysses* 15.4220-4221). Furthermore, the fact that she tells him to "repent" after he asks her to "[t]ell me the word, … known to all men" shows that while the self may conform to the object, there is nothing that can make

the object follow suit (*Ulysses* 15.4193-4298). For the same reason, when he turns on his mother and refuses her demands, she just prays with more intensity. The increasingly desperate vehemence of his refusals only evinces the strength of her authority within him: "'*Ah non, par exemple!* The intellectual imagination! With me all or not at all. *Non serviam!* … No! No! No! Break my spirit, all of you, if you can, I'll bring you all to heel!'" (*Ulysses* 15.4227-4236; emphasis original). It is because these refusals are not enough to banish her, because he cannot take "the agony of her deathrattle," and because his spirit *is* breaking that he smashes the chandelier (*Ulysses* 15.4238). But the very force that this gesture is meant to exorcise is what pushes Stephen to do it. Far from being an autonomous act of the will, then, smashing the chandelier is energized by the other in him. The hyperbolic description of the violence and chaos it leaves in its wake pertains more to his mental state than to the brothel itself: "Time's livid final flame leaps and, in the following darkness, ruin of all space, shattered glass and toppling masonry" (*Ulysses* 15.4242-4245; emphasis original). What appeared to be a moment of subjective freedom from mourning thus turns out to be one in which he is objectively overcome by it.

Bloom is more assertive at the end of "Circe," having worked through his psychological issues, but he nevertheless remains passively exposed to the effects of mourning in him. Kenner claims that the episode generates "a new self-possession" in Bloom, but it actually ends with him being (dis)possessed (*Ulysses* 127). Although described in "Eumaeus" as someone "who at all events, was in complete possession of his faculties" (*Ulysses* 16.61-62), these faculties are overpowered when Bloom is suddenly arrested by Rudy's spectral return:

(Silent, thoughtful, alert he stands on guard, his fingers at his lips in the attitude of secret master. Against the dark wall a figure appears slowly, a fairy boy of eleven, a changeling, kidnapped, dressed in an Eton suit with glass shoes and a little bronze helmet, holding a book in his hand. He reads from right to left inaudibly, smiling, kissing the page.)

BLOOM

(wonderstruck, calls inaudibly) Rudy!

RUDY

(gazes, unseeing, into Bloom's eyes and goes on reading, kissing, smiling. He has a delicate mauve face. On his suit he has diamond and ruby buttons. In his free left hand he holds a slim ivory cane with a violet bowknot. A white lambkin peeps out of his waistcoat pocket.) (*Ulysses* 15.4955-67).

He knows rationally that this image before him cannot be Rudy and that Rudy is in fact dead. Reason, however, cannot always protect one from the unforeseeable work of mourning. So "wonderstruck" by its influence, Bloom is convinced enough to call out to the image as if it were Rudy in the flesh. It is a very un-Bloomian moment. But that he is such a practical, levelheaded individual makes his complete (dis)possession in fantasy all the more poignant. This moment, however, is not merely one of wish-fulfillment—of Bloom having his "kidnapped" son returned to him after eleven years. While there are clear redemptive features to the image, his desire for Rudy's return gathers its energy from the reality that he is irredeemably lost. Rather than transcending this reality, the latter is constitutive of the image itself. The "mauve face" is the same one that haunted Bloom in "Hades": "A dwarf's face, mauve and wrinkled like little Rudy's was. Dwarf's

body, weak as putty, in a whitelined deal box" (*Ulysses* 6.326-27). Accordingly, the dark energy that fills and alters Bloom's conscious experience here, to the point of making him speak out loud, springs from Rudy's alterity, which acts on him even when he is in his "right mind" again after leaving the brothel. Not only does it animate the image before him, but it also provides the motive force of his paternal care for Stephen.

V.

Joyce's novel, however, performs its own exorcism in "Penelope." Derek Attridge has pointed out how much the word "flow" has been used by critics to describe the style of Molly's interior monologue. For example, Richard Ellman notes that "[t]he rarity of capital letters and the run-on sentences in Molly's monologue are of course related to Joyce's theory of her mind (and of the female mind in general) as a flow" (*James Joyce* 376). In contrast to Stephen's and Bloom's language, Roy K. Gottfried holds, "Molly's might represent the extreme of language at its loosest and most flowing" (*The Art of Joyce's Syntax* 35). According to Harry Blamires, "To enter the mind of Molly Bloom after so much time spent in the minds of Stephen and Leopold is to plunge into a flowing river" (*The Bloomsday Book* 246). For Anthony Burgess, "Joyce has dared to think his way into a woman's mind: it is safer to leave the floodgates open and let the dark turgid flow have its will; otherwise the spell might be broken" (*Here comes Everybody* 173). Finally, Elaine Unkeless argues that "[e]ven if Molly's sentences can be punctuated, even if each statement follows the one before it 'realistically' … and even if scholars can find patterns in Molly's thoughts, Joyce intends the sentences to be flowing and elusive, and the statements to be illogical" ("The Conventional Molly Bloom" 155). Molly has also been variously associated with Mother Nature, the earth, a life force, and "woman."

Attridge rightly claims that to interpret Molly's monologue in terms of flow reflects critical gender assumptions about women's language. My own objection, however, is to the even wider tendency in scholarship to reduce the episode's flowing movement to her stream-of-consciousness or vice versa. Rather than being this movement itself, I see her stream-of-consciousness as being swept up in it—or at least appearing to be so. The episode's flow encompasses her thoughts, emotions, and desires and hence cannot be identical to them. Separating the two is crucial, since the flow is meant to transcend the sense of loss that plagues her.

Far from being a continuous flow itself, Molly's stream-of-consciousness is marked by radical discontinuity. She is just as bound to the past as Stephen and Bloom, if not more so. As much as the flow carries her forward, she is continually borne back to what was. Thus, although Joyce identified the time of "Penelope" with infinity or eternity, Molly herself is thoroughly temporal and subject to mourning. The pleasure she gains from her memories of past love and friendship is inseparable from the grief she suffers from being presently deprived of them. This feeling of deprivation is the undercurrent of her stream-of-consciousness and what stimulates her libidinality. When she reminiscences about Mulvey's kiss (*Ulysses* 18.769-81), Gardner's embrace (*Ulysses* 18.332, 18.389-93), and Hester's romantic friendship (*Ulysses* 18.612-57), it is out of a desire for something now lost. That she remembers them is therefore not simply because she narcissistically seeks pleasure but rather because she is gripped by a sense that she will never feel the pleasure they gave her again. These lost objects engage her, not the other way around, and move her from within. Her overflowing desire for pleasure, then, testifies to the power of their residual charge in her.

Molly's entire disposition in "Penelope" is shaped by the force of this never-again preying upon her. Even her affair with Boylan can be understood as an attempt to restore what she lost with previous attachments or what she once had with Bloom. In the episode, the still-burning intensity of that alterity suffuses her desire and takes over her memory, which is why she thinks more about the past than her present experience with Boylan. Hence, rather than a "closed circle of … auto-affection," as Ewa Ziarek argues, Molly's monologue is pervaded with hetero-affection to which mourning opens her ("The Female Body, Technology, and Memory 'Penelope'" 114). Ziarek argues further that "[i]n the economy of [Molly's] unmediated memory nothing seems to be lost, especially not the authenticity and intensity of erotic experience" ("The Female Body, Technology, and Memory 'Penelope'" 114). But Molly's memory is mediated precisely by the loss of that which she cannot re-live, namely, "the authenticity and intensity of erotic experience." The sex she has with Boylan fails to negate this sense of loss and may even inflame it. Her memory, then, does not somehow bridge the gap between what was and what is but is itself torn by it.

Symptomatically, Ziarek reads the train whistle Molly hears as interrupting a "unity of voice, memory, and love [that] restores the shadows to life, the past to the presence of consciousness" ("The Female Body, Technology, and Memory 'Penelope'" 120). But there is no such unity—only the mournful desire for it. The reason why the whistle has a "weeping tone" to Molly is *because* she is haunted by the fact that the shadows cannot be restored to life and that although she is bound to the past, it can never again be one with the presence of consciousness: "he [Mulvey] gave me that clumsy Claddagh ring for luck that I gave Gardner going to south Africa where those Boers

killed him, with their war and fever … no he hadn't a moustache that was Gardner yes I can see his face cleanshaven Frseeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeefrong that train again weeping tone once in the dear deaead days beyondre call" (*Ulysses* 18.867-68, 872-75). Remembering "Love's Old Sweet Song" here, Molly is disturbed by the sense of loss that separates the present of the song from the "deaead days beyondre call" when love sang: "close my eyes breath my lips forward kiss sad look eyes open piano ere oer *the world the mists began I hate that* istsbeg comes loves sweet sooooooooooong" (*Ulysses* 18.875-77; my emphasis). For all her apparent liveliness, she is continually struggling against "the mists" that have fallen between "Me [then]. And me now," as Bloom himself thinks earlier in the day (*Ulysses* 8.436).

In the famous last lines of the novel, however, Molly revolts against mourning. The impetus for those lines is when that force of never-again, always gnawing at Molly on some level, seizes her consciousness with an energy that she cannot immediately move past:

> well its a poor case that those that have a fine son like that [i.e., Stephen] theyre not satisfied and I none was he not able to make one it wasnt my fault we came together when I was watching the two dogs up in her behind in the middle of the naked street that disheartened me altogether suppose I oughtnt to have buried him in that little woolly jacket I knitted crying as I was but give it to some poor child but I knew well Id never have another our 1st death too it was were never the same since O Im not going to think myself into the glooms about that any more. (*Ulysses* 18.1444-51)

But much like her husband, Molly is not a person who is easily overcome by "the glooms." Indeed, everything that follows these lines constitutes an effort to surmount the irrevocability that the repeated word "never" entails: her fantasies about Stephen (*Ulysses* 18.1476-92); her desire to go shopping for fruits and vegetables tomorrow (*Ulysses* 18.1499-1504); her intention to give Bloom "one more chance" (*Ulysses* 18.1497); her plans to buy flowers and prepare the house for Stephen's potential visit (*Ulysses* 18.1548-58); her thoughts about natural beauty (*Ulysses* 18.1558-63); her faith in God (*Ulysses* 18.1563-72); her reminiscences about Gibraltar (*Ulysses* 18.1582-1604); and the memory of her engagement to Bloom on Howth Hill "among the rhododendrons" (*Ulysses* 18.1572-82, 1604-09)).

All the imaginative plenitude here is a breathtaking response to the barrenness Molly feels. Although he claims that Molly "re-bears" it, Ellmann views the engagement as "a paradise lost" (*Ulysses on the Liffey* 172-73). To be sure, the moment itself is past and can never be re-experienced again. But, on my account, Molly remembers this moment because she believes that the love it conjures is *not* lost and *can* be regained. Accordingly, her final "Yes," and the belief with which it pulsates, challenges the never-again that has "disheartened [her] altogether": "I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes" (*Ulysses* 18.1605-09). Contrary to what is often assumed, however, this final affirmation is not a triumph, since it is still animated from within by the force it desires to surmount.

But the absence of punctuation and capital letters, the many run-on and constantly intermingling sentences, the rhythmic and swelling nature of the thoughts, and the way that the words of her monologue sprawl across the page all suggest that Molly is being pushed on by something of which she is unaware. As the critics cited above attest, to read "Penelope" is to feel oneself caught within a flow that one necessarily resists but to which one finds it difficult not to finally succumb. Molly is not the "flowing river" of nature, as already mentioned, but she is supposed to be part of its dynamic, vital movement. Why Joyce thought a woman's consciousness was closest to such a movement is a question that goes beyond the chapter's confines. But with this movement, I claim, he attempts to depict a force of pure continuity that would appropriate death, loss, and the past to itself but would not be impeded or affected by them. It would thus be exempt from the discontinuity of Molly's stream-of-consciousness. In describing the episode, Joyce said that "[i]t turns like the huge earth ball slowly surely and evenly round and round spinning" (qtd. in *Ulysses on the Liffey* 164) and that "[i]n conception and technique I tried to depict the earth which is prehuman and presumably posthuman" (qtd. in *Joyce, "Penelope," and the Body* 34). While *Ulysses* demonstrates the intimacy of life and death, it ultimately seeks to disjoin the two by affirming life as a ceaselessly revolving movement that spun before humanity and will continue spinning after it. For Joyce, then, individual lives are not free from the tyranny of mourning, but the absolutely affirmative, all-encompassing flow of life is. Such is the nature of his own revolt against mourning.

And yet, *Ulysses* cannot escape usurpation. The novel attempts to liberate itself from the force it unleashes by invoking a counterforce. But this invocation only serves to

indicate the novel's (dis)possession and is dictated by it. As much as Joyce uses style to give the appearance of an absolute forward momentum to the final episode, it is not the positive energy of life that propels Molly's consciousness but, on the contrary, the negative energy of loss that also seizes Gabriel Conroy. That *Ulysses* aspires to transcend the discontinuity that haunts its characters demonstrates that it is haunted and impelled by this discontinuity itself. Indeed, the desire it expresses for an autonomous flow emerges from its own heteronomous struggle with mourning. In this way, Joyce, like Woolf, both remains part of and breaks with what Henry Staten calls a "tradition of transcendence" that seeks liberation from loss (*Eros in Mourning* 1). He seeks such liberation but in the here and now rather than in a realm that completely transcends it. Joyce's conception of mourning as a transformative experience that acts subversively on both the mind and body articulates a new understanding of the term. But, ultimately, he sought to expel it from *Ulysses* by giving textual form to what would be free from it: the eternal spin of life. Despite this endeavor, however, the novel ends up being overmastered by the very thing it conceived.

Chapter 3

Faulkner's Revolt: The Exorcism of *The Sound and the Fury*

In "Pantaloon in Black," a chapter in the novel *Go Down, Moses*, William Faulkner depicts the demise of a black man named Rider shortly after his wife, Mannie, unexpectedly dies. The story is not simply one of grief but rather of an individual being gradually overcome by the larger experience of what I call mourning. Right from the start, Rider is described as large and powerful, standing over six feet tall and weighing more than two hundred pounds. We witness his astonishing strength when a fellow worker tries to help him bury Mannie: "He [Rider] didn't even falter. He released one hand in midstroke and flung it backward, striking the other across the chest, jolting him back a step, and restored the hand to the moving shovel, flinging the dirt with effortless fury so that the mound seemed to be rising of its own volition" (*Go Down, Moses* 129). In a later scene at the sawmill where he works, Rider picks up and throws a massive log onto the skidway before "stepp[ing] over the slanting track in one stride and walk[ing] through them [the other workers] as they gave way" (*GDM* 139). His furious labor here, however, is animated by a loss that he can neither bury nor toss away.

Rider's mourning is made physically apparent in the increasing redness of his eyes and "the labored heave and collapse of his chest" (*GDM* 136). Although married just six months, Mannie positively changed his life and the kind of man he was. Consequently, Rider struggles mightily to live on in a world that has been emptied of her being: "…as he strode on, moving almost as fast as a smaller man could have trotted, his body breathing the air her body had vacated, his eyes touching the objects—post and tree and field and house and hill—her eyes had lost" (*GDM* 131). His aunt and uncle implore

him to put his "faith and trust" in God, but Rider finds no comfort in religion, which can do nothing to lessen the strength of his bond to Mannie. While "the strong and indomitable beating of his heart" may initially signify "how tough, … the will of that bone and flesh to remain alive, actually was," it is insidiously co-opted by the power of death that Mannie's alterity unleashes in him. He flees their home after confronting her ghostly presence there, but he cannot flee a presence that also works on him from within. His "deep, strong, troubled inhalations" thus become an indication of "someone engaged without arms in prolonged single combat" (*GDM* 136-137). Under this co-opation, "he could not stop needing to invent to himself reasons for his breathing" and "as soon as he found himself believing he had forgotten it, he knew that he had not" (*GDM* 138). Unable to shake the feeling of being suffocated, Rider tries to drink it away, telling the force gripping him, "[d]at's right. Try me. Try me, big boy. Ah gots something hyar now dat kin whup you" (*GDM* 141). But the alcohol cannot stop the panting, and he is left "indrawing the cool of air until he could breathe" (*GDM* 142). Next, he tries to go to his aunt's house, where he was raised, but the love he finds there also fails to appease "the tremendous panting of his chest which in a moment now would begin to strain at the walls of this room too" (*GDM* 143).

Rider's labored breathing is therefore not a matter of him working through mourning or trying to grieve but of mourning working through him. This work has no *telos* of resolution and never reaches a point where Rider takes charge of it. He continues to drink and falls further under the influence not so much of the alcohol as of his sense of loss. The latter is what drives him to keep drinking as well as to keep moving: "He was moving again. But he was not moving, he was drinking, … And now he was moving, the

jug gone now and he didn't know the when or where of that either" (*GDM* 144-145). "[S]nakebit and bound to die," then, he eventually kills a crooked white man named Birdsong after he pulls a gun on him at a dice game and ends up being lynched by "the Birdsong boys," although it is officially ruled "death at the hands of a person or persons unknown" (*GDM* 145-147). Again, however, his behavior at the dice game, like his behavior before and after it, is not merely a result of drunkenness but of being (dis)possessed by a force that takes the form of the very air inside of him.

After he is arrested, Rider tears apart the prison cell most likely because his panting has become unbearable and he desperately needs the open air. He is subsequently beaten into submission by a black chain gang and lies on the floor "with tears big as glass marbles running across his face and down past his ears … laughing and laughing and saying 'Hit look lack Ah just cant quit thinking. Look lack Ah just cant quit'" (*GDM* 152). While no one around him understands it, this is a heartbreaking depiction of a man in the throes of something he cannot escape. Despite Rider's formidable physicality, mourning here reveals "the vanity of his own strength" (*GDP* 131). But it may also be that he does not want to escape mourning, since it is what keeps him bound, however painfully, to Mannie. Indeed, the fact that his body is so overtaken in this experience illuminates the intensity of their bond.

"Pantaloon in Black" ends with the town deputy telling his indifferent wife about Rider. The irony is that from an outsider's perspective, especially a racist one like the deputy's, Rider's behavior appears crazy—hence the story's title—and as far removed from grief as possible. As the deputy observes: "'His wife dies on him. All right. But does he grieve? He's the biggest and busiest man at the funeral. Grabs a shovel before

they even got the box into the grave they tell me, and starts throwing dirt onto her faster than a slip scraper could have done it… the next day he's the first man back at work except for the fireman, getting back to the mill before the fireman had his fire going, let alone steam up'" (*GDM* 148). These observations follow the deputy's claim that "'[t]hem damn niggers, … aint human. They look like a man and they walk on their hind legs like a man, and they can talk and you can understand them and you think they are understanding you, at least now and then. But when it comes to the normal human feelings and sentiments of human beings, they might as well be a damn herd of wild buffaloes'" (*GDM* 147). The story exposes the blindness and insensitivity of whites to the emotional experiences of African Americans in the post-Civil War South and deepens Faulkner's heretofore portrayal of his black characters. But it also articulates a conception of mourning as a physical overcoming that challenges how it has been traditionally conceived.

This conception can also be discerned in an earlier novel, *The Sound and the Fury*, but in an even more vivid fashion due to Faulkner's use of the stream-of-consciousness technique. The novel records the deterioration of the Compson household, a once-aristocratic Southern family whose notion of purity makes it allergic to the modern world. When he was asked what is wrong with the Compsons, Faulkner answered that "[t]hey are still living in the attitudes of 1859 or '60" (*A Critical Casebook* 24). Mr. and Mrs. Compson try to keep the knowledge of death away from their children as much as possible, not telling them at one point in the novel what Dilsey's youngest child knows without question, namely, that their grandmother has died. The Compson children only seem to know the word "sick," not any form of death. Jason must ask what

a funeral is and Caddy claims that "[t]hat's niggers. White folks dont have funerals" (*TSTF* 33). Believing that "a woman is either a lady or not," Mrs. Compson breaks down when Caddy becomes sexually active (*TSTF* 103). She banishes Caddy and her name from the Compson home after Caddy's husband divorces her and then refuses to let Caddy's daughter sleep in her mother's old room because she thinks that the child will be "contaminated by the atmosphere" (*TSTF* 198). Mr. Compson is also unable to accept his daughter's sexuality, becoming bitterly cynical and condemning the entirety of human existence as contaminated: "Created by disease, within putrefaction, into decay" (*TSTF* 44).[26] Far from a rejection of purity, however, Mr. Compson's nihilism is grounded in a misogynistic desire for it that he believes "nature" renders impossible. As Quentin recounts him saying: "'Women are never virgins. Purity is a negative state and therefore contrary to nature'" (*TSTF* 116). Mr. Compson turns to alcohol to anesthetize himself to a corrupt reality, while his wife uses camphor. According to André Bleikasten, "[w]ith both [Quentin and his brother, Jason] there is a persistent refusal of the Other, an unfailingly hostile response to anything or anyone likely to threaten the closure of their narcissistic world" (*The Most Splendid Failure* 152). Bleikasten extends this refusal to Benjy, as well, but Mr. and Mrs. Compson instill it in all their children. Even Caddy, the most rebellious of the Compsons, is deeply troubled by her sexuality, telling Quentin that she "died" when she lost her virginity to Dalton Ames (*TSTF* 123).

I will argue, however, that this "persistent refusal of the Other" is undermined by the force of mourning that constantly bedevils the novel's characters. Mourning is typically seen as a kind of purification whereby one cleanses oneself of one's grief for the

[26] Quentin remembers Caddy telling him before she gets married that "Father will be dead in a year they say if he doesn't stop drinking and he wont stop he cant stop since I since last summer [when she lost her virginity]" (*TSTF* 124; emphasis original).

lost object through a slow and painful process of detachment. In *The Sound and the Fury*, however, mourning is the means through which the Compson brothers experience the "corruption" they fear and refuse, inundating them with the other in spite of their apparent will or desire to be free from it. By binding them to something outside of themselves, mourning opens these characters to being affected in ways they otherwise would not be and having their dominant psychological tendencies thereby altered. Specifically, Faulkner stresses the bodily nature of this phenomenon. He shows not only that the character's bond to the lost object is physically constituted but also that the effects of loss on the character are physical in nature. Such a conception goes beyond accounts that interpret Faulkner's fictional representations of loss as adhering to Freudian psychoanalysis,[27] as comprising part of a "melancholic modernism" that naturalizes the traumas of modernity,[28] and as promoting an ethico-political "anti-consolatory mourning practice."[29]

A paradigmatic example is Reverend Shegog, who is described as "a worn small rock whelmed by the successive waves of his voice. With his body he seemed to feed the voice that, succubus like, had fleshed its teeth in him" (*TSTF* 294). His voice, we are told, "consumed him, until he was nothing" (*TSTF* 294). But his voice is not an autonomous thing working purely from itself. Rather, it is being worked through by the grief that inspires the sermon: "I hears de weepin en de lamentation of de po mammy widout de

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[27] See Bleikasten's analysis of Quentin's "melancholy mourning" and Greg Forter's essay on trauma in Freud and Faulkner. Bleikasten, André. *The Most Splendid Failure: Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury*. Indiana University Press, 1976, pp. 116-118, and Forter, Greg. "Freud, Faulkner, Caruth: Trauma and the Politics of Literary Form." *Narrative*, vol. 15, no. 3, Oct. 2007, pp. 259–285. For other explorations Faulkner and loss, see Matthews, John T. *The Play of Faulkner's Language*. Cornell University Press, 1982, and Mortimer, Gail L. *Faulkner's Rhetoric of Loss: A Study in Perception and Meaning*. University of Texas Press, 1983.

[28] See Moglen, Seth. *Mourning Modernity: Literary Modernism and the Injuries of American Capitalism*. Stanford University Press, 2007, pp. 27-44.

[29] Clewell, Tammy. *Mourning, Modernism, Postmodernism*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 56-92.

salvation en de word of God!" (*TSTF* 296). On a more profound level, then, the sense of "de weepin en de lamentation" is what "succubus like, fleshed its teeth in him," whelming and consuming him in waves. In this experience, something is happening to Reverend Shegog's body of which he is not in charge. A similar estrangement between mind and body occurs with Rider after seeing his wife's ghost. As he attempts to eat, he struggles to control his voice and manage his breathing, feeling himself whelmed by her presence. Although he is hungry, he cannot bring himself to eat "the congealed and lifeless mass": "Not even warmed from mouth-heat, pease and spoon splattered and rang upon the plate; his chair crashed backward and he was standing, feeling the muscles of his jaw beginning to drag his mouth open, tugging upward the top half of his head" (*GDM* 135). Mourning consumes him here rather than him it. As we shall see, however narcissistic or self-absorbed the Compson brothers may be, they are not immune to the succubus-like workings of its force.

The critical debate on *The Sound and the Fury* centers on whether it valorizes anything above the despair that reverberates through its pages. On the one hand, Faulkner commentators have read the novel as affirming the Christianity of the final section that Dilsey's character exemplifies. Olga Vickery argues that "out of [the first three sections'] disorder and confusion, come Dilsey's triumph and her peace, lending significance not only to her own life but to the book as a whole" (*The Novels of William Faulkner* 49). Similarly, Peter Swiggart claims that Dilsey's "role suggests the destructive impact of time and indicates the possibility of a religious vision by which the individual can free himself at least from despair" (*The Art of Faulkner's Novels* 106). John W. Hunt, in his turn, opposes Dilsey's love to the Compsons' lack of it, asserting that her "singing,

'repetitive, mournful and plaintive, austere,' is symbolic of the realistic courage which allows her, in the face of the most devastating evidences of meaninglessness, to find "de power en de glory" ("The Locus and Status of Meaning" 92). James M. Mellard echoes this conclusion: "It is Dilsey, then, who is the synecdochic image embodying the anagogic meaning and form of the novel, for it is she who contains the whole range of human experience—the sweep of innocence and experience, plenitude and vacancy, comedy and tragedy—presented in *The Sound and the Fury*" ("Faulkner's *Commedia*" 231). On the other hand, Faulkner commentators have read the novel as offering no relevant alternative to the social decay in which its characters are apparently trapped. Following Cleanth Brooks' observation that "the title of *The Sound and the Fury* … provides a true key, for the novel has to do with the discovery that life has no meaning," John V. Hagopian holds that "nihilism [is] the meaning of the [novel's] whole" ("Nihilism in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* 212). For her part, Myra Jehlen sees Faulkner, at this point in his career, "as almost ready to identify with Quentin Compson, who, when he determined that life was meaningless, simply stopped" ("Faulkner's Fiction and Southern Society" 324). The novel's ending, Jehlen maintains, "impl[ies] a radical disbelief in the meaningfulness of all orders, including necessarily the ordering vision of fiction" ("Faulkner's Fiction and Southern Society" 324). And in John Earl Bassett's view, "*The Sound and the Fury* suggests the fragmentation and aloneness of the sensitive twentieth-century American lacking religion, traditional myths, and coherent community, and living in a world where individualism in its ultimate extensions has become narcissism" ("Family Conflict in *The Sound and the Fury*" 409). Finally, a number of other commentators have insisted on the novel's ambivalence.[30] Walter J.

[30] For example, Donald M. Kartiganer argues that "[a]cknowledging, insisting on decreation, making real

Slatoff's reading is here a case in point: "We feel and are intended to feel, I think, that the events [of *The Sound and the Fury*] we have witnessed are at once tragic and futile, significant and meaningless. We cannot move beyond this" ("Unresolved Tensions" 96). In contrast to this criticism, I will demonstrate that the novel ultimately attempts to exorcise the force that (dis)possesses its characters in order to depict a notion of life free from mourning's dis-order. *The Sound and the Fury*, from such a perspective, neither affirms Christianity nor amounts to nihilism, but it is also not simply ambivalent.

I.

It is often assumed in Faulkner scholarship that Benjy mourns a lost plenitude he apparently once experienced with Caddy.[31] His favorite phrase, "Caddy smelled like trees," implies a sense of oneness with his sister.[32] This scent instinctively reassures him of her supposed natural purity and hence that nothing or no one has come between them. The word reassures is crucial, however, since it means that he is already breached by the threat of Caddy *not* smelling like trees. Someone or something has always already come between them, long before Caddy loses her virginity. But even though the longing for an

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the time prior to prearrangement, *The Sound and the Fury* yet strives for wholeness, an articulation of design: the form not imposed like a myth from the past, but the form that is the consequence of contingent being" (*The Fragile Thread* 342). Analogously, John T. Matthews claims that "the novel prefers a difficult concord, one that denies the possibility of absolute disclosure, that beclouds the prospect of the beginning and the ending, that signals the continuation of difference and deferment" (*The Play of Faulkner's Language* 390). Lastly, according to André Bleikasten, *The Sound and the Fury* pursues "an impossible dream: the quest is never completed, the reversal [of emptiness into plenitude] forever postponed. Yet in its very failure the novel succeeds" (*The Most Splendid Failure* 205).

[31] See Minrose C. Gwin's reading of Caddy's character. Gwin, Minrose C. *The Feminine and Faulkner: Reading (Beyond) Sexual Difference*. University of Tennesee Press, 1990, pp. 34-47. See also Fowler, Doreen. *Faulkner: The Return of the Repressed*. University Press of Virginia, 1997, p. 35. According to Bleikasten, "[h]er presence/absence becomes diffused all over the world, pointing, like so many feminine figures of Faulkner's earlier and later work, to an elemental complicity between Woman and the immemorial Earth (*The Most Splendid Failure* 60).

[32] As Faulkner explains in his Introduction to the novel: "And that Benjy must never grow beyond this moment; that for him all knowing must begin and end with that fierce, panting, paused and stooping wet figure which smelled like trees. That he must never grow up to where the grief of bereavement could be leavened with understanding and hence the alleviation of rage as in the case of Jason, and of oblivion as in the case of Quentin" (qtd. in *A Critical Casebook* 12).

ideal oneness with Caddy may dominate Benjy's libidinal economy, his mourning shows that a longing for her physical affection is also at work in him. The two are not only not the same but, on the contrary, diametrically opposed. Whereas the former is a desire for a pure Caddy, the latter is a desire for Caddy in the flesh—at the risk of impurities. The physical always involves an otherness that Benjy's ideal of simple oneness would eradicate. Given that he remembers rejecting Caddy's embrace at times because she smelled differently, Benjy must at least intuit that contamination is always possible whenever she gets close to him. Nevertheless, on April 7, 1928, he is increasingly overtaken by the loss of Caddy's touch rather than an ideal oneness with her. His desire for such oneness does not disappear altogether, but he cannot deny the force that his physical bond to Caddy exerts on his emotional being. This force has always exerted itself on him, but it does so all the more now that she has left his life.

The claim I am pursuing here, however, requires that the Benjy of the present be distinguished from the Benjy of his memories. Faulkner commentators have generally treated them as one and the same. But despite being developmentally delayed, there is not a single Benjy. While there is certainly overlap between them, the older Benjy, unlike his younger selves, has been afflicted by mourning for years. The question, then, is whether it has effected any significant alteration in his character.

Benjy's first memory is from December 23, 1908, a day notable to him not only because he enjoyed a closeness to Caddy but also because he suffered a distance from her. After being "snagged on that nail again" in the present, he remembers not just being snagged on it in the past but, more specifically, when "Caddy uncaught me and we crawled through" (*TSTF* 4). Here and elsewhere, Caddy's gentle treatment of him

contrasts with the harsh treatment he receives from an increasingly frustrated Luster. Because Benjy has spent so much of his life behind fences, closed off from "his" Caddy, the memory of them crawling through one together must carry special resonance. This is also one of only a few times he remembers them being alone. The unique proximity they share must therefore be the reason that, although it happened almost twenty years ago, all the tactile details of the moment come back to him with fresh intensity: how Caddy taught him how to stoop ("Like this, see"), how they "stooped over and crossed the garden, where the flowers rasped and rattled against us," how they "climbed the fence, where the pigs were grunting and snuffing," and that "[t]he ground was hard, churned and knotted" (*TSTF* 4). He also remembers keeping his hands out, instead of in his pockets as Caddy tells him to, most likely because he wanted to feel everything in the moment, particularly Caddy herself. This same wanting-to-feel is evident later in the novel when Benjy gets burned touching the fire that he associates with Caddy and when he touches "the dark tall place on the wall" where the mirror, in which he used to watch Caddy so often, once was (*TSTF* 59-61). Importantly, both these events happen shortly after he remembers a moment of physical intimacy with her (*TSTF* 57). In the present, then, Benjy is haunted by wanting to feel someone who is no longer there, which is what animates the first memory and many others after it.

Accordingly, it is not fortuitous that this desire is fulfilled in the following memory. It takes place earlier that day when Benjy is anxiously awaiting Caddy's return from school. Initially, Mrs. Compson thinks that he should be kept indoors because it is cold outside, but she eventually relents after her brother convinces her to let him go. Although the memory does not explicitly show how menaced Benjy must be by Caddy's

physical absence throughout the day, it can be inferred by how much he wants to meet her at the gate. As Versh tells Caddy: "'Couldn't keep him in." … 'He kept on until they let him go and he come right straight down here, looking through the gate'" (*TSTF* 7). That he insists on meeting her there in itself demonstrates how significant the experience is to him, but the memory also illustrates it in other ways. Versh attempts to keep Benjy's hands in his pockets, but Benjy nevertheless keeps them out, holding "onto that gate" in anticipation of Caddy's touch. The gate is so cold that his hands go numb ("The gate was cold. … I couldn't feel the gate at all"), but he still does not put them away, knowing that Caddy is about to arrive in "the bright cold" (*TSTF* 6). The moment of her arrival then comes back to him in vivid detail: "Caddy was walking. Then she was running, her book-satchel swinging and jouncing behind her. // 'Hello Benjy.' Caddy said. She opened the gate and came in and stooped down. Caddy smelled like leaves" (*TSTF* 6). He remembers how she showed immediate concern for how cold his hands were and how she tried to warm them herself: "'What did you let him get his hands so cold for, Versh'" … "'Did you come to meet Caddy,' she said, rubbing my hands" (*TSTF* 6). While this brief moment of contact may seem trivial, the affection it expresses could not be more opposed to what happens when Benjy *touches* the Burgess girl, hoping that she is Caddy, a misrecognition that leads to his castration: "I was trying to say, and I caught her, trying to say, and she screamed and I was trying to say and trying and the bright shapes began to stop and I tried to get out" (*TSTF* 53). To be sure, Benjy also remembers that "Caddy smelled like trees" after getting home from school, which is crucial to the moment, since it gives him the reassurance he desired at the time (*TSTF* 6). But what clearly possesses him in retrospect is a desire to feel Caddy's bodily presence again. It is crucial, for

example, that after Caddy tells him "'[c]ome on, let's run to the house and get warm,'" the memory does not cut to the house but includes the following image: "She took my hand and we ran through the bright rustling leaves. We ran up the steps and out of the bright cold, into the dark cold" (*TSTF* 7).

But the force that shapes Benjy's memories of this day has already seized both his mind and body before he gets snagged on the nail with Luster. When we first meet him, he is watching a few golfers play on what used to be his pasture. In a cruel twist of fate, he must now endure the word "caddie" being constantly called out without Caddy ever being there: "'Here, caddie.' He hit. They went across the pasture. I held to the fence and watched them going away" (*TSTF* 3). With the endless disappointment he receives at the fence, it is significant that Benjy still goes to it. According to Bleikasten, Benjy "cannot renounce [his lost object]; he can only howl in impotent protest" (*TMSF* 74). This claim assumes, however, that one's relation to loss is active rather than passive—that one can give up a lost object at will. Even if Benjy wanted to renounce Caddy, it does not follow that her alterity would renounce him. Indeed, this alterity is what keeps him coming to the fence and what moves him along it in the opening scene. Hence, far from being able to refuse the other, Benjy is being pushed and pulled by it from within. But what exactly about Caddy produces such an effect upon Benjy? Infused with the possibility of feeling her embrace again, with the memory of its sensation rippling throughout his body, he notes twice that "I held to the fence," holding on to it with the same passion with which he holds on to the gate (*TSTF* 3-4). His anticipation is overwhelmed, however, by his concomitant sense of her physical absence. Therefore, while he waits with his hands out for her, he also cannot stop "moaning," as Luster calls it. Remembering that she smelled

like trees will not suffice; he longs for Caddy in all her materiality now. He wants to see her "walking. Then… running" to him once more. His first memory is not simply a matter of association, then, but rather derives from the desire consuming him here, infecting his idealism.

This desire is working through Benjy even when the counter-desire seems to predominate. In his first memory, right before they leave the house to deliver Uncle Maury's letter to Mrs. Patterson, he remembers how "Caddy knelt and put her arms around me and her cold bright face against mine. She smelled like trees" (*TSTF* 9). Caddy's scent confirms for Benjy that she is purely his and that any breach between them has been removed. As she tells him: "'You're not a poor baby. Are you. Are you. You've got your Caddy. Haven't you got your Caddy'" (*TSTF* 9). But the next memory he has, almost immediately afterward, reveals that what stays with Benjy—that is, what matters to him now—is not Caddy's idealized scent but the feel of "her arms around [him] and her cold bright face against [his]." This memory is of him and his mother going to the cemetery to visit Mr. Compson's and Quentin's graves. Although seeing the carriage appears to provoke it, the details Benjy recalls show that a deeper motivation is at work. This weekly trip is one of his most cherished routines and something that makes him happy, so it is remarkable that he remembers a time when he is crying during it: "'Give him a flower to hold.' Dilsey said. 'That what he wanting' (*TSTF* 10). Luster often uses the same strategy that Dilsey employs here. "What are you moaning about, …" he asks Benjy earlier in the novel, "You can watch them again when we get to the branch. Here. Here's you a jimson weed. He gave me the flower" (*TSTF* 6). The flower acts like the fence and the gate, answering to Benjy's wanting-to-feel Caddy's physical presence. The

very pressure his hand exerts on the flower responds to the pressure that this desire is exerting on him from within, making him moan for something as apparently small as "[s]he helped me across and we went up the hill" (*TSTF* 13). It is also precisely the latter pressure that gives rise to the memory.

A similar dynamic can be discerned in the novel's final scene. Benjy has heard the word "caddie" again and is overcome by the remembered sensation of his sister's touch: "… Ben went on at his shambling trot, clinging to the fence, wailing in his hoarse, hopeless voice. … and he clung to the fence, … He [Luster] shook Ben's arm. Ben clung to the fence, wailing steadily and hoarsely" (*TSTF* 315-316). Luster and Dilsey do everything they can to hush him, but "he wouldn't hush" (*TSTF* 316). Dilsey tries holding him, "rocking back and forth, wiping his drooling mouth upon the hem of her skirt. … But he bellowed slowly, abjectly, without tears; the grave hopeless sound of all voiceless misery under the sun" (*TSTF* 316). Luster then gets Caddy's slipper and only "when they gave it into Ben's hand he hushed for a while"—a slipper "yellow now, and cracked, and soiled" from Benjy holding on to it for so many years (*TSTF* 316). When the slipper no longer quiets Benjy, Dilsey decides to let Luster take him to the cemetery, but not before giving him something else to clutch: "She helped Ben into the back seat. He had ceased crying, but now he began to whimper again. / 'Hit's his flower,' Luster said. 'Wait, I'll git him one'" (*TSTF* 317). Even after chaos envelops his world on the ensuing carriage ride and Jason strikes him, "breaking the flower stalk again," Benjy does not let go of "the single narcissus": "The broken flower drooped over Ben's fist and his eyes were empty and blue and serene again as cornice and façade flowed smoothly once more"

(*TSTF* 321). The same binding agent that makes him hold on to the freezing cold gate is what keeps his fist closed here. Such is the power of Caddy's physical hold on him.

Now, about halfway through his section, Benjy has three memories in which something or someone comes between him and Caddy but is ultimately removed, culminating with "Caddy smelled like trees" (*TSTF* 40-48). They follow the end of his memory of Caddy's wedding, where he is left crying because Caddy no longer smells like trees (*TSTF* 40). These memories all ostensibly testify to Benjy's desire for an ideal state of pure oneness with Caddy and to his apparent grief over the loss of it. But while this desire may be operative to some degree in them, there is evidence to suggest that they are actually inspired by another dynamic. One cannot fully control why one is bound to a given object or how it affects oneself, since the bond always involves an alterity that is neither reducible nor subject to that self. Consequently, even if a large part of Benjy still desires an ideal purity, his libidinality is nevertheless susceptible to being altered by mourning's work.

The first memory immediately after the wedding memory is when Caddy's perfume disturbs Benjy's sense of natural harmony with her. What provokes this memory, however, is the remembered feel of Caddy's arms around him: "…and Caddy put her arms around me, and her shining veil, and I couldn't smell trees anymore and I began to cry / *Benjy, Caddy said, Benjy. She put her arms around me again, but I went away*" (*TSTF* 40; emphasis original). It is not the force of "I couldn't smell trees anymore" that moves him now but the force of Caddy's embrace. In the wedding memory, Benjy remembers with striking detail just how badly he yearned for that embrace: "I could hear them in the parlor and I clawed my hands against the wall. … He

[T.P.] pulled me. Caddy. I clawed my hands against the wall. Caddy" (*TSTF* 38-39). Italics are most often used in Benjy's section to identify the present but at other times to show time changes between memories and for emphasis. The rest of the perfume memory is not italicized, which implies that this particular moment weighs especially heavily on Benjy's consciousness. He does not bother to recall that Caddy did not smell like trees or even that she smelled differently but only that he was forced to break away from her embrace yet "again." What comes back to him in the present, then, is the pain of that break between them and the lost sensation of her love. This break is what consumes him, succubus like, and what compels the memory itself. It is also why he remembers all the sweet minutiae of their contact. Twice he recalls how Caddy "came again, but I went away" (*TSTF* 40-41) and three different times that "she put her arms around me" (*TSTF* 40-42). In recounting the following, he is thus also in mourning for the loss of it: "She stooped down and put the bottle in my hand. 'Hold it out to Dilsey, now.' Caddy held my hand out and Dilsey took the bottle" (*TSTF* 42-43).

Although the perfume memory ends with "Caddy smelled like trees," it is this sense of loss, not Caddy's purity, that gives rise to the memory that comes after it, which begins with Dilsey telling Benjy that "'You too big to sleep with folks [i.e., Caddy]. You a big boy now. Thirteen years. Big enough to sleep by yourself in Uncle Maury's room'" (*TSTF* 43). The same longing to be close to Caddy that makes the younger Benjy cry here is what grips the Benjy of the present. As with the previous memory, he could skip the painful moments of physical separation between them and wholly focus on when Caddy is lying next to him, smelling like trees, and perhaps he would if mourning were under his command. He cannot help, however, that he is haunted by precisely that separation.

"'You a big boy,'" Dilsey tries telling him again, "'Caddy tired sleeping with you. Hush now, so you can go to sleep.' The room went away, but I didn't hush, …" (*TSTF* 44). The torment he feels at this separation emanates across the very space of his memory, between when "the room went away" and when "the room came back," between when Dilsey sat on the bed "looking at me" and when "[s]he went away," and between when "[t]here wasn't anything in the door" and when "Caddy was in it" (*TSTF* 44). Notice how Benjy even recalls the materials that separated his and Caddy's bodies as they lay beside each other: "I hushed and Dilsey turned back the spread and Caddy got in between the spread and the blanket. She didn't take off her bathrobe. / 'Now.' she said. 'Here I am.' Dilsey came with a blanket and spread it over her and tucked it around her" (*TSTF* 44). While the precautions Dilsey takes imply a concern that Benjy is, or may be, sexually attracted to Caddy, he stops crying and does not try to get any closer to her. That the older Benjy remembers them may suggest sexual attraction, but I would argue that this is another moment of intimacy so precious to him that all its details return, especially since he is now gripped by their loss. The specific nature of these details is therefore pivotal: "'All right.' Caddy said. She snuggled her head beside mine on the pillow. 'Goodnight, Dilsey'" (*TSTF* 44).

Benjy's memory of Caddy and her first boyfriend, Charlie, at the swing ends with him watching Caddy wash her mouth "hard" with the kitchen soap and observing that she smelled like trees (*TSTF* 48). It is the second time that he recalls witnessing her trying to purify herself of an invasive otherness. Tellingly, however, we never find Benjy gravitating to the kitchen or the bathroom where this attempted purification occurred, which demonstrates its lack of influence on him. On the contrary, he tends to seek out the

places precisely where the otherness invaded. For example, as Luster continues searching for a lost quarter, Benjy wanders off in search of something he has lost: "*...Here. Wait a minute. You wait right here while I go and get that ball. ... Luster came back. Wait, he said. Here. Dont go over there. Miss Quentin and her beau in the swing yonder. You come on this way. Come back here, Benjy. ... Come away from there, Benjy, Luster said. You know Miss Quentin going to get mad*" (*TSTF* 46; emphasis original). Benjy registers Luster's protestations here, but they are overpowered by the dark energy moving him toward the swing. The swing is the site of a past struggle between Benjy and Charlie for physical possession of Caddy: "She put her arms around me and I hushed and held to her dress and tried to pull her away. … The one in the swing got up and came, and I cried and pulled Caddy's dress. … I pulled at Caddy's dress. … He came back. I cried louder and pulled at Caddy's dress. … Charlie came and put his hands on Caddy and I cried more. I cried loud" (*TSTF* 47). As disconcerting as this struggle is, it shows what is influencing Benjy's movements. What presently exhilarates him is remembering being close enough to Caddy to "hear her and feel her chest going" as well as how she "took my hand" and "Caddy and I were running. … We ran out into the moonlight, toward the kitchen. … Caddy and I ran. We ran up the kitchen steps, onto the porch, and Caddy knelt down in the dark and held me" (*TSTF* 47-48). Hence, far from physically possessing Caddy, it is she who now physically possesses him: "Then she was crying, and I cried, and we held each other" (*TSTF* 48).

In light of this argument, Benjy's memory of Caddy returning home after losing her virginity can be re-examined. While Quentin later claims that Benjy began crying "*as soon as she came in the door"* (*TSTF* 174; emphasis original), as if he immediately knew

what had happened, the memory significantly reveals that he is mistaken: "Caddy came to the door and stood there, looking at Father and Mother. Her eyes flew at me, and away. I began to cry" (*TSTF* 68-69). There is no recall of a change in Caddy's scent throughout the entire memory. Rather, what disturbs Benjy is the change in her physical orientation toward him, and he does not begin crying until he notices it. So many memories involve Caddy warmly approaching and embracing Benjy, but this is the first and only one where she moves "away" from him and keeps her distance: "I went toward her, crying, and she shrank against the wall and I saw her eyes and I cried louder and pulled at her dress" (*TSTF* 69). He notes repeatedly how she shrank or stood against the wall. Instead of putting her arms around him, she merely "put[s] her hands out," and he remembers how "[h]er eyes ran" (*TSTF* 69). The younger Benjy wants her to do what she has done before, namely, go to the bathroom and cleanse herself of the other's presence. But the older Benjy is haunted by the way in which Caddy, rather than giving him comfort, expresses her own need for it here. This point is made remarkably clear by how he recalls every single aspect of the conversation their bodies have about the change between them:

> We were in the hall. Caddy was still looking at me. Her hand was against her mouth and I saw her eyes and I cried. We went up the stairs. She stopped again, against the wall, looking at me and I cried and she went on and I came on, crying, and she shrank against the wall, looking at me. She opened the door to her room, but I pulled at her dress and we went to the bathroom and she stood against the door, looking at me. Then she put her arms across her face and I pushed at her, crying. (*TSTF* 69)

As it gets later in the day, Benjy is increasingly seized by the memory of Caddy's care and support during the time of his name-change. Except for the night of his grandmother's funeral, it is the longest memory he has and especially pain-ridden. The rain indicates its somber atmosphere. Besides dealing with the discovery of Benjy's condition, the family is still reeling from Damuddy's recent death. Mrs. Compson is distraught. Jason's grief causes him to act up and fight with Caddy, and Quentin has also been in a fight. Whereas Mrs. Compson mostly refuses to show Benjy affection during this difficult time, telling Caddy "[n]o, no. Not in my lap. Let him stand up,'" Caddy herself knows that "'[i]f you'll hold him, he'll stop [crying]'" (*TSTF* 63). After Mrs. Compson breaks down in tears when Benjy gets close to her, making him cry, he remembers how Caddy "led me to the fire and I looked at the bright, smooth shapes" (*TSTF* 64). As he now sits crying in front of the fire, "holding the slipper," one thought keeps coming back to him: "Caddy lifted me under her arms. … Caddy lifted me again. … Caddy stooped and lifted me" (*TSTF* 61-63). Enwrapped by the loss of how this felt and the desire for it, he holds the slipper for the rest of the night. He even has it with him as he eats supper, thinking about when "Caddy put the spoon into my mouth easy" (*TSTF* 70). Benjy's recollections from his name-change, however, do not imply, to use Quentin's words, a "refuge unfailing in which conflict [is] tempered silenced reconciled" but rather a sensual resistance to such conflict: "*It's still raining, Caddy said*. *I hate rain. I hate everything*. *And then her head came into my lap and she was crying, holding me, and I began to cry. Then I looked at the fire again and the bright, smooth shapes went again. I could hear the clock and the roof and Caddy*" (*TSTF* 57; emphasis original).

My claim, then, is that Benjy longs for such resistance on April 7, 1928. The memory of his name-change ends with the image of "Caddy's head … on Father's shoulder. Her hair was like fire, and little points of fire were in her eyes, and I went and Father lifted me into the chair too, and Caddy held me. She smelled like trees" (*TSTF* 72). In the present, he repeats to himself that "[s]he smelled like trees," but his mourning has shown, whether or not he fully realizes it, that this phrase means nothing to him without "Caddy held me." As he "squat[s]" in the dark, "holding the slipper," which is the closest he can get to Caddy in the flesh, he seems to relive the moment when "Caddy knelt down in the dark and held me" or, rather, her alterity relives this moment through his own body: "*I couldn't see it, but my hands saw it, … my hands saw the slipper but I couldn't see myself, but my hands could see the slipper, and I squatted there, hearing it getting dark*" (*TSTF* 72; emphasis original).

The section ends with Benjy going to bed, completely absorbed by the memory of him and Caddy falling asleep on the night of Damuddy's funeral. Earlier in the day, he almost simultaneously recalls when he watched her "muddy bottom" as she climbed the tree and when he saw her getting married, which suggests that he believes, on some level, that the former presaged the latter and his eventual loss of her (*TSTF* 39). Before falling asleep, however, it is not the memory of Caddy's soiled underwear on which he dwells. Rather, he is filled with the moment when after hearing that his mother and grandmother were "both sick," "Caddy said, 'Hush, Maury,' putting her hand on me. So I stayed hush. We could hear us. We could hear the dark" (*TSTF* 75). There is no mention of Caddy smelling like trees here. The "something" he does remember smelling is probably Mrs. Compson's camphor or another scent he associates with "sickness." What matters to

Benjy now, no doubt still holding the slipper, is not the ideal of Caddy's natural purity but the bodily experience of how "Caddy held me and I could hear us all, and the darkness" (*TSTF* 75). Such an experience does not negate the otherness of death encroaching on the Compson children. Rather, the latter is intrinsic to it, providing the emotional backdrop against which Caddy's embrace was felt and is remembered. On the one hand, Benjy's desire for this experience springs from an inescapable sense of having lost it. On the other hand, the hope implicit in his desire constitutes a revolt against the permanence of that loss.

II.

Benjy's disability may make him more prone to experiencing loss in a physical way, but Quentin's mourning is also profoundly physical.[33] However, while the importance of loss in his life has certainly been acknowledged, a wide swath of criticism has subjugated it to a concern with time. In his famous essay on the novel, Jean-Paul Sartre claims that Faulkner's characterization of Quentin leaves us to conclude that "[m]an spends his life struggling against time, and time, like an acid, eats away at man, eats him away from himself and prevents him from fulfilling his human character" ("On *The Sound and the Fury*" 92). Furthermore, Perrin Lowrey asserts that "[w]hat Quentin really wants is to get outside of time, to get into eternity" ("Concepts of Time" 57). François L. Pitavy makes the same argument, contending that Quentin desires "the transcendence beyond time" ("Through the Poet's Eye" 88). Robert M. Slabey is even more emphatic: "In Quentin there is a Manichaean revulsion against the physical, the sexual, the limited, the temporal,

[33] In his seminal book on Faulkner's work, *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country*, Cleanth Brooks notes that "Benjy's section is filled with a kind of primitive poetry, a poetry of the senses, rendered in great immediacy, in which the world—for Benjy a kind of confused, blooming buzz—registers with great sensory impact but with minimal intelligibility." Brooks, however, does not develop this claim, so I have tried to elucidate the force animating that "poetry."

a romantic repudiation of the immediate realities of human life, and a direction toward the infinite and timeless" ("Quentin as Romantic" 79-80). Finally, Bleikasten maintains that "[t]h crux of the matter in section 2 is not time; it is Quentin's relation to time" (*TMSF* 137). But Quentin's relation to time is thoroughly influenced by his relation to loss. Temporal experience is a problem for him not in the abstract but because he is consumed by mourning. It is thus mourning he wants to transcend, not necessarily time itself. In fact, despite Quentin's explicit desire for a pure oneness with Caddy beyond the "loud world," another desire emerges from his bodily struggle with its force. This is a desire not for eternity, I will argue, but to stay alive. Quentin's tragedy is that he must end his struggle in death precisely because he cannot surmount it in life.

Quentin's section opens with him waking up and observing that he "was in time again, hearing the watch" (*TSTF* 76). The way he then recalls his father's various speculations on time makes it seem that time itself is the enemy that he will "spend all [his] breath trying to conquer" (*TSTF* 76). But "the long diminishing parade of time" only oppresses Quentin because it exposes him to the seemingly unending return of "Little Sister Death" and the havoc her alterity wreaks on him (*TSTF* 76). As he puts it himself: "If things just finished themselves" (*TSTF* 79). Part of his desire for an exclusive hell for him and Caddy is that it would mean the end of this return. "Again" is indeed the saddest word in his view because it epitomizes being passively bound to loss (*TSTF* 95). Jesus may have been "worn away by a minute clicking of little wheels," but he did not experience the "again" from which Quentin suffers, since he, like Saint Francis, "never had a sister" (*TSTF* 76-77). It is the exposure to this again that Quentin cannot tolerate, hearing it in the watch's ticking and feeling it "itching" after he turns his back to the

window. When the hour strikes a few moments later, the clock's reverberations merge with his mourning: "It was a while before the last stroke ceased vibrating. It stayed in the air, more felt than heard, for a long time. Like all the bells that ever rang still ringing in the long dying light-rays and Jesus and Saint Francis *talking about his sister*" (*TSTF* 79; my emphasis). It is not by chance that his wish for things to finish themselves, to stop "vibrating" within him, immediately follows this thought. The connection between his sense of time and the physical sensation of what it exposes him to can also be discerned later in the novel when he thinks "[a]nd after a while I had been hearing my watch for some time and I could feel the [suicide] letters crackle through my coat, against the railing, and I leaned on the railing, watching my shadow, how I had tricked it" (*TSSTF* 92). Accordingly, Quentin is tormented not so much by "the position of mechanical hands on an arbitrary dial," like his father, but rather by what the incessant movement of those hands entails: the non-stop coming of "Dalton Ames. Dalton Ames. Dalton Ames" (*TSTF* 77, 79).

Quentin's view of his friend, Spoade, further illustrates how vulnerable in his own body mourning makes him feel. As he looks out the window, "hear[ing] the watch again," he observes students "running for the chapel, the same ones fighting the heaving coat-sleeves, the same books and flapping collars flushing past like debris on a flood, and Spoade" (*TSTF* 78). His perception of them as "debris on a flood," however, proceeds from his own sense of being whelmed by successive waves of despair. After being overtaken by another such wave, he looks at Spoade with a mix of admiration and envy: "Spoade was in the middle of them like a terrapin in a street full of scuttering dead leaves, his collar about his ears, moving at his customary unhurried walk" (*TSTF* 78-79).

It is because Quentin himself feels like one of the "scuttering dead leaves," at the mercy of an invisible force, that Spoade's "customary unhurried walk" is so impressive. In his troubled gaze, Spoade is someone who is always in charge of his body, never being dictated by anything outside of himself. "The others passed him running," Quentin recalls, "but he [Spoade] never increased his pace at all" (*TSTF* 79). While Spoade can always maintain his pace, Quentin cannot help being continually pushed and pulled by "*I have committed incest I said Father it was I it was not Dalton Ames*" (*TSTF* 79; emphasis original). He most likely groups Spoade, then, with Jesus and Saint Francis as another male who has never experienced Little Sister Death. But this does not make Spoade an emblem of eternity to which Quentin aspires. Rather, it is his physical demeanor that Quentin envies because it does not seem to be plagued by loss or susceptible to the somatic violence of psychic italicization. Implicit in this envy is therefore an unacknowledged desire for life beyond his mourning.

This desire is also implicit in Quentin's unsuccessful revolts against mourning's oppression. For example, at one point, he is initially overtaken by the memory of "[a]nd when he put Dalton Ames. Dalton Ames. Dalton Ames. When he put the pistol in my hand I didn't" (*TSTF* 79). We learn later that not only did Quentin not shoot Ames, but he also fainted "like a girl" when confronting him (*TSTF* 162). Here, he justifies not shooting him by claiming that it would have meant that Ames would be "there" in hell with him and Caddy. His subsequent fantasy implies, however, that he wished that he had killed him and that he is haunted by his inability to do so: "If I could have been his [Ames's] mother lying with open body lifted laughing, holding his father with my hand refraining, seeing, watching him die before he lived" (*TSTF* 80). This fantasy does more

than simply compensate for the "I didn't" that torments him above. It is an attempt to reverse his passive relation to mourning and overcome its power over him. Whereas simply murdering Ames would not have revoked the loss he caused, negating the very possibility of his existence does—at least in Quentin's imagination. But that he is suddenly gripped by the image of Caddy after losing her virginity to Ames— "*One minute she was standing in the door*"—demonstrates that he is still like debris on a flood, unable to stop the vibrations within him (*TSTF* 80). This feeling of passivity, of being physically helpless in the face of loss, is what makes Quentin then shatter the watch "with the face still down" and pull the hands off (*TSTF* 80). By breaking the watch, he *does* something to quiet the memory that he "didn't." But instead of pacifying what its ticking exposes him to, he cuts his finger and "[t]he watch ticked on" (*TSTF* 80).

Quentin's response to his shadow is another instance of him trying to rid himself of this oppression. "The shadow of the bridge, the tiers of the railing, my shadow leaning flat upon the water, so easily had I tricked it that would not quit me," he says to himself, "At least fifty feet it was, and if I had something to blot it into the water, holding it until it was drowned, the shadow of the package like two shoes wrapped up lying on the water. Niggers say that a drowned man's shadow was watching him in the water all the time" (*TSTF* 90). The standard reading is that the shadow indicates the passage of time, so Quentin tries to "kill" or escape it because he wants to get out of time and does not want to be reminded of it.[34] But the question, then, is why the passage of time, pure and simple, would bother him at this point if timelessness is what he wants and he knows that

[34] Another reading of the shadow is that it is Quentin's alter-ego or unconscious, symbolizing all the sexual urges from which he seeks to free himself (*Reading Faulkner* 65). Since sexuality is central to his attachment to Caddy, such a reading is compatible with interpreting the shadow as a representation of his mourning. To desire to be free from one's sexuality, it should be noted, is not necessarily to desire to be free from one's body but to desire a different bodily experience.

he is going to commit suicide later in the day. Rather, it should fill him with excitement or happiness, knowing that he is getting closer to his desire with each passing second, not the anxiety that marks these lines. But if the shadow instead reminds him of his mourning—that he is bound at every passing second to a loss he cannot escape that is driving him to suicide—then it makes sense that he would want to drown it, especially since he feels as if it is drowning him. He even describes himself here, albeit indirectly, as a future drowned man whose "shadow was watching him in the water *all the time*." Whether conscious or not, then, trying to hold the shadow in the water, treading it into the pavement, walking it into other shadows, and so on are ways to physically empower himself against a force that is disempowering him, although these actions are dictated by what they challenge. For example, in a moment between the waves overtaking him from within, almost as though he were fighting for air, we read: "Trampling my shadow's bones into the concrete with hard heels and then I was hearing the watch, and I touched the letters through my coat" (*TSTF* 96). It is also no coincidence that he "trick[s]" his shadow after feeling his suicide letters "crackle through" his coat. Understood in this way, Quentin's response to his shadow does not imply a desire to get out of time but, on the contrary, to stay in it. The reason why he tries to liberate himself from its presence is because he wants to go on living, not be blotted out of existence.[35]

With this in mind, we can re-assess Quentin's thoughts about his Harvard classmate, Gerald Bland. As much as he may despise and satirize Bland, there is the same mix of admiration and envy in his view of him as there is in his view of Spoade. Standing on the bridge where he will later commit suicide, he watches Bland row up the Charles

[35] Faulkner himself claimed that there was no deliberate symbolism behind the shadow but suggested that it was "foreknowledge of his [Quentin's] own death" (*A Critical Casebook* 22).

River: “The shell was a speck now, the oars catching the sun in spaced glints, as if the hull were winking itself along him along” (*TSTF* 92). Due to his athletic physicality and way with women and the fact that he does not have a sister, Quentin associates Bland with the men with whom he vies for Caddy’s affections: “What picture of Gerald I to be one the *Dalton Ames oh asbestos Quentin has shot* [Herbert Head]” (*TSTF* 105). Faulkner critics have of course noted this association. Bleikasten argues that Ames and Bland “are to some extent father figures [to Quentin]: in their ability to seduce and dominate, their sexual potency, physical strength, and sporting prowess … they embody alike the ideal of *mastery* which Quentin pretends to despise because it is out of his reach” (*TMSF* 109; emphasis original). Mark Spilka also claims that the “blackguards Ames and Bland are linked with timeless values, and there are no wires attached to them. … Quentin makes the implied connection himself, recognizing in the modern scoundrel his own ideal” (“Quentin Compson’s Universal Grief” 465). But just as it shapes his perception of his shadow, Quentin’s experience of mourning is what motivates his idealization of Bland. He admires him specifically because, in his fluid movement on the water, Bland appears to be free from the violence that grips Quentin’s mind and body. This does not mean, however, that he has no wires attached to him but that he does not seem to be “dragged” by them in the way Quentin constantly is. For example, after being dragged entirely into the past for almost four pages by one of his wires, Quentin watches Bland “still pulling upstream majestical in the face of god gods” (*TSTF* 111). It is thus not time that Bland’s rowing apparently transcends but the turbulent force of mourning. While Quentin is pulled apart by the alterity to which his mourning binds him, Bland maintains “a steady and measured pull and recover that partook of inertia itself” (*TSTF* 121). Quentin’s

experience of the former is the reason why the latter has such a majestic quality. If Bland deserves adulation, then, it is not because Quentin sees him as a god external to time's flux[36] but because he is able to row "solemnly up the glinting afternoon," whereas Quentin struggles to stay afloat in it (*TSTF* 111). Rather than a desire for timelessness, as Spilka contends, such adulation also implies a desire to be liberated from his mourning and regain the autonomy it has taken from him.

Such a reassessment can be applied, as well, to Quentin's view of the seagull and the trout. Both have traditionally been read as images of eternity at which Quentin gazes with yearning desire. For example, in an established reading of his character, François L. Pitavy argues that "[t]he seagull's wings are a figure of the transcendence of time" and that "[l]ike the seagull, [the trout] represents in its suspension a perfect, and perfectly inaccessible, modality of existence" ("Through the Poet's Eye" 88-89). According to Pitavy, Quentin wants access to this modality *because* he is "condemned" by time ("Through the Poet's Eye" 88). In the same way, Stephen M. Ross and Noel Polk's insightful commentary on the novel claims that the "fish holding steady in the current echoes the gull holding still in the air 'on an invisible wire attached through space dragged' …both are images of stasis that Quentin finds attractive as he yearns to escape the flux of event and time" (*Reading Faulkner* 103). But these are images of relative equilibrium, not of complete liberation or total stasis. They are not out of this world. The seagull is "motionless in midair" but still seems to be bound by "an invisible wire" to "two masts" (*TSTF* 89). While it is motionless here, Quentin imagines the bird being "dragged" along the wire "through space" elsewhere (*TSTF* 104). Analogously, although

[36] Pitavy argues that "[d]eified, eternal, Gerald Bland becomes a solar figure…" ("Through the Poet's Eyes" 89).

the trout appears "delicate and motionless," it still "waver[s] delicately to the motion of the water" (*TSTF* 117). What he finds attractive about both, then, is their ability to reach such an equilibrium *in* space and time, not beyond it. Ross and Polk acknowledge this point to some extent but assume that it "reflects Quentin's desire to escape time and motion—to escape life itself—into some pure, still, and safe realm where nothing will change" (*Reading Faulkner* 55). Once more, however, rather than a desire to escape life altogether, these images imply a desire to escape the physical disequilibrium in which Quentin's bond to Caddy leaves him. This is why he is drawn to living things that *embody* freedom and not religious symbols of eternity and the afterlife.

The force of this disequilibrium is also what animates both Quentin's hypersensitivity to water and his hydrophilia. He frequently "smells" or "feels" water "running swift and peaceful," especially as the day wanes and he gets closer to his suicide (*TSTF* 135). But his rapport with water should not be taken as an urge for the quiescence of death. For example, the reason why he nostalgically recalls once riding a train "through rushing gaps and along ledges where movement was *only* a laboring sound of the exhaust and groaning wheels" is because it was a time when "movement" seemed to be "only" something outside of himself (*TSTF* 88; my emphasis). Now that the "surging" is so pervasively internal to himself, however, he never has a moment's peace from movement. Just moments later, he recalls how his insides would move when he remembered the South and when school was let out; how he used to "*mov*[e] *sitting still*" with Natalie, a childhood friend; and how "*my bowels moved for thee* [Caddy]" (*TSTF* 88; emphasis original). The other movements revolve around this last one, which must still vibrate within him. But if such a movement once brought Quentin pleasure, the

alterity from which it springs suddenly floods him with pain: "*One minute she was standing in the door. Benjy. Bellowing"* (*TSTF* 88; emphasis original). There is a sense that the memory of Benjy's bellowing—a sound that continually haunts Quentin—shakes the very walls of his mind, signifying as it does the loss of Caddy's virginity. It overtakes him more intensely later: "*one minute she was standing in the door the next minute he was pulling at her dress and bellowing his voice hammered back and forth between the walls in waves ... his voice hammering back and forth as though its own momentum would not let it stop as though there were no place for it in silence bellowing*" (*TSTF* 124; emphasis original). The unstoppable "momentum" of these "waves," however, is not merely psychic in nature but also something that Quentin feels "hammering [his whole body] back and forth." It is because of this turbulence that things like the seagull and "the ship … moving without visible means" are so comforting (*TSTF* 89). He yearns, under its influence, for the peacefulness of water, of "healing out to the sea and the caverns and the grottoes of the sea" (*TSTF* 90). As with the images discussed above, he is thus pulled toward the sea by the mourning working on him. Yet the sea, also like these images, is not completely quiescent but rather swift *and* peaceful. While he will ultimately choose to die in it, Quentin seeks solace from something that still runs with life.

Mourning is the undercurrent that shapes all of Quentin's idealizations. Throughout the day, he waxes nostalgic for the South, particularly the African Americans around whom he grew up. He remembers riding a train "that morning in Virginia" and seeing "a nigger on a mule … waiting for the train to move" (*TSTF* 86). Although he does not know the man, his "shabby and motionless and unimpatient" manner reminds Quentin of home and makes him realize how much he "had missed Roskus and Dilsey

and them" (*TSTF* 86-87). His subsequent thoughts on African Americans are racist and condescending but are nevertheless meant to emphasize "that quality about them" he admires, namely, "of shabby and timeless patience, of static serenity" (*TSTF* 87). According to Spilka, Quentin views this quality as "the one valid form of timelessness in the modern South" ("Quentin's Universal Grief" 459). But while Quentin views the man on the mule in terms of permanence and timelessness, there is nothing permanent or timeless about him. Rather, what makes him attractive to Quentin is his seeming ability to live carelessly *within* time, as if nothing could ever trouble or move him. As Quentin himself recalls, with "his head wrapped in a piece of blanket," the man "sat straddle" on "a gaunt rabbit of a mule," without a saddle, and "his feet dangled almost to the ground" (*TSTF* 86-87). Quentin cannot reach such a state of apparent detachment not because he is white or simply in time but because mourning keeps him in a state of attachment, both mentally and physically. Hence, if he desires the "static serenity" that this man, and African Americans more generally, embodies for him, it is not a serenity beyond time altogether but beyond the turmoil of loss.

The same desire is at work in his memory of listening to Louis Hatcher's voice with Versh: "And we'd sit in the dry leaves that whispered a little with the slow respiration of our waiting and with the slow breathing of the earth and the windless October, the rank smell of the lantern fouling the brittle air, listening to the dogs and to the echo of Louis' voice dying away" (*TSTF* 115). The "slow respiration" and "slow breathing" he experienced then are in direct opposition to the feeling of suffocation with which he struggles now. These lines may express a problematic longing to return to childhood but not to escape time. Rather, Quentin longs for a time not only before "the

odor of honeysuckle [got] all mixed up [in it]" but also when he could breathe easily, not "so hard" (*TSTF* 128, 156). Yet Pitavy interprets this memory as expressing a desire for eternity. In reference to Hatcher, he observes that his "conduct [is] of a man who has *all the time*, and thereby transcends the fretful agitation of the common run of the people," which is why Quentin admires him ("Through the Poet's Eye" 90; emphasis original). But Quentin's desire to transcend such "fretful agitation" is precipitated by a desire to attain Hatcher's particular mode of existence—not non-existence.

Many of the memories that constitute Quentin's mourning exacerbate his feeling of physical impotence in relation to it. He is especially haunted by the fact that he was unable to prevent losing Caddy to the world, not merely that he lost her. For example, there is the memory of when he breaks his leg but still tries to ward off possible threats to her "honor." It is his first memory of an outsider coming between them and him not being fully able to stop it: "*...He came along the fence every morning with a basket toward the kitchen dragging a stick along the fence every morning I dragged myself to the window cast and all and laid for him with a piece of coal*" (*TSTF* 113; emphasis original). At another point, he again recalls the night Caddy lost her virginity. The descriptive details that come back to him show how helplessly smothered he felt at the time: "*A face reproachful tearful an odor of camphor and of tears a voice weeping steadily and softly beyond the twilit door the twilight-colored smell of honeysuckle*" (*TSTF* 95; emphasis original). That these details return in an unpunctuated, disordered manner underscores that this feeling still reverberates violently within him. The same sense of helplessness pervades his memory of the weekend Mrs. Compson took Caddy to French Lick to meet potential suitors, which he equates with an animal being lured to its death. Despite his

misery, he could do nothing but listen to their departure: "*Bringing empty trunks down the attic stairs they sounded like coffins French lick. Found not death at the salt lick*" (*TSTF* 95; emphasis original). Such helplessness can be felt, too, when he remembers the car ride with Caddy, Mrs. Compson, and Herbert Head before the wedding. In retrospect, he is obsessed by the fact that she did not look at him: "*She wouldn't look at me ... wouldn't look at me ... She wouldn't look at me soft stubborn jaw-angle not back-looking*" (*TSTF* 95; emphasis original). Whatever her reason for not looking back, Quentin remembers it as further evidence of his inability to stop the widening breach between them. Finally, there is the conversation they have before she gets married when he attempts to close that breach, only to be continually rejected: "*Dont touch me just promise ... Dont touch me dont touch me ...* Dont touch me … *Dont touch me*" (*TSTF* 112-113, 115; emphasis original). Just as he could not make Caddy look at him in the car, he could not make her accept his touch here. Later, he will recall Caddy telling him, after he asks her if she loves those she has been with, that "[w]*hen they touched me I died*" (*TSTF* 149; emphasis original).

But while Quentin's memories show a desire to possess Caddy, they also show that it is she, in her alterity, who has always (dis)possessed him, especially now that he considers her lost. It is not that he wants to remember all the times he failed to master her, but his mourning brings them back because they are part of a bond that precedes and exceeds his subjective powers. This is not to say that he does not want the bond itself but that he cannot control how the alterity it opens him to affects his mind and body. Such a claim casts doubt on the argument that Quentin suffers from a clear-cut case of melancholia, which assumes that he himself clings to the lost object through "a

narcissistic identification" with it (Bleikasten 116). Although Quentin certainly idealizes Caddy to uphold his notion of honor, it is much more evident that the object clings to him. His interactions with the Italian girl, a representative of "Little Sister Death," exemplify this passive dynamic, albeit in a different register. Despite telling her "goodbye" four times and even running away from her "fast, not looking back," he cannot escape the girl's presence (*TSTF* 129-133). She continues to cling to him no matter what he does, like a shadow, "mov[ing] along just under [his] elbow" (*TSTF* 132).

Similarly, Quentin cannot escape remembering how he could never force Caddy to submit to his will. There is the memory of when he tries to make her care about what he did with Natalie: "*You know what I was doing? She turned her back I went around in front of her ... I was hugging her that's what I was doing. She turned her back I went around in front of her. I was hugging her I tell you*" (*TSTF* 137; emphasis original). After Caddy tells him "I dont give a damn what you were doing," he gets physical with her: "*You dont you don't I'll make you I'll make you give a damn. She hit my hands away I smeared mud on her with the other hand*" (*TSTF* 138; emphasis original). The last thing he recalls from this time is not them lying together "in the wet grass panting" but him still being unable to make her care: "*I told you I'd would make you* / *I dont give a goddam what you do*" (*TSTF* 138-139; emphasis original). There is also the memory of when he slaps her for kissing a boy and not being sorry about it: "*Red print of my hand coming up through her face like turning a light on under your hand her eyes going bright*" (*TSTF* 132; emphasis original). When she remains defiant, he tries to beat her into submission: "*…you will will you now I guess you say calf rope. My red hand coming up out of her face. What do you think of that scouring her head into the. Grass sticks criss-crossed into*

the flesh tingling scouring her head. Say calf rope say it" (*TSTF* 134; emphasis original). Like the previous one, however, this memory ends with Caddy refusing to submit: "*I didnt kiss a dirty girl like Natalie anyway*" (*TSTF* 134; emphasis original). Lastly, there is the memory of his and Caddy's conversation at the branch the previous summer. After he fails to carry out his proposed murder-suicide, Caddy gets up and starts walking toward where she is going to meet Ames. Quentin tries to slow her down by bringing her to where Nancy's bones lie and when this does not work, he "got in front of her again" and "held her": "Im stronger than you / she was motionless hard unyielding but still / I wont fight stop youd better stop / Caddy dont Caddy / it wont do any good dont you know it wont let me go" (*TSTF* 154). Caddy does not fight back here because she knows that she does not have to. Realizing that he cannot stop her, Quentin lets her go and "she moved back went around me on toward the trees" (*TSTF* 154).

As disturbing as his violence toward Caddy is, it is Quentin who is being assaulted in the very experience of its recall. He is the one who is powerless against the memory of his own powerlessness against her. The force of this assault is why he becomes aware of tricking his shadow again and starts to make his way toward the river with the girl: "*I didnt kiss a dirty girl like Natalie anyway* The wall went into the shadow, and then my shadow, I had tricked it again. I had forgot about the river curving along the road. I climbed the wall. And then she watched me jump down, …" (*TSTF* 134). It is also at this time that he starts to "feel" water, "dark and still and swift," as his inner turbulence physically draws him toward it (*TSTF* 138). When they get to the river, he is submerged in the Natalie memory and tells the girl that he wished that he could go for a swim (*TSTF* 137). The deepest motivation for desiring water here is not to purify himself of sexual

guilt, as it may appear, but to free himself from Caddy's suffocating hold on him. In a sense, then, he is the one ready to say "calf rope" now.

The command Quentin's mourning has over his body, not just his mind, is therefore profound. Not long after being cleared for "meditated criminal assault," he sees the little girl once more and starts laughing uncontrollably just as he had when he was arrested. Still unable to escape "her unwinking gaze … I began to laugh again. I could feel it in my throat and I looked off into the trees where the afternoon slanted, thinking of afternoon and of the bird and the boys in swimming. But still I couldn't stop it and then I knew that if I tried too hard to stop it I'd be crying" (*TSTF* 147). In this estrangement between mind and body, something masquerading as laughter is working upon Quentin that he cannot control, although he tries, and that instead controls him. He then begins to lose command of his narrative and is increasingly flooded not only by memories but, more profoundly, by the "waves of honeysuckle" gripping his memory (*TSTF* 152). His subsequent attack on Bland is partly motivated by the fact that his memories fill him with a sense of physical impotence. He remembers that he was *not* stronger than Caddy after all and how Ames, in contrast, "held her in one arm like she was no bigger than a child" (*TSTF* 155). But the attack is also motivated by being unable to take the overwhelming sensuality of these memories. He cannot tolerate recalling "*the secret surges the breathing locked drinking the wild breath the Yes Yes yes*;" the way Caddy sat as she talked about Ames, "clasping her wet knees her face tilted back in the gray light;" the "thudding" of her chest and the "hammering" of her heart when he asked her if she loved Ames; how she looked past him as they talked and her heart "going firm and slow now not hammering" when he held the knife to her throat; the "smell of her damp clothes

feeling her there;" and how "all smells and sounds of night seemed to have been crowded down like under a slack tent especially the honeysuckle it had got my breathing it was on her face and throat like paint her blood pounded against my hand I was leaning on my other arm it began to jerk and jump and I had to pant to get any air at all out of that thick gray honeysuckle" (*TSTF* 149-153; emphasis original). Hitting Bland is thus both another effect of mourning working through him and an attempt to stifle that work. Just as he ran from the house on the night Caddy lost her virginity (*TSTF* 149) and ran after leaving her with Ames (*TSTF* 156), he feels the need to do something here to cease the thudding and hammering inside of himself, to escape remembering the sensation of honeysuckle "on the flesh" (*TSTF* 150).

Quentin's attempt at liberation fails, but the point is that he makes it. Although the novel's Appendix claims that he loves death "above all," this attempt is not a fight to get out of life but to stay in it (*TSTF* 331). Soon afterward, he begins to feel "as if I and not light were changing, decreasing, though even when the road ran into trees you could have read a newspaper" (*TSTF* 168). This sense of physically dwindling is not an effect of time but of life rapidly slipping away from him. He realizes now that death is the only way out of mourning. His ensuing meditation on how "all stable things had become shadowy paradoxical … without relevance inherent themselves with the denial of significance they should have affirmed" has been read as revealing a life-denying nihilism (*TSTF* 170).[37] Such a reading, however, overlooks the fact that his feeling of instability here springs not only from knowing that his death is approaching but also from drowning within himself. Indeed, a few pages later, he remembers a time when "[a]s soon as I turned off the light

[37] For example, Ross and Polk claim that this passage suggests Quentin's "sense that life has no value" (*Reading Faulkner* 138).

and tried to go to sleep it [the honeysuckle] would begin to come into the room in waves building and building up until I would have to pant to get any air at all out of it until I would have to get up and feel my way like when I was a little boy [downstairs for a glass of water]" (*TSTF* 173). That he then goes directly to the dormitory bathroom for water further demonstrates that those waves are still "building up" inside of him—that he is still panting for "any air at all." This building up is what makes the peace of non-being so appealing. But it is telling that as he thinks about "the peacefullest words. … *Non fui. Sum. Fui. Non sum*," his thoughts become increasingly fragmented and he needs a "drink" (*TSTF* 174; emphasis original). The death anxiety that marks these lines is also discernible in how he feels the need to brush his teeth and hair before leaving to commit suicide.

Of all the explanations critics have given for Quentin's suicide, revolting against his mourning has not been one. Rather, it has often been argued that he fears that what he feels for Caddy is "temporary," as his father suggests, and hence seeks to avoid this reality through death (*TSTF* 177). For example, in a chapter titled "Rage against Time," Peter Swiggart observes, "[b]oth his attempted incest and his successful suicide are efforts to preserve his despair and to render it permanently meaningful" (*The Art of Faulkner's Novel* 100). But what Quentin wants in death is to attain a hell "beyond" it where he and Caddy can exist in a state of pure oneness (*TSTF* 116). Far from eternalizing his despair, such a state would end it. I have maintained, however, that his experience of mourning—of being violated and altered by his lost object—gives rise to another desire in him. As we have seen, this experience makes him feel not just mentally but, in particular, physically vulnerable. It is that sensation, not "the nausea of matter" or

"the abhorred carnal self," from which he desires liberation (Bleikasten 140). The death he chooses is his final attempt to achieve it, but he is forced to renounce his desire for life in the process.

III.

As different as Jason is from his two brothers, he is just as dictated by mourning as they are. But he desires to be self-sufficient and at least wants to believe that he is, saying numerous times that "I can stand on my own two feet like I always have" (*TSTF* 206). That he must repeat this claim so often, however, betrays the doubt it suppresses. Furthermore, he resents virtually everyone around him, and his section is rampant with misogyny, anti-Semitism, racism, class resentment, and a general cynicism. As the Appendix puts it: "to him [Jason] all the rest of the town and the world and the human race too except himself were Compsons, inexplicable yet quite predictable in that they were in no sense whatever to be trusted" (*TSTF* 338). But Jason does not reject that he is a Compson. Despite what his mother says about him being a true Bascomb, he never identifies himself as one, and he explicitly acknowledges Miss Quentin as his niece. Nevertheless, what he fears above all is the supposedly corrupting influence of the Compson blood:

> And there I was, without any hat, looking like I was crazy too. Like a man would naturally think, one of them is crazy and another one drowned himself and the other one was turned out into the street by her husband, what's the reason the rest of them are not crazy too. All the time I could see them watching me like a hawk, waiting for a chance to say Well I'm not surprise I expected it all the time the whole family's crazy. (*TSTF* 232-233)

He blames the Compson blood for the lost bank job that obsesses him in the novel's final two sections. This job was his chance to sit at "a mahogany desk," to "get along," and to not be "tied down in a town like this" (*TSTF* 228). More importantly, however, it seemed to be an opportunity to free himself from what he despairingly calls "the precedent I've been set" and to achieve self-sufficiency (*TSTF* 235). When he loses the job, Jason also loses the possibility of this freedom and realizes that he is inescapably tied to that precedent. As the embodiment of this loss, he sees in Miss Quentin the blood that made his brothers, father, and sister "crazy" and that threatens him. "Like I say you cant do anything with a woman like that, if she's got it in her" he remarks of his niece, "If it's in her blood, you cant do anything with her" (*TSTF* 232).[38] He comments at another time: "Blood, I says, governors and generals. It's a damn good thing we never had any kings and presidents; we'd all be down there at Jackson chasing butterflies" (*TSTF* 230). His violence toward Miss Quentin, then, is not so much a response to the lost job but more so to the physical sense of vulnerability it exposes in him. As the deepest effect of his loss—that is, of its alterity working on him from within—I will argue that this sense constitutes the force of mourning that Miss Quentin incites by her mere presence. He attempts to master it by trying to "control" her and thereby reassert his authority over himself.

Because Miss Quentin epitomizes, for Jason, the corruption he fears in himself, almost everything she does serves to intensify this fear, which tends to manifest as anger. Her physical appearance especially raises his ire: "so I stood there and watched her [Miss Quentin] go past, with her face painted up like a dam clown's and her hair all gummed and twisted and a dress that if a woman had come out doors even on Gayoso or Beale

[38] As far as where Jason got this belief, one needs to look no further than at his mother. "'It's in the blood,' she tells Dilsey, "'Like uncle, like niece. Or mother'" (TSTF 374).

street when I was a young fellow with no more than that to cover her legs and behind, she'd been thrown in jail" (*TSTF* 232). He does not oppose how she presents herself merely out of a notion of honor or propriety but rather because he views it as evidence of the Compson blood to which he cannot take feeling exposed. It is thus not fortuitous that he begins worrying "if I'm crazy too" almost immediately after this and is haunted by the image of his father sitting "all day with the decanter I could see the bottom of his nightshirt and his bare legs and hear the decanter clinking" (*TSTF* 233). Nor is it fortuitous that he then becomes insecure about his masculinity: "and Lorraine telling them he [Jason] may not drink but if you dont believe he's a man I can tell you how to find out" (*TSTF* 233). The feeling of physical exposure to something beyond his power undermines all his claims to self-sufficiency.

This feeling is precisely what Jason tries to subdue when he pursues Miss Quentin and the man in the red tie. In the third section, it starts to overtake him upon seeing "that red tie" and drives him after them, even into the woods (*TSTF* 238). He views her gallivanting with the showman as more evidence of a corruption that may be internal to himself. The tie is a painful reminder of this corruption, and he tells us that when "I recognised her [Miss Quentin's] face looking back through the window [of the showman's car]. … I saw red" (*TSTF* 238). Seeing red is not simply a matter of him getting angry but rather a consequence of being further infiltrated by the fear with which Miss Quentin fills him here. The former is in fact a reaction to the latter. As he falls more deeply into the grip of what he is trying to get a grip on, he can feel his passivity to it surging through his body. But Jason never admits this to himself, since that would mean acknowledging what he does everything in his power to deny. Moments later, he thinks:

"Like I say blood always tells. If you've got blood like that in you, you'll do anything" (*TSTF* 238). But he cannot leave it at that and go back to work. Although he rationalizes at one point that "whatever claim you believe she has on you has already been discharged" and thinks at another that "far as I'm concerned, let her go to hell as fast as she pleases and the sooner the better," he nevertheless continues to drive on after them (*TSTF* 238-239). The Appendix describes Jason as "logical rational contained," but reason is not what is primarily influencing him here (*TSTF* 338). Rather, he is desperate to overcome the feeling that is physically overcoming both him and his reason.[39]

In this way, while Jason's headache is directly linked to his car's gasoline, it can also be read as a symptom of his mourning: "It felt like somebody was inside with a hammer, beating on it [his head]" (*TSTF* 239). Even after parking the car and going into the woods, "with every step [it felt] like somebody was walking along behind me, hitting me on the head with a club" (*TSTF* 240). As he struggles more and more to find them, his headache gets progressively worse, as if his sense of exposure were physically consuming him: "Then I couldn't tell just how far I was, so I'd have to stop and listen, and then with my legs not using so much blood, it all would go into my head like it would explode any minute" (*TSTF* 240). He tells himself in exasperation, "let her lay out all day and all night with everything in town that wears pants, what do I care," but, again, he still pursues Miss Quentin and the showman, unable to tolerate the powerlessness he feels in relation to her (*TSTF* 241). Hence, it is not surprising that he then tries to make up for his

[39] To be sure, there are other possible reasons why Jason continues to chase them. He himself claims that he objects to Miss Quentin's behavior because "she hasn't even got enough consideration for her own family" (*TSTF* 240). He also insinuates that he is defending his family's honor against the man in the red tie, who "thinks he can run the woods with my niece" (*TSTF* 241). Finally, there is an implication that Jason is sexually attracted to Miss Quentin, and his relationship with her in many ways resembles Quentin's relationship with Caddy. In my view, however, there is more textual evidence to suggest that another dynamic is at work in him.

lost authority in the only way he can here—through words: "…I'll show them something about hell I says, and you too. I'll make him think that dam red tie is the latch string to hell, if he thinks can run the woods with my niece" (*TSTF* 241).[40] But this attempt to prop himself up does not assuage the fear that is whelming him: "With the sun and all in my eyes and my blood going so I kept thinking every time my head would go on and burst and get it over with, with briers and things grabbing at me" (*TSTF* 241). Ultimately, he fails to see the futility of what he is doing because all he sees, and feels, is red.

That Miss Quentin makes Jason feel so radically vulnerable—exposed to something within himself rather than from the outside—explains his rough and overbearing treatment of her. In the opening scene of section three, he convinces his mother "to turn her over to [him]" (*TSTF* 182). Mrs. Compson initially laments that "'the school authorities think that I have no control over her [Miss Quentin], that I cant—'" and he cuts her off: "Well, … You cant, can you? You never have tried to do anything with her'" (*TSTF* 180). To have control over his niece is precisely what Jason wants: "'If you want me to control her, just say so and keep your hands off'" (*TSTF* 181). Such control, however, entails keeping *his* hands on her and in a violent way: "'Remember she's your own flesh and blood,' she says. / 'Sure,' I says, 'that's just what I'm thinking of—flesh. And a little blood too, if I had my way'" (*TSTF* 181).

Blood is indeed what Jason is thinking of here. His desire to control Miss Quentin dissimulates a deeper desire to control the mourning she unleashes in him. He cannot manhandle his fear of what he sees in her, but he can try to manhandle her: "I grabbed

[40] Jason tries to counter his feeling of being undermined in other ways. He says to himself that "my people owned slaves here when you all were running little shirt tail country stores and farming land no nigger would look at on shares" and that "I have to work ten hours a day to support a kitchen full of niggers in the style they're accustomed to and send them to the show" (*TSTF* 239).

her by the arm. She dropped the cup. It broke on the floor and she jerked back, looking at me, but I held her arm" (*TSTF* 183). Holding Miss Quentin "like a wildcat" and dragging her through the house may give him a sense of authority, but his need to do so springs from an anterior sense of his authority being undermined (*TSTF* 183-184). Physically overpowering her is therefore a response to being physically overpowered himself. This is why he feels the need to emphasize his hold on her, her helplessness against him, and that he is not someone whose authority she can defy: "She fought, but I held her. … 'I'll show you,' I says. 'You can scare an old woman off, but I'll show you who's got hold of you now.' I held her with one hand, then she quit fighting and watched me, her eyes getting wide and black" (*TSTF* 184). Holding her, however, is not enough to displace his vulnerability, so he turns to a more violent means, telling her "[y]ou wait until I get this belt out and I'll show you" as he pulls it out (*TSTF* 185). After Dilsey stops him, he has to reaffirm his authority once more: "'All right, … We'll just put this off a while. But dont think you can run it over me. I'm not an old woman, nor an old half dead nigger, either. You dam little slut'" (*TSTF* 185). But this reaffirmation is still not enough, so he insists on taking her to school. "I've started this thing," he says to Dilsey, "and I'm going through with it" (*TSTF* 186). When Miss Quentin begins to tear her dress off in the car to prove a point against him, he can take it no more than when she later goes off with the showman. He "grabbed her hands," telling himself that "[i]t made me so mad for a minute it kind of blinded me" (*TSTF* 188). As he will later, Jason is seeing red.

Jason's cruelty toward Caddy, if not his general misogyny, is another way he displaces his vulnerability, since it gives him power over her and Miss Quentin. Everything he abhors in his niece he views as originating in his sister. Accordingly, he

gains as much satisfaction from controlling Caddy as he does Miss Quentin. In one of his memories, he recalls Caddy confronting him after he scams her out of reuniting with her daughter. He charges her one hundred dollars to see Miss Quentin and then gives her the briefest of glimpses "through a hack window" (*TSTF* 208). At the time, he enjoyed watching Caddy impotently squirm in frustration and relishes the memory of it now, recounting it in detail[41]:

> … I couldn't see her face much. But I could feel her looking at me. When we were little when she'd get mad and couldn't do anything about it her upper lip would begin to jump. Everytime it jumped it would leave a little more of her teeth showing, and all the time she'd be as still as a post, not a muscle moving except her lip jerking higher and higher up her teeth. (*TSTF* 208)

But although he observes how "after that she behaved pretty well," the power dynamic of the conversation gradually changes (*TSTF* 208). He continues to deliberately enrage her because he knows that she can do nothing about it. As she gets increasingly upset, however, he notes her behavior and reveals his growing apprehension: "She acted for a minute like some kind of a toy that's wound up too tight and about to burst all to pieces" (*TSTF* 209). For Jason, such behavior is evidence of what Caddy says next: "'Oh, I'm crazy, … I'm insane" (*TSTF* 209). When he claims that "you haven't got anything at stake" in their transaction, oblivious to the fact that her own child is at stake, Caddy becomes unhinged: "'No,' she says, then she begun to laugh and to try to hold it back all

[41] As the money order scene demonstrates, Jason also enjoys watching Miss Quentin squirm and the concomitant authority it gives him: "She was looking at me. Then all of sudden she quit looking at me without moving her eyes at all. I knew she was going to lie. … Her hands were sort of twisting. I could watch her trying to think of a lie to tell. … She just stood there, with her hands working against her dress. … She stood there, looking at the floor, kind of mumbling to herself. … She took the pen, but instead of signing it she just stood there with her head bent and the pen shaking in her hand. Just like her mother. 'Oh, God,' she says, 'oh, God'" (*TSTF* 214-215).

at the same time. 'No. I have nothing at stake,' she says, making that noise, putting her hands to her mouth. 'Nuh-nuh-nothing,' she says" (*TSTF* 209-210). Here, Caddy is coming to terms with the fact that she will never get her daughter back because her family considers her "crazy, … insane" and that she is losing her to a person who will never "be kind to her" or "take care of her" (*TSTF* 209). She is thus being physically taken over by the force of mourning and losing control of her body, as we saw happen with Rider and Quentin earlier. But Jason just sees it as more of the Compson precedent showing itself and recoils from her for that very reason: "Here,' I says, 'Stop that!' / 'I'm tr-trying to,' she says, holding her hands over her mouth. 'Oh God, oh God'" (*TSTF* 210). Unable to tolerate his exposure to it, "feeling her eyes almost like they were touching my face," he quickly gives into her pleading but not without necessarily reasserting his authority: "'If I send checks for her to you, … you'll give them to her? … You won't tell? You'll see that she has things like other girls?' / 'Sure,' I says, 'As long as you behave and do like I tell you'" (*TSTF* 210).

Jason experiences his deepest vulnerability, however, when he pursues Miss Quentin and the showman again in the final section after she takes back the money that he had taken from her for years.[42] According to the narrator, "[o]f his niece he did not think at all, nor of the arbitrary valuation of the money. Neither of them had had entity or individuality for him for ten years; together they merely symbolised the job in the bank of which he had been deprived before he ever got it" (*TSTF* 306). But what Jason tells the sheriff shortly before this demonstrates that his niece does have individuality to him—a

[42] This point deepens Linda Wagner-Martin's claim that "Jason's desperate search for the two is prompted not so much by the loss of the money … but because 'the whole world would know that he, Jason Compson, had been robbed by Quentin, his niece, a bitch.' A woman" ("Jason Compson: The Demands of Honor" 264). My reading of Jason's character, however, seeks to demonstrate that, on the deepest level, he is driven by something other than honor.

corrupt one: "'I wouldn't lay my hand on her. The bitch that cost me a job, … that killed my father and is shortening my mother's life every day and made my name a laughing stock in the town. I wont do anything to her'" (*TSTF* 304). It is also not the lost job itself against which he is revolting, as mentioned earlier, but the feeling of helplessness that her individuality has inflicted upon him here. After the sheriff refuses to help, Jason tells him that "I wont be helpless," but he knows that he is: "He looked at the sky, thinking about rain, about the slick clay roads, himself stalled somewhere miles from town" (*TSTF* 304-305). Such helplessness inspires the subsequent fantasy "of himself, his file of soldiers with the manacled sheriff in the rear, dragging Omnipotence down from his throne, if necessary" (*TSTF* 306). It is evident, as well, when, to take his mind off his headache, he "imagined himself in bed with [Lorraine], only he was just lying beside her, pleading with her to help him" (*TSTF* 307). As with the earlier chase, however, only getting a hold of Miss Quentin will appease this feeling: "[he was] thinking … of the embattled legions of both hell and heaven through which he tore his way and put his hands at last on his fleeing niece" (*TSTF* 306).

But Jason nevertheless understands that he is heading toward an "impending disaster; he could almost smell it, feel it above the throbbing of his head" (*TSTF* 308). Even if he can put his hands on Miss Quentin and get the money back, he will not be able to entirely negate his exposure to what she embodies to him. The farther he chases her, in fact, the more pervasive his sense of that exposure becomes, which is again indicated by his worsening headache. He cannot help, however, that the very thing he fears drives him forward. Significantly, it is only after he thinks about "his fleeing niece" that he first becomes aware that his head hurts: "It seemed that he could feel the prolonged blow of it

sinking through his skull, and suddenly with an old premonition he clapped the brakes on and stopped and sat perfectly still" (*TSTF* 306). The word "it" is left vague here but is elucidated a few pages later: "He was trying to breathe shallowly, so that the blood would not beat so in his skull" (*TSTF* 308). Following his confrontation with "the fatal, furious old man," Jason is obsessed with whether he is bleeding, as if he is afraid of being contaminated by what is throbbing in his head (*TSTF* 310). As ever, he is seeing red. But that he then asks for and accepts help from two African-American boys, as someone who so frequently insists on being self-sufficient, suggests that his mourning has perhaps had a transformative effect on him, if only momentarily (*TSTF* 312).

IV.

Of the Compsons, Arthur F. Kinney observes that "[w]hat their blood, their bloodline, their heredity, lacked was the realization of grace in the Christian's inherited recollection of the blood of the Lamb" (*Critical Essays* 7). Reverend Shegog's sermon, according to Kinney, serves to articulate the meaning of this realization: "The swinging chariots of Egypt, the dying generations of the past, even the poverty of then and now, he tells the faithful flock before him, are washed clean by Christ's blood and are eradicated in an annealment by which doom cracks … and the whole community of believers take their own chariots past the golden horns of angels to the glory of heaven and life everlasting" (*Critical Essays* 4). Reverend Shegog uses the word "annealment" in a way that implies reconciliation, but, more technically, annealing refers to a process whereby the internal stresses of glass or metal are removed through heating and cooling. Kinney contrasts the Compsons, whose lives painfully lack the Christian vision of annealment, with Dilsey, whose faith revolves around it. But while Reverend Shegog's sermon may be annealing,

as Kinney argues, Dilsey herself never experiences annealment. What is emphasized, rather, is her endurance in a life bereft of it.

Access is not given to Dilsey's stream-of-consciousness, but we can see that her faith does not enable her to overcome mourning. On the contrary, the one is inextricably bound up with the other: "Dilsey sat bolt upright, her hand on Ben's knee. Two tears slid down her fallen cheek, in and out of the myriad coruscations of immolation and abnegation and time" (*TSTF* 295). Far from the internal stress of those tears being eradicated, it has become permanently scarred into the lines of her "fallen cheek." Even after Shegog's sermon reaches its climax, Dilsey still "sat bolt upright beside [Benjy], crying rigidly and quietly in the annealment and the blood of the remembered Lamb" (*TSTF* 297). She continues to weep on the walk home, her tears running through the "sunken and deviant courses" they have forged upon her flesh (*TSTF* 297). To be sure, these may be tears of happiness at having "seed de power en de glory. … de first en de last," as Dilsey tells Frony (*TSTF* 297). Even so, however, the satisfaction she receives from that vision does not transcend mourning's bodily work but instead derives from it.

A kind of annealment, however, is performed elsewhere in the novel. In the fourth section, there is a radical change of form that eradicates the dominant form of the previous three sections. As Donald M. Kartiganer points out, "[f]rom the total immersion of the private monologue we move to the detached external view; from the confused and confusing versions of reality, we get finally an orderly, consistent portrait of the Compson family" ("Faulkner's Quest for Form" 635). Kartiganer goes on to contend, however, that "in this fourth attempt to tell the Compson story we are still faced with the problems of the first three, namely, a failure of the creation of a comprehensive form"

("Faulkner's Quest for Form" 636). For Kartiganer, then, the novel tries but fails to add up to "an encompassing vision of what we can accept as an essential 'supreme' reality" ("Faulkner's Quest for Form" 636). While noting its important differences from the earlier sections, Margaret Blanchard also shows that the narrator of the fourth section "never becomes omniscient" ("The Rhetoric of Communion" 126). Rather, she claims that "we emerge with a description of the speaker's perspective as limited, having no foreknowledge, no control over events, privileged access into one mind only, and much recourse to conjecture" ("The Rhetoric of Communion" 128).

These are trenchant readings, but they overlook what Faulkner attempts in this section. As he explains in his Introduction to the novel: "So I wrote Quentin's and Jason's sections, trying to clarify Benjy's. But I saw that I was merely temporizing; That I should have to get completely out of the book. I realised that there would be compensations, that in a sense I could then give a final turn to the screw and extract some ultimate distillation" (qtd. in *A Critical Casebook* 14). Regardless of whether a comprehensive, omniscient perspective is attained in the fourth section, the narrator pushes the plot forward in a relatively coherent manner, there is very little explicit mention or intrusion of the past, and there is no stream-of-consciousness whatsoever. Through the eradication of the latter, Faulkner tries to shield his narrative from the force of mourning that violates and works on the Compson brothers. Hence, it is this unruly force that he ultimately seeks to distill not necessarily out of the characters themselves but out of the flow of the narration. But why? In a letter to his agent, Faulkner clarified his preference for using italics instead of line breaks in the novel:

> But the main reason is, a break indicates an objective change in tempo, while the objective picture here should be a continuous whole, since the thought transference is subjective, i.e., in Ben's mind and not in the reader's eye. I think italics are necessary to establish for the reader Benjy's confusion; that unbroken-surfaced confusion of an idiot which is outwardly a dynamic and logical coherence. (qtd. in *A Critical Casebook* 3).

As this quote makes clear, for Faulkner, while his characters' subjective viewpoints are vulnerable to distortion, confusion, and disruption, the "continuous whole" that encompasses them is not. Individual lives are exposed to mourning's force but not the "dynamic and logical coherence" of life itself. The purity of this coherence or "objective picture," I claim, is what Faulkner aimed to achieve in what he thought would be "a final turn of the screw." It does not matter that subjective distortion, confusion, and disruption can still be found in the fourth section. Rather, what matters is that Faulkner attempts to rid the narrative of what whelmed and consumed it in the previous sections in order to approximate life as a dynamic, continuous movement that forms a whole. The expression of this notion of life, not the one that the Easter mass affirms, constitutes Faulkner's own revolt against mourning.

And yet, while there is very little explicit mention of the past and no stream-of-consciousness in the last section, Dilsey, Jason, and Benjy are still subject to mourning's tyrannical grip. Far from exorcising mourning, then, *The Sound and the Fury* remains caught in its force field. Indeed, the last section is pervaded by what its form is designed to overcome. Like Woolf and Joyce before him, Faulkner both adheres to and departs from a metaphysical tradition that desires to transcend what Henry Staten calls

"unmeasurable bereavement" (*Eros in Mourning* 5).[43] Instead of pursuing such transcendence in an ideal realm above and beyond life, Faulkner seeks to capture it within the perpetual dynamism of life as such. This endeavor does not involve, as Bleikasten argues, "restor[ing] the absolute presence of language to itself" but rather an effort to use language to its utmost to express life in its absolute presence (*TMSF* 205). In his reading of the Easter sermon, Bleikasten explains how it conveys the root meaning of religion or *religio* as "what binds man to man, man to God" (*TMSF* 201). The novel, however, yields another, perhaps deeper insight. What binds one to the other, and vice versa, is not a vision "beyond the confines of time and flesh" but a force that derives from precisely those confines (*TMSF* 201). In the final analysis, Faulkner desired liberation from this force, but although it was let loose in his novel, he lacked the power to master it.

[43] Staten links this tradition to Platonism, Stoicism, and Platonizing Christianity, claiming that "[t]here is in European intellectual history a strong, perhaps dominant tendency to transcend all merely mortal loves, loves that can be lost" (*Eros in Mourning* 1).

Conclusion

Modernism's Ethical Mourning?

In his Introduction to *PMLA*'s 1999 special issue on "Ethics and Literary Study," Lawrence Buell declared that "[e]thics has gained new resonance in literary studies during the past dozen years, even if it has not—at least yet—become the paradigm-defining concept that textuality was for the 1970s and historicism for the 1980s" ("In Pursuit of Ethics" 7). Writing in 2013, Dave Boothroyd observed that such a paradigm shift had in fact taken place: "Over the last twenty years, … we have witnessed an 'ethical turn' in the theorising of culture, society and politics, as well as of the arts and creative enterprise, … the concern with 'the ethical' has proliferated and territorialised both the academic disciplines and popular culture" (*Ethical Subjects in Contemporary Culture* 1). As Michael Eskin remarks, however, the ground for this critical turn was laid throughout the 1980s with works like Martha Nussbaum's "Flawed Crystals" (1983), J. Hillis Miller's *The Ethics of Reading* (1987), Wayne C. Booth's *The Company We Keep* (1988), and Tobin Siebers's *The Ethics of Criticism* (1988) ("The Double 'Turn'" 557). There were a number of other books that also contributed to it, including Richard Rorty's *Irony, Contingency, Solidarity* (1989), Simon Critchley's *The Ethics of Deconstruction* (1992), Dawn McCance's *Posts: Re Addressing the Ethical* (1996), Robert Eaglestone's *Ethical Criticism* (1997), Adam Zachary Newton's *Narrative Ethics* (1997), Jill Robbins' *Altered Reading: Levinas and Literature* (1999), and Derek Attridge's *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading* (2004). According to Eskin, writing in 2004, "[t]heir combined efforts have signaled what has come to be perceived and referred to as a 'turn to ethics' in literary studies and, conversely, a 'turn to literature' in (moral) philosophy" ("The Double

Turn" 557). But it was the philosophies of Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida that provided the most significant impetus for the "ethical turn" in literary studies. Buell describes Levinas as the "central theorist of the postpoststructuralist dispensation of turn-of-the-century literary-ethical inquiry" and credits Derrida for calling attention to his work as well as giving "new prominence to thinking about ethical responsibility for the other" ("The Pursuit of Ethics" 9). Although this turn appears to be on the wane today, the "ethics of alterity" remains one of the most important topoi in contemporary discourse. In what follows, however, I will argue that a certain thinking of alterity calls into question the very possibility of ethics, particularly in the context of loss.

The ethical turn has especially left its mark on the twenty-first century study of modernism and mourning.[44] Although certainly not the only motivating factor, 9/11 sparked this criticism's ongoing effort to come to terms with mourning and its ethico-political implications. The dominant thesis that runs through it is that we ought to resist consolation and sustain our bonds to lost others, since to sever them and move on would be an act of betrayal and injustice. [45] Patricia Rae's Introduction to *Modernism and Mourning* (2007) provides the most thorough articulation of this thesis. According to

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[44] For example, see Eng, David and David Kazanjian, editors. *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002, Durrant, Sam. *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning: J.M. Coetzee, Wilson Harris, and Toni Morrison.* Albany: SUNY Press, 2003, Ricciardi, Alessia. *The Ends of Mourning: Psychoanalysis, Literature, Film*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2003, Gilbert, Sandra. *Death's Door: Modern Dying and the Ways We Grieve*. New York City: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007, Clewell, Tammy. *Mourning, Modernism, Postmodernism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, Detloff, Madelyn. *The Persistence of Modernism: Loss and Mourning in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, Rosenthal, Lecia, *Mourning Modernism: Literature, Catastrophe, and the Politics of Consolation*. New York City: Fordham University Press, 2011. Hägglund, Martin. *Dying for Time: Proust, Woolf, Nabokov*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012. Bahun, Sanja. *Modernism and Melancholia: Writing as Countermourning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Gana, Nouri. *Signifying Loss: Toward a Poetics of Narrative Mourning*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2014.

[45] Tammy Clewell, whom I discuss below, captures this thesis in the final lines of her essay "Consolation Refused: Virginia Woolf, the Great War, and Modernist Mourning": "Woolf teaches us, finally, that only by refusing consolation and sustaining grief can we accept responsibility for the difficult task of performing private and public memory" (219).

Rae, modernist literature is characterized by a "resistance" to what Freud called the "work of mourning," which is a "painful, but ultimately healthy, process of severing the libidinal ties binding the mourner to the deceased" (*Modernism and Mourning* 13). Specifically, resistant mourning involves "a resistance to reconciliation, full-stop: a refusal to accept the acceptance of loss, whether through the severing and transference of libidinal ties or through the successful expansion of identity through introjection, or through any other kind of compensatory process" (*Modernism and Mourning* 16-17). Rae notes that this claim owes a debt to Jahan Ramazani's book *The Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney* (1994). "For Ramazani," she writes, "melancholia, or a general resistance to the normative 'work of mourning,' is what defines the modern poetic elegy. The modern elegist refuses to transcend or find redemption in loss and to move on to new objects of devotion" (*Modernism and Mourning* 14). But Rae also argues that Ramazani did not completely renounce Freud's theory of mourning, which has since been met, as she puts it, by "a profound and multifaceted challenge" (*Modernism and Mourning* 16). A key part of this challenge has come from new readings of Freud's own later work, particularly *The Ego and the Id* (1926), that contend that he re-conceives melancholia as constitutive of ego-formation rather than as a pathological condition. It is Derrida's ethics of mourning, however, that both supplies the philosophical basis for resistant mourning and sets it apart from Ramazani's notion of "melancholic mourning." As Rae observes, "Derrida repeatedly rejects the imperatives of 'so-called normal mourning,' … He sees all such reconciliation to loss as unethical, an act of infidelity toward lost loved ones and a failure to respect what death really means" (*Modernism and Mourning* 17). But, at the same time, Rae is careful to distinguish resistant mourning

from what she describes as postmodern theory's "naturalization of melancholia": "The 'resistance to mourning,' traced through this collection, … is… not a claim about lacks, but a deliberate decision about how not to respond to loss" (*Modernism and Mourning* 16). Under the heading of a "resistance to mourning," then, Rae argues that modernism's response to loss is ethical as well as progressive.

But although Rae criticizes Ramazani for "not completely abandon[ing] the theory of mourning the early Freud sets out," her own model has to uphold this theory to be able to resist it (*Modernism and Mourning* 15). For her model to be coherent, the work of mourning must not only be possible but also operative. There must therefore be a process that takes place whereby the self gradually works through grief and severs the bond to the lost other. Otherwise, there would be nothing to resist. This is to assume, however, that mourning has an intrinsically processual form and that the self is the one who manages it. It is also to assume that one has the ability to sever a bond one did not solely engender and to reconcile oneself to loss in the process. But if mourning is, on the contrary, a passive experience of being in the grip of the other's alterity and hence something that the self does not control but that controls it, then it would not be reducible to a subjective process, labor, or activity. To reduce it thus would be to presuppose an autonomy over loss that the heteronomy of this experience undermines. Such heteronomy, however, is absent from Rae's model, where the self's relation to the lost other is thoroughly active in nature. While there is passivity implied in the concept of resistance itself, what is being resisted here is something the self can choose to do or not to do. From its sovereign position, the self is able to make "a deliberate decision about how not to respond to loss" and to resist reconciliation at every turn. But when conceived

as a passive experience in which the self has no firm footing, then the effort to resist reconciliation is just as much of an attempt to master this passivity as the effort to find reconciliation. Indeed, along these lines, resisting reconciliation becomes as consoling as seeking it, since both positions desire control over loss. Rather than deliberate and voluntary actions, however, they should be construed as effects of being seized and worked through by an otherness that estranges one from oneself. Hence, even a person who firmly insists on resistance can always be overcome by a desire for reconciliation and the latter can always give way to resistance.

An important source of inspiration for Rae's model of resistant mourning is R. Clifton Spargo's book *The Ethics of Mourning: Grief and Responsibility in Elegiac Literature* (2004), which conceptualizes mourning as an ethical act that opposes psychological and social closure. According to Spargo, "[e]mbedded in mourning is a requirement to interrogate our cultural expressions of grief and to be on guard against the movement toward consolation—as a matter not just of time, but of ethical disposition. For consolation always involves a relenting of the hypothesis of agency, a humbling recognition that there is nothing more one could have done or might still do for the other" (*Ethics of Mourning* 37). The ethics of mourning Spargo develops runs counter to the pragmatic ethics he discerns in Freud's account, which entails "the necessary opposition to grief, with the mourner called upon to resume cooperation with those social narratives privileging utility and the functional autonomy of the self in culture" (*Ethics of Mourning* 19). To mourn ethically in the latter sense is to get over loss as efficiently as possible in order to be a productive member of society again. In contrast, Spargo asserts that "a resistant or incomplete mourning stands for an ethical acknowledgement of—or perhaps

a ceding to—the radical alterity of the other whom one mourns" (*Ethics of Mourning* 13). Such mourning means affirming this alterity over and against cultural practices that attempt to "curb and contain" grief, which is precisely why Spargo describes it as "a dissenting act" (*Ethics of Mourning* 6, 38).

At the heart of Spargo's model is a Levinasian notion of responsibility. Since one is always responsible for the other simply by virtue of being in relation to it, according to Spargo, the death of the other signals "a failure of relationship" (*Ethics of Mourning* 24, 37). But instead of ending one's responsibility for the other, death renews it: "What mourning imparts to ethics is a view in which the subject is signified precisely as one who is answerable to the unjustness of the other's death, as the very being chosen by the other for responsibility" (*Ethics of Mourning* 28). Responsibility here consists in enacting "a fantasy of care in which grief functions as a belated act of protection, expressing an ethic exceeding self-concern" and "an imaginative and impossible defense of the other against a death that has already occurred" (*Ethics of Mourning* 24, 35). It does not matter that the agency implied in the fantasy is impossible and that such responsibility can never be fulfilled. Rather, what Spargo describes as the "ethical crux to all mourning" is that by remaining committed to the memory of the other, one prevents this other from being foregone or forgotten, which would perpetuate further injustice against it (*Ethics of Mourning* 4). To be responsible for the lost other is therefore to never forget the injustice of its death and to never cease to wish that it were otherwise.

Spargo's account is predicated on an opposition between ethics and morality. His aim is "to invert our ordinary expectation about ethics as a language of obligation (the realm of *ought*) into a claim about a relation that is always and already in place" (*Ethics*

of Mourning 7). Hence, whereas "morality acted upon as an external code or priorly conceived obligation stands always in jeopardy of losing its focus on the other," in ethics "the subject is taken up by that which is beyond her control and knowledge, greater even than the idea of herself as agent" (*Ethics of Mourning* 16). What takes the subject up here is a "responsibility…assigned anterior to any instance of moral consciousness" (*Ethics of Mourning* 16). Furthermore, in morality, "obligation [is] perceived strictly as a matter of knowledge and pursued faithfully as a matter of choice," while in ethics "the other imposes the obligation before the subject chooses it" (*Ethics of Mourning* 16, 18). Where morality, then, is a matter of following "conventions, regulations, and parameters," ethics refers to "the inevitable and persistent fact of finding oneself in relation to the other" (*Ethics of Mourning* 7-8). These distinctions enable Spargo to claim that ethics involves "the diminution of the free and voluntary deliberation of the moral agent" (*Ethics of Mourning* 18).

But while ethics here implies an apparently radical passivity to the other, Spargo's conception of mourning is, like Rae's, almost entirely active in nature. In fact, despite what he says about "the primordial facticity of the other" and how it somehow imposes an obligation on the self, it is still the self who dictates mourning—who acts, fantasizes, wishes, and attends (*Ethics of Mourning* 7). To be sure, Spargo claims that mourning is grounded in a responsibility one does not choose, entailing that one "is for-the-other before it can be for itself" (*Ethics of Mourning* 17). But this responsibility begins by "opening oneself to the death of the other," which he calls elsewhere "an ethical openness" (*Ethics of Mourning* 9, 28-29). According to this reasoning, then, after its death, the other's alterity must wait to be hospitably received by the self. Without this

initial hospitality, it would remain outside of the self and mourning would never begin. A similar logic can be discerned in Spargo's description, drawing on Derrida, of memory's "act of reception, the permission it gives the other to approach" (*Ethics of Mourning* 26). His ethics of mourning needs as its foundation this subjective act of welcome in which the self opens itself to the lost other and thereby takes responsibility for it. But if the other's alterity does not have to wait to be welcomed, if it is already inside of the self before any gesture of openness, then such an ethics becomes problematic. Indeed, if this alterity can breach the self and contaminate the supposed purity of its consciousness, will, decisions, and actions, then the notion of responsibility on which Spargo's ethics of mourning rests is rendered unstable.

Pace Spargo, I would argue that the self is open to the other and its death, regardless of whether it wants or tries to be, not because of a supposedly originary responsibility, but because the self's bond to the other exposes the self to being affected by it from within. The ethical desire to open oneself up to the lost other and receive it is thus precipitated by its alterity already being at work within oneself, animating the very movement of this desire. Nor does the lost other require the self's "permission… to approach," as if the other were subject to its authority. If that were the case, the other would just be a possession of the self, something it could handle at will and whose alterity it mastered in advance. Rather, we must think a relation to the other wherein the other in its otherness defies this mastery and can violate the self's interiority, compromising or even overthrowing the authority it has over itself. The other would therefore be able to disrupt the absolute intimacy of one's self-relation—its relation to itself physically, cognitively, and emotionally—and destabilize it in turn. My further

claim is that just as the other's death does not end but often intensifies one's bond to it, it does not end such vulnerability but tends to exacerbate it. Hence, where Spargo interprets mourning as the self acting, however impossibly, to protect the lost other in its defenselessness, I conceive it, on the contrary, following Woolf, Joyce, and Faulkner, as the self's defenselessness in relation to the lost other's power to act upon it. This is a dynamic Spargo's account completely overlooks. Even when he follows Levinas's claim that the self can be "wounded by the other," it is only due to "neglecting her defenses," not because the other can wound the self whether or not these defenses are neglected (*Ethics of Mourning* 30). For Spargo, even though "[m]ourning comes too late to the question of agency," it nevertheless depends on the self ceaselessly maintaining "retrospective attention" to the lost other (*Ethics of Mourning* 31). But if the self attends in such a way, this is because it is being attended to by the other, whose alterity supplies the very energy with which the self attends.

Accordingly, rather than interpreting the retrospective fantasy of protectiveness for the lost other as something the self actively carries out, as Spargo does, it can be understood as an effect of the other's alterity suffusing and gripping the imagination, overriding the self's power over it. But precisely because the response to the other's death is therefore not an autonomous act, this alterity can also give rise to consolatory fantasies that have no place in Spargo's model. The retrospective fantasy, then, is not solely a product of the self but rather always influenced by the other. One may argue, however, that if one consciously and willfully desires to remain unconsoled, there is no way a fantasy of consolation can arise. But such a desire is itself preceded and shaped by the other's alterity, so it is never fully conscious and willful. Rather, it is always liable to

being transformed by this alterity, which is why the desire to never be consoled can become a desire to be consoled and vice versa. Two major implications follow here. First, the relation to the lost other is essentially undecidable; it can produce consolatory as well as anti-consolatory fantasies in the same self. And second, and more crucially, mourning itself cannot be responsible, since it is not something directed by a free agent but rather an experience driven by the lost other.

Spargo's argument implies, however, that the relation to the lost other must be ethical, since it automatically imposes on the self a responsibility that it has no choice but to carry out. Mourning, in his sense, amounts to carrying out this responsibility. Hence, while it may never be fully responsible, mourning here cannot be irresponsible or else it would not be mourning. When Spargo says that responsibility is unfulfillable, this is not to question the degree to which one can be responsible *at all* in the wake of loss but to argue that one can never be responsible *enough* to fulfill "ethics' larger calling" (*Ethics of Mourning* 18). So, despite Spargo's claim that the other's "obligating alterity … predicts a failure in the moral subject's definitive capabilities," he nevertheless assumes that the self, not the other, is in charge of mourning—that it takes responsibility for the other (*Ethics of Mourning* 18). His ethics of mourning, however, hinges on this assumption. But it is unclear why one becomes responsible for the other simply because he or she has a relation to it. It is also unclear how mourning grounded in a responsibility "beyond" one's "control and knowledge" can be responsible whatsoever. On the contrary, for Spargo's ethics to be responsible, it requires "the free and voluntary deliberation of the moral subject" that it is said to challenge.

To be sure, Spargo still goes a long way in thinking mourning as a heteronomous experience. But because he insists on it being an ethical act, something one does, his model ends up relying on "the voluntary-conscious-intentional-deciding-I-myself, the 'I can,' … of classical freedom," as Derrida puts it in his book *Rogues* (45). It is true that Spargo emphasizes "the failure of agency" in relation to mourning, but this refers to the fantastical agency of saving the other from death, not the "act" of mourning itself (*Ethics of Mourning* 37). Indeed, he holds that "in no way does the perception of responsibility's extraordinary, even its impossible, connotations lessen the requirement for action. Rather, the specter of failure, the incapability of agency, inspires the future of action" (*Ethics of Mourning* 37). He also suggests that the supposed act of mourning is dictated by the lost other. But, again, such dictation can only go so far. If it were so deep that the self was no longer the agent of its will, decisions, and fantasies, then mourning would no longer be the self's own activity or responsible. My argument, however, is precisely that loss makes possible such a pervasive dictation, undermining the notions of free-will, self-control, and rational agency normatively implicit in the concept of responsibility.

William Watkin's book *On Mourning: Theories of Loss in Modern Literature* (2004) also pursues a notion of "ethical mourning." He focuses on contemporary literature but briefly discusses Faulkner, Joyce, and Yeats as well. His account integrates the work of a number of thinkers but is particularly guided by that of Levinas, Derrida, and Nancy. According to Watkin, an ethics of mourning centers on the question of "How to Lose Responsibly" (*On Mourning* 3). He endeavors to challenge "the dominant mourning paradigm of consolation and recovery" by arguing that mourning should rather be conceived as "an ethical response to loss and its otherness, one that does not try to

trope death but which, instead, approaches death" (*On Mourning* 227). This response entails that "one take full responsibility for the other person before one considers them in relation to oneself" (*On Mourning* 19). We "trope" death and mourn irresponsibly when we do not truly confront it but instead reduce its "radical" otherness with consolatory rhetoric. As Watkin puts it, "mourning requires a rhetoric of summation and conclusion, meaning all acts of commemoration are caught in an ethical default. To mourn is to summarise but to be ethical is to resist all summary" (*On Mourning* 229). In contrast, to mourn responsibly is to do justice to the lost other's irreducible "singularity," which is something that "exists but cannot be named, that is singular to us but which we share with all others, that is who we are but that cannot be known, that relates us to strangers because it is the strangeness within ourselves" (*On Mourning* 15). What makes each person singular, Watkin claims, is precisely the singularity of his or her death. The logic of his argument seems to be that because death is supposedly "unknowable," the subject who suffers it is also, on a certain level, unknowable. Singularity, we are told, "reveals a subject [who] is always in excess of language and definition," and ethical mourning is a matter of responding fully to this singularity when the other dies (*On Mourning* 228). Watkin emphasizes that responding here constitutes an "act" whereby one encounters death's otherness "face-to-face" (*On Mourning* 222-223). This, he declares, is "what true and ethical mourning must be: an act of radical, commemorative, singular freedom" (*On Mourning* 233).

Like Spargo, then, Watkin's ethics of mourning calls for "the voluntary-conscious-intentional-deciding-I-myself, the 'I can,' … of classical freedom." For Watkin, the response to the other's death is a purely autonomous act, one that derives

from the self's will and is not influenced, determined, or otherwise contaminated by the otherness to which it is responding. It is important that he describes the self's confrontation with this otherness as a face-to-face encounter in which "one must forever get closer and closer to the other" but never arrive at it (*On Mourning* 224). Such a confrontation implies a "proximity" that Watkin interprets as "the space of mourning, which is also the space of freedom" (*On Mourning* 233). By the same token, however, this proximity, no matter intimate it may be, ensures an absolute separation between self and other, which protects the self from being broached and decentered by the lost other. Watkin is thus able to conceive mourning in terms of active freedom only by erecting an impassable space between the two. But if this space cannot hold the other's alterity at bay or protect the self against its infiltration, if self and other cannot be absolutely separated but are rather profoundly bound, and if the self's will is vulnerable to this infiltration, then even the apparently freest "act of mourning" is an instance of passive bondage.

Watkin's own account, however, can be read against itself. In the conclusion to his book, he asserts that "[f]reedom, the freedom to remember what happened, to mourn it and be responsible for it, is the act or event of crying itself, opening up a space or locale for mourning. Ethical mourning is, in other words, the opening up of an environment for loss through the event of the cry" (*On Mourning* 234). But is crying an act *or* an event? If it is an act, in the sense that Watkin's gives this term, it is something one does voluntarily, intentionally, consciously, and freely. If it is an event, in contrast, it is something that happens to and overtakes one, something that is out of one's control and exceeds one's ability to register it. As Derrida observes:

> If an event worthy of this name is to arrive or happen, it must beyond all mastery, affect a passivity. It must touch an exposed vulnerability, one without absolute immunity, without indemnity; it must touch this vulnerability in its finitude and in a nonhorizontal fashion, there where it is not yet or is already no longer possible to face or face up to the unforeseeability of the other. (*Rogues* 152)

For Derrida, a performative act neutralizes "the eventfulness of the event…insofar as it appropriates for itself a calculable mastery over it" (*Rogues* 152). An event, however, is not just an occurrence that happens to one from the outside but can also take place unforeseeably within oneself. Science would tell us that if we cry after suffering loss, it is because a stimulus (for example, a photograph, song, or memory) produces neural activity in the brain that generates an emotion and the concomitant response to this emotion. Yet it cannot explain why the stimulus affects us so deeply or what gives it such overwhelming power over us. I would contend that the lost other's alterity is the x-factor that stimulates the stimulus itself. Without it, the photograph or picture would not arouse an emotion and the memory would not affect one or perhaps even come about at all. But the cry, then, does not open the space for mourning, as Watkin maintains; on the contrary, it is mourning—the force of the other's alterity inside of oneself—that makes possible the cry. One does not make oneself cry for the other in an act of freedom but is rather made to cry by the other in an event beyond his or her volition.

Tammy Clewell has articulated one of the most thoughtful arguments for conceiving modernist mourning as an ethical practice. In her influential essay "Mourning beyond Melancholia: Freud's Psychoanalysis of Loss," she argues that "Freudian mourning involves less a lament for the passing of a unique other, and more a process

geared toward restoring a certain economy of the subject" ("Mourning beyond Melancholia" 47). According to Clewell, such a restoration entails "abandoning emotional ties, repudiating the lost other, and assimilating the loss to a consoling substitute," which brings mourning to "a decisive end" ("Mourning beyond Melancholia" 48). The self is thereby freed from what it has lost and enabled to reinvest its libido in a new attachment ("Mourning beyond Melancholia" 48). This leads Clewell to conclude that "Freud's early mourning theory may be placed, … within a longstanding epistemological and cultural tradition in which the subject acquires legitimacy at the expense of the other's separateness and well-being" ("Mourning beyond Melancholia" 48). But through trenchant readings of the work of Peter Sacks, Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, Julia Kristeva, and Ramazani, Clewell goes on to demonstrate that this theory has nevertheless persisted well beyond Freud's time. In each of their accounts, she demonstrates, "violence is done to the lost other," by being denied, repudiated, or attacked ("Mourning beyond Melancholia" 51). It is precisely such an understanding of mourning that Clewell's own conception seeks to combat. Like Rae, however, she acknowledges the importance of Ramazani's study of the modern elegy for her own intervention: "his analysis compels us to reject the notion of a complete working through of loss and adopt a notion of mourning as an endless process" ("Mourning beyond Melancholia" 55). But Clewell is after a kind of mourning that would lead away from the melancholic violence on which Ramazani focuses and toward "an affirmation of enduring attachments that no work of mourning can sever" ("Mourning beyond Melancholia" 56).

For this reason, Clewell turns to Freud's essay *The Ego and the Id* (1923), where she avers that he "redefines the process of identification associated with melancholia as a

fundamental part of both subject formation and mourning" ("Mourning beyond Melancholia" 60). In that essay, referring to identification or the internalization of the lost other, Freud admits that he "did not appreciate the full significance of this process and did not know how common and how typical it is" and states that it may be "the sole condition under which the id can give up its objects" (*The Ego and the Id* 28-29). This insight is what allows him to then give his famous description of "the character of the ego" as "a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes" (*The Ego and the Id* 29). For Clewell, these observations mean that "Freud collapses the strict opposition between mourning and melancholia, making melancholy identification integral to the work of mourning" ("Mourning beyond Melancholia" 61). She even claims that he repudiates his earlier theory and replaces it with a notion of mourning as "an interminable labor" in which working through loss no longer involves abandonment, reinvestment, and consolation but rather "depends on taking the lost other into the structure of one's own identity, a form of preserving the lost object as and in the self" ("Mourning beyond Melancholia" 61). Clewell here draws on Judith Butler's remarkable reading of *The Ego and the Id*, where she argues that, since "the trace of the other" is the condition of possibility for the ego, mourning is a process that "can never be complete, for no final severance could take place without dissolving the ego" (*Psychic Life of Power* 196). But Clewell still has to show how mourning can be thought beyond melancholia. To that end, she examines Freud's remarks on "constitutional bisexuality" in the same essay, asserting that this notion is evidence that identification, while retaining a necessary ambivalence, need not entail the rivalrous aggression of the Oedipus complex or the narcissistic rage of melancholia. If we thus re-conceive mourning on the basis of such an identification,

according to Clewell, “Freud’s text raises the possibility for thinking about mourning as an affirmative and loving internalization of the lost other” (“Mourning beyond Melancholia” 64).

One can certainly ask here how Clewell can think mourning without melancholia when she argues that melancholia is “a fundamental part” of mourning. It should also be pointed out that in *Inhibition, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926) Freud reiterates his “early” theory of mourning as a painful process in which “the subject has to undo the ties that bound him to his object” (205). But I want to consider Clewell’s suggestion about a “mourning beyond melancholia, a response to loss that refuses the self-punishment entailed in blaming the lost one for our own contingency and that enables us to live in light of our losses” (“Mourning beyond Melancholia” 65). Such a conception, she holds, “helps us, finally, to establish an intimate, indeed ethical, relation between past and future as we embark on the present work of endless mourning” (“Mourning beyond Melancholia” 65). Mourning as an interminable, ethical labor that refuses all forms of consolation is also central to her book *Mourning, Modernism, Postmodernism* (2009).

Although Clewell attempts to re-articulate mourning in a way that “relinquish[es] the wish for a strict identity unencumbered by the claims of the lost other or the past,” her own account ultimately re-imports precisely what it assails (“Mourning beyond Melancholia” 65). She works from the powerful claim that “being inhabited by otherness [is] a condition of one’s own subjectivity,” but the otherness of the lost other is completely muted in her model (“Mourning beyond Melancholia” 65). Like the models analyzed above, Clewell’s is totally active in nature. It is the self who dictates the entire process, possessing the power not only to internalize the lost other at will but also to

preserve it indefinitely. As was the case in Attridge's essay, this alterity can do nothing itself but only be affirmed, loved, and appropriated by the self, having no power of its own to challenge this appropriation, affect the self, or overthrow its authority. Far from being a force of destabilization in the self, then, it is the means by which the self stabilizes itself after loss. Clewell maintains that her conception "simultaneously creates and frustrates a desire for unity or fusion of selfhood" ("Mourning beyond Melancholia" 65). But it actually implies a peaceful fusion between self and other, not just a desire for it, both because the self is in full control of the lost other and because the lost other is nothing more than a property of the self. Consequently, we end up with "a strict identity unencumbered by the claims of the lost other or the past."

Clewell's ethical conception of mourning also reveals the same "problematic desire for radical independence from… the lost other" that she takes issue with in Ramazani's analysis of bereaved aggression ("Mourning beyond Melancholia" 54). This is demonstrated in the very idea of a mourning "beyond melancholia." Freud himself opposed mourning to melancholia as a condition of normal grief to one of abnormal grief. But, again, if mourning is a passive, heteronomous experience that one does not command but that commands one, then it must always be possible for it to involve the rage, aggression, and self-punishment that characterize melancholia. While the other's alterity can fill one with joyful, loving memories, it can also affect the same self much more violently. Clewell allows for ambivalence but problematically limits it by trying to transcend "the necessity of melancholy violence" ("Mourning beyond Melancholia" 64). To "refuse" such violence as a necessary possibility of mourning is to deny the other's otherness. It is because this otherness is other that the self cannot control and assimilate it

and that it can possess and dispossess the self in different ways at any time. Mourning's essential contingency thus follows from it being an experience driven by an irresponsible force of alterity rather than a practice directed by a responsible self. It is also worth noting that Rae's model of resistant mourning seeks to resist not just the "normal" or "healthy" work of mourning but also the notion of introjection that Clewell's model comes quite close to, even though she explicitly criticizes it. As Rae observes, "Derrida repeatedly rejects the imperatives of "so-called normal mourning," including the line of thinking that accepts and affirms the introjection of lost loved ones" (*Modernism and Mourning* 17).

All the above accounts are influenced by Derrida's work, which is ironic because I have drawn on that work to take them to task. But his reflections on mourning are indeed motivated by an ethical concern for how one ought to remember the lost other. Derrida conceptualizes his ethics of mourning in terms of fidelity and infidelity:

> Mourning must be impossible. Successful mourning is failed mourning. In successful mourning, I incorporate the one who has died, I assimilate him to myself, I reconcile with death, and consequently I deny death and the alterity of the dead other and of death as other. I am therefore unfaithful. Where the introjection of mourning succeeds, mourning annuls the other. I take him upon me, and consequently I negate or delimit his infinite alterity…. Faithfulness prescribes to me at once the necessity and the impossibility of mourning. It enjoins me to take the other within me, to make him live in me, to idealize him, to internalize him, but it also enjoins me not to succeed in the work of mourning: the other must remain the other. He is effectively, presently, undeniably dead, but, if I

> take him into me as a part of me, and if, consequently, I 'narcissize' this death of the other by a successful work of mourning, I annihilate the other, I reduce or mitigate his death. Infidelity begins here, unless it continues thus and is aggravated further. (*For What Tomorrow* 160)

It should be noted that Derrida's concept of "successful mourning" is *not* the same as Freud's. Whereas, for Freud, it is the severance of libidinal bonds to the lost other, Derrida conceives it as the latter's assimilation to the self. Freud, however, viewed this act of assimilation as preparatory to the work of mourning. As he formulates it: "Each individual memory and expectation in which the libido was connected to the object is adjusted and hyper-invested, leading to its detachment from the libido" (*On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia* 205). But both severance and assimilation amount to self-directed processes of reconciliation in which the lost other's alterity is completely negated. According to Derrida, to be unfaithful to the lost other—to mourn it successfully—is not only to "reduce or mitigate" its death by reconciling oneself to it but also to not respect this other as other by consuming its alterity in an act of narcissism. To be faithful to the lost other, then, is to refuse to mourn it successfully. But this does not mean to not mourn at all. Rather, we must mourn but only so much; we must interiorize the other and make it a part of ourselves, but we must also "leav[e] the other alone, outside, over there, in his death, outside of us" (*Memoires* 35). For this reason, Derrida says that mourning must fail in order to succeed—that it must be carried out but not completed, that we must come to terms with the other's death but not reconcile ourselves to it, and that we must take the other within ourselves "to make him live…to idealize him, to internalize him" but also preserve his "infinite alterity." Consequently, even the

most faithful mourning necessarily contains infidelity, since it must let the other "remain the other," which is to say that it must fail.

The issue here is not Derrida's normative conviction that it is unethical to deny or annul the alterity of the lost other but rather the assumptions his argument makes. First, he assumes that "successful mourning" is possible—that one *can* fully assimilate the lost other to oneself and that one has the power to negate or repudiate its alterity in the process. When Derrida describes mourning as impossible, it is not to call into question the possibility of successful mourning but to affirm an ethical imperative that mourning must be both done and not done. In fact, the conceptual intelligibility of "impossible mourning," as Derrida calls it, requires that successful mourning be possible. Otherwise, it would make no sense for him to claim that mourning only succeeds if it fails. Second, Derrida assumes that we can let the lost other remain the other through "a sort of tender rejection, a movement of renunciation which leaves the other alone, outside, over there, in his death, outside of us" (*Memoires* 35). This claim implies that we have the power not simply to reject or renounce the other at will but also to keep its alterity away from us. By respecting the other, so his argument runs, we leave it alone and it leaves us alone. Both these assumptions derive from Derrida's fundamental presupposition that mourning, whether successful or not, is something that the self engages in and controls.

But we can open up Derrida's account to quite a different understanding of mourning by undercutting the notion of assimilation on which it rests. It is commonly assumed that mourning involves working through loss whereby one comes to terms with the latter and learns to accept it. In the process, what was initially an external, alien trauma is gradually tamed and integrated to oneself. Such a process, however, refers to

the fact of the loss, not to the lost object. Assimilating a loss, insofar as this can be done, does not assimilate the object itself, which is why Freud claims that mourning also involves abolishing it. On the contrary, assimilation, or its resistance, signals that one is in the lost object's force field. If one seeks to work through a loss, or refuses to do so, it is because the object is working through oneself. Assimilation, then, does not make the other live in oneself; the other already lives there, whether one wants it to or not. The unruly life it lives in the self, with all its vicissitudes, is what I have called mourning. Accordingly, assimilation, like the attempt at severance, should not be equated with mourning but rather understood as one of its effects.

Two consequences follow from this line of argument. First, even if one reconciles oneself to loss, one can never "annihilate" the lost other, since its alterity is not something over which one has power. If one did, then it would not be an alterity. Rather, as Derrida himself declares, it is something that is "in us though other still" (*The Work of Mourning* 52; emphasis original). And second, although one can try to let the other remain other, no amount of "respect" can keep it simply outside of us. Indeed, regardless of how much one respects the other's alterity, there is nothing that can prevent it from not respecting one in return. These consequences entail a situation in which the other, while irrevocably dead or lost, can nevertheless, in its surviving otherness, not only violate and take over the self from within, effecting destabilizations and transformations, but also separate the self from itself so that even its own operations are no longer wholly its own.

To be clear, however, I am not claiming that it is wrong to refuse consolation, sustain bonds, and take responsibility for the dead but that the attempt to do this depends, in a profound way, on what has been lost. If one was not engaged by its alterity, if the

latter was not operative within oneself, then one would not be moved to refuse consolation, sustain the bond, and take responsibility for it in the first place. For this reason, however, the attempt to do so cannot be construed as a free, responsible act. Rather, it is something one is compelled to do, and may be compelled not to do, by a force that is both internal to and other than oneself. This supposed activity, I maintain, is a response to mourning and commanded by it, not mourning itself. Following Freud and Derrida, then, the widespread tendency in contemporary theory to turn mourning into an autonomous practice, labor, or act constitutes a *revolt* against it. Mourning as an event governed by the lost other undermines the autonomy this tendency presupposes and tries to save in the face of loss.

These critics conceive mourning as being subject to the self. For Woolf, Joyce, and Faulkner, on the contrary, the self is subject to mourning. Such subjection entails that the self does not autonomously orient mourning but is heteronomously oriented by it. An ethics of mourning based on the notions of fidelity and responsibility must assume, however, that the self is *free* in relation to the lost other so that it can be faithful or unfaithful, responsible or irresponsible. But if this relation is instead *coercive*—that is, if the self's thoughts and actions are not self-determined—then fidelity and responsibility lose their coherence. Like the consolatory models it opposes, models of faithful and responsible mourning bypass its fundamental passivity. Whereas consolatory models do this by making mourning terminable, anti-consolatory models do it by making mourning interminable. If, however, mourning consists in being related to an alterity that precedes and exceeds oneself, then it is not in one's power to make it terminable or interminable. A critical implication of my argument is that any ethics of mourning, if there can be one,

must account for how vulnerable loss leaves us and how it undercuts the normative basis of fidelity and responsibility. I have tried to show that mourning itself cannot be ethical and that the attempt to make it so is to assume power over something that, as *Mrs. Dalloway*, *Ulysses*, and *The Sound and the Fury* poignantly illustrate, overpowers us.

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