

Stilted Boys and Very Plucky Girls:
Melodrama, Irony, and Englishness in Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford

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Abstract

This dissertation takes up ways in which key archetypes and emblems of English melodrama – English seamen, Tory gentlemen, and Anglican saints; damsels-in-distress and suffragettes – are staged, then restaged, in innovative ways, in the midst of existential crises in the parallel careers of the sometime literary partners Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford – personal crises that echo the cultural crises of “The Death of Liberal England” and The First World War. These stagings and restagings draw on prior Continental-European and British literary modes – the Polish *gaweda* in Conrad’s case and the English pantomime in Ford’s own – to proffer in the English novel an unexpected modernist or even post-modernist mode, one in which ironic modernity and modernist irony are ironized and modernized themselves, in ways that show the reciprocity, the reversibility of all the ironies, ironic hierarchies, and generic trajectories on which such stagings depend. Conrad’s *gawedic* mode in the novel *Chance* (1914), then Ford’s pantomimic mode in the novel-sequence *Parade’s End* (1924-1928), discover means of romantic pursuit of “the moral occult” in the course of melodramas out at moral extremes, adventures like those of stilted boys and very plucky girls. And they likewise discover novel means of comic resolution of those moral crises, means that mark one version of an end to the modernist trajectory, and with it the start of something new. Conrad’s crisis in *Chance*, then Ford’s in *Parade’s End* mark crises in English fiction and literary culture more generally, ones resolved by comic and romantic means, resolved through reciprocal, reversible senses of ironic modernity and modernist irony both, which open up a space for new adventures out beyond those same terms.

Chapter One, “Between Jest and Earnest: *Chance*, Englishness, and Irony,” treats Conrad’s emigration to English domestic melodrama in his final Marlow tale, the best-selling *Chance*, which draws on Conrad’s prior sense of Polishness to stage his adopted Englishness by means of a complicated irony that mediates “between jest and earnest” in uncanny ways. Chapter Two, “Pictures from Dickens: *Chance*, Melodrama, and Irony” details the comic process by which Marlow’s staging of the “damsel” Flora de Barral in terms of a satirical burlesque on Dickensian themes is finally satirized itself by Flora’s unexpected irony at Marlow’s expense. Chapter Three, “Creatures of Light Literature: *Chance*, Melodrama, and The Moral Occult” concerns the novel’s restaging of itself in the fairy-tale terms of comic romance, as Flora turns away from an intended suicide to seize life’s chances for love and hope against depression and despair.

Chapter Four, “The ‘Ind Legs of The Elephink: English Pantomime and *Parade’s End*” treats Ford’s more sustained elaboration of Conrad’s discoveries in *Chance*, by means of a fictional mode derived from English pantomime, a mode with a native poise between earnest and jest. Chapter Five, “Prophecy and Tosh: *Eirons*, *Alazons*, and *Parade’s End*” details Ford’s pantomimic staging of his “mealsack elephant” Christopher Tietjens as poised between the status of an *alazon* or object of irony and the status of an *eiron*, or agent of irony, in pivotal turn. Chapter Six, “It’s Boon To Tak Up!: From Tragic Satire to Comic Romance in *Parade’s End*” concerns the pivot of the whole novel-sequence toward a final resolution as comic romance, set against the tragic satire of The First World War and the militant modernity Ford’s series transcends, like Conrad’s *Chance*.

Chapter One
“Between Jest and Earnest”
***Chance*, Englishness, and Irony**

Ford Madox Ford likened Joseph Conrad both as writer and man to an “Elizabethan Gentleman Adventurer” of Shakespeare’s day, and while Shakespeare had his problem dramas, Ford’s friend and literary mentor had a problem career.¹ He is perhaps the quintessential problem author of modern British literature, and the best-selling venture into feminine, domestic English fiction represented by *Chance* is the problematic pivot of his art, which marks the point in conceptual space where modern British fiction and the literature of Europe – in this case, Poland – overlap and abut, with reciprocal, reversible ironies from which the author’s problems then proceed – those problems that he poses for readers with ironic sensibilities less fluid than his own.² And Conrad’s art marks likewise the point in historical time when the Edwardian or Late-Victorian fiction of Ford’s and Conrad’s “master” Henry James overlaps and abuts in a similar way with the modernist fiction of Conrad’s close reader and admirer Virginia Woolf. The problematic place of Conrad’s art marks the point where the high English canon of James and Woolf overlaps and abuts with “lower” and “lighter” sorts of literature, from the maritime romances of Captain Frederick Marryat, which Conrad read through twenty years of service in the French and the British merchant fleets, to the imperial romances of Stevenson, Haggard, and Kipling at the start of his career in English literature. This

¹ Ford Madox Ford, *Joseph Conrad: A Personal Remembrance* (1924), New York: Ecco Press, 1989, p. 19.

² Joseph Conrad, *Chance: A Tale in Two Parts* (1914), New York: Oxford UP, 2002.

overlapping and abutment of “high” and “low,” “dark” and “light” in Conrad’s art is nowhere more evident than *Chance*. That pivotal and problematic work is a quintessential modernist novel in its “way of doing things ... that make them undergo most doing,” in the words of Henry James, who grapples most of all with *Chance* among the works he surveys in his essay on “The New Novel” in 1914.³ That year of *Chance*’s great and unexpected success is a pivotal one, of course, in English literary history, the moment of “The Men of 1914” – James Joyce, Wyndham Lewis, T.S. Eliot, and Ezra Pound – and the year as well of *Blast* magazine, with its manifesto by Lewis for a nascent English avant-garde before The First World War.⁴ The start of that war marked the close of the era that George Dangerfield describes as “The Strange Death of Liberal England,”⁵ the late Edwardian phase of which of which both *Blast* and its “Manifesto”⁶ are essential artifacts. But, in some sense, the modernism forecast by Lewis in his *Blast* manifesto was itself at an end already, along with the England it blasted

³ Henry James, “The New Novel,” in Henry James, *Notes on Novelists*, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1914.

⁴ Wyndham Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1937, p. 9.

⁵ George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (1935), Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1997. Dangerfield’s seminal study helps inform my discussion throughout of the Edwardian moment of both Conrad’s *Chance* and retrospectively Ford’s own *Parade’s End* (1924-1928), as do the following works: C. F. G. Masterman, *The Condition of England*, London: Methuen, 1901; Richard Ellmann, “The Two Faces of Edward” (1960) in *a long the riverrun: selected essays*, New York: Knopf, 1989; Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1968; John A. Lester, Jr., *Journey Through Despair, 1880-1914: Transformations in British Literary Culture*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1968; Samuel Hynes, *Edwardian Occasions: Essays on English Writing in The Early Twentieth Century*, New York: Oxford UP, 1972; John Batchelor, *The Edwardian Novelists*, London: Duckworth, 1982; Jefferson Hunter, *Edwardian Fiction*, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982; Jonathan Rose, *The Edwardian Temperament, 1985-1919*, Athens: Ohio UP, 1986; and John Patterson, *Edwardians: London Life and Letters, 1901-1914*, Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996.

⁶ Wyndham Lewis, “Manifesto” in *Blast I* (1914), Santa Rosa, CA: Black Sparrow, 2002, pp. 10-43.

and blessed, and this is apparent in *Chance*. The novel found a great success with English common readers, even as it both epitomized and yet transcended a modernist satire at odds with those same readers whom it reached just as *Blast* began its own work of modernist satire at around the same time. The Marlow whom Conrad brings home to bear satirical witness to the death of liberal England is every bit as tart and tonic in his hard-edged jocularity as Lewis all throughout his career. But Conrad's much more complicated stance amid the many overlappings and abutments of his problematic point in space and time would lead him to a turn already paces out ahead of Lewis in 1914. That turn was toward a self-reflection through which his own modernist satire on the death of liberal England was satirized in turn, such that his ironic modernity, his modernist irony was subject to itself in reciprocal, reversible ways – in ways that lead to problems in defining the hierarchy, if any, between the “high” modernity of *Blast* and the “low” popularity of *Chance*'s best-selling success as both a modernist novel and a piece of what Marlow himself will call “light literature” (215). And these reciprocal, reversible ironies in *Chance* led likewise to problems in defining the hierarchy, if any, between the Edwardian or Late-Victorian fiction that *Chance* helps culminate and the modernist fiction that it helps inaugurate simultaneously. The thing that most unsettles these hierarchies is the strange near-death of an English archetype and emblem – the strange near-death of Flora de Barral, the heroine of *Chance*, and the heir in 1914 of an English novelistic tradition that extends from Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1748) to the heroines of Conrad's master James. *Chance* pushes modernist satire to the edge of an abyss unplumbed by any other work in such an intimate way. It stages the

scene of Flora's near-death by suicide and dares us to laugh – to laugh as Oscar Wilde laughed, or feigned to laugh, at the death of Charles Dickens' child-heroine Little Nell.⁷ The progress of Flora de Barral toward her strange near-death is cast by Marlow in Dickensian terms – in terms that draw on Dickens, but in jocular, satirical ways that seem at first to cast the Christian earnestness and humanistic sentiment that Dickens work is haunted by to mere spilt-milk to help produce the cream of jest. At this, perhaps, we laugh along with Marlow, though maybe not so much at Flora's suicide, a scene that we approach, along with Marlow, as an end that her trajectory could take, and especially so if we conceive of that trajectory, as Marlow tends at first to do, in the terms of modernist satire, during which the readers' heart is hardened against such latent sentiment as Dickens still is haunted by, and with him the whole tradition from Richardson's *Clarissa* through the heroines of James. Most of us will fail to laugh at all, just as Flora herself will fail, on the edge of the abyss, to follow through on her intended suicide. Marlow is surprised at her remorse, which serves to ironize and satirize, and thus to overturn, his own ironic and satirical view of Flora's life in terms of tragedy. He chalks up the heroine's remorse to some persistence deep within her of an existential spark, a kind of moral affirmation of the latent viability of "words of old moralists and moral conventions," Christian earnestness and humanistic sentiment like Dickens's own, and with them certain "common forms of speech" and certain modes of "traditional feeling" that make up "light literature," a literature that we all of us are "creatures" of "much more than we know," as the ironized, satirized, and overturned Marlow comes to see and then explain (161,

⁷ Richard Ellman, *Oscar Wilde*, New York: Vintage, 1987, p. 469.

215). D. H. Lawrence, from his Nietzschean perspective, could not “forgive” Conrad for being so “sad,”⁸ and a later and a different kind of modernist reader, Hugh Kenner, could not quite forgive Conrad either, from his Christian point of view, for seeming at times to succumb to the latent nihilism of the *fin de siècle* when he started his career.⁹ But the *fin de siècle* ended and Conrad went on, with all the rest of his peers, finding ways to live and write beyond that sadness, just as Ford, his friend and protégé, found ways to live and write beyond the sadness of the First World War, and the Eliotic vision of a Waste Land presented by the world in the wake of the war. One of his resources for doing this was Polishness – the moral sensibility that came down to him from the *wiesce* or Polish national bards, and from the chivalrous ethos of his family’s *szlachta* class, from whom those bards themselves had come. This Polishness is where he started out and where I now begin, in hopes of plumbing *Chance*’s crucial problems in search of those solutions common readers would find, as England faced a near-death that it, like Poland before it, would learn to survive with vital honor and fidelity.

II

“Our guest has left us,” writes Virginia Woolf, in an essay on Conrad’s death in 1924.¹⁰ The terms of her readers’ and her own relationship to the obituary subject are suggestive here. Conrad the Polish émigré had been a guest of the English social scene, Woolf seems to say, just as Conrad the writer is a

⁸ D. H. Lawrence, “Letter to Edward Garnett, 30 October 1912” in James Boulton, ed., *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence: September 1901-May 1913*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979, p. 465.

⁹ Hugh Kenner, “Conrad and Ford” in *Gnomon: Essays on Contemporary Literature*, New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1958, pp. 162-170.

¹⁰ Virginia Woolf, “Joseph Conrad” (1924) in *The Common Reader* (1925), New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984, p. 223.

guest of English literature in turn. For the past ten years, he had been the most esteemed of the fiction writers active in England, so much so that he had been offered a knighthood, politely declined, just months before his unexpected death. Still, there remained “an air of mystery” about him, a difference and a distance that put even so admiring an observer as Woolf on guard.¹¹ “It was partly his Polish birth,” she explains, and “partly his preference for living in the depths of the country, out of ear-shot of gossips, beyond the reach of hostesses.”¹² Conrad had “the most perfect manners,” she allows, but his “accent” was wrong.¹³ The trace of something foreign in his voice was part of its appeal, but there clings to Conrad’s “genius” nonetheless something hard for English readers to approach.¹⁴ However “subtle” Conrad’s mind, however “indirect” his method may be, there remains something “simple” and “heroic” in his art, an atavistic strain of romance that is appropriate to stories of the sea, but problematic when imported to the ordinary scenes of English life, to the settings at the center of the fictional stage as defined by English literature.¹⁵ Woolf dates a falling-off in Conrad’s art to the moment when his memories of the sea began to fade and he turned to life on shore for inspiration in his novels and tales. Where a few very simple ideas, like honor and fidelity, supplied “a whole morality” at sea, the “complex” life on shore could not be rendered in those chivalrous terms.¹⁶ Without such supports as these, a sense of “balance” is disturbed in Conrad’s art between the “figures” it

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 223.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 225

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 229

depicts and the “background” of values it relates them to.¹⁷ This loss of balance results in an “involuntary obscurity which baffles and fatigues,” an “inconclusive” mixture of romance and the realistic norms of Englishness invoked by Woolf.¹⁸ Conrad himself had observed how English readers like Woolf missed something elusive in the chivalrous voice of his novels and tales. “That is Polishness,” he had explained, “Polishness I took from Mickiewicz ...”¹⁹

Born Jozef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski, the future Joseph Conrad was named in part for the hero of Adam Mickiewicz’s epic poem *Konrad Wallenrod* (1828). Mickiewicz’s poem encapsulates the values of the Polish *szlachta* class, of which Conrad’s parents Ewa and Apollo Korzeniowski and his uncle and guardian Tadeusz Bobrowski were among the leading lights. The *szlachta* were a landed gentry with certain key distinctions among the Continental aristocracies. They were Europe’s most numerous gentry class, making up ten percent or more of the Polish population. They were Europe’s first modern republican body, having chosen Poland’s monarchs from 1569 to the country’s partition by Russia, Prussia, and Austria in 1795. They were Poland’s intellectual class, and after its partition, their resistance to the tyrannies of Russian, Prussian, and Austrian rule found voice in the romantic literature of Mickiewicz, Zygmunt Krasinski, and Juliusz Slowacki, his fellow *wiesce* or “national bards.”

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 228

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 229

¹⁹ Zdzislaw Najder, *Joseph Conrad: A Life, Revised Edition*, Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2007, p. 458. Najder is Conrad’s best biographer and I am debted to him for his discussion of Conrad’s Polish context and other vital aspects of his work, both here and in *Conrad in Perspective: Essays on Art and Fidelity*, New York: Cambridge UP, 1997.

With partition, the values of the *szlachta* came to center on the same few very simple ideas to be found later on in Conrad's novels and tales. Chief among these ideas was integrity of spirit in the midst of moral stress. This code found its typical expression in the poetry and drama of the national bards, whose art had an overlapping pair of moral concerns – the affirmation of chivalrous ideals and especially the ideal of honor, sustained by one's fidelity to moral obligations to one's peers, but also a tragic recognition of the failures of such solidarity in instances of stress. Mickiewicz, Krasinski, and Slowacki together tried to shore up the *szlachta*'s morale as a basis for resistance to the tyranny of foreign rule. And together they attempted to explain how it was the *szlachta* had earlier failed to fulfill their obligations to the Polish community, and therefore how it was that foreign rule had ever come to pass.

The art of Mickiewicz and the national bards contains a volatile mobility of tone, taking on a range of attitudes toward Polish chivalry from satire to romance – the same quixotic irony at play, as we shall see, in Conrad's novels and tales. In keeping with this early inspiration, Conrad's Polishness is not some given essence of which he partakes, but the product instead of those imaginative modes in which he put his moral faith. A country bereft of nationality, the Poland of the national bards is an idea, a fiction, an imagined community whose members had no choice but to see it in imaginative terms. This quixotic legacy of Polishness would help shape Conrad's subsequent careers as a sailor and a writer in the British imperial sphere and with them his uncanny insight into Englishness – the

ethics, ideas, and images native to what he would come to call his “honourably adopted” second home.²⁰

The Englishness that Conrad would adopt in the British Merchant Fleet was conditioned by his formative reading in certain kinds of English literature, especially the genre of the maritime romance, exemplified for him by Frederick Marryat in works like *Peter Simple* (1834) and *Mr. Midshipman Easy* (1836), books contemporary more or less with the poems and plays of the Polish national bards. With their emphasis on honorably fidelity to moral ideals, the maritime romances of Marryat contained an ethos much in keeping with the values of the Polish *szlachta* class to be found in the works of Mickiewicz and his fellow national bards. Alongside those *wiesce*, Marryat had drawn upon sources that would also help inspire the works of Mickiewicz and his fellow national bards – the Scottish-Jacobite and the English-Medieval romances of Sir Walter Scott. Novels such as *Waverly* (1814) and *Ivanhoe* (1819) were fundamental sources for

²⁰ Joseph Conrad, Letter to Edmund Gosse, April 11, 1905, in Frederick Karl and Lawrence Davies eds., *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad, Volume 3, 1903-1907*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988, p. 384. The critical literature on Englishness is broad and deep and neither my study here nor any other could encompass it all. My use of the concept here is most informed by the following works: Robert Colls and Phillip Dodd, eds., *Englishness: Politics and Culture, 1880-1920*, London: Croom Helm, 1986; David Gervais, *Literary Englands: Versions of “Englishness” in Modern Writing*, New York: Cambridge UP, 1993; Judy Giles and Tim Middleton, eds., *Writing Englishness: An Introductory Sourcebook on National Identity*, New York: Routledge, 1995; Robert Colls, *Identity of England*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002; Joshua Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2004; and Roger Ebbatson, *An Imaginary England: Nation, Landscape, and Literature, 1840-1920*, Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005. In addition, I am particularly indebted to two works which focus especially on the same chivalric conception of Englishness essential to Conrad and Ford that is the focus of my reading of Englishness here: Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and The English Gentleman*, New Haven: Yale UP, 1981; and Christine Berberich, *The Image of The English Gentleman in Twentieth Century Literature: Englishness and Nostalgia*, Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007.

the European nationalisms of the Nineteenth Century, and likewise for the chivalrous, quixotic form that Polishness like Englishness would frequently take.

These common sources of Englishness and Polishness in Scott helped enable Conrad's dual vocations as a sailor and a writer, vocations he pursued as a Polish émigré to the British imperial scene of the maritime romance. The ethos of the British Merchant Fleet gave him unexpected chances to live out the values of the *szlachta* class. And the genre of the maritime romance gave him ample opportunities to muse upon the meaning of his nautical career and his émigré Englishness – again, in terms of the values of the *szlachta* class, and especially in terms of the chivalrous, quixotic point of view of Mickiewicz and his fellow national bards.

During Conrad's nautical career, a book appeared which helped revive the genre of the maritime romance and also to inspire the broader genre of the masculine romance, which would offer Conrad further chance to muse upon his émigré Englishness. The book was *Treasure Island* (1883), Robert Louis Stevenson's novel in the chivalrous, quixotic line of his countryman Scott, a novel which prefigured the broader turn toward masculine concerns in British fiction from the 1880's forward, a turn which helped enable Conrad's subsequent career in English literature. Works in the various subgenres of the masculine romance, and especially those with imperial themes, were a key context for moral meditation on the ethos of Englishness put forth by British culture during those same years, the ones in which Conrad emigrated to his second career, in English literature. The works of Conrad's colleagues in the masculine romance – Stevenson himself, H. Rider Haggard, Rudyard Kipling, John Buchan, and the

rest – are not without their insights into Englishness. Nonetheless, Conrad's own works show a subtler form of moral mediation than sometimes these these colleagues' works do, a subtlety derived in part from their recovery of latent resources in the chivalrous, quixotic line descending from Scott, from which the broader line of masculine romance can be seen to descend.

The chivalrous, quixotic line of Englishness so often mused upon in the masculine romance is itself derived in part from figures who each drew inspiration from the precedent of Scott – Thomas Carlyle, Benjamin Disraeli, John Ruskin, Alfred Lord Tennyson, and William Morris to name but a few. Each of these figures can be seen to draw more from one aspect of Scott than from another, more from the English-Medieval Scott of *Ivanhoe* (1820) than from the Scottish-Jacobite Scott of the *Waverly* books (1814-1832). Their senses of Englishness grew out of what Svetlana Boym calls “restorative” nostalgia for a Medieval England they imagined in their country's epic past.²¹ The senses of Polishness put forward in the art of Mickiewicz and his fellow national bards were likewise derived in part from the precedent of Scott. But these senses of Polishness grew out of what Boym calls “reflective” nostalgia for a Poland that the *szlachta* class had lost in the course of recent history. Like Scott's nostalgia for the Eighteenth Century Scotland of the Jacobite clans, the *wiesce's* nostalgia for the Poland of the Eighteenth Century, for Poland prior to its partition and the

²¹ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, New York: Basic, 2001. With etymological precision, Boym defines nostalgia as much in spatial as in temporal terms, as much as homesickness as a longing for the past. Her study, which helped inform my senses of Conrad's Polishness and Ford's own Englishness both, is based on a distinction between a nostalgia that seeks the restoration of the object of its loss and one that uses that loss as a source of reflective distance on present and immediate conditions, which it radically critiques. This reflective kind of nostalgia is the basis for Conrad's Polishness and Ford's own Englishness both.

tyrannies of Russian, Prussian, and Austrian rule, was self-consciously quixotic, instead of unwittingly so, as was sometimes the case among the less reflective of their English peers. Like the Scott of the *Waverly* books, Mickiewicz and his fellow national bards had a retrospective sense of the vulnerability of those traditions that they honored in their art. In their poems and plays, this subtlety of moral meditation yields a volatile mobility of tone, a moral ambiguity that was not always present in the ethos of Englishness prior to Conrad's emigration into English literature. One of Conrad's foremost contributions to that literature was in bringing this foreign kind of irony to bear upon the fictional traditions of his honorably adopted second home.

The first of Conrad's novels to muse upon domestic Englishness, in contrast to the Englishness-abroad of the maritime romance, was *The Secret Agent* (1907), the first of what would be his two novels set principally in England. Conrad's most domestic work to the point when it appeared, *The Secret Agent* was nonetheless the first one to be judged as "foreign" by his English peers. The novel's English setting threw the author's Polishness into relief and made it visible to English readers as it had not been before. Among the most perceptive of Conrad's English readers at this point was Edward Garnett, the husband of Constance Garnett, whose work translating Russian fiction was itself a key component of the English understanding of the "Slavic" point of view with which their friend and neighbor Conrad would grow to be identified. Edward Garnett describes their friend and neighbor Conrad as "a willing hostage" from "the Slavic lands," in exchange for whom no "ransom" could have weighed against the

“insight” he had offered to his English peers.²² Garnett credits his “superiority” to every other fiction writer active in England to Conrad’s special critical distance on the cultural context those fiction writers shared.²³ From *The Secret Agent* on, reviewers would note how his critical distance, and with it his mobility of tone, had come to increase the closer he had come to the ordinary scenes of English life, to the settings at the center of the fictional stage as defined by English literature. One review of *The Secret Agent* notes that English readers would never have expected the “nimble” sense of humor in the author’s latest work. The reviewer A. N. Monkhouse admits that it may “strain” the comic sense to find it latent in an anarchist plot, but he insists that Conrad’s treatment of the subject is enriched by its “comic ... details.”²⁴ The author’s “moral sense” has not been “blunted,” Monkhouse explains, but it has ceased being “squeamish.”²⁵ Conrad’s “horror” is “coloured” with “humour,” in the midst of which “obscure” and awful things are revealed to be comic, though “not merely” comic alone.²⁶ This volatile mobility of tone is in keeping with the author’s own intention for the book, which he describes as “a new departure” in “genre,” “an effort in ironical treatment” of “melodramatic” concerns.²⁷ Conrad would redouble this effort in the subsequent *Chance*, the second of his pair of novels set principally in England, which takes an

²² Edward Garnett, Unsigned Review of *The Secret Agent*, *Nation*, September 28, 1907, in Norman Sherry, ed., *Joseph Conrad: The Critical Heritage*, Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973, p. 191.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

²⁴ A. N. Monkhouse, “Review of *The Secret Agent*, *Manchester Guardian*, 12 September 1907” in Norman Sherry, ed., *Joseph Conrad: The Critical Heritage*, Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973, p.183.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

²⁷ Joseph Conrad, Letter to R. B. Cunninghame Graham, October 7, 1907, in *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad, Volume 3: 1903-1907*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988, p. 491.

even closer look than this one does at the ordinary scenes of English life, and with it an even more distant and ironical stance toward the melodramatic concerns of English literary domesticity.

Chance was the first best-selling novel of Conrad's career and likewise perhaps the first instance of popular acclaim for an English-language novel in the modernist mode. Appearing in the midst of the death of liberal England just prior The First World War – a period, according to Woolf, when “human character changed” – the novel has a pivotal but largely unappreciated place, not only in Conrad's career and in English literature, but also in the history of Englishness per se.²⁸ It represents a pivotal instance when a new kind of irony engendered in the English sense of self would be brought home and domesticated on intimate terms. This instance of uncanny insight finds its figure here in an English archetype and emblem who discovers she is very much “in it,” and shows herself aware that the heart of darkness lies in close proximity to matters of the heart in her ordinary life²⁹. What she ought to make of such an insight is the question posed by Conrad in *Chance*, a question answered there and in an unexpected way by England's willing hostage from the Slavic lands.

²⁸ Virginia Woolf, “Character in Fiction” (1924) in Andrew McNeillie ed., *The Essays of Virginia Woolf, Volume III: 1919-1924*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988, p. 421.

²⁹ Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1899) in Cedric Watts, ed., *Heart of Darkness and Other Tales*, New York: Oxford UP, 1998, p. 205. *Chance* is - among other things - a thorough overturning of Marlow's prior sense that “the women ... are out it,” and nowhere near the world of adventures, like Marlow's, out at moral extremes. “Girl!” Marlow shouts. “What? Did I mention a girl? Oh, she is out of it – completely. They – the women I mean – are out of it – should be out of it. We [men] must help them to stay in that beautiful world of their own ...”

Woolf and readers like her might find Conrad's own chivalrous ideals concerning honor and fidelity to be too simple, foreign, and few to do full justice to the scenes of domesticity on which most English fiction depended from Richardson to James. But they overlook the moral complexity, the self-reflexive irony of those ideals, since they overlook their basis in Conrad's nationality, or else they underestimate that Polishness, not just its ideals. They overlook that Conrad's sense of Polishness is cognate with certain sorts of Englishness, some native forms of honor and fidelity to which the Polish author brought complexities and ironies those native forms had never shown themselves to the same degree. The means of Conrad's novel importation of these newfound complexities and ironies were first the maritime then the imperial romance – modes dependent less on scenes of domesticity than on scenes of foreign intrigue. But as Liberal England dying came itself to be unsettled by such scenes, so too did Conrad's own complexity and irony seem more and more at home within the place he now adopted for his narrative stage, the same place as Woolf's own stage, the physical and spiritual environment of *Chance*.

III

I don't know much of the psychology of self-destruction. It's a sort of subject one has few opportunities to study closely ... Remorse in the sense of gnawing shame and unavailing regret is only understandable to me when some wrong [has] been done to a fellow creature. But why she, that girl who existed on sufferance, so to speak – why she should writhe inwardly with remorse because she had once thought of getting rid of a life that was nothing in every respect but a curse – that I could not understand. I thought it was very likely some obscure influence of common forms of speech, some traditional or inherited feeling ... [things] which remain in the air and help to form all the authorized moral conventions. Yes, I was surprised at her remorse (160-161).

Conrad's seaman-storyteller Charlie Marlow is speaking here of Flora de Barral, the heroine of *Chance*, and of the series of misfortunes that had brought her to the point of suicide. An only child, without a mother, Flora was abandoned by her father, a financier imprisoned for fraud. She was betrayed by her governess and other benefactors with designs on his misbegotten wealth. Being forced into employment as a governess herself, she was subject to sexual abuse at her employer's hands. Seeking comfort in the care of friends, she discovered that her friends harbored plans to exploit her situation for personal gain. Marlow knew these hardships had brought her to the point of suicide, but then he learned that she had failed to follow through. "I am not a very plucky girl," she jokes – "And you know why" (160). The reason for her change of heart is the narrative keynote of *Chance*. The effort of Marlow to understand Flora and Flora's own effort to be understood are the novel's contrapuntal themes. They take shape in a most "peculiar" manner, poised "between jest and earnest," as Flora's joke should indicate (21). Together, they form "a tragicomical adventure," between "frank laughter" and "unabashed tears" (231).

This mixture of jest and earnest is key to Conrad's sense of the basic ambiguity of all events, with the chance of his title being punned by him as accident and opportunity in constant turn. Tracing the vicissitudes of Flora's morale, he gauges the latent viability of forms and speech and modes of feeling that are closer to the heart of personal and cultural integrity for most of his contemporary readers than any he considers in the course of his career. Like all of Conrad's novels, *Chance* is poised between satirical negation and romantic affirmation of the normative conventions of his time and place – in this case, the

complex of ideals that I am calling Englishness. In previous novels and tales, this posture was dramatized for Conrad's contemporary readers in the less immediate terms of overseas adventure and foreign intrigue. In *Chance*, it is dramatized for them in the intimate terms of domestic melodrama, the genre at the center of the fictional stage as defined by English readers like Woolf prior to Conrad's emigration into English literature.

The story of a young woman making her way in a dangerous world, *Chance* is a very English tale, a tale of the sort that had been told before in various ways by Richardson, the Gothic novelists, Charles Dickens, the Sensation novelists, and recently by James. Just as an archetypal, emblematic line of prior heroines had, Flora de Barral will embody an ideal of Englishness – in her case, the chivalrous, quixotic ideal of spiritual integrity in the midst of moral stress. Her personal crisis embodies the cultural crisis England faced in 1914. It is this that leads Marlow to call her, both in jest and in earnest, “the most forlorn damsel of modern times” (58). Still, despite her evident reasons for being forlorn, Flora finds within herself a source of moral resolve by which to seize upon life's chances for hope as well as despair. Marlow had not met with many damsels in his time at sea, but he knows nonetheless that “in all of them,” however distressed, there is “something left, if only a spark,” and that “when there is a spark, there can always be a flame” (262). This incendiary potential, this spiritual reserve is what the title means by chance.

Conrad figures moral opportunity in feminine terms not only in *Chance* but all throughout his career. As Gordon Thompson notes, Conrad represents “the claims” of “the ideal” by means of feminine personae in most of his works.

His women are the bearers of the flame (444).³⁰ They bring life's chances to his men, who find their fates are either thwarted or fulfilled by these feminine dreams – the dream of faith, the dream of hope, the dream of love. These “visions” carry “all the ambiguity of life” (454).³¹ They are “sustaining” and “destructive,” “truthful” and “illusory” by turns (454).³² However, as Susan Brodie notes, extending Thompson's case, if it is often true in Conrad that idealism undermines his men, it is also true that skepticism threatens his women, and with them the moral affirmations on which spiritual integrity depends:

[If] an antithesis exists between masculine and feminine, as between skepticism and idealism, it is a natural part of human nature in general and reflects a duality inherent in the human experience itself ... In Conrad's art, as in life, there is a subtle shifting movement between these two aspects of our nature, and it is this movement ... that produces both a system of checks and balances and an inescapable feeling for life's ambiguity (142).³³

This ambiguity is Flora's spark. The heart bears a volatility that is figured by the shape of Conrad's novel, its singular mobility of tone.

Chance is the first of Conrad's novels to be cast in the singular form that would mark the final phase of his career, the years from 1914 forward when its author won a popular acclaim that had been theretofore unknown by an English-language fiction writer in the modernist mode. That form has been described as “ironic romance” and Conrad's final works do indeed employ motifs from romance in a ludic and ironic way to dramatize his moral meditations on the

³⁰ Gordon W. Thompson, “Conrad's Women,” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 32.4 (1978), 444.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 454.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 454.

³³ Susan Lundvall Brodie, “Conrad's Feminine Perspective,” *Conradiana* 16.2 (1984), 141-54.

latent viability of certain affirmations in the context of modernity.³⁴ His art had been distinguished all along by a few very simple ideas like honor and fidelity, as we have seen. From 1914 forward, these ideals would be domesticated, anglicized, and feminized as Life and Love, the narrative keynotes of *Chance* and of the final phase of Conrad's career, a phase which would show that "we are creatures of our light literature" much more than we know – as Flora will show him and as Marlow will see, in a most peculiar way (215).³⁵

In "Mr. Conrad: A Conversation" (1923), an essay written just before its subject passed away, Woolf stages a debate between two readers, "Penelope Otway" and "David Lowe" – a conversation pertinent to *Chance* and to how we ought to view the feminine, English, domestic Conrad of the author's final phase.³⁶ Despite what a certain kind of reader might expect, it is not tough-minded, masculine David who favors Conrad's work, but rather warm-hearted, feminine Penelope. Inclined to "strange, long stares of meditation," Penelope is the bluestocking daughter of parents with a cottage in the countryside, and David finds her there reading Conrad on a sunny afternoon.³⁷ "Mr. Conrad is a great writer! A great writer!" Penelope exclaims.³⁸ In support of her view, she argues that "Conrad is not one and simple," as certain critics claim, but rather

³⁴ Gary Geddes, "Introduction" to *Conrad's Later Novels*, Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1980.

³⁵ Jonathan Rose, "The Meanings of Life" in *The Edwardian Temperament, 1895-1919*. Rose's study is the best overview I know of the culture of ideas in Post-Victorian England. I am especially indebted to Rose for this chapter on the aube-de-siecle emphasis on "Life," which helped me link Conrad's concern in *Chance* with broader currents in the novel's times.

³⁶ Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Conrad: A Conversation" (1923) in Andrew McNeillie ed., *The Essays of Virginia Woolf, Volume III: 1919-1924*, p. 376.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 376.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 377.

“many and complex,” “composed” of at least two personalities.³⁹ One is the seaman-storyteller Charles Marlow, “subtle, psychological, loquacious,” the narrator of “Youth” (1898), *Heart of Darkness* (1899), and *Lord Jim* (1900), in addition to *Chance* (377). Another is the seaman Captain Whalley, the hero of *The End of the Tether* (1902), “simple, faithful, obscure.”⁴⁰ Conrad’s “beauty” for Penelope comes from “the two” personalities “together,” with Captain Whalley taking the lead.⁴¹ “Reserved” for “the bosom” of “the sea,” Conrad’s seamen are tested by “their attitude [toward] august abstractions,” toward a few very simple ideas.⁴² “Are they faithful, are they honourable?” the reader is invited to ask.⁴³ This chivalrous interrogation could not be made in that particular way – or so Penelope claims – of the heroines and heroes of James, the old “landlubber,” for whom mere drawing-room “relations” had counted for all.⁴⁴ However, as Penelope’s creator Woolf would shortly come to see in her particular way, the realm of drawing-rooms surveyed by James was likewise subject to storms, or rather to the very modern kinds of moral crisis storms supply in Conrad’s version of the maritime romance.

When *Chance* appeared in 1914, the English social scene would be a testing ground for spiritual integrity, for honor and fidelity, not least in the domestic realm of femininity conceived by English literature in terms of melodramas staged in drawing-rooms. Scholars from Dangerfield forward have

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 377.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 377.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 374.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 378.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 378.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 378.

recognized the pivotal role of the women's suffrage movement in the death of liberal England, or the birth of pre-war, post-Victorian modernity. In her study of "The Spectacle of Women," Lisa Tickner notes the crucial role of the suffrage campaign in staging or restaging certain archetypes and emblems of Englishness⁴⁵. However unlikely it may seem from a certain point of view, the Conrad of *Chance* is the English fiction-writer in the modernist mode who makes the most extensive use of the imaginative potential opened up by the suffrage campaign. Tickner's study helps us understand the reason why, and likewise why *Chance* and Conrad's other final works were well-received by women readers like Woolf's archetypal, emblematic Penelope.

For *Chance*, the most significant persona opened up by the suffrage campaign was the archetype and emblem of "the militant woman," the suffragette (205).⁴⁶ As Tickner explains, this figure drew her femininity not from domesticity but from an alternate source, that of "female heroism" in "history, allegory, and myth" (207).⁴⁷ The model for this feminine persona was that most un-English archetype and emblem Joan of Arc. Like her French-Medieval sister-in-arms, the militant Englishwoman of Conrad's day sought to manifest the "chivalry" that women could claim when "the much-vaunted chivalry" of men had failed to meet their country's needs (208).⁴⁸ As we have seen, the ironies implicit in honor and fidelity are at crucial to Conrad's art, and his women are the hearts

⁴⁵ Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of The Suffrage Campaign, 1907-1914*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1987. My discussion here of Flora de Barral and later on of Valentine Wannop as "very plucky girls" is indebted to Tickner and her discussion of suffragettes as archetypes and emblems of feminine chivalry.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

on whom those ironies turn. Just as the maritime realm of English manhood abroad had offered Conrad opportunity to muse upon the few very simple ideas on which the ethos of Englishness depends, so too would the domestic realm of English womanhood provide a similar stage.

The image of Flora de Barral has romantic undertones. As Woolf has Penelope observe, the heroine of *Chance* recalls “the dreams of a charming boy” as he muses on the tinted “photograph” of an “actress” from the West End stage.⁴⁹ *Chance*’s singular distinction can be found in how it validates such visions in the midst of moral stress. It does so by laying bare the terms employed by Marlow in telling Flora’s tale, and then revising it as Captain Whalley might have done. Along with its heroic vision of an English femininity, a feminine Englishness, this mixture of jest and earnest endeared the book to readers like Penelope, who made it the first best-seller of Conrad’s career and likewise perhaps the first instance of popular success for an English-language novel in the modernist mode. Conrad’s “English” novel is “a great book” Penelope claims, “though you will have to read it [yourselves] to understand why.”⁵⁰

Among the dying throes of liberal England, the women’s suffrage campaign gave to Conrad an unexpected means to make his novel importation into English fiction of a Polish sense of honor and fidelity, those chivalrous ideals that seemed at first too be too simple, foreign, and few for certain readers like Woolf, who doubted those ideals could do full justice to domestic scenes like

⁴⁹ Virginia Woolf, “Mr. Conrad: A Conversation,” p. 379.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 379.

Chance's, on which most English fiction had depended from Richardson on. But those ideals would prove the basis nonetheless for a complex, ironic affirmation made by unexpected means – by feminine means, employing English and domestic terms like Life and Love, the keynotes of *Chance*. This affirmation Conrad made would mark his novel out as being great for readers like Penelope. And yet its great complexity and irony would likewise bring a narrative design so convoluted that *Chance*'s great success could still surprise, as it did another peer of Woolf's and Conrad's in 1914, a reader who himself had been no stranger to the moral convolutions of a narrative design for telling young girls' tales.

IV

Chance is an example of objectivity, most precious of aims, not only menaced but definitely compromised; whereby we are in presence of something really of the strangest, a general and diffuse lapse of authenticity which an inordinate number of common readers ... have not only condoned but have emphatically commended. They can have done this through the bribe of some authenticity other in kind, no doubt, and seeming to them equally great if not greater, which gives back by the left hand what the right has ... taken away.⁵¹

This was Henry James's view of *Chance* in his essay on "The New Novel" in 1914, an essay which takes stock of English fiction as it stood at that turning point both in English national and literary history. Where James faults Conrad's peers for the "fatal error" of indifference to fictional form, he credits the author of *Chance* for standing "absolutely alone" as a "votary" of how to do a thing "that shall make it undergo most doing" in fictional terms.⁵² But even the notoriously painstaking James was moved to wonder why "so special, so eccentric, and so desperate a course" and "so deliberate a plunge into threatened frustration" as

⁵¹ Henry James, "The New Novel" in *Notes on Novelists*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914, p. 349.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 345.

Conrad takes in *Chance* should be required.⁵³ For James, the fatal “flaw” on “the roundness of it all” was that this formal difficulty seemed “imposed” from “without” by the author himself, and not “provoked” from “within” by the tale he would tell.⁵⁴

Chance is structured through an overlapping series of narrative frames that ramify perspectives on the archetype and emblem at the center of its fictional concern. We neither see nor hear from Flora herself save through Marlow’s eyes and ears, and Marlow hardly ever sees or hears from her at all save through others’ eyes and ears, like those of his fellow seaman Charlie Powell and his weekend hosts and guests, the suffragist crusaders John and Zoe, the Fynes. This most oblique of Marlow’s tales must be read as an elaborate meditation on the narrator’s encounters with the heroine herself, a meditation based on conversation with mutual observers like Powell and the Fynes, conversation ramified in turn by the questions that are raised by the unnamed auditor and interlocutor of the novel’s outer frame.

Chance finds Marlow in an unexpected place, the English countryside between the Channel and the Thames. Here he comes on Flora lost in thought and staring down into the depths of a quarry in the chalk hills near the sea, a “perfectly mad” thing to do, with no “conceivable” end (36). Marlow’s first impression notwithstanding, his effort here and all throughout *Chance* will be precisely to discover Flora’s purpose in coming as she does so near those depths. He questions Flora’s judgment and the risk that she has run, and notes that if she

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 345.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

disappeared the “verdict” of an “inquest” would be “suicide” (37). Flora answers him by noting that, “once [she] was dead,” it would not matter “what horrid people [thought]” (37). The tone of this response gives Marlow pause:

I perceived then that her thick eyelashes were wet. This surprising discovery silenced me as you may guess. She looked unhappy. And – I don’t know how to say it – well – it suited her. The clouded brow, the pained mouth, the vague fixed glance! A victim. And this characteristic aspect made her attractive; an individual touch – you know (37-38).

Marlow’s view of Flora is one he shares with John and Zoe Fyne, the weekend hosts whose cottage in the countryside is common ground for his and Flora’s meeting there by chance. Flora is a “girl-friend” taken up by Mrs. Fyne, an ardent suffragette and the author of a “handbook” for girls with “grievances,” while Marlow plays chess with Zoe’s husband John, a “a good little man” in the civil service who shares his wife’s political views (35, 52). Later on, when Flora disappears, the Fynes themselves are taken by surprise, but not Marlow their guest, who figures it was only his appearance on the scene that had prevented Flora’s leap into the quarry months before. However, it emerges later on that Flora’s leap was of a different type than Marlow had supposed – not suicide but marriage, an elopement to London with Mrs. Fyne’s brother Captain Roderick Anthony, a seaman who had run away himself some years before out of spite toward their father, a poet who had publicly espoused a code of honor and fidelity to family ties, while acting as a patriarchal tyrant in his private life. Marlow notices a daughterly resemblance in Mrs. Fyne’s jealous response to what she takes to be her girl-friend Flora’s betrayal of trust. Marlow joins the Fynes nonetheless in looking into Flora’s case like an amateur detective, an inquest which requires investigation of the motive for her contemplated suicide as well as

her subsequent failure to follow it through. This inquest leads Marlow and Fyne to the London docks, where Flora means to follow Captain Anthony to sea. A second meeting there gives further basis for the tale that Marlow tells to the unnamed auditor and interlocutor of the novel's outer frame, a tale which will expand upon the insight he has gained through conversation with the Fynes concerning Flora and her complicated history.

Mrs. Fyne confides in Marlow that never has she had such "a crushing impression" of "the miserable dependence of girls" as in the case of Flora, who has been mistreated both by family and friends (130). Where "a young man" could have "enlisted" or gone "to break stones on the roads" or "something of the kind," a young girl like Flora lacks the path to "independence" that a boy could find by making such a leap as her brother had made when he took to sea at the girl's own age (130). Flora's challenge is to find a means of agency when all of the accidents of circumstance have left her with a lack of opportunities for acting independently. In the world that is open to her, "without shelter, without bread, without honour," as Marlow explains, the best that she can hope for will be a "dole" of "pity" running downward "as her years wear on" (143). Marlow's challenge both as amateur detective and raconteur is to find a means of telling Flora's tale. "[You] can't buttonhole ... a young girl as you would a young fellow," he explains. "The [trick] in such a delicate case is how to get on terms" (157).

In its formal complexity as in much else, *Chance* resembles what had been the most well-known of Marlow's tales for English readers prior to 1914, *Lord Jim*. Although completed later on, *Chance* was conceived alongside *Lord Jim* and can be read as its sibling text, an alternate staging in feminine terms of its

masculine dilemmas, depicting as it does a meditation on the motives of a youth who is subject to a series of trials in instances of stress. Two things distinguish *Chance* from its sibling text that yield additional complexities of tone. First is the difference in sex and in social standing between Marlow and Flora. Where the gap between Marlow and Jim is one of age and experience alone, the gap between Marlow and Flora is one of gender and social identity. The second is the difference in social standing and sometimes in sex between Marlow and certain of the witnesses to Flora's plight. Where Marlow and observers like his correspondent Stein had held compatible views, observers like the Fynes have frames of reference less congruent with his own. Therefore, one sees Flora from a further remove than one sees her sibling Jim, and often from angles more oblique to Marlow's own than those of observers like Stein. This results in an even more intricate nesting of narrative frames, along with an even richer harmony or dissonance of narrative tones.

Chance opens by setting the stage for its narrative scene, a riverside tavern near the mouth of the Thames, where Marlow sits and talks with the auditor and interlocutor of the novel's outer frame, himself a weekend sailor of these estuary waters near the sea. Marlow and his friend are joined there by Charlie Powell, a sailor as well, whom neither Marlow nor his friend have ever met, but whom they recognize at once from having seen him on the Thames. Marlow's auditor and interlocutor narrates this opening scene, describing an afternoon spent listening to his maritime colleagues and their stories of the sea, and most notably to Powell's recollection of his first engagement on receiving his certificate to serve as a ship's second mate. Powell's first engagement had been aboard the *Ferndale*

with a Captain Roderick Anthony, whose name Marlow knows in connection with “an accident called Fyne,” chance acquaintances of his on weekends in the countryside some years before, around the time when Powell joined the *Ferndale’s* crew (31). Powell had been offered this engagement only hours before the ship had disembarked for a lengthy time at sea, so he had had no chance to learn to what it was that he ought to expect from its maritime society. Once aboard, however, he was “struck” by some “considerable” news – the newlywed Captain would be joined by his wife, a young girl no more than Powell’s age; and, what was more, Mrs. Anthony would bring with her her father “Mr. Smith,” an invalid who held a sullen grudge against her husband, whom Powell would serve now as his second mate (27). In Powell’s memory, Marlow recognizes Flora, whom he had met in passing years before, while visiting his weekend hosts and guests the Fynes. Marlow had been interested in Flora at the time and he is eager now to learn what has become of her since then. Powell must leave before he gets to explain, but Marlow feels confident of seeing him again before too long, some other weekend on the Thames. Meanwhile, Marlow’s auditor and interlocutor has questions of his own, questions that elicit Marlow’s own recollections of Flora when last she was seen, toward the end of his acquaintance with the Fynes. Nested in the memories Marlow shares with his friend are Mrs. Fyne’s own recollections of Flora at a time before the seaman-storyteller had arrived upon the scene, recollections she herself had shared with him later on, in his own role as her auditor and interlocutor. Mrs. Fyne’s account, Marlow’s, and his auditor’s and interlocutor’s own make up the opening section of *Chance* called “The Damsel,” the first half of what is subdivided by Conrad as *A Tale in Two Parts*.

The novel's opening section sets up its intricate nesting of narrative frames and gets us ready for "The Knight," the second half of *Chance*, when Mrs. Fyne in her role as Flora's witness will yield that position to Powell, once Marlow and the Fynes have parted ways.

James was troubled by the loss of "objectivity" that comes with Conrad's choice of casting *Chance* in a structure that C. E. Montague describes as like an "algebraic" formula of "brackets" or a child's toy of box-within-box.⁵⁵ For James, Conrad's "course" had been one or so freely "multiplying" the tellers of his tale as to make them "almost more numerous" and "certainly" more solid than the characters in whom, and the tale in which, one hopes "such agents" will disappear.⁵⁶ Nowhere is the loss of objectivity more clear than in the person of Marlow, returned after ten years gone – Marlow in whom Conrad would personify and objectify the narrative perspective at the heart of what for him was the modernist tradition in English-language fiction, epitomized by James. As Susan Jones observes, the Marlow of *Chance* will claim a Jamesian authority in telling Flora's tale, his self-reflexive comments on narrative construction being close to James's own, as we shall see.⁵⁷ Just as he had done in his three previous tales, Marlow tries here to follow James' advice to be among the sorts of person "on whom nothing is lost."⁵⁸ Ironically, however, the closer he comes to the

⁵⁵ C. E. Montague, "Mr. Conrad's New Novel," *The Manchester Guardian*, 15 January 1914" in Allan H. Simmons, John G. Peters, and J. H. Stape, eds., *Joseph Conrad: Contemporary Reviews, Volume 3, A Personal Record to The Arrow of Gold*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012, p.181-2.

⁵⁶ Henry James, "The New Novel," p. 347.

⁵⁷ Susan Jones, "Chance: A Fine Adventure" in *Conrad and Women*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1999, pp. 99-133.

⁵⁸ Henry James, "The Art of Fiction" (1884) in *Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers*, New York: Library of America, 1984, p. 53.

scenes of ordinary English life, as opposed to the realm of overseas adventure and foreign intrigue, the more problematic this will be. Marlow had refused prior to *Chance* to proffer his impressions in objective ways, but here he is tempted so to do. The narrative complexities he wrestles with in *Chance* are Conrad's own self-reflexive means of unsettling the authority of even this most comprehensive vantage-point on ordinary life for English readers like Penelope – or rather of acknowledging a prior unsettling underway, as human nature changed, as liberal England died, and a pre-war, post-Victorian modernity began to be born, not only in *Chance* but all across the English scene.

James assumed that readers like Penelope, who made *Chance* the first best-seller of Conrad's career, and likewise the earliest instance of popular acclaim for an English-language novel in the modernist mode, must have been rewarded for the loss of objectivity resulting from its narrative complexities by taking the "bribe" of an authority of some other kind.⁵⁹ What this consisted of for James was the spectacle, elaborately staged, of "a beautiful and generous mind at play," "a wandering, circling, yearning imaginative faculty, encountered in its habit as it lives and diffusing itself as a presence or a tide, a noble sociability."⁶⁰ The focus of this spectacle was "simply" "Mr. Conrad himself."⁶¹ His struggle with the powers "leagued against" him in *Chance* was one that common readers like Penelope had "understood" and of which they had approved, though their reasons for doing so remained unclear, and even to a critic as discerning as

⁵⁹ Henry James, "The New Novel," p. 349.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 350-351.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 350.

James.⁶² However, as we shall see, those reasons had to do with something heretofore elusive within Conrad's art, something English common readers now could recognize and value in their hostage from the Slavic lands.

Whether or not it is a work more complex or ironic than its sibling text, *Chance* is nonetheless a harder work to sit and read than *Lord Jim*, as James and readers like him could see. But *Chance*'s convolutions all proceed from an imaginative effort not unlike Lord Jim's – an effort, fraught with hardships, of coming to terms with an archetype and emblem of Englishness exposed to moral stress. And while that archetype and emblem, the young girl of English melodrama from Richardson on, is one of whom a writer like James could claim more intimate views, the stress that she is subject to in *Chance* is one that no novelist in England prior to Conrad himself knew so immediately. Woolf knew moral stress as well as Conrad, on his own terms. And she would write about that stress herself in time. Therefore, in 1914, ahead of her own coming career, she saw more clearly than her predecessor James why Conrad wrote in convoluted ways – and therefore, in the figure of Penelope, was more accommodating toward the complicated stagings of *Chance*'s subtle scenes.

V

The opening of *Chance* and the staging of its narrative scene recalls the openings of Marlow's three previous tales. Like the deck of the *Nellie* in *Heart of Darkness* and the tropical verandah in *Lord Jim*, the riverside tavern of *Chance* finds Marlow in a storytelling space whose social and cultural coordinates we can

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 351.

map along his narrative arc. And like the director of companies, the lawyer, the accountant, and his other correspondents in his previous tales, Marlow's auditor and interlocutor in *Chance* provides a dialogic motive for his narrative art and for the social and cultural trajectory his storytelling takes. Despite these similarities, some differences remain between *Chance* and Marlow's previous tales, which will bear on how we ought to read this fourth and final tale. Like the deck of the *Nellie* and the tropical verandah, the riverside tavern of *Chance* is a masculine space, where Marlow entertains his friends with his stories of the sea. But unlike those previous stages, the riverside tavern occupies domestic space, the quintessentially English space of the public house and of the bonhomie of mates that is the landlubber's version of the bond shared by sailors on the sea. Unlike Marlow's previous listeners, his auditor and interlocutor in *Chance* has not only been a seaman, but also seems to have shared in another very English occupation in turn, one that is close to Marlow's own as a teller of tales, the occupation of a writer of fiction. This self-reflexive role of Marlow's auditor and interlocutor is less overt in the volume of *Chance* than in the serial text, but it continues to be operative there as Conrad's means toward a new domestication of Marlow, his seaman-storyteller, to terrestrial modes of Englishness and English literature.

In Marlow's three previous tales, Conrad had used his detached and ironic storyteller in the way that Woolf's Penelope describes – as a means of getting distance on the few very simple ideas that he personifies in Captain Whalley, and especially so in "Youth" and in *Lord Jim*. Marlow's role as narrator there resembles the narrator's role in a prior Polish form of ironic romance called the *gaweda*, a tall-tale told by a richly dramatized raconteur, whose attitude and

ethos are themselves as much the object of his auditors' and interlocutors' attention, as the story being told.⁶³ In the *gaweda*, the subjectivity of the raconteur reveals itself in the shape his story takes in being told. The raconteur of the *gaweda* is most often as romantic, as quixotic or atavistic, as the story being told, with both the teller and his tale being revenants from times or places that are distant from the narrative scene. With its volatile mobility of tone, the *gaweda* supplies to Polish culture a means of expressing both a difference from and an identity with the national past, which it critiques and commemorates in turn.

Conrad's career as a writer initially of stories of the sea gave him special means by which to domesticate this kind of Polishness to prior modes of Englishness. He did this through the figure of Marlow, his seaman-storyteller, his *gawedic* raconteur. Marlow, like Conrad before him, had led what his auditor and interlocutor in *Chance* calls "the nearly-vanished sea life under sail" (21). That life had helped produced some men "of whom [the English] could be proud," as the narrator of *Heart of Darkness* notes – "the great knights-errant of the sea."⁶⁴ The waning of the sea life under sail provides an archetype and emblem for some incremental changes in the English self-conception toward the end of the nineteenth century that echo those more catastrophic changes in the Polish self-conception with the country's partition by Russia, Prussia, and Austria a century before. Marlow, in his role as a raconteur, provides an English

⁶³ Susan Jones, "Woman as Hero: Conrad and The Polish Romantic Tradition" in *Conrad and Women*, pp. 38-98. Jones' discussion of Conrad's Polish context is superb and, along with Najder's, helped inform my own. And I am especially indebted to her for her recognition of the parallels between the Marlow tales and the Polish *gaweda*.

⁶⁴ Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 137.

analogue for the storytelling voice of the *gaweda*, his seaman's yarns displaying an analogous mobility of tone toward the chivalrous ideals on which Englishness like Polishness was frequently based, both on land and at sea.

Marlow's auditor and interlocutor in *Chance* – and especially in his self-reflexive role as a figure for the novelist, a proxy for Conrad himself – provides a point of view that places Marlow's own in a more objective light than we have seen it in before, a light that accentuates his role as a raconteur in the terms of the *gaweda*, and with it his posture of a Jamesian authority in telling Flora's tale. Furthermore, Marlow himself seems to recognize this more objective light in which he is cast. This recognition frees him to indulge in the ludic and ironic meditation through which he comes to proffer his "objective" view of Flora's tale. Marlow's Jamesian posture is partly tongue-in-cheek, being based upon a ludic and ironic, a *gawedic* vision of himself as "a meditating Buddha" of the sea, a posture he adopts toward the end of *Heart of Darkness*, and one that he elaborates in *Chance*, with help from his fellow seaman Powell, who shares this romantic, quixotic, and atavistic understanding of a sailor's point of view (252).⁶⁵

Marlow shares with Powell a basic mistrust of "the shore gang," that landlubbing portion of the English population who want for that "responsibility" a sailor feels at sea (7). He holds that life at sea has this "advantage" over life on shore, that its claims are very "simple" and cannot be "ignored" (7). It is due to this conviction that Marlow takes the posture of a prophet of the sea by which he judges life on shore from a ludic and ironic, a *gawedic* point of view. Marlow's auditor and interlocutor observes the deep "resemblance" of the "profane" men

⁶⁵ Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 252.

on ships and the “holy” men in cloisters, all of them “detached” from the “vanities” and “errors” of a fallen world which follows “no strict rule,” and all of them possessing minds “composed” of “skepticism” and “innocence” in alternate turn, along with “an unexpected insight” into “motives,” as of “lookers-on at a game (28-29). Being “patient” and “reflective,” Marlow had enjoyed his time at sea for the benefit of “solitude” and “silence” for his “habit” of pursuing “ideas,” generalizing in “a most peculiar way,” poised “between jest and earnest” as we shall see (21). Whether on land or at sea, Marlow has a way of “prying into things considerably” (30). Powell takes his new-found mate to be a nautical type, the sort of seaman “always chasing some [idea] round his head just for the fun of the thing” (28). Marlow’s claim to have caught this “disposition” from a “puzzle-headed” shipmate he had had, a “fellow” who tried “gravely” to “account” for lots of things that no one else could be “bothered” about – a figure who mirrors both Marlow and the similarly self-reflexive figure of the first mate Franklin, whom Powell had met on the *Ferndale*’s crew and who had been his own auditor and interlocutor in working out the mystery of Captain Anthony, his newlywed wife, and his father-in-law Mr. Smith.

Retired to shore, the Marlow of *Chance* is passing time by playing games and telling tales, indulging in “the old-maiden-lady-like occupation” of “putting two and two together” in narrative terms, a gendered self-conception of his narrative art that casts its telling of tales in the feminine terms of English domestic melodrama from Richardson to James, a self-conception which likewise bears the ludic or *gawedic* irony that shows itself in various ways in the course of his tale, and especially in those parts concerning his hosts and guests the Fynes

and their suffragist views (242). These parts are among the many instances in *Chance* when Marlow's auditors and interlocutors will find it hard "to make him out," when Marlow will give them cause to ask themselves what he is "up to," as Powell explains (29). One thing that Marlow is up to is playing the fool, but always at the risk that he will make himself the fool he means to play, as we shall see.

An irony entails a hierarchy between two points of view, the point of view of the object of the irony or *alazon* and the point of view of the subject of the irony or *eiron* in turn: at a lower level, the irony depicts a situation as seen less clearly by its *alazon*; at a higher level, it depicts that same situation as seen more clearly by its *eiron*. And an irony likewise entails, in intellectual terms, that ignorance and knowledge be hierarchically opposed: at a lower level, the irony depicts a mental problem as understood incompletely, due to ignorance, by its *alazon*; at a higher level, it depicts that same mental problem as understood more fully, due to knowledge, by its *eiron*. And an irony entails furthermore, in ethical terms, that vice and virtue be hierarchically opposed: at a lower level, the irony depicts a moral dilemma as judged incorrectly, due to vice, by its *alazon*; at a higher level, it depicts that same moral dilemma judged more rightly, due to virtue, by its *eiron*. And, finally, an irony entails, in experiential terms, that naiveté and maturity be hierarchically opposed: at a lower level, the irony depicts the mortal condition, the human condition as misunderstood, due to naiveté, by

its *alazon*; at a higher level, it depicts that same mortal condition, that some human condition as understood more wisely, due to maturity, by its *eiron*.⁶⁶

The risk Marlow runs that he will make himself the fool he means to play is a risk that is inherent in the instability, the reciprocity, and the reversibility of the hierarchical relationships of *eirons* and *alazon* on which all forms of irony depend, and dramatized irony like Conrad's in *Chance* perhaps especially so. During a dramatized irony, the *alazon* is ironized such by the *eiron*. But during that same dramatized irony, the *eiron* may likewise be ironized in turn as an *alazon*, by the author of the dramatized irony. And this is even true, perhaps especially so, when the *eiron* of the dramatized irony is likewise the dramatized narrator of one of the novel's overlapping set of narrative frames, as in the case of *Chance*. This instability, this reciprocity, and this reversibility of the hierarchical relationships on which all such ironies depend is what enables the volatile mobility of tone, the lack of generic fixity in the *gaweda*, and in Conrad's own *gawedic* mode in *Chance*.

Marlow, the dramatized narrator, the *gawedic* raconteur of *Chance* is the *eiron* of a satire on both his auditor and interlocutor and his hosts and guests the Fynes, a satire above all else on the conventional and sentimental terms – the common forms of speech, the modes of traditional feeling – that these friends employ in telling or in hearing Flora's tale. Marlow seeks especially to ironize the view of Flora's tale that comes to him at secondhand through conversation with

⁶⁶ D. C. Mueke, *The Compass of Irony*, London; New York: Methuen, 1980. My understanding of dramatized irony both here and in my subsequent discussion of Ford's *Parade's End* is indebted to Mueke. And, in terms of my discussion of dramatized irony as satire, I am likewise indebted to Alvin B. Kernan, *The Plot of Satire*, New Haven: Yale UP, 1965.

the Fynes. He casts himself as an *eiron* in relation to the Fynes. But Marlow will himself become an *alazon* in turn, the author of a satire that elicits readers laughter with the raconteur as he plays out his ludic and *gawedic* posture as an *eiron* in relation to the Fynes, but likewise a satire that elicits readers' laughter at the raconteur as the irony engendered by his ludic and *gawedic* meditations takes on general terms that reveal the instability, the reciprocity, and the reversibility on which all forms of irony depend, and which will undermine his posture as an *eiron* by making him an *alazon* in turn.

In some sense, *Chance* enacts a book-length joke. That joke seems at first to be a joke at the expense of Marlow's auditor and interlocutor and of his hosts and guests the Fynes, a joke above all else at the expense of the conventional and sentimental terms – the common forms of speech and the modes of traditional feeling – that these friends employ in telling or in hearing Flora's tale. But that same joke will then reveal itself in time to be a joke as much or more so at the raconteur's expense, a joke whose punch line, delivered by Flora, will ironize the raconteur's terms in telling her tale, and offer up a chance to rehabilitate the sentimental sense and the conventional sense – the traditional sense and the common sense – of Flora's tragicomical adventure between frank laughter and unabashed tears. Conrad will personify this chance in the figure of Powell, his reimagination of the seaman-storyteller whom Marlow has been – Powell by means of whom he complicates and complements the terms that Marlow draws upon in telling Flora's tale in his satirical way, terms that will be cast themselves in the *gawedic* light by which the raconteur of *Chance* will be objectified and ironized by Conrad in turn.

Chance is cast in a retrospective and revisionary mode, a mode of palinode, a mode of reassessment, of the archetypes and emblems of the author and his honorably adopted second home, the archetypes and emblems of Englishness. *Chance* unfolds as a self-reflexive series of dramatized narrative scenes and scenes of narration, a series of focalized and ironized stagings of archetypes and emblems of Englishness, archetypes and emblems of domestic melodrama in the novelistic terms of English literature from Richardson to James, and in the case of Marlow, an archetype and emblem of the prior novelistic modernism of his author's own former career. These focalized and ironized stagings serve to dramatize the narrative performance of these archetypes and emblems as jests, as jeux d'esprit in which those archetypes and emblems are poised between jest and earnest, between the roles of *alazon* and *eiron* in reciprocal, reversible turn. These jests, these jeux d'esprit contribute to a visionary ethics, an ethical vision of the reciprocity and reversibility of all of our modern or post-modern ironies, ironic hierarchies, and generic trajectories. They add up to what Conrad's friend and protégé Ford would call, in his subsequent sequence *Parade's End* (1924-1928), "prophetic tosh."⁶⁷ This visionary ethics,

⁶⁷ Ford Madox Ford, *Parade's End* (1924-1928), New York: Knopf, 1950, p. 154-5. The Knopf edition of 1950 was the first to collect the four novels that make up Ford's sequence with the title *Parade's End*. The Knopf edition is reprinted with the same typeset and pagination as the current Penguin edition, by far the most widely available edition of *Parade's End* in print in the U.S., and the best one available when I started my work on Ford's book. Since then, however, scholarly editions of the four component novels have appeared in a series of Ford's works published in the U.K. by Carcanet Press: *Some Do Not ...* (1924), ed. Max Saunders, Manchester, UK: Carcanet, 2010; *No More Parades* (1925), ed. Joseph Wiesenfarth, Manchester, UK: Carcanet, 2011; *A Man Could Stand Up* – (1926), ed. Sara Haslam, Manchester, UK: Carcanet, 2011; and *Last Post* (1928), ed. Paul Skinner, Manchester, UK: Carcanet Press, 2011. I have made use of the Carcanet edition, but have chosen to cite the Knopf edition, since it and the subsequent

this ethical vision, this mixture of prophecy and tosh is an ironization of modernist irony, a modernization of ironic modernity. It is modernist irony, ironic modernity subjected to itself in self-reflexive terms. It is the prior novelistic modernism of Conrad's and Ford's own early careers come full circle to subjectivize itself, to ironize itself, and in so doing to transcend itself. This transcendence comes in Conrad's case at the moment of his first, best-selling success with readers like warm-hearted Penelope as well as tough-minded David Lowe. Conrad's "English" novel is a great book, Penelope claims, though we will have to read it ourselves to understand why. The singularity of Conrad's *Chance* – its lack of generic fixity and its volatile mobility of tone – is also very great. So we must read the book especially closely to understand why. We must begin by reading closely some scenes that set the stage for Marlow's act of telling Flora's tale, some scenes that mark his new domestication to the novelistic terms of English literature from Richardson to James, the seaman-storyteller's emigration to the realm of domestic Englishness and English domesticity, in the company of his hosts and guests the Fynes, with whom he soon will indulge in the old-maiden-lady-like occupation of putting two and two together in narrative terms, once their girl-friend disappears amid the chalk-hills and the quarries of the English countryside between the Channel and the Thames, where Marlow comes to tell her tale.

Chance's is a strangely Polish Englishness, a self-reflexive Englishness whose ironies all turn upon themselves with great mobility and moral flexibility.

The novel will reset its moral bearings and generic trajectory midway through, as the narrator Marlow, the *eiron* of its satire, will come to be the *alazon* of Conrad's moral satire on such satire as his narrator's own. Marlow will become, that is, the *alazon* of Conrad's affirmation of the Englishness of Life and Love, a feminine, domestic kind of Englishness that spoke to common readers like Penelope. Such sentiment was not without a precedent in Conrad's art, as in the case of *Lord Jim*. But in its sibling text, this affirmation takes a convoluted form, a form to fit its novel importation of a Polish kind of irony to English social scenes, where the force of moral stress is brought to bear on different archetypes and emblems than Conrad had turned to before. Not all of them withstand that moral stress, and neither will Marlow – at any rate without the recognition that his whole narration must revise its own terms, reset its own bearings, and rechart its own trajectory.

Chapter Two
“Pictures from Dickens”
Chance, Melodrama, and Irony

A sailor “hates” to “walk” on “solid” ground, so Marlow claims. He can stroll a ship’s deck if need be, but hiking on a rural road would be a “nightmare” or “wearisome” pain (41). The latter however is just the exercise that he gets when is called on by the Fynes to help them search the countryside around their cottage after Flora disappears (41). Marlow’s preference is for “leisurely movement” and “deliberate gait,” so he is troubled by the sight of John Fyne bounding off up the road at an “offensive” pace (42). Marlow’s chess-playing partner Fyne is an “enthusiastic pedestrian,” in Marlow’s punning phrase – a devotee of the pre-war, post Victorian fad for hiking in the English countryside. An expert on “the footpaths of England,” Fyne has penned “a tramp’s itinerary,” and one can find him hiking every holiday, “broad-chested” and “serious-faced” (31). In keeping with this earnest occupation, Fyne holds “solemn views” as well on “the destiny of women,” on “sublunary love,” on our moral “obligations” in this “transient life” and “so on,” in Marlow’s weary phrase (32). His silence during his and Marlow’s search is broken only by his somber tones describing his “desire,” and even more so Mrs. Fyne’s, to “guide” young girls on “the path of life,” a “voluntary mission” that the couple have assumed with all the force of “pedestrian genius,” in Marlow’s punning phrase (39, 40, 42). The sight of Fyne progressing up the road in his “knickerbocker” suit, tracking down a “phantom” girl, seems “too ridiculous” to bear, though Marlow finds a cause for secret laughter in the sight’s “absurdity” (41).

Just as the sea life under sail had been the archetype and emblem of a certain kind of Englishness-abroad, so now is the countryside of *Chance* an archetype and emblem of another kind of Englishness, domestic Englishness and with it the English domesticity of novelistic melodrama from Richardson to James. Like many of his pre-war, post-Victorian peers, Conrad draws on rural settings for the temporal and spatial coordinates of certain focal points in the English point of view, imaginative locations that will stimulate in Marlow a satirical burlesque of certain modes of Englishness. The Fynes' countryside of weekend cottages is Conrad's archetype and emblem for a pre-war, post-Victorian mode of the chivalrous ideal that had come down to contemporary England from Victorian times. The countryside already was a frequent focal point for this ideal, which had emerged as a cultural reaction to the dislocations of the modernizing Nineteenth Century. Therefore, it provides a fitting stage for Marlow's friendship with the Fynes – pre-war, post Victorian peers whose self-regard and self-deception are satirically burlesqued as atavistic remnants of an ideal they profess to reject on the nominal grounds of their progressive ideology.

John Fyne takes "pride" in his wife Zoe's class distinction as the daughter of the great Carleon Anthony, "the poet – you know" (32). "He used to lower his voice for that statement," Marlow explains, and people were "impressed" or "pretended to be" (32). Based loosely on Coventry Patmore, the author of *The Angel in the House* (1856), Mr. Anthony had written poems like "sentimental novels" told in "verse" of a "superior" kind (32). In them, he had "sung" an epic song of mid-Victorian times, in an effort to "glorify" that product of a lengthy "evolution" toward cultural "refinement," most of all in private life (32). Despite

this, however, in his own home-life, the poet had himself shown savage “traces” of the troglodytic “cave-dweller’s” mood (32). “Marvelous suave” toward his literary public, he had been “arbitrary” and “exacting” toward his family and friends, and especially so toward his daughter and son, once their mother had prematurely died (32). Roderick and Zoe had each of them rebelled against their father, and each of them had done so by “conventional” and sentimental means, means not entirely out of keeping with the poet’s own ideals as explicated in his verse (32). “Disgusted” with “civilization,” Roderick had taken to sea, while Zoe had taken to the broad chest and muscular arms of “the pedestrian Fyne,” again in Marlow’s punning phrase (33). What Marlow will later say of Roderick is implicit in his view of Zoe here, that she like him “resembled” her father much more than she knew, having “set up” for herself a certain “standard,” with the need to put in practice those ideals that the poet explicated in the “verses” that had made him look “sublime” in others’ eyes and most especially in his own (244).

Conrad’s satirical burlesque of Marlow’s hosts and guests the Fynes is just the latest in a longer line of portraits of idealists undone by self-deception and self-regard, and undone especially by progressive ideology, whether in its right-wing “conservative” left-wing “progressive” guise. A model for the Fyne’s own type of left-wing progressive ideologue can be found in the figures of the radicals Michaelis, Ossipon, and Karl Yundt in *The Secret Agent*. There, Conrad notes how much his would-be revolutionaries look like their opponents in the London police. In *Chance*, he notes the similarity between the nominal progressives the Fynes and the mid-Victorian forbears whom they claim to supercede. Marlow

sees the Fynes as less “advanced” than they take themselves to be, regarding them instead as merely “commonplace” and “earnest,” “without smiles” and “without guile,” mid-Victorians in pre-war, post-Victorian times (49).

Fumbling through the darkness with Fyne, as the two of them approach the quarry’s edge where Flora stood, Marlow laughs “out loud” in raucous “peals” when his friend falls head-first in a sink-hole filled with mud. Marlow justifies this outburst as “the comic relief” of a “dramatic” situation, one which his and Fyne’s protracted effort has invested with “amusing profundity” (43, 45). While Fyne regards their work unsurprisingly as altogether “tragic,” Marlow complicates that point of view (44). The Fynes’ unwitting chivalry in service to so “highly-strung” a damsel as their girl-friend seems to be has all the makings of a “farce” (45). Lacking in a sailor’s sense of irony, his hosts and guests become the objects of his jest. Both of them are “excellent” people, but their “excellence” itself supplies the stuff of Marlow’s jest and jeux d’esprit.

Marlow shares his farcical perspective on the evening’s goings-on by paying homage to an age-old image of ironic incongruity, the image of dogs standing up on their two hind legs. The search of the countryside around the Fynes’ cottage having brought no sign of Flora at all, the sailor walks in circles in the midnight gloom, commiserating with his friends. Faced with Zoe and her “reveries” and John and his “solemnities,” Marlow, made drowsy by his hike, receives a vision, an image which encapsulates the comedy implicit in the scene (49). He does not feel that he is “liable” to “fits” of “delirium,” he claims, but some “aberration” nonetheless has made him “mentally aware” of “three trained dogs,” waltzing round in stately circles on their six hind legs (46). There is

“nothing so solemn on earth,” he explains, as “a dance of trained dogs,” there is nothing more incongruous, more comic than canine jeux d’esprit domesticated to a waltz (46). This recognition troubles Marlow’s step “so to speak” and puts him back “on all fours,” at liberty again “to bark and bite” (46). The unexpected leap this image makes into an anthropomorphic play is emblematic of the strange cause for laughter Marlow finds in the mostly somber stuff of Flora’s tale. In fact, the ubiquity in *Chance* of its “tell-tale dogs,” in James’s disapproving phrase, will prove essential to its ludic irony and its *gawedic* sense of play. This is especially true of one particular dog, a household pet of the Fynes, with some “inscrutable” reason for striking up a “friendship” with Marlow, the couple’s guest (36).

Conrad personifies the element of chance, of opportunity, in the figure of this tell-tale dog. Marlow will enlist this furry friend as an ally in his effort to objectify and ironize the terms of Flora’s tale as it told by the Fynes. He gleans that tale through tea-time conversation with his hosts, conversation echoed by the barking of the dog, antic barking that provides a comic chorus that will help put Flora’s tale in its peculiar place, poised between jest and earnest, frank laughter and unabashed tears, as we have seen. That place is Conrad’s point of departure for an English analogue for the *gaweda*, with its ludic and ironic play on common forms of speech and modes of traditional feeling on which Englishness like Polishness was based, as we have seen.

Without a careful setting of the stage for the narrative scene of the Fynes’, and especially Mrs. Fyne’s, act of telling Flora’s tale, it is difficult to render very vividly the comic effect of the tell-tale dog, of his choric barking, which offers comic counterpoint to Flora’s tale as Marlow hears it during tea with his hosts.

Having witnessed Flora drifting toward the edge, Marlow views his hosts protracted effort to find out what has happened to her besides completion of her contemplated leap to be simply absurd. Despite the Fynes' insistence that all that their girl-friend has done is to "disappear," Marlow still feel justified in barking back "The devil she has!" (46). However, when he asks the Fynes to tea on the following day, they bring him news that ought to change his point of view quite as much as their own. Flora has written Mrs. Fyne to announce that she has run away to London to elope with Captain Anthony. This news is as upsetting to each of Marlow's guests as his tumble in the mud had been to John on the night before. It ought to be the same sort of trouble for Marlow himself as it has been for his guests, but the seaman gets his bearings by discharging peals of laughter once again at his pedestrian friends. He does this for the "fun" of the thing, he explains, because the Fynes' own marriage had itself been a "runaway" match very much like Flora makes with Captain Anthony, an "outrage" that Mrs. Fyne's father the "poet-tyrant" had "avenged" with a warrant for his daughter's and her husband's arrest (52). Despite the precedent for Flora's present leap, the Fynes do not approve of her match, and they make a plea for clemency that "disarms" their host's "mocking mood" (52). Zoe and John are not the sort to be "addressed" in "mocking" tones on such a "serious" subject, as John will explain (148). However, this is just how Mrs. Fyne had been addressed in Flora's letter, which had held "a strain of levity," "a challenging tone," as if intent on "daring" her to disagree with what her friend had done (148). Indeed, Flora's dare is quite in line with Zoe's suffragist ideal, an ideal which is neither "political" nor "social," as Marlow explains, but a "knock-me-down" doctrine of "feminine free morality,"

one which holds that no amount of “tenderness” or “scruple” should ever stop a woman from doing as she pleases to do, not even that most basic obligation, to show “consideration” for her family and friends (47). But, since her brother, as a sailor, is unusually susceptible to feminine wiles, Mrs. Fyne cannot consent to what she sees as an adventurous match. In some sense, her reasoning is sound, since the turn of chance that brought together Anthony and Flora was rife with romantic opportunity, in both the erotic and the chivalrous sense of romance – romance in the sense of a spiritual quest or adventure by amorous means. The comic incongruity, the ludic and *gawedic* irony of Mrs. Fyne’s response to Flora’s leap will run throughout the part of Flora’s tale that Marlow will glean from the Fynes. The Fynes’ own tell-tale dog will be the figure in whom Conrad will personify the ludic and *gawedic* turn of chance on which this irony depends, the ludic and *gawedic* turn of chance which keeps experience in flux and all of our narrative constructions unfixed, including the suffragist construction that was so important to the death of Liberal England and the birth of a pre-war, post-Victorian modernity.

The tell-tale barking of the dog is heard at unexpected intervals throughout the conversation that ensues at Marlow’s cottage after Flora’s letter comes. The purpose of this tea-time visit is for Marlow to acquire from Mrs. Fyne a sense of Flora’s past, a history he needs to know to take a further step in his and Fyne’s detective work, a trip to London as Mrs. Fyne’s ambassador to Flora and Anthony. Flora’s tale as told by Mrs. Fyne takes its generic trajectory from English domestic melodrama from Richardson to James, from the classic English novelistic terms for femininity. The tale takes shape in Zoe’s reminiscence over

tea and scones, while outside John attends to the dog, who is barking on the porch to come inside. Marlow reminisces himself of having seen the dog with Flora as they walked the quarry's edge, when the dog had come upon them barking "amiably," with that "cheerful" and "imbecile" expression, that canine smile, that dogs sometimes "put on" when it suits their needs (36). The dog had interfered with Marlow's chance to learn from Flora what it was that brought her near as she had come to a suicidal leap. Now, as Marlow ponders further questions raised by Flora's present leap, the dog appears again, this time to mingle cause for laughter with the somber story gleaned from Mrs. Fyne, laughter he engenders through his periodic barking on the porch, choric barking offstage from the narrative scene, which contributes to the irony attending Flora's tale. The tell-tale barking of the dog is an auditory figure for an otherness outside domestic bounds, for what can be housebroken only partly to the novelistic terms in which the English tradition from Richardson to James had rendered femininity, the same set of terms that Mrs. Fyne employs in telling Flora's tale. The antics of the dog lend an uncanny tone to that tale. The Fynes' household pet but not their friend, he stands outside their narrative terms, which his antics serve to qualify as measures of a narrative fixity and moral solemnity, in Marlow's sense of dogs as they dance on their two hind legs.

One instance of the tell-tale dog's intervention on the narrative scene is worth considering in further detail before we go on to the part of Flora's story Marlow gleans from Mrs. Fyne. That instance is a bit of comic business that gives us, in its purest form, the interplay of solemn fixity and antic opportunity in Flora's tale. It is an episode whose complicated harmony or dissonance of

narrative tones provides the key to the part of Flora's story Marlow gleans from Mrs. Fyne, a harmony or dissonance we need to learn to hear before we go on any further toward that part of her tale.

Before the dog himself appears onstage, his image is entwined with Flora's own in Marlow's memory as he tries to concentrate on Mrs. Fyne amid the barking from the porch. Flora's "ghostly" look as she had stared into the depths of her leap is inextricable, at least in Marlow's mind, from the image of the dog as he had frolicked at her feet in antic play (108). And just as Marlow had been interrupted then by the antics of the dog as he had questioned Flora's plans, so too will he be interrupted now as he investigates her past. The "sharp," choric "yapping" of the dog intrudes itself like piercing "stabs" to Marlow's "brain," not to mention Mrs. Fyne's (108). Meanwhile, on the porch, Mr. Fyne's "sepulchral tones" can do no more to quell the dog than "the deep patient murmur of the sea" can ever do to quell a music-hall performer on "a popular beach" (108). Therefore, Marlow takes a different tack, and goes outside to try to "bribe" his furry friend into "some sort" of "self-control," by feeding him a tea-time scone (108). The dog's response to Marlow's hospitality is rendered in impressionistic terms, through a bit of comic business, a ludic or *gawedic* tableau:

The dog became at once wildly demonstrative, half strangling himself in his collar, his eyes and tongue hanging out in the excess of his incomprehensible affection for me. This was before he caught sight of the cake in my hand. A series of vertical leaps in the air followed [on], and then, when he got the cake, he instantly lost his interest in everything else (108).

The dog's reply to Marlow elicits one in turn from Mr. Fyne, one that demonstrates further the ludic or *gawedic* implications of this comic tableau. Himself "as kind a master as any dog could wish," Fyne is nonetheless opposed to

any such frivolity as feeding scones to dogs (108). The Fynes have kept the dog on “Spartan” fare of hard, “repulsive biscuits” and “dry, hygienic bones,” with the latter meal the closest they have come to giving him treats. In keeping with this austere inclination toward the dog, Fyne is “vexed” by the frivolous indulgence Marlow shows toward what they both regard, although for different reasons, as a furry “fool” (109). Marlow proffers yet another tactic to keep the dog “appeased” (109). The Fynes could simply let the dog come in, where he would clearly like to be. Fyne’s response to this suggestion offers further demonstration of the ludic or *gawedic* implications of this comic scene. “Could they possibly have let the dog come in?” Marlow asks:

Oh dear no! I might indeed have saved my breath. It was one of the Fynes’ rules of life, part of their solemnity and responsibility, one of those things that were part of their unassertive but ever present superiority, that their dog must not be [let] in. It was most improper. It was out of the question. But they would let him bark one’s sanity away outside one’s window. They were strangely consistent in their lack of imaginative sympathy (109).

Just as it is difficult to render very vividly the ludic or *gawedic* effect of the tell-tale dog, so too is it difficult to render very vividly the contrapuntal effect of his choric barking as he frolics in and out of Flora’s tale in counterpoint to Mrs. Fyne. That counterpoint will ironize the terms in which she comes to tell that tale, by hinting at contingencies outside of its generic frame, outside the novelistic terms of English domesticity and English femininity from Richardson to James. Mrs. Fyne and Marlow piece together Flora’s tale in terms of one specific version of the same, perhaps the most significant one, from a literary view. As we turn now to consider their detective work, we ought to remember the tell-tale dog and his canine smile, to which we will return. His frolicking about on all fours makes

both Mrs. Fyne and Marlow stand by contrast on their two hind legs, and marks them both out therefore as figures of affectionate fun, in the ludic or *gawedic* terms that Conrad draws upon in *Chance*.

The dog is Conrad's figure for the antic turn of chance, for life's contingency and sense of opportunity, and also for his novel *Chance*'s sense of self-reflexive irony and moral complexity proceeding from the same. The dog will serve to satirize the Fynes, and their own less ironic and complex terms for telling Flora's tale. His contrapuntal barking will burlesque those same terms, and in a ludic or *gawedic* kind of harmony with Marlow's own laughter as his tale proceeds. But Marlow's way of listening is burlesqued in turn. It will come to be objectified and ironized along with the Fynes, and likewise by the barking of the dog, or rather by the antic turn of chance, by life's contingency and sense of opportunity. For now, however, that tell-tale dog is friend to Conrad's jester, his raconteur, whom he will help with his satirical burlesque.

II

Inspired by Mrs. Fyne, Marlow will imagine Flora's life as being made up of "pictures from Dickens," scenes "pregnant with pathos," and framed in the novelistic terms of domestic melodrama from Richardson to James (123). Dickens was the first English author whom Conrad read, and later on, as an author himself, he would maintain his "admiration" and "unreasoning affection" for a "master" whose "weaknesses" meant more to him than other writer's "strengths." Conrad formed his first sense of Englishness by reading Dickens' fiction, and especially his sense of an English domesticity and femininity that he

would come to know at firsthand later on as a Polish émigré to the ordinary scenes of English life that set the stage for Dickens' art. The presence of Dickens' art in Conrad's Polish youth, followed later on by Conrad's emigration to the English social scene, brought with them an ironic, a ludic or *gawedic*, vantage-point on that crucial source of fictional images of Englishness. In *Chance*, Conrad draws upon that vantage-point in telling Flora's tale at a point in ordinary English life when pictures from Dickens were being redrawn in the midst of a crisis in the English self-image – the death of Liberal England and the birth of a pre-war, post-Victorian modernity.⁶⁸

Marlow makes his reference to Dickens, and with him to the fictional terms of English domesticity and femininity, when giving us two poignant views of Flora by way of Mrs. Fyne – one from the time when Flora's mother had prematurely died, and the other one from just before her father, the speculative financier De Barral, was convicted of fraud. Mrs. Fyne had seen De Barral "clinging" to his daughter, hand in hand with her beside her mother's grave, and later she had seen him "hand in hand" with her again on Brighton beach, "observed [by] all eyes upon the sea" (123). The second of these views recalls implicitly the scene in Dickens's *Dombey and Son* (1848) when Florence, the daughter of Paul Dombey, a disgraced entrepreneur, goes walking with her father on that same stretch of beach, her own mother just having died.

If *Chance* can be read as its author's most Dickensian work, then *Dombey and Son* can likewise be read as its author's most Conradian in turn, containing

⁶⁸ My discussion of Dickensian motifs in *Chance* is informed by Edwin M. Eiger, *The Dickens Pantomime*, which also informs my subsequent discussion of Ford's *Parade's End* in terms of pantomime.

as it does a maritime plotline involving a nautical outfitter Solomon Gills, a seaman Captain Cuttle, and Florence's admirer Walter Gay, the ward of 'Uncle Sol' and Captain Cuttle, who is sent away to sea by his employer Mr. Dombey, who is eager to discourage his and Florence's affair. The intersection here of domestic melodrama and maritime romance is a clear anticipation of *Chance*, and especially its crucial motifs of Flora's runaway match with Anthony and their troubled life at sea with "Mr. Smith," Flora's father in disguise. But the principal Dickensian aspect of *Chance* is its reflection on the archetype and emblem, so crucial to Dickens, of the dutiful daughter, the "pure, passive, sad, [and] innocent" girl, faithfully devoted to a flawed father figure, and willing to be punished for his crimes. In addition to Florence Dombey, figures of this type in Dickens's work include the titular Amy of *Little Dorrit* (1857), who puts before her own needs the wants of her father William Dorrit, the patriarch of the Marshalsea prison for debtors, where his family resides. Dickens' sense of women being actually or virtually confined by the flaws of their fathers is implicit in his view of Florence Dombey and of Amy Dorrit in respective turn. Marlow and Mrs. Fyne will take up this vantage-point in *Chance* as a point of departure for their own meditation on Flora de Barral, Conrad's archetype and emblem of the dutiful daughter, the pure, passive, sad and innocent girl.

Like his model William Dorrit, Flora's father, the speculative financier De Barral, will wind up in jail, though for reasons that are less reminiscent of Dorrit than of Merdle, the speculative financier in *Little Dorrit* whose schemes send several naïve investors to the Marshalsea. And like his alternate model Paul Dombey, De Barral is a flawed father -figure who subordinates his family's needs

to his own desires. Brought to trial for fraud when his speculations fail, De Barral's defense is one that draws upon the highest aspirations of Victorian times. Like the clients whose investments he has lost, the financier can claim that he got "nothing" from his schemes, none of what success can bring, not even that most fundamental thing, a happy home (65). Like his prior models Dorrit and Dombey, and like his counterpart in *Chance*, Carleon Anthony, De Barral had engaged in public ventures that have only served to spoil the private life for which they sought to provide. Flora had been raised in gothic gloom at "the Priory," De Barral's estate, where her mother's only friend was Zoe Anthony, who lived next door with her father the poet, who discouraged her friendship with neighbors whom he saw as *déclassé* (56). Mrs. De Barral had had no one to talk to but this "not very happy" young girl, and the future Mrs. Fyne had been her confidant in the "anxiety" that drove her prematurely to her premature demise, much like Zoe's own mother, the wife of the poet, several years before (57). The future Mrs. Fyne's first view of Flora had been when Flora stood hand in hand beside De Barral at her mother's grave. Following the funeral, Flora had been taken by her governess to Brighton, where she would stay sequestered till her father's trial, and the brutal confrontation with her governess that proved to her that "nobody loved [her,]" that "nobody could" (169).

Marlow imagines the night before De Barral is jailed as Flora's "last sleep" not only of "innocence" but also of "ignorance," or "better still unconsciousness," of "evil" and "the world's ways" (78). Flora's spirit is about to be profaned, like "a temple" desecrated by some "vengeful" devil or beast (78). The agent of her spirit's profanation, its desecration, will be her governess, a "stiff-backed" figure

“all in black” who has shielded her charge from opportunists who have tried to be “agreeable” to her, “a sort of princess” by virtue of the dowry that De Barral’s wealth will bring (70). The governess herself is among those opportunists with an eye on Flora’s dowry and De Barral’s wealth, toward which she has aimed her “nephew,” and secretly her lover, “the wonderful Charley,” whom Flora admires (77). On the morning when De Barral is convicted and jailed and the princess Flora’s dowry disappears, the girl herself is made the “frail and passive vessel” into which her stiff-backed governess will pour out all the “hatred” she has stored within herself for “bitter” years in thankless service to her “betters” in society (93). The governess has lived “half-strangled” by “restraint” through all those years, and now that the possible “prize” of Flora’s dowry has been buried in the “dust” of disappointment, she finds herself at “liberty” for once to let loose (93). She does this by subjecting her charge to a feral and ferocious type of verbal abuse that will leave its victim wide-eyed, pale-faced, and frozen in place, with the sense of “being choked” by psychic “fingers on her throat” (94). Her brows scrunched by rage into “wrinkles” and her teeth bared “to bite,” the no longer stiff-backed governess leans in to Flora’s face, and spits out the taunt that the princess is worthless, the child of “a swindler,” no more than “a thief” (93-94). This taunt and its attendant trauma will be ones Flora never forgets. The sense she gets that “nobody loves [her,]” that “nobody could,” will leave behind a “mark” upon her “soul,” a moral “wound” to be pondered, to be “meditated” on (169, 92). After Flora’s mother prematurely died, her governess had come to be “security embodied,” but more than security alone, the “protection” of her life, of her very sense of self (91). Marlow struggles to describe what it is that Flora has

lost, what it is that her governess has taken away, in language that recalls the moral tenor of his prior accounts of moral crisis in the masculine realm of the maritime romance: “Even a small child lives, plays, and suffers in [the] terms of its conception [of] existence,” he explains. “Imagine, if you can, a fact coming [all of a sudden] [and] with a force capable of shattering that very conception [of existence] itself” (91). Through Marlow’s recognition of a young girl’s “stolidity” in facing this test, Conrad qualifies her effort to maintain her self-resolve as a faithful and honorable instance, a chivalrous instance, of cleaving to the mast in a drawing room and sailing through a storm (93).

With both her father and her governess gone, Flora must fall back upon among the only options for employment that were open to girls of her time and place, employment as a governess herself. In keeping with the archetypal, emblematic, novelistic terms of this vocation for girls, Flora’s subsequent career will be a sad itinerary through the archetypal, emblematic settings of domestic melodrama from Richardson to James. The most important of the stops on Flora’s tour is her time in a Germany derived from gothic novels, during which she finds herself subjected to the sexual advances of the father of the family she has come to serve, advances that are met with acquiescence from the lady of the house, herself a mother of girls, but far from being Flora’s friend. Flora’s instinct is to chart out for herself a less Richardsonian course, to rewrite her unfolding melodrama in alternate terms. She turns back toward England, and on the ferry home, she helps to restage an archetypal, emblematic scene from Conrad’s prior career – a scene from *Lord Jim* – in the moment when she sits all alone on the deck of the ferry in the middle of the night, and contemplates a suicidal leap into

the Channel below. Despite this premonition of her trials to come, Flora's sad itinerary presses on, not to the bottom of the sea but to the heart of darkest London, to a bleak pre-war, post-Victorian East End that calls to mind the work of George Gissing or any of a number of other post-Dickensian historians of urban despair. It is there that Flora meets the cold embrace of some family relations, Cockney cousins of De Barral's, from whom she must then be rescued by the only friend to whom she can turn, the stalwart Mrs. Fyne, who has followed Flora's progress with an eye for opportunity.

Across the seedy East End drawing room where Mrs. Fyne negotiates to liberate her friend from her unwanted ties, the suffragette observes a certain gleam in Flora's eyes. No "fugitive" glance, this look is a "deliberate intimation" of the inward spark reflected ever after in "all" of Flora's "moods" (129). Marlow wants to know from Mrs. Fyne if Flora's look at this point was "frightened [or] angry, crushed [or] resigned," to which Mrs. Fyne replies that "No!" it was none of these – in fact, it was "horribly merry" [emphasis mine] (129). Marlow agrees that Flora's strange expression must surely have been "horrible" to see, even if one had only watched it acted out upon "the stage," to which Mrs. Fyne replies that "Ah!" but "it wasn't on the stage" that Flora smiled her merry smile, and that it wasn't so much with her "lips" that she had seemed to "laugh," but with her intimating eyes (130).

Marlow's and Mrs. Fyne's exchange here over Flora's merry smile recalls an observation Marlow had made when he and Flora first met, along the edge of Flora's leap, as they walked the quarry side. Marlow had observed then that Flora's chin was "fine" and "somewhat pointed," cocked upward at an angle of

defiance that her subsequent banter shows is much in keeping with the fabled connotation of “sharp” chins as signs of mental shrewdness and guile, in this case a shrewdness and guile manifested as an unexpected wit in the midst of a tragic circumstance (37, 114). This uncanny mixture of levity and moral resolve can be found as well in Flora’s confrontation with her governess, during which, as Flora recalls, she could have “laughed” at what the governess regards as the merely monetary form of beggary to which her charge has been reduced, with her father sent to jail (94). “Is that all?” Flora wishes she had asked – asked merrily and with upturned chin and a defiant smile (94). Flora’s merriment here, her chin-up of defiance in the face of being cast as a damsel in distress, is at the heart of her vocation as a very plucky girl. The heart bears an ambiguity, a volatility that is figured by the shape of Conrad’s novel in telling Flora’s tale, figured by its singular mobility of tone and by the reciprocity and reversibility of its ironies, ironic hierarchies, and generic trajectories. This ambiguity, this volatility is Flora’s spark and the narrative keynote of *Chance*. It is the source of its merriment and laughter, its jests and jeux d’esprit, which punctuate its pictures from Dickens, its scenes pregnant with pathos, like the barking of a tell-tale dog, as we shall see.

Marlow reimagines Flora’s tale, as told to him by Mrs. Fyne. He casts it as a kind of burlesque on Dickensian themes, a pastiche in its imitation of and its homage to Dickens’ terms in telling tales like Flora’s own, but nonetheless a parody too, for the way in which those terms are ironized by their being objectified through Marlow’s same conceit of imitation and homage. In the midst

of this Dickensian burlesque, however, there are hints of something volatile, a spark within Flora, a laughter of her own, which will help her over time to overturn this play of morbid satire at her own expense. This spark of Flora's stands beside the tell-tale dog as another of *Chance's* antic figures for life's contingency and sense of opportunity. Marlow himself will be objectified, ironized, and satirized in turn by this same force, as we shall now begin to see.

III

In the midst of one of Marlow's meditations, the sailor pauses suddenly and stares into space, intent upon a "vision" that elicits wayward laughter and a self-betraying smile (212). "Am I to understand that you have discovered something comic in the history of Flora de Barral?" Marlow's auditor and interlocutor asks, understandably confused (212). This question helps give form to *Chance's* reader's own desire to know what Marlow is up to, his narrative intention, his generic trajectory in telling Flora's tale. The answer to this question helps give form in turn to Conrad's own intention to objectify and ironize the terms of Marlow's role as a raconteur, a teller of tales in the ludic terms of the *gaweda*. Marlow, the raconteur of *Chance*, insists that his laughter is engendered there not simply by comic relief but something more complex. "Comic! What makes you say?" he asks. "Oh, I laughed – did I? But don't you know that people laugh [sometimes] at [things] that are far from [being] comic?" he explains (212). Marlow then goes on to give his auditor and interlocutor, and with him *Chance's* reader, a sense of his intention in telling Flora's tale. He does so by asking a question which offers him a chance to make a passing allusion to a theory of laughter that will point us toward a context and a framework for his

irony here. “[Have you not] read the latest books [on] laughter” by “philosophers” and “psychologists?” he queries his friend (212). “They [show us that] we laugh from [superior intelligence,]” he claims (212). They show us that we laugh at “simplicity” and “tenderness of heart,” atavistic states that modern thinking has shown to be “absurd” (212). “Speak for yourself,” Marlow’s friend replies. “A lot of nonsense” had been written on “laughter,” he explains, and also “tears” (212). Be that as it may, Conrad’s reader ought to pay more heed to Marlow here than his friend seems willing to do. Just as Flora’s own horrible merriment in instances of stress offers clues to her vocation as a very plucky girl, so too does Marlow’s levity, his horrible irony in telling her tale offer clues to his intention in telling that tale in the way that he does, and with them clues to Conrad’s own intention in objectifying and ironizing his seaman-storyteller, his raconteur in the terms of the *gaweda*.

Marlow’s reply to his friend about the comic note he finds in Flora’s tale refers implicitly to Henri Bergson and the essay on “Laughter” Bergson published in 1901, an essay in which the French philosopher had studied the ethical psychology of one kind of comic disposition, one relevant to Marlow’s sense of levity, his horrible irony in telling Flora’s tale.⁶⁹ Marlow’s passing reference to Bergson and his essay on laughter is typical of Conrad’s own engagement with the topical concerns of the pre-war, post-Victorian moment when *Chance* found unexpected success. Along with the women’s suffrage movement and the culture

⁶⁹ Henri Bergson, “Laughter” (1901) in Wylie Sypher, ed., *Comedy: An Essay on Comedy by George Meredith. Laughter by Henri Bergson*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956. Dual volume combining Bergson’s “Laughter” and George Meredith’s “An Essay on Comedy” (1877).

of the countryside, the audience for *Chance* was also interested in Bergson, and especially so in the years from 1910 to 1914, when liberal England died and Conrad's book found unexpected success. Bergson's impact on the nascent modernism of younger peers of Conrad's like Woolf and her colleagues in the Bloomsbury group is well-known. But what has not been seen so clearly as it should be is Conrad's own prior engagement with Bergson's ideas. That prior engagement, like *Chance*'s great success, had come at a point in his career when he sought to write his way beyond the work on which he had by then acquired sufficient insight to recognize in hindsight as the prior modernism of a former phase – the prior modernism of the first three Marlow tales, but also of *The Secret Agent*, the first of his two works addressed like *Chance* to the ordinary scenes of English life, his new departure in genre toward ironical treatment of the melodramatic concerns at the heart of English fiction from Richardson through Dickens to James.

As we have seen, Conrad's raconteur Marlow had offered his émigré author a means to objectify and ironize the narrative voice of the maritime romance, through which he drew upon his prior career in the British merchant fleet in the foreign sphere of Englishness-abroad. And as we also have seen, that seaman-storyteller had likewise helped objectify and ironize a different but an equally important English narrative voice, the voice of Conrad's friend and colleague James and of domestic melodrama from Richardson through Dickens to James. Further complicating the already complex character of Marlow's storytelling voice in *Chance* is the levity and irony implicit in the laughter Marlow draws on Bergson's work to help explain and justify to his friend, the auditor and

interlocutor of the novel's outer frame. Conrad had struck this note of levity and irony before, in the black-comic impassivity with which the lives of Ossipon, Michaelis, and Karl Yundt, not to mention those of Verloc, Winnie, and Stevie, had been detailed in *The Secret Agent*, a book that was, in terms of tone, perhaps the most unsettled and unsettling of his previous works. In that first of his two novels set in England, Conrad based his new departure toward ironical treatment of domestic melodrama from Richardson through Dickens to James on a disembodied third-person vantage-point that casts a gimlet eye on the fates that the characters meet. Some critics have qualified their praise for what resulted from this new departure by noting that the novel's ambiguity of tone entails the cost of a moral frame of reference Conrad's readers could use to understand his point of view with regard to those events that the novel depicts. The reader's problem in *The Secret Agent* is the same one Marlow's friend will face in *Chance*, and especially so in those moments when the raconteur's laughter is engendered by a case for which the justifying context remains unknown. Marlow's reference to Bergson is an effort on his part to identify that justifying of context for his friend, and it is likewise an effort on Conrad's own part to objectify and ironize for readers of *Chance* the terms on which he based his prior vantage-point on Verloc, Winnie, Stevie, Ossipon, Michaelis, and Yundt. In that sense, Marlow's reference to Bergson helps to indicate a self-reflexive turn in Conrad's art, a turn that marks a pivotal moment, and probably the first in English fiction, when a prior modernism will objectify and ironize itself and, in so doing, transcend itself, even as it finds a great success with common readers like Penelope. A closer look at Bergson's view of laughter offers insight into Marlow's vantage-point in telling

Flora's tale in the way that he does, and it likewise helps prepare us to return to the tell-tale dog, in whom the novel will personify the element of chance that its title proclaims, the element of chance which keeps experience in flux and all of our constructions unfixed, including the modernist constructions of Conrad's prior art, the modernist constructions finding favor during *Chance's* day, with the death of Liberal England and the birth of a pre-war, post-Victorian modernity.

Bergson's essay on laughter is in keeping with his body of work, which is analogous in some respects to Conrad's own in its crucial concern with the modes of conceptual rigidity that threaten the vitality of human intuition in an ever-changing world. In her study of Conrad and Bergson, Mary Ann Gillies has noted how the wooden machinations in *The Secret Agent* of policemen and anarchists alike lend an uncanny aspect of marionettes to both groups as they vie with one another for control of an evolving situation that neither one can truly comprehend on the inflexible terms that they each employ.⁷⁰ This recognition of conceptual rigidity proceeds, as we have seen, from what one early reviewer described as a moral sensibility that, although it had not been blunted, had ceased being squeamish. In that sense, this moral sensibility derives from much the same place Bergson's humor does – temporary “anaesthesia of the heart.”⁷¹ If we could, for a time, become disinterested observers of our passing scenes, then we would find, so Bergson claims, that “many a drama,” many a tragedy, would “turn into a comedy” before our gimlet eyes.⁷² This vantage-point of

⁷⁰ Mary Ann Gillies, “Joseph Conrad: Bergsonian Ideas of Memory and Comedy,” in *Henri Bergson and British Modernism*, Buffalo, NY: McGill-Queen's UP, 1996.

⁷¹ Bergson, “Laughter,” p. 64.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 63.

“lookers-on” betrays a clear resemblance to Marlow’s own earlier description of a certain kind of seaman’s point of view, the point of view of the kind of seaman who pries into things considerably. This view-point gains a concrete form in Marlow’s ludic and ironic point of view on much of what he witnesses in *Chance*. That concrete embodiment contributes to another one of Bergson’s preconditions for the laughter he describes, the precondition that laughter needs an “echo,” that laughter is social, engendered by our shared recognition of any uncanny fact that each of us represses in our ordinary lives, the fact of a “mechanical” rigidity “encrusted” on us all, the fact of a lack of “elasticity” where we ought to find the “pliability” of a human vitality.⁷³ Given that the stiff-backed Fynes are sorely lacking in that kind of flexibility, they find it hard to laugh as Marlow sometimes wishes they would do. The jester, the ludic and ironic raconteur lacks the echo he requires. “Custom” blinds the Fynes like all the rest of us to certain kinds of comic incongruity inherent in our lives from day to day.⁷⁴ It takes a “dissolution” of routine to revive in us the comic sensibility.⁷⁵ In moments when the strictures of our lives betray themselves to prying eyes, we stand exposed to the vision of ourselves as “puppets” dangling from strings, as spirits dependent on the letter of habitual law to a comic degree.⁷⁶

Bergson’s sense of spirits bound by habit is similar in certain respects to Conrad’s own sense in previous works that our common forms of speech and our modes of traditional feeling may be paradoxically the principle threats to our

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

fulfillment of the few very simple ideas which hold the meaning of our lives. This is the *szlachta* sense of irony that Conrad learned the Polish national bards. The chivalrous ideal that would sustain the *szlachta* class through its long bondage under foreign rule was likewise the ideal that they themselves had failed to fulfill when their common forms of speech and their modes of traditional feeling had proved insufficiently vital to lead the Poles to victory against their foreign foes.

The *szlachta* sense of irony and Bergson's sense of comedy come close to one another in a figure who anticipates them both, a figure who initiates the history of the European novel, and especially those currents in that history that Conrad's work would help to culminate. That figure is Cervantes's Don Quixote, the chivalrous idealist par excellence, in whom we find a precedent for Conrad's own line of knights-errant from *Lord Jim* to *The Rover* (1923) at the end of his career. The man from La Mancha enters into Bergson's essay on laughter to personify the comedy inherent even in – perhaps especially in – our noblest efforts to attain a higher ground. "A fall is always a fall," as Bergson explains, but it is "one thing" to stumble down a well when one has failed to mind one's step, [and] "quite another thing" to stumble down a well when one is fixed "upon a star."⁷⁷ And it is "certainly" a star toward which Quixote tries to climb, the pole star of chivalrous ideals from medieval romance.⁷⁸ Just as significant here as Bergson's reference to Cervantes' Don is the image of his stumble down the well, a fall which bears coincidental likeness to the leap the damsel Flora almost makes, and likewise to that leap's comic parody by Marlow, through his jest and

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

jeux d'esprit in response to Mr. Fyne's own stumble, down into the mud. Fyne's misstep, like Flora's almost-leap, is Conrad's figure for a moral confrontation with the pitfalls and pratfalls of life, those turns of chance which threaten our fidelity to those few very simple ideals that hold the meaning of our lives.

As we have seen, Conrad represents the claims of those ideals by means of feminine personae in most of his works. His women are the bearers of the flame. They bring life's chances to his men, who find their fates are either thwarted or fulfilled by these feminine dreams— the dream of faith, the dream of hope, the dream of love. These visions carry all the ambiguity of life. They are “sustaining” and destructive, truthful and illusory by turns. However – again, as we have seen – it is also true in Conrad that skepticism threatens his women, and with them the moral affirmation on which our integrity depends. The heart bears a volatility, an ambiguity that is figured by the shape of Conrad's novel in telling Flora's tale, figured by its singular mobility of tone, by the reciprocity and the reversibility of its ironies, ironic hierarchies, and generic trajectories. This volatility, this ambiguity, is Flora's spark, and the narrative keynote of *Chance*. It is the source of its Bergsonian laughter, its jests and jeux d'esprit. But it is likewise the means by which these things will be objectified and ironized, in self-reflexive terms, as being, in and of themselves, stiff-backed postures, mechanical postures, just as guilty of pedestrian genius and conceptual rigidity as any we encounter in the convoluted telling of the tale of Marlow's telling Flora's tale. This volatility and ambiguity are the means, that is, by which the stiff-backed and mechanical postures of its raconteur and jester, with his laughter and jeux

d'esprit, will be objectified and ironized in turn, as we shall see, by a very plucky girl and by a tell-tale dog.

Marlow laughs in Bergsonian ways at the rigidly quixotic kind of chivalry that Anthony displays. But he himself is likewise settling further in a posture of an opposite but comparable rigidity, a stiff-backed kind of anti-quixotic or panzaic burlesque not just of chivalry but any other kind romance, any view with scope for opportunity within the turn of chance. This posture has been noted by the auditor and interlocutor of *Chance*'s outer frame, and maybe by its reader too. It comes to be solidified and clarified in coming itself to be subjected to satirical burlesque, first by Marlow's auditor and interlocutor, and later by the antic turn of *Chance*, the turn of Conrad's metaphors, both Flora's vital spark, and the tell-tale dog, to whom the heroine responds with an organic spontaneity and moral flexibility derived from Life and Love, the keys to late Conradian romance.

IV

The idea of Roderick Anthony, "the son of the poet," as "the rescuer" of Flora de Barral, the most forlorn damsel of modern times, is one by which Marlow is greatly "amused" (178). Marlow sees Anthony's life as being made up not of pictures from Dickens but of pictures from Patmore, scenes pregnant not so much with pathos as with the amusing profundity with which the ludic and *gawedic* raconteur has invested things in telling Flora's tale. Marlow sees Anthony's falling as hard as his does for the damsel Flora as a quintessential instance of the kind of pit-fall or prat-fall of chance, the kind of stumble down a

well or down a sink-hole filled with mud that one is liable to make if one's eyes are fixed, like Don Quixote's eyes, on a star and not the ground beneath one's feet. The star on which the eyes of Anthony are fixed is the ideal image that had served as the basis for the sentimental novels told in verse that his father the poet once wrote, novels that resemble Patmore's *Angel in The House*, with its ideal image of English femininity. Like his sister Zoe, there exists a certain family resemblance between her brother Roderick and their father the poet, whom both of them had meant to deny but whom each of them had largely affirmed. The poet had, as Marlow explains, "an admirable gift" for "etherealizing the commonplace," for making "touching" and "delicate" the "hopeless conventions" of his day (145-146). All the refinement and "tenderness" conveyed in "so many fine lines" "grow," on contact with Flora, "to the size of a passion" in the heart of his son, "who had never in his life read a single one" of the poet's famous novels told in verse, about "the most highly civilized, chivalrous love" (247). What the poet, "fastidious, cerebral," had "sung" in "harmonious numbers," his son would "feel" with "reckless sincerity" well-suited to being ironized and objectified, to being laughed at in Bergsonian tones, as indeed it will be by the ludic and *gawedic* raconteur of the damsel Flora's tale, in which the knight-errant Anthony will figure as a leading man (247).

Framed within a picture from Patmore, Anthony seems "simple" and "heroic," and not the sort of man to take "initiative" in amorous affairs (156). His "perfect timidity" where women are concerned is owing not to "indifference" on his part but to "chivalrous instincts" when faced with the damsel whom his sister befriends (156). Knights-errant such as Anthony are timid, as Marlow explains,

but they are “easily moved” (156). Having “need” for “affection,” they “go forward” with an “eagerness,” a “recklessness” when damsels give the sign (156). What the sign was that Anthony received Marlow claims not to know, though he guesses that it might have been the upturned “chin” his sister had seen, either that or something horribly merry in the eyes of her friend (163). No matter, however, what the sign had been, the knight had “*seen*” the damsel, seen her as “a possible woman,” and then gone forward at this “magic” sign (163). “A lover” hides in “every man,” as Marlow explains, a lover who is “called out” by “the most insignificant things” (163). “Whatever it was that encouraged him,” the knight had gone forward in manner Marlow would have called “heroic” had it not been so “simple,” as simple as a stumble down a well or down a sink-hole filled with mud, as simple as a pitfall or pratfall of chance, the stuff of a jest or jeux d’esprit, of Bergsonian laughter or the ludic meditations of the raconteur of a *gaweda*.

Going forward to meet her distress, it is “obvious” to Anthony at least that “the world” is “using” Flora “ill,” abusing the pure, passive, sad, and innocent girl (167). Having taken to sea, Anthony has sworn himself an “enemy” of “life on shore,” with its “fads” and “affectations,” like those that are indulged in by the family and friends who have left both him and Flora out at moral extremes, like “hermits withdrawn” from “the wicked world” (166). Each of them “hated all that,” those fads and affectations, that wickedness, as Marlow explains, and neither one of them was “fit for it” (165). But where a young man could bid it all goodbye – by enlisting, by breaking up stones on the road, or by taking to sea, – a young girl like Flora, the child of a swindler, no more than a thief, had few opportunities for independent action in the world that was open to her, a world

without honor or shelter or bread, with nothing but a pitiful dole running down as her years wore on. “Nobody would love me,” as Flora explains – “Nobody could.” Anthony’s chivalrous reply will serve to qualify his portrait as a picture from Patmore, one cast in the light of a jest or jeux d’esprit by the ludic and *gawedic* raconteur, the Bergsonian jester who will laugh at his portrait of the son of the poet, the great knight errant of the sea. “Nonsense! Nobody can love you!” Anthony exclaims. “You’ll have to be shown that *somebody* can,” you’ll have to be shown that “*I* can” [emphasis mine] (169). And then he goes on:

You dare stand and tell me that – [that nobody would love you, that nobody could] – you white-faced wisp, you wreath of mist, you little ghost of all the sorrow in the world. You dare! Haven’t I been looking at you? You are all eyes ... And you really think that I can now go to sea for a year or more, to the other side of the world somewhere, leaving you behind. Why! You would vanish ... what little there is of you. Some rough wind will blow you away altogether. You have no holding ground on earth. Well, then trust yourself to me – to the sea – which is deep like your eyes. (170).

What Anthony is moved by here, according to Marlow, is not mere “pity” and “indignation” at Flora’s tell-tale “marks” of “ill-usage,” the mystic wounds behind her magic signs (167). Rather, it is “something more spontaneous, perverse, and exciting” something that has given him the feeling that, should he “get hold” of her, she then will “belong to him” entirely, as “completely” as a woman ever could (168).

Whether despite or because of its Patmorian aspects, the urging of Anthony to Flora to join him in the “peace” and the “security” embodied by “the sea” appeals at once, according to Marlow, to the “bruised” and “battered” damsel, who finds herself swept up “straight” away and “carried out of [her] depth” by the outgoing tide of the knight’s “impetuosity” (166, 198). Marlow,

again, is amused by the son of the poet as he rescues this damsel, this pure, passive, sad, and innocent girl, and he is likewise “pleased” that Flora herself has proven “sensible” enough to meet her suitor halfway (175). What specific “proofs” of “lover-like lavishness” Anthony gave her Marlow claims not to know. But he assumes that those proofs and likewise Flora’s response had been cast in the “dithyrambic” phrasing for “expressions” of “love” for which the England of Patmore had a special kind of genius unequalled in its excellence except by the Fynes. Just as Anthony is simple and heroic, as Marlow explains, so Flora is a typical girl of “our civilization,” a girl not especially “intelligent” but “thoroughly feminine,” one who understands she must be “passive,” though not “inanimate,” involved as she is in “circumstances” where her simply “being a woman” is a matter of “occult” importance for herself and her suitor both (231). Flora’s being a woman, and therefore being passive, as Marlow says she must, is the source of the “visible” and “tangible” power by which the timid Anthony is moved (231). “This, as Marlow explains, is the “pathos” of “being” a “woman,” the pathos, yet also – and in ways that Marlow himself has failed at first to see – the opportunity, the chance:

A man can struggle to get a place for himself or perish. But a woman’s part is passive, say what you like, shuffle the facts of the world as you may, hinting at lack of energy, of wisdom, of courage. As a matter of fact, almost all women have all that – of their own kind. But they are not made for attack. Wait they must. I am speaking here of women who are really women. And it’s no use talking of opportunities either. I know that some of them do talk of it. But not the genuine women. Those know better. Nothing can beat a true woman for a clear vision of reality (210).

Marlow adds that he would call this clear vision true women possess “a cynical vision” were he not “afraid” of “wounding” his auditor and interlocutor’s sense of “chivalry,” for which, as he explains, “true” women are nowhere near so

“grateful,” as one might expect, to those of his “kind” (210). “The purely human reality,” as Marlow explains in Bergsonian tones, is one that will always be elusive to “abstractions” like chivalry, abstractions which represent stars, fixed points of conceptual rigidity, ones which may tempt our gaze upward from the ground beneath our feet, and therefore land us at the bottom of a well or of a sink-hole filled with mud, like Cervantes’s Don or like John Fyne (231). “Nothing will serve” for “understanding” Flora’s tale, as Marlow the raconteur explains, “but the rational linking up of characters and facts,” the putting of two and two together, no matter if that linkage might be wounding to damsels and knights or to “fellows” of his friend’s quixotic kind (210).

Marlow had refused prior to *Chance* to proffer his impressions in “objective” ways. But, both here and through the novel’s opening half, he is tempted to fix his understanding in just those ways, tempted as he warns against the pitfalls and pratfalls of chance, the conceptual rigidities indulged both by his auditor and interlocutor and by his hosts and guests the Fynes. The narrative temptations Marlow wrestles with in *Chance* are Conrad’s means to unsettle the fixity of even the most objective vantage points on ordinary life for English readers like Penelope, or rather his means to acknowledge an unsettling underway, as human nature changed, as Liberal England died, and as a pre-war, post-Victorian modernity was being born, both in *Chance* and all across the English scene, including drawing rooms, cottages, and chalk-hills near the sea. Just as he had done in his three previous tales, Marlow tries here to follow James’ advice to be a person on whom nothing is lost. Ironically, however, the closer he

comes to the ordinary scenes of English life, in contrast to overseas adventure and foreign intrigue, the harder this will prove to be.

Even as Marlow satirizes, by Bergsonian means, the rigidly quixotic kind of chivalry that Anthony displays, he is likewise, and at the same time, settling further in a posture of an opposite but comparable rigidity, a stiff kind of anti-quixotic or panzaic burlesque not only of chivalry but also of any other kind of romantic view, any view with scope for opportunity amid the turn of chance or life's contingency. This posture has been noticed already by the auditor and interlocutor of *Chance's* outer frame, and likely by its reader too. That stance will be solidified and clarified further, and therefore objectified further, as it slowly comes itself to be subjected to satire and burlesque, first by the auditor and interlocutor of *Chance's* frame, and later by the turn of chance itself, the turn of Conrad's metaphors, both in the form of Flora's spark and in the figure of the dog, to whom the heroine responds with volatility, derived from life's contingency and sense of opportunity.

V

Marlow's auditor and interlocutor will find himself from time to time at liberty himself to bark and bite, to snap back in turn at Marlow's Bergsonian jests and jeux d'esprit. At one point, he offers a satirical burlesque of Marlow's posture of a Jamesian authority in telling Flora's tale. "I understand perfectly," he claims:

You are the expert in the psychological wilderness. This is like one of those Redskin stories where the noble savages carry off a girl and the honest backwoodsman with his incomparable knowledge follows the track and reads the signs of her fate in a footprint here, a broken twig there, a trinket dropped by the way. I have always like such stories. Go on. (231-232)

Marlow's friend compares the raconteur here to the honest backwoodsman Natty Bumpo in James Fennimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* (1827-1841). The honest backwoodsman's ability to read aright the signs of a young girl's life, and this despite his lack of an acquaintance on intimate terms with the scenes of ordinary English life, will rhyme as well with an alternate authority, an alternate capacity for being a person on whom nothing is lost, one that will further satirize and burlesque the imaginative vantage point of novelists like James. That authority, that capacity comes down to the power of deduction that Marlow will claim, the one he shares not only with the novelist James but with Arthur Conan Doyle's great fictional detective Sherlock Holmes. In "The Adventure of The Second Stain" (1905), Holmes notes in tones that rhyme with Marlow's own that "the motives of women" are difficult to read, save for men like himself, with an ability for reading magic signs, of putting two and two together, of linking facts and characters, in Jamesian ways.⁷⁹ Women's "most trivial actions may mean volumes," as Holmes explains to Watson, just as Marlow will explain to his own friend in turn.⁸⁰ Women's "most extraordinary conduct may depend upon a hairpin or a curling tongs," he proffers, just as Flora's and Anthony's elopement may depend, as Marlow proffers, on certain magic signs.⁸¹ Marlow fails to make the same allowance to his own friend that Holmes will make to Watson in his turn, that it is a "mistake" to "theorize in advance of the facts."⁸² But despite or

⁷⁹ Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Aventure of The Second Stain," in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, New York: P. F. Collier and Sons, 1905, p. 363.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 363.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 363.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 363.

because of this failure, Marlow then goes on to meet his interlocutor's bark and bite, his snapping back by reasserting his Jamesian authority in telling Flora's tale:

A young girl you know is something like a temple. You pass by and wonder what mysterious rites are going on in there, what prayers, what visions? ... For myself, without claim, without merit, simply by chance, I had been allowed to look through the half-opened door and I had seen the saddest possible desecration, the withered brightness of youth, a spirit neither made cringing nor yet dulled but as if bewildered in quivering hopelessness by gratuitous cruelty; self-confidence destroyed and, instead, a resigned recklessness, a mournful callousness (and all this simple, almost naïve) – before the material and moral difficulties of the situation. The passive anguish of the luckless! (232)

Marlow is a person on whom nothing is lost, or so he constantly claims.

Through his power of deduction, through his tea-time conversation with the Fynes, and through his meeting with Flora herself as they had walked the quarry's side, Marlow has been given a glimpse into the temple of a young girl's soul, a glimpse into her desecrated spirit, the withering of which by some unfortunate chance has brought her to the point of suicide, both on the ferry back from Germany and on the quarry's edge before the sailor intervened. Marlow's glimpse has led him to envision Flora's life as being made up of a pictures from Dickens, as we have seen. And it has likewise led him to envision the life of her rescuer Anthony as being made up of pictures from Patmore in respective turn. It has allowed him, that is, to picture both those lives, both the damsel's and the knight's, in terms of a jest or *jeux d'esprit*, a satirical burlesque on the scenes of ordinary English life. But what has remained elusive to him is the narrative keynote of *Chance*. That keynote is Flora's reason for joking later on that she is not a very plucky girl and therefore showing that she actually is, her reason on the point of suicide for failing to follow it through, her reason for seizing life's

chances and opportunities. That reason is Flora's spark, her incendiary potential, her spiritual reserve. That reason is the heart's ambiguity, its opportunity, its chance, which will reveal the reciprocity and the reversibility of ironic hierarchies and generic trajectories like Marlow's own in telling her tale.

"Never confess! Never, never!" Marlow urges his friend (159). The occasion for this exclamation is ironically the seaman-storyteller's own confession of the outcome of his second encounter with Flora, on the London docks, where she would soon be taking to sea aboard the *Ferndale* with Anthony, her runaway match. It is there where Marlow comes to be privy without claim, without merit, and simply by chance not only to a glimpse into a damsel's soul, into her desecrated spirit, but also to a heroine's confession of the source of her spark, her incendiary potential, her spiritual reserve – the narrative keynote of *Chance*, the heart's ambiguity, its opportunity, which helps inspire a very plucky girl to seize life's chances for hope and not depression and despair. But "Never confess! Never, never!" Marlow nonetheless exclaims (159). "How many sympathetic souls can you reckon on," he asks, "in this [wicked] world?" (159). "What a sell" confessions are," he insists – "What a horrible sell!" (159). One might think that Marlow protests too much – and he does, as we shall shortly see.

Marlow's reflections on confession here, his reflections on a narrative confession's fraught relationship to its auditors and interlocutors are a critical restaging of perennial concerns of Conrad's whole career, from "Youth," *Heart of Darkness*, and *Lord Jim* on through to the final phase engendered by *Chance*. Conrad had broached those perennial concerns, he had staged that fraught relationship by means of the figures of Marlow and his auditors and interlocutors

in “Youth,” *Heart of Darkness*, and *Lord Jim*. In the subsequent *Chance*, he has come to ironize and objectify the figure of Marlow by making him the auditor and interlocutor for a confession in respective turn, a narrative account for which he lacks, at first, sufficient means of sympathy. Marlow’s insufficiency of sympathy will call for a revision of the terms for telling Flora’s tale, indeed for telling tales in general, as human nature changed, as Liberal England died, and as a pre-war, post-Victorian modernity was being born.

Marlow warns that narrative confession may “stir” up hidden depths, “secret” depths in its auditors and interlocutor’s souls, depths which may not hold sympathy but rather contempt, contempt expressed as irony conceived in Bergson’s terms, conceived as the *eiron*’s condescension toward the *alazon*, the human being’s laughter at the puppet, the marionette (159). The auditors and interlocutors of a narrative confession, as Marlow explains, may be stirred to take themselves to be the *eirons* in contrast to the *alazons* confessing their tales. As the auditors and interlocutors of a narrative account, the self-regarding “strong” may be stirred to be “disgusted” by the “weak,” and the self-regarding “lucky” may be stirred to be “amused” by the unfortunate, the victims of chance (159). In Marlow’s three previous tales and especially *Lord Jim*, the seaman-storyteller, the ludic and *gawedic* raconteur had kept a narrative poise between ironic meditation on sympathy with those confessions he had heard and then passed on to his auditors and interlocutors in his turn. He had eschewed, in those previous tales, the kind of moral condescension, the kind of Bergsonian laughter that he warns against in *Chance*, but in which he nonetheless has still indulged, by means of his jests and jeux d’esprit. Those jests and jeux d’esprit have come at

the expense of the Fynes, but also at Anthony's expense and even at Flora's expense – Flora, the heroine of *Chance*, but nonetheless an object for satirical burlesque, Bergsonian laughter from the jester Marlow whom Conrad has initially entrusted with telling her tale. Flora's spark, her incendiary potential, her spiritual reserve will shine more brightly in the moment when she finds herself – to mix metaphors necessarily – down on all fours, at liberty again to bark and bite, to snap back like Marlow's auditor and interlocutor at the jest whose satirical burlesque will be revealed in that same moment to be itself the same sort of dance of a dog upon its two hind legs, the same sort of case of rigidity and solemnity against which the jester himself has repeatedly warned. And that moment will be accompanied, as we shall see, by certain magic signs, the upturned chin and the smiling eyes of a suffragette, a militant woman, an English Joan of Arc, and a very plucky girl – and also by the antic barking of a tell-tale dog, to whom we now return.

Marlow's knowing condescension is revealed to be a posture that is latent within much of modern fiction, from the intimate appraisals of young girls' lives by James to the bold deductions from domestic melodrama by Doyle and his Sherlock Holmes. Marlow's auditor and interlocutor can satirize these points of view by relating them in unexpected ways to the work of Natty Bumpo, the backwoods scout in Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*. What Marlow, James, Holmes, and Natty Bumpo all display is a posture of having comprehended life's contingencies, and of being able now to condescend in knowing ways toward those apparently romantic opportunities that figures such as Flora and her

rescuer Anthony see. Such condescension, such satirical burlesque, is essential to the irony that Conrad himself would evince his whole career, and nowhere more so than his Marlow tales. That irony completes itself here as it reverses itself and thus transcends itself. The Marlow of the tales that reach their end-point in *Chance* is now a subject himself for condescension and satirical burlesque. His mastery of life's contingencies itself can be mastered in reciprocal turn, mastered or bettered by the antic turn of chance, embodied both by Flora's vital spark and that which calls it out, the tell-tale dog, Conrad's figures for romantic opportunity beyond the force of laughter and knowing disdain.

VI

The tell-tale dog has served as the figure for an otherness outside domestic bounds, for what can be housebroken only partly to the fictional terms of the English tradition from Richardson through Dickens to James. The antics of the dog have an uncanny tone, a comic incongruity, and therefore the dog's intervention on the narrative scene is emblematic of the interplay in *Chance* of solemn fixity and antic opportunity, its complicated harmony or dissonance of narrative tones. Marlow has shown himself capable of such frivolity as feeding scones to dogs, but there are limits to the raconteur's indulgence of his friend the furry fool, and he will find himself exposed therefore himself as a dog up on his two hind legs, domesticated to a waltz, just as much as John and Zoe Fyne. He finds himself subject that is to the ludic or *gawedic* effect of his friend the furry fool, the contrapuntal effect of his antics as he frolics in and out of Flora's tale. Those antics help to signify contingencies outside the raconteur and jester's self-conception as a person on whom nothing is lost, or so he constantly claims.

Flora's confession to Marlow is the narrative keynote of *Chance*, a note for which the raconteur and jester lacks at first sufficient means of moral sympathy. That lack requires revision of his terms for telling Flora's tale, indeed for telling tales in general. Confession can uncover hidden depths in its auditors' souls, among them undercurrents of contempt, the *ieron*'s condescension toward the *alazon*. But undercurrents of contempt can be reversed and condescension overthrown, such that irony itself can be ironized and *eirons* objectified in turn as *alazons*. This reversal of ironic hierarchies and generic trajectories is *anagnorisis* or dramatic recognition. But it is also, both in Marlow's case and Flora's own, an instance of epiphany⁸³, a showing-forth, a manifestation of "the moral occult," "the true that may be wrested from the real" in the course of our adventures out at moral extremes, the dramas or melodramas that give our lives their parabolic shape.⁸⁴ The truth shown forth to Marlow by Flora in the epiphanic moment she has come to confess is simply Life in the numinous terms of Conrad's pre-war, post-Victorian modernity and simply Love in the feminized, Anglicized terms of the final phase of Conrad's career inaugurated here by *Chance*. This Life or Love is described by Jonathan Rose as "a mysterious spiritual quality that [gives] human beings identity, consciousness, a moral sense, and free will – a vital spark

⁸³ My reading of epiphany from this point on is informed by Morris Beja, *Epiphany in The Modern Novel*, Seattle: U of Washington P, 1971.

⁸⁴ Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and The Mode of Excess* (1976), New Haven: Yale UP, 1995, p. 2, 5. I will draw on Brooks' notion of "the moral occult" from this point on, and I am indebted throughout to Brooks for his notion of melodrama as the mode of modern fiction that intuit moral meaning above and beyond those heremeneutics of suspicion with which Flora, then Tietjens and Valentine are forced to contend. I am indebted to Brooks' reading of James especially for helping me to recognize the presence of the moral occult in the melodramatic works of James' great successors, Conrad and Ford.

very like the Christian [notion] of the soul.”⁸⁵ This quality Marlow discovers in and through a very plucky girl, just as Flora herself had discovered it herself in and through the antic entrance on the scene of a tell-tale dog.

Flora’s confrontation with the dog, and through the dog with Life and Love, is prefigured in *Chance*’s sibling text *Lord Jim*. There, among the seamen who are called upon to serve in the inquiry into Jim’s behavior when the *Patna* fails to sink is one “Big Brierly, the captain of the crack ship [*Ossa*] of the *Blue Star* line.”⁸⁶ Brierly, as Marlow explains, is a man who has “never in his life” made a single “mistake,” and therefore never suffered “indecision” or “self-mistrust” like the novice seaman Jim.⁸⁷ “The fortunate man of the earth,” Brierly is “possessed” of an “acute” awareness of his “merits” and “rewards,” which include the “love and worship” of “a black retriever,” a faithful and honorable dog.⁸⁸ Despite his dog’s loyalty however, the master himself will demonstrate no such fidelity in turn, neither to his loving and worshipful dog nor to the seaman’s code, the code of conduct that is or ought to be the moral basis for his judgment of Jim. Brierly “committed suicide very soon after” this, as Marlow dryly explains, throwing himself overboard from the *Ossa* in a parody of Jim’s own leap.⁸⁹ His last words, according to the ship’s first mate Mr. Jones, were “Go back, Rover. On the bridge, boy! Go on – get. Shut that dog up in the chart room, [Jones.]”⁹⁰ “[The] dog was always at [his master’s] heels whenever he

⁸⁵ Jonathan Rose, “The Meanings of Life,” p. 74.

⁸⁶ Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim* (1900), New York: Oxford UP, 2002.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 42

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

moved,” and he followed him, “sliding” his nose. (44). Brierly was “afraid [that] the poor, [loyal, honorable] brute would jump [overboard] after him, don’t you see?” as Jones explains.⁹¹ The captains’ “rash act” is less of an enigma to the sleuth-like Marlow than it is to his companion Jones.⁹² “You can depend on it [the cause] wasn’t anything that would have [bothered] either [one] of us” very much, as Marlow explains.⁹³ “Neither you nor I, sir, [have] ever thought so much of ourselves,” as Jones is quick to agree.⁹⁴ Captain Brierly, “Big” as he is, lacks young Jim’s honor and fidelity, his loyalty and courage in confessing he had failed to keep the seaman’s code by which he is judged. “Why eat all that dirt?” Brierly asks, in light of Jim’s decision not to flee – “Let him creep [away from here]! By heavens! I would!”⁹⁵ Brierly wishes Jim would save face by skipping out on his trial. He recommends a course of cowardice, one aimed at preserving Jim’s “dignity,” but one that also serves to suggest that the face that Big Brierly wishes to save is not so much the novice Jim’s but rather his own, his own façade as a finer and more faithful seaman than in truth he has ever been.⁹⁶ Brierly judges Jim’s behavior paradoxically to be a “disgrace.”⁹⁷ “A man may go pretty near through his whole [life] without [the need] to show a stiff upper lip,” as Brierly explains. “But when the time comes ...”⁹⁸ Marlow insists that there is “courage” “in “facing it out” as Jim has chosen to do, “knowing very well that if he

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

went away [no one] would trouble [with tracking him down.]”⁹⁹ “Courage be hanged!” Brierly roars in reply. “That sort of courage is no use to keep [one] straight, and I don’t care a snap for such courage ... The fellow’s a gentleman ... He [ought to] understand.”¹⁰⁰ Brierly thus reveals himself here, by way of contrast with Jim, to be not at all the gentleman or seaman whom he claims to be, nor anywhere near being worthy of the honor, loyalty, and love of his worshipful dog. This contrast “destroys” Brierly’s “confidence” and motivates his suicidal leap.¹⁰¹ “Thus, apropos of Jim,” as Marlow explains, we “glimpse” the real Brierly, just days before he offers his “reality” and “sham” together “to the keeping of the sea.”¹⁰² The contrast Brierly makes with Jim gives Marlow grounds for judging Jim’s case more sympathetically than he had done before. “Jim facing [his fate] – of his own free will – was a redeeming feature” in his case, as Marlow explains. “I hadn’t been so sure of it before.”¹⁰³

Marlow had been surprised in *Chance*’s sibling text *Lord Jim* by the fineness and faithfulness, the honor and fidelity of a youth who was subject to trial in an instance of stress. And he will be surprised again by Flora’s fineness and faithfulness, her honor and fidelity, her failure to follow through on the suicidal leap she had intended to make. Marlow had been impressed in *Chance*’s sibling text by Jim’s dignity, his chivalry in keeping to the seaman’s code, the code that leads to him toward confessing the failure represented by his leap from the *Patna*’s deck – and then impressed again by his courage in facing his trial of

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50

his own free will and not running away. And he will be impressed furthermore by Flora's subsequent pluck, her loyalty to common forms of speech and modes of traditional feeling, the words of old moralists and moral conventions, even in the midst of her adventures out at moral extremes, her own trials as the most forlorn damsel of modern times. The recognition, the revision of his image of Jim is Marlow's *anagnorisis* in *Chance*'s sibling text, and it is brought about by Jim's redemption through a show of remorse, an unexpected show which undermines the *eiron* Marlow's own basis for judgement, and opens him up to an unexpected means of moral sympathy with an *alazon* who now can play the *eiron* in respective turn. And the same sort of *anagnorisis* will come with the damsel Flora's subsequent leap, her runaway match with Anthony, the knight, who, as a youth himself, had gone to sea like Flora's predecessor Jim. Ironically, this leap had been an outrage to Mrs. Fyne, a knock-me-down demonstration of the free morality that Mrs. Fyne had preached but never practiced herself, much as Jim's inquisitor Brierly had preached but never practiced his own seaman's code. Mrs. Fyne's girl-friend Flora had seized a turn of chance, which had brought her romantic opportunity in both the erotic and the chivalrous sense of romance, romance as an ethical adventure by amorous means. Flora's letter describing her leap has a challenging tone, the sense of a dare. It's strain of levity, its comic incongruity recalls a look that Flora had given once before to Mrs. Fyne, the intimation of an inward spark underlying all her moods, a strange sense of merriment conveyed by her upturned chin, her defiant smile, features expressive of an uncanny mixture of levity and moral resolve. This same sort of gleam in Flora's eyes, this same sort of intimation as is made to Mrs. Fyne, will be made in

turn to Marlow when he and Mr. Fyne track down Anthony and Flora on the London docks, from which they are bound, aboard the *Ferndale*, for a lengthy term at sea. This gleam, this intimation will convey to the raconteur Marlow, in a way that he has never gleaned before, the ludic or *gawedic* turn of chance which keeps experience in flux and all of our constructions unfixed. This represents an *anagnorisis* in *Chance* that is analogous to Marlow's recognition and revision in *Chance*'s sibling text *Lord Jim*. And like that prior *anagnorisis*, Marlow's current recognition and revision is shadowed, haunted, by a tell-tale dog – a black dog who bears the connotation of depression and despair, the connotation of death, including death by suicidal means like Brierly's own. The irony in Conrad's prior staging of Brierly's fatal leap lay in its inversion of this fabled, folkloric connotation of a tell-tale dog. Brierly's dog connoted not depression and despair, not death, but rather Life and Love, the basis for a loyalty, an honor and fidelity that Brierly himself did not possess, despite his moral pretense. That same inverted connotation, and with it the same sort of irony, is present in Conrad's restaging of this suicidal scene in *Lord Jim*'s sibling text. The black dog's entrance there on the scenes both of Marlow's telling and of Flora's tale has the force of an epiphany – a manifestation, a showing forth, by means of “melodrama, of “the moral occult,” the moral meaning which shadows and haunts both these ephiphanic scenes, “the true that may be wrested from the real” in both Marlow's and Flora's tragicomical adventures out at moral extremes, from tears to laughter, from laughter to tears in respective turn. The moral meaning which shadows and haunts these tragicomical adventures is the one contained by common forms of speech and modes of traditional feeling, the

words of old moralists and moral conventions, like Life and Love. These moral conventions are shown forth, manifested, in the antics of a tell-tale dog and in the gleaming eyes and upturned chin of a very plucky girl to both of whom we now return.

Marlow finds himself biding time “on the pavement” near the London docks, by the hotel where his partner Mr. Fyne has gone inside to meet with Anthony concerning Flora’s letter to his sister Mrs. Fyne (148). The sailor is content for now to loiter on the streets, surveying passersby in his usual way, when suddenly a figure comes upon him, headed toward the hotel door. “I was on the point of moving down the street” as Marlow explains, “when [suddenly] my [vision] was attracted by a girl:”

She was dressed very modestly in black. It was the white straw hat of a good form ... which had caught my eye. The whole figure seemed familiar. Of course! Flora de Barral. She was making for the hotel, she was going in ... [And] as I hesitated what to do she looked up and our eyes happened to meet just as she was turning off the pavement into the ... doorway (150).

With “a slow inclination of the head,” Flora answers Marlow’s gaze, while her “luminous, mistrustful maiden’s glance” seems to question “What is this one doing here?” (150). Her “deep blue eyes of tenderness and anger” subtly darken, her “eyelids” flutter slowly, but her “stare” remains “fixed” (151, 152). She does not strike the Fynes’ assistant as being “disconcerted” by seeing him here (152). Flora asks Marlow if Mrs. Fyne was very “much upset” by her marital leap, her runaway match (151). Marlow says that she had seemed “less so” than he himself had been or even Mr. Fyne, and this despite his having shared with both of them his view of Flora’s previous leap, her intended suicide, which he himself had seemed to interrupt when he had met her months before (151). Flora then

“negates” this “notion” offered to the Fynes – the idea that Marlow himself had “checked” her suicidal leap – slowly shaking her head from side to side contemptuously (151). “No?” Marlow chuckles, “Well have it your way” (151). At this, Flora chuckles in return, and “points” her “chin” up, toward Marlow, “aggressively” (152). A quick “gleam” flashes through her bright “red” lips, representing both a “smile” and a “bearing” of “teeth” much like her governess had made (152). “No, it wasn’t your shout,” Flora answers, “I had been [there] some time before you [came]. I went up there for what – for what you thought [that I’d intended] to do” (152). “One reaches a point,” she explains, when “nothing that concerns one” seems to “matter” anymore (152). “But something [had in fact held] her back,” as Marlow explains, though it was not his shout (152). He “should never have [imagined] what it was,” though *Chance*’s reader may have done (152). And Flora then confesses what it seems “absurd” to say – “It was the Fyne dog” (152). “You see,” as Marlow explains:

[She] imagined the dog had become extremely attached to her. She took it into her head that he might fall over or jump down after her. She tried to drive him away. She spoke sternly to him. It only made him more frisky. He barked and jumped about her skirt in his usual, idiotic, high spirits. He scampered away in circles between the pines charging upon her and leaping as high as her waist. She commanded, ‘Go away. Go home.’ She even picked up from the ground a bit of a broken branch and threw it at him. At this his delight knew no bounds; his rushed became faster, his yapping louder; he seemed to be having the time of his life. She was convinced that the moment she threw herself down he would spring over after her as if it were part of the game. She was vexed almost to tears. She was touched too. And when he stood still at some distance as if suddenly rooted to the ground wagging his tail slowly and watching her intensely with his shining eyes another fear came to her. She imagined herself gone and the creature sitting on the brink, its head thrown up to the sky and howling for hours. This thought was not to be borne. (152).

As we have seen, Flora jokes that she is “not a very plucky girl” and that Marlow “knows why” (160). But what is revealed here by these full details of her

prior failure to follow through on her intended suicide are comic incongruities that indicate how Flora, in this very act of jesting on her failure, is in fact the plucky girl whom she feigns not to be, one whose reason for lacking not the pluck but rather the cowardice to follow through on her intended leap has been lost all along on *Chance's* raconteur and jester just as much as on the butts of his jokes, John and Zoe Fyne. "I see you will have it that you saved my life," snaps Flora back at Marlow, but "Nothing of the kind" (160). She was "concerned," as she explains, for the "dog," but not the dog alone but also what he manifests, what he shows forth – a fineness and faithfulness, an honor and fidelity in terms of which "[her] idea of doing away with [herself]" now seems "cowardly" and mean (160). That is what she means, Flora offers, by saying she is not a plucky girl, and therefore showing that she is, and also worthy of the loyalty and love of hers and Marlow's furry friend, the tell-tale dog. "I was so miserable that I could only think of myself," she explains, and that is what was cowardly and "mean" (160). "Besides, I had not given it up," she adds – "not then" (160). Marlow's response to Flora's revelation – his *anagnorisis* and recognition – we have seen before, but it bears repeating here, in context, where its full epiphanic force is felt:

I don't know much of the psychology of self-destruction. It's a subject one has few opportunities to study closely ... Considered as a sin, it is a case of repentance before the throne of a merciful God. I imagine that Flora de Barral's religion under the care of her distinguished governess could have been nothing but outward formality ... [So] why she, that girl who existed on sufferance so to speak – why she should write inwardly with remorse because she had once thought of getting rid of a life which was nothing in every respect but a curse – that I could not understand. I thought it was very likely some obscure influence of common forms of speech, some traditional or inherited feeling ... words of old moralists and moral conventions. Yes, I was surprised at her remorse (160-161).

So surprised is Marlow, in fact – as certain readers may be – by this manifestation of the moral occult that he struggles to reverse the recognition, to undo the *anagnorisis*, and thereby to refix the flux into which this turn of chance has put his prior construction in telling Flora's tale. It must have been his voice and not the barking of the dog that had upset her suicidal "poise" (153). "Every act of ours ... presupposes a balance of thought, [of] feeling, [of] will," as Marlow explains, and hers had "destroyed", so that Flora was "no longer" in the mood (153). He guesses that Flora had figured that "[the] next day would do," that she would "slip way" softly like Brierly had done, so as not to draw the "notice" of the tell-tale "dog," a final, "tender" "necessity" before her fatal leap (153). He nonetheless wonders once again, and finally asks her outright, why it was that she had "thought better" of that suicidal leap and failed to follow it through (154). She "hadn't thought" at all, she explains, but she had "remembered," and "that was enough" (154).

Marlow is surprised by this remembrance, by Flora's remorse. His sense of surprise is an *anagnorisis*, a reversal as the raconteur's authority in telling Flora's tale is overturned by the subject herself. It is overturned as her intended suicide, the crux of Marlow's tale, was overturned prior to that by the tell-tale dog. That dog is Conrad's self-reflexive figure for such *anagnorises*, and with them the moral epiphanies or recognitions those reversals bring, their sudden intimations of the moral occult, the ghostly force of Life and Love within the antic turn of chance. These intuitions were prefigured prior to *Chance* in *Lord Jim*, in Conrad's prototype there for the tell-tale dog, the dog whom Brierly locks up, thus suppressing that reversal that might have overturned his suicide. Flora

makes no such suppression, but remembers Life and Love as manifested by the dog, and therefore suffers from remorse at her own tendency toward suicide. Flora thus reverses herself, to seize life's chances, its latent opportunities. This seizure overturns Marlow's terms – his knowing condescension, Bergsonian laughter, and satirical burlesque. It leads to *Chance* resetting itself here, midway through, reversing its ironic hierarchies and generic trajectories and moving on from tragedy to comedy, from satire to romance – a move that marks one end for modernism, one final destination in a key career.

Chapter Three “Creatures of Light Literature” *Chance, Melodrama, and The Moral Occult*

A very plucky girl had “remembered what [she] should [not] have forgotten,” and that was all, but it was everything – the “substance” of that “truth” which her author, in his famous “Preface” to *The Nigger of The Narcissus* (1897), had wanted “above all [else] to make [his readers] see.”¹⁰⁴ It was the kind of epiphanic recognition James Joyce described as a manifestation, a showing forth of “the significance of trivial things”¹⁰⁵ – a “moment of vision,” in terms that Woolf derived from Conrad’s “Preface” and used in her review of *Lord Jim*, a moment of special intensity, intuitive insight, and luminosity.¹⁰⁶ Woolf credits Conrad, well before herself and Joyce, with this “gift of seeing [life] in a flash,”¹⁰⁷ of recognizing meanings that are latent in life, parabolic possibilities, the true that may be wrested from the real. This truth is the moral occult, the ghostly habitation of our ethics in a world which has misplaced its sacred sense. The epiphanic recognition of this moral occult is the point toward which a melodrama moves – human drama out at moral extremes, where moral forces are at work, where moral choices must be made. The movement toward this epiphanic point is the trajectory of a modernism’s search for the sacred sense, its urge toward resacralization, its effort to reanimate the remnants of our sacred myths, to show forth the moral truths occluded by the real, hidden by it yet implicit in it. Evident

¹⁰⁴ Joseph Conrad, “Preface” to *The Nigger of The Narcissus* (1897), New York: Penguin, 1988, p. xlix.

¹⁰⁵ Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*, New York: Oxford UP, 1959, p. 169. Ellmann quotes Stanislaus Joyce, who recorded this phrase of his brother James’ in his diary.

¹⁰⁶ Virginia Woolf, “*Lord Jim*” (1917) in Andrew McNeillie ed., *The Essays of Virginia Woolf, Volume II: 1912-1918*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987, p. 142.

¹⁰⁷ Woolf, “*Lord Jim*,” p. 142.

in Conrad, Joyce, and Woolf all three, this movement is a principle quest of modernist literature, its journey toward a pentecostal fire, a promethean flame within the hereclitean flux of the contingencies of chance. This quest betrays an existential faith in Life and Love, in those moments when we have a fleeting sense of some reality or truth. The modernist essayist T. E. Hulme describes the movement down to his own day from God and Reason toward Life and Love.¹⁰⁸ This is a movement toward the sacramental sense of literature itself in Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), which Stephen Dedalus describes in religious terms as a "priesthood" of "imagination," transmuting the "bread" of our "experience" into the "body" of "Life" and Love.¹⁰⁹ "There must [always] be [a] word in the language ... in capital letters," as Hulme explains. "For a [very] long time ... [that] word was God. Then [people] [got] bored ... and [moved on] to Reason. [And] now [they all] take off their hats and lower their voices when they speak of Life [and Love.]"¹¹⁰ This Life and Love, as we have seen, is a quality that gives to human beings their identity, their consciousness, their free will, their moral sensibility. It is a vital spark like Flora's inner flame, a gem-like potential like the Christian soul. Marlow notes this spark of gem-like flame in Flora's predecessor Jim, with his intensity of life, that will to live that Brierly has lost, but Jim and Flora come to find, that vital spark which makes for all the difference, in the terms of Conrad's "Preface," the courage and pluck that Jim and Flora show in facing down their trials instead of running away. Such pluck and

¹⁰⁸ T. E. Hulme, "A Tory Philosophy" (1912), in Karen Csengeri ed., *The Collected Writings of T. E. Hulme*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1994, p. 244.

¹⁰⁹ James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), New York: Penguin, 1992, p. 240.

¹¹⁰ Hulme, "A Tory Philosophy," p. 244.

courage mark a “new realism” that the critic Arthur Waugh identifies within that same “new novel” we have seen surveyed by James. Over and against the Decadence, the fatal acquiescence, in the fiction of the waning Nineteenth century, this New Realism marks a different mood, an *aube de siècle* mood, which relocates the “possibilities” for Life and Love within the human “soul.” This difference is what makes for the distinction between Thomas Hardy’s Jude Fawley and Conrad’s Jim, between Hardy’s Tess Durbeyfield and Conrad’s Flora – between a fatal sense, that is, of the tragedy inherent in the satires of circumstance and a sense of the romantic opportunity, the comic incongruity inherent in the antic turn of chance.¹¹¹

Woolf identifies this difference that distinguishes Conrad’s works from those of Hardy and his peers as a “freshness of romance,” “a great possession” in “the depths of [our] hearts.”¹¹² This great possession is described in “Youth” itself as something “inborn,” “solid,” and “secret” which “shapes” the “fates” of women and men.¹¹³ This something, which Flora remembers, this something we should never forget, is outlined in Conrad’s “Preface” as:

The mystery [of] our lives, our capacity for wonder, our sense of pity, beauty, and pain ... the latent feeling of fellowship with [humankind], the subtle but invincible conviction of solidarity, that knits together [all] the loneliness of human hearts ... the solidarity in dreams, in joy, in sorrow, in aspirations, in illusions, in hope, in fear, which binds us to each other, which binds together all humanity – the dead to the living and the living to [those yet to be born].¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Arthur Waugh, “The New Realism,” *Fortnightly Review*, n. s. 99 (May 1916), 849-58.

¹¹² Virginia Woolf, “Mr. Conrad’s *Youth*” (1917) in Andrew McNeillie ed., *The Essays of Virginia Woolf, Volume II: 1912-1918*, p. 159.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹¹⁴ Conrad, “Preface” to *The Nigger of The Narcissus*, p. xlviii.

This mystery is the moral occult, the “substance” of “truth,” the truth of Life and Love.¹¹⁵ Conrad finds this truth out at moral extremes, in the honor and fidelity of seamen, the great knights-errant of the sea. He seems to proffer a “distinction” Woolf observes between those truths which we should take with “grains of salt” and those to which we ought to pay more “homage,” the drawing room manners of his ordinary readers and the morals of the mast to which his characters cleave.¹¹⁶ But Woolf’s prince of prose would be “a greater writer,” she claims, if he could honor both the heart’s “quiet deeps” and its transient “storms,” both the few very simple ideas of seamen cleaving to their masts and the drawing room customs and conventions of the lives on shore of readers like herself and her Penelope.¹¹⁷ But we have seen how Conrad came in books like *Chance* to domesticate his moral extremes, to recognize in telling Flora’s tale how the heart of darkness lies in close proximity to matters of the heart for common readers like Woolf. And Conrad’s heart like Woolf’s was one which knew more storms than quiet deeps, and not just while cleaving to a mast, but also and maybe more so in the drawing rooms and studies where he wrote his books, the places he had left in his youth, much like Flora and Anthony now, as they prepare to take to sea. Like Flora, and indeed like Woolf herself, Conrad struggled with depression all his life – attempting suicide in Marseilles at twenty-one years old, a novice seaman sailing for the French; and then collapsing at the age of fifty-three in Kent, from writing *Under Western Eyes* (1911). Woolf herself notes “Mr.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, xlix.

¹¹⁶ Virginia Woolf, “A Prince of Prose” (1921) in Andrew McNeillie ed., *The Essays of Virginia Woolf, Volume III: 1919-1924*, p. 291-92.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 292.

Conrad's Crisis" on completing *Lord Jim*, when things had come to "eyes" no longer "youthful" to look less simple than they had once seemed.¹¹⁸ And yet the most youthful eyes that Conrad opened as an author were the eyes of a middle-aged man, one with twenty years behind him of complicated service at sea. And as Conrad's biographer Zdzislaw Najder notes, the "values" "advocated" in the first phase of his subject's career and in the final phase engendered by *Chance* are very much the same as those "endorsed" in the middle phase of crisis, up to *Under Western Eyes* (419).¹¹⁹ Rather than a wholly new "beginning," Conrad's final phase, engendered by *Chance*, was a "simplification," a "solidification" of "tendencies" apparent from the start, which were present through the crisis coming after *Lord Jim*, although occluded perhaps by the satires of circumstance.¹²⁰

In taking Conrad's "measure of man," Paul L. Wiley notes a "comic" incongruity in *Chance*, "a tragi-comic flavor" that shows a "growing confidence" in Conrad, the ultimate "refinement" of a "talent" that was present from the start.¹²¹ In the final phase engendered by *Chance*, Conrad merely reaffirms his "ideal" all along of "action" in "accordance" with the "need of "ordinary" humanity, an ideal he embodies in Flora, his very plucky girl.¹²² In reading Conrad's fiction as "a study in literary growth," John A. Palmer sees Flora's tragi-comical adventure as the means to an examination of "the very preconditions" of

¹¹⁸ Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Conrad's Crisis" (1918) in Andrew McNeillie ed., *The Essays of Virginia Woolf, Volume II: 1912-1918*, p. 227.

¹¹⁹ Zdzislaw Najder, *Joseph Conrad: A Life*, Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2007, p. 419.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 419.

¹²¹ Paul L. Wiley, *Conrad's Measure of Man*, Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1954, p. 132.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 198.

her author's own ideal of "self-knowledge" and "responsibility" in the face of our apparent "inability," and yet our clear "necessity," to overcome the "darkness" at the heart of our lives – both our ordinary lives and those extraordinary moments when we find ourselves at moral extremes.¹²³ While reference alone to this "foundation" is insufficient to understand the fictional structures Conrad builds upon that base, and least of all the complex narratology of *Chance*, that is "not the same thing" as "denying," as some have some have tried to do, that such foundations exist.¹²⁴ As David Thorburn argues, there is something "old-fashioned" and "quaint" in Conrad's art, which marks him out at as being "uneasy," not only in his English "place of exile," but also, and more so, in "the time in which he lived," the same modernity he shared with Joyce and Woolf, Bergson and Hulme.¹²⁵ "A rich [and] simple nostalgia" that is "not at all modern" persists in him.¹²⁶ This homesickness, this sense of abjection, is the source of that depression and despair that is the keynote of Conrad for readers like Kenner, who critiques both Conrad and Ford in the light of the coming generation of Joyce and Woolf, Eliot and Pound. Unlike Joyce, for example, Kenner argues, neither Conrad nor Ford is ever sure what his "attitude" is toward "events" he describes, and "that is what [his irony] conceals."¹²⁷ But just as Conrad had objectified and ironized his storyteller Marlow in the midst of *Chance*, so too would he objectify and ironize himself and his own uncertainty, his own ambiguity, in his "Author's

¹²³ John A. Palmer, *Conrad's Fiction: A Study in Literary Growth*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1968, p. xiv.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xv.

¹²⁵ David Thorburn, *Conrad's Romanticism*, New Haven: Yale UP, 1974, pp. 161-62.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 162.

¹²⁷ Kenner, "Conrad and Ford," p. 167.

Note” to *Chance* in 1920, written in the light of its success with common readers, and especially women readers, like Penelope. “*Chance* is one of my novels that shortly after having been begun were laid aside,” Conrad notes, referencing the period of crisis just after *Lord Jim*:

Starting impetuously like a sanguine oarsman setting forth ... I came very soon to a fork in the stream and found it necessary to pause and reflect seriously upon the direction I would take ... [My] hesitation extended for many days ... I floated in the calm water of pleasant speculations, between the divergent currents of conflicting impulses .. My sympathies being equally divided and the two forces being equal, it is perfectly obvious that nothing but mere chance influenced my decision in the end (331).

Conrad, Kenner claims, had “forced” into “philosophy” a “naïve” “skepticism” of “man” making existential “fictions” in a “meaningless” void, a standard “Nineteenth Century” “theme” which had come to be as “dated” by the 1920’s of Joyce and Woolf, of Eliot and Pound as Alfred Lord Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* (1849) had done when Conrad started his career.¹²⁸ This vantage-point, however, mistakes both Tennyson’s and Conrad’s starting-points for final ends. Just as Tennyson progressed toward a Christian affirmation through his sequence of skeptical poems, so too did Conrad progress through his sequence of skeptical novels coming after *Lord Jim* toward the affirmation of a few very simple ideas – a progress which was more than just a circuit, neither leaping nor yet leaving behind the possibility of suicide which shadows all his work like the fabled, folkloric black dog of his depression and despair. Something turned the author from such circling, just as something turned his damsel from her own, something difficult to say – some incongruity, some freshness of romance, some comic opportunity to reaffirm a dream of Life and Love.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 167.

“It is a mighty force, that of mere chance,” as Conrad explains, “absolutely irresistible,” and yet it “manifests” itself in “delicate forms,” like the “charms” of a very plucky girl (331). It is hard to put one’s finger on the turn of chance, but Conrad “ventures” anyway that “it was Flora de Barral” “who [was] really responsible” for his own novel, and for its success with readers like Penelope (331). Flora took her place in an archetypal, emblematic line of English heroines from Richardson through Dickens to James. These women, like Flora herself, were the bearers of a pentecostal fire, a promethean flame, prophetic dreams of the moral occult, the dreams of Life and Love. The cultural contingency or rather the opportunity of women’s suffrage gave these bearers of the flame a crucial role to play in staging or restaging certain ideals of Englishness. England’s willing hostage from the Slavic lands made the most of the imaginative potential opened up by the suffrage campaign – the chivalrous spectacle of women, of female heroism on the English social stage. Its crucial archetype and emblem was the figure of the militant woman, the suffragette, modeled on that chivalrous but most un-English archetype and emblem, the French Joan of Arc. The image of Flora de Barral is the dream of a charming boy. It the tinted photograph of an actress playing Joan on the West End stage. But this archetype and emblem of Englishness is very much “in it,” very near the heart of darkness Conrad finds in close proximity to matters of the heart in ordinary English life. The miserable dependence of girls, their search for a path to independence, makes Flora’s case a delicate one with which to come to terms, a case which will require restaging in feminine terms of the masculine dramas of her author’s prior tales, restaging which objectifies and ironizes Conrad’s prior terms in telling those tales. The

former half of *Chance*, called “The Damsel,” marks Marlow’s emigration to the feminine realm of domesticity. The latter half of *Chance*, called “The Knight,” marks the damsel Flora’s own emigration to the masculine realm of the maritime romance, where her tale is taken up by a second seaman-storyteller, Powell, who will complicate and complement the prior terms for telling Flora’s tale employed by Marlow, the ludic and *gawedic* raconteur whom we have seen upstaged by the tell-tale dog. Under these more sympathetic eyes, the damsel will complete her tragicomical adventure out at moral extremes, and show herself again to be a very plucky girl, an archetype and emblem of Englishness.

Flora’s tragicomical adventure was the first best-seller of Conrad’s career and the earliest instance of popular acclaim for an English-language novel in the modernist mode. The author’s collapse in the aftermath of *Under Western Eyes* found an echo in the strange death Liberal England faced in 1914. *Chance* was a moral meditation, under Eastern eyes, on the latent viability of certain affirmations, certain words of old moralists and moral conventions, in the context of modernity – the ethos of Englishness, specifically. The novel, like its author and the culture he addressed, occupied a mode of palinode – a retrospective mode, a revisionary mode, which helped to cast it as a book-length joke at its raconteur’s expense, a joke the punch-line of which would serve to ironize that raconteur’s terms for telling this tale, indeed for telling tales in general. *Chance* shows a prior modernism come round full circle to objectify itself, to ironize itself, and so transcend itself. This self-transcendence yields a visionary ethics, an ethical vision, a marriage of prophecy and tosh, based upon the reciprocity and reversibility of modern or post-modern ironies, ironic hierarchies, and

generic trajectories. The literary fruit of this prophetic tosh is an ironization of irony, a modernization of modernity – modernist irony, ironic modernity subjected to itself in self-reflexive terms. This ironization and modernization yields a space for epiphanic recognition and romantic affirmation of the moral occult, shown forth through the words of old moralists and moral conventions in a given time and place. This recognition and affirmation shows the latent viability of common forms of speech and modes of traditional feeling that are close to the heart of both personal and cultural integrity for authors like Conrad and readers like Penelope. As Conrad puts it himself in his “Author’s Note:”

What makes this book most memorable to me ... is the response it provoked. The general public responded largely, more largely perhaps than to any book of mine ... This gave me a considerable pleasure, because what I always feared most was drifting into the position of a writer for a limited coterie – a position which would have been odious to me, as throwing about on the soundness of my belief in the solidarity of all mankind in simple ideas and in sincere emotions (332).

As we have seen observed already by Penelope and Woolf, foremost among those ideas and emotions which Conrad believes join us all in solidarity is the ideal of honor and fidelity, the chivalrous, quixotic basis of the Polishness he took from Mickiewicz, the ethos of the *szlachta* class and likewise of the Englishness native to his second home. That chivalrous, quixotic ideal he embodies in the figure of the seaman Charlie Powell, his foil for Marlow and a reimagination of the archetypal, emblematic figure of the seaman-storyteller – Powell who will complicate and complement the jester Marlow’s terms in telling Flora’s tale – his terms for telling tales in general. The archetypal, emblematic damsel’s emigration, in the person of Flora, to the masculine realm of the maritime romance is matched in the second half of *Chance* by the archetypal, emblematic

knight's emigration, in the person of Powell, to the feminine realm of domesticity. That realm is relocated, ironically, to Powell's ship the *Ferndale*, the quarters of which evoke the drawing rooms essential to the sorts of tragicomical adventures that might be faced by heroines in English domestic melodrama from Richardson through Dickens to James. Those quarters and the whole of the *Ferndale* from stem to stern provide the setting for the dreams of Powell, a charming boy, his beautiful and generous mind at play upon the given scene. That play is harmonious and dissonant at once with the ludic and *gawedic* tone of Marlow's mind at work on the scene before, the scene surrounding Flora's suicide and her failure to follow it through. The dreams offered up by this play are Conrad's chance to rehabilitate a sense of sentiment, the common sense of Life's tragicomical adventure out at moral extremes, of Love's tragicomical adventure between frank laughter and unabashed tears. And it is likewise his chance to rehabilitate the moral affirmation on which spiritual integrity depends both in personal and cultural terms. Life to young Powell – as to all of us, both young and old – is something in the nature of a fairy-tale,” as Marlow explains (215). “We are creatures of our light literature” much more than we know, “much more than [we] suspect,” we who “pride” ourselves on being “scientific,” with our “theories” which occlude the sacred sense of the moral occult (215). Light literature, with its archetypes and emblems, its generic conventions, is Conrad's literary analogue for solidarity, just as solidarity in turn is his social analogue for honor and fidelity. Over and against the heart of darkness faced in all his work from beginning to end, the terms in which his honor and fidelity, his sense of solidarity is bound to be embodied are those of that light literature that all of us

are creatures of much more than we know – the terms of old moralists and moral conventions, the sentimental terms of melodrama in the midst of life's contingencies, it's sacred and occult opportunities for Life and Love, not just depression and despair. These chances, these opportunities are sparks of gem-like flame, iridescent potentials, or spiritual reserves.

Flora's remembrance is not only an *anagnorisis*, a dramatic reversal, but also an epiphany – a manifestation, a showing forth of occluded moral meaning that is latent in things. This epiphany is characteristic of modernist fiction more generally, from Conrad and Ford down to Joyce and Woolf. Woolf saw how Conrad's epiphanies in works like *Chance* had prefigured her own. Such moments of vision in Conrad are showings forth of what Brooks calls the moral occult, the core of latent meaning toward which modernism moves. This moral occult was figured frequently in Conrad's day in terms of Life and Love – Life, the modernist successor, for Hulme, to Enlightenment Reason and the Christian God; and Love, the English, sentimental, and feminine term in which Life finds its form in Conrad's *Chance*. Such melodramatic affirmation of the moral occult was pregnant in Conrad's work going back to *Lord Jim*, and it marks him out as part of a movement toward the turn of the century against a prior mood of fatalism and despair. Woolf recognized this sense of romance in Conrad's work, but wondered if this sense was too dependent on the memory of his youth and its adventures at sea. But as Najder notes, the moral affirmation in Conrad had lasted through an existential crisis in the wake of *Lord Jim*, as Conrad left his youth at sea behind. And as Wiley, Palmer, and Thorburn likewise see, the sense

of romance in Conrad's later works proceeding from *Chance* was a kind of consummation and recapitulation of his moral posture all along. Their view contrasts with that of Kenner, who sees both Ford and Conrad as haunted by a lack of resolution that only their high modernist successors like Joyce and Woolf would finally achieve. But the alternate view does more to help explain the great success *Chance* found with English readers, including women readers, in 1914. Conrad's consummation and recapitulation of his ideals of honor and fidelity contained a foreign irony, a Polish kind of irony, that helped his English readers through a crisis of their own – not so much a strange death as a sudden transformation in the midst of mortal stress. Such transformation comes at the crux of *Chance*, as Conrad's work resets itself in complex ways to reaffirm the old simplicities, the few very simple ideas, of fairy tales and light literature, and with them the chances and the opportunities of Life and Love.

II

These chances and opportunities of Conrad's late career have not, however, been regarded by all of his readers as spiritual achievements, but rather as the marks of both a moral and artistic decline, indeed an absolute degeneration into juvenility. In his seminal study of "achievement" and "decline" across Conrad's career, Thomas C. Moser sets out terms for reading Conrad's final phase in highly negative ways which view the darkness and depression of his phase of crisis as his crucial contribution to literature, and his solidarity with all mankind in light literature, conversely, as the source of his collapse as an artist

and man, his downfall, and not his recovery of spiritual strength.¹²⁹ Conrad's later novels all share the same "intended moral" of a "dubious," "pernicious" sort, as Moser explains – the idea that "[Love] between a man and woman" is "the most important thing" in human life.¹³⁰ "How can a writer as complex and profound as Conrad [once was] have written [such embarrassing novels as *Chance*,]" such puerile pulp fictions and "popular trash."¹³¹ "Their stock characters belong in the romantic melodramas of [cheap] magazines," he explains, "as do their conventional love-trysts" and their "pernicious, sentimental message" concerning Life and Love.¹³² Moser's influential view of the later Conrad's sentimentality and especially his juvenility finds rich corroboration in the childhood memories of Conrad's sons Borys and John, who both testify to just the kind of boyish dreaming on their father's part of which such later readers as Moser have robustly disapproved. Borys writes of his father choosing boys' books to read to his son, books which "always" met his son's "approval," foremost among them the maritime romances of Marryat, which Conrad "enjoyed re-reading" just as much as he himself enjoyed to hear them from his father as he read.¹³³ And Borys' brother John recalls quite similar scenes, like one in which he found his father's pipe ash in the pages of *The Boy's Own Paper*, which John and Borys both received in volumes as Christmas gifts, and which their father then read himself "after [they] had gone to bed."¹³⁴ This side of Conrad may be

¹²⁹ Thomas C. Moser, *Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline*, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1957.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 106.

¹³³ Borys Conrad, *My father Joseph Conrad*, New York: Coward-McCann, 1970, p. 57.

¹³⁴ John Conrad, *Times Remembered*, New York: Cambridge UP, 1981, p. 32.

clarified by reference to certain clear “differences in temperament” between him and Ford which Michael H. Levenson identifies. These differences Levenson sees as reflecting a “division” in “Edwardian consciousness” which “stands revealed in two of its most popular successes:” Robert Baden-Powell’s Boy Scout movement and J. M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan*, “two mythologies of childhood” more “popular” and “influential” than “any [high] modernist myth.”¹³⁵ Levenson aligns Baden-Powell with Conrad in terms of their shared conception of what one might describe as the mannish boy, with his “premature” “virility” and eagerness to “Be Prepared,” in B. P.’s motto for the Scouts – prepared for the “assumption” of “responsibility,” the chivalrous vocation of the knight.¹³⁶ And Levenson aligns Ford likewise with Barrie, in terms of their own shared conception of the inverse of the mannish boy – the boyish man, with his childlike dreams and his “exuberant antagonism,” like Barrie’s *Peter Pan*, toward “growing up” to meet “maturity’s” demands, maturity against his own impulses toward a kind of knight-errantry or moral anarchy.¹³⁷ Levenson’s distinctions and analogies help clarify significant differences that must be reckoned with between both Conrad and Ford and by extension Baden-Powell and Barrie, each of whom admired the other’s work and wrote in their divergent ways, like Conrad and Ford, from a common apprehension of what Levenson describes as “a newly precarious

¹³⁵ Michael H. Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine 1908-1922*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984, p. 58. Levenson’s discussion of Conrad and Ford in terms of Baden-Powell and Barrie was enormously helpful to me in working through my own sense of how the two relate. For that and much else, I am in his debt.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 58

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 58

England, complex, inharmonious, and waning in confidence.”¹³⁸ But there are limits to Levenson’s distinctions and analogies that he himself is quick to admit. Conrad and Ford “are not to be assimilated to such a severe opposition,” as that between the Scout and Peter Pan.¹³⁹ And it could be argued also that Baden-Powell and Barrie likewise are not so diametrically opposed, or at least that opposing them is only an interpretive device for recognizing their divergences, as over and against the similarities that still remain. From Moser’s point of view, in which honor, fidelity, and solidarity, at least when anglicized and feminized as Life and Love, are the stuff of not merely light literature but pulp fiction or popular trash – from this point of view, the chivalrous vocation of the knight is indistinguishable from knight-errantry, moral anarchy and juvenility. This view of Moser’s is the view of knight-errantry one gets through only one of two component lenses in Cervantes’ great binocular view of moral chivalry – only its satirical view, and not its romantic view, only the *eiron*’s view and not the *alazon*’s own. It is a kind of panzaic view, and not a quixotic view. But a view of and from the point of view of the *alazon*, the holy fool, is the view we need to have see the reciprocity and the reversibility in the pairings of Conrad and Ford, Baden Powell and Barrie, adult responsibility and childlike dreams.

The view we need to have we can get from among the most famous or infamous authors of light literature or popular trash, depending on the reader’s point of view, in the century between ourselves and *Chance* – J. R. R. Tolkien in his essay “On Fairy-Stories,” a narrative type which includes but is not limited to

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 58-9

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

the fairy tale proper, the form which lies behind the dreams of Powell, in the second half of *Chance*, where Conrad's "Damsel" meets his "Knight."¹⁴⁰ Using terms very much like Moser's own, Tolkien notes that even among those readers who still have "wisdom" enough not to feel that fairy tales are simply wrong, the "opinion" still seems to remain that there is some sort of "natural connection" between such stories and "the mind[s] of children" or, in Moser's own terms, between light literature – the literature of Life and Love – and the minds of those attracted to trash, the populace at large, who patronized the cheaper magazines, who favored Conrad's *Chance*, and who would later bring phenomenal success to Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955).¹⁴¹ But "actually," as Tolkien explains, this connection is an "accident" of "history."¹⁴² Fairy tale romance is associated "naturally" with children, as Tolkien explains, since "children are human" and fairy tale romance is a "natural" human "taste" – and also "accidentally," since it forms a kind of "lumber" that in "latter-day Europe" has been "stuffed away" in "attics" or in playrooms, like antiques handed down to be toys.¹⁴³ Tolkien's metaphor here is clarified by William Blackburn, who notes that light "adventure" literature and children's literature both share "a common source" in "medieval romance," the form both ironized and reaffirmed in the fairy tale adventures of Cervantes' Don. Blackburn notes a growing sense of critical "contempt," from the Early Modern era of the "Renaissance" forward, for both

¹⁴⁰ J. R. R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories" (1947) in *Tree and Leaf*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1964. Tolkien may seem at first an unlikely critic to turn to in discussing Conrad. But his essay here is simply the best I have read on the fairy-tale sense of things that is so essential to Conrad's final phase engendered by *Chance* – not to mention the prior and subsequent phases of his protégé Ford.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 34.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

the “barbarous splendor” and the “widespread popularity” of all the forms of “romance” as a literary mode.¹⁴⁴ The hand-me-down lumber of romance was granted secondary space in the cultural playroom of children’s literature, which functioned as the “chapbook” afterlife of romance, as B. A. Brockman notes.¹⁴⁵ And then conversely, adult light literature, adventure literature, descended like Conrad’s and Tolkien’s from medieval romance, was seen to be the afterlife, for juvenile readers and for mediocre writers, of children’s literature. But this conflation of adventure literature with the juvenile and mediocre entirely misses what it was that Tolkien understood to be the underlying message of romance – namely that we can maintain, or else regain, or for the first time discover, our sense of “wonder,” as we go along our “journey,” through *Life with Love*.¹⁴⁶ “It is one of the lessons of fairy-stories,” Tolkien explains, “that on callow, lumpish, and selfish youth, peril, sorrow, and the shadow of death can bestow dignity, and even sometimes wisdom [too.]”¹⁴⁷ These tales hold many “things besides fairies,” he explains – they hold “ourselves, mortal men [and women], when our lives [become] enchanted” through the course of our adventures in the realm of “Faerie,” the “Perilous Realm,” the realm of melodrama out at moral extremes.¹⁴⁸ “Perceptible” but “indescribable,” this realm is hard to map out using words, save the parabolic metaphor so crucial to romance.¹⁴⁹ It may “perhaps” be glossed

¹⁴⁴ William Blackburn, “Mirror in the Sea: *Treasure Island* and the Internalization of Juvenile Romance,” *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* 8.3 (Fall 1983), 7.

¹⁴⁵ B. A. Brockman, “Robin Hood and the Invention of Children’s Literature,” *Children’s Literature* 10 (1982), 7, 13.

¹⁴⁶ Tolkien, “On Fairy-Stories,” p. 44.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10

“most nearly” as “Magic,” he explains – the sacred sense, the moral occult.¹⁵⁰

This sacred sense or moral occult, manifested epiphanically in both medieval and every other form of romance, takes the form, he explains, among other things, of “Escape,” followed after by “Recovery” – things of which children “as a rule” have much less “need” than adults do.¹⁵¹ The first of these things – in Tolkien’s day, in Conrad’s, and our own – was “commonly considered” “to be bad” for “anybody” at all, but especially for adults, who ought instead to reconcile themselves to things as they are, possessed of no enchantment, no sacred sense, no moral occult.¹⁵²

Just as Moser’s bleak assessment of Conrad’s career is emblematic of an influential view of his aesthetic and moral decline, so too is Bernard C. Meyer’s view in his “psychoanalytic biography” the emblem of an cognate view of his moral and aesthetic decline.¹⁵³ Meyer judges Conrad’s turn in *Chance* toward the light literature of fairy tales to be a psychopathology, a form of escapist “projection,” one in which a given subject’s “authorship” of life’s “vicissitudes” is “disavowed” obliquely, and tragic circumstances are “attributed” to external factors, not “the subject’s own mind.”¹⁵⁴ On the basis, however, of a closer acquaintance with Conrad and his different milieux, the subsequent biographer Najder would wonder if Meyer was being quite fair, and if Conrad’s many “torments” leading up to the escape from them engendered by *Chance* were so

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 46.

¹⁵³ Bernard C. Meyer, *Joseph Conrad: A Psychoanalytic Biography*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1967.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

“internal” after all, not based on “his experience,” his personal “perception” of “the tragedies of human existence, individual and social,” which really do exist outside the subject’s mind.¹⁵⁵ In light of his persistent emphasis on solidarity, Conrad could not be “egocentric,” Najder concludes, but “worried” instead, to a marked degree, by the effect of life’s chances and vicissitudes on other human beings – like Flora, for one – outside his own mind.¹⁵⁶ Far from the “surrender” of “autonomy” that Meyer proposed, Conrad’s light-literary or fairy-tale turn toward *Escape and Recovery* in *Chance* was a means of entrance into not of flight from responsibility.¹⁵⁷ Literary escapists, as Tolkien explains, are not so “subservient” to “whims” of “fashion” as those who come to diagnose their attitudes as psychopathologies.¹⁵⁸ They do not make life’s chances their “masters” by “worshipping” them as preordained.¹⁵⁹ And their critics, “so easily contemptuous,” have “no guarantee” that they will “stop” there with this impiety, and not “rouse” their readers to revolt.¹⁶⁰ Critics – such as Moser and Meyer – of literary escapists like the Conrad of *Chance* are often apt, as Tolkien explains, to confuse “the Escape of the Prisoner” from his or her jail with “the Flight of the Deserter” from the battlefield, or even apt furthermore to valorize “the Quisling’s acquiescence” as against “the Patriot’s resistance” to a foreign rule that threatens his or her autonomy and personal integrity.¹⁶¹ Tolkien’s sense of *Escape* as a chivalrous kind of resistance to the tragic vicissitudes which threaten life’s

¹⁵⁵ Najder, *Joseph Conrad: A Life*, p. 418.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 418.

¹⁵⁷ Meyer, *Joseph Conrad: A Psychoanalytic Biography*, p. 222.

¹⁵⁸ Tolkien, “On Fairy-Stories,” p. 61.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 60-61.

chances is echoed in the chivalrous imagery of Northrop Frye's own sense of romance, and its "paradoxical role" within the class-politics of a given society.¹⁶² In language that echoes both the Polishness of Conrad's *szlachta* class and Englishness too, Frye notes how "in every age the ruling class [projects] its ideals in some form of romance, where the heroes [and heroines] [embody] those ideals and the villains the threats to their survival" (186).¹⁶³ But there exists as well a spark of "revolution" in romance that is "never satisfied" with its established "incarnations" by the status quo (186).¹⁶⁴ The spirit of romance will show forth, epiphanically, again and again, so long as "new desires" and "new hopes" emerge that must be manifested by imaginative means (186).¹⁶⁵ The social and political backdrop of *Chance*, the women's suffrage campaign, was one such moment, when the spectacle of militant women, not damsels in distress but female knights, drew on chivalrous motifs from fairy-tales and light literature to manifest new feminine desires, new feminine hopes, which formed what Frye calls "the quest-romance,"¹⁶⁶ during which "fertility" trumps "barrenness" and "vigor" trumps "morbidty."¹⁶⁷ These triumphs are Tolkien's Recovery, the end of those Escapes – like Flora's elopement, her adventurous match – dramatized in fairy-tales and light literature. Recovery of this kind brings "renewal of health," revival of a "clear," unjaundiced "view" of things – and not so much "things as they are," but

¹⁶² Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1957, p. 186. Frye's seminal discussion of archetypal literary genre was crucial to this project as a whole, and especially so in terms of its view of romance. On this subject, I am indebted not only to the *Anatomy*, but also Frye's subsequent *The Secular Scripture: A Study of The Structure of Romance*, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1976.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 187-8.

rather things “as we [should] see them,” as things “apart from ourselves,” and not projections of our minds.¹⁶⁸ Escape serves to “clean” our mental “windows,” to “free” the world of things outside ourselves from “drabness,” “triteness,” and “familiarity,” the tragic costs of our “possessiveness.”¹⁶⁹ Subject to such “appropriation,” things which once “attracted” us lose “glitter,” “color,” and “shape.”¹⁷⁰ But once we escape from ourselves and our morbidity through modes of romance like Tolkien defends, we can then recover health and vigor, a clarity of vision that allows us once again to see those gems which we had hoarded to ourselves in their autonomous aspect as flames, vital sparks of the moral occult, of Life’s parabolic potential to yield up its essence as Love and not depression and despair.

Moser sees the arc of Conrad’s work as a downward trajectory from early achievement toward a terminal decline begun by *Chance*. What marks out this decline for Moser is Conrad’s alleged regression toward a kind of juvenility of moral vantage point and with it a kind of mediocrity of narrative theme. Powell’s view of life in terms of fairy tales and light literature is one that Moser saw as Conrad’s own. Moser’s view finds partial confirmation in the memories of Conrad’s sons Borys and John, both of whom observed their father’s boyish side and, with it, his embrace of fairy-tales and light literature. This boyish side of Conrad complicates but also complements Levenson’s view, which figures Conrad, and with him Baden-Powell, in terms of the man-like boy of the Scouting

¹⁶⁸ Tolkien, “On Fairy-Stories,” p. 57.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

movement and of Conrad's own adventures at sea. This view places Conrad, with Barrie and Ford, among the boy-like men, the Peter Pans, of post-Victorian times. Its ambiguity can be accounted for by how these figures, the man-like boy and the boy-like man, overlap within the genres of romance, the fairy tales and light literature, that are their customary homes. For Tolkien, these genres provide for their readers and protagonists both a fictive means of recognition of the moral occult, a narrative environment inclined toward such epiphany. And likewise, for writers like Conrad and for readers like Penelope, they offer in turn a means of moral escape, a means of moral recovery of Life and Love, when those are threatened by crises of depression and despair. Meyer views Conrad's narrative escape from this depression and despair paradoxically, as being a case of mental illness and moral pathology. But Najder counters Meyer's point of view, identifying Conrad's late return to the genres of romance with psychological health and moral strength. Najder seconds Tolkien's sense that Conrad's favored genre is centered not on childish flight from but rather on adult acceptance of responsibility. For Najder, Conradian romance is closer to the kind of romance conceptualized by Frye – the radical and fundamental kind in which the forms of chivalric commitment to high ideals enact a moral revolution of Life and Love against depression and despair. This moral revolution stems again from certain moments of epiphany, from instances when circumstantial chances are revealed as opportunities, when existential vigor overturns a fatalism and morbidity inclined toward suicide – as in both Flora's case and Conrad's own.

III

The dual conditions of vigor and morbidity Conrad indicates using

physiognomic terms in his initial portraits in *Chance* of Powell and Marlow respectively. Marlow is described by the auditor and interlocutor of Marlow's narration as being "lanky, loose, [and] quietly composed in shades of brown robbed of every vestige of gloss," possessed of the "narrow, veiled glance," the neutral bearing," and the "irritability" which go together often with a "predisposition" to bile or "congestion of the liver" (28). Powell is described by way of contrast as "compact, broad, and sturdy of limb," "full of sound organs" working well, and possessed of a "brilliance" of "colouring" and "lustrous" eyes within an "open" face (28). Powell personifies the fairy-tale vision of light literature that Tolkien describes, yet Marlow regards his fellow seaman as "simple," as someone whose "faculty [for] wonder" is "not very great," as compared with his own (196). Powell is "one of those people who form no theories," Marlow explains (196). "Straightforward people seldom do. Neither have they much penetration" (196). But that did not "matter" in this "case," the case of Flora's runaway match, in which his fellow seaman Powell, like John Fyne before him, will serve as a kind of Watson to Marlow's Holmes. Powell's lack of "wonder" does not matter, the detective explains, because his own investigations have obtained "the inner knowledge" of the case, the "secret" of the whole "situation" that lead to Flora's unexpected leap (196). But Marlow's auditor and interlocutor will ask a relevant question that complicates this sense of the case. "I say," he quickly asks, in the face of Marlow's Holmesian presumption, "how can you be certain that Flora de Barral ever went to sea?" (193). This question serves as well as any other meta-narrative moment in the whole of *Chance* to ironize Marlow's authority, his Holmesian presumption in telling Flora's tale.

What the auditor and interlocutor, and with him *Chance*'s reader, will get in the novel's second half, concerning Powell and his fairy-tale adventure on the *Ferndale*'s crew, is Powell's own impression of Flora and her situation, as gleaned by Marlow once again at secondhand. Powell is "friendly but elusive," as Marlow explains – "elusive" that is to Marlow's own satirical terms for telling Flora's tale, the latter half of which he gleans now only through the more romantic Powell's fairy-tale or light-literary point of view, which offers up to readers like Penelope and Woolf a kind of sympathetic insight that they could not have gained through eyes of the ludic, *gawedic* jester of the former half of *Chance*, which modulates now from romantic satire toward a kind of satirical romance, a more sophisticated version of fairy tales or light literature, but one nonetheless more in line with Powell's point of view than Marlow's own (194). Marlow "chases" the "mystery" of Flora, the mystery of "life's chances," by tracking down "the vanishing Powell" (194). "I don't think he wanted to avoid me," Marlow explains. "But it is a fact [that] he used to disappear ... in a very mysterious manner sometimes" (194). Powell disappeared from Marlow's sight as the seaman-storyteller chased the double and foil to whom he was forced to turn to satisfy his curiosity. The place to which he disappeared, a place beyond the scope of Marlow's vision through most of *Chance*, was the point of real intimacy with Flora, whom Powell is courting, unbeknownst to Marlow, now that she is back along the Thames, with her husband the Captain having passed away. When Marlow finds Powell, he "[presses] him [to] talk" – "about himself" and his first "voyage" on the *Ferndale*, which was, "by the by," not Flora's first voyage at sea, as Marlow explains (196). Marlow and *Chance*'s readers both get at Flora's

second voyage out by way of Powell's first and what leads up to it. Different as they are, Marlow and Powell both agree that "the happiest times in their lives was as youngsters in good ships, with no care in the world" (8). They also agree about "the proudest moment they had known in that calling," which despite Marlow's late bile and disillusionment, is never "embraced" on "rational" and "practical" grounds, but because of its "glamour" and sense of "romance." Their proudest moment was the one "when they had passed successfully their first examination and left the seamanship Examiner with the little precious slip of blue paper in their hands," which certified them both as second mates. It was a day when he "would have called the Queen [his] cousin," as Powell explains (8). "Upon [his] word," he adds, he had grown so very eager to take to sea that he would have "gone boldly up to the devil himself" if the devil had a "job" on hand to "give away" to one such as him (10). Powell needed no deal with the devil to secure his berth, but the strange circumstances of his chance do have an air of the occult – the moral occult – that helps anticipate the shape of melodrama that his voyage . "What was most remarkable," as Powell explains, about the old shipping master who gave him his berth was not only that the master's Christian name is Charles or Charlie – like his and Marlow's own – but also that his surname was Powell, again like his own. The person of the shipping master Powell is another one of Conrad's antic figures for the turn of chance – in this case, the working of coincidence, the way in which the randomness of circumstance can hold within itself nonetheless opportunities for those, like Powell, who are just starting out, and likewise those, like Flora, who are searching for a means of escape. The shipping master Powell had "rendered" him "a very good service," as the second

mate explains, since it is “a fact” that “with us merchant sailors the first voyage [out] as officer[s] is [our] real start in life” (21). The elder Charlie Powell had “given” to his young namesake “nothing less than that,” and the latter had assured him “that he had done more [for him] that day than all [of his] relations put together [had] ever [done]” (21). But this sunlit chance of Powell’s holds an ambiguity, as such things do – a shadow of reciprocal irony and possible reversal of fortune, from comedy to tragedy, from laughter to tears, in the course of this first voyage on the *Ferndale*’s crew. The old shipping master Powell demurs that “oh, no,” it was not him who brought this chance, but rather “forty tons of dynamite” within the *Ferndale*’s hold. This “shipment of explosives,” which figures the incendiary spark that the Captain’s wife Flora brings with her aboard, is “what has done the most” for Powell, as the shipping master explains. It and not the master himself is the new second mate’s “best friend.” Old Powell warns his younger namesake therefore not to be in such a “hurry” yet to thank him for his chance, since his voyage out has only begun (21).

Marlow and Powell offer alternate versions of the figure of the seaman-storyteller whom Conrad had proffered prior to *Chance*, most notably in “Youth,” *Heart of Darkness*, and *Lord Jim*. The different iterations of Marlow in those previous tales had all employed a certain irony and critical distance, but nothing nothing like the knowing condescension and satirical burlesque of the opening half of *Chance*. That condescension and burlesque are overturned now midway through, as Flora here reveals the hidden source of her remembrance, the unexpected source of her remorse at her intended suicide. As *Chance*’s scene now

moves from her elopement to the London docks and toward her married life at sea, the novel here resets its whole trajectory from tragic satire toward comic romance. It does so by supplanting Marlow's viewpoint with Powell's own, by supplementing Marlow's cynicism with his counterpart's more sentimental view. This supplemental movement is not without its own kind of irony and even burlesque. Powell's chance assignment to the *Ferndale's* crew is indeed an instance of romance. But that assignment will subject him nonetheless to the tragic volatility embodied by the load of dynamite within the *Ferndale's* hold.

IV

Powell starts his voyage "glad enough to be quit of the shore," and full of the "quiet satisfaction" and the "soothing certitude" of knowing he has nothing to concern him but a seaman's "duties," for which he feels amply prepared (214). "There can be nothing more reassuring to a young man tackling his life's work for the first time," as Marlow explains "than to have his competency taken for granted," as it is by Powell's fellows on the *Ferndale's* crew (214). Despite this reassurance, however, early on in the *Ferndale's* "passage," Powell learns, with an incredulous "amusement," that his Captain's recent marriage is "resented" by "the old lot" among the ship's crew (214). "Being young," as Marlow explains, Powell feels "naively" that the Captain's "being married" was no cause for any "anxiety" (215). But certain of the old lot will inform him all the same that "captain's wives" can "work" their share of "mischief," and that even the "best" remains a "nuisance" to a captain and his crew (27). Why this is so, no one ever explains, and Powell never finds himself inclined to take this "attitude" toward captain's wives too seriously (215). He would simply have dismissed it from his

mind had Mrs. Anthony not been “so young” (216). Powell would have labeled her a “kid,” were it not for the “sort of divinity” that still “hedged in” the wives of captains from his boyish point of view (216). He had always pictured captain’s wives as women distinctly “mature,” and even “frankly old” (216). So to see the “girlish” Flora “wrapped” in “rugs,” upon a “long” deck “chair,” comes as quite a surprise, like “a case of abduction” or similar crime (216).

Powell’s moral upset, however, is nothing as compared to that of one among the ship’s old lot – the first mate Franklin, whose jaundiced observations of Flora, her father “Mr. Smith,” and Captain Anthony present a kind of parody, pastiche, and satirical burlesque of the seaman’s point of view as supplied by Marlow in the opening half of *Chance*. Refracted through young Powell’s more romantic and more sympathetic eyes, Franklin’s viewpoint and the various deductions he will make upon its basis constitute, in their parodic form, a kind of criticism and correction of Marlow’s view, partaking of its same cynicism, here objectified for readers’ recognition in ironic ways. Retailing for Powell his remembrance of Flora and her father being brought on board, Franklin notes that two “starboard” cabins have been given over to the captain’s wife and “Mr. Smith,” with the captain himself now consigned to a portside “couch” (222). “Did you ever hear of the captain’s room being on the port side?” the first mate asks, in an insinuating way (222). The captain had explained this strange departure from the norm by saying that his newlywed wife should not to be “startled” by his being called on deck at any time of the night (222). But as for Franklin, he is unconvinced. “A woman who marries a sailor and makes up her mind to come to sea should have no blamed jumpiness about her,” he explains (222). And

jumpiness stikes Franklin right away as Flora's dominant trait, and nowhere more so than regarding "Mr. Smith." Consider these details from Franklin's memories, which serve to typify his point of view, both on Flora and her father, through the second half of *Chance*. "Devil only knows what was up with them," the first mate muses, observing Mrs. Anthony and Mr. Smith, then waiting on the *Ferndale's* dock:

There she was, pale as death, talking to him very fast. He got as red as turkey-cock – dash me if he didn't. A bad-tempered old bloke, I can tell you ... I couldn't hear what she what she was saying to him, but she put force enough into it to shake her. It seemed ... that he didn't want to go on board ... I couldn't stay there [watching them] forever, so I made a move to get past them if I could. And that's how I heard a few words. It was the old chap – something nasty about being 'under the heel' of somebody or other. Then he said, 'I don't want this sacrifice.' What it meant I can't tell. It was a quarrel – of that I am certain. She looks over her shoulder, and sees me pretty close to them. I don't know what she found to say into his ear, but he gave way suddenly. He looked round at me too, and they went up together so quickly then that when I got on the quarter-deck I was only in time to see the inner door of the passage close after them. Queer – eh? (222-223).

"All [of] this" the "goggle-eyed" Franklin will recollect to Powell in a "melancholy" way, and it is queer indeed – though not as queer itself as Franklin's point of view (223). Remembrance of these objects of "suspicion" is "a bitter sort of pleasure" for him, as it is also for Marlow, in his subtler sort of way (223). These recollections are "refreshing" for such "spirits" as theirs, and they retail them, with very little "caution," to listeners like Powell and the unnamed auditor and interlocutor of *Chance's* outer frame (223). If even Marlow's more sophisticated musings come to yield themselves in time to an outside irony, then their parody, pastiche, and satirical burlesque in Franklin's own less subtle sense of things will do the same, though much more quickly, and with much more force – as in his musings here on women, who again, supply a source of outside irony from which

to satirize a seaman's view. "I dare say ... I [myself] might have gone and got married," Franklin muses, in avuncular tones. But "I don't know:"

We sailors haven't got much time to look about us to any [such] purpose. Anyhow ... I haven't, I may say, looked at a girl in all my life. Not that I wasn't partial to female society in my time ... Very partial, I may say ... Of course I mean the respectable female society ... The other sort is neither here nor there. I blame no man's conduct, but a well-brought-up young fellow like you knows that there's precious little fun to be got out of it ... Captain Anthony is a proper man. And [that] should have saved him from the most foolish – He did not finish the phrase which certainly was turning bitter in his mouth (224-225).

Powell's earlier upset at Flora's seeming abduction is inverted here by Franklin's own upset at Anthony's apparent abduction, both by Flora and her father, to a kind of unmanning through marriage, and a consequent betrayal of the seaman's code. "They have done something to him!" Franklin muses, noting how the captain seems distracted now and far away (229). "What is it?" he asks rhetorically – what have they done? (226). Franklin "wish[es] to God" that Flora had never "set [her eyes]" on the captain – neither her nor "that old chap," her father, who "stares" at her, even as she stares at the captain, and the captain stares off into space (227). "Confound them!" Franklin explodes (227). He has "heard tell" before of women "doing [in]" sailors when they got them on shore (227). But to bring their moral "devilry" to sea and to "fasten" onto "such a man" as Anthony is something that he fails to "understand" (227). He fails to understand, but he can "watch" (227). And he assures his interlocutor Powell that Flora and her father "Mr. Smith" had best "look out," since they are subject, much like John and Zoe Fyne, to a seaman's gaze (229).

As for Powell, he finds himself "amused" at first by Franklin's "[com]plaints" and then "provoke[s] them for fun" (223). The second mate

regards the first as the “victim” of a “lunacy” that “poisons” his mind (224). The first mate’s “strange affliction” stirs in Powell a sense of “indignation” combined with “surprise” (223-224). Powell’s own “suspicious wonder” Marlow seeks to ironize, pointing out the “comprehensive” nature of his friend’s supposed naïveté, and doing so in terms that condescend to his romantic point of view on life in terms of fairy tales and light literature (229). Powell tried to “get hold” of goings on aboard the *Ferndale*, as Marlow explains, by “some side” that “fit” his “simple” notion of “psychology” (229). Foremost among these things goings-on was the memory that will echo most of all among all Franklin’s complaints, perhaps because it echoes in turn one of Powell’s prior suspicions, his sense that some sort of abduction must account for both the curious and wondrous fact of Flora’s now being on board. The memory is the single word “jailer,” as overheard by Franklin, and said by “Mr. Smith”, when he and Flora sat together, not knowing that Franklin was there. Franklin offers up an “execration” at the thought that such a word had been applied in any sense to Captain Anthony (229). And Powell, though he hold his own tongue, is likewise troubled that a “nasty” word like this had been employed by Mr. Smith, and near Flora no less (229). Mr. Smith is “enigmatical” and “weird” as Powell’s point of view (229). But weirder still is the ship’s whole atmosphere, in which he finds the damsel situated, in her curious and wondrous way.

Franklin offers yet another version of the seaman-storyteller, a kind of satirical burlesque of Marlow’s prior cynicism and knowing condescension in the opening half of *Chance*. Franklin’s cynicism is ironized by being contrasted with

Powell's point of view. But it serves in turn to ironize that view, to challenge that view, and in ways that cast the second mate himself in Marlow's own prior role of Jamesian and Holmesian detective, plumbing a domestic melodrama and a young girl's mystery, relocated to sea. Franklin to gives Powell certain clues about the moral volatility below the ship's deck – the tragic moral atmosphere embodied by the load of dynamite within the *Ferndale's* hold. That atmosphere is conjured up offhandedly, both by Franklin and Mr. Smith. Franklin insinuates that Flora has confined the *Ferndale's* captain. And Mr. Smith insinuates in turn that the captain has confined him and his girl. This weird and enigmatic moral atmosphere of tragic charge and counter-charge will typify not only Powell's newfound occupation of detective work in Marlow's prior vein, but also the retrospect on Flora that we get now from Marlow, who tells us Powell's tale.

V

The atmosphere aboard the *Ferndale* is weird and enigmatic, in light of Flora's being there; and Flora's being there is curious and wondrous, in light of the *Ferndale's* atmosphere. Their juncture creates an incongruity. But as for its observer, young Powell, "all" his "sympathies," as Marlow explains, are for the captain's wife and not for Franklin or the old lot on the crew (234). Flora here personifies the dream of a charming boy, and Powell still sees her in the light-literary terms of fairy-tale romance. She is the only person "younger than himself" on the whole ship, and their mutual "youth" creates a spiritual "bond" (234). With his "warm" and "open" bearing, Marlow speculates, the second mate had struck the captain's wife as being "on her side," a prospect which had to have "pleased" her, as against the "rough" and "crabbed" responses she had often had

gotten from the *Ferndale*'s crew (234). And, as for Powell himself, he deems the captain's wife to be a "jolly girl," a very plucky girl, as we have seen (238). The project of the second half of *Chance* is to restage the damsel Flora in the light of her pluck, to recast her story in the fairy-tale terms of light literature, as well as in its classical terms of domestic melodrama from Richardson to James. That project will depend on an accounting for the source of that anxiety engendered in the old lot, and Franklin most of all – the weird and enigmatic sense of tension that obtains among the captain, his wife, and Mr. Smith, the tension that is figured by the dynamite, the volatile explosive in the *Ferndale*'s hold.

That volatile explosive is the spark of a young girl's pluck, her spiritual potential, her moral resolve. First from Powell, then from Flora herself, Marlow gleans a point of view on her adventures at sea that will force him to revise his prior terms for telling her tale, to revise them from a ludic and *gawedic* pastiche of domestic melodrama from Richardson to James into the light-literary terms of fairy-tale romance, the terms of Conrad's final phase, the one engendered by *Chance*. This process of revision stems from Marlow's meditation on the damsel Flora's vantage-point on the marital dilemma that had led her to the starboard cabin with her father Mr. Smith, while her newlywed husband Captain Anthony resigns himself conversely to the ship's port side. Ever since the knight had "broken" in upon her "cruel" and "hopeless" plight, as Marlow explains, Flora had lived like a prisoner "liberated" from a cell (246). She had not been "terrified" by this invasion, but rather "bewildered" and "stunned," and she had then "abandon[ed] herself" up to Anthony with "passive" and instinctive trust (246). "Deep down, almost unconsciously," she had been "seduced" by the feeling of

“support” the knight had brought, which was something “she had never [felt] before” in all “her life” (246). Now, aboard the *Ferndale*, however, she feels that this support has “wavered threateningly” and almost let her down (246). She tries to “read” the sign of what has happened in the captain’s face, the sign of what it is that has led him to his port-side couch and away from Flora’s starboard marriage bed. But “that sort of language” she has yet to learn (246). Flora wonders “what it was” that “she had said,” for she had always been entirely “honest,” both with him and with his sister Mrs. Fyne (248). Upon eloping with her brother, she had, after all, written right away to Mrs. Fyne.

Flora’s letter had precipitated Marlow’s and John Fyne’s trip to the London Docks. That trip and then Fyne’s visit with Anthony had brought about the present trouble, both above and below the ship’s deck, both inside and outside its crew. Flora’s letter – or rather Mrs. Fyne’s own paraphrase, as shared with the captain by his brother-in-law – is yet another volatile explosive in the *Ferndale*’s hold, one which enters into close proximity to Flora’s spark, her volatile potential and moral resolve.

“No! There was no harm in that letter. It was simply foolish,” Flora will insist to Marlow later on, when he seeks her out, after speaking with Powell, and learning of her prior adventures after taking to sea (328). “Mrs. Fyne should have known better,” she explains, than to misconstrue the letter as she did, with such explosive results. Flora’s letter had been “simply crude,” an “echo,” in fact, of Mrs. Fyne’s own militancy (327). Flora had explained to her patron that she had “no scruples,” that “[she] did not love her brother,” that she was simply “selling [herself],” and “proud” to have garnered such a price (327). Flora had

felt “restless” when she wrote to Mrs. Fyne, and therefore she had written in a “reckless” way (327). This recklessness had lead her friend to label her, later, in a letter to her suitor, as an “adventuress, to which charge Flora counters that she has had “a fine adventure,” “the finest in the world” (328). That fine adventure would consist of the fairy-tale romance of her entrapment in a marital confinement from which she escapes, on the basis of her pluck, her spark, her volatile potential and moral resolve.

This marital confinement from which the damsel Flora escapes is in large part the work of her knight, and yet in larger part the work of the Fynes. During his and Marlow’s rescue mission to London, Fyne bursts in upon the captain with a “clatter” of “tongues,” “throw[ing]” out at him “more talk” than he has ever heard “boomed” in such a time (245). This talk “touches” all too roughly on the “deepest things” in Anthony’s heart, and therefore “shakes” him to his core (245). These things include his honor and fidelity, not just to Flora but to chivalry per se. Fyne insists that Anthony is taking some dishonorable “advantage” of the damsel he has wed – that is, if he insists on making love to her, when she does not love him, and has sold herself to him at that intimate price (247). These words boomed out so roughly have a marked effect on Anthony, as Marlow explains:

Possessed by most strong men’s touching illusion as to the frailness of women and their spiritual fragility, it seemed to Anthony that [he] would be destroying, breaking something very precious [in] [Flora] [if he were to take her to bed]. In fact, nothing less than practically murdering her. This seems a very extreme effect to flow from Fyne’s words. But Anthony, unaccustomed to the clatter of the firm earth, never stayed to ask himself what value these words could have in Fyne’s mouth. And indeed the mere dark sound of them was utterly abhorrent to his native rectitude, sea-salted, hardened in the winds of wide horizons, open as the day (247).

It is unclear to Flora “at first” what Anthony is doing in “giving her [her] liberty,” in giving her up, in hopes of saving his fidelity to her and to the whole idea of chivalry per se – the idea that led him, the knight, to rescue her, the damsel, from the plight of her entrapment by the Fynes. Flora came to welcome such a rescue as this on being saved from her contemplated suicide just prior to that by the tell-tale dog. She felt that she had been rescued, first by the dog, and then soon after by her knight. But now it seems all “over” for her, and the damsel turns “stiff,” like a “marble” statuette (249). It all seems once again as her governess said – that she is “insignificant” and worthy of “contempt,” that nobody loves her, since “nobody could” (249). “Humiliation” wraps her up again, like her blankets on the deck, and she remains “unwarmed” by the knight’s “generosity,” which seems to her a much worse “madness” than any insistence he should join her in their marriage bed (249). “Where” could she escape from “this,” she wonders, this new “perfidy” of loveless “magnanimity?” [emphasis mine] (250). There was no escape, she concludes, and this was “captivity” (250). There was no escape, but “so be it,” all the same (251). Anthony faces her, “outwardly calm,” and with a “scrupulous attitude” he feels it is his duty to maintain until such time as Flora gives him “sign” that she would “condescend” at last to share their marriage bed (293). Flora beats her husband, however, at this “honourable game,” and maintains an outward calm herself that “disconcerts” her noble spouse (254). Both the damsel and the knight are poisoned here by “bitter fruit,” and so their marriage comes to seem much like the jail that the first mate Franklin, for all his cynicism, is right to perceive. The antic turn of chance comes once again, however, to bring its opportunities for Life and Love. That antic turn, and all the

chances it brings, will be acknowledged in the newfound light of fairy-tale romance that Powell brings to complement and complicate the prior terms of Marlow for telling Flora's tale, the ludic and *gawedic* terms which Conrad's novel turns to overcome.

Flora feels Anthony's honor as a kind of "rejection," a "casting out," which is "nothing new to her," as we have seen (254). And yet she finds within herself a new "resentment" at this "ultimate betrayal" – a new found spark, an explosive potential, a moral resolve. She feels "no resignation" at all toward her present captivity, and says to herself, with "sullenness," that she is captured now with no "nonsense" at least, with none of that self-doubt that had accompanied such prior captivities as that which she had suffered at the hands of the Fynes (254). It is not her own fault, she now sees, that she is taken up again to be an "object" of "pity" for her errant knight (254). It is the knight's own fault, and that of his sister, the jealous and resentful Mrs. Fyne. Such clarity of "conscience" as Flora now can feel is one "advantage" that "mere rectitude" can offer over more "exalted" forms of "generosity" (254). Having found it in herself not to resign herself again to such a plight, Flora's burden is to find a source of hope, a basis for Life, in the midst of her recurrent captivity. This source of hope, this basis for Life she finds, as she has found it before, in the persistence of Love – the existential keynote of *Chance*, and of the final phase of Conrad's career.

"Man, we know, cannot live by love alone," as Marlow explains, but "hang me if I don't believe some women could" (262). Marlow does not mean to say that Flora is one of those women. She has "managed," after all, and much more often than not, to live unloved by anyone at all. But nonetheless, in spite of

this, she still had love enough in her heart for the tell-tale dog, and love not just for the dog, but for her errant knight, and for her father, the financier. Flora finds a love within herself for the tell-tale dog, then for her errant knight, and so she seeks a love in kind from her father, now imprisoned in the Marshalsea. Anytime her thoughts return to suicide, the image of her father intercedes, like the tell-tale dog, and Flora's pluck returns – her spark of volatile potential, her moral resolve. She remembers “that old man” of hers at Brighton, who had walked “hand in hand” with his daughter, promenading “by the sea” (250). She seems to see him coming toward her now, but “greyer” and “pitiful,” his spirit being broken by captivity like she herself has come to endure. And when her father first had been released, he seemed to be as she “remembered” him, when they had walked at Brighton on “parade” (262, 250). But something now was “different” from before (262). There was something now “between” them, something “hard” and “impalpable” that keeps them apart, like the “ghost” of those “high walls” in which her father was jailed (263). Flora hoped she would be “questioned” – she hoped for it even as she “shrank” from all those “answers” full of pain (265). But her father now seems “strangely” indifferent, more focused on himself and his plight, which seems not to offer any feeling left over for his daughter, with misfortunes of her own (265). The Great De Barral's daughter remembers his “unmovable expression” as they had held hands on their promenade (265). That “well-remembered glance” had been “enough” for her when she was a child – but not today. She has been so “starved” since then of all feeling” that she now needs more. What she needs now is moral affirmation – another of the keynotes of *Chance* and thus of Conrad's final phase, a synonym

here, in this context, for Life and Love.

A moral affirmation of Flora, however, is something that her father fails to give, and surely not a moral affirmation of her marriage to Anthony, not even in the light of its status as her means of escape from her entrapment by the Fynes. De Barral is aggrieved by Flora's marriage, and his angry response takes shape through conversation on a carriage ride, upon his leaving jail. "You – married? You, Flora! ... What for? Who to?" De Barral asks her, full of anguish, in the course of the ride:

You were just saying that in this wide world, there were only you and I, to stick to each other ... [So] couldn't you have waited at least till I came out? Why not? What was the hurry? ... Couldn't [you have] let a father have his daughter all to himself even for a day [?]... And you know I never had anyone, I had no friends ... [But] I would say to myself: What do I care for all that! I am the great De Barral and I have my little girl ... [But] here I am, overthrown, broken by envy, malice, and all uncharitableness. I find that my girl has gone and married some man or other, perhaps a fool ... anyway, not good enough [for her]. A silly love affair as likely as not. And a very suspicious thing it is too, on the part of a loving daughter (266-269).

Flora answers her father by affirming her elopement with the knight as a kind of affirmation in itself of Life and Love, an affirmation first of her own life against the contemplated suicide from which she was saved by the tell-tale dog, and second of her love for her father, which keeps her now from further thoughts of suicide, and even in the midst of that captivity her marriage proves to be.

"Papa, I haven't been shut up like you," the damsel explains, but "I wish I had been" (267). Rather, she had been out all "alone" in "the horrid world," from which she sought to escape by making a leap (267). There used to be a "time," as she remembers, when she thought herself "mad," and no one seemed to love her but a dog (267). Flora had been "thinking" of her father (269). Then Anthony

came. He “came,” just then, when she had almost “given up” (269). He came, he “noticed” her, and they are “married” now (270). She is “gripped” by great “anxiety” and “guilt,” great “pity” and “remorse,” as though she has “betrayed” her father’s trust, and now consigned him to a different kind of jail (270). “Scared,” “tired,” and “bewildered” by the “shocks” of “liberation,” De Barral breaks down on Flora’s shoulder and begins to cry (270). And then she weeps herself, as she sees herself “smashed,” in the depths of a leap, the tell-tale dog above her baying sadly to the sky, and then her father, all alone without his daughter, in the horrid world she sought to leave behind. But then De Barral “push[es]” her “away,” and all the “warmth” of comfort leaves her tears, as they turn “cold” upon her “cheek[s]” (272). Flora dries her eyes, but her “work” has been “done” (272). She has found a source of “courage” in herself through a good, hard “cry,” as many “women” have “done” in the “difficult trade” of their “dealings with men” (272). Once again, “there is in [women] always something left, if only a spark,” as Marlow explains. “And when there is a spark, there can always be a flame” (262). “Whatever men don’t know about women,” he adds, “[they] do know that,” if nothing more. “And that is why [some men] are [so] afraid of them” (280).

Far from Franklin’s prior gossip that Flora has captured and confined Captain Anthony, Flora herself has been captured and confined by her husband, who misunderstands how best to honor their marital bond. And far from Mr. Smith’s – that is De Barral’s – own gossip that he and his daughter have been captured and confined by the captain, it is Anthony himself, and with him all the

Ferndale's crew, including Flora in its company, now captured and confined by Mr. Smith – by De Barral and his tragic past, which serves to poison Flora's marriage, her escape from her intended suicide. The second half of *Chance* will hinge on Flora's next escape – her liberation, through a spark of Life and Love, from each of these successive circumstances for depression and despair. That spark will be a source of volatility within the *Ferndale's* hold. It will bring about the mystery that will trouble its crew, and it will serve to motivate the work of Powell as the Jamesian and Holmesian – and therefore Marlovian – detective of the novel's second half, the closing section where the stuff of tragic satire is recast through Life and Love as comic romance and light literature.

VI

The fear of one particular woman and her spark of volatility has helped create an ever-present prospect of explosion in the *Ferndale's* crew, with Flora's honor as the crux of a debate between the first and second mates and their respectively satiric and romantic points of view on her marriage to Anthony. Franklin calls that honor into question, while Powell views that question in itself as “absurd” (289). His efforts on behalf of Mrs. Anthony have helped establish Powell, in addition to the captain, as a kind of knight, a “champion” of Flora, the damsel, in distress amid the *Ferndale's* crew (289). He comes more and more to “entertain” the captain's wife with tales from his “not very distant” past on ships where “funny things” had gone on (289). Both Flora and Powell are “surprised” when Flora finds herself “amused,” and “laughs” more than “twice” in “the course of a month” at this “prattle” of the second mate's (289/297). Her laughter now is far from “loud,” but yet it marks a “startling” change in the *Ferndale's*

atmosphere (290). It makes Powell grow “enthusiastic,” as he puts it later on, for the captain’s wife (300). But he is troubled all the same by a morbid “curiosity” that Franklin has helped provoke (297). The “strange word” jailer echoes on inside the second mate’s mind (301). It was a “senseless” and “unlikely” word to hear, and Franklin must have “dreamed” it up, but still it echoes on (301). Powell himself is “worried” now into “questioning” Flora in a way that seems absurd (303). “Suspicion” is “not natural” for Powell, with his view of life in terms of light literature and fairy tale romance (303). But soon he comes to “catch” himself engaged in doing things he never dreamed, and overcome by fear – and not so much by fear of Flora, or by fear of women, as by fear of fear itself, by fear of that suspicious curiosity that Franklin helps provoke.

The thing at stake in *Chance*’s closing pages is the whole generic bearing of the novel, its narrative trajectory, and with it that same Life and Love that are the keynotes of *Chance*, and Flora’s tell-tale reasons there for leaping into marriage, not the depths of her depression and despair. The novel makes a final affirmation of its damsel’s Life and Love, one that validates her sentimental feeling for the tell-tale dog, and helps resolve the book’s trajectory from ludic and *gawedic* modes of satire toward the fairy-tale romance of Conrad’s final phase, which it engenders here. But what engenders that final affirmation, that final resolution is an ultimate immersion in some elements potentially destructive of the storyteller Powell’s own comic and romantic view of life as light literature. Powell will immerse himself in these, and thus face up to his fear. He will face it, and thus get through it, by plumbing these depths – by finding there, like Flora herself, a grounds for hope and not depression and despair.

The depths that Powell plumbs to face his fear are the intimate details of Flora's marriage to the captain and their subsequent domestic life at seas with Flora's father Mr. Smith. These intimate details produce the weird and enigmatic atmosphere that leads to Franklin's, then to Powell's sense of fear and curiosity. The complex narratology of *Chance*, its algebraic layering of brackets, is acknowledged once again and lightly figured in a skylight view above the starboard cabin and its marriage bed. Powell now is pushed, by "springs" of "conduct" in himself that seem "obscure," to look one night, while on deck, into the skylight's depths, and to face there the heart of darkness that lies in close proximity to matters of the heart, within the cabin's domesticity. As Powell sets the stage of observation:

I perceived [through the skylight] that I could see right into that part of the [room below] [that] the curtains were meant to make [private]. I just ... found my head within three inches of that clear glass, and – dash it all – I [looked in]. Not half an hour before I was saying to myself that it was impossible to tell what was in people's heads, or at the back of their talk, or what they were likely to be up to. And here I found myself up to as low a trick as you can well think of. For ... I remained prying, spying, anyway looking, where I had no business to look. He who has eyes, you know, nothing can stop him from seeing things ... (305).

Powell here succumbs to the "beastly" influence of Franklin, whose "talk" has served to rouse in him an "unhealthy" sense of curiosity (306). He finds himself, like Marlow before him, to be the kind of sailor who goes about "prying into things considerably" (30). During conversation later on, Powell will be "anxious" that Marlow understand the starboard cabin's merely physical "topography" (306). But what will interest his listener the most is the cabin's "moral atmosphere," the "tension of falsehood," the "desperate acting" that have "tainted" its scene (307). That scene had been charged by an explosive volatility

embodied by the load of dynamite within the *Ferndale's* hold. And that same atmosphere is figured here as well, in Powell's youthful eyes, and from his skylight view, by the most emblematic of all of *Chance's* leanings toward the realm of so-called pulp fiction and popular trash. That figure, in a word, is poison, an apt metaphor for this scene. Powell gazes down on Anthony, laid out beside a bottle of whisky, with a glass in his hand. The captain then gets up and leaves the room, at which point melodrama will explode upon the narrative scene. Powell notes a rustling of the curtain that divides the starboard cabin from the bedroom just beyond it that is used by Mr. Smith. He then becomes "suspicious," but with "nothing" in particular in mind:

He was suspicious of the curtain itself and observed it. It looked very innocent. Then just as he was ready to put it down to a trick of imagination he saw trembling movements where the two curtains joined. Yes! Somebody else besides himself had been watching Captain Anthony ... He was startled to observe tips of fingers fumbling with the dark stuff. Then they grasped the edge of the further curtain and hung on there, just fingers and knuckles and nothing else. It made an abominable sight. He was looking at it with unaccountable repulsion when a hand came into view; a short, puffy, old, freckled hand projecting into the lamp-light, followed by a white wrist, an arm in a grey coat-sleeve, up to the elbow, beyond the elbow, extended tremblingly towards the try. Its appearance was weird and nauseous, fantastic and silly. But instead of grabbing the bottle as Powell expected, this hand, tremulous with senile eagerness, swerved to the glass, rested on its edge for a moment ... and went back with a jerk. The gripping fingers of the other hand vanished at the same time, and young Powell staring at the motionless curtains could indulge for a moment the notion that he had been dreaming (308-309).

The modulation here of *Chance's* bearings toward so-called pulp fiction and popular trash may seem itself to be fantastic and silly, weird and nauseous, within certain readers' eyes. But it is still consistent, all the same, with Conrad's broader modulation toward the fairy-tale terms of light literature and comic romance. The puffy, freckled hand of de Barral, with its vial of poison, serves to figure, in the terms of fairy-tales, that morbid barrenness that vies with youthful

vigor in the movement of romance. That hand contains an actual poison, but it figures metaphorically the poisoning of Life and Love by its depression and despair. That poisoning is cast here in the terms of so-called pulp fiction and popular trash. But it is figured other places less concretely, in the classic English terms of domestic melodrama from Richardson through Dickens to James. Anthony will come to tell his damsel that her father has an “argument” against their recent marriage that has given him “pause,” and one he cannot “answer” in the proper way (317). That argument had turned on the imprisonment the damsel seems to suffer at the hands of her knight, and even in the light of her liberty, as judged by his honorable refusal of their marriage bed. In light of this entreaty by De Barral, the knight “surrender[s]” now all claim at all upon the damsel’s own fidelity. “[Your father] shall have his way with you – and [also] with me,” as he explains, to Flora’s dismay (317).

What leads them to this juncture, however, is Powell’s youthful vigor, which pits itself against the morbid barrenness de Barral’s poison brings into the *Ferndale*’s scene, made volatile already in its several ways. In a burst of “concentrated exaltation,” Powell leaps down from his perch above the skylight to the starboard cabin he has come to observe – and clearly, as Marlow explains, “the thought of Mrs. Anthony,” along with the captain, has engendered this turn (310). Powell seeks to clear the morbid moral atmosphere that hangs about the cabin, about the whole *Ferndale*, and about the tragic marriage of the damsel and her knight. And, in so doing, Powell faces his own fear by plumbing its depths. Those depths are the ones that *Chance* itself has plumbed all along – the close proximity of matters of the heart to the heart of darkness in ordinary life. In a

moment that can serve as a figure for the novel as a whole, Powell finds himself stopped short, on entering the cabin, by its seeming normality, its contrast with the uncanny poison he observed from above. “What check[s] him,” as Marlow explains, is “the harmless aspect of common things, the solitude, the peace, the homelike effect of the place” (310). The “grain of sand” that Powell “stumble[s]” over in his “headlong” rush is an “incredulity” at things as they appeared from his skylight view (310). “I must have dreamt it all!” he then concludes – he must be “dreaming” even then (310). The cabin’s dreamlike atmosphere for Powell, and with it *Chance*’s own dreamlike atmosphere in heading toward its close, move further still toward fairy-tale romance and other classic modes of light literature, when first the knight and then the damsel next appear. Anthony explodes into the room, and much to Powell’s surprise, just as Powell too explodes into view, while taking up his poisoned glass. This scene, like every other toward the denouement of *Chance*, bears an atmosphere of closing melodrama, like a Shakespeare play – an air which colors Powell’s view of Anthony as seeming like Othello, made “swarthy” by the rigors of the sea, but even more so by the *Ferndale*’s moral atmosphere of tragic machination, depression, and despair (314). This melodrama likewise colors Powell’s view of Flora, who emerges like an actress on the stage, a charming boy’s dream, in Penelope’s phrase. “I was the first to see [her],” Powell explains:

[She] had on a dressing gown of some grey stuff with red facings and a thick red cord round her waist. Her hair was down. She looked like a child; a pale-faced child with big blue eyes and a red mouth a little open showing a glimmer of white teeth. The light fell strongly on her as she came up to the end of the table. A strange child though; she hardly affected one like a child ... Do you know what she looked to me with those big eyes and something appealing in her whole expression? She looked like a forsaken elf. (313-314).

The damsel, the forsaken elf, has been abandoned not only by her husband, the Moorish knight, but also by her father, the mad, capricious Lear, who emerges now, back into the cabin, in a further stagey turn of melodrama, in Conrad's design. The "horrible" and "calculating" "impudence" her father demonstrates in now returning to the scene provokes a "shudder" down the spine, and brings the "tension" of the "false" "situation" to a point where it seems set to explode (314, 315). "Each situation created by folly or wisdom" has its "moment," as Marlow explains – the moment where the work of melodrama yields the moral occult, the true that may be wrested from the real, or what may appear to be (315). Things look different under Powell's own eyes, the extraordinary eyes of his skylight view – the light-literary vantage-point of fairy-tale romance, and Conrad's final phase, engendered here. "The behavior of young Powell," with its "boyish impulses," had not brought about this moment, this climax, as Marlow explains – but it had set the stage such an explosion as was pregnant all along within the *Ferndale's* moral atmosphere, with all its volatility. Marlow summarizes that pregnancy in customary style. "Of all the forms offered to us by life it is the one demanding a couple to realize it fully which is the most imperative" as he explains, since "Pairing off is the fate of mankind" –

And if two beings thrown together, mutually attracted, resist the necessity, fail in understanding and voluntarily stop short of the embrace, in the noblest meaning of the word, then they are committing a sin against life, the call of which is simple – and perhaps sacred. And the punishment of it is an invasion of complexity, a tormenting, forcibly torturous involution of feelings, the deepest form of suffering from which indeed something significant may come at last, which may be criminal or heroic, may be madness or wisdom – or even a straight if despairing decision (316).

This invasion, involution, and suffering have come upon the damsel and the

knight by their own hands – but also, and very much more so, at those of their family and friends, De Barral and the Fynes. De Barral’s plot to poison the captain is only the latest and worst of an ongoing series of plots against the simple, sacred pairing-off of the damsel and knight, who never do, in fact, pair off – not at least by means of that embrace they could by rights have shared within their marriage bed. The invasion, involution, and suffering that come between the two are not the same as Flora’s contemplated suicide, except in one particular sense – that they are sins against Life, against Love, sins that *Chance* itself will plot against through all its comic turns of opportunity. One such comic turn was the appearance of the tell-tale dog – and, now, another turn is Powell’s skylight vision, which will bring to light the moral occult. Flora herself had long been “gripped” by a “premonition” that things would explode, and she has come now already to the “limit” of her honorable “endurance” of her husband’s “magnanimity” (316). She is “prey” to an “intuitive dread,” and fearful now of being thrown back into that state of “moral loneliness” that drove her once before toward her intended suicide (316). In the stultifying stiffness of the *Ferndale*’s scene, she has sought a “close communion” with her knight. And now, within the smallness and the stillness of the starboard cabin, pressed against him once again, she turns to him, with “passive” expectation, for some sort of answer to the question of what the secret is between her father and himself, what secret it is that her confidant Powell had discovered, gazing down into the cabin that has held the men (316). Anthony responds to his damsel that he is “not blind,” and that he “won’t” “pretend” he does not “understand” that even though they are married, they are not paired off, nor are they apt to be (317). “I can’t fight any

longer,” he explains, “for what I haven’t got” – and Flora “[need not] be afraid” now that he will carry on (317). “No shadow [now] can touch you,” he assures her – since “I give you up.”

I must learn to live without you – which I ... told you [I could never do]. But I have done fighting or waiting or hoping. Yes. You shall go ... I renounce not only my chance but my life ... I, who [used to say] that I could never let you go, I shall let you go. I own myself beaten. You are free. I set you off since I must (317).

Anthony renounces here explicitly his chance for Life and Love and not depression and despair. His giving Flora up is not a suicide, but still nonetheless a kind of sin against the sacred sense embodied in the marital embrace, a sin against the hope that it contains. But Anthony’s refusal brings his damsel to a leap – to a moment like her moment at the quarry with the tell-tale dog, the moment when she manifests her pluck, her volatile potential, her moral reserve. Flora manifests the moral truth that may be wrested from the real, the truth of Life and Love in light literature and fairy-tale romance, the truth contained by Conrad’s final phase, engendered here, at *Chance*’s climax, by its damsel in distress. Flora “stiffens,” with “a frightened stare,” on hearing now her errant knight’s “words,” which she cannot “comprehend” (318). But then a “cry” comes out from depths within her “heart” (318). That cry is “not loud,” and yet it takes away the “breath” of all who hear it – her husband, her father, and Powell all three, and likewise Marlow in the novel’s outer frame. “But I don’t want to be let off!” Flora shouts to her knight – and “You can’t let me off ... [since] I won’t go away ... !” [emphasis mine] (318).

The sight, after this, of Flora’s arms around the captain’s neck will fill “young Powell” with “emotion” – and his listener Marlow too, as we will see

(318). But it inspires in Flora's father old de Barral the last of *Chance's* dramatizations of an irony and satire that burlesque the novel's now-ascendent terms of fairy-tale romance and light literature. "Did you see [that]?" de Barral says to Powell, giving voice in meta-textual terms to those concerns of certain readers we have seen who would reject the novel's turns toward Life and Love, at least as those are given shape, as they are here, by such conventional means as the comic machinations of the marriage-plot that *Chance* now consummates in finally pairing-off its damsel and knight (319). "Who would have believed it," as De Barral, the poison-plotter, sputters – "with her arms around his neck," and everything (319). De Barral, as he himself admits, had been "brought low," but "not so low" as this – so low as to be caught up like his daughter in the "clutches" of sentimentality (320). She had never really "listen[ed]" to him, De Barral explains – though he had only sought "to get her out of this" embarrassing mess (320). He had never really "trusted" her, he claims, and now "the wicked little fool," it seems, was "lying" all along – lying, "leading [him] on" and "bringing him low," even "lower than herself," down "in the dirt" of mediocrity (320). Then "quick as lightning," once these "ravings" cease, De Barral grabs the captain's poisoned drink and turns it up, with a black-comedic shout of "Here's luck" before this unexpected leap (320). But "it was not Mr. Smith who [drank] the poison," Marlow reasons later on – but "The Great de Barral" (323). And it had not been meant – at least at first – for his daughter's "magnanimous" suitor, but the financier himself, whose own "enterprises" had had "nothing" whatsoever "to do with magnanimity" (323).

From the “shadow” of this cause for old De Barral’s sudden leap the damsel Flora now is rescued by her knights – both Anthony and Powell – and Marlow is pleased (322). It is long after this, as Powell notes, before she comes back up on deck. But when she does, she tells her confidant how “fond” of him her father had been (322). Powell wishes then that he could “forget” how “all of this” had come “near” her – this depression, this despair, these turns toward suicide, her father’s and her own (322). Still, De Barral’s death removes a poison out of *Chance*’s plot and helps to clear the novel’s atmosphere of most of its morbidity. This change in generic trajectory is signaled by Conrad not only by a final change in Marlow we shall shortly see, but also by a change concerning Franklin – a change of scene, as he is swept off-stage, his work of satire and burlesque being done. The captain recommends the old first mate for his own command, and Franklin leaves the *Ferndale*’s crew. Powell then notes drily how the captain’s wife had never liked old Franklin “very much” (323). She had never let a “whisper” of it out, but Anthony, now paired-off with his wife, had learned to “read” the damsel’s “thoughts” and he had understood (323).

In plumbing from his skylight heights the depths of the *Ferndale*’s tragic atmosphere, the storyteller Powell, and with him *Chance* itself, faces up now to an existential threat to the comic and romantic view of life in terms of fairy-tales and light literature. Powell and the work he helps to narrate both immerse themselves in elements destructive more often than ot to comic romance, as opposed to the tragedy and satire of the novel’s opening half, which come to us through Marlow, in his cynical terms. What Powell and *Chance* will now uncover

as they plumb those waiting depths is the moral occult, the true that may be wrested from the real – in this case, a spark of Life and Love, much like Flora had recovered within her in turning away from her intended suicide. This spark of Life and Love will trump the poison of depression and despair that her father brings with him to the *Ferndale*'s and the novel's moral atmosphere. De Barral has embraced a will-to-death for which Flora herself has come to feel remorse. Her *anagnorisis* and epiphany resets the tragic and satirical plots that she is subject to, and with them the novel's prior terms of cynicism and burlesque. It empowers her to author her life in terms of comic romance, to seize upon life's chances for hope, its moral opportunities. This seizure by the heroine of *Chance* is an authorly revision of her tale in Powell's terms of fairy-tales and light literature, the same terms that Conrad himself had taken up prior to *Chance*, in the wake of his personal crisis from *Lord Jim* through *Under Western Eyes*. Those terms are conveyed most fully here in *Chance*'s denouement, to which we now turn.

VII

First De Barral's then Franklin's exit from the *Ferndale*'s scene issue onto an idyll of "six years" at sea, during which "[the] Captain and Mrs. Anthony" are framed in Powell's eyes in not only the ascendent but also now in fact the triumphant terms of fairy-tales and light literature (323). This idyll, while it lasts, is quite real – *Chance*'s fullest consummation so far of the cause for hope within the turn of opportunity. This idyll, nonetheless, does not last, and *Chance* turns on in tragic ways that contradict the charge that it capitulates itself to pulp fiction and popular trash. When Marlow enquires about the *Ferndale*, Powell

offers a surprise. “Don’t you know?” he asks. “[The] *Ferndale* was lost” four years back – “sunk” in a sudden “collision” – and Anthony “went down” with his ship (323). Colliding with the *Westmark*, as Powell explains, the *Ferndale* had sunk “like a stone,” and Anthony with her, “the finest man’s soul that ever left a sailor’s body,” as his former first mate can attest, from six years’ service on the *Ferndale*’s crew (325). Powell had raved like a “devil” on the *Westmark*’s deck as the *Ferndale* sank, and all of the *Westmark*’s crew had asked if he himself had captained the ship (325). “I wasn’t fit to tie the shoe-strings of the man you have drowned,” Powell had “screamed,” and yet he was put nonetheless, by this tragic circumstance, into Anthony’s place, in which he bore the painful duty of telling the captain’s widow that her husband had died (325). “I wished to die [myself] a hundred times,” he explains – indeed “I wished myself dead” (325). These passing thoughts of suicide in Powell were countered, ironically, by Flora’s own pluck, the damsel having faced, and faced down, the kind of leap toward which her knight now turned. Flora was a “brick,” as he reports (325). “No one could help loving [Anthony,]” as he himself attests, and he leaves it up to Marlow to “imagine what he was to [Flora],” his damsel in distress (325). Still, “before the week was out,” it was Flora herself who was comforting her knight, and “helping” him to “pull himself together,” to find a cause for in future turns of opportunity (325).

Chance’s final turn brings cause for hope to both the damsel and her knight, Flora’s only friend remaining from her *Ferndale* days, when she and Anthony had had their fine adventure, while sailing the sea. This closing turn of *Chance* will have an unexpected cause, Marlow’s active intervention in the

denouement, his role as proxy in completing its trajectory from ludic and *gawedic* burlesque toward light literature and fairy-tale romance, and thus toward Conrad's final phase, engendered here by Marlow's closing movement from the heart of former darkness toward affairs of the heart in ordinary English life for readers like Penelope. His jesting and burlesquing now done, Marlow brings about the consummation of a subtle possibility inherent through the novel's second half, in which the titular "Knight" is young Powell and not just Captain Anthony. The captain's tragic death had helped put Powell into Anthony's place, but the second and then the first mate had all along been Anthony's double in the role of a rescuer of Flora from the plots against her hopes and opportunities. That role he manifested at first in the guise of a friend, the only person on the *Ferndale's* crew who ever made the damsel laugh, who ever served to remind her of her hard-won status as the heroine of *Chance*, a very plucky girl. It was Powell who had altered Marlow's view-point and helped him see the damsel as a knight – a Joan or Arc, a suffragette – and then a friend. And it is Marlow now who comes in turn to alter Powell's view, to help him recognize his love for Mrs. Anthony as more than a friend. "Is [Flora now] in England?" he asks (326). "Oh yes," Powell answers – not "far" from "here," where he himself resides (326). "No! Really! Oh I see!" Marlow answers – "And I suppose that you are still ... enthusiastic [about her]," he adds, with a mischievous grin (326). "Pah! Foolishness!" the blushing Powell offers – "You ought to know better" (326). But Flora would be "pleased" to see her old acquaintance Marlow, Powell adds, in a prescient way – one which helps to indicate a nascent union of the

damsel and knight, a union Marlow helps to engender, as *Chance* turns toward its unexpected close (326).

Marlow goes to Flora that same day, to the cottage where she lives now, near the mouth of the Thames, where Powell still sails. Walking toward her “garden gate” to “meet” him, the damsel strikes the sailor now as different from before, no longer a “sorrowful wisp” or a “forsaen elf,” but her own “true self,” a “woman” of “thirty,” with a “dazzling complexion,” and the same “fine chin” and bright “eyes” that she had only flashed before at certain critical times (327-328). Both Marlow and Flora are “embarrassed” at first to see each other after ten long years, but then they “laugh” and hold affectionate hands, before their talk grows “grave,” or rather candid and frank, with Flora giving answers to a final set of questions Marlow has about her taking to sea (327-328). What Flora “suffered” she “could” never really “tell” her old acquaintance, even now (327-328). Though her “poor” lost “Roderick” had been “perfect,” she was bound upon “the rack” without a chance to “cry out” – at least at first (327-328). That chance had come the night her father died, when she had been let off by her errant knight. “Oh! I [was] miserable!” Flora exclaims – “But I did not want to hold out any longer against my own heart. I could not. The truth will out” (327-328). The truth that did out – as even Marlow can see – is Life and Love, the moral occult, which the damsel “discovers” as she rescues herself and her knight from their honorable game. This Life and Love are what Flora recovers through her marital leap, her late escape from her depression and despair (327-328). This leap, this escape had made the damsel an “adventuress,” to use the term employed by Mrs. Fyne (328). It had made her life at sea “a fine adventure,” an essay into comic

opportunity that marked the damsel out as a suffragette, a Joan of Arc, a female knight, a very plucky girl fit for fairy-tale romance in Conrad's final phase, which she engenders with her marital leap. "I loved and I was loved, untroubled, at peace, without remorse, without fear," as she explains (328). And, in the light of Flora's love, all life itself acquired for her a gem-like flame. "All the world, all life," she offers Marlow, "were transformed for me:"

The most familiar things appeared lighted up with a new light, clothed with a loveliness [that] I had never [known]. The sea itself! You are a sailor. You have lived our [a] life on [the sea]. But do you know how beautiful it is ... It was too good to last. But nothing can rob me of it now ... I am not sad. Yes, I have been happy. But I remember also the time when I was unhappy beyond endurance, beyond desperation. You remember that [too] (329).

Flora refers here to the scene of her intended suicide, interrupted, as Marlow had learned, not by himself but by the tell-tale dog. But she refers here also to her subsequent unhappiness on taking to sea, before the *Ferndale's* weird and morbid moral atmosphere was cleared up by Powell, with his brighter view of life derived from fairy-tales and light literature. As *Chance* concludes, even Marlow, the ludic and *gawedic* raconteur of the novel's prior half, seems now to share in Powell's point of view, so thoroughly corrected has his own view been by now both by Flora's and by Powell's points of view. And it is fitting therefore that it is Marlow, not Powell himself or any tell-tale dog, who sounds the novel's final note with his closing suggestion that Flora and Powell should themselves pair off as husband and wife. Marlow "likes" her friend "Mr. Powell," does he not? Flora asks – and Marlow says that he does (329). "There was a time," as Flora explains in fairy-tale terms, when the young first mate, a confidant with whom she could "talk," had been her one "relief" among the *Ferndale's* crew, including her

husband, with his honorable game (329). Powell still “loves” the sea, she adds – then Marlow counters that he has now “given it up,” for a retirement to the waters near the Thames (329). When Flora “wonder[s] why,” Marlow urges that not be coy (329). “Come Mrs. Anthony,” he answers, alluding again to his role as a Jamesian observer of the passing scene: don’t let me go away with the impression “that you are a selfish person, hugging [your] past happiness [to you] like a rich man’s treasure, [while] the poor [are] at [your] garden gate” (329). At this, there returns, for a moment, “the very voice of Flora [from] the old days,” containing now within it just a hint of “the old mistrust” and the “old” self “doubt” – the old “blow” received during “childhood” and its subsequent “scar” (329). “Do you think [that] it [is] possible that he should care for me?” she asks her old acquaintance, now her confidant (329). “You are brave” enough to “ask him,” Marlow answers (329). “Oh, I am,” Flora sees, taking on for the final time in *Chance* the independence of the suffragette, the Joan of Arc, the female knight, and not the damel in distress (329). Marlow urges her to ask her old friend Powell, and to ask him right away. It would be “wronging” a good man not to ask – a lover in distress (329).

When Marlow offers later on that “life consists in seizing every chance” we get, and that the knight should tell the damsel how he feels, Powell answers in religiose terms that this is “gospel truth” (329). This dream of a newly charming Marlow, a newly boyish seaman-storyteller, full of of fairy-tale romance, provokes a “grin” condescension from the auditor and interlocutor of *Chance*’s outer frame – a quuck “sarcastic” smile of self-protection very much in line with those of certain readers who are indisposed toward Conrad’s final phase, engendered here

in unexpected ways. As for Marlow, however, he is “not afraid of going to church,” let alone with two friends such as these, on what would be their wedding day (329). “Hang it all,” as he explains, but he is “not exactly pagan,” for all his view that life depends on “chance” (330). And thus the novel ends as it begins – on an unexpected note of romance that gestures toward some sacred sense, some moral occult, within the course of Life and Love. *Chance* had begun with a note from the Anglican mystic Sir Thomas Browne: “Those that hold that all things are governed by Fortune had not erred, had they not persisted there.” And Conrad’s novel then proceeds, in its own mystical way, toward gospel truth at its denouement.

One of Conrad’s key successors, the Christian Graham Greene, would posit later that “a great disaster” had struck the English novel with the death of Henry James.¹⁷¹ It was then that the novel lost its faith and one “dimension” of reality.¹⁷² This loss of “the religious sense” left fiction “paper thin,” a mere play of “carboard symbols” in a world made pointless by modern modes of satire that make a kind of secular refusal of those modes of melodrama that gesture obliquely toward some moral occult, some sacred sense, within the course of Life and Love.¹⁷³ Among those who employed these modern modes, according to Greene, was E. M. Forster, who like his friend and colleague Woolf, within the Bloomsbury group, read Conrad with interest, if not with the same degree of

¹⁷¹ Graham Greene, “Francois Mauriac” (1945) in *Collected Essays*, London: Penguin, 1969, p. 91.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 91.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

sympathy as his and Woolf's successor Greene.¹⁷⁴ Conrad had allowed, by way of Marlow in *Heart of Darkness*, that while his own tales differed from his fellow seamen's "yarns" in not possessing that kind of significance "the whole of which lay in the shell of a cracked nut," they did nonetheless have a moral sense, albeit one a vital part of which was not "inside like a kernel" but "outside, enveloping the tale," which "brought it out," like a "misty halo," made "visible" by "moonshine" on solid stuff.¹⁷⁵ But Forster would argue despite this that there was nothing solid in Conrad, but only a haze, that he was "misty in the middle" and the "casket" of his "genius" held no "gem" or flame.¹⁷⁶ This judgment, however, seems more apt in response to Forster's own work, with its misty liberalism, than to Conrad's, with its honor and fidelity to chivalrous ideals and the Polish *szlachta* class. Forster's friend and colleague Woolf read the author of *Chance*, as we have seen, with much more sympathy. But the writer who comes closest to rebutting Forster's case is neither the feminist Woolf nor the Christian, but a woman, Christian, and writer who comes closer than either Woolf or Greene in moral sensibility to Conrad's ideals and to his unexpected vision, in the figure of Flora, of a female knight, a modern Joan of Arc. That writer is Flannery O'Connor, who says that in his stated "aim" as novelist to "render" the "highest" kind of "justice" to the "universe," Conrad speaks from the "surest" moral "instinct" any artist can claim.¹⁷⁷ "The artist," as O'Connor explains, "penetrates

¹⁷⁴ E. M. Forster, "Joseph Conrad: A Note" (1926) in *Abinger Harvest*, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1936.

¹⁷⁵ Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 138.

¹⁷⁶ Forster, "Joseph Conrad: A Note," p. 138.

¹⁷⁷ Flannery O'Connor, "Novelist and Believer" (1962), in Sally and Robert Fitzgerald eds., *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose*, New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1969, p. 157.

the concrete world” to “find” within its “depths” a vital “image” of its “source,” a “image” of its “ultimate reality.”¹⁷⁸ Her own age and Conrad’s was “an unbelieving age,” as she observes, an age more inclined toward skepticism and satirical burlesque than toward faith and chivalric romance.¹⁷⁹ But that age was nonetheless still a “spiritual” age, and the best of its author were “searchers.”¹⁸⁰ One type of such searcher recognizes a “spirit” in humanity but not “outside” itself in some transcendent grace.¹⁸¹ Another type finds grace outside humanity, but not a grace that it will define like O’Connor or Greene. And still another type is poised between the two, not yet “contained” by “unbelief” nor yet “believing” in that definite way.¹⁸² This third type is Conrad’s own, poised from first to last, much like Flora, on the edge between depression and despair and all those common forms of speech and modes of feeling which remain within our midst like tell-tale dogs, and help recall us to that sense of Life and Love by which we choose to live.

The Life and Love that Conrad affirms has been hard to describe here except in those same terms that *Chance* invents for itself or that it draws from the post-Victorian moment of its unexpected popular success. Life is a conceptual counter for precisely Conrad’s nonspecific kind of humanistic vitality. And Love is a casting of that counter in the feminine, English, and domestic terms of that light literature he turns to here as a means of escape from his depression and despair and of recovery of moral resolve. I have touched here in passing on

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 159.

Greene's and O'Connor's Christian sense of that same vital spark, which they would call the human soul in the image of God, sustained by the Logos or Word, the Second Person of that Trinity. Those terms I touch on, but only lightly, since there are other terms, including Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist, and Muslim counterparts to Christianity's own. None of these are Conrad's terms nor are his own terms those derived from the great hermeneutics of suspicion through which works or art like his are ordinarily read within the academy – the terms of Marx, of Nietzsche, of Freud. As skeptical as Conrad was from first to last of the politics of Europe in his own day, he was equally as skeptical, and presciently so, of alternatives like Marx's own. And likewise, as much as he harbored his suspicions about such religious traditions as O'Connor's and Greene's, he was equally suspicious, or more so, of "The Death of God." This was the kind of indecision or irresolution in Conrad that would frustrate Hugh Kenner, from own Christian point of view, and likewise some, like Moser and Meyer, with more secular views. Kenner, Moser, and Meyer, like Woolf before them, are right to sense a crux within Conrad that lends his work an unsurpassed power in its chosen sphere, but also a certain ambiguity and lack of definition in more formal terms. Conrad's ethos is hard to paraphrase, except in terms some might regard as platitudes. But while that ethos can indeed be regarded in this negative way, it need not be. Neither Buddhist nor Hindu nor Muslim nor Christian nor Jew, Conrad is likewise neither Freudian nor Nietzschean nor Marxist by respective turn. In general, his work eschews both formal theology and formal philosophy and likewise the idiosyncratic myth-making that is characteristic of the high modernism gaining strength as *Chance* found its success. What it opts for instead

is an embrace, within in the midst of moral crisis, of a set of more communal and vernacular myths near to hand in the public domain of Conrad's cultural milieu, first in Poland and then in the England he would make his second home. Those were the myths of Polishness and Englishness in turn, with their common topography of damsels and knights, of honor and fidelity. What these myths lack in either formality or idiosyncrasy, they make up for in simple common sense. That common sense is not identical to any one of those more rigorously thought-through systems for defining the occult or occluded source of human morality. But it is cognate nonetheless with certain aspects of them all. What *Chance* will reaffirm amid the crises of suspicion that it overcomes is a mere humanism or humanity. This kind of humanism-as-such remains an object of contempt for hermeneutics of suspicion down to our own times. These hermeneutics have read humanistic works like *Chance*, with their basis in comic romance, in the alternative terms of tragic satire and cynical burlesque, in terms like those employed by the Marlow of the novel's opening half. Marlow's own employment of those terms will prove to be one he cannot sustain, and the same can perhaps be said of those analogous terms that take for granted the very opportunity to read works like *Chance* in their suspicious ways. These modes of suspicion partake themselves of a secular endeavor of philosophy now coming in its turn to be the same kind of object of contempt within some quarters as the projects of theology those modes themselves had sought to supersede. And this eclipse of philosophy beside "The Death of God" now issues likewise in a similar eclipse of humanism and with it the humanities, those projects in which such works of art as Conrad's *Chance* are seen in any terms at all. An affirmation once again of

humanism and of mere humanity, however sentimental, could be *Chance's* legacy, the novel's opportunity for literary studies at this moment of crisis, analogous in certain respects to the cultural crisis of a strangely dying England in 1914, and of the personal crisis of Conrad himself, as he took this fateful turn in his career.

Chapter Four
“The ‘Ind Legs of The Elephink”
English Pantomime and *Parade’s End*

The curious juxtaposition in *Chance* of irony and melodrama, of tragic satire and comic romance, and then its turn from the former to the latter, was not without its sequels, both in Conrad’s career and in modern English literature more generally. Conrad would follow *Chance* up with a pair of great works in an analogous mode, his last major novels *Victory* (1915) and *The Shadow-Line* (1917). The subsequent sequence of *The Arrow of Gold* (1919), *The Rescue* (1920), *The Rover* (1923), and the uncompleted *Suspense* (1924) bear out Woolf’s sense of “old sonorities” repeated somewhat “wearily.”¹⁸³ But the kind of affirmation made there with those diminishing returns is not the only one we find within this era in English literature. Conrad made his own affirmation in the midst of an existential crisis at the crux of his career. But the same sort of crisis and crux were ones inherent in his cultural moment and in most of the major careers that overlapped his own. Conrad’s own juxtaposition of irony and melodrama, of satire and romance is one that occurs quite often in modernist works toward the end of his career and shortly after his passing, such as T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922) perhaps most famously. Eliot’s career past *The Waste Land* has parallels to Conrad’s own that are prefigured by the final phase begun by *Chance*. *The Waste Land*, as Levenson observes, is at heart a chivalric

¹⁸³ Virginia Woolf, “Joseph Conrad,” p. 229.

romance, a quest for the grail in which the grail remains lost.¹⁸⁴ That grail would subsequently be found, or so Eliot believed, through with his conversion to Christianity five years on, and his elaboration after that of his newfound faith in *Ariel Poems* (1927-1930), *Ash Wednesday* (1930), and *Four Quartets* (1935-1943). Eliot would famously describe himself in 1927 as a “royalist in politics” and an “anglo-catholic in religion.”¹⁸⁵ The latter part of this affirmation drew from Woolf the pointed barb that her “poor dear” friend “Tom Eliot” was “dead” to her “from [that] day [on.]”¹⁸⁶ But Woolf herself would make some affirmations too, which left her open as well to controversy and pointed dissent. The most important of these were the feminist and leftist affirmations of her great polemics *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938), but they figure as well in her romances *Orlando* (1928) and *Flush* (1933) and in her last two novels *The Years* (1937) and *Between The Acts* (1941). These affirmations, these moral commitments, these self definitions of Eliot and Woolf came in response to the crisis of The First World War, the great catastrophe for European culture, including English culture, in 1914. But Eliot’s and Woolf’s affirmations, coming after Conrad’s own, would also help define the terms for several subsequent moral commitments and self-definitions in the rising cohort of English writers who succeeded the post-war high modernists by looking ahead to a subsequent catastrophe, The Second World War, which each of them predicted from their

¹⁸⁴ Levenson makes this point in his lecture on *The Waste Land* in ENGL 3810, the third and final part of a survey sequence on The History of Literatures in English at the University of Virginia.

¹⁸⁵ T. S. Eliot, “Preface” to *For Lancelot Andrewes: Essays on Style and Order* (1928), Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran, and Company 1929, p. vii.

¹⁸⁶ Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997, p. 457. Lee quotes Woolf in a letter to her sister Vanessa Bell, in which she comments on Eliot’s conversion with this barb and others just as pointed, toward Christians in general.

different points of view, and well ahead of its time. This was the cohort of W. H. Auden, Graham Greene, George Orwell, and Evelyn Waugh. Waugh was a convert like Eliot to Christianity, albeit in its Roman Catholic not its Anglican form, and he likewise embraced a Tory politics like Eliot's own. The irreligious Orwell had none of Woolf's own feminist beliefs, but he shared with her a leftist politics in successive turn. The Roman Catholic Greene and the Anglican Auden both forged their own hybrids of the Christian and leftist commitments that proved so often to be the poles of moral affirmation and self-definition for English writers between the world wars. All four of these leading lights in the last broadly modern, as opposed to contemporary, cohort in English literature looked back to the post-war modernist moment of Eliot and Woolf especially. But they also looked back prior to that, back to the Edwardian and Late-Victorian moment of Conrad's prime. Conrad himself and his crises were crucial especially for Greene, in obvious ways. And they were crucial too for Waugh, whose early masterpiece *A Handful of Dust* (1934) draws not only on Eliot's *The Waste Land* but also on Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* for its fictional terms. These great successors of Eliot and Woolf returned not only to Conrad but also, and equally importantly, to one of Conrad's great successors, a peer of Eliot's and Woolf's, who both embraced the high modernist moment that succeeded *Chance* and forged a seminal template for the rising generation of Auden, Greene, Orwell, and Waugh.

That great successor of Conrad's was his friend and protégé Ford, who wrote the most direct of *Chance*'s varied sequels in *Parade's End* (1924-1928), his sequence of novels on England, the English, and The First World War. On the basis above all else of *Parade's End*, Greene predicted that no twentieth-century

novelist writing in English would live more fully for future generations than Ford, and one sign of this vitality in Ford and in *Parade's End* was how Ford's sequence on The First World War would serve as a model for Waugh's later sequence on The Second World War in his *Sword of Honour* trilogy (1952-1961).¹⁸⁷ In the same year Waugh completed his own sequence, Auden would speak both for himself and for Waugh and Greene in offering Ford's quartet his highest praise:

Of the various demands one can make of the novelist ... that he show an understanding of the human heart ... that he illuminate our moral consciousness, that he make us laugh and cry ... there is not one, it seems to me, that Ford does not completely satisfy. There are not many English novels which deserve to be called great: *Parade's End* is one of them.¹⁸⁸

Auden casts his praise for Ford's quartet in sentimental terms, in terms reminiscent of the ones employed by Conrad's *Chance*, the terms of fairy-tales and light literature. And Ford's sequel to *Chance* does likewise offer up to us a juxtaposition of irony and melodrama, of tragic satire and comic romance, and one in which the former terms will yield to the latter over time. *Parade's End*, like *Chance* before it, was the product of a period of crisis both in its author's culture and in his career. In Ford's case, the crisis was an effort, alongside England's own, to recover his moral resolve in the wake of the war, during which he served in combat on The Western Front in France. Ford sought to restage an Englishness, and with it a chivalry, with ties to Conrad's own – an English

¹⁸⁷ Waugh is nowhere on explicit record in reference to Ford, but his Tory-Catholic sensibility and pantomimic irony are clearly indebted to Ford, whom he could not have avoided discussing with his colleague, the Fordian Greene. And the very close parallels between not only the respective settings of *Parade's End* and *Sword of Honour*, but also between the central figures of Christopher Tietjens and Guy Crouchback respectively are too close to be a mere coincidence.

¹⁸⁸ W. H. Auden, "Il Faut Payer" (1960), in Edward Mendelson, ed., *Prose, Volume IV: 1956-1962*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2010, p. 317.

gentleman's ethos that seemed, in the wake of the war, to be "insupportable" on previous grounds.¹⁸⁹ Ford had been a strangely prescient figure from the 1890's forward, striking poses from this gentleman's code that had anticipated Eliot's posture, and later Waugh's own, as Catholics in religion and Tories in political affinity. But neither Ford's politics, still less his religion, were fully in earnest. They always contained a note of jest and intellectual play, existing in considerable part not so much as real convictions as satirical foils for opposing trends within his times. Most notable among these trends was the intermingled secularism and progressivism of figures like George Bernard Shaw and Ford's own friend and colleague H. G. Wells – and with Shaw and Wells, the exponents of a Shavian and Wellsian point of view. Key among these for Ford were some of his own family and friends, the young Rossettis and Garnetts –like Ford himself, bohemian heirs of a militant modernity that Ford would long critique and in so doing transcend. Ford viewed The First World War as an inadvertent triumph of this same modernity, which he had countered both in life and art with his visions of the Tory gentleman and Catholic or Anglican saint. Ironically for Ford, who saw those figures as satirical foils for that same militant modernity that issued in the war, those figures would be objects of suspicion in the wake of the war, when they themselves would be subjected to an irony that blamed the war on them. Ford would respond to this suspicion by redoubling the sense of play within his postures all along. Where Conrad's own juxtaposition of tragic satire and comic

¹⁸⁹ Max Saunders, *Ford Madox Ford: A Dual Life, Volume II: The After-War World*, New York: Oxford UP, 1996, p. 108. Saunders quotes Ford writing this in response to Ezra Pound's criticisms of his volume of reminiscences and critical musings *Thus To Revisit* (1921). We will come to both that book and Pound's criticisms of Ford and his version of the gentleman's code in the chapter after this.

romance was a tactical maneuver in the midst of moral stress, Ford's similarly curious mixture of earnest and jest was a longterm strategy. It served to define his modernism, which reached its final form in *Parade's End*, a sequence strong enough – as Auden, Greene, and Waugh all could see – to serve as a paradigm for much of modern English literature between the two wars. Ford's sequence is a work of affirmation, moral commitment, and self-definition, of the same sort offered up in different ways by Conrad before him, by Eliot and Woolf at his same time, and by Auden, Greene, and Waugh later on. A grand retrospect on the Edwardian era and The First World War, it serves as well as a pivotal work – perhaps the pivotal work of the interwar era of both high modernism and the cohort in its aftermath. What it offers is an affirmation, a moral commitment, and a self-definition that are rooted in a very English kind of imaginative play. The playful note – the ludic and *gawedic* note embedded in *Chance* by the tell-tale dog – is the keynote of Ford's entire *Parade*. It offers up a very earnest prophecy of pointed dissent from the militant modernity that issued in war, and which would do so once more in a second war, the year that Ford died. And yet it offers up this prophecy as tosh, as imaginative play – the play of sentiment in matters of commitment, self-definition, and moral resolve. In doing both those things at once, Ford's sequence transcends the fatalism, depression, and despair that Conrad struggled with in *Chance*, to make much the same kind of merely humanistic affirmation Ford himself will make, of Life and Love. Its pantomimic mode or reciprocal, reversible irony would satirize Ford's various figures of Tory gentlemen and Catholic or Anglican saints. But it would likewise satirize its own modernity, its modernist project, and the whole hermeneutics of suspicion that

those figures were subjected to. Ford's work is based, like Conrad's, both in irony and melodrama, both tragic satire and comic romance. It is this poise of its pantomimic mode that recommends it most to us humanists, now faced with troubled times, when our own enterprise itself is seen as suspect, much like Ford's Tory gentlemen and Anglican saints.

II

With the end of *A Man Could Stand Up* (1926), Ford Madox Ford makes complete the three parts that he had planned for *Parade's End* (1924-1928), his sequence on England, the English, and the First World War, with this third part showing us the end of the war and the beginning of the post-war world that Ford would treat in an addendum to the set, *Last Post* (1928). On the night of the Armistice ending the war, Ford's hero, his Tory gentleman and Anglican saint, Christopher Tietjens, meets his long lost love, but not his lover yet, the suffragette and classicist Valentine Wannop, at his flat in Gray's Inn, London. Valentine and Christopher are joined there by some comrades-in-arms who had served under Tietjens, "good old Fat Man," during the war. "Over here! Pom Pom! Over here! Pom Pom! That's the word, that's the word! Over here!" these comrades sing, at the top of their lungs (674). As Valentine and Christopher dance, it feels to her as if the whole world round them were "prancing around," and that she and her fat man were the center-ring for all those "roaring circles" that were turning round London, round England, on that longed-for night, when they could first make love, their wider world no longer at war (674). A French phrase comes to mind that helps her figure how it feels to be moved by this less martial kind of music than she and her fat man were moved by before, a phrase that shows what Ford

himself was musing on in mounting his *Parade*, in turning back from Paris in the Twenties, where he lived and wrote, to London in the Teens, where he had lived and written, prior to serving the war: “*Les petites marionettes! Font! Font! Font!* The little marionettes! Dance! Dance! Dance!” (674).

Ford stages Valentine and Tietjens as marionettes, colorfully expressionistic archetypes or emblems of fairy-tale romance from a children’s play, with Valentine a version of commedia dell’arte’s Columbine and Tietjens a version of its Harlequin, Pierrot, and Pantaloon by alternate turns. With these last three lines in *A Man Could Stand Up*, with these last three lines in the trilogy that Ford had first conceived, Valentine will cast herself and Tietjens – and Ford will cast them both – in terms that imply generic contours to the whole *Parade*, contours that keep the connotation of Valentine and Tietjens as fairy-tale figures from a children’s play, but which cast those archetypes and emblems in their native terms of Englishness, the underlying ethos of the whole *Parade*: “On an elephant. A dear [old] meal-sack elephant. She was setting out on [an elephant]” (674).

The figure of Tietjens as a meal-sack elephant conveys in its immediate sense the weight of physical girth. His hero is “very big,” Ford tells us, and in his “fair, untidy Yorkshire” way, he carries “more weight” than he should, with his “blond, high-coloured” head being “shapelessly” swollen, like “a bladder of lard” (5, 15). But in a less immediate but more important sense, the figure of the meal-sack elephant conveys as well as this a sense of fictional weight. “Elaborate” of “character” and “phrase,” Ford’s hero is “protuberant” in places, bulging with a mannered extravagance that lends him the air of an “elephant” composed from

“sacks” of “meal,” a comical contraption built from “bladders” of “lard.” (5, 15). Bulky both in a physical and fictional weight, Tietjens “balloons” through the whole *Parade* as an overstuffed assemblage made from meal-sacks of Englishness that Ford had larded up before the war (261). This bulk of English essence with which Tietjens has been overstuffed by Ford, this elephantiasis of fictional weight, is what will lead us to regard him through the whole *Parade* as a portly pachyderm made from bladders of lard and trained to dance with a curious grace through the round of English drawing-rooms and Continental trenches that the sequence takes him through. And this archetypal, emblematic figure of Tietjens, the meal-sack elephant of Englishness, will take on further fictional weight when we consider that figure in the context of a genre Ford implies, a genre whose contours help to clarify the whole portly project he had mounted in the wake of the war, having larded up reserves of English essence through his whole career. The genre to which I refer is the Christmas pantomime, in terms of which Ford’s sequence is staged, and staged in ways a consciousness of which will help us recognize the three-ring circus, the carnival *Parade* of English archetypes and emblems Ford has mounted round Tietjens, and that Tietjens mounts himself, in staging himself and performing himself within the terms of what I hope to demonstrate is a pantomimic mode, a mode which has drawn upon the means of the Christmas pantomime or pantomime-proper and turned them toward an innovative end, the modern or post-modern end of restaging Ford’s and Tietjens’ English essence as prophetic tosh, a visionary ethics cast as sentimental play and the play of sentiment cast as an ethical vision for the post-war world, the modern or post-modern world in which we live today, a moral

vantage-point on the reciprocity and the reversibility of modern or post-modern ironies, ironic hierarchies, and generic priorities.¹⁹⁰

III

Pantomime connotes for our purpose an English theatrical genre of plays put on from Christmas to Easter every year, both for children and adults – part-comic, part-tragic, part-satirical, and part-romantic plays, blending histories, legends, and mythologies of English identity. Pantomime reached what so far has been its final form in the period just prior to the death of Queen Victoria in January 1901, the start of the Twentieth Century and a turning point for English identity, when Englishness itself began to mark the self-reflection of a culture faced with staging itself and performing itself in modern or post-modern time. Pantomime by January 1901 would be distinguished by its combination and condensation of a number of theatrical modes, each of which contributed elements that helped to make the compound, composite mode of pantomime a critical resource for English artists as they sought to dramatize and to characterize the unsettled senses of Englishness in modern or post-modern time.

¹⁹⁰ The first and until myself the only other scholar of Ford of whom I am aware to relate *Parade's End* to English Pantomime is Thomas C. Moser in his chapter on "Parade's End as Christmas Pantomime" in *The Life in the Fiction of Ford Madox Ford*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1980, pp. 214-54. Moser's chapter lent corroboration to my own reading of *Parade's End* in terms of English pantomime, but more than by Moser's chapter that reading was informed by: Ambrose Gordon's chapter on "The War as Fairy Tale" in *The Invisible Tent: The War Novels of Ford Madox Ford*; Martin Green's discussion of English modernity in terms of commedia dell'arte in *Children of the Sun: A Narrative of "Decadence" in England after 1918*, New York: Basic Books, 1976; Timothy Weiss's discussion of Ford in relation to fairy-tales and romance in *Fairy Tale and Romance in Ford Madox Ford*, New York: Lanham, 1984; and Ann Barr Snitow's discussion of Ford's progression "from comic irony to romance" in *Ford Madox Ford and The Voice of Uncertainty*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1984. Additionally, my reading of *Parade's End* in terms of popular drama is indebted to Esty's chapter on Woolf's *Between The Acts* – "Insular Rites: Virginia Woolf and the Late Modernist Pageant-Play" – in *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England*.

Chief among these prior theatrical modes were *commedia dell'arte*, the harlequinade, fairy-tale extravaganza, and music-hall burlesque. *Commedia dell'arte* was an Early Modern form of comic drama based on topical themes, featuring the archetypal figures of Columbine, Harlequin, Pierrot, and Pantaloon, the figures who would later form the basis for the French children's theater of marionettes. *Commedia dell'arte* spread from Italy through Europe as a whole, and found a home in England in the form of the harlequinade, the prototype for English pantomime, which started with an "opening" consisting of a fairy-tale mixture of English mythology, legend, and history, after which the *dramatis personae* would reveal themselves in "transformation scenes" to be renditions of the archetypal figures of *commedia dell'arte*. This harlequinade gave rise in mid-Victorian times to a separate theatrical mode, the fairy-tale extravaganza, which detached the prior opening and used it as the basis for a spectacle of fanciful artifice, allusion, and wit, in which whimsy and poetry were merged. And Fairy-tale extravaganza gave rise in its turn to yet another theatrical mode, the music-hall burlesque, the prototype for vaudeville and variety, in which the *dramatis personae* of the harlequinade and the extravaganza were subject to pastiche and parody, subject to a more unsettled irony than in those prior forms. By January 1901, each of these successive theatrical modes (*commedia dell'arte*, the harlequinade, fairy-tale extravaganza, and music-hall burlesque) would be incorporated back into the English pantomime or pantomime-proper as performed today – the compound, composite mode in which these less ambiguous modes could meet and merge within a literary space distinctly suited to the work to which the pantomime has been so often put by English artists

through the century and more since Queen Victoria died, the staging of a self-reflexive Englishness in modern or post-modern time.¹⁹¹

The compound, composite essence of the Englishness staged by the English pantomime or pantomime-proper can be seen in the overstuffed advertisement of one pantomime from mid-Victorian times as “symbolical, hyperbolical, parabolical, grotesque, picturesque, and grand.”¹⁹² The elephantine Englishness staged by the pantomime-proper since Victorian times includes a comprehensive range of English culture, from historical legend to literary mythology. Pantomime subjects from Victorian times include “Harlequin” renditions of legends of English identity, like those of Saint George and the Dragon, King Arthur and the Round Table, and Alfred the Great, who, in keeping with the pantomimic mode in which his tale is recast, finds himself juxtaposed with the myth of an “enchanted raven” in “Harlequin History,” the whimsical, poetical space of the pantomime.¹⁹³ And just as these Victorian pantomimes encompass those legends of English identity, they also encompass such mythologies as those of Shakespeare’s plays, as in such harlequinades as a Romeo and Juliet refigured pantomimically as “Harlequin” and “Queen Mab” in “The World of Dreams,” a staging which included a procession of heroes and heroines from all of Shakespeare’s plays.¹⁹⁴ The Early Modern moment of those plays

¹⁹¹ For further background on English Pantomime see: R. J. Broadbent, *A History of Pantomime* (1901), New York: Arno Press, 1977; A. E. Wilson, *King Panto: The Story of Pantomime*, New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1935; Paul Harris, *The Pantomime Book: The Only Known Collection of Pantomime Jokes and Sketches in Captivity*, London: Peter Owen, 1996; and Jim Davis, ed., *Victorian Pantomime: A Collection of Critical Essays*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

¹⁹² Wilson, *King Panto*, p. 152.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

became itself a frequent reference-point for harlequin history, as in the first production by the seminal pantomime dramatist E. L. Blanchard at Drury Lane: “Harlequin Hudibras or Cavaliers and Roundheads in The Days of The Merry Monarch” (1852).¹⁹⁵ Blanchard’s pantomime juxtaposes Hudibras, Samuel Butler’s knight-errant from the Restoration era, with the Spirits of Antiquity and those of Improvement, mapping out a pantomimic arc from The English Civil War to The Great Exhibition of the year before the play. And just as the harlequin history of Romeo and Juliet encompassed a parade of English heroines and heroes drawn from Shakespeare’s plays, so too would Blanchard’s harlequin history of English improvement over prior antiquity include its own parade of English archetypes and emblems in the modern, mid-Victorian mode: “Art, Science, Concord, Progress, Peace, Invention, Happiness, Wealth, Success, Industry, and Plenty.”¹⁹⁶ This emphasis on progress and forward advance was a staple of the Englishness staged by mid-Victorian pantomime, other subjects of which included Industry and Empire, as in “Harlequin and The Steam King” or “Harlequin Locomotive” and harlequin parades of British colonies from Africa to India, Ireland to Jamaica and points beyond.¹⁹⁷

The dual English national legends of industry and empire from the Early Modern era to Victorian times find a common figuration in among the most frequent subjects for the Christmas pantomime, an archetypal, emblematic figure in whose person James Joyce thought “the whole [English] spirit” to be found – Robinson Crusoe, with his “independence,” “persistence,” “slow yet efficient”

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 147

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 148-9.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

intelligence, and “calculating taciturnity.”¹⁹⁸ Pantomime or harlequin histories of Crusoe form the whole subgenre of the robinsonnade, and the robinsonnade forms a whole subgenre of the pantomime, as in Blanchard’s play for Drury Lane in 1881, in which the Crusoe story’s dual terms of industry and empire would be juxtaposed within an antic plot that brought the hero home to England – to Primrose Farm by the banks of the Thames, a whimsical, poetical location that evokes Aestheticism and the Arts and Crafts, with their attendant literary mythology of English domesticity.¹⁹⁹ Nowhere was that mythos more memorably figured than the archetypes and emblems of the English neo-pagan child and the child-like English Pan. These archetypes and emblems would themselves be juxtaposed with the robinsonnade in the seminal work in which the pantomime-proper opens out into the pantomimic mode – J. M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan* (1904), where the robinsonnesque desert island of the Neverland would function as a figure for the pantomime stage, and for a staging in the pantomimic mode of an unsettled sense of pre-war, post-Victorian Englishness ambiguously poised between the industry and empire embodied by the robinsonnade and the domesticity embodied by the archetypes and emblems of the neo-pagan child and the child-like Pan.

IV

These terms of the English Pantomime or pantomime-proper would occupy Ford significantly throughout the literary-modernist *annus mirabilis* of

¹⁹⁸ Michael Seidel, *Robinson Crusoe: Island Myths and The Novel*, Boston: G. K. Hall, 1991, p. 11. Seidel quotes Joyce in a lecture on Daniel Defoe, given during Joyce’s time in Trieste.

¹⁹⁹ Wilson, *King Panto*, p. 167.

1922, the year he moved to Paris, the year he read *The Waste Land* and Joyce's *Ulysses*, and the year he started mounting his *Parade*. Just how much the English pantomime was on Ford's mind at this pivotal point both in his career and in literary history is evident on turning to the under-read work that he would publish during 1923, the year between the modernist miracle year and *Some Do Not ...* (1924), the opening part of the *Parade*. That under-read work is *Mister Bosphorus and the Muses* (1923), Ford's first and only venture into pantomime-proper as distinct from the pantomimic mode, that genre made clear by its full, elephantine title, which demonstrates the genre's capaciousness and its modern or post-modern capacity for self-pastiche and self-parody: *Mister Bosphorus and the Muses or a Short History of Poetry in Britain. Variety Entertainment in Four Acts with Harlequinade, Transformation Scene, Cinematograph Effects, and Many Other Novelties, as well as Old and Tried Favorites*.²⁰⁰ If one replaces "Bosphorus" with "Tietjens," one gains a fitting alternate title for the more extensive effort Ford turned to next, the most important work of his career, and among the most important in the modernist mode. That effort, like *Mister Bosphorus* would be informed by Ford's concurrent readings of Eliot and Joyce during modernism's miracle year. Ford's intertextual engagement, both in *Mister Bosphorus* and the subsequent *Parade*, was based on an attendant recognition that the English pantomime had been an unacknowledged source of that same modernist mode that he himself as much as Eliot or Joyce had helped to create. Ford saw that with its sometimes dissonant, sometimes harmonious

²⁰⁰ In addition to the full text of *Mister Bosphorus*, an excerpt further indicative of its pantomimic flavor is more readily available in Ford Madox Ford, *Selected Poems*, ed. Max Saunders, Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2003.

assemblages of lyrics and dramatic vignettes, the contour of the Christmas pantomime had helped to shape *The Waste Land* – thinking, for example, of Eliot’s original title, *He Do the Police in Different Voices*, derived from Charles Dickens’s own prior pantomimic tour of London in *Our Mutual Friend* (1865).²⁰¹ And Ford saw likewise that with its pastiche and parody of archetypal figures and emblematic forms the English Pantomime had helped to shape *Ulysses* – thinking, for example, of the pantomimic transformation scenes Joyce staged in Nighttown in the “Circe” episode. Ford’s subtle and provocative reading of Eliot and Joyce would help to lead him toward his venture into pantomime-proper in *Mister Bosphorus*. But its most important consequence him, and for literary history, would come when that preliminary work lead further forward, toward the subsequent work on which he set out next, the most important work of his career and among the most important in the modernist mode.

Part commedia dell’arte, part harlequinade, part fairy-tale extravaganza, part music-hall burlesque, the pantomimic mode of Ford’s *Parade* is an elephantine mode, a mode protuberant in places and overstuffed with fictional weight that the mode makes dance with a curious grace. Part three-ring circus, part carnival parade, this pantomimic mode will serve to satirize yet also to romanticize those archetypes and emblems it seves to stage. It is distinctive as a mode in which those archetypes and emblems can be ironized and yet their moral

²⁰¹ Eliot’s alternate title for *The Waste Land*, along with other more overtly “English,” popular, and pantomimic elements of the final poem, were rejected by Ezra Pound, who helped the author winnow down and focus his manuscript. But this alternate, more “English,” more popular, and more pantomimic *Waste Land* can be clearly seen in the manuscript material collected in T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts including the Annotations of Ezra Pound*, Valerie Eliot, ed., New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1971.

ethos reaffirmed. Like his colleague William Butler Yeats' subsequent effort in "The Circus Animals' Desertion" (1939), Ford's effort in *Parade's End* is a kind of palinode, an act of reassessment of the archetypes and emblems of an author and his culture, and the ethos that they serve to represent.²⁰² Ford's meal-sack elephant Tietjens, his Tory gentleman and Anglican saint, is a "stilted boy" like Yeats's own Cuchulain and Ossian, a "player" on his author's and his culture's "painted stage," an actor in their modern or post-modern morality play. But where Yeats' archetypes themselves had taken all his "love," and not "those things that they were emblems of," Ford's Tietjens is a player for a different stage and cast in a different mode than Cuchulain and Ossian. That stage is a post-war stage in which the gentlemen and saints of Ford's own prior career prove "insupportable" on previous grounds. That mode is a pantomimic mode in which those archetypes and emblems are subject at once to satirical burlesque and extravagant romance, a mode in which those archetypes themselves still elicit Ford's love, but also, and more so, those things that archetypes like them are emblems of – those aspects of his prior ethos, the ethos of Englishness, Ford seeks to restage, and in restaging reaffirm. Some have laughed at this ambition as an instance of tosh, and Ford himself would agree, and laugh the loudest of all. But he would also argue, as I myself do, that such tosh as his can be a means of prophecy – in this case of prophecy that offers us an ethical vision of the pre-war, post-Victorian world of his own prior life in England, and likewise, once again, a visionary ethics for the post-war world, the modern or post-modern world in

²⁰² William Butler Yeats, *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats*, Richard J. Finneran, ed., New York: Macmillan, 1983, p. 346-348.

which we live today, a moral vantage-point on the reciprocity and the reversibility of modern or post-modern ironies, ironic hierarchies, and generic priorities.

V

Parade's End is not, like its predecessor, *Mister Bosphorus*, a pantomime-proper, but a sequence of novels in the pantomimic mode. Where *Mister Bosphorus* had announced its pantomimic status in the burlesque-extravaganziac terms of its title's elephantine advertisement, *Parade's End* would recognize likewise its parallel status through the figure of Tietjens, but also through the way in which it foregrounds self-reflexively its staging and performance of that elephant or marionette in the pantomimic mode. Along with the senses it conveys of Tietjens' physical girth and fictional weight, the figure of the meal-sack elephant conveys as well as these a less immediate yet more important sense of Tietjens' status as a pantomimic hub round whom will turn the three-ring circus, the carnival parade of English prophecy and tosh that Ford has mounted in *Parade's End*. Like its more familiar counterpart, the figure of the pantomime horse, the figure of the pantomime elephant has been a stock attraction of the Boxing Day stage, with the horses, elephants, and other circus animals in question being played by pairs of actors who perform their front and hind legs using hidden stilts. The fact that these hind legs, these fictional foundations of the meal-sack elephant Tietjens are pantomimic stilts is one that readers may have sensed but which will only be confirmed once the sequence makes its roundabout way to the Western Front in France. It is there that Tietjens finds himself enlisted in a "ragtime company," a "Falstaff's battalion" of comrades-in-arms whom he has come to command, the same group of men who will come to

him in Gray's Inn, London, seeking "hooch" to drink on Armistice Day (555, 571, 674). This hooch, which sets them prancing in their circles and roaring at the top of their lungs, is liquid spirits, but also, and more so, the spirit of a holiday not far along pas Armistice Day – December 26, 1918, the first Boxing Day in the wake of the war and the first post-war pantomime at Drury Lane, for which the good old fat man Tietjens promised tickets to his comrades in arms. Tietjens makes this promise to his men while they are marching toward the trenches, early on in his command. Tietjens feels a sense of "feudal duty" toward these "heroes, call them heroes" he has come to command (591, 571, 591). These heroes are "a quite unfeudal crowd," including in their meal-sack membership a motley crew of "drapers," "milkmen," and "clerks," of "music-hall comedians" and "scene-shifting" "supers" from the pantomime stage (555, 571, 591). It is one of these comedians who makes of Tietjens' sense of feudal duty, his Tory gentility and Anglican sainthood, a "Cockney jest" or "knock-about turn" on the pantomimic stage of *Parade's End*. That Cockney jest or knock-about-turn reveals the fictional stilts of an elephant's legs, stilts that serve to offer confirmation of the English pantomime as having shaped the mode in which Ford now is staging his *Parade*. That confirmation comes as Tietjens finds a common ground between himself and his comrades-in-arms, and when he first looks forward with them to a world beyond the war. But Tietjens' common ground with these comrades, these music-hall comedians and scene-shifting supers from the pantomime stage, is not the only indication we receive of a pantomimic aspect to the fat man's self-performance, an aspect of pastiche and parody, of self-satirical burlesque, which helps to qualify such tosh as his as prophecy too.

Ford casts Tietjens and Valentine as fairy-tale figures, archetypes and emblems of Englishness, like those in pantomime. Pantomime itself mixes irony and melodrama, tragic satire and comic romance, so it is therefore a fitting vehicle for the kind of reciprocal, reversible irony that Ford now pursues in his *Parade*. That tenor will allow an affirmation of comic romance against the tragic satire of the militant modernity that issued in The First World War. Ford found a pantomimic mode for *Parade's End*, and modern whose terms were latent in his prior career, and in high modernist works like *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land*. he explored these terms first in his pantomime-proper *Mr. Bosphorus and The Muses*, then drew upon once again them for the pantomimic mode of *Parade's End*. That mode will be confirmed on The Western Front in France, but it is sensed all along within those prior scenes in which Ford stages restages, in post-war terms, his pre-war figures of the Tory gentleman and Anglican saint. These stagings come in Tietjens self-performance, his prophecy and tosh, which mixes tragic satire and comic romance. His prophecy and tosh provides a survey, like pantomime's own, of those aspects of Englishness that Ford has come to stage. Those aspects of Englishness take Tietjens as their archetype and emblem, their fairy-tale figure, and he serves as a hub for Ford's reciprocal, reversible ironies – his visionary ethics and ethical vision of modern irony, ironic modernity subjected to itself in a post-war world, a modern or post-modern world, much like our own today.

Tietjens' self-performance as a pantomimic hub for Ford's *Parade* is made apparent from the opening scenes of *Some Do Not ...*, where his own caste, England's ruling-class bureaucracy, "administer[s] the world, not merely [the] Imperial Department of Statistics," where Tietjens finds himself employed (3). Should Tietjens' caste discover "insufficiencies" in foreign or domestic affairs, then they will write *The Times* of London at once with "regretful indignation," asking in "nonchalant voices," "Has the British This or That come to *this*?" (3). "The youngest son" of "a Yorkshire country gentleman," Tietjens is himself "without ambition," but a place within the English status quo has "come to him" "as these things do," or rather as they did before the First World War (5). He knows he is "entitled to the best," and therefore feels that he can be relaxed, nonchalant in his "attire" and in the "company" he keeps," nonchalant in his mannered and extravagant views and in his "flouting" of and "jeering" at the status quo (5). Both physically and mentally, he carries more weight than he should, but people listen to him when he speaks, and have good reason so to do. "You're a perfect encyclopedia ... Tietjens!" as one of them explains, a meal-sack elephant, bulging with tosh, but likewise prophecy too (5).

This prophecy and tosh, this flouting of and jeering at the status quo, are both epitomized by Tietjens' role as an extravagant critic of the sacred text of the ruling-class bureaucracy, the great *Encyclopedia Britannica*, whose most authoritative version yet had just been published, in 1911, the year before the start of the events that Ford depicts in *Parade End*. An ongoing source for Tietjens' flouts and jeers is his "congenial occupation" of counting up "from memory" all the "errors" in this latest iteration of this golden book of ruling-class

authority. With his elephantine memory for facts, this occupation serves him like a “drowse,” during which he seems to sleep, with no one guessing what he dreams: the mathematicians’ “theory of waves” or the “slips” in someone’s entry on “Arminianism” in Anglican theology (10, 15). Tietjens’ inward exile from the ruling-class bureaucracy consists in this eccentric occupation of observing “useless facts,” containing “obsolescent patterns,” yielding Tory gentility and Anglican sainthood as their end-result, the pantomimic stuff of Tietjens’ prophecy and tosh, his flouts and jeers, and his extravagant views (127, 135).

Possessed of what is elsewhere called “a clear Eighteenth Century mind,” or even, as we come to see, a mind of the Seventeenth Century, a mind of the English “Renaissance” and “Reformation,” Tietjens has a quixotic piety and passion for “truth.” This truth he finds in Tory gentility and Anglican sainthood, and not the status quo of his own day. Tietjens’ piety and passion echoes both the mathematician’s and the theologian’s moods, and helps explain his inward exile of musing on Arminianism and the theory of waves. Tietjens shares the theologian’s and the mathematician’s work of inward abstraction from outward details, those such as occupy the bureaucrat’s life, with its indifference to truth. Tietjens shares the focus on first principles and ultimate ends of the soldier in a trench whom he himself will come to be. He shares the focus that soldiers, dramatists, and novelists share as they are forced by what Ford’s colleague Thomas Hardy calls the “satires” of “circumstance” to recompose, to reconstruct, and to restage themselves, in the midst their adventures, sought and unsought, at

moral extremes.²⁰³ Already a mathematician and a theologian, Tietjens soon becomes a soldier, and, in that role, the dramatist or novelist of his recomposition, reconstruction, and restaging in the midst of a war. In all these roles he plays or comes to play, he stands “outside” his “herd,” “a lonely buffalo,” oblique therefore and critically aslant to his own caste, the “rotten” ruling-class bureaucracy – aslant to his own class’s manufacture of the status quo, the rotten, militant modernity that issues in the war (128).

No matter how how aslant he comes to stand, Tietjens will retain for English ethics, for Englishness distinct from that modernity, his piety and passion, a mystical devotion in the midst of his adventures out at moral extremes. In opting to be every bit as “English” in his “habits” and “temperament” as he can “control, Tietjens has “adopted,” quite “advisedly,” and with a “set purpose,” what he takes to be the model of “behavior” that is “best” in all the world (178). “If every day and all day long,” one “shout[s] in self assertion,” like the German, then one will have a “noisy” and a “troublesome” world, without the “surface calm” of “arm-chairs” in “clubs,” where one can while away the hours, musing inwardly on theory and theology or “nothing at all” (178). “The basis” for Tietjens’ “existence” is “complete taciturnity” regarding how he feels, regarding feelings as distinct from observation of the obsolescent patterns derived from useless facts (6). As Tietjens sees the world, one should not “talk,” but rather stiffen one lip (6). Such stiffness of lip will serve one well during hazardous affairs such as “railway accidents,” outbreaks of “fire,” and disasters “at sea” (179). Its usefulness in

²⁰³ Thomas Hardy, *Satires of Circumstance: Lyrics and Reveries with Miscellaneous Pieces*, London: Macmillan and Co., 1914.

instances of “death” and “dishonor,” of “madness” and “mental strain,” Tietjens learns when these misfortunes come upon him all at once, and “rather suddenly,” in August of 1914 – dishonor, as his prophecy and tosh confront the status quo; and death as he pursues his feudal duty in the First World War (179).

Tietjens has known all along that there would be a Great War, his prediction of which had been a keynote of his prophecy, revealed as more than tosh in August of 1914. “War, my good fellow,” is certain to come, and with the English “plumb centre” of it all, he had promised his friend and fellow bureaucrat, Vincent Macmaster, two years before the outbreak of hostilities (20). War is certain, he assures Macmaster, because “we fellows” are “such damn hypocrites” (20). “There’s [no one] in the world that trusts us,” he observes, nor is there any reason so to do (20). The English are “always, as it were, committing adultery,” Tietjens explains, betraying their piety and passion, what ought to be their mystical devotion to an Englishness distinct from the status quo (20). Tietjens, for himself, tries to maintain the habits and temperament, the model of behavior, that for him remains the best in all the world. To do this, however, he turns, or dreams of turning, to a “back-doorway out,” and roundabout forward, toward the “sainthood” every “gentleman” “desires,” the “mysticism” he himself has honored with eccentric fidelity (188). That back-doorway out toward Englishness leads roundabout forward first to France and its Foreign Legion, which Tietjens dreams of joining one day. This unexpected dream affords a prospect on the sense of feudal duty he will honor in the ragtime company, the Falstaff’s battalion, he will come to command, as Ford’s novel-sequence itself

turns roundabout forward from the drawing-rooms of England to the Western Front in France.

Tietjens' France is paradoxically more English than his England, and his French Foreign Legion is likewise more English than the ruling-class bureaucracy that manufactures the English status quo. Tietjens loves the French for their Englishness, their Tory gentility and Anglican sainthood, distinct from that same English status quo. He loves them for their "efficiency" and their "frugality" (187). He loves them for their "logic" and their "neglect of [industry]" (187). He loves them for their mystical "devotion" to "the Eighteenth Century" (187). Rather than the English status quo, he wants to serve a people who see "clearly" and "straight," and not "obliquely" and with "hypocrisy" (187). As for what such service would entail, he claims to know. A member of the French Foreign Legion was regarded not so much as a "hero," he explains, but a "dog" (187). A Legionnaire was "whipped" and he was "drilled," for "six" long "months" in the burning "sand," after which what still "survived" was not himself, but someone "cleaned" and "cleared," as Tietjens hopes one day to be (187). This "prospect" always brings "deep peace," since his "ambition" all along has been for "saintliness," the kind desired by every English gentleman, a means to handle "pitch" and not become "defiled." (187). He knows that this ambition marks him out as what his brother Mark has labeled "a sentimental ass," the product of a "puzzling strain" within the Tietjens family line, and likewise in the English status quo and its ruling-class bureaucracy (732, 741). But "Caliph in the harem or Dervish in the sand," the one or the other, one must be, as Tietjens explains (187). And he himself has taken to the sand, in his imagination, and joined the Foreign

Legion, so to consecrate his honor and fidelity, his piety and passion, his mystical devotion to an Englishness distinct from the status quo. Tietjens' sense of feudal duty will mark him out later on as "a regular Dreyfus," a patriot slandered as a foreign spy (409). His puzzling strain of mystical devotion, derives, nonetheless, from close to home – as Mark, for one, can plainly see.

Tietjens' mystical devotion he inherits from his mother, a "bothering woman" whom her stepson Mark had characterized as an "Anglican Saint" (732). "Chrissie" had been born "very late," Mark explains, and was "a mother's child" therefore and not a father's child, his mother's "ewe lamb," who shows a certain "softening" of the Tietjens "stock," who have lived at Groby Hall in Yorkshire's North Riding since 1689, the year their countryman "Dutch William" took the English throne. (732, 723, 143). Chrissie had been filled with "feudal spirit" by his mother, Mark explains, despite his family's shallow roots within the Yorkshire soil (741). He would like to be a Medieval nobleman, "keeping up the gates" on the Tietjens estate (741). The "sheep" an acre feeds and "how much wheat" it will yield are things about which Mark "has not the least idea," but which his brother "would know" (741). Mark finds both this obsolescent knowledge and his brother's resolution later on not to take up his charge of the Tietjens estate to be "a sort of Russian trick," a holy tomfoolery, like putting on a "hairshirt" and "begging" by the road, or like "dispersing" one's estate, and granting to one's serfs "their liberty" (741). Mark's allusions here reference Edgar, the Earl of Gloucester's son, disguised as Poor Tom, in Shakespeare's *King Lear* (1606), and then both Fyodor Dostoevsky's Prince Myshkin in *The Idiot* (1869) and Leo Tolstoy's Kostya Levin in *Anna Karenina* (1878). These references all indicate a

foreignness in Chrissie that has made him hard to place within the English status quo. Mark finds Chrissie's "craving" for "mortification" more appropriate to foreigners, to Russians, than to members of the Tietjens family line and England's ruling-class bureaucracy. Himself, like his brother, a ruling-class bureaucrat in London, Mark feels his puzzling younger sibling ought to be a "rural dean," writing treatises on theory and theology on Sunday afternoons, and earning for himself a "reputation" as a gentleman and "saint" (723, 732). But "he wasn't the one and he hadn't the other," as his brother dryly notes, since "[Providence] works in a mysterious way" (732). "Provvy" brings dishonor to Chrissie, as his Englishness, his Tory gentility and Anglican sainthood, comes to scandalize the English status quo – and then it brings death, the prospect of his own, as he pursues his feudal duty in the First World War. What Providence brings Chrissie most of all, however, is "love," the bond that he and Valentine share, the bond in the name of which the ewe lamb, the sentimental ass will soon renounce his longed-for charge to be a nobleman and dean, and in so doing earn himself, if paradoxically, the status, if not the reputation, of a gentleman and saint. Mark knows that it has been "believed," and looked upon "with shudders," that Chrissie has "desired" to live his life "in the spirit of Christ," a "horrible" ambition which has served more than anything else as the source of the scandal he has caused within the status quo (741). Mark himself does not view this vocation as horrible "per se" (741). He "doubts," however, that "Our Saviour," Chrissie's model, would himself have "refused" his given charge of Groby Hall, or have renounced his longed-for chance to be a rural dean (741). "Christ was a sort of Englishman," as Mark explains, and Englishmen "[do] not as a rule refuse to

do their jobs” (741). Chrissie will, of course, contend, conversely, that the mortification intrinsic to his Incarnation and his Crucifixion is itself the crucial part of Christ’s job, which he performs as any Englishman should. And he will likewise contend that he himself is imitating his savior as best he can, by mortifying himself, by renouncing – out of love for Valentine and for the truth she represents – his charge to be a nobleman and dean, though not, albeit paradoxically, his chance to be a gentleman and saint, and in a more substantial way than he has been before.

Nowhere are Ford’s own staging and performance of Tietjens, but also Tietjens staging of himself, made more apparent as stagings and performances cast in the pantomimic mode than in the light of that “good humour” with which Tietjens sees himself as he performs himself, as he stages and restages himself amid the satires of circumstance. He demonstrates this humor most dramatically while serving on the Western Front in France, recalling in the midst of “blue gloom” the “sunlight of “those naiveties,” like Tory gentility and Anglican sainthood, that we have been considering here, those mystical devotions and desires that even now have not “abated” by a “jot,” but rather been restaged, not only by Ford, but also by Tietjens – restaged as performances cast in the pantomimic mode, where prophecy and tosh can meet and merge (365). Consider then the following sunlight, recalled with good humor in the midst of gloom; consider this “good humoured” exposition of Tietjens’ “official religion,” this inward musing on that theory and theology of Englishness to which the sentimental ass and ewe lamb here returns in the midst of his adventures out at moral extremes (365).

God the Father “Almighty” Tietjens pictures as an Englishman, a Yorkshireman, a “great” and “benevolent” “duke,” who “never [leaves] his study,” but who knows his whole estate up and down (365). “Our Saviour Jesus Christ” he then pictures in turn as an “almost too benevolent” steward, the “son” of “the owner,” attentive to “the last child [living] at the porter’s lodge,” and therefore “apt” to be “got round” by wayward tenants when their bills comes due (365). “The Third Person” of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, he pictures, in conclusion, as “the atmosphere” of the estate, “the Game as distinct from [its] players,” “Winchester Cathedral” when “Handel” is played, a lazy Sunday afternoon, with “cricket” on the lawn (365).

Tietjens laughs “good humouredly” at this “projection,” which “like Bunyan’s” in his *Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678), consists of an Englishness apotheosized to a celestial scale (365). Tietjens recognizes his projection, like the Englishness on which it is based, as “probably done with,” soon to be, like Handel at Winchester Cathedral or cricket on a Sunday afternoon (365). Soon, “there will be no more parades of [this] sort,” as he can see, save perhaps as staged or restaged in the pantomimic mode (365). His sort of parade, as much as Bunyan’s, is now found wanting by the English status quo, with its vision of modernity, its modern social views, which have issued in the war. Handel at Winchester Cathedral will give way soon to a “[tent-]revival meeting,” in Wales or possibly “Chautauqua ... wherever that was (365). And Cricket on a Sunday afternoon will give way soon to “football” or “baseball” in turn (365). And even his Trinity of Landowner, Steward, and Game will be recast, in Unitarian terms, as a singular “real estate” agent with “Marxist [social] views” (365). Tietjens

hopes, however, to be “out of it,” one way or another, before this comes to pass (366). He hopes that he will catch “the last train” out, toward what he calls “the old Heaven,” and therefore miss the end of his parade (365).

A glimpse of Tietjens’ Old Heaven, an apotheosis of his theory and theology of Englishness, we get in June of 1912, two years before the First World War, as he and Valentine, just having met, embark upon a promenade together through the countryside in Kent. “This is England!” Tietjens thinks, the old Heaven (105). “A man and a maid walk [together], through [the] Kentish fields,” he observes self-reflexively, the man being “honorable” and “upright” and “clean,” and the maid being “virtuous” and “vigorous” and “clean” in her own turn (105). Both the man and the maid are of “good birth” and their “promenade” is “sanctioned, as it were,” by all the “best” authorities – the “Church” and “State,” “old maids” and “mothers,” and “admirable” friends, like Vincent Macmaster and Edith Ethel Duchemin, the hostess of the breakfast from which Tietjens and Mrs. Duchemin’s young friend Valentine begin their fateful passage through the Kentish fields (105).

Tietjens and Valentine, the man and the maid, will be ideally poised, throughout their passage, in a harmony between themselves and their English natural habitat, with each of them “knowing” by heart “the names” of all the “birds” that are “piping,” the “grasses” that are bowing,” and the flowers that are blooming as they cross the Kentish fields (105). Their observations bring to mind the history of naturalist writing in England from the Anglican divine Gilbert White and his *Natural History and Antiquities of Selbourne* (1789), which Valentine remembers later on, to W. H. Hudson and his guide to *British Birds*

(1895), the author having been Ford's and Conrad's friend and colleague and their neighbor in Kent. Tietjens' and Valentine's impressions of the flora and the fauna of the Kentish fields make up a kind of prose-poem, an ode to the English countryside through which they make their way:

Chaffinch ... Greenfinch ... Yellow-Hammer ... Garden Warbler ... Dartford Warbler ... Pied Wagtail ... Coltsfoot ... Wild White Clover ... Sainfoin ... Italian Rye Grass ... Our Lady's Bedstraw ... Dead-Nettle ... Bachelor's Button ... Cowslip ... Burr ... Burdock ... Violet ... Black Briony ... Wild Clematis ... Old Man's Beard ... Purple Loose-Strife ... (105)

"Walk through the fields, gallant youth and fair maid," muses Tietjens, ecstatic, rhapsodic at the ideal poise and harmony they find within their natural habitat (105).

This ecstasy and rhapsody that Tietjens feels he then composes as kind of musicology of ideal English harmony and poise. "God's England! Land of Hope and Glory!" he exclaims (106). Tietjens' exclamation here recalls the mixture of theology and music in the Third Person of his Trinity, the spirit of Westminster Cathedral when Handel is played. It likewise brings to mind the whole history of English music from Handel and his Christmas oratorio *Messiah* (1742) to another friend and neighbor of Ford's in Kent, Edward Elgar, and his Coronation anthem, "Land of Hope and Glory," for Edward VII in 1901. Tietjens will commemorate this anthem by drawing on its shape to voice the ecstasy and rhapsody he feels throughout his promenade with Valentine across the Kentish fields:

God's England! Land of Hope and Glory! F natural descending to tonic C major. Chord of 6-4 suspension over dominant seventh to common chord of C major ... All absolutely correct! Double basses, cellos, all violins, all woodwind, all brass. Full grand organ, all stops, special vox humana and key bugle effect ... [All absolutely correct!] (100).

“Thank God” for his promenade with Valentine, Tietjens exclaims, amid this harmony and poise – “Thank God for the upright young man and the virtuous maiden in the summer fields” (107). Thank God that they are both “as [they] should be,” he exclaims – “He Tory of the Tories ... as he should be! She suffragette of the suffragettes ... as she should be!” (107). He and Valentine connote “the [very] backbone of England,” he explains – each as absolutely correct, in his or her own way, as a key bugle sounding through the birds and the grasses and the flowers of the Kentish fields, before the First World War.

VII

Ford stages his elephant Tietjens, and Tietjens stages himself, through a series of overlapping pantomime tableaux, focalized and ironized depictions of his inward musing, which dramatize his self-performance as a Cockney jest, a knock-about turn in the pantomimic mode. Among these pantomimic tableaux, as we have seen, are Tietjens’ Pilgrim’s Progress toward the Old Heaven, glimpsed with Valentine across the Kentish fields; his theory and theology of Englishness, his Trinity of Landowner, Steward, and Atmosphere of the Estate; his craving for mortification, like Our Savior Jesus Christ; his status as a sort of Russian trickster, a tomfool begging by the road; his mystical devotion to his mother, that bothering woman, the Anglican saint; his piety and passion for a France and a French Foreign Legion paradoxically more English than and the English status quo; his honor and fidelity, his sense of feudal duty to an Englishness distinct from that same status quo; his posture as a buffalo outside his own herd, oblique and critically aslant to its ruling-class bureaucracy; his penchant for theory and theology, for obsolescent patterns made from useless

facts; his elephantine memory; his prophecy and tosh; his mannered and extravagant views; his flouts and jeers against the modern status quo and the version of modernity that issues in the war.

This overlapping series of elephantine over-inflations or pantomime tableaux serves to indicate the status of Tietjens' self-performance, and Ford's own staging of Tietjens, as a Cockney jest or knock-about turn in the pantomimic mode, with Ford's elephant poised ambiguously between the status of an *alazon* and that of an *eirón* in reciprocal, reversible turn – poised that is between the status of an object and an agent of an irony. An irony entails a hierarchy between two points of view – the point of view of the object of the irony or *alazon* and the point of view of the agent of the irony or *eirón* in subsequent turn. At a lower level, then, the irony depicts a situation seen less clearly by its *alazon*, while at a higher level, conversely, it depicts that situation seen more clearly by its *eirón* in turn. And an irony likewise entails, in intellectual terms, that ignorance and knowledge ought to be opposed in this same way. At a lower level, then, the irony depicts an mental problem comprehended incompletely, due to ignorance, by its *alazon*, while at a higher level, conversely, it depicts that problem understood more fully, due to knowledge, by its *eirón*. And an irony entails, furthermore, in ethical terms, that vice and virtue should be opposed in this same way. At a lower level, then, the irony depicts a moral problem judged unsoundly, due to vice, by its *alazon*, while at a higher level, conversely, it depicts that problem judged more soundly, due to virtue, by its *eirón*. And, finally, an irony entails, in existential terms, that naiveté and maturity should be opposed in that same way. At a lower level, then, the irony depicts the human drama as miscast, owing to naiveté, by its

alazon, while at a higher level, conversely it depicts that same drama cast more wisely, owing to maturity, by its *eiron*.²⁰⁴

The overlapping series of elephantine over-inflations or pantomime tableaux, which serve indicate the status of Tietjens' self-performance and Ford's own staging of Tietjens, as a Cockney jest or knock-about turn in the pantomimic mode are enabled so to do by the unstable, reciprocal, reversible hierarchical relationships on which all forms of irony depend, and the dramatized ironies of pantomime dramatists like Blanchard and pantomimic novelists like Ford perhaps especially so. During a dramatized irony, the *alazon* is ironized as being such by the *eiron* in his or her turn. But during that same irony, this *eiron* may likewise be ironized, in subsequent turn, as an *alazon* also, by the author of that dramatized irony. And that author himself or herself may likewise be ironized in turn as an *alazon* also by the audience for that same irony, such that the hierarchical relationships on which all such ironies depend may then become unstable, reciprocal, reversible in subsequent turn. This instability, this reciprocity, and this reversibility of those relationships yields magic transformations, the transformation scenes that are the stuff of English pantomime or pantomime-proper, and likewise of the pantomimic mode.

Consider these reciprocal, reversible ironic hierarchies in Ford's own set of pantomime tableaux. From Tietjens' point of view, he is an *eiron*, a modern "Jeremiah," what Ford's friend and mentor Joseph Conrad calls a "real wise man of the age." And in keeping with this role of *eiron*, he engages in prophecy,

²⁰⁴ My discussion of dramatized irony here is again indebted to Muecke's *The Compass of Irony*.

satirical burlesque against the social status quo. But this burlesque will seem to most of his peers and to his family and friends to be an instance of tosh, extravagant romance on behalf of an eccentric and quixotic kind of Englishness at odds with what they take for common sense. Tosh of Tietjens' type will seem to them to be the province of the *alazon*, what Tietjens' brother Mark himself will call the Russian trickster or the tomfool begging by the road. And in keeping with this role of *alazon*, Tietjens does indeed affront what counts as common sense among his peers and his family and friends. But this extravagance is nonetheless, or therefore, still recognized by Ford as constituting all the same a subtle instance of burlesque against the status quo, a subtle instance of prophecy, the province of the *eiron*, the wise man or modern Jeremiah, causing scandals for the version modernity that issues in the war. Thus Tietjens can be seen to be an *eiron* after all, not just an *alazon* – the author of a pantomimic prophecy and not mere tosh.

This reciprocity and reversibility of ironic hierarchies in Ford's own set of pantomime tableaux can, as we have seen before, be extended past this set or relationships between and among *eirons* and *alazons* and the author of these dramatized ironies to the sets of relationships between and among that author – in this case Ford – and the different sorts of readers in the audience from whom that set of ironies is staged. Ford stages Tietjens as an *eiron*, and in keeping with this *eiron's* role, he engages in prophecy, satirical burlesque against the status quo, the province of the modern Jeremiah or real wise man of the age. But Tietjens' prophecy, when seen from the vantage point of certain sorts of readers more credulous than Ford toward that same modern status quo, will seem to be an instance of tosh, extravagant romance on behalf of an eccentric and quixotic

kind of Englishness, the province of the Russian trickster and the tomfool begging by the road. Tietjens is restaged by these more credulous sorts of readers as an *alazon*. And, in keeping with this *alazon*'s role, he does indeed engage in tosh, scandalous effrontery at odds with what they take for common sense. But Tietjens' extravagant romance will likewise be staged, by certain other sorts of readers less credulous than these, as a subtle instance of prophecy, a subtle instance of burlesque against the modern status quo, oblique and critically aslant to the version of modernity that issued in the war. Thus Tietjens can be read as Ford had written him – and Ford himself can be acknowledged as the pantomimic author of a prophecy and not mere tosh.

These magic transformations or transformations scenes yield an ironization of irony, a modernization of modernity in overlapping turn – modernist irony, ironic modernity subjected to itself in self-reflexive ways. These ways Ford derives from English pantomime or pantomime-proper, the basis for the pantomimic mode in which he mounts his own *Parade*, the mode in which he ironizes Tietjens through satirical burlesque, but likewise the mode in which he draws upon that elephant's extravagance, his elephantine romance, for means to satirize the modern status quo, the version of modernity that issues in the war. Ford's staging of this reciprocity and reversibility of ironic hierarchies and generic trajectories is clear in the magic transformation or transformation scene in which the fictional foundations, the hind legs, of his elephant Tietjens are finally revealed to be the pantomimic stilts that certain readers may have sensed from the start of *Parade's End* but which will only be confirmed when it turns from English drawing rooms to war-time trenches on the Western Front in

France, where Tietjens is enlisted in the ragtime company, the Falstaff's battalion of music-hall comedians and scene-shifting supers from the pantomime stage, whom he has come to command.

Tietjens' postures all along have had an aspect of vignettes or tableaux from a pantomimic kind of novelistic stage. They have been staged in a pantomimic mode that figures Tietjens as a fairy-tale figure, an archetype and emblem of that Englishness one finds in pantomime. Tietjens the pilgrim, theologian, and saint; Tietjens the gentleman and legionnaire; Tietjens the buffalo and elephant, the trickster and fool – all of these are versions of Tietjens the *alazon*, the object of irony. But all of them are likewise versions of Tietjens the *eiron*, the agent of irony, in turn. Such reciprocity and reversibility allows for magic transformations, for pantomic transformation scenes, in which ironic hierarchies and generic trajectories invert themselves in unexpected ways. They allow for unexpected pivots from tragic satire to comic romance, from irony itself to melodrama, with the turn of a page. Ford's irony itself is ironized and with it his modernity, his modernist project, which is recast in terms of pantomime just as Conrad's own project in *Chance* was itself recast in terms of fairy-tales and light literature – in terms of modes themselves aligned with pantomime. This pantomimic basis of Ford's project in *Parade's End* has been implicit all along. It has been sensed from the novel's early scenes. But it will only be confirmed in a scene later on, on The Western Front in France, to which we turn.

Contrasting his own “Tommies” helmets to those that are worn by their antagonists the German “Huns,” the new commanding officer Tietjens is impressed by how the difference in designs helps “rub it in” for all concerned just what a “rag-time” performance it is in which their company is engaged (578). “A Hun against a Tommy [is] a Holbein *landsknecht* fighting [with] a music-hall turn,” he explains (577). With his pudding-bowl helmet “tumbled forward on his nose,” a Tommy looks less like one of Holbein’s knights than like “a fellow” with “a soap-dish” on his head, pulling faces for “the children” in a play (577). “[At] ease, stand easy,” Tietjens orders his men, and “[for] God’s sake put your beastly hats straight” (571). “[This] isn’t a drill,” he explains, “It’s only that your hats [are] all at sixes and sevens [and it’s giving] me the pip!” (571). Tietjens’ fastidious complaint is met with mocking incredulity among the quite un-feudal company of mailmen, drapers, clerks, and others he has come to command (571). “You ‘eer the orfcer[?]” one of them asks, “Gives ‘im the pip we do ... Goin’ for a wawk in the pawk wif [our] gels we are” (571). The notion Tietjens’ order evokes of a military march as a gentleman’s proverbial walk with his lady in the park brings to mind a bawdy music-hall song, a knees-up, about the Bois du Boulogne, a park in Paris, and the site of assignations of gentlemen with courtesans. “As I wawk along the Bor dee Berlong / Wiv an independent air,” a man called Runt begins to sing, at the top of his lungs (571). “W’ere’s me swegger-kine, you fellers[?]” he asks, burlesquing the new commanding officer’s extravagant air (571). “Did you hear Coburn sing that, Runt?” Tietjens asks, referring to a music-hall comedian whom he himself has seen (572). “Yes, sir,” Runt answers, swelling with pride. “I was the hind legs of the elephant” [when Coburn used to

sing it] in the “pantomime” at Drury Lane (572). “‘Ind legs ‘f the elephink ... good ol’ Helefink,” Runt muses, quite apparently moved (572). “I’ll go ‘n see ‘n elephink [the] first thing [when] I get [home]” (572). “[And] I’ll give every man of you a ticket [into] Drury Lane next Boxing Day,” his new commanding officer exclaims – Ford’s elephant Tietjens being just as moved as Runt in his own way (572). “We’ll all be in London” for “Boxing Day,” he promises – we’ll all be in London “or Berlin!” (572). “Oo-eer! Djee ‘eer ‘im?” Tietjens’ men begin to murmur, “Djee ‘eer the orfcer? The noo C. O.?” (572). “Mike it the old Shoreditch Empire, sir, ‘n [then] we’ll thenk you!” one soldier replies (572). “I never cared [much] for the Lane meself!” another interjects. “Give me the old Balliam for Boxing Day” (572). Tietjens grumbles that these “poor devils” preference of these “cheaper” music “halls” over Drury Lane, “the locus classicus” of pantomime, is sadly “typical” of England, which is growing more unfeudal every day. But still he will resolve to do his best for new these comrades-in-arms, these poor “bloody” devils he has come to command. As Ford’s narrator explains:

[Tietjens] was bound to do his best for [his] unit. [His] poor bloody unit. [For] the bloody knockabout comedians to whom he had lately promised tickets for Drury Lane ... [Those] rag-time ... heroes, call them heroes ... An immense sense of those grimy shuffling, grouching, dirty-nosed pantomime-supers came down over him and an immense desire to give them a bit of luck ... It really was a duty – a feudal duty! – performed for the sake of [those] rag-time [heroes]. He considered with satisfaction that he would command a very decent lot (590-591).

This moment of recognition and rapprochement marks a turning point in Tietjens’ enlistment in the rag-time company, the Falstaff’s battalion, he has come to command – and it marks a turning point as well in Ford’s own project of staging his *Parade* of English archetypes and emblems in the pantomimic mode. Runt’s memory of the elephant on Boxing Day at Drury Lane will echo back and

forth throughout Ford's sequence, through all of its instances of Tietjens being staged as an elephant, the 'hind legs of which are now revealed to be the fictional stilts of his performance in the pantomimic mode. Runt's memory will echo, for example, to the point where we began – with Valentine and Tietjens setting out toward a world beyond the war, with the suffragette and classicist astride her dear old elephant's back, and with the fat man himself sharing hooch with his comrades in arms on Armistice Day.

The hooch that Tietjens brings to his men is liquid spirits, which set them all to singing and prancing around, as their good old Fat Man dances with his long-lost love. But Tietjens' hooch has a deeper sense than this, as both the spirit of November 11, 1918, the spirit of the Armistice ending the war, and also, and more so, the spirit of December 26 of that same year, the spirit of the first Boxing Day in the wake of the war, the first post-war pantomime at Drury Lane, which Tietjens and his men will go to see. With Valentine astride his portly back, Tietjens sets out toward a world beyond the war, and in a manner not unlike what Runt's had been, when he himself heard Coburn sing, back at Drury Lane. He sets out, that is, as the hind legs of an elephant, of which his long-lost-love, makes up the better half.

Pantomime stages a return to prior times and primal scenes, in which those times and scenes are satirized and yet romanticized at once, in which their ironies are staged or restaged, in reciprocal, reversible ways. Tietjens is a liquor cabinet groaning with hooch, fairly bursting with deep draughts of Englishness lost in the war but found in the figure of the fat man, Ford's marionette. The Englishness with which his good old elephink is fit to burst – his sense of feudal

duty, of charity and solidarity – has now been made eccentric and quixotic by the modern status quo and by the version of modernity that issued in the war.

Tietjens' Englishness must be restaged, for the modern or post-modern world beyond the war – recast in the pantomimic mode, with its satiric and romantic points of view on that newly eccentric and quixotic way of playing one's part in the modern or post-modern morality play. Ford's staging of Tietjens' feudal duty in the pantomimic mode is made most clear in the scenes where Tietjens' sense of English ethics manifests itself through moral obligation to the ragtime company, the Falstaff's battalion, he has come to command. His feudal duty is a moral obligation seen most clearly in his promise to his men to buy them tickets to the pantomime at Drury Lane. Tietjens recognizes that his own feudal spirit and the spirit manifested by his men is an eccentric and quixotic spirit due for being "broken" by the modern status quo. "It was a queer idea," he muses, this "deliberate destruction of esprit de corps" "insisted on" by the authorities. Feudal spirit is bad for "trench-warfare," it seems (596). "At any rate," one's entrance into battle, as presently arranged, is "a lonely affair" (597). "It used to be comfortable and cozy," Tietjens explains. "You fought beside [the] men [of] your own hamlet, [commanded] the parson's son" (596). "Perhaps" such coziness and comfort as that "[was not] good for you," he muses – not good for the modern status quo. But Tietjens has resolved, both despite and because of these same facts, to give such coziness and comfort as he can to his men. Tietjens is resolved, that is, to manifest a charity and solidarity, a sense of feudal duty his possession of which has marked him out all along, paradoxically, as being out of step with the English status quo – eccentric, quixotic, oblique, and critically aslant to its

ruling-class bureaucracy, and to its maintenance and manufacture of the same unfeudal rottenness that issued in the war.

Tietjens' feudal duty, with its charity and solidarity, resembles an analogous vocation he himself has entertained, and that his author Ford has drawn on as a master-metaphor for the pantomimic role his meal-sack elephant plays. That vocation is the role of the priest or martyr or saint – which, like the gentleman's role, is an eccentric and quixotic role when cast within the terms of that modernity, that modern status quo, which has issued in the war. Tietjens will conflate his feudal duty with the ethos of the priest or martyr or saint. He will do so in the course of an impression from the Western Front in France, a memory that relates those two vocations to the English pantomime or pantomime-proper, and casts them in the pantomimic mode.

As Tietjens leads his men toward the trenches, and seeks to give those heroes any coziness and comfort that he can, he calls to mind a Roman Catholic priest, a "Papist Padre," and that parson's vocation, early on in the war, to bring such coziness and comfort as he can to another group of heroes, those entrusted to his care:

Once he had heard a Papist Padre preaching ... under shell-fire [in a barn]. The Padre had preached about very difficult points in the doctrine of Immaculate Conception, and the men had listened raptly. They didn't want lachrymose or mortuary orations. They wanted their minds taken off ... so did the Padre! Thus you talk to the men, just before the event, about ... the hind-legs of the elephant at [Drury Lane!] (603).

Ford's rendering of Tietjens' memory here is like a transformation scene, a magic transformation of the padre in the barn into a gentleman at Drury Lane, and of a gentleman at Drury Lane into the padre in the barn. And it is likewise like a magic transformation of the Christian Incarnation into pantomime on Boxing

Day, and of pantomime on Boxing Day into a kind of hope for heroes in a world beyond the war. Such transformations, such juxtapositions are the stuff of Ford's *Parade*, the stuff of both its basis in the English pantomime and of its staging in the pantomimic mode. Tietjens the ruling-class bureaucrat yields Tietjens the Tory gentleman, and Tietjens the Tory gentleman yields Tietjens the Anglican saint. Tietjens the Anglican saint yields Tietjens the tomfool, and Tietjens the tomfool yields Tietjens the elephant, the pantomime persona, the pantomime dramatist or novelist, staging himself and performing himself in the pantomimic mode. The strange and unexpected proximity of all these roles he plays is clear not only in the juxtaposition of Tietjens and the padre, but also in the juxtaposition of both of these actors with a self-reflexive figure for Ford's own staging and performance of Tietjens, and indeed his whole *Parade*, in the pantomimic mode.

IX

Just before his memory of the padre in the barn, Tietjens is struck by a ragtime hero called Slocombe, known for taking up his copy-book and pencil whenever he can. A crucial feature of the First World War was what a literary war it was, not just the war of modern times that brought the most important body of literature, but also, and not coincidentally, the one that was fought by the most highly literate and literary mass of men.²⁰⁵ One archetype and emblem of the war that Ford commemorates like no one else does is the image of writing about the

²⁰⁵ My understanding here and elsewhere of *Parade's End* within the context of English literature of The First World War is informed by Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, New York: Oxford UP, 1975; and Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture*, London: The Bodley Head, 1990.

war during the war. Tietjens' impression of Slocombe merits full quotation here for how the archetype and emblem it stages of the literary warrior and war-time litterateur casts the act of wielding copybook and pencil in the midst of war – and casts it not in the expected lyric mode of Great War poets and memoirists like Wilfrid Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, but rather in the pantomimic mode in which Ford stages his *Parade*, and nowhere else with so much self-reflection as this snap-shot from the Western Front in France:

The man writing in a copy-book had his tin hat right over his eyes. Engrossed, he sat on a gravel-step, his copy-book on his knees. His name was Slocombe and he was a dramatist. Like Shakespeare. He made fifty pounds a time writing music-hall sketches for the outer halls. The outer halls were the cheap music-halls that go in a ring round the suburbs of London. Slocombe never missed a second, writing in his copy-books. If you fell out for a rest when marching, Slocombe would sit by the roadside – and out would come his copy-book and his pencil. His wife would type out what he sent home. And write him grumbling letters if the supply of copy failed. How was she to keep up the Sunday best of George and Flossie if he did not keep on writing one-act sketches? Slocombe was slovenly as a soldier, but he kept the other men in a good humour, his mind being a perfect repertoire of Cockney jests ... Slocombe wrote on, wetting a pencil with his tongue (599).

Slocombe with his copy-book composing Cockney jests provides a mirror back on Tietjens as the dramatist or novelist of his own self-staging and self-performance in the pantomimic mode. And that self-staging and self-performance are a mirror back in turn on his prophetic tosh, which likewise is mirror back again on his eccentric and quixotic posture as a Tory gentleman and Anglican saint – a buffalo outside his own herd, a ewe lamb, a sentimental ass, oblique and critically aslant to the English status quo and to the version of modernity that issues in the war.

Leading up to Slocombe and his copybook composing Cockney jests, that same English status quo and that same version of modernity had yielded Ford's

own posture, like Tietjens' posture, as a buffalo outside his own herd, a Tory gentleman and English Catholic saint, the author of a tosh-filled prophecy, but also of a prophecy containing more than tosh. The last of these postures had yielded in turn Ford's ultimate self-staging and self-performance as a dramatist or novelist like Slocombe with his copybook composing Cockney jests – knock-about-turns like Ford's *Parade* of English archetypes and emblems in the pantomimic mode. Leading up to this self-staging and self-performance was Ford's own larding up of pantomimic archetypes and emblems through his whole career in the world before the war, during which he stood a kind of ewe lamb or sentimental ass, oblique and critically aslant to the English status quo – oblique and critically aslant, yet mystically devoted to an Englishness distinct from that same status quo and from the version of modernity that issued in the war, as we shall see.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ Here and in the subsequent chapters, my reading of Ford's perspective on The First World War in *Parade's End* is informed by Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and The Birth of The Modern Age*, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1989. What I will label as the "militant" modernity that Ford will point to through Tietjens as a cause of the war is well illustrated by Eksteins, among other ways in his discussion of the German government publishing a war-time, military, propoganda edition of Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1985), with its famous proclamation of the "death" of God. The British government published its own war-time, military, propoganda edition of a much more Fordian and Tietjensian book, Francis Palgrave's *Golden Treasury of English Songs and Lyrics* (1861), as revised with help from Alfred Lord Tennyson in 1891. But just as there was an element of stereotypically "English" conservatism within the Germans' waging of the war, there was likewise a stereotypically "German" progressivism on the English side – a Nietzschean "will to power" and moral laissez-faire very much at odds with the traditionalism emodied by Ford's Tory gentleman and Anglican saint.

Chapter Five
“Prophecy and Tosh”
Eirons, Alazons, and Parade’s End

For Christmas 1910, Ford gave his two young daughters, Christina and Catherine, his impression, in the memoir *Ancient Lights* (1911), of those “terrible, forbidding things, “the Victorian great.”²⁰⁷ These “Great Victorian Figures” had “built the Crystal Palace” and codified the Englishness of industry and empire in its modern, mid-Victorian form.²⁰⁸ They had seemed “twenty-five feet high” to the infant Ford, who now could claim, in terms that echo J. M. Barrie’s recent play, that he himself, like Barrie’s Peter Pan, had “never” quite “grown up” – not even then, at thirty-six years old.²⁰⁹ Ford seeks, however, to reassure his girls, and all those who like himself have not grown up, that there are few Great Figures left who can make them feel small . All of them have gone to Mount “Olympus,” he explains, where “very fittingly” they dwell.²¹⁰ Despite these Great Figures’ departures, Ford still strikes himself as being more or less the same little boy whom he had been in his Victorian childhood of Pre-Raphaelites, Aestheticism, and the Arts and Crafts – the same sort of Little Lord Fauntleroy “in a velveteen coat.”²¹¹ “Perhaps we are all of us [still] children,” he speculates, addressing his peers, “the very [same] children” they had been at “The Golden Jubilee,” when he himself was thirteen years old.²¹² Remembering how daunted

²⁰⁷ My citation of *Ancient Lights* will follow the retitled first American edition: Ford Madox Ford, *Memories and Impressions: A Study in Atmospheres*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1911, p. xiii.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 280.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 280.

²¹² *Ibid.*, p. 284.

he had felt among the Jubilee's Greats, Ford urges both his peers and his own daughters' generation not to emulate those terrible, forbidding things who made him feel small. Do not grow up to be "Carlyles," he urges them, do not grow up to be "great."²¹³ All through *Ancient Lights*, Ford stages and performs this comic posture of child-like, Barriesque, and pantomimic opposition to these recollected Greats. Consider his childhood memory here:

Dimly, but with vivid patches, I remember being taken for a walk by my father along what appeared to me to be a gray stone quay. I presume it was Chelsea Embankment. There we met a very old, long-bearded man. He frightened me quite as much as any of the other [Great Figures], who, to the eye of a child, appeared monumental, loud-voiced, and distressing. Later I remember that while I was standing with my father beside the doorstep in Tite Street of the house that [this same very old, long-bearded man] was entering, I fell down and he bent over to assist me to rise. His name was Thomas Carlyle.²¹⁴

Ford's memory is consistent with his posture all through *Ancient Lights* – which, time and again, will put his small and child-like figure up against such Greats as Carlyle, recollected here. But more important for our present purpose is what is offered in these kinds of recollections – a meeting place for whimsy and poetry, burlesque and romance, in which we start to see the subsequent composite of prophecy and tosh that forms the pantomimic mode of *Parade's End*.

Ford admits that the Carlyle recollected by his *Ancient Lights* has been "confounded" in his mind with "a gentleman called Pepper," "who very much resembled Carlyle," except that he was "dirty," and "exceedingly" so.²¹⁵ Pepper sold the type of "penny dreadfuls" that Ford had been forbidden to "read," and which he therefore read in secret "in the large coal-cellar" at his grandfather

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 45-6.

Brown's.²¹⁶ In this coal-cellar, Ford recalls, "I used to lock myself [up] to read the exploits of Harkaway Dick," who lived in "a hollow tree" and had "a tame black panther" and "a Winchester rifle," a gun with which, in one key instance, "he [had] shot no less than forty-five pirates through a loophole in the tree."²¹⁷ "I think," Ford admits, that "I have never since so fully tasted of the joys of life, not even when Captain Hook fought Peter Pan, for who was even Peter Pan [compared] with Harkaway Dick?"²¹⁸ These dreadful, forbidden coal-cellar adventures of Ford's – especially when considered in the light of such Great Figures as the Carlyle recollected just before – can help us gain an understanding of the pantomimic ethos Ford would cultivate from childhood forward, toward his subsequent *Parade*. Ford cultivates that pantomimic ethos as an unexpected means of getting distance on the English status quo, represented in bohemian form by his family and friends – the Hueffers and Browns, the Rossettis and Garnetts. Ford distanced himself especially – indeed, he distanced himself eccentrically and quixotically – from what he called the militant modernity apparent in his peers, and most specifically the younger generation of his family and friends – his cousins the Rossettis and his friends the Garnetts, the children respectively of William Michael Rossetti and of Edward and Constance Garnett. The militantly modern young Rossettis and Garnetts were "horrible monsters" of "precocity," as Ford recalls, and therefore held up to him "perpetually" as "marvels of genius," whom one should "thank God" for having had the chance to

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

“emulate.”²¹⁹ But Ford instead had “thank[ed] God” for having made the thing that he was – “an adventurous youth” and not a “monster” of “precocity,” a youth whose “sole idea” of “true joy” was to “emulate” instead those dreadful exploits of Harkaway Dick.²²⁰ “I suppose it was the spirit of romance,” Ford explains, or the spirit “perhaps” of “sheer tomfoolery,” a spirit that was rather hard to find amid the militant modernity apparent all around.²²¹ “I couldn’t be Harkaway Dick,” he explains, “so I took it out in monstrous solemn fun of the philosophic kind.”²²²

Ford’s solemn kind of philosophic fun would lead him forward, in a roundabout way, toward a pantomimic figure from the boy’s book world of his coal-cellar adventures at his grandfather Brown’s – his friend, the former sailor Joseph Conrad, who played a sort of Captain Hook to his own Peter Pan. The solemn kind of philosophic fun at which the two of them conspired yielded prophecy and tosh against the English status quo – Conrad’s through his *gawedic* figures of the gentleman and seaman, the Englishman on land and at sea; and Ford’s through his pantomimic figures of the gentleman and saint, elephantine archetypes and emblems he had larded up from childhood forward, toward his subsequent *Parade*.²²³

II

Born Ford Hermann Hueffer in December 1873, Ford anglicized his name after front-line service in the First World War. He was forty to forty-five years old

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

²²² *Ibid.*, p. 136.

²²³ The following section of background on Ford’s early life is informed by Max Saunders, *Ford Madox Ford: A Dual Life, Volume I: The World Before The War*, New York: Oxford UP, 1996.

through the course of the war, and his fifty-year career as a writer fell in roughly equal halves before and after the war. The son of a German émigré musician (his father, Francis Hermann Hueffer) and an heir of the English Pre-Raphaelites (his mother, Catherine Madox Brown), Ford was named for – then named himself once more for – his grandfather Ford Madox Brown, the great mid-Victorian painter of the panorama “Work” (1852-1865) and “The Last of England” (1855). The former is an inventory of and the latter is an elegy for certain versions of England and Englishness as Brown perceived them both in the middle Nineteenth Century. Brown, his daughter Catherine, and all of their bohemian friends saw England and Englishness both from a certain remove – and in the case of Catherine’s German husband Francis, both with foreign and familiar eyes.

Just as the Condition of England was a source of inspiration for the paintings of his grandfather Brown, so too was it a source of inspiration for Ford’s own novels, impressionistic memoirs, and essayistic prose before The First World War. And just as Brown, his daughter Catherine, his son-in-law Francis, and all of their bohemian friends viewed England and Englishness with foreign and familiar eyes, so too would Ford do so in his own work before *Parade’s End* – from the sociological impressions in his studies of *England and The English* (1905-1907) to the impressionistic recollections in his memoir *Ancient Lights* (1911) to the novelistic tour of English history, culture, and society, extending from the Early Modern era of *The Fifth Queen* series (1906-1908) on through *The Good Soldier* (1915) towards *Parade’s End*, with its treatment of the crisis of Englishness in Ford’s own era of the First World War. Both in life and art, Ford addressed that crisis paradoxically, by working out an even more ironic point of

view than what he shared with his family and friends, but one that was rooted nonetheless much more firmly than their own in an ethos of Englishness.²²⁴

Ford's problem both in life and art was the quintessential problem of the modernist, the cosmopolitan, reflecting on modernity – especially an insular modernity cut off from other countries that are present in the past, with their different ways of doing things there; an insular modernity established in parochial forms among one's family and friends. One of Ford's solutions was his pantomimic staging both in life and art of the figure of the Tory gentleman and English Catholic saint. Far less than his elephant Tietjens was Ford either gentleman or saint, but like him he assumed the roles of Tory and English Catholic as pantomimic masks with which to distance himself from his own status quo – his family and friends, with their insular modernity, embodied especially for Ford by the militantly modern young Rossettis and Garnetts, with what he called their “anarchist” and “atheist” views.²²⁵ “I don't know how deep my Tory-Papistry of those days went,” Ford would later admit, but he knew that his support for such “lost causes” had drawn its “cockiness” and pantomimic jest from the “burden” of his family and friends.²²⁶ He guessed he must have taken up these causes, these opposite sides, because his own side was so “aggressive,”

²²⁴ In addition to Saunders' biography and the works of Ford's listed above, the following discussion of Ford's the dual aspects of Ford's Englishness – “Toryism” and “(Anglo)Catholicism” – is informed by the best study yet of Ford's very complex mix of views: Robert Green, *Ford Madox Ford: Prose and Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981. And, as mentioned already, my reading of the chivalric aspect of Ford's Englishness is also informed by the studies of the English gentleman by Mark Girouard and Christine Berberich.

²²⁵ Saunders, *Ford Madox Ford: A Dual Life, Volume I: The World Before The War*, p.

54.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 54

he explains.²²⁷ To scandalize and satirize his status quo, he had “professed” himself a Tory and Catholic, he explains – while elsewhere, out among the “bourgeoisie” whom he was bound to “epater,” he had “professed” himself an “anarchist” in alternate turn.²²⁸ In “general speech, manner, and appearance,” he could have been a William Morris “socialist,” he adds – but what he “was” and what he “is,” he doesn’t “know.”²²⁹

What Ford already was, and what he came more and more to be in the course of his career, was a cosmopolitan, someone who acknowledged other countries and the different ways of doing things there. In an essay on “The Face of Janus,” published at the start of the war, Ford calls himself “a cosmopolitan, and also, I suppose, a poet,” someone “so apt to identify with [other people’s] [feelings] as to be [temperamentally] unable to take [up] sides very violently.”²³⁰ Ford identifies himself with the empathy and ambiguity he found embodied in his émigré mentor Conrad, in Conrad’s own émigré “master” James, and in James’ own émigré “master” Ivan Turgenev – of whom James wrote, in terms that echo Ford’s, that he had “felt” and “understood” his life’s “opposite sides,” and was therefore “imaginative” and “speculative,” not militant or violent, parochial or partisan, like Ford’s own family and friends.²³¹ Ford’s empathy and ambiguity found a spatial form in his acknowledgement of countries that were different from his own, with different ways of doing things there. He would

²²⁷ Ford, *Memories and Impressions*, p. 135.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

²³⁰ Saunders, *Ford Madox Ford: A Dual Life, Volume I: The World Before The War*, p. 469.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 469.

come, in the wake of the war, to emulate the prior emigrations of Conrad, James, and Turgenev with his own emigration from England to France – from London to Paris, where he mounted his *Parade*. But already, prior to the war, Ford's empathy and ambiguity had found a temporal form in his acknowledgement of different countries present in the past – above all in the English past – with different ways of doing things there that Ford would juxtapose, pantomimically, against the ways embodied by his peers and his own family and friends.

Imaginative and speculative, Ford understood the Seventeenth Century, with what Tietjens terms its saintliness. He understood the Eighteenth Century, with what Tietjens terms its gentility. And he understood all too well the century in which he was born, the century embodied for him by his grandfather Brown, but also by those Great and grown-up Figures who had made him feel small.

Tietjens would reject the Nineteenth Century in which he, like his author Ford, was born – and with it, those Great Figures of both his and Ford's own life before the First World War. He would personify that Nineteenth Century especially in one of Ford's own family friends, the uncle of his cousins the Rossettis, "the painter-poet" Dante Gabriel (16). Rossetti is the subject of a monograph by Vincent Macmaster – one in a series, as Valentine puts it, on "Eminent Bores" (509). Jestng with Macmaster, much as Ford himself had jested with the militantly modern young Rossettis Garnetts, Tietjens denigrates the painter-poet as an "oily" and "obese" man "who never took a bath," lounging in a "grease-spotted dressing-gown" and "underclothes he'd slept in" on the night before, while "gurgling" to "a five-shilling model" or "some Mrs. W. Three Stars" on "passion" and erotic intrigue (17). Tietjens "damns" all efforts, like Rossetti's,

that aim to “to justify fornication,” about which he finds the modern England of the middle Nineteenth Century on through his present day to be quite “mad” (17). “You’ve got” your Dante Gabriel Rossettis and “your John Stuart Mills” and “your George Eliots,” as Tietjens explains, “But leave me out!” (17). “I stand for monogamy,” he adds – “monogamy and chastity” (18).

Much less so than Tietjens was Ford either gentleman or saint, but what the author and his elephant shared was a critical distance, a certain remove, from the moral liberalism of their family and friends. Ford viewed this moral liberalism from the foreign yet familiar vantage-point of different countries in the English past, with their different ways of doing things there – their Tory gentility, their Anglican sainthood, and certain strains of both that had survived through Nineteenth Century, on toward First World War. Ford took a rooted cosmopolitan stance toward the mores of his present day – a stance that was rooted in that context, but one which nonetheless acknowledged other temporal contexts, countries different from his own, with their other ways of doing things there. Ford used those ways of doing things to ironize and satirize his own and those of his peers, his family, and friends. Just as modern England lacked for him a certain sort of rigor in its arts that was possessed by modern France, so too did modern England for him lack a certain rigor in its life, in its moral and ethical affairs, that was possessed to a greater degree, or at least in different ways, by Englands present in the past – by Seventeenth Century England, with its Anglican saintliness; by Eighteenth Century England, with its Tory gentility. Ford contrasted these with what his hero Tietjens calls the infidelity, the “lachrymose polygamy,” the “polysyllabic” “[self-]justification” of the English

status quo from mid-Victorian times on toward the First World War (17).

Tietjens could predict this Great War as a consequence of England's infidelity to much of what was best in its past, or rather to the best of those ideals to which it formerly aspired, but now no more. Tietjens prophesies this coming consequence to benefit Macmaster, thinking of his monograph on Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the latest in his series on those Great Victorian Figures or Eminent Bores of his and Ford's own life before The First World War:

War, my good fellow, is inevitable, and with this country plumb centre in the middle of it [all]. Simply because [we're] such damn hypocrites. There's not a country in the world that trusts us. We're always, as it were, committing adultery – like your fellow [Rossetti] – with the name of Heaven on our lips! So [we] have divorce cases ... Well, war is as inevitable as divorce ... (20-21).

There is an element of tosh as well as prophecy in Tietjens' notion here of modern English infidelity, but that same notion is essential nonetheless to his conception of the English Nineteenth Century, against which he, like Tietjens, now rebels. It is essential most of all to his conception of those lachrymose polygamists, those self-justifying polysyllabists, who haunted his and Tietjens' lives before The Great War. Ford's Great Victorian Figures are ubiquitous specters in his essayistic prose before the war, and most especially in *Ancient Lights*, which ends with a coda called "Change," on the England of 1910, the date at which he writes, still haunted, as his elephant would be, by those Victorian Greats. These Figures – epitomized in *Ancient Lights* as in *Parade's End* by Dante Gabriel Rossetti – had "talked and generalized [on] life and love," pursuing their erotic intrigues upon "the lines of least resistance" to their own desires.²³² No matter what their "peccadilloes" were, they had "always worked out moral [theories] good enough

²³² Ford, *Memories and Impressions*, p. 72.

to justify themselves and so impress the world.”²³³ That “in essence” is “the note” of Ford’s Greats.²³⁴ It echoes through the First World War, “exactly reproduced” among Ford’s family and friends – reproduced, for instance, in his friend and colleague Wells, perhaps the last of the Greats, who would, at once, no matter what the passing fad, produce a “great, big book” to prove that this, his latest whim, contained the shape of things to come, and should be made “the rule of life” for all the England.²³⁵ Against this echoed note of the Greats, the modernist and cosmopolitan Ford would seek discordant notes to juxtapose against it with a dissonance or irony. These pantomimic notes would form the basis for his masks as Tory gentleman and English Catholic saint in his impressionistic memoirs and essayistic prose. Neither Tory gentility nor English Catholic sainthood were notes that Ford would strike with much success in life distinct from art – life, in which the lachrymose polygamy that Tietjens satirizes proved a leitmotif. But Ford’s own stilted straining past the insular modernity, the moral liberalism he indulged in right along with his peers, contains an echo nonetheless of that same modernist and cosmopolitan reach to which his art could still aspire – his art which found its source of inspiration altogether outside of or critically aslant to his corner of the English status quo. Ford’s art found inspiration near to hand, in figures rather distant from himself – figures who would offer ready models for the Tory gentility and Anglican sainthood on which he based the pantomimic masks of his impressionistic memoirs and essayistic prose.

²³³ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 72. Ford is thinking here of the long line of non-fictional works of prophetic futurism that Wells published from *Anticipations* (1901) on.

III

The first of these Great Models near to hand yet rather distant from Ford was his friend and colleague Arthur Marwood, the person long recognized by scholars as Ford's most basic model of all for the elephant Tietjens and his Tory gentility. Marwood, like Tietjens, was an English country gentleman and heir to a Yorkshire estate, a Clifton College "old boy" and "a Cambridge man," and a gifted mathematician with a stout physique. Marwood looms largely in Ford's life and art as what Max Saunders calls "the most important man" he ever met, excepting only his grandfather Brown, then Conrad and James. A friend of Ford's and Conrad's both, Marwood was the only person either one knew who was as well-read as they themselves were in European literature, about which he could speak with an orotund yet genial authority that both would associate with James, and that Ford would associate also with his grandfather Brown. Conrad spoke for both himself and Ford when he called their friend Marwood "the real Wise Man of the Age" – a Tory prophet who embodied for his times the kind of Englishness that he and Ford both had emigrated toward in their different ways.²³⁶ Ford would give his model for Tietjens due credit for his master-metaphor for that same pantomime persona, and do so in the midst of staging Marwood as contrasted with himself and Conrad both. "We're [like] the two ends of creation," Ford has Marwood say, "[Conrad's] like a quivering ant and I'm like [a meal-sack elephant.]"²³⁷ Marwood here is referencing both Conrad's diminutive size and his anxious nerves, as contrasted with the speaker's own heft, his physical girth, and

²³⁶ Saunders, *Ford Madox Ford: A Dual Life, Volume I: The World Before The War*, p. 209.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

his well-stocked psychic reserves. Ford shared Marwood's physical girth, but not so his psychic reserves. He was anxious and nervous like Conrad, and therefore drawn like Conrad was to Marwood's own stolidity, his orotund yet genial calm. Ford attributes that stolidity to Marwood's "eighteenth century mind," a turn of mind that Ford laments has all but "disappeared" in his own day, leaving England "much more poor," and therefore subject to the moral infidelity, the lachrymose polygamy which Tietjens satirizes later on.²³⁸ But Ford observes as well that just "beneath" his stolid "surface" his friend was a "passionate" man – albeit of a passion more faithful and less lachrymose than any Great Figure's or Eminent Bore's.²³⁹ Marwood's was a passion for the "truth" – the "truth that makes for accuracy," for self-correction, not self-justifying cant.²⁴⁰ With his passion and clarity of mind, Marwood was indeed a kind of poet, though not Rossetti's kind or even Wells's own, with great big books to justify himself. Marwood's own "shamefacedness" and shyness made him read instead of write such great big books.²⁴¹ He was a shy and shamefaced poet, and a shy and shamefaced "mystic" too.²⁴² He claimed that he had seen a woman's ghost, in Eighteenth Century garb, one night while talking with Ford. And when he spoke about "The Higher Mathematics," one could hear "the voice of angels," or so Ford claims.²⁴³

IV

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 210.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

Marwood's shy and shamefaced passion and poetic mysticism Ford had found embodied prior to him and close to home, among the older generation of his family and friends – embodied by a model who, for him, stood much more great than such more lachrymose peers as her own brother, the painter-poet Dante Gabriel, with his polysyllabic gurgling on infidelity. That model was Christina Rossetti, whom Ford, in *Ancient Lights*, would call a much more “modern” figure than her brother, and whom he credits there as having been the “greatest” English writer of the Nineteenth Century.²⁴⁴ Tietjens calls Christina to mind when he informs Macmaster, in discussing her brother, that “there has been nothing worth reading ... in England since the Eighteenth Century” – save “written” by a certain woman's pen (19). Despite what might have been her pride of place among the literary Great, Ford notes of how Christina shunned that eminence so cherished by her peers. The prospect had filled her with “horror,” he explains.²⁴⁵ She had wished to be “obscure,” to be a plain “handmaiden of the Lord,” and not an Eminent Bore.²⁴⁶ Christina, the Anglo-Catholic poet and mystic, displayed a certain saintliness which Ford admired, a shy and shamefaced piety, passion, and clarity of mind that he found more and more to be lacking in the moral liberalism of the English status quo from mid-Victorian times on through The First World War. This piety, passion, and clarity of mind were very old, Ford saw, but also new. They carried memories of medieval times, yet markers of modernity too – a cosmopolitan modernity with distance on the present status quo, with diplomatic ties to countries present in the past, with

²⁴⁴ Ford, *Memories and Impressions*, p. 60.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

their different ways of doing things there. “We seem to be returning to the [moral realism] of the Middle Ages,” Ford explains, “and in that way, Christina [Rossetti], although she resembled the figure of the medieval nun, seems also a figure very modern,” in the midst of her peers, the lachrymose, polygamous Bores of mid-Victorian modernity.²⁴⁷ The moral realism here, both modern and medieval, is Marwood’s kind of clarity of mind, his piety and passion for the truth that makes for moral self-correction, not self-justifying cant. Ford illustrates this piety and passion that Christina shares with Marwood by contrasting her own brother Dante Gabriel’s depiction of the (in)famous adulterous lovers Paolo and Francesca with his namesake Dante Alighieri’s own. “Passion,” for D. G. Rossetti, he explains, was a “great” but “rather sloppy” affair – something “swooned about,” with “hands outstretched” and “eyes closed,” the thing which “sanctified” your “sins” and excused your infidelities.²⁴⁸ And even if you finally went to Hell, as Paolo and Francesca will do, you simply “drifted” in the “snowflakes” of “flame,” in your paramour’s arms.²⁴⁹ This vision, with its “swooning” and “ecstatic” “self-justification,” was based, as Ford is quick to explain, not on Dante Alighieri’s own view from medieval Florence, but on D. G. Rossetti’s later view from mid-Victorian London. Dante’s Paolo and Francesca meet a fate that is “painful” and “grotesque,” a fate more in line with the clarity of mind, the passion for truth, and the moral realism Ford saw coming round again in post-Victorian times.²⁵⁰ “We either do our duties and have very bad times, [but] with good

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 69-70.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

consciences,” Ford explains, or else “we do not do [them] and enjoy ourselves, with [intermittent] pauses for unpleasant [self-]reflection.”²⁵¹ Either way, he offers, “we” look “upon” our “little” lives in clearer and more accurate ways than “our” forebears did – the Eminent Bores of mid-Victorian modernity.²⁵² Tietjens summarizes this perspective early on in the *Parade*, jesting in Macmaster’s company how Dante’s own Paolo and Francesca went dutifully to Hell, “and no bones about it” (19). “You don’t get Dante justifying them,” he explains. Not like “your fellow” Rossetti, who “whines” about them “creeping into Heaven” at the end of the day (19).

Ford was a post-Victorian, an heir to The Great Victorian Figures, with whom he struggled, and against whom he defined himself in pantomimic ways, taking on the posture of a child, a Peter Pan. The grandson of Ford Madox Brown, Ford was an heir specifically to a brotherhood and sisterhood of Pre-Raphaelites, with whom he shared a singular concern for The Condition of England, The Condition of Englishness, expressed in a number of ways through the course of his career. The keynote of this singular concern, as manifested in Ford, was a conscious post-Victorianism, with a cosmopolitan vantage point on Ford’s own England and its liberal modernity. Ford derived this vantage point in part from sources distant in space, from the emigres James and Conrad, and from their joint reading of French and Russian literature. And he derived it in part from sources distant in time, from the Eighteenth Century mind of his friend Arthur

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 73.

Marwood, and from his friend Christina Rossetti's own Medieval mind. What Marwood and Rossetti both shared that appealed to Ford was a moral clarity, a moral objectivity, a means of ironizing and of satirizing the liberal modernity of his own day. This clarity and objectivity would form the basis in time of the intempered prophecy and tosh of Tietjens' statements of dissent from the English status quo, dissent like his reading above of Paulo and Francesca, as seen not from D. G. Rossetti's but from Dante Alighieri's point of view.

V

This point of view of Tietjens' here will form, in part, the basis, later on, for his renunciation of his hoped-for charge to be a nobleman and dean – though not, albeit paradoxically, his chance to earn the status, but not the reputation, of the gentleman and saint he longs to be. Tietjens will renounce this longed-for charge out of love of Valentine, and love for truth that makes for self-correction, not self-justifying cant. Rather than the mark of a gentleman or saint, Tietjens' brother Mark will view this gesture as a sort of Russian trick, a holy tomfoolery. He will find his brother's mortification more appropriate to foreigners, to Russians, than to members of the English status quo and its ruling-class bureaucracy. Mark figures Englishmen should stick to their jobs, and that Tietjens, had he done so, would have earned the reputation he desires. But Tietjens does not, since Providence works, as his brother observes, in mysterious ways.

Perhaps the most mysterious way in which this Providence works in *Parade's End* is in Tietjens' marriage. Tietjens has wed a famous beauty – the socialite Sylvia Satterthwaite, an icon of the illustrated news – who claims to

“hate” her husband for his saintliness and gentility, which led him into marriage when she found herself pregnant with a son who may not be his own. Sylvia is “tall, “slight,” “slow in her moverments,” and attractive to men – with her poised and stately figure, and her “reddish” hair in “great bandeaux” down “over her ears” (28). Sylvia’s “expression” bears a “virginal” lack of “interest” such as used to be displayed by “Paris courtesans,” in former times (28). Being “privileged,” wherever she goes, “to have all [the] men [bowing down] at her feet,” she feels no need for any “greater animation,” such as marks out “more common beauties” of her time and place (28). “Graceful,” “full of blood,” and strangely “cruel,” Sylvia is almost always “talking” – talking “cleverly,” with “wicked penetration,” and “clamouring” for contradiction, especially by men (121). She and Tietjens had found themselves alone together in a Pullman car, and when she found herself pregnant, the father of her child had been unknown, though Tietjens’ path at least was plain – marriage to a woman he had lusted for but never loved. Sylvia had lusted for him too, but she has only come to love him, and to hate him, now that he has wed her, but without loving her, and without leaving her for anyone else – not even for Valentine, whom Tietjens loves, but has not taken as a lover, since “some do not,” not suffragettes and classicists, not gentlemen and saints (283). Christopher’s and Valentine’s chastity, their clarity of mind, their piety and passion, their mystical devotion – all of these will mark them out as foreign, eccentric, quixotic to the English status quo. And all of them will mark them out likewise as marionettes, as fairy-tale figures from a children’s play. Tietjens’ ideals will mark him likewise in Sylvia’s eyes as “a fabulous monster,” a fanciful beast from “a pastoral play not so badly produced” – the

English “country gentleman type,” relocated to town, and miscast there, unlike his brother, as a bureaucrat (167). Sylvia admires her husband grudgingly, both for his “unusual knowledge” and a marked “consistency of character” the two of them share, but which has set them at odds – she with her Roman Catholic practice, which rules against her suing for divorce, and he with his Anglican saintliness and Tory gentility, which rule against his doing the same (154).

Tietjens’ unusual knowledge and marked consistency will mark him out later in the eyes of Mark’s French mistress Marie Leonie as “a well-trained meal-sack of *la dix-huitieme*,” the Eighteenth Century, or older still, “*la periode Moliere*,” the Seventeenth Century. Tietjens suggests to Marie Leonie “a lumbering character out of Moliere as presented at the *Comedie Francaise*,” a kind of stage Englishman, a comic burlesque of the gentleman and saint whom he longs to be (702). Christopher’s unusual knowledge and marked consistency have marked him out also in Sylvia’s eyes as a man of the Seventeenth or “Eighteenth” centuries instead of his own, a figure of “the Dr. Johnson type,” mixing “prophecy” and “politics” and talking lots of “tosh” – some of which tosh will prove prophetic indeed of what the politics are going to be in *la vingtieme*, The Twentieth Century, the oncoming era of The First World war. As Sylvia remembers, several years before the start of the war:

Tietjens had said that about the time grouse-shooting began in 1914, a European conflagration would [come] which would shut up half the houses in Mayfair and beggar their inhabitants. He had patiently supported his prophecy with financial statistics as to the approaching bankruptcy of various European powers and the growing acquisitive skill and rapacity of [England’s ruling-class bureaucracy] (154-155).

But Tietjens’ elephantine memory and talent for math were not his only source for this prophetic tosh that he had talked about the coming of war. There was

also that consistency of character the two of them share, that same sense of honor and fidelity that puts them at odds, that keeps him both from loving her and leaving her for anyone else – not for even Valentine, his long-lost love.

Both public and private, Tietjens' moral sense is of a piece, as is made apparent early on in *Parade's End*, when word comes that Sylvia is coming back to him from an affair that she had lately undertaken with a future fellow officer of his named Perowne. Tietjens analyzes this affair – not Sylvia's first – in conversation with Macmaster, the student of Eminent Bores, his college friend at Cambridge, and with him now a bureaucrat in London for Sir Reginald Ingleby and The Imperial Department of Statistics, the chief beneficiary of Tietjens' elephantine memory and talent for math. With Sylvia's betrayals in mind, Tietjens prophesies for Macmaster's sake as well as his own about a broad decline in chastity, a broad decline of which he takes the work of Dante Gabriel Rossetti as a pregnant sign, an all-too-typical sign of the general English infidelity from mid-Victorian times through The First World War – an epoch in the wash of whose receding roar he finds himself a Noah now in need of an Ark. "Damn it," Tietjens muses to Macmaster:

What's the use of all these attempts to justify fornication? England's mad about it. [You've] got your John Stuart Mills and your George Eliots for the high-class thing. [But leave me out!] ... I stand for monogamy. I stand for monogamy and chastity. And for no talking about it. Of course, if a man wants to have a woman he has her. And again, no talking about it. He'd no doubt be in the end better, and better off, if he didn't. I call that monogamy and chastity. And it probably is. [At] any rate it's clean. What is loathsome is all your ... polysyllabic Justification by Love. You stand for lachrymose polygamy ... Your Paolo and Francesca – and Dante's – went, very properly, to Hell, and no bones about it. You don't get Dante justifying them. But your fellow [Rossetti] whines about [them] creeping into Heaven [all the same] (17-19).

This hyperbolic, parabolic outburst of prophetic tosh is typical of Tietjens' sense of humor, the humor he is agent of and subject to at once throughout *Parade's End*. The outburst serves to typify likewise the serious and even the prophetic work to which this sense of humor gets put, both by Tietjens himself and by his author Ford, throughout *Parade's End*.

With its echo of "*l'Albion perfide*" or "perfidious England," the famous French judgment on his native land, Tietjens' tosh-filled outburst is an instance emblematic in itself of his and Ford's own work throughout *Parade's End* of turning parts of Englishness against themselves as prophecy – in this case the prophecy engendered by the Tory gentleman and Anglican saint showing up his country's perfidy, its failures of fidelity in private life. This prophecy on England's state of perfidy then makes an unexpected leap in scale, as it extrapolates from England's state of perfidy in private to England's state of perfidy in public, which England's rival France has always claimed. "War, my good fellow," Tietjens promises Macmaster, is sure to come, and with England at the center of it all:

That's simply because [we] fellows are such damn hypocrites. There's no country in the world that trusts us. We're always, as it were, committing adultery – like your fellow [Rossetti] – with the name of Heaven on our lips! So we have divorce cases ... Well, war is as inevitable as divorce ... (20-21).

The hyperbolic, parabolic leap of this prophetic tosh from private life to public life and back enacts an instance of the special type of modernist and cosmopolitan performance in which Tietjens and his author Ford alike can both be seen to engage. Tietjens' extravagant outburst burlesquing English honor and fidelity enacts a more self-knowing and sophisticated version of the same

prophetic tosh – not always recognized as such – in which Ford’s peers can all be seen to indulge. The greater degree of self-knowledge in Tietjens’ own prophecy, compared to much of modernist and cosmopolitan tosh, is clearly seen within his winking recognition that he’s “probably” been “disagreeable” in offering, without being asked, his views on English honor and fidelity (18). Has we been disagreeable? Well, “Jeremiahs usually are,” as Tietjens drolly explains (18). Tietjens attributes his status as a modern Jeremiah to his modernist and cosmopolitan stance of being so nostalgic, so homesick for the other countries of the past, with their different ways of doing things there, as to find himself located by his peers within the avant-garde – viewed by them, that is, as a fabulous monster, a fanciful beast from a brave new world, quite as much as any specter of the old regime, any ghost within contemporary times, who is haunting their modernity. “I’ve no [ethics] that did not disappear in the Eighteenth Century,” Tietjens explains. “I’m a Tory of such an extinct type that [someone] might [well] take me for anything [at all]” (489-490). Ironically, what Tietjens will be taken for most is an anarchist, a socialist, a revolutionary, owing to his sense of feudal duty, his charity and solidarity. But Tietjens claims no membership in any modern faction or club. He is indeed the most “unclubbable” man in all the English status quo and its ruling-class bureaucracy. The disagreeability of Tietjens the modern Jeremiah comes in large part from this unclubbability of Tietjens the latter-day Noah, fit for no man’s Ark but what he builds in time with Valentine, his long-lost love and fellow refugee. As Ford’s narrator offers, in an instance of the focalized and ironized description of his thoughts that serves to

dramatize his tosh-filled and prophetic self- performance quite as much as any outbursts do:

Tietjens, who hated no man, [had always wondered] why it was that humanity, that was next to always agreeable in its units, was, as a mass phenomenon, so hideous. You look at a dozen men, each of them not by any means detestable and not uninteresting ... [then] you [form] them into a government or a club and at once, with oppressions, inaccuracies, gossip, backbiting, lying, corruption, and vileness, you [have] the combination of wolf, tiger, weasel, and louse-covered ape that [is] human society (78).

Tietjens' sense that clubs are all beneath him, his sense that they all aggregate their members into beasts too disagreeable for his own Ark, odd hybrids of the wolf, tiger, weasel, and ape – these tosh-filled and prophetic views of Tietjens' appear most fabulous and monstrous to his peers when brought to bear upon themselves and their own ruling-class bureaucracy. Tietjens' type of prophecy, however filled with tosh, will serve to mark him out instead that much more clearly in the eyes of his peers as someone due for being cut from membership, a traitor to his tribe. "I always say [he] is a regular Dreyfus," Tietjens' foster-uncle General Edward Campion explains, once Sylvia has followed Tietjens out to the Western Front in France, where both he and Campion serve (409). Campion refers here to Captain Alfred Dreyfus, the Jewish, Alsatian artillery officer whom much of France had falsely accused as a German spy in 1894 – Dreyfus, exiled to Devil's Island on a trumped-up charge of treason that had served instead to render damning judgment on *la France perfide*, perfidious France, every bit as unfaithful to its better self and best ideals as Tietjens' England had become by the First World War. Just as Dreyfus's alleged betrayal had served instead to show how France itself betrayed itself through its wolfish, tigerish, weaselly, and ape-like persecution of an innocent

man, so too will Tietjens' own alleged betrayal serve instead to show how England has likewise betrayed its better self and best ideals through its beastly persecution of an innocent man – a regular Dreyfus named Christopher Tietjens. Sylvia replies to General Campion's charge by asking Tietjens' uncle, now her paramour, if it has not occurred to him "that [Tietjens] is a Socialist," and not a foreign spy (409). "Christopher! A Socialist! Damn it all!" the General exclaims, "Damn it all, he's down in my will ... But if the fellow's a Socialist it puts a [whole] different complexion [on things!]" (409-410). The basis for Sylvia's charge are extravagant outbursts of Christopher's own, like one in which he points to two "ideals" on which "the Toryism of Tietjens" and "the Left of the Left" can nonetheless agree – namely that "every working man [should] have a minimum [wage] of four hundred [per] year," and likewise that "every beastly manufacturer who wants to pay less [deserves] to be hung" (78). Sylvia has said she "hates" her husband for "the simple immorality" of "views" like these, every hyperbolic, parabolic "speech" expressing which has made her want to "stick" him with a "knife" (39). This sense of Tietjens' simple immorality informs General Campion's musing on her charge that his own nephew is in fact a secret agent for the Left Left, and not a foreign spy. "Of course there are [all of those] extraordinary things [that] [Chrissie] says," as the General recalls. "I've heard you complain of the immoral way he looks on [things]" (412). "Hang it all," he asks – not just rhetorically – but "what is at the bottom of [his] mind?" (412).

What is at the bottom of his mind is the sort of Russian trick, the sort of tomfoolery that Mark has observed, and which will mark him out most clearly from his own "class," the "public official[s]" who "administered the world," and

made it run on “gilt-edged securities” – that is until it ceased to do so, with The First World War (3, 20). One sign of Dreyfus-like betrayal is Tietjens’ feudal duty and vocation, which Mark has recognized in Tietjens’ habit of “poring over” Groby “like a mother” would “her baby’s face” (741). Chrissie had been his mother’s “ewe lamb,” and his mother, “that bothering woman,” was an Anglican saint, who had introduced a puzzling strain of tricks such as this into the Tietjens line. Chrissie’s status as his saintly mother’s ewe lamb and his subsequent intention so to shepherd the estate will lead to further such tomfoolery in whose prophetic tosh will lurk more fabulous and monstrous, more treasonous intentions still at the bottom of his mind. Chrissie means to “model himself” upon “our Lord,” as Sylvia explains (412). “Who’s that?” asks Campion. “Our Lord?” (412). “Our Lord Jesus Christ,” answers Sylvia, informing him as gently as she can of this his foster nephew Christopher’s most fabulous, monstrous, and prophetic tosh (412). “Our [Lord] ... Good God!” the general sputters, much more disturbed now than he had been before, when he had simply seen his nephew as the common kind of lunatic, a leftist secret agent or a foreign spy (412). “I always knew [that Chrissie] had a screw loose,” he explains, “But Good Lord! Good Lord!” – not this (412).

Campion’s scandalized and sputtering response to Tietjens’ latest, most prophetic tosh is typical, as we shall see, of how he comes to be regarded by the whole English status quo and its ruling-class bureaucracy. And Campion’s response is not at all to be assuaged by among the only persons who will vouch for Tietjens’ sanity. That person is Sylvia’s adviser, the Roman-Catholic chaplain Father Consett, a man with the kind of Irish “brogue” seldom heard outside of

certain “English novels,” a man with a laugh like “a steam roundabout,” a man who is “in short, a [kind of] saint” (23). Father Consett says to Sylvia that he himself has “never” seen in Tietjens the kind of “immorality” that she herself sees (23). He assures her that except for in “[such] matters [as] the two communions” – and “even” in those they had not differed very “much” – he has found her husband thoroughly “sound” (39). Sylvia’s rejoinder and Campion’s too would likely be that Consett would have found Tietjens so – Consett who reveals himself in time to be the same sort of Dreyfusard as Christopher his kin, Consett who is “murdered” later on, “in Ireland,” alongside the traitor “[Roger] Casement,” in the midst of the war (39).

Manifested through Roman Catholic orders or a layman’s desire to be an Anglican saint, the duty and vocation shared by Tietjens and Consett – and likewise by padre in the barn whom Tietjens meets on the Western front in France – the call, that is, to model oneself upon Our Savior Jesus Christ, will be regarded as a Dreyfusard sedition by almost every member whom we meet of Tietjens’ club, throughout *Parade’s End*. And this is even so when Tietjens’ tomfoolery and tricks are found in forms neither sacred nor Russian but English and profane. Ironically, the basis for the Dreyfusard’s tomfoolery and tricks has been the bad form he has shown in showing good form, by keeping up the ethos of his public school. This ethos “rammed into [him] at Clifton” underwrites his hope to model himself upon Our Savior Jesus Christ, and likewise his pantomimic posture as a gentleman and saint, a Russian trickster and a holy fool.

“It is not a good thing to belong the seventeenth or the eighteenth centuries” and not one’s own, as Tietjens sees. Nor is it good “to [take] one’s

public school's [ethos] too seriously" (490). "I am really, sir, the English public schoolboy," he observes, explaining to his uncle General Campion what screw it was of his that came loose (490). The English public schoolboy is an "eighteenth century product," Tietjens sees, and out of keeping with the spirit of the times (490). "Other men get over their schooling," he admits, but for himself the fact remains – he "never did" (490). He has remained "adolescent," he confesses, "with the [same] love of truth that – God help me! – they rammed into me at Clifton." Such things as gentility and sainthood are "obsessions with me, complexes, sir!" he explains. (490).

Tietjens casts himself as a modern Jeremiah, a prophet *contra mundam*, set against the world. His prophecy contains its share of tosh, its share of the reciprocal, reversible ironic sensibility of pantomime – and likewise of pantomime's Englishness, expressed through Tietjens' postures as a gentleman and saint. These postures are struck by Tietjens against *l'Albion perfide* – perfidious England – an adulterous rendition of the nation, which has lost faith in and failed to honor its own better nature and best ideals, in contemporary times. Much of the satirical force of *Parade's End* follows from how Tietjens' honor and fidelity to England's better nature is regarded as treason, such that he is seen by his own countrymen in foreign terms – as an English Captain Dreyfus, a spy for the French, or as a Russian trickster, a mere tomfool who has failed to do the duty that his owes to his own estate, the English ruling-class bureaucracy. Tietjens' worst alleged treason, and the fullest expression of the work's satirical force, is his Anglican sainthood, his ambition to model himself upon Our Saviour

Jesus Christ, which is greeted by his peers as his most profound betrayal of all. But this and all of Tietjens' ambitions come from close to home – not just his mother but that English institution, the public school. These moral complexes or eccentricities are in fact simply measures of sanity and normality, when judged in the terms of that same Englishness that Tietjens at least still honors with fidelity.

VI

Tietjens was fitted out from meal-sacks of Englishness that Ford had larded up through his whole career, through volumes filled with Tory gentlemen and Anglican saints. Ford's turn toward the pantomime-proper and then toward the pantomimic mode was a turn toward the palinode as well – a turn toward the mode of reassessment at a pivot-point in literary history as well as in his own career. In that sense, the elephant Tietjens recalls the "circus animals" to whom Ford's colleague Yeats would also turn, and in a similar way. Like Yeats's own Ireland, his "enchanted island," Ford's England had comprised an "allegorical dream," a dream that its allegorist had fitted out with his "stilted boys" – in Ford's case, Tory gentleman and Anglican saints. Irish Independence and its aftermath, entwined with his own troubled private life, would help lead Yeats to recognize how fully had "the dream itself enchanted him," how fully had its "players" and its "painted stage" enlisted "all his love," and "not those things that they were emblems of." And Ford had made a similar assessment regarding his dream, regarding his love, in The First World War, and in the midst of private troubles which would make him leave England for France and never return, save in palinodic works like his subsequent *Parade* of English archetypes and emblems in the pantomimic mode.

In keeping with its mode of reassessment, this palinode of archetypes and emblems serves to satirize yet also to romanticize such elephants as Ford had fitted out his whole career. Where Yeats' own circus animals "desert" him, Ford finds means here, through the pantomimic mode, to stage, or rather to restage, the drama of his prior career, before The First World War. Ford's meal-sacks have been piled up to build an elephant whom he has made to dance with much more grace than all those marionettes, those gentlemen and saints, whom he has made to dance before. Tietjens' protuberance, his mannered extravagance, his elephantine over-inflations of the archetypes and emblems of the gentleman and saint serve to foreground their status as vehicles, media, materiel. In Yeats' own analogous terms, these over-inflations serve to foreground the status of those archetypes and emblems as circus animals, as elephants performing in a painted show. This show, for Ford at least, is the greatest on earth, a show in which the players on the stage, those stilted boys, are cast as archetypes and emblems in the pantomimic mode – the mode which serves to foreground those archetypes and emblems as objects of love, but also, and more so, those things that they are archetypes and emblems of.

Those things Ford's stilted boys are emblems of are honor and fidelity – two ideas, very simple, at the heart of Conrad's work and Ford's own. Prior to the figure of Tietjens, however, Ford's gentlemen and saints had been more stilted than his mentor's boys had been. They had always been mere vehicles, mere media, and mere materiel, through which the truth which makes for self-correction had not been reached, since it had not been grasped, by their creator Ford. What had made for the less stilted character of Conrad's boys, as opposed

to Ford's own, and what had made for their creator's firmer grasp than Ford's on simple moral truths like honor and fidelity, was Conrad's years of seaman's service in the merchant marines – in which time his archetype and emblem, the English seaman, had been satirized and yet romanticized in turn, in the course of his experience at sea, just as Ford's own archetypes and emblems, the gentleman and saint, would likewise be satirized and yet romanticized in turn, in the course of his experience at war, during two years of military service on the Western Front in France.

Such satires of circumstance as Conrad's and Ford's have often brought about crises of faith in such simple ideas as those that lead them on to seek out their enactments in life of those adventures out at moral extremes that they had read about in stilted books for boys. But these crises of faith are not the only moral consequence that follows from such satires of circumstance, those ironies engendered by the pressures put on archetypes and emblems like Conrad's and Ford's – their English seamen, Tory gentlemen, and Anglican saints. In contrast to these crises of faith stands the metaphoric richness, the parabolic wealth, with which the players in such painted shows as theirs have nonetheless been endowed by that same moral pressure out at lived extremes.

That richness and wealth, that surplus of moral importance, in painted shows like Conrad's and Ford's is owing to their stilted players' reach for and sometimes their grasp of the moral occult, the true that may be wrested from the real in such melodramatic restagings of experience as these. This moral occult is the metaphoric tenor of those few very simple ideas that melodrama presses toward, and that its stilted players reach for and sometimes grasp, in the midst of

painted shows that yield to consciousness the truth of the parable, the moral romance, for which our archetypes and emblems are vehicular means— the truth that makes for self-correction, not self-justifying cant.

The partially occluded moral tenor Ford's players are vehicles for, the object of the honor and fidelity they strive to maintain, is an ethos based on simple but increasingly eccentric and quixotic ideals like solidarity and charity, Tietjens' feudal spirit, the ethos of the English public schools, and of Tory gentlemen and Anglican saints. This ethos Ford would contrast through his whole career, from his and Conrad's *The Inheritors* (1901) on, with its opposite extreme, the militant modernity and moral laissez-faire of "Fourth-Dimensionist" invaders like those whom he and Conrad sought to satirize in that under-read science fiction tale.²⁵³ Ford's and Conrad's inheritors, their travelers back to newly post-Victorian England from a future that would issue in war, are monsters of precocity, more grown-up than their authors' stilted boys, their seamen, gentlemen, and saints. These travelers back from coming times are "free" from any "ethical tradition," and – having "no ideals," "no reverence for life," and "no remorse" – they stand in contrast to those archetypes and emblems, with their feudal spirit, charity, and solidarity.²⁵⁴ Something of the attitude exemplified by these invaders is present in the outlook on Ford by one of "*les jeunes*," the young inheritors with whom he shared the post-war world.²⁵⁵ That young inheritor was

²⁵³ Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford, *The Inheritors: An Extravagant Story* (1901), Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page, and Co., 1924.

²⁵⁴ Conrad and Ford, *The Inheritors*, p. 9.

²⁵⁵ Ford Madox Ford, *Thus to Revisit: Some Reminiscences*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1921, p. 26. Ford's second volume of memoirs and musings is a fascinating document of his state of mind in the wake of the war, just prior to beginning his work on *Parade's End*, as he reconsidered his past and sought to place himself in relation to the new high

Ford's own friend and colleague Ezra Pound. "Thank God [that] I was born ten years later than you," Pound would write to "old man Ford" – I "escaped" a lot of "nonsense" that way.²⁵⁶ Chief among this nonsense Pound escaped by being younger than Ford was "the beastly word" gentleman, the cause of far "more trouble," Pound claimed, than all "the rest" of "the language" combined.²⁵⁷ Ford himself would partly grant Pound's claim. He would grant it, that is, to the extent of acknowledging that gentlemen and saints were "insupportable" phenomena, on prior grounds, in the post-war world. Pound and certain other young inheritors were occupied in cutting from the lexicon such beastly words as "gentleman" and "saint," such eccentric and quixotic terms as old man Ford's. But Ford himself had other plans, the working out of which would break new ground, a means on which to restage both his gentlemen and saints – a means by which to keep such stilted archetypes and emblems in the lexicon for decades to come, on past Pound's generation, to our own. Pound and certain other young inheritors proposed to substitute their painted players for archetypes and emblems such as old man Ford's, their own circus animals to populate the post-war world and its metaphoric stage. But Ford himself proposed instead to complicate the pivotal relationship of vehicle and tenor in staging such plays – to complicate the pivotal relationship of archetypes and emblems like gentlemen and saints to the partially occluded moral meanings for which those painted players stand, toward which they reach, and which they sometimes grasp, in the

modernist cohort of Joyce and Woolf, of Eliot and Pound. Along with Saunders' biography, *Mr. Bosphorus*, and of course Ford's novel-sequence itself, it has helped informed my sense of where Ford stood as he mounted his *Parade*.

²⁵⁶ Saunders, *Ford Madox Ford: A Dual Life, Volume II: The After-War World*, p. 194.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

modern or post-modern morality play. In working out those plans, he had turned to an old progenitor more ancient still than old man Ford – more ancient but equally prophetic in his way of certain innovative modes of melodrama for the post-war world.

VII

The old progenitor Ford turned to was Conrad, whose work supplied a model for restaging stilted boys like Ford's own gentlemen and saints, and with them the occluded moral meanings, the few very simple ideas that they are archetypes and emblems for – and likewise for restaging those adventures in the wake of an apocalypse, a catastrophe, the sort foreseen by Tietjens' own prophetic tosh, and likewise prior to that, in *The Inheritors*, by Ford's and Conrad's speculative vision of the militant modernity and moral laissez-faire that came to issue in the war. The model Ford found ready in his mentor's work was Conrad's means to criticize and yet to reaffirm the feudal spirit of the Polish *szlachta* class, in the long aftermath of its apocalyptic, catastrophic fall with their country's partition under foreign rule. The *wiesce* or Polish national bards each tried to shore up the *szlachta*'s morale, as a basis for resistance to the tyranny of foreign rule. And each of them attempted to explain how it was that their own ruling-class had failed to do its duty to the national community, and therefore how it was that foreign rule had come to pass. This legacy of Polishness enabled Conrad's insights into Englishness, the point of view he shared with young inheritors like Ford. The poems and plays of Poland's national bards display a volatile mobility of tone, a range of moral attitudes toward Polishness from satire

to romance. Conrad's contribution was to bring this special irony to bear upon the ethical traditions of his "honorably adopted" second home.

The most domesticated, naturalized, and Anglicized of Conrad's works was *Chance*, his first novel cast in the experimental form that served to mark the final phase of his career and mark a precedent as well for Ford's own final phase in *Parade's End*. That form has been described as ironic romance, but it can likewise be described as Polish pantomime or English *gaweda* – a naturalized, domesticated version of the mode of ironic romance in which the Polish national bards had cast their musing of the ethos of the *szlachta* class. This Polish pantomime or English *gaweda*'s domestication and naturalization of Poland's national mode of ironic romance would help in turn to shape Ford's subsequent discovery of English national means toward analogous ends, within the Christmas pantomime and then the pantomimic mode of his subsequent *Parade*. Conrad's final phase of works, epitomized by *Chance*, employs the archetypes and emblems of Englishness, of national romance, in an ironic way analogous to Ford's in his subsequent *Parade*. These archetypes and emblems are used to dramatize a set of moral speculations on the latent viability of certain very English affirmations in the face of that same modern status quo, that same version of modernity that issued later on in The First World War. Englishness like Polishness before it would have to be restaged in the face of such apocalypse such catastrophe, and with a more ironic notion of the pivotal relationship of archetypes and emblems like these to the occluded moral meanings, the simple ideas for which those painted players stand, toward which they reach, and which

they sometimes grasp, on the metaphoric, parabolic stage of the modern or post-modern morality play.

Conrad's seaman Marlow, the raconteur of *Chance*, strikes the pose of a visionary pundit – a pose like Ford's own hero Tietjens' pose as a gentleman and saint – a pose by which he judges life on shore, the English status quo, from a prophetic point of view, again like Tietjens' own. Marlow's auditor and interlocutor observes the "deep resemblance" of the "profane" men on ships and the "holy" men in monasteries – a likeness which recalls the deep resemblance of Tietjens' Tory gentlemen and Anglican saints. These archetypes and emblems stand distinct from their own social status quo, "detached" from the "vanities" and "errors" of a world with "no strict rule" – without the truth that makes for self-correction not self-justifying cant. All of them have minds composed of "innocence" and "skepticism" in alternate turn, along with "an unexpected insight" into motives, as of "lookers-on at a game." Marlow, like Tietjens, is inclined toward mental musing, inclined toward "prying into things considerably." Retired to shore, he passes time playing games and telling tales. Marlow, like Tietjens, with his irony, his prophecy and tosh, is up to playing the fool, but always at the risk that he will make himself the fool he means to play. Marlow, like Tietjens, is an *eiron* of satirical burlesque, but likewise – and also like Tietjens – an *alazon* in turn, an object as well as an agent of that same burlesque. That satire will elicits readers' laughter both with and at its raconteur, as the irony engendered by his own play takes on general terms – terms that ironize his role as *eiron*, by making him an *alazon* in turn.

The effort of Marlow to understand Flora and Flora's own effort to be understood are the contrapuntal themes of Conrad's *Chance*. They shape themselves in most peculiar ways, poised between jest and earnest, frank laughter and unabashed tears. A young woman making her way through a dangerous world, Conrad's heroine, like Ford's own hero Tietjens, would embody an ideal of Englishness distinct from her own modern social status quo – in her case, as in Tietjens' case, an ideal of honor and fidelity, of mystical devotion to the truth that makes for self-correction not self-justifying cant. Flora's personal crisis would embody the cultural crisis that this faced in 1914, just months before First World War. When *Chance* appeared in 1914 as the first best-seller in the modernist mode, the English social scene, the English status quo itself had become a battlefield, a proving ground, a setting for satires of circumstance and for adventures out at moral extremes – not least in the realm of femininity conceived by English fiction in the terms of melodrama in domestic affairs. The women's suffrage movement in which Flora, like Ford's heroine Valentine Wannop, was to play a crucial role was essential to this crisis of Englishness just prior to the First World War. In her study of "the spectacle of women," Lisa Tickner notes the influential role of the suffrage campaign in expanding English archetypes and emblems of femininity and likewise of English identity. Both for Conrad in *Chance* and for Ford in the *Parade*, the most important archetype and emblem of Englishness produced by the suffrage campaign was "the militant woman," the suffragette. As Tickner explains, this figure drew her "womanliness" not from novelistic domesticity, but from a different source, that of "female heroism" in "history, allegory, and myth" – the stuff of *gaweda* and of

pantomime. And just as one of Tietjens' reference points for the gentleman and saint was the most un-English figure of the Foreign Legionnaire, so too was a reference point for militant women or suffragettes the equally un-English Joan of Arc. Like her French medieval sister-in-arms, the English suffragette would show the sense of feudal spirit that heroines like Valentine and Flora could claim when the "much-vaunted" chivalry of men – including elephants like Tietjens – failed to meet their nation's needs.

When she fails to follow through on her intended suicide, Flora jokes that she is not a plucky girl. She shows in so doing that she is, and that she maintains her honor and fidelity, her mystical devotion to a truth oblique and critically aslant to her own modern status quo and to the version of modernity that issued in The First World War. The archetype and emblem of the plucky girl – the English Joan of Arc – is the principle means by which both Conrad in his *Chance* and Ford in his subsequent *Parade* reveal stiltedness in turn of their own boys – their English seamen, Tory gentlemen, and Anglican saints.

Ford's meal-sack elephant Tietjens is a circus animal in Yeats' terms, an archetype and emblem of the ethos that the author seeks to represent – in Ford's case the ethos of an Englishness embodied in Tietjens' dual aspects as gentleman and saint. Tietjens restages as pantomime a few very simple ideas of his author's own, ideas cognate with his friend and mentor Conrad's prior notions of honor and fidelity. These ideas form the moral occult that underlies Ford art, with its melodramatic aspect, through which these ideas are subjected to the satires of circumstance, the force of a tragic burlesque that threaten his vision – much like

Conrad's in *Chance* – of life as a comic romance. In the wake of The First World War, this vision was challenged by the modernist cohort whom Ford called *les jeunes*, and against whom he cast himself as a wise old man, much as he had once cast himself as a wayward child, a Peter Pan. Ford's post-war posture was informed by Conrad's posture just before the war, and his post-war Englishness had parallels with Conrad's Polishness throughout his career. Ford's use of English pantomime had parallels with Conrad's prior use of the Polish *gaweda*, with both authors' heroes being ironized versions of chivalrous knights – Tory gentlemen and Anglican saints in Ford's case, and English seamen in Conrad's own. And, as in Conrad, the agents of Ford's own reciprocal, reversible ironies are female counterparts to these chivalrous knights – suffragettes, not damsels in distress, as we shall see.

VIII

Like Flora de Barral, her counterpart in *Chance*, Valentine Wannop, the heroine of Ford's *Parade*, will show herself in time to be a plucky girl – and, like her counterpart in *Chance*, she will do so by denying that she is. “Oh, no! I'm not a heroine,” Valentine insists, but just “a pert schoolgirl” (81-83). I am “chaste, you know” and “perfectly virtuous,” an athlete and a classicist, though “not a blue stocking,” she claims (81-83). It is only because she had once been a “slavey,” a “lady's help,” a “tweeny maid,” to help her widowed mother Mrs. Wannop, that Valentine became a suffragette, a militant woman, and not a simple mistress in a girls' school. She “hates rows” and “dread[s]” the thought of “prison” and can barely stammer “V ... V ... Votes ... for ... W ... W ... Women!” in the face of hostile men, like the group of “city men” and so-called gentlemen who try to rape her

friend Gertie Wilson, when she and Gertie interrupt their golf game one weekend at Rye, in the countryside of Kent (81-83). But Valentine possesses, nonetheless, despite her protests otherwise, sufficient pluck not only to defend herself, but also to enlist the help in rescuing her friend of a big “fat” bulbous “idiot” with “bulging eyes,” who stands oblivious and lost in inward musing as he readies to put on an adjacent green (81-83). That idiot is Tietjens, the Tory gentleman and Anglican saint, whose feudal spirit first overtly manifests itself in aid of women’s suffrage and at Valentine’s behest. Valentine engenders Tietjens’ pluck by showing him her own. She engenders Tietjens’ show of feudal spirit by showing him her honor and fidelity, her mystical devotion to an Englishness distinct from his and her own social status quo, her mystical devotion, like his, to the kind of truth that makes for self-correction not self-justifying cant. Valentine presents herself to Tietjens as “a fair young woman” with “a fixed scowl,” who is “panting” just “a little” in her “pink cotton blouse” and “canvas hat” (66). “You’ve been demonstrating,” Tietjens notes, to which she replies “Of course [I] have, and of course you object ... But you won’t let a girl be [raped]. Don’t ... tell me, I know ...” (66). Valentine reveals her pluck here, and one of its manifestations through the whole *Parade* – her recognition of the archetypal, emblematic nature of Tietjens’ feudal spirit as it manifests itself, in its own turn, both through Anglican sainthood and, as in this case, through Tory gentility. And Tietjens’ response to her request for help takes on the archetypal, emblematic form that she expected it would, the form of romantic extravagance, extravagant romance from fairy-tale adventures, out at moral extremes, in stilted books for boys. “Come along!” Valentine shouts, and Tietjens runs, “rather like a rhinoceros,” having been

roused (67). Tietjens has been “violently spurred,” both by Valentine’s pluck and by “shrill, faint screams” coming closer toward them both, down the green:

Screams protesting against physical violence were at that date rare things in England. Tietjens had never heard the like. It upset him frightfully, though he was only aware on an expanse of open country ... [Then] a little young woman, engrossed, like a hunted [beast], came round the corner of a green mound. “This is an assaulted female!” the mind of Tietjens said to him. She had a black skirt covered with sand, for she had just rolled down [a] sand hill; she had a striped grey and black silk blouse, one shoulder torn completely off, so that a white camisole showed. Over the shoulder of the sand hill came the two city men, flushed with triumph and panting; their red knitted waistcoats moved like bellows. [One], his eyes lurid and obscene, brandished aloft a fragment of black and grey stuff. He shouted hilariously: “Strip the bitch naked! ... Strip the bitch stark naked!” and jumped down the hill. He cannoned into Tietjens, who roared at the top of his voice: “You infernal swine! I’ll knock your head off if you move!” ... Tietjens kept his eye upon the city man. [The city man’s] jaw had fallen down, his eyes staled! It was as if the bottom of his assured world, where all men desire in their hearts to bash women, had fallen out (67).

Tietjens’ intervention at Valentine’s behest gives her and Gertie both the chance they need to slip the crowd of so-called gentlemen across a waiting field. Tietjens is enthralled with admiration for Valentine’s pluck, as she shouts back over her shoulder in a “shrill, high” voice like a “cockerel’s” call: “Seventeen to two! The usual male odds! You’ll have to go round by [the] railway bridge, and we’ll be [gone on our bikes] by then!” (69). “Searching out” Tietjens in the crowd of men, she adds: “I’m sorry [that] I said that ... [Some] of you did not want to catch us. But some of you did. And you were seventeen to two. Why don’t you [just] give women the vote? You’ll find [that] it will interfere a good deal [less] with your indispensable golf” (69).

With her pluck, her chivalry, her mystical devotion, Valentine impresses Tietjens as being “the only ... soul [whom he has] met for years ... whom he can respect (127-128). And he is therefore pleased to see her over breakfast on the following day, in the Duchemins’ dining room – the Duchemins being Valentine’s

friends, Edith Ethel, Mrs. Duchemin, and the Reverend Duchemin, whom Tietjens has accompanied Macmaster to see, with regard to some pictures he owns by the poet-painter, D. G. Rossetti. “Positively,” Tietjens reckons, Valentine Wannop is “the only ... human being ... whom he [has] met for years whom he [can admire]” (128). “He hadn’t in years met a man [whom] he hadn’t had to talk down to – as you [would] talk down to a child” (128). “Perhaps [then] the future of the world was to women,” he wonders – “Why not?” (128). Sentiments like these, and Tietjens’ admiration for Valentine’s pluck, will soon lead others to speculate that she is his mistress and has been all along – well before their promenade together through the Kentish fields. She is not, but – so admiring is Tietjens of Valentine’s pluck – he more than halfway wishes she were. On the one hand, while “heroines are all very well,” very “admirable,” and sometimes “saints,” they are far “beyond the bounds” of “gossip,” and therefore can hardly be accepted as appropriate “wives” (88). But, on the other hand, “brightened up” as Tietjens shortly sees her in the Duchemins’ dining room, with “silk for [her] pink cotton [blouse,]” with “shining ... hair for [her] canvas hat,” and with “blue eyes fixed [intently] on his own,” Valentine engenders second thoughts (88). “By Jove ...” Tietjens muses. “What a jolly little mistress she [would] make!” (88).

Valentine, for her part, is equally impressed. She recognizes Tietjens from the start as his mother’s ewe lamb, a sentimental ass, a buffalo outside his own herd – like herself, oblique and critically aslant to the English status quo and to the version of modernity that issues in the war. He strikes her as being, like herself, “both in and out of place” in the Duchemins’ dining room (86). He seems to her to “go [well] with the ham, [with] the meat-pie, [with] the

galantine,” but not with “the Turner pictures, the Aesthetic curtains, [and] the Chippendale chairs” (87). She is pleased therefore to see him in his natural habitat, on their promenade together after breakfast through the Kentish fields. As they share their common knowledge of the birds that are piping, the grasses that are bowing, and the flowers that are blooming as they cross those fields, a matter broached the day before is unresolved – the matter of the seeming opposition of the archetypes and emblems that they represent, the Tory gentleman and Anglican saint and the militant woman, the suffragette. “Just get it out, will you?” Valentine asks. “Say once and for all – [and] in the proper, pompous matter – [that] you are not [at all unsympathetic] with [my] aims [and] [ends,] but [that] you disapprove ... immensely, strongly ... of [my] methods [and] [means,]” (112-114). Tietjens, for his part, denies that this is so. “I don’t” disapprove of your methods [and means], he insists. “I approve” of them “entirely.” “But your aims [and ends] are idiotic,” he explains (112-114).

Tietjens approves entirely of Valentine’s methods and means, her sense of chivalry and pluck. But he disapproves immensely, strongly, of the aims and ends of the suffrage campaign. He feels that the chivalry and pluck of the English Joan or Arc point toward higher aims and ends than those of that campaign, aims and ends toward which is a vehicle, a medium, a source of materiel. These aims and ends are eccentric, quixotic ideals like his own sense of honor and fidelity, his own sense of mystical devotion to an Englishness distinct from the status quo, and to the sort of truth that makes for self-correction not self-justifying cant. These eccentric, quixotic ideals are the moral occult toward which the suffragette reaches and that she partly grasps in the course of her adventures out at moral

extremes, the partially occluded moral meanings that the English Joan of Arc is an archetype and emblem of, a very plucky girl on the pantomimic stage of her own modern or post-modern morality play.

And Valentine for her part approves entirely of Tietjens' methods and means, his sense of chivalry and pluck. But she disapproves immensely, strongly of the aims and ends of his feudal spirit, his Tory gentility. She feels that his chivalry and pluck point toward higher aims and ends than those of that same gentility, aims and ends toward which it is a vehicle, a medium, a source of materiel. Those aims and ends are eccentric, quixotic ideals like her own sense of honor and fidelity, her own sense of mystical devotion to an Englishness distinct from the status quo, and to the sort of truth that makes for self-correction not self-justifying cant. These eccentric, quixotic ideals are the moral occult toward which the gentleman reaches and that he partly grasps in the course of his adventures out at moral extremes, the partially occluded moral meanings that the "English country male" is an archetype and emblem of, a stilted boy on the pantomimic stage of his own modern or post-modern morality play (114).

The pantomimic status of these stilted boys and very plucky girls as archetypes and emblems, painted players on the parabolic stage, is made apparent in Valentine's response to Tietjens' sense that the aims and ends of the suffrage campaign are idiotic as methods and means to grasp the moral occult. "I suppose you think that [that] [was] a mighty fine performance," she exclaims, "The English country male! The feudal [spirit] all complete!" (112-14). Valentine views Tietjens' self-performance as a knockabout turn, and casts that self-performance in theatrical terms, in pantomimic terms that foreground Tietjens'

status as an archetype and emblem who is stilted in his reach to grasp the moral occult. Valentine has “never met [a Tory] before” (135). She had “thought [that] they were all in museums,” built from excavated “bones” (135). She does know nonetheless “the way [a Tory’s] mind works,” as she explains. (135). “It picks up useless facts [and] it arranges [them] [in] obsolescent patterns and makes Toryism [out of] them” (135). A Tory “know[s] everything,” she notes, a reference to Tietjens’ famous memory and his elephantine grasp of useless facts. A Tory knows everything, and spins out his “principles” from “useless” knowledge gleaned from pointless “gossip” heard in country “fairs” and drawing rooms and gentlemen’s clubs (135). A Tory knows everything, but he will let the English “go to hell” and he will “never stir a finger [but] to say I told you so” (135). She apologizes to Tietjens if she has been “rude” in having seen him this way (112). But it is “irritating,” she explains, “to have to stand like a stuffed rabbit,” as she is often left to do, while a man of Tietjens’ type acts like “a regular Admirable Crichton” – like the hero of J. M. Barrie’s play just prior to *Peter Pan* – “with the English country gentleman air” (112).²⁵⁸ She concedes that her sense of irritation is “unfair” to Tietjens and that she has been “ungrateful” in stating it so (112). Tietjens is a more than merely “capable” “workman,” a workman simply “doing his job,” and doing it with “duffers” in his way – a more than merely capable comedian engaged in Cockney jests on the pantomimic stage, a hero, like herself,

²⁵⁸ In a sense, the ironies attendant on Tietjens invert those attendant on Barrie’s eponymous hero from his play of 1902. Where the working-class butler Crichton proves to be the only actual gentleman among those marooned on a desert island in Barrie’s play, the Tory and Anglican Tietjens proves to be the only genuine radical other than Valentine within the pre-war, post-Victorian world of Ford’s *Parade* – and therefore the only fit mate for Valentine, just as she, with her character and pluck, proves the only fit mate for him in turn.

engaged in prophecy and tosh on the parabolic stage of his own modern or post-modern morality play. He is “amazing,” she exclaims, “a great Panjandrum,” with his obsolescent patterns, his principles, his theory and theology and all, and with his mystical devotion to the moral occult, to the sort of truth that makes for self-correction not self-justifying cant. All of these eccentric, quixotic ideals have made him, like herself, a rather “awful figure,” and “rather” idiotic in particular lights. She is “relieved” therefore “to find” that he is simply “[a person] like [herself],” possessing “feet of clay,” and not only that but “a good man,” a “clever” man,” a man who, in the end, will “[come] through” (135).

Tietjens for his part greets Valentine’s acknowledgement of him, her recognition of him, with “clumsy sobs,” which show his own relief at having found her, whom he will come to love, his pug-nosed girl like a primrose (129). He has not known Valentine for more than a day and already “the convention” has arisen between them that he must “play” “stiff” and “cold,” like a gentleman and saint, while she must play “warm” and “clinging,” like a pug-nosed rose (129). But she is as “cool” as himself and “cooler no doubt,” since the gentleman and saint is “at bottom” a “sentimentalist,” his mother’s ewe lamb, a sentimental ass and not a Foreign Legionnaire, while his pug-nosed rose is at bottom a militant woman, a suffragette, a modern Joan of Arc, at odds with the English status quo and with the version of modernity that issues in the war. She is, in short, a very plucky girl, just as he himself remains a stilted boy. While the inverse of this is also true, Tietjens savors for the moment this “holiday” from “imbecile” conventions, from idiotic forms, which he enjoys on his promenade with Valentine across the Kentish fields. “Let [this] be a holiday!” he thinks. A

holiday from “standards,” from “conventions,” a holiday “above all from himself” and from the “weariness” that follows from his idiocy, that from his mission and vocation as an Admirable Crichton and a regular Dreyfus, as a Russian trickster and a tomfool begging by the road. Tietjens’ idiocy is not only the eccentric, quixotic isolation of these overlapping types of holy fool, but also – as the term’s etymology shows – the isolation of the idiomatic, the conventional, self in the midst of its performance of itself, its self-performance, on the parabolic stage, the pantomimic stage, of the modern or post-modern morality play. This idiocy is the isolated state of stilted boys and of very plucky girls, their distance from the social status quo and likewise from the moral occult toward which they reach and that they partly grasp in the midst of their adventures out at moral extremes. It is the wearisome persistence of idioms, conventions, and generic forms, which both enable and inhibit aspiration toward the moral occult, toward the truth that may be wrested from the real, the truth that makes for self-correction not self-justifying cant. It is the tosh that both enables and inhibits the prophecies of gentlemen and saints, of English Joans of Arc, of stilted boys and very plucky girls. It is the irony *gaweda* and pantomime both stage and seek to restage, and, in so doing, not so much to transcend as to comprehend – to recognize and understand – and perhaps in understanding to affirm as a moral opportunity, a spiritual chance.

Valentine’s suffragist protest and Tietjen’s intervention in her aid is a moment of moral recognition for them both, and the start of a romance. Valentine impresses Tietjens as a female exemplar of his own kind of Englishness, the chivalrous honor and fidelity of the Tory gentleman and

Anglican saint. And Tietjens impresses Valentine in turn as a male exemplar of her own kind of suffragist protest against the English status quo, with its perfidy, its moral adultery. Tietjens and Valentine both disapprove in turn of one another's aims and ends, of the conventional and idiomatic forms their honor and fidelity take at this contingent moment in time. But each of them likewise approves of the other's basic method and means, of the other's basic honor, fidelity, and moral resolve. Valentine especially can recognize Tietjens in Ford's own terms of pantomime, regarding him at once in terms both of tragic satire and comic romance. She shares in Tietjens' own quixotic stance against the English status quo, and her ability to see him both as *alazon* and *eiron* at once is essential to his own recognition and restaging of himself in Ford's own terms of pantomime, as we shall see.

Chapter Six
“It’s Boon To Tak Up!”
From Tragic Satire to Comic Romance in *Parade’s End*

Tietjens and Valentine’s romance is subject throughout *Parade’s End* to satire at the hands of their peers, who maintain and manufacture the English status quo and with it the version of modernity that issues in the war. This satire derives from the double-sense of stiltedness embodied by the gentleman and saint and by the very plucky girl – on the one hand, the sense of stiltedness as moral aspiration, the reach for and sometimes the grasp of the moral occult; on the other hand, the sense of stiltedness as moral ostentation, a pompous show of over-inflation and moral pretense, the *alazon*’s extravagance in need of being punctured by the *eiron*’s burlesque. The consequences of this double-sense of stiltedness are all implicit in the long trajectory of character itself from a means of moral cultivation in ancient times to an end – or an alleged end – in mere moral pretense within the context of modernity. Character begins in ancient times as a sense of moral standing, as the sum of those characteristics that form a person’s ethos and identity, his or her personal integrity. The term’s connotation then shifts from this sense of moral posture toward a sense of those extrinsic judgments that are rendered on the same, toward reputation as judged in social contexts by the jury of peers. This sense of character as reputation then shifts yet again toward a sense of character as oddity – an identity and an integrity that is either unusually good or unusually bad, such that its possessor is a character – a Russian trickster, a regular Dreyfus, a tomfool begging by the road – eccentric and quixotic, oblique and aslant to the social status quo. A character unusually

bad does, in fact, stand oblique and aslant to the social status quo. But in terms of the version of modernity that Tietjens and Valentine face, it is only the quixotic aspiration to cultivate a character unusually good that will be judged by the jury of peers to be eccentric and therefore odd enough to mark the aspirant out as a character – a trickster, a Dreyfus, a fool – in this particular sense at which the term has arrived.

Precisely this problem – not of evil but good – is glossed by an eccentric and quixotic peer of Ford’s Tory gentleman and Anglican saint and of his very plucky girl, G. K. Chesterton, whose essay “On The Negative Spirit” (1905) delineates the problem of a modern moral consciousness filled with very definite “images of evil” in the absence of any very definite image of “good.”²⁵⁹ “The human race fell once,” as Chesterton notes, and “in falling gained the knowledge of good and evil.”²⁶⁰ But now it has fallen again, and only “the knowledge of evil” remains.²⁶¹ “A great silent collapse,” a great “unspoken disappointment” had fallen with the advent of modernity, he claims.²⁶² All previous ages had been “crucified” to “realize” “what was [good.]”²⁶³ But his and Tietjens’ and Valentine’s own modern age was coming more and more to the conclusion that there were “no answers” at all to the problem of good.²⁶⁴ Every one of their own age’s most “popular phrases” – everyone one of its most polysyllabic self-

²⁵⁹ G. K. Chesterton, “On The Negative Spirit,” in *Heretics*, London: John Lane / The Bodley Head, 1905, p. 32. My reading of Tietjens’ and Valentine’s resistance to “the negative spirit” is additionally informed by Chesterton’s great sequel to *Heretics*: *Orthodoxy*, London: John Lane / The Bodley Head, 1908.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

justifications – was merely a “dodge,” a way to “shirk” the “problem” of deciding what was “good.”²⁶⁵

Within a modern English social status quo intent on dodging this decision they themselves have come to face, both Tietjens and Valentine, with their stilted aspirations toward the moral occult, will soon be judged by the jury of their peers not just as characters but hypocrites, too – pompous play-actors making-believe, whose embodiment of roles like Tory gentlemen and Anglican saint, suffragette and Joan of Arc, will seem to be deceitful and disloyal to the social status quo, which will see within those stilted postures the images of evil which its version of modernity could see, but not the images of good toward which the aspirants reach and which they sometimes grasp in the course of their adventures out at moral extremes. “We’re under a cloud!” as Tietjens explains, both “Valentine and I!” – with “General Edward Campion” to “spread the tale,” and with “forty old fogies at [his] club to spread the tale,” and with “no end” after that of “visiting books” from which they both are bound to be “cut” (107). The tale to which Tietjens alludes is the tale of his and Valentine’s return from her mother Mrs. Wannop’s house to the Duchemins’ house, their late-night return by way of dog-cart on the evening following their promenade across the Kentish fields. This tale and its spreading through the social world was just the sort of “mess” into which her dear old elephant got – and into which he got her – as Valentine explains (523). His uncle the General’s almost running their dog-cart over in his automobile was “symbolical” of all of Tietjens’ endless, “appalling,” and “unravellable” messes, from one to another of which he seemed always to “moon”

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

and to pull her along (523). Having spent the whole day with her mother and not so much as kissed on the dog-cart back, both she and Tietjens had been “perfectly [right,]” monogamous and chaste in Tietjens’ phrase (523). But still her “reputation” had “suffered” from being seen “alone” with him “at dawn” (524). It made no difference that he had not “insulted” her “in any way” (524). Still she must be said to be his mistress, and still she must be “worried” by the damage to his “reputation,” as well as her own (524).

The “fault” for this judgment that Tietjens and Valentine face lies not with General Campion and not with the forty old fogies and his club with their visiting books, as Tietjens explains (76-77). The fault lies instead with “the times” and with their version of modernity, in which those who aim to be right, to be monogamous and chaste, are perhaps the most susceptible of all to all those “dirty” connotations and “constructions” put on things by “dirty minds” – and put especially on things like his and Valentine’s dog-cart ride and their prior promenade across the Kentish fields (76-77). The “hermeneutics of suspicion” – in Paul Ricoeur’s phrase – that would reduce such aspirations toward the good to mere play-acting, mere making-believe, Ford had embodied decades prior to Ricoeur in the figure of one Mr. Ruggles, a gossip-prone member of the militantly modern bureaucracy that maintains and manufactures the social status quo that judges Tietjens and Valentine as hypocrites and frauds, deceitful and disloyal to their own ruling-class.²⁶⁶ “Disliking” Tietjens with the “inveterate” animosity of

²⁶⁶ Paul Ricoeur, “The Critique of Religion” (1973), in Charles E. Reagan and David Stewart, eds., *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: An Anthology of His Work*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1978. This seminal essay of Ricoeur’s has informed my work here

“the man who revels in gossip” for “the man who never gossips” himself, Ruggles has indulged in “extraordinary activity” in preparing a “dossier” on Tietjens – his contribution to a “book” in which “bad marks” are “set down” against men of “position” in their own ruling class bureaucracy (206-207). Housed within a “holy of holies” at the heart of his and Tietjens’ social scene, this book holds a comparable authority to that other sacred text of this same scene, the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, whose errors Tietjens counts up inwardly, in his “insolent,” inveterate way (206-207). This insolence of Tietjens’ infuriates Ruggles, who venerates the book of reputation even more than this assemblage of facts. He is pleased therefore to add the name of Tietjens to this parallel assemblage of “the suspect and doomed” – the dirty play-actors with their make-believe, the hypocrites and frauds, deceitful and disloyal to the social status quo. As Ford’s narrator notes, “it is in fact, asking for trouble” if one is more honorable and faithful than a world such as Ruggles represents (206-207). Far from any stilted aspiration toward the moral occult, Ruggles and the ruling-class bureaucracy see nothing at all but “base self-interest” in Tietjens’ own honor and fidelity.

One of the dirty connotations and constructions that are placed on Tietjens’ altruistic acts by such hermeneutics of suspicion as Ruggles represents coincides significantly with the sudden outbreak of The First World War – the war which only Tietjens has foreseen among his family and friends, the war which has issued from the version of modernity that Ruggles represents and has

throughout and helped me to identify first Conrad’s, then Ford’s efforts to objectify, ironize, and overturn suspicious heremeneutics like those to which Ricoeur responds.

inscribed in the “great book” of gossip at the heart of his and Tietjens’ social scene (209). That dirty connotation and construction is the tale that is spread about the mess that is made when Tietjens tries to comfort Mrs. Duchemin on the day when the war begins – August 14, 1914. On a train back to London from Edinburgh, Macmaster’s home, Tietjens embraces Mrs. Duchemin, who has just found out that she is pregnant by his colleague and friend, with whom she had begun an affair, she and Vincent having met at the same breakfast table from which her own friend Valentine and Tietjens had departed on their passage through the Kentish fields. Tietjens had “preferred” to ignore the “phases” of Vincent and Edith Ethel’s adultery, but he nonetheless attempts to comfort Edith Ethel, as Vincent’s mistress and Valentine’s friend (184-185). “General Champion,” however “was not to know that,” as Ford’s narrator explains – and just as the General had come upon and all but collided with Tietjens and Valentine during their dog-cart ride, so too does he come upon Tietjens and Edith Ethel on the Edinburgh to London train (184-185). So damaging to Tietjens’ reputation are the General’s own dirty constructions of both this kindness toward Edith Ethel and the dog-cart ride with Valentine that even Edith Ethel herself is taken in. Just three years after her confession of her pregnancy to Tietjens on the Edinburgh to London train, Mrs. Duchemin, now Lady Macmaster, will accuse Valentine herself of having born Tietjens’ child out of wedlock in the time since then – “spitting” out her slander like a “llama” or some other “beast of burden” would expectorate a wad of phlegm or bile (523). Valentine admits that “it would have been pretty rotten” of Tietjens to have given her a child in that particular way – almost as rotten as the social status quo embodied now by Lady Edith

Ethel and Sir Vincent Macmaster, and almost as rotten as their version of modernity as lachrymose, self-justifying cant, which had issued in the war (524). It would have been rotten and – if he had done – “he hadn’t ought’er done,” as she can hear the social chorus say (524). “Well, he hadn’t,” she replies – since some do not, not Tory gentlemen and Anglican saints. In the case of this particular mess, as in the cases of all the other messes into which he has mooned, Tietjens simply had not. But Valentine nonetheless had found herself accused – and “out of the blue” – of having born his illegitimate child. Her “first” and most “enduring” thought, however, had been, as always, for Tietjens’ moral reputation as much as her own (523).

The fundamental nature of this crisis in Valentine’s and Tietjens’ reputations that coincides so closely with the start of The First World War is illustrated by its ramifications on the very foundations of the gentleman and saint’s and the very plucky girl’s identities and integrities – that is to say, their parents, Mrs. Wannop, Valentine’s mother the novelist, and Mr. Tietjens, her long-time benefactor and friend, and the current squire of Groby Hall. Possessed of a novelist’s skepticism and irony, Mrs. Wannop, like her author Ford, is fit to counteract the hermeneutics of suspicion that impugn the honor of her daughter and her friend Mr. Tietjens’ son. But Mr. Tietjens himself is not so fit. He is a “reasonable man,” as Ford explains, but “not reasonable enough” to “doubt” the “circumstantial history” that Ruggles retails of his son’s purported infidelity and his abuse of the daughter of his oldest friend – Professor Wannop, the classicist, whose antique virtue coincided with the sense of propriety displayed by Mrs. Wannop as well as by Mr. Tietjens and his own wife, Christopher’s mother, the

Anglican saint. Mr. Tietjens has come to believe “implicitly” in the great book of gossip that Ruggles inscribes (209). He has “perceived” that his “brilliant” son has made “no advancement commensurate with ... his brilliance,” and he has come to “suspect” along with almost everyone else that such brilliance itself is “synonymous” with “reprehensible tendencies” (209-210). Ruggles’ “allegations” only serve therefore to “confirm” a hermeneutics of “suspicion” by which even Christopher’s father, for all of his own honor and fidelity, has been seduced, like almost everyone else (210).

Mr. Tietjens’ honor and fidelity, but also those inklings of suspicion to which it will be subject itself, are demonstrated well by the special sense of horror that both Mr. Tietjens and his son Mark feel when Christopher is linked in social gossip to Valentine. In all of Ruggles’ dossier against his younger son, what “breaks” Mr. Tietjens’ “heart” – and what may in fact have led him on toward the seeming suicide that both his sons will come to suspect – is “that Christopher should not only have seduced but have had a child by Valentine Wannop” specifically (210). Mr. Tietjens “entertains” for Valentine “an affection of the very deepest,” with “the same qualities appealing to [him] as appeal to his son” (211). And this affection of the father’s had, of course, engendered in its turn the same sorts of dirty connotations and constructions as Ruggles, General Campion, and others have put on the affection for this very plucky girl that is displayed by his brilliant younger son. Neither Christopher nor Mark will be immune to these suspicions, the foremost of which is that Valentine is Mr. Tietjens’ child, the illegitimate issue of an earlier adultery, or else that Mr. Tietjens harbors hopes himself of seducing and abusing Valentine.

Suspensions such as these are reinforced, though never quite confirmed, when Mr. Tietjens, a skilled outdoorsman, is killed in an unexpected and an out-of-character way – by shooting himself, having held his shotgun muzzle-forward, crawling under a hedge. Mark attributes this prospect of his father having “suicided” to “something soft about the Tietjens stock” – with the softness in question being just the sense of Tietjenses as characters unusually good or unusually bad that marks them out as oddities oblique and aslant to the status quo, and subject therefore to gossip and suspicion even more so than everyone else (758). Mr. Tietjens may have been too good. He may have thought his younger son Christopher to be “a bad hat” who had seduced and abused a very plucky girl (723). “But plenty of men had sons who were bad hats,” and they didn’t kill themselves as a consequence (723). So Mr. Tietjens had been either too good, or perhaps too bad. Valentine perhaps had been his daughter or a hoped-for mistress – “not that it mattered very much,” at least to Mark (758). Neither these prospects nor that of his brother Christopher in love with their unacknowledged sister or their father’s hoped-for mistress will very much bother Mark with his stiff upper lip, his practical hypocrisy, and his lack of that something soft that had led so many Tietjenses before him to mark themselves out as unusually good and often as unusually bad – his great grandfather “scalped” by “Indians” during the Regency, his grandfather dying in a brothel in Victorian times, his uncle dying drunk on a fox-hunt, and now his father shooting himself, deliberately or not, with a rabbit gun (758). But all of these suspicions fall hard on “a luckless sort of beggar” like his younger brother Christopher is, burdened by the softness in their stock that makes the prospect of their father’s

suicide – and with it the prospect that he himself helped bring it about – very difficult to bear. The falling of this kind of moral weight is just “the sort of thing that would happen” to a Tietjens of Christopher’s type, lacking Mark’s own practical hypocrisy, and heir to a puzzling strain of prophecy and tosh, introduced by his mother, the Anglican saint.

Another puzzling strain of prophecy and not mere tosh – a strain to which the Tietjenses of Christopher’s and Mr. Tietjens’ type now seem to be heir – is the prophecy made by “Spelden” on “sacrilege,” the prophecy made by the Catholic polemicist regarding the Tietjens family’s “cheating” of “the Papist Loundeses” out of Groby Hall, their unjust seizure of the Yorkshire estate when their countryman Dutch William took the English throne: “Be ye something as something and something and [still] ye shall not escape” (177). “What is it?” Christopher asks, that the Tietjenses shall not escape (177). “Calumny!” Sylvia exclaims (177). “Chaste as ice and cold as ... [cold] as [they] are,” the Tietjenses shall not escape from calumny – not till Groby Hall is returned to its rightful Catholic hands (177). Christopher himself – despite his own prophetic tosh – had once dismissed this prophecy of Spelden’s almost out of hand. But now he starts to grasp its credibility, and therefore to wonder as well if its author – like himself, with his own prophetic tosh before the start of the war – had not been “right” all along (177). From Mark’s and his father and their uncle to their grandfather and their great grandfather, from their brothers killed in Indian regiments the very same day to their sister drowned at sea the same week, Christopher can hardly find a Tietjens who has not died “of a broken neck or a broken heart,” and this despite – or possibly because of – their “fifteen thousand

acres of good farming land ... and all the heather on the top of it” at Groby Hall (177). Mark claims not to know Spelden, but Christopher himself becomes unnerved, suspecting that the calumny that falls on him in fact may be justified – suspecting that his Anglican sainthood is merely an imposture of the Catholic authenticity that Spelden could actually claim, just as his Tory gentility is merely an imposture by a Dutch parvenu of the genuinely Englishness the disinherited Loundeses, late of Groby Hall, could actually claim.

Spelden’s view of the Tietjens family sacrilege supposes a tradition of hypocrisy, by which the Tietjens family makes-believe, in a manner deceitful and disloyal to their own contemporary status quo and blasphemous as well toward the moral occult, the genuine good, in which the militantly modern generation of The Ford World War no longer believed. There is a myth of devolution, decline, and degeneration implicit in Spelden, just as a similar myth is implicit in the militantly modern hermeneutics of suspicion by which Tietjens and Valentine are read – and read not only by Ruggles, but also, perhaps, by many readers of Ford’s own work, readers less skeptical than Ford of Ruggles’ version of modernity, which Tietjens prophesied would finally issue in The First World War. But the mythic moral trajectory of Ford’s own work runs the opposite way. The myth underlying the *Parade*, the prophecy it makes oblique to Spelden, and to all of the suspicious hermeneutics that he comes before, is a myth of evolution, ascent, and regeneration – even in the midst of the catastrophe embodied by the war, indeed perhaps because of that catastrophe, whose onset and whose premonitions mark the crisis faced by Ford’s Tory gentleman and Anglican saint and by his very plucky girl.

In a culture that retains a sense of evil but has lost a sense of good, Tietjens and Valentine are faced with a crisis of character, in which their aspiration toward the virtues is misconstrued as mere play-acting and hypocrisy. Their dog-cart ride and moments like it are subject to suspicious hermeneutics that construe in them a moral infidelity and personal dishonor they do not contain. This modern paranoia of suspicion takes a militant turn with the outbreak of The First World War, when Tietjens' kind support for Mrs. Duchemin on the Edinburgh to London train is misconstrued as a sign of that adultery from which only Tietjens and Valentine among their group of peers have in fact refrained. Tietjens and Valentine are suspected all the more of hypocrisy. This gossip spreads as far as their parents, with Mrs. Wannop faithful to her daughter and Tietjens, but Mr. Tietjens shaken in his faith in his youngest son and Valentine. Mrs. Tietjens' morbid speculations are a localized form of that more general suspicion that yields a fatalistic sense of prophecy against the Tietjens' line, the sense of a Tietjens curse to which his youngest son is heir. The burden born by Tietjens and Valentine in facing down this crisis that their characters bring will be in staging or restaging themselves with more consistency, with less conceptual distance between their chosen archetypes of gentleman, saint, and suffragette and what those archetypes are emblems for.

II

The crisis faced by Tietjens and Valentine, and with it the moral trajectory of Ford's *Parade*, are illustrated well in any number of the inward moral dialogues that Tietjens conducts with different versions of himself,

different versions of his character, which flow from different senses of the concept of character itself. One such inward moral dialogue is one that Tietjens has with himself on the Western Front in France, reflecting on his ideas of monogamy and chastity, the absence of which in pre-war England he had seen as a crucial premonition of the oncoming war, and his efforts with Valentine efforts to honor which had caused the crisis in their reputations that had broken out along with the war. Within this inward moral dialogue, Tietjens the character – the trickster, the Dreyfus, the fool – meets and then yields to those aspects of character itself – Tory gentility and Anglican sainthood – toward which he aspires through stilted postures such as these. Tietjens' tosh-filled pre-war voice comes back to him, with an uncanny distance in time and space that allows him to hear it ironically: "His voice ... his own voice ... as if from the other end of ... a damn long-distance telephone" (281). "I stand for monogamy and chastity," that voice intones. "And for no talking about it" (282). "Of course if a man who's a man wants to have a woman he has her," the voice allows. "And again no talking about it" (282). "If then a man who's a man wants to have a woman ..." Tietjens starts to repeat, in concert with his recollected voice across the long-distance telephone line from the pre-war world, from the world before the crisis that erupts regarding messes such as promenades and dog-cart rides with very plucky girls (282). But "Damn it," he interrupts his recollected voice, "he doesn't!" [emphasis mine] (282). The man who wants the woman "doesn't" have her – not if he is married and not if he aspires to be a gentleman and saint [emphasis mine] (282). "He'd learned" since then – he had learned in the midst of the war and in the midst the crisis in his moral reputation that had come with the start of the

war – that such a man as this “does not” [emphasis mine] (282). And he had learned this in very large part from his very plucky girl, who also is the “sort” who does not and who had taught him something different from either his own prior tosh or the practical hypocrisy embodied by his older brother Mark. What that very plucky girl had taught him – on the basis of her own moral crisis, with which he in turn had provided her help – was a genuine, authentic aspiration toward the moral occult, toward the genuine, authentic moral good glimpsed in images like those of the gentleman and saint, the suffragette and Joan of Arc.

The lesson Valentine had offered Tietjens was an affirmation less of his postures as a gentlemen and saint and more of the moral occult toward which those postures helped him reach and sometimes grasp in the midst of the messes he made – the adventures he sought and those that sought him, out at moral extremes. Valentine agrees with Tietjens to sacrifice their love for the sake of a greater good, just as she will later on agree with him to sacrifice the stilted moral postures through which they had aspired to that good for the sake of their love – a good that they have come to see as greater than those postures themselves, those archetypes and emblems, closer in its reach to a grasp of that same moral occult than those archetypes are emblems of. Having seen his reputation collapse, coincidental with the start of the war in the Summer of 1914, Tietjens had suffered through a year and more of mounting calumny until he finally came in the Autumn of 1915 to enlist for war-time service himself – both to escape that mounting calumny and also to escape the rotten bureaucratic life that maintains and manufactures the war. He does this out of feudal duty and serves on the Western Front in France until the Spring of 1917, at which point he is invalided

home to England with amnesia and shell-shock. By the autumn of that same year, Tietjens has recovered enough to return to the Front, where all along his sense of “patriotism” has been only “half for England,” with the other half belonging to Valentine, his “pug-nosed girl” who “smells” like a “primrose” (363). Back at the Front, Tietjens wonders why he “slobbers” over Valentine this way (363). He has “never [even] kissed her” and doesn’t even know how she “smells” (309). Tietjens’ second chance to share a kiss with Valentine – following their dog-cart ride – had come on the night before he left to return to the Front. Having seen each other all through the Summer that had come between Tietjens’ return to England and this point of his departure back to France, Christopher and Valentine have made a point to meet on the night before at his rooms in Gray’s Inn, where they have a chance to consummate their five-year-old love for one another, not yet an affair. “[Even] at that time they had known what was going to happen,” as Tietjens will remember, from back at the Front (282-283).

Valentine’s “little, pale” and “pitiful” face had “gazed straight before her” at him, through the darkness of the long-vacated rooms where Tietjens had lived with his lawful wife (282-283). Valentine had walked down the hall, following him, toward the bedroom he and Sylvia were meant to share. “It’s perhaps too ... untidy ...” her love but not her lover had observed – referring not only to the bedroom itself but to this place and time, with all its connotations and with all of the constructions it invites, as the place and time to consummate their love but not yet their affair (282-283). “Yes! Yes ...” Valentine exclaims, meaning “No! No!” (282-283). The present circumstance is much too “ugly” and “too ... oh ... private” for that (282-283). “But when you come back ...” she adds to Tietjens,

and “permanently” and “oh, as it were, in public” (282-283). “I will be ready [then] for anything you ask” (282-283). What Valentine and Tietjens both refuse is the very play-acting and making-believe, the very hypocrisy with which they stand incessantly accused by the jury of their peers with no conception of good, and least of all of any greater good than mere self-justification through the polysyllabics of modern moral cant of the sort employed by most of their own family and friends – like Sir Vincent Macmaster and the former Mrs. Duchemin, Lady Edith Ethel, Sir Vincent’s former mistress, now his wife, and the society hostess of the drawing-room parties at which Valentine and Tietjens have seen each other all through the summer and hopelessly pined. Vincent and Edith Ethel are the sort who do – the sort who engage in hypocrisy, in lachrymose private polygamy behind a public posture of monogamy and chastity. But Tietjens and Valentine are different. “We’re the sort ...” he assures himself and Valentine both – the sort who “do not!” (282-283). “Yes – that’s it,” as Valentine answers him back, affirming this monogamy and chastity, this faithfulness to moral integrity. “That’s it,” she answers. “We’re that sort” (282-283).

An intimation lies implicit in Valentine’s memory of the start of hers and Tietjens’ moral crisis at the start of the war that she herself had been even more the sort who does not than he himself before the crisis began, and indeed that her responses to the crisis have been instrumental in moving him beyond the stilted postures of the gentleman and saint and toward the greater moral good that those archetypes are emblems of – the greater moral good that she herself, with her own stilted posture as a very plucky girl has always grasped more nearly than he. Tietjens clearly had once – if only once – been the sort who does. He had done

what he “hadn’t oughter done” at least one time, and he had done it with Sylvia, and done it on a train. Tietjens had yielded for once to his brother Mark’s advice, to Mark’s own practical hypocrisy. As “a man who’s a man,” despite his “chastity” at least, he had “[wanted] to have a woman,” and he had indeed “[had] her,” and then not “[talked] about it” after that (281-282). He had been “a decent fellow,” since he has learned since then that decent fellows do not (281-282). He had learned it in large part from Valentine, who also, at least in one respect, had broken with her own stilted posture as a suffragette, albeit in an opposite way – not in the direction of self-justifying cant like Tietjens’ own, but in a path toward the truth that makes for accuracy, a closer apprehension of the moral occult, a greater moral good than the militant modernity and moral laissez-faire of most of her friends.

“How do you get rid of a baby?” Mrs. Duchemin had asked her. “You ought to know!” (229). That question had been a “great shock,” a “turning point” in Valentine’s life, falling on her out of the blue, just as much out of the blue as Mrs. Duchemin’s later accusation that she herself had borne Tietjens’ child, and just as much out of the blue as the start of the war on the following day, when she and Edith Ethel and Christopher and Vincent had all headed south to a different world, on the Edinburgh to London train. Valentine had always imagined that there were “colonies” of bright beings, “chaste, beautiful in thought, [altruistic,] and circumspect,” and that such a colony existed in London “round” herself and such “friends” as Mrs. Duchemin (230-231). But “what had become” of such “beautiful intellects” now, Valentine was moved to asked – what with war and “sexual shock” falling out of the blue (230-231). Edith Ethel does her an

“irreparable wrong” in assuming that she knows the secret means by which a baby is disposed (230-231). Valentine’s prior “convictions” on the “moral” significance of “sex” had been “quite opportunist,” she is shaken now to see (264). Brought up with “advanced young people” – monsters of precocity like Ford’s Rossetti cousins and his friends the Garnetts – Valentine would once have said from “loyalty” to “comrades” like these that no “morality nor [ethics]” need obtain in the matter of sex, but rather an “enlightened promiscuity” (264). Be that as it may, even before her present shock falling out of the blue, Valentine had “deeper” and different “feelings” than these – namely that “incontinence” was “ugly” and that “chastity” ought to be “prized” in “the egg-and-spoon race” between virtue and vice (264). She had thought that such “bright beings” as her friends must be hypocrites in an unexpected sense – people whose “public advocating for enlightened promiscuity” went hand in hand with an “absolute” sexual “continence” in their own private lives (264). She had been “aware” that bright beings sometimes “fell away” from such “standards” as this, as indeed even Tietjens had done (264-265). But “being brought right up against” such contingencies had been, at least for Valentine, “a horrible affair” (264-265). And the horror was not only the substance of those contingencies but also their deeply hypocritical form – in this case, with the “circumspect, continent, and suavely aesthetic personality” of Mrs. Duchemin having been revealed as but a play-acting posture of make-believe behind which lurked a personality as “coarse” as and “infinitely more incisive in expression” than the personalities of the slaveys, ladies’ helps, and tweeny maids whom she had worked among in Ealing, where the soon-to-be Lady Macmaster presumes that Valentine has learned about the

means by which a baby is made to disappear. Mrs. Duchemin finds those means – and it cannot be ruled out that she finds them in some sense through Tietjens, to whom she will confess her problem shortly thereafter on the London train. In any case, Valentine is never to hear “what had become of Mrs. Duchemin’s baby,” since the very next day – along with the war – she is met by a Mrs. Duchemin just as “suave,” as “circumspect,” and as “collected” as “ever” before (265). Not a “word more” will ever “pass” between the two of them regarding Mrs. Duchemin’s child. This silence is “a dark patch” in Valentine’s mind – “as it were of murder” – at which she must not look. It is one of those “things” that – in the words of Winnie Verloc in *The Secret Agent* – “do not stand much looking into” (177).

Valentine’s personal “plunge” in the “abyss” of “blood and darkness” that this dark patch represents recalls likewise the words of Henry James in a letter written this same day, the second day of British involvement in The First World War – August 5, 1914.²⁶⁷ This social plunge in blood and darkness is “a thing that so gives away the whole long age” that he and his peers had just been living through “that to have to take it all now for what [those] treacherous years were ... really making for and meaning is too tragic for words.”²⁶⁸ The time of Valentine and Edith Ethel and Christopher and Vincent among the best and brightest beings of their pre-war society had not been long, but it had stood as an age, a set of years revealed to be treacherous in retrospect, like James’s longer age of Liberal Englishness, when he and his peers had all “supposed” that their “world,”

²⁶⁷ Henry James, Letter to Howard Sturgis, August 4, 1914, in Percy Lubbock, ed., *The Letters of Henry James, Volume II*, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1920, p. 384.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 384.

with slight “abatement,” was “bettering” itself, and growing brighter every day.²⁶⁹ The strange and sudden death of Victorian progressive modernity is personalized in Valentine’s plunge in blood and darkness at Mrs. Duchemin’s hands, just as James’s great motif of moral innocence abused is generalized in his own musing on The First World War as too tragic for words, including his own. The memory of that plunge has the same sort of Jamesian tone as the memory of Flora de Barral’s betrayal by her governess in Conrad’s *Chance*. And Valentine, like Flora, will show herself in time to be a very plucky girl, one whose innocence will yield to experience, with no sacrifice of her moral resolve or her spiritual integrity. In Valentine, like Flora, there is “something left, if only a spark,” and “when there is a spark, there can always be a flame.” That flame, in the case of Valentine, is the love she feels for Tietjens. And Valentine’s love supplies a spark of hope in Tietjens in turn – an incendiary potential that helps him seize life’s chances, its opportunities in the midst of disappointment and despair. These chances, these opportunities and Valentine’s love are his only source of hope on the Western Front in France, where the prophecies of Spelden seem fulfilled and any prospect of such betterment as James once had taken for granted seems all but gone. But Valentine had recognized Tietjens, and right from the start, as a man who in the end would “[come] through,” as indeed he does – a man with whom she might set out toward a world beyond their social status quo, beyond the version of modernity that issues in the war, as indeed she does (135). That chance, that opportunity will come, but only after further inundation of her dear old elephant,

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 384.

her gentleman and saint, in darkness and blood – from which he will emerge to be reborn for the post-war world, the post-modern world in which we live today.

Tietjens will resolve the inner crisis of character within himself through dialogue with inconsistent parts of himself and even more so with his moral tutor Valentine. Tietjens is the sort who should not, according to the lights of his posture as a Tory gentleman and Anglican saint. And Valentine in turn is the sort who both should not and does not, according to the lights of her own posture as a suffragette. Valentine's own honor and fidelity will serve to bolster Tietjens' own and bring his archetypal posture as Tory gentleman and Anglican saint into a closer agreement with that moral good those archetypes are emblems for. Both Valentine and Tietjens are faithful to the archetypal essence of their postures as the sort who refrain from infidelity, and Tietjens has come to this faith under tutelage from Valentine. The suffragette has freed herself not only from the chauvinism of the pre-war world, but also from its militant modernity, its militant infidelity, which issues in the trauma of Mrs. Duchemin's sudden transformation, her sudden self-revelation, on the day The First World War begins. This transformation or self-revelation traumatizes Valentine. Her trauma Valentine then imagines as a sudden descent into darkness and blood, a sudden descent which prefigures Tietjens' own into the harrowing in hell that is embodied by the war – the war which has issued in turn from that same militant modernity and moral infidelity that his very plucky girl had first faced down.

III

Tietjens' inundation in darkness and blood is made iconic in among the most audacious pantomimic tableaux in the whole *Parade*, an image by which Tietjens is scourged at Sylvia's hands – and scourged in a manner which achieves a classic pantomimic poise between extravagant romance and satirical burlesque. This audacious, iconic, tableaux comes in Sylvia's memory, in the midst of the war, of an earlier, pre-war evening in winter, when she had come home from a dance that she had gone to alone. On nights like this, spent alone, Sylvia has had the chance to ponder in a mirror's "depths" however it can be that Tietjens still resists her "long, cool hands," and her "immense bandeaux" of rich, red hair, "unloosed" across her bare, "white shoulders" in a warm bedroom (156). Surely, "with a little whiskey taken," he must want her again as he had wanted her before – though it seems that he does not, or maybe will not, as the case may be (156). Such thoughts move Mrs. Christopher Tietjens this particular night to an anger of despair that she remembers in Rouen on The Western Front in France, where she has followed her husband, in the course of his return to the war in the autumn of 1917. Sylvia remembers a "white bulldog" whom she had "thrashed" on "the night before it died:"

[A] tired, silent beast ... With a fat behind ... Tired out ... You could see it's tail ... the stump ... a great, silent beast ... I found it at the door ... And got [a] rhinoceros whip and lashed into it. There's a pleasure in lashing into a naked white beast ... Obese and silent, like Christopher ... Snow-white .. And it went [to die] under a bush. They found it there dead in the morning ... In thirty degrees of frost with all the blood vessels exposed on the naked surface of the skin ... The last stud-white bulldog of that breed ... As Christopher is the last stud-white hope of the Tory breed ... Modeling himself on our Lord ... (416-417).

Sylvia's remembered scourging – in some sense, her crucifixion – of the bulldog Tietjens was owing to her suspicion that Tietjens is sleeping with Valentine instead of herself. "She must discover ..." as Ford's narrator renders her thoughts. "But how do you discover?" [emphasis mine] (396-397). Sylvia's means of discovery is following Tietjens out to Rouen and into the abyss of blood and darkness represented by the war – the Hell to which Tietjens descends, on the model of his Lord, after having been scourged, but not to harrow Hell, as in the Gospel account, but rather to be harrowed there himself for his hypocrisy, his moral pretense in taking for his models such archetypes and emblems as the gentlemen and saint, let alone such a person as his Lord. The war which only Tietjens himself, with his prophetic tosh, had known was going to come is nonetheless seen by his wife to be a great comeuppance both for him and for Englishmen in general, with their "schoolboys' games of make-believe," like Tietjens' own play-acting as a gentleman and saint, a Christian on the model of his Lord. War is an "agapemone," Sylvia explains – a space for free-love or rather free-lust (396-397). Men such as Tietjens went to war, she elaborates, not out of moral obligation, but rather in pursuit of a "desire" just barely suppressed by their schoolboy's games, a lust "to rape innumerable women" (396-397). That was "what war was for," she explains (396-397). That "in the end" was the truth disguised by all "male honor" and all "male virtue" – a "warlock's carnival" of "appetites, lusts, [and ebrieties]" (438-439). And "there was no stopping it" – nothing to be gained from Tietjens' prophecy and tosh, since the war that he had warned about had come, and nothing to be gained from Tietjens' stiltedness, his reach to grasp the moral occult, since he was sleeping with Valentine, and also

Mrs. Duchemin, despite his vaunted claim that some do not, the pretense under which he had refused to do his duty to his wife (438-439).

On the Western Front itself, however, we find something rather different from the warlock's carnival of Sylvia's dreams – or we find something more than just that. We find male honor and virtue alive and well within Tietjens, who far from raping a multitude of women is instead, and once again, submitting himself to the moral guidance of a single one, albeit not his wife – a very plucky girl, with whom he has never made love, nor even shared a passing kiss. Tietjens' inner moral dialogues with different versions of himself give way on the Western Front to dialogues with Valentine, or monologues conducted with her image in mind.

"What would Valentine think," Tietjens asks, "if she could see him now?" He himself sees "very vividly ... the face of his girl who [is] a pacifist" (308).

Valentine is "not of course pro-German," but "disapproving," as Sylvia is, of men being slaughtered like "bullocks" in an "abattoir" (363). It "worries" him to think what her "expression" would be if she could see his "occupation" now (308).

Would it be "disgust?" (308). Yes, "perhaps, disgust!" (308). But he had "never seen" her face "express disgust" (309). She had "a face that made your heart miss a beat" – a face "like the first primrose" (309). "Not any primrose. The first primrose" (309). "She smelt like a primrose when you kissed her," he explains, "But, damn it, he had never kissed her." (309). Pantomime persona that he is, Tietjens struggles with such florid sentiments, even as he gives them lyric voice. Calling "one's young woman" a flower was rather "sentimental," he explains (309). But calling her "one special flower" was "a man's job" – like serving in a war (309). "Damn it all," Tietjens exclaims, such sentiments were "patriotism,"

though not “[as] you took [it] to be” – not a matter of “parades,” but of feelings for girls and of feelings for one’s countrymen and comrades-in-arms (363). It was probably because of “sentimentalists” like him, as Tietjens freely admits, that those countrymen and comrades-in-arms “persevere” in the “atrocious undertaking” of The First World War, the war that he himself had predicted would come, in the course of his burlesque, his prophetic tosh against the rotten state of things that brought it about (363). All the same, he feels a florid “passion” both for “Valentine” and “England” – specifically the Falstaff’s battalion he has come to command (363). These soldiers have names like “Arunjuez” and “Duckett” – Arunjuez, fearing “death of blindness” and “the loss” of “his [own] girl” Nancy; Duckett, “clean,” “small,” and “blond,” much like Valentine herself, with her “eyes” full of courage and her pug-like “nose” (602). Tietjens’ company are “a very decent lot,” as we have seen (591). He tells an unnamed sergeant that the men are “damned heroes,” when it came to that (554). “Hit was ... good to ‘ave prise from ... officers,” the sergeant replies, and especially from older ones like Tietjens (555). The young ones “haven’t got that comfortable feeling, sir,” as the sergeant explains (553). “When you looked at them you didn’t feel they knew so well [as older ones did] what you were doing it for, if he might put it that way” (553). And “what are [we] doing it for?” Tietjens answers him, rhetorically (553). Tietjens does it for – or rather from – a sense of feudal duty, of moral obligation and moral self-correction, that is due for being broken by the war, or rather broken by the militant modernity that Tietjens all along had seen would issue in the war. Tietjens does it out of piety and passion, mystical devotion he had learned from his mother, the Anglican Saint. He does it – as the

padre in the barn had done – for his men, the souls entrusted to his care. Tietjens’ service in the war is not unlike the padre’s own, a priestly kind of moral vocation far removed from any warlock’s carnival of rape or agapemone in Sylvia’s dreams. Mark has been aware all along that his younger brother Chrissie is a conscientious “churchman,” an Anglican saint, a churchman who might well take holy “orders,” if he heard the proper call (746). And even Roman Catholic Father Consett had defended Chrissie’s character as being wholly “sound” – except for as it touched upon the matter of “the two communions,” and even there he did not differ much (39). Mark has seen all along that “such a life” as Father Consett’s or the padre’s in the barn was “fitted” well to his brother Chris, with his “asceticism,” his sentimentality, his “private taste” for mortification, like his savior Jesus Christ (746). And Tietjens does indeed receive a call – a call to what he misses the most, a role to fit his sense of vocation, a role in which a man could stand up, and do his duty, in a world beyond the war.

That call comes to Tietjens in the form of a “key bugle” sounding out across the muddy trenches where he waits with his men, with no solid ground on which to stand, and in the line of German fire (555). This key bugle, Tietjens comes to learn, is in fact a regulation cornet, but still its tone and melody induce in him a “melting mood,” a “sudden waft of pleasure” at the “air” that its tune contains of “the seventeenth century,” the century of “Herrick” and “Purcell” – Robert Herrick, the poet of the lyric “Passing By,” and Henry Purcell, whose setting of Herrick’s poem to music Tietjens hears repeated in the cornet’s call:

“I know a lady so fair and kind, was never face so pleased my mind” (565).²⁷⁰

“Herrick and Purcell!” he exclaims. “What had become of the seventeenth century? And Herbert and Donne and Crashaw and Vaughn” (565). Tietjens’ memory of the poets George Herbert, John Donne, Richard Crashaw, and Henry Vaughn leads him on to a memory of Herbert’s great lyric “Virtue,” or at least its opening lines, which serve as an emblem for Tietjens of Herbert’s whole age.²⁷¹

“Sweet day so cool, so calm, so bright, the bridal of the earth and sky! By Jove it was that!” (565). Herbert’s age, for Tietjens, on *The Western Front* in France, is “[the] only satisfactory age” (566). “Yet what chance had it today,” much less “tomorrow,” he complains – what chance had “Anglican sainthood” like Herbert’s in the war-time world of *The Western Front* or in the world beyond the war (566). What remains, at least, is “the land,” solid ground where a man could stand up – Herbert’s landscape of “quiet fields” and “timbered hedgerows” and “creeping ploughlands,” which even then the “dawn” was “revealing” in his Wiltshire “parish” far away from the war (566). But “what was it called?” Tietjens wonders, recovering still from the amnesia he had suffered before (566). He struggles to recover from the depths of his memory the name of Herbert’s “tiny church” near “Wilton” on “Salisbury” plain (566). “Oh hell!” he exclaims. “What the devil was its name?” (566). And then the name “Bemerton” springs to his “tongue” – “Bemerton was George Herbert’s parsonage ... the cradle of the [English] race as far as [that] race was worth thinking about” [emphasis mine]

²⁷⁰ Authorship of “Passing By” is generally attributed to Herrick, but the lyric does not appear in his published work.

²⁷¹ George Herbert, “Virtue,” in *The Temple* (1633), in *The Poems of George Herbert*, New York: Oxford UP, 1907, p. 88.

(567). Tietjens pictures himself “standing up” on a “hill,” not the stout conflicted C. O. whom he is, peeping over his trench, surrounded by maps, but a “lean contemplative parson, looking at the land sloping down toward Salisbury spire” and with a “large,” “Greek” Bible tucked under his arm (567). “Imagine standing up on a hill!” he exclaims. It was “unthinkable” here, under German fire, but not at Bemerton, and not in Herbert’s age, “sweet day so cool, so calm so bright, the bridal of the earth and sky!” (567, 586). What was thinkable at Bemerton in Herbert’s age was not only standing up, but also, and more so, the thing that Tietjens’ archetype, derived from Herbert “Virtue,” is an emblem of, a role to fit his moral vocation, a role that seems denied him in the wartime world and likewise in the world beyond the war.

Tietjens feels nostalgic, homesick, for Herbert’s “sweet day,” which he has never known. His memory had failed him first in calling up the name of Bemerton, where Herbert, in the midst of a moral crisis of his own, had found his role as a poet, priest, and saint. And Tietjens’ memory fails him now in calling up the lines that follow Herbert’s “sweet day” in “Virtue” and serve to qualify those opening lines: “Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright / The bridal of the earth and sky / The dew shall weep thy fall tonight, / For thou must die.” [emphasis mine]. While Herbert’s landscape of fields and hedgerows and ploughlands is there still at Bemerton, the poet’s age is now long gone. The place where Herbert stood still remains, but not the time, so the homesickness Christopher suffers now cannot be healed by any geographic means, by any move back from the trenches to Bemerton or back to Groby Hall, as we shall see. Mark recognizes his brother as a “seventeenth-century” churchman who ought to be “strolling in a

grove” with a great “Greek Testament” under his arm (762). But while the grove remains, and while “the land” [has] not changed, still “the times [have] changed ... they [have] changed” [emphasis mine] (762). “Christopher is still [here],” the fields and hedgerows and ploughlands “[are] still [here] ... but not the frame of mind [of] [that] [sweet] day” that Herbert’s lyric had detailed (762). But Mark forgets what Christopher remembers, at least what he will finally come to see – the consolation offered past the sweet day’s death in “Virtue’s” closing lines: that “[A] sweet and virtuous soul, / Like seasoned timber, never gives; / And though the whole world turn to coal, / Then chiefly lives.”

The whole world has turned to coal round Tietjens – not only with the coming of the war, but also, and equally as much so, with the set of moral crises that will keep him from taking on the role that Herbert found to fit his calling, the role that Mark again will recommend, the role of Anglican priest. But this turning of the world to coal round Tietjens yields a gem-like flame, a diamond core of iridescent virtue such as Herbert had found upon his own world having turned to coal.

While admitting that he has a “predilection” for the priestly life his brother recommends, Christopher has nonetheless insisted on “an obstacle to his assuming such a cure of souls” (746). That obstacle, prefigured in the words of Herrick’s lyric “Passing By,” is Valentine – the lady “fair and kind,” whose pugnosed face “so please[s]” Tietjens’ mind. Mark is well “aware” that “a person of [his brother’s] way of thinking” might be “inhibited” from seeking ordination by just such an obstacle as this (746). His brother has “abstained” from “seducing” Valentine, since some, like himself, do not (746). But, still, he has “privately

desired” to have “illicit relations” with her (746). Mark remains a practical, panzaic hypocrite. He counts himself “no very good Christian, at least as regards the relationships of women and men” (746). And so, for him, illicit relations are rather less “insuperable” an obstacle to ordination than they are for his quixotic brother Christopher, the Anglican saint (746). “No doubt had his brother been a Papist,” Mark muses, he could have had Valentine live with him in a “housekeeper’s” role, and “no one would have [been] bothered” by that (747). “Nevertheless,” he admits, “the Church of England was the Church of England” – and Christopher was Christopher, too (747).

Christopher proves just as much his quixotic self in also denying himself, for Valentine’s sake, an alternate role for which he feels only slightly less piety and passion and mystical devotion than Herbert’s role of Anglican saint – the role of Tory gentleman in charge of Groby Hall. And by the same sort of Russian trick he plays on common sense by refusing to live hypocritically with Valentine while acting at but not in the role of a priest, he likewise refuses to live with her while acting at but not in the role of a squire. “You could not have a Valentine Wannop” living with you as your mistress, Tietjens explains – you could not, at least, at Groby Hall:

You could have a painted doxy from the servant’s hall, quarrelling with the other maids, would want her job, and scandalizing the parsons for miles around. In their sardonic way the tenants appreciated that: it was the tradition and all over the Riding they did it themselves. But not a lady, the daughter of your father’s best friend. They wanted Quality women to be Quality and they themselves would go to ruin, spend their dung and seed money on whores and wreck the fortunes of the Estate, sooner than that [you should do that too] (634-635).

Tietjens shares with the tenants of Groby Hall, and likewise with his possible parishioners at Bemerton or any other place he might take orders, a sense that

“Quality” should be “Quality,” or rather that such quantities as Tory gentlemen and Anglican saints should have the qualities those roles require, including those qualities that Tietjens himself has found so lacking in the England of his day, the qualities of monogamy and chastity. Tietjens lacks those qualities himself, or rather he must give them up to live with Valentine, as he intends to do, indeed as he cannot not do and live his life with any quality at all, with any honor and fidelity at all to that greater moral good that he has glimpsed and finally grasped in loving Valentine.

Tietjens honors and holds faithful to his prior postures, paradoxically, by giving them up – or rather by assuming them again in a pantomimic way, poised even more completely than they have been before at the pivot-point where prophecy meets tosh. Tietjens makes a grand renunciation that seems at first a kind of pastiche or parody of Henry James, but one which holds within itself as well not just such tosh as this but also, and more so, a prophecy of James’s kind, and of Valentine’s kind, in the midst of her crisis, like James’s crisis, with the coming of The First World War. Tietjens – like Valentine, like James – will flout the hermeneutics of suspicion, the negative spirit of that militant modernity that finally came to issue in the war. He stands at the end of the long trajectory of character from moral cultivation to moral pretense. He stands with a double-sense of stiltedness as moral aspiration and moral ostentation – hypocrisy, play-acting, and making-believe. He faces the secular scourging and crucifixion and harrowing in Hell that come with moral aspiration and moral cultivation in suspicious times with no image of good. He suffers through the great comeuppance that comes to games of make-believe played by stilted boys and

plucky girls, the great comeuppance in which such ostentation and pretense are damned to the secular Hell of calumny and gossip, to the secular Hell of The Western Front in France. One way of avoiding this comeuppance is the way that Mark has recommended time and again to his eccentric and quixotic brother Chrissie – the way of a practical, panzaic hypocrisy, one in which “Quality” need not be “Quality” all of the time, in which the quantity of gentlemen and saints need not require that they possess such qualities as monogamy and chastity all of the time. His brother could simply take orders and still take a mistress, Mark reasons – he could take Valentine as his mistress and still take his longed-for charge of Groby Hall. The tenants might not like it, and the parsons and parishioners might well be scandalized, but so what? Some do not, but, then again, some do. Some, indeed, do – most, in fact, do – but Tietjens still does not. He has a priestly kind of moral vocation and a gentlemanly kind of moral call, even if he cannot take orders, and even if he cannot take charge of the family estate. He cannot take orders because of that vocation, and he cannot take up charge because of that call. Chrissie is puzzling, Mark would say, he is sentimental, and prone to asceticism, prone to the mortification endured by his savior and his model Jesus Christ, and likewise to the grand renunciations undertaken in James. But Tietjens has a genuine, authentic aspiration toward the moral good – the good glimpsed by means of archetypes and emblems like gentlemen and saints, the good he glimpses even more clearly and finally comes to grasp in loving Valentine, his very plucky girl with her own renunciations, mortifications, asceticisms, and sentimentality. This good grasped by Christopher in loving Valentine is greater than his stilted posture as a gentleman

and saint and closer in its reach to grasp the moral occult, that truth that makes for self-correction, not self-justifying cant.

Tietjens has all along engaged in moral dialogue with versions of himself, with versions of his character, with alternate versions of his stiltedness – both with his prophecy and tosh. But now he will submit to moral guidance by the woman he loves, by his very plucky girl. His inward moral dialogues have given way to inward moral monologues with Valentine in mind and they will finally give way to his desire to speak with Valentine herself. The intercourse that Tietjens most desires with Valentine is conversation – not just a union of bodies but also, and more so, of hearts and minds. “Peace meant a man could stand up on a hill,” Tietjens muses (607-608). It “meant someone to talk to” and that meant Valentine (607-608). Valentine Wannop, “clean, blond, small” with “courageous eyes” and a pug nose – “she belonged to him” and “a valley road” or “mountain road,” not Bemerton or Groby Hall (602-603). “So he wouldn’t take orders” nor take up his longed-for charge of the family estate (602-603). But still he would find a kind of peace from the militant modernity and moral laissez-faire that finally issued in the war. He would find it in “sitting talking to [Valentine] for whole afternoons” (629). “That was what [a very plucky girl] was for,” as he explains (629). “You seduced a young woman in order to be able to finish your [conversations] with her. [And] you could not do that without living with her” (629). So, Tietjens determines he must write Valentine a letter, proposing that they live together after the war – that is, if he survives the war. On the one hand, it was “a clumsy swine’s trick” not to have written her before (629-633). But, on the other hand, it was “worse” than “reprehensible” to write to her now, in the

midst of the war – it was the “cold-blooded” act of a “seducer,” not a gentleman or saint. “You did not seduce the child of your father’s oldest friend,” he explains (629-633). You did not seduce her, let alone invite her to live with you in a “remarkably precarious” state (629-633). It simply “[wasn’t] done” (629-633). It was not done, yet he must do what he must do – that is, live “with Valentine ... because of Valentine,” and live with Valentine not at Bemerton or Groby Hall, but in a “four-room attic flat” (629-633). It would be “worse” than “reprehensible,” he understands (635-636). “For God’s sake,” however, he concludes, “let [it] be” [emphasis Ford’s] – for God’s sake, however, “let us be” [emphasis mine] (635-636).

His brother Chrissie is “a luckless sort of beggar,” Mark concludes (758). He cannot help being reprehensible, and yet he cannot help being so for God’s sake, as it were. He cannot be a gentleman and saint, and yet he cannot be a practical, panzaic hypocrite like Mark himself. He is just the kind of Tietjens who engendered Spelden’s prophecy on sacrilege, and just the kind of Tietjens who engendered the myth around the family estate that “Groby Great Tree” – planted to “commemorate” the “birth” of his and Chrissie’s “Great-Grand-Father,” who had died in a [whorehouse] – “did not like” the Tietjenses or Groby Hall. And if one took his brother’s “whole conglobulation” at “its worst,” even the otherwise skeptical Mark is rather apt to agree. His and Christopher’s father has seemingly committed suicide, and Christopher is planning now to live with what may be his own illegitimate sister in “open sin” (758). Christopher’s son, and the heir to Groby Hall, may not be Christopher’s own – and even if he is, Mark Junior is “a Papist,” the son of his Catholic mother Sylvia, who cannot divorce his father

Christopher, and whom his father still will not divorce, even in the midst of his newfound reprehensibility (758). This sort of conglobulation, Mark reasons, was just “the sort of thing” that “would happen” to a Tietjens of Christopher’s “variety” – the kind of Tietjens who “took what [he] damn well got” for “doing what [he] damn well wanted to” [emphasis mine] (758). Spelden might well be “justified,” as might the myth of Groby Great Tree and its curse on the family line. That line might be about to end – there might be “no more” Tietjenses at all, and Groby Hall might go back into “Papist” hands (758). The whole conglobulation might provide “a last post,” a final blowing of the bugle, for Christopher and all he represents (758). “The sun might rise” over Bemerton and over Groby Hall, Mark muses, “and the moon could do the same, but they would never – neither [one] – look [upon] the [likes] of Christopher [again] (762). “They might as well expect to see a mastodon,” an extinct species of elephant that can never be revived (762). But there is something left inside his brother that even Mark misses, and that only Valentine sees – a spark, a moral potential for gem-like flame, for diamond iridescence, as the world turns to coal. This something has marked his brother out all along as a man who in the end will come through, and be reborn for the post-war world.

For Christopher to be reborn, however, he first must die – or rather face his own death with honor and fidelity. Both an apotheosis and a transfiguration of Christopher comes when a German shell lands near the trench where he is hunkered with his men, with Arunjuez and Duckett and the whole Falstaff’s battalion, the whole ragtime company of music-hall comedians and scene-shifting supers from the pantomime stage. This apotheosis and transfiguration

will indicate to Mark that Spelden perhaps was wrong, that “the curse was perhaps off the family,” that his and Christopher’s father had not, in fact, committed suicide, that he had not, in fact, fathered Valentine, and that Christopher himself, conversely, had in fact, fathered Sylvia’s child, and therefore given Groby Hall an heir, albeit a Papist heir (832). But, before all of these reversals, comes what Tietjens perceives as “a dark age” – the depth of his harrowing in Hell – a “mental darkness” in which he “could not think” (637). This darkness descends as the earth moves under his feet,” like “a weary hippopotamus,” the German shell having churned the soil into a quick-sand made from mud (637). This mud sucks “composedly” under his feet and “assimilates” his “calves” and “thighs” (637). It “imprisons” him up to his chest, “suspending” him in “space.” All of this proceeds “like a slowed down movie” with Tietjens immobile, but observant, as the mud settles “slowly” over “Duckett, who lay on his side” (637). Down below himself and Duckett lies Arunjuez, who stares up at Captain Tietjens “out of viscous mud” (637). “Save me Captain!” he seems to say but Tietjens must “save [himself] first” (637). Freeing his legs from the mud, he slides down the slope toward Arunjuez, with a “smile” to meet his comrade’s “pallid” face (638). Standing up, “on the edge of liquid mud,” above Arunjuez, Tietjens fears that he will once again “sink in” (638). But he does not – “not above his boot tops,” at least (638). He finds his meal-sack elephant’s feet to be “enormous” and “sustaining,” as he bends down deeply to reassure Arunjuez and to pull him up out of the mud (638). He thrusts his hands into the “slime,” up to his “forearms,” and says “Thank God” for his “enormous” strength – for his “physical” strength, but also, and more so, the moral strength to use his girth and

force in this particular way (638). “It was a condemnation of a civilization,” he concludes, that, “possessed” of such strength, he “should never have had to use it before” (638). He looked like “a collection of meal-sacks,” but he could “tear a pack of cards in two,” and he is ready to do that, to save Arunjuez (638). Tietjens pulls Arunjuez up out of the mud, feeling “tender, like a mother,” and “enormous,” like an elephant, at once (639). Just before the German shell had hit, Arunjuez had exclaimed to Tietjens, observing his musing on Valentine: “[Y]ou’ve got someone that you love, sir!” (636). Arunjuez means someone like his own girl, Nancy, in the nearby town of Bailleul. “No, not like Nancy,” Tietjens answers – “Or, perhaps, yes a little like [her]!” (636). “Then you’ll get her, sir,” Arunjuez assures him – you “certainly” will (636). “Yes, I shall probably get her!” Tietjens replies, but this prospect is shadowed all along by poignancy of its fragility in the course of Tietjens’ harrowing in Hell, and especially so in the course of his apotheosis and transfiguration in the sinkhole of trench-mud with Arunjuez. Further up the slope from the two of them is Duckett, half buried in mud, as Tietjens had been by his side, but buried in the opposite way – covered over from his chest to his head, with his legs sticking out, in a grotesque posture of “running horizontally” in place (636). Drawing once again on his girth and force and moral fortitude, Tietjens pulls the boy up out of the mud “by his legs,” being careful not to damage his face, which could be pressed against a “stone,” yet taking that “chance,” for the sake of his life (636). But Tietjens seems at first to be too late. Duckett’s face remains undamaged, but “black” with mud and fast “asleep,” seemingly without the chance of waking up – like Valentine “reposing in

an ash-bin" (642). Duckett is revived to health, however, just as Tietjens himself comes home from his harrowing in Hell, transfigured and apotheosized.

Tietjens' harrowing in Hell within the trenches of the Western Front in France had been prefigured by perhaps the most audacious pantomime tableau in all of *Parade's End*, the scourging of the bulldog Tietjens in Sylvia's dream. That scourging is juxtaposed with Tietjens' own subjection to the trenches, which prove him to be quite different from Sylvia's dream and from all of those suspicious hermeneutics in which he has figured all through the *Parade*. That difference is signalled by a key bugle sounding through the trenches, a note which summons up in Tietjens a sense of the Seventeenth Century, and what is more, the sense of a vocation that he has come to harbor, a moral aspiration toward a virtue like George Herbert's own in taking up his call to leave his ruined life at court behind for a country church. The virtue under all of Tietjens' postures as gentleman and saint is a kind of diamond, a gem-like flame of inner moral substance, in a world that has turned to coal around him leading up to the war. Tietjens would like, if he survives the war, to embody that inner moral substance through taking up Anglican orders like Herbert or taking up a Tory's estate by taking on the management of Groby Hall. But he has come to see that he could only take up either of those charges in a hypocritical way. He has come to see that he must live with Valentine, which means living without the role, though maybe not without the inner moral substance, of a gentleman or saint. Tietjens once again is the sort who does not, the sort who does not play act or stoop to mere hypocrisy. Mark sees his brother's resolve here as a kind of moral folly that

signals his ruin and fulfills the Tietjens curse. But Tietjens views that same renunciation as a kind of redemption – a magic transformation in the terms of pantomime – by which he is transfigured and apotheosized, achieving the inner moral substance, albeit not the role, of a gentleman or saint.

IV

Tietjens comes home transformed, with a pantomimic sense of the relationships of idioms, conventions, and generic forms – such as those that make up his own postures as Tory gentleman and Anglican saint – to the tenor of the moral occult of honor and fidelity that even those archetypes and emblems that his postures represent are merely vehicles for. He comes to an ironic stance much like Valentine's own, with her simultaneous standing as a classicist, a keeper of the orthodox tradition of the moral occult, but likewise a suffragette, someone engaged in freeing herself from merely vehicular forms that impede that occluded moral tenor with which she keeps faith in her honorable way. Tietjens' and Valentine's moral occult has parallels with the "sacred tradition" Josef Pieper describes.²⁷² This sacred tradition is the kind of perennial wisdom Ford's hero and heroine retain against the militant modernity that issued in The First World War that Tietjens now comes through. Such tradition is no mere "mass" of "accidents" passed down, such that anything possessing "antiquity" is carried on as a matter of course.²⁷³ Some distinction must be made between an idiomatic

²⁷² Josef Pieper, *Tradition: Concept and Claim*, Wilmington, DE: St. Augustine's Press, 2010, p. 42. Pieper's study was crucial in helping me articulate here what I had recognized all along – the distinction between traditionalism and conservatism that underlies Tietjen's aspirations as Tory gentleman and Anglican saint, and explains the radical and not the conservative means he will use toward those traditional ends.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

and conventional “conservatism” that “resists” all “innovation” indiscriminately, and Tietjens’ and Valentine’s own postures of honor and fidelity, not so much to any archetypes and generic forms, including their own, but rather to those things that such generic forms and archetypes are emblems of – the aspects of sacred tradition, of perennial wisdom, of the moral occult.²⁷⁴ The kind of conservatism that both Valentine and now Tietjens reject is among those “categories of decadence,” in Piper’s phrase, that make up the militant modernity with which they contend, one which coexists quite often, as we have seen, with the kind of self-justification of moral infidelity that merits, much more than either Valentine’s or Tietjens’ own stances, the label of hypocrisy.²⁷⁵ What Valentine and Tietjens commit to is the drawing of distinctions between such conservative adherence to merely vehicular idioms, conventions, and generic forms and genuine honor and fidelity, in Pieper’s terms, to sacred tradition, perennial wisdom, and the moral occult. They are “positively free and independent” of a merely conservative adherence to vehicular norms, and they are therefore consequently more in touch with the substantive tenor of the moral occult.²⁷⁶ They recognize, in Pieper’s terms, that “[a] cultivation of tradition that attaches itself to a historically accidental external image ... becomes a positive hindrance to a real [preservation] of what is worth conserving, which perhaps can occur only under changed historical forms.”²⁷⁷ And so they come to make their union and to stage their self-performance on the parabolic stage in pantomimic ways.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

They stage them in the archetypal, emblematic terms of the suffragette, the Tory gentleman, and Anglican saint. But they stage them with a special kind of irony that comes from a moral recognition of the difference in love between those archetypal emblems and the things those archetypes are emblems of. This difference in love forms the basis of the union they will form in the wake of the war, out beyond and over its militant modernity. The closing acts of Ford's whole *Parade* will concern how their union is judged within those decadent terms, transformed and transfigured themselves, in the wake of the war, as we shall now see.

Tietjens comes home, as we have seen, transfigured and transformed. He comes home resolved to live with Valentine. And she comes home to him in Gray's Inn on Armistice Day, as we have also seen. On meeting there, they "look" at one another "for a long time," standing as if "bathed in soothing fluid," not "averting their eyes" as they have always done (669). They are "warm" now and "their hearts beat quietly" together as one (669). When Mrs. Wannop telephones in search of Valentine, they ask her for her blessing on their union, which they hope to consummate now, after so much time. "My dear boy," Mrs. Wannop tells Tietjens, "You're safe for good" (656). She had thought all along of what he "suffered," but that sacrifice is "nothing," Tietjens tells her, since the war is "over" now, and no one need remember it today (656). What must be remembered, however, is the problem Tietjens faces now with Valentine. That problem is the status of the union Mrs. Wannop now must bless for them to consummate their love. "I can't divorce my wife," as he explains – "I can't live with her, but I can't divorce her" (665). Mrs. Wannop holds out hope for a "legal way out" for her

daughter and her “almost” son (653, 656). “Have you got to do this thing?” she asks them both (653). “Yes, I’ve got to do it!” offers Valentine – “I [know that] I shall die if I [don’t]” (653). Mrs. Wannop “take[s] it” that her daughter has “thought it all out” (653). She “know[s]” she has “a good head” (653). But still she would be “glad” if there were some “way out” – some “legal” and honorable way (653). The legal way that Valentine and Tietjens now seek is her own blessing. It is this that they seek to save their characters from what might be seen as hypocrisy, from mere self-justification, like Paulo and Francesca in Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s view but not in Dante Alighieri’s own. Valentine will “come back” if Mrs. Wannop “order[s] it” (653). She urges her mother to do so before it is “too late” (653). But Mrs. Wannop “can’t” (653). She “can’t” order Valentine to do what it would “kill” her to do – to live without Tietjens, which would mean her “eternal” despair (653). So Mrs. Wannop “[makes] their union” in Tietjens’ phrase – she “[speaks] between them,” who “might [not] have spoken” themselves, or who at least had only ever spoken vaguely before, just as they had only ever looked briefly into one another’s eyes (669). “In one heart-beat apiece,” while Mrs. Wannop speaks, Valentine and Tietjens make “certain” – they justify and consecrate – a “union” that had “lasted” for “years” (669). They had “lived” already “side by side,” but never “together,” as they will be now, as they will be “forever,” come what may (669).

Valentine and Tietjens get Mrs. Wannop’s blessing, but problems remain. Ford stages their foremost trouble in among the most dramatic – or melodramatic – ways in which he stages any of their troubles through the whole *Parade*. He does so in a manner that goes out to self-reflexive extremes that bear

a note of pantomime amidst their “darkness” of atmosphere (820). Valentine and Tietjens look up “dark stairs” toward the Gray’s Inn bedroom which with Mrs. Wannop’s blessing they now can share (820). But then a “light” shines down from up above, flooding dramatically the stage of the stairway below (820). In the bedroom’s “opened door,” theatrically framed, stands a figure who obstructs the lovers’ passage toward their marriage bed – a woman “like a marble statue,” a tall “white” figure like the Greek goddess “Nike,” the “Winged Victory” of Samothrace (820). The figure in the spotlight is Sylvia, of course, and she bears down on Valentine and Tietjens now with the shout that she has “cancer,” bad news that functions nonetheless as a victory for her, since it prevents the honeymoon-of-sorts that Valentine and Tietjens had hoped for from Armistice Day. Her bad news represents in some sense the resumption of war – the war for Tietjens’ marriage bed. At this, Valentine is overcome by such depression and “despair” as she has never known, not even in the depths of her shock at Mrs. Duchemin’s and Macmaster’s affair. (820). She cries out to Tietjens “beside her” that Sylvia lies, that “she [has] not got cancer” [emphasis mine] (820). She cries out as Sylvia falls forward down the stairs, and thus on top of them – a “good” fall, a “theatre” fall, but “not good enough” at least for Valentine (821). When Tietjens volunteers to go away with his wife and not his long-lost love, Valentine protests, in tragic Latin – “No! He was never going with [her] again. *Fini Sylviae et magna ...*” (821).

But Sylvia is not yet done, nor is Valentine and Tietjens’ problem solved. The next dramatic stage on which Sylvia will wage her war contesting Valentine’s and Tietjens’ union is the civil court, which she, as a pious, if imperfect, Roman

Catholic, is not allowed to let adjudicate the state of her marriage. And yet she does so, with ambivalent results. Sylvia begins “divorce proceedings” against her husband Tietjens, who lives now with Valentine, in hopes to “petition” the court for the “restitution” of her “conjugal rights” (805). She does this by making the assumption that bringing such petition as this for “the restoration of your husband from [another] woman” is not quite the same as divorce (805). She does this, but still she has her doubts. She remembers her advisor – and Tietjens’ defender Father Consett – had told her “years ago” that “if [Tietjens] ever fell in love with [someone else,]” then Sylvia would lower herself to “acts of vulgarity” (805). One of those vulgar acts that Father Consett had predicted was Sylvia’s pretense that she had had cancer, a ruse now revealed as such during cross-examination in the open court, testimony that is broadcast then against her and in Tietjens’ defense by the scandal sheets, now having taken, for the moment, his side (805). And another of these vulgar acts, in Father Consett’s terms, is her petition itself. Sylvia has “toyed” with a “temporal” court in the “sacrament” of marriage and led herself thus to disgrace (805). As she remembers Father’s Consett’s prior warning in the years to come, she will admit to herself that he was right, and that her court case had been a “fiasco” to no good end (805). Then, after that, and for the very “first time,” she will start to feel, in actual earnest, a “mortification” and “religious fear” which she has thus far feigned (805).

Leading up to Sylvia’s own magic transformation, Tietjens comes home from the war transfigured and apotheosized. Any mere conservative embrace of idioms, conventions, and generic forms he leaves behind on the Western Front in

France and what he brings back home with him instead is an embrace of moral tradition, perennial wisdom, and those virtues, like honor and fidelity, that all his archetypal postures as a gentleman and saint were merely means toward and emblems for. In moving past these archetypal postures, these vehicular means, Tietjens moves closer than ever before to the substantive tenor of the moral occult, the moral good that he has always reached toward by his stilted means. This movement – and Valentine’s own – earns the stilted boy and very plucky girl Mrs. Wannop’s blessing, her gift of spiritual grace above the letter of the law. But law remains, however, and, with it, threats to Valentine’s and Tietjens’ unconventional union in the wake of the war. Sylvia remains the gravest threat, and the challenge posed by Tietjens’ wife is the challenge of the law against the spiritual gift of grace. But Sylvia herself will undergo a kind of magic transformation, a moral reversal that moves her toward redemption and a reconciliation toward Tietjens and Valentine’s union, as we shall see.

V

Sylvia’s religiosity will have a great bearing on the final resolution of *Parade’s End*, during which first she, and then a slowly dying Mark, will render judgment on Valentine and Tietjens and the union that the two of them form in the wake of the war. The closing volume of the sequence, *Last Post*, is seen from first to last through eyes besides Tietjens’ own, with the pantomimic hub of Ford’s *Parade* being largely absent from its narrative stage, save as the underlying motive for the drama of discernment in which Sylvia and Mark will engage. Following the court case in London, Tietjens and Valentine retreat together to the countryside of Sussex, to live there with his brother and Marie

Leonie. Tietjens takes up work there as an antiques dealer, including selling heirlooms brought from Groby Hall. And Valentine in time becomes pregnant, her union with Tietjens consummated in a child. As this new union unfolds, another front is opened up within the war that contests it and its propriety. Sylvia has leased out Groby Hall, his charge of which Tietjens has relinquished to live with Valentine. The Tietjens estate is rented out to an American heiress, one Mrs. De Bray Pape and in the course of preparations for her family's moving in, Sylvia connives to have her cut down Groby Great Tree, the fabled symbol of the whole estate, and the object at the center of the curse reported by Spelden against the Tietjens family for seizing Groby Hall out of Roman Catholic hands like Sylvia's own. The Seventeenth Century history of the Dutch Protestant Tietjens' appropriation of Groby Hall and of their infidelity toward Rome is echoed on the Twentieth Century stage of Valentine's and Tietjens' affair. It is echoed by Valentine's seizure of Sylvia's husband and Tietjens' infidelity toward Sylvia in leaving her for Valentine. Tietjens' Anglican has always been open, despite Father Consett's strong support, to the charge of hypocrisy, of mere play-acting and imposture in the Roman Catholic terms of Sylvia's view, however suspect that view itself may be, given Sylvia's own prior infidelity. And Tietjens' infidelity with Valentine now opens him up to the additional charge that his Tory gentility too has been an imposture, that he is a play-acting hypocrite like his Dutch forbears were when they seized Groby Hall. The cutting down of Groby Great Tree is itself a charge against Tietjens of this same kind, a charge in sync with Spelden's prior curse upon the Tietjens line. It is in search of confirmation of this charge that Sylvia comes – along with Tietjens' and her son Mark Junior and

others – to the Sussex countryside where Tietjens and Valentine now live with the dying Mark and Marie Leonie. Sylvia will judge for herself the life that Tietjens has made in the wake of the war and in the wake of his relinquished charge to manage Groby Hall. It is during the course of this judgment that Sylvia's religiosity will manifest itself and lead her toward a sudden change of heart that helps resolve the moral problem that remains for Valentine and for Tietjens, expecting their child – a sudden change of heart that helps resolve, in fact, Ford's whole *Parade* in pantomimic terms, on a note of comic romance set against the tragic satire of the militant modernity that Valentine and Tietjens move beyond now in the wake of the war.

From the same elevated position she had occupied at Gray's Inn on Armistice Day – bearing down on Valentine and Tietjens from the top of the stairs – Sylvia bears down again from a nearby hill above the Sussex homestead laid out below, “as if she were a goddess dominating its [fate]” (785). But chastened by the failure of her court case, Sylvia is “not so certain” now of her victory nor so reminiscent as she was of the Nike of Samothrace (785). She had once had “reason to believe” that she had been for “better” or “worse” – and “mostly” for “worse” – the “dominating” factor on her husband and the Tietjens family line (789). But now she is not so certain that she really effects him at all for “evil” or for “good” (789). Retired both from Gray's Inn and Groby Hall, he seems now to be a “four-square lump” of “solid” meal-sacks “too heavy for her hauling about” (789). The whole scene strikes her now in telling terms as “a comic affair” (795). Sylvia has all along feared that “God” would intervene in Tietjens' affairs. Her husband after all is “a good man” – a “sickeningly” good

man – as she herself knows (795). And it is also, as she knows, one likely “function” of God to see that good men like Tietjens “settle down” – that they retire, that is, to “stuffy” scenes like the one that lies before her now (795). God is “probably” and also “very rightly” on the side of “stuffy domesticities,” she concludes, since “otherwise the world could not [go on]” (795). Sylvia is struck all at once by a thought of “immense force” – the thought that “God [has] changed sides” (795). She had let Groby Great Tree come down to strike such a “blow” as she could against her husband and Valentine (802). But what if – in letting it fall – God was changing his mind, and “lifting” Spelden’s “ban” against the Tietjens family line (802)? “He well might [have done so,]” she reasons, now feeling, with a new-found earnestness, that sense of religious trepidation she had learned from Father Consett, or feigned to learn (802). Her first “intimation” that God might in fact have changed sides had come in the midst of her court case. She had then remembered Father Consett’s warning regarding what would happen should she ever wage her war on Tietjens in a court of civil law. Seeing now how things have turned out – with her court case done, and Groby Great Tree down – Sylvia is touched by pangs of conscience, gently prodded by a kind of moral “finger,” maybe that of Father Consett, “the agent of God,” or maybe even that of “God himself,” who might here have “really” taken up “a hand” in Tietjens’ affairs. In any case, all up and down “the landscape” she now feels “an August Will” (806).

That will – in meta-textual terms – is, of course, Ford’s own, as he brings his whole *Parade* toward a pantomimic close marked by comic romance and a redemptive reconciliation of Sylvia and Tietjens, of Sylvia and Valentine. Ford’s will here is not aesthetic alone, but also ethical. Ford’s view of things never rises

fully to the level of religion which Sylvia and Tietjens occupy in their alternate ways. But it retains nonetheless a kind of ethical relation to the moral occult that manifests itself both here and elsewhere in religious terms. Those terms, that pantomimic moral play with certain Christian ideals, would make its mark on Ford's own friends, the literary converts to the Catholic Church, Caroline Gordon and Allen Tate. And it would likewise serve as part of the appeal of Ford's *Parade* for their fellow Christian converts Auden, Waugh, and Greene. But its greatest importance for the argument here is how it culminates a number of trajectories at once from all across the *Parade* – the hermeneutics of suspicion in a militant modernity; the crisis of character and quest for vocation; the sense of a curse, a harrowing in Hell, a death and rebirth. These various trajectories now culminate at once within the stuffy domesticity of Valentine's and Tietjens' country cottage, on which their rival Sylvia bears down now from her nearby hill.

Sylvia bears down upon the country cottage bedroom where Valentine rests, now almost due with a child whom she imagines a boy – “Little Chrissie,” who marks a new beginning for the Tietjens family line (812). Valentine, like Tietjens, harbors hopes for their unborn son. But she recognizes nonetheless the problem that remains, the problem of Sylvia. The second “Mrs. Tietjens,” as her new Sussex neighbors now call her, imagines that she will go “mad” if she is forced again to contend with the first, especially now, with Little Chrissie in her womb (826, 818). She feels a fierce solicitude for him that is vaguely reminiscent of how she had felt in the case of Mrs. Duchemin's and Macmaster's unborn child. Sylvia embodies for Valentine – as Mrs. Duchemin and Macmaster once had done – a kind of militant modernity from which she hopes to shelter her son

and thus provide for him a future of which Tietjens now harbors new hopes. No “blight” such as Sylvia would bring on by her very presence must ever in any way “fall” on Little Chrissie in her womb (819). And yet that blight does fall, with unexpected results that help resolve the whole *Parade*, and with it Valentine’s and Tietjens’ troubles, on a pantomimic note of comic romance.

A recapitulation of the drama – the melodrama – of Gray’s Inn on Armistice Day was latent all along within the distant vantage-point above her pregnant rival Valentine that Sylvia has claimed within the nearby hills from which she now descends, bearing down now with an ominous force upon the whole country cottage, including Little Chrissie in his mother’s womb. “A very tall, thin figure” – “portentous” – rises up all along the path toward the bedroom where Valentine rests (820). It is Sylvia, “of course,” and Valentine says, “Let it be” (821). She has “fought” her “before,” and she “could” do so “again,” if need be (821). But Valentine detects a subtle change in Sylvia now from the Nike of Samothrace who bore down upon her and Tietjens on the stairs at Gray’s Inn. It is “queer,” but her face now seems “blurred,” her features “swollen,” and her eyes a tear-stained “red” (821). Valentine sees Sylvia pause, look down toward the bedroom window “contemplatively,” and then make up her face from a “vanity box” (821). That face looks “flawless” soon – “dark-shadowed,” “sorrowful,” and “dignified” (824). Sylvia is then “like a statue” again, but not so much victorious as “kind” (824). This change brings a sense of “comicality,” a sense of incongruity to Valentine (824). “Damn! Damn! Damn!” but this is not what she had primed herself to face (824). Valentine could never tell a person such as this, so sorrowful and kind, that her mere presence there would be so “loathsome” and

“infectious” as to blight a mother’s unborn child (824). So she decides instead to extend to her rival for the title “Mrs. Tietjens” the hospitality and courtesy that she and Marie Leonie have already shown to several of the visitors on that same day, including Mark Junior, Sylvia’s son.

It occurs to Valentine that it may not be “sporting” for certain of her other visitors to call her Mrs. Tietjens “under” Sylvia’s “nose” (826). “I am sorry [people call] me [that] before you,” she is moved to say, once she and Sylvia meet (826). But Sylvia is quick to reply, in an ambiguous way, that she no longer minds. “An the King will have my head,” she fires back, from between “stiff lips,” “I carena what he ... do with my [cock!]” (826). This is an old Tietjens adage, much-loved by Christopher and Mark, whose attitude it captures, as both Valentine and Sylvia know. Sylvia’s own use of the phrase reflects a sense of resignation at the loss of her husband to Valentine, and yet it also reflects the fact that she had something to lose, a genuine, if fleeting, kind of closeness, as Valentine can see now through her making of this inside joke with these intimate words. “It was Father Consett really ... Father Consett in heaven that has done this” as Sylvia explains (826). It was Father Consett who had brought her under Valentine’s own nose, to view the stuffy domesticity she shares now with Tietjens and their child to come. “I wanted to see how it was that you kept him,” she explains – to see if Tietjens’ union really could be blessed as Father Consett or his memory says it should (826). What Sylvia is struck by most, however, on coming face to face with Valentine, is not so much her keeping of Tietjens, but rather his child. Sylvia’s whole change of heart here toward the end of Ford’s *Parade* had

been prefigured all along by her solicitude toward children, and especially her own son Mark.

This gentle side of Sylvia is evident in one of Tietjens' memories from years before, when he recalls perhaps the warmest and most intimate moment between himself and Sylvia that Ford will let us see. The infant Mark had taken very ill in the depths of the night, and Sylvia and Tietjens had tended to him in a cold tub to bring his fever down:

[It] came to [Tietjens] ... the image of Sylvia, standing at attention, her mouth working a little, whilst she read out the figures beside the bright filament of mercury in a thermometer. The child had had measles, a temperature that, even then, he did not dare think of. [He] could still feel the warmth of the little mummy-like body; he had covered the head and face with a flannel, for he didn't care for the sight, and lowered the warm, terrible, fragile weight into a shining surface of crushed ice in water ... She had stood at attention, the corners of her mouth moving a little: the thermometer going down as you watched ... (300-301).

Whatever else she may have done, one thing that Sylvia will not do, as this memory goes to show, is ever threaten a child as Valentine had feared she would. With "God" as her witness now, as Sylvia assures her, she had "never" meant to "harm" her rival's "child." (826). She would not Valentine's nor "any woman's" child (826). She has a "fine one" herself, and she had "wanted" more (826).

Sylvia's and Tietjens' son Mark – the baby in the bath tub – is now a young man, one who scans his father's household from the nearby hills, just like his mother had done. Like Sylvia, young Mark is "slim in body," and yet like his father Tietjens he is "heavy" as well in his "bright red cheeks" (710). Looking down on Tietjens' country cottage with "a glum expression," Mark concludes his father's new recourse to rural living is not quite "playing the game" by its current rules (710). He "himself" is "Marxist-Communist," as "all" his set at Cambridge

“is” (710). So he is not – at least “in principle” – against the leasing out of Groby Hall or Groby Great Tree “coming down” (712). But what Mark is in principle against is Tietjens’ new “adoption of the peasant life,” which Mark regards as much the same treason or trick as had disturbed his namesake uncle and his father’s uncle General Campion, as we have seen (712). “The peasant [life] had always spoilt every advance in the ideas of the world,” as he concludes – or as he merely restates what all of Cambridge now “agrees” (712). But Mark is still impressed all the same by the panoramic vantage point he gets from standing now on this hill, the same kind of hill of which his father once had dreamed, while hunkered down in trenches on the Western Front in France. “Four counties” run out under young Mark’s feet (713). His “view” is as “great” as the perspective from above Groby Hall (713). His “trusts” his father now to have “settled” where you got such a view from “up [on] a hill” (715). “His father was a good sort of man,” Mark concludes (713). Tietjens may have “ruined” himself through “dissolute” living, as the gossips used to say, but, still, he was “a good [sort of] man” (715). “If he [Mark] could spend a while here,” with his father, who knew what kinds of things he might learn? (715). Mark’s mother was “no guide” to him at all, but Tietjens might be (715). Lacking him, there was Marxist-Communism. “They all looked to that now,” his whole “set” at Cambridge: “Monty, the Prime Minister’s son,” “Dobles, [General] Campion’s nephew,” and “Porter, with [his] pig’s snout” (716). Ford gives us here in young Mark’s Cambridge set a preview of the literary Thirties of Auden, Waugh, and Greene, with its various reactions both for and against the leftist politics that formed a crucial path past the post-war, high-modernist moment of Eliot and Woolf, as we have seen. But there were other

paths as well, as we have also seen, and one of them is likewise previewed here when we turn back from young Mark to Tietjens' other heir – Little Chrissie, in Valentine's womb.

Mark wonders "what [will] become of him," and Valentine is asking much the same of his young half-brother, her unborn child. She wonders what she "wishes" Little Chrissie to be, not "knowing" what awaits her unborn son within the post-war "world" (812). But Chrissie's father Tietjens harbors hopes. He "wishes" for his son to be a "parson," "contemplative" and lean, walking Wiltshire "tythe-fields" with the Gospels and Epistles in "Greek" carried under his arm (812). Tietjens believes in "Providence," as Valentine put it, or else he would never dream again this old "dream" for his unborn son (814). He hopes, if he can ever earn the "money," to "buy" for Little Chrissie a "living" at a certain small place near "Salisbury" Plain (814). "What was [its] name," asks Valentine, "a pretty name?" (814). It was "where George Herbert was parson," she remembers, recalling Tietjens' own recollection on The Western Front in France (814). "Bemerton," she recollects herself – George Herbert was "rector of Bemerton, near Wilton" (814). "That was what [her son] was to be like," she comes to believe. His father thought "the time had [now] come" for "another" George Herbert and Tietjens had been "right" before about such things (815).

As we have seen, it was Father Consett's ghost who brought Sylvia here, now face to face with Valentine, and Valentine and Tietjens' hope now for their unborn son serves to echo Father Consett's prior judgment that the infant's father was perfectly sound. These formally religious intuitions both have their bearing now on Sylvia's stance, her pantomimic change of heart, a magic

transformation scene that helps resolve Ford's whole *Parade* in terms of comic romance. But what accounts the most for this magic transformation, this transformation scene, is a less religious and a more religious intuition of the moral occult – a general solicitude toward children, much like Valentine's own at the start of the war, in the midst of Mrs. Duchemin's and Macmaster's affair. Sylvia would never harm a child. She has had one herself, and she wanted more. Her "riding" horses has prevented that, she claims, her riding or more generally the whole long course of infidelity her riding represents (826). Sylvia has felt the "times" have "changed" and with them "the world" (785). She has found herself far "heavier" and much more weighted with remorse than she has ever been before (785). She feels the "time" for some "decision" has "come" and, with that decision being made, she feels like the Nike of Samothrace on "losing" the "fruits" of her "victory" (785, 802). For this loss of fruits, however, she claims not to "care" (802). Pride goes before a fall, and something else now – a sense of humility – precedes the transformation of the Nike, just as another kind of harrowing had gone before the prior transformation of her lover and rival, the gentleman and saint. This change now in Sylvia's posture marks paradoxically her highest height – her apotheosis – in the whole *Parade*. "Damn it," she sobs to Valentine, but she is "playing pimp" for Tietjens, and "leaving [him] to [her]" – or rather letting him go (826). This sudden change of heart in Mrs. Tietjens is vaguely reminiscent of the closing-act reversals within Shakespeare's final sequence of plays, his set of post-tragic romances, like *The Tempest* (1611) and *The Winter's Tale* (1611), with their moral emphases on redemption and reconciliation, the magic transformation of love. These late

romances, with their transfigurations, their reversals of generic trajectory, their reciprocal, reversible ironies, are in some sense Shakespeare's pantomimic plays. They move past a prior sense of tragedy on toward the sphere of romance found in fairy-tales. And Valentine helps signal such a movement through the course of Ford's *Parade* toward its comic resolution when she muses in the midst of her encounter with the other Mrs. Tietjens that "the age of fairy-tales was not [yet] past" (815).

Sylvia had come to Sussex, as we have seen, to cast her judgment on Tietjens and Valentine. But on finding herself surveying their domestic scene, she is haunted by the moral intuition of an august will that has somehow sanctified their union and blessed it with grace. That august will she casts in her own terms of Christian theology. But in fictional or meta-fictional terms, that august will is Ford's own – the force of his narrative design as it moves the whole *Parade* toward its pantomimic close on a note of comic romance. That note is manifested first in the image of the pregnant Valentine, protecting her unborn child Little Chrissie from Sylvia's portentous descent from the nearby hills, and that note is manifested even more so in Valentine's prospect as Sylvia descends and then arrives at her door. Sylvia proves far less threatening than Valentine had dreamed and far more solicitous and kind than she had expected, toward her unborn child. This kindness and solicitude of Valentine's rival takes us back not only to Valentine's concern for the unborn child produced by Mrs. Duchemin's and Macmaster's affair, but also to Sylvia's concern for her own child Mark, who seems, after all, to be Tietjens' own. We meet young Mark

Tietjens, the Marxist-Communist at Cambridge, and his fate is juxtaposed with the possible future of his unborn half-brother, now lying in Valentine's womb. That future is a version of the one their father Tietjens' had desired on the Western Front in France, but had been denied – the future of an Anglican saint, living out George Herbert's virtues as a country parson near Salisbury Plain. This future recalls Father Consett's past and his role as Sylvia's priest. The Roman Catholic saint had always urged charity toward Tietjens, his Anglican counterpart. This urging of Father Consett's has long haunted Sylvia in undercurrent ways and it leads her at last to her own embrace of that moral tradition and perennial wisdom that Valentine and Tietjens already had grasped in the course of the war. This late grasp that Sylvia makes of the moral occult, the moral good, then leads her on toward her redemption through her reconciliation toward Tietjens' union with Valentine – a reconciliation that modulates the whole Parade toward its closing note of comic romance, that note which shows the age of fairy-tales is not yet done, at least according to Ford.

VI

Ford sets this pantomimic sense of a fairy-tale redemption and reconciliation through comic romance against the militant modernity that issued in the war and with it those suspicious hermeneutics that had led to the gossip against his meal-sack elephant Tietjens and Valentine, his very plucky girl. These hermeneutics were the source at once of Sylvia's gossip as amplified by Ruggles, but also – and crucially in closing here – of Mark's and Mr. Tietjens' suspicions regarding respectively their brother and son. In letting Tietjens go, in ceding him to Valentine, Sylvia has helped to bless the union – the closing comic

marriage – toward which Ford's whole *Parade* has slowly moved. But one more benediction still remains – Mark's blessing of his brother, and through it Mr. Tietjens' own, a final benediction to match the one that Mrs. Wannop gives to Valentine and Tietjens on Armistice Day.

Mark has fallen ill more and more since Armistice Day, at which point the force of the war had finally struck him all at once. Beyond her final letting go of Tietjens, Sylvia will find her fate left open, unsettled in the wake of the war, and unresolved by *Parade's End*. But Mark will be a casualty of war, his own fate set like Sylvia's against the closing note of comic romance that Tietjens and Valentine are blessed with by Ford. Mark will be the agent of that note as much as Sylvia herself, letting go in his own turn of his sense of suspicion, just as Sylvia has now let go of the conjugal claim that would prevent the closing marriage of Valentine and Tietjens that Ford has arranged. The tragic resolution that Sylvia has helped undo in terms of narrative design Mark will likewise help undo in terms of reader response. His vantage-point on Valentine and Tietjens on the day that he dies will move from irony and satire toward comic romance, rejecting in the end that prior suspicion with which the whole *Parade* might be received. This self-reflexive critical response to such suspicious hermeneutics does not, of course, deny them their force. But it does ironize them at least, and in pantomimic ways. It satirizes those suspicious hermeneutics in reciprocal, reversible turn.

Preparing to die, Mark holds an inward conversation with his father's ghost, whom he expects to meet, or whom he is reminded of in this circumstance. He imagines approaching Mr. Tietjens in the after-life and saying

to him, “Hullo Sir. I understand you had a daughter by the wife of your best friend, she being now with child by your son” (832). And he likewise pictures having to add “[And] I understand [sir] that you committed suicide!” (832). These details that Mark now anticipates having to note are ones that could have been drawn from a stage melodrama from before the war or from a melodramatic pre-war novel like Ford’s own *The Good Soldier* (1915), described by its narrator Dowell as “the saddest story [he has] ever heard.”²⁷⁸ But then, like Sylvia before him, Mark displays a change of heart and revises his mode. He thinks back over all the gossip he has heard about his brother and about his father’s death, but this time in a less suspicious way – or in a manner more suspicious of the gossip of Ruggles than the old terms of honor that his brother and father both were faithful to. On the day of his death, Mr. Tietjens was enlisted by the vicar of the parish church at Groby to cull a few rabbits, by which the vicar’s churchyard was overrun. Had Mr. Tietjens “mis-hit” and not killed a “bunny” right away, he would have crawled beneath the “quickset” hedge to get to where the rabbit had fallen, to finish the job (831). “Decent men” – of whom his father was one – would “put” such mis-hits “out” of their misery as soon as they could (831). They would indeed crawl under a hedge, if that was the way. His father must have left his gun in “action” going under the hedge (831). He was getting “absent-minded,” and “many good, plucked men” had died that way (831). Beyond the realm of over-broad suspicion, this current explanation makes sense. “Quite” clearly then, as Mark can now see, his “Dad” had not

²⁷⁸ Ford Madox Ford, *The Good Soldier: A Tale of Passion* (1915), London: Penguin, 1946, p. 13.

committed suicide (832). And that meant “Valentine was not his daughter, and there was no incest,” he then goes on (832). “The Greeks” had made a whole “tragic row” about incest, Mark notes in slyly self-reflexive terms – in terms that point precisely toward the kind of resolution Ford contrives now to overcome, to overcome using Mark and Sylvia as his “*ficelles*,” in James’s phrase – not *deus ex machina*, but agents of an author’s moral will. It is “weight off [Mark’s] chest” that he will not now have to go through any tragic row like he had foreseen. Mark can face his death now in more comic and romantic terms. The whole tragic row of the Tietjenses, “the worst of it rolled up,” is “over” now (832). “No suicide. No incest. A Papist [once again] at Groby [Hall] and Groby Great Tree down” (832). “How you could be [both] a Papist and a Marxian-Communist,” as Mark Tietjens Junior claims to be, his uncle fails to know. Mark cannot foresee the post-war future of Waugh and Auden, let alone of Greene. But Ford can imagine such a future, and with it one in which his Tory gentleman and Anglican saints could be restaged in pantomimic ways for that same post-war world. The “curse” was “off” the Tietjens “family” line, as Mark proclaims (832). It might be “superstitious” to say, but “you must have a pattern to interpret things by” (832). Ruggles’ gossip, the modern hermeneutics of suspicion, of historical curses, and of tragic rows was one such pattern, and no less superstitious – no less artful, no less willful – than Mark’s own. “You can’t ... get your mind to work” at all without some pattern to interpret things by (832). The pattern Ford resolves his whole Parade upon here is not the only one, and yet it is one – and likewise no more obsolete in the wake of the war than Valentine’s and Tietjens’ own honor and fidelity.

Mark will use this pattern Ford resolves on in framing the author's meal-sack elephant one last time. The first and only glimpse we get of Tietjens in the real-time plot of *Last Post* comes in its closing pages and thus at the final resolution of *Parade's End*. Valentine has worried all throughout the closing volume over whether she and Tietjens can secure enough money to fulfill the hopes and dreams they share in common for their unborn son. Valentine has scolded her fat man now and again, their union showing strains despite the blessings it receives from all around. Tietjens, having gotten one such scolding from his very plucky girl, has "lifted his bicycle round" to ride off "wearily" now to right his latest wrong – the placement, or rather misplacement, of some "prints" he planned to sell inside a "jar" that has now been sold (835). Tietjens pedals off down the road "like a dejected bulldog," in Mark's own phrase (835). "How are we to live? How are we ever to live?" sobs Valentine, on seeing him go (835). To which Mark asks her cryptically if she has ever "heard tell" before of the "Yorkshireman" on "Mount Ararat," the final resting place of Noah's Ark in the Biblical account (835). "Do you remember the Yorkshireman" on Ararat he asks – the one "who stood [up] with his chin just out of the water" as The Ark drew near (833). "It's boon to tak up!" he had shouted, "It's bound to clear up," as indeed it soon did (833). The close proximity here of an archetypal Yorkshireman and Noah in The Bible recalls the prior posture Tietjens struck as a tosh-filled prophet, a modern Jeremiah, set against the status quo. Tietjens, like the prophet Jeremiah and also like Noah farther back in Biblical time, is a good sort of man, as we have seen, a good sort of man, but living now through difficult times. But Tietjens, like Noah, seems set on surviving those times. He

stands now, like the Yorkshireman on Ararat, on top of a hill. He has built a kind of Ark for himself and Valentine, an Ark with room as well for their unborn son, and for Mark and Marie Leonie. Tietjens has made it through with love, honor, and fidelity. So Mark urges Valentine never to “let [her] barnie [Chrissie] weep for [her] sharp tongue to [her] good man [Christopher]” (836). Both Mark’s image of the Yorkshireman on Ararat and with it his closing admonition to Valentine to turn from the sharp tongue of tragic satire toward the sweet tongue of comic romance is consistent with his observation earlier on of the whole scene around him on this day when he dies. “It was [all] like a pantomime!” Mark notes, meaning not only this deathbed scene, but the whole of life now coming to an end (834). Mark’s reference here to pantomime, just pages from the end of Ford’s *Parade*, serves one time more and in summation to identify the ‘ind legs, the fictive stilts, of that whole sequence which closes here, as pantomime itself does, not as tragic satire but as comic romance.

This kind of closure however had its critics, including Ford’s great critical champion Greene, who so disliked this ending to the sequence that he dropped *Last Post* altogether from his Bodley Head edition of Ford. “I think it could be argued,” Greene wrote in his introduction to *Parade’s End* “that *Last Post* was more than a mistake – [that] it was a disaster,” one which would delay full recognition of Ford’s great achievement until that mistake was remedied in Greene’s own way (5).²⁷⁹ The first three volumes of Ford’s sequence, Greene argues, tell “the terrifying story” of “a good man tortured, pursued, driven into

²⁷⁹ Graham Greene, “Introduction,” in *The Bodley Head Ford Madox Ford, Volume III, Parade’s End: Part One, Some Do Not ...*, London: The Bodley Head, 1963, p. 5.

revolt, and ruined so far as the world is concerned" (5).²⁸⁰ It is therefore incongruous in *Last Post* when the "sentimentality" that "lurks" in the "shadows" of the series "emerges" there unashamed, "with "everything cleared up" and all the novel's "ambiguities" brought out into "idyllic sunshine" (5).²⁸¹ Ford's work would be "a thousand times better," Greene goes on, had it ended on Armistice Day, with Tietjens and Valentine "united it's true," but also with an unsettled future "with [the] witch wife Sylvia awaiting them there" (6).²⁸² This darker kind of fairy-tale ending would be the proper close, Greene concludes, to *Parade's End*, and not "the carefully arranged happy finale of *Last Post*" (7).²⁸³ But instead, in those concluding scenes, even the witch wife Sylvia – "surely the most possessed evil character in modern fiction" – "gropes toward goodness" in the end (5).²⁸⁴ "It is as though Lady Macbeth [had] dropped her dagger beside the sleeping Duncan," as Greene complains (5).²⁸⁵

Greene's passing reference to Shakespeare comes closer than he realizes there to grasping Ford's whole project in *Parade's End*. That project, as we have seen, bears certain parallels to Shakespeare's own toward the end of his career, in valedictory plays like *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale*. It shares with Shakespeare's final plays an effort to move beyond tragedy and satire toward a new kind of comic romance, one in which tragic circumstances like Lady Macbeth's or Sylvia's own are overcome and then redeemed through the highest

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

form of irony – the irony of charity, the irony of love. Whether viewed from his Christian vantage-point or from his leftist vantage-point, Greene’s rejection of this highest form of irony is strange, since what the highest irony provides is a moral means to the ultimate end of both the Christian and the leftist hopes that Greene embraced and which would prove such very common paths beyond the post-war, high-modernist moment Ford helped to conclude with *Parade’s End*. That end was the overcoming of tragic circumstances like those which had issued in The First World War and which would issue in A Second World War in the year Ford died. The author of *Parade’s End* had been quite earnest in his stated effort there to write a novel-sequence that would “obviate all future wars.”²⁸⁶ The moral, religious, and political dimension of Ford’s stated effort in *Parade’s End* are captured more surely than in Greene’s introduction by a colleague of Greene’s, one who likewise moved between a leftist and a Christian hope in the years between the two world wars. That colleague of Greene’s was Auden, who describes *Parade’s End*, in terms moral, religious, and political all at once, as “a four-volume study of Retribution and Expiation,” concerning all of English “society,” but especially certain classes and “families” it holds. The sequence opens, as he observes, with an England still governed as yet by a “ruling class” with “the social and moral values” such a class tends to hold.²⁸⁷ But there are “cracks” with this state of things that long precede their issue in The First World War.²⁸⁸ It is clear, as Auden notes, that “many young persons of good family are unfit to rule,” as evidenced especially – as Ford could see – by

²⁸⁶ Ford Madox Ford, *It Was The Nightingale ...*, London: J. B. Lippincott, 1933, p. 205.

²⁸⁷ Auden, “Il Faut Payer,” p. 312.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 312.

their “readiness to listen to and believe” the kind of “scandal” to which Tietjens and Valentine are subject in *Parade’s End*.²⁸⁹ And Ford imagines The First World War all throughout *Parade’s End* as a kind of “retribution” for the “sins” and “omissions” of the English ruling class, for which both it and “innocent” millions must “suffer” in the course of the war.²⁹⁰ Tietjens will be poised between those millions and his own ruling class, positioned as a Tory gentleman but also an Anglican saint – as a member of the ruling class, but not as a “political reactionary” or a “social snob.”²⁹¹ Tietjens suffers with the innocent millions, but then the “curse” is “lifted” in *Last Post*, with his hardships having left him “humble,” and “the one real defect in his character” – his intermittent “arrogance” – now mercifully “gone.”²⁹² Tietjens is ironized, satirized, and subject to tragedy as both his own class and many millions of innocents were through the course of the war. But he comes through as Valentine predicted, and ends as *Parade’s End* closes, with the prospect of comic romance. The prospect is the common end of both the Christian and the leftist projects toward which the English writers of Auden’s and Greene’s generation would turn in an effort much like Ford’s own to obviate a future war. That effort, as we know, would finally fail. But to “neglect” it and its seminal expression in *Parade End* would be a critical mistake, as Auden could see.²⁹³

The second half of this project has been an endeavor not to make that mistake. Where the first half attempted to recuperate the merely human or

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 317.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 317.

merely humanistic sense of Life and Love as found in Conrad's *Chance*, this closing half attempted in turn to recuperate not just the antic poise between Ford's pantomimic prophecy and tosh but also that not merely reciprocal but likewise reversible irony that helps resolve Ford's novel sequence – like Conrad's two-part novel before it – on a note not of tragic satire but comic romance. Just as Conrad's closing embrace of a merely humanistic Life and Love could prove essential to our critical project at a time when any effort like our own is gravely threatened by suspicion and burlesque, so too could there be fundamental value in a fictive hermeneutics like Ford's own – a hermeneutics founded on the irony of charity, the irony of Life and Love, and capable of staging itself not only as tragic satire but comic romance. Such a hermeneutics as this rejects the force of that suspicion, that gossip and scandal that helped to issue after Conrad's novel and before Ford's sequence in *The First World War*. It offers us a means toward that end held in common by the Christian and the leftist paths forward past the cultural crises that Conrad and Ford had faced before and that First World War. And it offers us more broadly an overlapping means toward the end held in common by all of our religious and political faiths – the merely humanistic end of Life and Love, a hope against depression and despair, a charity against the sense of scandal and gossip and suspicion that can issue in war. Conrad and Ford found these means through telling their tales of stilted boys and plucky girls, and we ourselves can find them in turn by reading those tales then sharing them with others as scholars, teachers, and friends.

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