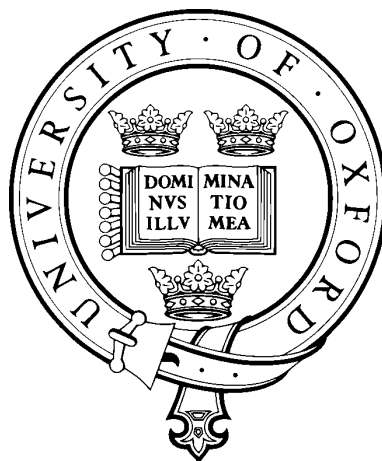


MODERNISM AND THE POLITICS OF TIME:

**TIME AND HISTORY IN THE WORK OF
H. G. WELLS, D. H. LAWRENCE AND VIRGINIA WOOLF**

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D.Phil. Thesis Submitted for Examination, Trinity Term 2014.

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This thesis argues for a revised understanding of time in modernist literature. It challenges the longstanding critical tradition that has used the French philosopher Henri Bergson's distinction between clock-time and *durée* to explicate time in the modernist novel. To do so, it replaces Stephen Kern's influential understanding of modernity as characterized by the solidification of a homogenous clock-time, with Peter Osborne's notion of modernity as structured by a competing range of temporalizations of history.

The following chapters then read the fictional and historical writings of H. G. Wells, D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf alongside such a conception of modernity, and show that all these writers explored different versions of historical time. Wells explored geological time in *The Time Machine* (1895) and *An Outline of History* (1920), Lawrence adapted Friedrich Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence in *Women in Love* (1920), *Movements in European History* (1921) and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), and Woolf imagined an aeviternal historical continuity and a phenomenological historical time in *Between the Acts* (1941).

By addressing historical time, this thesis enables a reassessment of the politics of modernist time. It challenges the view that the purported modernist exploration of a Bergsonian private time constitutes an asocial and ahistorical retreat from the political. Rather, by transferring Osborne's notion of a 'politics of time' to the literary sphere, this study argues that the competing configurations of politically-charged historical time in literary modernism, form the analogue of the competing versions of such a time within modernity, emblemized by the contrasting accounts of historical time of Martin Heidegger and Walter Benjamin.

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Writing a thesis about time and modernism has taught me many things. For instance, I have learnt that the paradoxes of time and motion are all a scam, and that the tortoise does not, in fact, beat Achilles. However, while the course has been long, it has also been rewarding, and I am very grateful to those who have helped me along the way.

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INTRODUCTION: MODERNISM AND THE CULT OF TIME

'Every conception of history is invariably accompanied by a certain experience of time which is implicit in it, conditions it, and thereby has to be elucidated.'

Giorgio Agamben¹

Modernism and the Cult of Time

In *Time and Western Man* (1927), Wyndham Lewis delivered a polemic against what he saw as a 'time cult' in the arts of his day. His central argument was that an obsession with time had developed in philosophy and the sciences, principally through the philosophy of Henri Bergson and the science of Albert Einstein, and that this obsession had influenced literature and the arts, resulting in the 'literary pre-occupation with Time' of artists such as Marcel Proust, James Joyce, and Gertrude Stein. Philosophy and literature, he contended, have been marked by a 'glorification of the concept Time', which on both planes resolves itself into a 'cult of Time'.²

Lewis attributed this pervasive fascination with time to the 'philosophy of *psychological time*' of Henri Bergson.³ Bergson first expounded this philosophy in his *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (1889), in which he adumbrated the pivotal distinction between 'two possible conceptions of time': *durée* and clock time.⁴ *Durée* is an inner duration involving qualitative succession which arises from 'the melting of states of consciousness into one another', whereas clock-time, a 'spurious concept' resulting from 'the trespassing of the idea of space upon the field

¹ Giorgio Agamben, 'Time and History: Critique of the Instant and the Continuum', in *Infancy and History: Essays on the Destruction of Experience*, trans. Liz Heron (London: Verso, 1993), 89-106, 89.

² Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man* (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1993), 205-6.

³ Lewis, *Time*, 84.

⁴ Henri Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (Paris: Alcan, 1889); all references here will be to F. L. Pogson's English translation of 1910: *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F. L. Pogson (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1910).

of pure consciousness', is a form of 'homogenous time whose moments are strung on a spatial line'.⁵ Lewis singled out Bergson's 'Doctrine of Time' as 'the creative source of the time-philosophy', and claimed that from 'the birth of Bergson to the present day, one vast orthodoxy has been in process of maturing in the world of science and philosophy'.⁶ He portrayed Einsteinian physics as an important later articulation of this time-philosophy, asserting that the 'philosophy of the [einsteinian] space-timeist is identical with the old . . . bergsonian philosophy of *psychological time*' or '*durée*'.⁷ Of course, audaciously to align Bergson's *durée* with the space-time of Einsteinian physics is to ignore the marked differences between the two, brought out when Bergson and Einstein met at the Société française de philosophie in Paris in 1922 to discuss the meaning of relativity, and reflected in Bergson's *Duration and Simultaneity* (1922).⁸ Undeterred by such differences, Lewis instead stressed the homogeneity of the philosophical time-doctrine, proclaiming to have found 'the same unanimity rampant throughout the contemporary theoretical field'.⁹ Further, Lewis claimed that Bergson had a profound influence on the literature of his day. 'Without all the uniform pervasive growth of the time-philosophy starting from the little seed planted by Bergson', he claimed, 'there would be no *Ulysses*, or there would be no *A*

⁵ Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 100, 107, 237. For a recent exposition of Bergson's distinction between *durée* and clock-time, and of his time-philosophy more generally, see Suzanne Guerlac, *Thinking in Time: An Introduction to Henri Bergson* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006).

⁶ Lewis, *Time*, 158, 84.

⁷ Lewis, *Time*, 84.

⁸ On the similarities and differences between Bergson's philosophy and the philosophy implied by Einstein's special theory of relativity, including a discussion of Lewis's treatment of the two in *Time and Western Man*, see Michael Whitworth, *Einstein's Wake: Relativity, Metaphor, and Modernist Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 190-4. For an account of the 'bitter dispute' between Bergson and Einstein, see Jimena Canales, 'Einstein, Bergson, and the Experiment that Failed: Intellectual Cooperation at the League of Nations', *Modern Language Notes*, 120/5 (December 2005), 1168-91.

⁹ Lewis, *Time*, 206.

La Recherche du Temps Perdu. There would be no “time-composition” of Miss Stein’.¹⁰

Since Lewis’s study, the dominant critical approaches to time in what has become known as modernist literature have been Bergsonian. As Adam Barrows observes, Lewis’s ‘allegation that the writers now considered canonical modernists were slavish devotees of the temporal philosophy of Henri Bergson has stuck fairly well in the collective critical consciousness’.¹¹ In their most general form, such critical approaches see within modernist literature the exploration of a private, psychological time, very similar to that which had been philosophically articulated by Bergson. Early studies, such as those of Shiv Kumar and Margaret Church, drew parallels between Bergson’s philosophy of time and modernist literature.¹² For example, Kumar in *Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel* (1962) held that Bergson’s ‘durée or psychological time . . . becomes the distinguishing feature of the stream of consciousness novel’, whose central exemplars are the novels of Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce.¹³ According to Kumar, these novels deploy innovative new formal techniques to explore their protagonists’ ‘stream of consciousness’, which is to be understood as a Bergsonian (or Jamesian) flux of conscious states; the novel thereby conveys or represents the flow of a Bergsonian psychological time, as it is experienced by the novel’s characters.¹⁴

¹⁰ Lewis, *Time*, 87.

¹¹ Adam Barrows, *The Cosmic Time of Empire: Modern Britain and World Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 55.

¹² Shiv Kumar, *Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel* (London: Blackie, 1962); Margaret Church, *Time and Reality: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963).

¹³ Kumar, *Stream of Consciousness*, 17.

¹⁴ In *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), William James advanced an account of ‘the perception of time’ based around the specious present, in which new objects enter consciousness through expectation, and fade into memory. Memory and expectation, the ‘retrospective and the prospective sense of time’, in turn ‘give that continuity to consciousness without which it could not be called a

Whereas Kumar aimed to ‘bring out the *parallelism* between the notion of stream of consciousness as it appears in [Woolf, Joyce and Richardson] and the Bergsonian concept of flux’, later critics such as Paul Douglass, Tom Quirk, Mark Antliff, Mary Ann Gillies and Hilary Fink all sought to establish concrete instances of Bergson’s influence on modernism.¹⁵ For example, Gillies in *Henri Bergson and British Modernism* (1996) charts the reception of Bergson’s philosophy in Britain, and offers Bergsonian readings of writers such as T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson and Joseph Conrad. While she argues that many aspects of Bergson’s philosophy influenced British modernists, her Bergsonian readings draw heavily on his philosophy of time: for example, she argues that Woolf ‘was preoccupied with [Bergson’s] opposition of *durée* and *l’étendu*’, that Joyce’s ‘fictional worlds are very much based in *durée*, because his primary focus is the inner world’, and that Richardson’s technique in *Pilgrimage* (1915-67) involves placing ‘the reader within *durée*, while at the same time using the more conventional external time to form the novel’s framework’.¹⁶ Recently, Paul Ardoin, S. E. Gontarski and Laci Mattison, the editors of *Understanding Bergson, Understanding Modernism*

stream’ (*The Principles of Psychology*, i (New York: Henry Holt, 1890), 606-7). Kumar sees James’s and Bergson’s accounts of time and consciousness as articulating, in a complementary manner, the philosophical basis of the so-called modernist ‘stream of consciousness’ novel (*Stream of Consciousness*, 13-4).

¹⁵ Kumar, *Stream of Consciousness*, viii. Paul Douglass, *Bergson, Eliot and American Literature* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986); Tom Quirk, *Bergson and American Culture: The Worlds of Willa Cather and Wallace Stevens* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Mark Antliff, *Inventing Bergson: Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant-Garde* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Mary Ann Gillies, *Henri Bergson and British Modernism* (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996) and Hilary Fink, *Bergson and Russian Modernism, 1900-1930* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999). See also Frederick Burwick and Paul Douglass (eds), *The Crisis in Modernism: Bergson and the Vitalist Controversy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

¹⁶ Gillies, *Bergson*, 134, 135, 153.

(2013), have reiterated the importance of Bergson's thought for modernism, and have called for a 'return to Bergson'.¹⁷

A Bergsonian understanding of time in the modernist novel has also, as Barrows makes clear, informed a long-standing critique of aesthetic modernism from the left, which stems from György Lukács and Raymond Williams.¹⁸ Most importantly, Lukács criticised the modernist writers' supposed exploration of a Bergsonian 'subjective time' as part of his wider critique of the ideology of modernism in *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* (1955).¹⁹ Lukács shares with Lewis the view that Bergson articulated the modern conception of time—he holds that other philosophers simply 'took up and varied this theme'—and that this conception of time 'soon made its appearance in literature'.²⁰ For Lukács, the modernist literary exploration of a Bergsonian subjective time forms part of what he sees as modernism's ideologically retrograde asocialism and ahistoricism. His favoured realist novels, such as those of Honoré de Balzac and of Thomas Mann, portray their protagonists within society at a given moment of history: they are thus situated within the 'objective time' of history and historical change.²¹ (The value of such realist novels, on Lukács' account, is that they then permit a social and political critique of the historical and social reality which they represent). By contrast, modernist writers' portrayal of a subjective time, in which the individual turns away from society and retreats into his or her own consciousness, forms part of the modernists' view of 'man' as 'by nature solitary,

¹⁷ Paul Ardoin, S. E. Gontarski and Laci Mattison (eds), *Understanding Bergson, Understanding Modernism* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 6.

¹⁸ Barrows, *Cosmic Time*, 12.

¹⁹ György Lukács, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, trans. John and Necke Mander (London: Merlin Press, 1963), 37-9.

²⁰ Lukács, *Realism*, 37.

²¹ Lukács, *Realism*, 38.

asocial, unable to enter into relationships with other human beings'.²² Moreover, by fetishizing a subjective time, modernist novels lose sight of the objective time of history: 'by separating time from the outer world of objective reality, the inner world of the subject is transformed into a . . . flux and acquires—paradoxically as it may seem—a static character'.²³ Though ostensibly being about time and flux, the modernists' celebration of a Bergsonian subjective time, by forsaking the objective historical time of the realist novel, forms part of what Lukács calls modernism's 'static approach to reality', and its denial of history.²⁴

On a more deeply entrenched theoretical level, Stephen Kern has used Bergson's philosophy of time to provide master-concepts with which to theorize time in modernism and modernity in his hugely influential *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918* (1983). Kern argues that the period from 1880 to the outbreak of the First World War 'created distinctive new modes of thinking about and experiencing time and space'.²⁵ He gives an account of how a vast array of technological innovations such as the telephone, wireless telegraph, x-ray, cinema, bicycle, automobile and airplane, and of how cultural developments such as the stream of consciousness novel, psychoanalysis, Cubism, and the theory of relativity, changed conceptions of time and space in this period. However, his overarching narrative account of the period implicitly accepts and reproduces the Bergsonian distinction between public and private time.²⁶ On Kern's account, the introduction of World Standard Time at the end of the nineteenth century 'created greater uniformity of shared public time',

²² Lukács, *Realism*, 20.

²³ Lukács, *Realism*, 38.

²⁴ Lukács, *Realism*, 34.

²⁵ Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918: With a New Preface* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 1.

²⁶ See Barrows, *Cosmic Time*, 9-11.

against which emerged the literary and cultural ‘explorations of a plurality of private times’ that were the ‘historically unique contributions of the period’.²⁷ Overall, for Kern, the ‘thrust of the age was to affirm the reality of private time against that of a single public time and to define its nature as heterogeneous, fluid and reversible’.²⁸ Kern’s narrative of the period therefore inscribes the changes in the experience of time and space within an essentially Bergsonian distinction between private and public time, and understands literary modernism as affirming a private temporal experience in the face of a superficial public sphere.

Subsequent studies, such as those of Randall Stevenson and Ursula Heise, have retrenched Kern’s implicitly Bergsonian approach to time in modernism. Stevenson’s account of time in *Modernist Fiction* (1992/1998) and related articles is particularly instructive (and problematic), because it purports to downplay the importance of Bergson while, following Kern, theoretically elevating Bergson’s distinction between private and public time to stand as the overarching opposition of the era.²⁹ As part of his assessment of Lewis’s *Time and Western Man*, Stevenson criticises the preeminent importance which Lewis ascribed to Bergson’s philosophy. Lewis’s contention that Bergson instituted one ‘great orthodoxy’ of time-philosophy is, Stevenson points out, ‘simply wrong’, and his argument that the widespread contemporary fascination with time could be attributed to Bergson’s influence

²⁷ Kern, *Time and Space*, 33, 313-4. For example, Kern holds that Marcel Proust, Franz Kafka and James Joyce all wrote literary works which explored ‘[t]he heterogeneity of private time and its conflict with public time’ (16-8).

²⁸ Kern, *Time and Space*, 34.

²⁹ Randall Stevenson, *Modernist Fiction*, 2nd edn (London: Prentice Hall, 1998); ‘A Narrow, Zigzag and Secluded Path: Conrad, Clockwork, and the Politics of Modernism’, in Andreas Fischer, Martin Heusser and Thomas Hermann (eds), *Aspects of Modernism: Studies in Honour of Max Nänny* (Tübingen: G. Narr, 1997), 33-52; ‘Greenwich Meanings: Clocks and Things in Modernist and Postmodernist Fiction’, *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 30 (2000), 124-36.

borders, he suggests, on the level of a ‘conspiracy’ theory.³⁰ More importantly, Stevenson advances deep-seated theoretical reasons why Lewis’s influence-approach is unsatisfactory. The issue of time in literature cannot simply be a question of philosophy’s influence on literature, or even a question of a reciprocal influence; rather, the issue has to be related to a wider set of ‘contemporary social, political and economic conditions’, or to conditions of modernity.³¹ Drawing on Kern’s cultural history, Stevenson provides a by-now familiar litany of contexts in which to read modernist time: new organizations of time brought about by the conditions of factory labour in industrialized capitalist society, shaped by factors such as the ritual of ‘clocking-in’ and ‘clocking-out’, as well as by Taylorism and scientific management; the spread of railways and the institution of a homogenous nationwide ‘Railway Time’ to replace local time zones; the establishment of world standard time, centred on Greenwich, through the Prime Meridian Conference in Washington in 1884 and the International Conference on Time in Paris in 1912.³² However, following Kern, he theoretically unites these diverse contexts in an overarching narrative of the formation of a homogenous public time. If anything, Stevenson’s time of ‘public life’ is more malign than Kern’s public time: it is the time of dehumanizing factory routine, of imperial domination, and of synchronized death in the trenches.³³

Reading the public/private distinction back into modernist literature, Stevenson (again following Kern’s example) holds that modernist writers reacted against pernicious public time by affirming private time. He compiles lists of examples to confirm his

³⁰ Stevenson, *Modernist Fiction*, 111, 115.

³¹ Stevenson, *Modernist Fiction*, 117, 13.

³² Stevenson, *Modernist Fiction*, 117, 120-1, 122-3. Compare Ursula Heise’s summary of the factors which brought about a ‘revolution in the awareness of space and time’ in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (*Chronoschisms: Time, Narrative, and Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 33-4).

³³ Stevenson, *Modernist Fiction*, 128, 118, 127.

argument that modernists disliked ‘time on the clock’: Gudrun’s horror at the ‘twitching of the hands of the clock’ in D. H. Lawrence’s *Women in Love* (1920); Bernard being upset by ‘the stare of clocks’ in Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando* (1928); Quentin smashing the glass of his watch and tearing off the hands in William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* (1929).³⁴ Correlatively, Stevenson argues, modernists affirmed ‘time in the mind’: central examples here are Marcel Proust’s use of memory as ‘an essential structuring device’ in *A la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-27) and the ‘freewheeling movements of Molly Bloom’s mind’ in the last episode of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922), both of which, he argues, show ‘modernism freeing narrative as far as possible from time on the clock’.³⁵ What justifies Stevenson’s wholesale interpretation of time in modernist literature in Bergsonian terms is not the fact that Bergson influenced modernist novelists (as Wyndham Lewis and Mary Ann Gillies argued), but rather the fact that modernist novelists (and philosophers such as Bergson) were reacting to the same set of social and economic conditions, which happen to be theorized in terms drawn from Bergson’s philosophy.³⁶ Bergson’s distinction between private and public time begins to appear obvious, inevitable, and ideologically-neutral. As one critic puts it, the distinction between private and public time becomes ‘utterly naturalized’.³⁷

³⁴ Stevenson, *Modernist Fiction*, 88, 90.

³⁵ Stevenson, *Modernist Fiction*, 96, 104, 128.

³⁶ See Stevenson, *Modernist Fiction*, 128.

³⁷ Jesse Matz, ‘Hulme’s Compromise and the New Psychologism’, in Edward P. Comentale and Andrzej Gasiorek (eds), *T. E. Hulme and the Question of Modernism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 113-31, 113. Ursula Heise, in *Chronoschisms* (1997), also accepts and reproduces Kern’s model of time in modernism, which she uses as a foil to contrast time in postmodernism. Notably, as with Stevenson, Bergson’s distinction between private and public time is completely naturalized, and Bergson is listed as just one of a number of other thinkers, alongside Sigmund Freud, William James, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Jean-Paul Sartre, who were all supposedly interested in ‘the nature and working of private temporality’ (36).

In general, since Kern's study, it has become standard practice to theorize time in modernity and modernism through Bergson's distinction between private and public time. For example, Pericles Lewis reiterates what have become critical commonplaces when he claims that modernity is characterised by 'the sense of a division between the time of private experience and the time of public life', and that 'modernists were fascinated with the disjunction between internal and external time'.³⁸ As Barrows points out, it 'has now become virtually impossible to think of modernist time outside of the contexts of Bergson's philosophy and Kern's social history'.³⁹

However, there are serious problems with the dominant Bergsonian approaches to the issue of time in modernism. To remain within the contexts of Bergson's philosophy and Kern's cultural history is detrimental, as critics such as Mark Hama, Jesse Matz and Adam Barrows have pointed out. It tends to reduce the many different forms of time and temporality in the modernist novel to a homogenous exploration of 'private time'. Hama has drawn attention to the limitations of 'the critical tendency to view time in the modernist novel almost exclusively in Bergsonian terms', and shows how it has obscured temporal complexity in the case of Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907).⁴⁰ Matz argues that the 'utterly naturalized distinction between private and public time', the demonization of 'all public temporalities', and the lumping 'very different kinds of temporal experiment together into the category of private time', has 'led to serious misunderstandings and underestimations . . . of modernist

³⁸ Pericles Lewis, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 12, 161. Compare Ann Banfield's similar claim that '[m]odernist time-thinking manifested an increasingly marked dualism: a disjunction between public/objective and private/subjective time' ('Remembrance and Time Past', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Modernist Novel*, ed. Morag Shiac (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 48-64, 48).

³⁹ Barrows, *Cosmic Time*, 9.

⁴⁰ Mark Hama, 'Time as Power: The Politics of Social Time in Conrad's *The Secret Agent*', *Conradiana*, 32/2 (2000), 123-43, 124.

temporalities'.⁴¹ Barrows points out that the Bergsonian critical tradition has 'led us to ignore the full range of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century modernist engagements with temporality'.⁴² These problems are most acute in the work of critics such as Stevenson and Heise who adopt Kern's theoretical framework. Stevenson objected to Lewis's contention that Bergson instituted one 'great orthodoxy' in the time-philosophy of his day, yet is himself guilty of projecting a far greater homogeneity into modernist literature by holding that it is united in a common project of resisting time on the clock and exploring time in the mind.⁴³ Evidence of the same homogenizing tendency is apparent in Heise's work when, in the course of a single sentence, she asserts reductively that the novels of Proust, Mann, Joyce, Svevo, Woolf, Faulkner, Stein and many others 'testify' to the fact that 'the temporal operations of the human mind and its potential conflicts with the linearity of public time became one of the most persistently recurring topics' in the modernist novel.⁴⁴

This thesis will contest the dominant critical narrative of modernism's affirmation of a private, Bergsonian time-consciousness. It will do so by arguing that H. G. Wells, D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf all explored varieties of a different sort of time in their fictional and historical writings: historical time, or time which underpins various conceptions of history. This modernist exploration of historical time has hitherto been largely occluded by the critical preoccupation with Bergsonian *durée*. By rendering a version of modernism which affirms the individual experience of a private, psychological time, Bergsonian approaches have overlooked the communal and historical aspects of modernist temporality. The inadequacy of such approaches in

⁴¹ Matz, 'Hulme's Compromise', 113-4

⁴² Barrows, *Cosmic Time*, 10.

⁴³ Stevenson, *Modernist Fiction*, 111.

⁴⁴ Heise, *Chronoschisms*, 36.

relation to the question of historical time is evident in the work of Stevenson and Heise. In *Modernist Fiction*, Stevenson addresses the crisis of the First World War, which brings his discussion of time in modernism to the level of ‘the evolution of history itself’.⁴⁵ Led by a generalization of his guiding Bergsonian distinction between time in the mind and clock-time to the level of historical time, he argues that history appeared in either one of two forms to modernists as well as to ‘the age as a whole’: either as continuous flow, or as discontinuity and fragmentation.⁴⁶ Following Kern, he argues that through its enormous violence the First World War extinguished ‘a sense of integration in the flow of time’: ‘[r]upturing the sense of the stream of time’, the First World War added to the tendency ‘to conceive time as divided or fractured rather than . . . seamlessly flowing’.⁴⁷ Correlatively, Stevenson finds two possibilities for modernist narrative in the aftermath of the First World War: narrative ‘could in various ways reproduce the fragmented, discontinuous aspect of contemporary history’, as in Lawrence’s *Women in Love*, or fiction ‘could try to smooth over or escape from the cracks and chasms in contemporary life through streams of consciousness, recovered memories, and loops in time’.⁴⁸

However, such a dualistic treatment of historical time is unsatisfactory. It is not the case that modernists conceived of historical time in only two possible ways. The various conceptions of historical time which writers such as Wells, Lawrence and Woolf espoused cannot be forced into a simple binary opposition between fragment and flow, an oversimplification underpinned by the Bergsonian distinction between clock-time and *durée*.

⁴⁵ Stevenson, *Modernist Fiction*, 141.

⁴⁶ Stevenson, *Modernist Fiction*, 128.

⁴⁷ Stevenson, *Modernist Fiction*, 145, 147. Compare Kern, *Time and Space*, 288-9.

⁴⁸ Stevenson, *Modernist Fiction*, 157.

Heise's approach to historical time is equally unappealing. While she does gesture towards 'the cyclical or spiral patterns of history and the recurrence of archetypes that many modernist texts foreground', these are firmly encased within a dualistic Bergsonian opposition, and are held to be alternatives to explorations of private time as means of resisting 'the linearity and mechanicity of standardized time'.⁴⁹ By contrast, this study will argue that the work of Wells, Lawrence and Woolf displays far richer and more varied explorations of historical time than the reductive and distorting portrayals which Bergsonian approaches have allowed. Conversely, by drawing attention to these varieties of historical time, I hope to challenge the adequacy of the Bergsonian framework for addressing the question of modernist time.

By drawing attention to modernist varieties of historical time, I also aim to challenge an important corollary of the Bergsonian view—that the modernist concern with time involves a retreat from the public sphere—and on this basis to argue for a revised understanding of the politics of modernist time. Bergsonian approaches have led to a widespread view of modernist time as involving a retreat from the public sphere, and with it from material and political concerns. Such a view follows in part from the (arguably) reactionary nature of Bergson's philosophy, and his advocacy of an introspective retreat into the realm of *durée* in his *Essai*. Therein, Bergson contrasted 'two different selves', one of which is 'the external projection of the other, its spatial and . . . social representation'; the other, more fundamental self is connected to *durée* and is therefore 'free'. To achieve 'freedom', Bergson advocated an introspective

⁴⁹ Heise, *Chronoschisms*, 36.

retreat from the ‘automated, external world’ into the depths of consciousness.⁵⁰ Such introspection involves turning away from social and political concerns: it is what Barrows calls ‘a reactionary retreat from the muck and grime of the spatial public realm’.⁵¹

The modernist concern with time, understood as the literary exploration of a Bergsonian interior time, has likewise been portrayed as complicit in a retreat from the public realm both by studies of influence such as that of Gillies, and by Kern’s cultural study. Typically, for example, in her Bergsonian reading of Dorothy Richardson’s *Pilgrimage*, Gillies contends that ‘Richardson was less concerned with the external world than she was with the inner one’, and that in the novel ‘society is less important than Miriam’s inner life’.⁵² Similarly, Kern’s study portrays the modernist exploration of Bergsonian private time as a reactive retreat from the public sphere and from modernity. Thus Stevenson, having inherited Kern’s framework, characteristically contends that modernist narratives ‘turn away from the reifying pressures of modern life towards more inviolate inner states of consciousness’.⁵³

The view that modernist time involves a Bergsonian retreat from the public realm has in turn led to two main interpretations of the politics of that time. The first stems from Lukács’s critique of the politics of modernism, and his charge that the modernists’ exploration of a subjective time, in which ‘the individual [retreats] into himself in despair at the cruelty of the age’ where he ‘may experience an intoxicated fascination

⁵⁰ Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 231-3.

⁵¹ Barrows, *Cosmic Time*, 12. Jane Goldman similarly remarks sceptically that Bergson ‘locates “freedom” in subjective intuition’ which ‘remains cut off from the spatial, material and historical “real world”’ (*The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf: Modernism, Post-Impressionism and the Politics of the Visual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 4).

⁵² Gillies, *Bergson*, 151-2.

⁵³ Stevenson, ‘Greenwich Meanings’, 131.

at his forlorn condition', forms part of an ideologically retrograde asocial and ahistorical modernism.⁵⁴ Lukács' critique has contributed towards the common view of modernist temporality as what Barrows calls a 'reactionary cultural formation', expressing 'a deliberate retreat from crassly material or "political" engagements'.⁵⁵

The second type of interpretation finds a more politically salutary aspect in the turn away from the public realm, and discovers in the supposed introspective plunge into the realm of *durée* an act of political resistance. Perhaps the most sophisticated version of this argument is given by Stevenson in 'A Narrow, Zigzag and Secluded Path: Conrad, Clockwork, and the Politics of Modernism' (1997).⁵⁶ Therein, Stevenson seeks to counter Lukács's charge that the modernists' exploration of subjective time constitutes a '[denial] or [evasion] of the pressures of contemporary history which writers should have addressed', and to recover a 'more worthwhile and politically responsible' role for modernist fiction.⁵⁷ 'Modernist fiction's zigzag forms and structures can be seen', argues Stevenson, 'as acts of resistance to the new stringencies of time's rule in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century'.⁵⁸ By claiming to find 'resistance within the form of fiction', Stevenson invokes what Jacques Rancière calls one of the 'great politics of aesthetics': the 'politics of the

⁵⁴ Lukács, *Realism*, 38. Similarly, within Woolf studies, Goldman has leveled a critique of Bergsonian readings of Woolf (rather than of Woolf's writings themselves), arguing that they tend misleadingly to present Woolf as apolitically divorced from 'the historical' and from "'the real world'" (*Feminist Aesthetics*, 4).

⁵⁵ Barrows, *Cosmic Time*, 4.

⁵⁶ An alternative, feminist version of this argument finds in the retreat into feminine *durée* an act of resistance to the masculine external world. For example, Gillies finds in Richardson's plunging 'her reader into the depths of Miriam's *durée*' a way of 'creating a distinctly feminine reality', and a deliberate attempt to 'rid herself of a dominant, controlling, masculine view of the world' (*Bergson*, 155). Goldman is sceptical about parallel arguments in the sphere of Woolf studies, suggesting that as well as relying on problematically 'gendered metaphysical dualisms', they tend to neglect rather than establish the feminist import of Woolf's writings (*Feminist Aesthetics*, 4). On the political aspects of the gendering of Bergsonian *durée* within the period, see Anne Fernihough, "'Go in Fear of Abstractions": Modernism and the Spectre of Democracy', *Textual Practice*, 14/3 (2000), 179-97, 493-4.

⁵⁷ Stevenson, 'Secluded Path', 50.

⁵⁸ Stevenson, 'Secluded Path', 50.

resistant form'. Such an aesthetics, which are best exemplified by those of Theodor Adorno, '[enclose] the political promise of aesthetic experience in art's very separation, in the resistance of its form to every transformation into a form of life'.⁵⁹ Indeed, Adorno had opposed Lukács's understanding of the politics of modernism in his review of *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*. Therein, he criticised Lukács's commitment to a form of mimetic realism, or his restriction of literature 'to the imitation of empirical reality', on the grounds that it misapprehended the constitutive formality of the artwork.⁶⁰ Instead, Adorno argued that through its form, the modernist artwork achieves an "'aesthetic distance"' from existence' that confers on the artwork the ability to stand as a critique of that existence.⁶¹ Opposing Lukács's position in a manner very similar to that of Adorno, Stevenson mobilises a defence of the politics of modernist time in the spirit of an aesthetics of resistant form. Resistant form, for Stevenson, means the often complex narrative form through which modernist novels explore the 'elaborate architectures of consciousness and memory'.⁶² Elsewhere, Stevenson celebrates the modernists' pursuit of 'temporal autonomy', a term derived from Gérard Genette which refers to the capacity of narrative to depart from a chronological ordering of events, and which becomes emblematic for Stevenson of modernist narrative's capacity to resist the dictates of homogenous public time.⁶³ Such 'temporal autonomy', silently echoing Adorno's 'aesthetic autonomy', comes to stand as a locus for the modernists' political acts of resistance. Stevenson's reading converts 'reaction' into 'resistance': the formal

⁵⁹ Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, trans. Steven Corcoran (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 44.

⁶⁰ Theodor Adorno, 'Reconciliation Under Duress', trans. Rodney Livingstone, in Theodor Adorno et al., *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Verso, 2007), 151-76, 154.

⁶¹ Adorno, 'Duress', 160. Adorno hints at insufficiencies in Lukács's treatment of the 'controversy about time triggered off by Bergson', and refers condescendingly to his preference for 'objective time' (171).

⁶² Stevenson, 'Secluded Path', 50.

⁶³ Stevenson, *Modernist Fiction*, 95.

complexity of modernist fiction in its exploration of private time is seen as part of a politics of resistance against late capitalism and the depredations of the public sphere.

However, because both Lukács's and Stevenson's arguments rely on flawed Bergsonian presuppositions, neither of their interpretations of the politics of modernist time is tenable.⁶⁴ Taking historical time into account reveals that modernist time does not involve a Bergsonian retreat from the social and historical. While Bergsonian approaches have led to a longstanding critical misrepresentation of the political dimensions of modernist time, abandoning a Bergsonian picture both allows and necessitates a reassessment of the politics of modernist time.⁶⁵ This study will argue that Wells's, Lawrence's and Woolf's various explorations of historical time carry divergent politics, and indeed that these explorations form sites of political contestation.

Once the question of the politics of modernist time is freed from a Bergsonian framework, it is no longer the case that this question can be answered in advance for all modernists. It is an indication of the homogenising effect of Bergsonian approaches that Lukács and Stevenson were able to attribute a uniform politics of time to all modernist writers. This homogenizing tendency is particularly evident in Stevenson's work, when he contends that identifying resistance through the form of their fiction helps to establish the same 'progressive political orientation' for authors

⁶⁴ I agree fully with Barrows when he writes that the 'political dimensions of modernist temporality have been misrepresented in a long-standing critical tradition that equates modernist time with the private, interior, and purely aesthetic pleasures of the Bergsonian *durée*' (*Cosmic Time*, 8).

⁶⁵ Barrows calls for a reassessment of the politics of modernist time in *Cosmic Time* (4). While this study contributes towards such a reassessment through consideration of historical time, Barrows' approach is to resituate the modernist experiments with the representation of time in the context of the political and legislative battles over world standard time. In doing so, he argues that what is fundamental is not the Bergsonian tension between public and private time, but the tension between national and global time (7).

such as Joseph Conrad, D. H. Lawrence and Wyndham Lewis, '[r]egardless of their explicit politics'.⁶⁶ It is precisely the assumption that all these authors were engaged in the same project of exploring a Bergsonian subjective time which allows a blanket reading of their politics of time, and leads to an erasure of their salient political differences. By contrast, in this thesis, I will argue that the different forms of historical time within modernism support a divergent range of politics. Conversely, I will suggest that the politics of modernism can be rethought productively through the politics of time.

Modernity and the Politics of Time

In *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde* (1995), Peter Osborne has argued that the question of modernity is principally one concerning time, and more specifically, of the temporalization of history.⁶⁷ He draws on Reinhart Koselleck's study of the semantics of historical time to support this position. Koselleck, through his reconstructions of the semantic prehistory of '*Neuzeit*' (literally, 'new time'), a German term for modernity which is found in its composite form only after 1870, shows the lived time-consciousness of late nineteenth-century European metropolitan modernity—the temporality of Charles Baudelaire and Gustave Flaubert, Georg Simmel and Walter Benjamin's modernity—to be an intensified social embodiment of a form of historiographic consciousness which had been developing in Europe for some time.⁶⁸ Osborne develops Koselleck's connection between the temporal form of experience which constitutes modernity and a form of historiographic consciousness,

⁶⁶ Stevenson, 'Secluded Path', 50, my emphasis.

⁶⁷ Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 1995).

⁶⁸ Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985); see Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 9-13.

to argue that modernity contains not just one form of temporalization of history, but a struggle between competing forms. Modernity, he claims, ‘contains a range of possible temporalizations of history within its fundamental, most abstract temporal form’.⁶⁹ For Osborne, this range of possible forms of historical consciousness is emblemized by the competing accounts of historical time found in the work of Martin Heidegger and Walter Benjamin, which in turn form part of what Jürgen Habermas has called ‘the philosophical discourse of modernity’.⁷⁰ Osborne contends that ‘the differences between the forms of temporality at stake in Benjamin’s and Heidegger’s work may be emblematic of the extent to which modernity contains a range of possible temporalizations of history’, and that ‘the idea of a competition or struggle between the different forms of temporalization . . . leads to the idea of a *politics of time*’.⁷¹

In this thesis, I will use Osborne’s model of modernity to replace that of Stephen Kern as a framework within which to pursue the question of time in modernism.⁷² That is, I will replace Kern’s notion of modernity as characterized by the solidification of a homogenous public time with Peter Osborne’s notion of modernity as characterized by a competing range of temporalizations of history. I will also use Osborne’s recognition that there was a range of competing theoretical accounts of time within the period as a corrective to the view, shared by Lewis and Lukács, that the time-philosophy of the day was homogeneously Bergsonian, or, as Lewis put it, that there

⁶⁹ Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 116.

⁷⁰ See Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity, 1990).

⁷¹ Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 116.

⁷² Bergsonian approaches are most difficult to resist in Kern’s framework, because the distinction between public and private time is so deeply theoretically entrenched; critics working within this framework need not establish the fact of Bergson’s influence on any given writer to justify their use of Bergson’s terms as critical concepts. Consequently, to contest Bergsonian approaches, it is most pressing to challenge this framework.

was ‘the same unanimity rampant throughout the contemporary theoretical field’.⁷³ Finally, given the inadequacy of the existing Bergsonian approaches to the issue, I will transfer Osborne’s notion of a ‘politics of time’ from the theoretical to the literary sphere as an alternative means of pursuing the question of the politics of modernist time.⁷⁴ Overall, I will argue that Osborne’s idea of a struggle between forms of temporality within modernity is matched by a homologous contestation of forms of temporality within literary modernism, as exemplified by the varieties of historical time found in the work of Wells, Lawrence and Woolf. First, however, I will set out in more detail the essential contrast which Osborne draws between Benjamin’s and Heidegger’s accounts of temporality.

As Osborne makes clear, Martin Heidegger and Walter Benjamin advanced very different accounts of temporality. In *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger argued that the ordinary conception of time, which sees time as a linear series of ‘nows’, and has been dominant from Aristotle to Bergson, hides the true nature of temporality. In the second division of *Being and Time*, he advanced a hierarchically-ordered conception of three different forms of temporality: within-timeness (*Innerzeitigkeit*), historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*), and ecstatic-horizonal temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*).⁷⁵ By contrast, in his ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’ (1940), Benjamin contrasted ‘homogenous, empty time’ with a conception of an explosive historical time—‘*Jetztzeit*’, or ‘now-time’—as part of his materialist conception of history.⁷⁶ Whereas historicism, he

⁷³ Lewis, *Time*, 206.

⁷⁴ While there are other political aspects of modernist time, such as those addressed by Barrows in *Cosmic Time*, I will focus on the ‘politics of time’ in Osborne’s narrower sense of a ‘politics of historical time’ (*Politics of Time*, viii, emphasis added).

⁷⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006).

⁷⁶ Walter Benjamin, ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’, in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), 245-55. On Benjamin’s *Jetztzeit* and his materialist conception of history, see also his ‘Eduard Fuchs, Collector and Historian’ (1937), trans. Howard Eiland and Michael

contended, operates with a conception of homogenous empty time, the historical materialist ‘establishes a conception of the present as the “time of the now” [*Jetztzeit*] which is shot through with chips of Messianic time’.⁷⁷ Heidegger, Benjamin and Bergson were thereby all united in their rejection of a very similar conception of time as a linear series of homogenous ‘nows’: Heidegger called this conception of time ‘the traditional conception of time’; Benjamin called it ‘homogenous, empty time’; and Bergson called it ‘clock time’. However, these three thinkers counterposed very different conceptions of temporality to such a homogenous time.

The accounts of time put forth by Heidegger, Benjamin and Bergson are competing accounts. In a note to *Being and Time*, Heidegger remarked that ‘Bergson’s view of time . . . has obviously arisen from an Interpretation of the Aristotelian essay on time’.⁷⁸ In this respect, Bergson’s approach resembles that of Heidegger, who offered his account of ecstatic-horizonal temporality as part of an ‘existential-ontological interpretation of Aristotle’s definition of “time” in *Physics* 4.’⁷⁹ However, unlike Heidegger’s account of ecstatic-horizonal temporality, Bergson’s account of *durée* supposedly failed to go beyond the traditional conception of time, a failure which is reflected in Heidegger’s comment that the ‘traditional concept of time’ has ‘persisted from Aristotle to Bergson and even later’.⁸⁰ Again, Benjamin’s concept of *Jetztzeit*

W. Jennings, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 3: 1935-1938*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Belknap Press, 2002), 260-302; ‘Paralipomena to “On the Concept of History”’, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Howard Eiland, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 4: 1938-1940*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Belknap Press, 2003), 401-11; and ‘Convolute N’, in *The Arcades Project*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Belknap Press, 2002), 456-88.

⁷⁷ Benjamin, ‘Theses’, 255.

⁷⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 500.

⁷⁹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 473.

⁸⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 39. Heidegger similarly suggested in his *History of the Concept of Time* (1925) that Bergson attempted to go beyond the traditional concept of time to a ‘more original’ one but failed, and so remains traditional (*History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, trans. Theodore J.

differs markedly from both Bergson's *durée* and from Heidegger's hierarchically-ordered levels of temporality. In particular, as Osborne points out, Benjamin was 'consistently scathing about Heidegger's work'.⁸¹ As early as 1916, he judged the published text of Heidegger's lecture, 'On the Concept of Time in the Science of History' (1915), to show 'precisely how this subject should *not* be treated', while in 1930 he wrote to Gerhard Scholem of his (never-realised) plan to 'annihilate' Heidegger 'in the context of a very close-knit critical circle of readers', led by himself and Bertolt Brecht.⁸²

Osborne's notion of a struggle between different forms of temporalization of history is best illustrated by the difference between Heidegger's and Benjamin's conceptions of historical time, which in turn underpin antagonistic conceptions of history. Osborne draws attention to the 'uncanny convergence' between Heidegger's and Benjamin's views on historical time, pointing out that both are critics of historicism, and for broadly similar reasons, and that both their alternatives rely upon the interruptive force of some notion of the ecstatic.⁸³ Yet this convergence only serves to heighten the difference between their respective conceptions of historical time and of history. Benjamin himself drew attention to this difference, when he wrote in a letter to

Kisiel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 9). As Osborne points out, Heidegger had intended to devote a section of his lectures on the 'History of the Concept of Time', held during the summer semester at the University of Marburg in 1925, to Bergson's theory, but only got so far as writing an outline of his position (*Politics of Time*, 214).

⁸¹ Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 176.

⁸² Letters to Gerhard Scholem on 11 November 1916 and 25 April 1930, in Walter Benjamin, *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin, 1910-1940*, ed. Gershom Scholem and Theodor W. Adorno, trans. Manfred R. Jacobson and Evelyn M. Jacobson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 82, 365; see Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 238.

⁸³ Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 175.

Scholem that he expected to see ‘sparks fly from the clash’ between his and Heidegger’s ‘two very different views of history’.⁸⁴

Heidegger advanced his account of historicity (*‘Geschichtlichkeit’*) in the fifth chapter of the second division of *Being and Time*.⁸⁵ Paul Ricoeur usefully summarises three main traits of historicity: first, time appears at this level as ‘extended’ between birth and death; second, in historicity, priority is given to the past in the structure of care that underlies the unity of the three dimensions of time (the three ‘temporal ecstases’); and third, through the structure of ‘repetition’ (*Wiederholung*), the character of time is rooted in the deep unity of time as ‘future’, ‘past’, and ‘present’.⁸⁶ Repetition underpins what Heidegger calls ‘authentic historicity’, as the repetition of past possibilities of being.⁸⁷ Such a repetition is described by Heidegger as occurring in a ‘moment of vision’ (*Augenblick*) which ‘deprives the “today” of its character *as present*’; history is then understood as ‘the “recurrence” of the possible’.⁸⁸ Heidegger contrasted such an authentic form of historicity with an inauthentic form, in which ‘one’s existence . . . is loaded down with the legacy of a “past” which has become unrecognizable’.⁸⁹

Benjamin’s account of *Jetztzeit* differs markedly from Heidegger’s account of historicity.⁹⁰ Whereas Heidegger had temporalized history as tradition or ‘handing-

⁸⁴ Letter to Gerhard Scholem, 20 January 1930; *Correspondence*, 359. On the differences between Heidegger’s and Benjamin’s conceptions of historical time, see also Howard Caygill, ‘Benjamin, Heidegger and the Destruction of Tradition’, in Andrew Benjamin and Peter Osborne (eds), *Walter Benjamin’s Philosophy: Destruction and Experience* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 1-31.

⁸⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 424-55.

⁸⁶ Paul Ricoeur, ‘Narrative Time’, *Critical Inquiry*, 7/1 (Fall 1980), 169-90, 180-2.

⁸⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 436.

⁸⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 443-4.

⁸⁹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 444.

⁹⁰ Benjamin comments in the *Arcades Project* that ‘Heidegger seeks in vain to rescue history for phenomenology abstractly through “historicity”’ (462, translation modified).

down', in which tradition establishes the continuity with the past that is a condition of historical existence, Benjamin temporalized history as the destruction of tradition.⁹¹

As Howard Caygill puts it, 'Benjamin emphasizes the destructive work of historical time or tradition over Heidegger's attempts to secure authenticity through it'.⁹²

Jetztzeit is a destructive and revolutionary temporality: it forms part of a 'historical materialism' which is 'directed towards a consciousness of the present which explodes the continuum of history'.⁹³ Benjamin describes it as 'the moment of awakening' which 'rescues' history from the present, 'ignites the explosives that lie in the past', and 'blasts the epoch' out of the reified continuity of homogenous time.⁹⁴ In place of the historicist notion of the historical progress of humankind, which 'cannot be sundered from the concept of its progression through homogenous, empty time', he put forward the revolutionaries' 'awareness that they are about to make the continuum of history explode'.⁹⁵

Heidegger's and Benjamin's competing forms of historical time carry conflicting politics. This contrast is reflected biographically in these thinkers' starkly opposed personal political commitments: Heidegger's commitment to National Socialism, and Benjamin's to communism. While Heidegger's notion of 'authentic historicity' has been defended and rehabilitated from within a tradition of left-Heideggerianism, it has also been seen as the philosophical basis of Heidegger's notorious support of National Socialism in the early 1930s.⁹⁶ On this interpretation, Heidegger's portrayal of the

⁹¹ Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 115.

⁹² Caygill, 'Destruction of Tradition', 11.

⁹³ Benjamin, 'Fuchs', 262.

⁹⁴ Benjamin, 'Theses', 263-5; see Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 144-50.

⁹⁵ Benjamin, 'Theses', 252, 253.

⁹⁶ For an example of an attempt to rehabilitate Heidegger's notion of authentic historicity, see Giorgio Agamben, 'Time and History'. The tradition of left-Heideggerianism began with Herbert Marcuse's Marxist interpretation of Heidegger's thought in a series of essays dating from 1928-32,

coming together of a ‘community’ or ‘people’ to realize their ‘destiny’ [*Geschick*] in a moment of authentic co-historizing, provides a philosophical model for the coming together of the *Völk* in the National Socialist Revolution.⁹⁷ For instance, Iain Thomson claims that ‘[t]here can be little doubt that the concept of historicity presented in §§72-7 of *Being and Time* provides the general philosophical framework in terms of which Heidegger understood his decision to join the National Socialist “revolution” in 1933’.⁹⁸

Benjamin’s conception of *Jetztzeit* forms part of a politics antithetically opposed to those of Heidegger. While Heidegger embraced National Socialism in the early 1930s, Benjamin’s political commitments were communist: his ‘Theses’, which were written shortly before he committed suicide whilst fleeing Nazi-occupied France in 1940, are advanced as part of what they call ‘the struggle against Fascism’.⁹⁹ *Jetztzeit* is a disruptive temporality of revolutionary political opportunity: it is the form of temporal awareness held by ‘the revolutionary classes at the moment of their action’. Thus, for example, to Maximilien Robespierre during the 1789 French Revolution, ‘ancient Rome was a past charged with the time of the now [*Jetztzeit*] which he blasted out of the continuum of history’.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, *Jetztzeit* is to form the basis of the historical materialist’s approach to history.¹⁰¹ The historical materialist exploits *Jetztzeit* to ‘blast a specific era out of the homogenous course of history’, in what is ‘a

which have been published in English translation as *Heideggerian Marxism*, ed. Richard Wolin and John Abromeit, trans. Richard Wolin et al. (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).

⁹⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 436.

⁹⁸ Iain Thomson, ‘Heidegger and National Socialism’, in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall (eds), *A Companion to Heidegger* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 32-48, 35. The issue of the relationship between the concept of historicity in *Being and Time* and Heidegger’s political engagement with National Socialism forms one aspect of what has become known as ‘the Heidegger controversy’.

⁹⁹ Benjamin, ‘Theses’, 249.

¹⁰⁰ Benjamin, ‘Theses’, 253.

¹⁰¹ See Rolf Tiedemann, ‘Dialectics at a Standstill’, trans. Gary Smith and André Lefevere, in Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 929-45, 941-5.

revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past'.¹⁰² From the struggle between Heidegger's and Benjamin's forms of historical time, Osborne derives the idea of what he calls a 'politics of historical time', or more simply, a 'politics of time'.¹⁰³

As indicated above, I will replace Stephen Kern's conception of modernity with that of Osborne. That is, I shall read the work of Wells, Lawrence and Woolf alongside a conception of modernity as containing a competing range of temporalizations of history. To be clear, what is problematic about Kern and Stevenson's approaches is not the fact that they attempt to relate the issue of time in modernist literature to a set of contemporary social, political and economic conditions: this undertaking is in itself laudable. Rather, what is problematic is that they theorize these conditions with concepts drawn from Bergson's philosophy, and moreover, that they construe the relation between modernism and modernity as a reactive one, in which aesthetic modernism, with its affirmation of private time, is seen as a *reaction* to modernity and its homogenous public time.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Benjamin, 'Theses', 254.

¹⁰³ Osborne, *Politics of Time*, viii, 116, emphasis removed. Mark Antliff addresses the question of the politics of Bergson's time in his *Inventing Bergson*: see in particular his epilogue, 'The Politics of Time and Modernity' (168-84). In part, Antliff shows how Bergson's clock-time and *durée* were made to carry different politics as forms of historical time by members of the Parisian avant-garde. For example, Bergson's symbolist followers criticised Charles Maurras and *Action française*'s logical analysis of history on the grounds that it denied the heterogeneous nature of historical time (22). Again, in his *Reflections on Violence* (1908), the revolutionary syndicalist Georges Sorel critiqued Karl Marx's projected theory of revolution on the grounds that it employed a concept of homogenous time to make illegitimate predictions about the future. His preferred conception of history, in which historical myths such as that of the general strike play a key role, operated under a more Bergsonian conception of historical time (158). (Both are political re-applications of Bergson's parallel critique of positivist forms of history in *Creative Evolution* (1907)). Bergson's philosophy of time was thereby adapted to carry what Osborne calls a politics of historical time.

¹⁰⁴ Critics such as Sara Danius and Mary Ann Doane have highlighted problems with Kern's reactive model of the relation between modernism and modernity. For Danius, Kern's discussion of private and public time in modernist art takes part in a larger (and problematic) movement in modernist studies in which modernism is seen as a *reaction* to modernity, paralleling, echoing or contesting its development (see *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception and Aesthetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 43-6). Doane points out that Kern's elevation of the distinction between public time and private time to the reigning opposition of the era 'perpetrates other, fairly intransigent oppositions: technology versus aesthetics, industrial capitalism versus the individual, the social versus the

Osborne's model of modernity has several advantages over that of Kern. Firstly, it does not use Bergson's philosophy to theorize time in modernity. It does not reduce all the changes in modernity to the formation of one 'public time', which can be thought to coincide roughly with world standard time. Rather, Osborne's theory recognizes that there were a variety of competing accounts of time in the period, and that no one can provide master-concepts to theorize the period itself.¹⁰⁵ Secondly, unlike Kern's theory, it is not committed to a reactive formulation of the relationship between modernism and modernity, in which aesthetic modernism is seen as a reaction to the changes brought about in industrial modernity. Rather, the relationship between modernism and modernity can be thought of as one that is, in Tim Armstrong's preferred formulation, 'often homologous rather than antagonistic'.¹⁰⁶ Thirdly, by recognizing a diversity of temporalities within modernity, it opens the way for the recognition of a similar diversity of temporalities in literary modernism, including a diversity of different forms of historical time. Literary modernism is no longer constrained to be seen as a homologous exploration of psychological time, but can be recognized as containing a range of sometimes conflicting times and temporalities. And lastly, following from the previous point, Osborne's notion of modernity opens the possibility that these different forms of temporality within literary modernism carry a divergent set of politics. It is not the case that all modernist literary explorations of time, as homogenous explorations of psychological time, carry

psychological' (*The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 236). See also Barrows, *Cosmic Time*, 16.

¹⁰⁵ The substitution of Osborne's model of modernity for that of Kern thereby removes the justification for reading the Bergsonian distinction between private and public time back into modernist literature on the grounds that it was the major structural opposition of the era. As a heuristic exercise, all the contexts which Kern identifies in his study could be re-described in terms drawn from Heidegger's analysis of temporality in *Being and Time*. Such an exercise would have the advantage of 'de-naturalizing' Bergson's distinction between private and public time, and of revealing the ideological charge which this distinction carries.

¹⁰⁶ Tim Armstrong, *Modernism: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), 1.

the same political valence, but rather, the various forms of time within modernism can carry different and often conflicting politics.

Ultimately, this thesis seeks to transfer Osborne's notion of a politics of time to literary modernism. Osborne shows that modernity was characterized by a competing set of temporalizations of history; this thesis argues that there was a homologous set of versions of historical time in literary modernism. That is, just as there are competing versions of historical time within modernity (emblemized by those of Benjamin and Heidegger), so there are competing configurations of historical time in literary modernism (illustrated by those of Wells, Lawrence and Woolf). To map Osborne's notion of a politics of time onto the literary sphere, I will set up a structural analogy between competing theoretical accounts of historical time, and Wells, Lawrence and Woolf's literary explorations of different forms of historical time. I do not intend to suggest that Heidegger's or Benjamin's accounts of historical time influenced Wells, Lawrence or Woolf. Indeed, they did not. However, I do mean to suggest that Wells, Lawrence and Woolf explored and articulated different versions of historical time in their fictional and historical writing which are analogous to those in the theoretical sphere. More generally, I will throughout this study draw parallels between debates concerning the politics of time in the theoretical sphere, and Wells's, Lawrence's and Woolf's explorations of different versions of historical time. For example, in chapter 3.1 I will compare Woolf's fictional imagination of a phenomenological historical time in *Between the Acts* to Heidegger's philosophical account of historicity. By drawing such comparisons, I will use the well-established critical debates about historical time in modernity to illuminate aspects of historical time in literary modernism.

Beyond Bergson: Historical Time in Wells, Lawrence and Woolf

Transferring Peter Osborne's notion of the politics of time to the literary sphere, this thesis argues that H. G. Wells, D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf explored different versions of historical time, which underpin contrasting conceptions of history, and thereby carry very different politics. In turning attention away from a Bergsonian psychological time to historical time, this thesis will move from the short time-spans across which the individual life is lived, to long time-spans across which history unfolds. Moreover, it will turn its attention away from individual to communal temporal experience: away from private individual consciousness as the exclusive and privileged site of temporality, to forms of time which can bring a community together in a shared sense of time and history. Finally, it will move its focus from the sense or meaning that arises from the pattern or shape of an individual life to the historical meaning which arises from the pattern and shape of history.

In the first part of this study, I will address H. G. Wells's exploration of geological time in *The Time Machine* (1895) and his universal histories, *The Outline of History* (1920) and *A Short History of the World* (1922). In chapter 1.1, by situating Wells's *The Time Machine* in the previously overlooked context of geological literature, I will throw light on its central conceit of time travel, the ruined architecture of the future age, and the work's fragmentary aesthetic. Wells's Time Traveller traverses a sublime and inhuman geological time, whose nature is reflected in the fragmentary narrative form of the romance. In chapter 1.2, I will explore how Wells's treatment of geological time changes markedly in his later writing. In his universal histories, he

draws attention to the immense age of the universe and of the earth, but undertakes to tell their story in one continuous narrative, with the help of two historiographical models: Biblical history, and Immanuel Kant's universal history with a cosmopolitan aim. I will explore how this narrative organization humanizes geological time, and how such a humanized historical time supported Wells's political advocacy of a cosmopolitan world state.

The second part of this study will examine D. H. Lawrence's creative adaptations of Friedrich Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence. Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence induces a rupture in historical time. It aims to effect a chronophilic 'redemption of time' in the face of a chronophobic Christian-Platonic tradition that has devalued time and the temporal in contrast to eternity and the eternal. Indeed, the thought's transformation of the relation between time and eternity is so decisive that it inaugurates a new historical age. Whereas previous history is the history of a Platonism whose values have been devalued, leading to the historical crisis of nihilism, the thought of eternal recurrence inaugurates a new, affirmative Dionysian age, marked by the coming of the overman, and the joyful revaluation of all values.

I will address Lawrence's various historiographical and literary adaptations of Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence, placing these adaptations in the context of contemporary philosophical interpretations of that thought. In *Movements in European History* (1921), Lawrence plotted the story of European history as a pseudo-Nietzschean historical cycle, and derived the imperative of a strong, Caesarist political leader from this shape of history. By contrast, in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), Lawrence creatively adapted the thought of eternal recurrence in a less

authoritarian manner. In this novel, Constance Chatterley rebels against her husband's oppressive Platonism in a manner which closely resembles Zarathustra's overcoming of Platonism through the thought of eternal recurrence. While Clifford's pursuit of Platonic beauty devalues the earth and constitutes what Zarathustra calls an act of revenge on time, Connie's sense of the 'immortality of the flesh' forms a chronophilic redemption of time and the temporal. Connie and Mellors pursue a green Nietzschean revaluation of the earth, and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* thereby stands as a fictional complement to recent readings of Nietzsche as a proto-ecological thinker.

The third part of this study turns to Virginia Woolf's late writings, and in particular her last novel, *Between the Acts* (1940). In a conscious departure from the long tradition of Bergsonian readings of Woolf's fictional experiments with time, I will argue that *Between the Acts* is better seen as an exploration of an aeviternal historical continuity and a phenomenological historical time. By drawing a parallel between Miss La Trobe's pageant and Mutabilitie's pageant in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1609), I will elucidate the role played by the *aevum*—an order of duration which lies between time and eternity—in *Between the Acts*. While the fantasy of an aeviternally permanent nature is a comforting one for Lucy Swithin, this inherently conservative temporal fiction carries a troubling politics, and is deeply problematic from the perspective of both gender and class.

As well as conveying a sense of the aeviternal continuity of history, Miss La Trobe's pageant is accompanied by a phenomenological historical time. Drawing a comparison between the historical time of Miss La Trobe's pageant and Heidegger's account of historicity facilitates a new approach to the politics of tradition in

Between the Acts and Woolf's late writing. Both Heidegger's and Woolf's versions of historical time are characterised by repetition, but whereas for Heidegger repetition forms part of an authentic historical stance whereby a people are brought together as a community and come into line with their historical destiny, for Woolf it forms part of a vision of history as a nightmarish repetition of patriarchal violence and war.

What needs to be stressed is how greatly Wells's, Lawrence's and Woolf's various forms of historical time differ from a Bergsonian psychological time. The difference is perhaps best illustrated by the case of the historical time of the pageant in *Between the Acts*, whose passing is marked by the ticking of a gramophone. This historical time of the pageant is a time of the mind, but unlike Bergson's *durée*, it does not involve an asocial retreat into the private sphere of consciousness. Rather, it is a communal time that binds together the minds of the pageant's audience in a shared experience. Nor does it involve a retreat from history. Rather, it provides the pageant's audience with a shared sense of history. (In turn, the historical time of the pageant belies Lukács' reading of modernist time as asocial and as complicit in a denial of history). Similarly, the aeviternity which co-exists with the historical time of the pageant in *Between the Acts* is unrelated to Bergson's philosophy: indeed, it has a far older provenance, dating back to scholastic philosophy. The other forms of historical time explored in this study—Wells's versions of geological time, and Lawrence's versions of Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence—similarly differ greatly from Bergson's conception of time.

Overall, my examination of Wells's, Lawrence's and Woolf's conceptions of historical time aims to motivate and contribute towards the wider project of the

reassessment of the politics of modernist time. The humanized geological time of Wells's universal histories forms the backdrop to the common story of mankind, which promises to undermine national differences and to unite mankind through a shared historical sense, and thereby supports his political vision of a cosmopolitan world state. Lawrence's adaptations of Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence carry contrasting politics. In *Movements*, Lawrence drew from the pseudo-Nietzschean cyclical shape of history the necessity for a strong, militaristic leader to unite Europe: such a leader forms part of Lawrence's notorious politics of leadership, and anticipates his 'leadership novels' of the mid-1920s. By contrast, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* constitutes a more peaceful imagination of Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence, and issues in a vision of a green revaluation of the earth. The repetitive temporality of the historical time of Miss La Trobe's pageant in *Between the Acts* provides a vision of history as the nightmarish repetition of patriarchal violence and war, and intimates the dangers of tradition and authority as forms of historical transmission. The fiction of aeviternal continuity in the same novel threatens to petrify exploitative gender and class relations in a changeless nature with no prospect of historical change. The different forms of historical time explored by Wells, Lawrence and Woolf in the literary sphere contrast just as sharply as do Benjamin's *Jetztzeit* and Heidegger's historicity in the theoretical sphere, and support a similarly divergent set of politics.

I should point out that this thesis makes no claim to be an exhaustive study of historical time in modernism. Rather, within literary modernism, I have restricted my focus to narrative works, and specifically to novels and histories. I have focused on narrative because, as Heidegger points out, it is the literary mode that is most directly

dependent on its deployment in time, and where innovations in the representation of temporality can be expected to play themselves out most visibly and with the greatest impact on literary form.¹⁰⁷ Theorists of narrative generally agree that time is one of the most fundamental parameters through which narrative is organized and understood.¹⁰⁸ More specifically, narrative is, according to the theories of Frank Kermode and Paul Ricoeur, the mode through which historical time is configured. Consequently, narrative demands the highest attention from an investigation of historical time. In privileging narrative, I am following the lead of previous studies of time in modernism, such as those of A. A. Mendilow, Hans Meyerhoff, Ricardo Quinones, and Ronald Schleifer, which have concentrated on novelistic narrative.¹⁰⁹ As Ann Banfield points out, in literary modernism ‘it is the novel, almost alone among genres, which is typically linked to time and to innovations in the representations of temporality’.¹¹⁰ Yet, restricting the focus of this thesis to narrative works involves overlooking modernist poetry, which offers a comparable array of articulations of historical time to those found in modernist novels. Most important, perhaps, are *The Cantos* (1917-69) of Ezra Pound as a ‘poem containing history’, the

¹⁰⁷ See Heise, *Chronoschisms*, 2, 47.

¹⁰⁸ For major studies on the relationship between time and narrative, see E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (London: Edward Arnold, 1927); M. M. Bakhtin, ‘Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel’, in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist ([written 1937-8]; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 84-258; Georges Poulet, *Etudes sur le temps humain*, i (Paris: Plon, 1949); Adam Abraham Mendilow, *Time and the Novel* (London: Peter Nevill, 1952); Hans Meyerhoff, *Time in Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955); Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction: With a New Epilogue*, new edn (1967; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (1966-72; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer, 3 vols (1983-5; Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1984-8); David Carr, *Time, Narrative and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); Genevieve Lloyd, *Being in Time: Selves and Narrators in Philosophy and Literature* (London: Routledge, 1993); and Mark Currie, *About Time: Narrative, Fiction and the Philosophy of Time* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

¹⁰⁹ Mendilow, *Time and the Novel*; Meyerhoff, *Time in Literature*; Ricardo J. Quinones, *Mapping Literary Modernism: Time and Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); Ronald Schleifer, *Modernism and Time: The Logic of Abundance in Literature, Science, and Culture, 1880-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

¹¹⁰ Banfield, ‘Time Past’, 48.

poetry of W. B. Yeats informed by his cosmological scheme of historical cycles or gyres set forth in *A Vision* (1926, 1937), and T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* (1935-42).¹¹¹

Within narrative works, I focus narrowly on those of three English-language writers: Wells, Lawrence and Woolf. Set within the same literary and cultural scene, these writers articulated interestingly contrasting conceptions of history and historical time, in part in response to each other. For example, as will be seen, both Lawrence and Woolf responded to Wells's conception of history: Lawrence attacked Wells's notion of historical progress, against which his own cyclical conception of history forms a striking contrast, and Woolf engaged with Wellsian history in *Between the Acts*, in which Wells's *Outline of History* stands as a model for both Lucy Swithin's *Outline of History* and Miss La Trobe's historical pageant. Moreover, Wells and Lawrence are particularly rich candidates for a study of historical time, as they are in the unusual position of having written histories as well as novels. This enables useful comparison of their historical and fictional narratives, and of how historical time is articulated in each. While Lawrence and Woolf are canonical high modernists, Wells is a peripheral figure on most conceptions of modernism. Despite his peripheral position, I will include him here on the grounds that, through his influence, he is centrally important to an understanding of time in modernism. *The Time Machine*, though more commonly studied alongside Victorian and fin-de-siècle literature, nevertheless stands at the cusp of modernism, and influentially anticipates what Heise identifies as a major aspect of the modernist (and indeed postmodernist) concern with time: the negotiation of the vast time-scales of geology and the natural sciences.¹¹² Similarly, Wells's hugely popular universal histories, though not obviously works of modernism

¹¹¹ Donald Hall, 'Ezra Pound: An Interview', *The Paris Review*, 28 (Summer-Fall 1962), 22-51, 47.

¹¹² Heise, *Chronoschisms*, 38-9.

themselves, were nevertheless published in the heyday of modernism—the *Short History*, for example, was first published in the watershed year of 1922—and influenced many modernist writers, including Lawrence and Woolf. Arguably, they are as important to English modernism as Oswald Spengler’s *The Decline of the West* (1918-22), which Wyndham Lewis selected in *Time in Western Man* as his foremost example of a history which reflects the ‘time-mind’.¹¹³ Once again, however, I address these writers at the expense of other modernist works in which historical time plays an important role, such as Thomas Mann’s *Der Zauberberg* (1924) and James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* (1939).

Finally, even within the work of the writers studied, my discussion of historical time is limited. For example, I have focused on Woolf’s last novel, despite the fact that historical time is of great importance to other of her novels such as *To the Lighthouse* (1927). While its scope is therefore narrow, I will conclude this thesis by considering ways in which its general approach of investigating historical time could be extended to other works within modernism. In particular, I will suggest how it might provide a useful framework for theorizing the colonial and postcolonial forms of temporality which are being revealed by the newly-expanded spatial reach of the ‘new modernist studies’.

Time and Narrative

To explore Wells’s, Lawrence’s and Woolf’s different conceptions of historical time, I will draw on Frank Kermode and Paul Ricoeur’s accounts of the relation between

¹¹³ For Lewis, Spengler stands as the ‘most undiluted and intensest specimen of the theorizing time-mind that has so far been produced’ (*Time*, 213).

narrative and historical time. In particular, I will adopt from these critics their shared contentions that narrative is central to the configuration of historical time, and that narrative involves a humanization of time. Given Kermode's narrow focus on narrative endings and apocalyptic 'fictions of the end', I will turn to Ricoeur to offer a more general account of the link between narrative and human time.

Kermode's classic study, *The Sense of an Ending* (1967), concerns what he calls 'sense-making', or the 'need to know the shape of life in relation to the perspectives of time'.¹¹⁴ Sense-making is a narrative activity, or the activity of telling stories in order to understand one's place in time and history: 'men rush "into the midst"', and to make sense of their span they need fictive concords with origins and ends'.¹¹⁵ By imposing a narrative organization on the events of history, and seeing it as structured by an end and a beginning, people make sense of their place within the larger scheme of history. The fictive concords in which Kermode is most interested in *The Sense of an Ending* are 'fictions of the End', or ways in which the end of the world has been imagined.¹¹⁶ He shows how an apocalyptic belief in the end of the world has been remarkably resilient to repeated disconfirmation, and has survived in various forms: indeed, he argues that 'the paradigms of apocalypse continue to lie under our ways of making sense of the world'.¹¹⁷ In particular, he argues for the centrality of apocalypse to modernism, for which 'the sense of an ending' is 'endemic'.¹¹⁸ Within modernism, the sense of an ending does not always surface in the form of a crude prediction of the end of the world, but more subtly through the transmission of concepts from the

¹¹⁴ Kermode, *Ending*, 3.

¹¹⁵ Kermode, *Ending*, 7.

¹¹⁶ Kermode, *Ending*, 5.

¹¹⁷ Kermode, *Ending*, 28.

¹¹⁸ Kermode, *Ending*, 98.

apocalyptic tradition such as ‘transition’ and ‘crisis’, which become central to modernists’ ways of making sense of their position in time.

As well as using Kermode’s concept of ‘sense-making’, I will adopt his contention that narrative involves a humanization of time. He describes plot as ‘an organization that humanizes time by giving it form’.¹¹⁹ His celebrated illustration of this thesis is that of a clock ticking. While a clock makes a series of qualitatively identical sounds, we impose a fictional organization onto this series by referring to its sound not as ‘tick-tick’ but as ‘tick-tock’. The interval between the tick and the tock gains significance by being poised between a beginning and an end: it is experienced through a form of ‘temporal integration’, which is a ‘way of bundling together perception of the present, memory of the past, and expectation of the future, in a common organization’.¹²⁰ By imposing a fictional organization on the sound of a clock through hearing ‘tock’ as an end, what was an empty homogenous time of mere succession becomes a humanized form of time charged with meaning.

Kermode’s basic example of the clock can be generalized to more complicated plots, including to fictional narratives such as novels, and to historical narratives. All plots, for him, are organizations that humanize time by giving it form. He uses the terms ‘*chronos*’ and ‘*kairos*’ to describe the qualitative transformation which narrative effects on time. *Chronos* is the time of ‘mere successiveness’, whereas *kairos* is ‘a point in time filled with significance, charged with meaning derived from its relation to the end’.¹²¹ Narrowly, in a Biblical context, *kairos* is time ‘charged with meaning’ because it is seen in relation to the future, or the End, which it foreshadows, and in

¹¹⁹ Kermode, *Ending*, 45.

¹²⁰ Kermode, *Ending*, 46.

¹²¹ Kermode, *Ending*, 192, 47.

relation to the past, which it transforms by validating Old Testament types and prophecies. The divine plot then becomes ‘the pattern of *kairos* in relation to the End’.¹²² Kermode broadens the distinction between *chronos* and *kairos* beyond this theological context: within any form of narrative organization, ‘that which was conceived of as simply successive becomes charged with past and future: what was *chronos* becomes *kairos*’.¹²³ The distinction applies to the example of the clock: the ‘fictive end’ of the ‘tock’ purges the interval of simple chronicity, and achieves a ‘temporal integration’, converting a blank into a *kairos*.¹²⁴ The same applies to ‘the time of the novelist’: events in a novel are not arrayed in an empty homogenous time of mere successiveness, but are set within a kairological time by virtue of their relation to the novel’s beginning and end.¹²⁵ Once again, historical narratives, by organising events into a narrative form structured by a beginning and ending, transform historical time from mere chronological succession to a humanized kairological time.

Kermode’s account of narrative’s humanization of time is useful, although its limitations should be noted. In *The Sense of an Ending*, he is concerned predominantly with one type of narrative—apocalyptic narrative, or fictions of the End—which leads him to emphasize narrative endings, and how such endings humanize time. Such a focus is valuable. Indeed, in this thesis, I will draw on Kermode’s understanding of narrative endings, and his distinction between *chronos* and *kairos*, in my discussion of H. G. Wells, and the humanization of geological time in his universal histories. His account of narrative is particularly pertinent here

¹²² Kermode, *Ending*, 47.

¹²³ Kermode, *Ending*, 46.

¹²⁴ Kermode, *Ending*, 192.

¹²⁵ Kermode, *Ending*, 44.

because Wells self-consciously draws on two models of history with clearly defined ends as a narrative form to organize his teleological history: Biblical history, and Kant's universal history with a cosmopolitan aim. Because Wells's narrative model is Biblical and end-governed, there is an easy translation of terms between his history and Kermode's narrative theory. However, while useful, narrative endings are not the only means by which time becomes humanized through narrative. As Ricoeur points out, Kermode's apocalyptic model 'is only one paradigm among others, which in no way exhausts the dynamics of narrative'.¹²⁶ To redress the limitations of Kermode's account, I will turn to Ricoeur, who offers a complementary though more general account of the relation between narrative and time.

Paul Ricoeur, like Kermode, holds narrative to play a central role in the configuration of historical time. In *Time and Narrative* (1983-5), which remains the most sophisticated and compelling exploration of the relation between time and narrative to date, Ricoeur develops an account of the interdependence of narrative and temporality through two overlapping oppositions. On the one hand, there is the theoretical opposition internal to explicitly theoretical or philosophical reflections on time between what Ricoeur calls the 'phenomenological' and 'cosmological' perspectives: the 'time of the soul' and the 'time of the world'. On the other, there is the opposition between such reflections taken as a whole (and given the name 'aporetics of temporality') and the refiguration of time through narrative in historical and fictional discourses, the exposition of which falls under the heading of a 'poetics of narrative'. The connection between the two oppositions is that the first opposition can be shown to be resolved in the poetics of narrative: the opposition between phenomenological

¹²⁶ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, i, 73.

and cosmological forms of time is ‘poetically resolved’ through narrative, and its ability to configure historical time.¹²⁷

Ricoeur advances an account of how historical and fictional narratives configure historical time, with his theory of threefold mimesis. Supposedly, historical time is the product of the ‘(re)inscription of lived time onto cosmic time’ in the form of a threefold narrative mimesis, whose stages Peter Osborne usefully summarises:

- mimesis 1:** a *pre*figuration of the narrative structure of historical time in the structure of human action and its everyday interpretation;
- mimesis 2:** the *con*figuration of historical time through the construction of narratives that are ‘overlaid’ on the chronological framework of a shared cosmic time;
- mimesis 3:** the *re*figuration of lived time by virtue of the effect of its narrative configuration back upon the experience of the reader.¹²⁸

As part of his analysis of mimesis 2, Ricoeur holds that narratives combine in variable proportions two temporal dimensions: an episodic dimension and a configurational dimension.¹²⁹ The episodic dimension draws narrative time in the dimension of linear time, in which events follow each other indefinitely in an open series. By contrast, the configurational dimension draws narrative time in the direction of human time. There are three aspects to this configurational dimension of narrative. One—and here Ricoeur explicitly echoes Kermode—is through narrative endings: ‘the configuration of the plot imposes the “sense of an ending” . . . on an indefinite succession of incidents’.¹³⁰ Here, Ricoeur is in full agreement with Kermode’s analysis in *The Sense of an Ending*: just as Kermode had held that imposing a narrative ending on a series of events transformed what was mere chronological succession into *kairos*, so

¹²⁷ See Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 47.

¹²⁸ Summary adapted from Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 53.

¹²⁹ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, i, 66-8; Ricoeur previously gave a near-identical account of the two temporal dimensions of narrative in his ‘Narrative Time’, 177-80.

¹³⁰ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, i, 67.

Ricoeur holds that a ‘new quality of time emerges from this understanding’.¹³¹

However, by identifying an additional two aspects of the configurational dimension of narrative—the transformation of a series of narrative events into a meaningful whole, and narrative repetition—Ricoeur provides a richer account than Kermode of the way in which narrative configures and humanizes time.

Like Kermode, Ricoeur holds that narrative involves a humanization of time. The central claim of *Time and Narrative* is that ‘time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative; narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal experience’.¹³² This humanization of time arises through the features of the configurational aspect of narrative mentioned above, all of which correspond to phenomenological aspects of time: the imposition of a sense of an ending, the grasping together of the series of events as a whole, and the recollection or repetition of a story.¹³³ This account of the humanization of time by narrative is more sophisticated than that of Kermode.

Ricoeur appeals not to Kermode’s relatively simplistic distinction between *chronos* and *kairos*, but to Heidegger’s phenomenological account of time, and his hierarchy of modes of temporalization in *Being and Time*. Narrative, for Ricoeur, draws readers from an inauthentic everyday conception of time, on which time is conceived of as a series of instants succeeding one another along an abstract line oriented in a single dimension (an understanding of time which corresponds to Kermode’s *chronos*), to the more fundamental temporal levels of within-timeness (*Innerzeitigkeit*) and historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*).¹³⁴ The humanization of time is thus not considered

¹³¹ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, i, 67.

¹³² Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, i, 3.

¹³³ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, i, 68.

¹³⁴ Ricoeur, ‘Narrative Time’, 170, 178, 180.

simply as the transition from *chronos* to *kairos*, but as the transition to ever deeper levels of phenomenological temporality, which in turn are projected back onto cosmic time in the form of historical time.

I will use Kermode and Ricoeur's accounts of narrative to address the relation between time and narrative in the writings of Wells, Lawrence and Woolf. Given these theorists' understanding of the importance of narrative for the configuration of historical time, my thesis will pay close attention to the formal aspects of the narratives of the writers studied. In the chapters on Wells, I will use Kermode and Ricoeur's theories of narrative humanizing time to contrast the different forms of geological time in *The Time Machine* and in Wells's universal histories. Ricoeur argues that 'time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative'; conversely, through its resistance to narrative organization, the geological time of *The Time Machine* remains inhuman and sublime. By contrast, the narrative organization of Wells's universal histories humanizes geological time. Kermode's account of the humanization of time by plot is particularly apt, given Wells's use of a Biblical scheme of universal history as a model for his histories, and the importance that he gives to an ending in his narrative organization of history. In Kermode's terms, geological time is transformed from being the empty time of mere succession (*chronos*) to being a *kairological* time which is, as we shall see, charged with political significance.

Once again, I will draw on Kermode to elucidate the relation between time and narrative in Lawrence's writing. Kermode shows how apocalypse has shaped our culture's sense of an ending, and how fictions of an end impose a pattern on historical

time, and give a sense or meaning to history. Yet Lawrence resisted this sense of an ending. Adapting Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence, he rejected linear schemes of history, and instead plotted history as a cycle. By rejecting the Christian sense of an ending, Lawrence restructured the Christian pattern imposed on historical time, and the meaning that is derived from that ending.

Ricoeur's theory of the reconfiguration of time by narrative through the process of threefold mimesis provides a useful way of approaching the audience's reaction to the pageant in Woolf's *Between the Acts*. Ricoeur's theory is a theory about the power of narratives to refigure their readers' experience of time, and particularly their experience of historical time. *Between the Acts* is a particularly rich fictional exploration of just such a scenario. Here, what Ricoeur calls the refiguration of historical time is set within the novel, by means of its meta-fictional structure, as the audience's reactions to Miss La Trobe's historical pageant are fictively imagined (as are Lucy Swithin's reactions to her Wellsian *Outline of History*). Lucy's *Outline* and Miss La Trobe's historical pageant are both historical narratives which promise to 'make sense' of their place in history for Lucy and for the pageant's audience at a particularly troubled time: a June day in 1939, overshadowed by the prospect of an imminent world war. In particular, I will focus on the audience's response to one aspect of the pageant: their reaction to its fiction of an aeviternal nature. As we shall see, while this fiction provides Lucy with a reassuring sense of historical continuity, Isa is less easily reassured, and wishes for there to be an ending to history.

My appeal to the narrative theories of Kermode and Ricoeur, and the connections which they draw between narrative and the configuration of historical time, aims to

challenge Bergsonian accounts of the relationship between time and narrative in the modernist novel. On Stevenson's view, for instance, modernist narrative, with its formal innovations and multifarious anachronies, is a means of portraying a Bergsonian psychological time. 'Modernist narrative', he claims, 'seeks to place "everything in the mind"', and with the help of memory as a central structuring device, strives to represent a psychological time.¹³⁵ Heise shares a similar view, holding that modernist narrative depicts a 'multiplicity of private temporalities'; against such a conception of modernist narrative, she then contrasts postmodern narrative which, with its repetitions, metalepses and experimental typographies, is not tied to any specific human observer, but simply to the temporality of the text itself.¹³⁶ By contrast, with the aid of the narrative theories of Kermode and Ricoeur, I aim to demonstrate that modernist narrative is notable not only for its portrayal of psychological time, but also (breaking free from the problematic Bergsonian distinction between psychological and clock-time) for its configuration of historical time.

Further, Kermode and Ricoeur's accounts of historical time will prove useful for addressing the politics of time of the writers here studied. In *The Sense of an Ending*, Kermode makes clear how politically-charged apocalypticism is as a paradigm of 'sense-making', and how much political power has been generated through history by people's belief that they were living at the end of times. In doing so, he draws attention to Norman Cohn's classic study, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (1957), which traces a tradition of 'revolutionary millenarianism' through the middle ages,

¹³⁵ Stevenson, *Modernist Fiction*, 96.

¹³⁶ Heise, *Chronoschisms*, 51, 64. Heise's understanding of modernist narrative is slightly more sophisticated than Stevenson's, insofar as she holds that modernist narrative seeks to juxtapose the memories and perceptions of several different characters, and thereby creates an inter-subjectively shared social time.

and thereby shows how apocalyptic prophecies ‘deeply affected political attitudes’.¹³⁷ In the epilogue to his study, Cohn connects the tradition of revolutionary millenarianism to political movements in the early twentieth century, and notably to communism in the Soviet Union and to National Socialism in Germany. For instance, he points out that the National Socialist Party drew on Joachim of Fiore’s (c. 1135-1202) form of millenarianism (as did D. H. Lawrence), and his idea of a third historical age, to form the idea of the ‘Third Reich’, a millennial age which was to last a thousand years.¹³⁸ Within literary modernism, Kermode connects the apocalypticism of W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis to their reactionary politics.¹³⁹

In part, I will extend Kermode’s investigation by exploring the connection between Lawrence’s use of a Joachite apocalyptic shape of history (in combination with a Nietzschean historical rupture) and his politics. However—and this is a central contention of this thesis—it was not only the apocalyptic shape of history, and what Giorgio Agamben calls ‘eschatological time’, which were political within modernism: rather, the other forms of historical time studied here are equally politically-charged.¹⁴⁰ For instance, Woolf’s use of the fiction of the *aevum* in *Between the Acts* carries a politics. Aeviternity, like eschatological time, has its own history as a politically-charged temporal order, having served political and juristic functions. Most notably, it underpinned the doctrine of the king’s two bodies, through which the

¹³⁷ Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*, rev. edn (London: Pimlico, 1993), 35; see Kermode, *Ending*, 14.

¹³⁸ Cohn, *Millennium*, 285; compare Kermode, *Ending*, 13.

¹³⁹ Kermode, *Ending*, 104-14.

¹⁴⁰ Giorgio Agamben, *The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 62.

legitimacy of the monarch's political power was guaranteed.¹⁴¹ Woolf's use of the fiction of aeviternity in *Between the Acts*, like previous uses of the concept, carries its own politics. Similarly, recognizing the political aspect of Wells's humanized geological time, and Lawrence's adaptations of Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence, is to broaden Kermode's narrow focus on the politics of the apocalyptic paradigm to the politics of historical time more generally.

I should note that there is a significant difference between my approach to time and narrative in this thesis, and Benedict Anderson's influential contention in *Imagined Communities* (1983) that the time of the novel is a homogenous empty time. He argues that the time of the nation and the time of the novel are both homogenous empty times, and that the rise of print culture, including the spread of the novel, facilitated the rise of nationalism by the articulation of such a time.¹⁴² His contention that the novel 'is clearly a device for the presentation of simultaneity in "homogenous, empty time"' implicitly carries the weight of authority from Benjamin's very similar association between narrative and homogenous empty time.¹⁴³ For example, in his 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', Benjamin argued that historicism relies on a form of homogenous empty time, which he associated with narrative by claiming that the historian is 'drained by the whore called "Once upon a time" in historicism's bordello'.¹⁴⁴ (By contrast, Benjamin's preferred materialist historiography, based around the constellation and the dialectical image, is markedly

¹⁴¹ See Kermode, *Ending*, 73.

¹⁴² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn (London: Verso, 2006), 22-36. More fully, Anderson argues that the medieval conception of 'simultaneity-along-time', which views time as 'something close to what Benjamin calls Messianic time', was superseded by a conception of 'homogenous, empty time' ('to borrow again from Benjamin'), in which simultaneity is marked by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar (24).

¹⁴³ Anderson, *Communities*, 25.

¹⁴⁴ Benjamin, 'Theses', 254.

non-narrative.) Anderson reconfigures Benjamin's argument by holding that nationalism rather than historicism relies on a form of homogenous empty time; in doing so, he retains Benjamin's connection between narrative and homogenous empty time, claiming that the time of the novel is just such a time.

However, by adopting Kermode and Ricoeur's theories of time and narrative, I diverge from both Benjamin and Anderson in holding that narrative time (including the time of the novel) is not a homogenous empty time, but is rather a phenomenological, lived time. This difference is most readily apparent in Ricoeur's distinction between the episodic and configurational dimensions of narrative. While for Ricoeur the episodic dimension of narrative draws narrative time in the direction of the time of succession (or what Anderson calls homogenous empty time), the configurational dimension makes narrative time a human time.

My rejection of Anderson's understanding of the time of the novel parallels a similar rejection of that thesis in the recent 'temporal turn' in American studies, which is associated particularly with the work of Wai Chee Dimock, Thomas Allen, and Lloyd Pratt.¹⁴⁵ Work in this field has exploited Anderson's suggestive link between the emergence of a time of the nation and the time of the novel. However, it has tended to revise his contention that both should be understood as homogenous empty time. Both Pratt and Dimock explicitly reject Anderson's understanding of the time of the novel. Pratt rejects Anderson's 'account of the realist novel's production of an experience of simultaneity and homogenous empty time', which 'continues to be taken for granted

¹⁴⁵ See in particular Wai Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Thomas M. Allen, *A Republic in Time: Temporality and Social Imagination in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); and Lloyd Pratt, *Archives of American Time: Literature and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

in many quarters', on the grounds that it relies on an imperfect theory of genre. Instead, he argues that as genres develop, they adapt and cannibalize previous genres, and thereby 'accrete a range of different and competing temporalities'.¹⁴⁶ More bluntly, Dimock claims that 'Benedict Anderson cannot be more wrong about the time of the novel'.¹⁴⁷

Conceptually equipped with the narrative theories of Kermode and Ricoeur, this thesis will be a study of modernist 'grand narratives'. The term 'grand narrative' or '*grand récit*' was introduced by Jean-François Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition* (1979), in which he famously defined 'postmodern' as 'incredulity towards metanarratives'.¹⁴⁸ As Heise points out, Lyotard's thesis about the demise of grand narratives and the proliferation of local or micro-narratives has been widely influential on theories of postmodernism and of postmodern fiction.¹⁴⁹ Redeploying Lyotard's thesis within the context of modernism, I will investigate modernist 'grand narratives' at a time before they suffered their supposed demise.

Lyotard uses the terms 'grand narrative' or 'metanarrative' to designate second-order narratives which seek to articulate and legitimate some concrete first-order practices or narrative; central examples he gives of such narratives are those of G. W. F. Hegel

¹⁴⁶ Pratt, *Archives*, 8.

¹⁴⁷ Dimock, *Continents*, 88. The other premise of Anderson's argument—that the time of nation is an empty homogenous time—has also been challenged, most influentially by Homi Bhabha in 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation: Nation and Narration' (in *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), 291-322). Bhabha argues for the revised thesis that the time of the nation is a 'double and split' time (295). As Pratt points out, Bhabha and other postcolonial critics reversed Anderson's account of nationalism by means of a refigured account of time in the realist novel: where 'Anderson proposed that the novel articulates homogenous empty time, postcolonial studies showed how the realist novel articulates competing orders of time' (8-9).

¹⁴⁸ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on the Condition of Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), xxiv.

¹⁴⁹ Heise, *Chronoschisms*, 16-7.

and Karl Marx, as well as the Enlightenment narrative of the emancipation of the rational subject.¹⁵⁰ In this study, I shall be concerned neither with grand-narratives as second-order narratives (and for that reason I will not employ the term ‘metanarrative’, which suggests a narrative about narratives), nor shall I be concerned with narratives insofar as they legitimate knowledge. Rather, I will use ‘grand narrative’ as a terminological bridge between Kermode and Ricoeur’s theories of narrative. I will use it as a synonym for what Kermode calls ‘fictive concords’, or ‘concord-fictions’: fictions with historical beginnings and ends which help us make sense of our lives within the perspectives of time.¹⁵¹ (In this sense, *The Sense of an Ending* could be said to be an exploration of grand narratives, and in particular of grand narratives of apocalypse). Equally, I will use the term ‘grand narrative’ to designate those historical and fictional narratives which best, according to Ricoeur’s threefold theory of mimesis, configure historical time.¹⁵² In this slightly modified sense, fictional as well as historical narratives can qualify as grand narratives. It is perfectly possible, for instance, that a novel could count as a grand narrative. Indeed, grand narratives arise in a variety of different domains, including historiography, science, philosophy and literature.¹⁵³

The following chapters will address the historical and fictional grand narratives of Wells, Lawrence and Woolf. Most immediately, Wells and Lawrence advanced their own historical grand narratives: Wells’s *Outline of History* and *Short History of the*

¹⁵⁰ Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, xxiii.

¹⁵¹ Kermode, *Ending*, 7, 190.

¹⁵² Here, I follow the lead of J. M. Bernstein, who suggests that Ricoeur’s account of narrative repetition is best seen as an account of grand narratives. See his ‘Grand Narratives’, in David Wood (ed.), *On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 1991), 102-123, 119.

¹⁵³ Allan Megill points out that, within historiography, grand narratives are closely allied to the tradition of universal history, which includes both Christian universal history, whose model is provided by the Bible, and secular universal history, such as Kant’s plan for a universal history with a cosmopolitan aim. See his *Historical Knowledge, Historical Error: A Contemporary Guide to Practice* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 167-70.

World are grand narratives which tell the story of mankind, and Lawrence's *Movements in European History* is a grand narrative which tells the story of European history from the founding of Rome in 753 B.C. to his present day. In a more subtle form, historical grand narratives all appear, in different ways, within the fiction of Woolf, Lawrence and Wells. A cosmological grand narrative of the degeneration of the human species and the gradual heat-death of the earth forms the background to the Traveller's journey into the distant future in *The Time Machine*. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* dramatises a Nietzschean and apocalyptic epochal transition, marked by Connie's pagan rebirth. And *Between the Acts* contains two historical grand narratives embedded within its fictional form: Lucy's Wellsian *Outline of History*, and Miss La Trobe's village pageant, which tells the story of the English nation from the earliest times to the present day. How, we might ask, do these historical and fictional grand narratives reflect and participate in different configurations of historical time? And what politics do they thereby express?

PART 1:

H. G. WELLS, GEOLOGY AND THE ABYSS OF TIME

Nineteenth-century natural science transformed the understanding of the earth's past and future, giving rise to a host of competing grand narratives, many of which were in conflict with the prevailing Biblical understanding of the world's history. Stephen Toulmin and June Goodfield point out that 'the first branch of natural science to become genuinely historical was geology', and that between 1750 and 1850 geologists 'created a new and vastly extended time-scale, anchored in the rock strata and fossils of the Earth's crust'.¹ While Bishop Ussher had famously dated Creation in 4004 B.C. on the basis of an interpretation of Biblical history, geologists such as James Hutton (1726-97) and Charles Lyell (1797-1875) advanced new conceptions of geological or 'deep' time, and suggested that the earth was immensely older than previously thought.²

James Hutton combined his doctrine that all the past changes of the earth have been brought about by the slow agency of existing causes with a conception of cyclical geological processes whereby the earth is continually wasted and renewed. His 'Theory of the Earth' (1788) concludes with the celebrated statement that: '[t]he result, therefore, of our present enquiry is, that we find no vestige of a beginning,—no prospect of an end'.³ Charles Lyell, in his *Principles of Geology* (1830-3), accepted Hutton's reasoning that if all past changes of the globe have been brought about by the slow agency of existing causes, then the earth must be ancient beyond human

¹ Stephen Toulmin and June Goodfield, *The Discovery of Time* (London: Hutchinson, 1965), 171, 141. See also Martin J. S. Rudwick, *Bursting the Limits of Time: The Reconstruction of Geohistory in the Age of Revolution* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), and *Worlds Before Adam: The Reconstruction of Geohistory in the Age of Reform* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

² 'Deep time' is the time over while long-term geological and astronomical processes operate. The term was coined by John McPhee in his *Basin and Range* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1981).

³ James Hutton, 'Theory of the Earth; Or an Investigation of the Laws Observable in the Composition, Dissolution, and Restoration of Land upon the Globe', *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, 1 (1788), 209-304, 304; see also his *Theory of the Earth, with Proofs and Illustrations*, i (Edinburgh: William Creech, 1795), 200. On Hutton's theory of the earth, see Rudwick, *Bursting*, 158-72.

powers of comprehension, and built a ‘uniformitarian’ system on this basis.

Geological ‘catastrophists’ typically required shorter timescales to explain the present state of the earth because they could appeal to violent catastrophes such as Noachian deluges. By contrast, Lyell’s ‘doctrine of absolute uniformity’ asserted that events in the remote past had never been of greater extent, suddenness or intensity than presently acting causes, and thereby pointed to a much greater age of the earth.⁴

Stephen Jay Gould has compared the importance of Hutton and Lyell’s discovery of geological time to that of the Copernican revolution in astronomy, the Darwinian revolution in biology, and the Freudian revolution in psychology.⁵

The narratives that geologists such as Hutton and Lyell told about the past and probable future of the earth paved the way for later developments in Victorian science, but were also complicated by those developments. As Rudwick points out, the ‘historicization of the earth, in what became the science of geology, was soon extended to other parts of the natural world, above all in Darwin’s conception of the historical character of living organisms’. He makes clear that the reconstruction of geohistory was ‘historically distinct from, as well as being an indispensable precondition for, the slightly later reconstruction of . . . [the] history of life in the perspective of Darwinian evolution’.⁶ In *On the Origin of Species* (1859), Charles Darwin paid tribute to Lyell for showing the immense age of the earth, without which his theory of evolution by natural selection would not have been possible. He wrote

⁴ Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology: Being an Attempt to Explain the Former Changes of the Earth’s Surface, by Reference to Causes Now in Operation*, i (London: John Murray, 1830), 87; see also 76-80. On Lyell’s doctrine of absolute uniformity, see Rudwick, *Adam*, 303-5. As Rudwick points out, the terms ‘uniformitarian’ and ‘catastrophist’ were first introduced by William Whewell in his review of the second volume of Lyell’s *Principles*, which was first published in the *Quarterly Review* in 1832 (*Adam*, 358; see William Whewell, ‘[Review of] *Principles of geology* . . . Vol. II. London. 1832’, *Quarterly Review*, 93 (March 1832), 103-32, 126).

⁵ Stephen Jay Gould, *Time’s Arrow, Time’s Cycle: Myth and Metaphor in the Discovery of Geological Time* (London: Harvard University Press, 1987), 1-2.

⁶ Rudwick, *Bursting*, 7.

that '[h]e who can read Sir Charles Lyell's grand work on the Principles of Geology, which the future historian will recognise as having produced a revolution in natural science, yet does not admit how incomprehensively vast have been the past periods of time, may at once close this volume'.⁷ Evolutionary biology suggested that humankind had evolved slowly from other forms of life over an immense time span, and was susceptible to evolve further in the future, in the form of either a biological progression or a retrogression. The latter possibility underpins the 'discourses of degeneration' which proliferated in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and which, as William Greenslade points out, were '[f]ounded on the Darwinian revolution in biology'.⁸

The geologists' understanding of the earth's past and probable future was complicated by thermodynamic physics, which suggested that the universe was undergoing a physical decay through the dissipation of mechanical energy, and consequently that the earth might suffer a heat-death. As Bruce Clarke informs us, many, including James Joule, Robert Mayer, Macquorn Rankine, Hermann von Helmholtz, James Clarke Maxwell and Rudolph Clausius share the honour of first formulating thermodynamic principles from the 1840s to the 1860s. However, it was William Thomson who first articulated both the immediate terms and the cosmological consequences of the second law of thermodynamics.⁹ In his paper 'On a Universal Tendency in Nature to the Dissipation of Mechanical Energy' (1852), he formulated

⁷ Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, Or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (London: John Murray, 1859), 282.

⁸ William Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel, 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 15-6.

⁹ Bruce Clarke, *Energy Forms: Allegory and Science in the Era of Classical Thermodynamics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 3. The second law of thermodynamics states that the entropy (disorganisation) of an isolated system which is not in equilibrium will tend to increase over time, approaching a maximum value at equilibrium.

the outcome of the second law of thermodynamics as the ‘dissipation of mechanical energy’: as a result, ‘within a finite period of time to come the earth must [be] unfit for the habitation of man as at present constituted’.¹⁰ Thermodynamic physics thereby contravened the grand narratives of earlier geologists, and Hutton’s optimistic conclusion that we find ‘no prospect of an end’. Moreover, physical theorists such as Thomson vied with geologists over the age of the earth, arguing that the earth was far younger than geologists had suggested.¹¹ As Joe Burchfield points out, this controversy was not resolved—and then in favour of the geologists—until the turn of the century, with the discovery of radioactivity and the invention of the radiometric dating of rocks. Radioactivity indicated a far greater age of the earth than physical theorists such as Thomson had been willing to grant, and discredited theories of heat-death as a relatively imminent consequence of the second law of thermodynamics.¹²

In this part of my study, I will address geological time in H. G. Wells’s writing. In chapter 1.1, I will focus on his early scientific romance, *The Time Machine* (1895), before moving on in chapter 1.2 to his universal histories, *The Outline of History* (1920) and *A Short History of the World* (1922). Addressing geological time in Wells’s writing forms part of my attempt to unsettle Bergsonian readings of time in modernism. Geological time is a cosmological time, or a time of nature, which contrasts markedly with Henri Bergson’s psychological *durée*.¹³ In *Chronoschisms*

¹⁰ William Thomson, ‘On a Universal Tendency in Nature to the Dissipation of Mechanical Energy’, in *Mathematical and Physical Papers*, i (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1882), 511-4, 511.

¹¹ See, in particular, William Thomson, ‘On the Age of the Sun’s Heat’, *Macmillan’s Magazine*, 5 (5 March 1862), 388-93; and ‘On Geological Time’ (1868), in *Popular Lectures and Addresses*, ii (London; New York: Macmillan, 1894), 10-64. For an overview of the controversy between the geologists and the physical theorists on the age on the earth, see Joe D. Burchfield, *Lord Kelvin and the Age of the Earth* (London: Macmillan, 1975), 90-116.

¹² See Burchfield, *Kelvin*, 163-205.

¹³ As we saw in the introduction to this thesis, Paul Ricoeur contrasts cosmological time, or the time of nature, with phenomenological time, or human time (see *Time and Narrative*, iii, 4, 12). For Ricoeur, the discovery of geological time by natural scientists ‘was the source of so much consternation . . .

(1997), Ursula Heise complicates the Bergsonian picture of time in modernism which she adopts from Stephen Kern:

[i]f the conflict between . . . public and private temporality constitutes one of the major concerns of culture and art in the first decades of the twentieth century, the modernist reflection on time can nevertheless not simply be reduced to this conflict. Other complications emerge when one considers the contribution of the natural sciences to the reconceptualization of time in the modernist period. Already in the nineteenth century, geology and evolution theory opened up the prospect that our planet and organic life had existed for time periods that lie beyond human experienceability.¹⁴

Exploring geological time in Wells's writing allows me to exploit the tension which Heise diagnoses between the purported modernist interest in Bergsonian private time and the modernist interest in 'time scales large beyond the reach of common-sense comprehension'.¹⁵ However, I wish to go further than Heise's acknowledgement that the interest in cosmological time forms one of a number of 'complications' in the otherwise satisfactory Bergsonian picture, and argue that the Bergsonian picture ought to be abandoned altogether. Further, my reading of geological time in Wells seeks to contest readings of modernist time as being apolitical. I will argue that, while geological time forms part of the cosmic pessimism of *The Time Machine*, it becomes central to his later political writings, and notably to his universal histories, where it supports his vision of a cosmopolitan world state.

I will address geological time in Wells's writing in part through narrative. I will place *The Time Machine* and Wells's universal histories in the context of the radically new and sometimes bleak narratives about the past and future of the earth and humanity that arose within natural science and surrounding discourses, and more specifically

because it brought to light a disproportion, easily translated in terms of incommensurability, between human time and the time of nature' (89).

¹⁴ Heise, *Chronoschisms*, 38.

¹⁵ Heise, *Chronoschisms*, 38. As indicated in the introduction to this thesis, I will read *The Time Machine* as a fin-de-siècle romance which stands at the cusp of modernism, and Wells's universal histories as popular histories which were published in the heyday of modernism.

within the context of the ‘deep’ historical narratives that geologists used in their reconstructions of the geohistory of the earth.¹⁶ Further, I will draw on Frank Kermode’s and Paul Ricoeur’s theories of time and narrative, and their accounts of narrative as humanizing time, to contrast Wells’s treatment of geological time in *The Time Machine* and in the universal histories. I will show that the narrative of *The Time Machine* is fragmentary, and thereby complements the romance’s depiction of geological time as a sublime, non-human form of time. By contrast, the continuous narrative of the universal histories humanizes geological time. What results is two very different forms of historical time. The historical time of *The Time Machine* is a sublime, non-human time of nature, whereas the historical time of the universal histories is a humanized geological time, which forms the backdrop to a very human story of progress towards a cosmopolitan society.

1.1 *The Time Machine* (1895) and the Ruins of Time

Critics have profitably placed H. G. Wells’s early scientific romances in a variety of scientific contexts. Steven McLean’s recent study, *The Early Fiction of H. G. Wells: Fantasies of Science* (2009), is exemplary in this regard. By reading his early scientific romances alongside his contemporary journalism on scientific subjects, and situating both in the context of his scientific training at the Normal School of Science in South Kensington, McLean’s study aims to investigate ‘the relationship between Wells’s scientific romances and the discourses of science in the 1890s and early years of the twentieth century’.¹⁷ Employing comparable approaches, critics have read *The*

¹⁶ See Rudwick, *Bursting*, 2.

¹⁷ Steven McLean, *The Early Fiction of H. G. Wells: Fantasies of Science* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 3. As McLean points out, Wells attended the Normal School of Science in South Kensington between 1884-7, where he was taught by T. H. Huxley (1, 23). A selection of Wells’s

Time Machine (1895) in two principal scientific contexts: those of evolutionary biology and thermodynamic physics.

Numerous critics, including William Greenslade, have placed *The Time Machine* in the context of evolutionary biology, biological retrogression and contemporary discourses of degeneration.¹⁸ Other critics have discussed the romance in the context of thermodynamic physics. Bruce Clarke has read *The Time Machine* as ‘a virtual allegory of classical thermodynamics’; he shows that its combination of physical and social entropy reflects a wider transfer within the period of concepts and metaphors from physical science to social discourses of degeneration.¹⁹ Michael Whitworth, in his discussion of the literary uses of entropy, has drawn illuminating parallels between *The Time Machine* and Joseph Conrad’s *The Secret Agent* (1907).²⁰ Neatly linking the contexts of thermodynamic physics and evolutionary biology with issues of form, Michael Sayeau has argued that the physical and social entropy that are themes of the romance are reflected in its narrative structure, which manifests a type of narrative entropy, and thereby raises the spectre of the end of fiction.²¹

Collectively, these critics have demonstrated that the future world which the Time Traveller visits is one beset by evolutionary retrogression, in which humanity has degenerated into two species before possibly suffering extinction, and one

important early scientific journalism is reprinted in *Early Writings in Science and Science Fiction*, ed. Robert M. Philmus and David Y. Hughes (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

¹⁸ See, in particular, Michael R. Page, *The Literary Imagination from Erasmus Darwin to H. G. Wells: Science, Evolution and Ecology* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 149-70; McLean, *Fantasies*, 11-40; Roger Luckhurst, *Science Fiction* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), 30-49; and Greenslade, *Degeneration*, 32-41.

¹⁹ Clarke, *Energy Forms*, 121-6. See also Allen MacDuffie, *Victorian Literature, Energy, and the Ecological Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 234-51.

²⁰ Michael Whitworth, ‘Inspector Heat Inspected: *The Secret Agent* and the Meanings of Entropy’, *The Review of English Studies*, 49/193 (Feb. 1998), 40-59.

²¹ Michael Sayeau, *Against the Event: The Everyday and the Evolution of Modernist Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 109-46; and ‘H. G. Wells’s *The Time Machine* and the “Odd Consequence” of Progress’, *Contemporary Justice Review*, 8/4 (Dec. 2005), 431-45.

approaching heat-death, as a consequence of the second law of thermodynamics and the ‘dissipation of mechanical energy’.²² That is, they have shown how Wells, by drawing on discourses of evolutionary biology and thermodynamic physics, fashioned his own narrative of a degenerating humanity and a slowly dying earth.

However, while critics have paid ample attention to evolutionary biology and thermodynamic physics, they have almost entirely overlooked geological discourse. Certainly, critics such as Frank McConnell, Patrick Parrinder and Simon James have mentioned both geology and geological time in their discussions of *The Time Machine*. For example, McConnell long ago suggested that ‘[w]hat Wells manages to do in *The Time Machine* is to articulate, for the first time and decisively for his age, a vision of the abyss of geological time’.²³ More recently, James has astutely pointed out that ‘*The Time Machine*’s engagement with Victorian science draws not only on biology’s reimagining of human physiology, but also on geology’s expansion of the Victorian sense of time’.²⁴ Yet beyond such passing references, there has not been a sustained discussion of *The Time Machine* in the context of geology. This comparative neglect is perhaps indicative of a wider tendency in the history of science in which, as Rudwick points out, geology’s historicization of the earth ‘has generally been treated as a mere prelude to the better-known story of the “Darwinian revolution”’.²⁵

²² Thomson, ‘Dissipation’, 511.

²³ Frank McConnell, *The Science Fiction of H. G. Wells* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 82. Parrinder mentions Wells’s ‘use of geological chronology’ in *The Time Machine*, and points out that Wells’s ‘familiarity with the prehistoric vistas opened up by nineteenth-century geology and archaeology had shaped his vision of time travel’ (*Shadows of the Future: H. G. Wells, Science Fiction and Prophecy* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995), 40, 38).

²⁴ Simon J. James, *Maps of Utopia: H. G. Wells, Modernity, and the End of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 56-7.

²⁵ Rudwick, *Bursting*, 7.

Regardless of the reasons for its comparative neglect, situating *The Time Machine* in the context of geology is rewarding. It provides insight into the conceit of time travel, the ruined architecture of the future age, and the work's fragmentary aesthetic. By reading the romance alongside the geology of James Hutton, Charles Lyell and others of their era, I will show how Wells drew on a tradition of depicting geological time, and the individual's relation to that time, through an aesthetics of the sublime. In turn, situating *The Time Machine* in the context of geology promises to throw new light on the more frequently discussed contexts of evolutionary biology and thermodynamic physics.

By the time he wrote *The Time Machine*, H. G. Wells was well-versed in geology.²⁶ He studied geology at the Normal School of Science, where he sat examinations in geology in 1886 and 1887.²⁷ While he failed the latter exam, as he records in his autobiography, he later took 'first place in second class honours in geology' in his B.Sc., which was awarded by London University in 1890.²⁸ He subsequently taught classes in geology at the University Tutorial College, London in 1890, and co-wrote with R. A. Gregory a text-book called *Honours Physiography* (1893).²⁹ *Honours Physiography* is a text-book that was designed to prepare students at the Royal College of Science for the 'Honours Examination' in Physiography, which covered

²⁶ There are five extant versions of *The Time Machine*. An early version of the romance, 'The Chronic Argonauts', appeared in *The Science School Journal* in 1888. *The Time Machine* was published in serialised form in the *National Observer* in 1894, and in the *New Review* in 1894-5; it was published in book form by Henry Holt and Co. in America and by William Heinemann in Britain, both in 1895. For an account of the publication history of *The Time Machine*, see *The Definitive Time Machine: A Critical Edition of H. G. Wells's Scientific Romance*, ed. Harry M. Geduld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 5-10.

²⁷ For a biographical account of Wells's time at the Normal School of Science, see Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie, *The Life of H. G. Wells: The Time Traveller*, 2nd edn (London: Hogarth Press, 1987), 53-65.

²⁸ H. G. Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography: Discoveries and Conclusions of a Very Ordinary Brain (Since 1866)*, i (London: Victor Gollancz and The Cresset Press, 1934), 188.

²⁹ J. R. Hammond, *An H. G. Wells Chronology* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 15.

geology, astronomy and meteorology.³⁰ As its preface claims, ‘Honours Physiography involves a sound knowledge of geological structures in general, and the forces molding them’; it includes a section on ‘The Age of the Earth’, and a final chapter on the ‘Distribution of Life in Space and Time’.³¹ In 1894, Wells reviewed T. G. Bonney’s *The Story of our Planet* (1893), which advertises itself as a non-technical and accessible introduction to geology in the tradition of James Hutton and Charles Lyell’s uniformitarianism.³²

In his autobiography, Wells records an ambivalence in his attitude towards geology. On the one hand, he criticizes the way that geology was taught at the Normal School of Science. He recalls being bored rigid by Professor Judd, with his pedantic commitment to rote-learning. He found most of the geology that he was taught dry, marred by the unprincipled accumulation of ‘great masses of new material’.³³ On the other hand, he describes how as a boy he had ‘pored over Humboldt’s *Cosmos* and began to learn something of geological time’.³⁴ Similarly, he records his interest in the geology ‘of that great generation which included Lyell and Murchison’, whose ‘general idea’ was, as he puts it, ‘to scrutinize the earth as a whole, say what it is and what it was, [and] ransack it for evidence of how it originated and what it has gone through’.³⁵ Even at the Normal School of Science, he was excited by the possibilities offered by geology. In petrography classes, he recalls examining ‘specimen chunks of

³⁰ The ‘Normal School of Science’ changed its name to the ‘Royal College of Science’ in 1890, before eventually becoming absorbed into Imperial College London.

³¹ R. A. Gregory and H. G. Wells, *Honours Physiography* (London: Joseph Hughes, 1893), i. On the title page of this work, Wells is described as ‘Lecturer in Geology at the University Tutorial College; Third in Honours in Geology and Physical Geography at B.Sc.’ (p.iii).

³² T. G. Bonney, *The Story of our Planet* (London: Cassell, 1893); H. G. Wells, ‘Reminiscences of a Planet’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 8990 (Jan. 15, 1894), 4.

³³ Wells, *Autobiography*, i, 184.

³⁴ Wells, *Autobiography*, i, 98. The reference is to Alexander von Humboldt’s five-volume *Kosmos: Entwurf einer physischen Weltbeschreibung* (1845-62), whose title has most often been translated into English as *Cosmos: A Sketch of a Physical Description of the Universe*.

³⁵ Wells, *Autobiography*, i, 228.

rock' which told of 'the steady creeping of molecule past molecule, age after age.

And in this interpretation lay the history and understanding of the Earth as a whole'.³⁶

Geological Time Travel



'The mind seemed to grow giddy by looking so far into the abyss of time'.

John Playfair³⁷

In H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895), the Time Traveller makes two principal journeys into the future, before returning home: firstly to the year 802,701 A.D., and secondly to 'more than thirty million years hence'.³⁸ The conceit of time travel which is central to this romance finds a precedent in geological literature, and more

³⁶ Wells, *Autobiography*, i, 230-1.

³⁷ John Playfair, 'Biographical Account of the Late Dr James Hutton, F. R. S. Edin.', *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, 5/3 (1805), 39-99, 73. The illustration is the frontispiece to Charles Lyell's *A Manual of Elementary Geology: Or, the Ancient Changes of the Earth and its Inhabitants as Illustrated by Geological Monuments*, 3rd edn (London: John Murray, 1851), p.ii. Below the frontispiece is the descriptive title 'Strata of Red Sandstone, Slightly Inclined, Resting on Vertical Schist, at the Siccar Point, Berwickshire', and the quotation from Playfair's 'Hutton'. The illustration is taken from *HathiTrust Digital Library* <<http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044107339012;view=1up;seq=5>> accessed 1 October 2014.

³⁸ H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine*, ed. Patrick Parrinder (London: Penguin, 2005), 28, 84. Unless otherwise specified, all further references are to this edition.

specifically, in that which Ralph O'Connor calls 'geological time travel'.³⁹ While, as O'Connor points out, the 'idea of being "carried back" into antiquity was . . . a commonplace among geologists', a seminal example of such time travel is John Playfair's description of an imaginative journey through time at Siccar Point, inspired by the geology of James Hutton.⁴⁰

In his 'Biographical Account of the Late Dr James Hutton' (1805), John Playfair described what has become famous in geological lore: the boat trip with Hutton and James Hall to Siccar Point, Berwickshire, which authenticated Hutton's theory 'by the testimony of the senses'.⁴¹ The rocks at Siccar Point are an example of what Hutton called 'angular junctions', or what in modern terms are known as unconformities. While, as Rudwick points out, several earlier naturalists had described such rock formations, Hutton reinterpreted them to confirm his theory of a cyclic 'succession of worlds', in which successive rock masses are uplifted then worn down in a cyclical process.⁴² Playfair records his impressions of listening to Hutton lecturing on the rocks:

[w]hat clearer evidence could we have had of the different formation of these rocks, and of the long interval which separated their formation, had we actually seen them emerging from the bosom of the deep? We felt ourselves necessarily carried back to the time when the schistus on which we stood was yet at the bottom of the sea, and when the sandstone before us was only beginning to be deposited, in the shape of sand or mud, from the waters of a

³⁹ Ralph O'Connor, *The Earth on Show: Fossils and the Poetics of Popular Science, 1802-1856* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 373-4. By extension, Wells's conceit of time travel also finds a precedent in the various popular theatrical and visual displays such as panoramas and dioramas which, informed by recent geological science, portrayed themselves as time travel into distant geological epochs. See *Earth on Show*, 263-324.

⁴⁰ O'Connor, *Earth*, 374. Although he does not explicitly mention *The Time Machine*, O'Connor intriguingly suggests that from geological time travel it 'was only a short step to the scientific romances of . . . H. G. Wells' (374).

⁴¹ Playfair, 'Hutton', 72. Wells would have known of James Hutton. Hutton's work, and its 'influence on the growth of the Science of Geology', is the subject of the first chapter of R. D. Roberts' *The Earth's History: An Introduction to Modern Geology* (London: John Murray, 1893), 4-13, a work to which Wells and Gregory refer their readers in *Honours Physiography* (118).

⁴² Rudwick, *Bursting*, 168-9.

superincumbent ocean. An epoch still more remote presented itself . . .
 Revolutions still more remote appeared in the distance of this extraordinary
 perspective. The mind seemed to grow giddy by looking so far into the abyss
 of time; and while we listened with earnestness and admiration to the
 philosopher who was now unfolding to us the order and series of these
 wonderful events, we became sensible how much farther reason may
 sometimes go than imagination can venture to follow.⁴³

Playfair here illustrates Hutton's conception of geological time through the conceit of an imaginative journey back through the epochs. His description has been widely celebrated. For example, Charles Lyell used the description of the mind growing giddy looking into 'the abyss of time' as an epigram to his *Manual of Elementary Geology* (1851). He also used an illustration of the scene at Siccar Point (which is reproduced above) as a frontispiece to this work.⁴⁴ As Rudwick points out, the 'idea of time as an abyss was borrowed from [Georges] Buffon, but it encapsulates what Playfair's generation (and others since) found most striking about Hutton's system'.⁴⁵

It should also be noted that Playfair's description deploys an aesthetics of the sublime to portray Hutton's geological time. In *Romantic Rocks, Aesthetic Geology* (2004), Noah Heringman argues that geology and Romantic literature were mutually constitutive discourses that shared a common idiom of landscape aesthetics. As part of his focus on 'aesthetic geology', he has shown that an aesthetics of the sublime and a related 'sense of wonder' was commonly deployed in geological literature.⁴⁶

⁴³ Playfair, 'Hutton', 72-3.

⁴⁴ Lyell, *Manual*, p.ii. In the body of the text, having quoted Playfair's account of the trip to Siccar Point in full, and explaining its significance 'as illustrating the antiquity . . . of the globe', Lyell points out that 'in the frontispiece of this volume the reader will see a view of this classical spot . . . faithfully drawn and coloured from nature by the youngest son of the late Sir James Hall' (60). Presumably, the three figures in the rowing boat painted by the younger James Hall represent his father, Playfair and Hutton.

⁴⁵ Rudwick, *Bursting*, 169.

⁴⁶ Noah Heringman, *Romantic Rocks, Aesthetic Geology* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004). On the geological sublime, see also O'Connor, *Earth*, 49-51, 151-3, and Cian Duffy, *The Landscapes of the Sublime, 1700-1830: Classic Ground* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 2, 4-5, 15-9. For a classic account of the development of the natural sublime as an aesthetic category, including by means of Thomas Burnet's *Sacred Theory of the Earth* (1681), see Marjorie Hope

Playfair's description of the boat trip at Siccar Point forms part of what Heringman calls the 'geological sublime'.⁴⁷ Contemplating the rock strata, the imaginative journey back through 'the abyss of time' takes the form of a sublime experience: '[t]he mind seemed to grow giddy', and, typical of many accounts of sublime experience, the imagination is 'overwhelmed'.

In *The Time Machine*, the Traveller's journey into the distant future in many respects resembles Playfair's description of the mind's journey back through geological time. The Traveller's 'great strides of a thousand years or more' on his machine into the deep future parallel Playfair's description of feeling imaginatively 'carried back to the time when the schistus on which we stood was yet at the bottom of the sea', then to '[a]n epoch still more remote', and again through '[r]evolutions still more remote' which 'appeared in the distance of this extraordinary perspective'.⁴⁸ Standing on the desolate beach in the distant future, the Traveller grows 'giddy'. Overwhelmed, he gets off his machine to recover himself, and stands 'sick and confused', 'incapable of facing the return journey'.⁴⁹ This giddiness is most immediately explained by the disorienting rocking of his machine, and the thinness of the air of the future. Yet it also echoes Playfair's description of the extremity of his imaginative voyage back through time: '[t]he mind seemed to grow giddy by looking so far into the abyss of time'. In the *New Review* version of *The Time Machine*, the Traveller had described his planned journey into the extreme future in terms which again echo Playfair: 'I resolved to run on for one glimpse of the still remoter future—one peep into the

Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1959).

⁴⁷ Heringman, *Rocks*, 12.

⁴⁸ Wells, *Time Machine*, 84.

⁴⁹ Wells, *Time Machine*, 85.

deeper abysm of time—and then to return to you and my own epoch’.⁵⁰ Playfair’s ‘abyss of time’ becomes Wells’s ‘abysm of time’, and his visual metaphor of ‘looking’ becomes Wells’s ‘glimpse’ and ‘peep’. The Time Traveller’s terminus, at which he grows giddy and needs to return, is both the extreme point to which he can travel into a world which is increasingly unable to support life, and also parallels the limit at which the imagination becomes overwhelmed in the sublime imagination of deep time, before needing to return to the present day.

Roger Luckhurst suggests that the Traveller’s journey to the desolate beach in *The Time Machine* helped to create the ‘cosmic sublime’ of science fiction. He argues that this scene might form ‘one origin of science fiction’ as a genre, and points out that ‘the perspective of cosmic time in this vision is expressed through sublime terror and awe’.⁵¹ Similar ‘cosmic perspective[s]’ are a feature of Olaf Stapledon’s works, and later become established in the science fiction of Arthur Clarke, Isaac Asimov and others in what Luckhurst calls both the ‘cosmic sublime’ and the ‘SF sublime’.⁵²

While Luckhurst credits Wells with the creation of what was to become the ‘SF sublime’, this aesthetic can be traced back to geological literature. Playfair’s account of the trip to Siccar Point is an important example of the sublime experience of geological time, and moreover one that has marked echoes in *The Time Machine*. However, it should be appreciated that this description is characteristic of a wider tendency in geological literature to use an aesthetic of the sublime to imagine geological time. As O’Connor points out, the new school of geology, often by

⁵⁰ Wells, *Early Writings*, 99.

⁵¹ Luckhurst, *Science Fiction*, 34-5. On the ‘SF sublime’, see also Page, *Imagination*, 157-8, and Cornel Robu, ‘A Key to Science Fiction: The Sublime’, *Foundation*, 42 (1988), 21-37.

⁵² Luckhurst, *Science Fiction*, 35, 47.

drawing on astronomy—‘the sublime science *par excellence*’—partook of ‘an aesthetic of wonder by which unlimited immensity (spatial or temporal) bewildered the mind into a temporary and pleasurable loss of rationality’.⁵³ The sublimity of the Traveller’s voyage into the distant future is heir to such an aesthetic of the sublime in geological discourse. His experiences in the deep future parallel the geologists’ portrayal of the imagination being overpowered in a sublime confrontation with a vast geological time.

The Traveller’s journeys through time also resemble more tranquil forms of geological time travel. In particular, the early stages of his journey parallel Charles Lyell’s use of imaginative trips through time in his *Principles of Geology* (1830-3). Imagination plays an important role in the *Principles*, in which Lyell stressed the importance of being able to imagine clearly past time in its immensity. Rudwick argues that although Lyell’s ‘scientific colleagues (unlike many of the Mosaic pseudo-geologists) readily accepted a vast time scale on the intellectual level, Lyell seems to have recognized that it was their scientific *imagination* that needed transforming’.⁵⁴ In the *Principles*, Lyell advocated reckoning the geological ‘myriads of ages’ not ‘by arithmetical computation’, but rather by ‘a train of physical events’: ‘signs which convey to our minds more definite ideas than figures can do, of the immensity of time’.⁵⁵ The geologist is portrayed as imagining physical changes through time in a very visual and dynamic manner:

to trace the same system through various transformations—to behold it at successive eras adorned with different hills and valleys, lakes and seas, and

⁵³ O’Connor, *Earth*, 153.

⁵⁴ Martin J. S. Rudwick, ‘The Strategy of Lyell’s *Principles of Geology*’, *Isis*, 61/1 (Spring 1970), 4-33, 11, his emphasis; compare *Adam*, 255-6, 304.

⁵⁵ Lyell, *Principles*, i, 25.

peopled with new inhabitants, was the delightful meed of geological research.⁵⁶

Wells's romance provides a very concrete version of such an imaginative exercise.

The Traveller builds a time machine, and literally—as opposed to imaginatively—watches the ages passing as he voyages through deep time. He records how, travelling on his time machine, he

saw trees growing and changing like puffs of vapour, . . . they grew, spread, shivered, and passed away. I saw huge buildings rise up . . . and pass like dreams. The whole surface of the earth seemed changed—melting and flowing under my eyes.⁵⁷

His watching the 'whole surface of the earth' changing before his eyes, and buildings rise and 'pass like dreams', parallels Lyell's description of the geologist beholding the earth at 'successive eras adorned with different hills and valleys', and 'peopled with new inhabitants'. In *The Time Machine*, the 'melting and flowing' of the surface of the earth also echoes Alfred Tennyson's *In Memoriam* (1850), in which the hills 'flow' and 'melt like mist':

The hills are shadows, and they flow
From form to form, and nothing stands;
They melt like mist, the solid lands,
Like clouds they shape themselves and go.⁵⁸

This stanza both reveals the influence of Lyell's conception of geological time on *In Memoriam*, and was itself later quoted in geological works.⁵⁹ For example, in *The Story of Our Planet* (1893), which Wells reviewed in 1894, Bonney used the first two

⁵⁶ Lyell, *Principles*, i, 25. Bonney characterized the 'task of the geologist' in a similarly visual and dynamic way in the *Story of our Planet*: the task is 'to delineate in a series of sketches the changing scenes—as sea was replaced by land, or land by sea, as island groups coalesced into continents, or continents were severed and submerged; as mountain chains arose, and as even they, at last, were brought low' (393).

⁵⁷ Wells, *Time Machine*, 19.

⁵⁸ Alfred Tennyson, *In Memoriam* (London: Strahan, 1870), CXXIII, 192.

⁵⁹ On the influence of Lyell's geology on Tennyson, see Dennis Dean, *Tennyson and Geology* (Lincoln: Tennyson Society, 1985), Virginia Zimmerman, *Excavating Victorians* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2008), 65-96, and E. E. Snyder, 'Tennyson's Progressive Geology', *Victorian Network*, 2/1 (2010), 27-48. Joseph Carroll suggests that Wells's *The Time Machine* is a translation of one of the lyric nightmares of *In Memoriam* (*Evolution and Literary Theory* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1995), 314).

lines of this stanza to conclude his chapter on the geological construction of the British Isles, where they complement his point that the earth's surface is 'never at rest', but 'rises and falls, as if it were the breast of some huge monster, slowly breathing as it sleeps'.⁶⁰ Again, in *The Time Machine*, during his return voyage, the Traveller records that '[t]he fluctuating contours of the land ebbed and flowed'.⁶¹ In the *National Observer* version, he witnesses the hills being eroded: 'I noticed the hills grow visibly lower through the years with the wear of gust and rain'.⁶²

In line with the uniformitarian geology of Lyell and others, geological change in *The Time Machine* consists of very small changes over vast periods, as opposed to dramatic changes wrought by violent geological catastrophes. Once the Traveller has arrived in the world of the Eloi and Morlocks, he notices subtle changes to the topography. After over eight-hundred-thousand years, 'the Thames had shifted, perhaps, a mile from its present position', and when he reaches the Palace of Green Porcelain, he 'was surprised to see a large estuary, or even a creek, where [he] judged Wandsworth and Battersea must once have been'.⁶³ In the world approaching heat-death, the Traveller, whose machine has not moved through space, finds himself on the edge of a sloping beach by a sea.⁶⁴ A process of geological change has taken place incrementally over the intervening time-span, much like that highlighted in

Tennyson's *In Memoriam*:

There rolls the deep where grew the tree.
O earth, what changes hast thou seen!
There where the long street roars, hath been

⁶⁰ Bonney, *Planet*, 448, 221. In his autobiography, Wells recalls reading Tennyson as a student (*Autobiography*, i, 194).

⁶¹ Wells, *Time Machine*, 86.

⁶² Wells, *Early Writings*, 64.

⁶³ Wells, *Time Machine*, 28, 64.

⁶⁴ Wells, *Time Machine*, 82.

The stillness of the central sea.⁶⁵

Bonney also quotes this stanza in his *Story of our Planet*, and comments that '[t]he poet uttered no dreamer's words, but simple scientific truth'.⁶⁶ In Tennyson's poem, the poet thinks that 'where the long street roars, hath been/ The stillness of the central sea', whereas in *The Time Machine*, what had been central London comes in the distant geological future to be covered by a freezing sea.

The geological aspects of the Traveller's time travel are developed further in an abandoned draft chapter of *The Time Machine*, called 'The Return of the Time Traveller'.⁶⁷ In this chapter, the Traveller returns from 'the desolate beach of the dying Earth', past his present day, and into the remote geological past. He becomes 'lost in time', and calls on his geological knowledge to try to locate himself. At first he worries that he will have travelled so far that what was later land would be sea: the 'persuasion came into my mind that I should stop when the country was submerged, & sink plump into the water of some of those vanished oceans whose sediments form the dry land of today'.⁶⁸ He fears reaching a time when the land was not yet formed from the ocean beds, like Playfair's journey in imagination to a 'time when the schistus on which we stood was yet at the bottom of the sea', or to Tennyson's time when what is now a street had been the 'stillness of the central sea'. Fortunately, however, he comes to rest on the bank of a prehistoric river delta. He recounts that: 'I peered through the thin haze to see any forms of life that I could identify from my

⁶⁵ Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, CXXIII, 192.

⁶⁶ Bonney, *Planet*, 222. In the Bonney's work, the stanza is suggestively juxtaposed with an illustration of the ruined columns of the 'Temple of Serapis', which will be discussed below. In his autobiography, Wells recalls his 'excitement' at realizing, while standing on the brow of Telegraph Hill in South London and looking across the weald to the North Downs, that 'I was standing on the escarpment of a denuded anticlinal, and that this stuff of the pale hills under my feet had once been slime at the bottom of a vanished Cretaceous sea' (*Autobiography*, i, 112).

⁶⁷ This chapter is reproduced in *Definitive Time Machine*, 184-8.

⁶⁸ Wells, *Definitive Time Machine*, 184-5.

geological reading & that would give me some idea of my position in time'. Using his knowledge of geology, he reassures himself that he will not have to travel through an oceanic period to return home: 'I remembered that the deciduous trees came after the Cretaceous period. At any rate I had not that oceanic period between me & my own time'.⁶⁹

However, to the Traveller's disadvantage, his geological knowledge is comically bad. He speculates that: '[s]o far as my knowledge of geology went this river might be the great flood that deposited what is now London clay'. Below, in what is perhaps a joke at his own expense, having failed the geological exam at the Normal School of Science in 1887, Wells adds a footnote which criticises the Traveller's supposition:

[t]he Time Traveller's knowledge of geology was scarcely on a level with his mechanical achievements. A distinguished geologist assures me that this supposition was quite inaccurate. . . . the hippopotamus [which the Traveller encountered] . . . would indicate the much more recent epoch of the Pliocene period.⁷⁰

Again, the Traveller estimates that he travelled 'thirty or forty million years' into the past, based on the fact that that 'is the period . . . some geologists give for the London Clay', but his supposition is once more undermined by a footnote, which states that '[t]he Time Traveller's geology was extremely elementary'.⁷¹

It is not just the geological landscape which changes over deep time in *The Time Machine*, but also celestial phenomena.⁷² The Traveller 'saw the moon spinning swiftly through her quarters from new to full, and had a faint glimpse of the circling

⁶⁹ Wells, *Definitive Time Machine*, 186.

⁷⁰ Wells, *Definitive Time Machine*, 185.

⁷¹ Wells, *Definitive Time Machine*, 186.

⁷² Bonney writes that, in investigating the remote past, 'the geologist must lift his eyes from the ground beneath his feet, and look upward to the orbs of heaven and the star-studded region of the sky. He must be content to seek help from the student of physics and the astronomer' (*Planet*, 330).

stars'.⁷³ He witnesses effects of celestial change which had been predicted by George Darwin's theory of tidal drag as he journeys further into the distant future:

the sun had ceased to set—it simply rose and fell in the west, and grew ever broader and more red. All trace of the moon had vanished. The circling of the stars, growing slower and slower, had given place to creeping points of light. At last, some time before I stopped, the sun, red and very large, halted motionless upon the horizon, a vast dome glowing with a dull heat.⁷⁴

He is able to watch, as opposed merely to imagine, the earth approaching heat death.

He repeatedly takes

great strides of a thousand years or more, drawn on by the mystery of the earth's fate, watching with a strange fascination the sun grow larger and duller in the westward sky, and the life of the old earth ebb away.⁷⁵

The conceit of having an observer watch the changes around him as he moves through vast spans of time makes vivid the infinitesimally slow changes of geology and astronomy. The Traveller contemplates the changes that had occurred over the course of his journey:

[a]ll the old constellations had gone from the sky, however: that slow movement which is imperceptible in a hundred human lifetimes, had long since rearranged them in unfamiliar groupings.⁷⁶

The 'slow movement' of the constellations over vast stretches of time, which are imperceptible to the individual observer, let alone 'in a hundred human lifetimes', become visible to the Traveller on his time machine. This way of concretely visualizing slow change through vast periods is a fictional equivalent of Lyell's geological imagination, and his advocacy of reckoning the 'myriad of ages' not through arithmetical computation, but visually, through trains of physical events.

⁷³ Wells, *Time Machine*, 19.

⁷⁴ Wells, *Time Machine*, 81-2.

⁷⁵ Wells, *Time Machine*, 84.

⁷⁶ Wells, *Time Machine*, 60-1.

Romantic Ruins



‘Present state of the Temple of Serapis at Pozzuoli’.⁷⁷

The world which the Traveller encounters in the year 802,701 A.D. is one of ruins. Much of the architecture of the future age is neo-Classical: there are ‘huge buildings with intricate parapets and tall columns’, ‘palace-like buildings’, a seat with arm rests carved as griffins’ heads and scattered cupolas and obelisks.⁷⁸ Many of the buildings are decaying or ruined: the colossal building into which the Traveller is led has a

⁷⁷ Frontispiece to Charles Lyell’s *Principles of Geology* (1830) (*Principles*, i, p.ii). Taken from *The Complete Works of Charles Darwin Online* <<http://darwinonline.org.uk/content/frameset?viewtype=text&itemID=A505.1&pageseq=1>> accessed 1 October 2014.

⁷⁸ Wells, *Time Machine*, 22, 29, 30.

richly carved arch with ‘Phoenician decorations’ which ‘were very badly broken and weather-worn’, and inside, the Traveller observes that ‘the corner of the marble table near [him] was fractured’. The landscape is overgrown: it is a ‘tangled waste of beautiful bushes and flowers’ which gives the impression of ‘a long-neglected’ garden.⁷⁹ There were ‘great palaces dotted about among the variegated greenery, some in ruins’, as well as ‘abundant ruins’, ‘abandoned ruins’, and ‘splendid palaces and magnificent ruins’.⁸⁰ Recounting his arrival in the future land, the Traveller describes ‘the condition of ruinous splendour in which [he] found the world’:

ruinous it was. A little way up the hill, for instance, was a great heap of granite, bound together by masses of aluminium, a vast labyrinth of precipitous walls and crumpled heaps, amidst which were thick heaps of very beautiful pagoda-like plants—nettles possibly.⁸¹

These ‘derelict remains of some vast structure’ had been described as a ‘colossal ruin’ with ‘precipitous masses and confusion of pillars’ in the *National Observer* version of *The Time Machine*.⁸² The Traveller pursues several of his adventures amongst ruins: seeking shelter in a ‘colossal ruin’, he clammers among ‘heaps of masonry’, and enters ‘a narrow gallery, whose end and side windows were blocked by fallen masses of stone’. A Morlock evades the Traveller, hiding ‘in a black shadow beneath another pile of ruined masonry’; the Traveller pursues this Morlock ‘into [a] second heap of ruins’, unto an opening ‘half closed by a fallen pillar’.⁸³ Later, the Traveller explores the ‘Palace of Green Porcelain’, a deserted Victorian-style museum ‘falling into ruin’.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Wells, *Time Machine*, 26-7.

⁸⁰ Wells, *Time Machine*, 30, 32, 33, 78.

⁸¹ Wells, *Time Machine*, 29.

⁸² Wells, *Early Writings*, 78.

⁸³ Wells, *Time Machine*, 45-6.

⁸⁴ Wells, *Time Machine*, 64.

Patrick Parrinder has advanced an influential reading of these ruins, which he sees as a key to the time-scheme of *The Time Machine*.⁸⁵ He points out that ‘the ruined buildings of the age of the Eloi and the Morlocks are, however implausibly, culturally continuous with our own civilisation. The landscape is full of classical motifs: cupolas, obelisks, fauns, and griffins’ heads, as well as the Sphinx’.⁸⁶ He goes on to argue that ‘we can understand *The Time Machine* better by seeing both an “800,000-year” and an “800-year” timescale at work in it’: ‘[t]he two scales, those of historical time measured by the rise and fall of cultures and civilisations, and of biological time measured by the evolution and devolution of the species, are superimposed upon one another’.⁸⁷ The Palace of Green Porcelain’s resemblance to a Victorian museum places it in the historical timescale, whereas the ‘Eloi and Morlocks could only emerge within the long perspectives of evolutionary time’.⁸⁸ For Parrinder, these timescales, although ‘internally consistent’, are ‘incompatible in certain respects’.⁸⁹ They ‘come into conflict’ when the Traveller arrives at the Palace of Green Porcelain, an episode which for Parrinder involves ‘chronological incongruities’.⁹⁰ While the Palace would have made sense on the historical time-scale, on the evolutionary timescale it involves ‘implausibility’: ‘the decay ought to have gone very much further’.⁹¹

⁸⁵ Parrinder first advanced this argument in *Shadows of the Future*, and then later in ‘From Rome to Richmond: Wells, Universal History, and Prophetic Time’, in George Slusser, Patrick Parrinder and Daniele Chatelain (eds), *H. G. Wells’s Perennial Time Machine* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 110-21. As McLean points out, ‘Parrinder’s idea that there are two timescales at work in *The Time Machine* [has been] generally accepted’ (*Fantasies*, 12).

⁸⁶ Parrinder, ‘Rome’, 116.

⁸⁷ Parrinder, ‘Rome’, 116; *Shadows*, 41-2.

⁸⁸ Parrinder, *Shadows*, 74.

⁸⁹ Parrinder, *Shadows*, 73, 42.

⁹⁰ Parrinder, ‘Rome’, 116.

⁹¹ Parrinder, *Shadows*, 73.

Parrinder argues that '[w]ithout the 800-year timescale we cannot easily explain such crucial details as the survival of the unmistakably classical forms of architecture into the far future'.⁹² However, the presence of such architecture can be perfectly well-explained without resorting to an 800-year timescale. It can be explained by reference to geological literature, and to the tropes of ruin that were widely used by geologists, including by Thomas Burnet, James Hutton and Charles Lyell, as a means of imagining geological time. On this reading, we need not see Wells's future landscape as an implausible conflation of two different timescales, but rather as the redeployment of tropes from geological literature in order to imagine a new form of geological time. Or, if we must follow Parrinder in holding that there are two timescales in operation in *The Time Machine*, these can be read not as an ungainly manipulation of the chronology of the fiction, but as an insight into geological time: that it has been conceived by geologists as an extension of historical time. The ruins of *The Time Machine* can be placed in the context first of Romantic ruins, and then of ruins in geological literature.

Wells's future landscape, with its fallen masonry, heaps of overgrown ruins, and decaying palaces is typical of those which attained great vogue during the Romantic period.⁹³ There are some details which modernize Wells's landscape: the ruined heap of stone is bound together by aluminium, a metal that had begun to be commercially exploited only in the late nineteenth century; the great hall is paved with blocks 'of some very hard white metal' rather than stone; and the seat with griffins' heads is made of 'some yellow metal' which the traveller 'did not recognize'.⁹⁴ Yet, while

⁹² Parrinder, *Shadows*, 42.

⁹³ See Anne Janowitz, *England's Ruins: Poetic Purpose and the National Landscape* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

⁹⁴ Wells, *Time Machine*, 26, 30.

these details give the ruins a modern or futuristic aspect, they are at the same time particularly Romantic. More specifically, *The Time Machine* draws on two Romantic ruins: those of Shelley's 'Ozymandias' (1818), and of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* (1860).

The very first thing that the Time Traveller encounters on arriving in the future is '[a] colossal figure, carved apparently in some white stone . . . It was of white marble, in shape something like a winged sphinx'.⁹⁵ Much critical attention has been devoted to the sphinx, which Matthew Beaumont describes as 'an obdurately overdetermined symbol'.⁹⁶ As Michael Page has suggested, one such determinant is Percy Bysshe Shelley's 'Ozymandias' (1818).⁹⁷ The verbal echoes between Shelley's poem and *The Time Machine* are marked: Shelley's 'colossal wreck' corresponds to Wells's 'colossal figure'; just as Shelley's statue displays a 'frown/ And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command', so too is there 'the faint shadow of a smile on the lips' of Wells's statue; and, as Shelley's statue displays a 'hand that mocked', and bears an inscription counseling despair, so Wells's Traveller feels that 'the sphinx . . . seemed to smile in mockery of [his] dismay', and later wakes beneath the sphinx to feel 'a profound sense of desertion and despair'.⁹⁸ The Traveller's anticipations of future posterity, like those of Ozymandias, prove misfounded: as he 'was led past the sphinx of white marble', the 'memory of [his] confident anticipations of a profoundly grave

⁹⁵ Wells, *Time Machine*, 21.

⁹⁶ Matthew Beaumont, 'Red Sphinx: Mechanics of the Uncanny in *The Time Machine*', *Science Fiction Studies*, 33/2 (July 2006), 230-250, 234.

⁹⁷ Page, *Imagination*, 158-9.

⁹⁸ Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Major Works*, ed. Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neil (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 198; Wells, *Time Machine*, 21, 35, 36.

and intellectual posterity came, with irresistible merriment, to [his] mind'.⁹⁹ Shelley's 'traveller from an antique land' becomes Wells's traveller of the future.

The Ozymandias motif is reinforced when we pair the symbol with perhaps its single most important determinant: the riddle of the Sphinx of T. H. Huxley's essay 'The Struggle for Existence in Human Society' (1888).¹⁰⁰ In this essay, which John Prince has suggested contains the answer to the riddle of the sphinx in *The Time Machine*, Huxley suggests that the 'true riddle of the Sphinx' is to know how to escape from conditions of evolutionary struggle for existence. Should this fail, he warns of a polarisation of society into a wealthy positive pole and a miserable poor pole, after which each nation will 'sooner or later be devoured by the monster [that it] has generated'.¹⁰¹ Wells's society of the Morlocks and Eloi can be interpreted as a nightmarish imaginative realization of a society which has failed to solve Huxley's 'true riddle of the Sphinx'. In this society, which the Traveller at first mistakenly thinks of as a golden age, humanity has degenerated, and split into two poles: the decadent and effete Eloi, and the subterranean, cannibalistic Morlocks. The more distant future bears even less trace of humanity: the Traveller encounters only giant butterflies and monstrous crab-like creatures. The sphinx statue, combining the two symbolic senses of Shelley's arrogance of man and Huxley's failure to resolve the evolutionary struggle for existence, thereby stands as a symbol of the arrogance of man in believing himself to be assured a long evolutionary prosperity.

A second allusion in *The Time Machine* to romantic ruins is to Nathaniel Hawthorne's

⁹⁹ Wells, *Time Machine*, 26.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas H. Huxley, 'The Struggle for Existence in Human Society', in *Evolution & Ethics and Other Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1894), 195-236.

¹⁰¹ John Prince, 'The "True Riddle of the Sphinx" in *The Time Machine*', *Science Fiction Studies*, 27/3 (Nov. 2000), 543-6; Huxley, 'Struggle', 212. See also McLean, *Fantasies*, 22-3.

The Marble Faun (1860). In his autobiography, Wells recalls that he began the first version of *The Time Machine* ‘very much under the influence of Hawthorne’, and confesses that certain elements were ‘obviously just lifted into the tale from Hawthorne’s *Scarlet Letter*’.¹⁰² While the elements ‘lifted’ from *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) disappear after the first version of *The Time Machine*, the 1895 versions allude more subtly to Hawthorne’s later romance, *The Marble Faun* (1860). The Traveller recounts a seemingly superfluous detail: that he went ‘past a number of sleeping houses, and by a statue—a Faun, or some such figure, *minus* the head’.¹⁰³ This headless statue of a Faun is an allusion to *The Marble Faun*, which is set amidst the crumbling ruins of Rome.¹⁰⁴ In Hawthorne’s romance, one of the principal characters discovers a ‘headless figure of marble’, and palaces are described as strewn with ‘fragments of antique statues, headless and legless torsos’.¹⁰⁵ The faun statue which Wells’s Traveller encounters suggestively aligns *The Time Machine* with Hawthorne’s narrative of the decline of the faun-like Donatello and his family over time: the past Arcadian ‘Golden Age’ of *The Marble Faun* is transposed into the far future in *The Time Machine*, with the ‘Golden Age’ of the Eloi.¹⁰⁶

While the allusions to ‘Ozymandias’ and *The Marble Faun* reinforce their Romantic nature, the ruins of Wells’s future landscape can also be placed more narrowly in the context of tropes of ruin employed in geological literature. Page has usefully positioned Wells’s ruins at the juncture between science fiction and Romantic literature. He points out that Wells’s ‘image of ruin’ in *The Time Machine* both

¹⁰² Wells, *Autobiography*, i, 309.

¹⁰³ Wells, *Time Machine*, 60, his emphasis.

¹⁰⁴ Parrinder also compares the ruins of *The Time Machine* to the ruins of Rome, although his preferred source is Edward Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (‘Rome’, 118-20).

¹⁰⁵ Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*, ed. Susan Manning (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 328, 31.

¹⁰⁶ Hawthorne, *Faun*, 66; Wells, *Time Machine*, 44.

‘becomes central to the vision of science fiction’, noting that ‘[t]he greatest practitioner of such cosmic visions of ruins is, perhaps, Arthur C. Clarke’, and also ‘reflects on similar images from the Romantic Period’: ‘it is through ruin, as the Shelleys and their contemporaries well knew, that we can reach the sublime, for ruin provides us a window into the vastness of historical time’.¹⁰⁷ This astute connection between Wells’s ruins and Romantic ruins can be supplemented with the connection to ruins in geological literature, many of which were also Romantic ruins.

Tropes of ruin were common in geological literature, and were a nexus around which ideas of geological time clustered. They form an important part of the ‘geological sublime’. As part of his wider argument that in the Romantic period, geology and Romantic literature were mutually constitutive discourses that emerged out of a shared cultural environment, Heringman has shown that Romantic poets borrowed tropes of ruin from geologists, and conversely, geologists borrowed back from Romantic literature.¹⁰⁸ Though common in the Romantic period, the trope of the earth as ruin is older, and can be traced back at least as far as Thomas Burnet’s *Sacred Theory of the Earth* (1681) which, as Marjorie Nicolson has shown, had a great influence on the formation of the natural sublime as an aesthetic category.¹⁰⁹

According to Burnet’s physico-theological theory, which stands as an ancestor to modern geology, the present earth is made of the ruins of a perfectly smooth antediluvian earth. This former earth had, apparently, been destroyed in a Noachian deluge: the flood subsided to reveal ‘the true image of the present Earth in the ruines

¹⁰⁷ Page, *Imagination*, 168.

¹⁰⁸ Heringman, *Rocks*, 180-1, 234-6.

¹⁰⁹ Nicolson, *Mountain*, 184-224. The first volume of Burnet’s *Telluris Theoria Sacra* was published in 1681 in Latin, and in 1684 in English translation; the second volume appeared in 1689 in Latin, and in 1690 in English.

of the first'.¹¹⁰ Mountains, which 'are nothing but great ruins', are implicitly compared to architectural ruins: they 'show a certain magnificence in Nature; as from old Temples and broken Amphitheatres of the Romans we collect the greatness of that people'.¹¹¹ Mountains also foreshadow the future ruin of the earth in a fiery conflagration, and Burnet looks forward to the time when 'these Ruines . . . will be burnt up'. For him, 'Burning Mountains or Volcano's of the Earth' are 'lesser Essays or preludes to the general fire; set on purpose by Providence to keep us awake, and to mind us continually, and forewarn us of what we are to expect at last'.¹¹²

James Hutton, although theoretically differing greatly from Burnet and his physico-theology, also figured the earth through tropes of ruin. For instance, in a passage in his *Theory of the Earth* (1788) which is quoted in Lyell's *Principles of Geology*, he writes that:

[t]he ruins of an older world are visible in the present structure of our planet, and the strata which now compose our continents have been once beneath the sea, and were formed out of the waste of pre-existing continents.¹¹³

For Hutton, these ruins are neither the ruins of a perfectly smooth world caused by a Deluge, and nor do they point forwards to a fiery conflagration. Instead, they are the result of natural causes such as erosion occurring over vast periods. In his popularization of Hutton's theory, Playfair reinforced the association with ruins, and set them within an established discourse of the sublime. His *Illustrations of the Huttonian Theory of the Earth* (1802) describes the lessons which the geologist learns of time, which are apparently most striking in the Alps. The geologist:

sees himself in the midst of vast ruin, where the precipices which rise on all sides with such boldness and asperity, the sharp peaks of the granite

¹¹⁰ Thomas Burnet, *Sacred Theory of the Earth*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (London: R. Norton, 1691), i, 65.

¹¹¹ Burnet, *Sacred Theory*, i, 110.

¹¹² Burnet, *Sacred Theory*, ii, 271-2.

¹¹³ Lyell, *Principles*, i, 61.

mountains, and the huge fragments that surround their bases, do but mark so many epochs in the progress of decay.¹¹⁴

By asking us to imagine the geologist in the midst of the Alps, Playfair draws on a by-then well-established discourse of the natural sublime: his ‘vast ruin’, bold ‘precipices’, ‘sharp peaks’ and ‘huge fragments’ are all drawn from a familiar lexicon of the natural sublime. He redeploys this lexicon in his imagination of geological time: his sublime geological ruins ‘do but mark so many epochs in the progress of decay’.

Lyell made prominent use of ruins in his *Principles*, most notably with his treatment of the Temple of Serapis.¹¹⁵ As Rudwick informs us, the so-called Temple of Serapis at Pozzuoli near Naples had been the source of a lively geological discussion since the publication of the antiquarian Andrea di Jorio’s *Tempio di Serapide* (1820).¹¹⁶ In his *Principles*, Lyell used the example of the ruined Temple—‘this celebrated monument of antiquity’—to support his argument that ‘the relative level of land and sea has changed’.¹¹⁷ By drawing attention to geological change through changes wrought on the decaying columns of a classical building, and even hypothesizing that ‘broken fragments’ of the building take part in the geological process of stratification, a close association is forged between geological and architectural ruins. This association is reinforced by the frontispiece to the *Principles* (reproduced above), which depicts a man meditating on ruins of the Temple of Serapis.¹¹⁸ The choice of frontispiece is apt

¹¹⁴ John Playfair, *Illustrations of the Huttonian Theory of the Earth* (Edinburgh: William Creech, 1802), 111.

¹¹⁵ See also the extended conceit in which he compares geological history to the architectural history of Egypt, with its ‘pyramids, obelisks, colossal statues, and ruined temples’ (*Principles*, 26-8).

¹¹⁶ Rudwick, *Adam*, 106-13. Andrea di Jorio, *Ricerche sul Tempio di Serapide in Pozzuoli* (Naples: Società Filomatica, 1820).

¹¹⁷ Lyell, *Principles*, i, 449; see 449-59.

¹¹⁸ Lyell, *Principles*, i, p.ii. This frontispiece is a copy of a very similar illustration from Jorio’s *Tempio di Serapide*: see Lyell, *Principles*, i, p.xiv, and Rudwick, *Adam*, 108, 299. Thomas Allen addresses

because, as Rudwick points out, Lyell ‘intended to use the case of Serapis, interpreted as the result of movements of the land in relation to a stationary sea level, as an epitome of his concept of a ceaselessly dynamic earth’. More importantly, however, Rudwick makes clear that ‘the picture symbolized Lyell’s intention to use human history as the key to geohistory’.¹¹⁹

Here, a distinction should be drawn between Hutton’s and Lyell’s conceptions of geological time. As Rudwick points out, Hutton did not deduce his vast timescale from observation, but rather conceived of time as a dimension that was stretched without limit into past and future, in what was in fact ‘a commonplace among Enlightenment savants’. He argues that Hutton ‘showed no interest in plotting the particularities of geohistory’, and that ‘[h]owever vast—indeed infinite—[his] putative timescale, nothing could have been more profoundly ahistorical’.¹²⁰ By contrast, Lyell’s *Principles* made a decisive contribution to what Rudwick calls the revolutionary ‘historicization of the earth’.¹²¹ His use of the Temple at Serapis encapsulates this process of historicization. The history of the geological changes at Pozzuoli, whereby the level of the land had risen and fallen over the centuries, and had periodically caused the Temple to become plunged into the sea, could be reconstructed in co-ordination with archaeological evidence, and with various eye-witness accounts of the Temple throughout history. The frontispiece to the *Principles* thereby, as Rudwick puts it, ‘neatly encapsulated Lyell’s ambition to integrate geohistory with human history’.¹²² Further, we can note that the frontispiece deploys a

Lyell’s frontispiece in discussion of American literature and deep time in his *Republic in Time* (178-80).

¹¹⁹ Rudwick, *Adam*, 299.

¹²⁰ Rudwick, *Bursting*, 169, 172.

¹²¹ Rudwick, *Bursting*, 7.

¹²² Rudwick, *Adam*, 299.

familiar aesthetic of the sublime. By depicting a solitary Romantic figure contemplating ruined columns, the frontispiece invites the reader to consider the work's conception of geohistory, which stretches back through vast tracts of time, on the model of a sublime meditation on classical ruins.

The ruins of the future age in *The Time Machine* invite a form of thought about the past which is common to both Romantic and geological ruins. Outside the ruined city of the future, the Traveller contemplates the vast spans of time which he has traversed, and the changes which have happened during that time:

all the activity, all the traditions, the complex organizations, the nations, languages, literatures, aspirations, even the mere memory of Man as I knew him, had been swept out of existence.¹²³

His meditations in the future age are similar to those of Kenyon in *The Marble Faun*, which are typical of Romantic meditations on ruins and on what Page calls 'the vastness of historical time'. In Hawthorne's romance, the ruins of Rome serve as 'landmarks of time' which prompt Kenyon to 'look through a vista of century beyond century' towards a past 'infinitely more remote than history can define', and to mark the individual life 'as nothing' when set against such an 'immeasurable distance'.¹²⁴ The Traveller's meditations are also similar to those of the solitary Romantic figure contemplating the ruined columns of the Temple of Serapis in the frontispiece of Lyell's *Principles*.¹²⁵ Just as Lyell's frontispiece depicts a man contemplating the ruins of a classical temple, and thereby prepares his reader to join him in his meditation on the vast horizons of geological time, so too the 'ruinous splendour' of the world of the Eloi and Morlocks is a suitable destination for the Time Traveller's

¹²³ Wells, *Time Machine*, 61.

¹²⁴ Hawthorne, *Faun*, 318-9.

¹²⁵ Wells undoubtedly knew about the Temple of Serapis: he and Gregory referred to it in their *Honours Physiography* (122). Bonney also discusses this 'often quoted' example in his *Story of Our Planet*, and provides an alternative illustration of the ruined columns (222-6).

journey through geological time, and his meditation once there on ‘all the years [he] had traversed’.

Like ruins in geological literature, ruins in *The Time Machine* provide both the Traveller and the reader with a means of comprehending the immensity of geological time, and the course of the earth’s history which unfolds over such time.

Contemplating the stars, the Traveller feels ‘suddenly dwarfed’:

I thought of [the stars’] unfathomable distance, and the slow inevitable drift of their movements out of the unknown past into the unknown future. I thought of the great precessional cycle that the pole of the earth describes. Only forty times had that silent revolution occurred during all the years that I had traversed.¹²⁶

His contemplation of the ‘unfathomable distance’ of the stars and their slow drift through great ages is an instance of the astronomical sublime which is, as we have seen, a close cousin of the geological sublime. Once again, it is fitting that the Traveller should contemplate deep time from a vantage point outside the ruined city. Wells takes tropes of ruin from geological literature, and redeploys them in *The Time Machine* to imagine deep time.

The connection between architectural and geological ruin in Wells’s romance is most closely forged through what is arguably the single most important ruin of the future age: the Palace of Green Porcelain. On his adventures, the Traveller visits the Palace, a Victorian-style museum which he describes as ‘the ruins of some latter-day South Kensington’.¹²⁷ He identifies ‘the Palaeontological Section, and a very splendid array of fossils it must have been’, and recognizes ‘some extinct creature after the fashion

¹²⁶ Wells, *Time Machine*, 61.

¹²⁷ Wells, *Time Machine*, 65. Parrinder points out that the Palace of Green Porcelain is modelled on the South Kensington Museum, which Wells visited whilst studying at the Normal School of Science (*Shadows*, 43-4, 53-5).

of the Megatherium’ and ‘the huge skeleton barrel of a Brontosaurus’. He also discovers a gallery ‘devoted to minerals’, and a section which ‘had been devoted to natural history’.¹²⁸ As Page points out, the museum has decayed, and become ‘a sublime ruin’.¹²⁹ It is described as ‘deserted and falling into ruin’: ‘[o]nly ragged vestiges of glass remained in its windows, and great sheets of the green facing had fallen away from the corroded metallic framework’. The Traveller wanders along a ‘ruinous aisle’, and finds that many of the white globe-lamps in a gallery of ‘colossal proportions’ are ‘cracked and smashed’; in one gallery, the roof of this ‘derelict museum’ has collapsed.¹³⁰

By portraying a ruined museum with decaying exhibitions of fossils, minerals and other geological phenomena, Wells plays on the conventional figuration in geological literature of geological phenomena as architectural ruins. The decaying geological exhibits in the museum are not figured as architectural ruins, but rather are housed in an architectural ruin, and indeed, in a further variation of this figure, the ruined museum and its exhibits are depicted as undergoing a second-order process of decay. The dinosaur skeletons and fossils, which themselves are vestiges from the distant geological past, have, since being exhibited, once again become subject to processes of decay. ‘The skull and the upper bones’ of the Megatherium-like creature lay ‘in the thick dust, and in one place, where rain-water had dropped through a leak in the roof, the thing itself had been worn away’. The Traveller comments that

the inevitable process of decay that had been staved off for a time, and had, through the extinction of bacteria and fungi, lost ninety-nine hundredths of its force, was, nevertheless, with extreme sureness if with extreme slowness at work *again* upon all its treasures.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Wells, *Time Machine*, 64-6.

¹²⁹ Page, *Imagination*, 168.

¹³⁰ Wells, *Time Machine*, 64, 66, 68.

¹³¹ Wells, *Time Machine*, 64-5, my emphasis.

The fossils form, as the Traveller puts it, a ‘spectacle of old-time geology in decay’.¹³²

While it plays on figures of architectural decay in geological literature, Wells’s museum simultaneously operates in the same manner as such figures, by allowing the processes of architectural and geological decay to be understood by each other. For example, the Traveller describes how he ‘went through gallery after gallery, dusty, silent, often ruinous, the exhibits sometimes mere heaps of rust and lignite’. Here, the juxtaposition of the ‘ruinous’ galleries and decayed exhibits within the course of a single sentence encourages the association between the two, and invites the reader to understand both as the products of a common process of decay.¹³³ Again, much as Lyell had associated architectural and geological decay by suggesting that ‘broken fragments’ of the Temple of Serapis took part in a geological process of stratification, so in *The Time Machine*, the Traveller’s analogy between a jar of camphor and a fossil aligns the decay of the museum with the process of geological decay:

[i]n the universal decay this volatile substance had chanced to survive, perhaps through many thousands of centuries. It reminded me of a sepia painting I had once seen done from the ink of a fossil Belemnite that must have perished and become fossilized millions of years ago.¹³⁴

The jar and the fossil are associated as vestiges of the same process of ‘universal decay’. As for geologists such as Lyell, architectural and geological decay serve to elucidate each other.

Ultimately, the ruins of the future age of *The Time Machine* are more sublime than the ruins of Lyell’s uniformitarian geology. Though tropes of ruin were common in geological literature, they functioned variously in different geological works.

¹³² Wells, *Time Machine*, 65.

¹³³ Wells, *Time Machine*, 69.

¹³⁴ Wells, *Time Machine*, 68.

Minimally, to describe something as a ruin implies that it has undergone a process of decay from a previous state. Yet, as we have seen, theorists understood this process of decay very differently. For Burnet, it was the result of a violent Noachian deluge, whereas for Hutton and Lyell, it was the result of presently-acting geological causes, such as processes of erosion and denudation, operating over long time-scales. Correlatively, Wells's ruins should be distinguished from those of uniformitarian geology. Though both *The Time Machine* and the geological works of Hutton and Lyell use ruins to imagine geological time, there are important differences between the two.

The Time Machine, reflecting later developments in evolutionary biology and thermodynamic physics, portrays a future very different from those which Hutton and Lyell had imagined. For both Hutton and Lyell, the processes of ruin to which the earth is subject are counterbalanced by processes of renewal. For Hutton, even though the destructive forces of chemical decomposition and mechanical violence wear away the hardest of rocks, these rocks are subsequently 'collected at the bottom of the sea' where they are consolidated and elevated by 'subterraneous heat', and are thereby 'transformed into solid land'.¹³⁵ This cyclical process of decay and renovation led Hutton to the famous conclusion of his enquiry into the natural history of the earth: that we find 'no prospect of an end'.

Similarly, for Lyell, although geological processes operated over vast time-scales, his picture of the world was one of uniformity and stability. As Beer puts it, Lyell's uniformitarianism 'suggests continuity, even a kind of permanence, and can be

¹³⁵ Hutton, 'Earth', 261-3; compare Lyell, *Principles*, 61.

transformed into covenant and stability'. Lyell's view of the world is, as she puts it, 'tranquil':

[t]he world of forms which the geologist inhabits, the slow phantasmagoria of oceans and continents interchanging, rising and falling as if earth were waves, makes for a tranquil elemental view of the universe, in which time implies an extended scale of existence beyond the span of our minds.¹³⁶

However, as we saw above, Hutton's and Lyell's tranquil views of the universe were rudely disrupted by later Victorian science, and notably by evolutionary biology, which raised the possibility that the human species might retrogress and suffer eventual extinction, and by the second law of thermodynamics, on the basis of which many foresaw the heat-death of the universe. The vision of deep time in *The Time Machine* is a combination of the vastly-extended geological time of Hutton and Lyell, with a foreshortening and heat-death due to the dissipation of energy which had not been part of either of their systems.

We saw above that critics have elucidated how the future world which the Traveller visits is one informed by evolutionary biology and thermodynamic physics. The world of the Eloi and Morlocks is one in which humanity has degenerated into two species, while the more distant future in which he finds himself on a frozen beach assailed by a 'bitter cold', is one of a world suffering heat-death.¹³⁷ What I would like to add is that these two forms of decay over deep time—biological retrogression and the mechanical dissipation of energy—become part of the meaning of the ruins which the Traveller visits. In particular, the sublime nature of the evolutionary and thermodynamic scenario described in the 'Further Vision' feeds back into the sublime nature of the ruins.

¹³⁶ Beer, *Darwin's Plots*, 39.

¹³⁷ Wells, *Time Machine*, 84.

The Traveller's journey to the desolate beach is one of sublime horror. He finds no recognizable descendants of humans: not even the degenerate Eloi and Morlocks of the year 802,701 A.D.. Instead, he encounters a 'thing like a huge white butterfly' and 'monstrous crab-like [creatures]'; travelling further into the future, even this 'crawling multitude of crabs' has disappeared, and the beach appears 'lifeless'.¹³⁸ The physical effects brought about by the dissipation of energy are similarly nightmarish, and the Traveller watches 'the life of the old earth ebb away' with a 'strange fascination' that turns to horror. He describes how a 'horror of this great darkness came on me', and of how in the 'rayless obscurity' he was struck by a 'terrible dread of lying helpless in that remote and awful twilight'.¹³⁹ His experience is described in the lexicon of the sublime—'obscurity', 'horror', 'terrible', 'dread', 'awful'—and adds a sublime dimension to the deep time of *The Time Machine* that was absent from Lyell's uniformitarian conception of geological time. In turn, the sublimity of the desolate beach feeds back into the ruins of the future age which stand as monuments to the deep time of the romance. By foreshadowing the eventual extinction of animal life and the heat-death of the earth, the ruins of the future age take on a sublimity that was not part of either Hutton's or Lyell's ruins. Rather, by foreshadowing the future destruction of the earth, Wells's ruins more closely resemble the sublime ruins of Burnet's physico-theological theory. The architectural ruins of *The Time Machine* are emblematic of the processes of biological and physical decay, and they anticipate not

¹³⁸ Wells, *Time Machine*, 82, 83, 84.

¹³⁹ This 'rayless obscurity' is one of a number of echoes in *The Time Machine* of Lord Byron's poem 'Darkness' (1816), in which the poet dreams that 'The bright sun was extinguish'd, and the stars/ Did wander darkling in the eternal space,/ Rayless, and pathless, and the icy earth/ Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air' (*The Major Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 272). Page has aptly described Wells's scientific romances as a synthesis of science and 'visionary Romanticism'; 'Darkness' is one of a number of Romantic poems on which Wells drew in the process in which, as Page puts it, he integrated his scientific training with 'a visionary imagination nurtured by the Romantic poets' (*Imagination*, 150, 155).

the fiery conflagration imagined by Burnet, but the frozen waste beaches of a slowly dying earth.

Literary and Geological Fragments

A central thesis of Gillian Beer's *Darwin's Plots* (1983/2000) is that 'evolutionary theory had particular implications for narrative and the composition of fiction'. She argues that: 'Victorian novelists increasingly seek a role for themselves within the language of the text as observer or experimenter, rather than as designer or god. Omniscience goes, omnipotence is concealed'.¹⁴⁰ *The Time Machine* can be placed within this movement: its narrative can be viewed in light of the geological and evolutionary theory which shapes so much of its content.

Rather than being a nonfocalized narrative, associated with an omniscient narrator, *The Time Machine* is a variable internally focalized narrative, consisting of a frame-narrative told by a first-person narrator, and the autodiegetic narrative of the Time Traveller.¹⁴¹ The narratives of the various versions of *The Time Machine* are, in different ways, fragmentary. In the *National Observer* and *New Review* versions, the Traveller's narrative of his voyage into the future is repeatedly interrupted by objections and comments from his sceptical audience, to the extent that he at one point breaks off his story.¹⁴² We learn how the Traveller was appeased, and 'produced some few further fragments of his travel story'.¹⁴³ In the final version of *The Time Machine*, the Traveller's narrative is presented as a fragment of a greater story, the

¹⁴⁰ Beer, *Darwin's Plots*, 5, 40.

¹⁴¹ Geduld suggests that this narrator is Hillyer, whom the Traveller 'seemed to see . . . but he passed like a flash' (*Time Machine*, 86; *Definitive Time Machine*, 118).

¹⁴² Wells, *Definitive Time Machine*, 162.

¹⁴³ Wells, *Definitive Time Machine*, 163, my emphasis.

rest of which has been lost by his failure to return from his second voyage. The first-person frame-narrator relates how he witnesses the Traveller setting out on a second voyage, with the intention of returning shortly. However, the frame-narrator recalls how he

stayed on, waiting for the Time Traveller; waiting for the second, perhaps still stranger story . . . But I am beginning now to fear that I must wait a lifetime. The Time Traveller vanished three years ago. And, as everybody knows now, he has never returned.¹⁴⁴

He speculates about the Traveller's fate:

[i]t may be that he swept back into the past, and fell among the blood-drinking, hairy savages of the Age of Unpolished Stone; into the abysses of the Cretaceous Sea; or among the grotesque saurians, the huge reptilian brutes of the Jurassic times. He may even now—if I may use the phrase—be wandering on some plesiosaurus-haunted Oolitic coral reef, or beside the lonely saline lakes of the Triassic Age.¹⁴⁵

Only the Traveller's narrative of his first voyage remains: it is embedded within the frame-narrative as the incomplete fragment of a much greater story. Here, I will argue that the fragmentary form of *The Time Machine* reflects Charles Lyell and Charles Darwin's views of the narratives which could be told about the geological and biological past.

Charles Lyell and Charles Darwin both stressed that our knowledge of the geological past is incomplete. In his *Principles of Geology*, Lyell took great pains to show that the geological record is incomplete as part of his defence of his 'doctrine of absolute uniformity' against the arguments of the catastrophists. Such incompleteness supported his conception of a vast past across which geological processes operated slowly and uniformly, as opposed to the shorter, violent histories of the

¹⁴⁴ Wells, *Time Machine*, 90.

¹⁴⁵ Wells, *Time Machine*, 91.

catastrophists.¹⁴⁶ The *Principles*, as James Secord makes clear, ‘claimed that any kind of global narrative would prove impossible to reconstruct, as too much of the record had been lost’.¹⁴⁷

Darwin, drawing on Lyell, also stressed the fragmentary nature of the geological record in the *Origin of Species* (1859). He held that ‘the most obvious and gravest objection which can be urged against [his] theory’ of evolution by natural selection is that there is no evidence of the ‘innumerable transitional links’ between different stages of evolving species. His response to this objection was that ‘[t]he explanation lies . . . in the extreme imperfection of the geological record’.¹⁴⁸ For Darwin as for Lyell, even if our knowledge were perfect, there simply is not evidence to create a complete record of the past. For example, of the Secondary and Palaeozoic periods, he pointed out that ‘our evidence from fossil remains is fragmentary in an extreme degree’. One important reason is that geological formations are ‘separated from each other by wide intervals of time’, during which no mark is left in the geological record, and so ‘the geological record will almost necessarily be rendered intermittent’.¹⁴⁹ He also remarked that the imperfection of the geological record was reflected in the paucity of the palaeontological collections of his day:

[n]ow turn to our richest geological museums, and what a paltry display we behold! . . . That our palaeontological collections are imperfect, is admitted by every one.¹⁵⁰

Bonney reiterated Darwin’s emphasis on the fragmentary nature of the geological record in the *Story of Our Planet*. He pointed out that though ‘it is now a quarter of a

¹⁴⁶ Lyell, *Principles*, i, 96-7.

¹⁴⁷ James A. Secord, ‘Introduction’, in Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology*, ed. James A. Secord (London: Penguin, 1997), ix-xliii, xix.

¹⁴⁸ Darwin, *Origin*, 279-80.

¹⁴⁹ Darwin, *Origin*, 288-9, 292.

¹⁵⁰ Darwin, *Origin*, 287.

century since Darwin wrote that well-known chapter' on the inherent imperfection of the geological record in the *Origin of Species*, and 'though since that time the labour of numerous indefatigable writers has filled many a gap and supplied many a link for which he had vainly sought, yet even now the lacunae are very great, and the materials at the disposal of the geologist can never be anything but fragmentary'.¹⁵¹

Geologists and natural scientists, including Lyell and Darwin, commonly figured the incomplete geological record as a fragmentary archive or book. Such figures form part of a wider phenomenon that occurred as part of the geologists' historicization of the earth in which, as Rudwick puts it:

[i]deas, concepts and methods for analyzing evidence and for reconstructing the past were deliberately and explicitly *transposed* from the human world into the world of nature, often with telling use of the metaphors of *nature's* documents and archives, coins and monuments, annals and chronologies.¹⁵²

As part of this phenomenon, a whole cluster of metaphors and tropes emerged around the idea of the geological landscape being temporally legible. Lyell, for instance, contended that the landscape had not always been legible, and that for classical geologists 'the ancient history of the globe was . . . a sealed book'.¹⁵³ Such metaphors became commonplaces in geological literature. Wells employed his own version to describe the task of the geologist in his review of Bonney's *the Story of Our Planet*.

The geologist, writes Wells,

scrutinizes this round respectable planet of ours with a trained and penetrating eye, and where the common man sees only a haphazard arrangement of hills and valleys . . . he reads, as plainly as if it were print, the story of this or that vicissitude our mother earth has experienced.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Bonney, *Planet*, 369.

¹⁵² Rudwick, *Bursting*, 6, his emphasis.

¹⁵³ Lyell, *Principles*, i, 20.

¹⁵⁴ Wells, 'Reminiscences', 4. Bonney frequently deployed similar metaphors of the legibility of the geological landscape. For instance, he titled the first part of his work, in which he sets out his central task of telling the 'story of our planet', 'The Story: Its Books and their Speech' (*Planet*, 2).

He later advanced extended variations on this metaphor in his universal histories and in the *Science of Life* (1931).¹⁵⁵ From such metaphors, it is a short step to figure the incomplete geological record as a fragmentary archive or book. Lyell makes just this step when he uses the metaphor of the ‘great chasm in the chronological series of Nature’s archives’, as does Darwin in the *Origin of Species*:

[f]or my part, following out Lyell’s metaphor, I look at the natural geological record, as a history of the world imperfectly kept . . . [O]f this history we possess the last volume alone, relating only to two or three countries. Of this volume, only here and there a short chapter has been preserved; and of each page, only here and there a few lines.¹⁵⁶

Far from resulting in a complete, universal narrative of the world’s history, the metaphor of legibility leads to a fragmentary, incomplete ‘history of the world imperfectly kept’.¹⁵⁷ While Rudwick has portrayed the ‘reconstruction of geohistory’ as one in which the ‘eventful narrative of deep or prehuman history first began to be pieced together’, it is important to realise that for Lyell and Darwin, this narrative would always be fragmentary.¹⁵⁸

The fragmentary narrative form of *The Time Machine* mirrors Lyell’s and Darwin’s views of the fragmentary narratives which could be constructed about the geological past. Just as the geological record provides only a fragmentary record of the history of the world, so the Traveller’s narrative only provides a fragmentary account of the future. In a variation on the metaphor of legibility, the frame-narrator of *The Time Machine* uses a metaphor of partial illumination to describe the knowledge which the

¹⁵⁵ See for example, H. G. Wells, *The Outline of History* (London: Cassell, 1920), 12-3, and *A Short History of the World* (London: Cassell, 1922), 11. The metaphor of the geological landscape as a book is developed and sustained through the chapter of the *Science of Life* entitled ‘The Evidence of the Rocks’ (H. G. Wells, Julian S. Huxley and G. P. Wells, *The Science of Life: A Summary of Contemporary Knowledge about Life and its Possibilities*, i (London: Amalgamated Press, 1929), 323-419).

¹⁵⁶ Darwin, *Origin*, 310.

¹⁵⁷ Similarly, Bonney figured a gap in the geological record as a page having ‘been torn out of the volume’ (*Planet*, 8).

¹⁵⁸ Rudwick, *Bursting*, 2.

Traveller's narrative gives him of the deep future: 'to me the future is still black and blank—is a vast ignorance, lit at a few casual places by the memory of his story'.¹⁵⁹

Wells later used very similar metaphors of darkness and illumination to describe the discovery of the remote geological past in *The Discovery of the Future* (1902).

Whereas previously the remote past had been a blank 'darkness', this all changed with the comparatively recent discovery of 'the geological past' by 'modern science': rock formations 'became sources of dazzling and penetrating light,—the remoter past lit up and became a picture'.¹⁶⁰

In *The Time Machine*, the description of the future as 'black and blank', illuminated at certain points by knowledge, is a strikingly visual way of thinking of the deep future.

It resonates with a nexus of similar metaphors in geological literature in which the vast geological past is portrayed as being dark and obscure, and of geological investigation either illuminating or filling in these gaps. Roderick Murchison, for instance, whom Wells mentioned in his *Autobiography* alongside Lyell as one of the 'great generation' of geologists, used similar metaphors in his *Silurian System* (1839). Therein, Murchison held that, while other geologists contend that 'as yet we gaze but dimly into the obscure vista of these early periods', the present work aims, by investigating the Silurian system, 'to fill up an interval of geological history'.¹⁶¹ The frame-narrator's description of the deep future as 'blank' also echoes Darwin's frequent descriptions of the geological past containing blank periods, often of enormous duration. Darwin writes, for instance, that 'there will be blanks in our geological history', and that 'between each successive formation, we have, in the

¹⁵⁹ Wells, *Time Machine*, 91.

¹⁶⁰ H. G. Wells, *The Discovery of the Future* (London: T. Fischer Unwin, 1902), 41, 47, 43, 49.

¹⁶¹ Roderick Murchison, *The Silurian System*, i (London: John Murray, 1839), 3, 12.

opinion of most geologists, enormously long blank periods'.¹⁶² For the frame-narrator, the Traveller's narrative fragment illuminates a few places of the deep future, just as for Lyell and Darwin, legible geological fragments illuminate sections of the geological past.

The Traveller's first-person account of his adventures in the future, which forms the majority of the narrative of *The Time Machine*, has survived only by chance. His adventures form a catalogue of near-escapes: his time machine is captured; he narrowly escapes from the Morlocks, first in their underground cavern, then in the woods and finally from their ambush; he escapes from giant crabs; and he only just manages to avoid fainting and perishing in the far distant future. If any of these near-escapes had been fatal, the Traveller would not have returned to tell his story. This narrative logic of chance survival mirrors the chance survival by which part of the geological record remains to us. It is an analogue to the process by which the jar of camphor had 'chanced to survive' in 'the universal decay', and the ink of the Belemnite had survived despite being fossilized 'millions of years ago'. Moreover, the contingency of the narrative logic also reflects the contingency, as opposed to design, which forms part of the process of evolution by natural selection. As Beer points out, Darwin in the *Origin of Species* concentrated on the mechanism of 'natural' (that is, non-human and unwilled) 'selection' in creating change; unlike 'artificial selection', there is no guiding authority which oversees this process.¹⁶³ *The Time Machine* thus formally embodies a logic analogous to that which has led to the nightmarish consequences of degeneration in the far future. Its narrative reflects a logic of chance survival as opposed to Providential design, organization, and *telos*.

¹⁶² Darwin, *Origin*, 173, 284.

¹⁶³ Beer, *Darwin's Plots*, 8.

The other side of the chance survival of the Traveller's first story is the loss of his second. The Traveller never returns, and his second story is lost, possibly in the far reaches of deep time. This loss parallels the loss and extinction which play such prominent themes in *The Time Machine*. It reflects the loss and extinction which characterize both geology, with the loss of a greater part of the fossil record over time, and of evolutionary biology, with the extinction of species. Wells had meditated on these themes in his article 'On Extinction' (1893). Therein, he reviewed the large number of species which had once existed but have left no evidence of their time on earth: '[t]he long role of palaeontology is half filled with the records of extermination; whole orders, families, groups and classes have passed away and left no mark and no tradition upon the living fauna of the world'.¹⁶⁴ Similarly, in *The Time Machine*, the Traveller, meditating on the deep time which he has traversed, contemplates 'all the traditions, the complex organizations, the nations, languages, literatures, aspirations' which 'had been swept out of existence'.¹⁶⁵ In the world of the Eloi and Morlocks, humans, as well as 'horses, cattle, sheep, dogs, had followed the Ichthyosaurus into extinction'.¹⁶⁶

The Palace of Green Porcelain stands as a mausoleum-like testament to the loss and extinction suffered by the future world.¹⁶⁷ In the *Origin of Species*, Darwin made vivid the loss and decay suffered by the biological and geological record by contrasting the 'infinite number of generations' that 'must have succeeded each other in the long roll of years' with the 'paltry display' that is found even in 'our richest

¹⁶⁴ Wells, *Early Writings*, 34.

¹⁶⁵ Wells, *Time Machine*, 61.

¹⁶⁶ Wells, *Time Machine*, 27.

¹⁶⁷ See Parrinder, *Shadows*, 53-4.

geological museums'.¹⁶⁸ Wells extended Darwin's conceit by depicting the already-poor palaeontological collection of a Victorian-style museum as having undergone a further, second-order process of decay and extinction. While some exhibits have chanced to survive—the Traveller is surprised to find that a box of matches has 'escaped the wear of time for immemorial years'—most have not.¹⁶⁹ The fossils in the 'Palaeontological Section' have experienced further decay since being displayed, and many other exhibits have fared even worse. The Traveller is disappointed to find in the natural history section only a 'brown dust of departed plants' and a 'few shriveled and blackened vestiges of what had once been stuffed animals'. The loss extends to the literary as well: all that is left of the library in the Palace are 'brown and charred rags'—'the decaying vestiges of books' which 'had long since dropped to pieces'.¹⁷⁰ These themes of loss and extinction are reflected in the narrative form of the romance. The loss of one part of the Traveller's story, and the contingent survival of another, results in a fragmentary narrative form, and embodies a narrative logic which reflects the processes and laws operating over deep time in the hostile universe of *The Time Machine*.

Cosmic Pessimism

Stephen Jay Gould suggests that Sigmund Freud wrongfully omitted the 'discovery of "deep time"' by geologists from his list of the major blows which science has dealt to the narcissism of humanity, and to what Gould calls the 'hope for our own

¹⁶⁸ Darwin, *Origin*, 287. Darwin developed the theme at length in the section titled 'On the poorness of our Palaeontological collections', pointing out that many of 'our fossil species are known and named from single and often broken specimens', and suggests various reasons for this poverty, including the processes of decay which cause soft organisms and even shells and bones to 'disappear' (287-8).

¹⁶⁹ Wells, *Time Machine*, 68.

¹⁷⁰ Wells, *Time Machine*, 66-7.

transcendent importance in the universe'. 'What could be more comforting', writes Gould, 'than the traditional concept of a young earth', and '[h]ow threatening, by contrast, the notion of an almost incomprehensible immensity, with human habitation restricted to a millimicrosecond at the very end!',¹⁷¹

Wells's *The Time Machine* is a scientific romance which vividly sets humanity against the perspective of deep time. The Traveller articulates such a perspective at the end of the *National Observer* version: '[l]ife is a mere eddy, an episode, in the great stream of universal being, just as man with all his cosmic mind is a mere episode in the story of life—'.¹⁷² At this point, he is fittingly interrupted by the sound of his child crying. By situating *The Time Machine* in the context of geological literature, I have shown that Wells drew on a tradition of depicting geological time, and the individual's relation to that time, through an aesthetics of the sublime. I have also indicated how the bleak aspects of the romance underpinned by evolutionary biology and thermodynamic physics feed back into the sublime nature of this deep time.

Building on the above, I would like to make a further distinction between the sublime nature of the deep time of *The Time Machine* and that of Lyell's geological time. Lyell's use of an aesthetics of the sublime to conceptualize geological time ultimately functions to reconcile humanity's place in the cosmos. Rudwick argues that Lyell's frequent analogy in the *Principles of Geology* between time and (Newtonian) space 'added the dimension of geological time to the sublime vision of a universe of perfect

¹⁷¹ Gould, *Arrow*, 1-2.

¹⁷² Wells, *Early Writings*, 90.

and wise design, a universe fully under the dominion of providential natural laws'.¹⁷³

Later, although writing in the era of thermodynamic physics, Archibald Geikie similarly employed an aesthetics of the sublime to incorporate geological time into a view of a harmonious (albeit not obviously theistic) world, well-fitted for humanity.

His *Scenery of Scotland* (1865), to which Wells and Gregory refer their readers in *Honours Physiography*, concludes:

scenery . . . leads us back farther than imagination can well follow, and, with an impressiveness which we sometime [sic] can hardly endure, points out the antiquity of our globe. . . . [I]t is the little changes which by their cumulative effects bring about the greatest results . . . with a nicely balanced harmony and order, forming out of the very waste of the land a kindly soil, which . . . [ministers] to the wants and the enjoyment of man.¹⁷⁴

Like Playfair's famous imaginative journey at Siccar Point, Geikie offers a conceit of geological time travel which bears classic hallmarks of the sublime: the experience is almost unendurable, and the imagination is overwhelmed. However, the sublime impressiveness of geological time leads, for Geikie, to a world of 'balanced harmony and order' which ministers 'to the wants and enjoyment of man'. The sublimity of geological time thus serves to heighten the wonder of an orderly and harmonious world, much as had the natural sublime of eighteenth-century theorists such as Joseph Addison.¹⁷⁵ By helping to reconcile humanity's place in a harmonious universe, the sublime nature of both Lyell's and Geikie's geological times contrasts with that of the deep time of *The Time Machine*. In Wells's romance, the sublime aesthetic is used to portray a universe which is anything but hospitable to humanity.

¹⁷³ Rudwick, 'Lyell's *Principles*', 33.

¹⁷⁴ Archibald Geikie, *The Scenery of Scotland Viewed in Connection with its Physical Geology*, 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 1887), 419-20; Gregory and Wells, *Physiography*, 138.

¹⁷⁵ See Nicolson, *Mountain*, 319-23.

Mark Hillegas long ago suggested that the bleak vision of *The Time Machine* is underpinned by T. H. Huxley's 'cosmic pessimism'.¹⁷⁶ That Huxley had a decisive influence on Wells hardly needs reiterating. However, it is worth recalling briefly that Wells described the year that he spent in Huxley's class at the Normal School of Science in 1884-5 as 'beyond all question, the most educational year of my life'; he later sent Huxley a copy of *The Time Machine* in 1895 with an accompanying letter in which he wrote that '[t]he central idea—of degeneration following security—was the outcome of a certain amount of biological study'.¹⁷⁷ In particular, Huxley's 1893 Romanes lecture 'Evolution and Ethics', in which he distinguishes the 'ethical process' from the 'cosmic process', and advances his conception of ethical evolution, has been widely recognized as of seminal importance for Wells's thought and writing.¹⁷⁸ For instance, Page has recently singled out this 'late essay' as of 'great significance to the evolutionary vision found in Wells's early scientific romances'.¹⁷⁹ John Partington has convincingly argued that Huxley's notion of ethical evolution influenced Wells not just in his early scientific writings but throughout his lifetime, and indeed, that it decisively shaped his later political commitments, behind which it stands as 'the unifying principle'.¹⁸⁰ In terms of *The Time Machine*, critics such as Hillegas and Page have rightly pointed out that this romance dramatizes the pessimistic scenario envisaged by Huxley for humanity if it fails to evolve ethically, and of the inevitable time when, in Huxley's words, 'the evolution of our globe shall

¹⁷⁶ Mark R. Hillegas, *The Future as Nightmare: H. G. Wells and the Anti-Utopians* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 30, 19; Thomas H. Huxley, 'Evolution and Ethics' in *Evolution & Ethics and Other Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1894), 46-116. More fully, Hillegas argues that '*The Time Machine* is a bleak and sober vision of man's place in the universe', and that '[i]t is Huxley's cosmic pessimism which gives meaning and permanence to this . . . anti-utopia' (30).

¹⁷⁷ Wells, *Autobiography*, i, 201; letter from Wells to Huxley dated 'May 1895', in *The Correspondence of H. G. Wells*, ed. David C. Smith, i (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1998), 238.

¹⁷⁸ Huxley, *Evolution*, 81.

¹⁷⁹ Page, *Imagination*, 151.

¹⁸⁰ John S. Partington, *Building Cosmopolis: The Political Thought of H. G. Wells* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 37, 2.

have entered so far upon its downward course that the cosmic process resumes its sway'.¹⁸¹ The vision of *The Time Machine* is indeed thereby one of 'cosmic pessimism'.

Supplementing the reading of *The Time Machine* as one of cosmic pessimism, I would like to draw attention to the role that the deep time of the romance plays in this vision. Huxley opened the 'Prolegomena' (1894) to his essay by invoking the vast expanses of geological time to unsettle the feeling that nature is somehow permanent. Though such an air of 'permanence' might arise from thinking that 'the state of nature' is essentially unchanging, and that, for instance, many of the same plants that are found in Britain today would have been found two thousand years ago, this feeling is deceptive:

measured by the liberal time-keeping of our universe, [the] present state of nature, however it may seem to have gone and to go on for ever, is but a fleeting phase of her infinite variety; merely the last of the series of changes which the earth's surface has undergone in the course of the millions of years of its existence.¹⁸²

Making vivid such a perspective on geological time, he points out that to '[t]urn back a square foot of the thin turf', and to expose the chalk that lies beneath, is to yield 'full assurance' that this site was once covered by sea, and that between the time that this chalk was formed and the turf came into existence, 'thousands of centuries elapsed'.¹⁸³ In the essay, Huxley exploits a similar temporal perspective by quoting from Blaise Pascal's *Pensées* (1669):

[l]'homme n'est qu'un roseau, le plus faible de la nature, mais c'est un roseau pensant. Il ne faut pas que l'univers entier s'arme pour l'écraser. Une vapeur, une goutte d'eau, suffit pour le tuer. Mais quand l'univers l'écraserait, l'homme

¹⁸¹ Huxley, *Evolution*, 45; Hillegas, *Nightmare*, 30; Page, *Imagination*, 153.

¹⁸² Huxley, *Evolution*, 2-3.

¹⁸³ Huxley, *Evolution*, 3.

serait encore plus noble que ce qui le tue, parce qu'il sait qu'il meurt; et l'avantage que l'univers a sur lui, l'univers n'en sait rien.¹⁸⁴

The quotation comes from a section of the *Pensées* that concerns the 'disproportion of man' in the universe, while addressessing the question: 'in the end, what is humanity in nature?'¹⁸⁵ Pascal depicts humanity as suspended between two extreme scales of nature: the 'ultimate microcosm of nature', and the macrocosm of infinite space:

[w]hoever looks at himself in this way will be terrified by himself, and, thinking himself supported by the size nature has given us suspended between two gulfs of the infinite and the void, will tremble at nature's wonders.¹⁸⁶

He describes such a vertiginous perspective as a 'new abyss', and repeatedly records his terror of vast space: '[t]he eternal silence of these infinite spaces terrifies me'.¹⁸⁷

However, this perspective is palliated for Pascal by the fact that humanity thinks and comprehends. One of his previous *pensées*, entitled 'Thinking reed', holds: '[i]t is not in space that I must look for my dignity, but in the organization of my thoughts. . . .

Through space the universe grasps and engulfs me like a pinpoint; through thought I can grasp it'. Thus, in what might seem like a paradox, Pascal claims that 'Man's greatness lies in his capacity to recognize his wretchedness'.¹⁸⁸

Huxley re-situates Pascal's thought within the context of nineteenth-century natural science. Whereas Pascal had generated an abyssal perspective by placing 'man' against infinite space, Huxley generates a similarly vertiginous perspective by positioning humanity against vast stretches of geological time. Pascal's 'abyss' of nature becomes Playfair's 'abyss of time'. Further, Pascal provides a fitting precedent for Huxley's conception of ethical evolution. Huxley writes:

¹⁸⁴ Huxley, *Evolution*, 115-6; see Blaise Pascal, *Pensées and Other Writings*, ed. Anthony Levi, trans. Honor Levi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 72-3.

¹⁸⁵ Pascal, *Pensées*, 66-7.

¹⁸⁶ Pascal, *Pensées*, 67.

¹⁸⁷ Pascal, *Pensées*, 67, 73.

¹⁸⁸ Pascal, *Pensées*, 36.

[t]he history of civilization details the steps by which men have succeeded in building up an artificial world within the cosmos. Fragile reed as he may be, man, as Pascal says, is a thinking reed: there lies within him a fund of energy operating intelligently and so far akin to that which pervades the universe, that it is competent to influence and modify the cosmic process.¹⁸⁹

He here aligns Pascal's idea that man is a 'thinking reed' with his own doctrine of ethical evolution: that man 'is competent to influence and modify the cosmic process'.

His citation of Pascal is adroit, given that Pascal made a similar move from man's nature as a 'thinking reed' to the need to act ethically:

[a]ll our dignity consists therefore of thought. It is from there that we must be lifted up and not from space and time, which we could never fill. So let us work on thinking well. That is the principle of morality.¹⁹⁰

Pascal had located man's dignity in the thought through which he could grasp the immensity of nature, and had based morality in 'thinking well'; Huxley similarly put great faith in the 'intelligence' by which humanity could understand the cosmic process, and could seek to combat it through the ethical process.¹⁹¹

In *The Time Machine*, Wells generates very similar temporal perspectives to those of Huxley by situating humanity against vast expanses of geological time. While Huxley had created such perspectives by gesturing towards the chalk beneath the turf that indicates the passing of 'thousands of centuries', and aligning such a perspective with Pascal's vertiginous suspension of man between microcosm and macrocosm, Wells achieves a similar effect by having the Traveller literally voyage across a sublime deep time. Wells pits microcosm against macrocosm just as had both Huxley and Pascal before him. However, in the bleak vision of *The Time Machine*, there is no recuperative aspect to such a perspective. Whereas Pascal had salvaged dignity for man by his ability to comprehend his position in nature, and Huxley had hoped that

¹⁸⁹ Huxley, *Evolution*, 83-4.

¹⁹⁰ Pascal, *Pensées*, 73.

¹⁹¹ Huxley, *Evolution*, 84.

through such comprehension humanity could even delay its inevitable cosmic fate, Wells offers no such consolation. As critics such as Hillegas and Page have shown, *The Time Machine* brutally dramatizes humanity's fate, having failed the Huxleyan challenge of evolving ethically.

Further, it should be recognized that, as part of this fate, *The Time Machine* conveys the loss of humanity's self-awareness regarding its position in the cosmic process. It dramatizes the loss of what was, for Huxley following Pascal, the consolation for humanity for its otherwise wretched position in the universe: the ability to be conscious of and comprehend that position. For Huxley, science has played a central role in understanding the cosmic process: 'a right comprehension of the process of life and of the means of influencing its manifestations is only just dawning upon us'.¹⁹² Such comprehension is in turn a prerequisite for ethical evolution, and the conscious decision to combat the cosmic process. Yet science, in the age of the Eloi and Morlocks, has become obsolete. The Traveller meditates on the waste of the Palace of Green Porcelain's decayed library, transferring a familiar trope of the futility of all ambition against the ravages of time (of which he is acutely aware) from the literary to the scientific:

[h]ad I been a literary man I might, perhaps, have moralized upon the futility of all ambition. But as it was, the thing that struck me with keenest force was the enormous waste of labour to which this sombre wilderness of rotting paper testified. At the time I will confess that I thought chiefly of the *Philosophical Transactions* and my own seventeen papers upon physical optics.¹⁹³

Moreover, the inhabitants of this future age are oblivious to the significance of the contents of the decaying museum. The Eloi seemingly have no comprehension of time. As Sayeau points out, 'the concept of time itself has become unavailable to the

¹⁹² Huxley, *Evolution*, 84.

¹⁹³ Wells, *Time Machine*, 68.

Eloi', who fail to understand the Traveller's attempt 'to express time' by pointing to the sun.¹⁹⁴ Comprehension of deep time similarly eludes the Eloi. They do not realise the significance of the fossils in the Palace, and treat them merely as decorative objects, forming necklaces from their fragments: '[h]ere and there I found traces of the little people in the shape of rare fossils broken to pieces or threaded in strings upon reeds'.¹⁹⁵ These necklaces are characteristic of their decadent and fading art:

[e]ven [the Eloi's] artistic impetus would at last die away—had almost died in the Time I saw. To adorn themselves with flowers, to dance, to sing in the sunlight; so much was left of the artistic spirit, and no more.¹⁹⁶

Whereas the Traveller can appreciate the pathos of the Eloi, and their precarious position in a dying universe, this is an awareness that eludes these decadent and child-like people of the future, who live forgetfully in what Sayeau calls 'the amnesiac flow of the present'.¹⁹⁷

The question of the significance or insignificance of humanity, when set against the perspective of a vast geological time, is in part one of narrative. Paul Ricoeur offers the following 'paradox':

[t]he length of time of a human life, compared to the range of cosmic time-spans, appears insignificant, whereas it is the very place from which every question of significance arises.¹⁹⁸

He adds that the 'full significance of this paradox is revealed only when narrative, understood as a mimesis of action, is taken as the criterion of meaning'.¹⁹⁹ Frank Kermode accords a similar role to narrative or 'plot', which he describes as 'an

¹⁹⁴ Sayeau, *Everyday*, 132.

¹⁹⁵ Wells, *Time Machine*, 65.

¹⁹⁶ Wells, *Time Machine*, 33.

¹⁹⁷ Sayeau, *Everyday*, 132.

¹⁹⁸ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, iii, 90.

¹⁹⁹ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, iii, 298.

organization that humanizes time by giving it form'.²⁰⁰ According to these theories of narrative, deep time is humanized when the geohistory of the earth is told as a narrative. As we have seen, the historicization of the earth by geologists opened the way for such narratives, and the writing of what Rudwick calls 'deep history'.²⁰¹ Metaphors of the legibility of the geological record—rocks as books, chronicles, documents or archives—of which we have seen several examples, are a step towards the construction of such narratives of deep history, and hence the humanization of geological time. They suggest that a narrative about the prehuman past lies in the geological landscape, waiting to be deciphered. However, in *The Time Machine*, geological time resists such humanization because of the romance's fragmentary and incomplete narrative form. The geological past and future remain sublimely vast and obscure, and part of a universe inhospitable to humanity.

By contrast, as we shall see in the next chapter, Wells humanizes deep time in his universal histories by telling the story of the geological past in one continuous narrative, a feat which he achieves by using Biblical history and Immanuel Kant's universal history with a cosmopolitan aim as models. In this new vision, humankind is no longer depicted as 'less than an iota in the infinite universe', to use a phrase from one of Wells's earliest short stories.²⁰² Rather, it forms the centre of a world which is working its way towards a cosmopolitan world state that stands both as the *telos* of history, and as its ultimate meaning.

²⁰⁰ Kermode, *Ending*, 45.

²⁰¹ Rudwick, *Bursting*, 2

²⁰² H. G. Wells, 'A Talk with Gryllotalpa' (1887), in *Early Writings*, 19-21, 20.

1.2. Deep History and Wells's Politicization of Geological Time

'When the past speaks it always speaks as an oracle: only if you are an architect of the future and know the present will you understand it'.

Friedrich Nietzsche¹

While *The Time Machine* (1895) sets humanity against the perspective of a vast geological time, H. G. Wells remained concerned with deep time throughout his career.² However, there is a marked contrast between his early and his late treatment of deep time, which corresponds to a change in his view of the position of humanity within the cosmos.

Jack Williamson has drawn attention to a decisive turning point in Wells's career at the turn of the century, with his *Anticipations* (1901) and *The Discovery of the Future* (1902), which constitute the two 'charter documents of futurology'. He reads Wells's entire sequence of early scientific romances as a sustained critique of late-Victorian ideas of progress, and argues that it was only with his 'discovery of the future' at the turn of the century that he was able to go beyond such a notion of progress, and launch his career as a prophet of human possibility.³ Indeed, there is an evident shift in his writing from pessimism to optimism. While most of his early science fiction

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', in *Untimely Meditations*, ed. Daniel Breazeale, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 57-124, 94.

² W. Warren Wagar contends of Wells that it 'would be difficult to imagine another major literary figure of his generation so intensely conscious of human life on Earth as a process of change over long periods of time, both historical and geological, both past and future. The cosmic scale of his imagination sets him apart from nearly all his contemporaries' (*H. G. Wells: Traversing Time* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 9).

³ Jack Williamson, *H. G. Wells: Critic of Progress* (Baltimore: Mirage Press, 1973), 3, 5.

was ‘darkly pessimistic about our human destiny’, he went on to engineer and promote ‘a grandly optimistic plan for the future of the race’.⁴

How are we to make sense of this shift in Wells’s career, in which he overcame his early cosmic pessimism, and turned from being a critic of progress to being a champion of progress? Williamson suggests that the change came when Wells managed to overcome his early Swiftian pessimism.⁵ More recently, Michael Page has offered an alternative explanation of the same phenomenon, and argued that this shift constitutes a return on Wells’s part to a ‘Romantic developmental worldview’, which he managed to reintegrate ‘into his biological foundations’.⁶ In this chapter, I will offer an alternative explanation: that Wells’s movement beyond his early cosmic pessimism, and his embrace of a progressive scheme for humanity, were driven by his developing politics. Concentrating on his universal histories, *The Outline of History* (1920) and *A Short History of the World* (1922), I will elucidate the role that deep time plays in Wells’s politics. I will argue that, whereas deep time in *The Time Machine* was depicted as a sublimely vast and terrifying non-human other, in the universal histories it is recuperated to form part of a vision of a humanized universe. It forms the backdrop to his very human story of mankind’s progress towards a cosmopolitan world state. I will explore how, as the deep time of Wells’s histories becomes humanized, it becomes politicized.

My argument will proceed in four stages. In the first section of this chapter, I will show that Wells employed Huxleyan perspectives on geological time throughout his political career, and that he turned such perspectives to his political advantage. In the

⁴ Williamson, *Critic*, 5, 124.

⁵ Williamson, *Critic*, 5, 23.

⁶ Page, *Imagination*, 163.

second, I will situate his universal histories in the context of geological ‘deep history’, and show how he gave a teleological shape to his versions of deep history by drawing on two principal historiographical models: Biblical history and Immanuel Kant’s universal history with a cosmopolitan aim. Having explored how the continuous narrative of his histories humanizes deep time in the third section, I will in the fourth show how such a deep time supports his transnational politics. However, by contrasting Wells’s approach to long-durational time with that of the historians of the Annales school, and by revisiting George Orwell’s attack on Wells as the ‘arch-priest of progress’, I will turn a critical eye on the politics of Wells’s progressive scheme of history, suggesting that it is guilty of a form of cultural, historical and political neo-imperialism.

Throughout this chapter, I wish to distinguish the deep time of Wells’s universal histories from that of *The Time Machine*. These texts differ greatly, especially in that the former are histories whilst the latter is fiction. Nevertheless, they can be brought into productive dialogue through a focus on narrative. To do so I will employ a methodology similar to those pioneered by both Hayden White and Paul Ricoeur.⁷ In particular, I will contrast the different forms of deep time in the universal histories and in *The Time Machine* by drawing on Ricoeur’s account of the relation between time and narrative, and his theory that narrative humanizes time. White and Ricoeur have done much to bridge the gap between history and fiction through the concept of

⁷ Hayden White developed an influential ‘poetics of historical discourse’ based around the premise that history and fiction share the same narrative structure. As he put it in *Tropics of Discourse* (1978): historical narratives are ‘verbal fictions the contents of which are as much invented as found and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences’ (*Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore; London: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), 82). In *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur similarly uses narrative as a bridge between historical and fictional discourse: his threefold theory of mimesis is developed as a general theory of ‘emplotment’, which applies equally to historical and to fictional narratives (see *Time and Narrative*, iii, 99).

narrative, and have encouraged the reading of history *as* fiction. Their types of approach are invited by Wells's histories, which repeatedly foreground their similarity to fiction. For example, the Preface to the *Short History* suggests that the following historical work is 'meant to be read straightforwardly almost as a novel is read'.⁸

Beyond Cosmic Pessimism

In *Building Cosmopolis: The Political Thought of H. G. Wells* (2003), John Partington has convincingly argued that T. H. Huxley's notion of 'ethical evolution' decisively shaped Wells's politics.⁹ He argues that Wells, having enthusiastically absorbed and adopted Huxley's idea of ethical evolution as a student at the Normal School of Science, went on to develop a political worldview by fusing this doctrine with an 'ideological framework' provided by socialism.¹⁰ He shows that Wells first started to apply Huxleyan 'ethical' principles to practical issues of social, educational and political reform with his *Anticipations* (1901), and that a commitment to ethical evolution lay behind all the subsequent stages of his political career. It underpinned both his support of welfare reform and international co-operation in the Edwardian period, and his later advocacy of cosmopolitan forms of world government, initially through pragmatic regional political unions, then later through a functional world state.¹¹

Although he does not explicitly mention geological time, Partington's thesis that Huxley's notion of ethical evolution underpins Wells's developing politics implies the

⁸ H. G. Wells, *A Short History of the World* (London: Cassell, 1922), v. All further references are to this edition.

⁹ Partington, *Cosmopolis*, 2, 30.

¹⁰ Partington, *Cosmopolis*, 31.

¹¹ Partington, *Cosmopolis*, 3, 43, 149.

importance of such a time for those politics. Huxley's ethical evolution involves viewing humans biologically in a wide temporal frame: such a perspective is required to appreciate the necessity of combating the 'cosmic process' through the 'ethical process'.¹² Indeed, as Partington points out, Wells held a 'lifelong Huxleyan belief that humankind must strive ever upwards to success, or fall ever downwards to failure and extinction'. He increasingly came to think that such success was to be achieved through global political union:

he became convinced that the choice for humankind was between global union and human extinction. From 1919 to his death in 1946 Wells actively campaigned for the former, warning against the latter.¹³

Time and again, Wells confronted his readers with a stark choice which was, in effect, either to follow his suggestions for a world government, or face extinction. It is worth making explicit the role that deep time plays in such a political strategy, and, conversely, showing how Wells's approach to deep time became increasingly political.

Wells repeatedly draws attention to the discovery of geological time in political contexts. A revealing early example is his lecture given at the Royal Institution and published in book form as *The Discovery of the Future* (1902).¹⁴ Warren Wagar has celebrated this work as one of the founding documents of 'future studies', arguing that 'it is not far-fetched to fix January 24, 1902, the day of Wells's Royal Institution lecture, as the day when the study of the future was born'.¹⁵ It should also be pointed out that this work forms a key step in Wells's politicization of geological time, and

¹² Huxley, *Evolution*, 81, 84.

¹³ Partington, *Cosmopolis*, 118, 109.

¹⁴ H. G. Wells, *The Discovery of the Future* (London: T. Fischer Unwin, 1902). Unless otherwise specified, all further references are to this edition.

¹⁵ W. Warren Wagar, 'H. G. Wells and the Genesis of Future Studies', *World Future Society Bulletin*, 17/1 (January/February 1983), 25-9, 26; see also his *Traversing Time*, 37, 283-4.

marks a crucial transition between his early cosmic pessimism and his later political writings.

In *The Discovery of the Future*, Wells invokes the comparatively recent discovery of the geological past to argue for the possibility of an analogous ‘discovery of the future’. He points out that ‘until the nineteenth century began’, man’s knowledge of the past was ‘absolutely confined’ to the domain of human history and tradition, and formed part of a picture rounded off by ‘legend and error’, such as by Bishop Ussher’s dating of creation in ‘exactly four thousand and four years B.C.’: ‘that was man’s Universal History . . . until the scientific epoch began’.¹⁶ However, with the ‘great discovery’ of the geological past, ‘modern science . . . abolished such limits to the past’: ‘[w]e have become possessed of a new and once unsuspected history of the world’.¹⁷ He goes on to develop a sustained analogy between the discovery of the geological past and his proposed ‘discovery of the future’, to support his argument for the possibility of the latter:

by seeking for operating causes instead of for fossils, and by criticising them as persistently and thoroughly as the geological record has been criticised, it may be possible to throw a searchlight of inference forward instead of backward, and to attain to a knowledge of coming things as clear, as . . . the clear vision of the past that geology has opened to us during the nineteenth century.¹⁸

The analogy is underpinned by Wells’s claim that knowledge of the future would be obtained through similar inductive inferences to those which were employed to obtain knowledge of the geological past. Rhetorically, he presents his proposed ‘discovery of the future’ as one which involves a shift of attention from the past to the future—from the ‘inductive past of geology’ to the ‘inductive future’—but in truth, his interest lies

¹⁶ Wells, *Discovery*, 41-2.

¹⁷ Wells, *Discovery*, 48, 43, 46.

¹⁸ Wells, *Discovery*, 50-1.

in both past and future: that is, in deep time, and in the long-term processes such as biological evolution and thermodynamic decay that operate over such time spans.¹⁹

The nascent political aspect of Wells's approach to deep time in the *Discovery of the Future* should be stressed. It is clearly revealed by the opening contrast which he draws between 'two divergent types of mind' that are to be 'distinguished chiefly by their attitude towards time': one that 'seems scarcely to think of the future at all', and another that 'thinks constantly, and by preference, of things to come, and of present things mainly in relation to the results that must arise from them'. Wells describes this latter type of mind as

the legislative, creative, organising, or masterful type, because it is perpetually attacking and altering the established order of things, perpetually falling away from respect for what the past has given us. It sees the world as one great workshop, and the present is no more than material for the future.²⁰

This sketch, which serves as a good description of Wells's own mind, and of his indefatigable political activities over the next four decades, makes clear the political element of the concern with the future: the desire to legislate, create, and organize in order to attack and alter 'the established order of things'. Indeed, what Wells here calls 'the scientific discovery of the future' or '[s]cientific prophecy', a method which animates many of his non-fictional 'futurological' works, aims not simply to predict what will happen in the future, but also to alter that future through political measures.²¹ Already in the *Discovery of the Future*, Wells makes the prediction that there will be 'a great world state':

[i]t is not difficult to collect reasons for supposing, and such reasons have been collected, that in the near future—in a couple of hundred years, as one

¹⁹ See Wells, *Discovery*, 77, 87.

²⁰ Wells, *Discovery*, 7-8, 10.

²¹ Wells, *Discovery*, 79, 71.

rash optimist has written— . . . humanity will be definitely and consciously organising itself as a great world state.²²

The ‘rash optimist’ to which Wells points with self-deprecating humour, is, of course, himself. As Partington points out, he first began constructing tentative proposals for the development of future society with the publication of *Anticipations* (1901), which contains his first non-fictional reference to a world state.²³ The early mention of a world state in this lecture shows the political impetus which lies behind the ‘discovery of the future’, and anticipates his sustained political campaign to achieve such a world state.

The *Discovery of the Future* marks a key point of transition between Wells’s early cosmic pessimism and his later Huxleyan political worldview. Therein, he deploys a classic Huxleyan perspective on geological time to make the point that humanity occupies a precarious position in the universe, and, in this particular instance, to chastise Auguste Comte and his Positivist followers for their complacent belief in the supremacy of humanity. ‘[W]e of the early twentieth [century]’, writes Wells, and ‘particularly that growing majority of us who have been born since the *Origin of Species* was written’, look ‘back through countless millions of years’:

[o]ur imaginations have been trained upon a past in which the past that Comte knew is scarcely more than the concluding moment, we perceive that man, and all the world of men, is no more than the present phase of a development so great and splendid that, beside this vision, epics jingle like nursery rhymes, and all the exploits of Humanity shrivel to the proportion of castles in the sand.²⁴

Having deployed such a perspective, Wells goes on to negotiate a cautiously optimistic path, whose tension with his earlier cosmic pessimism is apparent. On the one hand, he optimistically presents his ‘great world state’, carefully differentiated

²² Wells, *Discovery*, 80-1.

²³ Partington, *Cosmopolis*, 2, 1.

²⁴ Wells, *Discovery*, 76-7.

from a static Positivist utopia, as an enticing goal for humanity: a ‘world state’ that ‘glitters elusively’ in the future. Yet on the other hand, he points out that such faith in the future involves the ‘quite arbitrary belief’ that life is not ‘in vain’, and that it is scientifically perfectly possible that something should occur which would ‘utterly destroy and end the entire human race and story’.²⁵ He imagines in lurid detail a number of scenarios which could bring about such a cosmic disaster: the earth could be destroyed by an asteroid, humanity could be wiped out by disease, poisoned, hunted, and so on. Added to these possibilities is the certainty that the sun ‘must some day radiate itself towards extinction’. These are, of course, exactly the sorts of pessimistic cosmic scenarios which were envisaged in his early scientific romances. Notably, his description of the sun radiating itself towards extinction until the point at which ‘this earth of ours, tideless and slow moving, will be dead and frozen’, is the scenario of *The Time Machine*.²⁶ However, in the *Discovery of the Future*, Wells makes a decisive movement away from such pessimism:

I do not believe in these things, because I have come to believe in certain other things, in the coherency and purpose in the world and in the greatness of human destiny.²⁷

Throughout the lecture, Wells counterbalances his earlier cosmic pessimism with his newly-found sense of purpose: though ‘shot with pain’, the world is also ‘shot with promise’.²⁸

As critics such as Wagar, Williamson, John Reed and Partington have pointed out, Wells throughout his life maintained an acute awareness of the precariousness of

²⁵ Wells, *Discovery*, 81-2, 84.

²⁶ Wells, *Discovery*, 87.

²⁷ Wells, *Discovery*, 87-8.

²⁸ Wells, *Discovery*, 89.

humanity, and of its possible extinction.²⁹ Indeed, conveying such a precariousness feeds back in to his Huxleyan politics, and provides an urgency for the political steps which supposedly need to be taken to avoid cosmic disaster. What is significant is that in the *Discovery of the Future*, the bleak cosmic pessimism of the earlier scientific romances is counterbalanced by a new sense of purpose for humanity, and that already at this early stage, this purpose is directed towards the political formation of a world state.

While predominantly political, Wells's movement beyond his early cosmic pessimism also reflects a major change in the scientific understanding of cosmology. This change, whose significance for Wells's thought has been indicated by Patrick Parrinder, occurred with the discovery of radioactivity at the turn of the century. As Parrinder points out, the study of radioactivity revealed the source of the sun's heat to be thermonuclear fusion rather than combustion, and so discredited predictions of a relatively imminent heat-death as a consequence of the second law of thermodynamics.³⁰ In the *Interpretation of Radium* (1909), Frederick Soddy clearly articulated the cosmological consequences of the discovery of radioactivity, holding that '[w]e are no longer the inhabitants of a universe slowly dying from the physical exhaustion of its energy, but of a universe which has in the internal energy of its material components the means to rejuvenate itself perennially over immense periods of time'.³¹ As Parrinder notes, Wells switched 'shortly before the First World War from entropic pessimism to a position much closer to Soddy's thermonuclear

²⁹ W. Warren Wagar, *H. G. Wells and the World State* (Freeport, N. Y: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), 82; Williamson, *Critic*, 27, 38; John Reed, *The Natural History of H. G. Wells* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1982), 96; Partington, *Cosmopolis*, 5.

³⁰ Parrinder, *Shadows*, 39-40.

³¹ Frederick Soddy, *The Interpretation of Radium: Being the Substance of Six Free Popular Experimental Lectures Delivered at the University of Glasgow, 1908*, 3rd edn (London: John Murray, 1912), 248.

optimism'.³² The eleventh chapter of *Interpretation of Radium* so inspired Wells that he wrote a novel on its basis: *The World Set Free* (1914).³³ He also later apologised for the 'incorrect science' of *The Time Machine* in his 1931 preface to that work:

[t]he geologists and astronomers of that time told us dreadful lies about the 'inevitable' freezing up of the world—and of life and mankind with it. The whole game of life would be over in a million years or less. They impressed this upon us with the full weight of their authority, while now Sir James Jeans in his smiling *Universe Around Us* waves us on to millions of millions of years.³⁴

The discovery of radioactivity undoubtedly had a large influence on Wells. It would, however, be misleading to think that 'thermonuclear optimism' alone freed him from the shackles of his cosmic pessimism. Rather, the case of the *Discovery of the Future* suggests that Wells had already begun to move beyond his early cosmic pessimism in order to adopt a more politically-efficacious view of the cosmos.

When he gave his lecture in 1902, Wells still believed *The Time Machine* scenario of a thermodynamic heat-death to be inevitable. He held it to be a 'certainty' that the sun must radiate itself towards extinction.³⁵ In the second edition of the work of 1913, he added a footnote to this statement, which reads: '[n]ot now. This lecture was delivered ten years ago and the discovery of radio-activity has changed all that'.³⁶ While this shows that by 1913 he had abandoned his earlier belief in the inevitable heat-death of the earth, what is more important to note is that, when he first gave his lecture in 1902, he was determined not to let this belief compromise his new-found confidence in the progress of humanity. Letting this latter confidence override the forecast of

³² Parrinder, *Shadows*, 47.

³³ Wells dedicated this novel to Soddy's *Interpretation of Radium*, and acknowledged that his story 'owes long passages to the eleventh chapter of that book' (*The World Set Free: A Story of Mankind* (London: Macmillan, 1914), v).

³⁴ H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine* (New York: Random House, 1931), ix-x.

³⁵ Wells, *Discovery*, 87.

³⁶ H. G. Wells, *The Discovery of the Future*, 2nd edn (London: A. C. Fifield, 1913), 55.

heat-death, he forced himself to the statement that '[e]verything seems pointing to the belief that we are entering upon a progress that will go on with an ever widening and ever more confident stride for ever'.³⁷

Having formed a political worldview on the basis of Huxley's ethical evolution, Wells continued to use Huxleyan perspectives on geological time to his political advantage throughout his career. For instance, the *Fate of Homo Sapiens* (1939) finds Wells still pedalling his world community—by then understood in its mature theoretical form as a functional world state—as a necessary measure in order to save humanity from 'biological disaster'.³⁸ The threat had, in this instance, been raised by the recent rise of Nazism and the prospect of a second world war.³⁹ In his second chapter, Wells draws attention to the 'modification of time values that has occurred' between a 'modern intelligence to-day' and 'the outlook of our grandparents'. Whereas the earlier generation had 'scarcely any historical perspective at all', and 'looked back to a past of a few thousand years and at the very *beginning* of time as they conceived it', members of the newer generation have very different 'historical imaginations'. They 'live to-day in a vastly enlarged system of perspectives': '[o]ur historical ideas reach back now through vistas of millions of years'.⁴⁰ In typical Huxleyan fashion, this new perspective is used to unsettle the idea of an 'unchanging human nature': as 'our perspectives open', we discover that the fixity of human nature 'was a transient dream'.⁴¹ Indeed, Wells employs the same example of 'everlasting hills' to illustrate

³⁷ Wells, *Discovery*, 92.

³⁸ H. G. Wells, *The Fate of Homo Sapiens* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1939), 79. Partington argues that, while unstinting in his advocacy of a world state, Wells moved from a pragmatic support of various forms of regional unification in the aftermath of the First World War, to developing a functionalist theory of world government, which he championed from 1932 until his death in 1946 (*Cosmopolis*, 109, 101-26).

³⁹ Wells, *Fate*, 180, 296.

⁴⁰ Wells, *Fate*, 22-4, his emphasis.

⁴¹ Wells, *Fate*, 23, 25.

the new ‘system of perspectives’ as had Huxley in *Evolution and Ethics* (1894). While Huxley had written that to ‘[t]urn back a square foot of the thin turf’ and to expose the chalk formations beneath is to show that the supposedly “‘everlasting hills”’ have in fact undergone drastic changes over the course of geological time, so Wells writes that we now ‘know that the everlasting hills are not everlasting’.⁴² Characteristically, Wells goes on to exploit this perspective on geological time, and the precariousness of humanity within such a perspective, to his political advantage. He argues that in order to avoid extinction, everyone must ‘be re-educated as a conscious world citizen’, and must ‘be prepared to take his place in a collective world fellowship’.⁴³

Wells’s universal histories, *The Outline of History* (1920) and *A Short History of the World* (1922), play a central role in his Huxleyan politics, and constitute his most sophisticated political articulation of deep time.⁴⁴ While, as we have seen, he was willing throughout his career to invoke Huxleyan perspectives on geological time to political ends, his readers could best be persuaded to adopt his biological perspective if they were provided with a universal history which told the story of humanity against the backdrop of deep time.

Wells’s universal histories can be positioned at a decisive juncture in his political development, as he moved from being an ‘internationalist’ to being a ‘cosmopolitan’.

⁴² Huxley, *Evolution*, 3; Wells, *Fate*, 24.

⁴³ Wells, *Fate*, 79. The stark choice that Wells leaves his readers is: ‘[a]dapt or perish’ (312).

⁴⁴ *The Outline of History* was first published by George Newnes in twenty-four fortnightly parts between November 1919 and November 1920, and first appeared in book form in 1920, in an edition published by Cassell. Revised and updated editions were published in 1925, 1930, 1932, 1951, 1961 and 1972; the last two of these editions contain revisions made by Raymond Postgate and G. P. Wells. *A Short History of the World* was first published in 1922 by Cassell, and a revised edition was published in 1946. For an account of the *Outline*’s complex publication history, see Matthew Skelton, ‘The Paratext of Everything: Constructing and Marketing H. G. Wells’s *The Outline of History*’, *Book History*, 4 (2001), 237-75.

While his entire political career was governed by a commitment to Huxley's ethical evolution, Partington charts a crucial shift in his political outlook at the end of the Great War, at which point he replaced his earlier internationalism with a commitment to a cosmopolitan government: '[f]rom this time onwards he sought the supersession of nationalist sentiment in favour of a more tolerant cosmopolitanism which advanced world citizenship and collective responsibility'.⁴⁵ As Wells himself stressed, 'cosmopolitanism is something entirely different from internationalism'.⁴⁶ Whereas internationalism seeks the co-operation between nation-states whose structure it leaves in tact, cosmopolitanism seeks to dismantle the nation as a sovereign political entity, and to replace it with an entirely new and wider form of political community. While Wells's internationalism had manifested itself in his support of a 'League of Free Nations', he was, as the *Outline* makes eminently clear, bitterly disappointed with the eventual formation of the League of Nations as it was embodied in the Covenant of 28 April 1919. From this point onwards, he advocated a cosmopolitan world government.⁴⁷ Indeed, Partington accords the *Outline* a decisive role in Wells's movement to his new cosmopolitan politics. Although 'Wells first considered world unity during the Edwardian period, it is nonetheless possible to consider *The Outline of History* as Wells's manifesto launching his career as publicist for world peace and cosmopolitan unity'.⁴⁸

Wells's universal histories and his concomitant proposed reform of history teaching were eminently political. His need of history was not that—to use Nietzsche's

⁴⁵ Partington, *Cosmopolis*, 82.

⁴⁶ H. G. Wells, *After Democracy: Addresses and Papers on the Present World Situation* (London: Watts, 1932), 55.

⁴⁷ H. G. Wells, *The Outline of History* (London: Cassell, 1920), 590-4, 603. Unless otherwise specified, all further references are to this edition.

⁴⁸ Partington, *Cosmopolis*, 109.

terms—of the ‘idler in the garden of knowledge’, but rather was ‘for the sake of life and action’.⁴⁹ He made no secret of the political nature of his approach to history.

Both of his universal histories clearly advertised their political aims of countering nationalism and of providing readers with a common scheme of world history to prepare them for their role as citizens in the coming world state. For example, in the preface to the *Outline*, he flagged the urgent need of ‘*common historical ideas*’ to ensure a world peace:

[t]here can be no peace now, we realize, but a common peace in all the world . . . But *there can be no common peace and prosperity without common historical ideas*. Without such ideas to hold them together in harmonious co-operation, with nothing but narrow, selfish, and conflicting nationalist traditions, races and peoples are bound to drift towards conflict and destruction.⁵⁰

Moreover, he embarked on a relentless campaign for the replacement of the teaching of national history with world history, initially in works such as *The New Teaching of History* (1921) and *The Salvaging of Civilization* (1921), and later in works such as ‘The Poison Called History’ (1939).⁵¹ Once again, he made no attempt to conceal the politics of this campaign, clearly indicating that his proposed reform of history teaching was designed to help bring about his desired world state. As he put it, ‘[w]orld federation and the teaching of world history are two correlated and inseparable things’.⁵²

⁴⁹ Nietzsche, ‘History’, 59.

⁵⁰ Wells, *Outline*, vi; his emphasis.

⁵¹ H. G. Wells, *The New Teaching of History* (London: Cassell, 1921); *The Salvaging of Civilization* (London: Cassell, 1921); ‘The Traveller Provokes his Old Friends, the Teachers, Again in a Paper Called “The Poison Called History”’, in *Travels of a Republican Radical in Search of Hot Water* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1939), 89–121. Partington has usefully situated Wells’s proposed reform of history teaching within the context of his wider post-war project of educational reform, which aimed to create ‘the cosmopolitan citizenry which [he] felt was essential for the achievement of his world state’ (*Cosmopolis*, 88).

⁵² Wells, *Democracy*, 170.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will address the role that deep time plays in Wells's universal histories and in his advocacy of world history, while showing how such a time is central to his cosmopolitan politics. On the face of it, it may seem surprising that deep history and the prehuman past could be political. What could be less political than the emergence of life on the steaming beaches of the remote geological past, primitive reptiles venturing out from their swamp-forests in the Late Palæozoic Age, and herds of early mammals roaming the earth in the Cainozoic period? Such things predate humans, and may therefore appear equally remote from human affairs, let alone from contemporary politics. However, I will show in what follows that Wells exploited both geological time and the prehuman past for his cosmopolitan politics.

The Shape of Deep History

'The destination of the human species as a whole is towards continued progress. We accomplish it by fixing our eyes on the goal, which, though a pure ideal, is of the highest value in practice, for it gives a direction to our efforts'.

Immanuel Kant⁵³

H. G. Wells's *The Outline of History* (1920) and *A Short History of the World* (1922) are universal histories which tell the story of the earth and its inhabitants from its creation in the remote past up until the present day. Both sold widely: by the time Wells published his autobiography in 1934, the *Outline* had sold over two million

⁵³ F. S. Marvin used this quotation, along with the attribution 'KANT, *Criticism of Herder*, 1785', as an epigram in *The Living Past: A Sketch of Western Progress* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), 217. See Immanuel Kant, 'Review of J. G. Herder's *Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of Humanity*. Parts 1 and 2' (1785), trans. Allen W. Wood, in *Anthropology, History, and Education*, ed. Günter Zöllner and Robert B. Loudon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 124-42, 142.

copies.⁵⁴ Although Wells was keen to make clear that the *Short History* was ‘not an abstract or condensation’ of the *Outline*, but rather ‘a much more generalized History, planned and written afresh’, both works share a similar structure; indeed, he suggests that the *Short History* can be used as preparatory reading for the ‘much fuller and more explicit *Outline of History*’.⁵⁵ Paul Costello has usefully placed the *Outline* and *Short History* within a tradition of twentieth-century universal history or ‘world history’ that includes Oswald Spengler’s *The Decline of the West* (1918-22) and Arnold Toynbee’s *A Study of History* (1934-61), and which in turn forms part of a longer tradition of universal history that stretches back to the Bible.⁵⁶ World histories are, as Costello puts it, schematic attempts ‘to specify the pattern of the past from earliest recorded time to the present’.⁵⁷ Here, I would like to re-situate Wells’s histories in the context of geological ‘deep history’, and show how they deliberately appropriate the prehuman past which was brought to light by geologists.

Martin Rudwick has drawn attention to the importance of the new conceptions of ‘deep history’ that emerged with the discovery of geological time. He makes clear that what was significant about the discovery of deep time was not simply the magnitude of the new timescales, but also the construction of what he calls the ‘deep history’ that ‘fills up the vast tracts of deep time’, and the profound change that came about from ‘regarding human history as almost coextensive with cosmic history, to treating it as just the more recent phase in a far longer and highly eventful story,

⁵⁴ Wells, *Autobiography*, 615. On the marketing and commercial success of the *Outline*, see Skelton, ‘Paratext’.

⁵⁵ Wells, *Short History*, v.

⁵⁶ Paul Costello, *World Historians and their Goals: Twentieth-Century Answers to Modernism* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1994), 9-45. Wagar has also situated Wells’s histories within the tradition of universal history: see his *World State*, 137-42.

⁵⁷ Costello, *World Historians*, 9.

almost all of it *prehuman*'.⁵⁸ Indeed, as Rudwick has shown, the idea of a vast timescale of the earth was not by itself revolutionary. He complicates the popular but misleading view that what 'the emergence of the modern earth sciences needed above all' was 'an adequate sense of the vastness of geological time' and that 'this is just what was lacking until at least the turn of the nineteenth century' by demonstrating that modern geology displaced two major positions. The first is that of practitioners of the historical science of chronology who adhered to the 'traditional short timescale'. The most famous example of this position is Bishop Ussher's dating of Creation in 4004 B.C. based on his interpretation of Biblical history. However, there was another alternative which had already challenged the traditional short timescale: the 'eternalism associated with Aristotelian philosophy'.⁵⁹ As Rudwick points out, 'eternalist ideas persisted in European culture largely as an "underground" alternative'. For example, the anonymous and notorious *Telliamed* (1748) postulated a timescale of millions of years for the earth, which in turn was interpreted as just one phase in an even longer cyclic movement from, and to, all eternity. Consequently, what was decisive about the modern geology was not simply its positing of a longer timescale, but rather the idea that there was a long period of the earth's history which preceded the emergence of humanity:

[t]he eternalist view assumed that there had never been a time when the world was without human or at least rational life; it allowed for no conception of a prehuman and therefore radically *nonhuman* world. In that sense, the eternalist option was as profoundly unmodern as the short timescale.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Rudwick, *Bursting*, 2, his emphasis.

⁵⁹ Rudwick, *Bursting*, 115-7, emphasis removed. As we saw above, Rudwick positions James Hutton in this tradition of eternalism.

⁶⁰ Rudwick, *Bursting*, 118, his emphasis.

That is, modern geology is notable for its introduction of the novel idea of a vast prehuman past, and for raising the ‘prospect of extending detailed and reliable history back into a prehuman world’.⁶¹

Wells draws attention to the geologists’ discovery of the deep history of the earth in his histories. He emphasizes the abandonment of what Rudwick calls the short timescale, the realization of the vastness of the prehuman past, and the piecing together of the earth’s geohistory. After an opening chapter which situates the earth in space and time, Wells points out in the second chapter of the *Outline*, called ‘The Record of the Rocks’, that the ‘fossils in the rocks and the rocks themselves are our first historical documents’ and that by ‘studying this record men are slowly piecing together a story of life’s beginnings’. Much as Charles Lyell had done before him, he remarks that the record of the rocks has not always been recognized as such, and that ‘it has been only within the last century and a half that man has begun the serious and sustained deciphering of these long-neglected early pages of his world’s history’.⁶² He draws attention to the fact that ‘[s]peculations about geological time vary enormously’: ‘[e]stimates of the age of the oldest rocks by geologists and astronomers’ have ranged from between 25,000,000 and 1,600,000,000 years, with Lord Kelvin making the lowest estimate in 1867 and T. H. Huxley guessing at 400,000,000 years.⁶³ Wells stresses that ‘whatever the total sum may be’, it is important to realise that there was a time period of great duration before any significant life developed: ‘most geologists are in agreement that *half or more than*

⁶¹ Rudwick, *Bursting*, 2.

⁶² Wells, *Outline*, 7, 8; Lyell, *Principles*, i, 20. Wells provides an account of the discovery of geological time in his chapter on the nineteenth century: see *Outline*, 520-2.

⁶³ Wells, *Outline*, 8. Wells refers the reader to Arthur Holmes’s *The Age of the Earth* (1913) as an ‘admirable recent book’ that provides ‘a good summary of this most interesting discussion’ (8).

half of the whole of geological time had passed before life had developed to the Later Palæozoic level'.⁶⁴ The *Short History* opens by pointing out that

[a] couple of hundred years ago men possessed the history of little more than the last three thousand years. . . . Over a large part of the civilized world it was believed and taught that the world had been created suddenly in 4004 B.C..⁶⁵

However, this 'misconception' which 'was based upon a too literal interpretation of the Hebrew Bible' has 'long since been abandoned': that 'the universe in which we live has existed only for six or seven thousand years may be regarded as an altogether exploded idea'. Rather, it is now 'universally recognized that the universe in which we live has to all appearances existed for an enormous period of time and possibly for endless time'.⁶⁶

Wells's histories are themselves versions of deep history. They fuse the deep historical narratives of geologists with a scheme of universal history. The early chapters of the histories are highly-condensed versions of the 'deep histories' offered by geologists.⁶⁷ In the *Outline*, Wells acknowledged his debt to a number of geological textbooks and popular geological works, to which he refers his readers for further information. For example, in addition to acknowledging the debt of his opening six chapters to Charles Lyell's, Alfred Jukes-Browne's, and Louis Pirsson and Charles Schuchert's 'textbooks of geology', he refers his readers to the essays collected in Richard Lull's *The Evolution of the Earth and its Inhabitants* (1918) and Henry R. Knipe's *Evolution in the Past* (1912).⁶⁸ This last work follows what had become a well-established pattern of telling the story of the earth in a chronologically-

⁶⁴ Wells, *Outline*, 8, his emphasis.

⁶⁵ Wells, *Short History*, 1.

⁶⁶ Wells, *Short History*, 1.

⁶⁷ In the *Science of Life* (1929-30), H. G. Wells, Julian Huxley and G. P. Wells offered a much fuller account of the earth's geohistory and its evolving life forms: see *Science of Life*, i, 202-27; ii, 429-549.

⁶⁸ Wells, *Outline*, 24, 5.

ordered narrative form. The opening chapters of Wells's universal histories, which tell the story of the earth's remote past, are compact versions of such an approach.

Unlike Knipe's natural scientific account of the earth's geohistory, Wells's narratives of the prehuman past also form part of a scheme of universal history. This inclusion of the geological past into a scheme of universal history is notable, though not without precedent. For example, both Winwood Reade's *Martyrdom of Man* (1872) and F. S. Marvin's *The Living Past: A Sketch of Western Progress* (1913), which Wells acknowledges as previous 'sketches of universal history' that influenced his *Outline*, advance narratives of the newly-opened geological past.⁶⁹ Marvin, for instance, signaled that 'a scientific geology [has] opened the book of man's earliest history', and that

[t]he new discoveries enable us to plan out the vast tract of geologic time, compared with which historic time is but a minute in a day, and in rough outline to sketch the main features of human development.⁷⁰

While Wells wrote versions of deep history, what needs to be stressed is the particular organization or shape that he imposed on that deep history. What is significant is not just his incorporation of the geological past, but the role that that past is made to play in his progressive scheme of history.

Wells's deep histories are teleological. They tell the story of humanity as one of progress from a common biological origin in the remote geological past towards the *telos* of a coming world state. '[C]lumsily or smoothly', we are told, 'the world . . . progresses and will progress'.⁷¹ The last book of the *Outline*, called 'The Next Stage in History', looks forward to this coming world state: '[o]ur *Outline of History* has

⁶⁹ Wells, *Outline*, vi.

⁷⁰ Marvin, *Living Past*, 11, 12.

⁷¹ Wells, *Outline*, 608.

been ill written if it has failed to convey our conviction of the character of the state towards which the world is moving'. This 'state' is, of course, his World State or the political 'federation of all humanity'. He ventures 'to prophesy that the next chapters [of history] to be written will tell, though perhaps with long interludes of setback and disaster, of the final world-wide political and social unity'. His history ends with what is, as Wagar points out, one of Wells's favourite utopian images: '[l]ife . . . will presently stand upon the earth as upon a footstool, and stretch out its realm amidst the stars'.⁷² The last chapter of the *Short History*, entitled 'The Political and Social Reconstruction of the World', concludes on a similarly utopian note of hope: '[w]hat man has done, the little triumphs of his present state, and all the history we have told, form but the prelude to the things that man has yet to do'.⁷³

There is a tension in Wells's teleological scheme of history that arises from his firm belief that biological evolution is not teleological. Critics such as Wagar, Williamson and Reed have long since dispelled the once-popular image of Wells as a naïve champion of what Wagar calls 'the nineteenth-century dream of inevitable progress'.⁷⁴ Rather, they explain that throughout his life Wells thought of 'progress' principally in the terms of evolutionary biology, in which biological 'progress' is counterbalanced by the inverse possibility of biological retrogression and extinction. They argue emphatically that he did not hold the view, often associated with Herbert Spencer, that the process of evolution is one of automatic progress.⁷⁵ Indeed, incensed at having been accused 'of believing in Herbert Spencer's inevitable progress', he wrote in a letter of 1939 to the editor of *British Weekly*:

⁷² Wells, *Outline*, 604, 605, 608; Wagar, *World State*, 59.

⁷³ Wells, *Short History*, 405.

⁷⁴ Wagar, *World State*, 81.

⁷⁵ Wagar, *World State*, 80-7; Williamson, *Critic*, 23-30; Reed, *Natural History*, 95-109.

[w]hat have my books been from *The Time Machine* to *World Brain* (and my *Fate of Homo Sapiens* now in the press) but the clearest insistence on the insecurity of progress and the possibility of human degeneration and extinction?⁷⁶

While he continued to think of ‘progress’ in the same terms, he changed from his early position of cosmic pessimism to later being a ‘prophet of progress’.⁷⁷

Indeed, the universal histories are a central display of Wells as champion of progress.

We saw above that the *Discovery of the Future* negotiated a fraught path between cosmic pessimism and an affirmation of progress, in which Wells somewhat inelegantly decided to privilege the latter. The universal histories form a much more sophisticated articulation of a similar position. They tell the story of the evolution of humankind as one of progress without resorting to a Spencerian view of biological evolution as one of inevitable progress. Wells managed to achieve this feat by employing two principal historiographical models to structure his deep histories: Biblical history and Immanuel Kant’s conception for a universal history with a cosmopolitan aim.

Judeo-Christian Biblical history provides one model for Wells’s histories. In *Meaning in History* (1949), Karl Löwith has argued that modern ‘philosophy of history’, which he defines as ‘a systematic interpretation of universal history in accordance with a principle by which historical events and successions are unified and directed towards an ultimate meaning’, is entirely dependent on ‘the theological concept of history as a history of fulfilment and salvation’. His central thesis is that modern philosophy of

⁷⁶ H. G. Wells, letter to the Editor of *British Weekly*, 26 June 1939, in *The Correspondence of H. G. Wells*, ed. David C. Smith and Patrick Parrinder, iv (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1998), 227.

⁷⁷ Williamson, *Critic*, 121.

history 'originates with the Hebrew and Christian Faith in a fulfilment and that it ends with the secularization of its eschatological pattern'.⁷⁸

Wells's universal histories are paradigmatic instances of what Löwith calls 'philosophies of history'. Moreover, they support his thesis that modern philosophy of history involves the secularization of the eschatological pattern of theological conceptions of history. In Wells's case, he openly acknowledges that he takes theological history as a model, and that he adapts it for secular purposes. His histories are not theological but secular. The *Outline* holds that '[i]t is not the place of the historian to discuss the truth and falsity of religion, but it is his business to record the appearance of great constructive ideas'.⁷⁹ It displays an interest in world religions only insofar as they are phenomena which have brought about social and political unity, a treatment for which Wells was criticized by Hilaire Belloc, amongst others.⁸⁰

Nevertheless, Wells's histories are consciously structured on the model of Biblical history, as Wells makes clear in *The Salvaging of Civilization* (1921). Therein, he advocates the creation of a 'Bible of Civilization' which would follow the precedent of the 'old Bible' in many respects:

the opening books of our Bible of Civilization, our Bible translated into terms of modern knowledge . . . shall follow the old Bible precedent exactly. We shall tell . . . the New Story of Genesis, the tremendous spectacle of the Universe that science has opened to us, the flaming beginnings of our world, the vast ages of its making and the astounding unfolding, age after age, of Life.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 1, 2.

⁷⁹ Wells, *Outline*, 146.

⁸⁰ See, for example, Hilaire Belloc, *A Companion to Mr. Wells's 'Outline of History'* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1926). William T. Ross provides a summary of the controversy between Wells and Belloc in *H. G. Wells's World Reborn: 'The Outline of History' and its Companions* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2002), 41. In his review of the *Outline*, E. M. Forster regretted that Wells made of Christ and Buddha 'mere spiritual and social revolutionaries' ('A Great History, II', *Athenaeum*, 4706 (9 July 1920), 42-3, 43).

⁸¹ Wells, *Salvaging*, 105-6.

This new and scientific history, which would develop into ‘a universal history of man’, is to retain the teleological structure of its Biblical precedent: ‘[i]t will still point our lives to a common future which will be the reward and judgment of our present lives’.⁸² Löwith points out that, for both theology and philosophy of history, the ‘formal structure of the meaning of history’ derives from some ‘transcendent purpose’ which is at the same time the goal or *telos* of history: ‘[t]he claim that history has an ultimate meaning implies a final purpose or goal transcending the actual events’.⁸³ Wells’s claim that his universal history will point to a ‘common future’ that will be both ‘the reward and judgment of our present lives’ shows that he self-consciously draws on a teleological Biblical scheme of history. For him, the ‘common future’ is not the eschaton, but rather the coming World State, which stands as the ultimate purpose and goal of history, and provides its ultimate meaning.

Biblical history provides Wells with a historiographic model that complements his ‘futurological’ turn. Löwith notes that the teleological structure of Judeo-Christian history involves a future-directed attitude: ‘the temporal horizon for a final goal’ is ‘an eschatological future’, and thus the ‘ultimate meaning of a transcendent purpose is focused in an expected future’. He points out that ‘[s]uch an expectation was most intensely alive among the Hebrew prophets’, but also that ‘[t]he Christian and post-Christian outlook on history is futuristic, perverting the classical meaning of *historein*, which is related to present and past events’.⁸⁴ In his histories, Wells pays tribute to the Old Testament prophets, who are portrayed as having a mission very similar to his own. The *Short History* celebrates the ‘new kind of man’, the Prophet, who came into

⁸² Wells, *Salvaging*, 106-7.

⁸³ Löwith, *Meaning*, 4-5.

⁸⁴ Löwith, *Meaning*, 6.

existence with the Hebrew people, and Wells remarks that '[i]n the great utterances of Isaiah the prophetic voice rises to a pitch of splendid anticipation and foreshadows the whole earth united and at peace under one God'.⁸⁵ More generally, Wells's histories are, like eschatological history, future-directed: they continually look forward to the construction of the coming cosmopolitan society. As one early reviewer astutely observed, the *Outline* is 'the work of a man whose chief interest lies in the future'.⁸⁶ Wells's attitude towards the past in his histories is like that of 'the Hebrew and Christian view of history' in which, as Löwith observes, 'the past is a promise to the future; consequently, the interpretation of the past becomes a prophecy in reverse, demonstrating the past as a meaningful "preparation" for the future'.⁸⁷ In Wells's case, even the prehuman geological past becomes what Löwith calls 'a promise to the future'. As we shall see, this promise is made in part through the typological structure of the histories.

Wells's histories adapt a typological structure from the Christian Bible. Erich Auerbach gives an account of figura and figural interpretation, which sustain 'the figural view of history' that 'for almost a thousand years remained the only accepted view of history'.⁸⁸ Figural interpretation, as he puts it, 'establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfils the first. The two poles of the figure are separate in time, but both, being real events or figures, are within time, within the

⁸⁵ Wells, *Short History*, 120-1. On the prophetic aspect of Wells's futurology, and on his self-stylization as an Old-Testament prophet, see Parrinder, *Shadows*, 18-33.

⁸⁶ Edward Shanks, 'The Work of Mr. H. G. Wells', *London Mercury*, 5/29 (March 1922), 506-18, 516.

⁸⁷ Löwith, *Meaning*, 6.

⁸⁸ Erich Auerbach, 'Figura', in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 11-76, 60, 53.

stream of historical life'.⁸⁹ Typically, 'figures' are events or persons in the Old Testament that come to fulfilment in the New Testament with the Incarnation, or remain in anticipation of fulfilment with the Second Coming. Figural interpretation is, as Auerbach makes clear, integral to the Christian 'teleological view of history and the providential order of the world'.⁹⁰

Wells adapted a figural structure for his secular universal histories. The prehuman and the human past are to be fulfilled by a future World State. For instance, in the Cainozoic period of the *Short History*, we 'find a number of mammalian species displaying the beginnings of a true social life and keeping together in herds, packs and flocks'. Wells holds that the 'new communication and interdependence of individuals' in this period 'foreshadows the development of human societies of which we shall soon be telling'.⁹¹ It further implicitly foreshadows his own desired form of global community. He encourages a similar figural interpretation of the human past. Forms of human society, particularly those based either on world religions or on empires, are portrayed as foreshadowing a lasting peace and unity. For example, in the *Outline* Alexander the Great is held to be a 'portent of world unity', while his empire is described as 'the first revelation to the human imagination of the oneness of human affairs'.⁹² Here, 'revelation' retains a religious connotation. Alexander's empire is the first historical revelation of the 'oneness of human affairs', though the full revelation awaits the coming World State which, like the last days of the Book of Revelation, promises to be a revelation of history's meaning. Alexander's empire is thus a figure that attains its full meaning in history through the promised manifestation of a World

⁸⁹ Auerbach, 'Figura', 53.

⁹⁰ Auerbach, 'Figura', 56.

⁹¹ Wells, *Short History*, 38, 40.

⁹² Wells, *Outline*, 196.

Federation. The figural structure of Wells's secular universal histories is integral to his teleological scheme of history as that of 'the steadfast upward struggle of life towards vision and control'.

A second historiographical model for Wells's histories is that of Immanuel Kant's 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim' (1784). In the introduction to the *Outline*, Wells claims that Kant's is one of 'the views of history that [the] *Outline* seeks to realize'. Moreover, '*there can be no common peace and prosperity without common historical ideas. . . . This truth, which was apparent to that great philosopher Kant a century or more ago . . . is now plain to the man in the street*'.⁹³ One way in which Wells would have encountered Kant's ideas on history is through F. S. Marvin's *The Living Past: A Sketch of Western Progress* (1913); he praises this universal history in the introduction to the *Outline* as an 'admirable summary of human progress'.⁹⁴

Marvin provides summaries of Kant's 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim' (1784) and his 'Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch' (1795). The former he describes as 'incomparably the most powerful and pregnant statement of the views [of progress] which we are discussing, before the nineteenth century made them a commonplace'.⁹⁵ In his preface, Marvin acknowledges his debt to Kant

⁹³ Wells, *Outline*, vi, v. Wells refers to Kant's 'tract upon universal peace', which seems to indicate Kant's 'Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch' (1795). However, as Ross points out, it is clearly Kant's 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim' (1784) that Wells has in mind (*World Reborn*, 37). Costello has suggested parallels between Wells's *Outline* and Kant's 'Universal History', pointing out that both share the hope for a future cosmopolitan society (*World Historians*, 35-6).

⁹⁴ Wells, *Outline*, vi.

⁹⁵ Marvin, *Living Past*, 221-2. Marvin referred his readers to W. Hastie's collection of Kant's essays, *Principles of Politics* (1891), pointing out that the 'works on Universal History, Perpetual Peace, and the Principle of Progress' are 'of high importance' (281). Here, I will refer to Kant in this edition.

for providing the model for his progressive scheme of Western history, which tells the story of the ‘growth of a common humanity’. The idea of progress, he writes,

first came clearly into view with Kant and the philosophers of the eighteenth century. Take Kant's theory of universal history as the growth of a world-community, reconciling the freedom of individuals and of individual states with the accomplishment of a common aim for mankind as a whole. Add to this the rising power of science as a collective and binding force which the century since Kant has made supreme. You have then one strong clear clue which . . . seems to offer in the field of history something of the guidance and system which Newtonian gravitation gave to celestial mechanics in the seventeenth century.⁹⁶

Kant's idea for a universal history with a cosmopolitan aim, possibly mediated by Marvin's more recent adaptation of that scheme, provided Wells with a historiographical model for his deep histories.

Kant held that it was not known whether nature has an aim or *telos*, as ‘we are too short sighted to see through the secret mechanism of her constitution’. Therefore, it ‘seems, at first sight, a strange and even an absurd proposal to suggest the composition of a *History* according’ to a teleological conception of nature: ‘[i]t may well appear that only a *Romance* could be produced from such a point of view’.

Nevertheless, he proposes that we should assume that history has an aim, primarily for pragmatic reasons: ‘this idea may be serviceable’, and ought to serve ‘as a clue to enable us to penetrate the otherwise planless *Aggregate* of human actions’.⁹⁷ The ‘Ninth Proposition’ of the ‘Universal History’ holds that:

[a] philosophical attempt to work out the Universal History of the world according to the plan of Nature in its aiming at a perfect Civil Union, must be

⁹⁶ Marvin, *Living Past*, vi.

⁹⁷ Kant, ‘Universal History’, 25; his emphasis. Wells's invitation for his readers to approach his histories like novels, and the consequent blurring of history and fiction, can be read in light of Kant's project, and his suggestion that a history with a cosmopolitan aim might be thought to produce a ‘Romance’.

regarded as possible, and as even capable of helping forward the purpose of nature.⁹⁸

Of course, Wells writes after Darwin, from whom he drew the conclusion that nature does not have an aim or purpose. However, he adopts Kant's proposal of a cosmopolitan aim, using this end-goal as a 'clue' throughout his history for pragmatic reasons: its very idea promotes the actualization of such an end. Kant's *telos* of a 'perfect Civil Union' thereby stands as a model for Wells's World State.

Kant's secular universal history is structurally similar to Biblical history in being teleological. History for both derives its meaning in part from a future end state, whether this be the eschaton, or a secular cosmopolitan society. Kant draws attention to this structural similarity when he describes his history as 'chiliastic': we see 'that philosophy may also have its millennial view, but in this case, the Chiliasm is of such a nature that the very idea of it . . . may help to further its realisation'.⁹⁹

Wells followed Kant in adopting a teleological scheme of history. In *The Future in America* (1906), he records how '[l]ike most people of my generation, I was launched into life with millennial assumptions', and believed that the future would bring 'trumpets and shoutings and celestial phenomena, a battle of Armageddon, and the Judgment'. However, as a student of biology, these millennial assumptions were replaced by 'a blackness and a vagueness about the endless vista of years ahead, that was tremendous—that terrified'.¹⁰⁰ (This terrifying view of the endless vista of years corresponds to the sublime geological time of *The Time Machine*.) The histories

⁹⁸ Immanuel Kant, 'Idea of a Universal History from a Cosmopolitical Point of View', in *Kant's Principles of Politics, Including his Essay on Perpetual Peace: A Contribution to Political Science*, ed. and trans. W. Hastie (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1891), 2-29, 25.

⁹⁹ Kant, 'Universal History', 21.

¹⁰⁰ H. G. Wells, *The Future in America: A Search After Realities* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1906), 9, 10.

return to a form of millennialism, although not the ‘strictly protestant’ version of his childhood, but a more sophisticated secular version, in the mold of Kant’s ‘chialistic’ philosophy of history.¹⁰¹

Geological Time and Narrative

The narrative form of Wells’s universal histories contrasts markedly with that of his earlier scientific romance, *The Time Machine*. Whereas *The Time Machine* is a fragmentary narrative, the universal histories have a continuous narrative form, a fact that Wells made clear in the very first line of the *Outline*: ‘[t]his *Outline of History* is an attempt to tell, truly and clearly, *in one continuous narrative*, the whole story of life and mankind so far as it is known today’.¹⁰² This attempt to tell the story of life as a continuous narrative poses certain formal and technical difficulties, particularly as regards the prehuman past. Certainly, the use of Biblical history and Kant’s universal history as historiographic models provided Wells with a shape and structure to his history, and suggested a broad narrative organization which could be imposed over the expanses of deep history. Nevertheless, he still faced two difficulties in telling the story of the earth’s geological past, which were also problems faced by geologists with their deep historical narratives. The first is that of trying to construct a continuous narrative of the earth’s past when, due to the imperfection of the geological record, there are large gaps in the knowledge of that past. The second is that of telling a story which spans a vast amount of time, without making that story appear more event-filled than it in fact was. I will address these two difficulties in

¹⁰¹ Wells, *America*, 9.

¹⁰² Wells, *Outline*, v, my emphasis.

turn, contrasting Wells's narrative response in the histories with the fragmentary narrative of *The Time Machine*.

The imperfection of the geological record poses difficulties for the attempt to tell the story of the earth's past as a continuous narrative. In both universal histories, Wells clearly foregrounds the imperfect nature of the geological record, and our consequently partial knowledge of the earth's remote past. In the *Outline*, he employs a variant of the common metaphor of the legibility of the geological record, and extends his conceit that rocks are 'historical documents' by holding that these rocks are not like the orderly books and pages of a library. Rather, they are 'torn, disrupted, interrupted, flung about, defaced, like a carelessly arranged office after it has experienced in succession a bombardment, a hostile military occupation, looting, an earthquake, riots, and a fire'.¹⁰³ He later returns to this metaphor, stressing the incompleteness of our knowledge of the geological past:

[t]he Record of the Rocks is like a great book that has been carelessly misused. All its pages are torn, worn and defaced, and many are altogether missing. The outline of the story that we sketch here has been pieced together slowly and painfully in an investigation that is still incomplete and still in progress.¹⁰⁴

However, while he deploys a metaphor of the geological record as a book with torn and missing pages, the narrative that he tells about the earth's past is itself continuous.

Wells is happy to draw attention to our lack of knowledge of the past, but this lack does not disrupt the continuity of his story. For example, at the end of the seventh chapter of the *Short History*, he points to a gap in our knowledge of perhaps 'several million years' that is due to a break in the geological record:

¹⁰³ Wells, *Outline*, 7. In the *Short History*, Wells offers a similar conceit: he compares the sedimentary rocks to 'the leaves of a library that has been repeatedly looted and burnt' (10).

¹⁰⁴ Wells, *Outline*, 14.

[t]here comes a break in the Record of the Rocks that may represent several million years. There is a veil here still, over even the outline of the history of life. When it lifts again, the Age of Reptiles is at an end . . . we find now a new scene, a new and hardier flora, and a new and hardier fauna in possession of the world.¹⁰⁵

This break in the geological record is even reflected typographically on the page, with the use of ellipses at the end of the previous paragraph, and the atypical use of a line break between paragraphs. However, the gap in our knowledge of the past does not otherwise disrupt the continuity of the story. Indeed, within the same paragraph, he moves on to the next ‘scene’ of history. Narrative continuity is here facilitated by the ambiguity that attaches to the word ‘scene’, which refers both to a geological period and to a narrative scene. This second meaning is reinforced by the fact that this ‘scene’ forms the topic of the next chapter, which covers the Cainozoic period. The transition between narrative scenes and chapters in the story invites the reader to make a similarly smooth imaginative transition between geological epochs. In this sense, the metaphor of a ‘veil’ is telling: it suggests that a period of geological history is unclear or obscured from view, but further intimates that this break is being concealed or hidden. Wells becomes like a magician using a narrative trick to rush his readers past an inconvenient break in history, triumphantly lifting the veil to reveal a new scene.

The narrative continuity of the universal histories contrasts with the fragmentary narrative of *The Time Machine*, which, as we saw above, reflects the fragmentary nature of the geological record and of our knowledge of the earth’s past.

Correlatively, rather than dwelling on the poverty of our knowledge of the past, as the frame narrator of *The Time Machine* was made painfully aware of his ‘vast ignorance’

¹⁰⁵ Wells, *Short History*, 35.

of the future, Wells offers his *Short History* to his reader as an aid to ‘refresh and repair his faded or fragmentary conceptions of the great adventure of mankind’.¹⁰⁶

The attempt to present the geological past in the form of a narrative also threatens to make that past appear more eventful than it actually was. The challenge is how to achieve an appropriate rhythm in a narrative which spans a vast period of time. In the *Principles of Geology* (1830-3), Charles Lyell raised a similar technical problem. To illustrate the errors of the catastrophists which arise from assuming too short a time-scale in which the geological events of the past are supposed to have occurred, he asks us to imagine that:

the annals of the civil and military transactions of a great nation . . . be perused under the impression that they occurred in a period of one hundred instead of two thousand years. Such a portion of history would immediately assume the air of a romance; the events would seem devoid of credibility, and inconsistent with the present course of human affairs. A crowd of incidents would follow each other in thick succession. Armies and fleets would appear to be assembled only to be destroyed, and cities built merely to fall in ruins.¹⁰⁷

By compressing a two-thousand year history into a one-hundred year time-scale, a narrative account would read like an event-crowded romance, rather than a history.

Olaf Stapledon’s novel *Last and First Men* (1930), the plot of which turns on a markedly Wellsian conception of history, raises a closely analogous problem in explicitly narrative terms. The novel’s principal narrator is a historian from the distant future who tells the story of humankind in a (fictional) deep history of the universe. In the introduction, the narrator, who lives ‘aeons’ in the distant future, invites the reader to

¹⁰⁶ Wells, *Short History*, v.

¹⁰⁷ Lyell, *Principles*, i, 29.

contemplate for a few moments the mere magnitudes of cosmical events. For, compressed as it must necessarily be, the narrative that I have to tell may seem to present a sequence of adventures and disasters crowded together . . . in fact, man's career has been less like a mountain torrent hurtling from rock to rock, than a great sluggish river, broken seldom by rapids. . . . [E]ven [the] few seemingly rapid events themselves were in fact often long-drawn-out and tedious. They acquire a mere illusion of speed from the speed of the narrative.¹⁰⁸

The narrative compression in which 'adventures and disasters' appear 'crowded together' is much like that of Lyell's imagined compressed history, in which a 'crowd of incidents would follow each other in thick succession'. The 'illusion of speed' which Stapledon's narrator diagnoses as arising from 'the speed of the narrative' can be glossed through the narratological distinction between story time and discourse time. If vast stretches of story time are narrated in brief stretches of discourse time, the story appears to be more eventful than it actually was.

In part, Wells's histories negotiate the formal difficulty that Stapledon's narrator diagnoses by telling the story of the prehuman past as one which is supposedly devoid of events. While its introduction stresses that the *Outline* is 'one continuous narrative', Wells also claims in the early chapters to be 'telling . . . a history without events'. The first 'event' does not occur until the eleventh chapter, entitled 'Neolithic Man'. This 'event of primary importance' is 'the breaking in of the Atlantic waters to the great Mediterranean valley'. It is narrated with the intensity and drama of an adventure story: '[s]uddenly the ocean waters began to break through over the westward hills and to pour in upon [the] primitive people'. Before this point, the narrative lacks events, and is what is called 'a history of ages and periods and stages in development'.¹⁰⁹ As we shall see, Wells employs a variety of strategies to maintain

¹⁰⁸ W. Olaf Stapledon, *Last and First Men: A Story of the Near and Far Future* (London: Methuen, 1930), 2, emphasis removed.

¹⁰⁹ Wells, *Outline*, 59-60.

a narrative thread through a prehuman past that is devoid of events: he sketches a series of static scenes conjoined by drastic summary and ellipsis, he uses an imaginative conceit of time travel, and he employs rising action and anti-climax to achieve a novelistic rhythm.

To tell the story of the remote past, Wells's narrative proceeds by sketching a series of static, eventless scenes. Martin Rudwick and Ralph O'Connor have drawn attention to the importance of the tradition of pictorial representation of the primaeval world for the imagination of deep time.¹¹⁰ Wells's histories contain many such 'scenes from deep time', which help the reader to visualize the successive geological ages being described. For example, the *Short History* contains pictures with titles such as 'Landscape Before Life', 'Marine Life in the Cambrian Period', 'Sharks and Ganoids of the Devonian Period', and 'A Carboniferous Swamp'.¹¹¹ In a footnote to the *Outline*, Wells also recommends other works which provide vivid illustrations of the geological past, such as Knipe's versified *Nebula to Man* (1905) and his *Evolution in the Past* (1912), which are 'full of admirable illustrations of extinct monsters'; he also warns his readers of the historical inaccuracy of the 'fantastic pictures' of E. T. Reed's *Prehistoric Peeps* (1894).¹¹²

Functioning in a manner similar to the accompanying pictures, the narrative of the early chapters of the histories unfolds as a series of static verbal sketches of different geological ages. In his review of the *Outline*, E. M. Forster captured this narrative quality well when he compared Wells's history to a lecture which is given with the

¹¹⁰ Martin Rudwick, *Scenes from Deep Time: Early Pictorial Representations of the Prehistoric World* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1992); O'Connor, *Earth*, 263-324.

¹¹¹ Wells, *Short History*, 9, 11, 18, 21.

¹¹² Wells, *Outline*, 24.

aid of slides that are projected onto a sheet with the help of a lantern.¹¹³ In the *Short History*, a metaphor of sketching pictures encourages us to think of the narrative in a visual way: '[i]n a few paragraphs a picture of the lush vegetation and swarming reptiles of that first great summer of life, the Mesozoic period, has been sketched'. Such sketches become the basic narrative unit in Wells's story of the prehuman past; they are often connected together by means of striking narrative ellipses, through which huge portions of story time are elided: '[t]he Earth aged. One million years followed another'.¹¹⁴ By advancing a series of static verbal sketches connected by such ellipses, Wells tells the story of the geological past without recourse to any events; the rhythm of his histories consists in the movement between such scenes.

Another strategy that is deployed in the *Short History* to tell the story of the deep past is the imaginative conceit of time travel. In *The Time Machine*, the device of time travel results in the bifurcation of story time into two time frames. The first is the time frame of the Traveller's journey, which lasts a week, and the second is the time frame across which he travels, which is over sixty millions years. This device allows the Traveller to witness extremely slow geological and astronomical changes, which would otherwise never have been observable during a single lifetime. The second chapter of the *Short History*, entitled 'The World in Time', deploys a similar imaginative conceit:

[i]f we could go back through that infinitude of time and see the earth in this earlier stage of its history, we should behold a scene more like the interior of a blast furnace.¹¹⁵

The journey back is not a literal one with the aid of a time machine, but an imaginative one, expressed by the hypothetical clause: '[i]f we could go back . . . we

¹¹³ E. M. Forster, 'A Great History', *Athenaeum*, 4705 (2 July 1920), 8, 8.

¹¹⁴ Wells, *Short History*, 30, 9.

¹¹⁵ Wells, *Short History*, 5.

should behold a scene'. The history proceeds to imagine a voyage through time in a passage which, other than being written in the subjunctive mood, is almost indistinguishable from the Traveller's descriptions of his voyages through time:

[a]cross a sky of fiery clouds the glare of the hurrying sun and moon would sweep swiftly like hot breaths of flame. . . . Slowly by degrees as one million . . . years followed another, this fiery scene would lose its eruptive incandescence. . . . The sun and moon growing now each more distant and each smaller, would rush with diminishing swiftness across the heavens.¹¹⁶

Through this imaginative conceit, vast stretches of story time, and the normally imperceptible changes which occur therein, are covered in an extremely short discourse time. As in *The Time Machine*, the conceit of time travel allows a visual way of imagining the earth's changes through deep time.

Despite being devoid of events, the early chapters of Wells's histories take on a familiar novelistic rhythm, complete with rising action and anti-climax. As we have seen, the preface to the *Short History* encourages its readers to read the work 'straight-forwardly almost as a novel is read'. A similar approach to the *Outline* was encouraged by its marketing campaign, and the advertisements which portrayed Wells as a 'Master Story-Teller' and his history as 'Thrilling as Romance'.¹¹⁷ Indeed, both histories display many features associated with novelistic narratives. For example, the break in the geological record at the end of the Mesozoic period discussed above, far from resulting in a fragmentary narrative, is made to form part of the novelistic rhythm of the history. We learn that 'the Mesozoic period rose to its climax', a 'climax' which refers most immediately to the climax of a geological epoch, but also suggests that there will be a narrative climax. However, expectation of a narrative

¹¹⁶ Wells, *Short History*, 5, 6-8, my emphasis.

¹¹⁷ Arthur Lynch, 'H. G. Wells as Historian: An Interview with the Famous Novelist Whose Latest Work is A UNIVERSAL HISTORY', *Strand Magazine*, 58/347 (November 1919), 464-8, 468; see Skelton, 'Paratext', 247, 271.

climax is disappointed, and we never find out what happened: '[t]here comes a break in the Record of the Rocks that may represent several million years'.¹¹⁸ The parallel episode in the *Outline* is marked by a similar cadence of rising action and anti-climax: '[t]his great period of Mesozoic life, this second volume of the book of life, is indeed an amazing story of reptilian life proliferating and developing. But the most striking thing of all the story remains to be told'. However, the promise of a 'striking' event in the story proves to be a false one, and we learn anti-climactically that: '[t]hen the record is broken. . . . When next we find abundant traces of the land plants and the land animals of the earth, this great multitude of reptile species had gone'. What must have been an 'abrupt ending', a 'striking revolution', and a 'catastrophic alteration' is speculated about only retrospectively, and fails to constitute a narrative event, a failure which only serves to highlight the absence of events from the early chapters of the history.¹¹⁹

The contrasting narrative forms of *The Time Machine* and the histories contribute to their very different articulations of deep time. Both Frank Kermode and Paul Ricoeur claim that narrative humanizes time. Kermode characterizes plot as 'an organization that humanizes time by giving it form', and Ricoeur argues that 'time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative'.¹²⁰ Conversely, through its resistance to narrative organization, the geological time of *The Time Machine* remains inhuman. It forms part of a universe which is eminently inhospitable to humanity. In Ricoeur's terms, *The Time Machine*'s fragmentary narrative does not allow a bridge between phenomenological and cosmological forms of time, or between lived time and the time of nature, but rather emphasizes their stark

¹¹⁸ Wells, *Short History*, 27, 35.

¹¹⁹ Wells, *Outline*, 22-3.

¹²⁰ Kermode, *Ending*, 45; Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, i, 3.

disjunction. Wells's romance does not allow a poetic resolution to humanity's position against the abyssal perspectives of geological time that had been discovered by Hutton and Lyell, but rather emphasises humanity's insignificant and precarious position within a hostile universe, encapsulated by its closing image of the Traveller lost somewhere in the vast expanses of time.

Further, the fragmentary narrative form of the romance contributes to the sublimity of the deep time depicted therein. 'Obscurity' has long played an important role in conceptualizations of the sublime. For example, in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756), Edmund Burke held that 'terror is in all cases whatsoever, either more openly or latently the ruling principle of the sublime', and that '[t]o make any thing very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary'.¹²¹ As we have seen, the loss of the Traveller's second story makes the romance fragmentary, and leaves the deep future 'black and blank' to the frame-narrator.¹²² This image of the deep future as 'black'—which in turn echoes metaphors in geological discourse of the geological past as black and blank—is one of obscurity, which in Burke's terms makes it 'very terrible'. It thereby feeds back into the sublimity of the deep time of the romance.

By contrast, the narrative organization of Wells's deep histories humanizes geological time. Through the familiar rhythms of novelistic narrative, geological time is humanized, and the remote past is recuperated to play its role as the background to the adventure of humankind. The deep past is no longer portrayed as a terrifying non-human other, but forms part of Wells's newly-humanized universe.

¹²¹ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 2nd edn (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1759), 97, 99.

¹²² Wells, *Time Machine*, 91.

Along with the humanization of deep time in the histories, the sublime aesthetic is abandoned. Both the past and foreseen future are immense, but they are no longer sources of sublime terror. For example, in the *Short History*, Wells writes that:

[t]he Age of Reptiles lasted, it is now guessed, eighty million years. Had any quasi-human intelligence been watching the world through that inconceivable length of time, how safe and eternal the sunshine and abundance must have seemed, how assured the wallowing prosperity of the Dinosaurs and the flapping abundance of the flying lizards!¹²³

This safe land of eternal sunshine is a far cry from the hostile future world the Traveller visits, or the frame-narrator's speculations about his fate in the deep past among the 'blood-drinking, hairy savages', or among the 'grotesque saurians, the huge reptilian brutes of the Jurassic times'.¹²⁴ Geological processes are similarly unthreatening. For example, in a late edition of the *Outline*, despite involving 'colossal stresses' and happening through 'many millions of years', the 'wandering of the continents about the surface of the earth' is tamed through an extremely domestic simile: 'the mantle turns over in a pattern of gigantic vertical eddies, much as the water in the warmed saucepan turns over'.¹²⁵ If we find vestiges of the sublime aesthetic in the histories' portrayal of deep time, it functions not to highlight humanity's insignificant position in a hostile universe, but rather to augment the wonder of humanity's progress through deep history towards a cosmopolitan society: '[a]ge by age through gulfs of time at which imagination reels, life has been growing from a mere stirring in the intertidal slime towards freedom, power, and consciousness'.¹²⁶

¹²³ Wells, *Short History*, 33.

¹²⁴ Wells, *Time Machine*, 91.

¹²⁵ H. G. Wells, *The Outline of History* (London: Cassell, 1972), 23.

¹²⁶ Wells, *Short History*, 15.

The humanization of deep time in Wells's histories supports his political aims. As part of his account of the humanization of time by plot, Kermode argues that through narrative organization, and in particular through the imposition of a narrative ending, 'that which was conceived of as simply successive becomes charged with past and future: what was *chronos* becomes *kairos*'.¹²⁷ As we have seen, Wells took Biblical history as one of the models for his teleological histories, and adapted a figural scheme of interpretation. According to Kermode's narrative theory, this imposition of an end-governed narrative scheme on his histories brings about a humanization of time, in which geological time is no longer conceived of as a homogenous series of instants, but becomes charged with the past and future. It is not simply the case that phenomena such as the communal organisation of mammals in the Cainozoic period foreshadow the end of history in a figural manner, but rather that the time at which those phenomena occurred becomes charged with the future. In Kermode's terms, Wells's geological time is transformed from being the empty time of mere succession (*chronos*) to being a *kairological* time, composed of moments shot through with political opportunity. Geological time and the geological past are brought within the sphere of the political, and bear directly on Wells's aim of establishing a World State.

The political aspect of Wells's humanization of geological time can equally be articulated in the terms of Ricoeur's theory of narrative, and of narrative repetition. In these terms, the narrative structure of Wells's histories allows a poetic resolution between phenomenological and cosmological forms of time. Through the continuous narrative of the deep histories, lived time is re-inscribed on geological time in the form of historical time. This human historical time raises the possibility of a repetition

¹²⁷ Kermode, *Ending*, 46.

of communal modes of being from the prehuman past, a possibility that stands to be realized through the political formation of Wells's desired World Federation.

Deep Time, Transnationalism and the Politics of Progress

Deep time is integral to the transnational politics of Wells's histories. It directly supports his political aims of unsettling nationalist sentiment and facilitating a transnational World State, thereby ensuring world peace.¹²⁸ The penultimate chapter of the *Outline* blames 'the catastrophe of 1914' on nationalism and the aggressive imperialism which is portrayed as an extension of such nationalism. '[M]odern imperialism', writes Wells, 'is essentially a *megalomaniac nationalism*, a nationalism made aggressive'.¹²⁹ The teaching of national and nationalistic forms of history is held partially responsible for such a megalomaniac nationalism. For instance, Wells attributes the rise of bellicose German nationalism in part to 'German historical teaching', which 'became an immense systematic falsification of the human past'.¹³⁰ Even more emphatically, in the 'Poison Called History' (1939), he claimed that '[n]ationalism is the purest artificiality, and is made by the teaching of history and by nothing else'.¹³¹

By contrast, Wells's world history employs deep time to challenge the hegemony of the nation state as a sovereign political entity. The ideas of nation and empire were uncritically accepted, suggests Wells, because people lacked 'the sweeping views that

¹²⁸ These aims are also those of his sustained campaign to promote the teaching of world history, of which Partington provides a succinct summary: 'the old bias in favour of nationalist history which led to war and degeneration, had to be replaced by a bias for cosmopolitan history that would lead to world federation and peace' (*Cosmopolis*, 89).

¹²⁹ Wells, *Outline*, 560-1, his emphasis.

¹³⁰ Wells, *Outline*, 551.

¹³¹ Wells, 'Poison', 93.

a scientific study of history can give'. By contrast, his own history provides such a 'sweeping' perspective through its great vistas of geological time. 'If our story of the world has demonstrated anything', he writes, 'it has demonstrated the mingling of races and peoples, the instability of human divisions, the swirling variety of human groups and human ideas of association'.¹³² By placing the modern nation state—which only emerged in the nineteenth century—in the wider perspective of deep history, it is shown to be a comparatively recent phenomenon. Moreover, it is one that is subject to change and supersession by other forms of political association.¹³³ Indeed, while Huxley had employed perspectives on geological time to unsettle the view that human nature is somehow permanent, Wells here employs a similar perspective to challenge the view that ideas of nation and empire represent something 'fundamental and inalterable in human nature'.¹³⁴

In addition to challenging the nation, Wells's histories provide a scheme of deep history capable of supporting a transnational political community. By demonstrating the unity of humanity as a species with a common origin in the remote geological past, the *Outline*, as advertised in its introduction, provides 'common historical ideas' that promise to hold people together 'in harmonious co-operation', and thereby avoid the otherwise inevitable 'drift towards conflict and destruction'.¹³⁵ By furnishing readers with a sense of deep world history, Wells's histories facilitate a new, transnational form of political community, and thereby bring the promise of a lasting world peace. However, in the final section of this chapter, I will turn a critical eye on

¹³² Wells, *Outline*, 528.

¹³³ Wells, *Outline*, 528-9; see also 561.

¹³⁴ Wells, *Outline*, 529-30.

¹³⁵ Wells, *Outline*, v, emphasis removed. Similarly, in the 'Poison Called History', Wells argued that his preferred mode of history, with its long temporal perspectives, can unsettle typically 'falsified account[s]' of national origins, and replace them with an account of the biological origin of humanity in the 'remote past' (97, 103).

Wells's progressive scheme of history, suggesting that a more sinister politics lies behind his enticing promises.

Like Wells, the historians of the Paris-based Annales school employed a form of long-durational historical time to create a non-national form of history, which is in turn capable of supporting a transnational politics. The Annalistes in general, and Fernand Braudel in particular, pioneered a new approach to the study of history based around the long time-span.¹³⁶ The journal *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, whose foundation in 1929 by Marc Bloc and Lucien Febvre did much to establish the Annales school, announced its concern to investigate long time-spans from its very first issue.¹³⁷ However, it is Braudel's *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (1949) which constitutes the best-known and most celebrated example of long-durational history.¹³⁸ In his conclusion, Braudel sums up how his work 'represents an attempt to write a new kind of history, total history, written in three different registers, on three different levels, perhaps described as three different conceptions of time'.¹³⁹ The *Mediterranean* is structured around these 'three different conceptions of time'. The first part is based around the *longue durée*, a long-durational time which was taken as a parameter of historical study from geography, which in turn was influenced by geology and conceptions of geological time.¹⁴⁰ The second part is based around the medium time span or 'conjuncture', a measure

¹³⁶ For a history of the Annales school, see Peter Burke, *The French Historical Revolution: The Annales School, 1929-89* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990).

¹³⁷ The inaugural issue of *Annales* announced that: 'les recherches . . . sur les échanges de civilisation, depuis la préhistoire jusqu'à des temps tout proches de nous, y puiseraient de précieux objets de méditation' (*Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, 1 (1929), 59).

¹³⁸ All references here are to *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds, 2 vols (London: Collins, 1972-3), which is a translation of the second revised edition of *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (Librairie Armand Collin, 1966).

¹³⁹ Braudel, *Mediterranean*, ii, 1238.

¹⁴⁰ Despite its similar name, Braudel's *longue durée* has very little in common with Bergson's *durée*.

borrowed from economics and the social sciences. The third part is based around the short time-span, and is a version of traditional history which focusses on individuals and events. Braudel's approach is, in effect, to 'dissect history into various planes', or to 'divide historical time into geographical time, social time, and individual time'.¹⁴¹ In his essay, 'History and the Social Sciences: The *Longue Durée*' (1958), he emphasized the 'exceptional value of the long time span' to the study of history: 'it is in relation to these expanses of slow-moving history that the whole of history is to be rethought'.¹⁴²

In *Imagined Communities* (1983), Benedict Anderson has drawn attention to the power of Braudel's historiography as a transnational form of history. He counterposes narratives of nation that supposedly arise because the modern nation has 'the need for a narrative of "identity"', with Braudel's 'awesome' *Mediterranean*. In particular, he contrasts the two forms of history by the way they approach the subject of death. Whereas 'national biography' seizes on the 'exemplary suicides, poignant martyrdoms, assassinations, [and] executions' of its members, Braudel moves attention beyond the named individual and the historical event:

[f]or Braudel, the deaths that matter are those myriad anonymous events, which, aggregated and averaged into secular mortality rates, permit him to chart the slow-changing conditions of life for millions of anonymous human beings of whom the last question asked is their nationality.¹⁴³

Braudel's approach to history forms a rich alternative to national biography in part through its violation of the traditional spatial and temporal parameters of national history. It does not focus geographically on a single nation, but rather on the wider

¹⁴¹ Braudel, *Mediterranean*, i, 21.

¹⁴² Fernand Braudel, 'History and the Social Sciences: The *Longue Durée*', in *On History*, trans. Sarah Matthews (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980), 25-54, 27, 43.

¹⁴³ Anderson, *Communities*, 205-6.

area of the ‘Mediterranean’, and it does not limit itself to the time-scale of nations, but instead addresses the wider temporal perspectives of the *longue durée*.

While both Wells and the Annalistes employ long time-spans to unsettle national versions of history, their approach to history is otherwise markedly different. Whereas Wells advanced universal histories, the Annalistes eschewed overarching schemes of history, preferring instead to investigate medium and long-term historical processes from social, economic and geographical perspectives. And while Wells embraced narrative, boldly championing his grand historical narratives, the Annalistes spurned historical narrative. (Consequently, Wells falls foul of what Jean-François Lyotard has characterized as the postmodern incredulity towards grand narratives, while the Annalistes do not.) For example, Braudel banished narrative from medium and long-term history. As Ricoeur points out, Braudel took ‘narrative history’ and a ‘history of events’ to be ‘almost synonymous expressions’, and, like the Annalistes more generally, he took ‘it as given that the fate of narrative is sealed at the same time as that of events’.¹⁴⁴ The first two parts of the *Mediterranean* dispense with narrative, and the historical event is dissolved into an investigation of social and economic structures and conjunctures, and long-term geographical processes. By contrast, Wells implicitly distinguished narrative history and a history of events, managing to maintain the ‘continuous narrative’ of his universal histories throughout the remote prehuman past by ‘telling . . . a history without events’. What results is two contrasting forms of history that are capable of supporting equally different versions of transnational politics. The difference between these politics is reflected in the domain of literary studies.

¹⁴⁴ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, i, 101, 111.

Braudel's concept of *longue durée* has recently been embraced in literary studies. In her influential *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time* (2006), Wai Chee Dimock has adapted Braudel's *longue durée* to forge a transnational approach to the study of literature. Noting 'the glaring inadequacy of a nation-based model in world politics', she points to a 'parallel inadequacy in literary studies'. She appeals to Braudel's *longue durée* to disrupt hermetically nation-based approaches to the study of American literature, posing the question: '[w]hat would American literature look like . . . restored to a *longue durée*, a scale enlargement along the temporal axis that also enlarges its spatial compass?'¹⁴⁵

Following Dimock, several critics have drawn on Braudel's historiography and his *longue durée* in their transnational approaches to literature, particularly in combination with a geographic focus on the 'Atlantic world'.¹⁴⁶ Laura Doyle has imported Braudel's *longue durée* into modernist studies, highlighting its value for global approaches to modernism, and arguing that we need to 'lengthen our time lines and revise our historiography of empire'.¹⁴⁷ Such recent approaches contrast markedly with Wells's earlier transnational approach to literature. Dimock and others have employed Braudel's *longue durée* to disrupt national canons of literature by expansion: where formerly-canonical texts are still read, they are brought into new combinations with other texts from temporally or spatially remote locations. In an

¹⁴⁵ Dimock, *Continents*, 2, 4.

¹⁴⁶ See Susan Gillman, 'Oceans of *Longue Durées*', *PMLA*, 127/2 (March 2012), 328-34.

¹⁴⁷ Laura Doyle, 'Modernist Studies and Inter-Imperiality in the *Longue Durée*', in Mark Wollaeger and Matt Eatough (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 669-96, 672. Doyle's appeal to Braudel's *longue durée* forms part of the 'new modernist studies' which, as we shall see in the conclusion to this thesis, is a critical movement characterized by its transnational approaches and its attempt to expand the temporal and spatial boundaries of modernism.

antithetically-opposed manner, Wells advocated a contraction of ‘world literature’ into a quintessential canon.

In the *Salvaging of Civilization* (1921), Wells called for the creation of a ‘Bible of Civilization’, the first part of which would be a universal history similar to his *Outline of History*, and another part of which would be an anthology of world literature. The former would provide common historical ideas for its cosmopolitan citizens, while the latter would provide a common literary and cultural background. Using the formation of the Christian Bible as a model, he advocated the hyper-condensation of ‘the whole world literature’—which might otherwise take up ‘twenty or thirty thousand volumes’—into a ‘canonical Book or Books’.¹⁴⁸ This ‘organized attempt to gather up the quintessence of literature’ would involve a process of vigorous selection. For example, only short excerpts or certain speeches from William Shakespeare—who might otherwise have been an obvious contender—are to make it in to the canon. The same is true of the novelists, and only excerpted passages from ‘the greater books of such writers as Cervantes, Defoe, Dickens, Fielding, Tolstoi, Hardy, Hamsun’ stand a chance of making the cut.¹⁴⁹ When finished, he proposes that his Book or Books of Literature, along with his ‘Book of World History’, would ‘go into the hands of every man and woman in that coming great civilization which is the dream of our race’, and would help ‘constitute the intellectual and moral cement of the World Society’.¹⁵⁰ Such a proposal constitutes a transnational approach to literature. Wells’s Book of Literature is to be composed of works drawn not from a national canon of literature, but rather from ‘world literature’, and moreover is to help cement his readers together as citizens of a transnational world state.

¹⁴⁸ Wells, *Salvaging*, 118-9.

¹⁴⁹ Wells, *Salvaging*, 131, 122-3.

¹⁵⁰ Wells, *Salvaging*, 120.

However, while transnational, Wells's approach is arguably guilty of a form of cultural imperialism. Given the heavily Eurocentric bias of the authors which he considers for inclusion in his canon, we might be sceptical about his conception of 'world literature', and about his claim that such a literature would be 'universally inspiring'.¹⁵¹ As we shall see below, a homologous objection can be raised against his universal histories: while they avoid a form of nationalist imperialism, their progressive scheme of history is nevertheless guilty of a form of cosmopolitan neo-imperialism.

While Wells's promises of progress towards a harmonious world community and a lasting world peace may sound attractive, I suggest that they ought to be subjected to closer critical scrutiny. Is there a more sinister politics lurking behind these utopian promises of progress? George Orwell famously thought so, as he made apparent in his essay 'Wells, Hitler and the World State' (1941). In a series of writings from *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) to his obituary of Wells in 1946, Orwell levelled a critique of Wells's views of progress, and of his vision of a World State. In *The Road to Wigan Pier*, he dubbed Wells 'the arch-priest of "progress"', and suggested that 'vast contradictions' arise in his work because he 'cannot write with any conviction *against* "progress"'.¹⁵² In his review of Wells's *Two Film Stories* (1940), he drew attention to Wells's enormous influence, and suggested that '[t]he whole concept of "progress" (meaning aeroplanes and steel-and-concrete buildings) . . . which is definitely a part

¹⁵¹ Wells, *Salvaging*, 124. The vast majority of the authors whom he considers for inclusion in his canon are European, and of those, most are English: he mentions William Shakespeare, John Milton, Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, Henry Fielding, P. B. Shelley, William Makepeace Thackeray, Charles Dickens, and Thomas Hardy (122-4). More generally, Wells was, according to Partington, 'a firm believer in Europe's role as exporter of culture and civilisation' (*Cosmopolis*, 111).

¹⁵² George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, ed. Peter Davison (London: Secker & Warburg, 1998), 188.

of the modern mind, owes an immense amount to him'. However, he argued that Wells confused 'mechanical progress with justice, liberty and common decency'.¹⁵³

In 'Wells, Hitler and the World State', his most inflammatory essay, Orwell diagnosed an antithesis which supposedly runs through all of Wells's work: between the 'man of science who is working towards a planned World State', and the reactionary: '[o]n the one side science, order, progress, internationalism, aeroplanes, steel, concrete, hygiene: on the other side war, nationalism, religion'. He goes on to challenge Wells's 'equation of science with common sense', and to argue that in fact his scientific ideal is best realised in Nazi Germany:

[m]uch of what Wells has imagined and worked for is physically there in Nazi Germany. The order, the planning, the State encouragement of science, the steel, the concrete, the aeroplanes, are all there.¹⁵⁴

Orwell continued his critique in 'The Re-discovery of Europe' (1942). He aligned Wells with Arnold Bennett and John Galsworthy, and contrasted this generation of writers with a later one which included James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Aldous Huxley and Wyndham Lewis. What supposedly distinguished these two generations is their attitude towards progress. Whereas the earlier generation had championed the idea of progress, the later rejected such an idea: '[t]hey don't any longer believe that progress happens or that it ought to happen'.¹⁵⁵ To illustrate this distinction, he contrasts Wells with Lawrence, remarking that Lawrence's 'abandonment of Science and Progress' is, '[f]rom the point of H. G. Wells', 'simply heresy and nonsense'. Though holding reservations about Lawrence and the later generation of writers, all of whom are supposedly 'politically

¹⁵³ George Orwell, 'Review of . . . *Film Stories* by H. G. Wells' (1940), in *The Complete Works of George Orwell*, ed. Peter Davison (London: Secker & Warburg, 1998), xii, 189-92, 191.

¹⁵⁴ George Orwell, 'Wells, Hitler and the World State' (1941), in *Complete Works*, xii, 536-41, 538-9.

¹⁵⁵ George Orwell, 'The Re-discovery of Europe' (1942), in *Complete Works*, xiii, 209-21, 212.

reactionary, or at best . . . uninterested in politics', Orwell nevertheless celebrates their 'seeing through' the notion of progress:

[p]artly that was the effect of the war of 1914-18, which succeeded in debunking both Science, Progress and civilised man. Progress had finally ended in the biggest massacre in history, Science was something that created bombing planes and poison gas, civilised man, as it turned out, was ready to behave worse than any savage when the pinch came.¹⁵⁶

He again displayed his scepticism towards Wells's advocacy of world unity in his 'Review of '42 to '44' (1944), and was particularly unimpressed by his 'by now familiar idea that mankind must either develop a World State or perish', comparing Wells to a nursemaid scolding a naughty child: "Now, you'll take your nice medicine or the bogey-man'll come and eat you up." *Homo sapiens* must do what he is told or he will become extinct'.¹⁵⁷

Understandably, Orwell's assessments of Wells did little to promote good relations between the two writers. At a dinner party held by Inez Holden in 1941, Wells and Orwell had a 'God-awful row', both brandishing copies of the *Horizon* in which 'Wells, Hitler and the World State' was printed. Later, following the publication of 'The Re-discovery of Europe', Orwell recorded in his war-time diary receiving an '[a]busive letter from H. G. Wells, who addresses me as "You shit", among other things'.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Orwell, 'Re-discovery', 214, 212. In the next chapter, I will return to the subject of Wells's and Lawrence's opposed attitudes towards progress.

¹⁵⁷ George Orwell, 'Review of '42 to '44: *A Contemporary Memoir upon Human Behaviour During the Crisis of the World Revolution* by H. G. Wells' (1944), in *Complete Works*, xvi, 197-9, 197-8. See also Orwell's obituary of Wells, 'The True Pattern of H. G. Wells' (1946), in *The Lost Orwell: Being a Supplement to The Complete Works of George Orwell*, ed. Peter Davison (London: Timewell Press, 2006), 136-40.

¹⁵⁸ See Davison, *Complete Works*, xiii, 250; for an account of the dinner party, see Bernard Crick, *George Orwell: A Life*, 3rd edn (London: Penguin, 1992), 427-31. Orwell, diary entry for 27 March 1942, in *Complete Works*, xiii, 249.

What are we to make of Orwell's attack, which, as Partington observes, 'continues to blight Wells's reputation as a political thinker to this day'?¹⁵⁹ Many have rallied to Wells's defence. In a letter which was published in the *Listener*, Wells himself replied irately to 'The Re-discovery of Europe', suggesting that Orwell had completely mischaracterized his position as a belief that 'the world would be saved from its gathering distresses by "science"'.¹⁶⁰ Subsequent critics have similarly argued that Wells did not hold a blind faith in science, and was no naïve apologist for a Victorian belief in progress.¹⁶¹ Most comprehensively, Partington has sought to rebut Orwell's charges on a point-by-point basis.¹⁶² He has usefully situated the clash between the two writers in the context of their very different brands of socialism, showing how Orwell's support of patriotism as a means of resisting Hitler conflicts with Wells's cosmopolitan politics.¹⁶³ He argues that with the suggestion that Wells's plans for a World State find their true manifestation in Nazi Germany, Orwell reaches 'the height of ridiculousness'.¹⁶⁴

It should certainly be acknowledged that Orwell badly misrepresented Wells's position. Most importantly, Wells did not hold a blind faith in science and technology to bring about progress. Nevertheless, we should not forget that Wells was a staunch advocate of the idea of progress, and that such advocacy is still open to critique. Rather than exonerate Wells, closer scrutiny should be given to the politics of his view of progress, which I propose to do by re-reading Orwell's attack on Wells

¹⁵⁹ John S. Partington, 'The Pen as Sword: George Orwell, H. G. Wells and Journalistic Parricide', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 39/1 (Jan. 2004), 45-56, 45.

¹⁶⁰ H. G. Wells, letter published in *The Listener* on 9 April 1942; reprinted in Orwell, *Complete Works*, xiii, 218.

¹⁶¹ See Anthony West, 'The Dark World of H. G. Wells', *Harper's Magazine*, 214 (May 1957), 68-73; Reed, *Natural History*, 258, 97-8; Wagar, *World State*, 80-7, and *Traversing Time*, 251.

¹⁶² See *Cosmopolis*, 14-5, 120, and 'Sword'.

¹⁶³ Partington, 'Sword', 54.

¹⁶⁴ Partington, *Cosmopolis*, 15.

through the lens of Walter Benjamin's closely-contemporaneous critique of progress in his 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' (1941).

Benjamin's celebrated critique of progress in his 'Theses' is crystallized in the famous image of 'the angel of history', who watches the wreckage piling at his feet as he is propelled into the future by the storm of progress. In the 'struggle against Fascism', Benjamin portrayed it as imperative to combat conceptions of history which are based around the idea of progress, because 'one reason why Fascism has a chance is that in the name of progress its opponents treat it as a historical norm'.¹⁶⁵

Benjamin's contention that a concept of progress benefitted Fascism stands as a suggestive complement to Orwell's argument that Wells's faith in progress eventually culminated in Nazi Germany. Benjamin drew attention to the role that the idea of progress played in the corruption of the German working class. This class supposedly 'regarded technological developments as the fall of the stream with which it thought it was moving', and '[f]rom there it was but a small step to the illusion that the factory work which was supposed to tend towards technological progress constituted a political achievement'.¹⁶⁶ It is true that Wells did not hold a blind faith in science and technology as means of securing progress. Nevertheless, Orwell's argument that Wells confused 'mechanical progress with justice, liberty and common decency' implies a similar point to that of Benjamin: that a conception of 'progress' that does not admit an adequate distinction between technological and political progress is politically dangerous.

¹⁶⁵ Benjamin, 'Theses', 249.

¹⁶⁶ Benjamin, 'Theses', 250.

Benjamin accused one popular strain of vulgar-Marxism of recognizing ‘only the progress in the mastery of nature, not the retrogression of society; it already displays the technocratic features later encountered in Fascism’.¹⁶⁷ Once again, this suggestion stands as a suggestive counterpart to Orwell’s critique of Wells’s conception of progress, and his claim that ‘[m]uch of what Wells had imagined and worked for is physically there in Nazi Germany’. Indeed, Orwell subverted the progressive scheme of Wells’s *Outline* by suggesting that ‘[t]he order, the planning, the State encouragement of science’ that Wells so valued were present in Nazi Germany ‘in the service of ideas appropriate to the Stone Age’. That is, because Wells’s historical scheme does not admit of an adequate distinction between technological and political progress, he can only account for Hitler as an aberrational revenant from primitive times: ‘[c]reatures out of the Dark Ages have come marching into the present, and if they are ghosts they are at any rate ghosts which need a strong magic to lay them’.¹⁶⁸

More generally, Benjamin’s objections in the ‘Theses’ to progressive schemes of history apply to Wells’s conception of history. Wells’s view of history conforms closely to Benjamin’s targeted position of ‘historicism’. This is a view which is animated by a concept of progress, tends to employ historical narrative, and ‘rightly culminates in universal history’.¹⁶⁹ Correlatively, the differences between Wells’s histories and Benjamin’s preferred ‘historical materialism’ are equally marked. While Wells employs a scheme of progress, Benjamin rejects progress; while Wells favours historical narrative, Benjamin replaces narrative with the ‘constellation’ and the

¹⁶⁷ Benjamin, ‘Theses’, 251.

¹⁶⁸ Orwell, ‘Hitler’, 539-40.

¹⁶⁹ On Benjamin’s conception of ‘historicism’, and on other varieties of historicism which are not committed to progress, see Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 138-40. One notable respect in which Wells’s universal histories differ from Benjamin’s historicism is that they are not underpinned by a conception of homogenous empty time. Rather, as was seen above, they are underpinned by a kairological time.

‘dialectical image’; and while Wells’s history is ‘fundamentally a history of ideas’, Benjamin’s approach to history is materialist.¹⁷⁰

Orwell’s inflammatory alignment of Wells’s World State with Nazi Germany intimates that Wells’s cosmopolitan politics are complicit with a form of aggressive imperialism.¹⁷¹ Indeed, the progressive scheme of Wells’s deep histories might be suspected of an historical neo-imperialism. Orwell objected to Wells’s proposal for a document codifying the ‘Universal Rights of Man’, casting doubt on the purported universality of this document: ‘Mr. Wells is not ready to admit that his declaration of the “Rights of Man” is a purely Western document. Almost any Indian, for instance, would reject it at a glance’.¹⁷² A parallel point could be made about Wells’s histories and their overarching concept of progress, which is an equally ‘Western’ concept. In this light, his plan to have his histories or similar versions ‘translated into every language’ and distributed ‘throughout all the world’ constitutes an imperialist plan to disseminate and propagate a Western conception of history.¹⁷³

Furthermore, the progressive scheme of Wells’s histories arguably supports a neo-imperialist politics. While Wells criticized Alexander the Great’s empire and the Roman Empire, he nevertheless identifies them as foreshadowing the coming World

¹⁷⁰ Benjamin, ‘Theses’, 255; Wells, *Outline*, 565. Conversely, perhaps the most salient similarity between Wells’s and Benjamin’s otherwise vastly different approaches to history is the use they make of the services of theology, which, as Benjamin points out, has become ‘wizened and has to keep out of sight’ (‘Theses’, 245). Whereas Wells turns to a Christian Biblical scheme of history, Benjamin has recourse to Jewish Messianism.

¹⁷¹ The Marxist critic Christopher Caudwell similarly portrayed Wells’s world state as ‘a giant ultra-Imperialistic democratic world-state’ that is, ultimately, Fascist (*Studies in a Dying Culture* (London: John Lane, 1938), 87).

¹⁷² Orwell, ‘Review of ‘42 to ‘44’, 197-8.

¹⁷³ See Wells, *Salvaging*, 136. I will return to the issue of historical imperialism in the conclusion to this study.

State.¹⁷⁴ Suspicion might be raised by the fact that two of the most aggressive and brutal military empires in history are celebrated as portents of world unity. Such a suspicion is reinforced by Wells's advocacy of 'empire pooling', in which existing empires are to be combined into a 'Super-Empire'. In the *Outline*, he suggests that a 'League of Nations that is to be of any appreciable value to mankind must supersede imperialisms; it is either a super-imperialism . . . or it is nothing'.¹⁷⁵ Similarly, he proposed in his contemporary writing on empire that the colonial subjects of the various existing empires should be administered by a central organization, which would have the power, among other things, to exploit the natural resources of those colonies.¹⁷⁶

Wells's histories seek to break away from nationalism and from nationalist imperialism, yet they do so only to threaten a new form of transnational imperialism. Such a form of neo-imperialism is arguably more insidious precisely because it rejects a transparently partisan national basis, and operates instead under the banners of a supposedly universal and disinterested cosmopolitanism. To follow this line of argument is to suggest that, by aiming to create citizens fit for a World State by the propagation of 'common historical ideas', Wells's deep histories lie at the heart of a neo-imperialist project.

* * *

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how Wells moved beyond the early cosmic pessimism of *The Time Machine* to make political use of geological time. Most fully,

¹⁷⁴ Wells, *Outline*, 219, 277.

¹⁷⁵ Wells, *Outline*, 592.

¹⁷⁶ See Partington, *Cosmopolis*, 109-13.

we have investigated the politics of the deep time of his universal histories. D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf held conceptions of history markedly different from that of Wells, and their work is marked by similarly contrasting politics of time. While Wells advanced a linear scheme of universal history, in which humanity progresses from a shared biological origin in the remote geological past towards the *telos* of a World State, both Lawrence and Woolf challenged and subverted linear, progressive forms of history.

Lawrence followed Friedrich Nietzsche in his assault on linear schemes of history, and proposed in their place cyclical conceptions of history both in *Movements in European History* (1921) and in *Apocalypse* (1931). The latter work reinterprets the Book of Revelation to herald not the end of history, but rather the dawn of a new pagan age. As we shall see below, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) dramatises such an epochal rupture, and a concomitant Nietzschean transvaluation of values. Given his advocacy of cyclical conceptions of history, Lawrence's antipathy towards Wells's universal histories is understandable. In his essay 'Him with His Tail in His Mouth' (1925), he insouciantly inverted Wells's progressive scheme of history: '[h]adn't somebody better write Mr Wells' History backwards, to prove how we've degenerated, in our stupid visionlessness, since the cave-men?'¹⁷⁷ In his novella *St Mawr* (1925), Wells's *Outline* is treated similarly dismissively by the Dean, who comments wryly that 'Mr Wells' Outline' does nothing to help him to imagine Europe before the time of the Greeks.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ D. H. Lawrence, 'Him With His Tail in His Mouth', in *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine and Other Essays*, ed. Michael Herbert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 307-17, 317.

¹⁷⁸ D. H. Lawrence, *St Mawr and Other Stories*, ed. Brian Finney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 65. In the novella, Flora takes a much more positive attitude towards Wells's history, and defends a very un-Lawrentian position: "I think this is the best age there ever was, for a girl to have a good time in. I read all through H. G. Wells' history, and I shut it up and thanked my stars I live in

Virginia and Leonard Woolf published a series of Wells's political lectures, pamphlets and books at the Hogarth Press during the 1920s and 1930s, in which he continued to propagate his ideas for a world state, world peace and the teaching of world history.¹⁷⁹ Woolf's last novel, *Between the Acts* (1941), engages directly with Wells's conception of history. As critics have observed, his *Outline* is the principal model for Lucy Swithin's 'Outline of History'.¹⁸⁰ However, given Wells's persistent argument that a form of world history was urgently required if another world war were to be avoided, the fact that Lucy reads a Wellsian history on the eve of war is deeply ironic.¹⁸¹ Moreover, Wells's grand historical narratives are comically deflated in Woolf's novel. Having been reading her *Outline* in bed, Lucy is unable mentally to separate her maid Grace from a 'leather-covered grunting monster' in a 'primeval forest'. She gives her a divided glance that 'was half meant for a beast in a swamp, half for a maid in a print frock and white apron'.¹⁸² While prehistoric animals foreshadow modern forms of society in Wells's histories, Lucy is so immersed in her

nineteen-twenty odd, not in some other beastly date when a woman had to cringe before mouldy domineering men'" (74).

¹⁷⁹ See, for example, H. G. Wells, *The Common Sense of World Peace: An Address Delivered in the Reichstag at Berlin, on Monday April 15th, 1929* (London: Hogarth Press, 1929); and *The Open Conspiracy: Blue Prints for a World Revolution*, rev. edn (London: Hogarth Press, 1930). Virginia and Leonard kept copies of both of these works in their private library: see Julia King and Laila Miletic-Vejzovic (eds), *The Library of Leonard and Virginia Woolf: A Short-Title Catalogue* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 2003), 240-1.

¹⁸⁰ See, for example, Mitchell A. Leaska, (ed.), *Pointz Hall: The Earlier and Later Typescripts of Between the Acts* (New York: University Publications, 1983), 246, 441. Gillian Beer suggests that Woolf 'amalgamates' Wells's *Outline of History* with his *Short History of the World*, and 'writes her own version rather than quoting Wells directly' (*Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), 21).

¹⁸¹ In *Three Guineas* (1938), Woolf responded with a similar irony to Wells's comment in his *Autobiography* (1934) that '[t]here has been no perceptible woman's movement to resist the practical obliteration of their freedom by Fascists or Nazis' (Wells, *Autobiography*, 486, quoted in Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own; Three Guineas*, ed. Morag Shiach (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 214). She tartly responds in a footnote that although the men's movement to resist fascism may have been more perceptible, it is doubtful that 'it has been more successful' given that, at the time of writing, the Nazis 'now control the whole of Austria' (383).

¹⁸² Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts*, ed. Mark Hussey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 7.

history that she has comic difficulty separating the Wellsian figure (the grunting prehistoric monster) from its fulfillment (Grace).¹⁸³

In *Between the Acts*, Miss La Trobe's village pageant also partially resembles Wells's universal histories, most notably by being a grand historical narrative that runs from primeval times to the present day.¹⁸⁴ However, the story told by the pageant is not, like that of Wells, one of progress. On the contrary, as we shall see, the relentless ticking of a gramophone whose needle has stuck conveys a repetitive form of historical time. It suggests that history is not one of progress, but rather is marked by a nightmarish repetition of patriarchal violence and war.

¹⁸³ In an early draft of the novel, Lucy's *Outline* takes on a fantastic, unreal quality as the historical is mixed with the fictional: she is described as 'enchanted like a child by the story of the prehistoric world', and goes to bed 'rubbing her eyes, but still seeing the giant and . . . the unicorns, and the mastodons, and the mammoths' (*Pointz Hall*, 184).

¹⁸⁴ The pageant tells the story of England's past and is thereby, unlike Wells's histories, a form of national history.

PART 2:

**D. H. LAWRENCE AND NIETZSCHE'S THOUGHT OF ETERNAL
RECURRENCE**

2.1. Cyclical History

The politics of D. H. Lawrence and his work are notorious, and, according to his detractors, deeply reactionary. As Terry Eagleton observes, Lawrence's champions 'since the 1960s have been growing thinner on the ground by the year'.¹ Indeed, since his critical heyday when he was influentially championed by F. R. Leavis as forming part of 'the great tradition', his reputation has suffered from a number of critical attacks. His work has been extensively critiqued from a feminist perspective, perhaps most influentially by Kate Millett in her *Sexual Politics* (1970).² Moreover, his sympathy for authoritarian politics, and his alarming views of race, which find fullest expression in his 'leadership novels' of the 1920s, have been widely criticized.

Eagleton encapsulates such an approach when he claims that the leadership novels are characterised by 'a proto-fascist veneration of power, "blood-hierarchy", racial purity, male bonding, charismatic leadership, the revival of "primitive ritual" and mythology, and the brutal subjugation of women'.³ However, while Lawrence's views of women and his authoritarian politics are the subjects of long-running critical debates, what is less clear is the political nature of his critique of what he calls 'the industrial system', and the various alternatives that he advocated in its place.⁴ Such an issue is timely, given the relatively recent emergence of ecocriticism, and the attention that Lawrence has been receiving from ecocritics.

¹ Terry Eagleton, *The English Novel* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 256.

² Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (London: Sphere Books, 1971). For a survey and assessment of feminist approaches to Lawrence, see Robert Burden, *Radicalizing Lawrence: Critical Interventions in the Reading and Reception of D. H. Lawrence's Narrative Fiction* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 288-308.

³ Eagleton, *English Novel*, 278.

⁴ Letter to Charles Wilson, 15 January 1928; *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, Volume VI*, ed. James T. Boulton and Margaret H. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 267.

Recent ecocritical approaches have generated more affirmative readings of a ‘green Lawrence’. Before the emerge of ecocriticism as a self-conscious literary-critical movement, Lawrence had long been celebrated as a ‘nature’ writer. For example, Leavis venerated his exploration of ‘the malady of industrial civilization’.⁵ Since then, Lawrence has been portrayed as a forerunner and a source of inspiration for the ‘deep ecology’ movement, and has been celebrated by deep ecological critics such Del Ivan Janik, and Dolores LaChapelle in her *Future Primitive* (1996).⁶ Taking a different approach, Anne Fernihough has argued that Lawrence advanced a ‘green aesthetics’ similar to those of Martin Heidegger. She situates both Lawrence and Heidegger in the same tradition of *völkish* ideologies, and suggests that, while these ideologies have caused Lawrence to be linked to fascism, they also bring him close ‘to some contemporary “eco-feminist” writers’.⁷

Ecocriticism has raised the prospect of a re-evaluation of Lawrence’s politics. However, if such a re-evaluation is to take place, what should be avoided are the shortcomings of earlier Leavistite and deep ecological critics, who isolated ‘green’ aspects of Lawrence, and celebrated these without regard for the other political aspects of his writing. Arguably, the Leavisite celebration of a green Lawrence was itself politically reactionary. In *The Country and the City* (1973), Raymond Williams condemned the Leavisites who failed to address Lawrence’s political aberrations whilst paying homage to his conservative pastoral.⁸ Rick Rylance developed a similar

⁵ F. R. Leavis, *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1955), 71. See also Roger Ebbatson, *Lawrence and the Nature Tradition: a Theme in English Fiction 1859-1914* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980).

⁶ See Del Ivan Janik, ‘D. H. Lawrence and Environmental Consciousness’, *Environmental Review*, 7/4 (Winter 1983), 359-72, and Dolores LaChapelle, *D. H. Lawrence: Future Primitive* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 1996). For an overview of the ‘deep ecology’ movement, see Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2012), 23-6.

⁷ Anne Fernihough, *D. H. Lawrence: Aesthetics and Ideology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 171.

⁸ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 271.

critique to that of Williams, suggesting that '[i]t truncates Lawrence's politics to see him as having only industrial spoliation in mind'.⁹ Greg Garrard argues that the problematic aspects of the Leavisite celebration of Lawrence's song of the earth have been perpetuated in deep ecological approaches. The problem with such 'deep green' readings of Lawrence, according to Garrard, is that they fail to see that Lawrence's 'proto-ecological ideas' are overtly linked to larger political arguments about labour, nation and race, and that they tend to ignore important 'questions of power, gender, sexuality and religion'.¹⁰

Rejoining the environmental with the political, it might be asked: what are the politics of Lawrence's critique of industrial civilization? How does this critique relate to his notorious leadership politics? Are the two separate and separable, or are they inextricably intertwined? Is the 'green Lawrence' a cause for celebration, and if so, should this contribute towards a partial rehabilitation of Lawrence's political reputation? While ecocritical approaches thus promise to offer new insights into Lawrence's writings and their politics, it might conversely be asked: what might Lawrence's writing contribute to the expanding discipline of ecocriticism?

In this chapter, I wish to address such questions through the politics of time, and more specifically, by means of Friedrich Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence.

Drawing a comparison with the use of Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence in the contemporary philosophical discourse of modernity, I will argue that Lawrence adapted this doctrine, and fused it with an apocalyptic shape of history, in both his

⁹ Rick Rylance, 'Lawrence's Politics', in Keith Brown (ed.), *Rethinking Lawrence* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1990), 163-80, 175-8.

¹⁰ Greg Garrard, 'Nietzsche *Contra* Lawrence: How to be True to the Earth', *Colloquy*, 12 (2006), 9-27, 21-4, 10.

historical and fictional writing. Having addressed Lawrence's conception of history as expressed in his *Movements in European History* (1921), I will go on to offer ecocritical readings of *Women in Love* (1920) and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928). Recognizing that Lawrence creatively adapted Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence allows a reassessment of his politics, and more specifically, of his environmental politics.

The Politics of Eternal Recurrence

As Peter Osborne remarks, Friedrich Nietzsche is, as 'the thinker of eternal return', 'the philosopher of modernity *par excellence*'.¹¹ Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence is first put forward in *The Gay Science* (1882), forms the fundamental conception (*Grundconception*) or fundamental thought (*Grundgedanke*) of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-5), and is the subject of many of the notes collected in *The Will to Power* (1901-11).¹² Eternal recurrence, as taught by Zarathustra in 'On the Vision and the Riddle' in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, is the doctrine that 'whatever can happen' must 'already have happened' an infinite number of times, and likewise must happen 'once more' an infinite number of times: we must 'return eternally'.¹³ This doctrine is one of the most of the difficult and perplexing in all of Nietzsche's writings; it has generated, and continues to generate, a vast number of different

¹¹ Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 137. For Osborne, Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence constitutes a philosophical articulation of the temporality of modernity, and of the novel temporal experience of 'the new as the "ever-same"' (12).

¹² Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), §341, 273-4. See, for example, Book IV Section III, 'The Eternal Recurrence', in *The Will to Power*, ed. Walter Kaufmann, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 544-50. See also Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings*, ed. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 69-152, 123-4.

¹³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, ed. Adrian Del Caro and Robert Pippin, trans. Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 126.

interpretations.¹⁴ Taking a historical perspective, we can note that the thought of eternal recurrence was employed in the early twentieth century as part of what Jürgen Habermas has called ‘the philosophical discourse of modernity’.¹⁵ Writers such as Karl Löwith, Martin Heidegger and Walter Benjamin all employed Nietzsche’s thought to articulate various politically-charged stances towards modernity.

In *Nietzsche’s Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same* (1935), Karl Löwith claimed that the thought of eternal recurrence is ‘the core of Nietzsche’s whole philosophy’.¹⁶ For Löwith, Nietzsche’s teaching of eternal recurrence comprises two parts which are, ultimately, incompatible. On the one hand, the thought of eternal recurrence is a cosmological doctrine, which re-presents in the terms of the natural science of Nietzsche’s day an ancient cosmology: that the physical universe repeats itself endlessly. On the other hand, the thought in its anthropological form is an ‘ethical’ imperative: live in every moment so that you could will that moment back again over and over endlessly. In this anthropological form, the teaching is an ‘atheistic gospel’, which replaces the Christian belief in immortality with the will to self-eternalization.¹⁷ On Löwith’s interpretation, Nietzsche’s teaching of eternal recurrence constitutes an attempt to restore a pre-Socratic view of the world ‘on the peak of modernity’: ‘[a]t the end of an exhausted Christianity, [Nietzsche] sought “new sources of the future,” and found them in the recollection of that ancient world as it was before Christianity’.¹⁸

¹⁴ Lawrence J. Hatab distinguishes five types of critical interpretation of Nietzsche’s thought of eternal recurrence: cosmological, existential, normative, symbolic, and ontological (*Nietzsche’s Life Sentence: Coming to Terms with Eternal Recurrence* (New York; London: Routledge, 2005), 115-25).

¹⁵ See Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*.

¹⁶ Karl Löwith, *Nietzsche’s Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, trans. J. Harvey Lomax (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1997), 187.

¹⁷ Löwith, *Eternal Recurrence*, 83-94. Löwith’s interpretation thereby spans Hatab’s ‘cosmological’ and ‘normative’ categories of interpretation (see *Life Sentence*, 117).

¹⁸ Löwith, *Eternal Recurrence*, 95, 119.

Martin Heidegger also granted the thought of eternal recurrence a preeminent position in his writings on Nietzsche, claiming that ‘Nietzsche’s fundamental metaphysical position is captured in his doctrine of *the eternal return of the same*’.¹⁹ Like Löwith, Heidegger stressed the world-historical nature of the thought of eternal recurrence. Supposedly, this thought was designed to overcome the age of Christian-Platonism by rethinking its constitutive distinction between being and becoming through the standpoint of the moment (and hence through time): the thinker of the thought of eternal recurrence wills the infinite repetition of the moment, and by adopting this temporal stance, ‘stamps becoming with the character of being’.²⁰ Such an achievement promises to inaugurate a new, Zarathustran age, marked by a revaluation of the earth and of the body which had been so despised by Christian-Platonism. However, Heidegger became increasingly hostile towards Nietzsche, arguing that the thought of eternal recurrence failed to overcome the metaphysical tradition (the history of philosophy as Platonism), but rather stood as its virulent consummation.²¹ It did not herald the redemption of the earth, but instead paved the way for the unbridled technological mastery of the planet in the age of modernity. David Farrell Krell summarises this increasingly hostile attitude:

¹⁹ Heidegger offered four lecture courses on Nietzsche’s philosophy at the University of Freiburg-im-Bresgau between 1936 and 1940. These, together with a number of individual essays and lectures composed between 1936-46, and another lecture course on Nietzsche in the 1950s, are published in English as the four-volume *Nietzsche*, translated and edited by David Farrell Krell. As Hatab notes, Heidegger advanced the most important ‘ontological’ interpretation of the thought of eternal recurrence (*Life Sentence*, 124).

²⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. David Farrell Krell, ii (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 41, 57, 202-3. Heidegger stresses that Nietzsche’s thought of eternal recurrence is to be thought ‘[o]nly by way of . . . the moment’ (183, emphasis removed).

²¹ Heidegger’s interpretation of the thought of eternal recurrence thereby differs markedly from that of Löwith. Indeed, Löwith strenuously contested Heidegger’s interpretation, arguing that ‘Nietzsche’s thinking does not complete the self-certain subjectivity of modernity, but instead is a “new beginning” after the end of the Christian interpretation of existence’ (*Martin Heidegger and European Nihilism*, ed. Richard Wolin, trans. Gary Steiner (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 122).

Heidegger comes to take will-to-power as . . . machination, eternal return as a symbol of the dynamo, and overman as the technical giant bent on world conquest. . . . [I]t becomes increasingly difficult to hear the music of Zarathustra's new lyre.²²

Thus, in 'The Word of Nietzsche: "God is Dead"' (1943), Heidegger interpreted Nietzsche's philosophy to be the consummation of metaphysics which precipitates the 'struggle for dominion over the earth': with the death of God, and the coming of the overman, the earth 'can show itself only as the object of an assault . . . Nature appears everywhere . . . as the object of technology'.²³

Walter Benjamin's approach to Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence in his unfinished *Arcades Project* (1941) differs from that of both Löwith and Heidegger.²⁴ Benjamin displayed an interest in the thought of eternal recurrence as it emerged at roughly the same time in the worlds of Charles Baudelaire, Louis-Auguste Blanqui and Friedrich Nietzsche.²⁵ The thought of eternal recurrence served him in his opposition to historicism, which he held to be characterized by a concept of progress that is underpinned by a form of empty homogenous time.²⁶ He confronts the belief in progress with the thought of eternal recurrence as a strategy to unsettle such a homogenous time: '[t]he belief in progress . . . and the representation of eternal return are . . . the indissoluble antinomies in the face of which the dialectical conception of historical time must be developed'.²⁷ He moves towards such a dialectical conception of time by fusing Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence with Karl Marx's analysis

²² David Farrell Krell, 'Analysis', *Nietzsche*, ii, 267.

²³ Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 100.

²⁴ Benjamin, *Arcades Project*; see in particular Convolute D, 'Boredom, Eternal Return', 101-19. The *Arcades Project* includes numerous extracts from Löwith's *Eternal Recurrence* (1935). Benjamin reworked much of his *Arcades Project* material on eternal recurrence in his 'Central Park' (1939), which he intended to develop into his never-realised book on Baudelaire.

²⁵ Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 25; compare 'Central Park', in *Selected Writings*, iv, 175.

²⁶ 'In the idea of eternal recurrence', writes Benjamin, 'the historicism of the nineteenth century capsizes' (*Arcades Project*, 116).

²⁷ Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 119.

of the ‘exact repetition’ involved in modern industrial production, found in the chapter on ‘Machinery and Modern Industry’ in the first volume of *Capital* (1867).²⁸ The thought of eternal recurrence is reinterpreted in terms of the temporality of commodity production: each commodity that is produced under modern conditions of labour appears as both the new and as the ever-always-the-same (*das Neue und Immergleiche*). As Osborne points out, such a temporality comes for Benjamin to define modernity, as that of the ‘now’ that marks out the exact repetition of the new as the ever-same.²⁹ On the one hand, this temporality of modernity forms part of Benjamin’s projected depiction of ‘modernity as Hell’. However, on the other hand, corresponding to the dual structure of Nietzsche’s thought of eternal recurrence as both the most abyssal manifestation of nihilism and its joyful overcoming, it displays a more positive aspect.³⁰ It brings the hope of breaking into a new form of historical experience, and into a redeemed future. As Benjamin puts it, the idea of eternal recurrence ‘conjures the speculative idea . . . of happiness from the misery of the times’.³¹ It is a crucial step on the way to Benjamin’s conception of a revolutionary historical time. As Osborne puts it, the thought of eternal recurrence marks a departure in the experience of the repetitive succession of identical instants—abstractly projected onto history by historicism as the blank chronologism of ‘homogenous empty time’—into a new qualitative experience of the ‘now’ as an

²⁸ See Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 143, 229.

²⁹ Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 137, 143.

³⁰ James McFarland points out that Benjamin was influenced by Löwith’s presentation of Nietzsche’s thought of eternal recurrence as ‘a nihilism that simultaneously overcomes itself’, a dual aspect that ‘is explicitly historicized in Benjamin’s account’ (*Constellation: Friedrich Nietzsche and Walter Benjamin in the Now-Time of History* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 236).

³¹ Benjamin, ‘Central Park’, 184.

historical present, which contains within its static, monadic structure the equivalent to a Messianic ‘cessation of happening’.³²

In this chapter, I will use Heidegger’s, Löwith’s, and Benjamin’s interpretations of Nietzsche’s thought of eternal recurrence to address Lawrence’s politics. In *The Politics of Time*, Osborne has convincingly argued that the concept of ‘modernity’ is a site of political contestation, which contains within its most abstract temporal form a range of competing temporalizations of history. In a rare mention of modernist literary figures, he points out that Italian futurism, the poetry of T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, and the novels of Wyndham Lewis, have long been recognized as examples of politically reactionary modernism, and intimates that the work of these figures shares a common temporal structure with political and philosophical versions of reactionary modernism. He intriguingly suggests that ‘the temporal structure of such phenomena contains the key to a broader understanding of the politics of reaction more generally’.³³ Here, I want to exploit Osborne’s insight, and to approach the politics of Lawrence’s literary modernism through the politics of time. Using Heidegger, Löwith, and Benjamin as philosophical analogues, I will address Lawrence’s politics through his literary adaptations of Nietzsche’s thought of eternal recurrence. Ultimately, I will suggest that Lawrence’s adaptation of the thought of eternal recurrence in *Women in Love* in many ways parallels Heidegger’s interpretation of that thought, whereas his adaptation in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* more closely resembles that of Löwith.

³² Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 143. Compare McFarland’s contention that Benjamin’s notion of ‘dialectics at a standstill’ is a development of Nietzsche’s portrayal of the thought of eternal recurrence as ‘a Medusa head’ (*Constellation*, 236).

³³ Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 166.

The importance of Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence in Lawrence's writing has hitherto been underestimated. Of course, it is well known that 'Lawrence found Nietzsche', as Jessie Chambers puts it in an often-quoted passage from her memoir of Lawrence, in Croydon Central Library in 1908-9: 'I began to hear about the "Will to Power", and perceived that he had come upon something new and engrossing'.³⁴

There is an extensive critical literature on the relationship between Lawrence and Nietzsche.³⁵ However, within this literature, very few critics have paid attention to the thought of eternal recurrence. By way of exception, both Cecilia Björkén and Carl Krockel have argued persuasively that Lawrence engages with this thought in his early fiction.³⁶ Perhaps the reason that the doctrine of eternal recurrence has received so little attention from Lawrence critics is that Lawrence apparently rejected the doctrine in his 'Study of Thomas Hardy' (written 1914-5). Therein, he writes that 'Nietzsche talks about the Ewige Wiederkehr [eternal recurrence]. . . . But each cycle is different. There is no real recurrence'.³⁷ However, I will argue that behind this apparent rejection (which even in the context of the essay is equivocal), lies a deeper engagement with Nietzsche's thought. Indeed, I will argue that Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence appears throughout Lawrence's work in various modified, altered and transformed guises.

³⁴ Jessie Chambers, *D. H. Lawrence: A Personal Record by E. T.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 120. Rose Marie Burwell usefully reports that the Croydon Central Library possessed the following works of Nietzsche by the time that Lawrence left school in 1911: *The Future of Educational Institutions* (1872), *Human, All-Too-Human* (1878-9), *Joyful Wisdom* (1882-7), *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883-5), *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), *Twilight of the Gods* (1888), and *Will to Power* (1901) ('A Checklist of Lawrence's Reading', in *A D. H. Lawrence Handbook*, ed. Keith Sagar (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1982), 59-125, 69).

³⁵ See, in particular, Colin Milton, *Lawrence and Nietzsche: A Study in Influence* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987); Robert E. Montgomery, *The Visionary D. H. Lawrence: Beyond Philosophy and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1994); T. R. Wright, *D. H. Lawrence and the Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and Carl Krockel, *D. H. Lawrence and Germany: The Politics of Influence* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007).

³⁶ Cecilia Björkén, *Into the Isle of Self: Nietzschean Patterns and Contrasts in D. H. Lawrence's The Trespasser* (Lund: Lund University Press, 1996), 152, 174, 207, 212-3; Krockel, *Lawrence and Germany*, 66-9, 89, 132-3, 170, 189-90.

³⁷ D. H. Lawrence, *Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays*, ed. Bruce Steele (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 72.

Methodologically, my approach follows that of Colin Milton, who counsels against looking for ‘a mechanical and external application of Nietzsche’s ideas in Lawrence’s work’, and suggests instead that what is involved is ‘a creative absorption and development of them which issues in a richly detailed and specific fictional world’.³⁸ In line with Milton’s approach, I suggest that Nietzsche’s thought of eternal recurrence is not simply mechanically applied in Lawrence’s writing. Lawrence never contended that history repeats itself exactly. Nevertheless, he advanced a cyclical conception of history to very Nietzschean effect in *Movements in European History*; as we shall see, a very similar scheme of history lies behind the fictional world of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*.

Lawrence’s Conception of History

As Louise Williams has remarked, D. H. Lawrence was one of a number of modernist writers who advanced cyclical conceptions of history.³⁹ His view that history forms a cycle contrasts markedly with H. G. Wells’s conception of history as one of linear progress. As we saw in the previous chapter, George Orwell astutely drew attention to this difference, contrasting Wells’s belief in progress with the rejection of that idea by Lawrence and other writers of his generation such as James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Aldous Huxley and Wyndham Lewis.⁴⁰ In this section, I will address Lawrence’s cyclical conceptions of history in *Movements in European History* (1921) and *Apocalypse* (1931). As we will see, Lawrence’s conception of history carries a

³⁸ Milton, *Lawrence*, 21.

³⁹ See Louise Blakeney Williams, *Modernism and the Ideology of History: Literature, Politics and the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁴⁰ Orwell, ‘Re-discovery’, 212.

very different politics to that of Wells. Whereas Wells's teleological scheme of history supported his political ambition of bringing into being a cosmopolitan World State, Lawrence's cyclical conception of history in *Movements* did not support a cosmopolitan politics, or indeed any form of democratic politics; rather, it supported his desire for an authoritarian Caesarist leader. Orwell provided early warning of Lawrence and other modernists' schemes of history. Although Orwell rejected the idea of progress in history, and for that reason welcomed Lawrence's view of life as 'at least an advance on the Science-worship of H. G. Wells or the shallow Fabian progressivism of writers like Bernard Shaw', he also flagged the politically alarming aspect of countervailing schemes of history. He points out that many contemporary writers' 'revulsion from a shallow conception of progress drove them politically in the wrong direction, and it isn't an accident that Ezra Pound, for instance, is now shouting anti-Semitism on the Rome radio'.⁴¹ As we shall see, Orwell's insight applies just as well to Lawrence as it does to Pound, and it is true that, by supporting his authoritarian leadership politics, Lawrence's cyclical conception of history drove him, as Orwell puts it, 'politically in the wrong direction'.

Despite the relatively little critical attention it has received, Lawrence's *Movements in European History* contains the fullest formulation of his conception of history, and is invaluable for understanding his novels. *Movements* is a history textbook for secondary schools commissioned by Oxford University Press, written in 1918-9, and first published in 1921 under the pseudonym 'Lawrence H. Davison'.⁴² It is an account of European history from the founding of Rome in 753 B.C. to the late

⁴¹ Orwell, 'Re-discovery', 214, 216.

⁴² A further illustrated edition was published in 1925 under Lawrence's real name; a revised edition for Irish schools was published in 1926; and a new edition, with a previously unpublished Epilogue (which had been written in 1924) was published in 1971. All further references are to *Movements in European History*, ed. Philip Crumpton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

nineteenth century.⁴³ The history draws heavily on secondary sources, most of which were written between 1908 and 1917, but which also include Julius Caesar's *Gallic War*, Tacitus' *Germania* (c. 98), and Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-89).⁴⁴ As Philip Crumpton comments, although Lawrence's method 'was largely a narration of events drawn from his sources, rather than his own meanings and interpretations', a distinctive philosophy of history emerges from the text.⁴⁵ Lawrence commented in his correspondence on the 'developing significance' that emerged as he wrote the history: 'I do loathe the broken pots of historical facts. But once I can get hold of the thread of the developing significance, then I am happy, and get ahead'. He added that '[t]here is a clue of developing meaning running through it: that makes it real to me'.⁴⁶ This 'developing meaning', which constitutes Lawrence's metaphysic of history, is expressed in the work's combination of a Joachite epochal structure with a pseudo-Nietzschean cyclical form. Lawrence fuses these forms in a complementary manner, and from them derives imperatives of leadership.

As has been recognized, Lawrence's history is apocalyptic. In *Movements*, Lawrence gives an account of two different forms of apocalypticism: the early Christian belief in the Millennium, which signals an end to history, and a Joachite apocalyptic rupture, which signals the inauguration of a new historical epoch.⁴⁷ He is hostile to the first type of apocalypticism, which, as T. R. Wright points out, he criticises by reproducing

⁴³ The 'Epilogue', written in 1924, brings the history up to the present of writing.

⁴⁴ Philip Crumpton's appendix to the Cambridge Edition of *Movements in European History* lists Lawrence's sources. See also his 'Introduction', xxxviii-xlvi, and 'DHL and the Sources of *Movements in European History*', *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, 29 (1985), 50-65.

⁴⁵ Crumpton, 'Introduction', xlii.

⁴⁶ Letter to Nancy Henry, 23 January 1919; *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, Volume III*, ed. James T. Boulton and Andrew Robertson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 322.

⁴⁷ Lawrence, *Movements*, 31.

almost verbatim Nietzschean's argument that the desire for the Millennium is the fantasy of a slave class, avenging itself on the powerful 'by imagining the sudden destruction of the world to be near at hand'.⁴⁸ However, Lawrence is far more sympathetic to the second type of apocalypticism. In the twelfth chapter of *Movements*, he outlines Joachim di Fiore's (c. 1135-1202) interpretation of history:

[i]n 1254 a book was published called *Introduction to the Everlasting Gospel*, supposed to contain the teaching of a famous seer or prophet, the Abbot Joachim, who had died at Naples in 1202. In this book it said that Judaism was the revelation of the Father: Christianity was the revelation of the Son: now men must prepare for the revelation of the Holy Ghost.⁴⁹

The most immediate source for Lawrence's description of the Joachite doctrine is R.

B. Mowat's *The Later Middle Ages: A History of Western Europe 1254-1494*

(1917).⁵⁰ Mowat gives an account of 'the Abbot Joachim of Flora', the *Introduction to the Everlasting Gospel*, and the three stages of history: Judaism, which 'had been the revelation of the Father', Christianity, which was 'the revelation of the Son', and the future age which was to be 'the revelation of the Holy Ghost'.⁵¹ In *Movements*, Lawrence describes Joachim's work as having, in spite of being condemned by the Popes, 'a great power over the minds of men':

⁴⁸ Wright, *Bible*, 48.

⁴⁹ Lawrence, *Movements*, 147.

⁵⁰ This source has been overlooked by Peter Fjågesund, Warwick Gould and Marjorie Reeves, who suggest that Lawrence's knowledge of Joachim may have been derived from G. G. Coulton's *From St Francis to Dante: A Translation of All that is of Primary Interest in the Chronicle of the Franciscan Salimbene (1221-1288)* (1906), a copy of which Lady Ottoline Morrell sent to Lawrence in 1916, and which he claimed to have loved (Peter Fjågesund, *The Apocalyptic World of D. H. Lawrence* (Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1991), 11; Warwick Gould and Marjorie Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Myth of the Eternal Evangel in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 302; letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell, 15 February 1916; *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, Volume II*, ed. George J. Zytaruk and James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 538).

⁵¹ R. B. Mowat, *The Later Middle Ages: A History of Western Europe 1254-1494* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1917), 106-10. Reeves and Gould point out that Lawrence makes a 'slip in saying that Joachim dies at Naples', when in fact he died at Canale (*Joachim*, 302). This 'slip' seems to stem from an inattentive reading of Mowat, who wrote that Joachim was Abbot 'in the kingdom of Naples, and died in the year 1202' (106-7).

[w]ild ideas spread everywhere. Men began to expect the reign of the Holy Ghost. They said that before Jesus was born the Father had reigned: after this, until their own day, the Son had reigned; now the Holy Ghost would reign.⁵²

Following Mowat, Lawrence charts the political revolutionaries such as the Fraticelli and the Pastoureaux who were inspired by Joachim's doctrine in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁵³

In addition to giving an historical account of the ideas of Joachim, Lawrence's own history takes a Joachite apocalyptic form. As *Movements*' commentators have pointed out, Lawrence's history is suggestively aligned with Joachim's doctrine. For example, Daniel Schneider observes that Lawrence's European history 'exhibits the Joachite movement from the revelation of the Father (the Old World of Power and Union in the Flesh) to the revelation of the Son (the New World of Love and Union in the Spirit), but stops short of the revelation of the Holy Ghost'.⁵⁴ That is, in Lawrence's history, the Renaissance divides European history into two ages: the pre-Renaissance age of war and conquest corresponds to Joachim's age of the Father; the post-Renaissance age of production corresponds to Joachim's age of the Son. There is also the expectation of a third age, which corresponds to Joachim's age of the Holy Ghost: '[t]here still remains the last reign of wisdom, of pure understanding, the reign which we have never seen in the world, but which we must see'.⁵⁵ However, what has yet to

⁵² Lawrence, *Movements*, 147.

⁵³ Lawrence, *Movements*, 146-9; see Mowat, *Middle Ages*, 107-9.

⁵⁴ Daniel J. Schneider, 'Psychology in Lawrence's *Movements in European History*', *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, 39/2 (1985), 97-106, 103. Crumpton is more tentative: '[t]here is the barest hint of a Joachite interpretation of history in [*Movements*]', ('Introduction', xliii). Frank Kermode interprets Lawrence more generally as 'a Joachite' ('Lawrence and the Apocalyptic Types', *Critical Quarterly*, 10 (March 1968), 14-38, 17), and in *The Sense of an Ending*, points out that '[s]ome aspects of [Joachim's] brand of apocalypse survive in D. H. Lawrence' (13). Fjågesund advances 'Joachism' as the most important of five types of history that together make up Lawrence's 'apocalyptic-millennial' conception of history (*Apocalyptic World*, 8-13).

⁵⁵ Lawrence, *Movements*, 167. As Schneider points out, with its 'Joachite movement', *Movements* 'works out in detail many of the ideas that Lawrence had already suggested in "Study of Thomas Hardy" and in *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*' ('Psychology', 103).

be recognized is that the apocalyptic form of history in *Movements* is fused with a pseudo-Nietzschean cyclical structure.

Lawrence portrays European history as a cycle. Within the flood and ebb of history driven by two opposed ‘motives’ or ‘passions’, a pivotal moment occurs at the Renaissance:

[w]ith the Renaissance the new way of life comes into being. Men do not live just to fight and conquer and capture possessions. They live now in the joy of producing, the joy of making things.⁵⁶

At this critical ‘great change’ in the Renaissance, modern nations developed, and focused on ‘production rather than war and glory’. This movement towards peace and production is cross-cut by another trend: the break-down of great institutions into smaller individual powers: ‘[t]he whole history of Europe is a history of the breaking down of great institutions to make way for smaller, more numerous, more individual powers’.⁵⁷ The effect is that European history becomes a circle:

[l]ong ago, Europe was one vast realm ruled by a gorgeous emperor in Rome. Now the circle has been almost completed again. Europe seems to move towards infinite unification, towards the institution of one vast state ruled by the infinite numbers of the people—the producers, the proletariat, the workmen.⁵⁸

European history thus moves in a cycle, from one type of unity to another: ‘[s]o the cycle of European history completes itself, phase by phase . . . Europe moves from oneness to oneness, from the imperial unity to the unity of the labouring classes, from the beginning to the end’. The cyclical form of European history in *Movements* supports Lawrence’s assertion in the Preface that history is not teleological: ‘[w]e are not the consummation of all life and time’.⁵⁹ As already remarked, by advancing a

⁵⁶ Lawrence, *Movements*, 166.

⁵⁷ Lawrence, *Movements*, 241-2.

⁵⁸ Lawrence, *Movements*, 242.

⁵⁹ Lawrence, *Movements*, 252, 7.

cyclic conception of history, Lawrence joined company with a number of other modernist writers. Williams has usefully shown how modernists such as W. B. Yeats, Ford Madox Ford, Ezra Pound, T. E. Hulme, and Lawrence, all ‘found progress to be an historical structure unsuited to their needs’, and embraced instead various cyclical views of history, which they found to be ‘far more satisfying’.⁶⁰ However, although she draws attention to the cyclical nature of Lawrence’s conception of history, what she fails to recognize is the Nietzschean nature of this conception.⁶¹

The cyclical form of Lawrence’s history is pseudo-Nietzschean. Nietzsche advanced his conception of eternal recurrence in opposition to linear, teleological schemes of history. History, according to this doctrine, forms a cycle, as suggested by his description in *Ecce Homo* (1888) of the doctrine as that of ‘the unconditional and infinitely repeated *cycle* of all things’.⁶² Lawrence’s depiction of European history as a ‘cycle’ partially resembles the cyclicity of Nietzsche’s doctrine of eternal recurrence. The cyclical form of Lawrence’s European history does not conform exactly to Nietzsche’s doctrine eternal recurrence. Lawrence’s history does not repeat itself exactly, as the return to the beginning of the circle is marked by difference as well as by identity: the imperial unity of the beginning of history becomes the unity of the labouring classes of the end. Nevertheless, Lawrence drew very Nietzschean conclusions from the cyclical shape of European history.

Lawrence welcomed a return to the strong leadership characteristic of Imperial Rome, and the start of the cycle of European history. For Lawrence, history is driven by great

⁶⁰ Williams, *Ideology of History*, 2.

⁶¹ Indeed, she explicitly claims that although Lawrence’s ‘scheme of history is clearly cyclic’, he ‘did not accept what he believed was Nietzsche’s idea of eternal recurrence’, a claim which she supports by quoting Lawrence’s apparent rejection of the idea in his ‘Study of Thomas Hardy’ (179).

⁶² Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 110, my emphasis.

‘motives’ of ‘passions’ which manifest themselves in particular individuals, such as Alexander the Great, Attila, Martin Luther, Louis XIV and Otto von Bismarck.⁶³ In this regard, *Movements* is a ‘Great Men’ version of history. Interestingly, one reviewer in 1927 interpreted Lawrence’s *Movements* in Nietzschean terms, commenting that Lawrence’s ‘prime movers in human history’ are ‘rather muddled Teutonic Uebermensch’.⁶⁴ While Lawrence’s contention that history is driven by passional forces grants a great importance to Great Men in the past, it also opens the possibility for another Great Man to appear with decisive historical impact in the future. For Lawrence, the coming of such a Great Man is closely allied to the cyclical shape of history, just as for Nietzsche, the coming of the *Übermensch* is intimately tied to the thought of eternal recurrence. The last chapter of *Movements* looks back to ‘the great emperors leading Rome’, who were the subject of the first chapter of the history: ‘[I]long ago, Europe was one vast realm ruled by a gorgeous emperor in Rome. Now the circle has almost been completed again’. The cyclical return to such a state of imperial leadership is clearly welcomed: ‘if men much fight their way forward, they must have a leader whom all obey’.⁶⁵ *Movements* concludes that:

a great united Europe of productive working people, all materially equal, will never be able to continue and remain firm unless it unites around one chosen figure, some hero who can lead a great war, as well as administer a wide peace. It all depends on the will of the people. But the will of the people must concentrate in one figure, who is also supreme over the will of the people.⁶⁶

This ‘hero who can lead a great war’ is a Nietzschean *Übermensch* in its popular, militaristic form.

⁶³ For Lawrence, the ‘passional motive’ which drives history is ‘greater than any one man, though in individual men the power is at its greatest’ (*Movements*, 9).

⁶⁴ Casper J. Kraemer, ‘A Poet-Historian and a Lucretian Motif’, *The Classical Weekly*, 20/25 (9 May 1927), 197-8, 198.

⁶⁵ Lawrence, *Movements*, 241-2.

⁶⁶ Lawrence, *Movements*, 252.

The cyclical shape of history in *Movements* forms part of Lawrence's increasingly anti-democratic, authoritarian politics. By the time he wrote *Movements*, Lawrence's politics had become increasingly authoritarian. In a notorious series of letters written to Bertrand Russell in 1915, he had counselled:

[y]ou must drop all your democracy. . . . [T]here must be a Ruler . . . an absolute *Dictator* . . . The thing must culminate in one real head . . . no foolish republics with foolish presidents, but an elected King, something like Julius Caesar.⁶⁷

Such a rejection of democracy, in what Peter Scheckner describes as Lawrence's 'most reactionary statement' up to that point, marks a dramatic movement away from Russell's liberal politics.⁶⁸ The wish for a dictatorship, led by 'something like Julius Caesar', complements the cyclical historical scheme of *Movements*, and the call therein for a return to a Caesarist leader. In both cases, Lawrence's desire for a Caesarist leader anticipates later Caesarist political movements, such as that of Italian Fascism and Mussolini's self-stylization as a Roman emperor. Emile Delavenay has criticised the political vision of *Movements* on similar grounds, seeing it as an '[a]pology for dictatorship', and complicit with 'movements such as those which were to pave the way for Fascism and Nazism'.⁶⁹

It should be acknowledged that, in the Epilogue to *Movements*, written in 1924, Lawrence criticised the fascism that he had experienced on his visit to Italy in 1920, describing it as 'another kind of bullying'. Nevertheless, despite the shortcomings of Italian fascism, Lawrence claimed that '[w]e *must* have authority, and there *must* be power'. He stressed the importance of following 'natural' aristocrats, and concluded

⁶⁷ Letters to Bertrand Russell, 14, 16 and 26 July 1915; *Letters*, ii, 364-5, 371, his emphasis.

⁶⁸ Peter Scheckner, *Class, Politics and the Individual: A Study of the Major Works of D. H. Lawrence* (London: Associated University Presses, 1985), 16.

⁶⁹ Emile Delavenay, *D. H. Lawrence: The Man and his Work: The Formative Years: 1885-1919*, trans. Katharine M. Delavenay (London: Heinemann, 1972), 491, 493.

his epilogue with an injunction to his young readers: ‘every youth, every girl can make the great historical change inside himself and herself: . . . to follow only the leader who is a star of the new, *natural noblesse*’.⁷⁰ Of course, the scheme of European history presented in the body of *Movements*, provides historical material to inspire Lawrence’s young readers to make such a ‘great historical change’ within themselves. By suggesting that they will the return of a Caesarist leader, Lawrence presents his readers with a choice very similar to that of Nietzsche’s thought of eternal recurrence, which involves willing the return of that which has happened in the past. In the *Arcades Project*, Benjamin notes, following Löwith, that ‘there is a handwritten draft in which Caesar instead of Zarathustra is the bearer of Nietzsche’s tidings’, and comments: ‘[t]hat is of no little moment. It underscores the fact that Nietzsche had an inkling of his doctrine’s complicity with imperialism’.⁷¹ A very similar complicity exists between the cyclical shape of history in *Movements*, and Lawrence’s desire for the return of a strong leader, like those of Imperial Rome.

The pseudo-Nietzschean cyclical structure of Lawrence’s history complements its apocalyptic shape. At first sight, it might seem that there is a tension within a history that is both apocalyptic and cyclical. If the apocalypse is thought to bring an end to history, is it not incompatible with the idea that history continues in a cyclical fashion, by returning to its beginning? However, the tension is only apparent. As was seen above, Lawrence understands apocalypse not as signalling an end to history, but rather, in Joachite fashion, as giving rise to a new historical epoch. Such an epoch is structurally very similar to that which is to be inaugurated by Nietzsche’s thought of eternal recurrence. The thought of eternal recurrence aims to precipitate a new

⁷⁰ Lawrence, *Movements*, 263, 266.

⁷¹ Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 117; see Löwith, *Eternal Recurrence*, 72.

historical age, as is made clear by a note from the *Zarathustra* period: '[f]rom the moment when this thought begins to prevail . . . a new history will begin'.⁷² In 'The Vision and the Riddle' of *Zarathustra*, this historical transition is signalled by play on the word '*Augenblick*'. In this section, the gateway at which Zarathustra arrives is called 'Moment' or '*Augenblick*'—literally 'eye-glance'. As Gary Shapiro points out, Nietzsche's use of the term '*Augenblick*' echoes Luther's translation of St Paul's *First Letter to the Corinthians* (15:51-2): '[b]ehold, I tell you a secret: we shall not sleep, but we shall be transformed; and suddenly, in the blink of an eye (*Augenblick*), at the time of the last trumpet. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be transformed'.⁷³ Zarathustra's historical transformation is then an anti-Christian travesty of this eschatological moment: the thought of eternal recurrence induces a historical rupture which is structurally similar to the inauguration of a Millenarian reign. Indeed, Zarathustra talks of 'the Zarathustra empire of a thousand years'.⁷⁴ The pseudo-Nietzschean cyclical form of history in *Movements* similarly complements its Joachite epochal structure. Correlatively, Lawrence's 'hero who can lead a great war' takes on the aspect of a Messianic leader, as well as a Nietzschean *Übermensch*.

Lawrence once again employed a cyclical scheme of history in his *Apocalypse* (1931). The Book of Revelation provides, as T. R. Wright points out, a model for our whole culture's sense of an ending, an archetypal climax to the history of the world.⁷⁵ Yet, in his commentary on the Book of Revelation, Lawrence defied a linear conception of

⁷² Friedrich Nietzsche, 'The Eternal Recurrence', in *The Twilight of the Idols*, ed. Oscar Levy, trans. Anthony Ludovic (Edinburgh; London: T. N. Foulds, 1911), 252.

⁷³ Gary Shapiro, 'Nietzsche's Story of the Eye: Hyphenating the *Augen-blick*,' *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 22 (2001), 17-35, 21-2.

⁷⁴ Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 193.

⁷⁵ Wright, *Bible*, 228.

history, and asserted in its place a cyclical scheme. He claimed that '[o]ur idea of time as a continuity in an eternal straight line has crippled our consciousness cruelly. The pagan conception of time as moving in cycles is much freer'.⁷⁶ He went on to advance a 'piece of very old wisdom', that he unambiguously declared 'will always be true':

[t]ime still moves in cycles, not in a straight line. And we are at the end of the Christian cycle. And the Logos, the good dragon of the beginning of the cycle is now the evil dragon of today.⁷⁷

The contention that time 'moves in cycles' and 'not in a straight line' opposes the orthodox interpretation of the Book of Revelation as signalling an end to history.

Rather than approaching the end of history, Lawrence suggests that we are merely at the end of the Christian era, with the intimation that there will be another, post-Christian epoch.

Lawrence finds support for his cyclical scheme of history in the Book of Revelation, and in particular in the 'great red dragon', which first appears at Revelation 12:3, and later returns in 20:2 as 'the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil', who is bound for a thousand years. As part of his esoteric interpretation of the dragon, he advances a myth, in which two dragons—a green and a red—appear at the beginning and end of cycles of time:

[t]he agathodaimon becomes at last the kakodaimon. The green dragon becomes with time the red dragon. . . . What was a creative god, Ouranos, Kronos, becomes at the end of the time-period a destroyer and a devourer. The god of the beginning of an era is the evil principle at the end of that era. For time still moves in cycles. What was the green dragon, the good potency, at the beginning of the cycle has by the end gradually changed into the red dragon, the evil potency.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ D. H. Lawrence, *Apocalypse and the Writings on Revelation*, ed. Mara Kalnins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 97.

⁷⁷ Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, 125.

⁷⁸ Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, 125.

This myth is similar to those of the theosophists. Madame Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* (1888), for instance, advances a cosmological scheme of great cycles of time or *yugas*, of which we are living in the fifth, and holds that

[t]he Serpent became the type and symbol of evil, and of the Devil, only during the middle ages. The early Christians—besides the Ophite Gnostics—had their dual Logos: the Good and the Bad Serpent, the Agathodaemon and the Kakodaemon.⁷⁹

However, while Lawrence's cyclical cosmology is derived most immediately from Madame Blavatsky and the theosophists, it is used to oppose Christian linear time in a manner similar to Zarathustra's doctrine of eternal return.

Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence is opposed to a linear, Christian scheme of history. This is made clear in the section of *Thus Spake Zarathustra* entitled 'The Seven Seals', which parodies the Book of Revelation. 'The Seven Seals' is written in the form of a marriage song, with seven numbered verses, to match the seven seals of the Book of Revelation. The reworking of Revelation is ironic, given that the refrain of the song affirms eternal recurrence, which is antithetical to the orthodox interpretation of the seals signalling the end of time and the end of the world. The marriage of the song is not to be to 'a woman', but to the eternity of eternal recurrence: 'how then could I not lust for . . . the nuptial ring of rings—the ring of recurrence!'.⁸⁰ Nietzsche's seals signal not the end to the world, but the end of the Christian era. As Laurence Lampert puts it: 'Nietzsche seals his book with seven seals that mark the doom of the old order and the dawn of the new'.⁸¹ By overturning the

⁷⁹ Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy*, i (London: Theosophical Publishing Co., 1888), 410. Compare *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology*, i (New York: J. W. Bouton, 1877), 133, 157-8.

⁸⁰ Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 184.

⁸¹ Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching: An Interpretation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 287.

Christian hinterworldly goal for mankind through the affirmation of eternal recurrence, and by parodying the teaching of that goal in 'The Seven Seals', Zarathustra creates a new meaning and future for the earth.

Like Zarathustra's teaching, Lawrence's theosophical myth in *Apocalypse* points towards a new future for the earth. History will not end, but rather 'the cycle goes round', and there will be 'a return once more to the first . . . dragon'. This cyclical cosmology conflicts with Revelation 20:10, at which the dragon is 'cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, . . . and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever'. Lawrence's subsumption of the Christian era into a greater, cyclical cosmology, includes the imperative to overcome that era. For Lawrence, '[t]he good potency of the beginning of the Christian era is now the evil potency of the end', and so that era must be overcome. The challenge is 'to *conquer* the Logos, that the new dragon gleaming green may lean down from among the stars and vivify us and make us great'.⁸² The imperative is not to await the end of (linear) history, but to overcome the present Christian era, and to induce a new cycle of time.

While Lawrence advanced various cyclical conceptions of history in his non-fictional writing, we can now turn to his adaptations of Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence in his fiction. It will be seen that, in *Women in Love*, he drew on Nietzsche's thought as part of his critical portrayal of industrial capitalism.

Women in Love (1920) and 'the problem of industrialism'

⁸² Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, 129, 125, 126.

In *Women in Love* (1920), both Ursula and Gudrun Brangwen recoil from a life made up of mechanical repetition. In the chapter ‘Sunday Evening’, Ursula broods on death, which she thinks preferable to her life of mechanical repetition: ‘better die than live mechanically a life that is a repetition of repetitions’. In ‘Snowed Up’, Gudrun is driven almost to madness by the thought of ‘the mechanical succession of day following day, day following day, ad infinitum’.⁸³ Both of their attitudes towards mechanical repetition can be understood in the context of the new forms of temporal experience that arose with modern forms of industrial labour, as analysed by Karl Marx and E. P. Thompson.

In the first volume of *Capital* (1867), Karl Marx diagnosed repetition as a key aspect of labour under the capitalist mode of production. He traced the historical emergence of the uniform working-day as a combination of new modes of production, the employment of machinery, and parliamentary legislation concerning working hours. He points out that in the factory, the ‘dependence of the workman on the continuous and uniform motion of the machinery . . . created the strictest disciple’. The various Factory Acts contributed to this discipline. While they reduced the number of hours a labourer could work each day, they also had the effect of increasing the intensity and repetitiveness of labour: ‘the shortening of the working-day increases to a wonderful degree the regularity, uniformity, order, continuity, and energy of . . . labour’.⁸⁴ He approvingly quotes James Kay’s description of labour in cotton manufacture: ‘the dull routine of a ceaseless drudgery, in which the same mechanical process is incessantly

⁸³ D. H. Lawrence, *Women in Love*, ed. David Farmer, Lindeth Vasey and John Worthen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 192, 464.

⁸⁴ Karl Marx, *Capital*, ed. David McLellan, trans. Samuel Moore et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 253.

repeated, resembles the torment of Sisyphus'.⁸⁵ After Marx's time, factory labour was made yet more repetitive and mechanical by 'Scientific Management', pioneered by Frederick Taylor, and implemented in Henry Ford's car factories. Taylor's 'time and motion studies' sought to break down each of the tasks required by workers into their most simple constituent movements, and to establish an exact duration for these movements in order to increase efficiency.⁸⁶ On Marx's account, while the new time-discipline of capitalism first emerged in the industries earliest revolutionised by water-power, steam and machinery, it soon spread to many other branches of production, including potteries and glass-making, which were 'made to adopt the factory system', and finally even to 'domestic industries'. In this last case, legislation was needed to 'declare any house in which work was done to be a factory', as even domestic labour had fallen 'as completely under capitalist exploitation as the factories themselves'.⁸⁷

Ursula and Gudrun's antipathetic attitudes towards mechanical repetition are in part responses to the new forms of temporal experience that arose with industrial capitalism. Marx charted the emergence of a new form of labour 'not carried on by fits and starts, but repeated day after day with unvarying uniformity'.⁸⁸ Because labour consists of the performance of repetitive tasks within the confines of a tightly regulated working-day, each hour comes to seem indistinguishable from the others, and is seemingly repeated endlessly within a well-defined pattern of the working-

⁸⁵ James Phillips Kay, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester*, 2nd edn (London: James Ridgway, 1832), 22; Marx, *Capital*, 261. Marx took the quotation from Friedrich Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845).

⁸⁶ See E. P. Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism', *Past and Present*, 38 (Dec., 1967), 56-97, 89.

⁸⁷ Marx, *Capital*, 180. Compare Thompson, 'Time', 83.

⁸⁸ Marx, *Capital*, 251.

week that is itself endlessly repeated. Gudrun is horrified by such repetition, which she thinks of as ‘the mechanical succession of day following day, day following day’.⁸⁹ Similarly, Ursula thinks of her life as a school teacher as one of repetitive, mechanical routine. She thinks ahead to the next day: ‘[t]omorrow was Monday. Monday, the beginning of another . . . school-week, mere routine and mechanical activity’.⁹⁰ Her frequent use of the term ‘mechanical’ and its cognates is apt, given the role that machinery played in formation of the new labour habits, and the creation of the distinctive rhythm of the modern working-day. It suggests that her work as a school teacher is characterized by the same repetitive routine that characterizes factory work, and which Marx diagnosed as extending throughout all spheres of production in industrial capitalism.

Not only was the school a place that was infused by the time-discipline of industrial capitalism, but it was also an environment where such discipline and labour habits were inculcated. E. P. Thompson draws attention to the exhortations to punctuality and regularity that were written into the rules of schools, showing how such rules prepared pupils for the work-discipline required by industry. ‘Once within the school gates’, he comments, ‘the child entered the new universe of disciplined time’.⁹¹ Certainly, Ursula suffers from the ‘barren school-week’ that was ‘mere routine and mechanical activity’, recognizing how her own life has been reduced to one of ‘sordid routine and mechanical nullity’.⁹² Yet it should also be noted that she works in a disciplined educational environment that prepares its students for mechanical and repetitive jobs, and perpetuates the time-discipline of industrial capitalism.

⁸⁹ Lawrence, *Women*, 464. She thinks of her life with Gerald as one of ‘hideous boring repetition’ (464).

⁹⁰ Lawrence, *Women*, 193.

⁹¹ Thompson, ‘Time’, 84.

⁹² Lawrence, *Women*, 193.

In 'Snowed Up', Gudrun's horror of mechanical routine manifests itself in a nightmarish series of images of clocks.⁹³ Her fear of clocks, which she recognizes as bordering on 'madness', can be placed within the context of the rigorous time-discipline of industrial-capitalism. One symptom of the spread of capitalist time-discipline was the manufacture and sale of domestic clocks. Thomson has drawn attention to the 'general diffusion of clocks and watches' that occurred from the 1790s onwards, when 'the industrial revolution demanded a greater synchronization of labour'. He points out that, given the ready availability of inexpensive timepieces from this time onwards, even cottagers typically owned clocks.⁹⁴ Indeed, there is just such a clock in Gudrun's cottage. She has a perturbing experience with the 'long-case clock' that stands in her parlour, watching for several minutes its 'ruddy, round, slant-eyed, joyous-painted face' that seems to ogle her when the hands tick, until she breaks down in a 'maddened disgust' that foreshadows her later visions of horrifying clocks with twitching hands.⁹⁵

In one of her visions in 'Snowed Up', Gudrun thinks, with Gerald and modern industry in mind, that

[s]he could never escape. There she was, placed before the clock-face of life. And if she turned round, as in a railway station, to look at the book-stall, still she could see, with her very spine she could see the clock, always the great white clock-face. . . . the eternal, mechanical, monotonous clock-face of time.⁹⁶

As Stevenson points out, it is appropriate that Gudrun thinks of herself standing in a railway station in this chilling vision of a clock, given the role that railways played in

⁹³ Lawrence, *Women*, 464-6.

⁹⁴ Thompson, 'Time', 69.

⁹⁵ Lawrence, *Women*, 376-7.

⁹⁶ Lawrence, *Women*, 465.

the standardization of a national British time in the nineteenth century.⁹⁷ More simply, railway clocks also played an important role in the regulation of the working-day. As Marx points out in *Capital*, in order to circumscribe the working-day, one of the stipulations made by the Factory Acts was that “‘The time shall be regulated by a public clock’, for example, the nearest railway clock, by which the factory clock is to be set’. He points out that such ‘minutiæ’ were employed ‘with military uniformity’ to ‘regulate by stroke of the clock the times, limits, pauses of . . . work’.⁹⁸ The role that railway clocks played in the imposition of the time-discipline imposed by industrial capitalism helps to illuminate Gudrun’s sense of being haunted in a railway station by a ‘great white clock-face’.

Gudrun’s images of clocks convey the intrusive and pervasive nature of time in industrial capitalism. She thinks of her head ticking ‘like a clock, with a very madness of dead mechanical monotony and meaninglessness’. She realizes that Gerald will provide her with no escape: ‘[h]e, his body, his motion, his life—it was the same ticking, the same twitching across the dial, a horrible mechanical twitching forward over the face of the hours’. Fittingly, given that Gerald is an industrial master, time suffuses every aspect of his body, motion and life, until it seems that even ‘his kisses, his embraces’, reverberate with the ‘tick-tack’ of time.⁹⁹ With a hallucinatory intensity that approaches madness, Gudrun thinks of her own face as a clock dial:

[d]idn’t her face really look like a clock dial—rather roundish, and often pale, and impassive. She would have got up to look, in the mirror, but the thought of the sight of her own face, that was like a twelve-hour clock-dial, filled her with such deep terror, that she hastened to think of something else.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Stevenson, *Modernist Fiction*, 120-1.

⁹⁸ Marx, *Capital*, 170.

⁹⁹ Lawrence, *Women*, 464.

¹⁰⁰ Lawrence, *Women*, 465.

While the image frightens her, it is also strangely appropriate, given the imposition of work-discipline under industrial capitalism. Marx suggests that it is a feature of capitalism that labourers are effectively reduced to their labour-power, which can in turn be measured in terms of labour time. It is thereby apt, he points out, that workers should be designated as ‘full-timers’ or ‘half-timers’ depending on how much they work: the ‘worker is here nothing more than personified labour-time’.¹⁰¹ Gudrun’s picture of her face as a clock suggests a similar personification of time. It is as if her own body were so thoroughly imbued with the time-discipline of industrial capitalism, that it has been transformed into a clock.

Gudrun’s picture of her face as a clock is further apt, given the mechanizing effects of the new labour habits demanded by industrial capitalism. As part of his analysis of the effect of machines in modern industry, Marx draws attention to the phenomenon by which labourers are turned into machines: ‘[m]achinery is put to a wrong use, with the object of transforming the workman, from his very childhood, into a part of a detail-machine’. Most evidently in the modern capitalist factory, the most ‘perfect form’ of the exploitation of labour-power, people are subordinated to machines. The worker here typically spends his entire life ‘serving one and the same machine’, and is taught from a young age to ‘adapt his own movements to the uniform and unceasing motion of an automaton’.¹⁰² The effects of modern labour are portrayed very similarly in *Women in Love*. When Gerald decides to renovate his mining industry, and introduces ‘[n]ew machinery brought from America’, the miners are described as ‘reduced to mere mechanical instruments’. Conforming closely to Marx’s analysis of the effects

¹⁰¹ Marx, *Capital*, 162, 153.

¹⁰² Marx, *Capital*, 258-60. Taylor’s time and motion studies later refined such a form of labour. Stevenson convincingly suggests that Gerald’s development of his mines in *Women in Love* reflects the ‘new attitude created by Taylorism and scientific management’ (*Modernist Fiction*, 117).

of machinery in capitalist industry, the miners are described as being forced to submit to work that ‘was terrible and heartbreaking in its mechanicalness’, and becoming themselves ‘more and more mechanised’ in the process.¹⁰³ Gudrun’s image of herself as a clock involves a similar transformation into a machine. Earlier, she had compared the miners at Beldover to machines, thinking that they sounded ‘like strange machines, heavy, oiled’. Stirred to desire by these ‘half-automatised colliers’, she is portrayed as a ‘new Daphne, turning not into a tree but a machine’.¹⁰⁴ In this updated version of the Greek myth, she fittingly metamorphoses into a machine, and thereby becomes like the colliers whom she finds attractive and yet from whom she remains distant.

It is not only the workers in Gerald’s mines that are transformed into machines by the new conditions of labour. Gudrun thinks of ‘the Gerald’s of this world’ being turned into ‘mechanisms’: ‘[I]et them become instruments, pure machines, pure wills that work like clock-work, in perpetual repetition’.¹⁰⁵ Her conceit suggests that industrial masters are just as subject to the mechanizing effects of modern labour as their workers. Her portrayal of them as working ‘like clock-work’ conveys the regular, repetitive manner in which they operate, and intimates the time-discipline that they have internalized and that they impose through their ‘wills’ on their workforces. That they work in ‘perpetual repetition’ suggests, in part, that they work perpetually.¹⁰⁶ On Marx’s analysis, the use of machinery in production meant that the working-day could in theory be lengthened until the point at which it seamlessly joined the next day, and production could continue without interruption. He noted that, in the form of

¹⁰³ Lawrence, *Women*, 230.

¹⁰⁴ Lawrence, *Women*, 115-6.

¹⁰⁵ Lawrence, *Women*, 466.

¹⁰⁶ As we shall see below, ‘perpetual repetition’ also connotes Nietzsche’s thought of eternal recurrence.

machinery, the ‘implements of labour became automatic’, constituting an ‘industrial *perpetuum mobile*, that would go on producing for ever’.¹⁰⁷ Gudrun’s conceit is similar to that of Marx, although for her, it is the industrial masters that become such perpetually working machines.

Gudrun extends her conceit by compiling a mental list of the ‘machines’ in Gerald’s firm, from the wheelbarrow with ‘one humble wheel’, to the miners with ‘a thousand wheels’, up to Gerald ‘with a million wheels and cogs and axels’: ‘such a lot of little wheels to his make-up! He was more intricate than a chronometer-watch’.¹⁰⁸ The depiction of Gerald as a complicated machine, made out of wheels, cogs and axels, resonates with Marx’s description—which is open to both literal and figurative interpretation—of the powerful ‘master’ of the factory as having his factory machinery in his ‘brain [*Hirn*]’.¹⁰⁹ Further, it is telling that Gudrun should compare Gerald not just to a machine, but more specifically to an intricate ‘chronometer-watch’. In his analysis of the effect of machinery in modern industry, Marx contends that, by sweeping away ‘every moral and natural restriction on the length of the working-day’, the machine became ‘the most unfailing means for placing every moment of the labourer’s time and that of his family, at the disposal of the capitalist for the purpose of expanding the value of his capital’.¹¹⁰ Gudrun’s comparison of Gerald to a watch both reflects this way in which machines historically placed the labourer’s time at the disposal of the capitalist, and intimates the power that Gerald exerts over his work-force through time-discipline. In this latter case, it is fitting that the comparison should be to a ‘chronometer-watch’, a highly precise and accurate

¹⁰⁷ Marx, *Capital*, 247.

¹⁰⁸ Lawrence, *Women*, 466.

¹⁰⁹ Marx, *Capital*, 261.

¹¹⁰ Marx, *Capital*, 250.

type of watch, that would be well-suited to the ‘scientific’ measurement and regulation of tasks.¹¹¹

More generally, the chronometer-watch stands a symbol of Gerald’s power. With the rise of industrial capitalism, time became a site of conflict between the ruling and working classes. Marx points out that the ‘creation of a normal working-day is . . . the product of a protracted civil war, more or less dissembled, between the capitalist class and the working class’.¹¹² On the one hand, the industrial masters attempted to extract as much labour time as possible from their work-force in order to increase labour power and capital; on the other hand, the working class resisted this drive in part by supporting legislation such as the Factory Acts that regulate and place limits on the extent of the working-day. As Thompson makes clear, the working class came to accept the new time categories of their employers, and ‘learned to fight back within them’.¹¹³ Given this context, Gudrun’s comparison is revealing; the ‘chronometer-watch’ stands as a symbol of time as a site of contestation between Gerald as an industrial magnate and his workforce.

Both Ursula and Gudrun search—with limited success—for alternatives to lives made up of mechanical repetition. In ‘Sunday Evening’, Ursula dwells on death, which she sees as preferable to living a life of mechanical repetition. ‘How beautiful, how grand and perfect death was, how good to look forward to’, she meditates, and finds consolation in the fact that ‘this remained to look forward to, the pure inhuman otherness of death’.¹¹⁴ Her turning towards death finds a philosophical counterpart in

¹¹¹ Compare Stevenson, *Modernist Fiction*, 119, 126-7.

¹¹² Marx, *Capital*, 180.

¹¹³ Thompson, ‘Time’, 85-6.

¹¹⁴ Lawrence, *Women*, 193-4.

the *Zeitlichkeit* of Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927). Much as Ursula looks forward to death as an edifying and elating eventuality that promises to bring purpose to what was otherwise a 'life of barren routine, without inner meaning, without inner significance', so too Heidegger counterposed the authentic stance of 'anticipatory resoluteness in the face of death' to the inauthentic temporality of everyday life.¹¹⁵ Gudrun takes a different approach from her sister, and in a moment of desperation thinks of escaping her life of mechanical repetition by fleeing with the artist Loerke, to live a 'Bohemian life' in Dresden.¹¹⁶ By entertaining such a plan—and indeed by enacting it after Gerald's death—she settles on what Thompson identifies as '[o]ne recurrent form of revolt within Western industrial capitalism': the 'bohemian or beatnik' practice of 'flouting the urgency of respectable time-values'.¹¹⁷ The Brangwen sisters' attempts to escape a life of repetition through death or by means of a bohemian lifestyle respectively differ markedly from Gerald's approach, and his Nietzschean affirmation of such a life.

Gerald Crich and Eternal Recurrence

Lawrence fictively adapted Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence in his portrayal of Gerald Crich's renovation of his mining industry.¹¹⁸ Unlike Ursula and Gudrun, who recoil from mechanical repetition, Gerald comes to embrace such repetition as an

¹¹⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 378-9. This suggestion complements Michael Levenson's identification of Heidegger's *Zeitlichkeit* as a philosophical parallel that helps to 'elucidate' Virginia Woolf's high modernist experiments with time ('The Time-Mind of the Twenties', in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature*, ed. Laura Marcus and Peter Nicholls (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 197-217, 212).

¹¹⁶ Lawrence, *Women*, 464.

¹¹⁷ Thompson, 'Time', 95.

¹¹⁸ Like Benjamin, Lawrence employed Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence to characterize the repetitive labour conditions of modern industrial capitalism. However, as we shall see, his interpretation of Nietzsche's thought more closely resembles that of Heidegger than it does that of Benjamin.

intensification of the conditions of modern labour. In the chapter ‘The Industrial Magnate’, he throws himself into modernizing his family’s mining firm. He comes to realize that

[t]here were two opposites, his will and the resistant Matter of the earth. And between these he could establish the very expression of his will, the incarnation of his power, a great and perfect machine, a system, an activity of pure order, pure mechanical repetition, repetition ad infinitum, hence eternal and infinite. He found his eternal and his infinite in the pure machine-principle of perfect co-ordination into one pure, complex, infinitely repeated motion, like the spinning of a wheel; but a productive spinning, as the revolving of the universe may be called a productive spinning, a productive repetition through eternity, to infinity.¹¹⁹

Here, as Krockel points out, Lawrence unmistakably draws on Nietzsche’s notions of eternal recurrence and will-to-power.¹²⁰

Nietzsche’s doctrine of eternal recurrence achieves a transformation of the traditional understanding of ‘eternity’ as something that lies outside time, by rethinking it as the infinite repetition or recurrence of events within time. Every event is supposed to have occurred an infinite number of times in the past, and is seen as bound to be repeated an infinite number of times in the future. Lawrence draws on Nietzsche’s thought of eternal recurrence to portray Gerald’s mining industry as a ‘perfect machine’, ‘system’ or ‘activity’ of ‘repetition ad infinitum, hence eternal and infinite’. That Gerald’s system of infinite repetition should be ‘eternal’ suggests that, as with Nietzsche’s doctrine, eternity is rethought in terms of infinite repetition within time. Notably, Gerald is described as finding his ‘eternal and infinite’ in a ‘machine-principle’ of ‘infinitely repeated motion’ that is compared to ‘the revolving of the universe’ as ‘a productive spinning, a productive repetition through eternity, to infinity’. This description of the revolving universe closely echoes some of

¹¹⁹ Lawrence, *Women*, 228.

¹²⁰ Krockel, *Germany*, 170. Krockel comments that ‘the “eternal and infinite” mechanized repetition of Gerald’s will is an ideal—or perverse—form of Nietzsche’s “ewige Wiederkehr”’.

Nietzsche's more cosmological formulations of the doctrine of eternal universe, such as that of the note collected in the *Will to Power* that describes the world 'as a circular movement that has already repeated itself infinitely often and plays its game in *infinitum*'.¹²¹ In both cases, the world or universe is portrayed in terms of a circular movement of repetition through infinite time. What is distinctive about Lawrence's fictive adaptation of Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence in *Women in Love* is that he reimagines this doctrine in terms of machines and industry. The circular movement of Nietzsche's infinitely repeating world is transposed to a 'machine-principle' likened to the spinning of a wheel, and the infinite repetition of Nietzsche's doctrine is re-construed as the endless 'mechanical repetition' of Gerald's modern industrial mining system.

Gerald's affirmation of a mechanical-industrial version of Nietzsche's eternal recurrence is fused with the equally-Nietzschean motif of *Wille zur Macht* or 'will-to-power'. Gerald's perfect mining machine is described as the 'expression of his will, the incarnation of his power'. As Krockel notes, Gerald here 'expresses his "Wille zur Macht" through his impact upon the outside world, to "reduce it to his will"'.¹²² Elsewhere, Ursula refers to Gerald's forceful control over his horse beside a passing train as a 'lust for bullying—a real Wille zur Macht—so base, so petty'.¹²³ In both cases, Lawrence's version of Nietzsche's *Wille zur Macht* is what Milton calls 'a conscious urge which aims at establishing dominance of an obvious, physical kind'.¹²⁴ In the context of the renovation of his mines, Gerald's affirmation of eternal

¹²¹ Nietzsche, *Power*, 549. For more cosmological formulations of the thought, see also 'Eternal Recurrence', 237-50.

¹²² Krockel, *Germany*, 170.

¹²³ Lawrence, *Women*, 228, 150.

¹²⁴ Milton, *Lawrence*, 15-6.

recurrence is allied with the expression of his ‘will-to-power’, understood as a desire to control and subjugate the earth and his workforce.

In *Women in Love*, Gudrun and Gerald adopt opposed stances towards the thought of eternal recurrence. Gudrun’s recoil from the ‘thought of the mechanical succession of day following day, day following day, ad infinitum’, is, as the repetition of the Latin tag suggests, in part a reaction against Gerald’s affirmation of ‘repetition ad infinitum’. Her horror at what she calls the ‘terrible bondage of [the] tick-tack of time’ is a response appropriate both to the repetitive temporality of industrial capitalism, and to Nietzsche’s thought of eternal recurrence.¹²⁵ In the first case, the time-discipline of industrial capitalism is so pervasive and so deeply entrenched that there is seemingly no escape. Just as the worker in capitalist society is made a slave to the clock, so Gudrun sees the ‘tick-tack of time’ as a ‘terrible bondage’. However, Gudrun’s response is also a particularly appropriate one to Nietzsche’s thought of eternal recurrence. This thought presents itself, to those who are not able to affirm it, as the ‘greatest weight’ and as most ‘abysmal thought’.¹²⁶ If all things recur an infinite number of times, then there can never be an escape from time. As a note in the *Will to Power* puts it: ‘[e]verything becomes and returns eternally—escape is impossible!’¹²⁷ Gudrun thinks of mechanical repetition in markedly similar terms, thinking of the ‘eternal repetition of hours and days’ as ‘too awful to contemplate’: ‘there was no escape from it, no escape’.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Lawrence, *Women*, 464.

¹²⁶ Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 274; *Zarathustra*, 125.

¹²⁷ Nietzsche, *Power*, 545.

¹²⁸ Lawrence, *Women*, 464.

While Gudrun's horror at the eternal repetition of hours and days corresponds to the nihilistic aspect of the thought of eternal recurrence, Gerald's embrace of mechanical repetition *ad infinitum* is that of the Nietzschean *Übermensch* who is able to desire and will the eternal recurrence of the same, and thereby joyfully to overcome nihilism. This difference is marked by Gudrun's embittered rejection of 'the Gerald's of this world': '[l]et them become instruments, pure machines, pure wills that work like clock-work, *in perpetual repetition*'.¹²⁹ While, as we have seen, Gudrun's sentiment reflects the mechanizing effects of modern labour in capitalist society, her suggestion is also strongly Nietzschean. Her mention of 'pure wills' and 'perpetual repetition' once again fuses the Nietzschean themes of will-to-power and eternal recurrence. Her image of Gerald being as satisfied as 'a wheelbarrow that goes backwards and forwards along a plank all day', captures the conditions of labour in his mines as those of Nietzschean perpetual repetition. While this image suggests perpetual repetition as a lateral motion—not unlike the swinging of a pendulum—her image of Gerald composed of 'a million wheels and cogs and axles' conveys perpetual repetition as an endless rotary motion, and thereby reflects well the cyclicity of Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence.

Gerald's affirmation of eternal recurrence lies at the heart of a number of Nietzschean themes that run through *Women in Love*. In 'The Industrial Magnate', Gerald's renovation of the mines at Beldover is portrayed in Nietzschean terms that are projected schematically onto his relationship with his father. As Montgomery remarks, the analysis of Christianity in *Women in Love* is indistinguishable from that of Nietzsche. Lawrence presents the essential traits of the Christian in Gerald's father,

¹²⁹ Lawrence, *Women*, 466, my emphasis.

the watchwords of whose life—pity, duty, and charity—are the very ideas that Nietzsche singles out for his strongest attack.¹³⁰ His father had tried, in the face of increasing class-conflict, to balance his role as capitalist owner of the mines with Christian principles, for example giving away hundreds of pounds of his own money in charity to the workers when there was a strike. By contrast, Gerald dispenses entirely with such Christian morality, rejecting ‘[t]he whole Christian attitude of love and self-sacrifice’ as ‘old hat’.¹³¹ He dismisses his father’s qualms about exploiting his workforce as superfluous sentiment, and instead focuses on ruthlessly exerting his power to subordinate the miners to his will. The ‘great religion’ of his father becomes ‘obsolete’, and is ‘superseded in the world’.¹³²

In modernizing his mining industry, Gerald is portrayed as a Nietzschean *Übermensch*. For Nietzsche, he who affirms the thought of eternal recurrence overcomes the merely human, and becomes the *Übermensch* or superman. For instance, in Zarathustra’s parable in ‘On the Vision and the Riddle’, he who affirms the thought of eternal recurrence arises ‘no longer human’.¹³³ Similarly, Gerald, having embraced a version of eternal recurrence as a machine-principle of infinite repetition, appears as an industrial *Übermensch*. His new organization of the mines is described in explicitly Nietzschean terms as ‘the highest that man had produced, the most wonderful and *superhuman*’. His workers are ‘exalted by belonging to this great and *superhuman* system which was beyond feeling or reason, something really godlike’. Gerald himself transcends the merely human, and becomes ‘almost like a

¹³⁰ Montgomery, *Visionary*, 126.

¹³¹ Lawrence, *Women*, 226-7.

¹³² Lawrence, *Women*, 229.

¹³³ Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 127.

divinity' or a god—a 'God of the Machine, Deus ex Machina'.¹³⁴ Gudrun later thinks of him—again in Nietzschean terms—as 'superhumanly strong', and as a 'pure, inhuman, almost superhuman instrument'.¹³⁵ It is as an industrial Nietzschean *Übermensch* that he achieves a revaluation of his father's Christian moral values, reforming the mining industry according to values that lie beyond good and evil.

Within *Women in Love*, Gerald's Nietzschean reformation of his mining firm plays an important role within the wider scheme of history. The thought of eternal recurrence is both a matter of individual temporality, and has a wider impact on history. On the one hand, it involves the individual adopting a particular attitude within lived time, as indicated allegorically in 'On the Vision and the Riddle' by the fact that the thought is to be affirmed from a gateway with the word 'Moment' inscribed on top.¹³⁶ Yet on the other hand, the thought also induces a rupture in historical time, and induces the birth of a new, post-Christian age. As one of Nietzsche's notes from the Zarathustra period puts it, '[t]he doctrine of the Eternal Recurrence is the turning point of history'.¹³⁷ Gerald's embrace of a version of the thought of eternal recurrence in *Women in Love* achieves a similar effect on history. In part, this impact is reflected narrowly in terms of his family history, and of the history of the mines at Beldover. His renovation of the mines is portrayed as making a complete break with the past, and with his father's management: '[h]is father was forgotten already. There was a new world, a new order, strict, terrible, inhuman, but satisfying in its very destructiveness'.¹³⁸ Gerald's recognition that 'there was need for a complete break' employs similar terms of rupture to those of Nietzsche, when he notes that the thought

¹³⁴ Lawrence, *Women*, 231-2, 228, my emphasis.

¹³⁵ Lawrence, *Women*, 402, 418.

¹³⁶ Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 125-6.

¹³⁷ Nietzsche, 'Eternal Recurrence', 267; compare *Power*, 545.

¹³⁸ Lawrence, *Women*, 231.

of eternal recurrence ‘makes everything *break open* [*Aufbrechen*]’.¹³⁹ Yet Gerald’s industrial activities also promise—or threaten—to have a wider impact, on the stage of national history.

Early in the novel, Gerald and Rupert discuss an article in the *Daily Telegraph* that suggests that ‘there must arise a man who will give new values to things, give us new truths, a new attitude to life’.¹⁴⁰ As Montgomery points out, although unnamed, ‘Nietzsche is clearly present here’.¹⁴¹ The coming man of the article is a Nietzschean *Übermensch*, who would revalue all values. It is not implausible that Gerald and Rupert should find a Nietzschean article in a newspaper, given that Nietzsche enjoyed a vogue in England during the early part of the twentieth century. Indeed, Patrick Bridgwater argues that ‘Nietzsche began to receive serious recognition in England in about 1902’, and draws attention to the many articles that were published on Nietzsche in the British Press in the following decades, including in literary magazines such as A. R. Orage’s *The New Age*, and in national newspapers such as *The Sunday Times*.¹⁴² Gerald’s transformation into an industrial *Übermensch* means that, before his untimely death in the Alps, he looks set to play the Nietzschean role heralded by the newspaper. In ‘Snow’, Gudrun thinks of ‘the revolution that [Gerald] had worked in the mines’, and, in a flight of ambition, envisages him effecting a similar transformation on the national scale:

Gerald, with his force of will and his power for comprehending the actual world, should be set to solve the problems of the day, the problem of industrialism in the modern world. She knew he would, in the course of time, effect the changes he desired, he could re-organise the industrial system.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Lawrence, *Women*, 224; Nietzsche, *Power*, 544, his emphasis.

¹⁴⁰ Lawrence, *Women*, 54.

¹⁴¹ Montgomery, *Visionary*, 113.

¹⁴² Patrick Bridgwater, *Nietzsche in Anglosaxony: A Study of Nietzsche’s Impact on English and American Literature* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1972), 13.

¹⁴³ Lawrence, *Women*, 417.

For Gerald to solve ‘the problem of industrialism in the modern world’ through his forceful ‘will’ and ‘power’—or will-to-power—would be for him to fulfil the newspaper’s promise of a coming Nietzschean *Übermensch*. This role is—as one would expect with the thought of eternal recurrence—one of explosive historical significance, as suggested by the earlier images of England going off like a ‘powder-magazine’ or a ‘display of fireworks’.¹⁴⁴

While Gerald at one time promises to bring about a Nietzschean historical ‘revolution’, it should be noted that this is emphatically not a revolution in a Marxist sense. It is not a revolution of the working class against their capitalist masters, which promises to overthrow the existing class-structure and explode the capitalist form of production. On the contrary, the ‘revolution’ that Gudrun recognizes Gerald as already having effected in his mines, and which she hopes he will reproduce on the national scale, is a politically conservative revolution, which serves to entrench the power of the industrial masters over their workforces. Tellingly, in her plan for Gerald’s industrial-political future, Gudrun thinks that ‘he would go into Parliament in the Conservative interest’ in order to ‘clear up the great muddle of labour and industry’.¹⁴⁵

Notably, Lawrence’s unsympathetic adaptation of eternal recurrence and other Nietzschean themes in *Women in Love* accords closely with Heidegger’s interpretation of the thought of eternal recurrence as the virulent consummation of

¹⁴⁴ Lawrence, *Women*, 395. In ‘Continental’, Gudrun is inspired by the Alpine setting to ‘feel übermenschlich—more than human’, and remarks that it would ‘be wonderful, if all England *did* suddenly go off like a display of fireworks’ (394-5).

¹⁴⁵ Lawrence, *Women*, 417.

modernity. Lawrence and Heidegger both arrived independently at an interpretation of Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence in terms of industrial technology, despite the fact that this connection is by no means self-evident.¹⁴⁶ Both reinterpreted Nietzsche's thought in terms of machines. Heidegger asked provocatively: '[w]hat is the essence of the modern power-driven machine [*der modernen Kraftmaschine*] other than one expression of the eternal recurrence of the same?'¹⁴⁷ Similarly, Lawrence reinterpreted eternal recurrence as Gerald's embrace of a 'machine-principle' of 'infinitely repeated motion' that is compared to 'the spinning of a wheel'. Concordant patterns of imagery are developed throughout the novel, and eternal recurrence is frequently associated with the circular motion of machine parts. Gudrun's thinking of Gerald as a machine made up of 'a million wheels and cogs and axles' is one such example. Again, reworking a poem translated by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow as 'Retribution', she thinks of Gerald with his mining firm as grinding on 'at the old mills forever'; the image of endlessly turning 'mill-stones' in the 'eternal mills of God' is an apt one for eternal recurrence. In this context, it is fitting that Ursula, sickened by her existence of mechanical repetition, should think of 'all life' as 'a rotary motion, mechanised'.¹⁴⁸

Correlatively, Lawrence's interpretations of Nietzsche's notions of the *Übermensch* and will-to-power in *Women in Love* resemble those of Heidegger.¹⁴⁹ Lawrence's

¹⁴⁶ Löwith, for instance, dissented from Heidegger's interpretation, claiming that the thought of eternal return cannot be 'understood in terms of the essence of modern technology and its gyrating machines' (*European Nihilism*, 120). He asks rhetorically: 'when might Nietzsche ever have thought that the essence of modern technology, of the revolving engine, could be an "embodiment of the eternal recurrence of the same"?' (*Eternal Recurrence*, 226).

¹⁴⁷ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, ii, 223, translation modified and emphasis removed.

¹⁴⁸ Lawrence, *Women*, 228, 466, 463-4, 193.

¹⁴⁹ Fernihough has similarly aligned Lawrence and Heidegger's interpretations of Nietzsche, arguing that both 'bring Nietzsche forward into the age of technology . . . whilst seeing him, curiously, as a kind of philosophical technologist himself' (*Aesthetics*, 13). My reading complements her suggestion

reinterpretation of the *Übermensch* as an industrial magnate accords with that of Heidegger. Heidegger understands the *Übermensch* as he who affirms the thought of eternal recurrence, and comes to interpret this *Übermensch* as the modern subject, intent on the unbridled technological mastery and exploitation of the earth.¹⁵⁰ For such a subject, the ‘world changes into object’: ‘the earth . . . can show itself only as an object of assault. . . . Nature appears everywhere . . . as the object of technology’.¹⁵¹ In *Women in Love*, Gerald, as industrial *Übermensch*, conducts just such an assault on his mines, using new technology and employing ‘instruments human and metallic’ in his fight to subjugate ‘the resistant Matter of the underground’.¹⁵²

Milton has argued that Lawrence (deliberately) misrepresented Nietzsche’s notion of will-to-power in *Women in Love*, and that Lawrence’s will-to-power as a form of bullying stands as a crude variant of Nietzsche’s far more subtle concept.¹⁵³ However, setting aside the issue of fidelity to Nietzsche’s writings, it should be noted that Lawrence’s version of will-to-power partially resembles that of Heidegger.¹⁵⁴ Although he avoided a crudely psychological interpretation of Nietzsche’s doctrine, Heidegger saw Nietzsche’s will-to-power as revealing itself in a consummate subjectivity (the *Übermensch*), which sets itself against the world as object. He portrayed the *Übermensch* as ‘unconditioned will to power’, who seeks to exhibit his

that ‘Gerald Crich seems to offer a supreme example of both Heidegger’s “technological man” and of the will-to-power’ (146).

¹⁵⁰ Heidegger suggests that the doctrines of eternal recurrence and the *Übermensch* ‘are conjoined in a circle’ (*Nietzsche*, ii, 228). According to Heidegger, the *Übermensch* is he who is equal to the fundamental essence of modern technology, which he needs for ‘the institution of absolute dominion over the earth’ (iv, 117).

¹⁵¹ Heidegger, *Technology*, 100.

¹⁵² Lawrence, *Women*, 228.

¹⁵³ Milton, *Lawrence*, 15-6.

¹⁵⁴ Fernihough similarly aligns the way that Lawrence and Heidegger construe Nietzsche’s notion of will-to-power (*Aesthetics*, 147).

power and achieve ‘absolute dominance over the earth’: he regards himself as ‘the master of absolute administration of power with the fully developed power resources of the earth’.¹⁵⁵ In a manner that accords with Heidegger’s interpretation of the will-to-power as the culmination of a metaphysical tradition in which man as subject is set against the world as object, Gerald thinks of ‘mankind’ as ‘contradistinguished against inanimate Matter’, and the history of mankind as the ‘history of the conquest of the one by the other’. He seeks to achieve dominance over the earth: ‘it was his will to subjugate Matter to his own ends. . . What he wanted was the pure fulfilment of his own will in the struggle with the natural conditions. His will was now, to take the coal out of the earth, profitably’.¹⁵⁶ For both Lawrence and Heidegger, will-to-power is understood in terms of the domination and subjugation of the earth.

Further parallels could be drawn between *Women in Love* and Heidegger’s writings on technology.¹⁵⁷ Heidegger’s analysis of Nietzsche forms part of his wider critique of technology.¹⁵⁸ In his lectures on Nietzsche, Heidegger claimed that Nietzsche’s thought of eternal recurrence comes to define modernity as a pernicious age of unbridled technology. Later, in ‘The Question Concerning Technology’ (1954), he analysed the essence of technology as lying in ‘Enframing’ (*Ge-stell*), a mode of the revelation of being that reduces the world to ‘standing-reserve’ (*Bestand*) to be used

¹⁵⁵ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, iv, 81-2.

¹⁵⁶ Lawrence, *Women*, 228, 223-4.

¹⁵⁷ To do so is to build on a well-established tradition within Lawrence studies of reading Lawrence alongside Heidegger. See, in particular: Michael Bell, *D. H. Lawrence: Language and Being* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Fernihough, *Aesthetics*; Fiona Becket, *D. H. Lawrence: the Thinker as Poet* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1997); and Paul Sheehan, *Modernism, Narrative and Humanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 87-120.

¹⁵⁸ As Dale Allen Wilkerson remarks, Heidegger’s lectures on Nietzsche ‘explicitly [anticipate] his post-war stance concerning technology, the earth and the poetizing essence of Being’ (‘The Root of Heidegger’s Concern for the Earth at the Consummation of Metaphysics: The Nietzsche Lectures’, *Cosmos and History*, 1/1 (2005), 27-34, 28).

for technological purposes.¹⁵⁹ In *Women in Love*, Gerald's Nietzschean renovation of his mines results in a phenomenon very similar to that which Heidegger calls 'Enframing'. Indeed, Heidegger had used coal mining as an example of the technological revelation of being, explaining how the earth is converted into standing-reserve when it is 'challenged into the putting out of coal and ore'.¹⁶⁰ Elsewhere, he wrote that by Enframing, nature is converted into a 'gigantic gasoline station'.¹⁶¹ Similarly, Gerald comes to see the earth solely in terms of the raw materials that it contains, and becomes obsessed with the question of 'how to take the coal out of the earth'. However, it is not just inert 'Matter' that he seeks to subjugate. He decides in a ruthless and 'inhuman' manner to dispense with many of the firm's employees, in spite of his father's appeals to charity and pity: '[t]he old grey managers, the old grey clerks, the doddering old pensioners, he looked at them, and removed them as so much lumber'.¹⁶² The term 'lumber' can mean both 'surplus or disused articles', or 'timber or logs'; when heard in the second sense, the simile suggests that Gerald's employees are treated not as humans, but as natural resources that are there to be exploited. It thereby suggests a phenomenon very similar to Heidegger's notion of the reduction to standing-reserve, particularly given that Heidegger took the term 'standing-reserve' from forestry, in which context it refers to forests that are viewed simply in terms of their potential for timber. Again, in *Women in Love*, Gerald realises that he can economise by refusing to provide the widows of men who have worked for the firm with free coal, as has been custom, and wonders why these widows were 'not immolated on the pyre of the husband, like the sati in India?'.¹⁶³ His conceit

¹⁵⁹ Heidegger, *Technology*, 17, 19.

¹⁶⁰ Heidegger, *Technology*, 14. Compare Fernihough, *Aesthetics*, 145.

¹⁶¹ Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 50.

¹⁶² Lawrence, *Women*, 227, 224, 229.

¹⁶³ Lawrence, *Women*, 230.

functions by implicitly comparing the widows to the coal that he refuses to give them. Once again, humans in Gerald's industrial world are reduced to the status of natural resources, fit to be used up and consumed.

It is worth dwelling briefly on the politics of the thought of eternal recurrence in *Women in Love*. Lawrence drew on Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence to imagine an intensification of the mechanical repetition that characterizes labour in modern industrial capitalism. Marx provided an analysis of such repetition in the first volume of *Capital*, and located an emancipatory revolutionary potential therein. He observed that the extension of factory legislation to all trades had the effect of enforcing 'uniformity, regularity, order, and economy' in each individual workshop. Yet at the same time, by accelerating the concentration of capital and the exclusive predominance of the factory system, it

matures the contradictions and antagonisms of the capitalist form of production, and thereby provides, along with the elements for the formation of a new society, the forces for exploding the old one.¹⁶⁴

Developing Marx's recognition of a revolutionary potential within repetition, Benjamin drew on Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence to theorize the temporality of modernity as 'the new as the ever-same', a temporality which both displays a hellish aspect, but also locates a politically emancipatory potential within technology. By stark contrast, Gerald's affirmation of eternal recurrence in *Women in Love* holds no such emancipatory hope. Gerald's new 'machine-principle' involves an intensification of the conditions of modern labour as those of mechanical repetition, and an ever-tighter exploitation of his workforce. Rather than promising to explode

¹⁶⁴ Marx, *Capital*, 296.

the capitalist form of production, Gerald metamorphoses into an arch-capitalist and arch-industrialist.

Of course, the politics of eternal recurrence within the novel should be distinguished from the politics of the novel, and from Lawrence's personal politics. Gerald's embrace of eternal recurrence, and his industrial activities, are depicted negatively in the novel. Lawrence's picture of Gerald as a Nietzschean industrial magnate, brutally exploiting his mines and his workforce, is by no means a sympathetic one. Indeed, Lawrence drew on Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence in *Women in Love* to create a critical portrayal of industrial modernity and of the technological exploitation of the earth, much as Heidegger used Nietzsche's philosophy in his critique of technological modernity. However, as we shall see, Lawrence returned to Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), where he reworked it in a more sympathetic fashion.

2.2. The Revaluation of the Earth

It is widely held that D. H. Lawrence's last novel, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), involves a flight from history. Critics such as Scott Sanders, Graham Holderness, and Peter Scheckner have usefully situated the novel in the context of the 1926 General Strike, and Lawrence's reaction to the strike on returning to his home town of Eastwood that year. However, drawing attention to the differences between the three versions of the novel, all of these critics have maintained that the later versions become progressively more divorced from history and from social realities.¹ Sanders contends that by the third version of the novel, Connie and Mellors have become 'two isolated souls who have severed all ties with the degraded world' in order to 'seek their own private salvation through passion and flight'. As such, he argues that this novel is typical of Lawrence, who, grieved by the crippling effects of industrialization, was 'driven again and again to flee history into a mythic realm in which the passions of the body redeem the cruelties of the world'.² Holderness similarly argues that the novel underwent a 'process of retreat from history' through its different versions, culminating in the final version, in which "'class" is abolished': '[s]uch a denial of history is the necessary precondition for the relationship between Connie and Mellors; history presents no obstacles to its fulfillment, its symbolic reconciliation of real contradictions'.³ Scheckner concurs, suggesting that the 'rich tapestry of history, social struggle, and the interdependence of the public and private sectors is greatly diminished' over the course of the novels, and that by the final

¹ For an account of the composition of the three versions of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, and a discussion

² Scott Sanders, *D. H. Lawrence: The World of the Five Major Novels* (New York: Viking Press, 1974), 204-5.

³ Graham Holderness, *D. H. Lawrence: History, Ideology and Fiction* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1982), 223, 226.

version, the ‘historical England of the first two versions now becomes largely two people, Wragby woods, the hut, and a few animals’.⁴

While Sanders and Holderness argue that the novel’s turn from history was politically retrograde, Scheckner advances a more politically salutary reading of this same phenomenon. He holds that ‘even the least political version—the final one—suggests that a retreat from history or society into a mythic realm of sex or blood consciousness was an inadequate response to a political problem’.⁵ Drew Milne has followed Scheckner’s lead, arguing that the novels do not partake in an ideological retreat from class consciousness, but rather are ‘critical of sexual solutions to the political problems represented in the novel’. They thereby supposedly serve a useful political function, by allowing ‘us to see how the focus on sexual politics becomes one way for individuals to take refuge from political contradictions in narratives of personal conflict’.⁶

Contrary to these critics, I will in this chapter argue that, by recognizing its recourse to Nietzsche’s thought of eternal recurrence, we should appreciate that *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* does not involve a retreat from history. Rather, it is a rich novelistic imagination of a particular form of historical transition: the Nietzschean overcoming of a Platonic historical age, which is at the same time the apocalyptic inauguration of a third Joachite historical epoch. While the novel does represent a narrower spectrum of society through its successive versions, its Nietzschean and

⁴ Scheckner, *Class*, 161.

⁵ Scheckner, *Class*, 13.

⁶ Drew Milne, ‘Lawrence and the Politics of Sexual Politics’, in *The Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Anne Fernihough (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 197-216, 212-4.

apocalyptic elements inversely become more pronounced.⁷ As we shall see, acknowledging this historical scheme facilitates a revised understanding of the novel's politics, and of Lawrence's green politics more generally.

It should be flagged that the following reading of the *Lady Chatterley* novels departs from the Lukácsian theory of the novel held by Sanders, Holderness and Scheckner. All of these critics subscribe to the view, derived from György Lukács, that the novel's political value arises from its success or failure at representing society—along with its social contradictions—at a given moment in history.⁸ By contrast, my reading is implicitly committed to a view of the novel derived from Paul Ricoeur's theory of time and narrative. As was seen above, Ricoeur holds that narrative configures time in different ways (mimesis 2), and has the power to refigure its readers' experience of time, and in particular, their experience of historical time (mimesis 3).⁹ While the *Lady Chatterley* novels arguably turn away from the realist ambition of representing society along with its inherent social contradictions at a given historical moment, they nevertheless imagine a particular shape of history, and dramatize a form of historical transition. This configuration of a shape of history carries a politics, not least by its potential to refigure its readers' experience of time.

Lawrence's adaptation of Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* differs markedly from his earlier engagements with that thought.

In *Women in Love* (1920) and *Movements in European History* (1921), he combined

⁷ On different grounds, Tony Pinkney has also dissented from the popular view that 'the process of Lawrentian rewriting [in the *Lady Chatterley* novels] is a constant evacuation of history for myth' (*D. H. Lawrence and Modernism* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1990), 139-40).

⁸ See Sanders, *Lawrence*, 18, 32; Holderness, *Lawrence*, 7-12, 220; and Scheckner, *Class*, 93, 157.

⁹ While both theories are committed to some form of 'representation', Ricoeur's neo-Aristotelian conception of representation, developed in his theory of three-fold mimesis, differs markedly from that of Lukács.

versions of eternal recurrence with visions of powerful leadership. In *Movements*, he drew from the cyclical shape of his history the need for a powerful Caesarist leader. In *Women in Love*, he allied Gerald's embrace of mechanical repetition with his desire to exert his bullying 'will-to-power' over his mines and his work-force. However, as we shall see, in the *Lady Chatterley* novels, eternal recurrence is no longer associated with powerful leadership. This difference both reflects and takes part in Lawrence's well-documented movement away from authoritarian leadership politics in the late 1920s.¹⁰ As he put it in a letter of 1928: 'the leader of men is a back number. After all, at the back of the hero is the militant ideal: and the militant ideal . . . seems to me . . . a cold egg. We're sort of sick of all forms of militarism'.¹¹ Correspondingly, as we shall see, the thought of eternal recurrence stands in a very different relationship to the environment in his last novel. Whereas in *Women in Love*, the thought was associated with Gerald's ruthless exploitation and despoliation of the land through his industrial activities, Lawrence adapts the thought in far more sympathetic fashion in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. He makes it integral to Connie and Mellors's attempt, in the face of Clifford's environmentally-damaging industrialism, to revalue the earth.

The Historical Scheme of Lady Chatterley's Lover (1928)

For much of his life, Lawrence interpreted contemporary events with the help of Nietzschean and apocalyptic schemes of history. For example, during the First World War, he imagined a form of historical renewal by fusing elements of Nietzschean and

¹⁰ See, for instance, Rick Rylance's account of the 'softening of [Lawrence's] political outlook in the face of militarist power' ('Lawrence's Politics', 172-3).

¹¹ Letter to Witter Bynner, 13 March 1928; *Letters*, vi, 321. In context, Lawrence is explaining the transition of the vision of *The Plumed Serpent* to that of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*: 'the new relationship will be some sort of tenderness . . . and not the . . . lead on and I follow, ich dien sort of business'.

apocalyptic thought. In an often-quoted letter of 1915, he recorded his desire to ‘send up the new shoots of a new era: a great, utter revolution, and the dawn of a new historical epoch’. His sense that ‘an end is coming’, combined with his hope that there will be a ‘new era’, is most immediately an apocalyptic brand of thought, and conforms closely to the Joachite idea of the inauguration of a third historical age.¹² Yet the phrase ‘the dawn of a new historical epoch’ also carries Nietzschean overtones, echoing the title of one of Nietzsche’s works: *Morgenröte*, or *The Dawn* (1881).¹³

Lawrence continued to hold out hope for historical renewal and a ‘revolution’ in the last years of his life. He inveighed against what he saw as ‘the industrial system’, whilst rejecting communism as a solution. For example, in a letter of 1928, he wrote that ‘[i]t’s the industrial system which is wrong. And it’s up to the miners to change it. Not by hating capitalism or anything else’.¹⁴ Again, in another letter of the same year, he wrote that:

[i]t’s time there was an *enormous* revolution—not to instal soviets, but to give life itself a chance. What’s the good of an industrial system piling up rubbish, while nobody lives. . . . I get more revolutionary every minute, but for *life’s* sake. The dead materialism of Marx socialism and soviets seems to me no better than what we’ve got.¹⁵

Not only did he distinguish his preferred brand of historical ‘revolution’ to that of ‘Marx socialism and soviets’, he even diagnosed Marxism and the 1917 Russian Revolution as the culmination of the industrial and machine-driven system against which he was opposed. In his essay ‘Men Must Work and Women as Well’ (1929), he

¹² Letter to Hugh Meredith, 2 November 1915; *Letters*, ii, 426.

¹³ Not long before, Lawrence had considered calling his new philosophical work ‘*Morgenrot*’, a title modelled on that of Nietzsche (see *Letters*, ii, 315, 317).

¹⁴ Letter to Charles Wilson, 15 January 1928; *Letters*, vi, 267.

¹⁵ Letter to Charles Wilson, 28 December 1928; *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, Volume VII*, ed. Keith Sagar and James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 99.

suggested that 'the Soviet is established on the image of the machine', and portrayed the Russian Revolution as 'a great outburst of anti-physical insanity'.¹⁶

The *Lady Chatterley* novels do not turn away from history. On the contrary, in these novels, Lawrence used his favoured Nietzschean and apocalyptic schemes of history to depict the overcoming of a historical age defined by Platonism, and to imagine the birth of a new historical age, in which the earth and body are revalued.

In *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Constance Chatterley rebels against her husband's Platonism, and the pursuit of Platonic truth and beauty which had characterized the early years of their marriage. For example, in the second version of the novel, Clifford reads 'Plato's *Phaedrus*' to Connie, but she 'didn't care about the progress of the soul, nor for pure Truth nor pure Knowledge, nor the Philosophers' heaven'. She revolts against Clifford: 'I am sick to death of your philosophy and your immortality! It deadens everything out of existence. Look at you, how dead you are!'¹⁷

Commentators have pointed out that Connie, and the *Lady Chatterley* novels in general, are anti-Platonist. Joseph Voelker draws attention to the anti-Platonism of the three versions of the novel.¹⁸ Dennis Jackson highlights Connie's 'rebellion against Platonism', and her rejection of the *Phaedrus* myth.¹⁹ Barry Scherr usefully situates the anti-Platonism of the novel within the wider context of Lawrence's 'quarrel with

¹⁶ D. H. Lawrence, *Late Essays and Articles*, ed. James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 284.

¹⁷ D. H. Lawrence, *The First and Second Lady Chatterley Novels*, ed. Dieter Mehl and Christa Jansohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 298-9.

¹⁸ Joseph C. Voelker, 'The Spirit of No-Place: Elements of the Classical Ironic Utopia in D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 25/2 (Summer 1979), 223-39, 226.

¹⁹ Dennis Jackson, 'Literary Allusions in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*', in Michael Squires and Dennis Jackson (eds), *D. H. Lawrence's 'Lady': A New Look at 'Lady Chatterley's Lover'* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 170-96, 174.

Plato', which dates from at least the time of the First World War.²⁰ However, what has not yet been recognized is that the anti-Platonism of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is deeply Nietzschean.²¹ In particular, Connie's rejection of Clifford's Platonism closely parallels Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence, through which Zarathustra sought to break free of a historical age that has been defined by Platonism.

As Martin Heidegger points out, during the last years of his creative life, Nietzsche laboured 'at nothing else than the overturning of Platonism'.²² Nietzsche interpreted the 'collective history of Western philosophy' as Platonism, understood as the belief in the distinction between the true and apparent worlds, and saw this Platonism as determinative of 'the history of Western man'.²³ Such an understanding is particularly evident in the section of the *Twilight of the Idols* (1888) entitled 'How the "True World" Finally Became a Fable'. As Heidegger comments, the six numbered parts of this section 'can be readily recognized as the most important epochs of Western thought'.²⁴ Plato's distinction between the true and apparent worlds re-emerges in the Christian distinction between heaven and earth, Kant's distinction between the noumenal and phenomenal worlds, and Schopenhauer's distinction between the world as will and the world as representation. The sixth numbered part of this section marks

²⁰ Barry J. Scherr, *D. H. Lawrence's Response to Plato: A Bloomian Interpretation* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 35.

²¹ For example, my reading challenges Eleanor H. Green's contention that Nietzsche 'fades out' of Lawrence's work after the leadership novels ('Blueprints for Utopia: The Political Ideas of Nietzsche and D. H. Lawrence', *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, 18/1 (1974), 141-61, 159).

²² Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, i, 154. In 'The Word of Nietzsche: "God is Dead"', Heidegger contends that 'Nietzsche understands his own philosophy as the countermovement to metaphysics, and that means for him a movement in opposition to Platonism'. Heidegger interprets Nietzsche's pronouncement 'God is dead' to mean that the Platonic suprasensory world (the heaven of the *Phaedrus*) 'is without effective power': '[m]etaphysics, i.e., for Nietzsche Western philosophy understood as Platonism, is at an end' (61).

²³ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, ii, 171.

²⁴ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, i, 202.

the juncture at which the opposition between the true and apparent worlds is to be overcome:

[t]he true world is gone: which world is left? The illusory one, perhaps? . . . But no! *we got rid of the illusory world along with the true one!* . . . end of longest error; high point of humanity; INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA.²⁵

The ‘end of [the] longest error’ marks the overcoming of Platonism as the history of philosophy; the ‘high point of humanity’ signals the advent of the *Übermensch* who is to supersede the ‘last man’. The overcoming of Platonism is to be achieved through the thought of eternal recurrence, which, as Heidegger puts it, aims to overturn and ‘twist out of’ the Platonic antithesis between the true and false worlds: ‘INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA’.²⁶

Following Nietzsche, Lawrence came to portray the history of the world as the history of Platonism. In his late writings, he advanced grand historical narratives very similar to those of Nietzsche. In *Apocalypse* (1931), he held that with the ‘coming of Socrates . . . the cosmos died’, and the next ‘two thousand years’ constituted a Platonic-Christian epoch characterised by the denial of the body and the triumph of the machine.²⁷ In his essay ‘Introduction to These Paintings’ (1929), he similarly described the ‘history of our era’ as ‘the nauseating and repulsive history of the crucifixion of the procreative body’, for which Plato was ‘arch-priest’. This Platonic era is characterized by a denial of the body (‘We, dear reader, you and I, we were born corpses and we are corpses’) and pernicious industrialism (‘the masses were

²⁵ Nietzsche, *Twilight*, 171.

²⁶ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, i, 208. In a different (although closely related) idiom, the thought of eternal recurrence is employed to deconstruct the binary oppositions between the true and apparent worlds, being and becoming, and eternity and time—oppositions which have underpinned philosophy and metaphysics from Plato onwards, and which have lead to the devaluation of the body and of the earth. As we have seen, Heidegger ultimately suggested that the thought of eternal recurrence failed in its aim of overcoming Platonism, and instead stood as its virulent consummation.

²⁷ Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, 96, 78, 198-9.

caught and enslaved to industrialism . . . and our modern “civilisation” of money, machines and wage-slaves was inaugurated’).²⁸

In the *Lady Chatterley* novels, Connie overcomes Clifford’s Platonism in a manner that closely parallels Zarathustra’s attempt to overcome Platonism through the thought of eternal recurrence. In the first version of the novel, Clifford challenges Connie, asking her whether ‘Plato’s ideas, and heaven, and those things, mean nothing to you?’ She responds:

[p]ictures! They make pictures. . . . No! With heaven and Plato’s ideas and all those things, I feel as I do in the National Gallery, or in the Uffizi. I’m looking at something rather lovely, or very lovely, but the world is outside, and my life is in the world.²⁹

By holding that Plato’s ideas and heaven ‘make pictures’, she implicitly dissents from Socrates’ well-known view of art in the tenth book of Plato’s *Republic*. Therein, Socrates holds painting to be ‘third removed from reality’, as the imitation of objects which are made by craftsmen, and he and Glaucon famously resolve to banish painters for their ideal republic.³⁰ Inverting Socrates’ hierarchy, Connie degrades Plato’s ideas and heaven to the level of pictures. Claiming that the ‘world is outside, and my life is in the world’, she thereby values Plato’s ‘apparent world’ over his ‘true world’. This inversion corresponds to the fifth stage of the history of philosophy in Nietzsche’s ‘How the “True World” Finally Became a Fable’, which consists of the abolition of the ‘true world’, at which Plato blushes: ‘[t]he “true world”—an idea that is of no further use . . . let’s get rid of it! . . . Plato blushes in shame’. Whereas the ‘true world’ in Nietzsche’s history becomes first ‘unattainable’, then an ‘obsolete,

²⁸ Lawrence, *Late Essays*, 203, 193.

²⁹ Lawrence, *First and Second*, 50.

³⁰ Plato, *Republic*, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 605b, 348.

superfluous idea', so Connie feels distanced from Plato's ideas and heaven: 'I'm an onlooker, I'm not in the picture'.³¹

As with Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence, Connie combats Platonism by means of a new form of temporality.³² She rebels against Clifford's obsession with a Platonic immortality in which 'your soul, or your self . . . has a life eternal', feeling that she had to 'establish her own sort of immortality, perhaps; not always be commandeered by his'.³³ Her desire to establish 'her own sort of immortality' matches Zarathustra's task in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Zarathustra attains a new type of immortality by willing the infinite repetition of each moment, and thereby stamping becoming with the character of being through the thought of eternal recurrence. This new sense of immortality is conveyed by one of Nietzsche's notes collected in the section 'The Eternal Recurrence', appended to Oscar Levy's 1911 edition of *The Twilight of The Idols*, which counsels:

[L]et us stamp the impress of eternity upon our lives! This thought contains more than all the religions which taught us to condemn this life as a thing ephemeral, which bade us squint upwards to another and indefinite existence.³⁴

Just as Nietzsche counsels us to 'stamp the impress of eternity upon our lives' through the thought of eternal recurrence, so too Connie seeks a sense of immortality in this life: '[i]f I don't feel immortal, now, what's the good of fussing about it later on?' She pursues her own sense of immortality through the moment, claiming, to Clifford's chagrin, that Miss Bentley blushing and looking 'like a shy girl for a minute . . .

³¹ Nietzsche, *Twilight*, 171; Lawrence, *First and Second*, 50.

³² Adrian Del Caro points out that a 'solid first step towards opposing or reversing the effects of Platonism', which is to be achieved through the thought of the eternal recurrence, is 'a reorientation toward time, such that time in its transient dimension is not used to cast aspersions on the passing nature of earthly life' (*Grounding the Nietzsche Rhetoric of Earth* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004), 82).

³³ Lawrence, *First and Second*, 49-50. A deleted passage in the autograph manuscript of the first version of the novel makes clear that '[t]his question of . . . immortality had been dinned in to her by Clifford, during their readings of Plato' (622).

³⁴ Nietzsche, 'Eternal Recurrence', 254.

interests me as much as Plato'.³⁵ Her finding immortality in a seemingly transitory and ephemeral moment like Miss Bentley's blushing, parallels Zarathustra's stamping the moment (the gateway 'Moment') with the character of eternity by wishing its eternal recurrence.³⁶ Much like Nietzsche's Zarathustra, Connie achieves a transformation of being through time, and discovers what she calls the 'immortality of the flesh'.³⁷

Connie's overcoming of Clifford's Platonism constitutes a historical rupture. She advances a historical grand narrative of the world as one of Platonism, which is similar to those found elsewhere in Lawrence's late writings:

[t]he human body is only just coming to real life. With the Greeks it gave a lovely flicker, then Plato and Aristotle killed it, and Jesus finished it off. But now the body is coming really to life . . . And it will be a lovely, lovely life in the lovely universe, the life of the human body.³⁸

This condensed grand narrative of the death of the body is akin to that of 'Apocalypsis II', in which Plato thrills at 'the death of the body', and the body submits 'unto death' with Jesus.³⁹ Similarly, Tommy Dukes, whom Frank Kermode sees as Lawrence's mouthpiece in the novel, prophesies the fall of 'our civilisation', after which there will hopefully be a 'resurrection of the body', a phrase that resonates with Connie.⁴⁰ Her rejection of Clifford's Platonism, and her pursuit of a

³⁵ Lawrence, *First and Second*, 50.

³⁶ In a note reproduced in 'Explanatory Notes to *Thus Spake Zarathustra*', appended to Levy's edition of *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche described the moment as being 'properly occupied and immortalised' through the thought of eternal recurrence (280).

³⁷ Lawrence, *First and Second*, 50.

³⁸ D. H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, ed. Michael Squires (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 234-5. Compare *Will to Power*, §1051, in which Nietzsche suggests that 'the Greek body and the Greek soul "bloomed"' with the Dionysian, and hopes that the Dionysian may one day triumph against Christianity, which has historically stood as its 'counterdoctrine' (541-2).

³⁹ Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, 196-8. Lawrence's view of the complicity between Platonism and Christianity in the denial of the body echoes that of Nietzsche. As Heidegger points out, for Nietzsche, Christianity forms one stage in the history of Platonism: 'Nietzsche's critique of Christianity has as its presupposition the interpretation of Christianity as a degenerate form of Platonism' (*Nietzsche*, iii, 60).

⁴⁰ Frank Kermode, *Lawrence* ([London]: Fontana, 1973), 127; *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, 75, 85.

revivification of the body, marks the overcoming of the Platonic age. Her discovery of the ‘immortality of the flesh’ inverts Platonism in a manner that parallels Nietzsche’s thought of eternal recurrence, and achieves what Dukes calls a ‘resurrection of the body’.

Connie’s overcoming of the Platonic age is apocalyptic as well as Nietzschean. As Frank Kermode has shown, there is a ‘direct relation between the amorous action of *Lady Chatterley* and Lawrence’s exposition of the Opening of the Seals’ in his *Apocalypse*. Connie and Mellors undergo the pagan spiritual rebirth which Lawrence thought to be symbolised by the opening of the seven seals.⁴¹ Connie is described as reborn in a sexual encounter in the hut in the woods: ‘the consummation was upon her, and she was gone. She was gone, she was not, and she was born: a woman’. This sexual encounter, from which she emerges ‘a new-born thing’, recapitulates the entire span of Biblical history, with echoes of the Genesis account of creation and the Noachian flood: the ‘potent inexorable entry inside her’ came with a ‘primordial tenderness, such as made the world in the beginning’, after which she let herself ‘be gone in the flood’.⁴² Her orgasm—‘she was not, and she was born’—parallels Lawrence’s account of the opening of the seventh seal of Revelation, which ‘is a death and birth at once’.⁴³ Connie’s spiritual rebirth signals not an end to history, but the apocalyptic inauguration of a post-Christian epoch.

In ‘A Propos of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*’, which advertises itself as a ‘glossary, or prolegomena’ to *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, Lawrence situates the novel within a

⁴¹ Frank Kermode, *Spenser and the Allegorists* (London: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1962), 276; see also Lawrence, 128-9.

⁴² Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, 173-4.

⁴³ Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, 105.

tripartite scheme of history. He contends that there are three historical epochs: pre-tragic, tragic, and post-tragic. Supposedly, we live at the end of the tragic epoch, which has been marked by ‘escape from the body’, and whose main teachers include Plato and Jesus.⁴⁴ This tripartite scheme of history, with the promise of a not-yet-realised third historical age, is classically Joachite, and in that respect is similar to the historical scheme which Lawrence advanced in *Movements in European History*. Connie’s apocalyptic rebirth in the novel can be seen as realising the Joachite hope for a third age, or what Lawrence calls ‘the post-tragic epoch’.⁴⁵ In the second version of the novel, her rebirth is suggestively aligned with Joachim’s historical scheme. Shortly before her departure for the continent, Clifford says to her: ‘[i]f only we were an aeon or two ahead, you’d have no need to go out looking for a Holy Ghost on two legs’.⁴⁶ This mention of ‘a Holy Ghost on two legs’ is an allusion to Joachim’s ‘reign of the Holy Ghost’, which in *Movements* is held to be a ‘reign which we have never seen in the world, but which we must see’.⁴⁷ The Nietzschean and apocalyptic aspects of Connie’s sexual rebirth complement each other: her overcoming of the Platonic age is at the same time both Nietzschean and Joachite.⁴⁸ *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* thereby fuses Nietzschean and apocalyptic shapes of history, in a manner similar to *Movements in European History*.

The new historical age which Connie’s apocalyptic rebirth inaugurates is marked by different articulations of time and space. The Platonic-industrial epoch, from which

⁴⁴ Lawrence, ‘A Propos’, 329-31. The opening words of all three versions of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* are: ‘Ours is essentially a tragic age’.

⁴⁵ Lawrence, ‘A Propos’, 329.

⁴⁶ Lawrence, *First and Second*, 465.

⁴⁷ Lawrence, *Movements*, 147, 167.

⁴⁸ For example, while it forms part of Lawrence’s tripartite Joachite scheme of history, the idea of a ‘tragic age’ is also Nietzschean. For instance, the first section of the *Gay Science* proclaims that: ‘[f]or the present, we still live in the age of tragedy, the age of moralities and religions’ (74). Similarly, a note in the *Will to Power* describes the historical age of nihilism, during which confidence in ‘the “true world”’ is lost, as ‘the tragic age’ (*Will to Power*, §37, 24).

Connie's rebirth makes a departure, is characterised by a technological configuration of space and time. Clifford, as part of his activities as an industrial magnate, listens obsessively to the radio which he has had installed at great expense: '[h]e could sometimes get Madrid, or Frankfurt, even there in the uneasy Midlands'.⁴⁹ In *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the radio has altered the experience of time and space:

[t]he far ends of the earth are not five minutes from Charing Cross, nowadays. While the wireless is active, there are no far ends of the earth. Kings of Dahomey and Lamas of Thibet listen in to London and New York. . . . The world is a vast and ghastly intricacy of mechanism, and one has to be very wary, not to get mangled by it.⁵⁰

These sentiments, presented through Connie's free indirect discourse, mark a particular configuration of time (the 'far ends of the world are not *five minutes* from Charing Cross') and space ('there are no far ends of the earth'). Connie's observations about the wireless correspond to what David Harvey calls the phenomenon of 'time-space compression'. Such a compression, which apparently characterises modernity, is one by which 'processes . . . so revolutionize the objective qualities of space and time that we are forced to alter, sometimes in quite radical ways, how we represent the world to ourselves'. As an image of the 'compression of our spatial and temporal worlds', Harvey gives the example of space appearing to shrink 'to a "global village" of telecommunications'.⁵¹ For Connie, these changes in time and space are far from a cause of celebration, but reduce the world to a dangerous 'vast and ghastly intricacy of mechanism'.⁵²

⁴⁹ Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, 110.

⁵⁰ Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, 281.

⁵¹ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 240, emphasis removed.

⁵² In *Women in Love*, Ursula has a similarly claustrophobic experience of space: '[e]verything was gone, walled in, with spikes on top of the walls, and one must ignominiously creep between the spiky walls through a labyrinth of life' (193).

Connie and Mellors' 'mystic marriage' marks a reversion to an older form of temporality—a return to what Lawrence calls 'the rhythm of the cosmos'.⁵³ In the first version of the novel, the 'world looked different' to Connie after her rebirth:

[i]t had come alive. . . . She shivered to think of her other world, the . . . automatic world where she had lived with Clifford. To see the trees bulging and urging, like ships at anchor on a tide: to feel the world full of its own strange, ceaseless life!—she caught her breath, fearing to lose it again, fearing lest she might die down to the original machine-measured hours. Now, the clock mattered so little. The soft, full surge of the day had no minutes to it.⁵⁴

She is born into a new epoch, marked by a new temporality, beyond the 'machine-measured hours' of the 'automatic world' that she inhabited with Clifford. That 'the clock mattered so little', and that the day 'had no minutes to it', suggests a new form of time-reckoning, away from the demands of industrial modernity.

The transformation in time is matched by a transformation in space. In the second version of the novel, Connie emerges into a world in which:

[t]ime was a full soft urge, with no minutes to it. And the universe ceased to be the vast clock-work of circling planets and pivotal suns . . . The stars opened like eyes, with a consciousness in them.⁵⁵

As the celestial bodies are no longer reduced to measuring devices in this new form of time without minutes, they cease to be a vast mechanical 'clock-work', and come to life: they open 'like eyes'. A new sense of space is signalled as Connie leaves Mellors, 'quietly slipping among the live presences of trees and hills and a far-off star'.⁵⁶ That her position in the woods is coordinated with 'a far-off star', as well as with trees and hills, intimates a new and uncanny form of space. This new type of space marks an apocalyptic renewal of the old, pagan experience of space. In his introduction to Frederick Carter's *Dragon of the Apocalypse*, Lawrence contrasted the

⁵³ Lawrence, 'A Propos', 325, 328.

⁵⁴ Lawrence, *First and Second*, 68.

⁵⁵ Lawrence, *First and Second*, 382.

⁵⁶ Lawrence, *First and Second*, 382.

illimitable, homogenous space of modern astronomy, in which ‘lonely stars hang in isolation’, with the older sense of the ‘living heavens’, that was first made available to him by Carter’s interpretation of the Book of Revelation as an astrological scheme of pagan symbols. After her rebirth, Connie is surrounded by what Lawrence portrays as the pagan ‘living heavens’, with ‘brilliant living stars in *live* space’.⁵⁷

The Environmental Politics of the Lady Chatterley Novels

The *Lady Chatterley* novels turn away from the authoritarian politics that characterize Lawrence’s ‘leadership novels’ of the 1920s: *Aaron’s Rod* (1922), *Kangaroo* (1923) and *The Plumed Serpent* (1926). Given the arguably quasi-fascist, racist and misogynistic elements of these novels, Lawrence’s movement to what he described as the ‘tender’ vision of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* has come as a relief to many commentators. Raymond Williams, for instance, has described Lawrence’s last novel as a ‘moving’ and ‘encouraging’ return to the concerns of his earlier fiction.⁵⁸

Equally, however, as has been widely noted, the successive drafts of the *Lady Chatterley* novels become increasingly unsympathetic to communism. In the first version of the novel, the gamekeeper is what Holderness calls a ‘working-class hero’ who joins the Communist League, while in the third version, he explicitly rejects the League, and argues that political action is an inadequate response to the social paralysis of capitalism.⁵⁹ This movement reflects Lawrence’s personal rejection of

⁵⁷ Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, 46-7, 51, his emphasis.

⁵⁸ Raymond Williams, *The English Novel From Dickens to Lawrence* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1970), 184.

⁵⁹ Holderness, *Lawrence*, 223; Scheckner, *Class*, 147.

what he called '[t]he dead materialism of Marx', as a possible solution to the problems that he witnessed when he returned to the Midlands in 1926.

While for those with Marxist sympathies, Lawrence's spurning of communism is regrettable, and arguably a betrayal of the miners and of the working class, it would be a mistake to think that the *Lady Chatterley* novels turn away from politics altogether. It is not the case, as Scheckner suggests, that in his last years, Lawrence 'virtually abandoned politics'.⁶⁰ Rather, he continued to draw on the same Nietzschean and apocalyptic forms of historical thought that had served him so well throughout his writing career, to sustain a vision of a green historical 'revolution' that remains political, despite being incompatible with both fascism and communism.

The green revolution of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* takes the form of a Nietzschean revaluation of the earth. According to Nietzsche, Platonism entails a devaluation of the earth. In the *Will to Power*, he traced the antithesis between the true and the apparent worlds back to Plato, who, by attaching higher value to the nonsensuous, brought about a 'bold reversal':

Plato measured the degree of reality by the degree of value and said: The more 'Idea,' the more being. He reversed the concept 'reality' and said: 'What you take for real is an error, and the nearer we approach the 'Idea,' the nearer we approach 'truth.' . . . It was the greatest of rebaptisms; and because it has been adopted by Christianity we do not recognize how astonishing it is.⁶¹

For Nietzsche, once the world of being has been valued higher than that of becoming, the latter is seen as a source of discontent, and is condemned: '[t]he apparent world is

⁶⁰ Scheckner, *Class*, 115.

⁶¹ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §572, 308.

not counted as a “valuable” world; appearance is supposed to constitute an objection to supreme value’.⁶²

Just as for Nietzsche, the invention of the ‘true world’ corresponds to a devaluation of the world of becoming, so Clifford’s Platonism, and his valuation of a Platonic immortality, devalues earthly life: ‘[l]ife was a thing he turned into a grisly phantasm’.⁶³ In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche proposes that ‘[i]t would not make any sense to fabricate a world “other” than this one unless we had a powerful instinct for libelling, belittling, and casting suspicion on life: in that case, we would be using the phantasmagoria of an “other”, a “better” life to *avenge* ourselves on life’.⁶⁴ Clifford’s obsession with Platonic immortality, which turns life into a ‘grisly phantasm’, is just such an act of revenge on life. In the second version of the novel, people like Clifford who want ‘immortality and eternity’ are portrayed through Connie’s free indirect discourse as being ‘like a huge cold death-worm encircling the earth, and letting nothing live. It was Will, the will of dead things to make everything dead’.⁶⁵ Such people exert what Nietzsche calls a ‘will to denial of life’: through their desire for immortality and eternity, they exert their ‘unyielding, insistent human Will, cold, anti-life, and insane’.⁶⁶

In *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, the effects of the Platonic devaluation of the body and of the earth are clearly apparent. Under Clifford’s Platonist regime at Wragby, Connie’s body suffers, and is reduced to a corpse-like state. In the first version of the novel, this harm is conveyed in the terms of the *Phaedrus* myth: the ‘poor black horse of her

⁶² Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §583, 313.

⁶³ Lawrence, *First and Second*, 216.

⁶⁴ Nietzsche, *Twilight*, 170, his emphasis.

⁶⁵ Lawrence, *First and Second*, 300.

⁶⁶ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §853, 452; Lawrence, *First and Second*, 301.

body . . . had been lying now for months as if he were dead, with his neck twisted sideways as if it had been broken'.⁶⁷ In the third version of the novel, the same harm is apparent in the scene in which she looks at herself naked in the mirror. She notices that her body was 'a little greyish and sapless', her breasts 'unripe' and 'a little bitter', her belly 'slack', and her thighs were going 'flat, slack, meaningless'. The sight of her withering body makes her depressed and miserable, and causes her to hate '[t]he mental life'.⁶⁸ The violence done to Connie's body is symptomatic of what Lawrence in 'Introduction to These Paintings' calls the 'nauseating and repulsive history of the crucifixion of the procreative body', for which Plato was arch-priest.⁶⁹

Clifford's Platonist regime similarly drains all value from the earth. Wragby is described as 'spectral, not really existing', just as for Plato, the world perceived by the senses is one of non-being. In markedly Platonic terms, Connie thinks of Wragby as like the 'simulacrum of reality'.⁷⁰ The Platonic devaluation of the earth is made particularly apparent in a scene in which Clifford attempts to ascend a hill in his mechanical chair. In Plato's *Phaedrus*, Socrates advances a myth in which he likens the soul 'to the natural union of a team of winged horses and their charioteer', and describes the 'steep climb' of such souls 'to the high tier at the rim of heaven'.⁷¹ Clifford's efforts to climb the hill in his motor-chair parodies this Platonic ascent to heaven: he fails, and has to be rescued by the gamekeeper. Significantly, this parody intimates the harm that his Platonism inflicts on the environment.

⁶⁷ Lawrence, *First and Second*, 27.

⁶⁸ Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, 70-1.

⁶⁹ Lawrence, *Late Essays*, 203. In 'A Propos', Lawrence similarly contended that 'the great crusade against sex and the body started in full blast, with Plato' (332).

⁷⁰ Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, 18.

⁷¹ Plato, *Phaedrus*, in *Complete Works*, 246a, 247b, 524-5.

In 'Apocalypse II', Lawrence advanced a grand historical narrative of the technological domination of the earth. Supposedly, history since Plato has been 'one long process': the 'triumph of Mind over the cosmos progresses in small spasms: aeroplanes, radio, motor-traffic'.⁷² While Lawrence here associates the triumph of Platonism with the development of technology, appropriately, in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Clifford makes his Platonic ascent in a motorised wheelchair. Connie re-imagines Plato's conceit by replacing the horses with a Ford car, or, as Clifford would have it, a more aristocratic Rolls-Royce: 'Plato never thought we'd go one better than his black steed and his white steed, and have no steeds at all, only an engine!'⁷³ Connie and Clifford's conceit suggests a complicity between Platonism and technology that neatly complements Lawrence's historical scheme in 'Apocalypse II'. Connie watches Clifford's bath-chair 'jolt over the wood-ruff and the bugle', 'squash the little yellow cups of the creeping jenny', and make a 'wake through the forget-me-nots'.⁷⁴ His crushing the flowers on his ascent ironically conveys the damage done by his Platonic devaluation of the earth. Clifford, sitting impotently amid the wrecked flowers at the bottom of the hill, is emblematic of what in 'Apocalypse II' are described as the 'men of mind and spirit' who 'only succeed in spoiling the earth'.⁷⁵

The parody of the *Phaedrus* myth reflects the real environmental damage brought about by Clifford's industrial activities. This damage becomes particularly apparent to Connie on being driven past the colliery at Stacks Gate, where she sees the 'huge new installations' that Clifford has built. These new installations harm the environment:

⁷² Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, 198-9.

⁷³ Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, 179.

⁷⁴ Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, 184.

⁷⁵ Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, 200.

‘vast plumes of smoke and vapour rose from the new works’; in the adjacent town, ‘iron clanked with a huge reverberating clank, and huge lorries shook the earth, and whistles screamed’.⁷⁶ Returning to this part of the world from the continent in the second version of the novel, Connie finds a ‘realm of twilight and the mystery of iron, this disemboweled earth of coal and steel and steam, and the glare of red fire and of shadow’.⁷⁷ The metaphor of the disemboweled earth, by figuring the earth as a body, neatly links the harm sustained to both the body and to the earth by Platonism. In this version of the novel, Clifford’s intensification of his mining activities is accompanied by a blunt determination to make a mark in an act of industrial vengeance on the world: ‘[h]e still was going to make his mark on the environment: even if the mark should only be a scar!’⁷⁸

Clifford’s industrial activities at Stacks Gate obtrude on the woods, which would otherwise have been a perfect pastoral haven.⁷⁹ From Wragby Hall can be heard ‘the rattle-rattle of the screens at the pit, the puff of the winding-engine, the clink-clink of shunting trucks and the hoarse little whistle of the colliery locomotives’. As a result of the burning of Tevershall pit bank, the house was ‘full of the stench of [the] sulphureous combustion of the earth’s excrement’. Mellors, returning from an assignation with Connie, tries to escape into the ‘darkness and seclusion of the wood’, but

knew that the seclusion of the wood was illusory. The industrial noises broke the solitude, the sharp lights, though unseen, mocked it. . . . The fault lay there, out there, in those evil electric lights and diabolical rattlings of engines. There, in the world of the mechanical greedy, greedy mechanism and

⁷⁶ Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, 154-5.

⁷⁷ Lawrence, *First and Second*, 514.

⁷⁸ Lawrence, *First and Second*, 347.

⁷⁹ On pastoral, see Michael Squires, ‘Pastoral Patterns and Pastoral Variants in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*’, *ELH*, 39/1 (March 1972), 129-46, and Kingsley Widmer, ‘The Pertinence of Modern Pastoral: The Three Versions of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*’, *Studies in the Novel*, 5/3 (Fall 1973), 298-313.

mechanised greed, sparkling with lights and gushing hot metal and roaring with traffic, there lay the vast evil thing, ready to destroy whatever did not conform. Soon it would destroy the wood, and the bluebells would spring no more. All vulnerable things must perish under the rolling and running of iron.⁸⁰

Connie similarly resents the intrusion of industry in what would otherwise be her perfect pastoral idyll. Staying at Mellors' cottage in the woods, whilst outside is 'a clear clean morning', she wishes: '[i]f only there weren't the other ghastly world of smoke and iron!'⁸¹

It is a recurrent motif in criticism on *Lady Chatterley's Lover* that the novel stages the opposition between industrial and anti-industrial forms of life, pursued by Clifford on the one hand, and Connie and Mellors on the other.⁸² What has yet to be recognized, however, is the Nietzschean nature of Connie and Mellors's opposition to Clifford's industrial form of life. Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence, by collapsing the Platonic antithesis between the true and apparent worlds, opens the way for a revaluation of values. For Nietzsche, the antithesis between the true and apparent worlds constitutes the '[p]rejudice of prejudices', and must be overcome:

[i]t is of cardinal importance that one should abolish the *true* world. It is the great inspirer of doubt and devaluator in respect of the world *we are*: it has been our most dangerous attempt yet to assassinate life. War on all presuppositions on the basis of which one has invented a true world.⁸³

The antithesis is to be overcome through the thought of eternal recurrence: what had been devalued as the apparent world of becoming, stands to be affirmed and revalued. As Heidegger puts it, with 'the abolition of Platonism the way first opens for the

⁸⁰ Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, 13, 119.

⁸¹ Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, 212.

⁸² See, for example, Julian Moynahan, 'Lady Chatterley's Lover: The Deed of Life', *ELH*, 26/1 (March 1959), 66-90, 66-7; Widmer, 'Pastoral', 304-5; and Jae-Kyung Koh, 'D. H. Lawrence's World Vision of Cultural Regeneration in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*', *Midwest Quarterly*, 43/2 (2002), 189-206, 201.

⁸³ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §583, 313-4, his emphasis.

affirmation of the sensuous [world]'.⁸⁴ The revaluation of all values is dramatised by Zarathustra, the thinker of the thought of eternal recurrence. It is he, in his extreme iconoclasm, 'who breaks tablets and old values': he sits with 'old broken tablets around [him] and also new tablets only partially written upon'.⁸⁵

In *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Connie rebels against Clifford's deleterious Platonism, and seeks a Nietzschean revaluation of the body and earth. Whereas in *Women in Love*, Gerald's revaluation of values had taken the form of a newly-intensified mining system that exploited his workers and the environment, in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Connie's revaluation of values is imagined as a site of opposition to an industrial form of life. In the second version of the novel, her discovery of the aptly-named 'immortality of the flesh' precipitates a revaluation of her previously-neglected body. Her body is brought to life by Parkin's rapturous affirmation: 'for the first time in her life she had felt the animate beauty of her own thighs and belly and hips'.⁸⁶ Her revaluation of the body is like that of Zarathustra. Zarathustra declares that he will not go the way of the 'despisers of the body' who 'are angry now at life and earth'. In 'On the Hinterworldly', he holds that it was 'the sick and the dying-out who despised the body and the earth. . . . [T]hey fancied themselves detached from this earth, these ingrates'. By contrast, Zarathustra values 'the healthy body, the perfect and perpendicular body', for 'it speaks of the meaning of the earth'.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, i, 209.

⁸⁵ Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 171, 156.

⁸⁶ Lawrence, *First and Second*, 336. Characteristically fusing Nietzschean and apocalyptic themes, the coming to life of Connie's body over the course of the novel corresponds both to a Nietzschean revaluation of the body, and to an apocalyptic rebirth, as understood by Lawrence in *Apocalypse*.

⁸⁷ Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 21-4.

The revivification of Connie's body is accompanied by a revaluation of the earth. Nietzsche remarks in a note on the thought of eternal recurrence: '[f]rom the moment when this thought begins to prevail all colours will change their hue'.⁸⁸ That is, with the collapse of the Platonic antithesis between real and apparent worlds, colour returns to what had been the previously dim and shadowy 'apparent world'. A similar transformation occurs in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Under Clifford's Platonist regime, Wragby Hall had been rendered 'spectral', and Connie picked 'primroses that were only shadows'.⁸⁹ Driving around Tevershall, she finds the populace 'disfigured, strange, almost wraith-like': to her, 'there was something grey and spectral about them'.⁹⁰ However, once she has broken with Clifford's Platonism, the previously murky world becomes suffused with colour. On entering the woods, she notices that '[i]n the dimness of it all trees glistened naked and dark, as if they had unclothed themselves, and the green things on earth seemed to burn with greenness'. Similarly, in a subsequently deleted passage from the typescript of the third version of the novel, her sexual act of the recreation of the world is accompanied by 'a flushing like the birth of colour, strange and suffused'. It was 'the sensual birth of the loveliness of colour. Then the brightness came in gushes, gushes of dawn that flashed brilliant at the edges'.⁹¹

Connie consciously pursues a project of revaluing the earth. In the second version of the novel, in response to the deadening effects of the 'anti-life' Platonist concern for immortality and eternity, she wishes for the revivification of the earth:

⁸⁸ Nietzsche, 'Eternal Recurrence', 252.

⁸⁹ Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, 18.

⁹⁰ Lawrence, *First and Second*, 514, 369. The spectrality of Wragby parallels what Lawrence, in 'Introduction to these Paintings', diagnoses as one effect of Platonism: '[a]ll we know is shadows . . . Shadows of everything, of the whole world, shadows even of ourselves. . . . [O]ur world is a wide tomb full of ghosts, replicas. We are all spectres' (*Late Essays*, 203).

⁹¹ Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, 122, 419.

[t]he body of men, and the animals, and the earth!—it could all come alive again. . . . there was to be a resurrection, the earth, the animals, and men. She didn't want any more dead things . . . No more engines, no more machines . . . She wanted live things, only live things: grass and trees on the earth, and flowers that looked after themselves; and birds and animals, stoats and rabbits, hawks and linnets, deer and wolves, lambs and foxes. There *must* be life again on earth.⁹²

Her hope for a 'resurrection' most immediately conforms to Tommy Dukes' prophecy of a 'resurrection of the body'.⁹³ Moreover, her enumeration of different animals echoes the prophecy of Isaiah 11, in which the 'wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid'.⁹⁴ Juxtaposing predator with prey, Connie's thought echoes the rhetoric of Isaiah; her hope for a new earth thereby takes a Biblical prophetic form, and suggests the possibility of a Millennial resurrection. However, her desire for a new earth is also Nietzschean, and echoes Zarathustra's rhetoric of earth, which has been given ecological interpretations by Adrian Del Caro and others.⁹⁵ Zarathustra beseeches his brothers to 'remain faithful to the earth and [not to] believe those who speak to you of extraterrestrial hopes! . . . *to desecrate the earth is the most terrible thing*'.⁹⁶ He exhorts his brothers not to let their virtue

fly away from earthly things and beat against eternal walls with its wings! . . . Like me, guide the virtue that has flown away back to the earth—yes, back to the body and life.⁹⁷

By not flying away from earthly things, the 'value of all things will be posited newly by you!' Connie's hope for there to be 'life again on earth' parallels Zarathustra's message of optimism: 'the earth shall yet become a site of recovery! And already a new fragrance lies about it, salubrious—and a new hope!'⁹⁸

⁹² Lawrence, *First and Second*, 300.

⁹³ Lawrence, *First and Second*, 282.

⁹⁴ Isaiah 11:6-10.

⁹⁵ Del Caro, *Rhetoric of Earth*. On ecological approaches to Nietzsche, see below.

⁹⁶ Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 6, my emphasis.

⁹⁷ Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 57.

⁹⁸ Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 58.

Assessing Lawrence's Green Politics

It is a central claim of these chapters that the issue of Lawrence's environmental politics can be addressed through the politics of time, and more specifically, through the uses that he made of Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence. In this concluding section, I would like to use Lawrence's adaptations of the thought of eternal recurrence to position his work in relation to recent ecotheory and ecocriticism, and to assess the politics of his environmental writing.

It is notable how differently Lawrence employed Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence over the course of his writing. In *Movements in European History*, he adopted a pseudo-Nietzschean cyclical scheme of history to suggest the need for an authoritarian political leader to unify Europe; in *Women in Love*, he used Nietzsche's thought to portray Gerald's industrial exploitation of the earth through a principle of mechanical repetition; and in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, he drew on the thought to imagine Connie's rebellion against Clifford, and her revaluation of the earth and body. In the last two cases, Lawrence drew on the thought of eternal recurrence as a central aspect of his portrayal of industrialism and environmental damage, yet he deployed the thought in almost diametrically opposed ways. In *Women in Love*, the thought becomes the acme of Gerald's industrial exploitation, whereas in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, it becomes a site of Connie's resistance to industrial spoliation. How are we to make sense of this change? Are we to see it as a reflection of Lawrence's inconsistency as a thinker? While he was a persistent critic of what he called 'the industrial system', do his divergent uses of Nietzsche's thought betray him as a philosophical dilettante? On the contrary, I suggest that this divergence reflects

an openness of Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence to opposed interpretations, and mirrors an ongoing controversy concerning the interpretation of that thought.

It is controversial whether Nietzsche can be considered a 'green' thinker. The most emphatic rejection of this possibility came from Heidegger, who, as we have seen, held that Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence stands as the virulent consummation of the metaphysical tradition, and paves the way for the ruthless exploitation and technological mastery of the earth in the age of modernity. More recently, Ralph Acampora and Michael Zimmerman have adopted similar positions.⁹⁹ By contrast, critics such as Max Hallman, Graham Parkes, John McGraw and Adrian Del Caro have reappraised Nietzsche, and championed him as a proto-ecological thinker.¹⁰⁰

Lawrence's contrasting adaptations of Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence mirror these more recent divergent interpretations of that thought. His portrayal of Gerald as industrial magnate in *Women in Love* complements Heidegger's hostile interpretation of eternal recurrence as laying open the earth for technological mastery, whereas his sympathetic portrayal of Connie's Nietzschean overcoming of Clifford's Platonism in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* anticipates recent proto-ecological readings of Nietzsche. In the latter case, Connie's rejection of Clifford's Platonism has much in common, for example, with McGraw's interpretation of Nietzsche as a proto-

⁹⁹ Ralph R. Acampora, 'Using and Abusing Nietzsche for Environmental Ethics', *Environmental Ethics*, 16/2 (Summer 1994), 187-94; Michael Zimmerman, 'Nietzsche and Ecology: A Critical Inquiry', in Steven V. Hicks and Alan Rosenberg (eds), *Reading Nietzsche at the Margins* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008), 165-86.

¹⁰⁰ Max O. Hallman, 'Nietzsche's Environmental Ethics', *Environmental Ethics*, 13/2 (Summer 1991), 99-126; Graham Parkes, 'Staying Loyal to the Earth: Nietzsche as an Ecological Thinker', in John Lippitt (ed.), *Nietzsche's Futures* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1999), 167-88; John G. McGraw, 'Friedrich Nietzsche: Earth-Enthusiast Extraordinaire', *Analecta Husserliana*, 59 (1999), 277-306; Adrian Del Caro, 'Nietzschean Considerations on Environment', *Environmental Ethics*, 26/3 (Fall 2004), 307-21, and *Rhetoric of Earth*.

ecological thinker. Against Plato and the history of philosophy more generally, which have ‘paved the way’ for the ‘pillaging’ and the ‘poisoning’ of the planet, McGraw champions Zarathustra as the incarnation of Nietzsche’s ‘earthism qua life-philosophy’, and interprets the doctrine of eternal recurrence to be ‘paradigmatically emblematic of the ecological concern for the preservation/conservation of the earth’s diverse resources’.¹⁰¹

Lawrence’s recourse to Nietzsche helps to explain his partial affinity with the later deep ecology movement. His writings, with their critique of anthropocentrism, their valourization of the inhuman, and their exploration of nonhuman perspectives, have often been identified and celebrated as forerunners of deep ecology.¹⁰² One strand of Lawrence’s writing that resonates with the more extreme end of deep ecology, is the recognition of the harm that humanity has inflicted on the planet, and the various misanthropic fantasies of a world without humans.¹⁰³ Both Birkin and Mellors indulge in such fantasies. Birkin, for instance, remarks that ‘we cover the earth with foulness’, and argues that ‘Man is a mistake, he must go’. He wishes for ‘man’ to be ‘swept off the face of the earth’, to allow ‘a new start, non-human’: ‘don’t you find it a beautiful clean thought, a world empty of people, just uninterrupted grass, and a hare sitting up?’¹⁰⁴ Similarly, Mellors expresses his feeling that ‘the human world’ has ‘doomed itself’, and that ‘nowhere’s far enough away to get away’: ‘[t]he moon wouldn’t be far enough, because even there you could look back and see the earth, dirty, beastly, unsavoury among all the stars: made foul by men’. Had he the power, he would ‘wipe the machines off the face of the earth again, and end the industrial epoch absolutely,

¹⁰¹ McGraw, ‘Earth-Enthusiast’, 277-9.

¹⁰² See Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 97, 100-1, and ‘Nietzsche *contra* Lawrence’, 21.

¹⁰³ As Garrard points out, one ‘major, recurrent objection to deep ecology is that ecocentrism is misanthropic’ (*Ecocriticism*, 25).

¹⁰⁴ Lawrence, *Women*, 55, 127-8.

like a black mistake'.¹⁰⁵ As Garrard observes, it is the 'biocentric inhumanism' of such visions that 'seems to appeal to deep ecologists'.¹⁰⁶

Nietzsche's philosophy stands as a common source of inspiration for the anti-anthropomorphism of both Lawrence and deep ecology. While, as Anna Bramwell points out, Lawrence's 'intellectual background was saturated with a mixture of nature-worship and anti-anthropomorphism', Nietzsche's treatment of anthropomorphism demands particularly close attention.¹⁰⁷ The thought of eternal recurrence is, arguably, a radically anti-anthropomorphic thought.¹⁰⁸ In a note in the *Will to Power*, Nietzsche remarked that human values are 'constructs of domination' that have been 'falsely projected into the essence of things'. A revaluation of all values would involve the dehumanization of the world; it would break with humanism, understood as 'the hyperbolic *naïveté* of man: positing himself as the meaning and measure of the value of things'.¹⁰⁹ In *Women in Love*, the issue of anthropomorphism is discussed by Lawrence's characters in terms very similar to those of Nietzsche. Ursula explicitly objects to anthropomorphism: '[h]ow stupid anthropomorphism is! Gudrun is really impudent, insolent, making herself the measure of everything, making everything come down to human standards. Rupert is quite right, human beings are boring, painting the universe with their own image. The universe is non-human'.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, 220.

¹⁰⁶ Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 101.

¹⁰⁷ Anna Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20th Century: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 112.

¹⁰⁸ Heidegger disagrees, arguing that the thought of eternal recurrence failed in its aim of dehumanization. Instead, it supposedly involves an 'unconditioned anthropomorphism', which leads to a revaluation of values as 'an unconditioned dominion over the earth by human beings' (Nietzsche, iii, 173-4, emphasis removed).

¹⁰⁹ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §12, 14, emphasis removed.

¹¹⁰ Lawrence, *Women*, 264.

Nietzsche has also inspired deep ecologists. As Garrard informs us, one of the defining features of 'deep ecology' is its demand for a fundamental 'shift from a human-centred to a nature-centred system of values'.¹¹¹ The thought of eternal recurrence has attracted interest from ecotheorists because it promises, by opening the way for a revaluation of values, just such a shift. Critics such as Hallman and McGraw have seized on the ecological potential of Nietzsche's thought. For example, Hallman has aligned Nietzsche's rejection of 'epistemological anthropocentrism' with that of deep ecology. He suggests that, by rejecting such anthropocentrism, Nietzsche's philosophy 'opens the way for a nonexploitative relationship of human beings with nature'.¹¹²

However, while the issue of anthropomorphism is raised in *Women in Love* in Nietzschean terms, it would be wrong to suggest that the novel offers any straightforwardly Nietzschean solution to the issue. While Birkin rejects anthropomorphism, his misanthropic desire that humanity be swept off the face of the earth does not align easily with any of Nietzsche's teachings. Moreover, the polyphonic nature of the novel results in his misanthropic sentiments being tempered.¹¹³ He is mocked and made to feel foolish by Ursula, who asks him whether he believes '[s]imply in the end of the world, and grass?' Again, his 'dislike of mankind' is undercut by being pathologised, and described as amounting 'almost to an illness'.¹¹⁴ Even more tellingly, the novel refuses a straight Nietzschean solution to the problem of anthropomorphism, by casting Gerald in the role of *Übermensch*.

¹¹¹ Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 24.

¹¹² Hallman, 'Environmental Ethics', 117. Compare McGraw, 'Earth-Enthusiast', 278.

¹¹³ In 'Study of Thomas Hardy', Lawrence famously wrote that '[t]he degree to which the system of morality, or the metaphysic, of any work of art is submitted to criticism within the work of art makes the lasting value and satisfaction of that work' (89).

¹¹⁴ Lawrence, *Women*, 129, 61.

Gerald as *Übermensch* is portrayed not as an earth-lover, but as a technologist ruthlessly exploiting the earth. It is only later, when Lawrence returns to the thought of eternal recurrence in a more sympathetic manner in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, that his vision accords more closely with a Nietzsche-inflected version of deep ecology, such as that advocated by Hallman. Conversely, putting the point the other way round, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* offers one fictional exploration of how such a version of deep ecology might be imagined.

While Lawrence's recourse to Nietzsche underpins partial affinities between his writings and those of deep ecology, it simultaneously distinguishes his approach from that of later 'social ecologists' and 'eco-Marxists'. As Garrard informs us, these theorists address environmental problems as social problems that arise from the capitalist form of production, and seek to redress such problems by changing the political structure of society.¹¹⁵ As the social ecologist Murray Bookchin puts it: 'present ecological problems cannot be clearly understood, much less resolved, without resolutely dealing with problems within society'. Lawrence's rejection of communism in the *Lady Chatterley* novels may be disquieting to social ecologists and eco-Marxists, given their desire to confront environmental problems 'by collective action and major social movements'.¹¹⁶ Certainly, the issue of environmentalism in the *Lady Chatterley* novels is complicated when they are not viewed, through the lens of a Lukácsian theory of the politics of the novel, as realist novels. When Connie's retreat into the woods at Wragby is read as a Nietzschean and apocalyptic parable or allegory, the historical significance of the novels can be recognized. The final version

¹¹⁵ Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 31-3.

¹¹⁶ Murray Bookchin, 'What is Social Ecology?', in Michael E. Zimmerman (ed.), *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1993), 354-73, 354, 356.

of the novel is not simply a tale of personal regeneration, but carries a wider historical import, signaling the inauguration of what Lawrence called the ‘post-tragic epoch’. Of course, there are a number of ways that such a historical parable or allegory could be re-translated into social and political terms. Nevertheless, one interpretation that is foreclosed, given the rejection of such a solution within the novel, is as a parable of Marxist revolution.

On the contrary, it might be suspected that *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* has more in common with right-wing ecological movements. Situating the novel within the historical context of early twentieth-century proto-environmental movements, Anna Bramwell and David Bradshaw have drawn attention to Lawrence’s relationship with the politically right-wing Rolf Gardiner, who later founded the Soil Association in 1945, and John Hargrave, founder and socially-conservative leader of the Kindred of the Kibbo Kift (KKK).¹¹⁷ As Bradshaw has shown, some of Mellors’ proposals for social regeneration—and particularly his desire for men to wear bright red trousers—accord closely with those of Hargrave.¹¹⁸ For these reasons, the ‘vision’ of the *Lady Chatterley* novels differs from that of later social ecologists and eco-Marxists.

It should be recognized that Lawrence’s adaptations of Nietzsche’s thought of eternal recurrence underpin different versions of reactionary modernism. Advancing a temporal reinterpretation of Jeffrey Hurst’s concept of ‘reactionary modernism’, Peter Osborne argues that ‘reactionary philosophical modernism’ is constituted by a particular inflection in the temporality of modernity, where ‘reaction’ is to be

¹¹⁷ Bramwell, 112-3; David Bradshaw, ‘Red Trousers: *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* and John Hargrave’, *Essays in Criticism*, 55/4 (2005), 352-73.

¹¹⁸ Bradshaw, ‘Red Trousers’, 357.

understood as a movement towards the reversal of an existing state of affairs.¹¹⁹ Both Heidegger and Löwith employed the thought of eternal recurrence to articulate versions of such a reactionary modernism. For Heidegger, the thought of eternal recurrence comes to define modernity as the most recent historical epoch, in which being is revealed as *techne*. Modernity, thus understood, is a negative phenomenon: it is an age characterized by the unbridled technological mastery of the earth, and the reduction of humans and natural resources to standing-reserve. As an alternative to such an unattractive modernity, Heidegger in his later writings cautiously raised the possibility of a new mode of the revelation of being, which would issue in a new historical beginning or origin (*Ursprung*).

By contrast, Löwith presented the thought of eternal recurrence, in its anthropological form, as a reaction to modernity, and an attempt to overcome it. ‘Modernity’ for Nietzsche, claims Löwith, ‘is sick’; it is ‘empty’, a ‘desert’. The reactive aspect of the thought of eternal recurrence is conveyed in Löwith’s various formulations: Nietzsche supposedly ‘*confronts* [his] view of modernity with the idea of eternal recurrence’; the thought of eternal recurrence should ‘*strike* modernity’; it is ‘a *counterweight* to the “modernity” of decayed Christianity’.¹²⁰ The thought of eternal recurrence opposes modernity, on Löwith’s interpretation, by attempting to repeat or restore a pre-Socratic view of the world ‘on the peak of modernity’.¹²¹

Just like Heidegger and Löwith, Lawrence employed the thought of eternal recurrence to articulate reactionary stances towards modernity. In *Women in Love*, the unsympathetic portrayal of eternal recurrence parallels Heidegger’s view of the

¹¹⁹ Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 166.

¹²⁰ Löwith, *Eternal Recurrence*, 84, 137, 85, my emphasis.

¹²¹ Löwith, *Eternal Recurrence*, 95, 108-21.

thought as defining the age of modernity. As with Heidegger's hostile characterization of modernity, there is no redemptive potential located within Gerald's principle of mechanical repetition. In *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the more sympathetic adaptation of eternal recurrence parallels Löwith's interpretation of that thought as an attempt to repeat a pre-Socratic view of the world 'on the peak of modernity'. Connie attempts to restore an early-Greek attitude towards the body and earth. As for Löwith, modernity is seen as something that is to be overcome, and superseded by a new age. Lawrence's reactionary modernism is reflected in the negative depiction of technology in both novels: either as embodying the principle of mechanical repetition, or—as conveyed symbolically by Clifford's mechanical wheelchair—as characterizing the industrial-Platonic epoch.

Yet, we might wonder, are technology and industry necessarily bad? Is it not, it might be asked from a social ecological or an eco-Marxist perspective, the social relations that are problematic within industrial capitalism, and not simply the technology, viewed abstracted from these relations? A contrast could be made between Lawrence's adaptations of Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence, and that of Walter Benjamin.

Benjamin employed Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence to articulate a non-reactionary form of modernism. He employed the thought to articulate the temporality of modernity as the new as the ever-same, which, as we have seen, is inherently ambiguous: while on the one aspect it hellish, it also involves hope, and the prospect of happiness through a redeemed future. Tellingly, this prospect of redemption is located *within* modernity, and not as a *reaction* to modernity: the 'exact repetition'

analysed by Marx as a feature of modern commodity production holds the hope for a redeemed future within modernity. Benjamin's adaptation, unlike those of Lawrence, thereby left open the possibility that there was revolutionary potential within the time of modernity as that of the 'now-as-the-ever-the-same'. Correlatively, unlike Lawrence, Benjamin adopted a far more ambivalent towards technology, famously seeking emancipatory political potential within the realm of mechanical reproduction. Indeed, this more positive attitude towards technology is evident in his description of the doctrine of eternal recurrence as 'a dream of the immense discoveries imminent in the field of reproduction technology'.¹²²

Despite underpinning a reactionary form of modernism, it should be recognized that Lawrence's use of the thought of eternal recurrence in *Women in Love* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* forms part of a powerful critique of the industrial spoliation of the earth. Both novels make a welcome advance beyond Lawrence's use of Nietzsche's thought to support an authoritarian leadership politics in *Movements on European History*. In *Women in Love*, the thought is deployed, alongside other Nietzschean motifs, to create a powerful and damning portrayal of the repetitive, mechanical temporality of industrial capitalism. And in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the thought is re-adapted, in a manner that thankfully moves beyond the politics of the leadership novels, to imagine a green Nietzschean revaluation of the earth and body.

¹²² Benjamin, 'Central Park', 182.

PART 3:

VIRGINIA WOOLF AND THE PAGEANT OF MUTABILITIE

There is a long critical history of explicating Virginia Woolf's novels, and their formally-innovative explorations of time, by means of Henri Bergson's distinction between *durée* and clock-time. Floris Delattre's *Le Roman psychologique de Virginia Woolf* (1932) is the first major study in this tradition. Therein, he claimed that '[la] conception de la durée, dans laquelle Bergson a essayé d'appréhender dans leur intégrité les données du moi immédiat, est à la source même du roman de Virginia Woolf'.¹ Subsequent studies, which similarly see Woolf's novels as exploring a private psychological time, similar to that which had been philosophically articulated by Bergson, include those of James Hafley, Shiv Kumar, James Naremore, and Mary Ann Gillies.² Gillies, for example, claims that 'Bergson's place in Woolf's writing was extensive and pervasive'.³ She argues that Woolf's famous 'moments of being' are 'moments of pure *durée*', and that '[i]n order to capture these moments, Woolf manipulates traditional narrative form'.⁴ She advances a reading of almost all of Woolf's experimental fiction as ever-more-sophisticated attempts to represent such a *durée*, and concludes that, like Bergson, Woolf 'chose to write about the inner life; to depict this as fluid, chaotic, and continually mobile; to insist that real living occurred in extraordinary moments of being in which time was conflated and all moments existed simultaneously'.⁵

¹ Floris Delattre, *Le Roman psychologique de Virginia Woolf* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1932), 134. Part of this study appeared earlier in article form as 'La Durée bergsonienne dans le roman de Virginia Woolf', *Revue anglo-américaine*, 9/2 (December 1931), 97-108. Woolf was aware of the publication of Delattre's study, writing in her diary on 24 March 1932: '[t]wo Books on Virginia Woolf have just appeared—in France & Germany' (*The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume IV: 1931-1935*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1982), 85).

² James Hafley, *The Glass Roof: Virginia Woolf as Novelist* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1954); Kumar, *Stream of Consciousness*, 64-102; James Naremore, *The World Without a Self: Virginia Woolf and the Novel* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univeristy Press, 1973); and Gillies, *Bergson*, 107-31.

³ Gillies, *Bergson*, 130.

⁴ Gillies, *Bergson*, 59, 109-10.

⁵ Gillies, *Bergson*, 131. In her Bergsonian interpretation of Woolf's experimental fiction, Gillies displays only marginally more restraint than Kumar, and his striking claim that '[a]ll [of Woolf's] literary experiments as a novelist can be explained in terms of Bergson's *la durée*' (*Stream of Consciousness*, 68).

It is a moot point whether Woolf ever read Bergson, and how familiar she was with his philosophy. Certainly, she wrote in a letter of 1932 that ‘I have never read Bergson’, a claim which Leonard Woolf corroborated after her death, writing to James Hafley in 1949 that ‘Mrs. Woolf did not read a word of Bergson’.⁶ However, the question of whether Bergson influenced Woolf or not is immaterial for critics such as Randall Stevenson who, as we saw in the introduction to this thesis, accepts Stephen Kern’s Bergsonian theorization of time in modernism and modernity. For such critics, it is perfectly legitimate to claim that Woolf’s novels explore Bergson’s contrast between *durée* and clock-time, irrespective of any possible influence. Indeed, Stevenson argues that the Bergsonian distinction between ‘time in the mind’ and ‘time on the clock’ underlies ‘much of Woolf’s view of time’.⁷

Correlatively, while critics such as Kumar, Gillies and Stevenson have read Woolf through Bergson’s concepts, her writing has also become a mainstay for broader Bergsonian interpretations of time in modernism. She is commonly deployed to illustrate and support the deeply-entrenched Bergsonian understanding of time in modernist literature. For example, in his introduction to modernism, Peter Childs invokes *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and ‘Woolf’s mature fiction’ to illustrate his claim that

⁶ Letter to Harmon H. Goldstone, 16 August 1932; *The Letters of Virginia Woolf, Volume V: 1932-1935*, ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann (London: Hogarth Press, 1979), 91. From a letter quoted in Hafley, *Glass*, 174. Leonard similarly wrote in a letter of 29 May 1944 to Margaret Thwaites that ‘I doubt whether Mrs Woolf had read any Bergson’, and again in a letter of 14 December 1968 to Roberta Rubenstein that ‘I dont think [Virginia] had read or was at all influenced by Bergson’ (*Letters of Leonard Woolf*, ed. Frederic Spotts (London: Bloomsbury, 1992), 485, 571). On the issue of Bergson’s possible influence on Woolf, see Michael H. Whitworth, *Virginia Woolf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 122.

⁷ Stevenson, *Modernist Fiction*, 140.

Bergson's philosophy of time, and his distinction between *durée* and clock-time, 'changed the way many Modernists represented time in fiction'.⁸

More recently, critics such as Sanja Bahun and Angeliki Spiropoulou have compared time in Woolf's writing to the historical time of Walter Benjamin.⁹ This comparison makes a welcome advance beyond Bergsonian readings of time in Woolf. As Jane Goldman has pointed out, Bergsonian readings of Woolf have tended to obscure the political aspects of her writings. They misleadingly present her as apolitically divorced from 'the historical', and from what Alex Zwerdling has called "'the real world'".¹⁰ She contends that '[t]o characterize all of Woolf's writing in terms of the [Bergsonian] "continuous movement of inner life" is to risk its homogenization into an unbroken record of life as inner flux, and of existence primarily as passive, subjective and ahistorical'.¹¹ By contrast, through drawing comparisons with Benjamin's historical time, critics such as Spiropoulou have shown that Woolf's treatment of time is both historical and political. For instance, although she does not

⁸ Peter Childs, *Modernism* (London: Routledge, 2000), 49.

⁹ Sanja Bahun, 'The Burden of the Past, the Dialectics of the Present: Notes on Virginia Woolf's and Walter Benjamin's Philosophies of History', *Modernist Cultures*, 3/2 (2008), 100-15, and *Modernism and Melancholia: Writing as Countermourning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 144-94. Angeliki Spiropoulou, *Virginia Woolf, Modernity and History: Constellations with Walter Benjamin* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). See also Hilary Thompson, 'Time and its Countermeasures: Modern Messianisms in Woolf, Benjamin, and Agamben', in Stephen Ross (ed.), *Modernism and Theory: A Critical Debate* (London: Routledge, 2009), 86-98.

¹⁰ Goldman, *Feminist Aesthetics*, 4; Alex Zwerdling, *Virginia Woolf and the Real World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

¹¹ Goldman, *Feminist Aesthetics*, 4. What Goldman diagnoses as the apolitical nature of Bergsonian readings of Woolf is illustrated by Gillies's claim that Woolf 'set out to develop new narrative strategies to show . . . that [the] moment is a profound inner experience that is every bit as important as the more public events of the external world' (*Bergson*, 110). Against Bergsonian interpretations of Woolf's moments, Goldman's study of Woolf's feminist aesthetics seeks 'to place the Woolfian moment in the context of "the real world", that is in the material and historical realm beyond merely the personal and subjective' (1). In another significant attempt to move beyond Bergsonian readings of time in Woolf, Ann Banfield has re-situated Woolf's writing in the context of Cambridge philosophy of time, and has argued that the time of *To the Lighthouse* (1927) finds a close counterpart in Bertrand Russell's 'conception of real time as physical time' ('Time Passes: Virginia Woolf, Post-Impressionism and Cambridge Time', *Poetics Today*, 24/3 (Fall 2003), 471-516, 479). She cites Goldman's warning that Bergsonian readings of Woolf risk turning away from 'the real world', yet her own reading of Woolf in terms of Cambridge philosophy is arguably just as apolitical (479).

explicitly mention Bergson, Spiropoulou advertises that her ‘critical constellation’ between Woolf and Benjamin is intended to unsettle ‘the standard critical perception that modernism represents a flight from history into the mind of the individual’. She argues instead that Woolf’s innovative views of history and historical time function ‘as a medium of her politics’.¹²

In the third part of this study, I will address the historical time of Woolf’s *Between the Acts* (1941) and late writing in a manner which seeks to contest Bergsonian readings of time in Woolf, and yet differs from Bahun and Spiropoulou’s approaches. I fully endorse Spiropoulou’s attempts to highlight the importance of historical time in Woolf’s writings, and to demonstrate its political nature. Moreover, I am sympathetic to the situation of Woolf’s writings in the context of the philosophical discourse of modernity. Nevertheless, I will contest both her and Bahun’s alignment of Woolf’s approach to history with that of Benjamin. In the introduction to this thesis we saw that, as Peter Osborne has shown, modernity contains within its abstract temporal form a range of competing possible temporalizations of history, of which Martin Heidegger’s temporalization of history as tradition, and Walter Benjamin’s temporalization of history as the destruction of tradition, are emblematic.¹³

Spiropoulou aligns Woolf’s approach to history with that of Benjamin, and argues that like him, she effects a destruction of tradition.¹⁴ On the contrary, by focussing on *Between the Acts* and Woolf’s late writing, I will argue that Woolf’s approach to history is more like that of Heidegger than that of Benjamin, and that she temporalized history as tradition rather than as the destruction of tradition. To do so is

¹² Spiropoulou, *Constellations*, 3-4.

¹³ Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 116.

¹⁴ Spiropoulou, *Constellations*, 58, 148-52.

to argue for a revised understanding of Woolf's conception of history, and on that basis, for a new understanding of her politics.

My argument will proceed in three stages. In chapter 3.1, I will draw a comparison between Miss La Trobe's pageant in *Between the Acts* and Mutabilitie's pageant in the Mutabilitie Cantos of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1596, 1609). Through this comparison, I will elucidate the role that the *aevum*—an order of duration which lies between time and eternity—plays in *Between the Acts*. The pageant portrays both swallows and its chorus of villagers as subsisting in the *aevum*, and as persisting unchanged across history. Turning to the politics of time, I will show that the fiction of the *aevum* in *Between the Acts* carries a deeply suspect politics from the perspective of both gender and class.

In chapter 3.2, I will compare the historical time of Miss La Trobe's pageant, which is marked by the ticking of a gramophone, to philosophical accounts of time in the phenomenological tradition, and notably to Heidegger's account of historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*) in *Being and Time* (1927). In stark contrast to Bergson's *durée*, the historical time of the pageant resembles Heidegger's historicity in being a historical and communal form of temporality, marked by repetition. It is not negated or collapsed by the *aevum* portrayed by the pageant. Instead, it co-exists with this order of duration, much as time coexists with the *aevum* in *The Faerie Queene*, and in the scholastic philosophy from which the concept is drawn. In chapter 3.3, I will use the comparison between the time of the pageant and Heidegger's historicity to address the issue of the politics of tradition in *Between the Acts* and Woolf's late writing.

Overall, my approach in the following chapters will be to address the question of Woolf's politics through her conception of historical time. That Woolf thought innovatively about history and historiography from a feminist perspective is not in doubt. Critics such as Rachel Bowlby and Melba Cuddy-Keane have convincingly elucidated some of the feminist aspects of Woolf's views on history and historiography by drawing on Woolf's suggestions to Lytton Strachey and Clive Bell that history ought to be completely re-written, the famous suggestion in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) for students to 're-write history', which 'often seems a little queer as it is, unreal, lop-sided', and her own repeated plans to write a work on the 'lives of the obscure'.¹⁵ Addressing her portrayal of an aeviternal nature and a repetitive historical time reveals further feminist aspects of her vision of history.

What is more open to debate is how Woolf's innovative views of history relate to class. Spiropoulou draws attention to one possible tension between feminism and class in Woolf's politics when she points out that, while Woolf's championing of the 'daughters of educated men' in *Three Guineas* (1938) is feminist, it nevertheless

¹⁵ Rachel Bowlby has argued that 'Woolf's challenge to what she identifies as a masculine history (great wars, great nations, great men) anticipates the principles and practices of explicitly feminist history' (*Feminist Destinations and Further Essays on Virginia Woolf* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 31). Melba Cuddy-Keane has drawn attention to feminist aspects of Woolf's 'pluralistic approach to history': see her 'Virginia Woolf and the Varieties of Historicist Experience', in Beth Carole Rosenberg and Jeanne Dubino (eds), *Virginia Woolf and the Essay* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 59-77. In her diary entry of 29 April 1921, Woolf recorded a conversation she had with Lytton Strachey, in which she agreed with him that '[h]istory must be written all over again' (*The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume II: 1920-1924*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell (London: Hogarth Press, 1978), 115). In a 1928 letter to Clive Bell, she asks whether history ought 'not all to be re-written instantly?' (*The Letters of Virginia Woolf, Volume III: 1923-1928*, ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann (London: Hogarth Press, 1977), 454). Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own; Three Guineas*, ed. Morag Shiach (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 58. Woolf repeatedly planned to write a work on the lives of the obscure, for example writing in her diary entry for 20 July 1925: 'I want to read voraciously & gather material for the Lives of the Obscure—which is to tell the whole history of England in one obscure life after another' (*The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume III: 1925-1930*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell (London: Hogarth Press, 1980), 37).

seems to favour upper-middle class women at the expense of working class women.¹⁶

How do Woolf's views of history relate to class? Did she hold a revolutionary materialist conception of history? Or did she think of history more conservatively in terms of the continuation of tradition? The following chapters will address such questions through the politics of time.

¹⁶ Spiropoulou, *Constellations*, 10-1.

3.1 The Pageant of Mutabilitie

The pageant in Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts* (1941) is most immediately, as Joshua Esty has made clear, a version of the 'modern pageant-play'. This is a genre that was established by Louis Napoleon Parker in 1905, and includes T. S. Eliot's *The Rock* (1934), and E. M. Forster's 'Abinger Pageant' (1934) and *England's Pleasant Land* (1938).¹⁷ According to Esty, writers such as Woolf, Eliot, and Forster turned to this genre in what became a defining feature of late modernism: the attempt, following the instability and dissolution of the British Empire, to imagine new forms of English national history and tradition.¹⁸ The pageant in Woolf's last novel also resembles other theatre forms. Critics have drawn suggestive parallels with ancient Greek drama (possibly mediated by Jane Harrison's work on ancient drama and community), Elizabethan theatre, and Bertolt Brecht's epic theatre.¹⁹

In this chapter, I will place the pageant in a new context, and read it alongside Mutabilitie's pageant in the Mutabilitie Cantos of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1596, 1609). By comparing Miss La Trobe's pageant to Mutabilitie's pageant, I will elucidate the role played by the *aevum* in *Between the Acts*. The *aevum* was, as Frank Kermode informs us, conceived by scholastic philosophers as an order of duration which lies between time and eternity. It 'does not abolish time or

¹⁷ Joshua Esty, 'Amnesia in the Fields: Late Modernism, Late Imperialism, and the English Pageant Play', *ELH*, 69/1 (Spring 2002), 245-76, 246-7. See also Ayako Yoshino, 'Between the Acts and Louis Napoleon Parker—the Creator of the Modern English Pageant', *Critical Survey*, 15/2 (May 2003), 49-60.

¹⁸ See Joshua Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 54-61.

¹⁹ For example, on ancient Greek drama, see Melba Cuddy-Keane, 'The Politics of Comic Modes in Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*', *PMLA*, 105/2 (March 1990), 273-85, 274-5. On Elizabethan theatre, see Brenda R. Silver, 'Virginia Woolf and the Concept of Community: The Elizabethan Playhouse', *Women's Studies*, 4/2 (1977), 291-8. I will return to the similarity between Miss La Trobe's pageant and Elizabethan theatre in chapter 3.3. On comparisons with Brecht's epic theatre, see below.

spatialize it; it co-exists with time, and is a mode in which things can be perpetual without being eternal'.²⁰ In the Mutabilitie Cantos, the *aevum* is the state which helps Nature to triumph (somewhat ambiguously) over Mutabilitie, who had claimed that all is susceptible to change and decay. Woolf makes similar use of the concept of the *aevum* in her late modernist imagination of English history. In Miss La Trobe's pageant, nature is aeviternal, and remains constant throughout the vicissitudes of history. It offers a reassuring sense of stability to those at Pointz Hall who are threatened by the rise of fascism, the disintegration of the British Empire, and the prospect of a violent World War.

Spenser's and Woolf's Pageants

Towards the end of her life, Woolf took great interest in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, during which period she also wrote *Between the Acts*.²¹ She read Spenser's epic poem in 1935, remarking in her diary on 23 January 1935 that: 'I am reading the Faery Queen—with delight. I shall write about it'.²² She took notes on the first four books of the poem in what is now known as 'Reading Notebook XLV'.²³ Therein, she recorded in an entry dated 11 March 1935 that 'I have decided to stop

²⁰ Kermode, *Ending*, 70-2.

²¹ The first page of the first draft of what was to become *Between the Acts*, which is headed 'Summer Night', is dated '2nd April 1938' (see Virginia Woolf, *Pointz Hall: The Earlier and Later Typescripts of Between the Acts*, ed. Mitchell A. Leaska (New York: University Publications, 1983), 33). Arguably, the first allusion in Woolf's diary to *Between the Acts* occurs on 19 January 1935: 'I have an idea for a "play" Summers night' (*Diary*, iv, 275).

²² Woolf, *Diary*, iv, 275.

²³ Virginia Woolf, 'Reading Notebook XLV', Sussex, Monks House Papers, B.2m. As Brenda R. Silver points out, Woolf's notes on *The Faerie Queene* in this notebook were taken between 20 January and 11 March 1935 (*Virginia Woolf's Reading Notebooks* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 211). Woolf's notes are taken from J. Payne Collier's edition of *Works of Edmund Spenser*, 5 vols (London: Bell and Daldy, 1869); all references to *The Faerie Queene* in this chapter will be to this edition. Virginia and Leonard also owned a copy of *The Works of Edmund Spenser*, ed. R. Morris (London; New York: Macmillan, 1899), which Leonard had signed (see King and Miletic-Vejzovic, *Library*, 211).

reading FQ./ at the end of the 4th book/ because I am completely out of the mood'.²⁴

After a break, she decided to return to the poem, writing in her diary on 13 June 1935:

'I will now go on with the F. Queen. & finish it. The mood has come back'.²⁵

As planned, Woolf did write about *The Faerie Queene*. She wrote an essay called 'The Faery Queen', which was first published posthumously by Leonard Woolf in *The Moment and Other Essays* (1947).²⁶ Therein, she remarked that Spenser, though 'remote from us in time, in speech, in convention', yet 'seems to be talking about things that are important to us too', and that in his poetry are 'the qualities that agitate living people at the moment'.²⁷ She also wrote about Spenser and *The Faerie Queene* in her late unfinished project, which was to be 'a Common History book'; in particular, Spenser features prominently in 'Anon', which was to be the first chapter of this work.²⁸ In preparation for writing this book, she took more notes on *The Faerie Queene* in what is now known as 'Reading Notebook XXXVII'.²⁹

Woolf encountered the Mutabilitie Cantos as part of her reading of *The Faerie Queene*. These posthumously-published Cantos stand in a somewhat vexed relationship to the other parts of the poem. They were first published in 1609 under a title which was probably supplied by their printer, Matthew Lownes: *Two Cantos of*

²⁴ Woolf, 'Notebook XLV', 11. Similarly, Woolf wrote in her diary on 11 March 1935 that 'I have read myself to a standstill in the F.Q.: & shall not press the mood till it returns naturally' (*Diary*, iv, 287).

²⁵ Woolf, *Diary*, iv, 321.

²⁶ Virginia Woolf, 'The Faery Queen', in *The Moment and Other Essays* (London: Hogarth Press, 1947), 24-30; all references here will be to the version of the essay published in *Essays*, vi, 487-92.

²⁷ Woolf, 'Faery', 488, 491.

²⁸ See Woolf's diary entry for 12 September 1940; *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume V: 1936-1941*, ed. Anne Oliver Bell and Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1984), 318. See also Virginia Woolf, "'Anon' and 'The Reader': Virginia Woolf's Last Essays", ed. Brenda R. Silver, *Twentieth Century Literature*, 25/3-4 (Autumn-Winter 1979), 356-441, 389-92.

²⁹ Virginia Woolf, 'Reading Notebook XXXVII', Sussex, Monks House Papers, B.2c, 22-3. According to Silver, the notes in this notebook date from between 12 September 1940 and 28 March 1941 (*Notebooks*, 184).

*Mutabilitie: Which, both for Forme and Matter, appeare to be parcell of some following Booke of the Faerie Queene, Under The Legend of Constance.*³⁰ They appear under this title, following the first six books of *The Faerie Queene*, in J. Payne Collier's edition of Spenser's *Works* (1869), which is the edition of Spenser that Woolf used.³¹ We can be sure that Woolf knew the Mutabilitie Cantos, as she quoted two lines from them in an early version of 'Anon':

Spenser heard the rhymers and the mummers. . . .
And after her came jolly june arrayed
All in greene leaves, as he a player were.
 He had seen the man at the festival, and noted his green leaves when the Queen saw the masque at Kenilworth.³²

As Silver points out, the two lines which I have italicised are a quotation from the Mutabilitie Cantos: they describe the allegorical figure 'June', who processes as one of the 'Monthes' in Mutabilitie's pageant.³³ Woolf's comment below, following J. Payne Collier's gloss in the edition she was reading, suggests that the allegorical figure June was inspired by a masque Spenser might have seen at Kenilworth in 1575, at which Queen Elizabeth was present.³⁴

However, more than simply showing that Woolf knew the Mutabilitie Cantos, these lines invite a comparison between Mutabilitie's pageant and Miss La Trobe's pageant in *Between the Acts*. It is significant that Woolf quoted lines which describe June's role in Mutabilitie's pageant, given that Miss La Trobe's pageant is held on 'a June

³⁰ See Jane Grogan, 'Introduction', in Jane Grogan (ed.), *Celebrating Mutabilitie: Essays on Edmund Spenser's Mutabilitie Cantos* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 1-23, 1, 18.

³¹ Spenser, *Works*, iv, 241-86, 241.

³² Woolf, 'Anon', 416-7, my italics. These lines form part of what Brenda Silver calls the 'A version' of 'Anon'; in the later 'C version', an allusion to the Mutabilitie Cantos, but not a direct quotation, remains: 'Spenser . . . had seen "the player dressed in green"—the old play that the peasants acted when spring came and to placate the earth, the mummer hung himself with green leaves' ('Anon', 392).

³³ Silver, 'Anon', 417; Spenser, *Faerie, Mutabilitie*.vii.35, in *Works*, iv, 274.

³⁴ See Silver, 'Anon', 417.

day'.³⁵ Moreover, *The Faerie Queene* is explicitly mentioned in *Between the Acts* as one of the books which Isa notices whilst browsing in the Pointz Hall library.³⁶

Bearing in mind these suggestive connections, we can pursue the comparison between the two pageants.³⁷

In the Mutabilitie Cantos, the allegorical figure Mutabilitie challenges Jove, and ambitiously claims dominion over heaven and earth on the grounds that both are subject to change. Jove agrees to meet her challenge, and their dispute is presided over by 'great dame Nature' on Arlo hill.³⁸ In making her case, Mutabilitie argues that Earth, Water, Air and Fire are all subject to change. She then requests that Nature bring forth 'The rest which doe the world in being hold;/ As times and seasons of the yeare that fall', so that it may be judged whether they are likewise subject to change.³⁹ Nature obliges, and calls forth a pageant of the Seasons, the Months, Day and Night, the Hours and finally Life and Death, all of which process before the gathered assembly. Jove replies to Mutabilitie's pageant that although all things 'that under heaven dwell/ Are chaung'd of Time', yet the gods deserve still to rule, because they, from their 'heavenly cell', are what makes Time himself move.⁴⁰

³⁵ Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts*, ed. Mark Hussey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 55.

³⁶ Woolf, *Acts*, 14.

³⁷ Woolf, *Acts*, 14.

³⁸ Spenser, *Faerie*, Mutabilitie.vii.5, in *Works*, iv, 263. As Richard A. McCabe points out, the allegorical debate on Arlo Hill, in which Mutabilitie, Time and Nature are personified to play their various parts, forms the most explicit exploration in *The Faerie Queene* of the poem's pervasive theme of time: in the Mutabilitie Cantos, 'all of the poem's philosophical and theological attitudes converge in an intense exploration of the value of fortune, flux and time' (*The Pillars of Eternity: Time and Providence in 'The Faerie Queene'* (Blackrock: Irish Academic Press, 1989), 199).

³⁹ Spenser, *Faerie*, Mutabilitie.vii.27, in *Works*, iv, 271.

⁴⁰ Spenser, *Faerie*, Mutabilitie.vii.48, in *Works*, iv, 280. Mutabilitie should be distinguished from time. Indeed, Mutabilitie visits 'Tyme', who lives in 'the Circle of the Moone': 'an hory/ Old aged Sire, with hower-glasse in hand' (Spenser, *Faerie*, Mutabilitie.vi.8, in *Works*, iv, 244).

Nature, in her role of arbitrator of the dispute, passes her verdict. She decides, in a passage which echoes the depiction of the Garden of Adonis in the third book of *The Faerie Queene* (III.vi), that although all things are changed, ‘They are not changed from their first estate’, and ‘turning to themselves at length againe,/ Doe worke their owne perfection so by fate’.⁴¹ Consequently, Mutabilitie is defeated, and Nature asserts her own power over her: ‘Cease therefore, daughter, further to aspire,/ And thee content thus to be rul’d by me’.⁴² Nature also points ahead to the eschaton, which will inaugurate a changeless, eternal state: ‘But time shall come that all shall changed bee,/ And from thenceforth none no more change shall see’.⁴³ In the two stanzas of the ‘unperfite’ eighth canto, the poet reflects on Nature’s verdict, and although he concedes that Mutabilitie was unworthy to rule Heaven, yet holds that ‘In all things else she bears the greatest sway’.⁴⁴

Miss La Trobe’s pageant is, like Mutabilitie’s pageant, centrally concerned with the question of change over time. In the Pointz Hall pageant, although the seasons do not process as allegorical figures in front of the audience, their passing is conveyed by the villagers’ songs: ‘summer and winter and spring; and spring and winter again; ploughing and sowing, eating and growing; time passes’.⁴⁵ These songs of the passing of time and the cycling of the seasons suggest that ‘[a]ll passes’ and ‘all changes’, much as Mutabilitie had claimed that all is subject to change.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Spenser, *Faerie*, Mutabilitie.vii.58, in *Works*, iv, 284.

⁴² Spenser, *Faerie*, Mutabilitie.vii.59, in *Works*, iv, 284.

⁴³ Spenser, *Faerie*, Mutabilitie.vii.59, in *Works*, iv, 284.

⁴⁴ Spenser, *Faerie*, Mutabilitie.viii.1, in *Works*, iv, 285.

⁴⁵ Woolf, *Acts*, 91.

⁴⁶ Woolf, *Acts*, 100.

In the Mutabilitie Cantos, after her pageant, Mutabilitie puts forth the challenge whether:

CHANGE doth not raig and beare the greatest sway;
For who sees not that Time on all doth pray?
But Times do change and move continually:
So nothing here long standeth in one stay:
Wherefore, this lower world who can deny
But to be subject still to Mutabilitie?⁴⁷

The audience in *Between the Acts* discuss Miss La Trobe's pageant in terms which are markedly similar to those of Mutabilitie. During one of the intervals, an unidentified member of the audience asks: '[d]you think people change? Their clothes, of course'.⁴⁸ In a similar vein, following the Victorian scene, Mrs Lynn Jones contemplates the disappearance of the Victorian home:

Time went on and on like the hands of the kitchen clock. (The machine chuffed in the bushes.) . . . Change had to come, she said to herself, or there'd have been yards and yards of Papa's beard, of Mama's knitting. Nowadays her son-in-law was clean shaven. Her daughter had a refrigerator.⁴⁹

The pageant has caused Mrs Lynn Jones to think of the differences between the Victorian age of her childhood and the present day. She notes, for instance, as an index of modern technological advance, that her 'daughter had a refrigerator'. The scene is comic: collapsing the question of long-term change between historical ages and the question of short-term change within an age, she humorously imagines that a world without change would be one in which the Victorian 'Home would have remained; and Papa's beard . . . would have grown and grown'.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the issue of change over time and history is exactly that which is involved in Mutabilitie's pageant. Mrs Lynn Jones's awareness of the effect of 'Time', which she associates with the going 'round and round and round' of the hands of a kitchen clock, and

⁴⁷ Spenser, *Faerie*, Mutabilitie.vii.47, in *Works*, iv, 280.

⁴⁸ Woolf, *Acts*, 88.

⁴⁹ Woolf, *Acts*, 124-5.

⁵⁰ Woolf, *Acts*, 125.

which is also suggestively aligned with the historical time of the pageant through the parenthetical remark that the ‘machine chuffed in the bushes’, parallels Mutabilitie’s observations that ‘Time on all doth pray’, and that ‘Times do change and move continually’. Her acknowledgement that ‘[c]hange had to come’ is similar to Mutabilitie’s claim that ‘Change doth . . . reign’ and that ‘nothing here long standeth on one stay’.⁵¹

Moreover, Mrs Lynn Jones goes on to contrast historical change and the changelessness of ‘Heaven’ in a manner which resonates with the Mutabilitie Cantos. In the Mutabilitie Cantos, Nature points ahead to the eschaton, when change will be replaced by an eternal realm: ‘time shall come that all shall changed bee,/ And from thenceforth, none no more change shall see.’⁵² Again, developing Nature’s suggestion, the poet in the very last stanza of the poem looks ahead to the

time when no more Change shall be,
But stedfast rest of all things, firmly stayd
Upon the pillours of Eternity,
That is contrayr to Mutabilitie;
For all that moveth doth in Change delight:
But thence-forth all shall rest eternally
With Him that is the God of Sabbaoth hight.⁵³

Mrs Lynn Jones similarly contrasts change and eternity, and imagines a changeless Heaven: ‘[w]hat she meant was, change had to come, unless things were perfect; in which case she supposed they resisted Time. Heaven was changeless’.⁵⁴ While both Miss La Trobe’s and Mutabilitie’s pageants are centrally concerned with the issue of change across history, they also both dramatise an aeviternal state which resists

⁵¹ Woolf, *Acts*, 125.

⁵² Spenser, *Faerie*, Mutabilitie.vii.59, in *Works*, iv, 284.

⁵³ Spenser, *Faerie*, Mutabilitie.viii.2, in *Works*, iv, 286.

⁵⁴ Woolf, *Acts*, 125.

change. As we shall see, the aeviternal permanence of Nature in *The Faerie Queene* finds a close analogue in Miss La Trobe's pageant.

The Aevum

Critics such as Frank Kermode and Richard McCabe have demonstrated the importance of the concept of the *aevum* to *The Faerie Queene*.⁵⁵ In his *Summa Theologiae* (1274), Thomas Aquinas advanced the concept of the *aevum* as a third order of duration which 'lies somewhere between eternity and time', and measures things such as heavenly bodies and angels.⁵⁶ The concept of aeviternity provided him with a rationale for the peculiar mode of existence of angels, who are neither eternal nor fully temporal, but rather inhabit this third order, and though immutable as to substance, are capable of change by acts of will and intellect. As he put it: angels 'combine unchangeable existence with changeability of choice at the natural level, and with changeability of thoughts, affections and, in their own fashion, places'.⁵⁷

As Kermode and McCabe make clear, the concept of the *aevum*, as well as accounting for the quasi-temporal status of angels, also played an important role in harmonizing developments in the interpretation of secular history. Placing it in its wider intellectual context, McCabe informs us that the concept of the *aevum* arose historically out of a conflict between Aristotle's views of time, which re-emerged from the eleventh-century onwards, and those of Medieval Christianity. Aristotle had postulated an unending cycle of recurrent events, which at first seems difficult to

⁵⁵ See Kermode, *Ending*, 70-81, and McCabe, *Pillars*, 36-8, 127-30, 132-53.

⁵⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Questions on God*, ed. Brian Davies and Brian Leftow (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006), 101.

⁵⁷ Aquinas, *Summa*, 101.

reconcile with the linear view of history adopted by the early Church fathers.⁵⁸ The *aevum* helped conceptually to reconcile these two forms of history in what McCabe describes as ‘the Christianization of the Aristotelian viewpoint’.⁵⁹ It was possible to see human and animal life as attaining a cyclical perpetuity within the *aevum*, whilst remaining within finite time. As Kermode puts it:

[t]hus was invented an image of endlessness consistent with a temporal end. Historical events might be unique, and given pattern by an end; yet there are perpetuities which defy both the uniqueness and the end. Human society thus took on certain angelic characteristics.⁶⁰

Finally, it should be pointed out that the concept of the *aevum* soon acquired political and juristic functions outside the narrow confines of scholastic philosophy, and thereby took on a ‘politics of time’. Most notably, the concept was employed in the theory of ‘the King’s Two Bodies’.⁶¹ According to this legal theory, the king’s ‘natural body’ was distinguished from his ‘body politic’; while the former was time-bound, the latter was conceived as aeviternally perpetual, giving rise to the idea that the monarch ‘never dies’. As Ernst Kantorowicz puts it, the body politic of kingship ‘represents, like the angels, the Immutable within Time’.⁶²

In the *Mutabilitie Cantos*, the concept of the *aevum* facilitates Nature’s (ambiguous) triumph over Mutabilitie. In her verdict on the dispute at Arlo Hill, Nature concedes that all things are subject to change, yet rejects Mutabilitie’s arguments by, as McCabe puts it, ‘discovering intimations of eternity within the recurrent cycles of

⁵⁸ McCabe, *Pillars*, 36-7. See also Kermode, *Ending*, 68.

⁵⁹ McCabe, *Pillars*, 37.

⁶⁰ Kermode, *Ending*, 74.

⁶¹ See Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (1957; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), Kermode, *Ending*, 73, and McCabe, *Pillars*, 37-8. The concept was also used to establish the legal continuity and perpetuity of corporations, communities and empires: see Kantorowicz, *Two Bodies*, 273-314.

⁶² Kantorowicz, *Two Bodies*, 8; see also 171.

generation, decay and death'.⁶³ Significantly, her verdict echoes the presentation of the Garden of Adonis in the third book of *The Faerie Queene* which is, as McCabe points out, Spenser's 'most subtle and imaginative exploration of the *aevum*'.⁶⁴

In the Garden of Adonis, Genius, the god of generation, allows all the 'naked babes' who so wish to leave the garden 'to live in mortall state', before returning to 'grow afresh'.⁶⁵ This conceit of Genius repeatedly sending out 'babes' into the world, and then readmitting them to the garden, conveys what Kermode describes as 'the quasi-immortality of the generative cycle'. This quasi-immortality is crystallized in the figure of Adonis, whom Kermode interprets to be 'the entire biological cycle, conceived as subsisting in the *aevum*'.⁶⁶ Adonis is preserved in an arbour at the centre of the garden, 'in the midst of that Paradise'.⁶⁷ Although he is 'subject to mortalitie', he yet 'may not/ For ever dye', and achieves an aeviternal perpetuity, being 'eterne in mutabilitie,/ And by succession made perpetuall'.⁶⁸ His state of existence foreshadows Nature's triumph over Mutabilitie in the Mutabilitie Cantos. Nature's argument that all things 'by their change their being doe dilate' and turn 'to themselves at length againe,' recalls Genius's sending forth all that so desire into the world, after which 'they againe returne back by the hinder gate'. And Nature's claim that all things 'doe their states maintaine' despite being subject to change recalls Adonis's aeviternal state of being 'Transformed oft' and yet 'by succession made

⁶³ McCabe, *Pillars*, 208.

⁶⁴ McCabe, *Pillars*, 138. Ayesha Ramachandran draws attention to the conceptual and rhetorical similarity between the portrayal of the Garden of Adonis and the Mutabilitie Cantos, and argues that '[t]he seeds of the Mutabilitie Cantos are in fact already evident in the stanzas describing the Garden, where Spenser imagines the place of Time within the seemingly eternal stasis of garden's generative cycles' ('Mutabilitie's Lucretian Metaphysics: Scepticism and Cosmic Process in Spenser's *Cantos*', in Jane Grogan (ed.), *Celebrating Mutabilitie*, 220-245, 224-5).

⁶⁵ Spenser, *Faerie*, III.vi.32 and 33, in *Works*, ii, 455-6.

⁶⁶ Kermode, *Ending*, 77-8.

⁶⁷ Spenser, *Faerie*, III.vi.43, in *Works*, ii, 461.

⁶⁸ Spenser, *Faerie*, III.vi.47, in *Works*, ii, 469.

perpetuall'.⁶⁹ Both Nature and Adonis triumph over mutability, finding permanence in change. Spenser's Nature inhabits the *aevum*, and is like Adonis in being 'eterne in mutabilitie'.⁷⁰

Nature's aeviternal existence in *The Faerie Queene* finds a parallel in *Between the Acts*. Although 'Nature' does not appear as an allegorical figure in Miss La Trobe's pageant, nevertheless, as the Rev. Streatfield astutely points out, 'nature takes her part'.⁷¹ In *Between the Acts*, swallows synecdochically stand for a nature which triumphs over mutability.⁷² As planned by Miss La Trobe, swallows take part in the pageant.⁷³ For instance, to the excitement of the audience, 'real swallows darted across the sheet' during the Victorian picnic scene, and later, in the 'Present Day' scene, they danced '[r]ound and round, in and out they skimmed. Real swallows'.⁷⁴ That the same swallows appear in scenes representing different historical ages both forges a sense of continuity over time, and suggests that nature is changeless across history.

Lucy Swithin embraces the sense of continuity which the swallows bring. During one of the pageant's intervals, she watches the swallows swooping from rafter to rafter in the barn, and remarks how the swallows 'come every year . . . the same birds' from Africa, '[a]s they had come, she supposed, when the barn was a swamp'.⁷⁵ She

⁶⁹ Spenser, *Faerie*, Mutabilitie.vii.58, in *Works*, iv, 284; *Faerie*, III.vi.32 and 33, in *Works*, ii, 455-6.

⁷⁰ As Kermode puts it, Spenser's Nature 'is the goddess of what lives and changes in time under the conditions of a kind of immortality which is by definition of time' (*Ending*, 79).

⁷¹ Woolf, *Acts*, 138.

⁷² Tellingly, when the Rev. Streatfield offers his interpretation that 'nature takes her part' in the pageant, the 'swallows [swept] round him. They seemed cognisant of his meaning' (*Acts*, 138).

⁷³ Miss La Trobe plans to use nature in the pageant, writing in her stage directions: 'try ten mins. of present time. Swallows, cows etc.' (*Acts*, 129).

⁷⁴ Woolf, *Acts*, 118, 131.

⁷⁵ Woolf, *Acts*, 74-5.

extends her conceit across the whole stretch of geological time about which she has been reading in her Wellsian *Outline of History*:

“Swallows,” said Lucy, holding her cup, looking at the birds. Excited by the company they were flitting from rafter to rafter. Across Africa, across France they had come to nest here. Year after year they came. Before there was a channel, when the earth, upon which the Windsor chair was planted, was a riot of rhododendrons, and humming birds quivered at the mouths of scarlet trumpets, as she had read that morning in her *Outline of History*, they had come.⁷⁶

By linking the remote geological past to the present day, the swallows provide Lucy with a reassuring sense of historical continuity. The great changes which the earth has undergone in this period, conveyed by Lucy’s imaginative juxtaposition of a riotous primeval forest with the Windsor chair that is currently urbanely planted on the Pointz Hall lawn, throw into relief a deeper continuity of nature: that of swallows migrating year after year from Africa. Her idea that ‘the same birds’ have been coming from Africa since the remote past is the idea of an aeviternally perpetual nature, which corresponds to Nature’s aeviternal existence in *The Faerie Queene*.

Mrs Manresa is sceptical of Lucy’s conceit. She ‘smiled benevolently, humouring the old lady’s whimsy. It was unlikely, she thought, that the birds were the same’.⁷⁷ In one sense, Mrs Manresa is quite correct: given a swallow’s life-span, it cannot literally be the same birds which have been coming for thousands of years. However, in another sense, her remark overlooks the permanence of birds when they are conceived of as subsisting in the *aevum*. Aeviternal swallows may, like Adonis in his garden, and like the monarch according to the theory of the King’s Two Bodies, ‘never die’. Lucy’s conceit thereby accords subtly with the pageant, and its fiction of

⁷⁶ Woolf, *Acts*, 79.

⁷⁷ Woolf, *Acts*, 74.

an aeviternal nature, dramatised by the return of the same swallows throughout different historical ages.

The swallows in *Between the Acts* suggest a continuity and stability within history, which is nevertheless overshadowed by the prospect of a devastating war. In the ‘Present Day’ scene of the pageant, the swallows seem to foretell peace and prosperity:

[t]he swallows—or martins were they?—The temple-haunting martins who come, have always come . . . Yes, perched on the wall, they seemed to foretell what after all the *Times* was saying yesterday. Homes will be built. Each flat with its refrigerator, in the crannied wall. Each of us a free man; plates washed by machinery; not an aeroplane to vex us; all liberated; made whole.⁷⁸

That the swallows—or martins—‘have always come’, suggests again the idea of an aeviternal nature. They promise a continued stability into the future, by seeming to foretell the previous day’s optimistic news stories: that there will not be war (‘[e]ach of us a free man’), but instead growth and prosperity (‘[h]omes will be built’). Of course, such optimism is ironically misplaced, given the subsequent outbreak of war. This irony is intensified by the mention of martins. As Gillian Beer notes, the ‘temple-haunting martins’ are an allusion to *Macbeth*, and to the ‘temple-haunting martlet’ which ironically is interpreted to be a good omen by Banquo, shortly before the King is murdered.⁷⁹ To redouble the irony in *Between the Acts*, while the swallows or martins seem to foretell that there will be ‘not an aeroplane to vex us’, this turns out not to be the case. Later in the pageant, twelve ‘aeroplanes in perfect formation’ interrupt the Rev. Streatfield’s speech, and foreshadow war.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Woolf, *Acts*, 131.

⁷⁹ Beer, *Common Ground*, 171; the allusion is to *Macbeth*, 1.vi.4.

⁸⁰ Woolf, *Acts*, 138.

The combination of aeviternal continuity and a devastating war in *Between the Acts* is fully consonant. We saw above that the concept of the *aevum* was employed historiographically to harmonise Aristotlelian cycles of recurrent events with linear Church history which was given pattern by an ending—apocalypse. Indeed, this is the shape of history in the *Mutabilitie Cantos*. Nature both asserts an aeviternal continuity over change—all things ‘raigne over change, and doe their states maintaine’—and points forward to the eschaton. Similarly, in *Between the Acts*, the aeviternal continuity of nature symbolised by the swallows is combined with the prospect of war, which at times assumes apocalyptic proportions. William Dodge speaks bluntly to Isa of “[t]he doom of sudden death hanging over us . . . There’s no retreating and advancing”.⁸¹

More subtly, apocalypse also appears in the novel in a darkly comic mode. Through an ambiguity between the discourse time and the story time of the pageant, Giles perhaps inadvertently wishes for there to be no future:

‘Another interval,’ Dodge read out, looking at the programme.
 ‘And after that, what?’ asked Lucy.
 ‘Present time. Ourselves,’ he read.
 ‘Let’s hope to God that’s the end,’ said Giles gruffly.⁸²

The same ambiguity between the end of the pageant and the end of the world allows for further comedy:

[i]t was an awkward moment. How to make an end? . . . Then there was a scuffle behind the bush; a preliminary, premonitory scratching. A needle scraped a disc; chuff, chuff chuff; then having found the rut, there was a roll and a flutter which portended ‘God . . .’ (they all rose to their feet) ‘Save the King’.⁸³

⁸¹ Woolf, *Acts*, 83.

⁸² Woolf, *Acts*, 126-7.

⁸³ Woolf, *Acts*, 139-40.

Here, the ‘roll and a flutter’ herald either the playing of the National Anthem, or, as the sounding of the trumpets of the seven angels, apocalypse. Similarly, the word ‘God’ is ambiguously either the first word of the National Anthem, or refers to God and thereby suggests the second coming and the end of history.⁸⁴ Aeviternal nature thereby offers a picture of constancy which is fully compatible with an end to time in both *The Faerie Queene* and *Between the Acts*.

Gender and the Politics of a Changeless Nature

While Miss La Trobe’s pageant portrays nature as subsisting in the *aevum*, Woolf was acutely aware of the abusive roles which ‘nature’, and particularly changeless nature, could be made to play with gender. In *Three Guineas* (1938), she turned a critical eye to the concept of ‘Nature’, and its deployment in misogynistic arguments, such as those which sought to deny women the right to a university education: ‘Nature was called in; Nature it was claimed who is not only omniscient but unchanging, had made the brain of woman of the wrong shape or size’. Unchanging nature, and the biological structure of women’s brains, is evoked in such arguments as a reason for denying women a university education; even once admitted to the universities, it was claimed that the brain of woman was ‘not the creative brain; the brain that can bear responsibility and earn the higher salaries’.⁸⁵ Sexual difference is here inscribed in an unchangeable nature, and used as a pretext for keeping women out of the universities and out of the professions.

⁸⁴ See Revelation 8:6.

⁸⁵ Woolf, *Guineas*, 359-60.

Sexual difference, supposedly inscribed in nature, takes a particularly alarming turn under fascist regimes. Woolf's narrator remarks in a note to *Three Guineas* that

[t]he nature of manhood and the nature of womanhood are frequently defined both by Italian and German dictators. Both repeatedly insist that it is the nature of man and indeed the essence of manhood to fight. Hitler, for example, draws a distinction between 'a nation of pacifists and a nation of men'. Both repeatedly insist that it is the nature of womanhood to heal the wounds of the fighter.⁸⁶

The gender roles constructed by fascism, then made out to be 'natural'—man as fighter, and woman as healer—are deeply problematic, and Woolf welcomes the contestation by pacifist movements of the supposedly “‘natural and eternal law’” that man is a fighter.⁸⁷ The narrator of *Three Guineas* is similarly undaunted by Julian Huxley's warning in his *Essays in Popular Science* (1926) that 'man and woman differ in every cell of their body in regard to the number of their chromosomes . . . [which] have been shown by the last decade's work to be the bearers of heredity', and that 'any considerable alteration of the hereditary constitution is an affair of millennia, not of decades'.⁸⁸ Nature here is viewed not as eternal and unchanging, but, through the perspective of twentieth-century evolutionary biology, as permitting hereditary change at a glacial pace, over the course of millennia. Undeterred, Woolf's narrator comments wryly in response that 'as science also assures us that our life on earth is "an affair of millennia, not of decades", some alteration in the hereditary constitution may be worth attempting'.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Woolf, *Guineas*, 412.

⁸⁷ Woolf, *Guineas*, 412.

⁸⁸ Woolf, *Guineas*, 410-1, 413; the quotations are from Julian Huxley, *Essays in Popular Science* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1926), 64-5. In context, Huxley is rejecting Mathilde and Mathias Vaerting's view in their *The Dominant Sex: A Study in the Sociology of Sex Differentiation*, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1923), that the 'biological differences between the sexes in man are negligible' (63).

⁸⁹ Woolf, *Guineas*, 413.

In all these cases, Woolf is acutely critical of conceptions of nature that are used to legitimate gender inequality, such as the exclusion of women from the universities, or to define the roles of men and women in a bellicose fascist society. Such conceptions of nature, whether as eternal and changeless, or only as admitting change at a minute rate over the course of millennia, are to be challenged. ‘And must we not’, writes Woolf, ‘and do we not change this unalterable nature?’⁹⁰ The paradoxical formulation of this defiant call to change the unchangeable invites suspicion concerning formulations of an unchangeable nature: such a ‘nature’ turns out to be artifice, and moreover, one that can be challenged and rejected.⁹¹

The aeveiternally changeless nature depicted by Miss La Trobe’s pageant is similarly problematic. While Lucy finds the fiction that the same swallows have been visiting since the time when the barn was a swamp a comforting one, swallows also possess more sinister connotations in the novel. As critics such as Jane Marcus, Gillian Beer and Jane de Gay have made clear, swallows are associated in the novel with rape, violence and murder. All of these critics have drawn attention to the novel’s allusions to Algernon’s Swinburne’s poem ‘Itylus’, which is based on the myth of Procne and Philomena, the best-known version of which occurs in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.⁹² As Bart leaves the barn where Lucy has been contemplating the swallows, he mutters the

⁹⁰ Woolf, *Guineas*, 361.

⁹¹ Similarly, on St Paul’s use of the ‘argument from nature’, Woolf’s narrator writes: ‘[t]he argument from nature may seem to us susceptible of amendment; nature, when allied with financial advantage, is seldom of divine origin’ (*Guineas*, 392).

⁹² Jane Marcus suggests that Woolf rewrote Swinburne’s poem in *Between the Acts*, retrieving the myth’s ‘original claim of the power of sisterhood over the patriarchal family’, and turning it into a tale of ‘sorority and revenge for rape’ (*Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 76, 80, 93). Beer draws attention to Swinburne’s poem, and points out that the swallows ‘who sweep constantly across the barn recall the myth of Procne and Philomela in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*’, and thereby allude ‘to rape, violation, and murder’ (*Common Ground*, 136-41). Jane de Gay considers the allusions to ‘Itylus’ alongside different versions of the Procne and Philomela myth (*Virginia Woolf’s Novels and the Literary Past* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 205-7).

first line of 'Itylus'—"Swallow, my sister, O sister swallow"—a line which he repeats and modulates when Lucy joins him in his room.⁹³ Probably reflecting Bart's perspective through free indirect discourse, Lucy is figured as a swallow: she 'perched on the edge of a chair like a bird on a telegraph wire before starting for Africa'.⁹⁴ His murmuring the first line of Swinburne's poem encourages the identification of Lucy with Procne, who in the myth was transformed into a swallow after her sister Philomena was raped by Tereus. In turn, as Marcus and de Gay point out, the allusions to 'Itylus' echo the account of the rape of a girl by guardsmen, which Isa reads in *The Times*, and which haunts her throughout the day.⁹⁵ She reads how the girl was dragged into a barrack room, before 'one of the troopers removed part of her clothing, and she screamed and hit him about the face'; at this point, the door opens and 'in came Mrs. Swithin carrying a hammer'.⁹⁶ Lucy Swithin here appears both as the victim of the rape story, but also as a revengeful figure. This latter aspect complements her later depiction as Procne, who extracts revenge for her sister's rape by serving her husband their own son to eat.

The violent associations which surround swallows warrant circumspection for the aeviternal nature depicted by the pageant. Lucy sees in the swallows a continuity of nature, and her own figuration as a swallow places her in this order. However, as Bart's association of Lucy with Procne suggests, this supposedly natural order is one of patriarchal aggression and rape. Just as much as the 'natural and eternal law' which

⁹³ Woolf, *Acts*, 80, 84-5.

⁹⁴ Woolf, *Acts*, 85.

⁹⁵ See Marcus, *Patriarchy*, 93-4; de Gay, *Literary Past*, 205. As Stuart Clarke has shown, the rape about which Isa reads was a real case, which occurred on 27 April 1938, and was reported in *The Times*: see his 'The Horse with a Green Tail', *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*, 34 (Spring 1990), 3-4. See also Beer, *Common Ground*, 136-9, and Christine Froula, *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde: War, Civilization, Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 293-6.

⁹⁶ Woolf, *Acts*, 15.

fascists invoke to claim that man is essentially a fighter, the aeviternal continuity of nature in Miss La Trobe's pageant naturalises the patriarchal order and its incipient violence.

Isa's circumspect attitude to the idea of an aeviternal nature creates a further ambivalence within the novel towards such a fiction. Unlike Lucy, Isa does not embrace that fiction, and is not consoled by the continuity of nature. During one of the pageant's intervals, she picks a rose, and wanders through the gardens at Pointz Hall. In one of her poetic reveries, she thinks of herself wandering where

there grows nothing for the eye. No rose. To issue where? In some harvestless dim field where no evening lets fall her mantle; nor sun rises. All's equal there. Unblowing, ungrowing are the roses there. Change is not; nor the mutable and lovable.⁹⁷

The 'harvestless dim field' which she imagines displays the characteristics of the *aevum*. In language which echoes that of the Mutabilitie Cantos, the field is depicted as one where '[c]hange is not; nor the mutable'. It has a peculiar temporal character, and is seemingly stuck in a state of stasis: 'no evening lets fall her mantle', and no 'sun rises', as if the dim field existed in a state of perpetual dusk.

Through its aeviternal stasis, Isa's field resembles the Garden of Adonis (III.vi) in *The Faerie Queene*. In her reading notes on Spenser's poem, Woolf copied the following lines which describe the Garden of Adonis: 'There is continual Spring, & harvest there/ Continual', after which she wrote: 'why this beauty?'⁹⁸ These lines depict the Garden of Adonis as one in which 'Spring' and 'harvest' coexist, both 'meeting at one tyme', and moreover as one in which these seasons never pass but rather are

⁹⁷ Woolf, *Acts*, 111-2.

⁹⁸ Woolf, 'Notebook XLV', 15. More fully, the lines which Woolf quoted read: 'There is continuall Spring, and harvest there/ Continuall, both meeting at one tyme' (Spenser, *Faerie*, III.vi.42, in *Works*, ii, 458-9).

‘continuall’. They reflect the garden’s aeviternity which, as a state that lies somewhere between time and eternity, permits the coexistence of different times, and the changeless existence of seasons. Isa’s ‘harvestless field’ both echoes and modulates Spenser’s lines. That her field is ‘harvestless’ suggests a similarly aeviternal state in which the passing of the seasons is suspended, but in contrast to the Garden of Adonis where there is ‘harvest . . . Continuall’, Isa’s field is ‘harvestless’. While the Garden of Adonis conveys nature’s fertility and generative power, Isa’s field is one of sterility. In this respect, Isa’s field more closely resembles the Bower of Bliss which Guyon and Palmer visit in the second book of *The Faerie Queene*, and which stands as the sterile counterpart to the Garden of Adonis.

Whereas the Garden of Adonis celebrates the generative power of nature, and the sexual union of Venus and Adonis, the Bower of Bliss poorly imitates nature, and is a place of destructive and fruitless lust. The rose which Isa picks, and the ‘roses’ that she imagines in her field, resonate with a song that is sung in the Bower of Bliss, the following lines of which Woolf copied in her reading notes on *The Faerie Queene*:

So passeth, in the passing of a day,
Of mortall life the leafe, the bud, the flowre,
Gather therefore the Rose, whilest yet is prime,
Gather the Rose of love whilest yet is time,
Whilest loving thou mayst loved be with equall crime.⁹⁹

In *The Faerie Queene*, this *carpe diem* song about gathering ‘the Rose of love’ before it is too late is fittingly sung as Acrasia lies in a disheveled state on a ‘bed of Roses’, having recently seduced a young knight, Verdant.¹⁰⁰ However, in the wider context of the canto, Acrasia’s love, and the Bower of Bliss more generally, are shams through

⁹⁹ Woolf, ‘Notebook XLV’, 12; Spenser, *Faerie*, II.xii.75, in *Works*, ii, 329-30. Woolf omitted the third, fourth, fifth and seventh lines of the stanza. In one of her notes, Woolf expressed her preference for the ‘Bower of Bliss’ over other parts of the second book of *The Faerie Queene*, including the ‘fights’ and ‘[t]he history of Britain’ in II.x (12).

¹⁰⁰ Spenser, *Faerie*, II.xii.77, in *Works*, ii, 330.

which Guyon sees. Unlike the ‘goodly flowres’ which ‘dame Nature’ uses to beautify the Garden of Adonis, flowers in the Bower of Bliss are artificial and gaudy.¹⁰¹ The ‘large and spacious plaine’ where the Bower is situated is adorned ‘too lavishly’ by Art with flowers ‘as half in scorne/ Of niggard Nature’; their artifice is conveyed by their description as ‘painted flowres’.¹⁰² The ‘roses’ of Isa’s field which are ‘ungrowing’ are like the painted, artificial flowers of the Bower of Bliss.

Exploring the intertextual echoes of *The Faerie Queene* in *Between the Acts* further, it is significant that, while Isa pictures her harvestless field, Mrs Manresa is possibly seducing her husband Giles in the greenhouse.¹⁰³ Mrs Manresa becomes Acrasia, the ‘wanton Lady’ and ‘faire Enchauntresse’, and Giles plays the role of her ‘new Lover’, a ‘young man’ whom she seduces.¹⁰⁴ They are alone in the greenhouse which had earlier been described as covered by a ‘vine’ with ‘little grapes’ and yellow leaves that provide shade. The greenhouse is thereby an apt venue for their assignation, as it is like the ‘Porch’ which serves as one of the gates to the Bower of Bliss, and which is ‘Archt over head with an embracing vine’, with ‘bounches hanging downe’.¹⁰⁵ In another allusion to *The Faerie Queene*, Mrs Manresa is later described as leading Giles away at the end of the pageant ‘like a Goddess, buoyant, abundant, with flower-chained captives following in her wake’.¹⁰⁶ Her triumph is an ironic reversal of the

¹⁰¹ Spenser, *Faerie*, III.vi.30, in *Works*, ii, 454-5.

¹⁰² Spenser, *Faerie*, II.xii.50, 58, in *Works*, ii, 321, 324.

¹⁰³ Isa is acutely aware of her husband’s possible infidelity: ‘Isa was immobile, watching her husband. She could feel the Manresa in his wake. She could hear in the dusk in their bedroom the usual explanation. It made no difference; his infidelity—but hers did’ (*Acts*, 80). Shortly after imagining the harvestless field, Isa discovers Giles and Mrs Manresa leaving the greenhouse together: ‘[t]he door was kicked open. Out came Mrs. Manresa and Giles. Unseen, Isa followed them across the lawns to the front row of seats’ (113).

¹⁰⁴ Spenser, *Faerie*, II.xii.76, 81; 72, 79, in *Works*, ii, 330, 332; 329, 331.

¹⁰⁵ Spenser, *Faerie*, II.xii.54, in *Works*, ii, 322.

¹⁰⁶ Woolf, *Acts*, 145.

ending of the episode which takes place in the Bower of Bliss, in which Arcasia and her lover are enchained by Guyon and Palmer:

They tooke them both, and both them strongly bound
In captive bandes, which there they readie found:
But her in chaines of adamant he tyde.¹⁰⁷

In *The Faerie Queene*, it is Arcasia the enchantress who is bound in ‘chaines’ and ‘captive bandes’, whereas in *Between the Acts* it is Mrs Manresa the seductress who triumphs and ensnares Giles, and leads him away, a ‘flower-chained’ captive.

On the one hand, Isa’s imagination of a ‘dim harvestless field’, read alongside the other allusions in *Between the Acts* to Spenser’s Bower of Bliss, provides a poetic context for her husband’s possible infidelity with Mrs Manresa. Their meeting in the greenhouse takes on the qualities of Arcasia’s seduction of Verdant in the Bower of Bliss. This context is possibly a comforting one for Isa, insofar as it casts Mrs Manresa in the role of the Arcasia the enchantress who uses her ‘sorceree/ And witchcraft’ to seduce her ‘new Lover’ (Giles), who thereby becomes less culpable.¹⁰⁸

However, on the other hand, the harvestless field also provides an image of aeviternal nature as sterile and characterized by destructive and possibly violent lust. Shortly before the door to the greenhouse is ‘kicked open’ and Giles and Mrs Manresa emerge, Isa in her reverie thinks back to ‘the brawl in the barrack room when they stripped her naked’.¹⁰⁹ The juxtaposition of Giles and Mrs Manresa in the greenhouse and the girl being raped in the barrack room suggests that the two situations might be united by a common violence. Together, Isa’s image of the harvestless field, and the other associations in the novel between swallows and rape, suggest the dangers of the

¹⁰⁷ Spenser, *Faerie*, II.xii.82, in *Works*, ii, 332.

¹⁰⁸ Spenser, *Faerie*, II.xii.72, in *Works*, ii, 329.

¹⁰⁹ Woolf, *Acts*, 113.

fiction of an aeviternal nature, and by extension, the dangers of timelessly naturalised gender roles within a supposedly-changeless patriarchal order. However, while an ambivalence in the novel is thereby created towards the fiction of an aeviternal nature as regards gender, this is not the case with class.

Theatre, Epic and Bourgeois

The villagers in Miss La Trobe's pageant are depicted as aeviternally perpetual, much like the swallows which represent nature. A chorus of villagers appears throughout the different historical ages represented by the pageant: '[I]ook, there's the chorus, the villagers, coming on now, between the trees'.¹¹⁰ They first appear in the opening scene of the pageant which represents the very earliest days of England's past, and return in the Elizabethan, Restoration and Victorian scenes.¹¹¹ They wind in and out of the trees and sing songs, many of whose words get blown away by the wind.

The villagers sing of the fall of empires and world orders in history. At the end of the Restoration comedy, they sing: '[p]alaces tumble adown [. . .] Babylon, Nineveh, Troy . . . And Caesar's great house . . . all fallen they lie . . . Where the plover nests was the arch. . . through which the Romans trod'.¹¹² The ephemerality of these once-powerful empires is reflected in the fragility and transience of the song, which is only semi-audible: '[t]he words died away. Only a few great names—Babylon, Nineveh,

¹¹⁰ Woolf, *Acts*, 115. It is fitting that the villagers who are depicted as aeviternal should appear as a chorus. As Kantorowicz points out, Aquinas conceived of the angels who subsist in the *aevum* as having a collective identity: 'the immateriality of the angels did not allow the individuation of the species in matter, in a plurality of material individuals' (*Two Bodies*, 282).

¹¹¹ Woolf, *Acts*, 57, 90, 100, 115.

¹¹² Woolf, *Acts*, 101.

Clytemnestra, Agamemnon, Troy—floated across the open space’.¹¹³ The image of the plover nesting in the crumbling arch is one of the continuity of a nature which persists beyond the rise and fall of civilizations. Its sentiment is similar to that expressed by the sentence of Edgar Quinet, (inaccurately) copied by Léon Metchnikoff, which echoes throughout James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* (1940):

*Aujourd'hui comme aux temps de Plin et de Columelle la jacinthe se plaît dans les Gaules, la pervenche en Illyrie, la marguerite sur les ruines de Numance et pendant qu'autour d'elles les villes ont changé de maîtres et de noms, que plusieurs sont entrées dans le néant, que les civilisations se sont choquées et brisées, leurs paisibles générations ont traversé les âges et sont arrivées jusqu'à nous, fraîches et riantes comme aux jours des batailles.*¹¹⁴

However, while the villagers sing of the fall of empires, they themselves take on a type of permanence which resists the vicissitudes of history. They sing: ‘[s]ummer and winter, autumn and spring return . . . All passes but we, all changes . . . but we remain forever the same’.¹¹⁵ The villagers ‘remain forever the same’, living with the seasons, immune from historical change, and to a large extent oblivious to it: ‘we see only the clod’.¹¹⁶ Like the effect generated by swallows appearing in different scenes, the fact that the same chorus returns throughout the different historical ages reinforces the impression of the villagers’ changelessness throughout history. This continuity is further extended to the present day by the fact that the villagers depicted in the pageant are played by present-day villagers. In Miss La Trobe’s pageant, the villagers are assimilated to nature against history, and take on an aeviternal changelessness, much like that of Lucy’s swallows.

¹¹³ Woolf, *Acts*, 101.

¹¹⁴ James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, ed. Finn Fordham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 281. In a letter of 22 November 1930 to Harriet Shaw Weaver, Joyce wrote in summary of the ‘beautiful sentence from Edgar Quinet’: ‘E. Q. says that the wild flowers on the ruins of Carthage, Numancia etc have survived the political rises and falls of Empires’ (*Letters of James Joyce*, i, ed. Stuart Gilbert (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), 295). As Inge Landuyt and Geert Lernout have shown, Joyce encountered Quinet’s sentence through Léon Metchnikoff’s *La civilisation et les grands fleuves historiques* (1889): see their ‘Joyce’s Sources: *Les grands fleuves historiques*’, *Joyce Studies Annual*, 6 (Summer 1995), 99–137.

¹¹⁵ Woolf, *Acts*, 100.

¹¹⁶ Woolf, *Acts*, 101.

The assimilation of the villagers to an aeviternally changeless nature in *Between the Acts* accords with Woolf's imagination elsewhere of unchanging 'peasants'. As well as resembling the chorus in Greek drama, the chorus of villagers in Miss La Trobe's pageant are a dramatic equivalent to what Woolf saw as Thomas Hardy's 'eternal peasants'.¹¹⁷ In her essay 'Thomas Hardy's Novels', which was originally published in the *Times Literary Supplement* on 19 January 1928, Woolf lauded Hardy's portrayal of 'peasants':

it is not the part of the peasants in the Wessex novels to stand out as individuals. They compose a pool of common wisdom, a fund of perpetual life. They comment upon the actions of the hero and heroine, but while Troy or Oak or Fanny or Bathsheba come in and out and pass away, Jan Coggan and Henry Fray and Joseph Poorgrass remain. They drink by night and they plough the fields by day. They are eternal.¹¹⁸

By not standing out 'as individuals', and by commenting 'upon the actions of the hero and heroine', Hardy's peasants play, for Woolf, a very similar role to that of the chorus in drama, Greek or otherwise. Indeed, in her reading notes on *Jude the Obscure* (1895), which she made in preparation for her essay on Hardy, she explicitly wrote: '[p]easants used as chorus'.¹¹⁹

Unlike the heroes and heroines of his novels, who 'come in and out and pass away', Hardy's peasants are supposedly 'eternal', a 'fund of perpetual life'. In part, their eternal status reflects a common humour which persists unchanged throughout the

¹¹⁷ Cuddy-Keane has compared the chorus of villagers to the chorus in ancient Greek comedy ('Politics', 280). My suggestion complements the parallel that Peter Lowe draws between Woolf's villagers who see 'only the clod', and Hardy's poem 'In Time of "The Breaking of Nations"' (1915). He suggests that '[l]ike the "man harrowing clods", and the maid in Thomas Hardy's poem', the villagers' life in Miss La Trobe's pageant 'is a life that "will go onward the same/ Though Dynasties pass' ('Cultural Continuity in a Time of War: Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts* and T. S. Eliot's "East Coker"', *Yeats Eliot Review*, 24/3 (Fall 2007), 2-19, 10).

¹¹⁸ Virginia Woolf, 'Thomas Hardy's Novels', in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, iv, ed. Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1994), 507-19, 511.

¹¹⁹ Virginia Woolf, 'Reading Notebook XLII', Sussex, Monks House Papers, B.2j, 14.

ages. They are portrayed as giving vent to their ‘half-poetic humour which has been brewing in their brains and finding expression over their beer since the pilgrims tramped the Pilgrims’ Way’.¹²⁰ Yet Woolf also depicts the peasants as literally eternal, as themselves persisting through the ages. For instance, she depicts Gabriel Oak in *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874) as an ‘eternal shepherd’ tending ‘his sheep up there on the back of the world’: ‘the stars are ancient beacons; and for ages he has watched beside his sheep’.¹²¹ Further, she associates the persistence of Hardy’s peasants with the survival of the human race: ‘[t]he peasants are the great sanctuary of sanity . . . the last stronghold of happiness. When they disappear, there is no hope for the race’.¹²² By persisting unchanged throughout history, what Woolf depicts as the ‘eternal’ peasants of Hardy’s novels foreshadow her own use of a chorus of unchanging villagers in the pageant of *Between the Acts*.

Woolf also expressed a similar view of unchanging ‘peasants’ in her correspondence. In a letter of 26 June 1938, she wrote to Ethel Smyth of Hadrian’s Wall and the Northumberland countryside which she visited with Leonard, and which inspired her to think of ‘the immensity and tragedy and the sense of the Romans, and time, and eternity’. She wrote of her experience of visiting Haughton Castle:

oh me! the river running and the old Castle, and the grass and the people—peasants, wandering along the bank, and talking to us, like something in the time of Elizabeth, so that I felt I was actually in Shakespeare.¹²³

In this conceit, the ‘peasants’ appear as unchanged since ‘the time of Elizabeth’, and thereby allow Woolf an imaginative return to Shakespeare and to the Elizabethan age.

¹²⁰ Woolf, ‘Hardy’, 510-1. The idea of a common humour which persists over time foreshadows the anonymous tradition of song imagined by Woolf in ‘Anon’.

¹²¹ Woolf, ‘Hardy’, 510.

¹²² Woolf, ‘Hardy’, 511.

¹²³ Letter to Ethel Smyth, 26 June 1938; *The Letters of Virginia Woolf, Volume VI: 1936-1941*, ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann (London: Hogarth Press, 1980), 246.

In all these fictions, the enduring ‘peasants’—whether those of the chorus of Miss La Trobe’s pageant, of Hardy’s novels, or of the Northumberland countryside—resist change throughout history.

The portrayal of the villagers in Miss La Trobe’s pageant as aeviternal is deeply problematic from a class perspective. We saw that, historically, the *aevum* carried a politics of time through its application in the doctrine of the King’s Two Bodies. By enabling the distinction between the king’s ‘natural body’ and his ‘body politic’, the concept of the *aevum* was employed to consolidate and entrench the monarch’s position of power at the head of a feudal society. In *Between the Acts*, the fiction of the *aevum* plays a similarly ideologically-suspect role. Here the *aevum* is employed not to entrench the monarch’s position of power at the top of the class structure, as it is in the doctrine of the King’s Two Bodies, but rather to fix the working class in an aeviternally-frozen state of subordination at the bottom of that structure. The chorus of villagers who wear sacking cloth, plough the fields and tend the land according to the seasons, are idealised as aeviternally changeless over history. Such a portrayal of the working class is problematic because it petrifies the existing class-structure in an unhistorical and changeless stasis, and thereby conceptually forecloses the possibility of emancipatory political action.

It should be recognized that the pageant’s depiction of the working class as frozen in an aeviternal stasis is in direct conflict with a Marxist view of history. In its most general form, a Marxist view of history is one of ‘dialectical materialism’: it presents history as the history of society, described in material terms of social and economic conditions of production, as it changes according to the laws of dialectic. Marxist

historiography resists the view that any one strata of society is unchanging or eternal. It holds—contrary to countervailing interpretations of history—that the prevailing social and economic conditions of production at any given time are not static and changeless, but rather are inherently unstable, driven by dialectical contradictions. Whereas Miss La Trobe’s pageant portrays the working class as aeviternally permanent, dialectical materialism holds that nothing is exempt from change and history, and particularly not the existing class structure and the dominance of the ruling class. Correlatively, the pageant’s assimilation of the villagers to an aeviternal order is diametrically opposed to Bertolt Brecht’s epic theatre, which is allied to a Marxist theory of history.

The comparison drawn in this chapter between Miss La Trobe’s pageant in *Between the Acts* and Mutabilitie’s pageant in *The Faerie Queene*, and the elucidation of the role of the *aevum* as a temporal fiction, serves to challenge Brechtian readings of Woolf’s pageant. Numerous critics have compared Miss La Trobe’s pageant to Bertolt Brecht’s epic theatre.¹²⁴ These critics suggest that Miss La Trobe’s pageant uses formal techniques which are very similar to Brecht’s ‘alienation effects’ (*Verfremdungseffekte*) which involve, as he put it, ‘taking the incidents portrayed and alienating them from the spectator’ in order to ‘make the spectator adopt an attitude of

¹²⁴ See Herbert Marder, ‘Alienation Effects: Dramatic Satire in *Between the Acts*’, *Papers on Language and Literature*, 24/4 (Fall 1988), 423-35; Catherine Wiley, ‘Making History Unrepeatable in Virginia Woolf’s *Between the Acts*’, *Clio*, 25/1 (Fall 1995), 3-20; Karin E. Westman, ‘History as Drama: Towards a Feminist Materialist Historiography’, in Diane F. Gillespie and Leslie K. Hankins (eds), *Virginia Woolf and the Arts* (New York: Pace University Press, 1997), 335-43; Georgia Johnston, ‘Class Performance in *Between the Acts*: Audiences for Miss La Trobe and Mrs. Manresa’, *Woolf Studies Annual*, 3 (1997), 61-75; Michael Tratner, ‘Why Isn’t *Between the Acts* a Movie?’, in Pamela L. Caughie (ed.), *Virginia Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (New York: Garland, 2000), 115-34; Bahun, ‘Burden’, 105, 107-8; and Spiropoulou, *Constellations*, 151-3.

inquiry and criticism in his approach to the incident'.¹²⁵ For example, Catherine Wiley suggests that Miss La Trobe's pageant constitutes an 'epic theatre piece' which 'succeeds in alienating its audience to the point of criticism' by 'using many of the methods espoused by Brecht'. Specifically, she suggests that the cheap costumes and unrealistic stage setting of Miss La Trobe's pageant parallel Brecht's use of alienation effects 'to portray the stage as an artificial and temporary environment', and that the acting parallels that of Brecht's epic theatre, in which the actors 'show the process of acting out the character'.¹²⁶

Critics such as Karin Westman, Georgia Johnston and Angeliki Spiropoulou have used the analogy between Miss La Trobe's pageant and Brecht's epic theatre to suggest that the pageant, and the novel more generally, advance a broadly Marxist version of history. They thereby portray Woolf in a flatteringly politically-engaged and class-conscious light. For Westman, the alienation effects of Miss La Trobe's pageant form part of Woolf's supposed 'feminist materialist historiography', and her 'materialist perspective upon the individual's relationship to lived experience within British patriarchal society'.¹²⁷ Johnston argues that the central alienation effect of Miss La Trobe's pageant—reflecting the audience's image back to themselves with mirrors in the 'Present Day' scene—shows the audience 'as participants in [the] pageant of England' rather than as 'ahistorical'. She contends that this 'alienation effect' deflects 'acceptance of class victimization into an awareness of the historical

¹²⁵ Bertolt Brecht, 'Short Description of a New Technique of Acting which Produces an Alienation Effect' (1940/51), in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. John Willett, 2nd edn (London: Methuen, 2001), 136-47, 136.

¹²⁶ Wiley, 'Unrepeatable', 6-8. Similarly, Spiropoulou notes that the 'formal techniques' of Miss La Trobe's pageant are 'strikingly reminiscent of Brecht's famous *Verfremdungseffekte*': 'the villagers become actors, and any verisimilitude of scenery and costume is "outraged" to the extent that the latter destroys illusion' (*Constellations*, 152).

¹²⁷ Westman, 'History as Drama', 335.

production that creates class construction'.¹²⁸ Finally, Spiropoulou points out that Brecht defined the alienation effect 'in terms of dialectical materialism', and holds that the innovative formal techniques of Miss La Trobe's pageant which so resemble Brecht's alienation effects achieve 'a destruction of tradition'. Her invocation of Brecht's epic theatre thereby supports her wider argument that Woolf, like Benjamin, temporalized history as the destruction of tradition.¹²⁹

However, rather than champion Woolf as a quasi-Marxist, it is important to note the marked disanalogies between Miss La Trobe's pageant and Brecht's epic theatre. Although many elements of Miss La Trobe's pageant superficially resemble the alienation techniques of Brecht's epic theatre, they operate in a completely antithetical manner: they function unhistorically rather than historically.¹³⁰ As Wiley, Johnston and Spiropoulou all point out, Brecht aligned the alienation effects of epic theatre with a Marxist theory of history.¹³¹ In 'A Short Organum for the Theatre' (1948/1953), he claimed that the technique of alienating the familiar

allows the theatre to make use in its representations of the new social scientific method known as dialectical materialism. . . . It regards nothing as existing except in so far as it changes, in other words is in disharmony with itself.¹³²

In 'Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting' (1936), he claimed that the alienation effect in German epic theatre was 'principally designed to historicize the incidents

¹²⁸ Johnston, 'Class Performance', 69, 67, 72.

¹²⁹ Spiropoulou, *Constellations*, 208, 151.

¹³⁰ My argument complements Tratner's contention that '[e]ven though Woolf creates . . . alienating effects [*in Between the Acts*], she still does not seem to do what ultimately Benjamin says is the goal of . . . [Brecht's] epic theatre: to destroy completely the aura of art and tradition' ('Movie', 125). More generally, I fully agree with Tratner's argument that *Between the Acts* differs from Walter Benjamin's views by remaining 'respectful of previous traditions of art and even previous ages of the social order, as if something in those ages were worth preserving' (124).

¹³¹ See Wiley, 'Unrepeatable', 6-7; Johnston, 'Class Performance', 67; Spiropoulou, *Constellations*, 208.

¹³² Bertolt Brecht, 'A Short Organum for the Theatre', in *Brecht on Theater*, 179-205, 192.

portrayed', and was part of a new way of thinking: 'the historical way'.¹³³ In turn, by prompting the audience to think historically, epic theatre aims to inspire its audience to take political action: '[h]uman behaviour is shown as alterable; man himself as dependent on certain political and economic factors and at the same time capable of altering them'.¹³⁴ The spectator of epic theatre is encouraged to adopt a critical attitude towards the social conditions portrayed, and is prompted 'to justify or abolish these conditions according to which class he belongs'.¹³⁵

In stark contrast to the historical nature of Brecht's epic theatre, the villagers in Miss La Trobe's pageant are assimilated to an aeviternally permanent nature, and are depicted as unchanging across history. Indeed, it should be stressed that what critics have compared to Brecht's alienation techniques actually serve to reinforce this unhistorical view of the working class. For example, we have seen that both Wiley and Spiropoulou compare the incomplete immersion of the village actors in their roles to Brecht's alienation techniques. However, in Miss La Trobe's pageant, what Wiley describes as the actors' splicing their roles 'onto their own identities' does not, as in Brecht's epic theatre, serve to historicize the situations portrayed.¹³⁶ On the contrary, it reinforces the fiction of an aeviternal continuity by showing how similar the present-day villagers are to their ancestors whose parts they play, and thereby functions unhistorically.

Similarly, we have seen that both Wiley and Spiropoulou claim that the cheap costumes used in Miss La Trobe's pageant draw attention to the artificiality of the

¹³³ Bertolt Brecht, 'Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting', in *Brecht on Theater*, 91-9, 96. Compare Brecht's explication of the 'crucial technical device' of 'historicization' in his 'Short Description', 140.

¹³⁴ Bertolt Brecht, 'On the Use of Music in an Epic Theatre', in *Brecht on Theater*, 84-90, 86.

¹³⁵ Brecht, 'Short Description', 139.

¹³⁶ Wiley, 'Unrepeatable', 8.

performance, and thereby function like Brecht's alienation effects. However, once again, the clothes in the pageant function in a manner diametrically opposed to Brecht's alienation effects. The superficial change in costume between historical ages serves to reveal what is supposedly a fundamentally unchanging human nature which lies beneath. For example, the chorus of villagers appear in the opening scene of the pageant dressed in 'shirts made of sacking', and later appear in the Victorian scene dressed in 'Victorian mantles', yet sing of their fundamentally unchanging nature.¹³⁷

Waiting for the actors to change costume between scenes, members of the audience comment on the actors' 'dressing up', and are led to discuss the question of 'historical change':

[d]you think people change? Their clothes, of course. . . . But I meant ourselves . . . Clearing out a cupboard, I found my father's old top hat. . . . But our selves—do we change?¹³⁸

Lucy Swithin's answer to this question is that people do not change. Complementing her belief in aeviternal swallows, she subscribes to a radically unhistorical view of human nature. Watching the pageant, she muses that she does not believe that 'there ever were such people' as '[t]he Victorians': '[o]nly you and me and William dressed differently'. Summing up this unhistorical view, William responds: '[y]ou don't believe in history'.¹³⁹ Rather than revealing the historical nature of the incidents portrayed, clothes in the pageant instead affirm a belief in the changelessness of people, and the unreality of history. Nor, if Lucy's attitude is anything to go by, does the pageant induce the socially-critical attitude that was the purpose of Brecht's alienation effects. Far from inspiring her to take revolutionary political action, the pageant prompts her to muse 'with her odd little smile' on the constancy of human

¹³⁷ Woolf, *Acts*, 57, 121.

¹³⁸ Woolf, *Acts*, 88; her ellipses.

¹³⁹ Woolf, *Acts*, 125.

nature, just as it had earlier provided her with a reassuring view of the aeviternal permanence of swallows.¹⁴⁰

Far from resembling Brecht's epic theatre, Miss La Trobe's pageant is more like the unhistorical 'bourgeois theatre' against which epic theatre is counter-defined. In 'Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting', Brecht contrasted epic theatre, whose 'A-effect' was 'principally designed to historicize the incidents portrayed', with bourgeois theatre, which 'emphasized the timelessness of its objects'. Bourgeois theatre's

representation of people is bound by the alleged "eternally human". Its story is arranged in such a way as to create "universal" situations that allow Man with a capital M to express himself: man of every period. . . . This notion may allow that such a thing as history exists, but it is none the less unhistorical. A few circumstances vary, the environments are altered, but Man remains unchanged.¹⁴¹

This hostile characterization of bourgeois theatre's unhistorical representation of people is fulfilled remarkably well by Miss La Trobe's pageant. The villagers who persist unchanged through the ages of the pageant are like the 'Man' of bourgeois theatre who is 'eternally unchanged'.¹⁴² Their changing costumes, which serve to reveal to Lucy the unchanging human nature that lies beneath, accord with Brecht's characterization of bourgeois theatre as one in which '[a] few circumstances vary . . . but Man remains unchanged'. Correspondingly, the pageant's fiction of an aeviternal order underpins a conception of history much like that which sustains bourgeois theatre: 'such a thing as history exists, but it is none the less unhistorical'.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Woolf, *Acts*, 125.

¹⁴¹ Brecht, 'Alienation Effects', 96-7.

¹⁴² Brecht, 'Alienation Effects', 97.

¹⁴³ The pageant's 'unhistorical' depiction of aeviternal continuity should be distinguished from the 'denial of history' which Lukács saw as brought about by the supposed modernist exploration of a Bergsonian private time. Whereas the introspective turn into the realm of *durée* results in an obliviousness to history, and thereby constitutes a 'denial of history', the fiction of aeviternal

Of course, the politics of time of the pageant should be distinguished from that of the novel, and from that of Woolf's personal conception of history. While Lucy seemingly embraces the pageant's portrayal of aeviternal villagers, Dodge's remark to her that '[y]ou don't believe in history' intimates that he does not necessarily share her unhistorical view. Moreover, the pageant's audience debates the question of the changefulness or otherwise of human nature as an open question.

Nevertheless, the novel does not furnish a critical perspective on the pageant's depiction of aeviternal villagers. As we have seen, an ambivalent attitude within the novel is created towards the fiction of aeviternal swallows by Mrs Manresa's and Isa's sceptical responses to that fiction, and by the associations of swallows with rape. By contrast, the novel provides no such critical perspective on the fiction of aeviternal villagers. Moreover, this fiction is suspiciously similar to Woolf's fantasies elsewhere of 'eternal peasants'. The fiction of an aeviternal nature in *Between the Acts* carries, when it comes to class, a deeply suspect politics of time.

continuity in Miss La Trobe's pageant corresponds to an acute awareness of history, albeit a history across which things persist aeviternally unchanged.

3.2 The Historical Time of Miss La Trobe's Pageant

In *Between the Acts* (1941), Miss La Trobe's village pageant is accompanied by an historical time, whose passing is marked by the playing of a gramophone which lies hidden in the bushes. The gramophone plays a wide range of music throughout the pageant, including a 'pompous popular tune' which opens proceedings, a 'dance tune', a 'merry little old tune', a selection of 'London street cries', a 'pompous march tune', something which sounds like a '[f]ox-trot' or '[j]azz', something which could be 'Bach, Handel, Beethoven, Mozart', and the National Anthem.¹ Music draws the otherwise-distracted minds of the audience together like 'filings magnetised': the 'whole population of the mind's immeasurable profundity came flocking'.² It also helps to connect the various scenes of the historical pageant, and thereby facilitates a sense of historical continuity.³

When the gramophone is not playing music, it is often heard making either a mechanical chuffing sound, or ticking like a clock, and thereby marking the passing of time: '[c]huff, chuff, chuff went the machine. Time was passing'.⁴ The ticking of the gramophone, and more explicitly time itself, is several times described as holding the audience together: '[t]ick, tick, tick, the machine continued. Time was passing. The audience was wandering, dispersing. Only the tick tick of the gramophone held them together'.⁵ Conversely, the gramophone registers the dispersal of the audience during the intervals and at the end of the pageant, by playing the motif: '[d]ispersed

¹ Woolf, *Acts*, 58, 60, 90, 113, 115, 131, 135, 140.

² Woolf, *Acts*, 135.

³ See, for example, Woolf, *Acts*, 88.

⁴ Woolf, *Acts*, 109. Bart recognizes early in the pageant that the gramophone is '[m]arking time' (60).

⁵ Woolf, *Acts*, 111; compare 109.

are we'.⁶ As the last audience members drive away, the gramophone, seemingly winding down, marks the end of the pageant: '[t]he gramophone gurgled Unity—Dispersity. It gurgled Un . . . dis . . . And ceased'.⁷

The historical time of the pageant is far from being a version either of Henri Bergson's *durée* or of his clock-time. Rather, it more closely resembles Martin Heidegger's historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*). In the introduction to this thesis, I provided a short exposition of Heidegger's concept of historicity, which is found in *Being and Time* (1927). To recapitulate briefly, historicity is the form of temporality which underpins both history and Dasein's unity as a 'stretching' between birth and death. Its central structure is that of 'repetition' (*Wiederholung*), through which the three temporal ecstases are united. In authentic historicity, the members of a community are brought together in an act of 'co-historizing', in which they repeat past possibilities of existence. It was seen that Heidegger's historicity contrasts with Walter Benjamin's *Jetztzeit* and is one of the competing forms of the temporalization of history within modernity.

In this chapter, I will show how closely the historical time of Miss La Trobe's pageant resembles Heidegger's historicity. In particular, I will suggest that the time of the pageant and Heidegger's historicity are alike in four main respects: by being phenomenological, by being historical, by being communal and by being characterized by repetition. Woolf would not have been aware of Heidegger's account of historicity in *Being and Time*. (Nor is there any evidence that Woolf read Augustine's account of a 'time of the soul' in his *Confessions* (398), which, as we

⁶ Woolf, *Acts*, 69-71, 141-2

⁷ Woolf, *Acts*, 144.

shall see, stands as an important precursor to Heidegger's historicity). Nevertheless, Woolf's literary imagination of a form of historical time in *Between the Acts* stands as an analogue within literary modernism of Heidegger's emblematic account of the temporalization of history within modernity.

The historical time of the pageant marked by the ticking of the gramophone is distinct from the fiction of the *aevum*, which was discussed in the previous chapter. As Kermode makes clear, the *aevum* is an order of duration which is different from time: it 'does not abolish time' but rather 'co-exists with time'.⁸ Indeed, the *aevum* depicted by Miss La Trobe's pageant exists alongside the historical time marked by the gramophone, just as the *aevum* co-exists with time in both *The Faerie Queene* and in the scholastic philosophy from which the concept derives. Yet, while the aeviternal nature and the historical time of the pageant are distinct, they are also complementary, and together underpin a conception of history as continuity and tradition. Just as the concept of the *aevum* is one of perdurance across history, so too, as we shall see, the time of the pageant is one which supports a conception of history as the preservation and continuation of tradition.

Phenomenological Time

The historical time of Miss La Trobe's pageant is like Heidegger's historicity in being phenomenological. As Paul Ricoeur points out, Heidegger's *Being and Time* forms part of a phenomenological tradition of philosophical accounts of time, which

⁸ Kermode, *Ending*, 72.

extends through Saint Augustine, Edmund Husserl, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.⁹ The most general characteristic of such accounts is that they treat time as a ‘time of the soul’; by doing so, they contrast with what Ricoeur calls ‘cosmological’ accounts of time, which treat time as a ‘time of the world’.¹⁰ Thus, Saint Augustine’s account of time in the eleventh book of his *Confessions* (398) is a foundation of the phenomenological tradition. Therein, through his account of the threefold present, Augustine famously located time in the soul. He held that the past exists as ‘memory’, the present exists as ‘immediate awareness’, and the future exists as ‘expectation’: ‘[i]n the soul there are these three aspects of time, and I do not see them anywhere else’.¹¹ Time passes, for Augustine, through an activity of the mind, which is ‘stretched’ between memory and expectation: what ‘the mind . . . expects passes through what has its attention to what it remembers’, and so ‘present attention transfers the future into the past’.¹²

Edmund Husserl also advanced a phenomenological account of time in his *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* (1928).¹³ In this work, which acknowledges its debt to Augustine in its opening lines, Husserl gave an account of the workings of ‘retention’, ‘primal sensation’, and ‘protention’. Through these, consciousness constitutes both its own unity and appearance as a ‘flow’, and the unity and appearance of its immanent objects as things extended in immanent time.¹⁴

⁹ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, iii, 4, 63.

¹⁰ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, iii, 4, 12. The phenomenological time of Miss La Trobe’s pageant contrasts with the geological time of H. G. Wells’s writing, which, as we saw above, is a form of cosmological time.

¹¹ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, ed. and trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 235.

¹² Augustine, *Confessions*, 243.

¹³ Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893-1917)*, trans. John Barnett Brough (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991).

¹⁴ Husserl, *Phenomenology*, 84-5, 89. Husserl wrote that the ‘first person who sensed profoundly the enormous difficulties inherent in [the analysis of time-consciousness] was Augustine’: ‘[e]ven today,

Although he broke with Husserl's broadly Cartesian conception of the mind, Heidegger also offered a phenomenological account of time. As Ricoeur points out, by seeking 'in Care [*Sorge*] itself the principle of the pluralizing of time into future, past and present', Heidegger went beyond the Augustinian analysis of the threefold present, and further than the Husserlian analysis of retention and protention, yet remained 'in the same phenomenological space'.¹⁵

The historical time of Miss La Trobe's pageant is, like Heidegger's historicity and its precursors in the phenomenological tradition, a 'time of the mind'. Initially, it should be remarked that the conceit in *Between the Acts* of having music played on the gramophone to convey the passing of time is comparable to the use of music in Augustine's *Confessions* and Husserl's *Phenomenology*. Music and verse play a prominent role throughout Augustine's exploration of time. Most centrally, he uses the example of singing or reciting a Psalm in his pivotal characterization of temporal experience; he later returns to the example of a 'person singing or listening to a song he knows well'.¹⁶ Like Augustine, Husserl made extensive use of music in his investigations of the consciousness of time, returning frequently to his central 'example of a melody'.¹⁷ Woolf's use of music played mechanically on a gramophone stands as a particularly modern literary analogue to Augustine's and Husserl's philosophical explorations of time.

anyone occupied with the problem of time must still study Chapters 14-28 of Book XI of the *Confessions* thoroughly. For in these matters our modern age, so proud of its knowledge, has failed to surpass or even to match the splendid achievement of this great thinker who grappled so earnestly with the problem of time' (3).

¹⁵ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, iii, 68.

¹⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, 243, 245. The example of reciting a Psalm joins together what Ricoeur identifies as the two most important components of Augustine's exploration of time: the account of the threefold present, and the characterization of the mind as a distension. The conception of 'the threefold present as distension and distension as the distension of the threefold present' constitutes, according to Ricoeur, Augustine's 'stroke of genius', in the wake of which 'will follow Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty' (*Time and Narrative*, i, 19-20, 16).

¹⁷ Husserl, *Phenomenology*, 24.

It becomes particularly evident in the culminating ‘Present Day’ scene of Miss La Trobe’s pageant that the time of the pageant is a time of the mind. The scene is one of disorder and uncertainty. The present is one of fragmentation, as actors bring mirrors, tin cans and jars onto the stage to reflect the audience’s broken image back to them. The past is one of disorder, as actors from previous scenes of the pageant, representing different periods from English history, wander on stage and chaotically declaim various lines from their parts. The future is uncertain, as an anonymous megaphonic voice asks the audience how the wall of civilization is to be rebuilt by ‘orts, scraps and fragments like ourselves?’¹⁸ Against this scene of temporal disorder and confusion, the anonymous voice exhorts: ‘[a]ll you can see of your selves is scraps, orts and fragments? Well then listen to the gramophone affirming . . .’¹⁹ Music plays on the gramophone:

Like quicksilver sliding, filings magnetised, the distracted united. The tune began; the first note meant a second; the second a third. Then down beneath a force was born in opposition; then another. On different levels they diverged. . . . The whole population of the mind’s immeasurable profundity came flocking; from the unprotected, the unskinned; and dawn rose; and azure; from chaos and cacophony measure; but not the melody of surface sound alone controlled it; but also the warring battle-plumed warriors straining asunder: To part? No. Compelled from the ends of the horizon; recalled from the edge of appalling crevasses; they crashed; solved; united.²⁰

Given that the gramophone has throughout the pageant marked time, the portrayal of the mind being drawn together as it listens to music—the ‘whole population of the mind’s immeasurable profundity came flocking’—suggests a phenomenological time of the mind.²¹

¹⁸ Woolf, *Acts*, 135.

¹⁹ Woolf, *Acts*, 135.

²⁰ Woolf, *Acts*, 135-6.

²¹ In the passage quoted, it is indeterminate whether ‘the mind’ is that of an individual or of a group. Below, I will address the latter interpretation, and the communal aspects of this temporality.

The focussing of the previously-distracted minds of the audience parallels accounts of the mind being drawn together in acts of temporalization in the phenomenological tradition. Augustine gave a characterization of the mind's 'attention [attentio]', through which 'the future is transferred to become the past'. He contrasted such 'concentration [intentionem]' to the 'multiplicity of distractions' in which 'us the many' usually live.²² Similarly, Heidegger portrayed the stance of authentic historicity as one of the 'Self's resoluteness against the inconstancy of distraction'.²³ The drawing together of the audience's minds in *Between the Acts*, in which the contents of the mind 'came flocking' and 'the distracted united', parallels Augustine's description of the mind being brought from a 'multiplicity of distractions' to a state of concentration, and Heidegger's description of Dasein's pulling itself together from a state of distraction into a stance of authentic historicity.²⁴

In Woolf's novel, the similes of the distracted mind uniting like 'quicksilver sliding' and like 'filings magnetised' are spatial ways of figuring the mind, which parallel phenomenological characterizations of the stretching or distention of the mind. Heidegger characterized historicity as that through which Dasein '*stretches along between birth and death*'; in doing so he was, as Ricoeur points out, echoing Augustine's account of the distention of the mind.²⁵ Augustine had held, for instance, that in the case of reciting a Psalm, the 'life of this act of mine is *stretched* two ways, into my memory . . . and into my expectation'.²⁶ Just as the mind listening to music in

²² Augustine, *Confessions*, 243, 245.

²³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 442.

²⁴ Elsewhere in the novel, Miss La Trobe repeatedly calls for music to be played to gain the attention of the audience, which is prone to wander (see, for example, Woolf, *Acts*, 88). The Rev. Streatfield remarks in his concluding speech that 'as the play or pageant proceeded, my attention was distracted' (138).

²⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 425. As Ricoeur points out, with this stretching along '[w]e could not find ourselves any closer to Augustine' (*Time and Narrative*, iii, 72).

²⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, 243, emphasis added.

Between the Acts is spread out like iron filings in a magnetic field, so too, for Augustine, temporal experience is that of the mind spatially figured as stretched between memory and expectation.

The stretching which is central to both Augustine's and Heidegger's accounts of temporality results in what Ricoeur identifies as the central animating tension of both: that between 'discordance' and 'concordance'. For Augustine, the discordance of the *distentio*, or the stretching of the mind between memory and expectation, and the concordance of the *intentio*, or the unifying act of attention of the mind, are united in a reciprocal relationship, as the former constantly arises from the latter. As Ricoeur puts it, 'the more the mind makes itself *intentio*, the more it suffers *distentio*', and so Augustine 'sees discordance emerge again and again out of the very concordance of the intentions of expectation, attention and memory'.²⁷ For Heidegger, the discordance of Dasein's 'stretching along' contrasts with the concordance of repetition; as Ricoeur points out, this contrast 'coincides exactly with the Augustinian dialectic of *distentio* and *intentio*'.²⁸ A very similar tension arises in the mind as it listens to music in *Between the Acts*. Music draws the mind together in an act of attention, in which the 'distracted united': from 'chaos and cacophony' came 'measure'. However, this unity is threatened: 'a force was born in opposition', and the mind is driven by 'the warring battle-plumed warriors straining asunder'. This tension between order and disorder is reflected in the 'Unity—Dispersity' motif which is played by the gramophone, and which echoes throughout the novel.²⁹

²⁷ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, i, 21

²⁸ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, iii, 76.

²⁹ Woolf, *Acts*, 144. As we will see below, the 'Unity—Dispersity' motif also marks the coming together and separating of the audience as a community.

Expectation is central to phenomenological accounts of time, whether in the guise of Heidegger's 'anticipatory resoluteness', Husserl's 'protention' or Augustine's 'expectation'. For example, for Augustine, the future exists 'in the mind' as 'expectation'. In his example of the Psalm, time passes as words which were expected become transferred to memory.³⁰ Husserl similarly explores what he provisionally called 'anticipatory expectation' in 'the example of a melody': 'the first tone sounds, then comes the second tone, then the third, and so on'.³¹ Similarly, expectation plays an important role in the historical time of Woolf's novel. The drawing together of the mind listening to music includes an expectation of the future, as each note of the 'tune' brings the expectation of the next: '[t]he tune began; the first note meant a second; the second a third'. Earlier in the novel, the playing of a repeating scale had been linked with expectation of the future. As Isa and William Dodge sit in the greenhouse under the vine leaves, the

future shadowed their present, like the sun coming through the many-veined transparent vine leaf; a criss-cross of lines making no pattern. They had left the greenhouse door open, and now music came through it. A.B.C., A.B.C., A.B.C.—someone was practising scales.³²

Expectation here extends onto the historical plane. As Gillian Beer points out, the 'criss-cross of lines making no pattern' suggests the play of searchlights, and thereby foreshadows the imminent Blitz.³³ The future which shadows Isa and Dodge's present is a future disturbed by imminent war. More generally, war colours expectation of the

³⁰ Augustine, *Confessions*, 243. More precisely, for Augustine, the 'present considering the future is expectation' (235).

³¹ Husserl, *Phenomenology*, 24-5. What Husserl here provisionally calls 'anticipatory expectation' corresponds to what he later conceived of as 'protention', which is that by which 'I am directed towards what is coming' (122).

³² Woolf, *Acts*, 83.

³³ Beer, *Common Ground*, 126.

future in *Between the Acts*. Isa is acutely conscious of '[t]he future disturbing our present', as is Dodge of '[t]he doom of sudden death hanging over us'.³⁴

It is worth emphasizing that the time of Miss La Trobe's pageant is, like Heidegger's historicity, a historical time. For Heidegger, historicity is the form of temporalization which both unites individual lives, and underpins history as whole. (In this, Heidegger's historicity was intriguingly anticipated by Augustine, who suggested that his account of the temporal experience involved in reciting a Psalm was 'also valid of the entire life of an individual person', and of 'the total history of "the sons of men"').³⁵ Heidegger's account of historicity is both an account of the unity of the individual life—of how Dasein '*stretches along between birth and death*' and maintains itself constantly in a 'connectedness of life'—and an account of history which is 'rooted in temporality'.³⁶ Dasein, Heidegger argued, '*exists historically and can so exist only because it is temporal in the very basis of its Being*'.³⁷

Heidegger's contention that historicity is 'rooted in temporality' forms a point of comparison with *Between the Acts*. Just as Heidegger's historicity connects both

³⁴ Woolf, *Acts*, 60, 83.

³⁵ Augustine, *Confessions*, 243. Explaining how a theory of time which locates time in the mind can account for historical time, which by its nature extends beyond the reach of individual memory, became a major concern for early twentieth-century phenomenological philosophy. Husserl distinguished 'recollection' from 'retention', and on that basis conceived of a 'pseudo-present' which can be extended back in time. He writes that this 'process must evidently be conceived as capable of being continued without limit, although in practice the actual memory will soon fail' (*Phenomenology*, 72). As Ricoeur comments, '[t]his statement is of the highest interest for the shift from the time of remembrance to historical time, which goes beyond the memory of each individual' (*Time and Narrative*, iii, 39). While rejecting Heidegger's conception of historicity, Merleau-Ponty pointed the way to a conception of historical time in the *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) with his comment that 'my living present' can 'open on to temporalities outside my living experience and acquire a social horizon, with the result that my world is expanded to the dimensions of . . . collective history'. He also boldly denied the coherence of any conception of historical time in a world without or before consciousness (*Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 2002), 496-7, 502-3). Ricoeur characterized his three volume *Time and Narrative* as an expansion of Augustine's intriguing but undeveloped suggestions (*Time and Narrative*, i, 22).

³⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 425, 428, his emphasis.

³⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 428, his emphasis.

individual lives and history, so the phenomenological time of the pageant promises to hold together both the lives of the audience members, and the entire stretch of history depicted by the pageant. Music brings together the minds of the audience, and thereby promises to unify lives which might otherwise appear fragmented. The gramophone affirms a sense of unity when otherwise, as the megaphonic voice puts it, '[a]ll you can see of your selves is scraps, orts and fragments'.³⁸ Again, the time marked by the gramophone promises to tie together the historical scenes of the pageant as a coherent whole, and thereby underpins the scheme of English history presented by the pageant.

Time and Community

The time of Miss La Trobe's pageant and Heidegger's historicity are alike in being communal forms of temporality. Heidegger aligned inauthentic and authentic forms of historicity with different types of community. Inauthentic historicity is the normal state of affairs, in which 'the Self is lost in the "they" (*das Man*)'.³⁹ By contrast, authentic historicity 'weans one from the conventionalities of the "they" (*das Man*)' and draws Dasein together in an authentic form of community:

if fateful Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, exists essentially in Being-with-
Others, its historizing is a co-historizing and is determinative for it as destiny.
This is how we designate the historizing of the community, of a people.⁴⁰

Authentic historicity is essentially communal: it is done together as a 'co-historizing', or the 'historizing of the community'. It binds Dasein together in an

³⁸ Woolf, *Acts*, 135. Mrs Manresa's 'life history' had previously been described as 'only scraps and fragments' (29).

³⁹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 435.

⁴⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 443-4, 436, emphasis removed.

authentic form of 'Being-with-Others', which contrasts with the 'everyday Being-with (*Mitsein*)' that unites the inauthentic community of *das Man*.⁴¹

Between the Acts has long been read, and celebrated, as a novel about community. It is widely recognized that Miss La Trobe's pageant brings together a community at Pointz Hall at a time of historical uncertainty.⁴² Indeed, Woolf intended to write about community from a very early stage in the novel's genesis, as is evident from the much-quoted sketch of her 'new book' in her diary: "'I" rejected: "We" substituted'.⁴³ However, what needs to be stressed is the important role that historical time plays in the formation of the community envisaged in the novel. The gramophone, which marks the passing of time, is repeatedly described as holding the audience together. At the beginning of the play, the 'tick, tick, tick' of the gramophone needle 'seemed to hold them together, tranced'.⁴⁴ Again, the ticking of the gramophone binds together the audience, who otherwise threaten to wander and disperse:

Tick, tick, tick, the machine continued. Time was passing. The audience was wandering, dispersing. Only the tick tick of the gramophone held them together.⁴⁵

More explicitly, it is 'time' which holds together the audience: '[c]huff, chuff, chuff went the machine. Time was passing. *How long would time hold them together?*'⁴⁶ This 'time' which holds the audience members together as a community, however precariously, is much like the temporality of Heidegger's authentic historicity, which binds together 'the community' in an act of 'co-historizing'.

⁴¹ See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 156, 159, 164-8.

⁴² For example, Silver sees *Between the Acts* as an exploration of 'the possibility of community and its survival on the eve of World War II' ('Community', 295); Cuddy-Keane similarly suggests that in this novel Woolf 'may have been sketching out a new model of society' ('Politics', 274); and Esty portrays *Between the Acts* as a 'confrontation with national community' (*Shrinking Island*, 87).

⁴³ See Woolf's diary entry for 26 April 1938; *Diary*, v, 135.

⁴⁴ Woolf, *Acts*, 60.

⁴⁵ Woolf, *Acts*, 111.

⁴⁶ Woolf, *Acts*, 109, emphasis added.

In Woolf's novel, the coming together and separating of the audience is marked by the 'Unity—Dispersity' motif played on the gramophone.⁴⁷ The gramophone marks the audience's dispersal at an interval: '[t]he music chanted: Dispersed are we. It moaned: Dispersed are we. It lamented: Dispersed are we, as they streamed, spotting the grass with colour, across the lawn, and down the paths'.⁴⁸ Music also summons the audience together after the interval: '[t]he audience was assembling. The music was summoning them. Down the paths, across the lawns they were streaming again'.⁴⁹ The coming together and dispersal of the audience parallels the observations that Woolf made in her diary about the waxing and waning of communal feeling in the light of war: 'then there comes too the community feeling: all England thinking the same thing—this horror of war—at the same moment. Never felt it so strong before'.⁵⁰ Again, she described how the 'common feeling covers the private, then recedes'.⁵¹ The coming together of the audience in *Between the Acts* also parallels Heidegger's characterization of the coming together of a community from a state of 'dispersal' in authentic historicality.

For Heidegger, everyday Dasein has 'been dispersed into the many kinds of things which daily "come to pass"', and is 'driven about by its "affairs"'.⁵² Authentic historicality offers a way of Dasein coming 'to itself': 'it must first *pull itself together* from the *dispersion* and *disconnectedness* of the very things that have "come to

⁴⁷ Woolf, *Acts*, 144.

⁴⁸ Woolf, *Acts*, 69-70. Fittingly, the gramophone 'petered out on the last word "we"' to mark the complete dissolution of the audience as a community at the end of the pageant (71).

⁴⁹ Woolf, *Acts*, 86.

⁵⁰ Diary entry for 15 April 1939; Woolf, *Diary*, v, 215.

⁵¹ Diary entry for 25 August 1939; Woolf, *Diary*, v, 231.

⁵² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 441.

pass””.⁵³ The gramophone in *Between the Acts* similarly draws the audience together from a state of dispersal. The apotheosis of community is brought about by the playing of the music, and the coming together of the minds of the audience like ‘filings magnetised’, which not only unifies the individual minds of the audience in an act of attention, but also draws them together as a community.⁵⁴ After this intense and rapturous communal moment, the Rev. Streatfield’s speech comes as a shock, reminding the audience that they are not just a community, but also a collection of individuals: ‘[m]ust I be Thomas, you Jane?’⁵⁵

It should be emphasized that by its communal and historical nature, the time of Miss La Trobe’s pageant contrasts starkly with Henri Bergson’s *durée*. It was seen in the introduction to this thesis that Bergson, in his *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (1889), advocated an introspective retreat from the ‘automated, external world’ into the realm of *durée*.⁵⁶ The time of Miss La Trobe’s pageant is a time of the mind, but unlike Bergson’s *durée*, it does not involve an asocial retreat into the self. Rather, it is a communal time that holds the pageant’s audience together as a group. Nor does it involve a flight from history into the private sphere of consciousness. Rather, it connects history together for the pageant’s audience in a shared historical vision. By flagging the differences between the historical time of the pageant and Bergson’s *durée*, I aim to challenge Bergsonian readings of time in Woolf and in modernism more generally. For example, my interpretation of the time of the pageant both opposes John Batchelor’s suggestion that ‘the chuff, chuff, chuff of the gramophone’ marks the coming together of ‘clock time’ and ‘mind time’ in the

⁵³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 441-2, his emphasis.

⁵⁴ Woolf, *Acts*, 135.

⁵⁵ Woolf, *Acts*, 136.

⁵⁶ Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 231-3.

moment, and brings into question György Lukács's influential view of modernist time as asocial and as complicit in a denial of history.⁵⁷

Repetition in History

A final point of comparison between the historical time of Miss La Trobe's pageant and Heidegger's historicity concerns repetition. As has been seen above, a key aspect of Heidegger's account of historicity is repetition (*Wiederholung*), which is the temporal structure in which Dasein hands down to itself possibilities that have been.⁵⁸ Repetition is given value by Heidegger as a feature of authentic historicity. Indeed, *das Man*, whose existence is inauthentically historical, 'cannot repeat what has been', and so is 'loaded down with the legacy of a "past" which has become unrecognizable'.⁵⁹ By contrast, authentically historical Dasein 'understands history as the "recurrence" of the possible'.⁶⁰ As Ricoeur puts it, repetition in history is not, for Heidegger, the stale repetition of past possibilities of being, but rather 'opens potentialities that went unnoticed, were aborted, or were repressed in the past'.⁶¹

The historical time of Miss La Trobe's pageant is marked by a similar form of repetition to that portrayed by Heidegger.⁶² To a limited extent, the pageant offers a

⁵⁷ John Batchelor, *Virginia Woolf: The Major Novels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 135; Lukács, *Realism*, 37-9.

⁵⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 437.

⁵⁹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 443-4.

⁶⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 444.

⁶¹ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, iii, 76.

⁶² Critics have previously noted the importance of repetition in *Between the Acts*, and have approached it from a variety of different critical perspectives. For example, John Whittier-Ferguson identifies repetition as a defining feature of *Between the Acts* and a hallmark of Woolf's late style more generally, and connects it to the 'sociopolitical catastrophe of a second world war' ('Repetition, Remembering, Repetition: Virginia Woolf's Late Fiction and the Return of War', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 57/2 (Summer 2011), 230-53, 231). J. Hillis Miller addresses repetition in *Between the Acts*

positive sense of repetition. Heidegger portrayed the ‘authentic repetition of a possibility of existence that has been’ as ‘the possibility that Dasein may choose its hero’.⁶³ Lucy responds to the historical pageant in a very similar manner, thanking Miss La Trobe: ‘[w]hat a small part I’ve had to play! But you’ve made me feel that I could have played . . . Cleopatra!’ Miss La Trobe translates for her: ‘[y]ou’ve stirred in me my unacted part’.⁶⁴ On the one hand, Lucy’s feeling, which she is barely able to articulate, forms part of her whimsical mystical ‘one-making’, for which she is soundly mocked.⁶⁵ Yet, on the other hand, her feeling that she could have played Cleopatra is an awareness of other parts or roles in history that she could have played, or what Heidegger would call previous ‘possibilities of being’. Just as Heidegger’s repetition offers Dasein the possibility to return to the past and ‘choose its hero’, so Miss La Trobe’s historical pageant inspires Lucy to return to the past and choose her hero: Cleopatra.

However, although it offers Lucy an inspiring experience, the repetitive temporality of *Between the Acts* is otherwise sinister. The ticking of the gramophone needle suggests a repetitiveness within historical time, yet this repetitive ticking holds violent connotations. It echoes Lucy’s hammering of nails into the barn door, which Isa associates with the story of the rape of a girl by guardsmen.⁶⁶ Further intimations that history forms a pattern of violent repetition run throughout the novel.⁶⁷ For example, Bart remarks in conversation in the opening scene of the novel that:

through Gilles Deleuze’s contrast between ‘Platonic repetition’ and ‘creative repetition’ (*Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), 5-6, 203-32).

⁶³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 437.

⁶⁴ Woolf, *Acts*, 110.

⁶⁵ Woolf, *Acts*, 125-6.

⁶⁶ Woolf, *Acts*, 15.

⁶⁷ Wiley suggests that the ‘collective vision played out in *Between the Acts* asks both audience and reader to imagine the radical possibility of how we can stop history from repeating itself as war’ (‘Unrepeatable’, 3).

[f]rom an aeroplane . . . you could still see, plainly marked, the scars made by the Britons; by the Romans; by the Elizabethan manor house; and by the plough, when they ploughed the hill to grow wheat in the Napoleonic wars.⁶⁸

The 'scars' left on the landscape suggest the violence inflicted by successive peoples over the course of English history. Scars have been left not only by 'the Britons', then by their imperial Roman aggressors, but more recently from 'when they ploughed the hill to grow wheat in the Napoleonic wars'. Moreover, the repetitive pattern of war seems likely to continue into the future. The landscape around Pointz Hall is threatened by further scarring, as Giles is acutely aware: '[a]t any moment guns would rake that land into furrows; planes splinter Bolney Minster into smithereens and blast the Folly'.⁶⁹

As Madelyn Detloff points out, the ending of the novel, in which Isa and Giles are seemingly transposed back to prehistoric times where they 'must fight' then 'embrace', from which 'another life might be born', raises the prospect of a repetition of history.⁷⁰ As she puts it, when 'the curtain rises on the new scene that ends the novel, history may be set in motion to repeat itself'.⁷¹ Such a possibility of historical repetition has been variously interpreted. Christine Froula is among the critics who offer an optimistic interpretation of the ending. She suggests that the prospect of a new child keeps 'an unforeseeable future in play'.⁷² By contrast, Judith Johnston advances a more pessimistic reading. For her, even if 'another life might be born', the reader cannot expect that a third child fathered by Giles and grandfathered by Bart

⁶⁸ Woolf, *Acts*, 3.

⁶⁹ Woolf, *Acts*, 39.

⁷⁰ Woolf, *Acts*, 157.

⁷¹ Madelyn Detloff, 'Thinking Peace into Existence: The Spectacle of History in *Between the Acts*', *Women's Studies*, 28/4 (1999), 403-33, 428.

⁷² Froula, *Civilization*, 318.

will transform the old story of patriarchal domination and violence.⁷³ Johnston's pessimistic interpretation is supported by an earlier draft of the ending, in which it is held that Isa and Giles would 'fight' and 'embrace' as 'the moth quivering its red, its orange, lets fall a shower of eggs'.⁷⁴ This image is one of fertility, but also of destruction, as the moth letting fall a shower of eggs resembles an aircraft letting fall a shower of bombs. It thereby foreshadows the Blitz which is imminent on the June day in 1939. The image suggests that the propagation of children into a patriarchal society is set to reinforce the continual recurrence of war.

The violent aspect of the repetitive historical temporality of the pageant can be elucidated by reading the novel alongside other of Woolf's late writings. In *Three Guineas* (1938), history is characterised as a constant repetition of patriarchal violence and war. It is portrayed as a repetitive series of battles, not only military, but also those fought by 'the patriarchal system' against its 'victims', such as the 'battle of the universities' which was fought to deny women a university education.⁷⁵ 'It seems', writes Woolf's narrator, 'as if there were no progress in the human race, but only repetition'.⁷⁶ In a conceit whose images resonate with those of *Between the Acts*, the narrator writes:

[i]f we encourage the daughters to enter the professions without making any conditions as to the way in which the professions are to be practised shall we not be doing our best to stereotype the old tune which human nature, like a gramophone whose needle has stuck, is now grinding out with such disastrous unanimity? 'Here we go round the mulberry tree, the mulberry tree, the

⁷³ Judith L. Johnston, 'The Remediable Flaw: Revisioning Cultural History in *Between the Acts*', in Jane Marcus (ed.), *Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury: A Centennial Celebration* (London: Macmillan, 1987), 253-77, 273.

⁷⁴ Virginia Woolf, 'The Earlier Typescript', in *Pointz Hall*, 31-189, 184-5.

⁷⁵ Woolf, *Guineas*, 245-6. The daughters of educated men have, Woolf's narrator points out, 'been shut out of the universities so repeatedly' (280).

⁷⁶ Woolf, *Guineas*, 248-9.

mulberry tree. Give it all to me, give it all to me, all to me. Three hundred millions spent upon war.’⁷⁷

The gramophone, whose needle has stuck, marks a constant repetition of patriarchal wars in history. History for Woolf is not, as Beer suggests, ‘playful, a spume of language’.⁷⁸ Rather, with its incessant repetition of wars waged by a violent patriarchal order, history is more like the ‘nightmare’ from which Stephen, in James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922), is ‘trying to awake’.⁷⁹

Woolf’s exemplary figure for the historical condition explored in *Three Guineas* is Antigone. The repetition of war and the subjugation of women is dramatised in an imaginative return to the (fictional) past of Sophocles’s *Antigone*:

Creon said: ‘I will take her where the path is loneliest, and hide her, living, in a rocky vault.’ And he shut her not in Holloway or in a concentration camp, but in a tomb. And Creon we read brought ruin on his house, and scattered the land with the bodies of the dead. It seems, Sir, as we listen to the voices of the past, as if we were looking at the photographs again, at the picture of dead bodies and ruined houses that the Spanish Government sends us almost weekly. Things repeat themselves it seems. Pictures and voices are the same today as they were 2,000 years ago.⁸⁰

This imaginative return to ‘the past’ sets up a parallel between the events of *Antigone* and the present day.⁸¹ Women—who have previously been described as shut up in the private house ‘like slaves in a harem’, as well as shut out from the professions, from the universities, and from religious institutions—are comparable to Antigone, who was buried alive in a rocky vault by her father, Creon.⁸² And just as Creon ‘brought ruin on his house, and scattered the land with the bodies of the dead’, so too, having

⁷⁷ Woolf, *Guineas*, 238. Returning to this conceit, Woolf’s narrator again stresses the imperative not to ‘follow and repeat and score still deeper the old worn ruts in which society, like a gramophone whose needle has stuck, is grinding out with intolerable unanimity “Three hundred millions spent upon arms”’ (308).

⁷⁸ Beer, *Common Ground*, 8.

⁷⁹ James Joyce, *Ulysses*, ed. Jeri Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 34.

⁸⁰ Woolf, *Guineas*, 363.

⁸¹ Woolf, *Guineas*, 362.

⁸² Woolf, *Guineas*, 261.

shut out women from society, wars such as the Spanish Civil War inevitably arise: ‘[t]hings repeat themselves it seems’.

Woolf also portrayed history in terms of repetition in her diary and correspondence. In her diary, she presented the prospect of a second world war as the repetition of that of 1914: ‘[a] single step—in Cheko Slovakia—like the Austrian Archduke in 1914 & again [it is] 1914’.⁸³ Again, she wrote that ‘the whole of Europe may be up in flames . . . One more shot at a policeman & the Germans, Czecks, French will begin the old horror’.⁸⁴ She recorded a similar sense of the unbearable repetition of history in a letter to Lady Shena Simon: ‘[t]he human race seems to repeat itself insufferably’.⁸⁵ Overall, whereas Heidegger saw in repetition the possibility of an authentic form of historicity, and the handing down of a heritage from the past, Woolf portrayed history in terms of a very different form of repetition: the nightmarish repetition of violent acts committed by patriarchal society.

For Augustine, the condition of being in time is, ultimately, one of suffering. The distension of the soul is portrayed as painful, as if the soul were being stretched on a rack. He characterised the temporal experience of singing or listening to a song as suffering: ‘[a] person singing or listening to a song he knows well suffers a distension or stretching [variatur affectus sensusque distenditur]’.⁸⁶ Similarly, he described his life as ‘a distension in several directions [distentio est vita mea]’, as ‘stretched out in distraction’ and ‘pulled apart’: ‘I am scattered in times whose order I do not understand. The storms of incoherent events tear to pieces my thoughts, the inmost

⁸³ Diary entry for 28 August 1938; Woolf, *Diary*, v, 164.

⁸⁴ Diary entry for 24 May 1938; Woolf, *Diary*, v, 142.

⁸⁵ Letter to Lady Shena Simon, 25 January 1941; *Letters*, vi, 464.

⁸⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, 245.

entrails of my soul [intima viscera animae meae]'.⁸⁷ The painfulness of the distension of the soul is exacerbated, for Augustine, by the contrast between time and eternity, and the fact that being in time distances man from God, and the stillness of his eternity. As Ricoeur puts it, the *distentio animi* comes to express 'the way in which the soul, deprived of the stillness of the eternal present, is torn asunder'.⁸⁸

A similar theological contrast between time and eternity animates T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* (1936-42). In 'Burnt Norton' (1936), there is a lament for the condition of being in time which echoes Augustine's *Confessions*, and the account of time found therein:

Words move, music moves
Only in time; but that which is living
Can only die. Words, after speech, reach
Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern,
Can words or music reach
The stillness, as a Chinese jar still
Moves perpetually in its stillness.⁸⁹

Eliot here echoes Augustine, for whom words and music are a painful reminder of the condition of being in time, the difference between temporal words and the eternal Word, and of man's distance from the stillness of God's eternity.⁹⁰

Locally, Beer points out in her edition of *Between the Acts* that Eliot's Chinese jar finds an echo in Woolf's novel, with the vase that stands in the heart of the house, and holds 'the still, distilled essence of emptiness, silence'.⁹¹ More broadly, Woolf in this

⁸⁷ Augustine, *Confessions*, 243-4.

⁸⁸ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, i, 27.

⁸⁹ T. S. Eliot, *Collected Poems, 1909-1962* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002), 181-2.

⁹⁰ See Augustine, *Confessions*, 61-2, 243-5. For a reading of 'Burnt Norton' in the context of Augustine's account of time and memory in Book XI of the *Confessions*, see Paul Murray, *T. S. Eliot and Mysticism: The Secret History of 'Four Quartets'* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1991), 45-9.

⁹¹ Woolf, *Acts*, 27; Gillian Beer, 'Introduction', in Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts*, ed. Gillian Beer (London: Penguin, 1992), ix-xxxv, xxvii, 134.

novel imagined her own version of an historical time which is like that of Augustine by being a time in the mind. However, her imagination of such a time is not set within the theological contrast between time and eternity that animates Augustine's *Confessions* and Eliot's 'Burnt Norton', and is not marked by their theological lament of being far from God's eternity. Rather, if Woolf's historical time has a painful aspect, it arises through the repetition of patriarchal violence and war that marks its rhythm. Being stretched between the acts of historical violence is a distressing experience for victims of patriarchal society such as Isa, who thinks of the enduring suffering of humans, and wishes for it to end: '[d]own it poured like all the people in the world weeping. . . "Oh that our human pain could here have ending!" Isa murmured'.⁹²

⁹² Woolf, *Acts*, 129.

3.3 Historicity and the Politics of Time

In chapter 3.2, I compared the historical time of Miss La Trobe's pageant to Martin Heidegger's historicity: in contrast to Henri Bergson's *durée*, both are forms of temporality which are historical, communal and marked by repetition. In this chapter, I would like to exploit this parallel to address the question of the politics of time in *Between the Acts* (1941). It will be recalled from the introduction of this thesis that Heidegger's historicity holds a notorious politics of time, and has been seen as the philosophical basis of Heidegger's support of National Socialism in the early 1930s. In particular, according to Peter Osborne, it is through Heidegger's novel concept of repetition that the 'politics of Heidegger's temporalization of history is to be found'.¹ Here, by using the well-established debates concerning the politics of time in modernity to illuminate the politics of time in literary modernism, I will ask: what are the politics of the historical time of Miss La Trobe's pageant, given its similarity to Heidegger's historicity? For instance, Heidegger's portrayal in *Being and Time* (1927) of the coming together of the 'community' or 'people' in a moment of authentic co-historizing has been seen as providing a philosophical model for the coming together of the *Völk* in the National Socialist Revolution. Is there a similarly alarming politics to the historical time that brings the pageant's audience together as a community in Woolf's novel?

To address such questions, I will turn to Hans-Georg Gadamer's account of history in *Truth and Method* (1960). Therein, Gadamer develops Heidegger's conception of historicity into an account of the temporalization of history as tradition. Focusing on

¹ Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 169.

the role of literary tradition in Gadamer's and Woolf's writings, I will argue that although both Gadamer and Woolf thought of history in terms of tradition, Woolf was more sensitive to the politically problematic aspects of tradition. We will see that, while Gadamer advocated a rehabilitation of authority along with tradition, Woolf envisaged anti-authoritarian forms of tradition in both her critical and fictional writing.

The following interpretation of the politics of time in *Between the Acts* seeks to contest and revise those offered by Bahun and Spiropoulou. Both of these critics have aligned Woolf's conceptions of history and historical time with those of Walter Benjamin. Bahun has sought to establish 'the coordinates of Benjamin and Woolf's unrealized dialogue' on history, which she does by drawing a 'close comparison' between Benjamin's 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' and Woolf's *Between the Acts*.² She explicitly aligns their conceptions of historical time, holding that 'Woolf follows Benjamin closely' in his critique of 'universal history unfolding in homogenous time', and arguing that 'it is primarily in the relation of the three aspects of time as shot through by the socio-political moment of "the now of recognizability" that Benjamin's and Woolf's philosophies of history are commensurate'.³

In her book-length study, *Virginia Woolf, Modernity and History: Constellations with Walter Benjamin* (2010), Spiropoulou has sought to bring 'Woolf's historiographical constructions' to 'constellation' with aspects of Benjamin's 'incisive theory of modernity and innovative philosophy of history'.⁴ She argues that 'Woolf's critique of traditional historiographical trends in her fiction and essays is effectuated through

² Bahun, 'Burden', 100.

³ Bahun, 'Burden', 104.

⁴ Spiropoulou, *Constellations*, 3.

her revision of conventional notions of historical temporality . . . in ways which are often strikingly akin to Benjamin's radical historiographical conceptions'. She claims that, 'like Benjamin, she places emphasis on fragmentation and disruption rather than historical continuities'.⁵ In her chapter on *Between the Acts*, she argues that Woolf, like Benjamin, effects a 'destruction of tradition'. She holds that the 'constellatory representations' in this novel 'aim at the destruction of cultural tradition', and that the 'historical play within the novel virtually destroys the authority of national cultural tradition by deriding the nation's putatively legitimate and glorious history'.⁶

As I mentioned above, Bahun and Spiropoulou's comparisons between Woolf and Benjamin make a welcome advance beyond Bergsonian readings of time in Woolf, and draw attention to the historical and political aspects of time in her writing. In particular, placing Woolf in this theoretical context has reinvigorated the question of the politics of tradition in her writing. Both critics have drawn valuable parallels between Woolf's and Benjamin's attitudes towards tradition. They point out that both adopted critical attitudes towards cultural tradition and its transmission across history, an attitude which for Benjamin is crystallised in his famous apothegms that '[t]here is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism', and that 'cultural treasures' are spoils which are carried along in 'the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate'.⁷ They

⁵ Spiropoulou, *Constellations*, 6.

⁶ Spiropoulou, *Constellations*, 148.

⁷ Bahun, 'Burden', 103, 105; Spiropoulou, *Constellations*, 15, 32; Benjamin, 'Theses', 248.

Benjamin's famous apothegms in turn echo the opening of Karl Marx's 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte' (1852), in which men are portrayed as having to make their own history 'under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past': '[t]he tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living' ('The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 329-55, 329).

also usefully point out that both Woolf and Benjamin advocated a recuperative attitude towards the suppressed tradition of the ‘oppressed’.⁸

However, while I welcome the situation of Woolf within this theoretical context, I suggest that Woolf temporalized history as tradition rather than as the destruction of tradition, and that her conception of history thereby resembles those of Heidegger and Gadamer more closely than it does that of Benjamin. My departure from Bahun and Spiropoulou is encapsulated in our contrasting approaches to the historical time of *Between the Acts*. Whereas I have aligned the time of the pageant marked by the ticking of a gramophone with Heidegger’s historicity, and thereby to his account of the temporalization of history as tradition, Spiropoulou sees the gramophone as merely incidental. She suggests that the ‘ticking of the gramophone’ marks a ‘mechanical clock-time’, and functions as a distraction to the audience, thereby operating ‘as an alienation-effect’.⁹ By contrast, she argues that an explosive historical time, similar to Benjamin’s *Jetztzeit*, operates in the pageant. She suggests that the historical scenes of the pageant operate like Benjamin’s ‘dialectical images’, and produce ‘constellations’ between selected parts of the past and the present moment, in a manner that promises to blow open the continuum of history.¹⁰ The scenes of the pageant thereby ‘aim at the destruction of cultural tradition, which they expose as having thrived on barbarism and oppression in the name of civilization’.¹¹

⁸ Bahun, ‘Burden’, 106-7; Spiropoulou, *Constellations*, 6, 32.

⁹ Spiropoulou, *Constellations*, 155. On Miss La Trobe’s pageant and Brecht’s alienation effects, see above.

¹⁰ Spiropoulou, *Constellations*, 146-8.

¹¹ Spiropoulou, *Constellations*, 148. Bahun offers a similar reading of the historical time of the pageant, comparing the ‘dramatic stasis’ of the ‘Present Day’ scene to Benjamin’s notion of the ‘standstill’ (*Stillstellung*), a static instant in which the past and present converge and disclose the real dialectical nature of history (‘Burden’, 107-8).

However, Spiropoulou's interpretation of the scenes of the pageant as dialectical images is unconvincing, and, while there are undoubtedly subversive and satirical aspects of the pageant, it is excessive to claim that it aims 'at the destruction of cultural tradition'. To picture Woolf as threatening, in a politically-radical manner, to blow open the continuum of history with an explosive historical time may be tempting, but it is inaccurate. My counter-interpretation of the pageant as involving the temporalization of history as tradition will throw into relief the profound differences and disanalogies between Woolf's and Benjamin's conceptions of history. It will argue for a possibility that Spiropoulou herself entertains: that the 'constellation' between Woolf and Benjamin could, on closer analysis, 'open up to their final incommensurability'.¹²

The Temporalization of History as Tradition

Hans-Georg Gadamer, heavily influenced by Heidegger's conception of historicity, developed an account of the temporalization of history as tradition in his *Truth and Method* (1960).¹³ History, for Gadamer, appears as active tradition: '[e]ven the most genuine and pure tradition does not persist because of the inertia of what once existed. It needs to be affirmed, embraced, cultivated. It is, essentially, preservation, and is active in all historical change'.¹⁴ As Osborne points out, Gadamer took his model of tradition as an active reception and repetition of the past from *Being and Time*.¹⁵ In particular, his conception of tradition develops Heidegger's notions of 'handing-

¹² Spiropoulou, *Constellations*, 3.

¹³ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd edn, trans. W. Glen-Doepel, Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Continuum, 2004). For an exposition of Gadamer's conception of history as tradition, see Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, iii, 219-29. See also Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 131-2.

¹⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 282.

¹⁵ Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 131.

down' and 'inheritance', which are two constitutive features of the structure of historical repetition.¹⁶ Alongside the category of tradition, Gadamer undertook the restitution and reinterpretation of the category of authority.¹⁷ Insofar as history as tradition must be secured anew in each generation, the process of handing down is fraught with the threat of failure in the present. Therefore, as Osborne puts it, the 'continuity of tradition requires a constant exercise of authority to combat the threat of betrayal inherent in its temporal structure'.¹⁸

Gadamer granted a privileged place to literary tradition within his discussion of tradition.¹⁹ Echoing Heidegger's notion of handing-down, Gadamer held that literature, and linguistic tradition more generally, 'is tradition in the proper sense of the word—i.e. something handed down'.²⁰ Literature thereby becomes a heritage: it is something 'that has come down to us by being written down'.²¹ Authority plays an important role in the perpetuation of literary tradition (as it does with all forms of tradition): in this case, it operates through 'the authority of the educator'—the 'teacher', 'superior' or 'expert'—who teaches literature to his or her charges.²² Overall, the transmission of literary tradition is emblematic for Gadamer of the way in which historical continuity is established: literature is a '[form] of continuance' which has been created by 'a will to permanence'.²³

¹⁶ Thus, for Heidegger, '[r]epeating is *handing down* explicitly—that is to say, going back into the possibilities' that are '*inherited* and yet . . . chosen' (*Being and Time*, 437, 435, emphasis altered).

¹⁷ See *Truth and Method*, section 4.1.B.i, 'The Rehabilitation of Authority and Tradition' (278-85). The restitution of authority and tradition form part of Gadamer's controversial attempt 'to fundamentally rehabilitate the concept of prejudice' (278).

¹⁸ Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 127.

¹⁹ Literary tradition forms part of the verbal tradition, the understanding of which 'retains special priority over all other tradition' (*Truth and Method*, 391).

²⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 391. Compare: '[l]iterature is defined by the will to hand on' (396).

²¹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 393.

²² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 281-2.

²³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 393.

Woolf, like both Heidegger and Gadamer, thought about history in terms of tradition. As we saw above, the temporalization of history as tradition constitutes one of the possible forms of history within modernity. Its inherently conservative nature contrasts with more revolutionary or ruptural forms of history, such as Walter Benjamin's temporalization of history as the destruction of tradition. As we shall see, tradition and literary tradition play an important role in her late critical writings. She offered a critique of 'memory and tradition' as part of her attack on patriarchal society and culture in *Three Guineas* (1938). Her essay, 'The Leaning Tower' (1940), envisages the continuation of a literary tradition beyond the cataclysm of the Second World War, and its possible role in the formation of a utopian, classless society. And her last, unfinished essays, 'Anon' and 'The Reader' (1941), are attempts to chart an English literary and cultural tradition from the dawn of the nation's history until the present day, and as such, offer a reassuring sense of historical stability and continuity.

My interpretation of Woolf's conception of history as one of tradition partially resembles the older critical readings of Werner Deiman and Sabine Hotho-Jackson. Deiman argues that Woolf's historical vision is 'rooted in tradition', that she was engaged in a life-long 'quest for a belief in history as pattern and continuity', and that in *Between the Acts* the pageant 'becomes the major vehicle' for the novel's 'vision of [historical] continuity'.²⁴ Hotho-Jackson similarly interprets Woolf's view of history to be one of tradition, continuity and stability.²⁵ However, I by no means suggest a return to this older critical paradigm. These older critical readings address Woolf's conception of history in apolitical, existential terms. Deiman suggests that Woolf's

²⁴ Werner J. Deiman, 'History, Pattern and Continuity in Virginia Woolf', *Contemporary Literature*, 15/1 (1974), 49-66, 61, 50, 58.

²⁵ Sabine Hotho-Jackson, 'Virginia Woolf on History: Between Tradition and Modernity', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 27/4 (1991), 293-313, 305-11.

engagement with history in *Between the Acts* and late writings was a confrontation with ‘the existential questions of human life’, and Hotho-Jackson similarly suggests that ‘Woolf turned to history as an existential category’.²⁶ By contrast, I aim to elucidate the political aspects of Woolf’s view of history as continuity. While Woolf was, like Gadamer, committed to an idea of the continuity of tradition, she also adopted a circumspect attitude towards tradition, and levelled a feminist and class-based critique of the various abuses of tradition. Indeed, her late writing provides a critical dimension that is lacking from Gadamer’s account of history as tradition.

As part of his rehabilitation of tradition and authority, Gadamer celebrated education, and the ‘authority of the educator’, which helps to ensure the handing down of tradition.²⁷ Challenging the Enlightenment conception of authority, in which authority is opposed to reason, he argued that the true basis of authority is an act of ‘reason that grants the authority of a superior fundamentally because he has a wider view of things or is better informed’. The ‘authority claimed by the teacher, the superior, the expert’ is justified by the fact that ‘what the authority says is not irrational and arbitrary but can, in principle, be discovered to be true’. Thus, he waged a defence and justification of what might otherwise appear to be ‘the anonymous and impersonal authority of a superior which derives from his office’.²⁸

²⁶ Deiman, ‘Continuity’, 50; Hotho-Jackson, ‘History’, 305. Another unsatisfactory aspect of Hotho-Jackson’s treatment of Woolf on history is her opposition of tradition to modernity. She argues that Woolf’s views of history fall *between* tradition and modernity, assuming the two to be mutually exclusive, in a manner which reflects the popular but erroneous view that modernity necessarily involves a complete rupture with the past and with tradition. On the contrary, as we have seen, modernity involves within its most abstract temporal form a range of competing temporalizations of history, including the temporalization of history as tradition.

²⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 281-2.

²⁸ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 281.

Jürgen Habermas objected to Gadamer's conservative defence of the education process as part of his broader criticism of Gadamer's account of history as tradition.²⁹ Authority in education, he suggests, threatens to perpetuate tradition and prejudice in an insufficiently critical manner.³⁰ More generally, he argued that Gadamer's focus on tradition, and his rehabilitation of the concept of authority, blinded him to the ideological operations of power or 'force'.³¹ He accused Gadamer of failing to recognize the need of a critique of tradition, and indeed, of adopting a dogmatic stance that precluded the possibility of such a critique. As a countermeasure, Habermas championed 'the power of reflection', which confers the ability to criticize and 'to reject the claim of traditions'.³²

In *Three Guineas* (1938), Woolf advanced a critique of educational institutions which in many ways fulfils Habermas's desire for a critique of tradition and authority. While Gadamer celebrated educational institutions as places where tradition is handed down, Woolf makes painfully clear that educational institutions have tended ruthlessly to exclude women, and to perpetuate traditions which benefit men. As her narrator points out, whereas men have been educated at public schools and universities 'for five or six hundred years', the daughters of educated men have been so for only sixty. From this follows the 'indisputable fact' that

'we'—meaning by 'we' a whole made up of body, brain and spirit, influenced by memory and tradition—must still differ in some essential respects from 'you', whose body, brain and spirit have been so differently trained and are so

²⁹ Jürgen Habermas, 'The Hermeneutic Approach' (1967), in *On the Logic of the Social Sciences*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge: Polity, 1988), 143-70, 169. For an overview of what has become known as 'the Habermas-Gadamer debate', see Alan How, *The Habermas-Gadamer Debate and the Nature of the Social: Back to Bedrock* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1995).

³⁰ Habermas, 'Approach', 169-70.

³¹ Jürgen Habermas, 'The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality' (1970), trans. Josef Bleicher, in Josef Bleicher (ed.), *Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy and Critique* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 181-212, 204-7.

³² Habermas, 'Hermeneutic Approach', 168-70.

differently influenced by memory and tradition. Though we see the same world, we see it through different eyes.³³

While Gadamer uncritically celebrated tradition and memory (as ‘the bearer of tradition’), Woolf in *Three Guineas* levelled a scathing critique of the ‘memory and tradition’ which upholds the patriarchal order while at the same time so ruthlessly excluding classes such as that of the daughters of educated men.³⁴ She further made clear that women have been excluded from positions of authority in the professions and in religious institutions. For example, her narrator points out that ‘[i]t is true that for the past twenty years we have been admitted to the Civil Service and to the Bar; but our position there is still very precarious and our authority of the slightest’.³⁵

In his rehabilitation of authority, Gadamer attempted to dissociate the concept from that involved in authoritarian political regimes. He admitted that ‘it is primarily persons that have authority’, and that ‘authority implies the capacity to command and be obeyed’. Nevertheless, he hoped that his rehabilitated concept of authority is not that of ‘modern dictatorships’ and the ‘blind obedience to commands’.³⁶

Complementing Habermas’s suspicions concerning Gadamer’s ‘conviction that true authority need not be authoritarian’, Woolf’s *Three Guineas* is an implicit challenge to Gadamer’s defence of authority, and his counselled deference towards authority figures on the grounds that such deference accords with ‘reason’.³⁷

³³ Woolf, *Guineas*, 175.

³⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 392.

³⁵ Woolf, *Guineas*, 167.

³⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 281.

³⁷ Habermas, ‘Approach’, 169; see also ‘Universality’, 207. For Gadamer’s response to this charge, see his ‘Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and the Critique of Ideology: Metacritical Comments on *Truth and Method*’ (1967), trans. Jerry Dibble, in Kurt Mueller-Vollmer (ed.), *The Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 274-92, 283-6. The suspicion that Gadamer’s rehabilitation of authority legitimizes an authoritarian politics might be reinforced by considering Gadamer’s debt to Heidegger’s historicity, and the controversial politics of this form of historical time.

Three Guineas employs diverse strategies to suggest that the authority within the educational, professional and religious institutions of patriarchal society is the same as that of authoritarian political regimes. Woolf criticized the sartorial markers, ceremonies and traditions by which authority and rank within hierarchical organizations are demarcated and reinforced. Such ceremonies and traditions are portrayed as dangerously like those embraced by the military, and as operating in a manner similar to the fascist hypnotism of the mind through ‘the power of medals, symbols, [and] orders’.³⁸ For example, the essay was originally published with five photographs: those of a procession of university dons, a group of heralds, a judge, a bishop and a general, all of whom are depicted in their official robes of office. As Elena Gualtieri points out, these photographs help to establish a central claim of the essay: the ‘existence of a causal link between Fascism abroad and patriarchy at home’.³⁹ The regalia of the university dons is strikingly similar to that of the general, and that of the ‘Fascist Dictator’, who is described as having a body ‘tightly encased in a uniform’, upon the breast of which are ‘sewn several medals and other mystic symbols’.⁴⁰ Whereas Gadamer had blithely tried to dissociate the blind obedience involved in following a dictator and that involved in following a teacher, Woolf instead persuasively suggests their complicity.

Further, *Three Guineas* suggests that authority in educational establishments and other hierarchical organizations tends to lead to war. Her narrator suggests that

³⁸ Woolf, *Guineas*, 321-2. It is imperative, for Woolf’s narrator, that if women are to join the professions or universities, they must do so without creating parallel traditions themselves: ‘they will dispense with the dictated, regimented, official pageantry, in which only one sex takes an active part’ (321).

³⁹ Elena Gualtieri, ‘*Three Guineas* and the Photograph: The Art of Propaganda’, in Maroula Joannou (ed.), *Women Writers of the 1930s: Gender, Politics and History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 165-78, 177.

⁴⁰ Woolf, *Guineas*, 364.

for educated men to emphasize their superiority over other people, either in birth or intellect, by dressing differently, or by adding titles before, or letters after their names are acts that rouse competition and jealousy—emotions which . . . have their share in encouraging a disposition towards war.⁴¹

By contrast, and in response to the question of what we can do to prevent war, her narrator suggests that ‘we can refuse all such distinctions and all such uniforms for ourselves’.⁴² A key part of Woolf’s strategy in *Three Guineas* is to show that the authoritarian and hierarchical structures of education, religion and the professions are the same as those of authoritarian forms of government, particularly of fascist dictatorships, and that they lead to war.

Gadamer, as we have seen, grants priority to literary tradition, which for him plays an important role in establishing historical continuity. He writes that ‘what is fixed in writing has raised itself into a public sphere of meaning in which everyone who can read has an equal share’.⁴³ However, Woolf’s late writing implicitly discredits such a statement. To say that the literary tradition is open to all, and that in it ‘everyone who can read has an equal share’, is to be blind to class divisions and inequalities. In *Three Guineas*, Woolf’s narrator conceded that, though women have historically been largely excluded from the public sphere, including from educational institutions such as public schools and universities, and though the daughters of educated men have been secluded away in private houses, literature has nevertheless always been ‘open to the daughters of educated men’. The ‘profession of literature’, she admitted, ‘has never been shut to the daughters of educated men’: it ‘was impossible for any body of

⁴¹ Woolf, *Guineas*, 181-2.

⁴² Woolf, *Guineas*, 182.

⁴³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 293.

men to corner the necessary knowledge or to refuse admittance, except on their own terms, to those who wished to read books or to write them'.⁴⁴

However, literature is not equally open to all social classes, as Woolf made clear in 'The Leaning Tower' (1940). She points out in this essay, which was originally delivered as a talk to the Workers' Educational Association in Brighton on 27 April 1940, that it has been the privileged, wealthy classes who have had access to 'good, at least expensive educations': they 'came of families rich enough to send them to public schools and universities'.⁴⁵ Such educations made writers 'aristocrats': 'the unconscious inheritors of a great tradition'. The work of such writers displays clear evidence of such an aristocratic literary inheritance:

[p]ut a page of their writing under the magnifying glass and you will see, far away in the distance, the Greeks, the Romans; coming nearer the Elizabethans; coming nearer still Dryden, Swift, Voltaire, Jane Austen, Dickens, Henry James. Each, however much he differs individually from the others, is a man of education.⁴⁶

Woolf had earlier imagined the literary tradition in a similar manner in her 1919 essay, 'Reading'. Reading her book in the richly-furnished library of an English country house, which contains the entire canon of English literature, the mind of this essay's narrator is 'turned to the past':

[a]lways behind the voice, the figure, the fountain there seemed to stretch an immeasurable avenue, that ran to a point of other voices, figures, fountains which tapered out indistinguishably upon the furthest horizon. If I looked down at my book I could see Keats and Pope behind him, and then Dryden and Sir Thomas Browne—hosts of them merging in the mass of Shakespeare, behind whom, if one peered long enough, some shapes of men in pilgrims' dress emerged. Chaucer perhaps, and again—who was it? some uncouth poet scarcely able to syllable his words.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Woolf, *Guineas*, 284.

⁴⁵ Virginia Woolf, 'The Leaning Tower', in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, vi, ed. Stuart N. Clarke (London: Hogarth Press, 2011), 259-83, 265.

⁴⁶ Woolf, 'Leaning Tower', 266-7.

⁴⁷ Virginia Woolf, 'Reading', in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, iii, ed. Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1988), 141-61, 142.

In both cases, the literary tradition which stands behind the work being read is imagined spatially, extending into the distance, with more ancient literary ancestors standing further away.⁴⁸ However, while Woolf's earlier essay is, as Julia Briggs points out, 'class-blind', this is far from the case with 'The Leaning Tower'.⁴⁹ Writers become aristocratic 'inheritors of a great tradition' by virtue of their class position and wealth, which has provided them with expensive educations. The class of 'commoners and outsiders', amongst whom Woolf implicitly includes herself, has been denied such an education, and so looks at the 'great tradition' from the outside.⁵⁰

Anti-Authoritarian Forms of Tradition

Whereas Gadamer advocated a restitution of authority along with tradition, Woolf recommended an anti-authoritarian form of tradition in 'The Leaning Tower'. Therein, despite showing that tradition has hitherto been the preserve of the privileged, she did not abandon tradition altogether, but rather imagined the continuity of a literary tradition that has the power to survive the historical rupture of the Second World War. In the final line of the essay, she called for 'commoners and outsiders like ourselves' 'to preserve' and 'to create', an exhortation which suggests a temporal

⁴⁸ Woolf's spatial imagination of the literary tradition stretching into the distance is similar to Gadamer's description of 'temporal distance' (which he understood by way of Heidegger's interpretation of 'Dasein's mode of being in terms of time') not as 'a yawning abyss', but as 'filled with the continuity of custom and tradition, in the light of which everything handed down presents itself to us' (*Truth and Method*, 296-7).

⁴⁹ Julia Briggs, "'Almost Ashamed of England Being so English": Virginia Woolf and Ideas of Englishness', in *Reading Virginia Woolf* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 190-207, 194. Briggs points out that the library described in 'Reading' 'would have looked very different from "below stairs": servants 'only enter the library to dust the books, not to enjoy their contents' (194).

⁵⁰ Woolf, 'Leaning Tower', 278.

stance of both looking back to the past and forwards towards the future.⁵¹ 'It is thus', she wrote, 'that English literature will survive this war'.⁵²

Woolf proposed that the literary tradition should be continued in an anti-authoritarian manner. Whereas previously it had been the educated male elite who had had access to the tradition, she called for commoners and outsiders to read and to write, and suggested making a start by borrowing from public lending libraries: 'Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Virgil, and Dante, who, if they could speak . . . would say, "Don't leave me to the wigged and gowned. Read me, read me for yourselves"'.⁵³ She recommended a transgressive form of reading, which she illustrated with an analogy of trespassing on private property, paraphrasing Leslie Stephen: 'Whenever you see a board up with "Trespassers will be prosecuted," trespass at once'.⁵⁴ Whereas literature had once been the province of the elite, fenced-off as private property, she recommended that it be taken possession of by commoners and outsiders. It does not matter 'if we get our accents wrong, or have to read with a crib in front of us': 'we shall trample many flowers and bruise much ancient grass'.⁵⁵ Literature, it is hoped, will then stand as the 'common ground'.⁵⁶

Woolf's defiant resolution to 'bruise much ancient grass' echoes *A Room of One's Own* (1929), in which the prohibition to walk on the lawns of Oxbridge colleges was

⁵¹ Woolf, 'Leaning Tower', 278. Compare Gadamer's description of tradition as 'essentially preservation' (*Truth and Method*, 282).

⁵² Woolf, 'Leaning Tower', 278.

⁵³ Woolf, 'Leaning Tower', 277.

⁵⁴ Woolf, 'Leaning Tower', 277; Leslie Stephen, *Studies of a Biographer*, iii (London: Duckworth, 1902), 276-7.

⁵⁵ Woolf, 'Leaning Tower', 277.

⁵⁶ Woolf, 'Leaning Tower', 278. Compare *A Room of One's Own*: '[l]iterature is open to everybody. I refuse to allow you, Beadle though you are, to turn me off the grass' (98).

associated with the exclusion of women from university education.⁵⁷ The conceit of literary trespassing conveys a deliberate flaunting of authority, and thereby forms a strong contrast with Gadamer's counselled respect for authority. It encapsulates a critical attitude towards tradition, much like that called for by Habermas.⁵⁸ While tradition and memory can, as *Three Guineas* makes clear, exclude women and sustain a patriarchal order, they also have the potential to combat class and gender divisions and inequalities. If they operate in an anti-authoritarian manner, they could pave the way to what is envisaged in 'The Leaning Tower' as a utopian society, a future 'world without classes'.⁵⁹

Woolf imagined another anti-authoritarian form of literary tradition in her unfinished late essays, 'Anon' and 'The Reader' (1941). These essays were originally planned as chapters in 'a Common History book', which was to be an attempt to 'read from one end of [literature] including [biography]; & range at will, consecutively'.⁶⁰ Written during the early stages of the war, they can be seen as an attempt to look back, in a time of crisis, to the reassuring sense of historical stability and continuity offered by an English literary and cultural tradition.⁶¹ As such, they provide a sense of tradition much like that of Gadamer, for whom tradition establishes continuity in history.

However, 'Anon' envisages a form of literary tradition which is, unlike that of Gadamer, anti-authoritarian.

⁵⁷ Woolf, *Room*, 6-7.

⁵⁸ Benjamin draws attention to the danger that tradition could serve as 'a tool of the ruling classes', and famously holds that '[i]n every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it' ('Theses', 247). However, I suggest that Woolf falls short of Benjamin's wholesale 'destruction of tradition', and that her attitude towards tradition more closely resembles a critically-inflected version of that of Gadamer.

⁵⁹ Woolf, 'Leaning Tower', 274.

⁶⁰ See Woolf's diary entry for 12 September 1940; *Diary*, v, 318.

⁶¹ One of Woolf's notes in an early plan for the book encapsulates what was to become a major theme of the essays: '[t]he continuity of tradition' ('Anon', 373). She adds: '[t]he song making instinct. . . . This is continuity— . . . certain emotions always in being; felt by people always' (374).

The relevant sense of authority in 'Anon' is not that of Gadamer's educator, who hands down the literary tradition, but rather that of the artist, whose works become part of the literary tradition. In particular, Woolf contrasts an idealized early tradition of literature and song, created by a motley crew of anonymous singers and playwrights, with the later creation of artworks by named individual artists, or authors. The earlier tradition was, according to Woolf, brought to an end with the invention of the printing press and the emergence of the modern 'author': the 'first blow has been aimed at Anon when the authors [sic] name is attached to the book. The individual emerges'.⁶² While the earlier anonymous literary tradition had been a common property, from which artists were able freely to 'borrow' and 'repeat', the author's name being attached to the book implied a new form of authority within the literary tradition, as individual works became the property of specific individuals.⁶³

Woolf suggests that although the early anonymous tradition has largely died out, it continues to exist in various modified forms. For example, she claims that the 'anonymous world' still exists 'beneath our consciousness', and is a 'world to which we can still return'.⁶⁴ The hint of a possible renewal of the authorless tradition complements the hope raised in 'The Leaning Tower' of the continuation of a literary tradition by a wider class of writers, including those who have previously been excluded from the sphere of high culture. As we shall see, Woolf explored the possibility of a similar continuation of literary tradition in *Between the Acts*.

⁶² Woolf, 'Anon', 385.

⁶³ Woolf, 'Anon', 397.

⁶⁴ Woolf, 'Anon', 385.

Tradition and Politics at Pointz Hall

Between the Acts is a novel saturated in tradition. The comparison drawn above between the historical time of Miss La Trobe's pageant and Heidegger's historicity suggests that Woolf, like both Heidegger and Gadamer, temporalized history in terms of tradition. Indeed, history appears as tradition at Pointz Hall: as the transmission of received heritages, which are threatened in the present by the prospect of historical rupture by war.

The novel is set in a quintessential English village, immersed in tradition. The Olivers are a comparatively new family to the area, having been there '[o]nly something over a hundred and twenty years', but many of the families are far more ancient, having 'been there for centuries, never selling an acre'.⁶⁵ The fishmonger's boy, on his delivery round, visits places 'whose names, like his own, were in Domesday Book'.⁶⁶ The annual pageant in the novel forms a tradition, having been performed the past seven years, as does Bart and Lucy's ritualistic rehearsal of a conversation about whether it will rain or be fine, and whether, consequently, it would be better to hold the pageant in the barn or outside. Isa has become so habituated to this conversation that she can predict each of its turns in advance.⁶⁷ Indeed, much of the characters' habitual behaviour has sedimented into forms of tradition. Lucy, for instance, ponders each year the 'recurring question' of whether she should take a house in Kensington or in Kew, before predictably deciding to stay in Hastings.⁶⁸ Much of the action of the frame-narrative falls within the familiar channels of habit: conversation at lunch turns

⁶⁵ Woolf, *Acts*, 5, 54.

⁶⁶ Woolf, *Acts*, 23.

⁶⁷ Woolf, *Acts*, 16.

⁶⁸ Woolf, *Acts*, 18.

to the well-worn topic of the portraits that hang in the dining room; sitting on the lawn after lunch, the customary remarks about the view are made; and Lucy's tour of the house for William Dodge follows a well-rehearsed pattern.⁶⁹

The novel is also permeated with a sense of literary tradition, albeit a tradition whose coherence and stability is constantly put into question.⁷⁰ While the novel is itself a densely woven tissue of allusions and echoes from a literary tradition, within the novel, Miss La Trobe's pageant presents what is in part a history of English literature, and includes meta-theatrically an Elizabethan drama and a Restoration comedy. Miss La Trobe is described as having 'the whole of English literature to choose from' as inspiration for writing her pageant.⁷¹ Isa browses in the library at Pointz Hall, the 'heart of the house', which is described in an earlier draft of the novel as containing the 'whole of literature'.⁷² However, she passes over literature, biography and history to pick up instead a newspaper, which '[f]or her generation . . . was a book'.⁷³

⁶⁹ Woolf, *Acts*, 35-6, 38-9, 50-4.

⁷⁰ Indeed, on Alex Zwerdling's pessimistic interpretation of the novel, Miss La Trobe's pageant 'is intended to show us a society and a cultural tradition breaking down into its component parts' (*Real World*, 321). The precariousness of the literary tradition conveyed in *Between the Acts* parallels Woolf's feeling, which she recorded in her wartime diary, of the instability of 'the "tradition"': 'the war—our waiting while the knives sharpen for the operation—has taken away the outer wall of security. . . . even the "tradition" has become transparent' (see Woolf's diary entries for 27 June and 24 July 1940; *Diary*, v, 299, 304). For Woolf, this turning transparent of the tradition is related to her sense that there is no readership to receive her works: '[n]o echo comes back. I have no surroundings. I have so little sense of a public that I forget about [*Roger Fry: A Biography*] coming or not coming out. Those familiar circumvolutions—those standards—which have for so many years given back an echo & so thickened my identity are all wide & wild as the desert now' (299). In Gadamer's terms, with the dissipation of the reading public due to the war, there is no-one to receive new literature, and the process of handing-down, which is so essential to the establishment of historical continuity, is broken. Certainly, Woolf's awareness of the loss of her readers is linked to her sense that history will come to an end, and that there will be no future: '[w]e pour to the edge of a precipice . . . & then? I can't conceive that there will be a 27th June 1941' (299).

⁷¹ Woolf, *Acts*, 43.

⁷² Woolf, 'Earlier Typescript', 48. More fully, the library is described as containing the whole of literature 'from Chaucer': '[w]hat Chaucer had begun was continued with certain lapses from his day to this very morning. . . . Chaucer, the great originator of this still-continuing conversation or argument or song, faced the window' (48-9).

⁷³ Woolf, *Acts*, 15.

Characters quote and misquote from the history of English literature. Bart chafes Mrs Manresa that she ‘has her Shakespeare by heart’, to which she responds by quoting the opening of Hamlet’s ‘To be or not to be’ soliloquy, flirtatiously asking Giles to help her finish the speech; Isa comes to Giles’s rescue, misquoting a line from John Keats’ ‘Ode to a Nightingale’.⁷⁴ Literary fragments surface in characters’ consciousnesses throughout the day, in part prompted by the pageant: Giles quotes a line from *King Lear*, and Bart murmurs a line from Algernon Swinburne’s ‘Itylus’.⁷⁵ In an earlier draft of the novel, Lucy Swithin remarks on the sense in which literary tradition forges a sense of continuity:

‘Gather ye roses while ye may,’ Dodge translated it for her.
‘That’s an old saying!’ Mrs. Swithin exclaimed. ‘How I like ‘em! They give one such a sense of continuity. Everybody coming to the same conclusion.’⁷⁶

Ironically, the ‘saying’ is a commonplace about transience. The line appears in a poem by Robert Louis Stevenson which in turn echoes one by Robert Herrick: ‘Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,/ Old Time is still a-flying’.⁷⁷ Yet Lucy Swithin’s enthusiasm is not completely undercut by this irony: even sayings about the transience of the individual life can provide a sense of continuity on the historical level. Such sayings form part of a literary and cultural tradition which is capable of being gathered together into a meaningful whole in an act of Augustinian *attentio* or Heideggarian repetition.

⁷⁴ Woolf, *Acts*, 40.

⁷⁵ Woolf, *Acts*, 62, 80.

⁷⁶ Woolf, ‘Earlier Typescript’, 158.

⁷⁷ Robert Louis Stevenson, ‘Gather Ye Roses’, in *Poems, Hitherto Unpublished* (Chicago: Bibliophile Society, 1921), 86; Robert Herrick, ‘To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time’, in Arthur Quiller-Couch (ed.), *The Oxford Book of English Verse, 1250-1900* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900), 218. Mitchell Leaska points out that one source of the saying is Herrick’s poem, whose first line Woolf paraphrased in her diary on 31 August 1938 (*Pointz Hall*, 238; *Diary*, v, 165). The saying is also similar to that in Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* (1596)—‘Gather therefore the Rose, whilst yet is prime’—which, as we saw above, Woolf copied in her reading notes.

The sense of tradition afforded by the pageant in *Between the Acts* plays on T. S. Eliot's influential understanding of tradition. Eliot advanced his conception of tradition in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1919), and returned to it in *After Strange Gods* (1934).⁷⁸ Whereas Heidegger and Gadamer provide accounts of the temporalization of history as tradition from within the philosophical discourse of modernity, Eliot provides a comparable account of tradition and the historical sense from within literary modernism. William Dodge, in an early draft of the novel, thinks of Miss La Trobe's pageant acting as "a disintegration of personality".⁷⁹ His phrase echoes Eliot's impersonal theory of poetry, and the apothegm in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' that the 'progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality'.⁸⁰ Woolf had recorded this maxim in the notes that she took on Eliot's essay.⁸¹ It is not clear, in Dodge's use of the term, whether he has in mind the disintegration of the personality of the artist, or of the audience. In the latter case, Eliot's focus on the impersonality of the poet is transferred to that of a communal audience, in a manner which complements Woolf's intention to explore community in the novel. For Eliot, the impersonality of the poet is related to his sense of tradition: he suggests that achieving impersonality involves being 'conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living'.⁸² Given that the Pointz Hall pageant presents a literary tradition on stage, Dodge's remark that the pageant is an attempt to

⁷⁸ Woolf took notes on 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', along with other essays in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1920), in what is now known as Reading Notebook XXXVIII: see Silver, *Notebooks*, 192. She wrote to Eliot that, having 'picked up The Sacred Wood', she 'came home and burnt every one of [her] own leading articles in the Supplement': '[w]hy are you the only man who ever says anything interesting about literature?' (Letter to T. S. Eliot, 3 September 1924; *Letters*, iii, 129). *After Strange Gods* advertises itself as a 're-formulation' of the problem of tradition (*After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1934), 15). Whereas Eliot had approached the question of tradition as a 'purely literary one' in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', in *After Strange Gods* he construed tradition in a broader sense, as encompassing 'habitual actions, habits and customs' (15, 18).

⁷⁹ Woolf, 'Earlier Typescript', 113.

⁸⁰ T. S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1920), 42-53, 47.

⁸¹ Virginia Woolf, 'Reading Notebook XXXVIII', Sussex, Monks House Papers, B.2d, 20.

⁸² Eliot, 'Tradition', 53.

disintegrate personality suggests a similar connection between impersonality and tradition.

Dodge's remark invites a broader comparison between Miss La Trobe's literary-historical pageant and Eliot's theories of tradition and the historical sense. Tradition, in Eliot's seminal essay, concerns the 'historical sense', which

involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order.⁸³

The 'Present Day' scene of Miss La Trobe's pageant dramatises a scenario which corresponds closely to this historical sense. Just as the 'whole of literature' for Eliot has a 'simultaneous existence' to the man with historical sense, so actors from different periods of the literary past reappear simultaneously on stage in the Present Day scene of the pageant, each declaiming 'some phrase or fragment from their parts'.⁸⁴ And just as Eliot's historical sense involves a 'perception' of the 'presence' of the past, so this scene of the pageant offers the audience a literal perception of actors from the various past ages of the pageant, as they return and appear physically present on stage.

However, Miss La Trobe's scene stands in an ironic relationship to Eliot's historical sense. Whereas in Eliot's historical sense, the whole of literature 'composes a simultaneous order', in the Present Day scene the literary past returns in a chaotic and disordered manner. The literary fragments declaimed by the actors form a cacophony,

⁸³ Eliot, 'Tradition', 44.

⁸⁴ Woolf, *Acts*, 132.

as lines from *King Lear* and *Macbeth* are mixed with nursery rhymes and nonsense phrases. The scene is one of ‘uproar’ which had ‘passed quite beyond control’.⁸⁵ In contrast to the order of Eliot’s literary tradition, tradition in *Between the Acts* is threatened with incoherence and disorder, and its continuity into the future is radically uncertain.

Between the Acts reflects the ambivalent attitude towards tradition expressed in Woolf’s late critical writings. Initially, it should be remarked that the novel intimates the dangers of an authoritarian form of tradition, in part through the repetitive historical time of the pageant. As we saw in chapter 3.2, the historical time of the pageant suggests violence, as the repetitive ticking of the gramophone is associated with the rape of a girl by guardsmen. Similarly, history in *Three Guineas*, figured by a ‘gramophone whose needle has stuck’, is portrayed as one of the incessant repetition of war waged by patriarchal societies sustained by ‘memory and tradition’. Both works convey the violence which accompanies the perpetuation of history as tradition within patriarchal society.

The dangers of an authoritarian form of tradition are further conveyed in *Between the Acts* through the character of Miss La Trobe, who, as critics have pointed out, at times resembles a fascist dictator. For Patricia Joplin, *Between the Acts* is a ‘meditation on the proximity of artist to dictator—of author to authoritarian ruler’, and Miss La Trobe at times ‘bears a striking resemblance to a petty dictator’.⁸⁶ Michele Pridmore-Brown similarly points out that Miss La Trobe is ‘made to resemble a führer at the beginning of the play’, and Judith Johnston remarks that she and Adolf Hitler both

⁸⁵ Woolf, *Acts*, 132-3.

⁸⁶ Patricia Klindienst Joplin, ‘The Authority of Illusion: Feminism and Fascism in Virginia Woolf’s *Between the Acts*’, *South Central Review*, 6/2 (Summer 1989), 88-104, 89, 88.

came ‘to power’ in the same year: 1933.⁸⁷ Miss La Trobe’s occasional likeness to a dictator intimates the dangers of authority in the perpetuation of history as tradition, whether it be narrowly the authority of the artist over their work (and particularly of Miss La Trobe as the authoritarian mediator of the literary tradition), or more broadly the authority of a political leader over his or her followers. The proximity of her roles as artist and dictator makes the suggestive connection, which Gadamer was so keen to resist, between authority in the perpetuation of (literary) tradition, and authority in authoritarian politics.

While Miss La Trobe occasionally resembles a fascist dictator, her actors and audience correlatively at times resemble a community led by such a dictator. The actors are figured as ‘troops’ obeying orders ‘barked out in guttural accents’, and the audience are compared by the anonymous megaphonic voice to ‘gun slayers’ and ‘bomb droppers’.⁸⁸ Since, as we saw in the previous chapter, the historical time of the pageant plays an important role in uniting the audience as a community, suspicion is transmitted to this historical time. Such a suspicion might be reinforced by considering hostile interpretations of the politics of Heidegger’s historicity. Just as Heidegger’s authentic historicity has been seen as providing a model for the coming together of a fascist community led by Hitler, so the historical time of the pageant unites the audience into a community led by the dictatorial Miss La Trobe.

⁸⁷ Michele Pridmore-Brown, ‘1939-40: Of Virginia Woolf, Gramophones, and Fascism’, *PMLA*, 113/3 (May 1998), 408-21, 413; Johnston, ‘Remediable Flaw’, 264.

⁸⁸ Woolf, *Acts*, 46, 134. Miss La Trobe barks out orders to her troops in ‘guttural accents’ as if she were a German military leader, or even Hitler, whose speeches Woolf listened to on the radio. For instance, on 5 September 1938, Woolf anticipated listening to Hitler’s ‘mad voice vociferating’ at the Nuremberg rally (*Diary*, v, 166). Again, on 9 November 1939, she recorded how ‘we listened to the ravings, the strangled hysterical sobbing swearing ranting of Hitler at the Beer Hall’ (*Diary*, v, 245). Miss La Trobe’s preference for child actors with ‘[f]air hair’ over those with ‘dark’ is alarming, given the context of National Socialist racial ideology (47).

While *Between the Acts* intimates the dangers of an authoritarian form of tradition, it also depicts the renewal of an anti-authoritarian form of tradition. Critics such as Joplin, Cuddy-Keane and Pridmore-Brown have interpreted *Between the Acts* as a novel which foregrounds the risks of authoritarian forms of society, yet ultimately provides a more positive model of community. For Joplin, Miss La Trobe renounces her role of ‘author-as-tyrant’ in ‘her finer moments’ and thereby becomes ‘the author as anti-fascist’: at this point, the audience is transformed into ‘a community conscious of its internal differences but momentarily united and at peace’.⁸⁹ Similarly, Cuddy-Keane points out that though Miss La Trobe is ‘almost a negative authority figure’ and at one point ‘resembles a commander at war’, other factors serve to ‘counteract her domineering role’. For her, the choric voice which emerges from the pageant ‘subverts the habitual dominance of the leader figure and introduces a new concept of community in which the insider-outsider dichotomy is erased’.⁹⁰ Finally, Pridmore-Brown argues that Miss La Trobe eventually ‘relinquishes her führerlike bearing’, and the previously herd-like crowd are transformed into a community governed by a ‘pluralist politics that affirms internal difference and that consists in a perpetual formation, expansion, and linking of subject positions’.⁹¹

What can be added to these assessments is that Miss La Trobe’s renunciation of her dictatorial role corresponds to the renewal of an anti-authoritarian form of tradition. The pageant portrays an anonymous tradition of song which runs throughout English literature and history, much like that envisaged in ‘Anon’. This tradition is represented by the chorus of the pageant, made up of a file of undifferentiated villagers, who first emerge singing with a common voice in the early stages of

⁸⁹ Joplin, ‘Authority’, 90, 97.

⁹⁰ Cuddy-Keane, ‘Politics’, 278, 275.

⁹¹ Pridmore-Brown, ‘Gramophones’, 417.

history, and return at various later stages. While the pageant thereby depicts an anonymous tradition of art, it is further implied that the pageant itself forms part of and renews this tradition. Notably, when the Rev Streatfield looks for someone to thank at the end of the pageant, Miss La Trobe remains conspicuously absent: she ‘wishes’, as he puts it, ‘to remain anonymous’.⁹² She becomes like the ‘anonymous playwright’ of ‘Anon’, and in particular, like one of the idealized anonymous Elizabethan dramatists who preceded the emergence of the named playwright. Such

dramatists remain anonymous . . . the play itself was still anonymous. The lack of Marlowes [sic] name, or of Kyds [sic], shows how largely the play was a common product, written by one hand, but so moulded in transition that the author had no sense of property in it. It was in part the work of the audience.⁹³

By renouncing her authorial role, Miss La Trobe comes to resemble Woolf’s anonymous Elizabethan playwrights who ‘had no sense of property’ in their work.

At its best, the pageant in *Between the Acts* becomes an exemplary model of communal artistic creation. It is not the product of a single authoritarian artist. Rather, it is, like Woolf’s Elizabethan plays, a ‘common product’ and ‘in part the work of the audience’.⁹⁴ It is also the product of ‘commoners and outsiders’ such as Albert, the ‘village idiot’. By relinquishing her authorial control over the pageant, Miss La Trobe shows that the English literary tradition which the pageant depicts is not the property of an elite group of aristocratic inheritors, but is rather open to all, like the ‘common ground’ of ‘The Leaning Tower’. By renewing an anonymous tradition of song and literature, the pageant raises the salutary prospect of the continuation of such a

⁹² Woolf, *Acts*, 139.

⁹³ Woolf, ‘Anon’, 398, 395. Brenda Silver discusses the pageant of *Between the Acts* alongside Elizabethan drama, and points out that the Elizabethan playhouse ‘had long been for Virginia Woolf a symbol of community’ (‘Community’, 293).

⁹⁴ In *Between the Acts*, the audience enthusiastically join in with the play. Most notably, in the Elizabethan section of the pageant, Mrs Manresa sings the words of a song with such abandon that the roles of audience and actors become confused: it somehow becomes the case that Mrs Manresa ‘was the Queen; and he (Giles) was the surly hero’ (68).

tradition into the future. This is the prospect that, as Woolf put it in 'The Leaning Tower', 'English literature will survive this war' and cross the gulf to a 'classless and towerless society of the future'.⁹⁵

* * *

In the third and final part of this study, we have seen that Woolf's conception of history in her late writing was one of continuity and tradition. In *Between the Acts*, the inherently conservative fiction of an aeviternal continuity across history, and the historical time of the pageant marked by the ticking of a gramophone, underpin a conception of history which differs from more revolutionary forms of history, such as those of Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin. Correlatively, we have seen that Woolf's conception of history is more politically conservative than those of Brecht and Benjamin, particularly as regards class. For example, we saw that in *Between the Acts*, the pageant's depiction of the working class as aeviternally frozen in a state of subordination conceptually forecloses the possibility of revolutionary political action.

However, this is not to say that there are not politically radical aspects to Woolf's conception of history, and in particular, radically feminist aspects. For example, as we have seen, in her last novel the fiction of the *aevum* intimates the danger of timelessly naturalized gender roles, and the repetitive historical time conveys the dangers of the perpetuation of history as tradition within a patriarchal society. Moreover, although she falls short of a revolutionary Marxist attitude towards class, she explores in her critical and fictional writing how 'commoners and outsiders' might exploit anti-

⁹⁵ Woolf, 'Leaning Tower', 278, 276.

authoritarian forms of tradition to redress the manifest gender and class inequalities in society, and to direct history towards a more egalitarian future.

CONCLUSION

'It takes imagination and courage to picture what would happen to the West . . . if its temporal fortunes were suddenly invaded by the Time of its Other.'

Johannes Fabian¹

This study opened by challenging the dominant Bergsonian critical approaches to the issue of time in modernist literature, and the misrepresentations of the politics of modernist time to which they have led. The following chapters then developed this challenge by showing that H. G. Wells, D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf all explored different versions of historical time in their fictional and historical writings: Wells explored geological time, Lawrence adapted Friedrich Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence, and Woolf imagined an aeviternal historical continuity and a phenomenological historical time. The focus on historical time is well-suited to challenge Bergsonian approaches, and their tendency to portray the supposed modernist exploration of a Bergsonian private time as asocial and ahistorical, because it draws attention to the communal and historical aspects of modernist temporality.

Further, the focus on historical time discredits the dominant Bergsonian picture insofar as it has played an important role in the debate about the politics of modernism. What are no longer plausible are György Lukács's and Randall Stevenson's contrasting interpretations of the politics of modernist time.² Both Lukács's interpretation of modernist time as an ideologically retrograde denial of history, and Stevenson's counter-interpretation of it as a politically progressive act of resistance achieved through aesthetic autonomy, are flawed, because of the shared Bergsonian presuppositions of their arguments. Wells, Lawrence and Woolf engage

¹ Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 35.

² Lukács, *Realism*, 37-9; Stevenson, 'Secluded Path', 49-51.

with historical time in a manner that does not deny history, but on the contrary, opens up history, and what is more, different conceptions of history. Moreover, their experiments with historical time do not constitute a retreat from the political, but carry differing politics, and are sites of political contestation. Geological time, in Wells's universal histories, becomes politicized as it becomes humanized: it supports his advocacy of a cosmopolitan world state. The pseudo-Nietzschean cycles of history in Lawrence's *Movements in European History* (1921) are used to support a bellicose politics of leadership, whereas the fictional imagination of eternal recurrence in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) corresponds to a peaceful vision of a green revaluation of the earth. The historical time of the pageant in *Between the Acts* (1941) conveys the dangers of tradition and authority as forms of historical transmission, whereas the fiction of aeviternal continuity threatens to petrify exploitative gender and class relations in a changeless nature, without prospect of emancipatory historical change. Transferring Peter Osborne's notion of a 'politics of time' to the literary sphere, I have argued that these competing configurations of historical time in literary modernism form the analogue of the competing versions of such a time within modernity, emblemized by the contrasting accounts of historical time of Martin Heidegger and Walter Benjamin.

Approaching the politics of modernism through the politics of time has brought to light a very mixed set of politics. It should come as no surprise that some of the politics discussed above are reactionary. As Terry Eagleton remarks, it is a 'well-known scandal' that many of the most eminent modernist writers held 'obnoxious politics views'.³ Indeed, we have seen that some of Wells's, Lawrence's and Woolf's

³ Eagleton, *English Novel*, 258.

experiments with historical time issue in reactionary politics. For example, we saw that Wells's use of deep time in his later writing is arguably guilty of a form of cultural and political neo-imperialism, and that Lawrence in *Movements* adapted Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence to support his authoritarian leadership politics. I should make clear that by discussing conservative or reactionary aspects of these writers' politics, I do not thereby subscribe to a similar politics myself. For example, I have contested critical readings of Woolf which portray her as holding a revolutionary materialist conception of history, similar to those of Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin. I have argued instead that she thought of history more conservatively in terms of continuity and tradition. Such a revisionary interpretation is not itself politically conservative, but rather is motivated by a desire to understand better, and more accurately, the politics of Woolf's writing.

However, addressing historical time has not only disclosed a new set of reactionary modernist politics. It has also revealed a variety of more affirmative politics. For example, we saw that Lawrence's adaptation of Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* makes a welcome move beyond his earlier authoritarian politics, and complements certain recent celebrations of Nietzsche as a proto-ecological thinker. Again, we saw that while there are politically conservative aspects of Woolf's conception of history as regards class, there are also radically feminist elements of that conception. Her feminist critique of tradition in patriarchal society, and her imagination of alternative anti-authoritarian forms of tradition, in many ways fulfill Jürgen Habermas's desire for a critically-reflexive approach to history as tradition. For her, anti-authoritarian types of tradition become ways of

bringing about positive social change, and of directing history towards a more egalitarian future.

In order to rethink the issue of modernist time outside the sphere of Bergsonian concepts—which has been the task of this thesis—I identified in my introduction the pressing need of breaking free from Stephen Kern’s influential understanding of time in modernism and modernity. In order to break free from this framework, I have replaced Kern’s notion of modernity as characterized by the solidification of a homogenous public time with Peter Osborne’s notion of modernity as characterized by a competing range of temporalizations of history.⁴ This substitution has proved sympathetic to my investigation of historical time in the work of Wells, Lawrence and Woolf. However, such a substitution has further value beyond the bounds of this study. Reading modernist literature alongside Osborne’s notion of modernity opens up new critical questions which had been foreclosed by Kern’s theorization, and provides a framework for the continuing reassessment of the politics of modernist time. Whereas Kern’s model of modernity reduces the range of modernist experiments with time to a uniform exploration of private time, Osborne’s model, by recognizing a diversity of temporalities within modernity, opens the way for the recognition of a similar diversity of temporalities in literary modernism. Moreover, while Kern’s model encourages a blanket reading of the politics of modernist time, Osborne’s model opens the possibility that the different forms of temporality within literary modernism carry a divergent set of politics, and indeed are sites of political contestation.

⁴ Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 116.

In the remainder of this conclusion, I would like to indicate one potential future use of the theoretical framework adopted in this thesis: as one for conducting an investigation into the politics of modernist time in colonial and postcolonial contexts. While this thesis has touched only briefly on such issues, with the suggestion that Wells's progressive scheme of history is guilty of a form of neo-imperialism, their importance is suggested—somewhat ironically, given his role in my introduction—by Wyndham Lewis. While Lewis was portrayed as something of a villain in the introduction to this thesis, here I would like to return, in something of a commodious vicus of recirculation, to *Time and Western Man* (1927).⁵ In particular, I would like to explore one of his more intriguing suggestions concerning the political aspects of what he identified as the contemporary fascination with time and history: that Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West* (1918-22) is guilty of a form of temporal colonialism.

Lewis critiqued the politics of the *Decline of the West*, which stood for him as a 'perfect model of what a time-book should be'.⁶ He objected to the contrast which Spengler drew between the highly developed historical consciousness of modern Western man, and the supposedly 'ahistoric mind' of other cultures and peoples. Spengler argued that while modern 'men of the West' have a sophisticated historical consciousness, other cultures have an 'ahistoric spirit', for which there 'is certainly no

⁵ Two contentions that can usefully be extracted from Lewis's polemic, and deployed as correctives to later Bergsonian approaches to the question of time in modernism, are that the fascination with time in the period extended to a fascination with history—the "time" view *is* the historical view *par excellence*—and that such a fascination with history is deeply political: '[w]here history is concerned . . . no one is able to contend that the historian is not a politician' (*Time*, 246, 247). This thesis is able fully to endorse both contentions. The former stands as a useful corrective to Lukács's influential argument that the modernist concern with time paradoxically took part in a wider denial of history, and the latter stands as a corrective to the widespread view, espoused by both Lukács and Stevenson, that the modernist concern with time involves a retreat from political concerns. Of course, by returning to Lewis, I by no means wish to rehabilitate the Bergsonian aspects of his argument.

⁶ Lewis, *Time*, 113.

world-history, no *world-as-history*'.⁷ For instance, Spengler claimed that in 'the Indian Culture we have the perfectly ahistoric soul. Its decisive expression is the Brahman Nirvana'.⁸ Echoing Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man* (1734), in which the 'poor Indian, whose untutor'd mind/ Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the wind', Lewis suggested that by attributing to him an 'untutored ahistoric mind', Spengler 'treats the poor Indian . . . with the same lofty pity and disdain that the conquering White showed for the "poor Indian"'.⁹ The charge is that Spengler's history is guilty of a conceited and disdainful form of imperialism, 'nourished upon a sort of *time-jingoism*'.¹⁰ Indeed, Lewis rhetorically aligned Spengler's ascription of an 'ahistoric mind' to the Indian with forms of aggressive colonial conquest, comparing Spengler's overrunning of Indian history to 'our ancestors [overrunning] the New World and the Orient'.¹¹

Johannes Fabian has levelled an influential critique of anthropology on the grounds that it displays a form of 'time-jingoism' similar to that identified by Lewis. In *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (1983), he argues that anthropology has, from its formation as an academic discipline, been characterized by what he calls a 'denial of coevalness': a 'persistent and systematic tendency to place

⁷ Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, trans. C. Atkinson, i (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1926), 8; quoted in Lewis, *Time*, 213.

⁸ Spengler, *Decline*, i, 11; quoted in Lewis, *Time*, 214. Spengler claimed that '[w]e men of Western Culture are, with our historical sense, an exception and not a rule. World-history is *our* world picture and not mankind's. Indian and Classical man formed no image of a world in progress' (15). On Spengler's conception of the 'historyless' condition of certain cultures, see also *Decline*, ii, 46-51.

⁹ Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man*, ed. Maynard Mack (London: Methuen, 1950), 27; Lewis, *Time*, 214.

¹⁰ Lewis, *Time*, 214. For Spengler, every culture 'possesses a specific and peculiar sort of history' which is made possible by that culture's 'time-sense' (*Decline*, i, 131). Thus, for example, he claimed that the 'Indians . . . have no sort of time-reckoning (the absence of it in their case expressing their Nirvana) and no clocks, and *therefore* no history' (133). In 'complete contrast to the almost dreamy unconsciousness of the Indian' is the 'intense historical awareness' of Western man, which is underpinned by a highly sophisticated time-sense: 'man has never . . . been so awake and aware, so deeply sensible of time and conscious of direction and fate and movements as he has been in the West' (131, 133).

¹¹ Lewis, *Time*, 214.

the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse'.¹² That is, anthropological discourse has invariably placed anthropologists and their readers in a privileged time frame, while banishing the Other to a stage of lesser development, and often to a position which falls entirely outside of time and history.

For Fabian, the denial of coevalness which characterizes anthropology is one facet of the 'chronopolitics' of 'colonialist-imperial expansion'. He contends that new conceptions of time, which resulted from the secularization and naturalization of Judeo-Christian historical time, both facilitated the denial of coevalness in anthropology, and more generally provided an ideological support for imperial expansion. As he puts it, 'Secularized Time had become a means to occupy space, a title conferring on its holders the right to "save" the expanse of the world for history'.¹³ While aggressive and expansive imperial societies historically required space to occupy, they also more profoundly 'required Time to accommodate the schemes of a one-way history: progress, development, modernity (and their negative mirror images: stagnation, underdevelopment, tradition)'.¹⁴ That is, '*geopolitics* has its ideological foundation in *chronopolitics*'.¹⁵ Fabian's diagnosis of chronopolitics as the ideological foundation of geopolitics stands a complementary theoretical counterpart to Lewis's suggestive rhetorical association between the 'historical

¹² Fabian, *Time*, 31, emphasis removed.

¹³ Fabian, *Time*, 146.

¹⁴ Fabian, *Time*, 144. While I fully endorse Fabian's contention that geopolitics has its ideological foundation in chronopolitics, I would modify his claim that modernity is characterized by a single form of time—roughly, a secularized Judeo-Christian time (2). In this respect, Fabian's thesis resembles that of Benedict Anderson, who claims that the Judeo-Christian time of the mediaeval period was succeeded by a single time of modernity (which is also the time of nations): an homogenous empty time (*Communities*, 24). By contrast, and as an extension of the approach taken in this thesis, both positions should be replaced with Osborne's superior conception of modernity being characterized by a range of competing temporalizations of history.

¹⁵ Fabian, *Time*, 144.

overrunning' of Indian history in works such as Spengler's and the imperial overrunning of territories by the colonizing European.¹⁶ In both cases, time is what Fabian calls an 'ideologically construed [instrument] of power'.¹⁷

Lewis's hints that Spengler's concepts of the historical and the ahistorical are used as ideological weapons in a form of temporal colonialism, and Fabian's argument that a similar denial of coevalness is endemic to anthropology, indicate that the questions of time and historical time are central to the politics of colonialism and postcolonialism. They show that Osborne's notion of a politics of time within modernity extends importantly to questions of colonialism and postcolonialism.¹⁸ Accepting this position, one might ask: is there an analogous politics of time in literary modernism? How might such a politics play itself out in terms of the literary text? Are there forms of temporality within literary modernism that resist or subvert colonialist historical schemes and their concomitant ideologies?

Such questions could, I suggest, be pursued profitably within the remit of the 'new modernist studies'. Some of the most salient features of this recent critical movement, as identified by Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz, are the spatial and temporal expansion of the boundaries of modernism, and the use of transnational approaches, which render a version of modernism very different from the older, 'international' model.¹⁹ It is important to note that this thesis does not form part of the new modernist studies. By concentrating on three canonical writers, it has not taken part in either the spatial or the temporal expansion of modernism. Indeed, such a

¹⁶ Lewis, *Time*, 214.

¹⁷ Fabian, *Time*, 144.

¹⁸ See Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 16-7, 199.

¹⁹ Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz, 'The New Modernist Studies', *PMLA*, 123/3 (2008), 737-48, 737, 739.

conservative choice of writers arguably retrenches rather than disrupts the existing modernist canon.²⁰ Nor has it adopted a transnational approach (of which Mao and Walkowitz distinguish three main varieties). It has not, for instance, sought to exploit new transnational reading strategies, such as Susan Friedman's method of 'cultural parataxis', or Jessica Berman's use of a 'transnational optic'.²¹ Nevertheless, this study does provide a useful framework for theorizing the new forms of temporality which are being revealed by the recently-expanded scope of the new modernist studies.

Mary Lou Emery has shown how the newly-expanded spatial reach of modernist studies has the potential to reveal new forms of time and temporality. As she puts it, '[t]he recent emphasis on space in modernist studies takes us back to time, or rather, to newly modern times'.²² In particular, work in the emergent field of Caribbean modernist studies has highlighted new forms of temporality. Scholars in this field have explored the Caribbean as a site of what Homi Bhabha calls 'contra-modernity', and what Paul Gilroy has called a black Atlantic 'counterculture of modernity'; in doing so, they have revealed what Emery calls 'contramodern temporalities', including the sedimented and cumulative times identified by Ian Baucom.²³ The approach to modernist time undertaken in this thesis could be extended to an

²⁰ For instance, in terms of temporal boundaries, all the writing addressed here falls within what Mao and Walkowitz call the 'core period of about 1890 to 1945' ('New', 739).

²¹ Mao and Walkowitz, 'New', 738-9; Susan Stanford Friedman, 'Cultural Parataxis and Transnational Landscapes of Reading: Towards a Locational Modernist Studies', in Astradur Eysteinnsson and Vivian Liska (eds), *Modernism* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2007), 35-52, 37; Jessica Berman, *Modernist Commitments: Ethics, Politics, and Transnational Modernism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 30.

²² Mary Lou Emery, 'Caribbean Modernism: Plantation to Planetary', in Mark Wollaeger and Matt Eatough (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 48-77, 48.

²³ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 6; Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993), 36; Emery, 'Caribbean', 52; Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 24-5, 311-33.

investigation of such contramodern temporalities. How does historical time appear within the wider spheres of literature which are being addressed by the new modernist studies? And what are the politics of these different forms of time in colonial and postcolonial contexts?

Existing approaches within the new modernist studies suggest in more concrete form how such questions might be pursued. For example, in a colonial context, Edwige Tamalet Talbayev has shown how the writings of the Algerian Berber Jean El Mouhoub Amrouche explore a form of temporality which seeks both to establish coevality between Berber and French cultures by enunciating a multiple, shared present of synchronicity, and to disrupt French historiographic models, thereby disengaging a local form of modernity from Eurocentric historicist narratives of global development.²⁴ Or again, in postcolonial contexts, Jahan Ramazani has explored how African poets such as Christopher Okigbo and Caribbean poets such as Kamau Brathwaite have reworked Euromodernist apocalypses for their ambivalent visions of the historical rupture of modernity.²⁵

By replacing Kern's conception of modernity with that of Osborne, this thesis has provided a promising framework for theorizing such approaches, and for future investigations into what Emery has identified as the 'new and modern times' which are being revealed by modernist studies.²⁶ Kern's older framework is ill-equipped to support such investigations. Indeed, the question of the politics of historical time can barely be raised within his Bergsonian opposition between public and private time.

²⁴ Edwige Tamalet Talbayev, 'Berber Poetry and the Issue of Derivation: Alternate Symbolist Trajectories', in *Global Modernisms*, 81-108, 87, 82.

²⁵ Jahan Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 106-8.

²⁶ Emery, 'Caribbean', 48.

Moreover, his notion of the public time of modernity implicitly forecloses the possibility of any forms of temporal resistance in colonial and postcolonial contexts other than an affirmation of 'private time'. By contrast, the framework adopted in this thesis allows the possibility that there are a competing ranges of temporalizations of history in colonial and postcolonial literatures, and that historical time becomes a site of political contestation in such literatures. To pursue such a possibility, within the sphere of the new modernist studies or beyond, would form a continuation of the enterprise undertaken in this thesis: the (re)assessment of the politics of modernist time.

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