

judgment is disinterested, even in a sense irresponsible. We can easily find our interests magnetized by characters who would be intolerable in real life. But the fact remains that what I am calling practical interests, and particularly moral qualities as inferred from characteristic choices or as stated directly by the author, have always been an important basis for literary form. Our interest in the fate of Oedipus and Lear, of David Copperfield and Richard Feverel, of Stephen Dedalus and Quentin Compson, springs in part from our conviction that they are people who matter, people whose fate concerns us not simply because of its meaning or quality, but because we care about them as human beings.

Such concerns are not simply a necessary but impure base, as Ortega would have it, to "make contemplation possible" but "with no aesthetic value or only a reflected or secondary one" (pp. 80, 76). In many first-rate works they are the very core of our experience. We may refuse assent when an author tries to manipulate us too obviously or cheaply with a casual bestowal of goodness or intellectual brilliance or beauty or charm. We all have use for epithets like "melodramatic" to apply against abuses of this kind. But this does not mean that human interest in itself is cheap. It is true that our involvement in the fate of Raskolnikov is not different in kind from the involvement sought by the most sentimental of novels. But in the great work we surrender our emotions for reasons that leave us with no regrets, no inclination to retract, after the immediate spell is past. They are, in fact, reasons which we should be ashamed *not* to respond to.

The best of these has always been the spectacle of a good man facing moral choices that are important. Our current neglect of moral terms like "good man" and "bad man" is really unfortunate if it leads us to overlook the role that moral judgment plays in most of our worthwhile reading. There is a story of the psychoanalyst who listened patiently and without judgment to the criminal self-revelations of his patient – until suddenly, as the patient was leaving, the analyst was filled with surprised revulsion. Try as we will to avoid terms like "moral" and "good" – and despite the mounting chorus against relativism, many still do try – we cannot avoid judging the characters we know as morally admirable or contemptible, any more than we can avoid judgments on their intellectual ability. We may tell ourselves that we do not condemn stupidity and viciousness, but we believe that men ought not to be stupid and vicious nonetheless. We may explain the villain's behavior by relating him to his environment, but even to explain away is to admit that something requires excuse.

Actually, there has been less of a retreat from moral judgment than appears on the surface, because of the shift, in modern fiction, to new terms for goodness and wickedness. Modern literature is in fact full of conventionally "virtuous" villains, fatally flawed by their blind adherence to outmoded norms, or by their intolerance of true but unconventional goodness (the missionaries in Maugham's "Rain," the "quiet American" in Greene's novel). Perhaps the prototype is Huck Finn's Miss Watson, who is determined to "live so as to go to the good place." It is easy for the author to make us agree with Huck, who "couldn't see no advantage in going where she was going, so I made up my mind I wouldn't try for it." But few have ever made the mistake of thinking that Huck has repudiated virtue in repudiating Miss Watson's idea of virtue.

Much of what looks like purely aesthetic or intellectual quality in a character may in fact have a moral dimension that is highly effective, though never openly acknowledged

between author and reader. When compared with Dickens, for example, James Joyce may seem explicitly amoral. Joyce's overt interests are entirely in matters of truth and beauty. Conventional moral judgments never occur in his books except in mockery. And yet the full force of *A Portrait of the Artist* depends on the essentially moral quality of Stephen's discovery of his artistic vocation and of his integrity in following where it leads. His repudiations of conventional morality – his refusal to enter the priesthood, his rejection of communion, his decision to become an exile – are in fact read as signs of aesthetic integrity – that is, of superior morality. Joyce would probably never call him a "good" boy, though later an older and mellower Joyce was willing to describe Bloom as "a good man," a "complete man."²⁴ For us Stephen is, in part, a good boy. His pursuit of his own vision is uncompromising; he is headed for Joyce's heaven.²⁵ We may pretend that we read Joyce objectively and disinterestedly, without the sentimental involvements required of us in Victorian fiction. But most of us would never get beyond page one if the novel were only a portrait of an aesthetic sensibility receiving its Joycean epiphanies.²⁶

Whatever Joyce's intentions, for example, with such episodes as the cruel pandybatting of the innocent Stephen, Joyce clearly profits from our irresistible sympathy for the innocent victim. Once such sympathy is established, each succeeding episode is felt deeply, not simply contemplated. The Victorian hero often enough won our sympathies because his heart was in the right place. Many modern heroes win our allegiance because their aesthetic sensibilities will not be denied, or because they live life to the hilt, or simply because they are victims of their surroundings. This is indeed a shift of emphasis, but we should not let popular talk about the "affective fallacy" deceive us: the very structure of fiction and, hence, of our aesthetic apprehension of it is often built of such practical, and in themselves seemingly "non-aesthetic," materials.

Combinations and Conflicts of Interests

Since men do have strong intellectual, qualitative, and practical interests, there is no reason why great novels cannot be written relying primarily on any one kind. But it is clear that no great work is based on only one interest. Whenever a work tends toward an exclusive reliance on intellectual interests, on the contemplation of qualities, or on practical desires we all look for adjectives to whip the offender with; a mere "novel of ideas," a mere "desiccated form," a mere "tear-jerker" will offend all but the small handful of critics and authors who are momentarily absorbed in pushing one interest to the limit.²⁷ But it is a rare critic who can distinguish the novels that are really marred by narrowness from those "narrow" novels which, like Jane Austen's, develop a wide range of interests within a narrow social setting.

In any case, for good or ill, we all seem convinced that a novel or play which does justice to our interest in truth, in beauty, and in goodness is superior to even the most successful "novel of ideas," "well-made play," or "sentimental novel" – to name only a selection from the partialities that conventional labels describe. Our emotional concern in Shakespeare is firmly based on intellectual, qualitative, and moral interests. It is a serious mistake to talk as if this richness were simply a matter of stuffing in something for the pit and something else for the gallery. To separate the plot, the manifold

qualitative pleasures (including the patterns of imagery and the rich bawdry), or the profound intellectual import and to erect one of the fragments as superior to the others is precisely what a direct experience of the plays teaches us not to do. We experience a miraculous unity of what might have remained dissociated but for Shakespeare's ability to involve our minds, hearts, and sensibilities simultaneously.

Another master of the same kind of richness is Dostoevski. In *Crime and Punishment* we experience a wide variety of intellectual appeals. We are curious about the philosophical and religious and political battle between nihilism and relativism on the one hand and salvation on the other. We are also simply curious about whether Porphyry will catch his mouse. We are curious about a thousand and one details that are resolved in the course of the work. Second, we are constantly titillated with qualitative hungers: we have seen the crime and we demand the punishment; we would like more of this remarkably profound use of dreams, and we are given more; we would like more of this skill in transforming disagreeable characters into sympathetic portraits, and Dostoevski does not disappoint us. Finally, our *practical* judgments and the resulting emotions are powerfully involved. We sympathize with Raskolnikov in a peculiarly intense fashion from beginning to end; we wish passionately, though without much hope, for his happiness, and we fear the very punishment which our interest in cause-and-effect patterns demands. We sympathize also with many others, particularly with Sonia. Those aesthetic frauds, tears and laughter, are prominent throughout, but we do not experience them as isolated, sentimental moments, divorced from our intellectual and aesthetic hungers and rewards.

So far, so good. It would be a mistake, however, to make a simple plea for authors to enrich their palettes, as if all appeals had to be in all works, the more the better. The danger is not so much that enough interests won't be packed in, but that pursuit of secondary interests may diminish interests that the author most desires. Even though most great works embody to some degree all three types of interest, some of the particular interests under each type are incompatible with each other and with some types of rhetoric. It was, in fact, a recognition of this incompatibility of interests that led to the notion that overt rhetoric, useful as it was in heightening some practical interests, hampered some qualitative interests, particularly the qualities of realism or purity. But there are other incompatibilities that have not been so fully described.

An author may want, for instance, to cultivate the reader's interest in the quality of ambiguity. He cannot do so, however, and at the same time convey the full intellectual pleasure of gratified curiosity or use fully the reader's moral and emotional interests. There is a pleasure in seeing someone whom we like triumph over difficulties and there is a pleasure in recognizing that life is so complex that no one ever triumphs unambiguously. Both pleasures cannot be realized to the full in the same work. If I am to rejoice, for example, in Stephen's flight into exile as the final sign of his growth into the true artist, I cannot at the same time delight fully in his creator's cleverness in leaving the meaning of that flight ambiguous; the more ambiguity the less triumph.

If he is clear about where his focus lies, a great artist can of course do some justice to the complexities of the world and still achieve a high degree of emotional involvement. Dostoevski, like Shakespeare, derives some of his pre-eminence from his ability to show what a murky business the moral world really is while still keeping the lines of our moral sympathies clear. His criminals remain deeply sympathetic because he knows, and

makes us know, why they are criminals and why they are still sympathetic. Not genuine ambiguity, but rather complexity with clarity, seems to be his secret. If he were to leave the basic worth of Raskolnikov or Dmitri ambiguous, or if he were to leave us in doubt concerning Ivan's sincerity in his dialectic with Alyosha, we could never be moved as deeply as we are by their fate.

The real world is of course ambiguous. When my king goes to his doom, I am never sure whether to weep or cheer; or if I am sure, I find out soon that I may very well have been wrong. My true love turns out to have, not a heart of stone – as might very well have happened in the older fiction and drama – but a heart that leaves me baffled. Like myself, she is neither good nor bad, but a puzzling mixture. If literature is to deal realistically with life, then, must it not dwell on the neutral tones rather than the scarlets and deep sky blues? Yes – if verisimilitude and naturalness are more important than anything else. But high dramatic effects depend on heightening. Demigods, heroes, villains, poetic Othellos and Iagos – these are not realistic in the sense of being like our everyday reality. And, on the other hand, Maggie, the girl of the streets, will not appear as a queen, even potentially, if she is treated with strict realism; only if the narrator feels free to manipulate his materials in order to show what she might have been or how her fate is representative of a society – in short, why it is more significant than the disasters one reads about in today's paper – will we care about her with anything like the concern we grant willingly to the unrealistic Desdemona. A Joyce may provide enough other interests to be able to risk our question, "Who cares about the fate of Molly Bloom?" but what is Farrell to reply when I ask, "Who cares about the unheroic hero of *Gas-House McGinty*?"²⁸

Similarly, if an author wishes to take me on a long quest for the truth and finally present it to me, I will feel the quest as a boring triviality unless he gives me unambiguous signs of what quest I am on and of the fact that I have found my goal when I get there; his private conviction that the question, the goal, and their importance are clear, or that clarity is unimportant, will not be sufficient. For his purposes a direct authorial comment, destroying the illusion that the story is telling itself, may be what will serve his desired effect rather than kill it.

There is a pleasure from learning the simple truth, and there is a pleasure from learning that the truth is not simple. Both are legitimate sources of literary effect, but they cannot both be realized to the full simultaneously. In this respect, as in all others, the artist must choose, consciously or unconsciously. To write one kind of book is always to some extent a repudiation of other kinds. And regardless of an author's professed indifference to the reader, every book carves out from mankind those readers for which its peculiar effects were designed.

The Role of Belief

With this broadened spectrum of interests in mind, we should now be in a somewhat more favorable position to consider the question of the author's and reader's beliefs. "Most contemporary students of literature would agree that a writer's ideas have as little to do with his artistic talent as his personal morals.... Not many people would agree with the views of man held by Homer, Dante, Baron Corvo, or Ezra Pound; but whether

or not we agree with them should have little to do with whether or not we accept or reject their art." So writes Maurice Beebe, editor of *Modern Fiction Studies*,²⁹ expressing once more a position that has been repeated again and again since the famous claim by I. A. Richards that "we need no beliefs, and indeed we must have none, if we are to read *King Lear*."³⁰ On the other hand, the editor of a recent symposium on belief in literature finds common ground among all the participants in the conviction that literature "involves assumptions and beliefs and sympathies with which a large measure of concurrence is indispensable for the reading of literature as literature and not another thing."³¹

The seeming disagreement here is striking. But it is partly dissolved when we remember the distinction we have made between the real author and the implied author, the second self created in the work. The "views of man" of Faulkner and E. M. Forster, as they go about making their Stockholm addresses or writing their essays, are indeed of only peripheral value to me as I read their novels. But the implied author of each novel is someone with whose beliefs on all subjects I must largely agree if I am to enjoy his work. Of course, the same distinction must be made between myself as reader and the often very different self who goes about paying bills, repairing leaky faucets, and failing in generosity and wisdom. It is only as I read that I become the self whose beliefs must coincide with the author's. Regardless of my real beliefs and practices, I must subordinate my mind and heart to the book if I am to enjoy it to the full. The author creates, in short, an image of himself and another image of his reader; he makes his reader, as he makes his second self, and the most successful reading is one in which the created selves, author and reader, can find complete agreement.

This distinction, however, only partly dissolves the contradiction about the role of beliefs, because the divorce between my ordinary self and the selves I am willing to become as I read is not complete. Walker Gibson, in an excellent essay on "Authors, Speakers, Readers, and Mock Readers,"³² says that the book we reject as bad is often simply a book in whose "mock reader we discover a person we refuse to become, a mask we refuse to put on, a role we will not play." We may exhort ourselves to read tolerantly, we may quote Coleridge on the willing suspension of disbelief until we think ourselves totally suspended in a relativistic universe, and still we will find many books which postulate readers we refuse to become, books that depend on "beliefs" or "attitudes" – the term we choose is unimportant here³³ – which we cannot adopt even hypothetically as our own.

We can see that from this standpoint the trouble I had with Lawrence's implied second self can equally well be described as my inability or refusal to take on the characteristics he requires of his "mock reader." Whatever may be said by Laurentians of the weaknesses in my own real character that might account for my refusal, I simply cannot read his polemic without smiling when I should be panting, scoffing when I should be feeling awe. Whether I should blame myself or Lawrence for this, I can never be quite sure. Perhaps we are both partly at fault. Even if I cannot resist blaming him, at least a little, it is difficult to know whether his failure to carry me along is a failure of craftsmanship or a fundamental incompatibility that no amount of craftsmanship could overcome. But it is impossible for me to conclude that incompatibility of beliefs is irrelevant to my judgment of Lawrence.

We cannot fully enjoy James's *Ambassadors*, for another example, if we insist as we read that spontaneity of consciousness must always be subordinated to the puritan conscience – if we refuse, that is, to entertain the implied author's values at something like his own estimate. Strether's discovery in Paris of what it means to *live* will be for us a fall rather than a triumph, and the book will be for us less effective. His discovery must seem a good thing, not just in his or James's views, in which we can take an interest, but in our own. And afterwards, if the book is to maintain our respect, if it is to be remembered as something more than a pleasant experience based on ephemeral trickery, we must be able to entertain the beliefs on which Strether's discovery is based as among the intellectually and morally defensible views of life. One of our most common reading experiences is, in fact, the discovery on reflection that we have allowed ourselves to become a "mock reader" whom we *cannot* respect, that the beliefs which we were temporarily manipulated into accepting cannot be defended in the light of day.

It is true, as Beebe reminds us, that we can read with pleasure the works of a great many authors, some of whose beliefs we reject: Dante, Milton, Hopkins, Yeats, Eliot, Pound – the list varies, of course, with the position of the critic. But is it really true that the serious Catholic or atheist, however sensitive, tolerant, diligent, and well-informed about Milton's beliefs he may be, enjoys *Paradise Lost* to the degree possible to one of Milton's contemporaries and co-believers, of equal intelligence and sensitivity? Can a devout Protestant or Jew who abhors clerical celibacy enjoy Hopkins' "The Habit of Perfection" as a devout Catholic of equal literary sensibility and experience enjoys it? We must be very clear that we are talking now about literary experience, not about the pleasures of finding one's prejudices echoed. The question is whether the enjoyment of literature as literature, and not as propaganda, inevitably involves our beliefs, and I think that the answer is inescapable. Anyone who has ever read the same novel "before and after," noticing that strange loss of power a novel betrays when one has repudiated its norms, whether of Church or Party, of faith in progress, nihilism, existentialism, or whatever, knows that our convictions even about the most purely intellectual matters cannot help fundamentally affecting our literary responses.

Purists may reply that, even though all readers do in fact allow their beliefs to get in the way of an objective view of the work, they should not do so. Which puts us right back where we started: if we want to deal with an ideal literature that has never existed on land or sea, and postulate an ideal reader who could never possibly exist, and then judge all books and all readers as they more or less approximate to this pure state, that is our privilege. But as the facts are, even the greatest of literature is radically dependent on the concurrence of beliefs of authors and readers. In an excellent discussion of this problem, M. H. Abrams says what would not need to be said at all if a generation of exhortation to "objectivity" had not led us astray:

Is an appreciation of the Ode [on a Grecian Urn], then, entirely independent of the reader's beliefs? Surely not. As it evolves, the poem makes constant call on a complex of beliefs which are the product of ordinary human experiences with life, people, love, mutability, age, and art. These subsist less in propositional form than in the form of un verbalized attitudes...; but they stand ready to precipitate into assertions the moment they are radically challenged... If the poem works, our appreciation of the matters it

presents is not aloofly contemplative, but actively engaged. . . . We are interested in a fashion that brings into play our entire moral economy and expresses itself continuously in attitudes of approval or disapproval, sympathy or antipathy.³⁴

This does not mean, of course, that Catholics cannot enjoy *Paradise Lost* more than they might a second-rate Catholic epic, or that Protestants cannot enjoy "The Habit of Perfection" more than they might a second-rate Protestant hymn. It means simply that differences of belief, even in the sense of abstract, speculative systems, are always to some extent relevant, often seriously hampering, and sometimes fatal. Imagine a beautifully written tragedy with a convinced Nazi SS man as hero, his tragic error consisting of a temporary, and fatal, toying with bourgeois democratic ideals. Is there any one of us, regardless of our commitment to objectivity, who could seriously claim that agreement or disagreement with the author's ideas in such a work would have nothing to do with our accepting or rejecting his art?

It is true that some great works seem to rise above differences of speculative system and to win readers of all camps. Shakespeare is the pre-eminent example. The norms in his plays are indeed compatible with more philosophies than are comprehended in most of our dogmas; it is precisely this centrality, this lack of bias, this capacity to cut to the heart of problems which all philosophies attempt to deal with in conceptual terms, that makes his plays what we call universal. Great art can bring men of different convictions together by translating, as it were, their different vocabularies into a tangible experience that incorporates what they mean. It thus mediates among philosophies: Platonist and Aristotelian, Catholic and Protestant, liberal and conservative, can agree that these lives are comic and those tragic, that this behavior is vicious and that admirable, that somehow, in fact, these plays express existentially, as the current fashion puts it, what life means.

But this is far from saying that great literature is compatible with *all* beliefs. Though Shakespeare seems, when looked at superficially, to "have no beliefs," though it is indeed impossible to extract from the plays any one coherent philosophical or religious or political formulation that will satisfy all readers, it is not difficult to list innumerable norms which we must accept if we are to comprehend particular plays, and some of these do run throughout his works. It is true that these beliefs are for the most part self-evident, even commonplace – but that is precisely because they are acceptable to most of us. Shakespeare requires us to believe that it is right to honor our fathers, and that it is wrong to kill off old men like Lear or grind out the eyes of old men like Gloucester. He insists that it is always wrong to use other people as instruments to one's own ends, whether by murder or slander, that it is good to love, but wrong to love selfishly, that helpless old age is pitiable, and that blind egotism deserves punishment. He never lets us forget that the world is made up of good and evil in very strange and frightening mixtures or that suffering is an essential part of the world's constitution, but he also remembers that it can produce a ripeness which in a sense justifies all: in his plays, suffering, like everything else, makes a kind of sense in an ordered universe. Such a list of persistent norms is surprisingly similar to the norms derived from other really great authors, as well as those found in many very mediocre ones. Certainly, to work in accordance with such universals is not enough to make an author great. But to accept

them in the works where they are pertinent is a fundamental step before greatness can be experienced.

We seldom talk in these terms about great literature only because we take them for granted or because they seem old-fashioned.³⁵ Only a maniac, presumably, would side with Goneril and Regan against Lear. It is only when a work seems explicitly doctrinaire, or when reasonable men can be in serious disagreement about its values, that the question of belief arises for discussion. Even when it does arise, it is often misleading if we think of beliefs in terms of speculative theories. The great "Catholic" or "Protestant" works are not, in their essentials, Catholic or Protestant at all. Even though a Catholic may be presumed to derive additional pleasures and insights not available to the non-Catholic in reading Mauriac's *Knot of Vipers*, the picture it gives of a man made miserable through his own spiritual confusion depends for its effect on values common to most views of man's fate. Any reader who believes that human misery is pitiable and that to feel constant envy and fear and mistrust is to be miserable must pity this man. Anyone who believes that it is good, or important, for a miserable, loveless man to find some repentance and love, however slight, before he dies, cannot help responding to this conclusion. The non-Catholic reader's lack of concern over whether the protagonist will receive extreme unction – a problem that plays a minor role in the book – will no doubt reduce his response to some degree. But the knot of vipers gnaws as excruciatingly for an unbeliever as for the most orthodox reader.

Although such universals inevitably operate to some extent in all successful literature, it is true that most works whose authors have asked the reader to be "objective" have in fact depended strongly on the substitution of unconventional or private values – often in modern criticism called "myths" – for more conventional or public standards. Far from asking for objectivity, their authors have really asked for commitment on an unusual axis. The strangeness of much modern literature when it is first encountered comes in large part from this substitution – often unacknowledged and unsupported by any clarification or intensification – of a new and peculiar scale of norms for the old.

Thus the "novel of sensibility," as written by Virginia Woolf and others, deliberately rejected most of the values on which the effects of older fiction were based. In *To the Lighthouse* there is little effort to engage our feelings strongly for or against one or more characters on the basis of their moral or intellectual traits. Instead, the value of "sensibility" has been placed at the core of things; those characters who, like Mrs. Ramsey, have a highly developed sensibility are sympathetic; the "villains" are those who, like Mr. Ramsey, are insensitive. We read forward almost as much to discover further instances of sensibility as to discover what happens to the characters. The revelation of the whole, such as it is, is of the overall *feeling* rather than the meaning of events.³⁶ But this, of course, does not mean that belief is irrelevant. The reader who does not value sensibility as highly as Virginia Woolf will fail to enjoy much of her work unless he is persuaded by it, as he reads, to shift his judgment.

Similarly, if I say to myself, as I read *Ulysses*, "Bloom is a bad man because he masturbates in public," or "Camus' *Stranger* is wicked because he commits murder," I am obviously barred from any complete experience of *Ulysses* or *The Stranger*. It is true, I think, that moral values of another kind are in operation in both works.³⁷ But it is also true that neither Joyce nor Camus cares very much whether his characters are good in any sense of the word except the author's own. On the other hand, in the

later works of Tolstoy, the chief value is a narrowly moral one; a host of beliefs that one must accept to read Joyce or Camus, Faulkner or Hemingway properly are not only ignored but actively combated by the rhetoric of a story like "Where Love Is, God Is Also."

The problem for the reader is thus really that of discovering which values are in abeyance and which are genuinely, though in modern works often surreptitiously, at work. To pass judgment where the author intends neutrality is to misread. But to be neutral or objective where the author requires commitment is equally to misread, though the effect is likely to be less obvious and may even be overlooked except as a feeling of boredom. At the beginning of the modern period, no doubt the danger of dogmatic overjudgment was the greater one. But for at least two decades now, I am convinced, far more misreading has resulted from what I can only call dogmatic neutrality.

* * *

The Morality of Impersonal Narration

The Morality of Elitism

We have noted that many of the works in the unreliable mode depend for their effects on ironic collusion between the author and his readers. The line between such effects legitimately pursued and the pleasures of snobbery is difficult to draw, but impersonal, ironic narration lends itself neatly, far too neatly, to disguised expressions of snobbery which would never be tolerated if expressed openly in commentary. Chesterton once attributed part of the decline of Dickens' popularity to "that basest of all artistic indulgences (certainly far baser than the pleasure of absinthe or the pleasure of opium), the pleasure of appreciating works of art which ordinary men cannot appreciate."³⁸ Even baser would be the pleasure of writing works *so that* only the select few can understand. The author who sets out to appeal by his impersonality to "the most alert young people of two successive generations – in Berlin, Paris, London, New York, Rome, Madrid," regardless of the needs of the work in hand, is as inartistic as the author who plants irrelevant appeals to the prejudices of the buying public.

We do not judge the finished work, of course, according to the motives of the author. But the prohibition works both ways: If I cannot condemn a work simply because I know that its author was a snob, neither can I praise it simply because its author refused to be commercial, or condemn another because its author set out to write a best seller. The work itself must be our standard, and if the reader can see no reason for its difficulties except that critical fashion dictates an anti-commercial pose, he is bound to condemn it fully as much as he would if he discovered cheap appeals to temporary prejudices in a popular audience. In both cases the test is whether everything has been done that ought to be done – nothing more, nothing less – to make the work fundamentally accessible, realized in the basic etymological sense of being made into a thing that has its own existence, no longer tied to the author's ego. And if it was the peculiar temptation of Victorian novelists to give a false air of sentimental comradeship

through their commentary, impersonal novelists are strongly tempted to give the reader less help than they know they should, in order to make sure that they are seen to be "serious."

A frequent explanation of the snobbish air that sometimes results is that there is no serious audience left for art except the precious, saving remnant. Virginia Woolf, for example, was haunted by the sense that older writers could depend upon an audience with public norms, while she must construct her private values as she went, and then impose them, without seeming to do so, on the reader. Neither Austen nor Scott, she says, has much to say about the matter of judgment of conduct outright, "but everything depends on it... To believe that your impressions hold good for others is to be released from the cramp and confinement of personality."³⁹ We are told again and again that the novelist could not help turning inward to his own private world of values because there was no outer world left to which he could appeal.⁴⁰ But even if consensus has declined – something in itself hard to prove, in spite of our ready clichés about it – surely artists must accept some of the responsibility for the decline themselves. If the loss of consensus forced them into private value systems, private myths, it hardly could be said to have forced them into the kind of private techniques I have discussed in the latter part of this book. One possible reaction to a fragmented society may be to retreat to a private world of values, but another might well be to build works of art that themselves help to mold a new consensus.⁴¹

There have been philosophical and psychological obstacles to facing the presumed decline of consensus in this positive way. The philosophical obstacle at its most destructive is nihilism, with the temptations to subjectivism or even solipsism that it always brings in its train. If the novelist really believes that there is no objective meaning to existence, then his only motive for writing is that he wants to write – a motive that is no better and no worse in the ultimate scheme than would be the motive of a Hitler, or, let us say, of a scrawler of graffiti. To worry about the reader would be absurd in a genuinely absurd universe.

Most so-called nihilisms stop far short, however, of this complete negation; almost all writers think there is some meaning, at least in the act of artistic creation. The more common philosophical assumption of unphilosophical writers since Kant has been a kind of subjective art-ism: there is value, but it is only what the artist creates out of the chaos.

Now it is possible, I think, to derive even from such a position inescapable arguments in favor of the artist's making an effort to communicate his vision. But often enough it has been used in defense of an aesthetic solipsism almost as radical as would be dictated by nihilism. Dujardin, whom Joyce claimed as the father of stream-of-consciousness technique, said that "the whole of reality consists in the clear or confused consciousness one has of it." And he quotes Joyce with approval as saying that "the soul, in one sense, is all there is."⁴²

Even this position might be extended to require of the author that he do everything possible to make his consciousness of reality clear, not simply to "himself" but to that part of himself which lives in relation to a public; if a work is really clear to the author-as-reader, we might argue, it will be accessible to his proper public. But in practice it has tended to produce a pose of indifference to all readers. We need not

be philistines to believe that even the purest of artists can be victimized by human pride, and we must be blind devotees of modern literature indeed to ignore the destructive, though often amusing, cultism that has marked discussions of certain novelists since Joyce.

It is hard to see how anything can be done about such a situation short of rejecting the subjectivism on which it is based. Though I cannot argue the case philosophically here, it seems clear that this one aspect of our rhetorical difficulties cannot be corrected simply by working for more intelligent discrimination in readers. The author himself must achieve a kind of objectivity far more difficult and far more profound than the "objectivity" of surface hailed in many discussions of technique. He must first plumb to universal values about which his readers can really care. But it is not enough, I suspect, that he operate on some kind of eternal ground, as recommended by our religious critics.⁴³ He must be sufficiently humble to seek for ways to help the reader to accept his view of that ground. The artist must in this sense be willing to be both a seer and a revelator; though he need not attempt to discover new truths in the manner of the prophet-novelists like Mann and Kafka, and though he certainly need not include explicit statement of the norms on which his work is based, he must know how to transform his private vision, made up as it often is of ego-ridden private symbols, into something that is essentially public.

It is at this point that the philosophical problem becomes a psychological problem. The artist must, like all men, wrestle constantly with the temptation of false pride. Hard as it may be for him to accept the fact, his private vision of things is not great art simply through being his. It is made into great art, if at all, only by being given an objective existence of its own – that is, by being made accessible to a public.

But of course as soon as the vision is made accessible, it subjects itself to being judged; one of the nicest of ironies is that of the writer who loses more and more stature the better we understand him, because the better we understand him the more of his egotistical weakness we see untransformed in the work.

In short, the writer should worry less about whether his *narrators* are realistic than about whether the *image he creates of himself*, his implied author, is one that his most intelligent and perceptive readers can admire. Nothing will so certainly consign a work to ultimate oblivion as an implied author who detests his readers⁴⁴ or who thinks that his work is better than it is. And nothing is so certain to lead an author into creating such a picture of himself as the effort to appear brighter, more esoteric, less commercial than he really is. The convenient but ultimately ridiculous notions that all concessions to the public are equally base, that the public itself is base, and that the author himself is not a member of "the public," can be as harmful as the desire to become a best seller at all costs.

The ultimate problem in the rhetoric of fiction is, then, that of deciding for whom the author should write. We saw earlier that to answer, "He writes for himself," makes sense only if we assume that the self he writes for is a kind of public self, subject to the limitations that other men are subject to when they come to his books. Another answer often given is that he writes for his peers. True enough. The hack is, by definition, the man who asks for responses he cannot himself respect. But no one is ever the peer of any author in the sense of needing no help in viewing the author's world. If the novelist waits passively on his pedestal for the occasional peer whose perceptions are already in

harmony with his own, then it is hard to see why he should not leave everything to such readers. Why bother to write at all? If the reader were really the artist's peer in this sense, he would not need the book. In a world made up of such readers, we could stop worrying about the problem of communication entirely and simply write each his own books. But if such a world is recognized as ridiculous, however close it may seem to some of the facts of our present one, then the novelist cannot be excused from providing the judgment upon his own materials which alone can lift them from being what Faulkner has called the mere "record of man" and turn them into the "pillars" that can help him be fully man. We may scoff at the southern gentleman's rhetoric in the Stockholm address, but the greatest living novelist means – for once – what he says.

Since the war we have seen many pleas for a return to the older, pre-Flaubertian models, not only in the matter of point of view but in the general structure and interests built into the novel.⁴⁵ The false restrictions imposed by various forms of objectivity have been attacked frequently, sometimes with great acumen based on personal experience in writing novels. But it would be a serious mistake to think that what we need is a return to Balzac, or to the English nineteenth century, or to Fielding and Jane Austen. We can be sure that traditional techniques will find new uses, just as the epistolary technique, declared dead many times over, has been revived to excellent effect again and again.⁴⁶ But what is needed is not any simple restoration of previous models, but a repudiation of all arbitrary distinctions among "pure form," "moral content," and the rhetorical means of realizing for the reader the union of form and matter. When human actions are formed to make an art work, the form that is made can never be divorced from the human meanings, including the moral judgments, that are implicit whenever human beings act. And nothing the writer does can be finally understood in isolation from his effort to make it all accessible to someone else – his peers, himself as imagined reader, his audience. The novel comes into existence as something communicable, and the means of communication are not shameful intrusions unless they are made with shameful ineptitude.

The author makes his readers. If he makes them badly – that is, if he simply waits, in all purity, for the occasional reader whose perceptions and norms happen to match his own, then his conception must be lofty indeed if we are to forgive him for his bad craftsmanship. But if he makes them well – that is, makes them see what they have never seen before, moves them into a new order of perception and experience altogether – he finds his reward in the peers he has created.

NOTES

- 1 Forster would not allow the author to take "the reader into his confidence about his characters," since "intimacy is gained but at the expense of illusion and nobility." But he allows the author to take the reader into his confidence "about the universe" (*Aspects of the Novel* [London, 1927], pp. 111–12).
- 2 *Madame Bovary*, trans. Francis Steegmuller (New York, 1957), p. 80.
- 3 Such obtrusions are especially obvious in narration that purports to be historical. And yet intelligent men were until quite recently able to read ostensibly historical accounts, like the Bible, packed with such illicit entries into private minds, with no distress whatever. For us it

- may seem strange that the writers of the Gospels should claim so much knowledge of what Christ is feeling and thinking. "Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him" (Mark 1:41). "And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone forth from him..." (5:30). Who reported to the authors these internal events? Who told them what occurs in the Garden, when everyone but Jesus is asleep? Who reported to them that Christ prays to God to "let this cup pass"? Such questions, like the question of how Moses could have written an account of his own death and burial, may be indispensable in historical criticism, but they can easily be overdone in literary criticism.
- 4 Speaking of Joyce's *Ulysses*, Edmund Wilson once complained that as soon as "we are aware of Joyce himself systematically embroidering on his text," packing in puzzles, symbols, and puns, "the illusion of the dream is lost" ("James Joyce," *Axel's Castle* [New York, 1931], p. 235).
 - 5 "Situation of the Writer in 1947," *What Is Literature?* trans. Bernard Frechtman (London, 1950), p. 169.
 - 6 "Conversations with Eckerman," January 29, 1826, trans. John Oxenford, as reprinted in *Criticism: The Major Texts*, ed. Walter Jackson Bate (New York, 1952), p. 403.
 - 7 Letter to Richard Woodhouse, October 27, 1818, *The Poetical Works and Other Writings of John Keats*, ed. H. Buxton Forman (New York, 1939), VII, 129.
 - 8 *Correspondence* (October 12, 1853) (Paris, 1926-33), III, 367-68. For some of the citations from Flaubert in what follows I am indebted to the excellent monograph by Marianne Bonwit, *Gustave Flaubert et le principe d'impassibilité* (Berkeley, Calif., 1950). My distinction among the three forms of objectivity in the author is derived in part from her discussion.
 - 9 *Ibid.* (December 12, 1857), IV, 243.
 - 10 *Letters on the Short Story, the Drama and other Literary Topics*, selected and edited by Louis S. Friedland (New York, 1924), p. 63.
 - 11 *Corr.* (April 26-27, 1853), III, 183: "...ne doit avoir ni religion, ni patrie, ni même aucune conviction sociale..."
 - 12 "The Slave Cast Out," in *The Living Novel*, ed. Granville Hicks (New York, 1957), p. 202. Miss West continues: "Writing is a way of playing parts, of trying on masks, of assuming roles, not for fun but out of desperate need, not for the self's sake but for the writing's sake. 'To make any work of art,' says Elizabeth Sewell, 'is to make, or rather to unmake and remake one's self.'"
 - 13 In her inaugural lecture at the University of London, published as *The Tale and the Teller* (London, 1959). "Writing on George Eliot in 1877, Dowden said that the form that most persists in the mind after reading her novels is not any of the characters, but 'one who, if not the real George Eliot, is that second self who writes her books, and lives and speaks through them.' The 'second self,' he goes on, is 'more substantial than any mere human personality' and has 'fewer reserves'; while 'behind it, lurks well pleased the veritable historical self secure from impertinent observation and criticism'" (p. 22).
 - 14 E.g., Fred B. Millett, *Reading Fiction* (New York, 1950): "This tone, the general feeling which suffuses and surrounds the work, arises ultimately out of the writer's attitude toward his subject... *The subject derives its meaning from the view of life which the author has taken*" (p. 11).
 - 15 "When we speak of technique, then, we speak of nearly everything. For technique is the means by which the writer's experience, which is his subject matter, compels him to attend to it; technique is the only means he has of discovering, exploring, developing his subject, of conveying its meaning, and finally of evaluating it... Technique in fiction is, of course, all those obvious forms of it which are usually taken to be the whole of it, and many others" ("Technique as Discovery," *Hudson Review*, I [Spring, 1948], 67-87, as reprinted in *Forms of Modern Fiction*, ed. Wm. Van O'Connor [Minneapolis, Minn., 1948], pp. 9-29; see esp. pp. 9-11).

- 16 *The English Novel* (London, 1930), p. 58. See Geoffrey Tillotson, *Thackeray the Novelist* (Cambridge, 1954), esp. chap. iv, "The Content of the Authorial 'I'" (pp. 55-70), for a convincing argument that the "I" of Thackeray's works should be carefully distinguished from Thackeray himself.
- 17 "Qu'est qui me dira, en effet ce que Shakespeare a aimé, ce qu'il a haï, ce qu'il a senti?" (*Corr.*, I, 386).
- 18 Vladimir Nabokov, *Laughter in the Dark* (New York, 1938), p. 1.
- 19 "'Psychical Distance' as a Factor in Art and an Aesthetic Principle," *British Journal of Psychology*, V (1912), 87-98, as reprinted in *The Problems of Aesthetics*, ed. Eliseo Vivas and Murray Krieger (New York, 1953), pp. 396-405.
- 20 See, for example, Brecht's "Chinese Acting," trans. Eric Bentley, in *Furioso* (Fall, 1949). A history should be written of the concept of aesthetic distance. One element in such a history would be the growing knowledge, early in the century, of oriental literature, with its extremely unrealistic setting, costumes, and acting manners. Donald Keene shows some similarities between anti-realist theories of the eighteenth-century puppet dramatist, Chikamatsu, and certain western theories, beginning with the Imagists (*Japanese Literature* [London, 1953], esp. chap. iii). Brecht's so-called epic theatre, with its emphasis on unrealistic "alienation effects," is explicitly patterned upon certain effects in the Chinese theatre. "In the Chinese theatre," Brecht says, "the alienation effect is achieved in the following way. The Chinese performer does not act as if, in addition to the three walls around him, there were also a fourth wall. *He makes it clear that he knows he is being looked at. . . . The actor looks at himself*" (p. 69). But such external influences by no means account for the readiness with which serious artists pursued the very sense of distance which the preceding generations had struggled to overcome.
- 21 Keene, *Japanese Literature*, p. 8.
- 22 See Kenneth Burke, "Psychology and Form," *Counter-Statement* (Los Altos, Calif., 1953), p. 31. Readers who know Burke's *Lexicon Rhetoricae* will notice in my threefold classification as I develop it below some similarities to his "five aspects of form": syllogistic progression, qualitative progression, repetitive form, conventional form, and minor or incidental forms. But I am classifying interests, not forms; forms are almost always built upon several interests.
- 23 See also *The Affair at the Inn* (London, 1904) by Kate Douglas Wiggin, Mary Findlater, Jane Findlater, Allan McAuley. Each author "did" one character. Protests against this tendency to let interest in the quality of the telling replace interest in what is told can be found throughout modern criticism. Beach claimed that the net effect of *The Awkward Age* depended too much on "the recognition of the author's cleverness" (*The Method of Henry James* [New Haven, Conn., 1918; Philadelphia, 1954], p. 249). David Daiches finds that the pleasure in Virginia Woolf's *The Years* "derives more from a recognition of virtuosity, let us say, than from our complete domination by the novel as an integrated work of art"; though he tries to allow for the former recognition as a legitimate literary pleasure, it is clear that for him it is inferior to what is really "an integrated work of art" (*Virginia Woolf* [Norfolk, Conn., 1942], p. 120).

Compare Faulkner's complaint about Sherwood Anderson: "His was that fumbling for exactitude, the exact word and phrase within the limited scope of a vocabulary controlled and even repressed by what was in him almost a fetish of simplicity, to milk them both dry, to seek always to penetrate to thought's uttermost end. He worked so hard at this that it finally became just style: an end instead of a means: so that he presently came to believe that, provided he kept the style pure and intact and unchanged and inviolate, what the style contained would have to be first rate: it couldn't help but be first rate, and therefore himself too" (*Atlantic Monthly* [June, 1953], p. 28).
- 24 Quoted from Frank Budgen in R. Ellmann, *James Joyce* (New York, 1959), p. 449.
- 25 For a contrary view, see Caroline Gordon, *How To Read a Novel* (New York, 1957), p. 213. For a convincing argument that Joyce is interested in moral satire, not simply in aesthetic values,

- see Lawrance Thompson, *A Comic Principle in Sterne – Meredith – Joyce* (Oslo, 1954). "There's moral indignation, even though both Stuart Gilbert and David Daiches insist that Joyce's concern is not moral, only aesthetic" (p. 26). See also Joyce's letter to Grant Richards about *Dubliners*, "My intent was to write a chapter of the moral history of my country, and I chose Dublin for the scene, because that city seemed to be the center of paralysis..." (quoted in Thompson, p. 25).
- 26 To see how essential judgment was to Joyce's conception of his work, see Ellmann, *James Joyce*, pp. 380 ff.
- 27 Cf. David Daiches' distinction between the "intellectual fallacy, where the most 'real' facts about men and women are considered to be their states of mind rather than of heart," and the "sentimental fallacy" of constructing novels or plays "out of purely emotional patterns" (*Virginia Woolf*, pp. 27–28). Though Daiches explicitly denies that works committing either "fallacy" are necessarily inferior, it seems clear that he would rate a work which somehow avoided both of these "exaggerations" above even the best work committing one or the other fallacy.
- 28 What I am saying here is related to the case made by E. E. Stoll about the artificial, and hence unrealistic, heightening of sympathy in Shakespeare's characters. "To sympathize you must know the facts; when you don't know them, your interest is of another sort; and while the incentive of suspense in Shakespeare and the ancients is an anxious sympathy, in Ibsen and the moderns it is an excited curiosity" (*Shakespeare and Other Masters* [Cambridge, Mass., 1940], p. 14; see also pp. 27, 28, 240).
- 29 Summer, 1958, p. 182.
- 30 "Poetry and Beliefs," *Science and Poetry* (1926), as reprinted in R. W. Stallman (ed.), *Critiques and Essays* (New York, 1949), pp. 329–33. A short bibliography of criticism of Richards' position is given in Stallman, p. 333. It should be noted that in the context of his distinction between "statement" and "pseudo-statement" the word *belief* does not mean what Richards' critics have generally taken it to mean; rather it means something like "convictions about ultimate reality based on solid evidence."
- 31 *Literature and Belief: English Institute Essays*, 1957, ed. M. H. Abrams (New York, 1958), p. x.
- 32 *College English*, XI (February, 1950), 265–69.
- 33 Many writers have rejected "beliefs" only to bring them back under another term like "attitudes." See "Poetry and Belief," *T.L.S.* (August 17, 1956), pp. xvi–xvii.
- 34 *Literature and Belief*, pp. 16–17.
- 35 After a similar, though more comprehensive, listing of Shakespeare's values, Alfred Harbage seems to hear in the background, as I do, a chorus of very modern voices protesting that he has got it all wrong. He turns, as it were, and faces them, and to me he has it all right: "If anyone can ask how an artist of the intelligence postulated above could have accepted the values described in this book – so cribbed and 'Victorian,' so bourgeois and grubby – . . . [I answer that] A great poet could accept the values because they were great values. They represented a synthesis of such products of Judaic and Hellenistic philosophy as had shown the highest power of survival – literally, the best that had been known and thought in the world. Nothing since Shakespeare's time has impeached the evidence of an ordered universe, however more diffidently it must now be defined, or of the superiority of an ethic of love..." (*Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions* [New York, 1952], p. 296).
- 36 "The new philosophy opened up sources of interest for the novel which allowed it to dispense with whatever values such writers as George Eliot and Henry James had depended on in a still remoter period. Like naturalism, it brought with it its own version of an esthetic; it supplied a medium which involved no values other than the primary one of self-expression" (William Troy, "Virginia Woolf: The Novel of Sensibility," *The Symposium*, III [January–March, 1932], 53–63; and [April–June, 1932], 153–66, as reprinted in Zabel, *Literary Opinion in America* [rev. ed.; New York, 1951], p. 324).
- 37 For a convincing argument that morality is important in *Ulysses*, see Lawrance Thompson, *A Comic Principle in Sterne – Meredith – Joyce*. See also p. 183, above.
- 38 Introduction to Everyman edition of *Bleak House* (n.d.), p. ix.
- 39 Virginia Woolf, *The Common Reader* (London, 1925), pp. 301–2.
- 40 Robert Liddell talks of the same contrast between the chaotic present and the ordered past. "People are not [at the present time] necessarily less moral but there is no universal standard of Moral Taste – even among Principled persons – to which a writer can appeal" (*Some Principles of Fiction* [London, 1953], p. 110). Alex Comfort, contrasting the traditional drama and the nineteenth-century novel, on the one hand, with the modern novel on the other, says that the latter "can make no assumptions about [the reader's] beliefs or activities comparable with those which the early nineteenth-century novel, addressed to a section of society, could make. . . . An entire world has to be created and peopled separately in each book which is written." "For the first time in recent history we have a totally fragmented society" (*The Novel and Our Time* [London, 1948], pp. 13, 11).
- 41 For a persuasive statement of a less hopeful view of the possibilities open to the novelist, see Earl H. Rovit, "The Ambiguous Modern Novel," *The Yale Review* (Spring, 1960), pp. 413–24: "The modern novelist . . . seems to have no choice between simplicity and directness on the one hand or complexity and ambiguity on the other. If he tries to deal honestly with the fearful intangibilities of his own experience and the chaos of the twentieth-century human condition, he must, in some sense, invent his own peculiar form. If he attempts to employ the traditional story-telling forms . . . he will run an overwhelming danger of accepting some of the sureties of the past inherent in the form, and, consequently, of dissipating into the mood of sentimentality and the mode of melodrama. The serious modern novelist is thus obliged to plunge into the abyss of value-creation, and his resultant novel, if successful, will necessarily communicate reflexively and symbolically [that is, without direct authorial statement of the values on which the work depends]. And if he is successful in crystallizing his alienation in an aesthetically satisfying metaphor, the chances are excellent that his work will be politely ignored by the mass audience" (p. 424).
- 42 Edouard Dujardin, *Le Monologue intérieur: Son apparition, ses origines, sa place dans l'œuvre de James Joyce* (Paris, 1931), p. 99.
- 43 See Edwin Muir, "The Decline of the Novel," *Essays on Literature and Society* (London, 1949), pp. 144–50.
- 44 The case of Henry de Montherlant is one of the most interesting in this regard. The aristocratic "ethic of quality," the "virtue of contempt," that his novels seem to advocate has led to widespread protest. Whether Montherlant himself really stands for what his characters advocate is hard to determine, but it is clear that to the extent he does so, our admiration for his work suffers. As a recent reviewer said, we cannot believe that a character like Pierre Costals in *Les jeunes filles* is intended to be sympathetic and at the same time fully respect the author. "Might it not be better," he suggests, "for M. de Montherlant's reputation as an intelligent writer if Pierre Costals were looked upon as a character who has as little of his author's complete approval as Georges Carrion, Alissa, or Jean-Baptiste Clamence?" (*T.L.S.*, January 6, 1961, p. 8). Surely it would be better. But must we not ask of the novels themselves whether they will justify the exoneration? In any case, his stature will rise and fall depending on what they tell us.
- 45 See, for example, Angus Wilson, *The Observer*, April 7, 1957, p. 16: "Balzac . . . is once again one of the great masters of the traditional form to which novelists are returning. . . ."
- 46 The most recent is Mark Harris' delightful comic novel, *Wake Up, Stupid* (New York, 1959).