

Nowhere Places and the Poetics of Landscape:
Temporality, Literary Atmosphere, and the Ethical Arena in Colonial Modernity.

by

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ABSTRACT

This study introduces a multi-disciplinary ecocritical approach to fictional evocations of place in colonial modernity between 1890 and 1940. Drawing together both modernist and contemporary theories of cognition, spatio-temporality, cinema, and the literary and human geographical assimilation of unfamiliar places, it analyzes the literary and visual poetics by which modernist depictions of landscape produce analogues for the crisis of the individual in the face of the *other*. Quarrelling with the sometimes recursive formulations of the spatial turn in culture studies, it reconceives the spatio-temporal arena through which literary representations of consciousness are staged through setting depictions. In order to track the dislocating of the subject in “exotic” environments an analytic frame is introduced, *aesthetic duration*, describing the narrative poetics by which epiphanic human experiences come to be mounted through tropes of aporia or ‘blockage’ – the temporal process by which the ambient aspects of concrete topographies are transformed into ideational or affective atmospheres. While the initial chapters introduce a model of theatricalized temporal ambience in fiction through Joseph Conrad’s *An Outcast of the Islands*, the study goes on to include close readings of Conrad’s *Lord Jim* as well as exoticist works by the problematic ‘modernists’, Lawrence, Forster, and Woolf. More fully, the scenographic dynamics of topographical depiction in these fictions of the imperial periphery are used to reveal how texts utilize durational forms and their primary vehicle, atmospheric appearing, in order to evoke interiority. Additionally, the present-time experience of cognitive crisis, where grounded in representations of landscape, is shown to constitute a performative forum for consciousness and narration. To this end the spatio-temporal frames of William James, Henri Bergson and Walter Benjamin are explored for their insights into the dynamics whereby the moment of signification is held open in order to enable thematic, affective, and cognitive transfers. The study thus begins by theorizing the ecologically nuanced strategies by which colonial places offer themselves as stand-ins for the decentred subjects of European modernism, and concludes by establishing a theatricalized model for the synaesthetic processes by which the places in colonial modernist fiction communicate significance via their performative poetics.

PREFACE

Portions of this thesis were developed for single-author or theory based conferences. Parts of the second section of Chapter One, and much of Chapter Four was developed from a conference paper delivered at the University of Cape Town as part of the international conference entitled ‘Outposts of Progress’, convened by Gail Fincham, Jeremy Hawthorn, and Jakob Lothe (06-11.12.2011). The material on Conrad’s shipboard depictions in the *Patna* section of this latter chapter has also benefitted from a paper given at the Modernist Studies Association’s annual convention at Victoria, B.C., in November 2010: “Shipboard Beings: Cognition, Identity and the Marine Poetics of Modernism”. The analytic platform of the last section of Chapter Four was worked out in a paper given at The Modern Languages Association annual conference at Seattle in January of 2012, “Not Bleeding, Singing: Operatic Form and the Individual in Conrad’s *Twixt Land and Sea*”, as well as in a recent conference paper for the Joseph Conrad Society of the United Kingdom at Bath, England (07.2012), “Ships in the Night: Intimacy, Narration, and the Endless Near Misses of Conrad’s Chance”.

The third section of Chapter Five on D. H. Lawrence has been published in somewhat altered form in *D. H. Lawrence Studies* (Vol. 20, No. 2 October 2012: 85-111) as edited by Virginia Hyde, Michael Bell, and N-C Paik: its title there is “Nowhere Will Now Say A Few Words: The Aesthetics of Landscape in D. H. Lawrence’s *Kangaroo*”.

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For Jocelyne and our boys, with love

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: On the Poetics of the Modernist Landscape

Preamble on Mental Landscapes

The landscape thinks itself in me [...] and I am its consciousness.
Paul Cézanne – Letter to Gasquet (in Merleau-Ponty 1964: 17)

The physical world can be a strange place. It is stranger still when one abandons known surroundings for a different locale, a location unfamiliar or exotic enough as to seem entirely other. Novels and short stories have made much of the disorientations one suffers when the ground beneath one's feet appears to shift, or what had been a backdrop to mundane tasks suddenly takes on a different aspect than expected. At such moments the location one is in ceases to be neutral, and may take on a more active role in consciousness; and so the uncanny sense one has before a particular surroundings becomes not simply a problem of kind, for instance, of the sort of landmarks to be followed, but of *presence*. By this word I intend two things. First, there is the likelihood that a place suddenly rendered strange will begin, so to speak, to creep beneath the skin. This is not such an unusual experience, for having hurtled down the wrong path thinking it the right one, or looking up to discover a seemingly endless repetition of dunes or trees or hillocks that you had not noticed before, there is often an accompanying speeding of the blood – one breathes differently, the hollow in the ear may seem to throb with that sense of having lost one's bearings, of knowing one is mazed. This is the moment of disorientation I mean, where one looks into the mist and nothing appears as it was, or equally worrying, the misty *nothing* appears, punctuated only by the presence of that faint throbbing at the back of the mind. But there is also presence of another kind. Out of that instance of finding oneself thrown back on that sense of something being wrong, of the physical world being unhomely, a host of impressions and worries begins to churn. The individual, perhaps without knowing it, starts to populate those unfamiliar surroundings with projections of the right path or the sought after break in the dunes, or simply of categories of worry, of the place having done you in with its stupid lack of features. These imaginings, these absurd notions caught up with the branches of trees or unmarked and waving grasses, are also a kind of presence. They are the self-authored fictions of the mind's grappling with itself and the world;

they are mental representations responding to the fact that it is harder to think straight when one is becalmed in the midst of nowhere – yet one does *think*. And like the embodied responses one makes at such times, in which the environment around one seems almost to be breathing in tandem with one’s own reflections, these natural things, too, are of the moment.¹

One writer who is to remain at the centre of focus through much of what follows has shown himself to be very interested in both halves of the equation, the concrete aspects of disorientation, and the thematic and dramatic processes brought out by the efforts of individuals and artists alike, to represent what it is to become unmoored in the world. More particularly, this author had long found his most recognizable theme in the less known and perhaps exotic colonial out there of his time, where along with dunes and paths, one also finds wooded slopes disappearing into cloud, plains of light, or the endless oceanic repetition of slightly differing waves. In perhaps his best known tale, “Heart of Darkness” (1902 [1899]), the Polish born yet unmistakably English writer, Joseph Conrad, focuses equally on the process of locating places and events as an aesthetic problem, while underlining the ease with which one can be both sure of one’s exact location on the face of the earth and given over to feelings of ungroundedness. The voyage into central Africa of Charlie Marlow, the story’s main narrator, is full of this nexus of blocked thoughts and unknowable locations at a time of historical contradictions and rapidly changing value systems. It is, as its author tells us, a trip into another world; but it is also a trip into the realms of the ethical self, the imaginary, the metaphysical, and, especially perhaps, the nowhere-ness of *place*:

I looked around, and I don’t know why, but I assure you that never, never before, did this land, this river, this jungle, the very arch of the blazing sky, appear to me so hopeless and so dark, so impenetrable to human thought (79)

Such is the material of my study, the obscured colonial “out there” as this came to be portrayed in fiction around the opening decades of the twentieth century, and in which narrative locations were made out to be not simply the background of particular environments, accurate or fantastic as these might be, but came to stand for a more dynamic interleaving between self and

¹ This is a commonplace staging of issues. Compare Yi-Fu Tuan’s *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, which describes the stages of being lost in a forest – one can still orient oneself bodily in the world, but such orientations remain ungrounded until one finds a constituting deictic centre (Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 1977: 36). See also Wallace Stevens’s poem, “Anecdote of the Jar” (1923) in *Collected Poems* (New York: Random House, 1954) where the act of orientation enables the focalization by which the ‘wilderness’ is humanized: ‘I placed a jar in Tennessee, / And round it was, upon a hill. / It made the slovenly wilderness / Surround that hill’ (lines 1-4).

world. As with one's thoughts upon being lost in what had hitherto been a familiar setting, the terms of disorientation open into a host of metaphysical speculations upon what it is to know one's way, to have a chosen "path". As common as this may be in the colonial milieu, to read settings as shifting arenas of cultural or existential contestation is not always to posit oppositions between geography and the individual human subject: sometimes the difficulty is precisely cultural or historical, or it can stage moments of moral confusion since, after all, the colonial world is based upon the often inhumane exercise of mercenary justice, and the shadows and mists of Marlow's 'hopeless and so dark' riverbank can be peopled. But one may also find in the midst of such confusions, moments of sublime accord with the magnificence of the physical scene regardless of the men and women moving invisibly, unconsciously, across that now transformed setting. In the face of the literary record, however, these remain no more than moments. As often as not, such examples of successful orientation come to be accompanied by someone or other coming apart at the seams before the uncanniness of the global periphery, the absurdity of imperial mores, the thrumming of the void – out of which experience the terms of being lost as an individual, and the place in which one is lost, might come to share deictic coordinates. To rope together a pair of hackneyed notions, we are not always where we think we are, and when we are lost, even the familiar seems strange. Here, too, the idea of estrangement or defamiliarization seems as appropriate to one's feelings in the world as of the textual poetics by which authors create such effects. This awareness is part of the modernist heritage as well, not least in the work of the Russian Formalist critic, Viktor Shklovsky, who writes of the image becoming defamiliarized through encountering 'a vision of the object instead of serving as a means for knowing it' – that is to say, the image as a phenomenal effect rather than a preconceived essence. For Shklovsky, then, '[t]he purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known' (1965 [1917]: 18). More generally, by defamiliarizing places, things, and events in their texts, authors can link the disorienting potential of phenomena to the sorts of 'hopeless and dark' colonial settings under examination here, and finally, as we shall see, to the more obviously abyssal disposessions of the sublime.

This process is not necessarily universal to modernism or colonialism, let alone, as we shall later note of Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts* (1940), a rural pageant. One might read, for instance, the entirety of Leonard Woolf's sympathetically ventriloquial Ceylonese novel, *The Village in the Jungle* (1913) without finding much in the way of modernism's characteristic tropes, let alone a durational rendering of disorientation vis-à-vis the topography of that former colony. Woolf's central character may be an outcast to his own Sinhalese social origins, but he

is not out of place in the manner of the colonists, and so, perhaps, the tropical surroundings of that text are neither sublime nor, to use another of Marlow's words from "Heart of Darkness", 'impenetrable'. As Woolf explains, he was rather engaged in the work of trying 'somehow or other vicariously to live [the] lives' of the locals with whose ways and lives he claims to have been 'obsessed' (1967: 47). This observation leads to a crucial point concerning the present study, foremost that it is an analysis of a major trope of modernist practice, and more directly, of the colonial modernist experiences from which such practices enter metropolitan aesthetic practice (though this latter subject is to be no more than briefly acknowledged). While I will be looking in detail at the literary and textual structures by which performative landscape treatments are conceived and animated as communicative figures within texts, I have not given myself the task of concurrently discussing how the imperial settings I look at operate as colonial spaces vis-à-vis the "subject" peoples who belong there, nor, indeed, to contextualize how the very different terrains and national cultures underlying fictions located in the non-Western world can only with caution be lumped wholesale into something called *colonial* modernism.

The point is, of course, that the places of the imperial world were all the unique products of differing environments and cultural engagements and communities, and so where my close readings move with Conrad from the Congo to the Malay Archipelago, or in the latter stages of my study, from an invented South American enclave, to settler Australia, to a particular locale of British India, it may appear that I am indeed assembling these distinct spaces into one greatly-branched colonial nowhere. But it should be added, too, that the *fictional poetics* by which these differing "colonial" milieux were raised within literary texts in the larger modernist period *do* show marked similarities in aesthetically minded authors, and so their art-novel treatments of their imagined or experienced surroundings might yet be viewed not only through a single lens polished, as it were, in the workshops of the geographical and phenomenal conditions of the far-flung corners of empire, but with regard to European and North American engagements with the various stylistic developments we have come to associate with modernist experimentation. Given this complexity of material I have had to make some hard choices. As a result, the abstract nature of my approach is less concerned, here, with its potential ethnocentric, postcolonial, or socio-historical fallouts, but the temporal and signficatory dynamics through which fictions engage, ecologically, sensorially, or conceptually, with the phenomena of colonial places. Further, by being concerned more with the era-specific *aesthetics* of the human awareness of "natural" environments as raised in consciousness, my focus arrows in upon the textual dynamics by which engagements with settings are rendered problematic by specific

conditions of mind or topography. That such conditions have peoples and histories and ethical understandings attached to them does not render the more limited goal of working out how colonial modernist tropes of landscape operate invalid, though it does make the comments of the present paragraph all the more necessary for readers expecting a more obviously literary-critical handling of themes.

Equally, it needs stating that this is a study of Western aesthetic practice in a particular realm of literary engagement, here with non-Western landscapes of alterity. To this extent, the work does not reach towards the responses of colonized peoples in the period, nor to the much debated central tenets of postcolonial study. This does not mean my close readings remain closed to the moral deprivations of the colonial period, however defined, nor the extraordinarily rich blending of artistic discourses with the social or historical developments of my target period: bluntly stated, they are not my subject here – then how can one pretend to do the work of reading such developments without having examined, in detail, the poetics by which Western representations of such worlds operate? Colonialism and modernism are both highly contested sites of academic attention for good reason, but as artistic challenges they have yet to be put under the microscope, or not often enough, as the joint occupants of a single if sometimes tortuous slide. Similarly, for reasons of brevity I have left aside the obvious fact that for every stretch of imperial terrain described as empty or dark, there is invariably a return gaze from the shadows threatening to upset the tidiness of their author's aesthetic models. While much trenchant criticism might be made of such instances, it is the mobile aesthetics of the model I stop at. To put the matter quaintly, the thematic stew may be richer than the poetic broth, but we can hardly *start* with the former as though it bore no relation to the latter – to advance a statement made earlier, poetics might be the subject, but I pursue it first in order to understand better what it does.

These observations can be expressed less abstractly. In the case of geographical bewilderment one might simply make out the topographies thus problematized as spaces of unfinished appropriation, figurations of landscape in which the actuality of physical space becomes less important than the intellectual apparatus through which it is eventually to be viewed. Here *place* can be seen to defer to the perspectives by which it comes to be framed and less to the landscape on the ground, reminding us of how landscape is itself a contested term, a way of managing uncertainties (“strangenesses”) between a particular concrete environment and the positions or outlooks from which we are wont to cognize our encounters with it. In the second case, however, where the strangeness of colonial places appears resistant to the terms

already given in the process of colonial normalization, we might be left with the sorts of reversions we just saw Conrad tracing in “Heart of Darkness”, where the ‘dark’ is made to fall from the light of day as surely as, some three decades later, Henri Fauconnier’s Malayan sunshine would set all the boundaries into motion:

Sous le ciel sans voûte, néant blanc, d’où ruisselait de l’incandescence, toutes choses devenaient fluides. Eblouissement, évanouissement.... On ne vit plus dans la réalité, à peine dans l’illusion, on va se résorber en lumière comme ce monde pâle qui s’évapore, comme tous ces mirages autour de soi. (*Malaisie* 1987 [1930]: 189)

[Under the vaultless sky, white void that flooded us with blazing light, all things became fluid. Dazzlement, – ecstasy.... We lived no longer in reality, hardly even in illusion, we were reabsorbed into light like this pallid world that dissolves in vapour, like the mirages that encompass us. (as *The Soul of Malaya* 1965: 133)

In Fauconnier’s account, this dissolving world is flooded by temporal openness such that whatever depth it contains loses its meanings in a filmic unity of fluid abstraction. Time, that marker of the passage from ‘reality’ to ‘illusion’, is now found abandoned within the experiential beyond of vapour and ‘blazing light’. The process is hardly isolated to literary poetics: as Gilles Deleuze observes in his writings on cinematic movement and time, ‘objects, by gaining depth, by losing their contours, are united in duration’ (1986: 11), here the length of time over which such effulgence remains active.² Fauconnier’s observance is of this kind. The bedazzlement he cites is part of the temporal span by which consciousness dissolves into the thingness of the world; and so such dissolving describes a durational event.

I have been stressing the phenomenological dynamics of estrangement from one’s location, yet it is worth remembering that the tropes by which dissolving times and places enter literature are not ideologically or historically innocent. In this study I will not be addressing how and why this is save as asides to my narrower focus on colonial landscape depictions, but there is nonetheless a vast literature on colonial and now postcolonial discourses less interested in the niceties of poetic forms in fiction, and in which attention to form is a retrograde affair. All the same, even when transported to the colonial wilderness and made to face what the Nigerian

² Consideration should be given to Gilles Deleuze’s readings of a figure dealt with in more detail in Chapter Three below, Henri Bergson. As suggested by ‘the profound thesis of the first chapter of [Bergson’s] *Matter and Memory*: (1) there are not only instantaneous images, that is, immobile sections of movement; (2) there are movement-images which are mobile sections of duration; (3) there are, finally, time-images, that is, duration-images, change-images, relation-images which are beyond movement itself’ (1986: 11). It may be said that the present study seeks to accommodate, to the performative aspects of the abyssal landscape, the poetic wealth of the Deleuzian “time-image” to tropes of the void in relation to the colonial modernist depiction of exotic settings.

writer Chinua Achebe later infamously excoriated as Conrad's unmaking of "the other world" (1977: 783), we should not be called back from understanding how that 'other world' is made or operates as a (more or less) grounded setting for fictional representation. As the critic Lionel Trilling dubiously stated of "Heart of Darkness", 'one of the great points' of the novella is how 'Marlow speaks of the primitive life of the jungle not as being noble or charming or even free but as base and sordid – and for *that* reason compelling' (in Parry 2005: 39) – a reading in which the 'primitive' and the sordid are all too readily aligned. The point, however, is that neither do such misapprehensions and paradoxes need to be kept separate in pursuing questions of form, but should be seen as jointly encoded in them. This is an outlook shared in John Wylie's survey of landscapes from the vantage of human geography, a work in which a landscape is from the first 'a tension between proximity and distance, body and mind, sensuous immersion and detached observation' (2007: 1). While we could add to this list an awareness of the political, racial, and broadly humanist tensions through which landscapes are created and read, such tensions are not always forceful. For Conrad's narrator in "Heart of Darkness" the sense of bewilderment creeps up before he has even arrived along the river, at which point the geographical facts of his location give way to that 'hopeless', 'dark', and 'impenetrable' presence (79). What we find with Marlow, then, is a located encounter (for he knows more or less *where* he is) that is as ungraspably present to the senses as it is a cognitive impossibility. But the idea that the aporetic aspects of terrain need not be negative is part of the imperial record, too. For the French writer and adventurer, Pierre Loti, travelling with a caravan across the Ottoman-controlled Sinai desert leaves him confronting a less despairing though nonetheless impenetrable 'empty infinity' from which

nous prit une sorte d'ivresse et de frisson de la solitude; un besoin de nous enfoncer là dedans davantage, un besoin irréflechi, un désir physique de courir dans le vent jusqu'à une élévation prochaine, pour voir plus loin encore, plus loin dans l'attrante immensité...

[we were taken by a sort of drunken thrill at that solitude; a need to force ourselves into it, an unreflecting need, a physical desire to run in the wind towards the next rise, to see further still into that impelling immensity...] (1993: 20)

Whether the 'unreflecting' brush with emptiness is positive or negative, one yet finds an ordering apparatus. As we shall see of his Australian novel, *Kangaroo* (1923), D. H. Lawrence's protagonist is seen confronting a view across the bush towards a distant uplands – only rather than the intervening topographical expanse being set out, we find notification of what is not there, a plain with 'plenty of space, yet spreading grey for miles and miles', and with 'all this

hoary space of bush between' (76-7). This recourse to absence in relation to an actual terrain is typical of depictions of open country ("there's so much open space here"), as, indeed, is the positing of thematic content for that spatial reach. In *Kangaroo*, that hidden substance is immediately qualified as a 'subtle, remote, formless beauty' (77), and this is precisely the point: both the topographical real, and the topological categories with which it is cognized, come together in that formless 'between' to produce its aesthetic, in this case the 'open space' of beauty. Elsewhere in the novel, the central figure is actively discomfited by the tangibility of otherness: 'There was a presence. He looked at the weird, white dead trees, and into the hollow distances of the bush. Nothing! Nothing at all!' (14). The eighteenth century theorist, Edmund Burke, long ago identified such spaces of *nothingness* as productive abstractions, 'ideas which present no distinct image to the mind' (1990 [1757]: 158-9). We will not spend time wondering how Burke's notions of sublime modalities operate in modernism (see note 32), but his understanding of how *imageless* anxiety produces its own brand of ambience is one we need to keep in mind here, as where, to cite one instance, the panicked title character of *Almayer's Folly* (1895) finds himself falling from nowhere to nowhere:

Day after day, month after month, year after year, he had been falling, falling, falling; it was a smooth, round, black thing, and the black walls had been rushing upwards with wearisome rapidity. A great rush, the noise of which he fancied he could hear yet; and now, with an awful shock, he had reached the bottom (78)

The locale in which the unsuccessful Dutch trader, Almayer, feels himself plummeting might be imaginary and the 'noise' entirely psychosomatic, but apart from intending a continuous experience ('falling, falling, falling'), that particular abyss is yet for him a 'smooth, round, black' actuality. Moreover, to the extent that its representational qualities (as metaphors of epistemological loss) are turned into a phenomenal setting, Almayer's tumble suggests the mobilization of figural categories as a theatricalized space that is yet resistant to any one 'distinct image' as Burke foresaw. Yet the affective tone is unmistakable: unable to resolve the tensions between reality and his needs, Almayer is on his way "down", a self-othering victim of his own machinations. Conrad has him drop through an abstract void, but what of characters who experience loss in a more actual world? In Malcolm Lowry's *Ultramarine* (1933), the author's fictional alter ego is given to admit, 'I am on a ship, and I am going to Japan. Lost. Lost. Lost' (44) though the ship is not at all 'lost'. Or what of instances in which "dislocation" itself becomes the 'object' of narration, as with the 'empty space' focalized by the downed flyers in

Saint-Exupéry's *Terre des Hommes* (1939)³ with its 'dazzling brightness' and mirage-filled plays of light (130), a now unknown waste definable solely by luminescence? So perhaps being lost somewhere is little different than Almayer's placeless 'smooth, round, black' version – the important point being that in either rendering one ends up precisely *nowhere*.

Here the idea of tension noted by Wylie does not quite convey the affliction faced by fictional characters in the face of geographical or cultural disorientation. Almayer might reach the floor of his abyss, but as we will see of Jim's jump into the 'everlasting deep hole' in *Lord Jim* (125), sometimes there is no actual environment to furnish a ground for being. But in fiction, at least, perfectly solid topographical features can have a similar effect. As Conrad puts it in "Heart of Darkness", 'you lost your way on that river as you would in a desert, and butted all day against shoals, trying to find the channel, till you thought yourself bewitched and cut off from everything you had known once – somewhere far away – in another existence perhaps' (48): the shoals are actual enough, only they are not part of 'existence'. The foregrounding of places as being no more existentially founded than Conrad's river is essential to the landscape discourse I am after here, for in accounting for the annihilatory forms utilized in the texts under examination, we need to ask what authors hope to communicate by raising geographical encounters as analogues of interiority; or why, almost unavoidably in many modernist colonial narratives, a metaphysics of absence is employed to convert the gap of alterity into 'another existence perhaps'.

Textual questions also abound concerning how the intentional aspects of disorienting landscapes are narrated. Is 'empty space' merely an effect produced through the way in which material places are framed in novels, that is to say, as a function of the mental spaces thus focalized? How does language rehearse the epistemological failures by which material landscapes come to be effaced by distance and the movement of light forward from modernism, in which objects in space become 'slowly lost in it, their outlines erased and consumed' (Damon Galgut 1995: 56)? Or does the presentational problem of what constitutes physical and mental space in literature come down to what narrative theorist Franz Stanzel understands as the incompleteness of literary space at all times, the simple fact that unlike the spaces of the visual arts, textual 'spaces' can never be fully actualized (1984: Ch. 5.2)?⁴ More basically still, how

³ I am citing from the 1942 volume translated as *Wind, Sand, and Stars*.

⁴ Much work has been done on the incompleteness of texts. The role of 'textual cues' in the construction of indefinite or disorienting settings has been carried over more or less narratologically "benign" terms such as hypothetical, fuzzy, indeterminate, gappy, or paraliptic narratives (Genette's term for the leaving out of information presumably available to narrators). A central figure here in the theorization of gaps is

does the fictional presentation of ‘empty’ landscapes in a still colonial modernism avoid being sidetracked by the task of representing one mode of being through another, sense through language, interiority via location, one’s place through what one does with it in the mind? Paul Armstrong’s *The Challenge of Bewilderment: Understanding and Representation in James, Conrad, and Ford* offers a unified view onto several of these categories by showing how ‘laying bare the epistemology of representation’ opens the door to ‘making explicit [a work’s] hermeneutic implications’ (270). In setting out his reading of the productive poetics of ‘bewilderment’, Armstrong posits ‘the power and ubiquity of contingency’, but immediately raises the theoretical stakes by claiming absence as ‘a fundamental condition of existence’ (110). It is easy to see this qualification as defining one more poststructural space of becoming, but I want to hold back from this move in order to explore disorientation as primarily a concrete or sensory actuality – a modality not just of language’s variability or cultural acclimatization, but a function of the encounter with landscape as an ecological dynamic.

On top of the linguistic possibilities described by Armstrong through Derrida’s notification of ‘unrestrained signification’ (185), and still to remain within the context of Conrad’s oeuvre wherein ‘the negativity and insubstantiality of human constructs’ (111) is manifest, there is yet an older trope at work which we will need to discard. E. M. Forster raises it in his 1923 sketches on neo-colonial Alexandria, *Pharos and Pharillon*, citing Edward Dyer’s Elizabethan conceit ‘My mynde to me a kingdome is’ and then promptly abandoning all such interior imaginaries as weakly ‘conventional’ (1962: 93). In this study, too, the solipsistic and generic conversion of mental realms into discrete representational landscapes will not be a focus since such processes obscure the crucial synaesthetic aspects by which the colonial modernist “nowhere” takes on sensory presence in fictional texts. As Todd Bender says of impressionism, the key transitional point occurs at ‘the fleeting moment of intersection when the exterior world impinges on a sensitive consciousness’ (1997: 6), to which I will later append the idea that where the literary representation of consciousness is involved, the impingement not only runs both ways, but does so upon its ‘sensitive’ *sensory* aspect. Some of these reciprocal instances are

Lubomír Doležal (1998). A related frame of Doležal’s, ‘zero texture’ (1995: 201), comes into play where an author ‘writes nothing’ about a particular object or action and so ‘produces zero texture – no fictional fact comes into existence, and thus a gap appears in the fictional world’. See “Fictional Worlds: Density, Gaps, and Inference” (*Style* 29 (Summer 1995): 201-15). This is a different order of interrogation than, say, Marie-Laure Ryan’s (1991) work on possible worlds as subsuming unactualizable or psychosomatically projected actions, places, or states. It may be seen that the abyssal forms I am tracking would appear to suggest, as a figural effect, the paradoxical actualization of zero texture forms – that is to say, the absence of phenomena, or even absence per se, is poetically brought to presence.

overt, as where Virginia Woolf imagines the young lovers in *The Voyage Out* standing in the tropical night while the ‘darkness poured down profusely, and left them with scarcely any *feeling* of life’ (273, my emphasis), that is to say, where the *profuseness* of that darkness is synaesthetically projected onto it by the strained emotions of Woolf’s lovers. Elsewhere one needs to work harder to see not just where colonial estrangement is underwritten by conditions on the ground, but to track how the mental operations by which deserts and seas or the tropic night are rendered textually transferrable through sensory aporia – to point to another instance from Lowry’s first book, we will see how the narrator’s observance that ‘[o]utside was the roar of the sea and the darkness’ comes to map itself across both the phenomenal and the figural realm (*op. cit.* 160).

A more complex argument will need to be raised to distinguish my target trope from the more spiritually directed spaces of the transcendent Romantic sublime, especially where these imply the internalization of values, let alone the links between universal meanings and what we saw Dyer call his mental ‘kingdome’. In distinction to the connective promise of the romantics, the modernist sublime I am tracking is less likely to defer to meanings beyond the subject, and so one tends to find in this era neither an interior discourse equal to the supposed profundity of the cosmos, nor an inter-subjective arena for shared values – what the cultural geographer Douglas Porteous would have us put back together as a now more groundable ‘*paysage intérieur*’ or ‘landscape of the mind’ (1990: 8).⁵ One example should do to sustain this last point. For instance, the modernist erosion of a shared sublimity accords with what the late nineteenth century South African feminist intellectual and writer, Olive Schreiner, has to say about the manner in which the solipsistic isolation of her South African setting works on the psyche. In *The Story of an African Farm*, she shows how rather than communing with the open spaces and skies of the veld, ‘ourselves beat back upon ourselves’, underlining the hollow reflexivity by which topographical emptiness presses upon the mind (1999 [1883]: 128). Still, by the time of Schreiner’s era, the presumed inwardness of the individual in the face of natural emptiness was only with increasing difficulty aligned with the transcendental strain of nature appreciation. As the American transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson had put it nearly half a century earlier, ‘[p]articular natural facts are symbols of particular spiritual facts’ (1957 [1836]: 31). Here Emerson appears to be foregrounding how the presentation of nature is as much about the *formation* of the individual subject as what that subject makes of the world, an insight that would

⁵ Porteous effects his analysis through ‘scapes’ – inscape, homescape, bodyscape, otherscapes, and so on – formulations he defines through the exotic settings of Malcolm Lowry and Graham Greene.

later give rise to numerous disavowals. As one pioneer of place representation reminds us in his study on social domination and the ideological filters by which particular terrains are viewed, ‘Landscape might be seen more profitably as something like the “dreamwork” of imperialism’ (Mitchell 2002: 10),⁶ at any rate, a colonial version of a here Emersonian symbolic transference. Schreiner’s protagonists may not have read the American sage as closely as their author did, but in the stony veld the pressure to conform to the cycle of projections is complicated by the fact the screen of such *spiritual facts* has only small ‘hairy-leaved bushes’ and an empty sky to work with – at which point ‘we get up in great fear and run home as hard as we can [...] We never quite lose that feeling of self again’ (*op. cit.*). Faced with a recalcitrant environment, the terms of transcendence have little symbolic purchase, and the romantic self, as of the imperial subject, can only move towards an abyssal foundation as a means of making something of that fearsome ‘feeling of self’. W. J. T. Mitchell’s “dreamwork” might still be active, but its terms are readily transposed onto the negative realms of aporia and disorientation.

Here I might add that my notification of abyssal forms in these very different writers refers to the aporetic or unrepresentable “contents” of discourse where geographical places (as mental constructs) are seen to be sites of alterity, and not, therefore, of mythical framings of the geography of meaninglessness, or more recent theorizations of the *mise-en-abyme* as the process by which thought or representation undergoes infinite or self-reflexive regression.⁷ The nowhere places of colonial modernity may indeed involve such regressions within the subject, but the abyssal forms I mean pertain more specifically to tropes of place in which the encounter with alterity becomes sensorially or performatively actual – in which, so to speak, the abstract sensation of being nowhere has transformed itself into a somewhere.

Contextualized literary spaces through the work of cultural geographers such as Wylie, Porteous, or Mitchell might suggest that this is to be a study of the cultures of place along the lines of what has come to be known as *geopoetics*, *ecocriticism*, or *geocriticism*. The latter, for instance, has for its impetus the idea that we should be tracking ‘not only those places that readers and writers experience by means of texts, but also the experience of space and place

⁶ I should note that the imperialism referenced in these pages has almost nothing to do with the multi-kingdom annexations of emperors, but the capitalist ideology of economic aggrandizement and lines of flow and control. For an excellent *political* discussion of the issues, see Bongie (1991).

⁷ See Lucien Dällenbach’s *Le Récit spéculaire. Essai sur la mise en abyme* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1977) for this author’s updating of André Gide’s identification of the “story within a story” or “image within an image” form as essayed in the latter’s *La Tentative amoureuse* (1893).

within ourselves' (Tally 8) – including, presumably, spaces of disorientation.⁸ The reason for my not pursuing one of these *geocritical* approaches requires comment. In the first place, the impetus for many of these “new” disciplinary conversations lies with the groundbreaking spatial discourses of the French social theorists Michel Foucault (2002 [1966]) and Henri Lefebvre (1991 [1974]) whose ideas on, respectively, the discourse and the production of space continue to inform multidisciplinary work on the spatial paradigms congruent with global power structures, textual exegesis, environmental literary study, or the exotic other.⁹ In a more obviously novelistic context, one might also engage the self-styled “spatial history” of the celebrated cultural critic Paul Carter (1987) whose work has inflected, among a host of possibilities, the separate literary geographies of Andrew Thacker (2002, 2003) and Graham Huggan (1989b, 1994). Indeed, a body of theory has grown up around the idea of literary mapping, a development that has also given rise to the textual atlases of Franco Moretti in whose oeuvre literary criticism morphs into the frames and charts of cartography (1998, 2005). While the topological aspects of this work can have relevance to the fictional poetics reviewed below, the phenomenological and spatial aporia which cartography suppresses in its translation of narrative events into graphic representation may be assumed to reproduce at least one of the problems this paper was designed to overcome. More particularly, the issue of what is gained and lost in the poetic conversion of physical space to representational topology is not always clear in critical outlooks, an issue as important to our understanding of what fictional places do as that of the issue of who controls or produces the spatial paradigms behind such processes.

⁸ This is the term of the French geographer, Bertrand Westphal (2011 [2007]), with his awareness that ‘cultural binarism’ is at the root of many interpretations of colonial literature. For Westphal, the response ‘of the individual in the face of the Other’ is the tale of the ‘confrontations between the *hic et nunc* of a being immersed in a referential context and the *hic et nunc* outside the circle of the familiar, outside the perceptual field’ (122-3).

⁹ In updating the mediations and compressions by which spatiotemporality operates in geographical study, human geography has sought to engage a variety of spatial dynamics implicating the individual. Space here can be an enabling arena for human praxis (A. Jiménez, A. “On Space as Capacity.” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 9 (1) 2003: 137-53), or more revealingly for my purposes, a site of feminist agency as in Gillian Rose’s *Feminism and Geography* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993); Doreen Massey’s *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1994). The effort to feminize space has also folded into more general statements of the dynamic multiplicities such arenas intend. Massey’s *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005) stands out in this regard, joining older statements concerning, for instance, fluid zones of intersection at the confluence of place and space as forums through which the fictional (at any rate, narrated) experience of dislocational aporia might be mounted – E. S. Casey’s notion of ‘being in place differently’ (*The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1997: 337), or John Thrift’s observation concerning ‘how networks echo back and forth’ as an associational *place* embracing ‘all manner of spaces and times’ (“Steps to an Ecology of Place,” in D. Massey, J. Allen, and P. Sarre (eds.), *Human Geography Today* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999: 310-13).

While I will make recourse to some of the theorists I have just named, my focus yet remains with the ambient and performative aspects literary poetics make possible rather than the geographical or postcolonial concepts by which so much recent work on global literary space proceeds. To this extent, where Westphal's *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces* would certainly furnish the grounding for a study of literary landscapes, I have left its tenets in abeyance since these themselves rehearse a series of theoretical positions so well mapped, and for a long time so prevalent, that whatever findings I might make would merely "intervene" in previous work rather than stake out a new view. Do we need, for instance, another tip of the hat to Foucault's *heterotopia*, perhaps through one of Bakhtin's chronotopes, or another analytic platform citing, together, Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, Gilles Deleuze, Fredric Jameson, Edward Soja, David Harvey, and so on?¹⁰ My point is not that the awarenesses I am pursuing here are not part of the armoury of any or all of these crucial figures; rather, the scenographic imaginings of the literary figures at the centre of this study can be seen to provide a more poetically structured perspective by which to decipher the performative atmospheres through which the colonial landscape is most effectively staged in modernism, and by which such settings come to frame consciousness.

As a shorthand way of differentiating my project from existing models, I want to take up a recent volume of the cultural geographer, Derek Gregory, whose work, *The Colonial Present*:

¹⁰ *Heterotopia* appears in the sixth principle of Foucault's *Of Other Spaces* (1986 [1966]). Such spaces denote zones in which 'all the other real sites that can be found within the culture are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted'. But what of fictional spaces presented as aporetic or empty, in which the focalizing agent can discern no known practice? For Foucault, the mirror and focal point, cease to function and the place so occupied is 'at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal' – that is to say, no 'virtual point' acts as prism, only the narrated or self-narrating self and the world he or she creates. More recently a loosely defined and non-essentialist dynamics of "becoming" has formed a key trajectory in postcolonial discourse theory. One result of this work has been the elevation of space as a theoretical locus in lieu of place. In separate ways, Spivak's attention to feminist, deconstructive or "late Marxist" space in *Toward a Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1999), Bhabha's 'hybrid' or 'third' space of cultural practice in *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), and Huggan's posthuman 'mappings' (1989, 1994) exemplify the shift away from scholarly engagement with the lived environment. As with critic John Noyes's formulations of 'social and subjective space' (1992: 62-3), this shift has been accompanied by various re-engagements with Marxism, 'Derridean metaphysics', and psychoanalysis. Note, too, the dialogues of space as the dynamization (or becoming-ness) of the 'between' spaces privileged as 'hybridity' in Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), and as 'ethnoscapes' and 'ideoscapes' in Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996). Despite the shared interests of cultural geography and postcolonial literary study, it is apparent that the binary approaches to space and place as charted by, say, P. Cloke's and R. Johnston's *Spaces of Geographical Thought: Deconstructing Human Geography's Binaries* (London: Sage, 2005: 1-20) cannot fully explicate the complex interactions of interiority, physical setting, and language in the literary record.

Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq (2004), foregrounds the ‘power and performative force of colonial modernity’ (4). Recognizing that Gregory’s analysis foregrounds *modernity*, not modernism, it is no less obvious that if I have given myself the lesser task of worrying over the poetics of the ‘performative’ in a more overt way than Gregory’s study of ‘colonial modernity’s productions of the other *as other*’ (*ibid.*), I am yet indebted to his observations. It is instructive to pursue Gregory’s awareness of how spatial understandings are theatricalized in cultural outlooks, not least where he writes of a ‘pure performative’ in which ‘performance here as elsewhere resides in the spacing between what happens and what does not happen, between what is seen and what is not seen’ (140). If I may leave aside the zones of inter-societal misery Gregory is addressing for the presentational stylistics of human geographical engagement with specific places, we might still ask to what degree the ‘spacing between’ indicated by the performative might turn out to be one more endlessly fertile trope of ‘elsewhere’. In fact, Gregory indicates his awareness of such nuances by having already steered his readers towards what is involved in a performance-based model. Foremost of these is how the performative ‘*produces the effects that it names*’ (18; original emphasis), an insight aimed at the theatrical effects of the ‘citationary structure’ by which our own era of Orientalism operates.¹¹ Where, for instance, Edward Said writes how the colonialists’ ‘idea of representation is a theatrical one’, Gregory goes on to qualify Orientalist production thus: ‘Its categories, codes, and conventions shape the practices of those who draw upon it, actively constituting its object (most obviously, “the Orient”) in such a way that this structure is as much a *repertoire* as an archive’ (*ibid.*). The word “repertoire” is revealing, here, indicating a contents and a form together, one that I would describe as a poetic modality that carries with it the potential for its own counter-critique. This is Gregory’s sense, too, underlined where he quotes not just Said but an Iraqi theatre director who indicates how in the theatre ‘one can perform the dividing line between fiction and reality, present and future’ (*ibid.*).¹² Similarly, Judith Butler’s influential work on the performative is brought in to underline the often double-edged fecundity of performance – from which Gregory is able to note how the performative ‘space of potential is always conditional, always precarious, but every repertory performance of

¹¹ It needs to be stated that Gregory is here addressing the ‘existential meaning of the land’ for the Palestinians and its ‘de-realization’ (141) in international politics – so reminding us that aesthetic forms are not inherently innocent.

¹² For convenience I will collect Gregory’s references for this part of his book now: for Said, see *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1978: 63); for the theatre director, see Nuha al-Radi, *Baghdad Diaries: A Woman’s Chronicle of War and Exile* (New York: Vintage, 2003: 151); for Butler, see *Bodies That Matter* (London: Routledge, 1993: 241); and Soja, *Third Space: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996) – though here Gregory does not cite the passage I do.

the colonial present carries with it the twin possibilities of either reaffirming and even radicalizing the hold of the colonial past on the present *or* undoing its enclosures' (19). When applied to an earlier colonial world, the theatrical motif may be fraught with moral gravity, as I argue below, but it is simultaneously no more open to ethical tensions than the equally performative “nowhere” landscapes I am investigating here, and which, in common with the “theatre” of imperialism, incorporate spatial practices into both the specific environments being represented, and the cultural and aesthetic prerogatives by which such representations are constructed.

Gregory's approach also emphasizes how the human geographical and literary record is inflected by the insight, which he links to the “spatial” geographer, Edward Soja, that space is a practice or a “doing”, a *way* of both encoding and reading back otherwise recalcitrant or simply hazy thematic contents and the contradictions they embody – in this case the almost invisible ‘Thirdspace’ theorizations by which Soja reifies the space in which ‘everything comes together’ (1996: 57). The list Soja provides for this zone of flows and exchanges is as impossibly vague as it is an important benchmark by which to see not just why my study is required, but why we need to revisit the modernist roots of spatial thinking as an *occasioning*. Thus where Soja collects under his rubric, ‘subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history’ (*ibid.*), it should become apparent that “space” as a theoretical trope can intend a promiscuous dynamics of transformation and intervention as much as it does here the (aesthetic) representation of a shared ecology of embodied consciousness vis-à-vis a geographical environment. Gregory appears alert to such proclivities, calling them ‘Pandora’s Spaces’ in the middle of observing that such ““paradoxical”” constructs ‘are not always and not everywhere the emancipatory formations that some writers have taken them to be’ (258). (It is for this reason that Gregory makes allusion to the myth of Pandora, the opening of whose *pithos* jar releases a host of academically performative evils.) Thirdspace formations are, accordingly, a postmodern variant of a poetics of signification, one that I see being inaugurated most comprehensively in the formative phases of modernist aesthetic practice – Cézanne’s landscape that ‘thinks itself in me’ – and which, as Gregory acknowledges, ‘*produces the effects that it names*’. For this reason I have chosen to bracket the geographically inflected literary spaces at the centre of my inquiry in order to hold off the effects they “name”, so better to focus upon the poetic strategies by which affective and

thematic content is poetically produced. But I mean produced in a dynamic way, as a scenographic and so concrete “becoming” of landscape in which, again with Cézanne, and now more firmly in the modernist era, ‘I am its consciousness’ is less an artistic conceit than a knowing notification of aesthetic form.

One result of the nexus of ideological space and geographical study Gregory cites has been awareness that modernism and imperialism cannot but be ideological bedfellows. In this vein, Michael Valdez Moses’s essay on Conrad’s anti-colonial stance, “Disorientalism: Conrad and the Imperial Origins of Modernist Aesthetics” (2007), concerns an area of colonial studies I have so far left largely to the side, the aesthetics of empire by which the presumed chaos of the colonial natural scene is made out as an excuse for the spatial ubiquity of the imperialist project. While relations of power will not be examined in my study, Moses’s critique of the view that the still colonial era of modernism’s flowering was largely an Orientalizing affair offers indispensable insights into the paradoxical “presence” given of abyssal landscape figures in early twentieth century colonial texts, as well as the way that such a poetics *performs* content in the manner indicated by Gregory. For this reason, as well as Moses’s more pointed recognition that modernism was first taught to locate thematic significance in the chaotic conditions of the colonial outlands, we might look at his thesis before addressing the way in which the tropes of modernist imperial fictions might actually function.

As distinct from the actual work of geopolitical “taming” in the name of imperial control, Moses asserts that the discourse of Western mastery in the face of the world is partly an historical fallacy, and so he sees the West’s nineteenth century colonial engagements as being as much about cognitive and cultural self-erasure as turning foreign lands into receptacles for Western aggrandizement. Rather than seeing modernism as a properly metropolitan tendency, Moses takes the disorienting encounter with a colonial otherness as an important impetus upon modernist modes of thought and representational strategies. For Moses, the collision of views and contrary atmospheres we find so powerfully evoked in a text such as Conrad’s “Heart of Darkness” provides a necessary counter-narrative to outlooks in which writings against empire were the product of a later epoch. Moses accordingly observes that it is not Western mastery and imposition one finds in the exercising of the imperial project in the face of seemingly peripheral spaces of otherness, but as with Conrad’s best known novella, epistemological and phenomenological failure:

If, as Conrad’s anonymous narrator would have it, the ‘tranquil waterway’ in which the *Nellie* is moored leads to ‘the uttermost ends of the earth... into an immense heart of

darkness,' and the Thames and the Congo form one continuous stream, then the cultural cargo that the great river bears back to the European capital includes not only the tarnished booty of imperial conquest but also the disorienting effects of the colonial encounter. (67)

Setting aside the ramblings of the ivory trader and station agent at the centre of the text, Moses explores the Western failure of accommodation to the bewildering physical reality of the 'dark' continent. Tracing Conrad's tracing of the cognitive, moral, and epistemological challenges of the Congo basin, Moses, like Marlow, sees the sensory experience of that environment as being not just existentially threatening, but that the disclosure of aporia defines an *actual* state:

it seemed unnatural, like a state of trance. Not the faintest sound of any kind could be heard. You looked on amazed, and began to suspect yourself of being deaf – then the night came suddenly, and struck you blind as well. (56)

Deaf and blind, yes, but the effect of these sensory deprivations is one of being comprehensively blocked to the degree that the aporetic comes to define a "scene" (this is my term, not Moses's) in a manner accommodating of modernism's nascent belief that contemporary industrial existence might be so compromised. But this is not quite Moses's point. If his designation for colonial perplexity, *disorientalism* is yet an apt and evocative name for an important process in modernist technique, it does not describe the projection of aporia onto the colonial milieu, but the finding of it. Therefore, he concentrates upon the nature of the modes of expression he sees being created in response to the actual physical and epistemological challenges of the colonial scene, including the kinds of "nowhere" figures these give rise to, for instance where the Congo is described as '[a]n empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest' (1994: 48). Moses's insights are not limitable to "Heart of Darkness", but can be traced elsewhere in Conrad's oeuvre. As we find of the river landscape of the short story, "The Lagoon", composed two years earlier, there is no overt message to be drawn from the setting, no possible reading by which the wilderness may offer a meaningful and stable environment for human endeavour, only 'the breathless silence of the world' (2012: 156). Moreover, the occluded African scene, like those of the Malay fictions encountered below, is neither the site of mastery nor of its narrative means, and so we are given Marlow's outbursts as to the futility of relating the story of the renegade trader and idealist apologist, Kurtz: 'Do you see him? Do you see the story? Do you see anything?' (39). Such outbursts signal the end of Marlow's road, that turn in the river where one falls into 'the notion of being captured by the incredible which is of the very essence of dreams' (*ibid.*). Thus rather than underlining the need for better imperial

systems or pluckier and perhaps less imaginative agents, the colonial rhetoric Conrad has Marlow cite for us collapses into individual failure: ‘it is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one’s existence – that which makes its truth, its meaning – its subtle and penetrating essence’ (*ibid.*). To return to Moses’s thesis, it is this sort of epistemological and spatial bewilderment that leads him to view the tale as comprising a *modernist* chaos transferable to the developing urban reality in Europe, to its own bends in the river.

Moses’s paper touches upon another fundamental area for my study. While “Heart of Darkness” might offer its metaphysical shadings to ‘mere incidents of the surface’, and so shunt the actuality behind such phenomena into a higher domain, Moses does not see the sublime as a valid term for that domain. As he states it, the call to the sublime has less to do with poetics or difficulties of reception than its entrenched position with art-historical discourse: ‘The temptation is for the ill-equipped artist to render the African landscape *as if* it were just another version of its European counterpart; hence the European concept of the “picturesque” or “sublime” is inappropriately imposed upon a subject ill-suited to its application’ (55).¹³ Indeed, while considering the possibility of transferring literary or culturalized notions from one setting to another, Moses’s thesis is more interested in the colonial roots of modernist estrangement than what one does with it: the ‘strain placed upon Marlow’s lexical reserves by his imperial encounter with a radically alien place’, or the ‘inadequacy of the particular set of representational tools’ by which Europeans tried to capture such otherness (55). For these reasons, and without mentioning Paul Armstrong’s not dissimilar focus on “bewilderment” (see page 8 above), Moses posits a new hollow colonial poetics of alterity, founded as much in modernist dealings with an imperial *out there* as of the avant-garde tendencies of the cosmopolitan centres:

Thus it is that Conrad, via his narrator, Marlow, improvises an experimental set of representational devices meant to capture both the subjective experience and objective lineaments of a non-European, nonurban, and premodern reality, and in so doing, he helps generate a new *style* that we come to recognize retrospectively as *modernist*, a style subsequently employed and readapted by himself and other literary artists as the “new” (and consequently) alienating conditions of the modern European imperial city. (56)

¹³ Moses leans heavily upon J. M. Coetzee’s reading of subliminal projections onto the South African interior in *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (1988). In that text, the ‘quest for an authentic language’ will not be solved from outside even where ‘language, consciousness, and landscape are interrelated’ (7): in short, how does one make ‘a home in Africa for a consciousness formed in and by a language whose history lies on another continent’ (173)? Coetzee thus emphasizes the asymmetry of words and concepts bearing on the European creation of landscapes from the ungraspable hinterlands of South Africa.

More generally, by subverting Said's *Orientalism* (1978), Moses's essay not only finds colonialist 'disorientalism' to be a crucial influence upon European aesthetics, but he claims a formative role for modernism in subsequent thought, specifically with respect to the postmodern slant to postcolonial cultural production and academic readings of it. In this sense, it is possible to draw lines between what Moses sees occurring in modernism and the formalist interplay featured in later periods. Here I want to illustrate the potential Moses brings to the fore by bringing the notion of the sublime back into the picture as a way of contextualizing how abyssal treatments of landscape communicate significance in modernism. This precise task has been suggested before, albeit in Sandra Dodson's article on the sublime as a *political* factor in Conrad's oeuvre. Reflecting briefly and brilliantly upon that author's landscape presentations, Dodson cites the way light falls into the gloom of Patusan as 'into an abyss' (*LJ* 238) while noting how '[i]n a self-reflexive, post-Kantian move, the topos of sublime, abyssal landscapes in Conrad is always already a simulacrum of the emptiness underlying all discursive, ideological constructs' (1998: 20). Further to providing the telling, and in this study, the much used phrase, 'abyssal landscapes', Dodson goes on to cite Fredric Jameson's discussion of modernity's existential dynamics wherein an act of self in the world 'suddenly yawns and discloses at its heart a void which is at one with the temporary extinction of the subject' (1983: 249; *c.f.* Dodson 33). By tying together Jameson's political views with Dodson's outlook on nature's 'ungraspable [...] indeterminacy' vis-à-vis the Conradian individual (20), we once more see how the individual and his or her (presumably) natural environment come to share terms. Apart from providing a highly suggestive shorthand expression for my own work, to which I acknowledge her bringing together terms along a trajectory leading from Schiller, Nietzsche, and de Man (including her notification of *abyssal*), Dodson's discussion may be extended towards my intention of seeing how, in the face of possibly "empty" or unused or chaotic terrains, a critique of imperial modernity might be mounted through the representational poetics of topographical description, not least, to repeat her words, by tracing how 'sublime, abyssal' aspects of landscapes are constituted as a means of complicating notions of nature's meaning (*op. cit.*).

The implications of Dodson's purview can be updated from the generic realm of our own era. For instance (and with a little patience), the connections between early and late century thought about the presumed contents of poetic forms can be read in Jean-François Lyotard's infamous assertion that '[a] work can become modern only if it is first postmodern. Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant' (1984: 81). While Moses makes no mention of Lyotard, it is productive to think

Moses's argument through the paradoxical terms raised by that thinker, especially where Lyotard claims that modernism's modes of significance are 'nostalgic' for allowing 'the unrepresentable' to communicate the burden of a 'missing contents' (81). Indeed, the hollow modernist 'style' Moses finds in a colonial setting has something in common not only with the erasures of content Lyotard notes of the period, but the postmodern turn from content to what Lyotard calls 'allusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented' (82). Despite Moses's suspicions that the long-standing discourse of the sublime is too specific in its cultural derivation to be of much use in the imperial wilderness, Lyotard's attention to the unrepresentable zone of the conceivable offers inroads for the equally contentless "sublime" version of the modernist disorientation Moses draws from Conrad's jungle and river settings.¹⁴ Further, by allowing the missing contents of modernist nostalgia to fall away in lieu of the openness of their presentation as a 'new' awareness of alienation, the *disorientalizing* encounter with the colonial abyss yet manages to parade its paradoxical contents – that is to say, still with Moses, the disorientalization Conrad's form sets in motion is still the vehicle by which his thematic meanings are made possible.¹⁵

By proposing a close reading of the structural poetics by which modernist colonial landscapes operate in fictional texts, the aporetic if no less geographically apt actual conditions fuelling the depiction of abyssal landscapes will not only become clearer, but, as Moses indicates, students of the larger period will be better placed to read modernist disorientation as a stage in the development of postmodern conceits concerning the elevation of literary means over the contextual issues they might otherwise have brought forward. At this stage, I would only

¹⁴ The notion that there is a category of sublime art or aesthetics has been put to question, notably by Jacques Rancière in his *Aesthetics and Its Discontents* (2009 [2004]), where he carps at Lyotard's passing over the ethical issues by which art distinguishes itself from other kinds of productions. For Rancière, the sublime merely 'translates the incapacity of the imagination to grasp' its object 'as a totality'. Rancière's fuller statement is of interest: 'Imagination's incapacity to present a totality to reason, analogous with its feeling of powerlessness before the wild forces of nature, takes us from the domain of aesthetics to that of morality', and finally towards 'entry into the ethical universe' (89).

¹⁵ In "Postcolonial romanticisms? The Sublime and Negative Capability in Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" and J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*" (*Postcolonial Text*, Vol. 3, No 1, 2007), Philip Dickinson claims that Conrad's text 'does not suggest the sublime's adequacy as an aesthetic tool' since such moments 'are always at least implicitly questioned by the larger narrative frame' and so devalued (7). For Dickinson, postcolonialism 'consists in its deployment and modification of the romantic sublime' (1). This move is worrisome, as though one had only to cite Kurtz as a 'wraith from the back of Nowhere' in order to arrive at Hans Bertens's comments on the 'perpetual negation' of sublime postmodern art for which the 'sublime does not lead to towards a resolution: the confrontation with the unrepresentable leads to radical openness' (2005 [1995]: 128; c.f. Dickinson 2007: 3).

suggest that the occluded aspect of modernist tropes drawn from the colonial outback draws literary energy from the ‘unpresentable’ as readily as Lyotard’s postmodern dynamic:

The postmodern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unpresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unpresentable. (*ibid.*)

In each of these critical views, Moses’s ‘new *style*’, or Lyotard’s locating of ‘the unpresentable in presentation itself’, a similar raising of modernism’s poetic medium to the status of the signified may be observed, yet in each case one also finds reluctance to undertake the work of textual analysis by which the forms in question, their functioning as tropes, might be conceived as structures open to detailed analysis.¹⁶ This is not to say that hollowness or disorientation as categories of the West’s view of colonial topography is always as thrillingly abstract as Loti made it out to be in his Middle Eastern travels, let alone uncondusive to proprietorial interest.¹⁷ One may indeed be swept up by hymns to pure space as was that ‘desert loving’ English romantic, T. E. Lawrence,¹⁸ but we need to keep in mind that such spaces remain literary constructs more reliant upon vacating their landscapes of meaning than in finding some imagined significance written upon their surfaces. So in what follows I will still need to ask what happens when places distort the ability of the western individual to navigate between known points, when the cognitive and imaginative faculties of the individual are, so to speak, set loose upon a grid of their own conception. This does not mean that such settings are no longer subject to the realities of gravitational pull or embodiment, only that for the subjects of the

¹⁶ Other terms are available for this nexus of formal and thematic issues. Paul Sheehan’s *Modernism, Narrative, and Humanism* (2002) adapts Seymour Chatman’s distinction between ‘story’ and ‘discourse’ as a means of expressing not simply the modernist inclination to radicalize the unfolding of events vis-à-vis their actual sequencing, but as a way to posit a modernist ‘plot of revelation’ against the ‘plot of resolution’ provided in ‘traditional (i.e., premodernist) narrative’. In this model ‘revelation’ is seen to provide the enabling means of Lyotard’s unpresentable just as ‘resolution’ reflects the merely presentational. Here, Sheehan begins by noting how events are not ‘resolved’ so much as displayed in modernism, and thus the ‘modernist novel liberates narrative’s latent performative power by introducing irregularities’ (14-15).

¹⁷ Even that late and very imperialist dictator, Benito Mussolini, when offered a barren corner of Abyssinia in lieu of the whole, famously quipped how in the face of such ‘lunar landscapes’ he was no ‘collector of deserts’: he had no interest in owning nothing. (Remark to Pierre Laval (5 January 1935). See: Richard Collier, *Duce! : A Biography of Benito Mussolini* (1971: 125).

¹⁸ This line is from the film script of Lawrence’s story by Robert Bold and Michael Wilson; it is spoken by the Arabian Prince, Faisal (played in black-face by Alec Guinness).

colonial era, the poetic pleasures of spatial abstraction generally do not *outlast* the lack of concrete landmarks.

As will be seen in a later chapter, this temporal characteristic is pivotal. While the sorts of setting tropes covered by this study rarely describe fixed temporal schemes, and despite my need to finish introducing just what is altered as a result of landscape figures carried upon notions of time, it should be said that both Gregory's performative tropes and Moses's process of disorientation will turn out to be reliant upon poetic transfers occasioned within a particular temporal framework. As I will shortly make clear via the exiled trading clerk in Conrad's *An Outcast of the Islands*, the unrepresentable intentional contents of his consciousness may feed back into the 'lofty indifference' of the wilderness (258) as surely as Moses's 'continuous stream' of rivers retains the disorienting capacity of its countless minor tributaries, but there is a progressive hiatus to that process of "feeding back" and "retaining" that will need unpacking. In this study I have a name for those extensions or contractions of narrative temporality by which poetic or thematic significance is activated out of place depictions: aesthetic duration. With this term I do not just mean the period in which the process of figuration completes itself, but how it does so *through* the collocation of consciousness with a bewildering array of worldly settings. First, however, I must conclude the present section by isolating what sort of "blank space" or aporetic occasioning is set in motion through tropes of a temporal landscape. For this I turn to another scholar of our own period.

An unmarked if nonetheless valuable potential intertext for Moses's essay is occasioned by an early work by Christopher GoGwilt, who places Conrad at the centre of a process less of colonial than metropolitan self-fashioning. As GoGwilt says, 'Conrad's narratives have long been taken as a response to a general crisis of modernity, but that response, I argue, shows how the crisis is not a crisis of Western culture. It is a crisis that produces, in reaction, the idea of Western culture' (1995: 1). Here I do not need to take up the mantle of GoGwilt's larger thesis in order to use aspects of his argument. The present study, too, works within the rubric GoGwilt brackets for us as Moses's study does after him, that in the colonial confrontation it is the West that is being gazed at as much some less savoury exercise in self-focalizing aggrandizement. Conrad is still the key witness here, for despite the exotic appeal and focus of his early oeuvre, his works are demonstratively about Europeans – often of continental background – lost among the shores and outlands of the colonial realm. This is my theme, too, the *there* of that scene of epistemological loss, though I have given myself the humbler job of trying to sort out the

underlying tropes of the locations and imperial spaces upon which colonial syntaxes rely.¹⁹ Thus I have very largely left aside the postcolonial discourse sustaining much excellent writing on the contradictions and ideological twists of the collision of sameness and otherness in order to wonder how fictions of exotic confrontation construct their settings and, moreover, how such settings underline what GoGwilt calls ‘the incoherence of Europe’s cultural identity’ (2) in the face of such representations.

A more specific context can be mentioned in relation to GoGwilt’s book, for in his discussion of Marlow’s finding in the Congo jungle an English handbook on that most imperial requisite, seamanship, GoGwilt (with Marlow) points to its having been annotated in a coded hand – as Conrad thrice repeats, in ‘cipher’. More tellingly, GoGwilt writes how

[L]ike the “blank space” of his childhood days, it is the disorientation that determines his understanding of the “place of darkness.” The preserved book makes him “forget the jungle and the pilgrims in a delicious sensation of having come upon something *unmistakeably real*”; the ‘cipher’ transforms the “blank space” of Africa into “this nowhere” (GoGwilt 124, original emphasis; citing *HoD*, i.e. 1994: 11, 54)

GoGwilt is drawing attention to something of fundamental importance that, again like Moses’s essay, centres upon the equating of usages such as ‘space of darkness’ or ‘blank space’ with the productive capacity of disorientation, the ‘nowhere’ into which one is projected. Here we might return to a point made earlier concerning mental as opposed to topographical spaces, for it is all too easy to ascribe a psychological outlook to such a “darkness” or “blank space”. Indeed, one of Conrad’s great readers, Albert Guerard, writes convincingly of that author’s ‘night journey into the unconscious’ (1958: 39), and another, Paul Kirschner, has entitled one monograph *Conrad: The Psychologist as Artist*.²⁰ The point, of course, is that geographical blankness determines or *creates* that ‘unmistakably real’ imperial nowhere as much as it does the interior visions or psychological crossings of the wires that go with it. GoGwilt’s instance of ‘double-mapping’ (124), for instance of the west plotting its own shadows in the riverine darkness of the Congo, is not only brought to fruition within the void Conrad cites of people and places alike, but goes on performing its terms in an affectively and cognitively potent manner even after

¹⁹ The use of literary models in the geographical negotiation of place and spatial form begins at least with the French social theorist Michel de Certeau for whom ‘narrative structures have the status of spatial syntaxes’ – the grammars by which human practices transform places into space. As de Certeau attests, ‘[e]very story is a travel story – a spatial practice’ (1984: 115).

²⁰ This is a critical commonplace of the time. Compare Thomas Moser, *Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline* (Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1957: 47); see also Stephen Donovan’s discussion, “Gorgeous Eloquence: Conrad and Shadowgraphy,” in Baxter and Hand, 2009: *esp.* 98-99.

readers have decoded them. Thus Marlow's discovery of the otherwise dependable tome with its secret marginalia (like the mysteries of the river he is blindly navigating) comes to constitute a real if still phenomenally active ephemeral border to the imperial project along with its place-making facility. In short, it is not just the making of a colonial "nowhere" I want to track, but the continual performative excess sustaining it. Pierre Loti captures this distinction in the first book of his trilogy on the Holy Land, *Le désert*. There the desert uplands of the Sinai prompt two responses, the first has to do with a nowhere in which 'rien ne se passe, rien ne change et il n'y a plus rien' ['nothing happens, nothing changes, and there is nothing more'] (150), and the second with the performativity of uneventfulness, what is finally a dynamic and affectively nuanced *coup de théâtre* combining temporal immediacy with the slower unfurling of phenomena, the desert reaching out towards the horizon it effaces – the durational *happening* of landscape:

Et tout de suite, autour de nous, c'était l'infini vide, le désert au crépuscule, balayé par un grand vent froid; le désert d'une teinte neutre et morte, se déroulant sous un ciel plus sombre que lui, qui, aux confins de l'horizon circulaire, semblait le rejoindre et l'écraser. (20)

[And all at once, around us, it was the infinite void, the desert at dusk, swept by a strong cold wind; the desert of a neutral dead hue unrolling under a sky more sombre still, that to the ends of its circular horizon, seemed to rejoin and erase it.]

Place and the Metaphysical: An Outcast of the Islands

There is a vastness, a solemnity, a gloom, a sense of solitude and of human insignificance which for a time overwhelm him; and it is only when the novelty of these feelings have passed away that he is able to turn his attention to the separate constituents that combine to produce these emotions, and examine the varied and beautiful forms of life which, in inexhaustible profusion, are spread around him. Alfred Wallace (1878: 67-8)

In order to introduce my durational model as a poetic strategy, I turn to a passage from the penultimate chapter of Conrad's second novel, *An Outcast of the Islands* (1896). At the psychological and thematic climax of the novel, the author comes to express his themes through poetic processes drawn from the profusion of its Eastern setting – processes in which the 'impalpable' appear not just as a place, but as one with a particular temporal structure. The moment I want to look at in that novel shows the very *un-Kurtzian* commercial agent, Peter Willems, confronting his failure to maintain an identity outside the social milieu of which he had

been part. Isolated in the Borneo jungle, Willems is at a crossroads, ‘robbed of everything’, lacking fellowship, lacking identity (252) and, moreover, lacking bearings in his tropical surroundings. In an author’s note written long after the publication of his novel, Conrad allows that the ‘mere scenery got a great hold on me as I went on’, with the caveat that while it may be the ‘most tropical of my eastern tales’, there is not ‘the slightest exotic spirit in [its] conception or style’ ([1919] 282). Indeed, despite having had himself swallowed up in the forest ‘immensity’ that began a few hundred yards away, the real-life model for Conrad’s protagonist had not proven himself interesting to the author.²¹ Notwithstanding these biographical notices, the fictionalized setting wherein Willems’s confrontation with self-erasure occurs is shown to be a place of occluded perspectives matching that character’s own failures of vision, and so, in this obvious sense, the novel’s setting has become aporetic. Leaving aside the thematic concerns critics note of Willems’s social and private failures, Willems’s moment of negative epiphany can be read as a tutorial passage for my larger thesis, one indicating what sorts of insights my aesthetic model makes possible:

Standing on the high platform, he looked over the expanse of low night fog above which, here and there, stood out the feathery heads of tall bamboo clumps and the round tops of single trees, resembling small islets emerging black and solid from a ghostly and impalpable sea. Upon the faintly luminous background of the eastern sky, the sombre line of great forests bounded that smooth sea of white vapours with an appearance of a fantastic and unattainable shore. He looked without seeing anything – thinking of himself. Before his eyes the light of the rising sun burst above the forest with the suddenness of an explosion. He saw nothing. Then, after a time, he murmured with conviction – speaking half aloud to himself with the shock of the penetrating thought: ‘I am a lost man.’ (274)

One of the first things we should note is the series of moves by which Willems’s physical surroundings are set out via tropes of aporia: ‘impalpable sea... unattainable shore... without seeing anything... saw nothing’. Simultaneous to these effacements, Willems’s gaze into the gloom occasions a curious reversal of Milton’s ‘darkness visible’. Here we find not only the faint glow of dawn and its white vapours, but light made visible, the ‘nothing’ of Conrad’s phrasing, reiterated at the moment of the dawn light bursting over his protagonist.²² Equally

²¹ Conrad writes: ‘My interest was aroused by his dependent position, his strange, dubious status of a mistrusted, disliked, worn-out European living on the reluctant toleration of that Settlement hidden in the heart of the forest-land, up that sombre stream which our ship was the only white men’s ship to visit’ (8).

²² The Malay man, Arsath, in “The Lagoon” faces a similar dawning blindness in the face an equally overwrought surroundings. Conrad himself noted that the story was ‘a tricky thing with the usual forests river – stars – wind sunrise, and so on – and lots of secondhand Conradese’ (*Collected Letters I*: 301).

notable is how Willems's inability to *see* ensures that the passage's spatial coordinates cede place to those of temporality, for Willems is no longer projecting himself in or through sensory space, but looking sightlessly into it for 'a time'. Thus Willems's cognitive movement from aporia to his 'conviction' of being lost comprises the experiential hiatus between 'He saw nothing' and the 'Then, after a time' immediately following it, a textual mapping occurring over the full stop between the statements. This shift from that spatializing *nothing* to the temporal impetus of *then* helps ensure that the moment's narrative impetus is sprung from an abyssal construct – both in the sense of an affectively charged presencing of 'nothing' in Willems's mind, and as this is abetted by his author's much noted use of negative qualifiers such as 'impalpable' or 'unattainable'. The leap from aporia to 'penetrating thought' is thereby accomplished rather as an illusionist pulls rabbits from empty hats: we see that there is nothing, and then, with Willems, we slowly see the nothing that is, here the sun bursting 'above the forest'. So, too, we see the temporal span over which Willems's comprehension moves from blindness to an equally vacant, equally big eyed, existential void.

The passage therefore stages a number of the figural modalities my introduction has been hinting at: the effacing of the figure as well as the ground before him, aporetic *vision*, threatened interiority, the place of othering, exotic dislocation, or the sublime durational gap between actuality and understanding. Here we are faced with a scene in which the drama of light bursting over the fog-effaced forest cannot quite dispel the complex effects of its 'ghostly and impalpable' backdrop with its sombre edges and the unreachable *interior* shore it intends. These atmospheric conditions set the imagination back upon itself such that the erasure of the ground comes to compose its own amorphous figure as the 'nothing' Willems sees. Moreover, the landscape into which Willems gazes is effaced by the sorts of geographically and meteorologically apt conditions we saw Moses point out as constitutive of modernist disorientation: river mists, dense tropical foliage, the quickly rising sun, and so on. The place, one feels, is actual – one might say "real", except that the blocked aspects of Willems's encounter with it are such that his presence there is less a matter of phenomenological negotiation with the conditions of a specific, possibly challenging location than of the internalization, linguistic or otherwise, of its 'impalpable' descriptive categories.

The process is also durational since Conrad's prose rehearses the movement of Willems's gaze from the lingering night fog, to the bamboo clumps, to the treetops. The unfolding of temporality is likewise presented as an affectively charged cognitive lacuna, the span of time in which 'nowhere' is understood to occupy Willems's consciousness as a 'ghostly' presence, here

the ‘fantastic and unattainable shore’ Willems encounters as an abyss. In brief, the temporal features of Willems’s confrontation with himself are reimagined as belonging to the ambient concrete space he inhabits. By running together otherwise empty (because unreal) descriptions of time and place, Conrad brings us into Willems’s mental processes, not just through dramatizing Willems’s wrestlings with moral and existential loss, nor even by projecting the terms of such loss onto the world, but where his experience of epistemological crisis *becomes* that world. At this point, then, the abyss is reified as an actual, phenomenological reality replete with foliage, shores, mists, and a rising sun; and thus, the continuously unfolding representational landscape Willems engages has taken the place of the concrete conditions of his location.

Something of this poetics out of the ambient qualities of nothing has been noted before. Thinking about the manner in which Conrad creates meaning from the conjunction of rhythmic form and the unsayable, T. E. Lawrence acknowledges a certain mastery:

He’s absolutely the most haunting thing in prose that ever was: I wish I knew how every paragraph he writes (they are all paragraphs: he seldom writes in a single sentence...) goes on sounding in waves, like the note of a tenor bell, after it stops. It’s not built in the rhythm of ordinary prose, but on something existing only in his head, and he can never say what it is he wants to say, all his things end in a kind of hunger, a suggestion of something he can’t say or do or think.’²³

Lawrence is underlining a key correspondence within Conrad’s *oeuvre* through an aural conceit. By expressing the inexpressible and perhaps unfathomable ‘something’ Conrad hopes to communicate over the rhythmic span of his paragraphs, such contents are conceived to reach beyond the text like the emanations of a bell ‘after it stops’ ringing. Theory based critics have long been alert to this sort of paradox, for instance in John Hillis Miller’s description of the ‘unveiling’ of the unseen in “Heart of Darkness”, described as an apocalyptic parable for the manner in which its tropes call down ultimate if still ineffable categories.²⁴ In this sense, too, the aporia Lawrence finds so haunting in his textual encounter with Conrad, and which he notes as stemming from Conrad’s own difficulties with the unsayable, appears to require both formalist

²³ Letter to F. N. Doubleday, 20th March, 1920. Cited by Keith Hull in regard to critics who saw Conrad as an important influence on Lawrence (Hull 2012: 98-9). Compare Jeffrey Meyers, *The Wounded Spirit* (London: Martin, Brian, and O’Keeffe, 1973); and Thomas O’Donnell, *The Confessions of T. E. Lawrence* (Athens OH: Ohio UP, 1979).

²⁴ Concerning Conrad’s apocalyptic unveilings, J. Hillis Miller writes how parable ‘has at least one thing in common with apocalypse: it too is an act of unveiling which has never been seen before’ (1989: 210-11). Of the celebrated passage from the novella beginning ‘The yarns of a seaman have a direct simplicity...’ (8), Miller writes: ‘The figure both illuminates its own workings and at the same time obscures or undermines it, since a figure of a figure is an absurdity’ (212-13).

and sensory approaches to its unraveling. This, at any rate, has been my goal, to attend to the actual sounding of the bell alongside the continuance of its acoustic presence in the mind. And while T. E. Lawrence might have helped set me on this path by foregrounding the phenomenal aspects of Conrad's poetics, he does not finally see that author as a textual translator of the outer world so much as 'a giant of the subjective as Kipling is of the objective' (*op. cit.*). What do we do, then, with the fact that Conrad's interior nothingness is nonetheless an actual if deserted village on the East coast of Borneo, and from which geographically bounded mental space we find the *objective* 'emerging black and solid' into consciousness? To suggest a means of answering this quandary we need to look more deeply at Conrad's use of time.

I have noted the durational particularity of Willems's epiphany, but like the tonal echo Lawrence discovers, this framing of the on-line experience of what appears to be an encounter with atemporality may be extended across the larger chapter in which Willems reaches his epiphanic awareness of loss. In having the days 'passed unnoticed, unseen' as a collection of described sunrises and sunsets, Conrad makes it clear that by stepping away from time as a socially or culturally accepted awareness of change, Willems has abandoned its ordering capacity:

How many days? [...] He did not know. To him, since Lingard had gone, the time seemed to roll on in profound darkness. All was night within him. All was gone from his sight. He walked about blindly in the deserted courtyards, amongst the empty houses that, perched high on their posts, looked down inimically on him, a white stranger, a man from other lands. (251)

If much has been made of Conrad's formalization with Ford Madox Ford of Gustave Flaubert's originary notion of *progression d'effet*, what we find in *An Outcast of the Islands* is more the cumulative effect of hindrance than progression.²⁵ Here the foreshortening and expansion of

²⁵ *Progression d'effet* intends that series of purposive developments from which we achieve, as Conrad explained in a letter concerning "*Heart of Darkness*", 'one suggestive view of a whole phase of life [which] makes of that story something quite on another plane than an anecdote of a man who went mad in the Centre of Africa' (*Letters to Blackwood*, 154). Ford's later description hardens up this model to the degree that 'a Novel was the rendering of an Affair: of one embroilment, one set of embarrassments, one human coil, one psychological progression [...] the whole novel was to be an exhaustion of aspects, was to proceed to one culmination, to reveal once and for all, in the last sentence, or the penultimate; in the last phrase, or the one before it – the psychological significance of the whole' (1921: 15). For Flaubert's comments see his *Correspondence*, Vol. 5: 69 and vol. 8: 223f (Ed. Jean Bruneau. Paris: Gallimard, 1973.). As to that writer's belief in such progressions as inevitable or describing 'one human coil', Flaubert writes on *L'éducation sentimentale*, that 'Il n'y a pas progression d'effet. Le lecteur, à la fin du livre, garde l'impression qu'il avait dès le début. L'art n'est pas la réalité' (letter to Joris-Karl Huysmans, February-March 1879).

temporal frames by which narrative motion is stymied in the text accords with the chapter-long crisis Willems undergoes, and which ends with his acknowledgment of being ‘a lost man’. This frustration of narrative purpose has a number of thematic results. We have seen Willems reach the nadir of his encounter with alterity, but much of the distress he experiences is presented as bearing upon his awareness of mortality in the rank tropical setting Conrad imagines for him. Willems’s obsessive thinking about his fate very quickly becomes enmeshed with all that he can or cannot see, and this comprehension of both the indifference of his surroundings and the projections he casts into them can at times read from our perspective as a parodic and historically pre-emptive case study in *Being-toward-Death*:

Yes, death. Why should he die? No! Better solitude, better hopeless waiting, alone. Alone. No! he was not alone, he saw death looking at him from everywhere; from the bushes, from the clouds – he heard her speaking to him in the murmur of the river, filling the space, touching his heart, his brain with a cold hand. He could see and think of nothing else. He saw it – the sure death – everywhere. He saw it so close that he was always on the point of throwing out his arms to keep it off. It poisoned all he saw, all he did; the miserable food he ate, the muddy water he drank; it gave a frightful aspect to sunrises and sunsets, to the brightness of hot noon, to the cooling shadows of the evenings. He saw the horrible form among the big trees, in the network of creepers in the fantastic outlines of leaves, of the great indented leaves that seemed to be so many enormous hands with big broad palms, with stiff fingers outspread to lay hold of him; hands gently stirring, or hands arrested in a frightful immobility, with a stillness attentive and watching for the opportunity to take him, to enlace him, to strangle him, to hold him till he died; hands that would hold him dead, that would never let go, that would cling to his body for ever till it perished – disappeared in their frantic and tenacious grasp. (254)

Having found himself interpolated by *death*, mortality becomes the ‘horrible form’ Willems finds in all things. The temporal condition into which he enters may be read in the various tenses of the verbs Conrad uses here as they pass from the perfective to the progressive aspect and back again (‘stirring... arrested... watching... strangle... perished’); that is to say, the discourse of tense threatens to overturn the chronological vagaries of the scene that are already in place, and that despite their rhythmic progression (‘sunrises and sunsets... noon... evenings’), remain undifferentiated within the atemporal arena of Willems’s experience.²⁶ Similarly, where death is found returning Willems’s gaze we find a series of affectively potent embodiments as

²⁶ Such processes are not limited to literary modernism: as Betty Buchsbaum reminds us in her study of the aesthetic modes common to Paul Cézanne and Wallace Stevens, what painting (and so poetry) sets out to accomplish is the act of ‘unifying complex perspectives in an atemporal present, to give pictorial immediacy’ (317). The observation can be extended to contemporary theatrical practice wherein discrete temporal frames are simultaneously engaged across space.

where death is *seen* to be ‘so close’ that he struggles to physically ‘keep it off’ (ibid).²⁷ These *memento mori* reflect an indeterminate ontological and temporal category actualized in his present surroundings, but which has yet to enter the scene as a narrative event. The landscape and its atmospherics are part of this process, both as the topographical ground of Conrad’s account, and as the proleptic vehicle for a yet to arrive state of affairs. While remaining the palimpsest of unfolding events, the novel’s setting has become de-realized to the point that its representational categories – a river, the land, the air – are prone to absorption into figural constructions involving projective events such that a sunset offers ‘a foreboding of violent death that beckoned him from everywhere – even from the sky’. Thus the place he occupies, while retaining its indifferent actuality, simultaneously performs itself as an extension of his interiority.

The complicating of the scene’s deictic attributes is not limited to images of impending death or the temporalization of the landscape, but responds to the fuller narrative sweep of Willems’s story: ‘All the things, all the men he knew, existed, moved, breathed; and he saw them in a long perspective, far off, diminished, distinct, desirable, unattainable, precious... lost for ever.’ The result of this combination of possible future events (‘After he died all this would remain’), with the on-line unfolding of his embodied responses to past and present experience sets Willem aside within his own spatio-temporal realm, one ‘possessed by the exaltation of the solitude, of the silence, of his memories’ (259). Further, this solipsistic state announces its own abyssal duration in which worldly existence merges with representations of its closure, composing a virtual *present* composed almost entirely of metaphorical categories:

And, all at once, it seemed to him that he was peering into a sombre hollow, into a deep black hole full of decay and of whitened bones; into an immense and inevitable grave full of corruption where sooner or later he must, unavoidably, fall. (259)

Such tropes are part of a much broader literary tradition. By one possible argument, to escape the derivations of his own sources Conrad is merely reproducing a secular version of what Rudolf Otto calls the ‘indirect means of representing the numinous’, which in the Western tradition Otto sees offering two main possibilities, ‘darkness and silence’ (1959: 83). Writing in 1917, however, Otto does not have the perspective onto modernism from which to append

²⁷ For the influential cognitive view on embodiment see: Lakoff, George. *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal About the Mind* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1987); Andy Clark *Being There: Putting Brain, Body and World Together Again* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1997); Hendriks-Jansen, Horst, *Catching Ourselves in the Act: Situated Activity, Interactive Emergence, Evolution, and Human Thought* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1996); Lakoff & Johnson, *Philosophy In The Flesh: the Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

emptiness or boundlessness to his list of indirections, and so misses seeing the abyssal possibilities by which the drama of the individual might be played out, or to draw his tropes from the sort of durational cycle Conrad had imagined for his stranded outcast:

He had a terrible vision of shadowless horizons where the blue sky and the blue sea met; or a circular and blazing emptiness where a dead tree and a dead man drifted together, endlessly, up and down, upon the brilliant undulations of the straits. No ships there. Only death. And the river led to it. (253)

What I wish to pull from this discussion is how Willems's state is also one of endless movement within his imagination, where in his reveries and fantasies of escape we are offered a existence which is, as Brian Massumi says of the horizon of the virtual, 'enveloped in potential, outside possibility and predictability', but one that is yet, as Willems's unwilling if still finally charged last embrace with his Brunei Malay consort illustrates, '[i]mmanent to bodily change' (168).²⁸ Ironically, it is only with mortality that Willems is able to re-enter the narrative time in the novel in a more concrete sense, only this end does not close the destabilizing function the text has already set in motion. As Conrad makes clear, in his brush with epistemological and existential failure Willems has already seen that the real of human life does not follow the temporal closure of narrative, but remains, as a textual construct, within the endless flow of things, and to this degree, may be seen to embrace the nonetheless embodied space of the colonial virtual as surely as his author is drawn to combine sensuality and symbolic death in the here dubious, equally open figure of his Eastern lover, Aïssa. Jeremy Hawthorn has commented on this sort of projection, and the movements sustaining them. These he sees being reified by the 'massive increase in human mobility associated with colonialism and imperialism', augmentations giving access not only to the sexualized figures of the colonial population, but 'real exotic landscapes that could serve the same representative purpose'; hence '[i]f the flora of tropical lands struck the visiting European as more lush and fecund than the plants and trees back home, it was tempting to extrapolate a view of tropical sexuality as similarly exaggerated' (2007: 62).²⁹ So, bluntly, Willems's romance with Malay life is not more 'lush' than his abyssal self-

²⁸ Conrad's poetic strategies are echoed in Brian Massumi's writings on virtuality and architecture (1998), where 'measureless depth and insubstantial surface' work together within a common topological rubric.

²⁹ I have not chosen to comment upon is what Jeremy Hawthorn observes as the 'displacing' of 'human sexuality and gender characteristics into vegetable nature' (2006: 230). Mindful of Martin Bock (*Joseph Conrad and Psychological Medicine*. Lubbock: Texas Tech UP, 2004) and Rebecca Stott (*The Fabrication of the late-Victorian Femme Fatale: The Kiss of Death*. Houndmills: Macmillan, 1992), Hawthorn reads *Outcast* through the equally gendered wilderness of "*Heart of Darkness*" to argue that in each text the desired indigenous woman is 'an extension of the forests with which she is associated'

removal from its conditions, hence the love-making Conrad provides him just prior to his crisis.

On one level, then, figural usages embracing the ‘unattainable’ or ‘enigmatical’ support T. E. Lawrence’s observation about Conrad’s meanings ending in ‘a kind of hunger, a suggestion of something he can’t say or do or think’ (op. cit.); but where such usages are simultaneously seen of the localities of the text (let alone hunger for more overtly sensual occasionings) they underwrite the dynamic blending of topographical and topological schemes we have been seeing. It is telling, too, I think, that Lawrence’s tonal observance of Conrad’s stylistics should find an analogy in the very last sentence of *An Outcast of the Islands*. There the word “Hope” is ‘repeated in a whispering echo [by] the startled forests, the river and the hills’. This is fitting – not only do we have the ‘sounding in waves’ Lawrence notes echoing through the landscape, but where Conrad has that setting make ‘no other answer’, we are left with a just sensory, if still affectively charged nothingness tracing its valedictory mood across the closure of the text.

Pretty as this is, there is a point to be made where figural attributes are recast as natural ones. Simon Schama provides a helpful summation in *Landscape and Memory* (1995), setting out how the overlaying of ideas over places, and the resulting ‘muddling’ of categories, produces a situation in which tropes become more actual than their referents:

Landscapes are culture before they are nature; constructs of the imagination projected [...] but it should also be acknowledged that once a certain idea of landscape, a myth, a vision, establishes itself in an actual place, it has a peculiar way of muddling categories, of making metaphors more real than their references; of becoming, in fact, part of the scenery. (1995: 61)

Rather than stop at the details of this important point (its substance is rehearsed often enough below) I want to show where it provides a useful limit case for the literary form at the crux of my essay. As Schama indicates, because *landscape* is an aesthetic structure as much as a “scenic” locus of cultural and locational practices, I have not filtered my argument through the perhaps expected frames of thematically generated investigation,³⁰ but via analysis of their structural dynamics as tropes. Not only are the methodological suppositions made more transparent this

(235). A single line from “*Heart of Darkness*” (Ed. C. Watts. Oxford UP, 2002: 168) serves as a thumbnail of Hawthorne’s view: ‘the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life’. See: Hawthorne, J. “Reading and Writhing: The Exotic and the Erotic in Joseph Conrad’s *An Outcast of the Islands*.” *Postcolonial Dislocations: Travel, History, and the Ironies of Narrative*. Oslo: Novus, 2006. 227-39.

³⁰ One collection that attempts both sides of the coin is Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George Handley’s *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011). There the editors focus upon the historical record as a table of interactions with landscape, and thus ‘foreground the landscape (and the seascape) as a participant in this historical process rather than as a bystander to human experience’ (4).

way, but by *temporarily* separating the mechanism from the weight of its broader cultural and geographical accretions – and thereby seeing the narrative steps by which landscapes are emptied of content – we are better positioned to track the sometime sublime temporal process by which exotic spaces come to act as sites of immanent or projected significance within fictional texts. But what, then, of nature: by what terms can nature be roped into an aesthetic outlook?

If, as Conrad's story indicates, colonial spaces are sometimes treated as forming a kind of non-place, how are we to read geographical places presumed not only to be in a state of nature, but as locations which, by dint of being largely under-populated and so uncultivated, unwritten, and (at least to the uncomprehending visitor) *cultureless*, tend to render human categories absurd in the face of a presumably purer moral hinterland beyond the reach of human settlement, that more "natural" nature somewhere out there? In the face of each of these questions we need to ask to what degree the colonial periphery is validated as a state of nature in modernist fiction, and, more profoundly, by what terms the presumed alterity of that "out there" is found open to human conceptual schemes. But is wilderness any more valid as a term than "nature" and "the natural"? Here we do well to recall the origins of "wilderness" in the Old English *wildēornes*, the place or condition of wild animals rather than humans. Nature, of course, has a different formation, 'nature' itself leading back through Old French, to the Latin, *natura*, or *birth*, the way things were at the start (when was that mythical event first concretized?). Here the environmental critic, David Mazel, wants us to tease out the terms by which nature is brought into discourse, and so to question the wilderness as "actuality" along with our use of it. It is worth pursuing Mazel's chariness concerning terms, especially where his views help us to consider nature as a colonizing effect rather than a concrete process, especially where he asks '[h]ow are we to know that *any* object presented to readers as natural or original – right on up to that object viewed as the most natural, that sine qua non of nature, the wilderness – is not itself performed?' (91). Mazel is elsewhere helpful on the status of nature as outside cultural attempts to capture it, and so writes of the

myth of the environment, as if the environment were an ontologically stable, foundational entity we have a myth *about*. Rather, the environment is itself a myth, a "grand fable," a complex fiction, a widely shared, occasionally contested, and literally ubiquitous construction, something whose "reality" derives from the ways we write, speak, and think about it. (2000: xii original emphasis)³¹

³¹ Mazel's work on American environmentalism provides a fertile counterpoint to how the poetics of landscape and environment can be co-opted by ideological perspectives. The unassimilability of natural settings works its way into Mazel's thesis: the alterity of the American "out there" *invites* territorial

This move towards the performativity of environments is not limited to Mazel's example any more than that it was in the case of Derek Gregory. Instead we might turn to another reader of landscapes, the aesthetic critic Jonathan Bordo; and while Bordo does not, as I do, see the sublime being enabled wherever the concept of '*terra nullius*' is projected onto an imperial landscape, yet he sees the wilderness coming to bear upon the representational codification of 'landscape art [as] a scenographic staging of oblivion in colonial projects' (309), in brief, as a theatrical trope.³²

It is useful to bring these terms back into the realm of the actual places in the imperial world where they might be seen to apply to a variety of settings: thick colonial forests (Henri Fauconnier, *Malaisie* 1930), bush country (D. H. Lawrence *The Boy in the Bush*, 1924), high brush and maze-like tracings of tributaries (Peter Fleming, *Brazilian Adventure* 1933), snowy uplands (James Hilton, *Lost Horizon* 1933), depthless turquoise shallows (Henry de Monfreid *Les Secrets de la mer Rouge* 1931), and so on through the register of natural features. Moreover,

assimilation, hence that nation's *taming* of the wilds while leaving behind a set of prescriptive attitudes and practices, for instance through the National Parks system. Here nature's 'chaotic' excess underwrites myths of wilderness within a hegemonic outlook. Mazel presents what he sees to be failed readings of nature as focused on the Yosemite region, with even the great American naturalist, John Muir, entertaining 'suspicions about the legibility of the purported natural text'. As Mazel argues that where Muir had made the region's landscape 'the primary vehicle for his radical environmentalism, it had already been made the vehicle of social conservatism' (97).

³² Bordo's theorization of the issues can be as obscure as his vocabulary is tantalizing. In its stymying of human narrativity, the wilderness stands for 'a denial of the meaning of the event'; more properly, being no more than the 'frame and topos of the aesthetic of the sublime', it intends an 'unpicturable condition' or '*terra nullius*' within the realm of aesthetics. (310). Note must be made of the Burkean sublime here. For that writer, even where language is found to be inadequate to the task of communicating 'clear' ideas, it can yet transmit affective content out of the obscure, thus 'conveying the *affections* of the mind from one to another' (op. cit. 56). At this stage, Burke's *Treatise* becomes rather more interesting to my own argument than Kant's assimilation of nature to mind, for Burke understands the role of aporetic disorientation to be a function of sublime language as much as it is the outcome of a challenging terrain. Here Burke illustrates his point through John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, where in the description of Hell in the second book, the wandering if still just embodied souls of the damned pass 'O'er many a frozen, many a fiery Alp; / Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens and shades of death, / A universe of death' (2.620-22). It is in moving from the banal listing of topographical features to the sublime metaphysical breadth beginning the third line that Burke locates his bridging 'obscurity': 'Here again are two ideas not presentable but by language; and an union of them great and amazing beyond conception; if they may properly be called ideas which present no distinct image to the mind' (159). One of Burke's commentators, Philip Shaw, whose argument I have been adapting here, points toward a linguistic sublime in which, as Shaw puts it, 'cloudiness, obscurity, and terror [...] is intimately linked with the combinatory power of language' (53). Shaw's reading may be correct in as much as all literary effects reach back to the words in which they are couched, but while poetic structures are at the heart of this study, it is the obscurity Burke pauses over (or rather its aporetic qualities) that I see as being central to the kinds of tropes by which fictional settings make the leap from topographical concreteness to the more profoundly disorienting realms of the unrepresentable.

it is in the colonial world that environments are made challenging to sensory appropriation through their own naturalness, for instance via blinding clouds and mists, or where the seemingly unbounded repetition of treetops, breaking waves, mountains or shadows throws one's ability to say, yes, this is here and there is there, or to claim one's own perspective as the deictic centre of all that one beholds.³³ Similarly, it is in the face of such phenomena that the individual can slip into the 'state of trance' Conrad's narrator claims to suffer in "Heart of Darkness", and in which stupor, to risk an analogy with Auden's narrator in his occasionally exoticizing poem, 'As I Walked Out One Evening', the glaciers, deserts, and the 'land of the dead' noted by the poet become equally conceivable by the time one reaches Kurtz's inner station.

All this is to suggest that disorientation is as much a cognitive as a physiological state, for without being blinded by glaring light or parched with thirst one can still be astonished by the grandeur of geographical reality: the plane extending to the horizon, the very distant mountains that seem to take forever to approach, the countless undulations of the flowing sea, the sky at night, Conrad's much obscured 'vast matted jungle'. As the great Polish poet, Zbigniew Herbert, later suggested, one does not need to enter the boundlessly exotic places of the earth to discover the 'inconceivable desert' of experience, or that the idea of place as a state of loss is internalized as readily as it is discoverable in the places of the greater world.³⁴ Nonetheless, in the colonial realm Herbert's desert, like Auden's sighing one, is not only a figurative expression, but as we see of Loti's holy land in *Le désert*, a place in which the sun very properly 'rises, burns, and spreads its increasingly hypnotic white fire' (1993: 7). Therefore, when one is led to cognize some apparently flat, featureless, and hence directionless "tableland" of the imperial hinterlands, and perhaps to do so through the categories of the sublime, one is as often as not existing in two spaces at once, the interior and the exterior – for the process entered results from and leads towards the human habit of utilizing the topological superficiality of actual places as a basis for their abstraction in the mind. Yet more than simply running *table* and *land* together into a new conceptual blend – for which we might usefully recall Plato's ideal table in *The Republic* along

³³ Milton's damned might appear as prototypical Conradian colonialists ('wallow'd up and lost / In the wide womb of uncreated night, / Devoid of sense and motion' 2.149-51), yet the possibility of perspective is elsewhere retained: 'for what can force or guile / With him, or who deceive his mind, whose eye / Views all things at one view? he from heav'ns highth' (2.190).

³⁴ Herbert was not considering imperial outposts. The man who sings 'the inconceivable desert / the call of the abyss' is a "house" guest in Soviet controlled Eastern Europe. These lines appear in an affecting poem in which the human spirit under an intolerable regime retreats until, like the presumed 'harmony of the universe', it is 'so perfect / it is inaudible'. See Herbert's "Mr. Cogito – Notes from the House of the Dead" from *Report from the Besieged City*, translated by John Carpenter and Bogdana Carpenter (New York: Ecco Press, 1985: 72-5).

with, for instance, all the Table Mountains in the world (there are four in California alone) – we need to see how writers utilize notional descriptors such as ‘inconceivable’, ‘infinite’, or ‘featureless’ as a means of harnessing ideational and then thematic content to the discursive forms utilized in topographical description. Or at least we need to see where those sublime indicators are poetically transformed into an encounter with place as seen of Herbert’s desert. There, the wasteland of the ‘inconceivable’ ceases to be a metaphor or synecdoche for the experience of human limitation, but becomes the reified location of such experience. To borrow a term of Leonard Talmy’s to be laid out in Chapter Four, “ception”, the inconceivable terrain becomes a desert at the mobile conjunction of perception and ideation: it becomes a landscape.

So the precondition for seeking such tropes in landscapes is to link the process of othering to the means by which the spaces it produces can be read back as thematically meaningful. It is here that we need to come back to Kant’s observation of the moral imperatives as these come to bear upon the emptying or denaturalizing of “sublime” geographical space. For Kant, there is a connection between the way the mind works and universal order. For him, the categories of the beautiful and the sublime are staged as a ‘disposition of the mind that is similar to the moral disposition’ (§29 5:268). More direct for my purpose, ‘it follows that the intellectual, intrinsically purposive (moral, good), judged aesthetically, must not be represented so much as beautiful but rather as sublime’ (§29 5:271), thereby linking *transcendent* human reason to a universal moral order. However, when translated to conceptually empty and thus amoral colonial spaces, Idealism’s conquest of mental space is less able to find moral analogues in the conquest of topographical space. The Kantian dialectic of sublime disorientation might still provide its restorative topologies, but these have been emptied of content such that, as with Conrad’s “The Lagoon,” the ‘abysmal night of the wilderness’ intends no more than the place wherein ‘there was nothing left in the world’ (159).³⁵ Here we have reached what Dodson, thinking of Conrad’s settings, called the ‘simulacrum of the emptiness’ underwriting human discourse (1998: 20). On first glance, there is little left to lose after this. In such cases the enlightenment rubric of an ordered and ordering cosmos applies no more than the Romantic dream of boundless interior space we see in a figure such as Friedrich Schelling (1775-1854) for whom – writing precisely one century before Lord Jim – ‘Nature, to the artist, is merely the imperfect reflection of a world that exists not outside but within him’ (1978 [1800]: 232).³⁶ This

³⁵ ‘Abysmal’ has the same derivation as “abyssal”, being from the Latin *abyssus* and the Greek *abussos*.

³⁶ See *System of Transcendental Idealism* [1800] for Schelling’s full statement on art: ‘The view of nature, which the philosopher frames artificially, is for art the original and natural one. What we speak of

is a strong statement of the internalizing view vis-à-vis nature, but its relocation *in* man rather than the world comes at a price. For Timothy Morton, the enlightenment objectivity of the world describes no more than the presumed unity of universal spirit and its objects. Of the Hegelian romantic view which took its place Morton writes:

In this phase, spirit outstrips objects; art's content outstrips its substance. Infinite inner space is opened up. No external object becomes adequate to convey this inner space, so art must now be about the successful failure to embody the inner world. (2012: 129)

Thus it appears that “abyssal” aesthetic forms would provide a means of replacing the inadequate ‘external object’ Morton notes with an equally boundless void of aporia, and so to concretize ‘infinite inner space’ via the sensory contents of that void. As we have seen, recasting a voidal exterior space to match the interior one seems simple enough in the trying conditions of the colonial margin, yet there is a problem. Where one’s ability to orient oneself (and so to cognize one’s environment) comes under threat from within, the ‘successful failure’ Morton writes of can seem more like a nightmare version of trying to distinguish intentional objects from real ones, or topological constructs like Willems’s ‘fantastic and unattainable shore’ (274) from their scarcely discernible topographical actualities.³⁷ At this point it would appear that even the misleading ‘supreme moment of complete knowledge’ Conrad writes of in “Heart of Darkness” (100) comes to grief upon the equally sublime *phenomenal* arena in which ‘[y]ou looked on amazed, and began to suspect yourself’ (56). This doubt is really an effort to bridge, via abyssal tropes, the merely physical impacts of disorienting environments in relation to the failure of the mind to grasp and represent their presumed meaning at another level. What is left behind is the aporetic residue of that failure, the tropes by which consciousness seeks to orient itself, and which leads only to the abyss of its representational means, that is to say, maps of disjunction.

I should put this another way: in the process of aesthetic representation we often find cognitive abstractions as analogues for natural forms (a tableland, the spreading plane of the sea), but we can also note a more disarming threat to the individual via abstract constructions built not

as nature is a poem lying pent up in a mysterious and wonderful script. Yet the riddle could reveal itself, were we to recognize in it the odyssey of the spirit, which, marvelously deluded, seeks itself, and in seeking flies from itself’ (231-2). I cite the remainder of the passage in Chapter Four.

³⁷ Morton is not working from Conrad but two of Hegel’s papers: *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, translated by Bernard Bosanquet (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993: 85-6), and *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, 2 volumes, translated by T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975: 1.301–302, 1.516–529). Morton’s historical reduction of aesthetics has three phases, the “symbolic” in which numinous ‘objects outstrip spirit’ and art’s ‘substance [...] outstrips its content’ (127), the “classical” where ‘objects and spirit seem perfectly matched in a beautiful symmetry’ (128), and the “romantic”, already cited.

on blending natural and ideational features, but their lack – emptiness, the void, the abyss. What this study does is bring these two tendencies into literary play such that these voids and emptinesses appear epistemologically actual, hence my noting of the representation of the colonial wilderness as an abstracted “nowhere” place that is yet sensorially concrete. Of more immediate concern is the fact that when raised in this way, non-places can still present an aesthetic form through which a great deal of moral, dramatic, and thematic work can be accomplished. The aesthetic means may be different outside the romantic moment, but Morton’s ‘successful failure to embody the inner world’ yet produces the external colonial one.

What we are after in these pages, then, is how landscape is not immediately organized (‘grasped’) from the rawness of topography, but remains (or is converted to) temporalized passages of pure seeing, pure ‘sensation’, only – and this is the abyssal moment – the *interiority* of abyssal textual environments remains open where *there is nothing to see*, open, that is, within the realms of the virtual. So we should understand that in either case, the positive or negative reading of the abyss as constructed via geographical experience, it is the poetic *structure* of the trope in accordance with its sensory effectiveness as vehicle that renders it potent as a literary event unfolding in time, and not its presumed and never quite achieved tenor. Further, such tropes can be conceived as structures which do not admit content, but manufacture affective presence of either a celebratory or ironically projective nature as a means of foregrounding (making strange) the ties between culture and its colonial places.³⁸

Where does this leave the ‘shadowless horizons’ and the ‘circular and blazing emptiness’ (253) of *An Outcast of the Islands*, for such an abyss is not only of use to writers interested in making ‘reality’ out to be unapproachable or unnameable, or of prying apart any comforting sense of collusion between imagination and place. That same colonial site of disorienting, sordid glamour can sometimes be made to reveal, as it does in Conrad’s “Karain: A Memoir” (1897),

³⁸ We see the former in Karen Blixen’s *Out of Africa* and Robert Byron’s *Road to Oxiana*, both of 1937. Relevant passages to these examples are not hard to locate. Indeed, Blixen’s celebratory mode is generated by the flight her narrator takes over the East African terrain. If there in the highlands one can still feel one is no longer ‘on earth but dark deep waters, going ahead along the bottom of the sea. It is not even certain that you are moving at all’ (196). Seen from an airplane, however, Blixen allows that one is ‘taken into the full freedom’ of the perspective as though party to some new conception (‘the idea...’) from which vantage you ‘understand everything’ (205) – a comprehension adding a romantic hue to what is no less the idealizing product of imperialism created as much out of Western modes of perspective and transportation as some presumed absorption into the “natural” setting. Byron celebrated literary travelogue is more pleased to mock such gushing: ‘Look up, look up; up this quarried flesh, these thrice enormous shafts, to the broken capitals and the cornice as big as a house, all floating in the blue... Look along the mountains to the void: the desert, that stony, empty sea. Drink the high air... And then turn, *tourist*, to the East. (43 italics in original).

not just tragic potentates and a bay ‘like a bottomless pit of intense light’ (15), but a more dynamic interleaving of tropical places and fictional personages.³⁹ In “Karain” such interleaving is signalled by a ‘scenic landscape that intruded upon the reality of our lives by its motionless fantasy of outline and colour’ (17). The trick is to see where Conrad’s ‘motionless’ scenery lurches free of our conception to become the *intruding* flux of scenography (as is the case with the atmospheric phenomena of night in “The Lagoon”), but for this we need see what sort of thematic and symbolic potential is carried in by that process, and how it is animated in and through time – the performative nexus of abyssal tropes and durational forms sustaining the colonial modernist landscape in fiction.

Landscape as Event: A Critical Overview

Before indicating the specific arguments engaged in the various parts of this study, I want to locate my project within current critical discourse. First, some context: viewed collectively, my chapter essays reveal the various means by which colonial modernist evocations of the significant landscape do not merely entail symbolic transfers of poetic meaning onto setting depictions, but provide the arena by which consciousness both creates and is in turn subsumed by fictional environments. Here it should be recognized that the more aesthetically and geographically adventurous writers of the period did not simply find the world’s surroundings as uncomfortably *unheimlich* or “unhomely” as they found themselves, but in representing the self before an alien surroundings, discovered in the imperial world a forum of alterity matching their own. As we see of the fin de siècle *An Outcast of the Islands*, exotic space is not just a figure or analogue for the othering of the self. Rather the nothingness of place, its abyssal conditionality, comes to frame one’s surroundings as an aporetic ecology in which the benighted subject partakes. This is a different process than that associated with enlightenment notions of the world as a knowable and so controllable site of possible harmony, or the romantic belief that the natural world might offer itself an environment of significant if still ineffable form. The dynamization of aporetic settings as darkness, emptiness, or nothingness is not the flipside of the world as the meaningful vessel of human culture, but a more radical disinheritance, the earth as illusion, as

³⁹ See Linda Dryden (2009) for a good summation of the theatricality of this tale from the point of view of Conrad’s colonial attitude, foremost how he took ‘issue with the traditional stereotyping of the East’ (11).

the non-place in which human notions can only ever find false comfort. Indeed, within the realms of cultural expression, the destabilized platform of early twentieth century modernity was no longer just unhomely because one could not get a grasp on that former reality, but when discovered within some colonial “nowhere”, was now seen to comprise its own sensorium. And if I have suggested that there is thus a physical actuality to ideational or topological constructions of place in the tropes under investigation here, it must no less be remembered that the modern struggle to acclimatize to the western imperial and capitalist hegemony was a moral contest from which that same solid ground was conceived to have fallen away. It is in this sense that the central representational problem of the era came into being, that of charting the self’s *concrete* experience of falling away as a means of hanging onto the presumably equally concrete valuations of that former “objective” world. Thus where, for a figure such as the French vitalist thinker, Henry Bergson, temporal *process* would take on its own restorative authenticity, in Conrad’s case time could seem more solidly connected to the topography of the abyss. In such a reading, too, using the reconceived aesthetic means necessary to the task of drawing significance from the void, authors could raise the poetics of placelessness as a way of commenting both upon the loss of that (supposedly) formerly moral world *and* of the new real by which nostalgia for the self-exculpations of the fall might be cast in new light. Indeed, this second possibility came to be dynamized in differing ways: as a means of raising a compensatory environment with which to counter the loss of the world, as Woolf’s protagonist does through illness in *The Voyage Out* (the body as its own landscape of bewilderment) or, as in *An Outcast of the Islands*, where that archetypical pioneer of Western values, the trader, is given to mobilize his own now entirely self-sustaining hell of continuous experience out of an actual jungle landscape.

Before setting out what literary critics have made of colonial landscapes as moral constructs, let alone how this purview impacts the ethically hued comments I make at the end of the closing chapter, it is helpful to reflect a moment on the junctures by which the formal means of my opening chapters cede place to the more theatricalized argument they will have made possible. Certainly I do not mean that aesthetic duration is to be superseded as an analytic tool, only that having set forth the textual conditions by which loss of selfhood is fictionally mounted through what is finally a temporally structured withering of place, we are ready for the larger goal of interrogating colonial modernity via the performative atmospheres by which the fictional evidence opens itself to a more sophisticated interrogation than attention to its poetics alone sustains. As made clear from the theoretical focus (and Theory wars) of the late twentieth century academy, there are good reasons for hanging onto aesthetic understandings alongside the

urgent ethical requirements of literary communication. Without clear comprehension of the means by which written art carries out its task, we risk doing an injustice to the moral fallouts made possible when thematic significance is activated out of place depictions. For this reason the formalist nature of the first part of this work has been undertaken as a necessary preamble to the literary close readings ending it. Such is the multidisciplinary character of the study, which has for its final target, a literary analysis of what abyssal tropes make possible through their temporal unfoldings – that is to say, how and why the landscapes of the imperial *out there* came to perform the sometimes stricken consciousness of the colonial individual, and what those representative terrains tell us about the crises of a key transitional epoch in Western culture.

The various goals can be placed in perspective through glancing at recent works in colonial modernist criticism. Being focused on the representations of English literature in the face of alterity, Douglas Kerr's *Eastern Figures: Orient and Empire in British Writing* covers some of the territory I do here, though without my emphasis on poetics. Kerr's work therefore acts as a springboard for a précis of what my topological method makes possible. Of course *figures* does double duty in Kerr's work, standing for both the human subjects and objects of colonial letters and the tropological frames through which these are constructed and viewed. Kerr indicates that where Western cultural productions focused on what 'Eastern places and people' simultaneously tell us about intercultural relations, 'every representation has potentially a quasi-allegorical dimension, as a trope in that Western discourse of the East'. Thus Kerr takes for his parameters 'an Eastern object of representation, and a Western modality or point of view' (2), and notes where such objects might range from 'a sea of indistinguishable foreign faces' to 'the natural scene' (3). Further, while the term 'figure' suggests a host of hermeneutic possibilities, Edward Said's monumental *Orientalism* is cited for its plea to investigate 'style, figures of speech, settings, narrative devices, historical and social circumstances, *not* the correctness of the representation nor its fidelity to some great original' (1985: 21). For this reason the West's 'representational tropes' furnish the matter of Kerr's book, though as he points out, the 'methodological challenge' posed by Said has yet to be met (4). Indeed, it is towards this methodological realm that my analysis of landscape tropes aims.

On a related note, Christopher GoGwilt's new book concerning the modernist outlooks linking Conrad, the Creole sensibility of Jean Rhys, and the great Indonesian writer, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, ends by invoking, in relation to how the critic should read their works, the philological implications of postcolonial literature's foregrounding of unreliability and 'unevenness' (2010: 227). In bringing forward philology as a means of problematizing the

relationship between words and their cultural orderings in his target writers, GoGwilt's *The Passage of Literature* rounds upon an arranging term heavily underscored in my own study, the 'trope', which he uses to capture 'that *link* or *break* between language and literature' (*op. cit.*, original emphasis):

If *trope* generally means any figurative use of language, the theoretical problem it poses is the question of how to distinguish between literal, or standard meaning, and the figurative departure from the standard or literal sense [...]. Since literal, or proper meaning can only reveal itself through the figurative turn away from proper, or literal meaning, tropes exemplify the inherent instability of meaning (235)

Further, where Foucault and Derrida are referenced for, respectively, their views on the breakdowns of nineteenth century philology and the creative unmaking of language, GoGwilt writes how tropological usages are key for 'locating those moments of aporia that characterize Derrida's readings of philosophical texts' (*ibid.*). This bringing together of tropes and the aporetic has its own heritage, brought forward by GoGwilt through Paul de Man's deconstructive readings in which, importantly, 'tropes are disruptive for de Man precisely because they twine together meaning [the "signified"] and the principle of the meaning's articulation [the "signifier"]' (236).⁴⁰ As GoGwilt goes on to state, the 'trope is an index of what cannot be guaranteed and therefore must be reread with considerable suspicion – with the suspicion, indeed, that the most important thing has been left out' (237), hence the 'problem of referentiality posed by the *aporia* of any tropological system' (239 my emphasis). These are all crucial phrasings for me, primarily where, with regard to the colonial modernist landscape, I will be striving to work out the literary forms by which that which 'has been left out' is made poetically potent via the same tropes by which thematic or affective "contents" are textually encoded as unstable or aporetic.

In GoGwilt's case, however, it must be stated that his comments concerning a poststructural or deconstructive understanding of the philologies standing behind postcolonial literary comprehension set out a frame of analysis that does not fall within the purview of my present essay, but bear out the comparative modernisms he sees enriching postcolonial discourse. All the same, my notion of an abyssal poetics of place description begins from suspicion of what that critic acknowledges as the 'notorious instability of the trope of poststructuralist theory' (*ibid.*). Moreover, if I find the roots of such figurative usages in originary form in the fictional

⁴⁰ This quotation refers to GoGwilt's citing of Marc Redfield's commentary in the latter's "Professing Literature: John Guillory's Misreading of Paul de Man" (Redfield 2007: 118).

work of the lead up and the flowering of the modernist period, I am yet indebted to the broader range of late twentieth century theoretical explorations as interrogations of the forms and ideologies of literary representation and meaning. “Theory” joins the range of genealogies I draw from in trying to find a means of comprehending what landscapes are and do in narratives of the imperial exotic, yet it also indicates a modus I cannot comprehensively follow any more than I can productively bracket off postcolonial or geocritical analysis, poststructuralist philosophies of space and time, environmental criticism, and so on. It is in this sense that my path is therefore not interdisciplinary so much as multidisciplinary. Nor is it even, perhaps, a study of the modernist depiction of colonial landscapes as pursued through the narratologies and place/space debates of post-theory scholars.⁴¹

Indeed, it is not so because there is a moral argument to be made here concerning the disorientation and effacing of the centres of narrative consciousness around the turn of the twentieth century. But how do the nebulous frames of communicative excess I have been tracking reflect moral categories? I want to answer this question by raising the representation of landscapes through what David Parker (2007: 14ff.), following Charles Taylor (esp. 1989), would call ‘strongly valued goods’, or Bernard Williams (1985), ‘thick’ conceptions of moral value.⁴² In his book on life writing from which these terms appear, *The Self in Moral Space* (2007), Parker takes for his cue Taylor’s descriptions of one’s identity being ‘bound up in how you are oriented, toward which strongly valued goods’, from which self-knowledge comes one’s orientation in Taylorian “moral space” – the space of self-questioning concerning ‘where you stand, about what important goods or values constitute your horizons of meaning and significance’ (15-16, paraphrasing Taylor 25ff.). These suppositions are of course no more limited to life writing than the musings of Conrad’s Marlow remain applicable only to fictional worlds – in either case one may still ask *where one is* when one ceases to have the knowledge or orientational grasp by which Parker’s reading of moral space operates. So too, some of the terms

⁴¹ Into this perspective I would draw the contributors of the justly well-received *Literary Landscapes: From Modernism to Postcolonialism* (2008). Here, the postcolonial focus can at times seem somewhat reductive with regard to its spatial applications. This is not to say that the volume just referred to, along with its highly accomplished editors Attie de Lange, Gail Fincham, Jeremy Hawthorn, and Jakob Lothe, are not interested in the geographical and theoretical platforms I raise, only that in their groundbreaking mixture of narrative studies and postcolonial discourse vis-à-vis fictional place depictions (primarily though not exclusively of South Africa), they do not put their insights towards key theoretical developments: viz. ecologies of consciousness and world or the atmospheric occasionings by which that co-presencing communicates itself in texts.

⁴² Parker is citing William’s reading of Gilbert Ryle and Clifford Geertz undertaken in *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1985).

just quoted have obvious locational qualities, thus *orientation, space, horizons*. I have stressed what we might call the affective and “platial” constituents of abyssal depictions of colonial places,⁴³ but to what degree, then, do the disorientations of such spatial constructs reflect a milieu in which moral groundings no longer obtain and one is left gazing not at oneself, but say the image Fauconnier conjures in relation to his arrival in the then Malay States, his impression of a ‘white line edging an empty ocean’ (1990 [1930]: 119)? In what way is that ‘line’ no less a moral horizon, or its emptiness a morally contested space? But neither here nor in his 1994 book, *Ethics, Theory, and the Novel*, does Parker make so topographical a move, though in the earlier work he is certainly attuned to the platial tropes of moral disintegration. Writing of Cyril in D. H. Lawrence’s *The White Peacock* (1911), and commenting upon that character’s admission of feeling ‘terror’ and insignificance ‘among a great empty space’ as though he ‘were a mere fleck drifting unconsciously through the dark’ (*WP* 37), Parker notes how Lawrence’s ‘narrator is disoriented in moral space. Pity and terror overwhelm him, and, remarkably, the imagined experience seems to overwhelm the habitual limits of Lawrence’s prose, giving rise to more supple, fluid, expansive rhythm that is responsive to the immediacy of [that] new feeling’ (1994: 139). Indeed, my project can be seen in a nutshell by replacing the ‘limits of Lawrence’s prose’ with those of platial depiction, and then cross-examining Parker’s observation of the ‘supple, fluid, expansive rhythm’ as a moral ecology – the actual place in which the rhythms of morality are raised through the more “ordinary” rhythms of nature. Hence, too, similar to the affects suffered by Lawrence’s metropolitan narrator in *The White Peacock* – where he discovers ‘there had been nothing left in the world but the glitter of stars streaming, ceaseless and vain, through the black stillness of the night’ (159) – colonial modernism does not just present the synaesthetic scene of disorientation in both topographical *and* ethical terms, as often as not it locates them in a nowhere that is yet paradoxically, orientationally, concrete. But this too, as Parker points out, is part of ethical enquiry. Citing the title of a well-known work by Thomas Nagel (1986), Parker recognizes that even a presumably objective outlook can be described ‘as a “centreless view”, a view from nowhere’ (15) such as that given of the objective actuality of the colonial nowheres read here.⁴⁴

⁴³ Here I am appropriating Stuart Elden’s useful neologism concerning concrete localities – “Place is historical: history is platial” (2001: 91). My use of platial indicates both “of places” and a turning from the generality and theoretical ubiquity of *space*.

⁴⁴ I do not here mean the ‘any place whatever’ of Deleuze’s *Cinema 2: The Time Image* (1986). Discussing Michaelangelo Antonioni, Deleuze describes how that auteur creates ‘dehumanized landscapes, of emptied spaces that might be seen as having absorbed characters and actions, retaining only a geophysical description, an abstract inventory of them’ (5). The point with the abyssal landscape

Postcolonial scholars have also focused on the moral perspectives set in brackets by the imperial venture, along with the permeable boundaries between the colonial and the postcolonial fields, or between modernist and postmodernist cultural expressions. As seen in Chris Bongie's *Exotic Memories: Literature, Colonialism, and the Fin de Siècle* (1991), the ethical and sociopolitical repercussions of the 'transnational phenomenon' of alterity are read through the prerogatives of Western adventurism and 'enlightenment anthropology' (13-14) if only because, as Bongie indicates, it is the practice of positing the "exotic" space of the other that constitutes the 'central concerns of the exoticist project' and its efforts to underwrite 'authentic experience' vis-à-vis the philosophical basis of 'sovereign individuality' (9). As astute as this avenue of comprehension is, my project ultimately maintains the exotic landscape more as a frame of consciousness for the beleaguered subjects of modernity and the authenticity of their inability to square consciousness with the demands of imperial culture. Indeed, where Bongie ends by raising the possibility of a 'politics of absence' in relation to exotic constructs, I stop at the "poetics" of such absence. This distinction can be illustrated through Bongie's rather original use of the controversial Italian literary icon, Pier Paolo Pasolini, as a means of indicating how the *intermediary* space of "the reprieve where we are not" [*la tregua in cui non siamo*] forms an 'unreal alterity' that is no less a moral location (227-8): 'To inhabit this space is, finally, to put oneself in the place of the Other: to take as one's own the burden of an emptiness that can never be possessed – that emptiness from which alone a song comes forth, and another who sings it' (228).⁴⁵ What I have done with the sorts of abstract spaces noted by Pasolini is assign them concrete form in the actual places of the imperial outlands and seas, that is, in the representational colonial ecologies we abbreviate as *landscapes*. The difference between Bongie and I is that I see such landscapes performing not only the emptiness but, on occasion, Pasolini's 'song' of the self.

Notwithstanding the moral aspects of the platial constructs by which the "centreless view" set out by critics allows the human to speak from spaces of alterity, the moral issues finally constitute a larger set of questions than I can answer in the poetic and theoretical orbit of a study focused upon the textual dynamics of Western tropes of nowhere and nothingness in the modernist colonial world. My emphasis will thus not only entail a certain abstractness of discourse, but the necessary business of working out the socio-historical and cultural impacts of

of colonial modernism is that it remains an arena of consciousness rather than, primarily, the abstract forum of its effacement – later to be readdressed by the potentiality (becoming) of the time-image.

⁴⁵ Cited without page numbers from *Le ceneri di Gramsci* (Milan: Garzanti, 1957).

colonial practice will remain limited. This said, it is yet upon the ethical issues raised by my study of landscapes that my full project ends – there to see the performativity of fictional or fictionalized landscapes as indicating both the failure of Western modes of comprehension and a possible route towards a possible reconciliation with other peoples and other places. But ethics can be called in from another direction as well. If, as we shall see, Conrad sets many of his narrative crises in a unique spatial enclave, a late century *costa enigmática* with real rivers, real sunsets, and real breakdowns, the issue is to treat these narrative settings such that we do not simply turn landscapes into complicated metaphorical analogues for something else, but to see what landscapes raise up within and *against* colonial narratives. To this extent, the modus I am developing for this study does point towards a performative narratology in which the “poetics” of modernist space may be equated with modernist attempts to hold off discarded fixed visions of morally sanctioned landscapes while allowing its topographies to suggest a more authentic alterity. Here the possibility that ‘[t]hinking geographically heightens our moral concerns’ (Sack 1997: 24) is no less applicable to the ‘savage’ Congo wilderness of “Heart of Darkness”, than it is to the soporific and fallible Dutch Sumatran setting of Madelon Lulof’s *Rubber* (1931). Indeed, in the latter an indictment of colonial society goes hand in hand with natural splendours couched in the *sfumato* ‘tenderness’ of a prelapsarian natural scene that by the fact of its geographical imprecision, shows how the overlaying of culture upon a terrain can be as hollow as the mores by which it presumes to civilize that imperial void:

The grassy plain undulated endlessly, a rare harmony of liquid lines. The outline of the hills lost its precision. It became impossible to say whether they were sky or earth or even sea. And throughout this immense expanse, as far as the eye could reach, there was no human-being, not a hut, not a sign of habitation. (222)

Lulof’s central characters may not be lost, but the terms of their pleasure nonetheless relate to the enactments of a colonial process of dislocation, one that, as we have seen of Moses’s and GoGwilt’s understandings, buttresses views as to the centrality of metropolitan literary poetics in the colonial confrontation with places. In either case, the theatrical scenography, akin to the cinematic processes of the stream of consciousness method, folds into an aestheticization of the landscapes before one. Thus where the abyssal landscape (to maintain Dodson’s phrase) would tend to suggest spatializations rather than duration, space over place,⁴⁶ when viewed

⁴⁶ This phrasing warrants commentary. More generally, the space/place debate in geography continues to respond to an originary division between the often Marxist leanings of postmodernity with its emphasis on spatial superstructure, and scholars interested in rescuing *place* from a secondary localist role (Tuan

through late nineteenth century theorists of time such as James and Bergson, it is the performativity of abyssal tropes, the mobility of Lulof's imprecise landscape, that shunts spatial imaginings into the *apparently* immaterial realm of process. Here I cannot emphasize enough that while a large number of late twentieth century theoretical models could have been called in to negotiate abyssal inventions on the imperial frontier, I have tended to treat these equally 'impossible to say' late-century constructions as cultural products still open to the historical and representational modes of the earlier novelistic record. It is for this reason that I have, for better or worse, welded a multidisciplinary array of newer approaches into my view onto modernist cultural practices as a means of allowing the modernist poetics of landscape consciousness to speak for itself in the language of its origination, something that will become clearer where my fourth chapter sets out Conrad's evocations of the colonial alterity as a corrosively performative, if still ethically activated arena of fictional poesis.

A last point here: as Jeremy Hawthorn once noted, the attribution of a 'productive interaction between an extreme flexibility and mobility of narrative on the one hand, and a rootedness of *moral and human* commitment on the other' does not save us from 'what is perhaps *the* central problem of modernist fiction: how is the modern novelist to prevent a multi-perspectival view of the world (or even a view of "the world" as inescapably constituted by and divided between multiple perspectives upon it) from degenerating into relativism, solipsism, and (very soon after) triviality?' (1990: ix, original emphasis). If my strategy has been to problematize Hawthorn's guarded citation of "the world" by aligning it with the representations of landscape in Conrad and other authors of the period, it is certainly neither because Conrad should be credited with a monolithic conception of his time and place, nor because I see that author trying to overcome some putative divide between the world and its illusions: the record indicates, as Hawthorn immediately notes, that Conrad is also in some ways 'essentially a materialist rather than an idealist, possessed of an unshakeable belief in the existence of the

1974; Sack 1997; E. S. Casey. *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993). For spatial scholars, 'place' refers to a locational particularity *determined* by spatial practices, an outlook by which places become 'mere apportionings of space, its compartmentalizations': see Casey's "How to Get From Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena." *Senses of Place*, edited by Steven Field and Keith Basso (Santa Fe NM: School of American Research Press, 1996: 14). Scholars of place see material locations invoking their own discursive and concrete practices. Thus it is through 'phenomenologically linking places to selves', that a locale ceases to be a 'mere container' but 'a taking place' (Agnew 2005 84, 87). Platial networks thus reflect the individual, phenomenological experience of the specific locales wherein individuals are found. For Doreen Massey places are 'articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings', and so reflect both individual concerns and 'a sense of place which is extroverted' in that it includes larger social and cultural 'relations, experiences and understandings' (1994: 154).

world independent of its perception by human beings' (*ibid.*).⁴⁷ Similarly, Michael Levenson writes of Conrad's 'realist aspiration' in terms of taking inspiration from his mainly French inheritance of literature's 'severity of objectivity', lack of interest in 'vaporous morality', and insight that the 'clarity of sentences and the precision of rhythm would mirror the structure of the real world' (2009: 181). What this study adds to these realist means and outlooks is the extent to which modernism's worlds were not necessarily crystalline, but inherently theatrical in their representations. This does not stop the stones from being silently stony; but it might mean that as a scenographic ecology of self and environment, the representational settings authors create through their fictions are never quite as *silently* or objectively empty of content.

Despite the broader lens of my opening and closing chapters, is this predominantly a study of Conrad's landscapes? Yes and no: while the present study would be entirely possible without his example, and while he is hardly the sole author of the tropes at hand, Conrad is nonetheless their most consistent formulator in the developmental era of modernism between 1895 and 1920. As such, I have acceded his earlier works the central position they occupy here without any pretence of following their development through his entire oeuvre, or – to cite one possible late exemplar – to follow his career-long development of that endlessly transitional text, *The Rescue* (1920), wherein even the first stirring of romance in that work is borne of 'a shapeless mass [that] glided out of the dark void' (2006: 121), or reaches its peak as a timeless and nearly abyssal interlude likened to 'the sweep of the tide, without speech, without movement, without heat' (321). To this degree, while my broader undertaking here is to elucidate how aesthetic duration operates through a particular era of Western colonial experience, and particularly as the dynamic mode by which landscapes are animated as spaces of colonial alterity, it should perhaps be recalled that Conrad had been before the period of modernism proper, let alone its postmodern and postcolonial offspring, a professional (if finally transient) traveller of the imperial *au-delà*, and so remains, across his second career, an intimate of both real space and of the artifices by which land and seascapes accrued cultural and symbolic value in his epoch. Perhaps as importantly, he stands for that awareness of where the 'faded stream' cutting across such places as often seemed to be 'pointing for ever' back at the self, not just as the event of their co-presencing, but one constituting a more authentic time and memory for the *unfounded* individual. Authentic, yes, but Conrad's "out there" is as often seen through a

⁴⁷ For Guerard, Conrad's oeuvre features a 'declared fear of the corrosive and faith-destroying intellect – doubled by a profound and ironic skepticism' (57), an outlook I see interrogated, though not corrected in Conrad's representation of atmospheric and narrative settings.

tinted haze, as where he writes in a letter concerning the Malay and Indonesian places of his inspiration, ‘Yes – in Borneo but as a matter of reality in my memory it is only a faded stream’. More plainly, now in a letter, Conrad allows how he regrets to see his ‘own stupid finger pointing for ever to the spot on the map’ as though this should be meaning enough:

After all, rivers and people have nothing true about them – in the vulgar sense – but the names. Any criticism that would look for real description of places and events would be disastrous to that particle of the universe, which is nobody and nothing in the world but myself. (*CL I*: 87)

What my study does, then, is to see in what ways the colonial modernist landscapes may yet be more real, and as paradoxically concrete, as the ‘true’ nowheres their authors create in fiction.

Chapter Outlines

This chapter has rolled through a number of themes important to this study. At this point it is helpful to acknowledge how my reading of temporalized landscape figures is structured around its various research areas, a collation including epiphany and the impression as literary tropes, aesthetic framings of literary atmospheres, phenomenological and ideational models of fictional temporality, narratological investigations into the formal constraints of literary landscapes, theatrical understandings of performative space, linguistic analysis of human spatial reception, and explorations of environmental and “wilderness” aesthetics. While this listing of paths would appear to indicate an impossibly broad canvas, each of these areas is necessary to the task of composing the more singular picture I am after, and so to articulate the dynamic processes by which fictional settings are animated as arenas of communicative potential. As will shortly be seen of my chapter descriptions, the theoretical framework of this study is therefore more progressive than fixed. In the order of their larger appearance, these frames pass from the aesthetic principles by which landscapes, even abyssal ones, are determined as representations, to their communicative means as voidal constructs that express themselves as either impressionistic or epiphanic tropes, to their literary effect as atmospheric occasionings within particular canonical texts.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Conrad claimed in a letter to the then literary advisor to *Blackwood’s Magazine*, David Meldrun, that unlike *Lord Jim*, *The Rescue* aims ‘at purely Aesthetic (if I dare say so) effects’ (10.08.1899; *CL II*: 191).

Further, in moving towards a performative reading of landscapes and their ambient features within colonial modernism – what they give rise to as affectively and thematically charged poetic structures – I will be deepening another point of Paul Armstrong’s, this to the effect not only do the authors he investigates ‘lay bare the epistemological preconditions that make representation possible’, but as ‘literary impressionists’ they take the novel beyond representation by pursuing its epistemological principles so radically that *they make them thematic*’ (1987: 16, my emphasis). Notwithstanding the worrisome claim of an unsubstantiable ‘beyond’ or excess to representation that is not somehow encoded into the form and content of literary works, the idea that form communicates substance gains much in Armstrong’s wording. The suggestion here is that indeterminacy and aporia are also poetic forms, and that their communicative apparatus, impressionistic and contingent as this may be, is thematically active: the aporetic or abyssal landscape *performs* something out of its ambient qualities. In modernist fiction, “nowhere” and “nothing” are not just evocative, but have a literary form: not just the often metaphorical phenomena carried upon ‘the ripple of the river, the souging of the trees’, but ‘a voice speaking from beyond the threshold of an eternal darkness’ (*HoD* 108).

We have just looked at the colonial *wilderness* as presented in Conrad’s *An Outcast of the Islands* as both an unrepresentable forum for experience and, simultaneously, as an aesthetic structure with clear thematic fallouts. This introduction has addressed some of the ways in which the colonial landscape can imply both a “nowhere” for its western characters, and yet remain a dynamic environment for the laying out of human consciousness. Chapter Two goes on to construct a more detailed theoretical position from which the transformation of setting descriptions can be understood, especially where place depictions are seen to collect around particular aesthetic practices. There I will concentrate upon how the literary impression, epiphanic form, and textual “atmospheres” impinge upon the performativity of settings, and so I begin by asking, via the unlikely pairing of Jonathan Culler and Theodore Adorno, what sort of significance escapes the aporias of literary forms focused on drawing profound meaning from figures of nothingness. Indeed, I note two different aesthetic modes by which landscape treatments accrue meaning, the impression and the epiphany. Anchoring my discussion of how the modernist use of impressions gives texture to abyssal forms, I read Jesse Matz’s *Literary Impressionism and Modernist Aesthetics* (2001) in order to indicate how theorization of the impression has been hindered by suspicion towards its phenomenological aspects, including the temporal focus attending that project. Here I supplement the missing temporal dimension of Matz’s outlook by recourse to Jacques Aubert’s and Charles Taylor’s work on the time spans by

which impressionistic data is drawn into the epiphanic moment. Epiphany is especially useful in this context since it lays out one important process by which difficult to categorize ‘online’ phenomena are accorded cognitive and thematic value.⁴⁹ Because landscapes are not just spatio-temporally blendings of geographical and cultural conditions, but ambient arenas for *platial* experience as these unfold in both the mind and senses, I borrow the term ‘atmosphere’ from the philosophical and aesthetic readings of Gernot Böhme and Martin Seel, in whose works psychosomatic spaces are theorized as providing particular moods and so of altering the human comprehension of places. Simultaneously, as the theatrical theorist, Erika Fischer-Lichte, has it, I draw attention to such atmospheric sites of poesis as *performative* arenas, thereby focusing the chapter on what will be a central tenet in my study, the communicative potential of landscapes as these enter consciousness, and by which they take on particular moral tenors within the subject. Finally, in order to nudge the substance of my reflections towards the more fluid modalities given of temporal tropes, I return to the landscape through a brief look at cinematic writing on the aesthetics of film settings, an area of investigation in which sensory effects lead directly towards the frames of spatio-temporal dynamicism.

Chapter Three dedicates itself to the time constraints by which atmospheric literary figures impart significance through landscapes as continuous unfoldings. From this discussion duration will be seen to emerge as the indispensable narrative vehicle by which fictional settings become affectively charged. Beginning with a survey of modernist temporality via the canonical literary figures of Virginia Woolf and T. S. Eliot, as well as the writings of William James and Henri Bergson in the face of contemporary claims as to the nonexistence of time, I turn to Paul Ricoeur’s narrative framing of temporality as a means of introducing an analyzable structure for literary presentations of time. At this point theorists nearer our own period are called in to negotiate the historical material, primarily through the phenomenological frames Vivian Sobchack raises in her work on the cinema, where she maps the excesses made possible by the real time encounter of interiority with the spatial representations crucial to the interpretation of film. In order to return the theoretical material to the fictional works at the heart of this study, the chapter ends with two literary readings of Conrad’s poetics of temporality. This return to the stylistics of fiction culminates the rhetorical platform around which the study is arranged, and which provides a means of understanding how we discern (or, importantly, fail to discern) differences between mental and topographical spaces, as well as the temporal forms across which

⁴⁹ For my use of “on-line”, see Gilles Fauconnier and Eve Sweetser, eds., *Spaces, Worlds, and Grammar* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

those discernments are carried. By this stage, *aesthetic duration* will have emerged as a means of animating setting constructions in colonial modernist fiction from the point of view of, respectively, noting the deictic markers by which landscapes take on thematic and dramatic significance, as a narrative platform for understanding how and what fictional settings communicate, and as a narrative structure with implications for the way in which modernist authors represent the displacing of consciousness onto landscapes.

As a result of this extended opening, my two closing chapters are entirely given over to close readings. In distinction to the final chapter, where I cover three novels, the fourth treats a single major text in detail, *Lord Jim*. Extending observations of this novel made in previous chapters, I argue that the dramatic tension Conrad creates through the collision of fleeting impressions, abstract treatments of concrete environments, and the aporetic human subject, are best understood not simply as aesthetic durations, but, to adapt my investigation onto Gernot Böhme's work in Chapter Two, performative literary atmospheres. To this extent, along with the temporal understanding of abyssal landscapes made in Chapter Three, the fourth chapter's engagement with *Lord Jim* comprises the core of my study, primarily because it is there that the dynamics by which colonial landscapes and seascapes carry thematic value is laid out and formalized through a continuous reading of that novel's three primary settings: aboard the *Patna*, in the Sumatran 'wilderness' of Patusan, and, as the model for my theatricalized outlook, the "Stein" episode separating them.

Only with my last chapter, then, do I extend my discussion from Conrad to the larger colonial modernist era. There the loss of focus on the specific issues of Conrad's use of geographical locations is offset by the wealth of durational strategies found in other writers and texts: Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out* (1915), D. H. Lawrence's *Kangaroo* (1923) and E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924), works, that is, in which negotiations of contemporary experience are staged through the synaesthetic encounter with colonial landscapes. Since the setting treatments given by these authors depart in subtle ways from the patterns produced in Conrad's early oeuvre, I will emphasize how the frames of significance they draw from landscapes engage different aspects of *sense* – touch in Woolf, the phenomenal body in Lawrence, hearing in Forster. In all cases, the atmospherics of platial representation provide a means of eluding the communicative limitations of language and image, while remaining alert to the ethical issues that twentieth century modernity had made all the more problematic.

CHAPTER TWO

Modernism's Communicative Places: Theory, Terms, Aesthetics

'For the sake of the possible': Structure and Excess

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the theoretical foundations by which fictional evocations of landscape come to operate as vehicles of significance. This I will do from two broad points of view: through the modes by which the literary aesthetics of landscape operate, and how such modes are brought together as ambient or atmospheric occasionings. Leaving aside the temporal aspects of my reading for Chapter Three, and their performativity for Chapter Four, here I explore how interior or subjective states come to be encoded in place descriptions. While this chapter will lead away from my focus upon colonial modernity, through concentrating upon the processes of literary communication per se we become better placed to posit landscapes as vehicles of human content, while understanding how platial “meanings” are most effectively communicated and interrogated by indirect means.

For the remainder of this section I want to set out a brief exploration of the general terms by which human significance comes to be enfolded into setting constructions, both as a means of revealing pressures upon the ‘identity’ through which, or on whose behalf, the narrative is being filtered, and as a means of animating the imperial nowhere as a literary structure. Indeed, by watching how access to the individual human subject becomes conflated with the locatedness of that individual, we are able to glimpse where the fictional depiction of landscapes provides a perspective on interiority. But before asking how fictional settings are charged with significance, we need to ask to what extent the poetics of place allow an author to grapple with landscapes from a purview not yet implicated in the failings of the imperial cultures through which such landscapes are habitually viewed.

More practically, given that my object of study is a trope, or structure of figuration, it seems sensible to begin from the point of view of formalist attention to the aesthetic transferal of categories of subjecthood onto the spaces of the world. As we have already seen, setting descriptions in modernism are often related to issues of identity, and the narrative complications through which we are to posit the individual subject vis-à-vis the world – concerns reinvigorated in late century debates over the status of the “human” as a historical formation. Certainly, the

title-hero of Conrad's *Lord Jim* is simultaneously 'overwhelmed by his own personality' and 'overwhelmed by the inexplicable' as regards his situation and surroundings (*LJ* 224).⁵⁰ While not concerned with particular novels or periods, Jonathan Culler brings together structuralist and theory-based perspectives in order to ask the perennial 'question of whether the identity of the subject is something given or something constructed', and wonders whether the answer will entail one's behaving a certain way as a means of narratively erecting a route back to what you always were:

Western novels reinforce the notion of an essential self by suggesting that the self which emerges from trying encounters with the world was in some sense there all along, as the basis for the actions which, from the perspective of readers, bring this self into being. The fundamental identity of character emerges as the result of actions, of struggles with the world, but then this identity is posited as the basis, even the cause of those actions. Isn't that what we're struggling with in theory's debates about essentialism – whether certain aspects of identity are essential, necessary, or whether all are constructed and in that sense contingent? (2007: 34-5)

For Culler, mapping the essentialist aspects of the fictional self is a function of that individual's 'encounters' with his or her investments in the concrete world. Identity may be confirmed out of one's actions and struggles, but as Culler suggests, that emergence of that identity as a stable basis of and for consciousness is not perhaps so different from the *self* that had been implied from the start. It is around such an identity that the reader can create a continuity of attention that becomes stable to the degree that that the narrative centredness of the fictional self is now perceived as being self-identical (identity: from the Latin, *idem*, the same). Against this equation, my endeavour sets out to incorporate challenging or even aporetic surroundings into Culler's generic notion of 'world' – places which, by dint of the physical, cultural, or atmospheric challenges they pose, prove resistant to assimilation by fictional characters. The charge of essentialism given Culler's reading of the individual is of course well placed where the 'fundamental identity' of the subject is seen to be both the author of the self and its process of emergence, thus his usages suggest the very traditions that Theory-steeped critics have been pleased to dismantle. In such cases the suggestion is made that a person might rather stand for (as the roots of the word *person* from the Latin *persona*, or actor's mask,

⁵⁰ Robert Hampson is very good at laying out this aspect of Jim's trajectory, citing the latter's efforts to arrange his 'identity-for-self' in such a way that he might 'protect it from the challenges of reality' (1992: 120), a reality, that like Hawthorne's notification of 'the world' in Conrad (1990: ix-x), I see being partially cast upon his setting constructions, and so opened to discursive interrogation where introspection remains occluded.

indicate) a kind of facade for something more evanescent than a particular narrative sameness – the same dynamic I see of place representations.

But let me pick up once more on the notion of ‘world’ in order to ask what sort of self we can imagine in the absence of an accompanying environment. This issue is only made more pointed where questions concerning the ontological status of fictional individuals are shunted onto places or locations, and especially where such individuals are faced with challenges to their ability to maintain a cultural identity in a difficult environment – for instance by attempting to ground the self through one’s relationship to otherwise alien settings. Indeed, in each of the fictional works mentioned so far in this study, it is at least apparent that the place of the subject can sometimes seem as important as the identity we are led to attach to the fictional individual. This insight continues to be part of the larger debate to which Culler alludes, and, in its fictional and theoretical guises, fuels Culler’s observation that with regard to ‘the literary in theory’, the literary ‘has migrated from being the object of theory to being the quality of theory itself’ (38). Further, as Culler elsewhere observes of theory, ‘the qualities of literature can’t be reduced either to objective properties or to consequences of ways of framing language’ (2009: 45): in other words, poetics, like theory, remains ungroundable in the sense that there is no concrete end to be formed from it. To this extent, that which remains non-objective and unframed is the task and goal of writing and theory, its essential project being to reveal that which language is not capable of revealing, or at least, to create the significance that fails to be elided wherever ‘language resists the frames we impose’ upon it (op. cit.). More direct to my purposes, Culler writes of the tension between the poetics of specific forms and their hermeneutic aspects, concluding one line of thought with the Derrida-like statement that ‘if we say that meaning is context-bound, then we must add that context is boundless’ (op. cit. 67).⁵¹ When applied to the spatial and topographical aporias we find of the colonial modernist landscape, it is as easy to see how the cultural boundedness of individuals comes to grief in the *unbound* topographies of unfamiliar places, as it is to see that the contexts through which places are assimilated might not be so different from the self-contextualizations of the individuals imagined there. To this degree, both the individual and their cultural suppositions are wrapped up in the tropes whereby the excess of natural settings is communicated: what we are is *where* we are.

In order to illustrate the ‘possible goals of literature and theory’ and, more specifically, as

⁵¹ David Gorman makes this suggestion in his “Theory of What?” (*Philosophy and Literature* 23.1 (1999) 206-216) where he cites Derrida’s text *Limited Inc* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1977) as a partial source for Culler’s comments.

a means of acknowledging ‘philosophy as writing that achieves literary effects’ (39), Culler cites nearly the entirety of the closing passage of Adorno’s *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*; moreover, he does so without wishing to embrace either Adorno’s ‘messianic perspective’ (39), or the terrible ironies of the European war then fuelling the latter’s viewpoint.⁵² Despite the length of Adorno’s reflection, I repeat it here for the manner in which it gathers together so many of the strands appearing in the present study, not least the connectivities between perspective, touch, otherness, and what Adorno is wise enough to avoid calling an *epiphanic* resolution to the problems of identity, thought, and the perspectives by which we comprehend our being in the world. While my investment in Adorno’s example will be limited, it is apposite to remember that among its other attributes, Adorno’s book of reflections signals in so many ways, a *terminus ad quem* for modernism.

Perspectives must be fashioned that displace and estrange the world, reveal it to be, with its rifts and crevices, as indigent and distorted as it will appear one day in the messianic light. To gain such perspectives without velleity or violence, entirely from felt contact with its objects – this alone is the task of thought. It is the simplest of all things, because the situation calls imperatively for such knowledge, indeed because consummate negativity, once squarely faced, delineates the mirror-image of its opposite. But it is also the utterly impossible thing, because it presupposes a standpoint removed, even though by a hair’s breadth, from the scope of existence, whereas we well know that any possible knowledge must not only be first wrested from what is, if it shall hold good, but is also marked, for this very reason, by the same distortion and indigence which it seeks to escape. The more passionately thought denies its conditionality for the sake of the unconditional, the more unconsciously, and so calamitously, it is delivered up to the world. Even its own impossibility it must at last comprehend for the sake of the possible. But beside the demand thus placed on thought, the question of the reality or unreality of redemption itself hardly matters (1974: 247)

Broadly, this passage looks ahead to Adorno’s monumental if only partly revised *Aesthetic Theory* (originally 1970), specifically where Adorno’s arguments collect around a passage he has taken from Paul Valéry’s *Autres Rhumbs* (1943): ‘Beauty demands, perhaps, the slavish imitation of what is indeterminable in things’ (Adorno 2004 (1970): 94). In light of Valéry’s observation it is easy to see how the search for a perspective by which to grasp the ‘indeterminable’ is at the heart of Adorno’s project, and links it both to modernism and its late-

⁵² Culler acknowledges his debt to Robert Baker for his own use of this citation from Adorno. Baker’s original usage appears in his doctoral dissertation: “Poetic Form, Poetic Fiction, and the Way of Extravagance: Twentieth Century Inventions” (Cornell University, 1997). It is beyond the scope of the present study to mount more than the most cursory indication of where Adorno’s work can be seen to impact the historical and theoretical aspects relevant to it.

century theoretical inheritances.⁵³ Culler, himself, draws attention to the last line of Adorno's reflection, indicating how along with 'the messianic' strain he notes of that author, redemption 'can be thought of as a figure that enables such discourse'. Furthermore, as in literature, 'it is the demand of otherness placed on thought that counts' (40), from which we may suppose, with Culler, that 'insofar as thought seeks to find passages beyond the familiar, the known, the countable, it is cognate with the literature, or at least the literary efforts, of romanticism and modernism' (38). Thus we arrive at an important historical nexus of ideas linking the poetics of aesthetic representation with otherwise irretrievable 'truth content', here the discourse of otherness as a state preliminary to the mounting of "indeterminable" content.⁵⁴

I would like to set Adorno's reflection loose amongst several quotations from Conrad's irretrievably romantic-modernist text, *Lord Jim*, and to use this intersection as a means of laying out, in shorthand form, an otherwise improbable collusion of Adorno's theoretical poesis and Conrad's fictional strategies, and by doing so, to wonder how this might help us draw moral and aesthetic significance from place descriptions. To remember that novel more fully, *Lord Jim* is from the first as much a meditation upon its places as it is the honour of its title-character. Stranded in Asia following an injury, Jim is drawn, by degrees, to the same 'eternal peace of Eastern sky and sea' as his fellow marine officers, and so does not return to England. His new post as first mate of the rusting *Patna* is cut short when the ship strikes a sunken hulk en route to the Arabian coast. In the panic surrounding the officers' fears of sinking, they abandon the ship and its "cargo" of Muslim pilgrims. The subsequent rescue of both the absconding officers and then the *Patna* brings shame and approbation to Jim, and, having lost his officer's ticket, he begins an itinerant shore career moving progressively east from Bombay (now Mumbai) as a vagabond from truth. Brought constantly into awareness of his own notoriety ('his keen

⁵³ The Valery passage may be found in *Tel Quel II*. Paris: Gallimard, 1943, pp. 103-97. Compare Martin Seel's view that Valery's insight is of 'great' theoretical and ethical significance to Adorno, impacting, along with his work on aesthetics, issues of freedom and "the subject" as raised in the latter's *Negative Dialectics*: '[f]or Adorno, art thus becomes the hallmark indicating that the word has not been comprehended if it is known only conceptually; that the world has not been appropriated if it is appropriated only technically [...]; in a word, that we do not really encounter the reality of our lives if we encounter it merely in a spirit of mastery' (2005: 15).

⁵⁴ In laying out Adorno's Aesthetic Theory for the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Lambert Zuidervart writes: 'Arguably, the idea of "truth content" (*Wahrheitsgehalt*) is the pivotal center around which all the concentric circles of Adorno's aesthetics turn (Zuidervart 1991; Wellmer 1991, 1-35; Jarvis 1998, 90-123). To gain access to this center one must temporarily suspend standard theories about the nature of truth (whether as correspondence, coherence, or pragmatic success) and allow for artistic truth to be dialectical, disclosive, and nonpropositional. According to Adorno, each artwork has its own import (*Gehalt*) by virtue of an internal dialectic between content (*Inhalt*) and form (*Form*)' (< <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/adorno/> > Web. 15.02.12).

perception of the Intolerable' 46), Jim is sent by an acquaintance of his sometime mentor, and the novel's primary narrator, Marlow, into the upriver jungle settlement of Patusan in North-Western Sumatra where, since no one will know him, he would be free to forge a more honourable role and reputation for himself. There, in the course of fulfilling his obligations to this new identity, and in very uncertain circumstances, he offers up his life rather than to abandon, for a second time, the state and status of his responsibilities.

While the novel presents one man's search for reconciliation with conscience, the geographical locations Jim occupies at the beginning and end of the narrative has as profound an impact on his journey towards self-worth as the scenario inscribing it. In the first place, Conrad's text stages its own search for character, mobilizing multiple points of view, temporal loopings, and disclaimers to its own perspectival footings with regard to its central subject. This strategy has the result of deepening the effect of moral loss and existential disorientation that the novel appears to be reifying, all the while interrogating the potentially illusory effects of its own fictional means. To this degree, the novel remains indeterminable in the sense seen of Adorno.

In fact, the analogy can be deepened without finessing the terms of such indeterminacy. For example, in precipitously abandoning both ship and self-image for the featureless realm of the oceanic, Jim's situation rehearses Adorno's 'consummate negativity', while his subsequent search for redemption, as narrated by Marlow, yet points towards 'possible knowledge' that must be 'wrested from what is'. At the same time, such knowledge is 'marked' in *Lord Jim* by, as Adorno says, 'the same distortion and indigence which it seeks to escape'. Indeed, Marlow indicates as much through his claims of having only misleading glimpses of his 'inscrutable' subject, viz. a figure standing 'at the heart of a vast enigma' (291), one trying to *wrest* his way towards knowledge from his wanderings as a 'soul astray amongst the passions of this earth' (276). Even the novel's ending, facing death in the name of a potentially illusional making of amends, accords with Adorno's notation of the 'impossibility' that thinking 'must at last comprehend for the sake of the possible'. I would not want to push these scant correspondences any further, especially where they both ride upon the modernist tendency towards a poetically charged, if vaguely expressed grasping after profundity. Indeed, the fact that Conrad and Adorno are operating according to very different political axioms and historical conditions does not negate the congruency of their tropes, nor the fact they are both putting forward "truth" statements in which critical content is transmitted aesthetically rather than discursively.

Further to Culler's comments on the aesthetic borrowings of philosophical thought, Conrad and Adorno may thus be seen to be locating the unthinkable through the *literary*. And if Martin

Seel puts the issue more concretely still, pointing out, as does Valéry, the importance of undertaking ‘a *sensuous* consideration of what is indeterminate’ (16 my emphasis), what better place to look than at the sensuous articulations of topographical spaces and their atmospherics, at any rate, as here, Conrad’s practice of occluding those moments of potential vision permitted of his fictional characters (*LJ* 137). What might such a comparison look like between the places in which significance is suggested and the indeterminate knowledge or, to borrow Adorno’s wording, the negativity that is to be ‘squarely faced’ (1974: 247)?

Indeed, it is not difficult to imagine Conrad assenting to the ironic hedging of Adorno’s final sentence where this concerns the unimportance of the ‘reality or unreality of redemption’. This is not because of Adorno’s pessimistic underlining of what is in effect a positive statement of intent, but his comprehension that saying more risks carrying over the ‘distortion and indigence of which it seeks to escape’. So too, while *Lord Jim* is among many things a tale of one man’s illusional redemption ‘wrested from what is’ (to borrow Adorno’s phrase), we yet find in the latter’s words faint echoes of the rhetoric Conrad draws upon in his depiction of the meeting between *Lord Jim*’s prime pessimistic narrator, Marlow, and the novel’s romantic sage, Stein. Here, at the narrative fulcrum of this broken backed text, the dream of redemption is ‘a charming and deceptive light’ tossing up its ‘impalpable poesy’ (201), which by the novel’s end comes to be for Marlow no more than an empty figure, a ‘pitiless wedding with a shadowy ideal of conduct’ (351).⁵⁵ Moreover, it is against the substancelessness of these typical Conradian quandaries that Conrad speaks in his 1917 “Author’s Note” to *Lord Jim* of having not just seen Jim’s ‘form’ pass by on an ‘eastern roadstead’, but of having recognized him as “‘one of us’”, that is, of having claimed Jim’s mass over his figure (44).⁵⁶ So we are perhaps not far from the nostalgic forward glance of Adorno towards the perspective won of through ‘felt contact’ with objects, even where one faces the simultaneous necessity of conceding the ‘conditionality’ or ‘impossibility’ of thought itself. Of course Adorno is not alone in promoting a radical aesthetics of objectivity. Something similar had already been promoted in German literature by the conservative Austrian writer, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, whose *Letter of Lord Chandos* (1902) relates how traditional poetic language had led ‘into the void’ (122), and thus to the search for ‘a language in which mute things speak to me’ (128). As with Adorno, the modernist reification of

⁵⁵ Michael Greaney in “Lord Jim and Embarrassment” (in Simmons and Stape, *Lord Jim: Centennial Essays*) says the duel is between Leavis (1948: 218) and Fredric Jameson’s *Political Unconscious*. In the former the break between halves is a literary failing, and in the latter, a revelatory symptom of its historical authenticity.

⁵⁶ This ‘us’ is culturally qualified in the preface: Jim is claimed as a westerner as opposed to the product of some dream of northern desire or of Latin tetchiness over honour and reputation.

objects or places such as von Hoffmannsthal's 'mute things' or Conrad's Congolese 'great silence' (*HD* 48) appears phrased in seeming awareness of the slippage between signifiers and things. Such impossibility is more constitutive for Adorno than Conrad. If neither are prepared to broach a positive identity for the human subject, Conrad retains the proposition that one may keep the subject in sight through the essentialist dynamic of 'the idea of Fidelity' – one of the 'very simple ideas' upon which the world 'rests'.⁵⁷ For Adorno (and this is one of the reasons that his work is dangerous to casual quotation), the subject is really a non-identity, and so phenomenologically founded efforts to work forward or back from individual experience are wrongheaded given that any philosophy 'which tries to base such notions as reality or truth on an analysis of consciousness' are merely idealistic (1940: 5).⁵⁸

So while we are not yet ready to tie the modernist representation of interiority and landscape to the aporetic aspects of place settings, it is at least conceivable that the nexus of the concrete and the ideational (the topographical and the topological), might be addressed through the poetic forms by which the embodied encounter with topography engages (maps onto?) the mind's efforts to orient itself in time and space. As we see of the first chapters of *Lord Jim*, an individual's sense of being *lost* can occur in the precise knowledge of where one is, with up to date coordinates and the ordered events. How different is this from the 'impossible' perspectives Adorno recognizes as one more 'standpoint removed [...] from the scope of existence', or is such a standpoint no less caught up with the now *abyssal* perspectives by which thought is 'delivered up to the world' as surely and devastatingly as we will see Jim cast down into it? Thus in representing how writers dramatize Adorno's attempt to 'displace and estrange the world' and its subjects, we will eventually need to address fictions in which subjects are seen to be oriented less by concrete environments than the self-formed objectifications by which individuals cognize their surroundings. In other words, we will want to address the fictional encounter with alterity as a means of discovering how the affective potency of that realm embraces both spatial

⁵⁷ This thought occurs among the last few paragraphs of his "A Familiar Preface" to *A Personal Record* (1912): 'Those who read me know my conviction that the world, the temporal world, rests on a few very simple ideas; so simple that they must be as old as the hills. It rests notably, among others, on the idea of Fidelity. At a time when nothing which is not revolutionary in some way or other can expect to attract much attention I have not been revolutionary in my writings. The revolutionary spirit is mighty convenient in this, that it frees one from all scruples as regards ideas. Its hard, absolute optimism is repulsive to my mind by the menace of fanaticism and intolerance it contains. No doubt one should smile at these things; but, imperfect Esthete, I am no better Philosopher.'

⁵⁸ We may add the proviso given by Adorno: 'Behind this principle there is nothing but the old idealist principle that the subjective data of our consciousness are the ultimate source of all knowledge, and that therefore any fundamental philosophical analysis must be an analysis of consciousness' (1940: 18).

disorientations *and* Adorno's 'mirror-image' of the constructed self – its abyssal knowledge.

We should look at one such world in *Lord Jim*. As the vatic character Stein puts it, the way to survive the disillusionment and annihilation of the existential *via negativa* is to 'submit' to it, or as Adorno states matters, to work from its 'standpoint' in order to avoid succumbing to the 'distortion and indigence which 'knowledge' seeks to escape'. In either case the perspective onto the *Other* is won through embracing the unrepresentable, or in the terms of the present argument, through confrontation with the literary arena by which otherwise unrepresentable interior *landscapes* are troped as real ones. Stein's model is of course as much about places as it is a way of facing challenges: 'In the destructive element immerse', he says, or as *Lord Jim* sets out in practical terms, immerse yourself in the sensorium of the abyss:

A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea. If he tries to climb out into the air as inexperienced people endeavour to do, he drowns – *nicht wahr?*... No! I tell you! The way is to the destructive element submit yourself, and with the exertions of your hands and feet in the water make the deep, deep sea keep you up. (200)

Not only do these notorious lines indicate the metaphorical collusion of categories of embodiment with a topologized landscape – keeping oneself afloat upon a dream sea from which sensory experience has been voided – they reveal how it is from Adornian negativity that the encounter with the otherness of the self is represented at its most profound level. Of course the structure of Adorno's aphorism is, like Stein's directive concerning immersion in the 'destructive element', a feature of a long-standing tradition rooted partly in apophatic theology.⁵⁹ By this rubric, abstract experiences (including the sublime surplus of such understandings) are approached through defining what they are not, and so taking the negative route since, once more with Adorno, the negative can produce 'the mirror-image of its opposite'. Jim's falling into the sea, devastating as it is, is yet in Marlow's understanding of Stein's admonition over the 'destructive element', only one more ironic encounter with the 'unfathomable and pellucid depths' of experience. All the same, it is through such experiences that one comes 'nearer to absolute Truth', while recalling that since both Stein's citation of 'Nature... Kosmos' (195), and Marlow's returning 'Truth... Beauty' (202) feature the ironic capitalization of abstract nouns, we must wonder at their potential inadequacy as signs. It is at least partly for this reason that with Conrad and Adorno the concrete response to negativity comes to be made through embodied action, by the 'exertions of your hands and feet', that is, from *wresting* knowledge 'from what

⁵⁹ That is, the tradition running from Pseudo Dionysius (the Areopagite) through Thomas Aquinas, *i.e.* from around the turn of the 6th century to the late medieval period.

is'. Briefly put, it is through 'felt contact' with thought's 'objects' that one sets out towards the 'possible' of Adorno's text – or as Conrad might have scripted it, the upper case realm of the "Possible".

Let me draw these reflections back into the domain of landscape poetics, including, as Jim's jump into the sea illustrates, locations wherein the dislocated subject is hauled into sensory proximity with the things and atmospheres of a geographically located "nowhere". A major theme of this study, then, is to see to what degree modernism provides geographical analogues for the encounter with the negative 'truth' of alterity, and to wonder how landscapes come to be utilized for their thematic fullness, especially where they are negatively presented. Here it is the aporetic quality of places that needs to be underlined across the geographical reach of the larger period, so that with the occluding atmospheres of *Lord Jim* (1900), as, for instance of the exoticizing and absolutely not imperialistic terrain of the "Snow" chapter of Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* (1924), or, later, the ocean-like and so unlandmarked colonial Sahara of Paul Bowles's *The Sheltering Sky* (1949), the conditionality of the setting can be seen to perform both the embodied medium of human endeavour, and the otherwise veiled symbolic contents cached in nature and the world. In this sense, wherever one goes in modernity, the negative figurative machinery that Adorno provides for 'impossibility' can be seen to align with the 'unfathomable and pellucid depths' of Conrad's search for truth.

Equally, what Adorno envisions at the end of *Minima Moralia* is not the continuation of old thoughts, but a *physical* experiencing now freed from prior associations, a fresh embodiment of the negative from which utopian thinking can spring. With Conrad, however, it is not the new that the encounter with world is to bring (what *new* would that be?), but survival – for from immersion in the abyssal 'destructive element' one merely holds the absurdity of existence at bay through negative means. With Adorno, then we are not so far from Conrad's model of submitting oneself to the impossible deep and surreptitiously, discursively, *swimming* to redemption.

Modes of “Impossibility”: Impressionism and Epiphanic Knowing

The white light of the moon threw silver tints on the porticoes of the pagodas, on the pyramids, on the thatched roofs; the cocoas, the palms, and the light leaves of the clumps of bamboos defined themselves sharply against the clear sky; and though no perceptible air came to stir the atmosphere, the whole trembled before me like a dream, without my being able to seize the moving outlines of this magic picture. The nights are beautiful in the East, and the East is beautiful only at night; both men and things gain by being seen in an uncertain light Louis de Carné (1872: 153)⁶⁰

Always consider the impressions that you are making upon the mind of the reader, and always consider that the first impression with which you present him will be so strong that it will be all that you can ever do to efface it, to alter it, or even quite slightly to modify it [...] I have asked myself frequently since then why one should try to produce an illusion of reality in the mind of one's reader. Is it just an occupation like any other [...] or is it the sole end and aim of art? Ford Madox Ford “On Impressionism” (1914)

This section takes up the manner in which fictions address the themes we saw in Culler and Adorno, those bluntly ‘trying encounters with the world’ (Culler 2007: 34) by which identity is tested, and perspectives created to ‘displace and estrange’ that world. As we have already seen of several representations of colonial landscapes, a gap opens between embodied interactions and how that encounter is cognitively organized in the mind. The problem then is to wonder what happens when the terms of that cognitive reordering appear divorced from the physical experience of place, or, likewise, to ask what is entailed when the orientational categories by which the mind navigates are overwhelmed. On this note, I want to pursue the poetics of ‘felt contact’ with the world’s objects through the literary impressionism of modernism’s early phase. According to one of its most sophisticated commentators, Jesse Matz, the art of the impression mines the ‘in between-ness’ of the sensual and the ideational, and so complicates the place wherein such ‘felt contact’ is seen to lie. As Matz goes on to observe, the ‘impression is never simply a feeling, a thought, or a sensation, but partakes, rather, of a mode of experience that is neither sensuous nor rational, neither felt nor thought, but somewhere in between’ (2001: 16). For Matz, then, the concrete is only one side of the equation by which objects are given significance. Such is evident in *An Outcast of the Islands*, where at his point of submersion into alterity, Willems suffers a version of Adorno’s ‘felt’ engagement: ‘He wanted to clasp, to embrace solid things; he had an immense craving for sensations; for touching, pressing, seeing,

⁶⁰ I am indebted to Victor Savage’s *Western Impressions of Nature and Landscape in Southeast Asia* (Kent Ridge [Singapore]: Singapore UP, 1984) for bringing Carné’s book to my attention, as of the British Orientalist Talbot Kelly’s descriptions of Burma (1912) cited below.

handling, holding on, to all these things' (268). Here the European outsider is found flailing after one half of the failed (constructively negative) unity Adorno critiques in a prior reflection from his *Moralia*, 'the inseparability of what is spiritual and what is corporeal'. As Adorno crucially claims, there is no *intellectual* content 'which would not somehow be grounded in corporeal perception and demand corporeal fulfillment' (151. VII: 242).

In that same chapter from *Outcast*, however, we find Willems facing the aporetic impossibility of his finding an Adornian 'standpoint removed [...] from the scope of existence', and so he fails to wrest a perspective for himself from the 'distortion and indigence [he] seeks to escape'. Such is the particular blockage I see being rehearsed in depictions of a colonial modernist landscape, one problematizing the search for an Archimedean perspective that would by definition remain free of metropolitan attitudes. But is this not, in a superficial way, just what Adorno was promoting at the end of his collection of moral aphorisms: that wherever abyssal perspectives appear, wisdom might follow – provided, of course, that at some point the desired image in the mirror is found to emerge from 'felt contact' with thought's objects. Again, what if such contact defers not to *places* in the world, but their intentional aspects as "nowheres"; does this mean that a landscape – as a focalized and so culturalized mental construct – can provide such an 'object'? Conrad provides a telling example. In setting *Lord Jim*'s title hero adrift upon a marine 'abyss', we are given a means of categorizing sublime excess (the 'immensity' he was conceived to be 'in touch with' 132) as a figure for both the oceanic actuality around him *and* its effects upon consciousness. Jim may be in a small boat, but as with Pierre Loti's traversal of the Sinai, the 'immensity' common to both texts is merely an impressionistic effect of modernity's escapes from itself.

But putting immensity and consciousness together like this is to risk what Fredric Jameson had identified as Conrad's 'mystical vision of identity' in his book, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1983 [1981]: 38). In his long chapter on *Lord Jim*, Jameson argues that Jim's presumptive cure through right action is as illusional as the equally inauthentic existential failures he undergoes on the *Patna*. Thus where Jameson's larger critical perspective has to do with the liberation from false consciousness and political totalization, in Jim's case such a search has only a retrograde goal of achieving a 'feudal ideology of honour' through what Jameson justifiably decries as that character's '*bovarysme*, [...] daydreaming and hallucination' (200-5). As with Jameson's noting of aesthetics as a libidinal if not utopian turning of form into content, reality into image (228), we see that Conrad's aestheticization of Jim's on-line temporal experiences remains both unreal ('in touch

with immensity' 132) and narratively located, that is to say, lodged within 'the alluring *shape*' of his final 'success' (351 my emphasis). This sort of narrative roundness is part of the problem for Jameson, a symptom of late capitalism's attachment to mirrors and virtual effects as makers of identity. Because both the story and its author's "realist" principles are *already* bound up with what they hope to escape, the only possible escape from this retrograde 'success' is to reveal the formal means underlying it as a play of images, something Jameson sees Conrad accomplishing. Thus in providing a way of reflecting back upon the viewer the inauthentic aesthetic agency of the era, the reader comes to comprehend that what is being presented are not the real conditions of some imperialistic or capitalistic actuality, but the sensory sleights by which that presumed edifice is sustained as 'actuality'. It is here that the crucial transfer is made from the impressionistic presentations of the mind's inability to get past the surface effects given by what Jameson calls 'Conrad's sensorium', to Conrad's utopian aspect – his habit of creating unreal *places* as their own kind of abstract if ultimately false "solidity".

Jameson's commentary on the terms of this aesthetic transfer stands as one of the lovelier flights in his critique of capitalist representational strategies. In essence, he says, utopian writers capable of inventing new worlds upon the back of the old (Conrad and Henry James!) will eventually revert to the utopia of abstract technique as a means of foregrounding that which they do not have the resources to critique in a more direct manner. Somewhat surprisingly, Jameson cites theatre and film, with James as a stylist of the former.⁶¹ Thus like James's reliance upon 'the unity of organization of the theatrical space and the theatrical scene' (220), Conrad's attention to 'sense perception' offers what appears to be a *modernist* vision of space, but which is in reality only an occluded symptom of the old:

In such "purer" descriptive passages, the function of the literary representation is not to underscore and perpetuate an ideological system; rather, the latter is cited to authorize a new representational space. This reversal then draws ideology inside out like a glove, awakening an alien space beyond it, founding a new and strange heaven and earth upon

⁶¹ My theatrical treatment of the colonial wasteland is a reversal of what Fredric Jameson tells us when he says that contrary to James's social comedies, Conrad is cinematic as opposed to theatrical. Conrad is certainly cinematic in relation to his tendency towards the impression, or in how he effects to many of his narratives through what we might think of as textual montage, only here, with the *Patna* episodes, Jameson downplays *Lord Jim*'s crucial movement from the theatricalized topology of the ocean into its underlying cinematographic allusiveness – that is, he forgets or plays down the scenographic, performative side of theatre as an aesthetic form. Likewise, while it might appear I am following Ricoeur's dictum from *Time and Narrative* that a plot collates 'multiple and scattered events, thereby schematizing the intelligible signification attached to the narrative taken as a whole' (1984: x), I in fact mean this not at the level of plot, but at that of the poetic devices and motifs giving it texture. It is not the narrative that gives cohesion to *Lord Jim* as a whole, but its figural apparatus.

its inverted lining. In that unearthly struggle between ideology and representation, each secretly trying to use and appropriate the other for its own designs and purposes, the ideological allegory of the ship [Jameson has been writing of Conrad's *Typhoon* as well as *Lord Jim*] as the civilized world on its way to doom is subverted by the unfamiliar sensorium, which, like some new planet in the night sky, suggests senses and forms of libidinal gratification as unimaginable to us as the possession of additional senses, or the presence of nonearthly colors in the spectrum. (219-20)

Here we are given the effect of a newness in which impressions remain roped to the ultimately utopian unworldly presentation of new orders, but which are merely the inversion of the false order one already has; thus literary modernism might reify the image of the 'alien space beyond', but this is only the same old one. So the impression or image which promises so much is not the harbinger of a new vision, but returns us to the 'fleeting, ephemeral effects' the landscape writer David Reason sees creating 'a patina of transience on apparently stable forms' including those of a landscapes which are already, as Reason points out, 'polyrhythmic composition[s]' of change (1987: 40). In his preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, Conrad may want to 'to make you hear, to make you feel [...] and before all, to make you see', but as Jameson argues, all he has done is assert 'the declaration of independence for the image' (220), and so allowed it to drift away from social or historical necessity, if not the flux of natural progression.

It is profitable to see how Jameson makes the transition from the wobbly actuality of the impression to the utopian. This is something he sees occurring through the same dynamics by which impressionistic renderings of place inevitably lead from their concrete aspects towards the more abstract realm of figuration – what we might think of as the passage from topography to topology. As Jameson writes, 'Conrad's sensorium virtually remakes its objects, refracting them through the totalized medium of a single sense'; for by such means is 'sensory abstraction' achieved – that is, an abstract sensory occasioning is accorded or 'given in the object'. As an instance of such abstraction, Jameson cites the conceptual strangeness or 'unearthliness of the sea' in Conrad's long story, *Typhoon* (1902: 218-9), a work begun before the publication of *Lord Jim*, and in which text impressions are actualized across a broad range of aesthetic figurations.⁶² To return to my terms, Jameson's *abyssal* sea is troped into being via the impression, through which transformation its actual conditions have become topological constructs. By being made out to be an object of consciousness alongside the winds and waves of the real sea, the utopian promise (or as here, the threat) of the sea's abstract qualities can be maintained in the imaginary against the deprivations of time that are so destructive to the fleeting *actuality* of the impression

⁶² See my Chapter Four for discussion of the *unearthly* or *abyssal* sea as presented in *Lord Jim*.

– its transient phenomena. In a roundabout way, Jameson makes the same point of *Lord Jim*, for instance where he says of Stein's trays of *lepidoptera*, that this 'collection of images' is preserved, 'beyond time, in the imaginary' (227), in this case the utopian realm of natural order and nostalgia the butterflies reify as allegorical impressions.

Matz comments in detail on the 'utopian compensation' Jameson notes of modernism (e.g. at 27, 225, 256; c.f. Matz 137, 149), though differs in that he sees the impression as underwriting the meeting of sensory data with the mental processes by which it is cognized rather than, with Jameson, remaining solely at the stratum of sense. To stay with Matz's terms, the impression need not be downgraded as merely sensory, and so is not the 'flip side of capitalist rationalization' Jameson appears to be claiming for it, but a productive 'juncture between rationality and sensuous experience' (137). While Matz observes how and where the Conradian 'impression's ambiguity become[s] allegorical', he sees a crucial transition in Conrad's method resulting in that writer being led to produce "'mere impressions" of a world of mere abstraction' as opposed to using the impression to knit the human to the phenomenal world (226-7). As proof of this change Matz looks to the dark 'dead end to Impressionism's allegory' as given of Kurtz's palisade of severed heads in "Heart of Darkness": the fleeting play of surfaces has gone from rehearsing the glitter of *being* to being, here, a mask for a more prosaic horror. Nonetheless, the notion of "abstract" impressions will prove crucial for my analysis of *Lord Jim*, while avoiding the occasional excess of Matz's focus on allegory or, indeed, its political fallouts.⁶³

In brief, it is not the interpretative potential of Conrad's impressionistic scepticism I wish to halt with, but the tendency, prominent in his early works, of making impressions out of abstract rather than solely sensual categories. Making what are in effect topological constructions the ground of narrative is of course different from recognizing how the impression partakes 'both of flux and instantaneity', let alone how it blurs 'the line between the abstract and the concrete' (248). Nor does Matz make much mention of the temporal conditions of the impression as this is (or is not) held through time, and so does not move in the direction of the

⁶³ Commentaries on Conrad's politics are less common now, but most position Conrad in the conservative side of things while allowing that he is finally taken neither by aristocratic privilege, nor democratic radicalism. See: Irving Howe, *Politics and the Novel* (New York: Horizon, 1957); Eloise Knapp Hay, *The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1963); Avrom Fleishman, *Conrad's Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1967); and Benita Parry, *Conrad and Imperialism: Ideological Boundaries and Visionary Frontiers* (London: Macmillan, 1983). All of these are discussed in Andrea White's essay, "Conrad and Modernism," in *A Historical Guide to Joseph Conrad*, Ed. John Peters (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010).

scenographic uses by which Conrad links his impressions to larger setting practices. In spite of Matz's hesitation to move beyond his recognition of the impression's instantaneous 'moments' of perception, or to explore the fuller breadth of Conrad's oeuvre, the ideological potential Matz notes is rightly seen to have broader implications, hence what would 'ideally be synthesis becomes dissociation, after all, along social lines' (244).⁶⁴ Where is consciousness or the individual in all this?

In his *Conrad and Impressionism*, John Peters responds to just such questions:

Conrad investigates a variety of objects of consciousness: physical objects, human subjects, events, ideas, space, and time. With each object of consciousness, he employs impressionist techniques to show that the epistemological process is individual, and his impressionism consistently leads to human subjectivity as the common element in the appearance of these objects. (2001: 123)

While the atomization of individual impressions leads towards a 'desire to find some point of belief' (124), the positive potential of such commonality offsets any recurrent stripping away of sureties. Mark Wollaeger is more emphatic still, emphasizing how with Conrad the 'hunger for the absolute always returns, as does the vision of the abyss opened by total scepticism' (1990: 13), a process applicable to the tendencies of the time: 'In Schopenhauer and Conrad alike, as in the emerging modernist sensibility that sustained them, the claims of scepticism are contested by the consolations of transcendence' (55-6). Peters cites both these passages, but without aligning the impression with either scepticism or the superficial effects by which the fictional subject finds a perhaps wanton transcendence (Kurtz's 'supreme moment of complete knowledge' *HD* 100). While subjectivity is seen to be no less relative than the universe here (128ff), Conrad is acknowledged as finding individual existence to be the only possible building block for moral order in the face of 'knowing that no absolutes exist' (133). What, then, of the *moment* Matz writes of where the impression is still an identifiable 'unit' as much as a hovering: is the impression therefore a unit of knowing or scepticism? Moreover, where Matz's 'flux and instantaneity' morph into a (for me) durational flux of instantaneous moments blending the 'abstract and the concrete', we might wonder to what extent the phenomena of the impression

⁶⁴ Matz ignores *Lord Jim* and *Outcast*, but dedicates a chapter to "*Heart of Darkness*" – though only a single paragraph (193) on the anti-impressionism of Woolf (albeit in *Jacob's Room*), and nothing at all on Forster and Lawrence. As I hope to clarify, by bringing temporality and the performative into the equation there is yet a way of offering an assessment of the imperial exoticism Conrad experienced without mounting the sort of critique Jameson was aiming for, nor of embracing a Marxist awareness of the underlying structures of history's *telos* in order to see Conrad's aesthetics hovering between manqué leftism and right wing obscurantism.

debouches into moments of possibly symbolic significance. In short, building on Wollaeger's notification of the 'consolations of transcendence' in relation to the ephemera of sense, epiphany will be seen to provide a model for the durational holding open of the poetic transfers critics note of impressionist practice, including the often ironically hued insights thereby made available.

Nonetheless, we are still left with the problem of the thematic significance carried upon *abyssal* forms of representation, and especially of the tropes by which they typically appear. By investigating transfers of substantial meaning through depictions of physical and then abstract landscapes (where these are either sensorially confusing or reflect the cognitive disorientations of the subject), the concrete phenomena Jameson and Matz identify as being treated through potentially suspect categories of the abstract may turn out to be even more paradoxically bereft of content or retrievable sense data than imagined, and so to fall within the range of the aporetic. And whether this sort of literary space is either or both an ideological failure and a possible first stage of an *ex nihilo* redemption, we can still acknowledge the degree to which symbolism is called in to negotiate not just objects of experience but the sometimes equally impressionistic "substance" of the aporetic encounter of fictional subjects with the world. It is at this point, too, that the space of the impression, the specific located aspect of its sensory features, can appear to take on the disorienting role of yet another platial nowhere. We see something of this process in Conrad's descriptive practices, for instance where despite 'the vivid glitter of innumerable suns reflected by the running wavelets of the stream', the world rather 'seemed to end' (*Outcast* 252), so finding in that play of surfaces the epiphenomena of some more ultimate field of relations. It is on this note that *Lord Jim* differs from previous works including its dress rehearsal in *An Outcast of the Islands*. In the later text the ends of the earth are made over not only as the slough of isolation, but a ground of romantic selfhood. Accordingly, where the impression offers one way of watching where Jameson's 'unearthliness of the sea' becomes *unearthly*, we will now have to explore, as a literary poetics, how from that disorientation one can 'make the deep, deep sea keep you up' (200).

Here we might recollect the reason for my use of the impression. Where this chapter began with the potential for redemption through the narratives by which significance might be launched through embodied experience, and then moved on to address the sense impressions by which that juncture was to be symbolized and so made allegorical, with Conrad we come to see that the modernist encounter with nothingness can also be a site through which human experience finds the occasioning of its meaning. In this way, the juncture between the paradoxical worldliness of the colonial void and the aporetic characters left before it might

communicate itself as much through moments of perceptual flux involving impressions of ‘vivid glitter’ as the transcendent and temporary illusions of the individual.

But this aesthetically rich occasioning does not replace the disillusionments of what Jameson derides as aestheticism’s ‘art-commodity’ valuations (218). While an abyssal poetics might produce ways of elucidating or unveiling the *unconscious*, there is no lasting compensation – aesthetic or existential – for the disorientations of abyssal form in Conrad. Jim, like Willems in *An Outcast of the Islands*, or Martin Decoud in *Nostromo*, remains finally locked within his voidal setting, and so no redemption escapes the false “reality” of romance or illusion. As we shall see when we come, next chapter, to Paul Ricoeur’s three-volume study of temporal phenomenology (1984-8), the occasioning of illusion is not always *meaningfully* reinserted into narrative time as a restorative span, but indicates its impossibility. Such is one of Conrad’s more sobering assessments of his era: where abyssal forms are employed in modernism, identity refuses fiction’s formational capacity, and the images so produced, as full of tension as these might prove, remain as mute to false consciousness as they are to more authentic one. Yet out of such negations something is still performed for Conrad – so the question becomes one not just of the poetics by which that something is animated, but how we are to see through the curtain of impressions to the unrepresentable if still negative epiphanic dynamics he imagines enfolded in the ‘rifts’ of the vivid if ‘immaterial veil’ from which the self is to be manifested (140).

So there are in fact two discrete literary forms or tendencies at work here, the displacement of possible meaning as the gap or tension between the sensory and ideational contents of objects or forms, *impressionism*, and the ways in which the data of experience vis-à-vis such phenomena are enfolded or read back as heightened significance, *epiphany*. While in no way aiming to combine these two literary frames within a single all-encompassing structure, it will be shown that inasmuch as aesthetic duration addresses significance from both ends of the spectrum, the formal framing of literary figures including their putative contents (at any rate, their poetic tenors), as well as the narrative conditions whereby such significance is made aesthetically available to fictional centres of consciousness, it is temporality that provides the connective tissue. In other words, time presents the means whereby space is made expressive in the sense Matz lends to it in his discussion of the role sensation plays in literary aesthetics. There the impression is used to ‘move aesthetic experience *from* the realm of sensuous perception back towards that combination of (or middle ground between) sense and thought always at work in the “aesthetic”’ (50). The critic Max Saunders is very good on this process as

well, noting where this movement is given prominence in Conrad, as well as the sorts of blockage it can intend:

First, impressionism is supposed to concentrate on the visible world. But it does this in order to get at something that cannot be perceived visually: the “truth” underlying the “visible universe”. [...] The second paradox is that while Conrad’s art renders the visible universe as a way of revealing the secrets that lie beneath it, what he finds is that they *are* secrets – enigmas, mysteries. They elude rational “seeing”, and remain recalcitrantly bewildering phenomena. (2010: 267)⁶⁵

But there is also a destructive aspect to this process in which impressionism ‘metamorphoses into modernism’ while being ‘particularly drawn to moments of defamiliarization’ in the sense already broached above through the example of the Russian Formalist, Shklovsky. As Saunders goes on, the manner in which experience ‘acquires a rawness and a directness that makes it more real for us’, is self-consciously analogous to the way in which a painterly impression ‘intensifies awareness of the picture surface’ (269) at the cost of a more familiarly unifying apprehension of depth.

But whether considered under the rubric of ‘Impressionism’s allegory’ (Matz) or the ‘something that cannot be perceived visually’ (Saunders), we still come away empty handed from the presentation of ephemerality as a kind of reality, not least because such phenomena are derived less from topographical actuality than the already converted features by which landscapes come to presence.⁶⁶ Here we might be reminded, too, that “settings,” “landscapes,” or “fictional spaces” already intend representational structures arrived at through complex processes of conceptual refinement, including the management of topological relationships involving here and there, near and far, the seen and the unseen, and so on.⁶⁷ We have looked at

⁶⁵ Saunders cites Ford to show how the impression is already a shuttling in time. As described in his book on Conrad, Ford sets out the phenomenon of a character’s perceived identity less through beginning ‘at his beginning and work[ing] his life chronologically to the end’, but by working between such poles: ‘You must first get him in with a strong impression, and work backwards and forwards over his past’ (1924: 30, at Saunders 268). Roger Fry writes similarly of the artist’s search for the revelatory qualities of his or her subject: painters approach their subject ‘now from one point of view, now from another, in fear lest a premature definition might deprive it of some of its total complexity’ (*Cézanne: A Study Of His Development*. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2004: 3; also cited in Buchsbaum 305).

⁶⁶ Conrad’s underappreciated *The Shadow-Line* (1917) is insistent upon the abstract unreality of its marine setting, not because sea is a ‘still void’, or coasts spread like a ‘thin, featureless crust’ (73), but for providing a visual field upon which it is ‘impossible to distinguish land from water’ and one’s ship becomes a ‘model [...] set on the gleams and shadows of polished marble’ (76).

⁶⁷ Concerning alterations in deictic construction by which ‘presence’ and absence are grammatically predicated, Zubin and Hewitt (1995) write: ‘A special case of shifting is voiding. One or more DC [deictic centre] components may become indeterminate if the presence and identity of a WHO, WHAT,

the impression as a way in which the concrete encounter with landscapes might give rise to finally abstract (topological) figures of aporetic unknowability, but we now need to investigate how the impression's literary cousin, the epiphany, might prove to be the mode by which the impressionistic depiction of abyssal settings are converted to poetic significance in fiction.

As with many sub-fields of narrative study, late twentieth century investigations into epiphanic modalities have benefited from the collusion of poststructural tropes of presence and absence in relation to the more structuralist approaches such tropes aimed to surpass in the first place, a reinvigoration discernible in the investigations of Morris Beja (1971), Ashton Nichols (1987), Karl Heinz Bohrer (1994), Martin Bidney (1997), and Wim Tigges (1999). Many of these discussions warn of the risks of confounding epiphanic features with those of temporalized or recurring images or visions, but with the partial exception of Nichols study, *The Poetics of Epiphany*, most authors pay less attention to the formal qualities of the form as opposed to its general tendencies and thematic potential. Tigges's collection, *Moments of Moment: Aspects of the Literary Epiphany* (1999), is instructive on this note, specifically where its contributors map the sensory categories by which epiphanies come to be temporalized, as opposed to the particular objects wherein the moment of revelation is occasioned. As Tigges puts matters in his introduction, 'if one replaces elements by matter, motions by time (events), and shapes by space, then almost "anything goes" by way of epiphany', and one is 'at risk of falling into the trap of confusing epiphanies with visions of images' (21). But this is precisely the slippage we *should* discover between epiphanic moments derived from the poetic encounter with intentional objects, and those of events produced through encounters with an equally "charged" abyssal space. In this manner, notions of an *epiphanic* impression *or* impressionistically prompted epiphany may be of help in mapping the literary transformation of landscapes into arenas of non-essentialized significance.

Many scholars of epiphany are pleased to downplay the actual transfer of '[p]rivileged moments of secular revelation' (op. cit. 467) onto or through objects. Nichols, whose definition this is, wants to see the twentieth century version of epiphany focused upon language such that

WHEN, or WHERE is not relevant at that point in the narrative; for example, the WHO and WHEN of the DC may temporarily shift to null during a scene description, or a WHAT that was momentarily important may cease to be tracked if the WHO is no longer attending to it. The voiding operation may be regarded as shifting to a null component' (141). Voiding thus offers a frame by which significance may be drawn from the inversion of figure/ground relations. One result, as suggested by the passage just cited, is to shift attention onto the abandoned deictic centre, and so describe the process by which the void itself comes to act as a deictic centre. To take the example of *The Shadow-Line* from the preceding note, we find the narrator absenting himself from the deictic centre in order to observe the ship as a model occupying the position just voided.

‘literary epiphany records the movement from a view that sees language as a recorder of experience to a view that describes language as a creator of meaning’ (*ibid.*). In one important sense, however, this language-centred performativity is merely a repetition of the modernist usages in which the ‘unstated “something” revealed’ by that form, while ‘always connected to a powerful emotional awareness’, may be no more than the more or less linguistically carried self-revelation of the mind to itself – in other words, poiesis. In this sense the landscape as a representational artifice need not employ sensory material, but simply stand as a symbolic figure. It is in order to avoid such circularity that I want to attend to the temporal conditions (‘privileged moments’) by which experience is textually transformed into thematic significance. While the durational aspects of epiphany are rarely treated, we can glimpse how such an analysis might play out by keeping the on-line features of Matz’s ‘sensuous perception’ at the centre of focus.⁶⁸ That the impression might need to remain aloof to such critical usages does not, however, deter us from discovering how epiphanic modes of time may also combine sensory and ideational frameworks in a manner parallel to James Joyce’s framing of epiphany in his posthumously published *Stephen Hero* (1944, written 1904). There we grasp how the thingness or ‘quidditas’ Joyce assigns to epiphanic objects infers resonance between *momentary* significance and the surface effects of the ‘commonest objects’: that is to say, we sense an ambivalence or (in more positive guise) a productive correlation between the form and content of both epiphany and the impression that requires the mediation of time to communicate. As Morris Beja, points out, ‘[p]art of the appeal of the epiphany lies in its very transitoriness’ (50).⁶⁹ Accordingly, where the impression aims to offer aesthetic meaning at the cusp of the body-world problem – the synaesthetic ‘between’ that Matz notes (2001:16) – we still need to comprehend how the

⁶⁸ Matz strongly opposes bringing the impression into play with other literary formations. Citing Peter Stowell (1980: 16-7), Matz reports how ‘critics go so far as to make Impressionism the harbinger or counterpart of, among other possibilities, “Bergson’s *durée* and Husserl’s phenomenological time, the Empiricism and epistemological indeterminacy of William James, the uncertainty principle of Heisenberg, the relativity principle of Einstein’s space and time, the phenomenologist’s recognition of reciprocal perceptual reality between subject and object”’ (Matz 26).

⁶⁹ Two points might be added: first, in the temporal unfolding of epiphany such transience can involve a synaesthetic cognitive leap: ‘[Jim] raised his hand deliberately to his face, and made picking motions with his fingers as though he had been bothered with cobwebs, and afterwards he looked into the open palm for quite half a second before he blurted out [...] “I had jumped...” (124-5, second ellipsis in original). Second, the epiphanic “moment” allies itself with the poetics of revelatory time as this funnels into the present. Here Ashton Nichols says that for ‘the epiphany to last, it must issue from a powerful perception of the present and the mingled associations of the past, which can both exist in the intensely realized instant’ (16-17). By contrast, Stowell extends to the impression the kind of temporal aspect we have just seen for epiphany, reading impressionism as the ‘shift from a description of concrete and tangible reality to a rendering of apperception’ (17), that is, the assimilation of a new experience through the terms of an individual’s past experience(s) and so to that individual’s ‘subjective objectivity’ (18).

impression encodes poetic framings of alterity through tropes of aporia or the abyss. In such a reading, epiphanies do not require the positive reification of the epiphanic object, but raise the Conradian ‘blank space’ or ‘heart of an impenetrable darkness’ as symbolizations of unstated or even unstatable content – yet this is different from Joyce’s object oriented practice, as seen of the infatuated boy in “Araby”, who in the convergence of ‘a single sensation of life [...] bore [his] chalice safely through a throng of foes’ (2000: 23). In Conrad, for instance, we are often faced not with objects so much as an epiphanic absence or caesura (*HoD* 8):

the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine.

The metaphorical absence or nothingness Marlow is gesturing at here may be sensorially enacted as ‘illumination’ or a more impressionistic play of chiaroscuro effects, but the meaning remains essentially self-defeating. To this extent, the *abyssal* epiphany I want to identify relies upon an apophatic or negational model of significance. How does this accord with epiphany’s more usual alignment with meaningful *objects*?⁷⁰

We can answer this question by returning to James Joyce. In his reworking of the concept of revelatory significance through the sudden manifestation of ecstatic meaning, Joyce raises terms from the thought of Thomas Aquinas. Concerning the Thomist notion of the essence proper to objects, their *quidditas* or “whatness”, we hear Stephen Hero proclaiming how ‘the mind receives the impression of the symmetry of the object. The mind recognizes that the object is in the strict sense of the word, a *thing*, a definitely constituted entity’. In the process of epiphanic transfer that abstractable “whatness” takes its part in ‘an organized composite structure’ that contains its potential meanings in a communicative structure such that

Its soul, its whatness, leaps to us from the vestment of its appearance. The soul of the commonest object, the structure of which is so adjusted, seems to us radiant. The object achieves its epiphany. (1956: 10)

⁷⁰ Henry James has commented on the Conrad-like straining of cognition between consciousness and experience, the latter being ‘never limited’ and ‘never complete’: ‘it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider-web of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness, and catching every air-borne particle in its tissue’ (1984 [1884]: 52). The practice of framing contentless epiphanic moments is not unique to Conrad. To cite an author equally at home with the Adornian effort to identify standpoints ‘removed [...] from the scope of existence’ we can look to Pierre Loti discovering himself in a zone of “impossibility”, or as he puts it, one in which he was ‘suspended in the void’ (‘suspendue dans le vide’ *Le désert* 109).

As Daniel Schwartz realizes in the context of his readings of *Ulysses* and “The Dead”, the sort of epiphanic meaning produced here via the “radiant” object is less reliant upon its material conditions than the ‘suspension’ or ‘vision out of time’ by which it achieves hermeneutic force (1987: 26). For Schwartz, regardless of its sometime rhetorical and affective efficacy via things, epiphany is empty, ‘a promise of revelation’ (27) that is never delivered, yet which implicates the reader in unraveling the unachievable or unrepresentable content of its metaphorical means. Epiphanic form thus remains performative to the degree that readers (along with Joyce’s narrators) are able to make something of that suspension. Hence we ‘approach the order and meaning, the illumination and intensity, of epiphany – which is both a moment of enlightenment within the narrative and the promise of revelation offered the reader’, but which endlessly remains just out of reach (*ibid.*).

Along with the impression, it would thus appear that epiphanic form provides a useful initial model for our understanding of the means by which abyssal setting constructions are rendered apparent in literary texts as a temporally activated negative “presence,” especially where its typical tropes construe places as an often (but not necessarily) impressionistic combination of topographical (concrete) features and topological (ideational) descriptive categories. Further, the epiphanic experience of *aporia as a place* is made possible not just through affectively charged symbolic transfers of meaning between objects and ideas, but the impressionistic and therefore dynamic ‘inbetweenness’ that Matz posits between phenomenological and empirical frames of analysis (*op. cit.* 16ff.). Indeed, regardless of whether its path is found to be more impressionistic or more epiphanic, the dynamics of the landscape process *are* the content (2005: 64). How is this so?

One scholar who has investigated the raising of the impressionistic nothing into the order of epiphanic significance is Charles Taylor, whose *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (1989) posits the epiphany as the crucial marker in the development of figures of human identity from the enlightenment into modernism.⁷¹ Mining literary and philosophical understandings of the form through which imaginative writers have communicated indeterminate meaning through moments of privileged insight, Taylor sees a broad pattern emerging out of the romantic’s citation of epiphanies of nature, including its outlet in the ‘expressive powers’ of the human (e.g. 446). This process is then countered through a pre-modernist, and in Taylor’s case, a Baudelairean ‘epiphanic art which is against nature’, a transition it recompenses through

⁷¹ While Taylor’s point of view is ultimately drawn from religious impulses (the ‘moral sources’ (x) of his analysis), his reading of the epiphanic mode is largely unprogrammable.

raising the aesthetic to the status once occupied by nature or the natural (439). Thus while continuing ‘to explore, even to celebrate subjectivity’, modernist art involves ‘a decentring of the subject: an art emphatically not conceived as self-expression, an art displacing the centre of interest onto language, or onto poetic transmutation itself, or even dissolving the self as usually conceived in favour of some new constellation’ (456). It is with this latter phase – art’s having shifted its focus onto ‘poetic transmutation’ – that epiphany becomes useful to me, first as the collusion of sensation and ideation in impressionism, and secondly as the epiphanic transferal of significance onto objects in tandem with ordinary embodied experience.

We can deal with these in the order given, only the notion of sensation needs to be bracketed. In discussing the ‘image’ through the example of the poetry of Ezra Pound, Taylor historicizes the replacing of the ‘Romantic epiphany of being’ – in which significance ‘comes to full definition in its embodiment’ within epiphanic objects – by the ‘epiphany of interspaces’ (476), one that we shall find laid over spatialized landscapes below. For Taylor, interspatial significance does not depend on an ‘expressive object’, symbolic or otherwise; rather

[t]he epiphany comes through the presentation... It is this non-expressive relation that I am trying to grope for when I say that the object sets up a kind of frame or space or field within which there can be epiphany... the more defined the frame, the more distinct the message. (477)

Part of Taylor’s point emerges out of his discussion on the ‘hard-edged presentation’ of objects in Imagism in particular – its sensory aspect. In his reading of Pound’s refusal of the traditionalist rhetoric and iconography of *depth* in order to ‘produce poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred and indefinite’ – the fifth point of the so-called “Imagist Manifesto”, (“Some Imagist Poets” Vol. II 1916) – the argument is made that since authentic significance could no longer be derived from the welter of prior wordings, there would be, in Taylor’s impressionistic paraphrase, a ‘return to the surface of things’. At the same time, this hardening of the aesthetic object was ‘counter-epiphanic’ (467) to the extent that Pound’s dictum concerning the literary medium (e.g. ‘the application of word to thing’ having become ‘slushy and inexact’ 1968 [1918]: 21) could be applied to both the aesthetic practices and inherited traditions of the time. And because the epiphanic object itself, along with literary representations of the object, was downgraded, epiphany, now shunted into the gap between things, becomes ‘non-expressive’:

From within this model of epiphany, we can see the point of insisting on a hard-edged, clear, highly particularizing portrayal of the object. When we’re dealing with an expressive object, we strive to see through it, for it is infused with the deeper meaning.

But when the object serves to frame an epiphanic space, it must stand out distinctly, in its full opacity [...] And we can understand the modernist refusal of depth: what is rejected is the depth of expressed meanings. (Taylor 477)

For all this, one is yet faced with attempts to discover ‘expressed meanings’ not by recourse to the aesthetic energy produced as a result of sharper framings of the non-expressive ‘gap or field’ between intentional or actual objects, but through atmospherically occluded views of things, including the sensory aporias by which fictional places, things, or people are rendered as constellations rather than “objects”. While Taylor does not say, for instance, atmosphere or atmospheric space but rather ‘epiphanic space’ or its ‘field’ (477), such spaces nonetheless provide the linking device by which he sees modernist spatializations of time being renegotiated in the memory (e.g. 464). But the still sensory aesthetics of atmosphere also have strong literary connotations. In “Heart of Darkness”, ‘the still and earthy atmosphere’ (20), or the ‘something ominous in the atmosphere’ (15) Conrad writes of fuels the negative epiphanies by which Conrad deflects significance from places and objects onto the glows, halos, or ‘spectral illumination of moonshine’ taking their place (8). Bluntly, where the superficiality of sensory encounters remains strong, we are more likely to see impressionistic modes at work, and where verb forms become transitive, or the data of impression begins to be cognitively and thus topologically set out, we look towards an epiphanic resolution for landscape figures.

This ‘endlessly’ unfolding epiphanic moment begs tracking in temporal terms: is epiphany point-like or durational in its operation? Is the impressionist presentation of phenomena via surfaces or ‘atmospheres’ more like a continuous encounter with sense data, or a series of discrete events? Or, now to recall the character who ‘swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe’ in the last sentence of Joyce’s story, “The Dead” (225), is the moment of enlightenment briefer than the unfolding of revelation that precedes it? Indeed, where the sublime dislocations of exotic terrain involve some sort of epistemological blockage, the way out of the impasse is usually imagined as sudden. As *An Outcast of the Islands* shows, Willems’s coming into self-awareness may be point-like, yet the broader process whereby the heightening of thematic and affective elements is rendered communicable seems more durational in the manner of Joyce’s just colonial story, as where the reader is invited to expand the textually invisible hiatus separating Conrad’s phrasings: ‘He saw nothing. Then, after a time’ (274).⁷² On the other hand, as we have already seen with Loti’s *Le désert*, the

⁷² Willems’s “moment” occupies twenty-two lines (Penguin 1975: 274). Midway through the passage, before the sun has risen and the epiphany carries, he feels a ‘horror of himself’ that ‘faded quickly’ but

abyssal encounter can appear as a continuous state – here carried over the chain of adjectival amendments following the sudden recognition of the landscape’s empty essence: so not just encountered ‘all at once’, as Loti writes, but endlessly ‘unrolling’ under a sky it seems ‘to absorb and erase’ (20).

These temporal aspects have been noticed elsewhere. In *The Aesthetics of James Joyce* (1992), Jacques Aubert reads modernist epiphany not merely as a manner of utilizing objects to symbolize cognitive or affective states, but sees such states devolving from ‘the *discursive* and *symbolic* dimensions of aesthetic production’.⁷³ As Aubert goes on, epiphany provides ‘access to Being’ through the suggestiveness of its formal conditions: it is a revelatory ‘speech act creating the symbolic break, or gap [...] which is the precondition, the necessary moment preliminary to significant presentation’ (93). It is instructive to note the recourse to ‘preconditions’ in Aubert’s description, not simply because, like Schwartz, he indicates an abyssal caesura (the ‘break’ or ‘gap’) at the moment of epiphanic transmission to the reader, but because epiphanic structures stop short of their declared point of completion and thereby remain in the seemingly endless ‘moment’ preliminary to significance.

Aubert’s phrasing has solid modernist antecedents. Next chapter we will need to turn to Walter Benjamin’s version of literary atmosphere wherein the auratic realm will be seen to reflect the present time tension of discordant images, not just their ‘strange weave of space and time’, but the temporal adaptability of ‘the moment or the hour’ in which the auratic unfolds (*SW* 2: 519). Here, however, such moments are no less crucial to Benjamin’s much cited setting of modernist *historical* time, as where he writes of the extended moment just prior to the surely epiphanic *Stillstellung*, or zero-hour of discourse. Here Benjamin is addressing the temporal hiatus accompanying signification – to employ his phrasing from *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, he wishes to theorize the point at which ‘time originates *and* has come to a standstill’ (1939: *JXVI* my italics). On the simplest level, this designation reflects an abyssal trope, one in which a gap or hiatus is proffered as a ‘constellation’ or arena of significance. Benjamin, for instance, writes on his Arcades Project of a visualizable if not spatialized ‘now’ that

was yet ‘like a sudden and final decrepitude of his senses’ – followed by eight lines of setting description, five of “seeing” the sunrise, and then his epiphanic ‘shock’.

⁷³ Compare Nichols (1987: 212): epiphany ‘transforms the details of ordinary experience and yields up visible manifestations of meaning out of the invisible workings of the mind’. I prefer Aubert’s narrative attention for it tries to focalize the less interrogated process by which Nichols attempts to draw meaning ‘out’ of ‘invisible’ workings of mind.

is the now of a particular recognizability. In it, truth is charged to the bursting point with time. (This point of explosion, and nothing else is the death of the *intentio*, which thus coincides with the birth of authentic historical time, the time of truth.) It is not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the new to form a constellation. In other words: image is dialectics at a standstill⁷⁴

While Benjamin's zero-hour appears to be what time philosophers would call a point-like formation, the moment would yet appear to frame a duration out of time, if only in the sense that the image produced out of it remains pent with dialectical tension.⁷⁵ How might such a constellation be transported into the discussion of epiphany?

Differently from Benjamin, Aubert's analysis relates not just to phenomenological awareness of the moment of presentation, nor notions of *being* in relation to tropes of nothingness or nowhere, but its openness to narrative contexts by which epiphanic forms are seen to condition what would otherwise remain unrepresentable. Here Aubert is referring to epiphanic meanings in the ordinary flow of time – not Benjamin's 'standstill', but the more impressionistic flux of experience. Let me stay with "ordinary time" a little longer. For Nichols, epiphany 'transforms the details of ordinary experience and yields up visible manifestations of meaning out of the invisible workings of the mind' (212). According to this reading, epiphany is opened up to revelations involving abyssal figures of placelessness or meaninglessness. Thus in lieu of the significant "object", sensory experience can be seen to include the "impressionistic" processes of aporia and epistemological loss. Indeed, it is here that the notion of *aesthetic duration* comes into play, a formation presupposing fiction's ability to chart moments of epistemological crisis through platial representation, while offering a descriptive poetics of the experiential span in which aporetic (or sublime) figures are called in to mediate that crisis. In short, the durational model I am building may be seen to offer an initial description of the cognitive and affective structures by which platial significance, *where troped through abyssal figures*, seemingly unfolds as a span of present experience.⁷⁶ But having put the impression and

⁷⁴ A good discussion of this passage is available in Hanssen, Beatrice. *Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*. London: Continuum, 2006: esp. 150. The original setting can be found at Benjamin, Walter. *Passagen-Werk*, Vol. 1, 577; and a standard English version (to go along with Jowett's) at: "Theses on the Philosophy of History." *Illuminations*. Trans. Harry Zohn. London: Fontana, 1973, pp. 245-55.

⁷⁵ The importance of this formation can be read in Adorno's aside that the 'core' of Benjamin's thought is shot through with 'the paradox of the impossible possibility' (See "Portrait of Walter Benjamin." *Prisms*. Trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1981: 227-41).

⁷⁶ Of course the narrative span we are wont to think of as a hiatus or moment out of time need not be atemporal, but a focalization of phenomena. In "L'Oeil et l'esprit" (1961) Merleau-Ponty sees thought being expressed at the point at which the 'spark is lit between sensing and sensible' (163). In all such

epiphanic form together, and so looked at time not just as a recording device for phenomenal experience (and thus producing a limited depiction of intuitive ‘reality’) but as the partial creator of such reality, we must now look for the elucidation of that collusion as productive of a particular ambience, the affective atmosphere given of impressionistic surface effects held over time.

Literary Atmosphere – or What the Impression Conjures

‘I have had some impressions, some sensations – in my time’

Letter from Conrad to Edward Garnett, 19th June, 1896. (*CL I*: 288)

In the past few years the notion of literary atmospheres as having a more delineated theoretical presence has taken root, especially through the philosophical basis provided by Gernot Böhme (1995). The impetus for his work stems initially from the concept of the aura of aesthetic objects provided by Walter Benjamin as in his essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Production”. Likewise, Böhme has relied on two thinkers of the 1930s period, Ludwig Klages for his notions concerning the “reality of images” [*der Wirklichkeit der Bilder*],⁷⁷ and Hermann Schmitz for his outlook upon the phenomenology of the body with its focus on ‘man’s reflection on finding himself in his surroundings’ (1990: 3).⁷⁸ Schmitz’s theorization of environmental awareness is key for Böhme, many of whose projects set out to account for perception in terms of the impressions one receives atmospherically (1993: 120). As will become apparent below, notwithstanding Böhme’s application of his ideas to theatrical and

models the indescribable if still *sensed* contents of of the mind-body-world continuum join the temporal structures and perspectival filters by which such understandings are composed and communicated – thus Merleau-Ponty’s ‘spark’, Schwartz’s ‘vision out of time’, Benjamin’s ‘constellation’ of present image and the past, Adorno’s redemptive knowledge ‘wrested from what is’.

⁷⁷ Klages (1872-1956) is a notorious figure, whose mystical views found support from the German radical right in the Nazi era. His central work in this vein is the three volume *The Intellect as Opponent of the Soul* (*Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele* 1929-33). Compare the Conradian echoes raised by Miriam Hansen on the ‘primal or archaic’ image in Klages’s thought: “‘Aura’ (or ‘nimbus’) in Klages’s parlance is the “fluidal shudder” or “veil” that constitutes and surrounds the *Urbild*, the “daimonically enchanted” image that transforms ordinary objects into visions or epiphanies’ (123). For Hansen’s discussion, see “Aura: The Appropriation of a Concept” in her *Cinema and Experience: Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno* (Berkeley: UCLA Press, 2011).

⁷⁸ As translated by Anna Blume from “Ästhetik,” in *Der unerschöpfliche Gegenstand. Grundzüge der Philosophie* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1990, 455-97). Böhme takes much of his initial theory from Schmitz’s work on atmosphere.

architectural frames, the aesthetic representation of atmospheres have been given their most sustained discussion by Martin Seel in a more rigorously aestheticizing manner than is so far the case in Böhme's work – as well as by Erika Fischer-Lichte (2008) in terms of its general application to performance studies. First, however, what is atmosphere?

It is worthwhile examining Benjamin's original discussion of aura, especially, perhaps, because he does so through the phenomenal conditions of engaging with a landscape. Note that the following is not the slightly shorter version found in the essay on "The Work of Art" (*SW* 4: 255), but that of an essay on the history of photography, where it appears in relation to the street scenes photographed by the Frenchman, Eugène Atget (1857-1927). Thus Benjamin's original setting for his discussion of aura is not the mountain scene of the excerpt reproduced below, but that of the empty street scenes in Atget's photographs which are 'not lonely, merely without mood; the city in these pictures looks cleared out' (*SW* 2: 519). Famously for Benjamin (and rather like Atget's nearly exact contemporary, Joseph Conrad), the photographer 'looked for what was unremarked, forgotten, cast adrift, and thus such pictures work against the exotic, romantically sonorous names of the cities; they pump the aura out of reality like water from a sinking ship' (*ibid.* 518).⁷⁹

What is aura actually? A strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance or semblance of distance, no matter how close the object may be. While resting on a summer's noon, to trace a range of mountains on the horizon, or a branch which casts its shadow on the observer, until the moment or the hour become part of their appearance – this is what it means to breathe the aura of those mountains, that branch. (*ibid.* 518-19)⁸⁰

The auratic quality Benjamin notices here is important for us here not because of its withering in the face of technological modernity, but for its generating of felt significance from the relations between, to once more borrow from Wylie's notation of landscape 'proximity and distance, body and mind, sensuous immersion and detached observation'. Equally, the temporal span wherein 'the moment or the hour', is woven into its physical qualities sets out a *spatial* duration occasioning consistent with my target trope.

Parallel to the poetic concerns emerging out of Benjamin, F. R. Ankersmit underlines the 'paradox' that we 'become aware of aura only when the work of art is on the verge of losing it',

⁷⁹ For an excellent discussion on the themes of the auratic in Benjamin's aesthetics, see Diarmuid Costello's essay "Aura, Face, Photography: Re-Reading Benjamin Today" in Benjamin, Andrew, *et. al. Walter Benjamin and Art*. London: Continuum, 2005.

⁸⁰ From "Little History of Photography." *Die literarische Welt*. September-October 1931. *Gesammelte Schriften*, II, 368-385. Trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter.

but it is this trace of what is lost that ‘*makes us aware of the fact that the work of art possessed this aura at all*’ (2005: 183 original emphasis). This recognition underlines Adorno’s debt to Benjamin in that final *Moralia*, for it is from ‘negativity’ and the seemingly unreachable perspectives it offers that we become aware, as by the ghost image of its vanished ‘presence’, of the otherwise hidden *possibilities* of discourse. In a different manner, then, from my use of Adorno’s aesthetic tendencies in *Minima Moralia* or of Benjamin’s auratic awareness, my citation of Böhmean atmosphere comes with a proviso. Where I have been pointing to collusion between embodied and ideational responses to place as being contingent upon the tropes by which they are raised, Böhme understands atmospheres as involving both the material conditions of a particular situation, and the non-identical reading of such conditions *in the world* – that is to say, he combines the experiential with the intentional such that atmospheres are only actual ‘spaces insofar as they are tinged by the presence of things, people, or the surrounding constellations’ (1995: 33). The difficulty with turning actual atmospheres, meteorological or physiological, into something both physically extant and created from subjective or psychosomatic processes is obvious, especially where, as Fischer-Lichte points out (2008: 115), the concept properly belongs to ‘aesthetic discourse’.

A pictorial example helps clarify the issues. In an article concerning aspects of Böhme’s work, Peter Dalsgaard and Karen Kortbek present a diagram showing two separate circles, one labeled *the subject* and the other *space*. A third circle labeled atmosphere and indicated with a dashed line, overlaps the other two, thus linking physical space with the subject. This inclusion concerns the dynamic presence set in motion by the presumed unification of the affective, physical, and notional aspects of the human response to space. Accordingly, the caption to the diagram reads: ‘Illustration of Böhme’s understanding of atmosphere as a concept both lying at the intersection between subject and space, however, also in the subject and in the space at the same time’ (Dalsgaard and Kortbek, 2009: 2).⁸¹ Here we might note the attention Böhme pays to atmosphere as both spatialized interaction (a further notification of the ‘intersection between’) and, simultaneously, its presence *within* both space and the subject, that is to say, its objective presence within the economy of embodied subjects and present locations.

In perceiving an atmosphere I sense what sort of environment I find myself in. The perception thus has two sides to it: on the one hand, there is the environment which radiates a certain quality of mood, on the other hand – me, participating in this mood through my very situatedness and thereby becoming aware where I now am... To put it the

⁸¹ Böhme is cited in relation to an interactive architectural exposition in the Danish city of Aarhus.

other way round, atmospheres are the very forms in which things and environments present themselves. (1995: §96)⁸²

Where atmosphere might therefore be seen claimable as the medium of both being and presentation, Böhme is elsewhere more circumspect.

The reason is primarily that atmospheres are totalities: atmospheres imbue everything, they tinge the whole of the world or a view, they bathe everything in a certain light, unify a diversity of impressions in a single emotive state. And yet one cannot actually speak of “the whole”, still less of the whole of the world; speech is analytical and must confine itself to particulars. Moreover, atmospheres are something like the aesthetic quality of a scene or a view, the “something more” that Adorno refers to in somewhat oracular terms in order to distinguish a work of art from a mere “piece of work”; or they are “the Open” which, since Heidegger, has given us access to the space in which something appears. Seen in this way, atmospheres have something irrational about them, in a literal sense: something inexpressible. Finally, atmospheres are something entirely subjective: in order to say what they are or, better, to define their character, one must expose oneself to them, one must experience them in terms of one's own emotional state. Without the sentient subject, they are nothing. (2008)

As Dalsgaard and Kortbek articulate Böhme's position, atmosphere denotes the coming together of a particular dynamic of spatial practice, where they are

not thought of as free-floating but as something emanating from and created by things, people, or their constellations. Conceived as such, atmospheres are not objective, like certain properties that things have, and yet they are tangible, belonging to that thing insofar as these things articulate the spheres of their presence through their properties – thought of as ecstasies. Neither are atmospheres something subjective, such as a mental state of mind. And yet, they are of the subject, form a part of it, insofar as they are sensed by people physically present. Simultaneously, these sensations reflect the bodily being-present of the subjects in the space. (2009: 2)

At first glance, the breadth of coverage here is too large for what may reasonably be claimed. For example, the term ‘constellations’ would appear to drag forward a good deal of baggage from Benjamin's “Theses of History”, as well as Adorno's use of the term in relation to the irreconcilability of concepts. The one idea that should leap out, however, is the *tangibility* of atmospheres despite their non-objective status. Thus we have the ‘ecstasies’ (that which stands outside-of-itself) mentioned by Dalsgaard and Kortbek, and which are an important plank in Böhme's theorization of atmospheric perceptibility. As Fischer-Lichte outlines in her précis of Böhmean atmosphere (*esp.* 2008: 116), the sensations (or more properly, the apperceptions)

⁸² This translation is by Cameron Shingleton of the Melbourne School of Continental Philosophy.

noted by Böhme tend by to prioritize what would normally be called secondary qualities – sound, smell, and so on; and it is these senses, as distinguished from the primacy of perception, that is raised to the status of a formal constituent of atmospheric happening. Fischer-Lichte has good reason to draw atmospheres into the realm of the performative, since her writings on dramatic space are strongly inflected by what she calls the *performative feedback loop* proper to the theatre. As she shows, such processes are performative because they are founded on the autopoiesis of the theatrical event, with performers and audiences (in our case, fictional centres of consciousness and readers) responding to *and* creating the context of meaning through the ambient dynamics of the audience/actor relationship.⁸³ But this relationship is no less mobile in other genres, as Conrad himself acknowledges in a late notes comparing literature and the cinema:

The human voice as well as the written word has this strange quality that it awakens a varied response, like a sort of echo which instead of repeating the sentences would go on developing and commenting [on] the idea, and [it is] in that power of the word and to that property of the human mind in his readers that an artist must trust for his effects, for his success, for his very life, I mean for his artistic life. (in Schwab 1965: 346-7)⁸⁴

Here it is the voice or text setting out the feedback loop Fischer-Lichte writes of, the echoes sensory and ideational longevity underwriting the durational aspect of aesthetic moments.

Fischer-Lichte is also important to me for her work on the dynamics of the theatricalized forum as inviting the self-constructed response of those present.

By “performative space” I mean a space as it comes into being, when people – or animals – move in and through it. While the architectural-geometrical space in which a performance takes place is more or less stable, the performative space changes with each movement of an actor, an animal, an object, the light, with each change of the light, with each sound ringing out. The performative space is unstable, fluid, ever changing. It is the different spaces that come into being in the course of the performance. (2009: 180)

More to the point, while in the performative realm ‘the performers create performative spaces by moving in and through a given space, the spectators who watch them and perceive the

⁸³ Common to Fischer-Lichte’s various phrasings of this relationship in her book is the observation that ‘the autopoietic feedback loop, consisting of the mutual interaction between actors and spectators, brings forth the performance’ (163). Her gathering of themes near the end of her book provides a constructive synthesis of her larger project: ‘The actor’s presence, the ecstasy of things, atmospheres, and the circulation of energy “occur” in the same way as the meanings brought forth as perceptions or the emotions, ideas, or thoughts resulting from them’ (162-3).

⁸⁴ I am indebted to Richard Ambrosini for recalling Conrad’s cinema notes. Cf. Ambrosini 1991: 57-63.

performative spaces they create, will conjure imagined spaces' (*ibid.*). Importantly, then, it is this transition from spatial alterations to the spaces of the imaginary thus evoked (e.g. 185) that we will come to look for in the textual record, and from which the performative landscape will come to embrace its atmospheric qualities as the representational nexus of place, ambience, and the symbolic and imaginary complexities so enabled.

To return to Böhme, the mobility of "atmospheric" form offers crossing points between place, sense and our affective immersion *and* constitution of atmospheres: 'The form of a thing also affects [...] its surroundings. It practically radiates into its environment, takes away the surrounding space's homogeneity, fills it with tension and possibilities for motion' (1995: 33). Such, too, is the process I see occurring with regard to fictional places. For example, by turning the Congo into the atmospheric if visually aporetic landscape that his characters move through ('An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest' 1994: 48), the dark heart of Conrad's Africa becomes not just a forum for otherness, but an actualized scene, the sensory and cognitive occasioning or *event* of alterity that, in turn, engenders the process of signification. As with Benjamin's appraisal of Atget, the point of this observation is to mark the juncture at which the work of art loses its positive aura to the more negative ambience that comes of finding oneself nowhere. In "Heart of Darkness", the vanishing imperial aura is from the start replaced by that of Conrad's more abyssal variant – the atmospheric collusion between sense and ideation being what unites them. So, too, once the abyssal actuality of Conrad's impressionistic ambience is raised to the status of the epiphanic object, then the only meanings to be derived from it are carried upon tropes of absence, meaninglessness, and so on.

In relation to this process, Böhme's idea of *space* as being aesthetic or phenomenally experiential seems designed to span differences 'almost impossible to bridge', here 'between the space of bodily presence and space as a medium for representation' (2002: 1). However, Böhme can appear more taken with the bodily realm:

[the] space of moods is physical expanse, in so far as it involves me affectively. The space of moods is atmospheric space, that is, a certain mental or emotive tone permeating a particular environment, and it is also the atmosphere spreading spatially around me, in which I participate through my mood [...]. Although bodily space is always the space in which I am bodily present, it is at the same time the extension, or better, the expanse of my presence itself. The space of moods is the space which, in a sense, attunes my mood, but at the same time it is the extendedness of my mood itself. The space of actions is the space in which I can act, but also the scope of my possibilities. The space of perceptions

is the space in which I perceive something, but also the expansion of my involvement with things (5).⁸⁵

All the same, by turning atmospheres into a kind of place, we are better positioned to describe the fictional subject's involvement with phenomenologized space at the point that it becomes aesthetically charged. Moreover, by treating the tonal sensorium engulfing topologized (representational) space along with their atmospheric qualities, we see how representational spaces can be conceived as sharing more than a merely intentional relation to topographical actualities. It is easy to see where thematic and affective content becomes attachable to atmospheric renderings of literary representations of places. For instance, the nineteenth century French intellectual and political figure, the Comte de Carné, writes in his Eastern travelogue of the effect of sublime heights upon one's sensibility:

There is something very strange about the sensation which one feels at a great height: no sound reaches it; the air is rarefied, and the atmosphere seems to have attained a sensible transparency. This calm and peaceful feeling was in no way affected by the wild landscape beneath [...] when one has overhead nothing but the blue sky, he seems to participate in its high serenity. (de Carné 1872: 305)

The 'feeling' described in these lines is also a response to the morning light 'peering at last through every veil', to the 'sensible transparency' of the mists, indeed, to the 'high serenity' of the scene (304-5). As Böhme puts it, in an atmospheric environment the 'bodily presence' of the subject participates in the mood given of more properly representational states. Despite the cold and dampness discomfiting the travel party in de Carné's description, the serenity of the moment overrides the harsher aspects of the wilderness setting, momentarily transforming the actual Cochin China terrain not into a merely sublime scenic backdrop, but a 'space of moods'.

It is perhaps not surprising that Böhme has also set his reading of atmospheres within the one milieu in which representational space is most precisely treated as one of 'bodily presence' – the theatre. In a short text entitled "The Art of the Stage Set as a Paradigm for an Aesthetics of Atmospheres", Böhme offers a concise statement on the ways in which the theatrical environment offers a structure for the elucidation of atmospheres as a scene of both presence and

⁸⁵ At this point Böhme turns to the productivity of *virtual* space as an organizational principle for the expansion of affective or bodily spaces into environments, indicating how 'representational spaces [...] take on the character of virtual spaces at the moment when they become entwined with the space of bodily presence' (2002: 7). It should be noted that virtuality is meant here in the representational sense as opposed to that of the ontological (Deleuzian) realm of actuality.

representation.⁸⁶ In the first place, the theatrical audience experiences atmospheres as ‘something “out there”, something which can come over us, into which we are drawn, which takes possession of us like an alien power’. At the same time, such states are a ‘typical intermediate phenomenon, something between subject and object’, and, as such, have ‘no secure ontological status’ (2008: 3). Admittedly, this is a wobblier conception than Böhme elsewhere allows for atmospheres, yet it is through the theatrical artifice as a means of ‘*producing* atmospheres’ in order to make them communicable to audiences by which they become ‘quasi-objective’ (4 original emphasis). Accordingly, it is as possible to communicate atmospheric presences ‘intersubjectively’, as it is to create them as ‘phenomena’ (4-5). Here Böhme uses the example of pointillist technique in painting to describe the move he is making, that is, the move from the sorts of sense data encoded in artistic objects and performances to ‘representational spaces [...] *experienced* as spaces of bodily presence’ (2002: 7): in the case of pointillism, the canvas creates the conditions for the constitution of visual effects not ‘on the painted surface but “in space,” or in the imagination of the onlooker’ (2008: 6).

But neither are theatrical atmospheres generated out of the concrete conditions of the modern stage mechanism; these are not related ‘to the determinations of things, but to the way in which they radiate outwards into space, to their output as generators of atmospheres’ (ibid). Hence Böhme turns once more to the ‘expressive form of things’ or ecstasies (*‘ekstases’*) for which the human body is akin to the ‘sounding board’ of a musical instrument (7). In fact we can find a similar moment in Conrad’s *Freya of the Seven Isles* where it is not just the body but the place itself which renders such *ekstases* concretely atmospheric, in this case through the piano upon which Freya literally bangs out her own affective states: ‘The volume of sound it gave out in that bungalow (which acted as a sounding-board) was really astonishing. It thundered sweetly right over the sea’ (2008 [1912]:126, brackets in original). Despite such possibilities, Böhme’s essay on theatre is finally more concerned to address the play of light and shadow upon mental and sensory processes than the aural aspects of performance. Here he quotes from the 1929 philosophical dissertation of Robert Kümmerlen, *Zur Aesthetik bühnenräumlicher Prinzipien* (1929: 36), for whom ‘[stage] lighting on its own generates a fluid between the individual structures of the performance’ (9). Such an atmosphere is both actual, and conducive to a mood that plays us both because as Kümmerlen goes on, ‘the lights of the spatial

⁸⁶ Böhme’s essay was first published as a conference proceedings: “Un paradigme pour une esthétique des ambiances: l’art de la scénographie” in Augoyard, Jean-François, ed. *Faire une ambiance*. Grenoble: Editions la Croisée, 2008.

representation produce a self-contained impression' since a 'specific mood is contained in the space represented through the ethereal effect of brightness' (10). Once more, in providing a sensory template by which we can begin to construct a literary frame for atmospheres – not least in regard to the *theatricalization* of its means within fiction – the sense of aural and visual stimulus Böhme notes reflects a potential route by which to contemplate the impressionistic highlighting of phenomena in relation to abyssal settings: the atmosphere or nearly concrete *mood* of nowhere.

More recently, the concept of atmosphere has been taken up in a more aesthetically nuanced manner by Böhme's student, Martin Seel, who retains much of Böhme's model while rejecting the all-encompassing aspects of the latter's earlier work. Where atmosphere had been a mode of perception accompanying understanding, intuition, and so on, Seel focuses on atmospheric appearances which are '*noticeable*' (original emphasis) rather than tied to issues of 'general perceptibility' or availability to cognition, and so attends to atmospheres in aesthetic terms, here as 'a sensuous-emotional *awareness* of existential correspondences':

This explicitness of the atmospheric arises when it is expressly perceived in its primordial domain: in the synaesthetic play of appearances from which it is formed... They are a situation's appearing, consisting of temperatures, smells, sounds, visuals, gestures, and symbols; an appearing that touches and concerns in one way or another those who find themselves in this situation. As soon as the latter are exposed to this play of emotionally significant appearances, not simply positively or negatively but actually becoming attentive to it, they perceive their surroundings in atmospheric appearing. (93)

This manner of 'appearing' collects disparate elements into a single awareness, such as 'when a landscape is perceived simultaneously as a landscape painting, or an urban scene as stage scenery' (94). But this blending of representational tropes underlines a key issue of the temporal structuring of atmospheres within aesthetics, one in which the 'life situation of human beings goes beyond their spatiotemporal location' (*ibid.*). Here Seel's discursive target reaches beyond atmospheres into the forms through which ambient effects are brought into aesthetic presence. Simultaneously, atmospheres make possible the series of aesthetic 'correspondences' by which presencing becomes significant, since through 'an alert sense of atmospheric appearing, we perceive our particular concrete, sensuously discoverable situation as a temporary *form of our life*' (*ibid.* emphasis in original) – in essence, an impressionistic opening into *durational* being.

It is here however, that the lack of literary critical models constructed around cross-disciplinary aesthetic modalities is most felt. Before embarking upon a more detailed exposition of temporal processes relevant to the fictional poetics of landscape, the theme of next chapter, I

want to close the present one around a brief glance at how film theorists have addressed the spatialized mobilities of that most modern of the arts, cinema, a move precipitated by the paucity of literary interventions into the spaces and performativities of temporality on screen. As may be expected, something of this process has long been part of the vocabulary of film theory, which like theatrical and literary attention to the affective residues and aesthetic modes of landscapes, brings time and space constructs into its discussion of cinematic representations of place settings. In his essay on the topographies of the “western” genre in American film, Tom Conley cites cinematic material relevant to some of the observations I have just been making. His insights on the moods given of the encounter with spatial depth in film parallel what I see of the literary record, especially where the experience of such depth is found extended in time. Discussing the cinematic long shots discussed by Deleuze in *Cinema I: The Movement Image*, Conley writes how such a view ‘[rehearses] the origins of vision and space whenever we suddenly notice that it is the space before our eyes we are *seeing*’ (in Martin Lefebvre 2006: 297). Akin to Deleuze’s notation of how we have ‘the perception of perception’ (*Cinema I*, 98), Conley understands how in ‘the staging of a space where no immediate centre can be discerned, the atmospheric qualities of the sensory world stretch before our eyes’ as an object of vision (297). Such stretching implies a figure applicable to both the extension of space and the time wherein that duration unfolds temporally, as well as to the ambient qualities thereby produced. Conley cites Deleuze for another point as well, this concerning the self-reflexivity of the perceptual process: in his redefining of cinematic terms, Deleuze ‘appeals indirectly to the rapport that geography and landscape hold with psychogenesis, the continuous birth and experience of subjectivity’ (*ibid.*). This is close to the position I am propagating in my study, that the ‘rapport’ of landscape with the continuous act of consciousness gives birth to, or to use my term, *performs* the ecological becoming of the located subject in face of what Conley phrases as the particularities of the ‘atmospheric qualities of the sensory world’ developed through cinematic representations of space and time.

What Conley notices, then, is an atmospheric becoming in the sense given by Seel. Furthermore, in bringing time into the equation Seel borrows from Böhme, it is in fact the present that is underscored, hence the ‘decisive’ aspect of atmospheric awareness ‘is that the making present of a present situation is in the foreground,’ at any rate, a foreground including involvement not just with the ‘synaesthetic play of appearances’ (93) Seel writes of, but a temporally charged example of the *perception of perception* Deleuze notes. Again, Seel

suggestively underlines the linking of the specificity of experience ('this situation') to its corresponding affective content:

At the centre of this awareness is the perceptive sensing of how something *in* this situation – or of how this *situation* – corresponds or could correspond (positively or negatively) with my weal and woe. (93)

What is instructive here is Seel's awareness that these correspondences are aesthetic structures as opposed to some actual dynamics of being, a factor he immediately supports by referring his theorization of atmospheres to the larger problems of artistic appearance. Working from Arthur Danto's now classic work, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art* (1981), Seel writes how 'objects of art must be equated neither with "mere real things" nor with "mere representations."' ⁸⁷ Rather, such categories are 'objects of the senses that differ from other sense objects by being presentations'; indeed, they are artistic 'presentations *in the medium of appearing*' (95 original emphasis), and so remain, as he later observes in relation to language, 'contaminated with meanings and ideas' (106):

It is not enough to demarcate the objects of art from other nonaesthetic things and presentations; they have to be demarcated from other kinds of aesthetic objects too, that is, from objects of mere and atmospheric appearing; or, to be more precise, from those objects that are *merely* objects of mere and atmospheric appearing. (95.)

So, too, because of the performative aspect of aesthetic objects as these are presented to consciousness, Seel sees works of art as '*constellational presentations*' for which the contextual 'configurations from which they acquire their meaning are accessible only to lingering sensuous perception' (95-6). These terms bring together, under the umbrella of "atmospheric" presentation, the three areas of this chapter, temporal duration ('lingering'), the impression ('sensuous perception'), and epiphany as the bridge between '*constellational presentations*' and 'meaning'. It is in this operation that merely atmospheric appearances are superseded by their performative transformation through the sorts of interpretations demanded of aesthetic practices. Indeed, Seel notes here the simultaneous human encounter with '[a]bstract and concrete presents' (100):

The encounter with a well-executed object of art does not just put us into a moment of time, as is the case with the perception of mere appearing; it does not just emphasize dispositions and relations of actual or potential life situations, as happens in the

⁸⁷ Seel does not cite page numbers for this work.

consciousness of atmospheric appearing. The encounter makes the presences of human life present *independently* of the particular life situation of their beholders, readers, or listeners. It releases real and unreal presences of general experience. [...] The presence radiating in aesthetic perception [...] is not simply a temporary constellation of things and events but a kind of experiential encounter with this constellation; it is a *relation* of human beings to their life surroundings. (97)

There is more here than I hope to comment upon, but it is the aesthetic confluence of time, perception, sensory experience, and, most saliently, of the ideationally charged physicality of the *concrete* encounter with ‘constellational presentations’ that I wish to underline. There are good reasons for this emphasis on the sensory basis of the encounter with, as Seel says, ‘real and unreal presences’. First, there is an obvious relevance to the drawing of significance from fictional landscapes, especially where such landscapes are negatively constructed from aporetic encounters as seen in *An Outcast of the Islands* – where they might be, indeed, the sorts of non-places I have termed “abyssal” presentations. There is a double difficulty here. If the significance such settings intend is not directly accessible through what are, in effect, negative presentations in ‘the medium of appearing’, there is still the issue of the perspectives by which such presentations are made apparent. On this note Seel indicates how ‘all searching for orientation is conducted within the horizons of indeterminate relations, which actually remain for the most part indeterminable’, but which nonetheless give rise to the ‘sensuous intensity’ of our attention to them. If, as we saw of *An Outcast of the Islands*, Conrad’s social castaway is incarcerated within a zone of alterity forming the concrete conditions of his life, it is interesting to find Seel deriving the presentational appearance of the indeterminate from tension between the real and what Seel identifies as the fullness of the ‘indeterminacy, which is the privilege of the ephemeral present’ (138). In other words, Seel locates the ‘seized and dismissed possibilities of knowledge and action’ of the work of art at the intersection of the ‘two driving forces of aesthetic perception: to lose oneself in the real or to go beyond everything that is (so far) real’ (98-9). Further, it is to be understood that the cognitive and sensory operations Seel writes of are also to be undertaken with ‘sensory intensity’. Thus where literary settings are concerned, significance resides not just in the intense states of disorientation, but through ‘lingering sensuous perception’ of the gap between topographical actuality and the topological ‘real’ we make of it in the mind – Willems’s crushing epiphany.⁸⁸ In any case, the moment of meaningful

⁸⁸ Twentieth century high theory has a number of deconstructionist or poststructural outlooks available for raising ‘unthinkable’ thematic content through tropes of absence or caesura. For the critic and theorist, Paul Sheehan, such insights are a feature of late modernism ‘where two things that cannot be thought

‘presence’ produced through ‘aesthetic intuition’ is dependent upon our will to *abstain* from any ‘determining and affecting orientation’ that would distance us from its more subtle effects:

The subjects of aesthetic perception are concerned with sensing their own presence while perceiving the presence of something else. In the sensuous presence of the object, we become aware of a moment in our own presence. [...] We allow ourselves to be abducted to presence. Aesthetic form is a radical form of residency in the here and now. (32-3)

This last sentence alerts us to an important facet of the experience of disorienting presence, for as we also saw of Willems, the confrontation with self can be a radically decentring process in which the ‘here and now’ of one’s own sensed presence does not lead towards an epiphany of *meaningful* being, but its devastating opposite. In any case, such moments in Conrad are often expressed not only through the atmospherics in which they are set, but as temporal interludes. Seel makes a similar point in discussing the codeterminacy of temporality and sense within the imagination, a statement in accordance with abyssal treatments of place where the virtual “sensory” phenomena actualized in abyssal treatments of place remains associable with the “actual” phenomena presented with it:

It is constitutive of the scope of aesthetic consciousness that in its duration we do not always remain (only) with really *present* objects, nor always (only) with the making present of *real* objects. But the aesthetic imagination is always characterized by an imagined sensuous presence of what is envisaged. (73, original emphasis)⁸⁹

together cannot *not* be thought together’ (2002: 168). There is a long tradition to Sheehan’s observance. Arguing from the German romantic theorists Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg), Azade Seyhan links tropes of *chaos* and fragmentation to the negotiations of subjectivity, noting how chaos operates spatially as the ‘generative source of the structure of experience’ (1992: 134-5). So, too, in his important discussion of Kant’s textual sublime, Paul de Man describes ‘the spatial articulation of the infinite’ as a function of ‘extension’ and imaginative ‘totality’ such that space both ‘lies outside the sublime and remains there’ (1990: 93). As space for de Man is no less ‘a necessary condition (or cause) for the sublime to come into being’ (ibid.), the sublime actually entails space as both the arena and dynamic means of sublime significance, one opening itself to ‘the chiasmic transfer of properties between the sensory and the intellectual world’ (99). The spatial aspect of the sublime reflects not a philosophical principle, but one that is *linguistic*, and so describes a spatial dynamics of ‘discourse’ (93) for which epiphany provides the objective outlet (“Phenomenality and Materiality in Kant,” in Hugh Silverman & Gary Aylesworth, *The Textual Sublime: Deconstruction and Its Differences* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990). De Man’s essay also appears in his *Aesthetic Ideology* (Minneapolis: U Minneapolis Press, 1996, pp.70-90). Indeed, de Man’s complex formulations accomplish the dynamizing of the ‘non-expressive relation’ that Charles Taylor admits struggling to cognize as ‘interspatial’ epiphanic gaps – the process by which the unnameable content of epiphany ‘sets up a kind of frame or space or field’ (477) in order to be made apparent, (or as I would add, its linking “atmosphere”).

⁸⁹ As Seel immediately explains, ‘Sensuous projections of the imagination refer to objects that are not within the scope of bodily perception. These projections become *aesthetic* projections as soon as the objects are imagined in their appearing’ (op. cit. 74).

With this word, ‘duration’, we come to deflect further questions concerning the atmospherics by which the impressionistic is transformed into a ground or setting for fiction, and can turn to the temporal conditions of the narrative gaps across which such transformations are held. Before doing so, however, we can very briefly summarize what has already been laid out vis-à-vis what sorts of contents are mobilized through time.

Again, the cinema offers a convenient rubric by which to collate the fictional poetics at hand. Like theatre, film presents a performative medium dependent for its deepest effects of the placing of the individual not just into the relatedness of a spatial arrangement in which depth intends a topographical fixity, but one allowing for the mobilization of that depth as a metaphor for more profound processes. In this manner, surface effects are employed over such depths in order to link the sensory and cognitive faculties of human orientation to thematic contents. Where this happens, abstract tropes animate themselves as atmospheric occasionings just as sensory phenomena leads towards complex ideational structures. Woolf’s *The Voyage Out* relies upon a like set of figural transfers, not least where the young woman at the centre of the story lives out a disorienting version of Benjamin’s branch backed by faraway mountains, though here the focal distances are reversed: ‘Through the waving stems she saw a figure, large and shapeless against the sky. [...] she was speechless and almost without sense’ (276). Without *sense* because it is the depth she is seeing in its empty clarity, and which in the text implies a host of affective and symbolic tensions. But how different is this simple set of relations from the viewer before her stage or screen, where events are experienced unfolding in spaces that are at once phenomenal and imaginary, but which, importantly, exist in all four dimensions only in the imagination?

Here we might mark something expressed by the mid-century French social theorist, Edgar Morin, whose 1956 book on film, *Le cinéma, ou l’homme imaginaire*, summarizes how film does not just capture objects, ‘but makes them subject to unreal movements’ (2005: 122). If as Morin tells us, ‘movement is the decisive power of reality: it is in it, through it, that time and space are real’ (118), we no less discover that ‘montage’, the language of formal composition in the cinema, adds its own brand of impact – doing so by ‘inject[ing] its rhythm, its organizing movement, where there was only a succession of scenes, shots, images. Everything is in motion’ (130-31). The motion is key, here, not just because we are once more reminded that the word, cinema, finds its roots in *kinemas* – movement – but that movement is inseparable to events occurring in time. Before taking up this temporal aspect it is yet worth observing that there is an objective spirit to Morin’s vision, born of his intellectual foundations in Marxism, which brings

him to denigrate what we might call the Conrad-like impressionism of cinematic writing ‘from the 1920s onward’. To this list Morin appends the contemporary film critic Paul Gilson’s surely Conradian observation that ‘[i]n the cinema, characters and objects appear to us through a kind of unreal mist in a ghostly impalpability’ (1929: 16). It is here, however, that Morin’s own usages shift towards the abyssal potentiality he sees for cinematic mobility, and which I will over the next two chapters claim for the durational aspects of the theatricalized scenography of Conrad’s setting depictions.

Through movement, and “by virtue of these secret operations of the mind thanks to which the real and the unreal merge”, the cinema has become more real and more unreal than the [continuous and unedited mechanism of the] cinematograph. Movement is the soul of cinema, its subjectivity and its objectivity. Behind the camera, navigator of time and space, the double track of life and dream spreads out into the infinite. (131, quoting Gilson op. cit.)

There are two aspects of this view of the cinema we will need to bring forward, the relationship Morin notes between movement and stillness as temporal phenomena, the topic of the next chapter, and what sort of actuality is created from Gilson’s merging of ‘the real and the unreal’ through tropes of ‘unreal mist’ and ‘ghostly impalpability’ – the theme of my eventual engagement with *Lord Jim*.

CHAPTER THREE

Colonizing Duration: Time, Phenomenology, & the Loss of the Subject

Time can affirm its formidable reality even to those who loudly proclaim its nothingness.
Schelling, *Ages of the World* (1813)

Time and the Places of Consciousness

You have no right to despise this transitory fleeting element, the metamorphoses of which are so frequent, nor to dispense with it. If you do, you inevitably fall into the emptiness of an abstract and indefinable beauty. Baudelaire “The Painter of Modern Life” 1859-60.

How might the landscape reflections of the previous pages find their place within the larger orbit of time philosophy? Can a landscape be temporal, and if so, what would it mean to become lost in it? Such issues form the substance of this chapter’s investigation into the ways in which the passage of time transposes itself onto the contours of fictional places. All the same, while I will eventually need to locate my reflections on temporality through the contemporary responses of William James, Henri Bergson, and their early twentieth century inheritors, I begin by shuttling between the literary, critical, and philosophical outlooks of key practitioners of the modernist aesthetics of time and space.⁹⁰ Indeed, within the fluid bounds of the period’s temporal outlooks, time itself came to be treated not only as the carrier of profundity but to some extent its contents as well. Karl Barth’s *Epistle to the Romans* is not much read now, but it exemplifies that characteristic nexus of “dead” time with the moral gravity of the moment. Written in 1922, at the high water mark of the modernist era, Barth finds time’s movements ceding way to an endlessly revelatory instant that is, for all of its connection to theological significance, beyond the human ability to measure grace:

We remove from the “moment” when the last trump sounds all likeness to the past and the future, and thereby proclaim the likeness of all times, of all past and future, for we no longer perceive any past or any future which, in its complete distinction from the “moment” does not participate in its dignity and meaning. (1933 [1922]: 116)

⁹⁰ My target period, modernism, is of course a cultural, intellectual, and historical construct retroactively assigned in relation to, at least in its prototypical stages, and among many other names, the writers just mentioned; and so while its typical tropes tend to cut across disciplines and understandings, for sake of simplicity I will yet continue to abbreviate the complexity of the period as *modernist*.

This joint citation of ‘to perceive’ and ‘to participate’ in relation to the human incapacity to contemplate the eternal moment alerts us to another theme of the following pages, the phenomenological aspects by which supposedly atemporal formations are experienced. This is an important step for my notion of aesthetic duration in regard to the colonial nowhere, not simply for indicating how (to adapt Husserl’s phrasing) it is through bracketing off the unreflective “natural attitude” towards time that Barth’s *presentation* of temporal hiatus remains comprehensible to us, but because it accentuates the far larger issue of the intentional aspect – the thingness, or thinkableness – of “abyssal” readings of time, not least the notion of an abyssal present.⁹¹ While I will not be pursuing a Husserlian reading of time in these pages any more than I will a Heideggerian or an Einsteinian one, it is essential to keep in mind how the problematization of time in the modernist era offered avenues for a new and deeper authenticity, or, equally, a vessel of irreconcilable absurdity.

Last chapter I wrote of the sensory contents of atmospheres in relation to more abstruse treatments of particular terrains. There the question arose as to how such phenomena were to be conceived as aesthetic structures within language and mind, especially where the source material involved tropes of nowhere-ness or epistemological frustration that seemed applicable beyond the colonial situation. This chapter will therefore continue to point away from solely colonial frames, albeit to return us to a better position from which to view literary tropes combining imperial places and temporal passage. So, too, by reflecting upon the temporalization of space not just in the literary and philosophical record, but where, for instance, it impacts early to mid-twentieth century writing on film, it becomes easier to comprehend how much is gained from an atmospheric model of the sensory flux underwriting place depictions, let alone how a phenomenologically nuanced reading of landscapes might come to frame a truly modernist poetics of temporality. These general considerations have shaped the present chapter in two ways: firstly, although I do not attempt a unified history of the formal “time” concerns inflecting the work of writers such as Conrad or Woolf, it is certainly observable that a number of potentially influential durational models were already at work by the close of the nineteenth century and I will mark these where they come to impinge on landscape constructions. Secondly, and more generally, where landscapes are activated via the sorts of performative atmospheres described at the end of Chapter Two, I will need to draw such atmospheres into

⁹¹ Husserl is describing the suspension or *epoché* by which judgements concerning the world’s structures and its historical and linguistic accretions are set aside in lieu of the raw data of phenomena as given to consciousness. The process is fully explained in the transcendently minded *Ideas* of 1913, but is already present in root form in the *Logical Investigations* of 1900-01.

relation with literary efforts to find analogues not just for the various crises of consciousness mapped by modernism, but to point out how the fictional unfolding of experienced time provided a medium for the literary collusion (shall we say ecology?) of consciousness and environment. Through the following preamble, then, my focus will be upon time's atmospheric flows and rhythms across the colonial modernist period; more overtly, such flows will be found to incorporate a spatial imaginary as applicable to landscapes as they are to human thought.

It has of course been observed that space and time are already conflated in modernism. Stephen Kern's now classic *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918* (1983) has value here, collecting albeit conflated examples of spatio-temporality via 'Conrad's darkness, James' nothing, and Maeterlinck's silence; Proust's lost past, Mallarmé's blanks, and Webern's pauses'. For Kern, these 'constituent negativities' serve to resurrect the 'neglected "empty" spaces that formerly had only a supporting role and [bring] them to the centre of attention on a par with the traditional subjects' (177-9). While Kern is writing on the metropolitan scene, he goes on to describe such arenas of modernist 'non-being' in terms of 'positive negative space' (153), a trope we have already encountered in the colonial context. All the same, the collapsing of terms Kern undertakes does not always accord with earlier outlooks on spatio-temporality. For a figure such as Henri Bergson, there are crucial differences between spatial form and temporal flow. As Genevieve Lloyd points out, Bergson questions reality through the figure of the human intellect, which, 'for the greater convenience of practical life, breaks up the continuity of the real, taking snapshots as it were of a changing reality which it then mistakes for ready-made things' (1993: 97). What Lloyd means by 'things' here is segmented or metric time along with the endlessly divisible realm of space, the spatio-temporal constituents of the 'as if' reality we put in place of Bergson's actual flowing one. Lloyd's phrasing of Bergson's broader perspective has bearing upon landscapes since, for Bergson, 'space is not a "ground on which real motion is posited". Rather, it is *real* motion that "deposits space beneath itself"' (98; citing Bergson 1913: 289).⁹² Empty space is of course both negative and positive here, as Kern reminded us: positive because it is made out to be the matrix of the arrangement of objects both in cognition and the world, negative because it fails to capture, except perhaps topologically, the endlessly forming, endlessly divisible mappings we make of that world. Thus, as opposed to its pre-existing objects, "space" itself is really construed out of time's passage.⁹³ Such a model accords with

⁹² See *Matter and Memory*, translated by N. Paul and W. S. Palmer (London: George Allen, 1913).

⁹³ Many of these discussions are indebted to Russian Formalism as well as Joseph Frank's 1945 essay "Spatial Form in Literature". That latter work animated the larger historical context of the juxtaposition

what we saw of Willems on his Borneo house platform, miserably composing his unreal surroundings not from the separate instances in which he noted the shifting fog, the bamboo, the ‘tops of single trees’ and so on, but through the laying out of those features as *secreted* in and across his experience of the present. Hence the landscapes of the story came to be focalized as the relation between the viewer and the possibly atmospheric physical features and contours in view – so not just construed by consciousness, but *temporally* constituted.

This process is not isolated to theorists of modernist time. Human geographers raise similar models of motion and flow in their work. Here we might pause over Mike Crang’s efforts to capture the modulations of spatial events as expressed in his essay, “Rhythms of the City” (2001). Acknowledging Bergson’s observation of space’s limits as well as Henri Lefebvre’s work on the social production of “space,” Crang sees terms emerging for the rhythmic aspects by which spaces reveal themselves in time, for instance as modeled on the city as organism. Of this latter idea Lefebvre had written:

Space is nothing but the inscription of time in the world, spaces are the realizations, inscriptions in the simultaneity of the external word of a series of times, the rhythms of the city, the rhythms of urban population [...] the city will only be rethought and reconstructed on its current ruins when we have properly understood that the city is the deployment of time. (1995: 16)⁹⁴

Making use of these now classic efforts to dynamize space in social theory, as well as Elizabeth Grosz’s writings on the transgressive spatio-temporality of embodiment (1995) and temporal becoming (1999), Crang writes how ‘the temporalization of place removes a sense of self-contained moments and acts linked by external logics to open possibilities of immanent and emergent orders’, and thus defines ‘a becoming of velocities, directions, turnings, detours, exits and entries’ (2001: 206). Notwithstanding Crang’s not uncommon move to locate the

of interior and exterior space in a manner comparable to the spatial disorientations I see of the colonial topos: ‘Just as the dimension of depth has vanished from the sphere of visual creation, so the dimension of historical depth has vanished from the content of the major works of modern literature. Past and present are apprehended spatially, locked in a timeless unity that, while it may accentuate surface differences, eliminates any feeling of sequence by the very act of juxtaposition’ (“The Widening Gyre” 1963: 59). My study differs by seeking to analyze the experience of fictional characters as conceived through the spatial tropes Frank set out. Hence the surface articulations or ‘juxtaposition’ he writes of are reconceived both in terms of the atmospheric quality such tropes give off, and of the durational span in which spatialization is understood to be narratorially active.

⁹⁴ For Lefebvre’s disinclination to acknowledge his own Bergsonism, see Brendan Fraser’s “Toward a philosophy of the urban: Henri Lefebvre’s uncomfortable application of Bergsonism” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 26(2) (2008) 338 – 358. The word rhythm is of course prominent in Lefebvre’s final book, *Rhythmanalysis* (1992).

potentiality of the virtual in space-time, nor theory's capacity to explicate its discursive targets *through* the same poetically described 'rhythms' and forms it hopes to observe, his borrowings from Grosz's sense of rhythmic temporalized space has implications for colonial modernism's abyssal practices, the fact that 'what duration, memory, and consciousness bring to the world is the possibility of unfolding, hesitation, uncertainty. Not everything is presented in simultaneity' (Grosz 1999: 25). One hesitates to label Crang's own observations modernist, but the notion that temporal "spaces" provide embryonic if fluctuating sites of a more authentic vitality and significance is one that we will meet often enough in the next pages. More properly, what such readings indicate is the continuation of the prototypical modernist conundrum by which one begins with fictional places scattered over the imperial outlands, goes on to incorporate spatializing models of the mind's encounters with environment, and finishes by positing time as the key to their understanding.⁹⁵ Indeed, the novelistic setting through which I wish to exemplify what I see happening in modernist spatial depiction is a countrified "landscape" near one of the metropolitan centres Michael Valdez Moses saw being infected by tropes responsive to the colonial *out there*.

In an early draft for what was to become *Between the Acts*, then entitled "Pointz Hall",⁹⁶ Virginia Woolf describes the 'emptiness' of a domestic space as having its own form of authentic existence, one oblivious to focal outlooks, yet which forms the 'rhyme and rhythm' of being. Woolf sets out this moment of poiesis as the coming to 'presence' of that which can have no name, and which is no more than an impalpable if still just ambient actuality.

Who observed the dining room? Who noted the silence, the emptiness? What name is to be given to that which notes a room is empty? This presence certainly requires a name, for without a name what can exist? And how can silence or emptiness be noted by that which has no existence?... Does it not by this means create immortality? And yet we who have named other presences equally impalpable—called them God, for instance, or again the Holy Ghost—have no name but novelist, or poet, or sculptor, or musician, for this greatest of all preservers and creators...Nameless it is yet partakes of all things named; it

⁹⁵ Compare William James's "stream of consciousness" in Chapter IX ("The Stream of Thought") of his *Principles of Psychology* (1890): 'If we speak objectively, it is the real relations that appear revealed; if we speak subjectively, it is the stream of consciousness that matches each [shading of relation between speech and thought] by an inward colouring of its own. In either case the relations are numberless and no existing language is capable of doing justice to all their shades' (vol. I: 245 (Macmillan 1891); c.f. 348f.). James's insight was applied to literature by May Sinclair in her 1918 review of the first three volumes of Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage* (1915-67), and was fictionally exploited by, among others, Joyce, Woolf, and Henry Green. As a form it is derivative upon the same source ideas, texts, and tendencies I am exploring here, and thus it constitutes likenesses rather than sources for *colonial* aesthetic duration.

⁹⁶ The house went through several identities: Poyntzet, Poyntz, Pointz.

is rhyme and rhythm; it is dressing and eating and drinking; is procreation and sensation; is love and hate and passion and adventure.⁹⁷

Woolf is inscribing a particular abyssal reality, here domesticated to the England of 1939, but which, in the context of her novel, remains tied to the uncertainties of the looming war. In this sense, the unknown is not only captured within the text's atmospheric textures, but remains set against Woolf's nostalgic and unifying vision of English history as occasioned by the village pageant around which the plot revolves – and which simultaneously occasions a lovely parody of national literary and theatrical poetics. In raising that 'which has no existence' into the temporal frame of the story, Woolf is also destabilizing this past such that the present, in as much as it remains capturable from the stream of time, is no more able to be pinned down than what has gone on before.

Woolf's use of temporality in the final *Between the Acts* is not dissimilar to Walter Benjamin's description of the backward facing 'Angel of History' in his nearly exactly contemporary theses on history, a work powerfully infused with Benjamin's own helplessly catastrophic responses to the Nazi invasion of France. To recall part IX of that 1940 text, Benjamin's angel is looking into the past while being helplessly blown by a storm into the unseen future. As in Adorno's closing *Moralia*, the past cannot be focalized any more than the flux of present experience because the "historical" content (the 'catastrophe') of both realms is being endlessly augmented. Buffeted by winds, and not being able to find a stable point of perspective on temporal existence in view of the ever-growing debris field of the past, the angel is adrift in the flux of history's supposed *telos*, or to use Benjamin's word, 'progress'. Woolf's sense is congruent. Her village performers might sing of the cycle of seasonal activities and how 'time passes...' yet in the end the 'wind blew the words away' (86, ellipsis in original); more directly still, the character, Isa, is given to consider her possible futures as a place '[w]here the eyeless wind blows' (105).⁹⁸

⁹⁷ The passage, "Silence", is quoted in Mark Hussey, *The Singing of the Real World*, 152-153, and is taken from the typescript with author's corrections at the Berg Collection of the New York public library (unsigned, 2 April 1938 – July 30th 1939). Compare the "Time Passes" section of Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. There sensory phenomena creates the means by which a radically decentred experience of the real comes to the fore as a last register of significance. It is beyond the range of my essay to pursue the very interesting route by which such usages compare to Alain Robbe-Grillet's revitalization of 'décor' in *Pour un nouveau roman* (1963).

⁹⁸ Benjamin's wording runs as follows: 'There is a painting by Klee called *Angelus Novus*. An angel is depicted there who looks as though he were about to distance himself from something which he is staring at. His eyes are opened wide, his mouth stands open and his wings are outstretched. The Angel of History must look just so. His face is turned towards the past. Where we see the appearance of a chain of events,

But the temporal storm that Benjamin sees rushing his angel into the not-yet of history also has an aesthetic distinctiveness for Woolf. In setting her individuals adrift around the idealized hub of the English country estate and “its” village, the reader is invited to identify the unseen future rushing down upon the novel not just as a trope for time’s aesthetic occasioning, but art’s endless becoming, that is to say, the aesthetic ‘rhyme and rhythm’ of time’s virtual aspect. Here *Between the Acts* is less generous with its procedural hints than the draft passage we looked at, bellowing its call to meaning rather as Eliot’s seemingly whimsical publican calls the living shades to order in “The Waste Land”. There the voice cries ‘HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME’ (1922: line 141 *etc.*), only rather than urging a similar speed on those already bespoken to temporality, Woolf animates a stillness out of which the moment of communication is to appear, the timeless abyss of ‘Empty, empty, empty; silent, silent, silent’ (2008: 26). This is less elegant than the initial questing expressed in that unoccupied room, but it is more honest – not ‘immortality’ or the ‘Holy Ghost’ or the all-conceiving artist, but emptiness and silence, the *duration* of the inconceivable stilled void of Woolf’s excised text: a room as a ‘shell, singing of what was before time was’ (*ibid.*) just as in Woolf’s colonial novel, *The Voyage Out*, the fever-ravaged shell of her heroine is described as ‘floating on top of the bed and her mind [...] flitting about the room’ in troubled knowledge of the past (328).

But to remain with the excised passage from *Between the Acts*, neither do we need to replace the spatial and sensory aporias with temporal ones to see what is at stake. Here the void is the real, yet it is out of Woolf’s abyss that the event is seen to spring, the Benjamin-like moment in which the zero-hour starts the clock, in which the angel sees, at last, the living past with the still dead future. Or, to recall Adorno, writing his final reflection not many months after Woolf and Benjamin, the void comprises the ‘impossibility’ thought ‘must at last comprehend for the sake of the possible’. The contexts are not the same, of course, though the poetics may seem so; for even the endless starts in Woolf’s otherwise not very continental scenario are not simply *in* time, but indicate some other kind of experiential passage, the rhythm of emptiness as the sensory realm by which atmospheres are composed – for instance the scratching of the gramophone:

he sees one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before his feet. He would like to pause for a moment so fair, to awaken the dead and to piece together what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise, it has caught itself up in his wings and is so strong that the Angel can no longer close them. The storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the rubble-heap before him grows sky-high. That which we call progress, is this storm’ (Benjamin “On the Concept of History” IX).

Chuff, chuff, chuff went the machine. Could they talk? Could they move? No, for the play was going on. Yet the stage was empty; only the cows moved in the meadows; only the tick of the gramophone needle was heard. The tick, tick, tick seemed to hold them together, tranced. Nothing whatsoever appeared on the stage. (57)

These aural repetitions indicate time entering consciousness as a series of sensory events. It would be easy to label such phenomena as an on-line fictional experience of a particular sensorium, and as such, to make a duration of them; yet this appears not to be the entirety of Woolf's conception. Time at this moment has no meaningful action attached to it, only a surrounding scenery across which the cows trundle – so here the temporal has become shorn from human process.

This notion of temporal separation is one that still finds adherents later in the century, often in company with the semiotic deconstructions associated with the linguistic turn in philosophical and literary discourse. Indeed, essentialist notions of both time and language are targeted in Paul de Man's observance that 'modernity invests its trust in the power of the present moment as an origin, but discovers that, in severing itself from the past, it has at the same time severed itself from the present' (1971: 149). Time in the late-century era may still be seen to have lost its purpose, but in the earlier period it still finds recompense in the dynamics of its becoming, as we saw of Woolf's energetic repetitions of 'empty' and 'silent' over the stage in *Between the Acts*. Thus the constitution of the *abyssal* arena is anything but a dead end, but a means of drawing signification out of nothing and nowhere, or more simply, as an animating dynamic. The difference between metropolitan literary observances and colonial one may be insinuated here. In the European context abyssal forms are to be associated with the internalization of heightened states of crisis or cultural contradiction, but in the colonial realm, where culturally incongruous geographical settings might go hand in hand with the enforcement of social contradiction, the potential for abyssal forms is not just endlessly present, but one of the expectations of the genre. Fauconnier's *Malaisie* captures the sense of attraction that abyssal forms could be put towards. In the isolation of a house seemingly lost in the jungle, the narrator is given to hear 'the dim murmurs of the abysses' drawing him outside 'to contemplate the darkneses that called to us' (1990: 118). Thus the darkened abyss is provided with a powerful affective pull, but one to which no symbolic transfers accrue save that of the process of symbolization itself, the contemplation of a murmuring and darkened nowhere.

Elsewhere one finds a more directed critique of the atomizations of the individual in colonial modernity. As we will see when we come to *Lord Jim* next chapter, this critique can

have a cosmic flavour, for instance where the fixed, if subliminal arena of the seemingly unmoving *Patna* is likened to the lightless ‘ether behind the swarm of suns, [...] the appalling and calm solitudes awaiting the breath of future creations’ (59).⁹⁹ The drive to diminish the world by gazing back at it through, so to speak, the wrong end of the telescope, operates differently in the English setting of Woolf’s last novel. Rather than removing present experience from the human realm as a means of destabilizing the constructed imaginary in which her characters think and move, Woolf wants us to discover a more meaningful present. In writing, ‘the play was going on [yet] the stage was empty’, the reader is rather led to animate such voidal constructs, though it is left to the reader to decide whether the news from that empty silence is positive or negative. The evidence swings both ways: out of that now darkened nowhere Woolf’s characters inhabit at the close of the text, we find a revelatory stalling of temporal progression. There the local playwright, Miss La Trobe, ‘hear[s] the first words’ (144), old Mrs. Swithin takes up her book without knowing where she is in that particular march of progress (‘It was time to read now, her Outline of History. But she had lost her place’ 147), and Giles and Isa, lying together in the darkness, begin another cycle in their lives – at the rising of the ‘the curtain [they] spoke’ (149). Metric time ticks away through these moments of loss and reconstitution, yet from behind it, from having ‘lost her place’, a more authentic temporality enters ‘singing of what was before time was’ (*ibid.*). Of course, we do not learn from Woolf what this more authentic time has for its substance; we can only note what the empty form *does* in the text. In this sense, the very emptiness of Woolf’s tropes acts as a promise of meaning that, epiphany-like, is always at the cusp of symbolization, only now with cows and pastures in lieu of cosmic processes, and with a less obviously excoriating vision than that rehearsed by Conrad. Taken together, such moments present an aesthetic as opposed to measurable (if even objectifiable) encounter with the passage of time, and hence what I have called an *aesthetic* duration. Fittingly enough, Woolf defines this sort of temporality as a ‘rhythm’, a word chiming with the temporalized landscape Mike Crang was struggling to annotate via ‘rhythms of particular locales’ (op. cit. 206), and which I will be raising below, first through a durational frame, and later in the guise of a more fully colonial rhythm.

⁹⁹ A “cosmic” outlook is returned at several points in the text. In Chapter Three, ‘the immensity of the outspread sea, the stillness of the coast, passing north and south beyond the limits of my vision, made up one colossal Presence watching us’. Compare Fauconnier’s planetary reference elsewhere in Eric Sutton’s translation of *Malaisie*: a ‘pure fathomless night had absorbed the whole plain and its village constellations. The earth seemed to have shrunk; we were alone on a tiny vagrant planet’ (1990: 118).

The search for terms and right processes is a crucial part of modernism's heritage. It is the impetus behind Ronald Schleifer's comments in his *Modernism and Time* (2000) where, in a section appropriately entitled "The View from Nowhere", he collects the era's temporal qualifications:

Many thinkers associated with twentieth-century Modernism – Husserl, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, [...] Schreiner, Einstein, Freud, Bakhtin – came to see that time is not an object, something that can be described, reported and referred to in a constative utterance. They also came to see that it is not something that can be simply presented and performed. Rather, time, they discovered, must be figured and more precisely, *articulated* by something other than itself. (70, original emphasis)

Schleifer goes on to foreground the linguistic version of this argument, out of which time comes into being only on being mediated: 'In this understanding, representation and temporality arise in the same movement, the movement of signification – situated in the juncture between language conceived as observation and language conceived as action' (*ibid.*). Woolf had ended *Between the Acts* with a similar notification. Miss La Trobe might be seeking 'shelter; voices; oblivion' in a pub, but authentic language in that milieu is also a monosyllabic sinking 'down into the mud' where it might become fertile: 'Words without meaning – wonderful words' (144). Such, too, is the signifiatory moment of landscape should one accede to the idea that a focalized locality only comes into being through discourse. The trick is to see where abyssal forms complicate the discursive argument by leading the reader away from signs and images towards tropes more reliant upon aporia. In Woolf's late oeuvre, this constructive blockage is dynamized through her theatricalized glance into the void, and it is there that one discovers life's 'embrace [...] in the "Heart of Darkness", in the fields of the night' (148), in the abyssal zone out of which meaning creates itself – appropriately, for my purposes, *through* Conrad's most famous story.

This focus on nowhere and the atemporal as a "place" is more extensive in the period than the novelistic record shows, especially where such nowheres are set in motion. In terms similar to Conrad's cosmic model with its 'dark spaces of ether' (in *Lord Jim*), the late-Romantic (or proto-modernistic) German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche had already removed the human world from its objective position at discourse's deictic centre:

What did we do when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving now? Away from all suns? Are we not continually falling headlong? And backwards, sideways, forwards, in every direction? Is there still an

above and a below? Are we not straying as though through an endless Nothingness? (*The Joyful Wisdom* (*Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* [*The Gay Science*] 1882)¹⁰⁰

The intuition that both the figure and ground of human experience have been dislocated (the ‘we’ along with ‘this earth’) has ramifications for one’s sense of place as we move into modernism. This is especially true where such tropes tie in to Schleifer’s observance of the falling away of perspectives able to be ‘described, reported and referred to in a constative utterance’ (*ibid.*). In fact, language’s vanishing coordinates are not so very different from the topological abstraction of landscape features I am noting, not least of the way such awarenesses foreground the contemporary sense of moral and epistemological disorientation. Just as we saw of Nietzsche’s interrogating of the “where” of thought, objective standpoints were now being shifted onto conceptual rather than topographical categories. Temporal process is very much part of this devolution towards history’s ‘endless Nothingness’. Indeed, what catches my attention with Nietzsche’s outburst is the chain of imperfective ‘now’ moments it employs (‘moving now... continually... straying’). In this general way, at least, links emerge between the disparate temporal hermeneutics at work in the writers named thus far in the chapter. This list can be dauntingly inclusive of both personal and cultural perspectives: rhythm of spatial meaning (Woolf), the vanishing spatio-temporal ground for the human (Nietzsche, Conrad), citations of eternal authenticity (Woolf again, Eliot), and history’s fluid perspectives (Benjamin). In each of these tropes a similar detaching of deictic coordinates from phenomena are evident – whether one’s position is fixed or moving, goal oriented or process oriented, and so on. There are moral impacts, too. With Conrad the slurring of standpoints is largely beside the point since ‘[t]here is no morality, no knowledge, and no hope: there is only consciousness of ourselves which drives us about the world that, whether seen in a convex or a concave mirror, is always but a vain and floating appearance’ (*CL* 2: 30).¹⁰¹ Against the debasements of self-representation it is not surprising that certitude in a fixed spatio-temporal matrix should now be ‘convex’, now ‘concave’, and (as the scientists were about to discover) entirely detached from human notions of order. Richard Sheppard – from whose essay on the historical avant-garde I take Nietzsche’s quotation from *The Joyful Wisdom* – is more general in his extension of Conrad’s point:

Like the modern scientist, all these modernist writers have a developed sense that reality is not reality as perceived and structured by the Western bourgeois consciousness.

¹⁰⁰ Translation by Richard Sheppard (in Giles 1993: 30): Friedrich Nietzsche, ‘Der tolle Mensch’, in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (1882), Book 3, paragraph 125, *Werke*, II: 400–2.

¹⁰¹ Letter to Cunninghame Graham, January 31, 1898.

Moreover, they all sense that within and behind reality as it is conventionally understood, there lies a realm full of dynamic energies whose patterns are alien to liberal humanist or classical notions of order, and, to the extent that such patterns exist at all, elusive and mysterious. (1993: 17)¹⁰²

The material of this chapter can be restated around this quotation, not simply because it explores literary effects generated from contemporary understandings of the flow of experience upon consciousness, nor even that it finds explication through the influential insights of William James and Henri Bergson, but because the sometimes ‘alien’ or ‘elusive’ frame of time will be seen to provide the key for a good deal of literary experimentation. To remain a moment longer with the philosophical discourse, we need to see how Sheppard’s ‘elusive’ pattern took temporal form in two distinct directions. These come down to the difference between, on one hand, the phenomenological citing of time as a ground for human experience, and on the other, “analytic” questionings of time’s ontological status.¹⁰³ Both have implications for abyssal literary formations. While phenomenologically minded thinkers were attempting to link time with subjective experience, those more steeped in the idealist roots of analytical philosophy were concerned to downplay time’s actuality. In this latter area, F. H. Bradley’s suggestion in *Appearance and Reality* (1893) that time was merely apparent set in motion a long debate about the materiality of temporal experience, a thesis soon supplemented by that of his fellow Englishman, John McTaggart, whose 1908 essay, “The Unreality of Time” provided a logical

¹⁰² Much work has been done on the protean aspects of modernism in relation to historical and temporal meanings. Richard Sheppard identifies at least nine modernisms while admitting what Malcolm Bradbury’s and James McFarlane’s now classic *Modernism 1890-1930* (1976) identifies as the ‘cataclysmic’ or ‘apocalyptic’ aspect of a period ‘subject to extreme semantic confusion’ (45). So, too, the compound of movements and reversions produced by the era reflects the chaotic intersection of precisely the kinds of larger teleological, formalist, or metaphysical frameworks (i.e. ‘Apollo or Dionysus’ 48) that poststructuralist critics have been pleased to demolish. Andreas Huyssen and David Bathrick (1989: 1-16) have complicated the bifurcation of modernism into its presumed onto-theological and socio-cultural halves by addressing their common poetics. Sheppard sees modernism as ‘more a transitional phenomenon than a period or a movement’, a nexus rather than a centre (in Giles 1993: 4). In a similar vein, Raymond Williams notes two senses for the modern: “modern” as a historical time, with its specific and then changing features; but “modern” also as what Medvedev and Bakhtin, criticizing it, called ‘eternal contemporaneity’, that apprehension of the “moment” which overrides and excludes, practically and theoretically, the material realities of change’ (1989: 76-7).

¹⁰³ The distinction has an ancient pedigree concerning the evergreen question of whether time exists or is of the lesser order of appearances. The emergence of the new physics (what Bergson would thumbnail as “Minkowski’s and Einstein’s space-time” 1922) was quickly set against desire to maintain a humanist (or a vitalist anti-humanist) hedge against mechanistic views of the individual. Time was drawn into these larger issues as both a matrix for orderly social and technological progress and as a trope of scarcely attainable authenticity – for instance as Heideggerian ‘presence of being’. See Richard McDonough for Heidegger’s sharing of modernism’s organicist outlook (*Martin Heidegger’s Being and Time*. Peter Lane: New York, 2006. p.70, 94).

basis for time as a second order effect of relations. Aside from the troubling notion that ‘time’ may not exist, the main impediment to some sort of general agreement upon time’s nature consisted, then as now, of the difficulty of separating perceptions of time from time itself. So, too, the logic of time could be seen to be no less self-effacing than the language in which such problems come to be expressed: as the time philosopher Nathan Oaklander puts it, the ‘futility’ of attempting a ‘linguistic reduction’ of temporality can be shown where a factual tensed statement such as “soon my publication deadline will pass” inevitably proves itself false as its contents falls out of the future.¹⁰⁴ Baldly stated, the problem for twentieth century models of cultural and physical time washes down into the evergreen division between time as unreal, and our responses therefore *apparent* (for which we look to the analytic school for guidance), and time as the actualization of our responses to it, for which we turn to the phenomenological record.¹⁰⁵ I will soon need to complicate this division through the way in which novelistic framings of atemporal or otherwise “unreal” experiential modes appear to fall between the categories just laid out; first, however, a few comments are called for upon the thinkableness, or indeed, the *thingness* of time.

Concerning the sorts of cultural contents that might accrue to time, the fluid temporalities of the phenomenological stream quickly became part of the armoury of those eager to maintain a humanist or, with Bergson, a *vitalist* hedge against mechanistic views of the individual. By focusing on the structures of consciousness by which the individual subject confronts and cognizes the materiality of his or her encounters with world, artists and thinkers came to pursue time as an impressionistic and authentic flux of appearances. This is not to ignore the Xeno-inflected tortoise and hare paradoxes of the analytic school, especially since the manner in which temporal passage incorporated movements from the future through the present and into the past continued to influence contemporary mores. All the same, my purpose in drawing from the phenomenological discourse is to mark how the intentional aspect of the supposed contents of abyssal forms, their “objecthood”, stands in relation to the tropes and narratives by which such temporal flows are aesthetically activated. A number of questions immediately present

¹⁰⁴ As Oaklander notes, temporal readings of time often conflated the target with its means, and so confused matters by employing ‘the concept it intended to analyze’ (2004: 19).

¹⁰⁵ Regarding the *unreal* camp, critics have long since wrestled over what McTaggart (1908) called the tensed and untensed outlooks on time wherein temporality is either a privileging of the present over the past and future such that the passage of time is factive (this is the so-called A-series), or an untensed layering of events which are no longer temporally dynamic, but orderable only as being earlier, later, or simultaneous (the B-series). As seen of the seven century continuum in academic discourse between Aristotle’s *tensed* conception of time and Augustine’s ultimately *tenseless* one, it becomes apparent that McTaggart’s division is likely not final.

themselves. Are temporal forms merely *mental* events as Husserl came to suggest after his own turn to idealism? Do they reflect concrete occasionings in time, or exist as merely virtual effects? Or, to recall Böhme, is time *atmospheric* and so enfolded within the partly concrete ‘forms in which things and environments present themselves’ (1995: §96)? The case of Husserl is particularly suggestive where abyssal tropes are posited in relation to temporal flow. In departing from his emphasis on lived experience towards a more transcendent form of idealism, Husserl comes to rehearse the process we shall see of literary works; here I mean the movement i) from aporia as the hell of cultural disorientation, to ii) the transcendent and frequently sublime poetic contents such forms were given to accommodate, roughly speaking, the difference between Conrad’s and Eliot’s literary creeds.

Let me pick up on Böhme’s ambient awarenesses in terms of the theatricalized realm we saw last chapter with regard to Fischer-Lichte’s performative feedback loop. Thinking of atmospheres as being aesthetically akin to performance helps us to regard the moods activated and sustained in time by settings not simply as indicators of the ecology of self and environment, but as forums for literary poiesis. Moreover, to these zones we may therefore assign formal properties and, more pertinently, an open-ended temporal frame. Once more, the spatial dynamics proper to the cinema provides an apt analogy for the literary process, for instance where the apparent materiality of the cinematic image as a *temporal* structure helps us dissect Conrad’s efforts to mobilize “nowhere” in a work such as *An Outcast of the Islands*. We have already looked at Edgar Morin’s writings in relation to film’s ability to capture and organize the seeming actuality of ‘unreal movements’ (2005: 122). In reflecting upon what that critic calls ‘the *concrete processes of participation*’ (216, original italics) Morin refers to the manner in which impressionistic processes remain resolvable: the ‘mind of the spectator performs tremendous, nonstop work, without which a film would be nothing but a [...] movement on the screen, or at the most, a fluttering’. Hence Morin had written of the unificatory exchange by which ‘this whirl of lights, two dynamisms, two systems of participation, that of the screen and that of the spectator’, collects itself (201). More germane to my notion of landscape as a kind of occasioning, Morin, quotes Jean Epstein’s 1920s essay, “The Senses”, wherein the film screen ‘is that place where active thought and spectatorial thought meet and take on the material appearance of being an action’ (see Abel 244). With Epstein, Morin conceives of the coexistence of thinking and the manner of its focalization as a single event, described as the blending of “mental” processes between film and viewer. Indeed, it is for this reason that the ‘psyche of the cinema not only elaborates our perception of the real, it also secretes the

imaginary’ (202). Here Morin goes on to consider how the imaginary capacity of ‘the cinema “imagines for me, imagines in my place and at the same time outside me, with an imagination that is more intense and precise”’.¹⁰⁶ More crucially, film ‘represents and at the same time signifies. It remixes the real, the unreal, the present, real life, memory, and dream on the same shared mental level’ (202). There is much to wonder about in this amalgamation of mind with screen effects, let alone Morin’s turn towards the complicated issue of reception. What I would like to pick out, however, is the seemingly epiphanic moment of significance and intensity in which the imaginary is deployed – the temporal realm in which aesthetic reception and its atmospherics produces ‘the material appearance of being an action’ (Epstein *op. cit.*).

A single example will return us to the literary realm. As we saw in Conrad’s second novel, Willems’s situation places him in a state of existential and epistemological inertia, a stasis communicated largely through temporal figures in which ‘time seemed to roll on in profound darkness’ (251). Here the location Willems occupies has ceased to be a setting for action, but remains as inaccessible to him as the possibility of a meaningful immersion in his environment – as where the far riverbank ‘appeared unattainable, enigmatical, forever beyond reach’ (*ibid.*). The challenge to consciousness that impressionistic and especially “aporetic” phenomena provides has been mentioned; what is less clear is how contractions or extensions of experienced time come to be encoded in landscape constructions, including their atmospheres. In other words, we need to attend to the process wherein spatio-temporal perceptions become phenomenal agents in their own right, as so take on the dynamic material quality of Epstein’s ‘action’. What then of Willems’s consciousness before the “agency” and material imaging (or scenography) of the landscape wherein he finds himself? Conrad tells us how the ‘immense and impenetrable silence’ of the jungle ‘swallows up without echo [his] murmur of regret and the cry of revolt’ (265), but are his sensory faculties also swallowed? Doubtlessly, the oceanic realm of silence Conrad creates for his hapless character is not just temporally or spatially extended, nor simply a figure for the mental space or Morin-like ‘fluttering’ of Willems’s disorientation; rather it has become a ground of consciousness able to subsume the “now” of reflection along with its intentional contents, a list including the narrative hiatus ‘in which nothing could live now but the memory and hate of his past’ (265), ‘the keen salt breeze that made him shiver now and then’,

¹⁰⁶ Morin is working from the notations of the critic François Ricci (1947: 162), whose short paper, “The Cinema Between the Imagination and Reality” stressed that medium’s tendency towards the real: “Le cinéma entre l’imagination et la réalité,” *RIF* 2 (Septembre-Octobre 1947): 161-63.

the river ‘flowing ceaseless’ (266), ‘the endless and minute throngs of insects’ (268), his own ‘dull indifference’ (274), and so on.

By addressing phenomenal experiences not available to everyday modes of thinking (the abyssal ‘nothing’ remaining endlessly ‘beyond reach’), we are led to consider phenomenology’s questioning of mind/world relations not just for the moral and poetic contents that can be attached to them, but as sensorially felt analogues to modernist unease as staged in the temporal flows or “flowing” disjunctures, of colonial texts: a synaesthetically mounted duration. While these observations provide the themes of the three remaining sections of this chapter, it needs to be recalled that it is the sensory circumstance of duration by which we can address the textual construal of what Morin calls ‘the *concrete processes of participation*’ (216). Such is the process we will need to keep in mind as we move from i) durational encounters with aporia in modernism towards ii) more formally phenomenological readings of landscape time, and then iii) the way that Conrad’s oeuvre reflects the interpretative temporal excess of modernist landscapes.

Unreal: Modernist Durations, Modernist Stasis

[T]he process of dwelling is fundamentally temporal, the apprehension of the landscape in the dwelling perspective must begin from a recognition of its temporality. Only through such recognition, by temporalizing the landscape, can we move beyond the division that has afflicted most inquiries up to now, between the scientific study of an atemporalized nature, and the humanistic study of a dematerialised history.

Tim Ingold “Culture and the Perception of the Environment” 1992: 208

With this section I will once more be moving between the insights of poets, novelists, philosophers and critics in order to round upon fictional embracings of “discrete” if fulsome moments of duration. By incorporating this breadth of view I do not pretend to suggest a new genealogy for the poetics of duration in modernism, but use this section as a means of sharpening awareness of what it means to recognize temporal processes in general, and how such matters were seen to extend across the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. I will begin with asking what it is to notice time as the present, let alone as existing at all, and then move on to the sensory productivity of literary efforts to raise the present as the vessel of profound significance, a vessel, moreover, of the intuition that human significance contains a physiological component, a felt awareness that the *event* of temporal existence is also embodied existence. But

this section mounts a more specific set of observances as well. Where the “present” is conceived as having no breadth or actuality, the impetus to find meaning for temporal experiences becomes acute. Here I will bring in Paul Ricoeur’s narrative model to indicate one influential way of giving time’s paradoxical presence a structure of meaning comprehensible to humans, a move I will immediately extend to temporal tropes built around an abyssal conception of experience. Here, too, I cite writers of the modernist period inclined to follow Karl Barth’s path of assigning profound significance to the paradoxes of time. T. S. Eliot plays a role here, not least for constructing several of his poems around the idea of meaningful temporal aporia, for instance where these involve poetic energies fuelled by stilled time, or for animating symbolic usages as these come to incorporate the spiritual authority of a now eternal present. As will soon become apparent, the dynamic aspect opened by poetic invigorations of aporetic time once more opens the door not only to Bergson’s more flowing conception, but in the hands of William James, an expansion of the moment to include its prior and subsequent awarenesses in a manner congruent with novelistic practice. Rather than returning us to the old divide between point-like and durational notions of time, the section shows how artists found ways to collapse such oppositions into a dialectics of significance.

First a question: what is it to notice time? For a recent adherent of the analytic view of time, Robin Le Poidevin, to ‘perceive something as present is simply to perceive it: we do not need to postulate some extra item in our experience that is “the experience of presentness”’ (2009).¹⁰⁷ In other words, experience is already phenomenological in that it denotes experience of *something*, which is of course Husserl’s contention in reviving, through Franz Brentano, the medieval concept of intentionality. This concept posits a distinction between things that are entirely mental, and the contents (the “somethings”) of thought that are brought to presence out of our primordial encounters with objects and processes, and which still remain available to the senses. For all its straightforwardness, Le Poidevin’s statement aims to deflate phenomenological arguments concerning the means by which things and happenings are made available to consciousness as cognitive *events* involving a temporal “something”. As he argues,

¹⁰⁷ See Le Poidevin’s article on time-experience for the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP): <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/time-experience/#5>>. The generic task of setting out the analytic view could have been undertaken through a number of time theorists. Le Poidevin has the advantage of being centrally positioned within the analytic camp – and therefore able to plead his case from a perspective at odds with my own – and recently (and prolifically) active. Other possible works include Nathan Oaklander’s *The Philosophy of Time: Critical Concepts in Philosophy* (New York; London: Routledge, 2008), Oaklander’s and Quentin Smith’s *The New Theory of Time* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1994), or David Mellor’s *Real Time II* (London: Routledge, 1998).

there is no event called “time perception”, only perceptions of events since ‘when we learn the concept of time, we necessarily do so in the context of change’ (2003: 21). This last move is central to Le Poidevin’s line of inquiry. He is showing how the present-time experience of temporality is no more substantiable than that of *experiencing* past or future “events”, or that of raising intentional objects in mind. Like the eventless experience of time (for how long was I daydreaming about nothing?),¹⁰⁸ imagined objects may be real in the mind, but their “reality” is of a different order of phenomena than the printed text before one or the table upon which it lies. However, the account just given of daydreaming in which duration and intentionality are brought into proximity is certainly unsatisfactory. There the length of the dream sequence has no more internal evidence to shore it up as a temporal passage than Willems has ‘walk[ing] about blindly in the deserted courtyards’ without any *concrete* idea of ‘how many days’ had gone by (265).

Looking at this problem through the cognitive processes made available through the phenomenological tradition, the philosopher Shaun Gallagher consigns the issue (in scare quotes) to “the problem of objective synthesis”, that is to say, the issue ‘of explaining how we can perceive objects as either changing or persisting over time despite the fact that the past seems not to persist or have actuality’ (1998: 18). Has not actuality? What of the past that Willems so devastatingly regrets in Conrad’s novel; do his mistakes not persist in his mind and therefore impact his actions as he wanders blindly about; do such non-events not nudge him towards despair as surely as the concrete ones? Commenting upon the roots of phenomenology, Gallagher offers what is for me an appropriate figure for the locational process accompanying Willems’s sense of (un)reality:

In the paradigm that governs from Locke through the Jamesian and Husserlian traditions, temporality is confined to the theatre of subjectivity, acted out on the private stage of consciousness, presented in the lonely performance of solipsistic experience. Even objective time, to the extent that it is allowed to play its role, is something that is filtered through individual consciousness, something that appears at the end of the intentional process (108)

This theatrical analogy captures something of the idealist’s recognition that the mind creates reality, while acknowledging how a perspective onto time is a kind of objectification of interior processes – the play of perspectives by which theatricalization is said to occur. Time fits

¹⁰⁸ Compare Proust in the first volume of *À la recherche du temps perdu* where Swann has ‘a moment of illumination, like a man in a fever who awakes from sleep and is conscious of the absurdity of the dream-shapes among which his mind has been wandering without any clear indication between himself and them’ (249).

into this process in two ways. First, for the analytic thinker, conceiving durational experience as temporal ‘extension’ is problematic since our experience of events occurs only in the present, for which, presumably, there would still have to be a prior and a future series of less temporally privileged moments labeled “past” and “future”. From these philosophical niceties (we shall come to the counterarguments shortly) one can infer the historical disconnection of human experience from all but the temporally limited and thus *spatialized* actuality of the now-time. Second, as Conrad’s chapter-long narrative of Willems’s *theatre of subjectivity* shows, there is still a presentational unfolding of reflection and repetition, at any rate, a continuing state in which what Gallagher calls ‘solipsistic experience’ appears to embrace a juxtaposition of things that persist and things that change as a durational state – the on-line encounter with nothingness staged through Willems’s negative epiphany. To run with Gallagher’s analysis, what Conrad appears to be narrating is the temporality of “the problem of objective synthesis”, one, moreover, that comes to comprise a landscape that is not now a merely temporal frame, but the concrete *nowhere* arena in which Willems suffers his crisis, and in which he *becomes* that nowhere.

So given the conditions by which temporality *appears* to exist, and accounting for the potentially minute gaps between phenomena and sense (between, say, the production and reception of sound or light waves), it is perhaps less surprising that so many theorists should make claims for the unreality of time. Here Le Poidevin suggests how ‘one of the most important lessons of philosophy, for many writers, is that there may be a gap, perhaps even a gulf, between our representation of the world and the world itself, even on a quite abstract level’ (31). Such a gulf is of course not to be confused with the abyss we have been tracking thus far (though I will close this study with one of Conrad’s all-encompassing marine *gulfs*), but it does highlight the problem we are after: the fictional mind’s propensity to blur the distinction between ideational and phenomenal experience as these unfold in narrative, or the means by which discrepancies between metric time and our sense of it might be tracked. Siding with Augustine’s venerable assertion that it is ‘in my own mind, then, that I measure time’ (*Confessions* Book XI §27), Le Poidevin observes that ‘duration and precedence can be seen as entirely mind-independent features of the world, despite the fact that our perception of them is indirect’ (178). In other words, as with Augustine, Le Poidevin calls time an interiorized ‘*mental* item’.¹⁰⁹ This idealist notion of the presumed unreality of time is assumed has implications for the aesthetics of

¹⁰⁹ The idealist point of view is foundational in Kant’s conception of time as located within the system of awareness consciousness creates for itself, as it is for turn of the century idealist thinkers such as Bradley and McTaggart. For the classic working out of these issues see: McTaggart, J. M. E. 1908. “The Unreality of Time.” *Mind*, New Series 68: 457-484.

literary time I am building, primarily in its enabling of analytic philosophy's focus on ontological as opposed to phenomenological time, so better to assert a point-like conception of present experience resistant to the durational claims of the phenomenologists:

There is a further discrepancy between the experienced present (i.e. what we experience as present) and any supposedly objective present. As Augustine clearly saw, any objectively present moment would have to be durationless. (2007: 79, discussing *Confessions*, Book XI, §15; Pine-Coffin 1961:264–6)

As Le Poidevin goes on to argue, 'if (as the presentist asserts) only the present is real, and (as Augustine has argued) the present is durationless, it follows that any real event of experience, *qua* real event, is itself durationless' (79).¹¹⁰

The phenomenological outlook is of course less prepared to strip temporality of the meaning value along with the experiential actuality of its "moments". In relation to literary texts, and as a means of circumventing durationless time as a storyless series of now-points, the French philosopher, Paul Ricoeur, sets out a narrative understanding of time. As raised in his monumental *Time and Narrative* (1984-8 [*Temps et récit*, 1983-85]), both the context-dependent human experience of time and the seeming straightforward linearity of its perceived "now" moments come together in story-based forms. Within the temporal structuring of storyworlds – their narratological ordering – Ricoeur also points to the 'fictive experience of time projected by the conjunction/disjunction of the time it takes to narrate and narrated time' (TN2 77). Accordingly it is through the narratological complex of relational experiences and temporal perspectives by which the unrealizable abyssal correspondences I wish to analyze can be exploited as durations. For Ricoeur, too, time is both an organizing moment of personal experience and a trope of non-human scale and sublimity. As with that thinker's move away from existential concerns towards the hermeneutic realm in which experience is cognized through language, the temporal rift between personal and world time is not seen to be insurmountable. Here Ricoeur cites phenomenological efforts to draw on narrative as a way of escaping solipsistic accounts of temporal change, thus allowing lived time its human scope while finding ways of allowing a space of becoming for more cosmically scaled notions of time such as seasonal rhythms or celestial movements. Accordingly it is by harmonizing internal, social, and global temporal scales that we achieve the historical present in which events become intelligible:

¹¹⁰ On this note Barry Dainton asks whether we can 'really distinguish, in introspection, an infinite number of distinct phases of a single short tone, or a perceived movement' (*Stream of Consciousness: Unity and Continuity in Conscious Experience*. London: Routledge, 2000: 170).

that is to say, where what we say or do falls into the universal realm without being submerged or losing its personal importance. Hence Ricoeur writes how ‘[o]n a cosmic scale, our life is insignificant, yet this brief period when we appear in the world is the time in which all meaningful questions arise’ (*TN I* 1985: 263). One example: to say, for instance, “today I am grappling with phenomenology’s limitations” is to integrate this event both into the calendar of universal passings, and into my own otherwise insignificant concepts of progression, obligation, and reflection. Such integration is categorized by Ricoeur as the ‘inscription’ of human experience onto the universal scheme of things (*TN III* 1988: 109).¹¹¹ Thus where the present is seen to act as a lens collecting recalled natural or human events out of the past and into the present of experience – thereby to project such events from this now originary present into the array of possible future actions of events – the ordering by which present time attains meaning for the individual is akin to that of a plot. Further, Ricoeur’s reading foregrounds plots as temporal structures by which the flux of possible or actual events is transformed into an array of necessary and so meaningful ones offering the compensations of a potentially consilient structure. Time may be beyond understanding, but temporal experience is not.¹¹²

What then of aporatic time or timelessness? Let me use a theatrical illustration of where such correspondences make meaning from the communicative potential of temporal disconnections and aporia. In his 1937 ‘time play’, *I Have Been Here Before*, the dramatist and novelist, J. B. Priestley, has a stage character reflect upon the contents carried by temporal framings. As it is phrased here, this content is made available only on leaving the “now” of narration Ricoeur wants to foreground:

We have to change the focus of attention, which we have trained ourselves to concentrate on the present. My problem was to drift away from the present – as we do in dreams – and yet be attentive, noting everything – (206)

¹¹¹ Ricoeur writes of our need for some sort of fabric by which human temporal occasionings, past, present, or projected, do not collapse before either the larger run of time, or the minutiae of experience. For Ricoeur, this fabric is the discourse by which historical time becomes ‘articulated through a narrative mode’, hence ‘narrative attains its full significance when it becomes a condition of temporal existence’ (1984: 52 [*TN I*]).

¹¹² There is a powerful expository value to Ricoeur’s thesis, especially where he applies his notion of narrative emplotment to fiction’s ‘kingdom of the as if’ (1984: 64). I may be noted that Ricoeur’s structures of temporally plotted meaningful events fail to capture the disintegration of Jim’s ‘perfect state of preparation’ (113). The lesson of the *Patna* episode is how Jim was ‘taken unawares’ such that ‘[e]verything betrayed him’ (ibid.).

What Priestley appears to be suggesting is how ineffable significance, the ‘everything’ noted by his character, is achieved beyond time, here as a phenomenological experience of a state outside ‘the present’ that is yet open to the notations of one who is ‘attentive’. The “here” one travels towards is not without *qualia* or experiential content, and so the ‘everything’ Priestley’s character is noting is not some sort of dream-like presence focalized beyond time, but the contours of the nowhere space one has drifted away to.¹¹³ In writing his play Priestley admits to having been influenced by the exploratory writings of P. D. Ouspensky, but it is not the heretofore hidden reality of the nowhere Ouspensky animates through his notion of the “eternal now” I wish to excavate, but the literary forms through which it takes meaning, the trope, common across modernism, in which Ricoeur’s ‘narrative mode’ becomes an experiential space for the individual.¹¹⁴ As seen of Priestley’s own conversion of time into ambient space (in which one can ‘drift away’), Ricoeur’s focus upon the ‘fictive experience of time’ defers less to narrative action than, as here, the continuous phenomenological experience of a particular located space, a fictional *landscape*.

Indeed, to turn from Priestley’s example, we can see the topological implications of his outlook very directly with the famous opening lines of Yasunari Kawabata’s novel, *Yukiguni* or *Snow Country* (written 1934-47). There we discover an aging Japanese roué reflecting upon his past from a seat on a moving train, and asking ‘whether the flowing landscape was not perhaps symbolic of the passage of time’ (1957: 14).¹¹⁵ What is common to Kawabata’s train-bound

¹¹³ Qualia is a notorious term, used here as the raw data of how an experience feels – the “whatness” of the colour “red”. In *Mind and the World Order: Outline of a Theory of Knowledge* (1929), the pragmatist philosopher, Clarence Irving Lewis defines it in terms of the ‘recognizable qualitative characters of the given, which may be repeated in different experiences, and are thus a sort of universals; I call these “qualia.” But although such qualia are universals, in the sense of being recognized from one to another experience, they must be distinguished from the properties of objects. [...] The quale is directly intuited, given, and is not the subject of any possible error because it is purely subjective’ (1956 [1929]: 121).

¹¹⁴ The work of Ouspensky to which Priestley refers in the 1937 first edition of his play, produced that year, is *A New Model of the Universe: Principles of the Psychological Method in its Application to Problems of Science, Religion, and Art*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1931. There Ouspensky writes of the ‘Eternal Now’, defined through his observation that ‘every moment contains a very large number of possibilities. And all of them are actualized, only we do not see it and do not know’ (139 original emphasis). As such, in what he calls time’s “fourth dimension” the *Eternal Now* is ‘the state in which “everything is everywhere and always”’ (489).

¹¹⁵ This is reminiscent of his Zen insight that the ‘heart of the ink painting is in space, abbreviation, what is left undrawn’. In separating his traditional Japanese outlook from Anglo-European modernism, Kawabata describes how the ‘Zen disciple sits for long hours silent and motionless, with his eyes closed. Presently he enters a state of impassivity, free from all ideas and all thoughts. He departs from the self and enters the realm of nothingness. This is not the nothingness or the emptiness of the West. It is rather the reverse, a universe of the spirit in which everything communicates freely with everything,

observer or Priestley's play-bound character is how time's presumed flows are figuratively transferred onto the topographical forms of landscape in the sense that Kawabata, who is of course neither European nor colonial, sees occurring.¹¹⁶ Is there, therefore, a particular genre of significance that comes out of such tropes, a *qualia* capable of sustaining symbolic meaning? Indeed, even where time is experienced as having no purchase – as McTaggart and his analytic bedfellows described – the time during which representational spaces accrue significance can still be considered a *poetic* duration. This observation need not be complex; the wording of Kawabata's 'flowing landscape' can indicate a minimum of temporal development, but neither does it point to a frozen "moment" in which symbolism, or indeed epiphany, is sometimes misleadingly couched. By comparison, a durational approach suggests how in dynamizing a viewer's suspended state of mind, we can better represent the dream state through which quasi-epiphanic experiences accrue symbolic force – the suggestion offered by Kawabata's old man.

More can be said of the play of time and timelessness in modernism and after. Probing narratives in which temporal and seemingly "atemporal" or tenseless models of experience exist side by side, the sociologist Ann Game has posited

experiences of the moment that might be regarded as extra-temporal, as outside familiar structures of past-present-future, of either linear time or Bergson's duration. Such moments are moments in eternity. In living these, we experience a now, and then all at once, we experience a temporal connectedness... Corresponding to this time is a space that, in contrast to familiar notions of an empty space comprised of terms of separation, is full and alive in its connectedness... 'Belonging', I will argue, is an experience of living in-between. (2001: 226)

The tension between duration and fixity Game wishes to animate via her 'in-between' model has solid modernist credentials, as does her borrowing of the notion of "sacred time" from Mircea Eliade, who in common with Ouspensky sees a fulsome space of authenticity in the cessation of temporality.¹¹⁷ Eliade, too, shares Priestley's sense of people being 'trained' to give precedence to the present: 'I practiced for many years [the] exercise of recapturing that epiphanic moment, and I would always find again the same plenitude. I would slip into it as into a fragment of time

transcending bounds, limitless. [...] Truth is in "the discarding of words", it lies "outside words" ("Japan, the Beautiful and Myself," Nobel acceptance speech, 1968).

< http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1968/kawabata-lecture.html>)

¹¹⁶ Compare the "spatialized" duration Mikhail Bakhtin enfolds into the chronotope as the 'intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed' (84).

¹¹⁷ Here we might recall Barth's *Epistle to the Romans*, cited at the beginning to this chapter.

devoid of duration—without beginning, middle, or end’ (cited in Elwood, 1999: 98-99).¹¹⁸ To glance at another writer interested in the spirituality of time, the language Eliade is using here is similar to the more obviously literary realm of T. S. Eliot’s poetic meditations upon temporal or *temporalized* stasis as the site of profound and indeed sacred significance. Eliot’s *Ash Wednesday* (1930) and *Burnt Norton* (1935/6) offer a basis for a numinous if also abyssal understanding of temporal comprehension, that is to say, a time based version of the ‘objective correlative’ by which affective content is evoked ([1919] 1976: 100).¹¹⁹ In the later poem, for instance, Eliot’s attention to temporal aporia promotes paradoxical significance in a like manner to Game and Eliade. By making stilled time both the tenor and vehicle of metaphorical inference, Eliot claims how ‘Time past and time future / Allow but a little consciousness. / To be conscious is not to be in time’ – not *conscious* because the real is actually an endless present unsullied by worldly flux. In this sense, Eliot’s conception exploits tension between time’s passage and the epiphanic meaning derived at what he identifies as ‘the still point of the turning world’.¹²⁰ Like Eliade, Eliot describes the timeless point wherein consciousness achieves its view onto actuality as a durational stillness:¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Eliade, *Autobiography*, in Robert Ellwood, p.98–99 (*The Politics of Myth: A Study of C. G. Jung, Mircea Eliade, and Joseph Campbell*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1999).

¹¹⁹ In his 1919 essay, “Hamlet and his Problems”, published in *The Sacred Wood* (1920), Eliot says: ‘The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an “objective correlative”; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked’.

¹²⁰ That consciousness is most authentic ‘out of time’ accords with theological models of the period. For Nicholas Berdyaev, meaning or immanence is ‘separated by an abyss from the world and from man’ (1935: 33).

¹²¹ This phrasing can be made to accord with theological descriptions of atemporal duration. The theologically infused ‘moment’ may be seen in a much-cited article by Eleanore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (“Eternity” *The Journal of Philosophy* Vol. 78, No. 8, August 1981: 429-458), as well as in later works:

So the classic ancient and medieval expositions of the concept of eternity are attempts to frame the notion of a mode of existence consisting wholly in a present that is limitless rather than instantaneous. Such a present is indivisible, like the temporal present, but it is atemporal in virtue of being limitless rather than instantaneous, and it is in that way infinitely enduring... atemporal duration, conceived as a beginningless and endless present, cannot admit of succession... neither successiveness nor plurality of intervals can be features of the atemporal duration that characterizes the mode of existence of the absolute perfect being.” (Stump, Eleanore, and Kretzmann, Norman. “Atemporal Duration,” *J. Phil* 84 (1987): 218-9)

The theological goal here is the dynamic whereby the eternal is also *in* time, for which atemporal duration offers a conceptual system allowing the sublimely atemporal to remain influential within time without any alteration of ontological or temporal status – useful for indicating a time structure wherein ineffable content is made symbolically available to human understanding while remaining temporally unlocated.

And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance. ("Burnt Norton" Part II)

Such a statement would appear to foreground Oaklander's point about conflating poetic encounters with time (or, as here, eternal time) and the surplus of language – here the paradoxical apophatic openness of Eliot's 'Neither [...] nor [...] Except [...] only'. But neither should we mistake this sort of aestheticized hovering for the Bergsonian view of matters, in which duration intends a positive 'pure' or final reality. As Genevieve Lloyd sees of Bergson's model in *Creative Evolution*, there is as much difference between time and eternity, as there is between either of them and duration:

Rather than seeing time as a degradation, a falling away from eternity, Bergson sees eternity as an abstraction from change. Eternity is not the ultimate reality underlying time, but an unreal abstraction hanging over it. From the standpoint of ancient philosophy both time and space, he says, can be "nothing but the field that an incomplete reality, or rather a reality that has gone astray of itself, needs in order to run in quest of itself" (98; citing Bergson 1913: 336)

In this estimation, the 'quest for itself' undertaken by ancient philosophers is only another search for an epiphanic link between 'incomplete reality' and the totality Bergson distinguishes in temporal passage. With Eliot and his inheritors, however, time had become the holy well into which one sought, albeit with a vastly leaking bucket, to capture the forms of the eternal.

Novelistic variants of this search are not hard to find. We have seen Eliot framing the collecting 'point' through which the profundities of the real might be fused from the flux of experience, but Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* exemplifies a like hardening of meaning through time's unruly passage. As with Eliot's usage in "Burnt Norton" where 'all is always now', Woolf imagines the expansive temporal now (the 'moment') as a jewel into which all experience pours:

there is a coherence in things, a stability; something, she meant, is immune from change, and shines out (she glanced at the window with its ripple of reflected lights) in the face of the flowing, the fleeting, the spectral, like a ruby; so that again tonight she had the feeling she had had once today, already, of peace, of rest. Of such moments, she thought, the thing is made that endures. (105)

Again, we find the same underlining of ‘coherence’ as unreal or immobile, an order of things ‘immune from change’. In Woolf’s handling, this sort of endurance is won from the impressionistic flux ‘with its ripple of reflected lights’, that is to say, transfigured from ‘the flowing, the fleeting, the spectral’ into an ordering and epiphanic object of understanding. Woolf is not done, however, for with the “Time Passes” section of the book, the flux – there in the form of ‘the darkness’ (143), ‘the nothing’ (144), and ‘silence’ (148) – is seen to take on the ontological condition of an actant, and so to overwhelm any merely momentary epiphanic stillness. Durable as it is across the instance in which it is focalized, the object, here Mrs. Ramsay’s ruby, merely sinks back into the oceanic time of the void.¹²² Thus as wildly different as Woolf and Eliot are, the *narrative* instabilities they track may still be gathered into a passing *figural* moment projected onto things, though for Eliot the abstract and poetic ‘form’ or ‘pattern’ by which unsayable wisdom finds its medium is finally more constitutive than its momentary objects. In both authors, however, we see how readily temporal figures can be transferred onto place settings along with the contents of human interiority. This last notion is more pronounced in Woolf’s oeuvre, as we shall see again with *The Voyage Out*, but it is in Eliot, too, where with the closing lines from the second part of “Burnt Norton” (1936), the perspective onto everyday time is helplessly bound up with the affective clutch of places:

To be conscious is not to be in time
 But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,
 The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,
 The moment in the draughty church at smokefall
 Be remembered; involved with past and future.
 Only through time time is conquered.

Regarding the presumed triumph of eternal time over fugitive narrative time, Eliot’s example calls for a further reflection. Given the temporally grounded understanding of the individual, discrepancies arise between duration as being both ‘external’ to the individual and constituted within consciousness – hence the two kinds of ‘time’ Eliot cites at the end of his

¹²² The “Time Passes” section (143ff) enacts a series of spatiotemporal tropes through the Ramsays’s vacation house, where atmospheres are called in to take on the narrative role formerly held by human figures (the servants escape this logic). Once again we have an empty room: ‘Nothing it seemed could break that image, corrupt that innocence, or disturb the swaying mantle of silence which, week after week, in the empty room, wove into itself the falling cries of birds, ships hooting, the drone and hum of the fields, a dog’s bark, a man’s shout, and folded them round the house in silence.’ Such usages have their abyssal aspect, the ‘downpouring of immense darkness’ that comes with the weather, or of an agentive transience (here a floating feather) that might have tipped the house such that it ‘pitched downwards to the depths of darkness’ or the ‘sands of oblivion’.

verse section. This discrepancy appears in a key thinker of modernity I have not yet mentioned, Ludwig Wittgenstein, who sought to play off the form of time against our experience of its putative ‘temporal’ content: ‘If by eternity is understood not external temporal duration, but timelessness, then he lives eternally who lives in the present’ (1922: 6.4311). While Wittgenstein might be showing how consciousness has no purchase on space and time because we have no perspective on them outside of ourselves (‘[t]he solution of the riddle of life in space and time lies *outside* space and time.’ 6.4312, original emphasis), like Eliot, his interrogation on interior and exterior time effectively replicates the nonexistence of time posited by Augustine, while underlining the phenomenal roots of temporal existence, here the continued experience of *living in the present*. Indeed, what the poetic model of *timeless* duration appears to demand is that whether time moves or not, it cannot but remain open to phenomenological experience.¹²³ In sum, Eliot’s example only returns us to the open-ended dance of the durational model.

Bergson is once again the obvious figure here. Beginning with the 1889 publication of his doctoral dissertation, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, translated as *Time and Free Will* (1910), Bergson’s example helps us historicize duration not simply as an underwriting of continuous event time free of the logical fallacies inherent in the succession model – in which phenomenal events change their position as once-future occurrences recede into the past – but as the facilitating medium of conscious being.¹²⁴ For all his presumed influence on modernist literary practice, Bergson yet remains suspicious of language’s ability to reproduce interiority, arguing that the merely symbolic means of novelistic practice cannot capture the real of duration (*durée*), but as with the relations of memory and phenomena, stops at the shadow play by which reality is mistakenly construed.

Little by little it comes into view like a condensing cloud; from the virtual state it passes into the actual; and as its outlines become more distinct and its surface takes on colour it tends to imitate perception. (*Matter and Memory* 1991 [1896]: 134)

The prime issue for Bergson is that texts are themselves highly segmented structures, and so cannot replicate the full range of experience that in *The Creative Mind* he comes to identify with ‘pure mobility’ (1994 [1934]: 165). Similarly, the ‘inexpressible’ aspects of our ‘fundamental

¹²³ Compare Ann Game, for whom Mircea Eliade’s notion of sacred space is a form of ecstatic ‘epiphanic’ fullness: ‘[t]his is not nostalgia’s lost paradise, but an eternal paradise, lived now’ (239; in Ellwood, 1999: 98-9).

¹²⁴ Bergson’s philosophical reputation is not as secure as earlier in the century, and neither his name, nor *Duration*, make it into the index of the recent *Oxford Handbook to the Philosophy of Time* (2011), edited by Craig Callender, though Henry James and the “specious present” warrant rather more attention.

self' cannot be linguistically approached 'because language cannot get hold of it without arresting its mobility' any more than it can fit language 'into its common-place forms' without losing what is individual in the subject (129). For Bergson, the problem of language extends beyond the issue of aesthetics in relation to essence: simply put, our failure 'to translate completely what our soul experiences' suffers a basic cognitive setback, for 'there is no common measure between mind and language' (164-5).¹²⁵ At the same time, Bergson does admit how the efficacy of linguistic representation allows a negatively framed glimpse of reality as an *effect*, for instance as a noting of the veils language casts over events in order to draw attention to the mere flux of shadows playing out on the other side:

Now, if some bold novelist, tearing aside the cleverly woven curtain of our conventional ego, shows us under this appearance of logic a fundamental absurdity, under this juxtaposition of simple states an infinite permeation of a thousand different impressions which have already ceased to exist the instant they are named, we commend him for having known us better than we knew ourselves. This is not the case, however, and the very fact that he spreads out our feelings in a homogenous time, and expresses its elements by words, shows that he in his turn is only offering us its shadow: but he has arranged this shadow in such a way as to make us suspect the extraordinary and illogical nature of the object which projects it; he has made us reflect by giving outward expression to something of that contradiction, that interpenetration, which is the very essence of the elements expressed. (2001: 134)

With this account of the limitation of fiction – how on the one hand it helps us 'put aside for an instant the veil which we interposed between our consciousness and ourselves' (ibid) – we are nonetheless pushed towards the 'mistakes of associationism' that come of 'substituting for the interpenetration of the real terms the juxtaposition of their symbols'.¹²⁶ In Bergson's view, juxtaposition makes 'duration out of space' as opposed to capturing, intuitively, the continuous and indivisible flow of reality that so often eludes us, since for the 'greater part of the time we live outside ourselves, hardly perceiving anything of ourselves but our own ghost, a colourless shadow which pure duration projects into homogenous space' (231). Here we must pause over the notion that the aestheticized play of shadows might yet produce illuminatory markers of that more reticent reality, just as atmospheres reveal something both of the real and our responses to

¹²⁵ Compare Paul Atkinson's assertion concerning Bergson's reticence to apply 'general' philosophical principles to art seeing 'as they would undermine the emergent fluidity of the creative act' (2007: 52).

¹²⁶ In T. E. Hulme's translation of Bergson's *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1913), we discover that '[n]o image can replace the intuition of duration but many diverse images, borrowed from very different orders of things, may, by the convergence of their action, direct consciousness to the precise point where there is a certain intuition to be seized' (London: Macmillan, 1999: 27-8). Such convergence is also noted (as 'juxtaposition') in Joseph Frank's 'spatial form' (1945).

it. So, too, we are returned to the artistic means by which landscape constructions cease to be sites of metaphorical transposition but performative spaces in their own right. We have already touched upon such possibilities in Conrad, for whom Marlow's seekings in "Heart of Darkness" and *Lord Jim* are tied to a glowing 'haze' or 'glimpse through a rent in the mist', including whatever lies beyond the 'veiled' shape of Jim's future (i.e. *LJ* 222, 228, 291, 351). Here we find Bergson grudgingly acknowledging how figurative usages like these provide a means of bringing us 'back into our own presence' by suggesting the means by which we might bypass symbols in order to intuit the actuality behind them (134).¹²⁷

Ironically, the tactile aspects of the awareness of time that Bergson wished to retain in his model appear in Proust's fiction. In *Le Temps retrouvé* (1927), Proust states how '[c]e que nous appelons la réalité est un certain rapport entre ces sensations et ces souvenirs qui nous entourent simultanément' [that which we call reality involves a certain rapport between sensations and the remembrances we simultaneously engage] (1954: 896-6).¹²⁸ Such 'rapport' can also extended to the kinds of sensory alterations we see everywhere in modernist fiction: the sun that once shone 'there' on the interior walls of the Ramsay's house in *To the Lighthouse* is now over 'here'; in the same Priestley play cited a few pages ago, we are told how 'reality' emerges from the periphery less of reason than sense (*op. cit.* 142):

What seems to happen continually just outside the edge of our attention – the little fears and fancies, as you call them – may be all-important because they belong to a profounder reality, like the vague sounds of the city outside that we hear sometimes inside a theatre.

¹²⁷ This is the argument of *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, first published as *La Pensée et le mouvant* (1934). One irony of Bergson's dismissal of language as capable of true presence follows from his parallel worry of its social aspects, where, as we saw above, the 'fundamental self' is inadequately, because falsely, translated into the 'common-place forms' of public discourse – that is to say, because language is already a fallen mode, and its translative capacities merely an effect. The public aspect requires comment, for what else is Conrad up to in his early texts but the public reconstitution of the fallen or secretive individual – and so to drag such individuals back into such 'common place forms'. Critical explications of Bergson's tropes can sometimes surprise: in his discussion of Bergsonian *duration* as a dynamic forum of synthesis, Deleuze writes of how it allows us to "“preserve” the instantaneous states of space and to juxtapose them in a sort of “auxiliary space”" (1988 [1966]: 38) – space!

¹²⁸ It is curious to read Bergson's commentary on fiction in the knowledge of his subsequent marriage to a second cousin of the then twenty-one year old literary ephebe and best man, Marcel Proust. While both men posit time as *the* structure of significance buried behind a façade of everyday temporal and social reality, Bergson sees fictional representation as being of lesser status than the unmediated immediacy of duration for the simple reason that texts, being representations, cannot overcome their symbolic and so spatialized nature as opposed to the authentic intuition of a present reality. Bergson's early work can nonetheless be read in opposition to Proust's as yet unwritten *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-27), where time is not just processed in fictional language, but created out of it.

Where this phrasing might reflect the solipsistic ‘theatre of subjectivity’ we saw Gallagher locating in the subject, the difference is that such individuals are now being simultaneously dragged into awareness of the world through the shared ambience of phenomena encountered in time. The importance of this reversal lies in the vagueness of the transition by which that ‘profounder reality’ is to be glimpsed, indeed, of the material traces common to both realms, and which comprise the shared ecology of the individuals and environments.¹²⁹ No less symptomatic of early modernism’s search for solidity in the midst of its epistemological challenges, with Bergson’s project the material aspects of memory and cognition become fused, thus allowing from awareness of time’s passage, the possibility of *perceiving* the virtual (1998: 244):

“Pure,” that is to say, instantaneous, perception, is, in fact, only an ideal, an extreme. Every perception fills a certain depth of duration, prolongs the past into the present, and thereby partakes of memory. So that if we take perception, in its concrete form, as a synthesis of pure memory and pure perception, that is to say, of mind and matter, we compress within its narrowest limits the problem of the union of soul and body.

The phenomenal particulars of such transience have long lain at the roots of modernist art. As Baudelaire once said of painting, ‘Modernity is that which is ephemeral, fugitive, contingent upon the occasion; it is half of art, whose other half is the eternal and unchangeable’ (1951 [1861]: 37). This notion does not go away in modernism. More than half a century after Baudelaire’s aside, Carl Jung would describe Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922) as occupying ‘a day on which, in all truth, nothing happens. The stream begins in the void and ends in the void’. One finds an impressionistic perceptibility in both statements. For Jung, Joyce’s ‘stream’ may only ‘touch upon the essence of life, but quite certainly it touches upon life’s ten thousand surfaces and their hundred thousand colour gradations’. The ‘touch’ may be ephemeral as Baudelaire foresaw, but it reaches into the void parodied by Jung as surely as the nothing that ‘happens’. Moreover, such impressions exist both in the emptiness of eternity and the surface of time’s stream. As Jung continues: ‘The pitiless and uninterrupted stream rolls by, and its velocity or precipitation grows in the last forty pages till it sweeps away even the marks of punctuation. It thus gives cruellest expression to that emptiness which is both breath taking and stifling, which is under such tension, or is so filled to bursting, as to grow unbearable’ (1993 [1932]: 402). Aside from these lines looking ahead to Benjamin’s discussion of truth as ‘charged to the bursting point

¹²⁹ Here we come near to the substance of Bakhtin’s much-cited assertion that through collusion between representation and embodiment we achieve the unity of the chronotope, the state wherein ‘[t]ime, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history’ (1981: 84).

with time' and the image as a moment of poiesis ('wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the new'), Jung is here working towards a similar recognition to that of what Siegfried Kracauer meant when in the context of cinema he observed how 'the very unconscious nature of surface manifestations allows for direct access to underlying meaning of existing conditions' (1993 [1927]: 457). As Kracauer continues, with regard to our 'access' to the deeper strata of understanding, the 'meaning of an epoch and its less obvious pulsations illuminate one another reciprocally' (*ibid.*). More so, it is the synaesthetic quality of such *pulsations* that are found 'contingent upon the occasion' as Baudelaire phrased it, just as the temporal charge of the void, or the marks it sheds upon the page, are actualized as the fusings of meaning and phenomena.

We have been following Bergson down this road, but he is hardly the only theorist of the era for whom temporality becomes problematic in the face of time, or, indeed, of the material aspects of aesthetic production through which temporality is to be perceived. His older contemporary, William James, had been no less a proponent of temporal effects on the psyche, especially with regard to what was already being called the 'specious present'. This redefining of the present moment of experience intends the temporal span during which the embodied mind has immediate *felt* dealings with the unfolding of phenomena, but which is not, as twentieth century theorists of time put it, point-like in that it can enfold more than one moment.¹³⁰ As James explains:

We are constantly aware of a certain duration—the specious present—varying from a few seconds to probably not more than a minute, and this duration (with its content perceived as having one part earlier and another part later) is the original intuition of time. (*The Principles of Psychology* 1890: 603)

Furthermore:

The practically cognised [sic] present is no knife-edge, but a saddle-back, with a certain breadth of its own on which we sit perched, and from which we look in two directions into time. The unit of composition of our perception of time is a duration, with a bow and a stern, as it were—a rearward and a forward end. It is only as parts of this *duration-block* that the relation of *succession* of one to the other is perceived. We do not first feel one end and then feel the other after it, and from the perception of the succession infer an

¹³⁰ For a spirited partisan discussion of the development of the term, see Holly Anderson and Rick Grush, "A Brief History of Time-Consciousness: Historical Precursors to James and Husserl," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* (2009) Volume: 47, Issue: 2 [Citeseer], pages: 277-307. The identity of E. R. Clay as cited by James is fictitious. The actual writer was a retired cigar producer, Robert Kelly who had set himself up as an anonymous amateur scholar (see: *The Alternative: a Study in Psychology*. London: Macmillan, 1882).

interval of time between, but we seem to feel the interval of time as a whole, with its two ends embedded in it (*op. cit.*: 574)¹³¹

As we shall see when I at last align these observations to my topographical theme, James's broadening of momentary experience has implications for the temporal conditions by which disorienting landscapes come to be troped as nowhere places. Primarily, this is because the present has been made expansive enough to maintain both the instance of epiphanic meaning and the series of transitions leading to it – the stages by which phenomena are made out to be aporetic. The temporal aspects of the equation remain less secure, however. For Le Poidevin, James is not speaking of the present of experience as a moment of some perhaps minor extension, but of a different order of measurement by which duration is to be 'perceived both as present *and* as temporally extended':

This present of experience is 'specious' in that, unlike the objective present (if there is such a thing...) it is an interval and not a durationless instant. The real or objective present must be durationless for, as Augustine argued, in an interval of any duration, there are earlier and later parts. So if any part of that interval is present, there will be another part that is past or future (*SEP* 2009)

As may be seen by the reference to Augustine, Le Poidevin's observation returns us to the old divide: where analytic thought finds spatialization and aporia, Bergsonian *duration* supposes an indivisible and continuous succession of temporal moments, a conception presumably allowing, alongside entry into the 'true' continuum of time, a critique of the aesthetic limitations of narrative or segmented time. Le Poidevin phrases matters differently, here through the example of Kant's separation of human experience from the world:

Kant described space as the form of *outer* sense, meaning that experience represented external objects as spatially related to each other. But time he described as the form of *inner* sense, meaning that experiences presented themselves as temporally related. (Kant 1929 [1787] b37) So the sense of time order is for Kant essential to all experience, the sense of spatial order essential only to some of it... But how do we move from the fact, if it is one, that experience presents itself as temporally unified to the unity of time? For

¹³¹ For reasons of space, James's rudimentary model can stand in for Husserl's and Heidegger's separate tripartite schemes: Husserl's attaches retention and protention (or expectation) to the phase of the present, giving the example of listening to the notes of a known piece of music in which present understanding is not merely the succession of sounds, but how they work into comprehension of the patterning of what has been received into the senses as well as to what is expected; Heidegger's temporality is comprised of the three *ecstases*, the futural, the past, and the present. In each case, one reaches out of the present, in light of the past, into the future. The question of the actuality of time is not in question, only how its endpoints are meaningfully defined vis-à-vis the individual.

Kant, there is no gap, since for him time is nothing more than a form of intuition: it is not a feature of the world as it is in itself. To say that time is necessarily unified is just to say that experience necessarily presents itself as such. (162-3)

As a potential vehicle for durational perception, James's 'specious present' (the fictional "duration-block" so intended) can be conceived as denoting an attractive if possibly misleading *continuous* atmosphere incorporating Kant's 'outer sense' along with the multiple lesser moments by which phenomena enters consciousness. I want to close this section, then, by working James's durational model through the spatio-temporal settings of two of the fictions already introduced.

In the face of Conrad's poetic strategies in *An Outcast of the Islands*, we can observe that Willems's sense of time is only as sure as his sense of social belonging; once he steps into the jungle where he is to wait out the shame of having fallen from colonial solidarity, he simultaneously falls out of time. Things might happen, but as an orderable phenomenon, such events can only knot themselves into the narratorially graspable form of 'hours together' (252). It is the atemporal fallout of this process that we discover where the sum of Willems's separate experiences (or duration-blocks) collects into his devastating instance of epiphanic awareness. But James's model is insightful in another way, too, especially where in the midst of his chapter-long experience of loss Willems is able, as James says, to 'look in two directions into time', and so to imagine a host of possible outcomes against the welter of past events he is recalling. And even if that future is no more than a fantastic projection divided between wishful thinking and visions of mortality, it is only with Willems's recognition of loss that the view onto the aporetic *present* at last prevails, and he descends 'into the mist that closed above him' (274) – but this is only another way of saying that the durational process ends for Willems the instant that 'the shock of the penetrating thought' expends itself, and he has fully descended into his all too authentic abyssal present.

A further question still stands out from the durational process: where no phenomenal changes occur on which to hang temporal progression, to what degree does aesthetic duration involve a synaesthetic uncoupling of the presumed unity of embodied cognition and the time frames by which temporal passage can be marked? To look ahead to Woolf's first novel, *The Voyage Out*, such disjunctures appear as spatializations of time, the lapse, say, across which 'a few minutes would lead from *broad* daylight to the *depths* of the night' (*VO* 321, my emphasis). In fact, the fever sequences Woolf creates for her ailing heroine very nearly parody Bergson's arguments from his *Essai*. There authentic experience can only exist in unsegmented duration,

that is, where time is actualized as the intuitive experiencing of a fluid yet still essentialized “life”. In Woolf’s handling, Bergson’s ‘infinite permeation of a thousand different impressions’ does not remain marked in consciousness.¹³² For Woolf’s feverish young woman, it is not the thousand impressions she suffers, but the ones that, unlike Willems’s less particularized ‘little shining monsters of repulsive shapes’, rear up out of Bergson’s ‘infinite permeation’ like drunk drivers out of oncoming traffic, thereafter to loom surreally in her thoughts as the virtual events by which duration is carried in and out of clock time. What happens, then, when unlike the actually swarming insects besetting Willems in *An Outcast of the Islands*, the sensations and affects playing in consciousness are merely virtual, when nothing happens but ideation, when, to return to Woolf’s words, for ‘two or three hours longer the moon poured its light through the empty air’ (335)? At such junctures we enter the terrain of aesthetic duration, that temporal landscape in which the human is given to confront the ‘breathing’ night (*ibid.*), or in which time’s impressions remain only problematically lodged in sense: ‘There she lay, sometimes seeing darkness, sometimes light, while every now and then some one turned her over at the bottom of the sea’ (*VO* 322). In this case the fever suffered by Woolf’s protagonist may suggest a more delusional process than is meant by abyssal tropes. Such moments do not need to attach to scenes of hallucination, but may be focalized out of some more conscious aspect of experience. Earlier in *The Voyage Out*, Woolf’s shipboard lovers had struggled to communicate with each other in the tropical night. There the ‘great black world lay round them’, but its movements were not queasily embedded in the psychosomatic distortions that Woolf depicts over her final chapters, but remained synaesthetically connected to the ‘smoothly along’ by which both the lovers and the darkness around them were drawn downriver, and out of which phenomena the night ‘seemed possessed of immense thickness and *endurance*’ (273 my emphasis).¹³³

Presented with this combination of sense and absence as the joint attributes of aporetic space, we are ready to review aesthetic durations as attempts to embody time in sensory experience; for having started this section by wondering how we might conceive of the present of experience, and the chapter by musing over the ways in which novelists and poets had “temporalized” their landscapes, time’s synaesthetic and poetic potential can now be broached as a discrete narrative mode.

¹³² The ‘thousand different impressions’ is rather more pointed in Willems’s ‘endless and minute throngs of insects’ in *An Outcast of the Islands*.

¹³³ I prefer this line in the earlier version of this novel, published as *Melymbrosia*: ‘The great black world lay all about them. It seemed possessed of immense thickness and *endurance*’ (Woolf, [1912]: 310).

Contemporary Phenomenology, and the Real of the Present.

My work shall not be an utter failure because it has the solid basis of a definite intention [...] in its essence it is action [...] nothing but action—action observed, felt and interpreted with an absolute truth to my sensations (which are the basis of art in literature) – action of human beings that will bleed to a prick, and a moving in a visual world. Conrad: letter of 31.05.1902 to William Blackwood (*CL II*: 418)

Prior to turning to the phenomenological and cinematic nature of Vivian Sobchack's observations on time and selfhood, it is convenient to glance at Maurice Merleau-Ponty's mid-century phrasing of how experiences of fictionally constituted individuals cannot always be 'identified with temporality' (1962 [1945]: 494). As set out in his *Phénoménologie de la perception*, Merleau-Ponty foregrounds time's relational foundations in phenomena by which temporality is 'not a real process, not an actual succession that I am content to record', but 'arises from my relation to things' (478). Indeed, it is in the absence of such relations that time becomes meaninglessness since '[w]e shall never manage to understand how a thinking or constituting subject is able to posit or become aware of itself in time' (494). As if rebutting Bergson's excoriation of fictional accounts, Merleau-Ponty sets out his resolution to the problems of the sensate self in reference to Proust's great *roman fleuve*, where temporality ceases to be something individuals experience or have, but holds a more constitutive role such that where 'the subject is identified with temporality, then self-positing ceases to be a contradiction, because it expresses the essence of living time' (*ibid.*). As we remember, Proust's theme centres upon one individual's attempt to find terms proper to the understanding and signification of time and memory, that is, to make the present live in the fullness of the past and its places. Accordingly, Merleau-Ponty would seem to be effecting a performative staging of the Bergsonian melding of time and consciousness, one in which time, consciousness, and the subject's sensory attachments compose a continuous forum of temporal being. It is through this more inclusive framing that the fictional moments I have been tracking as durational suspensions come into view not as *gaps*, but constitutive moments providing the authentic loci of being-in-time. Though we are not there yet, it is the dynamic aspect of the constitution of authenticity as loci that I will be calling performative.

Because the dynamic aspects of temporal construction in fiction correspond not only with settings, but the staging of significance through impressionistic and epiphanic modes of presentation, it is helpful to begin with phenomenological approaches to the moving image as

viewed here through Vivian Sobchack's engagements with film culture. The utility of this sphere becomes apparent where the poetic structures by which artists represent the subject's relations to place are explicitly linked to the spatio-temporal conditions of the narrative moments in which they are set. For instance, in *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (2004), Sobchack echoes Merleau-Ponty by focusing upon 'the embodied and radically material nature of human existence and thus the lived body's essential implication in making "meaning" out of bodily "sense"' (1). Here Sobchack concentrates on 'the phenomena of experience and their meaning as spatially and temporally embodied, lived, and valued by an objective subject', processes she mediates through the 'historical and cultural existence' of subjects and events (2). With the obvious caveat that the textually determined conditions of literature are a far cry from an art of moving images, it is yet useful to follow a central strand of her argument for the manner in which it links time to one's physical locations. Sobchack's insights into the image are especially useful where she addresses what it means for individuals 'to be embodied in the multiple and shifting spaces of the world – not only the familiar spaces that seem of our own making and whose meanings we take up and live as "given" but especially those spaces that seem to us strange or "foreign" in their shape and value' (13).

In the first place, Sobchack blends the embodied phenomenological focus of Maurice Merleau-Ponty with Patrick Heelan's notion of non-Euclidean visual space, glossed by Sobchack as the idiosyncratic 'curved space of our lived and embodied experience' (16).¹³⁴ Heelan's work promises to offer a descriptive theory of human vision able to incorporate the sorts of topological constructions we have been looking at. My interest in Sobchack's use of Heelan is the temporal aspect Sobchack engages, which lifts her analysis from its more obvious spatial focus to one engaging what she calls 'the "shape" and "temporality" of being lost in worldly space' (21). Here the circular pattering of spatial disorientation, for instance the spatio-temporal recurrence of finding oneself back where one began, gives way to simply being lost, that is to say, of losing one's 'present grounding' and so 'being lost in the *present*' (25, original emphasis). From this temporally defined state, Sobchack brings us back to geographical disorientation via the same

¹³⁴ Sobchack is referring to Heelan's *Space-Perception and the Philosophy of Science* (Berkeley: UCLA Press, 1983). For Sobchack, "hyperbolic space" gives rise to idiosyncratic mental spaces – their 'sense of distortion in relation to the appearance of objects in various divisions of space as they are proximate to the embodied subject viewing them' (17): 'Looking at an extended horizon below eye level "such as the sea seen from the top of a cliff," the viewer "seems to be at the center of a great bowl with its rim on the horizon." An extended horizon above eye level, such as the sky, is experienced as "a vaulted structure" (op. cit.; citing Heelan 29-31). Further, 'it is hyperbolic visual space that is grounded in the human body, its phenomeno-logic informed not only by external material forces but also by the intentional directedness of consciousness toward its objects' (op. cit. 17).

sorts of topologized spaces we saw Conrad dramatizing in *An Outcast of the Islands*, so focalizing how the ‘nothing’ temporally and symbolically enfolds the self-discovery of his being ‘lost’ – a state combining moral, cultural, and epistemological factors. As Sobchack explains in her cinematic context:

This form of being lost seems an existential condition rather than a hermeneutic problem. Its structure is perilously open rather than hermetic, its horizons indefinite, its ground unstable, and its emphasis on the vertical axis (“forward” and “backward” are not the problem, but “here” most certainly is). The shape of “not knowing where you are” is elastic, shifting, telescopic, spatially and temporally elongated; one is orientationally imperilled not so much on the horizontal plane as on the vertical. (*Vertigo* is often described as “the bottom falling out.”) The primary temporal dimension of this form of being lost is the present – but a present into which past and future have collapsed and that is stretched endlessly. Not knowing where you are is, in effect, the “black hole” of being lost (25)

Dislocation thus involves a peculiar form of narrative disruption. Here the tidy division of deictic markers into spatial and temporal features is reconstituted as a new kind of setting in which the process of finding oneself in exotic or unassimilable space produces ‘disorientation and its resultant existential anxiety’. Moreover, in this state, ‘worldly space and time are “overmarked” – that is, [...] one’s present spatial and temporal orientation are overlaid and conflated with other (and equally compelling) space-times’ (op. cit.). The result of such disorientation is collected by Sobchack under the banner of ‘losing one’s orientational moorings’ and so entering ‘polyphonic space-time’ that ‘collapses and conflates past and future in and with what becomes a vertiginous and all-consuming present’ (26). Indeed, these phrases do not suggest spatialized time so much as its less theorized opposite, temporalized space, here the dynamic arena wherein landscapes rather than topographies come to ground the durational encounter. Notwithstanding Bergson’s observation that the present tends to float to the surface of reflection because it is the locus of sensory action (*esp. Matter and Memory* 185-6; cf. Lloyd 1993, Ch. 3), a question arises as to how and why representations of narrative crises so often appear through tropes involving, as Sobchack has it, the manner by which spatio-temporal moments of disorientation become ‘overlaid and conflated with other (and equally compelling) space-times’. While Sobchack’s analysis does not pertain to the colonial modernist frames of my study, the potential of her thesis is clear. Similar to ‘not knowing where you are’ in cinematic space, being “lost” in an extended present is not only relevant to fictions ‘set in non-Euclidean, “uncivilized,” or “exotic” places’ (21-2), but wherever platial disorientation is heightened through representations of the seemingly endless horizon of present experience.

Students of time have provided other ways of conceiving ‘timelessness’ as a narrative trope open to different durations. Yuval Dolev writes how ‘phenomenologically, we never encounter “the present” as such, but only present things’, hence ‘it makes no sense to speak of the duration of “the present,” only of the duration of present events and states of affairs’ (210). Tellingly, Dolev allows a multiplicity of different temporal encounters within the individual. As with Merleau-Ponty, these are relationally conceived:

it is present events that have a duration, and different events have different durations... We may encounter short-lived present events or present events the span of which contains our lifetimes. That our cognitive relation to the present always involves a context does not render the present in any way mind dependent. As a corollary we obtain the discovery that moments in time cannot be thought of only as themselves tensely located, as past, present, or future. Rather, it is only in relation to events, or states of affairs, that occupy these moments that they are tensely located. (128-9)

Likewise, Dolev asserts that all events remain on “ontological par” irrespective of their temporal location (viii), and so he ultimately likens the tensed version of time to ‘a global ontology machine, the flow of which consists in the carrying of unreal future events into the limelight of the “real and alive” present, and then ejecting them to the unreality of the past’ (155). As made evident in the passage just quoted, in place of this accrediting of present experience, Dolev would have us attend to the contextual circumstances of events:

the question “how long is the present?” is not one we understand, for it is asked outside of any context, and that therefore, “a vanishing instant” is not an answer we understand either. Second, when a question of duration does arise, it always concerns not “the present” as such, but an event, or state of affairs, which is present... What appears as a narrowing down toward the “real” present is, in fact, a change of context. (122-3)¹³⁵

By pressing the idea of a multiplicity of co-existing and contextualized durations, temporality is shunted towards the cultural practices wherein the effect of ‘timelessness’ is knowingly produced as a means of underwriting more authentic readings of time:

There are also activities around which, in some traditions, life is structured, whose subject is time itself. I am thinking, for example, of activities aimed at establishing a distinction between sacred and profound time, or of *mediative practices in the description of whose products the term “timelessness” is employed*. (216 my italics)

¹³⁵ Dolev ends his study with an ethically nuanced rumination on temporality as comprising co-existing durations. Here time is not necessarily ‘a human fabrication, [...] some experiences that bear on our understanding of time are so fundamentally *human* that it is impossible to weed out the human element from descriptions of time as it is met with in relation to them’ (215).

Reviewing Sobchack's temporal analysis of spatial disorientation alongside Dolev's awareness of atemporal states as vessels of meaning, the geographically edged epistemological challenges at the heart of my study begin to emerge into more unified shape. So, too, as Dolev indicates, profundity is often culturally aligned with tropes of timelessness. This need not be a dead end, for as Ricoeur has shown, such unreality might yet be implicated within narrative structures, and so made to reveal meanings in relation to the manner in which time's aporetic flows might be articulated and harmonized. The astrophysical notion of an 'event horizon' is telling in this regard, for where this denotes the limit beyond which particles or events cease to have any affect on an observer (or perhaps the limit beyond which a focalizing individual may be considered radically dislocated), the narrative occasioning of an *abyssal* duration (the experience of nothingness as a timeless and contentless arena) posits a disorientation through which the process of narrative signification is halted, but aesthetic significance is not. In order to close out these reflections on time's meaning by a return to the literary realm, I want to examine how time inflects correlations between epiphanic durations and the real it purports to reveal in relation to the practices of a recent phase of "continental" literary theory, this through brief examination of Josiane Paccaud-Huguet's and Yael Levin's critical readings of Conrad's poetics of time.

Stasis, Meaning, and the Temporal: Two Readings on Conrad

I seemed to have lost all my words in the chaos of dark thoughts I had contemplated for a second or two beyond the pale. (Lord Jim 274)

With these words Marlow once more makes clear his conception of what we might now call the *real* of experience, at any rate, that which falls outside the 'shell' human cultures erect for themselves, that 'sheltering conception of light and order which is our refuge' (274). Indeed, having discovered himself outside such shelter, Marlow's terms spill from the void: 'lost... chaos... dark... beyond'. In this instance the view is momentary, as Marlow says, a matter of a 'second or two'. At other junctures of his spoken and written narrative in *Lord Jim*, this passing glance into the 'chaos [...] beyond the pale' is more harshly extended. To begin with the briefer form, in an article entitled "Motion that Stands Still: The Conradian Flash of Insight" (2008), Josiane Paccaud-Huguet sets out to describe sudden moments of significance in Conrad's

fictions, especially where his poetic strategies enable the communication of significance through what she calls, building on Conrad's own usages, a 'flash' of comprehension into the real. In *Lord Jim*, this modus is most apparent at precisely those moments where the view onto authenticity is staged beyond a cloud or veil, indeed, 'beyond the pale'. Such openings into the 'real' are, in Paccaud-Huguet's view, produced out of an epiphanic 'place', or actual location of the instance of the sublime, described as the 'linguistic spot where the real contaminates representation' (2008: 134). Furthermore, the markers of that location are metonyms for the effaced contents of the other, the means whereby we become aware of the 'darkness which bites into the outer edge of the word' (*ibid.*). Likewise, the recurring negative affixes of Conrad's 'words' (e.g. 'un-, in-, -less, dis-') suggest phenomenal actualities in that they remain 'possessed of a physical quality: they have incorporated something of the crystalline void' into their utterance (135). Here, Paccaud-Huguet quotes Lacan in relation to the latter's hollow structures of desire and signification, but the actual springboard for her thinking on Conrad's modernist impulses is the Slovenian theorist and critic, Slavoj Žižek (esp. 2002), whom she cites in relation to the Deleuzian virtual and Lacan's notion of the 'Real' breaking through our illusions.¹³⁶

More pertinently, Conrad's search for the means to approximate a more authentic field of human experience for his characters is renegotiated as a "holding open" of the real. Thus what was at first only a route into veracity is now made out to be that actuality for the simple reason that the process no longer has an identifiable, if even conceivable end point. Furthermore, the temporal aspect of the experience of encountering that presumed holding open, is in Žižek's description, not bound by the momentary flash noted by Paccaud-Huguet. Indeed, Žižek sees such framing as lying within a developing 'transcendental empiricism' observed through 'an impersonal pre-reflexive consciousness, a qualitative duration of consciousness without self' (2004: 4). Conrad's search for his answer is thus translated into the framing device by which that prior search for the self is seen to expend itself against unrepresentable actuality. In this way the aporetic Conradian atmosphere is no more than the means by which, according to Paccaud-Huguet, 'we may awaken to a new reality' (123), a potential she observes Conrad deriving from aesthetic practice given that, as he put it in his *Notes on Life and Letters* (1921): 'All creative art is evocation of the unseen... the most insignificant tides of reality' (2004: 16; in Paccaud-Huguet

¹³⁶ Žižek is raised here for his awareness of how the 'authentic twentieth-century passion for penetrating the Real Thing (ultimately the destructive Void)' is undertaken 'through the cobweb of semblances which constitutes our reality' (2002: 12). Complementing Paccaud-Huguet's reading of the spot in time by which significance is communicated, I will find in Conrad's texts an effort to counter the 'destructive Void' by mounting scenes of ethical awareness as a critique of the putative 'reality' of the colonial world.

123).¹³⁷ At issue here, then, is the turning of absence into presence such that absence appears to undergo reification as an effect, and so the vehicle of Conrad's tropes is converted into its own tenor. Conrad's attention to misted perimeters and gleaming hazes (what I identify as the concrete atmospherics of absence) are, in Paccaud-Huguet's view, firm evidence of Conrad's finally transcendental temporal art.

Similar to Paccaud-Huguet's appeal to Lacanian descriptives in her search for a structure for Conrad's 'nothing', Yael Levin writes of 'the otherwise present', a formation reliant on a series of consciously Derridean metaphorical usages involving the textual construction of an 'intermediary position that exists between the two absolutes' of absence and presence, or more symptomatically, 'absent presences' (5). From this critical vantage, Levin points towards Conrad's 'aesthetics of deferral' (18), and so focuses upon what she sees as that writer's continual 'oscillation' between 'binary opposites', a dynamic that 'metaphorically encapsulates the categorical enmeshment of absence and presence' in 'the form of a final suspension' (21). As with Paccaud-Huguet's 'contamination' of representation by the real, Levin's model of temporal hiatus speaks of Conrad's narrative method as being capable 'by way of an irremediable contagion' to *infect* Jim and Marlow and reader alike (*op. cit.*). The central time argument of Levin's book is summed up via *Nostramo* in which 'the novel's temporal arrangement rests on the tension between the iterative and the singular, between the cyclical and the linear, between repetition and the originary moment', pairings productive of the 'instance of an impossible conjunction of binary opposites' (53-4). Despite the correspondences of their terms, Levin's formation plays a different tune to Paccaud-Huguet's theorization of Conrad's 'flash of light into a dark cavern' (*CL I* 343).¹³⁸ Even if that momentary glimmer of meaning is seen to freeze the cutting across of another more timeless order of actuality, there is still a crucial term missing in the "temporal" phrasings Paccaud-Huguet and especially Levin provide in their critical armouries: duration.¹³⁹ Indeed, the abyss may be the builder of tensions, the ratchet by which delayed decoding ticks towards its epiphanic release, it may even be the natural state or landscape of the real, but it *performs* more than its own withdrawal. In an 1895 letter to his

¹³⁷ From Conrad's essay "Henry James: an Appreciation" (1904). Likening that master's art to 'a majestic river', Conrad sees James finding wisdom through 'the earnest consideration of the most insignificant sides of reality', a 'snatching of vanishing phases of turbulence disguised in fair words, out of its native obscurity into a light where the struggling forms may be seen, seized upon, endowed with the only possible form of permanence in this world of relative values – the permanence of memory' (16).

¹³⁸ See *Collected Letters V.I*: 343. The phrase is from a letter to Edward Garnett 10.03.1897.

¹³⁹ In Levin's account, the Bergsonian underpinnings of her attention to the temporally divisible features of Conradian "present time" pass without mention.

sometime literary conscience, Edward Garnett, Conrad writes of ‘a flash of lightning on a landscape when the whole scene and all the details leap up before the eye in a moment and are irresistibly impressed on memory by their sudden vividness’ (*CL I* 198). The suddenness may be obvious for the reader, but we should note, too, how the landscape must first be effaced by darkness for such illumination to have ‘impressed’ itself on memory as well as the eye, and how a more textually derived duration comes to be encoded into the lengthening sentence by which that impression takes meaning. As a later letter to Garnett explains, language is in fact the ordering principle of sudden comprehension ‘Where do you think the illumination – the short and vivid flash of which I have been boasting to you came from? Why! From Your words, words, words. They exploded like stored powder barrels’ (*CL I* 344).

Briefly, like the impulse to repair contradictions through the oscillation of absence and presence (Levin), the task of modelling literary insight on a flash of light across the real (Paccaud-Huguet) is akin to replacing one trope with another. In either case, the critic stops at only one part of the trajectory over which these figural operations complete themselves. The process of signification may be voidal, or it may involve the presencing of the “absence” that Martin Decoud discovers staring into the empty gulf near the end of *Nostromo*, but the movement is broader, more epiphanically drawn out. And while I will not detail either the paths or the contents by which the poetic process leads towards some more profound comprehension, in Conrad’s case at least, the goal of a finally moral vision is achieved. This can be put another way. With Levin, especially, the interpretative frame lends the effect of collapsing valuable insights into the same endlessly malleable metaphorical trope, one having the advantage of being able to accommodate all within the oscillation of oppositions such that the excess of the tension between them endlessly produces its own kind of space – ‘the otherwise present’ – the openness of which ‘offers both a tenable and a desirable alternative to the two binary extremes’ (170). Taken together, however these critical recourses to figural language (the *biting* undertaken by ‘darkness’) raised by Paccaud-Huguet and Levin indicate how often even linguistically or narratologically alert critics remain tied to modes of analysis untouched by new conceptualizations of literary space more alert to cognitive structures, and so more able to analyze a particular narrative mode than reproduce its poetics.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Jessica Dubow makes a similar point in discussing the nomadic “territorializations” of theory’s more prolific inheritors: ‘what I propose here is not any utopianism which privileges perpetual ‘becoming’ as the ideal form of subjective practice; a position which in the manner of certain interpretations of Deleuze and Guattari, rejects the territorial in its haste to equate nomadic mobility with the powers of a subversive critical capacity’ (2004: 219). In general, the use of literary “high theory” has come in for a more

A last reflection is required to conclude this chapter. In having concentrated on duration, I do not wish to add to the list of theory-inflected readings of the poetics of temporal absence. The fetishizing of absence is not the goal of abyssal forms any more than timelessness or placelessness, just as the spatializing of time Bergson decried as inauthentic can be made to find its dynamic in ways other than I have staged here. By setting in motion both the figures and the grounds (or landscapes) of modernist fictions we only animate spatial forms, but where temporal tropes are called in to mediate this aesthetic process, modernist authors achieve more than to speed up or slow down the segmented individual frames of a film (as one analogy goes). The poetic process that needs to be followed is certainly not that of stopping at absence or oscillation as the final states of signification, at least not where voidal landscapes are involved. As the next chapter's sustained reading of *Lord Jim* will show, the trope serving the interests of the representation of flux and its resulting epistemological struggles comes into play as Polaroid snapshots used to do for studio photographers, in this case by freezing the captured moment, but then withholding the filling in of the image for the minutes in which that image is *other*, a cloudedness of emulsion, or in Conradian terms, the cloud or veil withholding the real while allowing fleeting glimpses of what that real might *eventually* look like were the world structured that way. To this end, the temporal reflections of this chapter have helped launch us towards a more *ecological* framing of being, one in which time is not the sole medium of consciousness in the worlds as created within texts – as we might suppose of Bergson's outlook – but enables the performative dynamics by which fictional personages find themselves in (or out of) place.

searching critique. Consult, for instance, the halt to the 'end of the subject' in contemporary thought as suggested by works such as Paul Bove's *In the Wake of Theory* (1992), Barbara Johnson's *The Wake of Deconstruction* (1994), Valentine Cunningham's *Reading After Theory* (2002), or the edited collection *What's Left of Theory* (Butler et al, 2000). But see Rabaté 2002 and Davis 2004 for arguments suggesting that while the culture wars may be gone, the 'ghosts' of the ideas presented by leading practitioners of Theory still remain. Derrida famously described the 'demise' of deconstructive ideas a 'multiplication of necrologies' (1996: 224).

CHAPTER FOUR

Lord Jim: Nowhere is a Place

‘Neither Stein nor I had a clear conception of what might be on the other side when we, metaphorically speaking, took him and hove him over the wall’ (LJ 212).

Towards the Performative

Over the next pages I mean to investigate the primary locales of Conrad’s watershed text, *Lord Jim* in order to mount a unified reading of colonial modernist “landscapes”. The immediate purpose of this chapter, however, is to analyze those settings as performative arenas. While each of the three spaces treated in these pages – the shipboard scene on the *Patna*, Jim’s retreat at Patusan, and Stein’s house at the dramatic fulcrum of the novel – can be seen to produce significance beyond what either Jim or Marlow are given to express in the text, the following close readings suggest ways in which readers of the novel can access these sometimes ephemeral effects. My task, therefore, is to unravel the dynamic interplay of sensory, concrete, and figurative elements by which Conrad proceeds, and out of which his text produces the sort of theatricalized confluence Pamela Howard identifies as the ‘seamless synthesis of space, text, research, art, actors, and spectators’ fundamental to staged environments (Howard 2002: 130). While I will be wondering how the novel’s primary seascapes and landscapes enable such synthesis, it is with the Stein episode, in particular, that I close by mounting a reading of what theatre theorists understand as a *scenographic* analysis of place. Here, I will fuse narratological and “scenic” analyses of Conrad’s novel in order to build a performative model of how the moral arena is poetically constituted in time as a theatricalized ecology, one that remains both a concrete location and the arena of metaphysical exchange.

The view onto fictional space I am pursuing here has not been essayed elsewhere save within the work of literature itself. In his novel, *The Quarry*, the recent South African writer, Damon Galgut, dramatizes how the performativity of place can grasp hold of the imagination of a fictional character, even where that location is no more than an ‘empty space before him that arena as small and charged as the stage of a theatre’ (1995: 8). Galgut is also a playwright, so might be expected to have a conception of how emptiness can also be dramatic. What then of the empty spaces in Conrad – is there a theoretical platform by which his emptinesses can be

rendered dramatic? Yet even in the presence of recent new work on that author's theatrical imaginings (Hand 2005; Baxter & Hand 2009), the investigative frames I bring to bear have yet to be applied to either the drama or stories. Conrad, himself, declared that '[t]hough I detest the stage I have a theatrical imagination' (*CL4* 218). I would go further than this, and claim for that same 'imagination' a full awareness of the aesthetic means by which "theatricalized" settings are called in to both renegotiate and dramatically dynamize the erosion of the fictional subject. My project, then, seeks to radicalize the point of view by which one might call Conrad a 'writer who is inspired by the performing arts as a source for intertextual reference and illusion', or one 'whose works are frequently imbued with theatricality and the strategies of dramatic metaphor, dramatic irony and dramatic actualization' (Baxter & Hand 4). Conrad may be all of these things, but as this study shows, his imagination and sensibility are performative at a deeper level, too. There is a further proviso. By analyzing Conrad's fictional spaces through the ethical dilemmas of *Lord Jim*, the dramatic environments Jim occupies are seen to approximate the moral scene of his social and personal engagements, even where such spaces appear tilted more towards fantasy and role playing than places of shared responsibility.

In a previous section, I cited Jeremy Hawthorn's suspicion that the modernist exploding of the more or less fixed perspectives by which fiction had previously operated threatened to degenerate the medium into 'relativism, solipsism, and (very soon after) triviality' (1990: ix). As I come to argue here, it is the turn towards a new presentation of consciousness and place that offers a writer such as Conrad a means of setting out a moral forum, and by which he can do so while recognizing that his fictional casts may not have the tools to recognize, let alone arrange, the arena in which such interrogations are to take place outside the individual. This point can be illustrated via a long-standing aspect of theatrical practice. Of the central place of the stage in classical society, Jean-Pierre Vernant writes how 'by establishing [...] a performance open to all citizens, directed, played and judged by qualified representatives of the various tribes, the city makes itself into a theatre; in a way it becomes an object of representation and plays itself before the public' (Vernant 1969: 107-8).¹⁴¹ That human construct, the city, 'makes itself into a theatre': this wording is suggestive for us, but what of nature or the natural scene, can these not be both theatrical and morally central? Here I want to suggest that the agency Vernant extends to the city as a particular kind of forum is no less part of the colonial modernist conception of

¹⁴¹ It has been argued that Hannah Arendt's views on the theatre were informed by Vernant's outlook, hence: 'The theatre was the political art par excellence; only there is the political sphere of human life transposed into art. By the same token, it is the only art whose sole subject is man in his relationship to others' (Arendt 1998: 188).

landscape. With Conrad, too, the possibility that the natural arena (whether peopled or not) is also a stage, appears not just to be focused on creating wilderness analogues for a moral forum hitherto centred upon the civic world (after all, *Lord Jim* has its court of inquiry, its gatherings of officers or, more convivially, of European “gentlemen”), but of giving the agency Vernant notes a more mobile performative aspect. For this reason I have sought to identify the forms by which poesis is made potential through the presentation of landscapes, that is, the scenographic tropes by which such representations are rendered performative of moral perspectives.

As indicated in previous chapters, the poetic figures by which places come to be represented in *Lord Jim* are not neutral, but foreground, through their defamiliarizing tendencies, voidal conditions of darkness, haze, or spatial abstraction as much as any actual topography. There is an obvious purpose to such tropes. At key moments, the marine ‘abyss of obscurity’ (118) or ‘over the wall’ jungle actuality (212) into which Jim’s separate jumps deliver him appears to be the enabling medium by which we are to predicate his existence. As Marlow goes some ways towards admitting, Jim falls into focus at precisely those moments he is most obviously in transition, not where one might construe a body-mind continuity for what “presence” the novel provides him, but where it is precisely their disunity that best describes his state. As we will see below, Stein’s late-romanticist musings present a similar chiaroscuro pattern in their provision of areas of darkness behind the illuminations of his wisdom. Indeed, the statements of belief and inquiry that Marlow and the old trader exchange are given value not only through the atmospherics Conrad provides the scene, but by having Stein, like Jim, return from having temporarily vanished ‘out of this concrete and perplexed world’ (199) – that is, by having Marlow and Stein physically rehearse the scenario of the novel through the lit actuality of the domestic spaces grounding that scene.

As shall also become more important as the chapter unfolds, Conrad’s representational ploys incorporate ethical and ideological fallouts. In his very recent study on the “fictions” of personal development in colonial modernism, Jed Esty suggests how Jim’s efforts, whether self-generated or effected by his confidants, ‘ultimately fail or remain stunted in Conrad’s frontier spaces’, and so underline Jim’s ‘failure to *accumulate* experience or to amass a personality’ within Conrad’s ‘colonial economy’ (2012: 139). This is well stated, yet while the attempts of Jim’s mentors to finesse a scenic occasioning capable of matching the younger man’s illusionism are devalued at the novel’s close, the three major setting constructions of the novel may nonetheless be seen as upholding the *moral* actuality of both the abyss of personal illusions and that of the ‘frontier spaces’ in which such illusions are played out. Conrad may be attacking

materialist social relations along with the falsely “saving” illusions of romanticism, but the idea of a more authentic nature being performed outside the imperial lines fares little better. It is for this reason that the existence of a mediating and performative moral dynamic at the intersections of self and world becomes not just desirable, but necessary to the success of the novel. This is not the same as proposing that the ‘frontier spaces’ Esty writes of need to be aligned with Jim’s ‘personality’, but that either side of the coin relies upon a scenographic dynamics founded upon tropes of nothingness, obscurity, and darkness.

Crucial to my purposes, then, is the degree to which Conrad’s language continues to engage in what we might think of as *abyssal* poetic forms while simultaneously providing a more traditionally mimetic description of mind-world relations. This apparently two-fold use of setting in *Lord Jim* will be looked at in detail from the next section, in the first case through Conrad’s detailed description of the presently unfolding phenomenal conditions of the ‘indefinite immensity’ [127] upon which the *Patna*’s officers are adrift. Here the figural blendings by which Jim’s embodied encounter with the ocean comes to be presented appear to develop from the earliest phases of the modernist aesthetic, with its roots in Romanticism’s tendency to view landscapes as analogues of consciousness. Ruskin is one example here. In his 1835 *Diary*, now describing a Wordsworth-like descent from the Alps into Italy, he writes how rocky outcrops flank a ‘chasm [...] like the side scenes of a theatre, their bases lost in an abyss in whose depth the river is not seen’, and in which, further, ‘you feel as if the convulsed earth had yawned and let you down into a chasm from which there is no egress’ (70). With Ruskin, then, we find a similarly physical presencing of aporia, though without the cultural fallouts notable of the colonial version. By the middle of the nineteenth century, too, what we might think of as language’s autotelic aspect – its capacity for generating significance proper to itself – was already imagined as having been reified out of ‘nothingness’, that is to say, as an effacement of location made in relation to authentic aporias of consciousness. We catch glimpses of such a move with, for instance, Arthur Schopenhauer’s intuiting of the will as beyond representation (1818-19), Kierkegaard’s ambivalence between propositional human discourse and unfathomable divine language (*Either/Or* and *Fear and Trembling* 1843), or the worries expressed by Nietzsche in the second part of *The Genealogy of Morals* (1887) where we are told that the discourse of meaning ‘crystallizes into a kind of unity’ that is at once ‘difficult to dissolve, difficult to analyze and [...] completely and utterly undefinable’ (II §13).¹⁴² The

¹⁴² This passage appears as part of a commentary on the meaning of punishment, but Nietzsche’s terms are more broadly applicable.

philosophers were not the only worriers. An equally abyssal poetics of verse presents itself as the endlessly regenerative ‘goal’ of Stéphane Mallarmé’s search for aesthetic purity, a quest from which he claimed that ‘après avoir trouvé le Néant, j’ai trouvé le Beau’ [after having found nothingness, I found Beauty] (*Letter to Cazilis*, 1866; in 1953: 27). But whereas Mallarmé might mine the fertile aesthetics of negativity as a means of creating allusions to abstract beauty (‘les plus purs glaciers de l’Esthétique’ [*ibid.*]), for the later Conrad, the *attractions* of the negative might be no less illusional than the sometimes impressionistic sense data he notices.

A more obviously sustainable trajectory for the tensions animating Conrad’s theatricalizing aspects can be set out through earlier philosophical efforts to overcome the interior drama of perception and solipsistic vision. We have already come across the crucial nineteenth century thinker, Arthur Schopenhauer, through Mark Wollaeger’s view that for Conrad and his philosophical forebear, ‘the claims of skepticism are contested by the consolations of transcendence’ (55-6). Indeed, for Schopenhauer, the divide one finds between the phenomenal and the noumenal (the world outside human experience) is complicated by aesthetic contemplation whereby the individual ‘can no longer separate the perceiver from the perception’ (1844 [1818]: §34). Given the mediating presence of Marlow in *Lord Jim*, readers are faced with basic hermeneutic issues concerning their understanding of the book’s title hero: how do the contents of his interior reflections relate to the natural harmonies his author constructs around him – what is the proper object of ‘perception’ when both consciousness and the world are atmospheric occasionings? It is here, then, that Schopenhauer’s epistemology addresses the interior dynamics of the wilful individual immersed within the phenomena of the world, if not quite, as in our case, their theatricalized representation within fictional texts.

Further, in the thirty-fourth section of Schopenhauer’s *The World as Will and Representation*, the *what* of perception is brought into focus as a potential escape from the limitations of self. By engaging in ‘abstract thought’ or through allowing ‘the concepts of the reason, to take possession [of] consciousness’, the act of pure vision leads to the embodied mind being ‘filled with the quiet contemplation of the natural object actually present’. At such times, then, Schopenhauer’s viewer ‘loses himself in this object’ to the degree that he ‘forgets even his individuality, his will, and only continues to exist as the pure subject, the clear mirror of the object’. More relevant to my purposes, the subject and the object ‘have become one, because the whole consciousness is filled and occupied with one single sensuous picture’, so to speak, an atmosphere. While this process of forgetting one’s ‘individuality’ results in the object having ‘passed out of all relation to something outside it, and the subject out of all relation to the will’,

Schopenhauer in no way finds this a negative occurrence: ‘he who is sunk in this perception is no longer individual, for in such perception the individual has lost himself; but he is pure, will-less, painless, timeless subject of knowledge’ (§34). In other words, the brute body, so attuned to the sensorium of world, delivers the mind from the artifice of human reason (§33), and so releases the human from the realms of will.¹⁴³

Against Schopenhauer’s radical scepticism in which the ‘entire world of objects is, and remains, representation’ (§5), it is not surprising that Conrad should propose to ground human faith in some sort of actuality, even if, as with the famous preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, such actuality proclaims itself through the surface of sense data. As Conrad instructs us through his belated “Author’s Note”, he had seen Jim’s ‘form pass by – appealing – significant – under a cloud – perfectly silent. Which is as it should be’ (44). This ‘should be’ is curious, not surely for the reasons Frederick Karl raises concerning the ‘trivial’ or ‘misleading’ aspects of the prefaces (1979: 822), but for Conrad’s casual underlining of the waffling over clouds and veils within the economy of his fictional observances. Considering the ‘clarity of vision’ by which the artist ‘invites the spectator to share in this state’, even Schopenhauer allows that while the artist’s vision might be ‘clouded by intense willing’, the profound image may yet be produced though which ‘the Idea’ can be contemplated (§38). Of course Conrad is more modern than this, and his excoriations of faith contain the suspicion that formations such as Schopenhauer’s ‘Idea’ are

¹⁴³ The full passage is worth reproducing for its description of the manner in which the act of perception can lead to a quietistic state (*The World as Will and Idea*. 2nd Edition. Trans. R. B. Haldane, and J. Kemp. London: Trübner & Co., 1883-86 [1844]: §33):

If, raised by the power of the mind, a man relinquishes the common way of looking at things, gives up tracing, under the guidance of the forms of the principle of sufficient reason, their relations to each other, the final goal of which is always a relation to his own will; if he thus ceases to consider the where, the when, the why, and the whither of things, and looks simply and solely at the what; if, further, he does not allow abstract thought, the concepts of the reason, to take possession of his consciousness, but, instead of all this, gives the whole power of his mind to perception, sinks himself entirely in this, and lets his whole consciousness be filled with the quiet contemplation of the natural object actually present, whether a landscape, a tree, a mountain, a building, or whatever it may be; inasmuch as he loses himself in this object (to use a pregnant German idiom), i.e., forgets even his individuality, his will, and only continues to exist as the pure subject, the clear mirror of the object, so that it is as if the object alone were there, without any one to perceive it, and he can no longer separate the perceiver from the perception, but both have become one, because the whole consciousness is filled and occupied with one single sensuous picture; if thus the object has to such an extent passed out of all relation to something outside it, and the subject out of all relation to the will, then that which is so known is no longer the particular thing as such; but it is the Idea, the eternal form, the immediate objectivity of the will at this grade; and, therefore, he who is sunk in this perception is no longer individual, for in such perception the individual has lost himself; but he is pure, will-less, painless, timeless subject of knowledge.

neither available nor desirable; hence it is precisely the *cloudedness* that is posited as authentic. More accurately still, we might say that such obscurity is raised through the theatricalized atmospherics by which the world and its individuals may at last be conjured in their actual guise.

One further point: as compared to Conrad's (Mallarméan) union of nothingness and aesthetics, where Schopenhauer is wont to stop with 'negative knowledge' wherever 'the utmost limit of the positive' (§71) is reached, Conrad's protagonists seem more willing to broach that impossible sphere. It is here that Jim and Stein become interesting as explorers of the individual sublime, Jim by passing (leaping!) back and forth over the apparent bounds of 'the unattainable' (57), Stein via the endless minor negotiations by which the romantic individual navigates the 'destructive element' (*LJ* 200). In either case, it is no longer negative knowledge one achieves in colonial modernity, but a more epiphanic clutching after authentic *action* – though whether viewed beneath the self-inaugurated light of Jim's ethical imperative ('saving people from sinking ships' 47), or Stein's equally dreamy harping on missed 'opportunities' (202), both remain, as Marlow comprehends, engagements with 'a shadowy ideal of conduct' (351). But there is a larger argument to be drawn from *Lord Jim*'s troping of cloudedness and shadow, for in their atmospheric fullness, the abyssal arena comes to frame a series of *coups de théâtre* in which, as Schopenhauer reminds us, 'consciousness is filled and occupied with one single sensuous picture'. It can therefore be added that the 'sensuous picture' I am tracking here is the very landscape through which consciousness confronts itself in time.

I should fill in a few more details concerning the rifts between imagination and experience as these are construed within Conrad's oeuvre. Where Jim's outward comprehension of events is initially described as being "as anguishing, appalling, and vengeful as the created terror of his imagination" (127), the reader discovers that while this situation appears corroborated by the presentation of Jim's consciousness, the charged atmosphere is as much a product of his aporetic imagination as supposed actuality. The key issue is to locate the source of this tension not as some sort of discursive *in-between* zone generated at the interstices of mind and world, but to trace the aesthetic paths by which each realm borrows terms from the other while serving to overturn unified notions of Jim's personhood or agency. Conrad is of course not unique in this view. As Nietzsche puts it in his posthumous (and editorially contentious) collection of writings, *The Will to Power* (1906), it is a myth to believe in the 'separation of the "deed" from the "doer," of the event from someone who produces events, of the process from a something that is not process but enduring, substance, thing, body, soul, etc.'. Moreover, where the subject has become a wisp in the dark, it is equally tendentious to 'attempt to comprehend an

event as a sort of shifting and place-changing on the part of a “being,” of something constant’ (1968: 336 [1885-6]).¹⁴⁴ Indeed, it is in the face of this negative insight, along with Nietzsche’s distress over (as he accuses Wagner in *The Birth of Tragedy*) ‘revering the unclear as a virtue’, that Conrad comes into focus as responding to the debates at the centre of his formative era, and moreover, doing so partly through his own atmospherically ‘unclear’ landscape depictions.

There is a more pointedly historical inheritance that needs acknowledging here, too, this concerning the charge Stein expresses to Marlow that Jim’s romanticism is an encumbrance.

‘ “He is romantic -- romantic,” he repeated. “And that is very bad – very bad.... Very good, too,” he added. “But is he?” I queried.

‘ “Gewiss,” he said, and stood still holding up the candelabrum, but without looking at me. “Evident! What is it that by inward pain makes him know himself? What is it that for you and me makes him – exist?” (202)

With this Conrad raises the poisoned chalice of the romantic soul, the glories of which lead to irreality and ‘inward pain’, yet out of which vessel comes knowledge of the self. Jim’s pain in the book is unmistakable, yet in his author’s handling such affliction becomes displaced by the need to reify his character’s interior processes. This hidden side of the soul is, in Conrad, an abyssal trope – just as Stein’s cry of ‘Evident!’ is delivered into a lit, but finally empty space. You can look into another soul as into oneself, but it is not the *self* one finds; nor is there a capitalized essence for man or the human to match the discursive wealth of ‘Beauty’ or ‘Truth’. Like the physical settings through which the romance portion of Jim’s scenario is focalized, the ‘existence’ to which Stein alludes, despite its brooding energy, is finally an obscure affair. There is a crucial heritage at work here that the romantics were no more able to surmount through the questing spirit than modernists were with their fetishizing of authentic time. We find the former in Schelling’s distinction made in his book *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800) where he comments upon the ultimate reality to which thought aspires, and for which art is the bridge. More remarkably, Schelling’s atmospheric terms replicate a good deal of Conrad’s language concerning the interiorizing dangers of creative idealism – for instance, where Jim can be confused with the artist-fabricator of both the self and his or her ambient world:

the land of phantasy toward which we aspire gleams through the world of sense only as through a half-transparent mist, only as meaning does through words. When a great painting comes into being it is as though the invisible curtain that separates the real from

¹⁴⁴ See Walter Kaufmann’s introduction to the Kaufmann and Hollingdale edition (1968) concerning the work’s troubled editorial origins and political reputation.

the ideal world is raised; it is merely the opening through which the characters and places of the world of phantasy, which shimmers only imperfectly through the real world, fully comes upon the stage. Nature... is merely the imperfect reflection of a world that exists not outside but within [the artist] (1978: 228)

The difference between Schelling and Conrad can be intuited from this passage, too, where the subject matter of the ‘great painting’ that Schelling imagines seems rather to celebrate the closing of the gap between the *real* and the ‘ideal world’. *Lord Jim* tends towards another conclusion, with Jim passing ‘away under a cloud’ rather than the gleam of Schelling’s internalized ‘stage’. Conrad’s novel may lay the ‘land of phantasy’ over a very real Arabian Sea or the island of Sumatra, but it is no less a communiqué from the void in which a new post-tragic phase of human morality is announced.

Thus the matter of this chapter organizes itself around the notion of Conrad’s landscapes as performative structures for the creative ‘process’ that is its title-hero. The first two sections move from the topologies of Jim’s encounter with the sea, through the phenomenological conditions of the real where it tumbles into the marine chaos of the *Patna*’s near sinking, to the fin de siècle gaudiness of Patusan’s jungle setting, a sylvan “Isle of the Dead” (‘a grave for some sin, transgression, or misfortune’ 204) upon which Jim achieves, at the cost of his life, a valedictory glow of ‘fame, love, and success’ (351). Thus it is only with the third section that we may see the Stein interview (92-203) as the fulcrum of the two main “natural” settings of the novel. Here my performative model will allow us to approach the novel not just as the split *romance* or *tale*¹⁴⁵ of one man’s having ‘retreated from one world, for the small matter of an impulsive jump’ to another (345), but as a text necessarily unified through its symbolic and poetic appurtenances. It is at this point, too, that aesthetic duration will be fully substantiated as a poetic form, after which, having served its term as an explanatory trope, the discussion will be free to move onto what the evocative atmospherics colonial modernist texts accomplish thematically. This is not, therefore, to define theatricalization via the melodramatic ordering of fictional scenarios, nor even to set atmospheres above the temporal processes by which they become aesthetically communicable, but to question what sort of thematics become available when landscapes take on the dynamic qualities of a *scene*. As with Conrad’s insertion of the Stein chapter between the *Patna* and Patusan halves of his text, these reflections teach us how to

¹⁴⁵ The novel’s subheadings from, respectively, the first American and British book editions (1900).

view the selves at the centre of this famously broken backed novel of moral self-reconstitution in the imperial never-never.¹⁴⁶

Sailing the Fold: Time, Motion, and Lord Jim's Oceanic Abyss

This section probes the extraordinary abstractness of the figures by which Conrad sets out the *Patna* voyage. Jim might be sailing across a marine void, yet not only does the ship's progress remain precisely charted, but the maritime conditions, wondrously placid as these are, remain founded in the naturalistic aspects of the text. Here, Jameson's observation of the 'unearthliness of the sea' (*op. cit.*) is once more appropriate to Conrad's treatment of the ocean crossing. Despite the conceptual potency of the latter's descriptions, the sensory actuality of the ship's passage is maintained through to the rescue of Jim and the other executive members of the ship's company following their precipitate departure from the *Patna*. In other words, the voidal figures we are about to see retain their concrete aspect along with the synaesthetic topologies through which Jim's storyworld becomes temporarily destabilized. As seen in rudimentary form in *An Outcast of the Islands*, the important existential issues given of Conrad's treatment of his protagonists have as much to do with the instability of the romantic notion of the self as they do belief in the material world as a secure home for the human. All this is plainly laid out in the novel, but what is less clear is how the symbolic use of settings pushes beyond any mere synthesis of self and environment, but comes to enfold, atmospherically, the symbolic texture of the figurations by which Jim's predicament is transposed upon particular locations.

More specifically, the shipboard drama Jim undergoes is occasioned less by whatever it is the *Patna* strikes than Jim's being torn from immersion in an epiphanic space, what Ian Watt calls the 'timeless and symbolic state' promoted by the text (294). The following passage, presented through *Lord Jim's* sometime frame narrator, shows this state as both fixed and dynamic:

¹⁴⁶ The phrase the 'never never' is a product of the Australian colonial landscape, appearing in Barcroft Boake's title poem from *Where the Dead Men Lie and Other Poems by Barcroft Boake*. Stephens, A. G., ed. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1897): Out on the wastes of the Never Never – / That's where the dead men lie! / There where the heat-waves dance forever – / That's where the dead men lie!

The propeller churned without a check, as though its beat had been part of the scheme of a safe universe; and on each side of the *Patna* two deep folds of water, permanent and sombre on the unwrinkled shimmer, enclosed within their straight and diverging ridges a few white swirls of foam bursting in a low hiss, a few wavelets, a few ripples, a few undulations that, left behind, agitated the surface of the sea for an instant after the passage of the ship, subsided splashing gently, calmed down at last into the circular stillness of water and sky with the black speck of the moving hull remaining everlastingly at its centre. (55)

Several features of this passage may be noted. First, the focalizing narrator appears to be hovering over the scene as though contemplating the ship and its bow wave from a great height. As a result, the real movements of the ship and sea seem to be elided with the cognitive categories of ideation, categories immediately leant metaphysical essence. This is apparent not simply in the propeller's 'beat' having been aligned with 'the scheme of a safe universe', but through the timeless aspect of the 'permanent and sombre' folds of water produced by the ship's bow. What might we make of the superficial impressions we find 'enclosed between [the] straight and diverging ridges' of those folds – 'white swirls of foam bursting in a low hiss, a few wavelets, a few ripples, a few undulations' (55)? Unlike the endlessly extending curve of the bow wave, these disturbances are both temporary and unchanging, repetitions rather than discrete events. Instead of marring the otherwise topological smoothness of water, such movements are given as having merely 'agitated the surface of the sea for an instant', yet because they are being produced through the ongoing action of the ship cleaving the waters, they drag their endless small vitalism in their train. This careful description aligns with the matter of my second chapter, where both the impression and the epiphanic moment were set out as literary significance structures evoked *across* time. Such is the case here, as well, albeit collected within the same composite figure wherein the endlessly repeated impressions of 'swirls of foam' and their 'splashing' are occasioned alongside the equally endless fold of the bow wave. It is too early to wonder whether this fold is no less epiphanically charged, let alone suffused with the potency of the virtual, but it is clear that the flux of surface effects and the stilled curl of water are durational effects existing both within and seemingly outside temporal progression (indeed, Deleuze's notion of 'the fold' as a virtual site seems apposite here).¹⁴⁷ Steadily traversing its calm sea, the ship is simultaneously moving and enfolded within a frozen continuum, but such, too, are the temporal poetics by which Jim's self-reflexive fantasies are played out on the bridge. There Jim's inner life is both narratorially progressive and temporally neutral, the latter since

¹⁴⁷ C.f. Deleuze's *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*. Trans. Tom Conley. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

there is no way to gauge what sort of spatio-temporal compressions and extensions are at work in Jim's heroic projections ('At such times [...] 58). In either case, what we need to take away from the marine repetitions and the looping of Jim's reveries is how the temporal figurations Conrad employs frame Jim's affective state, as they do the continual atmosphere in which he is embroiled. In short, where I note a composite ambient scheme unifying the actuality of the ship's passage including Jim's banal tasks, and the metaphysical conceits with which Conrad invests Jim's shipboard experience, we need to ask how else this model runs through the variety of details and hermeneutic residues set out by the text?

Let me start with a simple parallel. Given the quality of unvaried sameness in the passage just cited (the same agitations and associated impressions, the same bisecting of an undifferentiated marine surface) our attention is thereafter drawn to the now fully abstract, if still actualized image of the hull hovering within the 'circular stillness of water and sky', indeed, not simply *within* such immobility, but, as we saw of T. S. Eliot's equally *atemporal* durations, a movement 'remaining everlastingly in its centre.' Only the centre of what, a virtual world, a watery *landscape*? Conrad acknowledges the problem. Having set out to use *Lord Jim*'s ocean environment to underline the artifice of Jim's illusionism, he ends by constructing a virtual marine "topology" in which Jim and his setting remain impressively dislocated. In an obvious sense, this dislocation is the expected one. Where landscapes can incorporate the specific sense of *topos* or place, the more transient locatability of a seascape is compromised in a way that no iteration of chart coordinates can capture. If as Heraclitus famously avowed, you cannot step into the same river twice, what then are we to make of an open ocean as one's *location*, one upon which you certainly cannot step more than once, and for which the process of orientation is less a matter of marine actuality than the topologized movements of celestial bodies and pencil lines? Deserts, plains and seas at least share this feature: to the extent that we remain untutored by the patterning of dunes, waves, and currents, or, say, of the colours and densities of their surfaces, such places are as easy to lose one's way upon as they are inviting of metaphysical speculation to fill in their seeming "non-status" as places. As we have already seen, the move towards hollow structures of signification is not rare in Conrad, nor confined to his marine settings. All the same, the sea's physical qualities do lend a ready-made metaphorical potential to his maritime tropes, for instance where the *Nan-Shan*, the storm bound steamer in Conrad's story, *Typhoon*, is found 'pitched' into the depths of the cyclone 'as if taking a header into a void' (1921: 42-3). That this sort of marine void is not described at this stage of *Lord Jim* is precisely its strength, for the sublime unknowability of the becalmed ocean becomes a marker of the displacement and

estrangement Jim himself is about to enter – or, indeed, not counting his fall into the void of death at the end of the story, into which he is ‘twice’ pitched.¹⁴⁸ We will soon look at the storm squalls afflicting the *Patna* after its collision, but nothing there compares with the meteorological extremes faced by the *Nan-Shan* in which the ‘gale howled and scuffled about gigantically in the darkness, as though the entire world were one black gully’ (43). Indeed, more common to both texts is the conversion of such tropes to the active workings of fate as seen of *Typhoon*’s furiously agentive night in which an ‘impenetrable obscurity pressed down upon the ghostly glimmers of the sea’ (45).

It would be banal to observe how a furious sea might be presented as lacking a ground or “horizon” with which to anchor its spatio-temporal reach, but such is the case with the *Patna*’s flat traversal of the Indian Ocean. There it is not the ocean’s chaotic potential that complicates the novel’s orientational scheme, but its seeming lack of phenomena. The ship might be steadily making its way, but the only surety outside of the celestial readings by which its global reach is tracked is the observational point of stillness where the bow of the *Patna* makes its cut in the surface of the sea. Indeed, it is as though the ocean were being instantaneously pierced and restitched like surface of an expanse of cloth being gently and steadily pulled onto an unmoving blade. And since Conrad reports the ‘onward motion’ of the ship as ‘imperceptible to the senses of man’ (59), we only encounter what is, in effect, the sea folding itself over at the blade of the bow. Once more, since the sea is itself entirely unmarked, no sense of motion obtains for the ship and the sea crossing becomes unreal – the ‘phantom of a track’ drawn by a ‘phantom’ steamer:

the sea, blue and profound, remained still, without a stir, without a ripple, without a wrinkle [...] The *Patna*, with a slight hiss, passed over that plain, luminous and smooth, unrolled a black ribbon of smoke across the sky, left behind her on the water a white ribbon of foam that vanished at once (54)

¹⁴⁸ Differing treatments of the sublime may be seen in two nearly contemporary “sea” novels begun near the end of the 1920s, Conrad Aiken’s *Blue Voyage* (1927), and Malcolm Lowry’s *Ultramarine* (1933; amended 1962). Aiken’s abyssal treatment is the more casual: ‘Unmerciful sea. He was already launched into the infinite, the immense solitude (3); ‘the sea was an immense disc of blue light [...] the bright ship burned and sparkled in the midst of the infinite [...] The sense of the infinite, and of being isolated in its garish and terrifying profundity was beginning to work upon them’ (31-2). Here the ocean is an analogue for Aiken’s protagonist’s stream of reflection where this rehearses the modernist interior sublime – ‘to live intensely, to be intensely conscious [...] an infinite symphony’ (15-16). Where Aiken’s subjective centre can only offer a ‘fraction of its identity, like a vast sea’ (15), Lowry’s Eastern ocean is the scene of deeper knowledge, a ‘boundless waste’ from which horizons new lands and peoples emerge from the ‘nothingness’ (1933: 24). Where for Lowry’s protagonist the ocean scene is akin to being ‘lost in a dark tunnel’ (144) or beating ‘against the dark wall of the sea’ (159), one might yet attain ‘clear perception’ out of the nothingness (158).

Further, what this unrolling and vanishing emphasize is the spatialized sameness wherein difference is merely repetition:

Every morning the sun, as if keeping pace in his revolutions with the progress of the pilgrimage, emerged with a silent burst of light exactly at the same distance astern of the ship, caught up with her at noon, pouring the concentrated fire of his rays on the pious purposes of the men, glided past on his descent, and sank mysteriously into the sea evening after evening, preserving the same distance ahead of her advancing bows. (54-5)

In each of these descriptions Conrad removes the focal perspectives and eventive alterations by which temporality is constituted through change. In taking the *Patna* as Jim's figurative "ground", we offer him a location vectored by the ship's rail (57), but the *Patna* itself remains, so to speak, at sea: disconnected from its marine setting, an alien and alienated object analogous to the more or less illusional condition of its human occupants. Aside from Jim dreaming himself into a (here) literally oceanic cosmic realm, what are the bounds of the 'circular stillness' of the sea or the 'vast silence' around him (*ibid.*)? Likewise, there may be a note of containment in having Jim's eyes 'roaming about the line of the horizon', but this line is itself immediately dissolved through Jim's efforts to comprehend what is, in effect, the 'unattainable'.

We can go further. To the extent that Jim's maritime location may be expressed in the degrees of latitude and longitude etched upon the *Patna's* navigational table, Conrad's topological construction maps the endlessly mobile, endlessly reconstituting horizon seen from the bridge. Accordingly, the movement of the ship through the world escapes measurable categories as surely as Jim escapes those of western bourgeois identity. Such, perhaps, is the romanticism Conrad wants to call into question; for where, like the constitution of the self, finding one's position in the natural world has become a function of interiority, then both one's "place" and the on-line processes by which constitution is oriented have become unlatched from the sorts of moral engagements and *taskscape*s by which human groundedness is achieved. This is the dreamworld Jim occupies on the *Patna* before and during the events of the collision, and which, like his hospital stay before taking his berth, made up the enervating eternal present in which he moved. What the shipboard emergency presents, then, is a situation in which the actual conditions of his worldly encounters join up with the interior ones as though both were suddenly *outside* the segmented spaces and the grounded locations his situation had hitherto provided. This is a major theme of the text, and, like Marlow's wandering interrogations, serves to underline Jim's view of the world as no more stable than the perspectives by which we view him.

There is a crucial notification in this. Because Jim only achieves the consolidations of a developed character with death, we are instead given the illusory abyssal vehicle of his being to that point; and thus it is not action we see of him on the *Patna* (this comes at Patusan), but the *scene* of his adventurous reveries.

With Conrad, then, the transitions by which the scene of the self is effected are sometimes given as falling outside the reach of time as a meaningful cycle. Similarly, such moments tend to escape efforts to colonize temporality in the interests of racial supremacy or imperial efficiency, and so remain bound to the lesser temporal orderings of the *Patna*'s voyage, the patent log 'periodically' ringing 'its tinkling stroke for every mile traversed on an errand of faith' (56), the 'clanking' and 'tin-pot clatter' of the ash-buckets near the end of each watch (58). Small wonder Jim should remark the steadiness of this non-progress: where there is no time, there are no events; or, conversely, as of maritime routines, when there is a time and a tinkling for every event, the abyss is kept at bay. Such is the lesson of Captain Brierly's suicide. That fine fellow, who had once 'had a gold chronometer presented to him' for the quality of his overseas services (85), stands for the excellence of timely order upon the otherwise disorderly maritime medium; and so it is entirely fitting that all that is left of him when he takes himself overboard is his watch 'carefully hung under the rail by its chain' (88) – a lovely play on Jim's failures on the *Patna*, where he is *on watch at the rail*. Time may be regularized where ships are concerned – the calling of the clock, the cycle of duties, the regularized tinging of another patent log (oiled by Brierly before his own jump) – but the order given of metric time is finally no less meaningless than its looser forms since in either case a different reality is found to escapes. As Marlow relates, Brierly commits his 'reality and his sham together' at his moment of death; that is, in the wake of whatever realization of orderly success he has ceased to hold following Jim's failure. In this sense, Brierly's shamming is no more than the failed constitution of reality, and, accordingly, comes to replicate Jim's fantasy existence when the latter stands gazing at nothing from the glorious tranquility of the *Patna* – and by the by, believes in the rightness and fixity of phenomena. Thus we are given the reverie of regulated time as being both of the ship and nature, the two together, as where each evening the setting sun had gone down 'preserving the same distance ahead of [the *Patna*'s] advancing bows' (55), a figure by which we no less witness the sham of romantic reality keeping pace with its imperial and capitalist metrics. It is in this sense, then, that the temporal conditions seen of the *Patna*'s voyage sustain the epiphanic discourse Conrad weaves into his depiction of it. To hazard an equation out of these observations, the stultifying effects of the repetitive sameness Conrad records do more than

render the illusion of measurable time a literary paradox – such experiential hiatus denotes the realm of the real. In this way the pre-collision sea voyage mapped in the second and third chapters of *Lord Jim* (54-62) sets up the revelation not of the gods formerly made available through epiphany, but the less tidy, less ethically secure incursion of reality into the illusionary fabric of Conrad's text. Indeed, Conrad carefully gives us Brierly's self-exterminating version of that incursion nearly forty pages before Jim's more detailed presentation, a passage notable for its rehearsal of the factors just raised: time, space, alterity, the symbolic and imperial myth of the sovereign self.

He [Brierly] jumped overboard at sea barely a week after the end of the inquiry, and less than three days after leaving port on his outward passage; as though on that exact spot in the midst of waters he had suddenly perceived the gates of the other world flung open wide for his reception. (86)

The issue I want to carry forward from Brierly's example is that of how something so defiantly vague as *Lord Jim*'s 'other world' is created as a temporal form within the text, not just given reign as a topology that does something, but one charged with moral potential. To begin with the first part of this formulation, the plays on dynamism and stillness Conrad executes are profitably read through the cognitive linguistic purview. While in no way a literary scholar, Leonard Talmy's work is crucial in the discussion of how the focal objects and the points of view by which landscapes are maintained as textual constructions can not only be set in motion, but simultaneously haul the descriptive attributes of such landscapes along with them. Indeed, the dynamic to look for as I introduce Talmy's understanding concerns how absolutes such as 'stillness', 'immensity', or 'silence' become vitalized not simply as ambient qualities of environments, but agentive ones.

Simply put, Talmy's designation responds to what he calls our 'cognitive bias towards dynamism' (1996: 213) along with the kinds of metaphorical transferences by which such dynamism is seen to play out in language and thought. The key designation here is 'fictive motion'. By this term Talmy intends 'linguistic instances that depict motion with no physical occurrence' (1996: 211): *the scenery rushed past, the road ran to the horizon, or the cliff wall climbed over the trees*.¹⁴⁹ Here a focalized ground such as *the scenery* or a *road* is set in motion as a figure within some larger context, a process extendable to already figural physical features such as *the cliff wall*. But there is a further aspect to this troping of presumably stable objects,

¹⁴⁹ A slightly different analysis of the shift from experience to ideation is provided by Ronald Langacker's 'abstract motion' (1987: I.168-73).

and this concerns the degree to which perception or vision is made kinetic in producing the figural effects that fictive motion intends. In other words, it is one thing to note that a cliff is given to “rise” over a forest, where neither are in movement, but another to say the *scenery rushes past* where factive or actual motion is occurring – remembering that with the cliff it is the viewed object and not the observer that is in motion. A further distinction needs to be made: the division between fictive motions that are entirely “fictive”, as with the rising cliff, and those in which there is factive motion mixed in (as where the scenery “moves” vis-à-vis a moving observer), collapses in certain cases. An assertion such as *the road ran to the horizon* provides a useful case in point in that there are two possible actions which may be abbreviated. Here it is not just ‘actual’ versus ‘perceived’ motion we need to remember but the transitive and intransitive aspects of such motions (*c.f.* Matlock 2004: 234). For instance, the road may be figuratively doing the transitive “running”, but there is a partly transitive function at work in that we construe movement for the road’s *running* by visually, and so physically, following its path: thus either the road is claimed to be in motion where no motion obtains, or the viewer *moves* along its path. Even here, however, we must distinguish between movements that are bodily, as in *my eyes followed the road as it ran to the horizon* and those that are virtual and thus intransitive as in *the road appeared to run away from me*, in which neither the road nor the viewer’s gaze need be in motion. Here of course, the distinction may be elided in experience since one can both follow an actual visual path, say up the face of a cliff, while imagining the cliff soaring over one. Likewise, one may feel a sense of vertigo in either or both possibilities – that is to say, regardless of the physical act of looking being activated or not, real affects can be produced from “soaring” cliffs and a viewer imagining tilting her head too quickly in response.

Aside from the figural and affective richness of motion figures, the question of what is being set in motion needs to be understood in relation to the modal and aspectual conditions of the language in which such usages are couched. There are two issues here. The first concerns the use of perfective or imperfective verb forms. It is one thing to comprehend that *the cliff rose to an impressive height* since the perfective tense indicates that it rises no more, and another to comprehend it “rising”. A statement’s larger aspectual context is also important, for just as Wordsworth’s craggy mountain ‘upreared its head’ over the young poet in *The Prelude* (I: 378), powerful affects may be generated from perfective narrations through the activation of the conceptual structures by which mentally simulated motions unfold. The reason for this activation is that the work of comprehending simulated motion, ‘like real motion or perceived motion, takes time to complete’ (Matlock 238). It is in this sense that fictive motion maps onto

my understanding of the durational qualities of signification even where no events, motion, or cognizable temporal passage obtains: indeed, the effects are not just virtual, but aesthetic.

Other temporal issues may be noted at the discourse level of narration. To return to the example of a road running to the horizon, is it always *running* like that, or do such tropes indicate an instant in time or an enduring state? As crucially, having once set the road or cliff in motion at a cognitive level, can the storyworld be destabilized by the imputation of a more affectively wrought state to such motions, as in *all at once the road lurched towards the horizon*, or *the scenery rushed giddily past*? Thus there is a kind of textual force dynamics at work by which fictive or factive motions generate affective fall-outs modified by adjectival descriptors. More crucially, where motion figures are called in to (sensorially) substantiate shifts between topographical descriptions and topological forms, we need to watch how adjectives complicate the abstract transitions by which factive motions such as seeing a *landscape passing by* from a train window blend with fictive projections such that *the landscape vanished forever behind me*. Several of Conrad's usages are of this kind, as where Jim 'saw vaguely the ship he had deserted uprising above him' (125), or in his discovery that the 'silence of the sea, of the sky, merged into one indefinite immensity' (127). Moreover, given the literary prevalence of such figures, it is not surprising that fictive motion should not be the preserve of cognitive researchers in our time, but appears in modernist discussions of aesthetics. Here is Wassily Kandinsky writing on the geometries of dynamic form in art from Munich in 1926:

The geometric line is an invisible thing. It is the track made by the moving point; that is, its product. It is created by movement – specifically through the destruction of the intense self-contained repose of the point. Here, the leap out of the static to the dynamic occurs. [...] The forces coming from without which transform the point into a line, can be very diverse. The variation in lines depends upon the number of these forces and upon their combinations. (Kandinsky 1979: 57)

As already intimated, the kind of assertion Kandinsky makes in relation to the 'leap out of the static to the dynamic' becomes thornier where motion figures attach themselves to place descriptions that are already figural, and so contain prior metaphorical transfers or analogies. To take a complex example from *Lord Jim*, the frame narrator's observation that 'the Arabian Sea, smooth and cool to the eye like a sheet of ice, extended its perfect level to the perfect circle of a dark horizon' (55) offers an elaborate topology containing both sensory facts and trope-like amendments. Here the attributes of the subject of the sentence, the 'sea', are dynamized in relation to figural attributes of both the direct object (the sea's 'perfect level') and the indirect

object the flat sea is seen “extending” itself towards – in this case the ‘dark horizon’ ending both the sentence and the ultimate point of the narrator’s visible universe. To write that the sea’s ‘perfect level’ is everywhere apparent is one thing, but it is another to claim the horizon is a reachable destination for such flatness when horizons are no more than perspectival effects endlessly relocated with the viewer. In this case, too, the abstract and immobile attributes of the subject, ‘perfect’ for instance, are not just sprung from a figural comparison (‘smooth [...] like a sheet of ice’), but are set in motion where no motion obtains – the sea *extending* its flatness. In this regard, too, the terms of Conrad’s simile of the Arabian Sea being ‘smooth and cool to the eye like a sheet of ice’ are set in motion (‘extended’) over those of an abstract metaphor, the plane/plain of the sea. Indeed, the destination of such movement is merely illusory, ‘the perfect circle of a perfect horizon’. Apart from the imperfective continuous realm of the smooth sea endlessly extends itself, this usage is topological in the mathematical sense that it intends ‘geometric properties and spatial relations unaffected by the continuous change of shape or size of figures’.¹⁵⁰ To collect these topologies in the order Conrad gives them: we are given the ship moving both of itself and over the ocean; the ocean is described as bound by the horizon even though an *horizon* never describes a particular stretch of the visible world; and a sea’s surface cannot go anywhere its waters do not. What these usages do, then, is underwrite the unreality of the sea before Jim, just as the moving stillness and ‘continuous change’ of his author’s topological figures destabilize the presumably “stable” narrative artifice of the narrator’s global point of view.

To remain with the narrator’s observations concerning the Arabian Sea, where the substance of Conrad’s description might be rephrased as “gazing towards the curve of the horizon, the flatness of the sea was apparent as far as one could see”, we have a series of operations whereby an attribute of the subject, the sea’s surface extension, is predicated as an event, the action by which the plane of the smooth and flat sea is understood as extending towards the horizon’s apparently bounded expanse. All the same, where the sea extends its surface without ‘physical occurrence’ and fictive motion obtains in the manner laid out by Leonard Talmy, the fact that the sea goes on extending the empty category of its “expanse” towards the merely figural horizon, and that it does so as part of a seemingly endless imperfective process, ensures that the trope in question remains both abyssal and durational.

Accordingly, and here I return to the time issues, a landscape is not temporal simply because it exists in time, or because it is party to endless naturally occurring alterations, but

¹⁵⁰ See: <<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/topology>>.

because the terms by which it is constructed in language are themselves seen to embrace change. From this observation we might conclude that there is little difference between the figural motions by which a still and unchanging landscape is animated in narratives, and a landscape in which endlessly fluctuating conditions are seen as constant and stable – the paradox of the eternally unfolding present we saw Eliot setting out through having the ‘still point’ wherein time accrues meaning simultaneously troped as a ‘dance’. Here Conrad would appear to embrace both possibilities with his landscape constructions, and so to engage topological descriptions as a means of destabilizing topographical sureties. We have just looked in detail at what is finally a minor point of description concerning Jim’s sea crossing, but the point to be drawn from that discussion is that just as Conrad’s details emplot their own durations, so do his larger scenic projections. This holds as true for the *Patna* as it does the by now familiar example of Willem’s place of exile in *An Outcast of the Islands*. In either case, Talmy’s analysis of ‘fictive motion’ is valuable where it perspectivizes the treatment of space as process, or place as defined by time and in time, and so creates, if only as literary effect, the dynamizing of topological relations where none might otherwise be extended to obtain.

But there is another proviso to the temporal aspects of landscapes: as intentional objects incorporating a particular view onto a topographical expanse, landscapes are created and dynamized through being focalized. Even where no change is evident to the senses, as with so many of Loti’s ‘eternal’ stretches of Sinai desert, the changes and movements by which landscapes come to be read as temporalized offer a means of entering the mind doing the focalizing. To this extent, fictive motion is constitutive of the sorts of landscape constructions my study is targeting, and, simultaneously, of the consciousness through which that act is filtered. By being created through the conversion of physical expanses into spaces of experience, temporal landscapes imply both the durational aspects of the subject’s engagement with them, and those of the topological transfers through which they are described. To this extent, then, temporal landscapes are constituted through fictive motion figures; moreover, as we shall later see within colonial modernist texts, such temporality is called in not only to effect thematic impact in relation to colonial places, but to animate scenographic depictions of the consciousnesses found there, and so to comment, finally, if indirectly, upon the moral and historical pressures incumbent upon the imperial system that brought them.

Where Talmy’s frame of fictive motion prods my discussion of the colonial modernist landscape towards a topological reading of its features, for instance by attributing to them abstract relations and movements from the barest sensory phenomena, there is yet a factor

through which the encounter with sensory circumstances allows a much closer synthesis of sense and ideation than topology suggests, and this is through what we have seen Martin Seel describe as ‘the synaesthetic play of appearances’ in the fashioning of atmospheres (*op. cit.* 93). The marine example discussed a few lines ago in relation to fictive motion is again instructive since, in its initial laying out, there were so little sensory phenomena associated with it. In that case the Arabian Sea was seen to extend its ‘perfect level’ to the horizon because the smoothness of its surface occasioned no discernible changes by which actual movement might be experienced, and so its extension was easily incorporated as a topological figure. But this is only half the process since, as the Oxford Online Dictionary defines it, synaesthesia involves ‘the production of a sense impression relating to one sense or part of the body by stimulation of another sense or part of the body’.¹⁵¹ Moreover, such cross-modal transferences are not figurative since, as phrased by its leading psychological theorist, Richard Cytowic, we ‘are not talking about sound symbolism or metaphor, but a perception, a literal joining of the senses’ (2002: xxiii-iv).¹⁵² But Cytowic is sceptical about synaesthesia as a deliberate aesthetics since, in his view, art ‘transports us to that transitory and mystical change in self-awareness that is known as ecstasy’, this being ‘any passion by which the thoughts are absorbed and in which the mind is for a time lost’. Further to the aporia Cytowic notes of such absorption, ‘[b]oth synaesthesia and the artistic experience are ineffable, and both indescribable by language’ (319). Here I must disagree: a colonial text like *Lord Jim* gives the lie to Cytowic’s assertion that ‘an aesthetic based on synaesthesia can be only marginally meaningful to a general audience’ (*ibid.*), or indeed, that at least in the literary sense, ‘one cannot perceive and hallucinate in the same visual coordinates’ (107).¹⁵³ In the writers looked at in the present essay, the poetics by which the ineffable is constituted is such that its goal is indeed that in which ‘the mind is for a time lost’ – lost *for a time* in the space of the ineffable as an aesthetic and thematically charged event: aesthetic duration.

All the same, we might use Cytowic’s problematic as a point of view onto Conrad’s synaesthetic presentation of the Arabian Sea as experienced from the bridge of the *Patna*, which as one critic helps us remember, is ‘elevated like a stage and lit up at night’,¹⁵⁴ thereby theatricalizing Jim’s view for himself as much as the novel’s readers. Late in his life, Conrad was to describe the modulation of focal position not as an aspect of literary theatricalization, as I

¹⁵¹ See: <<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/synaesthesia>>.

¹⁵² For a more aesthetically focused debate see L. E. Marks, *The Unity of the Senses: Interrelations Between the Modalities* (New York: Academic Press, 1978: Chapters 7-8).

¹⁵³ Cytowic is relying upon M. Schatzman’s “Ghosts in the Machine.” *Psychology Today*, January 1981: 99 (§9.5.3).

¹⁵⁴ Kerr (2008: 67)

do here, but in terms of the cinema. In a letter to his agent, Eric Pinker, concerning his American lecture series, Conrad writes how he had

sketched out the outlines of a lecture [...] on the (apparently) extravagant lines of the imaginative literary art being based fundamentally on scenic motion, like a camera: with this addition that for certain purposes the artist is a much more subtle and complicated machine than a camera, and with a wider range, if in the visual effects less precise (Jean-Aubry [*Life and Letters IV*] 1927, 302-3)

But on the bridge of the *Patna*, Jim's brand of theatricality is more topological than mobile, though one might want to recall how his state nonetheless appears to meld into Cytowic's sense of the 'ecstasy' in which the 'thoughts are absorbed' (*op. cit.*). There is a tension rooted in Conrad's scenic practices, however. It is all very well to set his descriptions into motion, fictive or otherwise, but as Linda Dryden recognizes, another view is no less tenable: 'In *Lord Jim* Marlow is complicit with Jim's heroic imperial fantasy by perpetuating a perception of the East as an unchanging and permanent spectacle' (2009: 20). This argument locates itself alongside the one-dimensional Orientalism of what she calls 'Said's *tableau vivant*', in which actors 'are set against an exotic and theatrical backdrop' (21). Accordingly, Dryden goes on to record Marlow's further observations that the East is as 'a picture created by fantasy on a canvas' upon which frozen spectacle you can 'turn your back' while the West was 'a world where events move, men change, light flickers, life flows in a clear stream' (286). The view of the frozen East is true enough where one is regarding the painted scenery of the theatre, but we can still wonder to what degree a more dynamic conception creeps into Conrad's *tableau vivant* constructions – of which the ship's bridge in *Lord Jim* offers a primary example. Indeed, by placing Conrad's use of 'scenic motion' alongside the synaesthetically inflected encounter with setting, we gain insight not just into how *Lord Jim*'s narrative creates effects through focal changes tracked in time, but how those alterations in viewing platform create their own atmospheric occasionings. To return to the *Patna*, by presenting the absence of motion experienced from that vantage as a synaesthetic 'sense impression', the apparent sensory aporia of a *perfectly* motionless sea comes to be qualified by a compensatory sense, the now visually mobile extension of the sea's plane of trajectory as a scenographic artifice – the dynamicism one experiences were the fixed planes of scenery to suddenly heave into motion. More concretely, the figurative process we see of Conrad's tropes is abetted by the smooth, ice-like immobility of his ocean plane such that given its even, reflective surface, the sea becomes 'smooth and cool to the eye like a sheet of ice'. Thus we find an obvious if not very original synaesthetic transference of an attribute of touch

(‘cool’) to the visual realm, not just for the sea’s icy night-time hue beneath the ‘serenity’ of starlight, but for the combination of temperature, colour, and evenness of aspect. Equally, the sea extends one of its attributes (its luminous surface) to the topologically perfect circle of the horizon, while bringing with it the synaesthetically induced and so analogous qualities of the flatness, coolness, and colour of ice.¹⁵⁵ These reflections have an impact on how we “read” the scene, let alone their impact on literary atmosphere as an ineffable or ecstatic ‘joining of the senses’. To recall my discussion in Chapter Two, for a thinker such as Böhme it is of no great significance that atmospheres obtain regardless of ‘whether what is represented is merely a product of thought or is derived from reality’ because, as ‘representational spaces’, they assume ‘the character of virtual spaces at the moment when they become entwined with the space of bodily presence’ (2002: 1). In brief, atmospheres are by definition already *synaesthetic*, and, at least in their abyssal guise, eminently suited to the dramatization of radical disorientation at the *scenic* level. Moreover, they are disorienting to the degree that the entwining of virtuality and embodiment sustaining them is dependent upon focal changes that are at once external and interiorizing: Jim’s ‘glance around the unattainable horizon’ (57).¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Being the transference of an attribute of touch, ‘cool’, to the visual realm, hence a cool night-time hue.

¹⁵⁶ Another of Talmy’s cognitive linguistic frames is of interest in regard to the literary construction of synaesthetically enhanced tropes of becoming. I have suggested the relevance of fictive motion to notions of aesthetic duration, but Talmy can also be seen to incorporate at least the visually dynamic realm of synaesthesia in his thinking on the ‘single continuous cognitive domain’ of *ception* (in Bloom 1999: 214). As its truncated etymology suggests, *ception* may be defined as ‘all the cognitive phenomena, conscious and unconscious, understood by the conjunction of perception and conception’ (2000: 139). In his influential 1996 chapter “Fictive Motion in Language and ‘Ception’” (see the 1996 edition of *Toward a Cognitive Semantics*), Talmy addresses the gap between ‘observable psychological phenomena’ and ‘perception’ proper as this is negotiated in the present: ‘[w]hile perhaps best limited to the phenomena of current processing, *ception* would include the processing of sensory stimulation, mental imagery, and currently experienced thought and affect’ (*ibid.*). Accordingly, *ception* implies the conjunction of vision and ideation as limited by the time in which that conjunction is processed, and so reflects the span of ‘on-line’ cognitive processing in relation to synaesthesia – for a useful collation of Talmy’s ‘ception’ with other motion metaphors as encoded in space and language see Rosario Caballero’s *Re-Viewing Space: Figurative Language in Architects’ Assessment of Built Space* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), and especially Chapter Five, Section 2.2, pp. 117-23. Where the blending of sense data may be seen through many of Conrad’s tropes, for instance with ‘the darkening of the great stillness’ or the ‘shadow’ of a cloud having ‘extinguished every sound’ on the *Patna* (120), we find strong evidence of synaesthesia occurring in all its phenomenal immediacy: ‘Jim paced athwart, and his footsteps in the vast silence were loud to his own ears, as if echoed by the watchful stars’ (57). And where *ception* might be hauled into relation with, say, the equally synaesthetic figures of time David Herman sees inflecting the ‘multivalent temporal system’ of ‘fuzzy’ temporality (2002: 224), it is perhaps more helpful to allow it to stand for a more obvious consideration that it obtains whenever conceptual and perceptual phenomena are enacted together, and ceases at the point that a particular synaesthetic processing has been completed. This termination is not final, however, for the *object* of perception/conception so constructed – let us say Conrad’s calm and darkened ‘stillness’ – is now a topologized figural construct (the ‘perfect level’ of the

With these provisos in mind, we can return to the passage cited near the beginning of this section. While the *Patna* has been reduced to the ‘speck of the moving hull’ at the centre of a ‘circular stillness’, we soon discover that the ship has been subsumed within an even more profound metaphorical and topological arrangement, the ‘great certitude of unbounded safety and peace’ viewed from the vantage of the *Patna* (55-6). Such ‘certitude’ has every appearance of having oriented itself around Jim’s view from the deck, yet we must remember that very little is given to move in that shipboard actuality, only the fabric of the sea at the point that it is endlessly bisected and rejoined behind the steamer. In this manner the ‘everlastingly’ fixed if yet moving ship, like the looming ‘shadow of the coming event’ presents a durational frame of attention. Further, these figural usages are reflective of the transformation of landscapes into topologies through the theatricalization of our view onto them, and by degrees, the morphing of stillness or darkness into agentive qualities, as where the ‘massive shadows’ of Marlow’s room are described as being ‘possessed of gloomy consciousness’ (169). Such qualities also have thematic and affective resonances, and so their durational occasioning carries symbolic weight both for the human subjects imagined within the temporal scheme and across the narrative as a whole. At such moments the atmosphere thus composed becomes not just a focal landscape against which the story is seen to unfold, but the fabric of its communicability as aesthetic object.

Furthermore, by giving the reader no object by which changes in deictic centre may be mapped, the phenomenal aspects of the pre-collision voyage are effectually frozen in the tableau of repetitive movement along with the folds of the wake, hull, the sea, the sky, celestial objects, and even our perspective as readers: the ship moves endlessly, but the horizon does not, and so time passes without notice or modulation. To this degree the real phenomena of change tends to be measured internally, as conceptual rather than concrete processes. As previously noted, apart from the undifferentiated sequence of the risings and settings of the sun experienced from the *Patna*, Conrad’s frame narrator makes little effort to normalize the passing of time according to clock time, but marks temporal passage at the symbolic level where the sameness of their passing suggests the ‘certitude of unbounded safety’ (55-6) given by the sea, and hence ‘the magic monotony of existence between sky and water’ (50). In this way the actual sea has become an ocean of the mind, a process made explicit where that ‘black speck’ of the ship’s hull is transposed onto the ‘small black cross’ marking each day’s progress on the chart. But this

sea) liable to inclusion within larger frames (extending itself to the horizon) and other durational experiences.

analogy has its own progressively graphic aspect as a spatialization of time. The actual movement of the *Patna* through the water is figuratively stilled just as the pencil trail it leaves upon the chart is dynamized as though it were the topological scheme of navigational accounting, and not the hull's impalpable advance, that contained the true movement. Indeed, this relationship between the ship's actual progress and its topographical analogue is extended back into the phenomena of the voyage such that Jim sees 'the white streak of the wake drawn as straight by the ship's keel upon the sea as the black line drawn by the pencil upon the chart' (58).

Throughout Jim's shipboard encounter with sublime natural space, it is less the 'hidden reality' of Jim's imaginings (let alone the passage of time) that underwrites the continuities of passage, but Conrad's dramatizing of time's unreality. Indeed, the heroic contents of Jim's reveries can seem to approximate a Bergson-like duration in which his masculinist fantasies and reflections become as surreally insular as the ship's progress across the sea, yet which together form the abyssal arena from which Jim is able to construe the (for him) "authentic" virtuality of the imaginary realm. This is not to suggest that the orderings of imperial and commercial transits are not maintained in a like manner. Just as Brierly's suicide was carefully weighed against the continuance of clock time, the rotating schedule of marine duties aboard the *Patna* lend their rhythm to the naturalized 'scheme of a safe universe' (55) as surely as the motorized beat of the engines. There is a larger perspective to be comprehended here beyond the cocooning mechanism of maritime trade or Jim's self-serving moments of fantasy. Time might be a poetic medium in modernism, but it is also one of constraint. As an ordering technology, Conrad's wry recording of temporal existence appears no less *constraining* than Georg Simmel's vision of Western urban realities were to prove a few years later in *The Metropolis and Mental Life* (1903). There the saving devices of Nietzschean individuality ('unschematized individual expressions'), like the socialist abandonment of competition between equals, signalled 'the resistance of the individual to being levelled, swallowed up in the social-technological mechanism' (2002: 11):

Punctuality, calculability, and exactness, which are required by the complications and extensiveness of metropolitan life are not only most intimately connected with its capitalistic and intellectualistic character but also colour the content of life and are conducive to the exclusion of those irrational, instinctive, sovereign human traits and impulses which originally seek to determine the form of life from within instead of receiving it from the outside in a general, schematically precise form. (13)

That the press of “exterior” time might be alleviated at the colonial periphery does not escape Conrad’s attention, not least where the ‘*eternal* peace of Eastern sky and sea’ might be attuned to ‘short passages, good deck-chairs’ (52, my emphasis). As intimated last chapter, correctives to the ‘severer view of duty’ (*ibid.*) found at the metropole were already being elaborated in the interior process of William James’s saddle-shaped durational scheme, as they would more flamboyantly with Bergson’s *L’Évolution créatrice* (1907), models alert to the need to, as Simmel says, *determine the form of life from within*. For Bergson, time is the forum through which we receive ‘messengers from the unconscious [to] remind us of what we are dragging behind us unawares’: hence James’s description of duration as ‘the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances’. As James goes on, ‘our personality which is being built up each instant with its accumulated experience[,] changes without ceasing. [...] We may go further: it is not only something new, but something unforeseeable’ (2007: 7-8).

In light of Simmel’s and Bergson’s comments, we can now see Conrad’s setting of Jim’s interior fantasies on the ship’s bridge as being not just theatricalized for the reader’s view, but as providing a window onto Jim’s own tendency to elaborate a world via a now durational synaesthesia in which he conceives, at the juncture of perception and conception (an instance of Talmy’s “ception” described at note 56), a place within the accepted order that leaves room for both the ‘unforeseeable’ aspects of the individual and the perquisites of shipboard order. But this happy simultaneity, it needs to be recalled, is itself illusional in Conrad’s vision – for as his sometimes caustic text makes clear (though so elegantly, so atmospherically, we are prone to forget), the *Patna* is not one of Simmel’s Berlin time-pieces holding an entire social mechanism in place but a hopeless rust-bucket run by a greasy brute beneath a cosmos ‘infinitely remote’. Likewise Jim, despite looking his part, is no more than a handsomely appavelled Bergsonian jellyfish, ‘chang[ing] without ceasing’ behind its veil of translucent *membra*, a young man liable, as so many young men, to squirt under pressure.¹⁵⁷

Time therefore appears to have become a paradoxical frame in *Lord Jim*, both the occasioning of modernistic mechanization and a vessel of questionable interior freedom. Consciousness might continue to be endlessly, helplessly new, as Bergson set out, but it is

¹⁵⁷ As Simmel puts it, the city as organism relies for its own patent log upon an individual punctuality since ‘the lack of the most exact punctuality in promises and performances would cause the whole to break down into an inextricable chaos. If all the watches in Berlin suddenly went wrong in different ways even only as much as an hour, its entire economic and commercial life would be derailed for some time’ (op. cit. 13). The words of Bergson’s are from the previous citation.

simultaneously shorn of its temporal actuality by the lulling if no less destructive repetitions of Jim's voyage, put to sleep by its routine aspect along with the trusting pilgrims in the hold. And if the days may pass serenely, their place of disappearance is endlessly open: that which is left in the past is not simply gone, but 'disappearing... falling' into the endlessly renewed wake of the vessel as it continues 'on her steadfast way' (ibid). To this extent, past, present, and future are effectively retained within the same spatio-temporal structure because, if only symbolically, we discern their mobile point of origin *and* disappearance occupying a here and now as overtly as Bergson sees memory 'follow[ing] us at every instant' (7). Indeed, the repetitious quality of this durational state intensifies our attention to the passage of time as a zone of potential erasure, one unfolding, as Conrad shows us, upon a sea described as being so 'still' it is 'viscous, stagnant, dead' (54). Likewise, in lieu of a sufficiently textured present of experience, the actual distance being traversed ceases to translate itself into narrative or geographical momentum, but enables a series of cognitive openings into the imaginary in which not being able to 'see' the passage as a progress becomes precisely the impetus of Jim's reveries. So too, by reducing external phenomena, Conrad is able to infuse his descriptions with metaphysical categories that do not, in the end, admit phenomenal content: a timeless imaginary realm that gives rise to the text's tendency to approximate the consummate illusory status of a 'secret truth' (58).

Before reviewing the atmospherics of the *Patna* passages of *Lord Jim* in a more mainstream critical manner, I should draw out both the affective results for Jim of the very uneventfulness of shipboard life. First, just as the 'luminous immensity' (55) of the maritime nowhere serves to slow time's passage, so Jim's affective state comes to colour his view of current events. He wallows in a 'very excess of well being' (57), feels 'gratitude for this high peace of sea and sky' (58), indeed, 'care[s] for nothing that could happen to him to the end of his days' (57). These sensations nudge Jim towards his encounter with what is in effect a temporalized non-event, the pleasing 'hidden reality' (58) he constructs for himself, and which has for both its actual marine location and reified "reality", a virtual ship upon an atmospheric *trompe l'oeil* sea – at any rate, a world that the nearly inconspicuous collision intervenes to, Benjamin-like, 'pump the aura out of [that] reality like water from a sinking ship' (*SW* 2: 518).¹⁵⁸ Second, the affectively generative monotony of the voyage composes its own kind of objective eventhood, the duration of timelessness flowing out of the dimensionless repetition of days and nights seen 'falling into' the abyss-like wake of the *Patna* (55). The mythic scale of these

¹⁵⁸ The neutralizing of aura is of course strongly and comically evident in the prosaic post-collision actions of the French lieutenant.

comments is an important developing feature of *Lord Jim*'s early drama, especially where 'the eternity beyond the sky seemed to come down', and the ship to travel through the infinite reaches of the cosmos ('the appalling and calm solitudes awaiting the breath of future creations' 59). These figurations of timelessness in relation to the finite add their effect to the text's denaturalization of its deictic parameters such that, with the collision, it is not just Jim's reveries and positive affects that are brought to a close, but 'the inaccessible serenity of the sky' (57): 'suddenly the calm sea, the sky without a cloud, appeared formidably insecure in their immobility, as if poised on the brow of yawning destruction' (62). More straightforwardly, from the moment of impact, the atmosphere of ideational *impressions* characterizing the voyage to this point at last gives way to one of a more concrete uncertainty.

But the cosmic scale of this figural destruction might also remind us of something Schopenhauer says at the end of his monumental work on the world and the will. We have already seen Conrad build upon the cosmic pretensions of the frame narrator's language. There the meaning, or, indeed, lack of meaning seen from that topologized sublime realm was encoded into the texture of the frame narrator's account, and hence the lack of any real communion with 'the lustre of the half-transparent dome covering the flat disc of an opaque sea' (59). As against Conrad's enervating if still ambivalent description we find Schopenhauer proclaiming how 'what remains after the entire abolition of will is for all those who are still full of will certainly nothing; but, conversely, to those in whom the will has turned and has denied itself, this our world, which is so real, with all its suns and milky-ways – is nothing' (§71). It would be wrong to argue too directly from one passage to the other, but a point of commonality does emerge, this concerning the threat of an abyssal void or nothingness beyond human expectation. For Schopenhauer, the 'nothing' of existence is twofold: either we learn to embrace it in order to free ourselves from the distortions of the willing subject, or we lose the actuality of the world ('its suns and milky-ways') by embracing the will as godhead. So just as, for Conrad, 'the calm sea, the sky' are little more than appearances masking the destructive real lying behind, Schopenhauer's categories of natural phenomena point out the possible nullity of human conceit – or nearly. For passing from one writer to the other, it is true that the aestheticized nothing of the nineteenth century collapses into the unphilosophical nothingness of Conrad's more corrosive twentieth in which there is no knowledge, no rescuing relinquishment, and no saving Adornian site of 'impossibility'; but it is no less true that in all of Conrad there is nothing to match the 'gospel' of Schopenhauer's willing-less state:

instead of the restless striving and effort, instead of the constant transition from wish to fruition, and from joy to sorrow, instead of the never-satisfied and never-dying hope which constitutes the life of the man who wills, we shall see that peace which is above all reason, that perfect calm of the spirit, that deep rest, that inviolable confidence and serenity, the mere reflection of which in the countenance, as Raphael and Correggio have represented it, is an entire and certain gospel (*op. cit.*)

For Schopenhauer, we pull away from the world of sense in order to ground human wisdom in a ‘nothing’ free of everyday human involvement.¹⁵⁹ Conrad’s example differs. Jim’s fantasy life may be eminently wilful, but put back into the embodied realm of experience following the collision of the *Patna*, the concrete world is still held at a remove, and so liable to being reconstructed according to one’s individual illusions. The geography here is actual enough, but it is all too easily hauled into a more personal and dubiously aestheticized realm of invention and projection. For Conrad, it is not the will that wants excising in the name of Schopenhauer’s ‘perfect calm of the spirit’, but the romance of illusion propping up such claims.

We need to look, then, at how the physical is brought into the equation of this universal ‘nothing’, the embodiments, that is, by which the abyssal comes to be reified out of one’s surroundings. One result of the atmospheric raising of negative affects is how the topologically founded eventualities that gave rise to them play out as the ground of Jim’s *sensory* confrontation with phenomena. Such events can be narratively tense, as where the bow of the *Patna* is felt lifting from the ‘undisturbed level of the sea’ (62), or where he touches ‘the bulging, rust-eaten plates that kept back the ocean’ (106). In the latter case, Jim has been sent forward to inspect the ship’s collision bulkhead. In spite his visions of disaster, Jim’s thoughts before the rusting membrane keeping the *Patna* afloat are not merely visual, but comprise a phenomenological whole:

I tell you it bulged. **I was holding up my lamp** along the angle-iron in the lower deck **when** a flake of rust as big as the palm of my hand fell off the plate, all of itself [...] The thing stirred and jumped off like something alive **while I was looking at it** [...] I expected to see the iron open out **as I stood there** and the gush of water going over them **as they lay** (105: emphasis added)

¹⁵⁹ Reading this same passage from §71, John Atwell comments on how ‘a nothingness to abhor and fear’ under the sway of the will transforms to ‘a nothingness of (as it were) bliss’. See *Schopenhauer on the Character of the World: The Metaphysics of Will* (Berkeley: U California Press, 1995: 169). But Schopenhauer is elsewhere more Conradian. In the essay, “Free Will and Fatalism”, Schopenhauer says ‘[t]he only freedom that exists is of a metaphysical character. In the physical world freedom is an impossibility’ –escape is only ever internal (*On Human Nature*. T. Bailey Saunders, trans. New York: Cosimo, 2010 [1897]: 48).

The modal variations marked in bold indicate not simply Jim's experience of an unsegmented temporal frame, but gesture towards the prolongation of simultaneity through its adverbial conjunctions: *when*, *while*, *as*. Marlow's narration of Jim's account offers the immediate data of consciousness as a continuous frame, indeed, as an extended instance of *ception* in which Jim's fears take on both psychologized and sensory content. So too, Jim's panic-filled reflections expand over the compromised surface before him as onto a topography, at which point it is not really important, save perhaps for nautical enthusiasts, that the metal truly bulges, or whether such movement is only actualized within the virtuality of that "landscape":

I can easily picture him to myself in the peopled gloom of the cavernous place, with the light of the globe-lamp falling on a small portion of the bulkhead that had the weight of the ocean on the other side, and the breathing of unconscious sleepers in his ears. I can see him glaring at the iron, startled by the falling rust, overburdened by the knowledge of an imminent death (*ibid.*)

In the *Patna* episode, instances of synaesthetic engagement with sensory phenomena help Conrad ground what would otherwise remain merely imaginary suppositions concerning the romantic individual in a finally ungovernable universe. Certainly, the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea are abstracted from their marine actuality to the degree that this setting becomes aligned to the empty qualifiers of Conrad's quasi-symbolic usages – 'the gates of the other world' (86). As we have seen, distinctions between concrete and ideational settings are made blatantly "abyssal" for the reader where Conrad attends to the 'abyss for ever open in the wake of the ship', an atemporal and, indeed, unreal site that will remain active until the moment of Jim's jump – at which point its topological effectiveness will give way to an even more sensorially challenging oceanic real. So just as Jim's illusions do not survive the shipboard emergency occasioned by the collision of the *Patna*, this overdetermined conceptual setting is from the first de-actualized in proportion to the degree to which Jim's fantasies of heroic selfhood fail before the actual requirements of his professional calling. Moreover, by the time the absconding ship's officers are picked up by the *Avondale* some hours later, the daytime sea has become a naturalistic location, a place of endlessly fluid contours and shifting atmospheric conditions over which a more traditional narrative progression might be instituted (125-40). In this manner, the maritime scene that had beforehand taken on the condition of Jim's epiphanies of romantic self-constitution is now, at least while it is still dark, the disillusioning chaos of impressions into which he tumbles.

Similarly, the abstract benchmarks of Jim's self-reflexive discourse no longer find purchase through the empowering act of perspective making, but have joined that of the 'ignorant and pious multitude' aboard for whom 'all the sights, all the sounds' were 'for ever [...] incomprehensible' (106). In the face of such knowledge, and confronted with the sublime 'silent company of the dead', it is not the power of reason that emerges to rescue Jim from the moment of radical alterity, but the negative capacity of his 'confounded imagination' where this 'had evoked for him all the horrors of panic, the trampling rush, the pitiful screams [...] the appalling incidents' (108). As if we needed more convincing, the sensory potency of this imaginary realm is substantiated where Jim is 'nearly knocked [off] the hatchway ladder' leading from the bulkhead by no more than 'the light touch of canvas on his face' (106). But time has also taken on an almost revelatory presence within the symbolic apparatus of the novel. While the reader has already been presented with Jim's efforts at the enquiry to maintain 'a meticulous precision of statement' concerning the emergency, and thus to bring out 'the true horror behind the appalling face of things' (65), this aim is continually subverted both through the text's affectively charged recursiveness in subsequently recounting those events, and that account's simultaneous tendency towards hiatus. Such is the case where Marlow, once more considering the worn bulkhead, extemporizes upon 'that awful' and now epiphanic 'stillness preceding a catastrophe, that trying silence of the moment before the crash' (108). Indeed, if not for the inquiry we would not discover that these events had been 'occupying' a specific 'place in space and time', an accuracy presumably returning the narrative from the abyssal figuration of the sublime 'East' to the deictic event categories of a western sensibility:

The facts those men were so eager to know had been visible, tangible, open to the senses, occupying their place in space and time, requiring for their existence a fourteen-hundred-ton steamer and twenty-seven minutes by the watch; they made a whole that had features, shades of expression, a complicated aspect that could be remembered by the eye, and something else besides, something invisible, a directing spirit of perdition that dwelt within, like a malevolent soul in a detestable body (*ibid.*)

Such temporal discrepancy has other effects. By allowing the premonitions Conrad encodes for his readers to remain disconnected from the surface realities comprising the 'meticulous' account sought by the court, the reader, like Jim on the bridge, is instead left gazing 'amazed, at the undisturbed level of the sea' (62) as if the event before the court were in fact Jim's affective and cognitive response to the collision and not the practical or professional results of a marine mishap. So, too, the facts of the matter give way to the phenomenological durations

through which events are reconfigured either as interior categories or metaphysical suppositions. Thus where the accident is accompanied by a ‘faint noise [...] less than a sound, hardly more than a vibration... as if thunder had growled deep down in the water’ (62), the initial response of the officers is to look ‘upwards at the stars’ as for divine guidance. In this way, too, the figure of the ‘everlasting deep hole’ (125) into which Jim makes his leap from his ship is quickly sustained as much by the surface of his experiences (‘the tremble of a vast ripple running over all the visible expanse of the sea’ 133) as by the revelatory impact wherein ‘his soul knew... all the despair’ of the events at hand (126). In each case what is being focalized is precisely that which remains both conceptual and perceptual in the text, the ‘vast ripple’ or ‘expanse of the sea’ experienced from the *Patna*, and thus our attention skips over ‘the despair’ felt by the ship’s officers, to latch onto the sublime void in which both categories are contained.

In some ways, Conrad’s poetic practices merely foreground modernism’s attention to spaces of dissolution. For Jonathon Crary, the elusive aspects of modernist painting are no less deconstructive, since ‘looking at one thing intently did not lead to a fuller and more inclusive grasp of its presence, its rich immediacy. Rather it led to its perceptual disintegration and loss’ (2000: 288).¹⁶⁰ Crary’s insight might refer to the breaking down of claims to objectivity with respect to the visual planes of aesthetic representation, but fictional discourse treads a similar path. Jim’s jump from the *Patna* does not launch him from his reveries into eventhood so much as into another strata of discourse in which it is the ‘rich immediacy’ of an abyssal nothingness enters the now broken frame. Translated into the fictional realm of *Lord Jim*, Conrad’s title-hero loses not only the manageable conditions of his existence as these are found constructed by his narrators, but “storyhood”. As Marlow’s narration indicates, Jim loses the plot the moment he makes his jump, at which point his actual and discursive positions in the world coincide within the realm of the abyss. Such is the paradox presented at the enquiry. There the ‘abyss’ into which Jim launched himself is once more an objective, topographical actuality, yet it is one for which no objective view is available – how does one focalize a sea?¹⁶¹ Indeed, the actual plunge is set aside as a kind of solipsistic *ekstasis* that has only a before and after of narrative presence, one taking place over the ellipsis Conrad inserts between ‘I had jumped...’ and ‘It seems’, and of which Jim is given to claim ‘I knew nothing about it till I looked up’ (125). Thus it is left to the

¹⁶⁰ Crary’s references to the relationship between colour and form stem from Cézanne’s landscapes.

¹⁶¹ It is diverting to read how the executive members of the historical model for the *Patna*, the *S. S. Jeddah*, abandoned ship off the Somali Coast in the vicinity of Ras Asir, then called Cape Guardafui (11°55’N 51°55’E). See the *Board of Trade Wreck Report for ‘Jeddah’, 1881*, available on-line at <<http://www.plimsoll.org/resources/SCCLibraries/WreckReports/14642.asp>>.

reader to intuit a perspective from which to comprehend the event of jumping and then the status of the ‘everlasting deep hole’ wherein Jim finds himself (125). It is indicative of Conrad’s nascent modernism that while this ‘deep hole’ is non-existent, it is yet erected as the paradoxical forum wherein the ‘silence of the sea, of the sky, merged into one indefinite immensity still as death’. All the same, the topology thus constituted is finally ungraspable through the senses since you ‘couldn’t distinguish the sea from the sky; there was nothing to see and nothing to hear. Not a glimmer, not a shape, not a sound’ (127). It is telling, too, that like Willem’s acknowledgement of the loss of self in *An Outcast of the Islands*, or Almayer’s imaginary fall to the ‘bottom’ of nowhere, the actual location grounding Jim’s crisis of consciousness in place and time is a zone of effacement. Like the rift Jim feels between himself and his fellow officers on the *Patna*, it is ‘a space that could not be traversed, by an obstacle that could not be overcome, by a chasm without bottom’ (119). As with the spatial analogues Conrad provides that rift via the seaborne real, Jim’s moral blind spot thereafter locates itself between the poles set out by Crary, in the ‘rich immediacy’ of a presence that is no less the site of ‘disintegration and loss’, or in my terms, the rich sensory ‘immediacy’ of Jim’s experience of the “modernist” abyss.

If it does not take much finessing to bring such ‘immediacy’ into the realm of phenomenology with its focus upon ‘[m]aking conscious sense from our carnal senses’ (Sobchack 2004: 1). Throughout the *Patna* chapters we find “sense” confounded with the embodied phenomena of Jim’s being in the world, a nexus compounded by tensions between actualities and their presentational forms within Conrad’s narrative. Here we enter upon the ambient grey area Marlow sees borne out by Jim’s ‘conviction’ that reality might prove more amenable than ‘the created terror of his imagination’ (126). But it is no less important to see that Jim’s ‘created terror’ is as inherently atmospheric as his author’s metaphysical suppositions. Such is the case with Jim’s pre-collision dreams wherein the ambient effects of life’s ‘hidden reality’ conjures real pleasures from ‘the charm of vagueness’ (58). It is telling, too, that Conrad’s presentation of the setting should be at its most unreal at the peak of Jim’s affective ‘languor’, when the ‘serenity which fostered the adventurous freedom of his thoughts’ was animated by both the concrete placidity of the ocean scene and the abstractions drawn from it—a topological sea reflecting the arcane motions of the cosmos. Such interplay is part of the fabric of Conrad’s depiction of Jim’s illusionistic and atmospheric *jouissance*, and parallels the metaphysical profundities Conrad provides the phenomenological conditions of the voyage. By reading Conrad’s landscapes as atmospheric *appearings*, we grasp the point at which the mutual presentation of action, setting, and moral valuation achieves symbolic force not only as the by

turns blinding or darkened imperial arena underwriting the Western ‘thoroughfare to the East’ (52), but as an embodied actuality.

While my synaesthetic focus may be overstated, I am by no means the first to point to the impressionistic atmospherics of *Lord Jim*. Ian Watt long ago noted the ‘pervasive atmosphere of ominous serenity’ on the *Patna*, referencing the interpretative suspensions created by the novel’s sequencing of ‘minutely presented physical sensations’ (1979: 271-2). As Watt indicates, Conrad himself raises the term in his preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus* where fiction is a craft of the ‘temperament’ that ‘endows passing events with their true meaning, and creates the moral, the emotional atmosphere of the place and time’ (NN 146). But Watt is thereafter rather vague. For him, atmospheres are reserved for narrative instances of mood or tenor that escape precise delineation: the ‘moral atmosphere’ in which Conrad invests the character of Kurtz in “Heart of Darkness” (in Watt 145), the ‘evocative atmosphere’ of Marlow’s narrations (253). For Jakob Lothe, writing a decade after Watt, such atmospherics are supplemented by ‘descriptive interludes with a distinctly lyrical quality’ productive of a ‘strong impression [...] of life as terse, unreal, and strangely dream-like’, indeed, of an ‘intensification of visual impression’ (1989: 141).¹⁶² Lothe is no less sensitive to the frame narrator’s two-fold task of rendering the universe confronted by Jim on the *Patna* ‘unsafe’ while retaining a simultaneous ‘sense of reassurance [...] in harmony with the surrounding elements’. This atmospheric aspect of the text is described in detail by Lothe (esp. 145-9) where the ‘lyric quality is essentially engendered by the intensity of the visual presentation’ (142), or the ‘subtly contrived evocation of atmosphere’ (148).¹⁶³

These observances can be temporalized through Watt’s much discussed notions of *delayed decoding* and *symbolic deciphering*, which, taken together, help us isolate narrative spans in which an atmosphere becomes dramatically activated as a continuous ground or *scene* of

¹⁶² Watt’s *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century* has been criticized for its ‘arbitrary’ application of modernist idioms to Conrad’s first works, and the historical flattening such an approach occasions. See Robert Caserio’s “Joseph Conrad, Dickensian Novelist of the Nineteenth Century: A Dissent from Ian Watt.” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. Vol. 36, No. 3 (Dec., 1981), pp. 337-347. Caserio’s comments are also applicable, in part, to Lothe’s narratological study, *Conrad’s Narrative Method* (1989), the latter upholding a sometimes de-historicizing view of both its investigative means and target texts.

¹⁶³ The lyric quality Lothe ascribes to *Lord Jim* would appear to promote an intensification not only of the intradiegetic imagery ascribed to those chapters, but the theatricalization of its focal means – the foregrounding of the hypothetical points of view by which a narrative scene is viewed. While the narrator places such imagery into the storyworld, no character within it would (or perhaps could) think it, just as the visual and cognitive processes of Jim’s dream world are left without contents. Yet by focalizing the moods and affects Jim experiences in real space and time, the focalizer stages a ‘temporarily reduced attitudinal distance between Conrad and his authorial narrator’ (142).

action.¹⁶⁴ Delayed decoding stands as a link between momentarily occluded or seemingly unrepresentable processes and the narrative structure by which their textual presence is cognized, for instance that moment from “Heart of Darkness” in which a rain of sticks upon the river is reconceived as volleys of arrows. As Watt puts it, we come upon a ‘gap between impression and understanding’ where the ‘delay in bridging the gap enacts the disjunction between the event and the observer’s understanding of it’ (op. cit. 176-7), a notion reflecting the productive hiatus between ‘the forward temporal progression of the mind, as it receives messages from the outside world, with the much slower reflexive process of making out their meaning’ (175). Second, the phenomena fuelling such processes is often depicted by impressionistic means:

Conrad seems to have been trying to find ways of giving direct narrative expression to the way in which the consciousness elicits meaning from its perceptions [...] One of the devices that he hit on was to present a sense impression and to withhold naming it or explaining its meaning until later (175)

Here the impression is not valued in and of itself but as a delaying tactic made for narrative effect. It is at this point, too, that Watt’s notification differs importantly from my durational model. For instance, the closure of deferral Watt notes at the end of the gap of cognition assumes that ‘decoding’ does in fact occur, which is not the case with abyssal figures where epistemological failure is less a hiatus than a continuous state one becomes temporarily aware of. So, too, as his examples show, Watt’s focus is ultimately on things that are there as opposed to the aporetic states and atmospheres my study targets. For Watt, the delay is directed towards the “ambience” of what is not extant or directly representable: ‘the impressionist rendering of surface phenomena’ (271), hence he inserts the temporal aspect of the process into the closed form of decoding rather than, as I do, making the delay itself the bearer of significance. Thus where aesthetic duration intends a passage-like process of cognitive closure “out of nothing”, delayed decoding merely slows down a more prosaic negotiation of phenomena.¹⁶⁵ Similarly, where such phenomena reflects higher order constructions, the moral, psychological,

¹⁶⁴ “Scene” is used here in the temporal sense developed by Mieke Bal (2009 [1985]: 100) – a textual span in which the time taken to narrate events is equal to the present-time duration of the story.

¹⁶⁵ Watt sees important moral residues to Conrad’s poetic strategies. Broadly, the durational lag of decoding tends to efface the performative potential of the impression, replacing it, as Watt sees of “*Heart of Darkness*”, by having the phenomenological assumptions of its method undergird Conrad’s ‘subjective moral impressionism’ rather than an otherwise productive problematization of the ‘relation of individual sense impressions to meaning’ (174 my emphasis). So the impression is for Watt a moral category carried in on the tails of its eventual decoding, and what import it has as aestheticized sensory phenomena are put in the service of ‘understanding’ first of ‘an inward and experiential kind’, and then as a more decided and historically inventive ‘posture of uncertainty and doubt’ (*ibid.*).

metaphysical, and existential excesses Watt collects as the ‘mysteries’ of ‘interior life’ – or, by extension, the ‘mainly inarticulate and unconscious confrontation of moral identities’ (285) – then the emphasis on ‘external and physical clues’ given of delayed decoding (279) cedes place to the more hermeneutic involvements of ‘symbolic deciphering’.

The development of Watt’s deciphering model ends there, however, and its awareness of thematic excess peters out into subsequent temporal analyses of Conrad’s forms as a river dissolves into its estuaries: chronological ‘disjunction’, the Flaubertian ‘scenic method’ and its Jamesian adaptations (showing rather than *relating* events), Bergsonian memory as the matrix for the ‘infinite permeation of a thousand different impressions which [...] ceased to exist the moment they are named’ (*Time and Free Will* 1889: 133), Joycean and Woolfian stream-of-consciousness, Frank’s “spatial form” (as practiced by Eliot and Pound), the experiments with Ford Madox Ford concerning temporal impressionism and *progression d’effet*, Beach’s ‘chronological looping method’, Genettian ‘anachrony’, and so on. These transitions and frames are so well mapped that rehearsing them here would be tedious. Nonetheless, it is worth recalling how temporal frames are called in to resolve Watt’s analysis, more pertinently how ‘[s]ymbolic deciphering is used for the specific purpose of producing an atmosphere of intensely expectant interrogation’ (285) – the move carried through my durational model.

To summarize this section, the atmospherics that critics note in relation to *Lord Jim*’s ambiguous symbolic realm may be seen to promote the novel’s ambient qualities at the expense of the veridical. Indeed, one effect of underlining the ineffable aspects of the novel’s places is that the reader becomes aware of the process of trying to peer beyond the clouds and veils by which Jim’s actuality is shrouded. And while the ultimately theatricalized process Conrad thereby inaugurates offers insight into Jim by rehearsing the flaw in his nature – making a “real place” of what his imagination projects – we have yet to address the tensions of that transition as a scenic becoming. Here I do not mean the lag between the telling of events and reflections subsequently made upon them (Lothe 146), nor even the productive disparity between what we are given to *see* and what the unseen things come to perform as poetic utterances the moment they are focalized. Instead we need to look to the process by which places and selves jointly *appear* as an aesthetic effect, for which point we must turn to Patusan. There, as Douglas Kerr cannily indicates in *Eastern Figures*, authority might be founded upon Jim’s credibility, though he ‘maintains it by performance’. To this extent Jim’s ‘statecraft’ is ‘a kind of stagecraft’ (67), a theatricalized reading Kerr substantiates through Conrad’s evocation of that setting. And if the ‘romantic language’ and ‘spectacle of illusion’ Kerr sees Conrad providing for the *Patna*

descriptions create the ‘glamorous atmosphere’ and ‘appropriate lighting for Jim’s fascinating performance of lordship’ (75), we will also find in those atmospherics the scene of a searching moral performativity, if not evidence to bolster Conrad’s need to remind readers that it is yet ‘a far cry from Prospero’s Island to Patusan’ (Letter to Harriet Capes 22.03.1902 *CL II*: 394).

Patusan as the Gates of the Real

‘I don’t suppose any of you have ever heard of Patusan?’ Marlow resumed, after a silence occupied in the careful lighting of a cigar. ‘It does not matter [...]’ (*LJ* 203)

In answering Marlow’s question, it is the process of individuation at Patusan that matters rather than, say, knowing that Homer’s land of the Lotus Eaters may have been modelled on the island of Djerba off the Tunisian coast, or that when she wrote *The Voyage Out*, Virginia Woolf had been no nearer South America than the Iberian peninsula. In the case of Conrad, it is of course *interesting* that despite his relocating the settlement to the northwest coast of Sumatra, the fictional Patusan appears to be tied in its platial detail to the Berau region of North East Borneo. Conrad had, after all, visited Borneo, but for reasons that remain unclear, that setting was shifted in the process of composition.¹⁶⁶ In any case, the sort of milieu we have been following in the present study is less concerned with the accuracy of Patusan’s comprising ‘[t]hirty miles of forest shut it off from the sight of an indifferent world’ (209) than it is with the ‘nowhere to go to’ into which Jim jettisons himself after unburdening himself to Marlow (157) – and as Marlow says, such nowheres do not matter.¹⁶⁷ As may be seen in the text block reproduced below, however, Patusan is both place and abyssal non-place, a make believe zone in which the dynamic aspects of the actual setting (the gerund constructions *stretching*, *rolling*, and *glimmering*) are thrown back on themselves by descriptors invoking sensory blockage or indiscernibility: ‘dark’, ‘brooding gloom’, ‘vast and monotonous’, ‘faint’. Here the ‘gloom’ signals an atmospheric

¹⁶⁶ This information is reported by Richard Curle in *Joseph Conrad and his Characters* (London: Heinemann, 1957: 40), and discussed in the Watts and Hampson edition of *Lord Jim* I am using (2000: 362, n.40). For Conrad’s staging of Patusan as geographical actuality see *LJ* 221ff; and for a more general discussion of Conrad’s locational strategies: Jerry Allen’s *The sea years of Joseph Conrad* (Doubleday 1965) and Norman Sherry’s *Conrad’s Eastern World* (1966).

¹⁶⁷ Herman Melville has also written of the actuality of such a nowhere; not only in *Typee* (1846) and *Omoo* (1847) but notably in *Moby Dick*, where writing of a fictional South Pacific island he says, ‘[i]t is not down on any map; true places never are’ (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1988 [1851]: 55).

occasioning sufficiently palling to ensure that no light escapes the scene save that of the reflections of the rivers winding through it – just as the distant sea is for once not activated as a zone of escape so much as the enclosing ‘polished’ surface of impression isolating the place from the world (238):

below us stretched the land, the great expanse of the forests, sombre under the sunshine, rolling like a sea, with glints of winding rivers, the grey spots of villages, and here and there a clearing, like an islet of light amongst the dark waves of continuous tree-tops. A brooding gloom lay over this vast and monotonous landscape; the light fell on it as if into an abyss. The land devoured the sunshine; only far off, along the coast, the empty ocean, smooth and polished within the faint haze, seemed to rise up to the sky in a wall of steel.

Such is Patusan to those standing before it, a gloom lost in ‘the vast expanse of the forest country, a dark sleeping sea of sombre green undulating as far as the violet and purple range of mountains’ (234). Once again, the place of Jim’s moral and existential rehabilitation is not quite actual, but a now forested “oceanic” nowhere collapsing Stein’s ‘destructive element’ (200) into what is in effect a green and rolling version of the Indian Ocean’s ‘circular stillness of water and sky’ (55). But Jim, too, is no less virtual a figure; as Marlow says – somewhat disingenuously since this is his account – ‘I don’t know why he should always have appeared to me symbolic’ (238). For all Marlow’s seeking in the shadows, it would appear that Jim is susceptible to aesthetic structuring, ‘a figure set up on a pedestal to represent in his persistent youth the power, and perhaps the virtues, of races that never grow old, that have emerged from the gloom’ (238). Here a more performative basis can be accorded Jim; but this is no less than we have come to expect from Jim’s surroundings. Patusan falls into this pattern where its significance is generated both through symbolical transfers and as the more pliable if still productive outcome of its textual means. Like the darkened landscape into which Jim consigns his fate at end of the novel, Jim’s occluded essence remains as ineffable as the figurative excess Reuven Tsur has observed in his cognitive study of sacred verse. For Tsur, the figurative is only part of the equation since readers are no less induced to ‘perceive a non-conceptual state of mind emerging from a *stretch* of conceptual language’ (7 my emphasis), that is to say, durationally. To extend Jacques Aubert’s epiphanic model to absurd lengths, what Conrad gives us with the Patusan half of the novel is a twenty-two chapter ‘symbolic break’ prior to Jim’s death, only instead of the *presentation* we might then expect (the epiphanic unveiling of achieved moral stature) we find an inconclusive atmosphere flickering over the close of the text. Jim may have survived his fall from the *Patna* into the ocean of the real as he does not immersion in the peripheral wilderness

of the Dutch East Indies, but in either case the place is no less fudged than he is – as befits one standing in for races ‘emerged from the gloom’, the ambience is the meaning.

But the inconclusiveness is precisely the point. Bernd Hüppauf has worked with the unsharp or “fuzzy image” in a manner congruent to Conrad’s scenic mobilities and the performative atmospherics they enable: ‘Fuzziness draws the gaze into a sphere of uncertainties that leads to disorientation and, at the same time, captures the gaze, fascinating it’. There is a productive (he does not use the word performative) confusion in such disorientation, one that ‘frees the image from the lifeless sameness of identity’ (245) in a manner we might align with Marlow’s *suggestions* as to the actuality underwriting Jim’s character. Indeed, for Hüppauf, too, there is a larger historical and aesthetic process at work in which ‘modern unsharpness’ needs to be read against the precisions of instrumental reason. And where he sees both, for instance, in the occasionally blurred aesthetics of photography’s early development (238), I would raise the parallel case of a *literary* modernism where equal to the visual realm, ‘indeterminacy and vagueness [...] cannot be appropriately comprehended as negativity and lack’ (233). Furthermore, as Hüppauf reminds us, ‘[v]ague contains the Latin word *vagus*, i.e. roaming, and it is this non-systematic movement in space, which is imitated by the eye in front of a fuzzy image’, and from which a new visual mode is constituted out of indeterminacy – just as the abyss gives rise to its own poetic performativity.

More pointedly, watching Jim looking over the Patusan landscape, Marlow is given to contemplate how the *Patna* incident ‘had given a new direction to [Jim’s] life’; only by remembering such failure as ‘a shadow in the light’ (238), Marlow underlines the illusionary quality of the episode’s continued presence in his mind. The phrasing is important, not merely because the chapter immediately following these words describes the increasingly positive reputation developing around Jim, but for drawing the terms of his success into relation with Patusan as a kingdom of shadows and voids, one with the further complexity of being home to entrenched communities of the Malay Archipelago’s diverse ethnic heritage. The restoration of Jim’s honour and self-image might come to be inscribed in geographical terms, but such terms remain indeterminate. Indeed, in having become ‘the greatest thing around for many a day’s journey’, or in one having to travel ‘a long weary way through the jungle before you passed beyond the reach of its voice’ (244), such reputation appears more virtual than substantial, a creation of the absurd ‘isolation’ of his power (243). Even here, Jim’s hold on the landscape is not projected upon it as an act of imperium, but takes its more *voidal* ‘tone from the stillness and gloom of the land without a past’ just as the ‘truth’ Jim comes to stand for is found to share

‘something of the nature of that silence through which it accompanied you into unexplored depths, heard continuously by your side, penetrating, far-reaching’ (244). To this extent, the recuperation of Jim’s moral substance takes on the abyssal ‘tone’ and ‘depths’ of his surroundings, and so his ethical status in the text partakes as much of that place’s ‘stillness and gloom’ as of the expanding circles of its iteration by the colonized peoples beneath him.

It is discomfiting, of course, that with *Lord Jim* the arena of one man’s restitution yet remains an ‘unexplored’ if still demonstratively peopled land, one capable of *devouring* illumination, and so swallowing its own possibilities for meaning as later it swallows Marlow’s thoughts through the ‘great silence of earth, sky, and sea’ (290). In a like manner, such silence absorbs Jim without releasing him from that cloud or veil that has presumably bedevilled Marlow’s and our understanding of him from one end of the text to the other. Accordingly, the geographical actuality in which Jim finds himself at Patusan might be simultaneously and symbolically refigured as one more nowhere, one more occasioning of non-being, and therefore as mirroring the abyssal maritime arena constructed in the novel’s first half. But the weight of conventional allusion Conrad makes to the spirit of place or nature’s necessarily pathetic aspect is not foundational; such figures merely buttress the larger performativity of the setting, the locational mysteries which ‘made [Jim] their own’ (226), and which fail to release him, even in death, from that landscape’s ‘world of shades’ (352). Hence from the first we might mark the Kurtz-like *claiming* of Jim by his atmospherically immersive environment, a category collapsing everything within his glance, but which immediately comes to offer not only its countering gaze, but something more potent:

He looked with an owner’s eye at the peace of the evening, at the river, at the houses, at the everlasting life of the forests, at the life of all mankind, at the secrets of the land, at the pride of his own heart; but it was they that possessed him and made him their own to the innermost thought, to the slightest stir of blood, to the last breath. (125-6)

Here Patusan is not abyssal merely because its shadowy actuality embodies a pervading spirit of ‘sinister reality’ (224), nor by its appearing to generate action – the event of Jim’s being claimed by the land; such status is more interior than this, residing in the ‘spectral’ effusiveness with which Jim’s ‘innermost thought’ is colonized. Here, too, it is the close relationality between self and the spirit of place that comprises much of the ‘fabulous value of the bargain’ effected between Jim’s acts of self-making, and his captivity to that process. To this degree, the symbiosis between self and landscape Conrad rehearses at Patusan appears more properly formative of the sorts of mental spaces and ecologies I will shortly define in terms of their

scenographic arena. All the same, this symbiotic arena entails a kind of aporetic becoming, too, an illusional reality with its own spectral existence. Beneath what Conrad will later call Patusan's already 'obscure surface' one has only the truth of a kind of 'illusion' or 'oblivion', here the nowhereness of both life and its geographical occasioning:

I have that feeling about me now; perhaps it is that feeling which has incited me to tell you the story, to try to hand over to you, as it were, its very existence, its reality – the truth disclosed in a moment of illusion (281)

This is one of the central lessons of the novel, for Jim is true to a self whose presence gestures towards symbolic meanings that never come to pass, or which, as with the poetics Tsur allocates to the numinous, allows us only to 'perceive a non-conceptual state of mind' (7) out of Jim's already obscure interior processes. Thus where Jim is still the remorseless explorer of illusions, one ready at the very end of the novel to '[pass] away under a cloud, inscrutable at heart, forgotten, unforgiven, and excessively romantic', we are merely repeating the central drama of *Lord Jim*: a human shade engaging in the actions and comportments of a real world, but who is finally an 'evoked ghost' adrift upon a world whose materiality does not stop it from being the home of illusions (351). And if Patusan is no more real than the Indian Ocean setting leading up to Jim's fall from grace, a geographical unreal that endlessly offers its refusal to locate the individual save 'within the wall of forests fringed with white foam, within the coast that under the western sun looks like the very stronghold of the night', that darkling 'stronghold' is to be associated less with any actual coastal interior than the figurative arena wherein Jim's 'shadowy ideal of conduct' (351) comes to be reified. Conrad's accomplishment in the often maligned second half of the novel is to have made the abyssal scene of Patusan actual without losing its symbolic depth, a task abetted by having raised impressionistic allusiveness to the status of sensory appearance – or as Seel puts it in his work on atmosphere, an actuality offering us 'a sensuous consideration of what is indeterminate in things' (2005: 16).

This last point needs bearing out. In each of the several moonlit scenes in the novel, the indeterminate is raised as a different kind of reality, on this occasion bound up with Marlow's celebrated talk of going home, of return, and of the need to 'render an account' following the period of roaming the world as one might the bourn of the unknown: 'We wander in our thousands over the face of the earth, the illustrious and the obscure', a period of trial after which one returns to the people and places left behind (206). The larger passage can seem obscure, but Marlow goes on to raise Wordsworthian echoes of belonging to a particular non-colonial

landscape, in which one has desire to ‘meet the spirit that dwells within the land, under its sky, in its air, in its valleys, and on its rises, in its fields, in its waters and its trees – a mute friend, judge, and inspirer’ (206). The interest of this passage lies partly in its following a rather *Gothick* description of Jim’s home at Patusan, and partly for its ventriloquial echoes of “Tintern Abbey”, a poem in which Wordsworth’s ‘sense sublime’ denotes the fusing of the natural spaces of world with ‘the mind of man’ (lines 96-100).¹⁶⁸ One result of this conflation of Patusan’s ghostly realm with romantic notions of an essentialized union of ‘nature and the language of sense’ (line 110) is to release categories of poetic belonging upon a place that is not entirely actual, and so to reify that which is most virtual about Patusan, its ghostly presence as the home of illusion and mortality. In the passage we are about to read, Conrad effects an almost gleeful subversion of romantic figures, not just the ‘conical hill split in two’ with its halves ‘leaning slightly apart’ or the moon waning ‘three days after the full’,¹⁶⁹ but the theatricalized awareness of natural events. Hence we hear how the moon

rose exactly behind these hills, its diffused light at first throwing the two masses into intensely black relief, and then the nearly perfect disc, glowing ruddily, appeared, gliding upwards between the sides of the chasm, till it floated away above the summits, as if escaping from a yawning grave in gentle triumph. “Wonderful effect,” said Jim by my side. “Worth seeing. Is it not?” (205)

The ‘effect’ Jim qualifies here is nicely ironic, highlighting his author’s awareness of the game being played, one in which Patusan is both a knowingly melodramatic backdrop and a forum for profound reflection. The indeterminate, it appears, is no less a rhetorical flourish.

This twofold approach to landscape is of course a trope of the *fin de siècle* period, visible for instance, in Arnold Böcklin’s popular canvases from the 1880s. To borrow Conrad’s descriptives, one might think of the split verticals, ‘intensely black relief’, ‘yawning grave’, and dubious ‘gentle triumph’ of each of the five versions of “*Die Toteninsel*” (‘The Island of the Dead’).¹⁷⁰ While in all likelihood not citing some definite visual analogue, the description

¹⁶⁸ [...] a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man (96-100)

¹⁶⁹ This lesser measure, a moon past its emblematic fullness, might put us in mind of Jim’s being ‘an inch, perhaps two, under six feet’ (45).

¹⁷⁰ Arnold Böcklin’s much anthologized painting was self-described as a ‘dream picture’. The artist painted five versions between 1880 and 1886, and in actuality – or through the many subsequent printings of the tableau – inspired a series of symphonic tone poems including those of Schulz-Beuthen 1890,

Conrad stages yet invites a symbolist scheme by which images link to the moon's 'dark powers' and 'ascending spirit'. Indeed, we might be forgiven for wondering whether Jim's 'wonderful effect' deflates the mood of profundity as surely as if *Lord Jim*'s Chester, or Bob Stanton, or the insane second engineer (he of the pink toads) had wandered down from Böcklin's tableau to tie off death's dinghy. Certainly Conrad is not above such moments, as the cadaver with the protruding tongue at the close of "An Outpost of Progress" shows, but how different is Jim's statue-like gaze over Patusan, at any rate, the shadowy principedom Marlow makes of it? Of course Conrad is not quite so obvious in his depiction, but sets Jim out in tension to his surroundings as a figure of "solidity" whose project in the world is finally as indefinite as Patusan is, a tension made obvious for us where, as Marlow puts it, 'the shadows were very real around us, but Jim by my side looked very stalwart, as though nothing – not even the occult powers of moonlight – could rob him of his reality in my eyes' (224). But this solidity, the essence of which has been from the first chapters impossible to grasp, merely underlines the illusionism of Patusan as spectacle. After all, Jim also plays his illusionistic part in a visual sense. We have already seen him as a figure before the devouring space of the region into which he has been sent: there Kerr calls him 'intensely visible – a cynosure', not just 'incorrigibly theatrical' for the scenographic factors I have listed, but as Kerr argues, set out from the human crowd he crows through the force of his self-presencing (68ff.). Nonetheless, the space of Jim's reification is as abyssal as Jim himself, with the paradoxical result that what is made actual is the very illusionism of Jim's role there, that is to say, the trope of his performance. Patusan thus becomes the zone of merely symbolic gestures, a non-place on which to construct an *apparently* stalwart non-self. And as of Jim's otherwise substantial physical and status-directed presence as a European in the colonial tropics, Conrad all too often finds other ways of putting out his tongue at such value systems, as where Jim's approach to 'greatness as genuine as any man ever achieved' is closely accompanied by the 'insulting hullabaloo' of a 'troop of monkeys' (223).

Such absurd moments aside, the point is that the world of shades offered by Patusan undergirds a figure whose very history denies the efficacy of symbolic usages: Jim might be part of a symbolist drama, but with his leap from the Patna he has become too modern, too solidly meaningless, to meld closely into a *meaningful* landscape. This, too, is modernist, for there is finally no Wordsworthian presence attachable to one's surroundings by which the individual

Sergei Rachmaninoff 1909, Max Reger 1913, and so on. The image was clearly widely known: for instance, Strindberg's 1907 play, *The Ghost Sonata*, ends with a musically accompanied presentation of the painting.

might solidify his or her identity in relation to it. Even their shared atmosphere, potent as this might be, is finally unplaceable, a luridly foliated tropical retreat offering little more than nostalgia for a more meaningful engagement with place. It is of course apposite that such nostalgia is raised more upon linguistic or imagistic lines than ontologically substantiated by the text. The perspectival modes by which darkness and emptiness come to mobilize Conrad's visual descriptions in the novel often do little more than offer conceptual anchors by which their author's sense of physical and moral nothingness may be communicated. Thus in drawing a more general statement of the role of landscapes in *Lord Jim* as a whole, we see how abyssal modes may be centred around repetition or paradoxical motion as seen of the *Patna*, or found to synaesthetically incorporate sensible experience at Patusan where 'the noise of the white surf' overpowers 'the voice of [Jim's] fame' (209) or, a little later, where one remains 'too dazzled by the glitter of the sea below his feet to see him clearly' (221). Such usages anchor in sense our reception of the aporetic qualities of Conrad's settings as readily as they convert themselves to thematic usages concerning the *object* of conceptualization. This is not perhaps so different from Wordsworth's romantic claim that nature is itself an 'anchor' of heightened reflection (line 110), nor, at a stretch, to cognitive theories of conceptual blending being found to emerge from sensory experience.¹⁷¹ At any rate, what we find in the novel is how the physical basis of the encounter of consciousness with world comes to be refined into ideational concepts through categories of abstraction that yet remain inflected by the bodily experiences that gave rise to them. But Conrad is a *late* romantic, and so the language of sense reception, potent as it is in his construal of atmospheres and landscapes, is hardly the basis of ethical understanding, let alone of what Wordsworth calls 'moral being'. For Conrad, such 'being' cedes way to its voidal modernist double wherein morality is not to be anchored in anything save some sort of fidelity to action, the labour value of an otherwise collapsible, otherwise meaningless system of beliefs.

My point, however, is to see how Conrad's landscape constructions appear to encode a number of processes between cognition and embodiment. For instance, how do the responses of his characters to the physical places in which they find themselves reflect not only the sorts of sensory aporia humans face before the world, but a more abyssal collating of darkness or obscurity with cognitive failure? Indeed, Patusan is shown to blend both possibilities at once, with perceptual challenges both sustaining the conceptual categories by which landscapes are

¹⁷¹ Mark Turner claimed in his 1993 book, *The Literary Mind* (Oxford UP), that '[c]onceptual blending is a fundamental instrument of the every day mind, used in our basic construal of all our realities' (93). See also: Mark Turner's and Gilles Fauconnier's "Conceptual integration and formal expression" (*Metaphor & Symbolic Activity*, 1995, v10 (n3): 183-204).

assigned “moral” value, and knocking away the sureties by which the supposed purity of place may be upheld. In this way, Patusan is both a fitting home for Jim’s sickened spirit, and one admitting of chaos. But this duality is in fact no more than a ‘[w]onderful effect’ (205), a hedge against a real that continually threatens to unseat the comfort of one’s illusions, as where the archipelago insulating Patusan is broken down by the inchoate force of nature, hence ‘[i]n the offing a chain of islands, dark, crumbling shapes, stand out in the everlasting sunlit haze like the remnants of a wall breached by the sea’ (221). It is a pattern replicated in the synaesthetic structure of so many of Conrad’s tropes, which as Cytowic reminds us, is a mode reflective of that which is ‘ineffable’ or ‘indescribable by language’ (319). Here, too, Conrad instructs us how to read his text, for *Lord Jim* rehearses its cognitive difficulties not just through aporia, but the synaesthetically muddled connectivities of sensory order as where ‘the land devoured the sunshine’ (238) or, now in a more positive milieu, Jim and Jewel walk while a ‘lovely night seemed to breath on them a soft caress’ (263).

On one hand, then, we are provided with natural descriptions that have no attached sensory phenomena such that Jim is ‘half-creat[ed]’ as though ‘a symbolic figure in a picture’ (140), while on the other we discover that there was nothing extraordinary about the picture in the first place, that it was merely “natural”. This retreat from the symbolic apparatus of his tropes is one of Marlow’s more endearing traits, as where in the midst of an otherwise continuous homodiegetic-intradiegetic account of the events following Jim’s abandonment of the *Patna*, Marlow suddenly foregrounds the unmetaphysical plainness of the abyss into which Jim has delivered himself: ‘And all the time it was only a clouded sky, a sea that did not break, the air that did not stir. Only a night; only a silence’ (127). With these lines the moral and existential abyss the text has been creating are naturalized, and so the arena of poesis thus intended subsides into the mere welter of tides, waves, and weather conditions. The sea and sky may remain elements of Wordsworth’s ‘mighty world’ (line 106) as they do Conrad’s ‘indefinite immensity’ (127), but they are not *inherently* more than this.¹⁷² Likewise, Conrad’s meaning formations often play on the gap between virtual and actual categories, and so remain as susceptible to atmospheric variance as they are open to ironic deflation – the self-consciously

¹⁷² Such agentive settings have romantic antecedents, for instance, the fictive motions we find in the overhanging ‘craggy steep’ (377) at Ullswater from the famous rowing episode from Book I of “The Prelude”: ‘a huge peak, black and huge, / As if with voluntary power instinct, / upreared its head [...] with purpose of its own / And measured motion like a living thing’ (378-84). Wordsworth is of course less known for his abyssal potential than essentialist readings of nature as transformed in the embodied mind: ‘The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse, / The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul / Of all my moral being’ (“Tintern Abbey” 109-11).

mocking *only* of that sequence of narrative locations wherein Jim's moral stature was compromised: *sky, sea, air, night, silence*. Moreover, this cataloguing of forums for Jim's failure is underlined through abyssal tropes combining tropological and phenomenological categories, a listing trumped by the performative rejoinder of Marlow's seemingly conclusive outburst whereby '[h]is saved life was over for want of ground under his feet, for want of sights for his eyes, for want of voices for his ears. Annihilation – hey!' (127). What this retreat from the numinous shows is how the conversion of actual topographies into mental ones works both ways – that the Wordsworthian sense of the unity of figures and landscapes is not necessarily positive, but can result in the self coming to be alienated in the more modern sense not of a fall from grace (Jim's jump from the *Patna*), but of the excoriation of the terms by which *romantic* atmospheres are upheld.

Jim's death occasions one such downgrading of the conversion of natural phenomena into human meaning, for his vanishing into an irretrievable 'world of shades' (352) can in no way be made to constitute the 'commonplace surroundings' Conrad cites in the "Author's Note" (44). Nonetheless, the solipsism Marlow unveils at the close of the novel is not just opposed to the workaday world we should remain with, but to the false literary ambience Jim dies to, in which: 'The sky over Patusan was blood-red, immense, streaming like an open vein. An enormous sun nestled crimson amongst the tree-tops, and the forest below had a black and forbidding face' (349). These phrases are glaringly "symbolic", but Marlow's here garish effusions follow hard upon Jewel's efforts to clasp Jim to her own ambient realm in opposition to that of Jim's finally mortal ideal, hence the opposition of the biliousness of this 'open vein' of darkness and mortality with Jewel's cries of falsehood (349). Thus in the equation of selves and settings, one might say that the focus on consciousness in the first half of the novel is more modern than the second in which the settings seem to take over at the expense of human depth. As should now be evident, with the Patusan chapters Conrad himself comes to mock the staginess of his settings, an outlook that might be more defensible were the author to maintain his line with regard to his habit of defusing constructions ('Only a night'), and so to ironize Jim's 'Arcadian happiness (I won't say anything about innocence) in the bush' (171).

What such outbursts demonstrate, however, is that the lugubrious aspects of Patusan's scenery are no more or less real or virtual than any in the novel, hence Conrad's tendency to theatricalize his own settings. At times, too, the imperial backdrop is just that, as outside the court hearing in the first part of the novel:

Under the shade of a lonely tree in the courtyard, the villagers connected with the assault case sat in a picturesque group, looking like a chromo-lithograph of a camp in a book of Eastern travel. One missed the obligatory thread of smoke in the foreground and the pack-animals grazing. A blank yellow wall rose behind overtopping the tree, reflecting the glare. (159)

Indeed, the staged quality of this passage is sustained by its temporal flatness, something we will want to recall when we turn to the theatricalized surfaces and depths of the novel's central Stein chapter. Here Conrad cannot help but have Marlow draw attention to the more complex aspects of his scenographic awarenesses, not only the temporal means by which the artifice of such moments is activated within interiority, but the sensorially phenomenal attributes of geographical actuality, let alone the picturesque un-modernist villagers. At other times, however, the text is more upfront with its effects, as where the more typical slow fading of the light around Jim cedes place to briefer moments of illumination. Sometimes these can be startlingly effective, as where in the midst of a lightning storm the 'sustained and dazzling flickers seemed to last an unconscionable time':

The growl of the thunder increased steadily while I looked at him, distinct and black, planted solidly upon the shores of a sea of light. At the moment of greatest brilliance the darkness leaped back with a culminating crash, and he vanished before my dazzled eyes as utterly as though he had been blown to atoms. (173)

The suddenness of this effect is rarer in *Lord Jim* than Marlow's more customary unveilings of revelation, but as Conrad seems to realize, the flashings of the instant may offer a like opportunity to salvage *presence* from instances of aporia. Here we might be reminded how Jim is more habitually set loose over the earth in the midst of a temporally extended darkness, one in which he is only occasionally glimpsed in something like profundity:

[t]here are moments, too, when I believe him to have been only a disembodied spirit astray amongst the passions of this earth – surrendering himself faithfully to the claim of his own world of shades' (351-2)

We are now ready, I think, to return to the performativity of the durational landscape model, yet I will end this section by spending a moment longer with Patusan's ghostly presences. If we have seen Conrad incorporating interiority and geographically apt linking atmospheres into his presentation of Jim's final home, we might still spotlight the way in which the novel indicates the degree to which the "out there" of the colonial world is supportive or destructive of human efforts to find a place in it. I want to flesh out this issue through notions drawn from Timothy

Morton's *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (2007) and *The Ecological Thought* (2010). In the earlier book, the central thesis concerns how the 'dreamy quality of immersion in nature is what keeps us separate from us', from which it follows that the true entry into the "ecological" – an unmediated being there of and within the world – 'means being without nature' (204). That is to say, Morton interrogates our often literally toxic cultural fallouts by wondering whether our self-limiting view of human consciousness might better see the effect of our actions upon the world were it to do away with the divisive concept of a natural world separate to our own. By promulgating a gulf between natural and human existence, or in raising some prototypical and safely Lacanian symbolic divide between the imaginary and the real (that which 'resists symbolization absolutely'),¹⁷³ Morton finds developed cultures essentializing both sides of the divide. In line with his argument for a positive embracing of non-nature, and as we shall see with D. H. Lawrence in the next chapter, Morton is an advocate of 'nonhuman' being as a way of wriggling out from the knots bequeathed by the nature/human, world/mind divide.

Where Morton's views are dragged into alignment with *Lord Jim*, we find that there are a number of places on offer in the *Patna* and small boat passages of the novel where Jim approaches a nonhuman perspective, of having actually tumbled himself into Stein's 'destructive element' and so quite literally falling 'into a dream like a man falls into the sea' (*LJ* 200). From his rather different context, and without concerning himself as to the moral issues of abandoning social or professional obligations, Morton would appear to intimate that the image of a man submitting himself to the sea is not to atomize the self in the midst of an alien medium, but to erase the distinction that promotes the idea of the self being necessarily separate from one's given natural environment. So as with 'the East' or 'the destructive element', the abyss of authentic experience is taken over from the contradictions and wilful erasures of imperial hegemonics to be supplanted by Morton's 'deep' or 'dark' ecologies of being (respectively 2007, 2010) – only Morton is here replacing the romantic poesis stemming from tropes of depth or darkness with the actuality of the sublime. So phrased, the problem bequeathed by the romanticist conception of the world involves its most typical compensatory move, what in the vein of ecological ungroundedness Morton decries as the 'poisoned chrysalis of the beautiful soul' (2007: 205). The problem Morton sees here concerns the raising of consciousness, more particularly, its equally sublime imaginative faculty ('infinite inner space' 2012: 129) as a way of replicating the lost linkage between the presumably non-human natural world and ourselves. Jim

¹⁷³ Compare Lacan's *Le séminaire, Livre I: Les Ecrits techniques de Freud* (Paris: Seuil, 1975: 80).

is presented with a similar programme in coming to Patusan, only carried over in terms of the self's lost honour and status rather than notions of a *lost* nature. All the same, nature in *Lord Jim* is true to colonial form where it embraces the colonized along with their landscapes, and thus reifies the very division the 'beautiful soul' was meant to finesse, through which process Jim was to have made his way back to the culturally defined honour he now lacks. In order to see this last point at work we need only look to Jewel as symbolic of a naturalized human beauty meeting Jim half way. In this sense, their union rehearses the romanticist (and more prosaically romantic) imperialist elevation of productive west with natural east, the 'beautiful soul' as set against the beauteous nature of Jewel and Patusan, or in the terms of *Lord Jim*, the fallen romantic self and the imperial beyond.

What remains for Morton, as for Conrad, is alertness to the abyssal dynamics by which, as Morton has it, one goes about 'dissolving the barrier between "over here" and "over there," or more fundamentally, the metaphysical illusion of rigid, narrow boundaries between inside and outside' (2010: 39). Here Morton's ecological view appears to approximate Conrad's aesthetic practices in offering views as to what that dissolved unitary ecology might look like. This is only half of the problem, however, for the kinds of 'naturalness' Morton wants to critique in ecological terms, and Conrad in moral and existential terms, is only another 'temporal illusion' by which notions of naturalness are sustained, and into which frame one places the seasons, the stages of life, or the life cycle of nations. Indeed, where the 'neat aesthetic frame' of presentation is seen to break, Morton sees '[h]orror and disgust' arising (ibid.) since the human version of temporal change is culturally tied up with our needs rather than those of the global habitat as a whole (2010: 44). Thus wherever non-human processes are seen to impinge upon our human sense of natural proportion and temporal flow, it becomes harder to sustain the illusion of the orderly progressions of nature, and so disasters, even Jim's more personal one, reflect the affective traumas of nature's denaturalization. The terms may depend on our contemporary ecocritical perspectives, but Conrad, especially with the *Patna* chapters, sets up Jim's fall through rendering the world as being as abstract as it is ghoulishly symbolic in the Patusan half of the text.

Thus if *Lord Jim* presents us with a watered down parson's son version of Willems's tribulations of identity in *An Outcast of the Islands* and Kurtz's Nietzschean project in "Heart of Darkness", yet it is the process of disappearing into the scenery that for a time rescues Jim from the ignominy of being swallowed up by awareness of the illusionary quality of human action. That there are tragic consequences to the refiguration of Jim out of Patusan's "wilderness" void

might be thematically important, but it hardly reflects the main task of the colonial poetics by which Conrad enriches his tale. And just as Morton problematizes the dangerous ease by which the figure is always separable from his or her ground, even at his most aesthetically attenuated, Conrad appears more interested in what his tropes make possible as ethical determinants rather than in their potential relatedness to constructs like *nature* or *world*. Conrad's landscapes and seascapes are rather more than backdrops, but they remain as exchangeable as a sailor's ports in a way that being 'one of us' is not, just as the 'eternal constancy' (351) of the Marlovian elite trumps the more flightily malevolent 'spirit that dwells within the land' (206). At Patusan, however, Conrad has given himself the dramatically effective, if ethnically colour-blind task of rendering Jim's surroundings empty and dark while simultaneously populating them with peoples and settlements, the very communities given to transmit Jim's fame and reputation. The risk of this aesthetics is that where, as Conrad says of Jim's public role in the closing lines of Chapter XXVII, 'you would have to paddle, pole, or track a long weary way' before ceasing to hear that role 'tinged with wonder and mystery on the lips of whispering men', the reality is that such men are not creatures of the 'gloom of the land without a past', but its unalienated and inalienable residents. The theatre of *Imperium* may have a darkened auditorium and wings, but dressed, as here, in their nationally styled blackout suits, it does not lack for stage crew.

The Interview with Stein: The Theatrical Heart of the Novel

The centre of interest throughout Roderick is in Rowland Mallet's consciousness, and the drama is the very drama of that consciousness – which I had of course to make sufficiently acute in order to enable it, like a set and lighted scene, to hold the play.

Henry James, "Preface to Volume 1 of the New York Edition" (1934 [1907]: 16)

Marlow's visit to the respected and successful trader, Stein, divides the *Patna* and Patusan portions of the novel while offering a means by which two much larger movements of the text may be arranged as part of a single thematic structure – 'to hold the play' as James says.¹⁷⁴ While critics sometimes essay such unity, it is nonetheless difficult to find

¹⁷⁴ This is hardly an uncontested view of the novel. In a letter to Edward Garnett, Conrad writes, 'Yes! You've put your finger on the plague spot. The division of the book into two parts, which is the basis for your criticism, demonstrates to me once more your amazing insight' (CL2 302; November 1900). Conrad also concedes to his 'want of illuminating imagination' by which 'to obtain a sort of lurid light out of the

commentators willing to raise the sometimes positive romanticism of the second half of the novel over the explorations of consciousness in the first. Even where I show, here, how one might posit an abyssal comprehension of the spatial totality of the novel, the existential balance of its halves remains at issue; indeed, how many readers will want to make use of the fact that the *Patna* scenes operate as the field of projections whereby fantasy is laid over the actual, and the Patusan segment as its opposite, a topographical real laid over the realm of illusions as a volcanic crust is formed upon the magmatic flux beneath. In this section, then, I suggest that the Stein chapter's scenographic apparatus instructs us how to interpret the novel's theatricalized moral scheme as a conscious whole. Further, I show that Conrad's poetic negotiations are designed to capture Jim's traumatized subjectivity without doing violence either to the flux of his interior processes, or by essentializing his author's critique of imperial modernity. As will shortly be made evident, this dual process comes to be carried out through the lenses in and by which fictional characters are seen to be enacted in a particular environment, that is to say, the *mise-en-scène* through which such representation is grounded, and which we can see in the epigram to this section where Henry James writes of the 'drama of *that* consciousness' as a foundational moment for a stage play (*op. cit.* my emphasis). In order to clarify this point, and with no pretence that we are still with modernism, we might for a moment look ahead to mid-century theorizations of the "located" presence given of the individual in theatrical practice. Thus Alan Robbe-Grillet on the theatre of Samuel Beckett (111 original italics):

The human condition, Heidegger says, is *to be there*. Probably it is the theatre, more than any other mode of representing reality, which reproduces this situation most naturally. The dramatic character *is on stage*, that is his primary quality: he is *there*.

very events' – but see Paccaud-Huguet's "The Sublime Object of *Lord Jim*." *Époque conradianne* (L'), vol. XXX/2004: *Lord Jim*. Presses Univ. Limoges, 2004: 155-70). As I argue, theatricalization (the performative aspect of Conrad's negative figurations) mitigates some of the stylistic differences between the *Patna* and *Patusan* sections, thus I am leery of Michael Greaney's observation that *Lord Jim* 'relocat[es] to Patusan in order to evade the deconstructive logic the text has set in motion' (2002: 167). This ignores the novel's larger movement from the excoriation of narrative truth towards the equally illusional need for truthful lies. Students of the question, notably Watt (1979) and Simmons ("Conrad on James: Open-endedness and Artistic Affiliation," *Conrad, James and Other Relations* (K. Carabine, O. Knowles and P. Armstrong, eds. New York: Columbia UP, 1998: 97-112) do not resolve this problem in the way I am suggesting. Of the *Patusan* material, Watt cites Conrad's comment of a 'bare almost bald recitation of facts' seeing that by this point the reader will have enough commentary to fill in the mental and emotional background, and thus 'psychological disquisition should have no place' (1979: 308, citing W. Blackburn, ed. *Joseph Conrad: Letters to William Blackwood and David S. Meldrum*. Durham NC: Duke UP, 1958: 107). For other critical notifications of failure for the second half of the novel, see Erdinast-Vulcan's *Joseph Conrad and the Modern Temper* (New York: Oxford UP, 1991: 34–35) and Linda Dryden's, *Joseph Conrad and the Imperial Romance* (New York: St. Martin's, 2000: 158).

Seen this way, the theatre brings us back to the ‘essential theme of *presence*: everything that is *is here*, off-stage there is only nothingness, nonbeing’ (123 original emphasis). Even where we might haul Jim into solipsistic relation with the illusionistic or even stagy ‘nothingness’ of the places he moves through, Conrad into is not this ingenious. For him the world is real and the process of representing it, as indicated in his celebrated preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, no more than the problem of making us *see* it as an actuality. Yet in *Lord Jim* the actuality he wishes us to attend is, in fact, representational. It is not just that Jim appears to Marlow as a ‘symbol’ in the recitation he is imagined to be producing (238), but that his *scene* is like this as well: a symbolic presence in the midst of symbolic nothingness. For this to have occurred the ‘nothingness’ or ‘nonbeing’ Robbe-Grillet notes as the “beyond” of theatrical presencing has had to move onto the stage to become that platial “presence”, and for the abyssal scene to have become the locus of focalization. This is not, of course, a view of reality, but a representational ploy, an effect undermining what we assume reality to be along with its personages and settings. Such *scenes* are not simply the places of presence, the stages thus composed, but our experience of the dynamics of representation through time, of that duration of no one and nowhere, of our temporalized view onto Jim in his place. What this section specifically addresses, therefore, is the degree to which Conrad utilizes this theatricalized dynamic as a means of bringing the problem of Jim to presence in the Stein episode, of making him real, as an existential and moral process of becoming (‘How to be!’ 199).

In my opening chapter I used the word *arena* to underline the spatial dynamics of the scene in which processes of individuation or dissolution are imagined to occur. At that point I defined such locations as the experiential modernist arena wherein the conditions of particular places meld with conceptual categories of expanse, closure, sensory aporia or limitlessness, and so on. What then of the interior spaces wherein Stein’s and Marlow’s interrogation of ‘how to be’ unfolds in relation to the existentially positive negativity of ‘the destructive element’ (202)? In their progression through the interiors of Stein’s house (at Samarang on the north coast of Java), we are not presented with walled rooms or measurable spaces, but areas of light in the midst of great expanses of darkness. Are we therefore invited to read the darkened expanses Marlow and Stein traverse in the house as both a figure for the insubstantial world Jim has occupied since his moral failure, as well of the oceanic and (soon to be) Patusan scene of that condition?

Two issues are of immediate concern. First, the chapter enfolds through a single spatio-temporal scene, so there is a powerful focal centre to its narrative means. Conrad himself makes

this point in a letter about *Lord Jim* to his long-standing publisher, William Blackwood (18.07.1900): ‘After all, these divisions (some of them are very short) are not chapters in the usual sense of each carrying the action a step further or embodying a complete episode, I meant them only as pauses – rests for the reader’s attention while he is following the development of *one* situation, only *one* really from beginning to end’ (*CL II*: 282; italics original). Second, the chapter’s many references to the void of experience exemplify the romantic tendency to conjure idealistic worlds behind or through the material one, and, indeed, to do so, as we just saw Conrad claim, as a single ‘development’, indeed, a single *duration*. Similarly, where the text imagines Jim falling between the ‘clashing claims of life and death in a material world’, and the ‘imperishable reality’ understood to exist beyond that world (199-201), there are two sorts of continuous symbolic and literary spaces simultaneously at work, the one as idealistic as the other is illusional. To borrow a Platonic analogy, at several points in the discussion it is as though the ideal forms and the misleading shadows of human conception were found actively vying for the same cave.¹⁷⁵ Such is the disputation of abyssal and sensory tropes in Conrad wherever such figures pair off into images of darkness and light, of shadowy expanses versus pools of illumination. Thus it is, too, that we should find the claustrophobic ‘shapeless gloom [of] a cavern’ (192) set against the ‘vast and uncertain expanse’ of the ‘great plain’ of human endeavour (201) – the scenographic unity of human space with the abyss of experience. These opposing tropes are further linked by a single theatrical modus, in this case the single spatio-temporal scheme comprising the chapter (including the matter of its flashbacks). By such means is the “unreality” of the chapter’s forum of the colonial imaginary brought to presence as both an ungrounded landscape and, through the collusion of fixed and portable illumination, a more mobile (because dynamically lit) space of thinking.

Let me phrase this another way. The arena I note for the chapter requires its readers to navigate between symbolic and actual phenomena. And if the scenario unfolds not upon the plains and abysses Conrad evokes but in a house in the Dutch East Indies, we are nevertheless invited to raise together these two realities, these two significance systems, and to do so as surely as we are meant to equate Jim’s shameful leap with Stein’s call to immerse oneself in ‘the destructive element’. Moreover, where that interior setting falls outside the purview of the wilderness or “natural” locations of my essay, Stein’s house yet presents a theatricalized representational landscape that is, with the ocean and Patusan settings, no less ‘desolate under the impalpable poesy of its crepuscular light’ (201). Likewise, the scale of Stein’s house with its

¹⁷⁵ I am of course referring to the “Allegory of the Cave” in Book VII of the *Republic*.

‘vast room’ of entomological specimens (192) finally suggests a metaphysical zone at the edge of the sublime, one raised in concert with the correspondingly ‘vast and uncertain expanse’ of Stein’s conviction (201). It is for this reason that the spatial scenography of the scene is focalized through lit spaces situated within a seemingly endless extension, just as in the theatre our focus of reflection is steered by the pool of light in the midst of the “nothingness” of the otherwise darkened stage and auditorium. All the same, despite the Stein chapter unfolding within pools of light, and the field of focalization reduced to the arena of direct encounter between the two men, we understand we are in domestic space – it is just that the darkness surrounding that space is presented as being of equal palpability: ‘Only one corner of the vast room, the corner in which stood his writing-desk, was strongly lighted by a shaded reading-lamp, and the rest of the spacious apartment melted into shapeless gloom like a cavern’ (192). Such ‘shapeless gloom’ is a decisive feature within Conrad’s scheme, for we are invited to follow the lit pathway created by the passage of Marlow and Stein as they pass through spaces as though upon a stage replete with the series of spatially mounted reflections, the mirrors, polished surfaces, and burning candelabra by which their progress is tracked. While these reflections are actual enough in the terms of the visual reality presented by the narrative, they are yet suggestive of the more elusive realm wherein Stein’s and Marlow’s sympathetic interest in Jim is made profound, and by which ‘we had approached nearer to absolute Truth, which, like Beauty itself, floats elusive’ (*ibid.*). This is a characteristic statement, one seemingly more appropriate to the description of a treadmill from nowhere to nowhere than movement through even an unreasonably large house:

He lit a two-branched candlestick and led the way. We passed through empty dark rooms, escorted by gleams from the lights Stein carried. They glided along the waxed floors, sweeping here and there over the polished surface of a table, leaped upon a fragmentary curve of a piece of furniture, or flashed perpendicularly in and out of distant mirrors, while the forms of two men and the flicker of two flames could be seen for a moment stealing silently across the depths of a crystalline void. (201)

Indeed, what we find here is Marlow’s self-focalization as one of the seemingly disembodied human ‘forms’ caught in the light Stein carries. Theatricalization is thus an apt frame for reading the passage, both for theatre’s reliance upon effects which do not need, being real, to aspire to claims of actuality, and by presenting localities in which their own status as artifice is foremost; moreover, by placing the onus of point of view upon Marlow himself (as much as upon the reader as spectator), Conrad allows a multiplicity of focal centres. *Look,*

Marlow seems to be instructing his readers, just as I have been “seeing” Jim in this account, so in this hall of mirrors I see myself – and so, in the presence of ‘Beauty’, ‘Truth’, illusion, and wandering souls, you see the missing object of my reflections. Further, so that we should know how to unpack this shadow play, we watch the ‘gleams’ of candlelight passing over the abyss like disembodied spirits among the ‘graves and pitfalls’ of existence, that is, the actuality of the nowhere from which we view the scene.

Such unreality had been signalled from the start of the chapter. Marlow describes himself ‘traversing an imposing but empty dining-room very dimly lit’ in which both darkness and emptiness are expanses to be crossed, a voyage stage-managed by a Charon-like ‘Javanese’ superannuary, whose task accomplished, ‘vanished in a mysterious way as though he had been a ghost only momentarily embodied for this particular service’ (192). Stein himself is no more material. He is a ‘shadow prowling amongst the graves of butterflies’ (200), an emissary of that negative order whose features ‘would disappear in a great eruption’ of pipe smoke, and whose voice came ‘out from a cloud’ (198-9). As Marlow presents him, he is as one ‘robbed of substance’, a being who ‘hovered noiselessly over invisible things with stooping and indefinite movements’. Even his speech is no less *scenic*; he is a ‘voice, heard in that remoteness where he could be glimpsed mysteriously busy with immaterial cares, was no longer incisive, seemed to roll voluminous and grave’ (199-200).¹⁷⁶

But it is not the uncanny aspect of these human entrances and exits I want to raise in terms of theatricality any more than I do Stein’s underworld gaucheness, or Conrad’s attention to lighting as representational effects. Rather, it is the spatial and focal structuring of the scene presented that is in question, the just visible unfolding atmosphere of ‘impalpable poesy’ Marlow notes for us, and by which the void is given latitude in the action of Stein’s and his ‘progress through the lofty silent rooms amongst fleeting gleams of light’. Moreover, Marlow gives this enactment of their passage through space and time as though Stein and he had been ‘carrying on a discussion’. The observation is revealing: Conrad presents a synaesthetic enfolding of self and phenomena in which the silent environment of flashing reflections and retreating shadows

¹⁷⁶ Stein’s personal history incorporates its own ‘out there’ features. Various an 1848 revolutionary, penniless peddler, an East Indies naturalist’s assistant, and a traveller and trader in the heart of the Malay archipelago, he at last settles into wealthy respectability near Java’s third city, the port of Samarang. Marlow accords him ‘an intrepidity of spirit and physical courage that could have been called reckless had it not been like a natural function of the body [...] completely unconscious of itself’ (191). Stein may collect butterflies, but he does not wish to become one. Not being an ‘artist’ like Jim, he leaves the ‘beauty’, ‘accuracy’, and ‘harmony’ of the ‘mighty Kosmos’ to ‘Nature [...] the great artist’ (195). Stein is thus perhaps a romantic materialist, collecting objects rather than playing out his imaginings according to a ‘shadowy ideal’ (351).

incorporates the ecological aspects of their reflective passage *as a dialogue* (201-2). Stein's house may not be topographical in any but a figural way, but it is nonetheless a kind of colonial landscape, that is, a symbolic visualization of ethically charged space. To borrow one of Conrad's images, it is 'circled with a bright edge', but circled in such a way that the surrounding 'abyss full of flames' illuminates, rather than scorches, the performative forum (*ibid.*). Indeed, the *mise en scène* is more substantially abstract than even these topological tropes might indicate. Unlike the illuminated ship's cabin in "Karain, a Memory", or the house platforms in "The Lagoon" or *An Outcast of the Islands*, the *son et lumière* atmospherics of Stein's home do not require meteorologically suitable natural figures of winds, storms, or matinal stirrings to create atmosphere. More so, such atmosphere is called into being not just by lighting or the suggestive depth of its shadows, but through human movement across the walkable depths of its ambient 'void': not geography, but the dynamic enactments of scenography. The setting of the chapter might be comfortably domesticated, yet it performs itself (and is performed) as an *unheimlich* stage for symbolic transferences between ideas, things, and processes.

We might look further at the temporal ramifications of the moment. Certainly, the march of Marlow and Stein through the rooms frames a durational passage through time and space, movements allowing the symbolic apparatus to unfold as a scenographically presented landscape. It does not matter too much that the spaces crossed are defined not by distance but darkness, or that this shadowy realm is occasionally not black but 'crepuscular', an expanse glowing with 'a charming and deceptive light'. There are other possibilities here, for the space intended has no real beginning or end, but rather blends the two into an intermediate zone in which the symbolic gleam of the illusions that had sustained Stein's own youth (e.g. 200) are now as present in the scenic effects of the interior in which they find themselves as Jim's suddenly 'imperishable reality' (202). But the actual real-time voyage through the flashing dark of Stein's home is not just brilliant theatre for the manner in which it symbolizes the novel's central understanding of human illusion through the real spaces and real glows of a colonial trader's "house", but for its self-conscious staging of a durational encounter with the void. Moreover, this tour of Hades is undertaken in an altered manner to the temporal schemes we saw signalled by Paccaud-Huguet's 'flash of insight' or Levin's 'otherwise present', for here one can gesture across these temporal frames as concretely as one may stroll from one end of its staged space to the other. More so, we look through both this dimness and the flames to what lies beyond those inhuman depths, and so come 'nearer to absolute Truth, which like Beauty itself,

floats elusive, obscure, half submerged' (202), that is, half in one realm and half in the other.¹⁷⁷ The traversal of actual space undertaken by the two men through the ghostly scenography of Stein's house thereby performs a rather literal voyage through the scenery of the inexpressible, but it also draws upon the dialogical effects of the time taken to accomplish it, through which the romantic fantasy of entering the realms of the other comes to be reified.

The blended nature of these tropes serves to return us to Böhme's notation of the atmospheric 'intertwinement of representational spaces with the spaces of bodily presence' (2002: 7), especially where the interior topography of Stein's house and the symbolic topology it becomes are raised together. In this manner, too, the full range of the thematic matter of the chapter comes to be sustained by the sensorium Conrad creates for it – to cite only the most obvious dynamic, with the areas of light that are almost immediately transferred into figures for something else. As elsewhere in Conrad, such illuminations are crucial. This can be as simple as helping us *see* where significance is to be found, as where a single display 'tablet' is illumined in Stein's study such that 'the word *Coleoptera* written in gold letters glittered mysteriously upon a vast dimness' (193); but it is no less requisite for focalizing areas not lit, as when a few pages later a case now of butterflies is borne 'religiously away [...] passing out of the bright circle of the lamp into the ring of fainter light – into – into shapeless dusk at last', from life to death, form to formlessness (199). All the same, light is not necessarily a beacon for faith and enlightenment in Conrad, as, say against its more Kurtzian possibilities of an equally well-lit negative capability – it is also corrosive. Faced with things 'that perhaps could never be told', Conrad informs us that the 'light had destroyed the assurance' it had hitherto inspired in 'distant shadows' (200). In these latter instances especially, light defines 'spaces of bodily presence', but it also sets out 'representational spaces' in which light's symbolic potential is open to alterations in moral meaning – only because light is both the medium of sensory vision and that of the spaces thus focalized, the scenic ground of the chapter remains as figural as it is actual. It is here that Böhme's model becomes so indispensable. Atmospheres not only 'bathe everything in a certain light' and so 'unify a diversity of impressions in a single emotive state' (Böhme 2008), in Conrad's handling such auras are the instrument by which the contested unity of 'this concrete and perplexed world' (199) is dramatized. This is not to confound figuration, or more precisely, the affects created through figuration, with the mood thus created in the reader, but to suggest that such moods have their own gradations and appurtenances, and so produce from the sensory,

¹⁷⁷ Here we might be reminded of the (half) knocked down ship in *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (1897), in which the oceanic real and the human imaginary vie for ascendancy.

imagistic, cognitive, and affective evocations so set in motion, the intertwinement of ‘representational’ and embodied ‘presence’ of which Böhme writes.

It is at this point, too, that Seel’s brief borrowing from Sergei Eisenstein comes into play once more. To recall this statement, Seel had been discussing the ‘resonating’ by which a particular treatment of landscape becomes reified in reality, resonances in which, as Eisenstein expressed it, the landscape had taken effect as the ‘complex bearer of the possibilities of a plastic interpretation of emotions’ (1945). A few lines ago I suggested that as a spatio-temporal occasioning, the “landscape” of the Stein chapter is more virtual than concrete. I need to expand this notion in relation to the literary atmospheres Conrad’s text builds upon. In the first place, it is surprising how little we are given of Stein’s house as a ‘plastic’ space. Instead we build our cognitive map of the chapter’s setting from a smattering of disjunctive detail concerning its interior topography. For instance, while we are presented with ‘an imposing but empty dining-room’ (192) or ‘empty dark rooms’ (201), Conrad’s setting notes are not sufficient to produce a map of architectural relations. The spaces of the scene are defined otherwise, primarily as a function of illumination and sonority, thus we are not provided with firm edges or vectors, but spaces of ambience looming out of the dark: “So you see me – so,” (193). I would call the result an atmosphere, but there is a further aspect to such settings. As Seel observes, such resonance leads ‘us to the edge of our developed capacity to perceive – to where we can no longer recognize anything but can nonetheless perceive with the greatest intensity’ (158). Brought into play with *Lord Jim*, Eisenstein’s ‘plastic interpretation of emotions’ reifies Jim’s ‘imperishable reality’ as the affectively hued collusion between ‘fleeting gleams of light’ and ‘sudden revelations’ (202). Moreover, it is through this poetics of the impression in relation to epiphanic disclosure that we discover the play of the unrepresentable, of illusion, self-image, and mortality; and if these categories are not quite empty enough, not quite reminiscent of the unbounded view from the *Patna*, the description closes on the sublime void given by the ‘silent still waters of mystery’. To state this differently, the ‘irresistible force’ of Jim’s absent ‘reality’ is made possible *through* Stein’s and Marlow’s ambient walk in the dark, just as, at least in Stein’s words, Jim’s ‘inward pain makes him know himself’ – the one then the other. So the scenographic climax of the chapter comes where Marlow’s trails after Stein through the darkened house with its various imperial reminders. Despite his eyes having ‘followed’ Stein’s shape, Marlow rather tells us what he is *not* seeing, from which set of images a more real one emerges, ‘the reality’ of Stein’s otherwise unfocalizable ‘destiny’. Thus out of the atmospheric voidal scene and the focal complexity of its presentation, the reader is asked to *see* that which

Stein himself will not accede to. There is a broader lesson here. Just as Jim cannot be raised in the full reality of consciousness, or his ethical status adequately set out before the moral contradictions of the colonial realm, the space of such questions is perhaps as near as the novel comes to wondering what sort of critique might be provided. After all, the failings of ‘one of us’ in the colonial realm is a public affair. By theatricalizing his narrative points of view, Conrad turns the mirror over the novel’s thematic conundrums: so Marlow sees himself marching into the darkness with that paragon of romantic imperialism, Stein; so the flickering reflections of their combined wisdom come to pass as little more than the ‘fleeting gleams’ Marlow finds aimed back at him. The riddle of the Western colonial imaginary remains in the ambient darkness of ‘opportunities I let escape; dreams I had lost’ (202). The Stein chapter provides more mysteries than explicit answers, yet in performing a tour of the ‘pellucid depths’ and spaces of conscience, that idea of the self is raised in all its potential alterity.

We should return to the temporary stage upon which these patterns play out. At the most basic level, we are shown how Stein’s house comes to be as derealized as the *Patna* was for Jim before the collision, or Patusan would be in the novel’s latter half. But while this home is no less a kind of mortuary, a Javanese Hades with Jim added to the pinned souls Stein collects alongside his past selves, it is still a lit space at the centre of an endlessly extendable darkness – a stage of western being in the midst of alterity. So the reduction of the reader’s field of focalization to the arena of direct encounter between the two men is not indicative of a dead end of progress: for like its chiaroscuro setting, the surrounding darkness is palpable enough to comprise the atmosphere wherein the moral questionings Conrad dramatizes for us continue to generate analogues in the presumed adventure-genre artifice of Jim’s Sumatran exile. Moreover, just as Stein’s house is animated in relation to the scenic topoi of the underworld, it is crucial to see that the temporal aspects of this setting are for once not expanded or contracted, but form a continuous action as is occasioned nowhere else in the text. Thus save for the incursions of Stein’s past history into the present of the scene, we are not made conscious of time passing, but are invited to inhabit a temporal space that as Watt notices, is the only one of Marlow’s scenes since his meeting with Jim in which ‘story and narrative time are fully coordinate’ (305). To remember a line cited from David Reason’s work on the changeability of actual landscapes looked at in Chapter One, the continuous present of the Stein section of *Lord Jim* yet features ‘ephemeral effects which create a patina of transience on apparently stable forms’ (1987: 40).¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ Reason is here writing of the temporal landscape as a ‘polyrhythmic composition of processes’ incorporating phenomena from fluttering leaves to tectonic shifts.

Here Reason puts his finger upon the transient representational inflections that a theatrical model brings to literary topography. The sensory flow he notes can also be appended to the dynamics of theatre we saw Robbe-Grillet addressing at the top of this section; for just as the theatre of any epoch offers the forum in which a character ‘*is on stage [...] is there*’ (op. cit.), the transient occasioning of the theatre is durational in that its stability resides in the flow of being *there*. On its own, the transience of fictional language is not enough to produce the effect of theatricalization, let alone to animate the scenographic realm – it is the holding of sense data in time that does this, and by which the unrepresentable comes to be focalized via the plastic modalities of the “stage” so presented.

Here we might pull away a moment from the theatrical processes on display in Conrad in order to bring the above reflections into line with the broader scope of natural environments. I have already raised Tim Ingold’s assertion of how “landscapes” are not separate from the physical environment, but encapsulate the interactive dynamics of our engagements with them. To this extent, the landscape is not an arena we simply inhabit, nor of which we are a part, but intends the forum in which the human *is*. The title of Ingold’s *The Perception of the Environment* (2000) likewise defers to the means by which we notice the spaces enfolding us. Like Timothy Morton’s more culturally directed standpoint, these outlooks do away with the need to posit some sort of sublime interface as the only possible bridge between humans and world. The medium Ingold set out for this task, a landscape’s temporal quality (1992: 208; 2008), is not dissimilar to my notion of aesthetic duration as the poetic means of dramatizing human encounters with places (or the non-places so concretized). To bring the *mise en scène* Conrad provides for the Stein chapter into Ingold’s interactive discourse is therefore to foreground that scene as a real time encounter with the topologized arena: thus Conrad’s attention to the plastic spaces in which abyssal “phenomena” births ‘sudden revelations’ (202).

All the same, it is not enough to indicate the scenographic occasioning of such tropes; fictional environments can have the further goal of animating the terms by which the human is to be raised as moral agent, or when, as with both modernism and colonialism, the unfolding of the *human* is precisely the process being placed in brackets. While I have been drawing attention to the proliferation of *abyssal figures* through usages derived from poetic, fictional, or philosophical representations of absence, with *Lord Jim* we are faced by a text in which the formation and dynamization of literary “atmospheres” provides the means by which those bracketed understandings might be brought before us. In this sense, Jim’s significance as an individual at a particular period of colonial modernity might be made thematically clearer, but

there is no less an affective purpose to the poetics I have been tracking. By fuelling our desire to grapple with his identity in a more obvious sense than can be captured through the intervening mists and veils Marlow imagines for us, readers are compelled forward through *Lord Jim*'s fragmented structure in order to achieve the poetic unity Conrad conceives as 'one situation [...] from beginning to end' (*CL II*: 282). Yet as Marlow also makes clear, Jim's significance is the endless process of searching that he, like the reader, has embarked on, and whose reification into symbolic meaning can only come to presence via fugitive constructions:

The mist of his feelings shifted between us, as if disturbed by his struggles, and in the rifts of the immaterial veil he would appear to my staring eyes distinct of form and pregnant with vague appeal like a symbolic figure in a picture. (140)

The allusion to self-referentiality with respect to Marlow attempts to create Jim is hardly unique in the novel. A few pages earlier Marlow's account had stalled in a wave of rhetorical questions aimed at his interlocutors ('Why this impulse? Do you see the significance? [...] Hey, what do you think of it?' 127). Here again the 'symbolic figure in a picture' that Jim approximates never coalesces into more than a place or being in which we can peer into Marlow's 'rent in the mist in which [Jim] moved and had his being' (136).¹⁷⁹ Where the human subject is concerned, we are again left not so much with a *what*, as a *where*, thus the question becomes one of working out by what means that *where* is made communicative. Such, at any rate, has been the impetus for the multidisciplinary of my study. By asking by what means a landscape might be said to represent human consciousness without recourse to essentialized notions of places or fictional subjects, I have come to attend the durational poetics by which both ends of the equation become open to figural transferences, not least of wondering at what point the "when" of representation brings forth the epiphanic moment of aestheticization.

In part, my phrasing here responds to the exchange of letters Jean-Luc Nancy carried out with Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe on the 'scene' of paradoxical (or oxymoronic) human presence in modernity. If such presencing seems congruent with the appearing trick Conrad produces for "Jim", it is because that author, like Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe, produces the subject as a tension between tropes 'thought of initially as (re)presentation', and those 'thought of initially as a place of emission and as an enunciatory presence' (1996 [1992]: 274). Where this treatment would appear to hearken back to modernist notions of the subject as absence as much as it

¹⁷⁹ This may be derived from the language of the *Authorized Version*, which speaks of the place in which 'we live, and move, and have our being' (*KJV Acts* 17: 28).

responds to, for instance, gaps between discourse and its referents in recent high theory, the key supposition concerns the abyssal notion of a transformative void or ‘scene’ defining not *presence*, but its enabling arena, the *where* wherein the self is understood to be effected.¹⁸⁰ For Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe, late twentieth century debates over the essentialistic notion of the human only serve to relocate the subject within the ‘welded duality of presence and absence’, or more concretely, in a ‘place of emission and [...] enunciatory presence’ (*ibid.*). What is notable about these restitutions of the human as a subject of discourse is how well they chime with the poetics by which, for instance, Böhme frames his description of *atmospheres* as ‘representational spaces’ that ‘can be experienced as spaces of bodily presence’ (2002: 7), that is, as the ecological locus whereby consciousness comes to be treated as a landscape.¹⁸¹ *Lord Jim* takes this step as well, and hence Conrad does not frame Jim as he does his lesser characters, but sets him loose within the fold-like ‘rifts’ or ‘rents’ through which the inner self is brought to presence against an ideational landscape made more problematic by its imperial inheritances.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ A further observation can be made to tie interiority to theatrical embodiment, for the word with which Nancy begins his exchange with Lacoue-Labarthe is the Greek *opsis*, meaning both ‘performance’ and “‘staging” [*mise en scène*]’ (273). The crux of the matter is whether the scene is viewed from within or without, as a backdrop to its human figures, or the space such figures bring into being: ‘What then is a “stage” [*scène*] if it is always a place for figures, and if there are no figures except on a stage? What happens to these two modes of the figure?’ (274). I would argue that Conrad works both sides of the coin. Attention to Jim’s interior reflections and the phenomena of his interactions with the world (as before the *Patna*’s collision bulkhead) help the reader enter the space he occupies as an on-line development, the self-created forum of his being. By contrast, the scene setting provided for the Patusan sections operate more as a stage or ground for action.

¹⁸¹ In the wake of the postmodern reification of absence and three generations of Modernism studies, we need to be mindful of the status of the human or posthuman in late modernity. In a classic formulation, Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut observe that ‘the authentic subject is “nothingness”, hence the ‘distinguishing feature of man is to be undefinable; his essence is to have no essence’ (1990: xvi). Similarly, by asking “who is there” in regard to the human, Jean-Luc Nancy defers to the locative ‘presence’ of the individual as an arena for the post-metaphysical fullness of human experience: ‘Present is that which occupies a place... a spacing that allows that something *come* into presence’ (in Cadava et al. 1991: 7). For Nancy, the ‘subject’ cedes place to the occasion of a coming to be – ‘that which comes indefinitely to itself, never stops coming, arriving: the “subject” that is never the subject of itself’ (*ibid.*). In Nancy’s still modernist desire to escape *presence*, it is by closing off the ‘who’ from the ‘there’ of presence that we avoid essentialist notions of humanness.

¹⁸² This is a more complex issue than can be editorialized here. While modernism cannot be outlined through recourse to any one rhetorical or formal feature, Richard Sheppard helpfully contextualizes the issue as it emerges out of the nineteenth century. In “The Problematics of European Modernism” (in Giles 1993 pp. 1-12), he cites Nietzsche’s *The Will to Power* (1906) to show how language is both the site of the annihilation of the subject, and that of the discourse wherein individual significance is promoted as an occasioning without the imposition of explicit “content”, hence ‘the existence of the shifter “Ich” (‘I’) should not mislead us into thinking that there exists a unified substance or organic cell which corresponds to it” (1993: 19). This accords with Conrad’s attempts to register the movement and struggles of Jim’s consciousness through a shifting series of momentary viewing platforms – perspectives presenting such interiority as a figural mobile space rather than a precise location, for instance where Marlow describes

The views he let me have of himself were like those glimpses through the shifting rents in a thick fog – bits of vivid and vanishing detail, giving no connected idea of the general aspect of the country. (99)

Indeed, it is one of the paradoxes of the novel that we can be made to feel we are on solid ground with the ‘mists’ or ‘veil’ occluding Jim’s topological arena in which Jim acts since these are *atmospheric* and so have at least the materiality of sensory occasionings. Such instances embrace a range of expressions, incorporating the ‘rosy tinge’, ‘blaze of gold and crimson’, and ‘slaty shadow’ colouring Marlow’s final departure from Patusan (290-91), figures of solipsism (‘under his own little cloud’ 216), or tropes of visibility (‘impossible to see him clearly’ 293) in which the presumably interior object of perception is open to question. Given the abundance of impressionistic and symbolic figures and descriptives concerning the illuminatory conditions of these perceptual acts, Conrad’s settings operate not so much as imaginative variants of actual spaces as invitations to posit consciousness from tropes of abyssal being and so to *see* Jim as the process or *performance* of an otherwise hidden interiority, just as one might impute the essence of a place. And where this poetic means might be viewed in a positive light, in Conrad’s fictions the division of the individual from his or her located ground is almost uniformly devastating *across* the colonial divide: Almayer, Willems, Arsat, Kurtz, Jim.

Furthermore, in drawing this chapter to a close around the performativity of the theatrical scene as unfoldings in time, I should point out that the kind of landscape thus animated remains no more than a trope for the spatial dynamics of fictional presence. For to think of theatre merely as an objectification of interiority or exteriority of the dramatic process is to miss the spectatorial aspect of performance, its formal requirement that there should be a focalizing receptor at the other end of the theatrical gaze. Given Jim’s (and Marlow’s) facility for slipping into spaces of introspection, it is of course hardly surprising that the task of grasping Conrad’s title-hero should provide narrative challenges even to the extent of Marlow’s well known claim that he ‘can’t explain to you who haven’t seen him and who hear his words only at second hand the mixed nature of my feelings’, or the suspicion that where Jim is concerned, he ‘was being made to comprehend the inconceivable’ (111). It is here of course that a theatrical modus becomes justified for Marlow’s project of revealing Jim’s essence, even to the degree of interrogating the masks by which one ‘side’ of us is ‘turned perpetually to the light of day’ and

how the ‘mist of [Jim’s] feelings shifted between us, or took ‘distinct’ form ‘in the rifts of the immaterial veil’ spatially dividing him from the world of others (140).

another to ‘perpetual darkness’ (111-12). Similarly, Marlow is given to admit that his account of Jim has come to consist of ‘bizarre and exciting glimpses through the fog’ (127), or more atmospherically, the glance of ‘an instant into the secret convolutions of a cloud’ (130). Despite the casual iteration of images of light from shade, Marlow is no less aware of the existential profundity of his search, that at some level he is hoping to extend his vision to the colonial space in which Jim ‘moved and had his being’ (136). Time is a central concern to all of these tropes, especially where the long view is all at once rewarded: ‘there can be but few of us who had never known one of these rare moments of awakening when we see, hear, understand ever so much – everything in a flash’ (148). This awareness of the power of epiphanic openings into knowledge provides a positive counterpoint to the more temporally extended experience of aporetic states. The search may be long, but knowledge is sudden and brief, chary of elaboration. Yet as Marlow’s example instructs us, the blockage to understanding is voluminous to the degree that it comes to compose endlessly expanding verbal or textual spaces, zones of becoming (or alterity) as liable to launch themselves into the sublime reaches of the cosmos as arrow their way between sudden shifts of narrative perspective.¹⁸³

If these impediments to vision ultimately serve to underline Fredric Jameson’s claims as to the ‘schizophrenic’ nature of the book as a whole (219), this observation can hardly serve as a complaint: why else should one read *Lord Jim* save to discover something akin to that novel’s dramatization of what *The Oxford Dictionary* sets out as ‘a breakdown in the relation between thought, emotion, and behaviour, leading to faulty perception, inappropriate actions and feelings, withdrawal from reality and personal relationships into fantasy and delusion, and a sense of mental fragmentation’.¹⁸⁴ Conrad himself indulges this sort of play with regard to his protagonist. Even the preface is careful to point out the ‘appealing’ particularities of Jim’s form as a mute and occluded sign (if not quite the schizophrenic ‘faulty perception’ noted by the lexicographers). But such is Jim’s perspective at Patusan, too, where no one is to know the ‘real,

¹⁸³ Ann Banfield (1987) has written of an ‘empty deictic centre’, a designation intending a character-like subjectivity occupying a deictic or *locatable* focalizing position at ‘the scene’, but who cannot be identified with a particular individual – a largely atmospheric designation. Something akin to Banfield’s observance can be seen of the frame narrator’s account of the *Patna*’s oceanic realm, where efforts to focalize the scene foreground not just its vastness and lack of contour, but the metaphysical excess of that emptiness as mood or ambience (the ‘bewitching breath of the Eastern waters’ 51, the ‘sinister splendour of that sky’ 54). Similarly, Lothe notes, the ‘narrative setting’ of Marlow’s oral narration from Chapter Five is ‘difficult to comment on critically since so much of its significance depends on the subtly-contrived evocation of atmosphere’ as a ‘dreamy quality’ borne of a reflective and ‘associative’ narration, including its ‘frequent shifts between different levels of time’ (148).

¹⁸⁴ Oxford Dictionaries Online: <<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/schizophrenia>>].

real truth' of his being (268). Indeed, the statement falls between Marlow's acknowledgement that Jim 'existed *for me*, and after all it is only through me that he exists *for you*' (208), and his constant avowals to not being able to see into Jim at all (99).

But here we return to the fact that the *locating* of Jim's self in his imperial backwater is as close as we get to his being, and so it is we are invited to collate an interiority for him from the abyssal landscapes he occupies. Even then, as Marlow finally admits, we have no more of him than the 'alluring shape' from which we are to fill in some more composite reality (351). Once more, it is not the claims of self-constitution I am after here. As 'a finished artist', Jim might manage to finesse reality and self-illusion into a more pleasing form, but I would still point to the very dislocatedness of Conrad's settings as the arena in which Jim is most successfully realized as a process of becoming. Further, it is the very theatricality of this arena – its combination of plastic effects and will'-o'-the-wisp spatial ambiances – that lies at the heart of this process. Likewise, time is never far from Conrad's poetics here, as of the numerous points in the novel at which Jim is seen in momentary flashes, one moment 'planted solidly upon the shores of sea and light', and the next 'vanished [...] as utterly as though he had been blown to atoms' (173). So much the better if perspective comes to take the place of content: in the theatrical economy of abyssal representation it is the endlessly changing view onto the missing contents of identity by which the performative attains its necessary status. As David Herman puts matters, 'shifts in perceptual focus create a space for a parallel trajectory of emotional response' (2002: 276). Nonetheless, if Conrad's poetics simultaneously engage the real and the imaginary of his text, how are we to deal with the absence of a stable point of view from which to observe Jim when the novel so assiduously deconstructs such a platform?

In the first place, many of the interpretative issues stemming from the changes in focal aspect near the beginning of the novel disappear once we see that the reader is meant to be implicated in Conrad's narrative form – that we are to become the vantage (the 'one of us') by which Jim is presented. In other words, Conrad is careful to enmesh the reader into an endless untangling of perspectives such that we, and not the text's ostensible narrators, become its most important narrative filter. Indeed, it is the reader's need to negotiate the temporal that brings us directly to the heart of the novel, and by which its themes take on embodied or "theatricalized" presence. It is to surmount the problem of Jim as the novel's obscure object of focalization for which interiority has been made out to be a dynamic of place, a projective colonially charged landscape whereby atmospheres of light and darkness take on the affective burden of communicating the essence of the 'mysterious white man at Patusan' (249). As my next chapter

shows, the more general crisis of subjectivity in the fin de siècle period continues to be performed through the focalized milieu of its place depictions, a process deepened wherever the ground of subjective reflection is founded upon sensory engagements which invite the reader more viscerally into the performative process. It is not necessary, however, to direct this study towards the theorization of reception to see its fecundity as a temporalized trope for the collusion of places, individuals, and the ethical. As the theatrical theorist Pamela Howard writes in a related context (the work of the seventeenth-century painter Jean-Siméon Chardin), '[o]bjects and figures become, as in theatre, emblematic, the carriers of the myth, heightened by darkness and light, and adding value to the empty space' (129). Here I have tried to locate in Conrad, this sort of atmospheric valuation, one I see performing the ethical stage wherein such issues can be if not resolved, then held up to the light – or as is perhaps more Conradian, held up to darkness, to emptiness. Even here, however, upon the 'threshold' at which Stein deposits Marlow for the night, the scenographic terms Conrad raises seem rather more potent than the 'practical remedy' they seek for the 'great evil' of Jim's romanticism, let alone the constitutive process of personal illusionment (201-3).

To end then, we might look to a valedictory passage from late in the novel, describing Marlow's last glimpses of Jim. Like so many of the settings under investigation in these pages, metaphysical concepts are set in motion as plastic effects – not just converted to the sensory realm, but animated as scenographic elements. Where in the Stein chapter, Jim had been brought to presence out of the 'void' of Conrad's revelatory tropes, Marlow's final view is coloured by pathos. Here the vanishing object of Marlow's reflections is here made out to be both a fading impression and the aesthetic centre of what a leading student of epiphany, Ashton Nichols, calls 'privileged moments of secular revelation' (in Tigges 1999: 467). Such is the instance of poiesis Conrad constructs for his readers. Here as elsewhere, the novel's most profound mediations upon Jim's interior reflections fade into their imperial background just as Jim's parting words to Marlow, 'No – nothing', echo the abyssal place in which he remains. Conrad is presenting us not just with the stillness of the 'vast enigma' surrounding Jim, but the negative epiphanic object of his 'veiled' form – negative because it describes significance made not through the appearing of the meaningful figure, but its vanishing into a surrounding otherness. So too, the fading of the light is not only preparatory for the moment of transformation, but makes an impressionistic duration out of Marlow's gaze onto it. In this way we are led to respond to the slow extinguishing of Jim's nearly endless capacity (in Marlow's eyes) for gathering in what illumination remains of his shadowed landscape:

He was white from head to foot, and remained persistently visible with the stronghold of the night at his back, the sea at his feet, the opportunity by his side – still veiled. What do you say? Was it still veiled? I don't know. For me that white figure in the stillness of coast and sea seemed to stand at the heart of a vast enigma. The twilight was ebbing fast from the sky above his head, the strip of sand had sunk already under his feet, he himself appeared no bigger than a child – then only a speck, a tiny white speck, that seemed to catch all the light left in a darkened world.... And, suddenly, I lost him.... (291)

CHAPTER FIVE

“A Cardboard Background on the Stage”: Foster, Woolf, Lawrence

How “Modern” is the Modernist Landscape?

This chapter looks ahead from Conrad’s fin de siècle moment towards abyssal forms in the late burning of the imperial era just before and then after the First World War. Here, too, we will find a generative poetics of the void being applied to modernist treatments of very different if still exotic landscapes; and while the trio of authors at the centre of the present chapter can hardly all be called high modernists, if indeed, in the case of the oldest and youngest, *modernist* at all, each of the texts read here reveals a readiness on the writers’ side to incorporate aporetic settings as arenas of embodied experience. Thus apart from the synaesthetic interest these volumes hold in their treatments of topographical forms, Virginia Woolf’s *The Voyage Out* (1915), D. H. Lawrence’s *Kangaroo* (1923), and E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* (1924) may be seen, with Conrad’s Malay fictions, to rely upon durational unveilings of epiphanic insight. So, too, if there is a kind of logic in taking these writers in the order of their publication dates, and thus moving from the geographically encrypted sensuality of *The Voyage Out*, to *Kangaroo*’s death-infused Australian landscape, to the thrumming politicized ambience of Forster’s *A Passage to India*, it is not their shared critique of imperium I want to trace so much as the ways in which the human senses are brought in to negotiate social or personal difference before the “exotic”.

Why these three writers and these particular texts? In the first place, part of my theme has been to show the ubiquity of aporetic landscape treatments and aesthetic duration in the colonial depictions of the modernist period. The canonic if problematically congruent authors of this study each employ, for different purposes, durational stagings of abyssal tropes. Comparing such usages across rather than *through* their different fictional and thematic milieux is bound to risk giving the impression that all of these texts therefore exhibit a similar polarity. This is not the case, yet the problems they each pose the reader (not to mention their divergent national contexts of their locations on the imperial map) are brought more usefully into relief where their narrative and poetic means are accounted in a similar manner – for which reason the temporally mounted unfolding of their synaesthetically expressed engagements with environments is revealed here as the basis of comparison. Aesthetics does not trump ethics, but comprehending

how one follows from the other makes it easier for literary scholars to avoid some of the more obvious distortions of either generalizing from very specific detailed colonial contexts, or of projecting morally inflected thematic contents from a theoretical as opposed to literary purview.

Despite their relative contemporaneity, the placement of my trio of texts within the catalogue of “modernist” landscape writing requires explanation.¹⁸⁵ Here we might begin by considering Lawrence. Faced with that author’s oeuvre, the critic Hugh Stevens asks why Lawrence should be considered contemporary when his works aim ‘to help us to recapture a premodern, or even “primitive”, relationship with nature and with our own bodies, and dissolve boundaries between the self and the world?’ Indeed, Stevens finds Lawrence to be ‘something like an ecological antimodernist, continuing a tradition of Romantic organicism’ largely antithetical to the tropes of the period, and so sees Lawrence dealing with issues of self-consciousness, issues inflected, for instance, by that author’s readings of Nietzsche in whom one finds ‘an awareness of self as separated from the natural world, a mental condition arising from the influence of modern, rational, scientific thought, with its dualisms and harsh delineation of subject and object’ (in Shiach 2007: 137). Further, Stevens writes how Lawrence saw the “modernist” novel going wrong because of its mechanical aspects and what we might think of as subservience to the soul destroying and self-conscious ‘social individual[s]’ that “we” (along with our fictional characters) have become:

If we can’t hear the cries far down in our own forests of dark veins, we can look in the real novels, and there listen-in. Not listen to the didactic statements of the author, but to the low, calling cries of the characters, as they wander in the dark woods of their destiny. (*STH* 2002: 205)¹⁸⁶

That Lawrence saw himself writing those ‘real novels’ seems quite clear, as is his disgust with the false gods of self-conscious social being or the aesthetic techniques by which the self is to be fictionally realized. Whatever one thinks of Lawrence’s larger ethical project, let alone the ecological bent Stevens locates in the former’s sylvan embodiments, we nonetheless find Lawrence’s sensibility leading towards an organicism of place which, while offering arenas for the unbridled natural self, finds in its non-European occasioning a less nostalgic, less bucolic

¹⁸⁵ Composition dates obscure the epochal positions of these works. Where Woolf has been seen as a new voice operating against the poetics of the previous generation, and Lawrence as a late conservative rallying of essentializing outlooks (as mounted through the complicating guise of an organicist revival), the most socially staid of these three, Forster, appears more willing to reach outside himself to other living cultures and races.

¹⁸⁶ From the essay, “The Novel and the Feelings”.

nature than had perhaps been envisioned. One result of this is that like Conrad before him, the peopled wilderness of the colonial “out there” is as likely to repel as to offer, through the abyssal conditionality of their environments, a non-place congruent to Lawrence’s non-traditional humanism. And even where such anti-humanism is seen to be as historically new as, say, the tone of Woolf’s poetic fictions, a note of caution needs to be sounded, for it is easy to forget that Woolf was born only three years after the presumably more staid and traditional Forster, and three before the “rebellious” Lawrence, or that Woolf would outlive Lawrence by a decade, and Forster both by several decades.¹⁸⁷ Even allowing for Conrad’s late turn to literary production (he was, after all, 22 years older than Forster), the three “later” writers covered in this chapter were producing or publishing more or less aporetic treatments of place from the 1920s, and, as Conrad was to do (here with *The Shadow Line*, serialized 1916, and the long-developing *The Rescue* of 1920), pushing the embodied landscape into the realms of the ecological by continuing to internalize topography as a category of the embodied subject.¹⁸⁸

Critics have certainly picked up on a host of potential topoi concerning colonial settings at the cusp of embodied interiority, a list including exotic locations as zones of compensation for Woolf’s traumatized sexuality, Lawrence’s need for a freer culture of intimacy, or Forster’s homosexuality.¹⁸⁹ Yet whatever critical capital such intimacies produce cannot be separated either from the fictional forms or landscape constructions by which Woolf’s South America, Lawrence’s Australia, and Forster’s India are staged. If much of the interest of these texts relies

¹⁸⁷ Their dates are E. M. Forster (1879-1970), Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), and D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930). By another rubric of comparison: Woolf’s first fiction was begun around 1908, though there was still a longish gestation to come, while Lawrence’s first mature short compositions date from 1907; similarly, Forster’s first published novel appeared in 1905 – his initial short stories a few years earlier.

¹⁸⁸ Thomas Hardy is an interesting test case for the supposed modernism of such a project. With respect to the synaesthetic landscape, Hardy had as his aim ‘a sensuous apprehension of daily life that embraces the contemplative and metaphysical’, an outlook that is finally what Hardy in 1890 himself called a personal one: ‘Art consists in so depicting the common events of life as to bring out the features which illustrate the artist’s idiosyncratic mode of regard; making old incidents and things seem as new’ (in Florence Hardy, *The Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1928*. London: Macmillan, 1962: 225).

¹⁸⁹ The death of Rachel Vinrace, the heroine in *The Voyage Out*, appears connected to her failure to survive the problem bequeathed by sexual passion, animated here first through oceanic distress (‘monsters’) and then more forcibly, the tropical profusion Woolf provides through her treatment of flora and landscapes. See Molly Hite’s essay: “Virginia Woolf’s Two Bodies,” (*Genders* 31, 2000) for a discussion of Woolf’s self as projected back from the fictions, for instance of a visionary body and a social body produced by and for the gaze of others. Also interesting are: Rachel Bowlby, *Feminist Destinations and Further Essays on Virginia Woolf* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1997), Gillian Beer, *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground* (Ann Arbor, MI: U of Michigan Press, 1996). For analysis of Foster’s sexuality in his fiction, see A. A. Markley’s “E. M. Forster’s Reconfigured Gaze and the Creation of a Homoerotic Subjectivity” (*Twentieth Century Literature* 47.2 (2001): 268-292), and James Miracky’s *Regenerating the Novel: Gender and Genre in Woolf, Forster, Sinclair, and Lawrence* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

upon the holding of an idealized past in relation to the flux of present experience, the place depictions sustaining them are more often than not reliant on a frisson between landscapes seen as immanent, and those suggestive of transcendence. As will have become apparent, it is the frisson between inherent or physical significance and metaphysical meaning structures which I argue is present at the heart of so much of Conrad's early fictional practice, and which in the present chapter I will update through novels complicating attempts to enact or dissolve affective and cognitive responses to particular environments via the now suspect operations of consciousness.

One task of the next three sections is thus to watch, in separate authors, and through their foregrounding of different human senses, the means by which language allows writers to probe the disorientations of fictional characters in the presence of alterity. By remaining alert to the textual features by which, to borrow from John Hillis Miller's reading of the incipient modernity of Thomas Hardy's landscape depictions, we better understand where and how 'between the intention and the deed, between moment and moment, between the self and itself, between mind and landscape, falls the word' (1970: 144).¹⁹⁰ But the initial guiding factor here remains that of a temporally alert reading Wordsworth's notation of 'language of sense' where this tilts into the more virtual and certainly voidal realms of twentieth century modernity – indeed, where the language of true sense, as that of true nature, is most authentically raised through temporalized tropes of the abyss, and so finds the *place* of cultural disintegration both within the subject and in the world.

Touching Darkness in The Voyage Out

Is Woolf a writer of place or interiority? Certainly she is less often read for her engagements with her fictional places, yet her first and last novels are importantly engaged with their settings. We have already seen something of the temporal landscape in *Between the Acts*, yet her first novel of 1915 remains of interest largely for its interiorizing treatment of its shipboard and then make-believe coastal and river settings. One might of course want to know where one is here, other than in a fictional former British possession named Santa Marina, along the South American Atlantic littoral, but Woolf is content not to be too precise. She will present

¹⁹⁰ Miller seems to be borrowing sonorities from Eliot's "The Hollow Men" of 1925.

us with ‘Portuguese military families’ strolling across the page, but prevaricates between announcing a Portuguese or Spanish imprint for the cultural identity of the town or its history (Jed Esty identifies it as ‘Spanish’). We are told, too, how the settlement suffers following the British withdrawal from the Elizabethan-era colony, and of incursions by each of the Iberian colonial players: ‘from the sea came vengeful Spaniards and rapacious Portuguese’ (2004: 85). It would appear, then, that Woolf’s colonial offshoot is near enough to Brazil. That country had been independent from 1822, but Woolf is no less coy about the presumed postcolonial apparatus she is creating, thus the Santa Marina of her text remains comprehensible as an updated extension of the once ‘great British colony’ of the seventeenth century, now reconceived in leisure terms as that ‘small colony’ (85) or ‘English colony’ (92) centred, appropriately enough, on an hotel. That is to say, as one minor character intimates in a letter, we are in the midst of the holidaying chattering classes, and so might assume long stays, tropical weather, the services of a ‘British Consul’, and ‘an English steamer in the bay’. Of this locale, too, we hear how with ‘artists, merchants, cultivated people – they are stupid, conventional, and flirtatious...’ (*ibid.*, ellipsis in original). With Woolf abroad it would seem we are not so far from home.

The inclusion of *The Voyage Out* in this study is not, then, as it is with the other works under investigation, the result of specific tropical or colonial experience on the author’s part, but the result of an even more gratuitously bookish invention than, say, Conrad’s reliance upon third person accounts of the Malay scene.¹⁹¹ Nevertheless, if some of her jungle paraphernalia appears to hearken as much to the exotica of Kew Gardens as of popular representations of South America – Hudson’s *The Purple Land* seems appropriate¹⁹² – the completed narrative finally

¹⁹¹ Alfred Wallace’s *The Malay Archipelago* (1869), is usually cited in this regard, alongside largely unconvincing attempts to link Conrad to the diaries and letters of James Brooke of Borneo, or Rane Margaret Brookes’s late *My Life in Sarawak* (1913).

¹⁹² Woolf’s 1919 story, “Kew Gardens” (written 1917) has been remarked for its generic if at least now authentic noticing of interiority through exotic foliage. Such collusion is suggested in a chapter entitled “Factualism and the Search for Ordinary Things”, in Lorraine Sim’s *Virginia Woolf: The Patterns of Ordinary Experience* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010). The following passage from the story is suggestive:

They walked on the path the flower-bed, now walking four abreast, and soon diminished in size among the trees and looked half transparent as the sunlight and shade swam over their backs in large trembling irregular patches.

But William caught him by the sleeve and touched a flower with the tip of his walking-stick in order to divert the old man’s attention. After looking at it for a moment in some confusion the old man bent his ear to it and seemed to answer a voice speaking from it, for he began talking about the forests of Uruguay which he had visited hundreds of years ago in company with the most beautiful young woman in Europe. He could be heard murmuring about forests of Uruguay blanketed with the wax petals of tropical roses, nightingales, sea beaches, mermaids, and women drowned at sea...

takes us beyond the clichés of tropical alterity to ground us in a freer, if more voidal space of closure concerning the brief life and pathetic death of its heroine, Rachel Vinrace. Esty is decided upon the lack of closure in the novel, writing how Woolf ‘twists the coming-of-age plot into one long, spiralling denouement’, thus leaving a record of ‘[s]talled development – or colonial adolescence’ (2012: 129-31). This seems fair since, in face of the oceanic and then Amazonian scene, ‘Rachel’s identification with infinite space and uncouth nature becomes, for Woolf, a technique for indicating resistance to a mature identity’ (135) more than any specific colonial one. But the place itself is still a large part of the novel’s mechanism, a view seemingly paralleling the argument set out by Susan Stanford Friedman, for whom the story exhibits, in words echoing Woolf’s own eventual phrasing in her “Modern Fiction” essay of 1923, ‘an exhilarating victory over the tyranny of conventional plot’ (1996: 109). Precisely: only I would want to reach beyond ‘plot’ to incorporate the exotic settings of *The Voyage Out*, indeed, to place such settings into the dynamic that Paul Armstrong, for one, engages under the rubric of a temporal signification: ‘The paradox animating Woolf’s art is that the transcendent moments of being she pursues can only be achieved by manipulating transience and discontinuity’ (1987: 264) – the formal basis of aesthetic duration.

But Friedman is engaged on what is a narratological reading, and while she underlines how Woolf’s conservative plotting can be shown to escape its bounds such that ‘interlocking narratives of gender, class, race, and empire reverberate vertically within the horizontal narrative’ (121), she does not extend this model into the novel’s carefully depicted exotic environments or the durational foundations of their poetics. But Friedman is elsewhere more direct about the novel’s places, marking where the members of an upriver expedition appear to be aiming for ‘the heart of the night’ or might be discomfited by the ‘great darkness’ about them (259). Yet where Friedman wishes to align these descriptions with the perils of gender, Esty rather points to Conrad’s “Heart of Darkness” as a ‘clear intertext’ for Woolf’s novel (133).¹⁹³ While I will not be rehearsing how these critics collect their few thoughts on the novel’s landscape treatment, I do not want to abandon their views yet; for just as Woolf is learning to

¹⁹³ “Virginia Woolf’s Pedagogical Scenes of Reading: The Voyage Out, The Common Reader, and Her ‘Common Readers’”. In *Virginia Woolf: An MFS Reader* (Maren Linett ed., Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2009). For a similar argument concerning “Heart of Darkness”, see: Mark Wollaeger’s “The Woolfs in the Jungle: Intertextuality, Sexuality, and the Emergence of Female Modernism in *The Voyage Out*, *The Village in the Jungle*, and “Heart of Darkness”” (*Modern Language Quarterly* 64:1, March 2003 [University of Washington]), and Patricia’s Crouch’s, “Gender in the Jungle: *The Voyage Out* as a Response to “Heart of Darkness”.” (*Women Writers: A Zine*. Ed. Kim Wells. Online Journal. Published: January 7, 2002).

write fiction in the partly Conradian guise of a “failed” or at least truncated colonialist *Bildungsroman*, Friedman is helpfully alert to what its narrative spaces allow. Here she sets up Bakhtin’s and Kristeva’s classic statements wherein narrative is ‘the play of desire in space as well as time’ (2002: 217), a move entirely appropriate to Rachel’s sensual difficulties, and then complicates this dynamic through ‘dramatic irony created by the (vertical) intertextual resonances of which the characters (in horizontal space and time) remain unaware’ (121): Rachel, as unable or unwilling to face the practical embodiments of social or personal intimacy as her author, turns them into tropes.¹⁹⁴ While I want to accede to the general drift of Friedman’s thesis as opposed to its more specific vocabulary of ‘intersections’ (119) and ‘interplay’ (121), *The Voyage Out* still offers a less crystalline working out of poetic significance than that on display in her mature works. Nonetheless, the reader is invited, Friedman-like, to infer the true objects of ‘the play’ of narrative desire through the author’s figural strategies; indeed, to see the *settings* of these dramas as more than spatio-temporal constructs for action, but as communicative forms through which we come to interrogate the here incommunicable excess of meaning. Despite what the critical record offers, the importance of abyssal formations in *The Voyage Out* extends beyond whatever fascination they hold in reference to the apparently mortal sensuality Woolf is bracketing, and, moreover, offer a deeper engagement with spatio-temporal forms than Friedman allows in her notification of narrative fallouts extending ‘in space as well as time’. Thus once more, where landscapes of interiority and the exotic are permitted to share terms, we will need to ask what terms these are, as well as how the novel’s physical settings – their putative *actuality* as shipboard or tropical sites – comes to impact the derailments of a protagonist?¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ Friedman ranges from the Bakhtinian chronotope to the spatialized intertextuality of Kristeva’s essays from *Desire in Language*, “Word, Dialogue, and Novel” (1966) and “The Bounded Text” (1966-7). Regarding the latter, Kristeva’s ‘spatial tropes’ allow us to ‘read narrative by interpreting the text’s horizontal and vertical narrative movements and intersections. Such interactions are events, I will argue, that take place at every moment in the text in a kind of interdependent interplay of surface and depth’ (110). Friedman’s fondness for theory’s abyssal tendencies become clear where ‘such moments may appear as juxtapositions, oppositions, conflations, convergences, or mirrorings of narrative coordinates’ (110-11). Parts of this essay appear in another of Friedman’s publications: “Spatialization: A Strategy for Reading Narrative”, this from Brian Richardson’s *Narrative dynamics: essays on time, plot, closure, and frames* (Ohio State University Press, 2002: 217-28). Here narrative is ‘the play of desire in space as well as time’ (217). Friedman cites Kristeva in laying out how ‘spatialization suggests an interpretative strategy that regards a text as “a dynamic [...] intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (fixed meaning)’, thus drawing attention to the significant textures of Woolf’s presumably *unfixed* setting depictions (Kristeva 1966: 65, in Friedman 132).

¹⁹⁵ Forster’s 1926 review of Woolf’s novels to that date is acute in its recognition of *The Voyage Out*’s unreality outside the imagination, and ‘whose scene is a South America not found on any map and

Befitting a novel entitled *The Voyage Out*, the shipboard chapters offer a clear route into understanding how the text is structured. Like *Lord Jim*, the abstract topologies offered by the story's marine settings map the uncanny motions and by turns lulling or aporetic surfaces of the ship and its surroundings; so, too, the maritime scene presents a topologized sensorium for alterity with its 'troubled grey waters' and 'fitfully scattered' reflections (67), one grounding Rachel's confrontation with what is for her a threatening interiority. At the same time, however, it is within this same brief span of sensory otherness that Woolf creates the forum within which Rachel is given to discover a safer arena of gesture and touch, let alone a Conrad-like encounter with cosmic analogues. Later, in the upriver jungle expedition, such alterity would be couched in an amorphous and nearly complete darkness, but here, through the sea crossing, her physical being is made analogous to the colonizing physicality of the scene before her: 'She leant upon the rail of the ship, and gradually ceased to feel, for a chill of body and mind crept over her' (*ibid.*). So the point to be made here will concern the degree to which both body and mind are shunted onto the novel's settings as knots of contestation, just as, early in the novel, jouissance and a more prosaic form of biliousness are given as the joint products of oceanic movement.¹⁹⁶

I want to complete these more general comments concerning *The Voyage Out* by attending to what the moments of embodiment accomplish in the text as temporal unfoldings. Certainly, Woolf appears conscious to the possibilities of the novel to mechanize and so desensitize the body as a means of assaulting culturally outdated psychological or mythological

reached by a boat which would not float on any sea, an America whose spiritual boundaries touch Xanadu and Atlantis' (1975: 172). In place of the social comedy the text appears to promise, Forster sees a 'current' of 'deep unrest' serving to lift the novel into the realm of the 'noble'. All the same, the novel 'is not romantic, not mystic, not explanatory of the universe'. But neither is it geographically founded, let alone transformable into a more traditionally minded document: 'By using the wrong tone of voice – over-stressing 'South America' for instance – the critic might easily make it appear [so]' (173). Hence the tropical aspect of the work would seem to be generic to Forster, a transmutable feature 'not found on any map', yet with interior analogues for which he cites the closing words from a late chapter: 'But it chilled them to see themselves in the glass, for instead of being vast and indivisible they were really very small and separate, the size of the glass leaving a large space for the reflection of other things' (295). Forster uses this passage to encapsulate Woolf's scenario, writing how instead of the expected social comedy 'the voyage continues, the current deepens, carrying her between green banks of the jungle into disease and death' (172).

¹⁹⁶ Woolf is not alone in the modernist problematization of the body as communicative field. As with Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr* (1918) or Hemingway's crisis of physical competence in *The Sun Also Rises* (1925), Woolf's first novel has fictional individuals appear as a conjunction of cultural practices and automaton attributes in which affect, gesture, and conscience sometimes fail to converge. Compare William Pritchard's jaunty "Character as Performance," *Profiles in Literature: Wyndham Lewis* (London: Routledge, 1972), or Lewis's short essay, "The Meaning of the Wild Body", *The Wild Body: A Soldier of Humour and Other Stories* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1928). Compare Philip Young's examination of Hemingway's "wounded heroes" as representing the 'outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual dis-grace' in *Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration* (Penn State UP, 1966 [1952]: 41).

framings of ‘subjectivity’. Moreover, the extended narrative frames by which she makes such moments aesthetically potent seem to offer her not just the durational medium of contact between the embodied mind and the world, but the fabric by which platial constructs are given to perform the tensions the individual cannot or will not face. Where the pangs of conscience had been, as with *Lord Jim*, synaesthetically transferred onto the location, Woolf makes the synaesthetic *body* the locus of not otherwise (not decently narratable) interior processes. Thus in offering the literally trans-Atlantic trajectory of a sexually repressed young woman from Europe to a new world tropical other, Woolf’s novel simultaneously traces an analogous course across the body as a different order of event horizon, one in which time becomes animated not simply as spans of experience, but as its constitutive fabric. As I will be arguing nearer the end of this section, the interiorization of Rachel’s sensual being can be entered into the process of subverting the gestural repertoires by which the self expresses its social constructedness. In this manner, rather than exploring, as Lawrence would, the synesthetic entwining of body and consciousness as a last arena of authentic being, Woolf develops a now fully modernist poetics of embodiment around physical encounters with a here colonial void in order to offer snapshots of aporia as the self’s reality. As seen in my second chapter, however, such epiphanic moments are often inaugurated by a longer temporal engagement with a topologized interior terrain. If such terrains are hardly *necessarily* colonial in nature, it needs recalling that Woolf’s aporetic protagonist in *The Voyage Out* does not reach crisis at some point-like halt of symbolization, but comes upon the moment of breakdown through a longer signficatory process, here set out as aesthetic duration. Indeed, by focusing on the body as a site of non-linguistic narrativity, Woolf’s early text permits the flow of otherwise unrepresentable thematic significance into the temporal gap poetically effected between the body conceived as topology, and body as a phenomenological interleaving of mind and world.

How, then, does the temporalized body come to be articulated in the narrative drama of *The Voyage Out*? In the first place, the embodied sensorium as landscape is not entirely the product of the tropics, but begins with the departure of the *Euphrosyne* from its anchorage in the Thames. This change in demeanour is mapped not only through having the space of London’s social discourse made suddenly mobile, but through the physical destabilizations of the seaborne encounter. Something like this had been effected through the *Patna*’s collision. To recall that scene, the gently rising and falling bow of the ship signalling that nearly imperceptible event was accompanied by a ‘faint sound of thunder [...] less than a sound, hardly more than a vibration’ (*LJ* 62). Woolf describes a similar reification of shifting outlooks where a ‘slight but perceptible

wave seemed to roll beneath the floor; then it sank; then another came, more perceptible. Lights slid right across the uncurtained window. The ship gave a loud melancholy moan' (*VO* 9). As again with *Lord Jim*, these sensory determinants gain in force as a few pages later Woolf's heroine finds 'words rammed down her throat' by the wind, while her cabin partner, Helen, is 'overcome by the 'spirit', indeed, the 'intoxication', of movement (11). Played out against the ennui of the ship's social scene, and then before the new visual perspectives offered from the rail, these motions subtly redraw the physical real of the voyage. This passage into new spaces is dramatized in more overt form via the gale through which the ship passes, and (now more akin to Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* of 1945), utilizes the ensuing tempest-tossed hiatus as a launching pad for new realms of relationality given 'the whole course of their lives was now put out of order' (65). We should note too, how the storm opens a gate to interior processes, not just because it might cause Woolf's cast to temporarily suffer 'their view of the strange underworld, inhabited by phantoms' (67) but by directing attention to the nether parts of social niceties as with Mrs. Dalloway's 'white underclothes fallen and scattered on the floor' or the petticoats which 'rose above her knees' (66-7):

Instantly the world dropped into shape; they were no longer atoms flying in the void, but people riding a triumphant ship on the back of the sea. Wind and space were banished; the world floated like an apple in a tub, and the mind of man, which had been unmoored also, once more attached itself to the old beliefs. (67)

But we had already been prepared for this tendency away from 'old beliefs'. Such is the role of the mythic element offered by Mr. Pepper's unconvincing pastiche of sea creatures loosing themselves from the 'unplumbed depths of ocean' to enter consciousness, a realm of interiority in which 'white, hairless, blind monster' would threaten to 'explode if you brought them to the surface, their sides bursting asunder and scattering entrails to the winds when released from pressure' (18). What these lines indicate is the extent to which the voyage across the Atlantic is really the traversal of a submerged self, at any rate, to recall Friedman's borrowing from the various axes of Kristeva's spatial paradigm, a journey into *depth* as much as another geographical location. The key notion here is the degree to which Rachel herself is not able to *plumb* such profundity, being, as one of Woolf's more delightfully arch critical biographers calls her, 'quite astonishingly ignorant', if not a 'wispy amalgam of ineptness, shyness and innocence' (Rose 1978: 50-1). Not idiotic, then, but perhaps a little dull, Rachel is, in Esty's acute encapsulation, 'the unintegrated subject' at the novel's centre who 'cannot interpret or describe the effects of her own self-dissolution' (2012: 136). This is not so different

from Forster's pleasantries about the *Euphrosyne* being a 'boat which would not float on any sea': so where Rachel is a cipher for Edwardian youth at the cusp of its historical erasure, the ship stands for the void or space that is both the body voyaging to a new "location" and the vessel of human interiority. Rachel, of course, is not the only hollow figure in the novel; as Phyllis Rose says of Rachel's lover Hewet, the 'tepid Terence is more a position paper than a character', a non-man to go with Rachel's failure to broach 'acceptance of herself as a woman' (67).

Nor does the negative undertow suggested by Mr. Pepper's monsters of the within ever quite leave the novel, but increases across the two other voyages presented in the text, the upriver excursion and Rachel's descent into death. Indeed, the expedition Woolf's cast undertakes into the only slightly less oceanic realm of the continent's tropical interior confirms the sexual politics and psychologies of the South American half of *The Voyage Out*, a scenario often brought out to seal arguments as to the intimate history of its author. But these possibilities, traceable as they may be, need to be understood less against the unconvincing forest background Woolf gives her setting than the sensory disorientation she provides Rachel at the moment of her crisis of intimacy. Her being literally bowled over in the wake of her upriver engagement is typical in this regard.

A hand dropped abrupt as iron on Rachel's shoulder; it might have been a bolt from heaven. She fell beneath it, and the grass whipped across her eyes and filled her mouth and ears. Through the waving stems she saw a figure, large and shapeless against the sky. Helen was upon her. Rolled this way and that, now seeing only forests of green, and now the high blue heaven; she was speechless and almost without sense. (268)

Here the abrupt occasioning of a moment of unwelcome embodiment provides not just a warning as to Rachel's inability to accept the work of sexual congress, but a more profound uncoupling of the self from its anchoring in the body. The resulting instance of sensory aporia is oddly reminiscent of that Eliot would later use for the lover of the Hyacinth girl in "The Waste Land" whose own intimate awakening, consummated or not, left him epistemologically bewildered: 'I could not / Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither / Living nor dead, and I knew nothing, / Looking into the heart of light, the silence' (lines 38-41). '[S]peechless' and 'almost without sense', Woolf's anti-heroine is likewise set upon by the entry into interiority of a threatening if half-desired external world, now in the shape of the suddenly commanding Helen, now Helen and Hewet, rolling together with her in the waving grass.

The feasible sapphism of the moment has generated much analysis in its focus upon the Helen's 'soft body, the strong and hospitable arms, and happiness swelling and breaking in one

vast wave' (*op. cit.*), but I want to remain with Woolf's raising of 'happiness' as an ecology of self and surroundings: 'Very gently and quietly, almost as if it were the blood singing in her veins, or the water of the stream running over stones, Rachel became conscious of a new feeling within her' (276).¹⁹⁷ Such has been the movement of this chapter of the text (XXI), a rhythmic alteration between Rachel's by turns wallowing or deepening awareness. She may be lost now, but clarity had emerged earlier:

With every word the mist which had enveloped them, making them seem unreal to each other, since the previous afternoon melted a little further, and their contact became more and more natural. Up through the sultry southern landscape they saw the world they knew appear clearer and more vividly than it had ever appeared before. As upon that occasion at the hotel when she had sat in the window, the world once more arranged itself beneath her gaze very vividly and in its true proportions. (266)

Still, it is only a momentary respite from the burden of her experiences alone or in the presence of her newly betrothed partner, and their stupor, cognitive and sensory, is explicit with 'their minds sometimes working with difficulty and sometimes ceasing to work, their eyes alone perceiving the things round them' (267). The point is made, too, that such patternings are the work of a place already set out in terms of exhilaration and threat. Here is Mrs. Ambrose looking over the country at a greater distance, and noting the admixture of indefinable affects:

she thought the country very beautiful, but also sultry and alarming. She did not like to feel herself the victim of unclassified emotions, and certainly as the launch slipped on and on, in the hot morning sun, she felt herself unreasonably moved. Whether the unfamiliarity of the forest was the cause of it, or something less definite, she could not determine (271)

This is a far cry from Willems's travails before the all consuming Eastern jungle in *Outcast*, let alone Jim's presence in the nowhere of Patusan; the brief entry into Woolf's South American forest confection, that 'sultry southern landscape' (274), is not finally the zone of the real or some abyssal agency but, despite its tropical profusion, a walk in 'an old English park' like 'Arundel or Windsor' (272). The drawing of affects from atmosphere is no less common

¹⁹⁷ Such is also the affective excess of Rachel's roll in the grass with Helen. The transition between the two moments is carried through the internalization of landscape, hence the voices calling Rachel and Hewet 'never reached through the waters in which they were now sunk', but remained outside the moment. Adrift in the mindlessness of connectivity to place, Helen is yet not particularly alert to its categories: 'The grasses and breezes sounding and murmuring all around them, they never noticed that the swishing of the grasses grew louder and louder, and did not cease with the lapse of the breeze' (268).

than that of ascribing such ambient effects as positive or negative. Here is the British Orientalist Painter, Talbot Kelly, simultaneously writing of the indeterminacy of Burma's light which

filled the air with an impalpable mist which enveloped the landscape in a silver haze, and gave to its features a suggestiveness which was charming. Distances which were not really great appeared to be immense, and the sun, shining through the laden atmosphere, glorified even the monotony of the rice-fields with opalescent tints [...] This silvery curtain, which lends such enchantment to the commonplace, I found to be general in the cultivated lands, and during the few hours of its continuance it seems to envelop nature in a poetic glamour difficult to describe. (1910: 74)

Here we might backtrack in *A Voyage Out* to see what sort of scene setting Woolf invents at Rachel and Hewet's first entry into the forest:

As they passed into the depths of the forest the light grew dimmer, and the noises of the ordinary world were replaced by those creaking and sighing sounds which suggest to the traveller in a forest that he is walking at the bottom of the sea. The path narrowed and turned; it was hedged in by dense creepers which knotted tree to tree, and burst here and there into star-shaped crimson blossoms. The sighing and creaking up above were broken every now and then by the jarring cry of some startled animal. The atmosphere was close and the air came at them in languid puffs of scent. The vast green light was broken here and there by a round of pure yellow sunlight which fell through some gap in the immense umbrella of green above (264)

This sort of sketching in words is not very difficult once we make up our minds about the fact that one appears to be 'walking at the bottom of the sea', or that the forest canopy might be given over to 'vast green light' (*ibid.* my emphasis). As a genre, Woolf had once been troubled by the ersatz quality of this sort of presentation, what Kelly sets out through 'poetic glamour'. In her would be 1909 magazine text, "Memoirs of a Novelist" (rejected by *Cornhill*), she parodies the albeit occasionally similar writings of travel accounts such as Kelly's along with the grotesqueries of the tropical sublime where mountains appear as 'ramparts of clouds' and cascades go on 'leaping and flashing, now golden, now purple', and so on. As Woolf summarizes such efforts, the 'scenery was tropical because one gets effects quicker there'.¹⁹⁸ In the terms of *The Voyage Out*, the effect required appears tied to a merely interior projectability in which the landscape is by turns no longer the 'ordinary world' outside the jungle (264), but has been made visible in its 'true proportions' through Rachel's shifting 'gaze' (266). Unlike Conrad, then, the illusions of Woolf's fictional personages do not take place before a voidal

¹⁹⁸ This combination of the parody and Woolf's comment upon it appear in Rose, p. 69. See the "Monk's House Papers", University of Sussex Library (MH/B 9a)

realm that is always, so to speak, there beneath the one we customarily experience, but a more transitory realm of endless cognitive reconstructability. With Woolf, too, it is the human incorporating Armstrong's observation of the literary impression's joint raising of 'transcendent moments' and 'discontinuity' (1987: 264): at least at this part of *The Voyage Out*, such processes are not found in nature but ourselves.

Notwithstanding the fluid landscape practice, a more distressing abyssal grounding might simultaneously be raised for Woolf's text. Earlier, for instance, the reader had been invited to join the lovers' gaze inland from a coastal bluff wherein 'the vast expanse of land gave them a sensation which is given by no view, however extended, in England'. Here the exoticizing outlook 'was one of infinite sun-dried earth, pointed in pinnacles, heaped in vast barriers, earth widening and spreading away and away like the immense floor of the sea' (194), a sublime expanse not inflected by, as the rest of its chapter instructs us, masculine attempts to capture time and space, or more pointedly, the 'shape' of Rachel's body, but rather 'the exquisitely pleasant sensations which a little depth of the sea washing over rocks suggests' (195). A less sensually active example comes on the couple's first night on the river steamer. Here the intertextual links that Esty and others connect with Conrad become as striking as the synaesthetic darkness through which the later stages of the text will increasingly deliver its effects:

They seemed to be driving into the heart of the night, for the trees closed in front of them, and they could hear all round them the rustling of leaves. The great darkness had the usual effect of taking away all desire for communication by making their words sound thin and small [...] beyond that there was unbroken darkness, no light reached their faces, or the trees which were massed on the sides of the river. (251)

Questions of embodiment are raised in a passage connected with this one, and it is interesting to wonder what the novel might have been like were Woolf more personally and historically able to broach the issues of personal intimacy in a more direct manner. Here we have Hewet awake at night as they steam upriver:

He was drawn on and on away from all he knew, slipping over barriers and past landmarks into unknown waters as the boat glided over the smooth surface of the river. In profound peace, enveloped in deeper unconsciousness than had been his for many nights, he lay on deck watching the tree-tops change their position slightly against the sky, and arch themselves, and sink and tower huge, until he passed from seeing them into dreams where he lay beneath the shadow of the vast trees, looking up into the sky. (252)

This is not the first time Hewet has had his feelings splayed into his surroundings, for in the midst of his falling in love at Santa Marina these had been as false as the state into which he feared his emotions were delivering him: ‘Everything he saw was distasteful to him. He hated the blue and white, the intensity and definiteness, the hum and heat of the south; the landscape seemed to him as hard and as romantic as a cardboard background on the stage, and the mountain but a wooden screen against a sheet painted blue’ (234).

Despite the potential falseness of subjects and their surroundings, the effort is made during the two-chapter river expedition to stage a more potent inwardness. And if these give rise to the sorts of ‘unclassified emotions’ one feels before the demesnes of alterity, the results are not yet voidal regardless how they might flirt with its categories. In this sense the forest descriptions stand as preparations for the more telling nocturnal atmosphere of the return voyage to Santa Marina that follows Rachel and Hewet’s disturbing and ecstatic moments in forest. For Rachel, the all too embodied ‘engagement’ she and Hewet have been launched upon causes them to rebound between moments of intimate coupledness and rather more flushed and troubling bouts of anxiety – ‘having ventured too far and exposed themselves’ (279). Yet some of these apparent affects appear connectable to not feeling very much at all, and the consequent need to work oneself up to some sort of compensatory passion, or at least for Rachel, who in the midst of the faux jungle seems as ready to affirm her own experiment in mature passion as an atmosphere she wills herself into, as opposed to grounding such passion in the shape of doleful Terence. In fact, their proclamations of love have a whiff of misplaced comedy about them, let alone the weak watery ‘churning’ of emotional ecologies:

By degrees she drew close to him, and rested against him. In this position they sat for some time. She said “Terence” once; he answered “Rachel.”

“Terrible—terrible,” she murmured after another pause, but in saying this she was thinking as much of the persistent churning of the water as of her own feeling. On and on it went in the distance, the senseless and cruel churning of the water. She observed that the tears were running down Terence's cheeks. (265)

But if the settings of the novel have thus far been proved as inconsequential as its characters, what Woolf shows us at the emotional climax of her novel is how Rachel’s powers of visualization are unable to broach intimacy, but remain a kind of experiential shell shutting her off from others. Hence where Rachel reaches outside it to caress her fiancé’s cheek, Hewet’s touch to the same spot communicates nothing to him but the universal force of unreality and meaninglessness:

a curious sense of possession [came] over her, it struck her that she might now touch him; she put out her hand and lightly touched his cheek. His fingers followed where hers had been, and the touch of his hand upon his face brought back the overpowering sense of unreality. This body of his was unreal; the whole world was unreal. (275)

Here Woolf is being more obviously psychological than Conrad in *Lord Jim*, whose title-hero, as Esty rightly intimates, is no more equipped to interrogate himself and his actions at the age of thirty than is Rachel at twenty-four. If Conrad is more inclined to raise metaphysical categories from passages of description, and so to add moral rather than personal gravity to his dramatizations of interiority, there is little in *Lord Jim* equivalent to Rachel's gestural performance as a means for mining gaps between social expression and interior panic. Rachel's travails are not perhaps more felt than Jim's, but one suspects a personal element buried within her responses, one more individually responsive than the evocative but empty constructs of the cosmic void through which Marlow will sometimes sketch Jim's imaginings. A more pressing observation might be made between the texts. Just as the collision of the *Patna* and the subsequent court enquiry woke Jim from his self-authored view of himself, the 'upset' Rachel has her own enquiring gaze returned by the indigenous villagers whose encampment the travellers cross in returning to the steamer. There 'long narrow eyes slid round and fixed upon them with the motionless inexpressive gaze of those removed from each other far beyond the plunge of speech'. Moreover, as the party 'sauntered about, the stare followed them, passing over their legs, their bodies, their heads, curiously, not without hostility, like the crawl of a winter fly' (277). The strength of this seemingly colonial gaze is not just notable for the 'cold, melancholy ... insignificant' feeling that comes over Rachel and Hewet, but for the transformation of that observed space into an ambient sensation that refuses to leave her, the 'for ever and ever' durational aspect of the landscape's affectively charged collation of 'those women sitting under the trees, the trees and the river'.

Tellingly, it is at this point that the focal centre of the scene shifts onto Helen, who more freely and wisely than Rachel, immediately reflects upon 'the delicate flesh of men and women, which breaks so easily and lets the life escape compared with these great trees and deep waters' (278). From these environmentally directed snippets of thought, whether aspects of the actual setting or figures within tropes, the novel begins its final movement towards a more dramatically overt laying out of landscape as a stage for interiority. This is made obvious in Helen's 'presentiments of disaster' concerning the new couple, from which she composes a surreally imagined scene of mishap, 'a picture of a boat upset on the river in England, at midday' (*ibid.*).

While no such emergency occurs, something of its affective potential is suggested by the atmospherics of their nocturnal cruise downriver. This voyage back, peaceful as it remains, is symbolically decisive. From her setting, Woolf produces the sorts of abyssal scenographies we saw developed in *Lord Jim*, only now defamiliarized through the more jagged modernist style developing in the period. Here we have people and chairs appearing as ‘angular shapes’, with the arc of cigarettes in the darkness marking the location of disembodied hands and mouths. This physical estrangement extends to language where words are themselves found to have ‘crossed the darkness’ or ‘hung... suspended in the air’ (271). Of greater consequence, however, is the landscape flowing past the only seemingly stilled little ship as ‘the *procession* of dark trees’ (272, my emphasis), the unreality of which fictive motion causes Rachel to murmur ‘Are we in the deck of a steamer on a river in South America? Am I Rachel, are you Terence?’:

Beneath them the smooth black water slipped away very fast and silently... The great black world lay round them. As they were drawn smoothly along it seemed possessed of immense thickness and endurance (273)

It is the phenomenal conditions of the darkness and slipping felt at the ship’s rail that I wish to call scenographic, along with moment’s sensory qualities as these are reconstituted through aporia. Like *Lord Jim*, the topological categories offered by Woolf’s shipboard setting come to take their place within the atmosphere sustaining them, and so, as here, enable the performance of interior states through the uncanny or stilled motions felt from the deck, or through the focalization of touch: the night air ‘that seemed to press soft fingers upon the eyelids’; the dark that ‘made them feel each other very near’ (271). As seen of Jim’s jouissance at the rail of the *Patna*, Woolf’s dramatization of Rachel’s retreat from the threatening fullness of life entails some sort of temporal extension by which the openings and closings of interiority are poetically enacted. Here the night-time voyage becomes the medium by which Woolf is able to reify those aspects of Rachel’s being that remain beyond the range of her conscious thoughts; and thus the ‘thickness and endurance’ of the ‘great black world’ about her, the aporetic actuality it presents, are reified as sense impressions through time – the here *aesthetic* duration, for Rachel, of the subliminal other she cannot quite quell within herself, though can just make out like the ‘little points of frosty light infinitely far away’ that ‘drew their eyes and held them fixed, so that it seemed as if they had stayed a long time and fell a great distance when they once more they realised their hands grasping the rail and their separate bodies standing side by side’ (281).

And when Rachel is immediately reproached for having forgotten that ‘separate’ person beside her, her response is not quite assured, for in asserting that ‘she had not forgotten’ her response falters before the blackened surroundings, causing the narrator to intervene with a rare instance of free indirect discourse: ‘only the stars – the night – the dark – ’ (ibid). With Rachel’s attention being drawn by the sublime void opening before her, the phenomenological aspects of the shipboard setting, the concrete, embodied experience of the abyss that intimacy has raised within her, becomes active:

Now a bell struck on the bridge, and they heard the lapping of water as it rippled away on either side, and once a bird startled in its sleep creaked, flew on to the next tree, and was silent again. The darkness poured down profusely, and left them with scarcely any feeling of life, except that they were standing there together in the darkness. (*ibid.*)

The recourse to darkness as actant in the last sentence of this key chapter is the final stage of the process I have been charting, the moment at which the scenographic aspects of the descriptives announcing Rachel’s fears become dynamic. The ‘darkness’ that ‘poured down’ reveals itself as the fleshing out of an interiority made concrete, and in so doing, reifies itself through its actual worldly effects upon the embodied mind, momentarily turning the abstract notion of the unfaceable beyond of conscious experience into a phenomenal player in the action of the novel. Woolf’s night is not just, so to speak, darkness with figures, not an effort to make real that which Rachel would rather leave unthought, nor even a nocturnal version of the death soon to overcome her, but a theatricalized concretization of what is otherwise the phenomena of affect. Importantly, it is an occasioning in time in which, like Jim fantasizing during his night-time watch on the deck of the *Patna*, consciousness becomes enveloped by the topological arena at the moment the latter becomes available as an ambient arena.

Moreover, while this process is created through the words of the text, language plays no role in the fictional experience of the subliminal *other* Rachel feels within herself, and which might otherwise erupt into threatening sexuality. Words in this ambience are merely phenomenal. ‘Words crossed the darkness, but not knowing where they fell, seemed to lack energy and substance’ (271). In Woolf’s evocation of the extended moment, the press of the riverine setting rather finds expression in “wordless” phenomena, the products of becoming slowly ‘conscious’ of the passing trees, of the scene extending ‘as far as they could see’ (281) or of being ‘[h]alf asleep, and murmuring broken words’ (282); indeed, of what one is just able to

recognize in the actual night.¹⁹⁹ If we are not given the content of Rachel's thoughts while in these transitory states, they yet appear as instances of *ception*, at any rate a quasi-Wordsworthian beholding of the world we 'half create' for ourselves as redemptive reality ("Tintern Abbey" lines 106-7). More to the point, the apparent half-reality begs the question of what could possibly complete it. Thus with the expedition behind them and the betrothed couple seemingly at peace, Woolf permits Rachel a self-summarization in which 'nothing' plays a leading part:

For the methods by which she had reached her present position, seemed to her very strange, and the strangest thing about them was that she had not known where they were leading her. That was the strange thing, that one did not know where one was going, or what one wanted, and followed blindly, suffering so much in secret, always unprepared and amazed and knowing nothing; but one thing led to another and by degrees *something had formed itself out of nothing*, and so one reached at last this calm, this quiet, this certainty, and it was this process that people called living. (306, my emphasis)

As the novel quickly goes on to emphasize, such nothingness offers its denouement not in the self-discoveries of maturation, but an alternate landscape of illness and hallucination. Rachel's descent into the mortality of 'knowing nothing' is accompanied by its own lurid brand of durational misapprehension; and there, 'isolated alone with her body [...] a few minutes would lead from broad daylight to the depths of the night' (321). Time is not the only factor here, for Woolf also sets out Rachel's sufferings via the internalization of platial figures, of her rising 'to the surface of the dark, sticky pool', of lying on the top of waves, or when this is 'replaced by the side of a mountain', of her body becoming 'a drift of melting snow, above which her knees rise in huge peaked mountains of bare bone' (336). Thus where Rachel's interiority had for a time melded with the abstract voids of darkness or silence, she is now a collection of scenographically activated features. Death, it would appear, is less a matter of consigning oneself bodily to the elements than of quietly, confusedly, becoming a kind of topography.

A late passage in *The Voyage Out* serves to tighten our focus on the scenographic aspect of Woolf's settings, notably where the encounter with self is subsumed by one's own literally feverish atmosphere. Such an encounter would seem in accordance with one of Böhme's more recent definitions, cited at the end of my second chapter, in which the subjectivity of

¹⁹⁹ "Half" seems to be a common status in the novel as numerous examples from the text bear out: not just for one mountain 'half-concealing' another (84) or one looking over 'the shadowed half of the world' (105), but characters being 'half asleep' (179, 184, 259, 282, 305, 338, 345, 360) half-conscious (360), 'half-seeing' (330, 362), half-hearing' (30, 362), or more simply, with eyelids 'half-closed' (305, 307). These usages buttress the psychosomatic aspects of novel, as where the night sky draws Rachel's gaze such that she must fall 'a great distance' before being fully conscious again.

atmospheres is underlined in the act of our giving way to them as emotional states since '[w]ithout the sentient subject, they are nothing'. Yet it is the propensity of literary atmosphere to be of precisely 'nothing' that we are after here, and which we find exemplified by the darkness falling over the river steamer in Woolf's novel. There such darkness had become an emblem for the pressures upon Rachel's call to intimacy, as, more broadly, in the face of colonial alterity. Both aspects of this dynamic are lampooned through that marvellous series of images in which the hotel-restaurant occupied by its polyglot "colonizing" guests unfolds by flashes of lightning, freezing the gestures of its occupants into a series of stop-animation tableaux allowing us to witness the artifice of social affects and potential interior relations as Rachel, at last free of self-consciousness, lies dying upstairs:

The room grew suddenly several degrees darker, for the wind seemed to be driving waves of darkness across the earth. No one attempted to eat for a time, but sat looking out at the garden, with their forks in the air. The flashes now came frequently, lighting up faces as if they were going to be photographed, surprising them in tense and unnatural expressions. The clap followed close and violently upon them. Several women half rose from their chairs and then sat down again, but dinner was continued uneasily [...] while the lightning aimed straight at the garden every time (358)

Here is not the epiphanic duration of stopped time, but snapshots out of the dark capturing 'tense and unnatural expressions' which might, in the continuity of time, be massaged into more socially pleasing poses. But these vast flickerings are also frozen impressions encompassing 'the clatter of knives upon plates', 'a gust of cold air', the wind 'lifting tablecloths and skirts', 'sounds of windows being shut and doors slamming violently', and so on: spatializations of time as segmented by moments of wave-like darkness, and which, seen in sequence, threaten to reveal not just a narrowing of 'the space between heaven and earth', but the social truths no one wants to face once the electricity is restored – thus 'when they saw each other in the artificial light they turned at once and began to move away' (*ibid.*). Woolf's technique needs stressing here for its use of a sudden and impressionistic unveiling of the images by which a new understanding is inaugurated, and which, in her later oeuvre, might be used to bolster a more positive and permanent process of focalization. On this note we might recall Mrs. Ramsay's dinner in *To the Lighthouse* in which, ruby-like, one finds 'a coherence in things, a stability' in experience, and from such *moments* 'the thing is made that endures' (105); or of *Mrs. Dalloway* proper, where Clarissa, now '(crossing to the dressing table) plunged into the heart of the very moment, transfixed it, there' (40). In an obvious sense, such junctures occasion an epiphanic framing of the mirror into which Clarissa looks, 'collecting the whole of her at one

point'; but they also expand into something like the saddle shaped specious present of William James's conception, in which guise the now of experience incorporates contemplation of itself through time, and thus latches onto 'coherence [...] stability' rather than endless momentary passings, of the timelessness of the 'transfixed' instant. In Woolf's estimation, such encounters stage the moment of comprehension in a more positive manner than that just seen of the hotel diners in *The Voyage Out*. Indeed, Woolf came to assign a name to these experiences, calling them 'moments of being' – by which she meant a 'sudden violent shock' lifting one from a period of 'non-being', and which, in its textual occasioning ('putting it into words') leads towards revelatory comprehension in which significance becomes temporarily productive of wholeness (1976: 70, 72).²⁰⁰

But the last pages of *The Voyage Out* are revealing in comparison with *Lord Jim* in another sense, for Jim's navigation of abyssal landscapes is no more progressive, no more constitutive of a story in the narratological sense than Rachel's efforts to avoid the full implications of bourgeois life. To this extent neither text describes actions so much *acts* of discourse in which, as Conrad has Marlow observe, the 'whole world seems to fail you' (132). And if at important points of her text, Rachel Vinrace seems to share Jim's experience of being left 'floating in an abyss and in touch with immensity' (*ibid.*), so both novels close with the passing of the world's shades – and not just Jim himself, nor Stein waving a hand over his now papery butterflies, but Woolf's stand in for Lytton Strachey, St. John Hirst, 'half-asleep' in a hotel chair

and yet vividly conscious of everything around him. Across his eyes passed a procession of objects, black and indistinct, the figures of people picking up their books, their cards, their balls of wool, their work-baskets, and passing him one after another on their way to bed.' (363)

This finale accords with Rachel's last impressions, where 'everything had become very pale and semi-transparent', as it does the strangely 'expanding' room in which '[t]here were immense intervals or chasms, for things still had the power to appear visibly before her, between one moment and the next' (336-7). In both novels, then, what epiphanic potential the novels' endings command arrives broken into sense impressions as though glimpsed from a periphery. Such, too, is *The Voyage Out*'s final gaze over the landscape a few lines before the 'procession

²⁰⁰ The phrase is from her autobiographical "A sketch of the Past", written in 1939-40.

of objects' just cited, where the topographical atmosphere had become a last vessel of meaningful affects for another of the novel's many chorus members:

The rain had ceased, the heavy clouds were blown away, and the air was thin and clear, although vapourish mists were being driven swiftly across the moon. The sky was once more a deep and solemn blue, and the shape of the earth was visible at the bottom of the air, enormous, dark, and solid, rising into the tapering mass of the mountain, and pricked here and there on the slopes by the tiny lights of villas. The driving air, the drone of the trees, and the flashing light which now and again spread a broad illumination over the earth filled Mrs. Flushing with exultation. (353)

Still, the replacement of thematic and dramatic resolution by this sort of scenography was not universally admired. As William Empson complains in his essay on Woolf, the synaesthetic and the ambient are not replacements for action, or not in the way they will be seen to be in the next work under investigation, Lawrence's *Kangaroo*. Thus Empson on 'sensation' and narrative:

the impressionist method, the attempt to convey directly your own attitude to things, how you connect one thing to another, is in a sense fallacious; it tries to substitute for telling a story, as the main centre of interest, what is in fact one of the by-products of telling a story; it tries to correlate sensations rather than the impulses that make the sensations interesting. (1987 [1931]: 448)²⁰¹

***Nowhere Will Now Say a Few Words:
Landscape in Kangaroo***

In the case of Lawrence the lines of descent from the abyssal landscape dynamics of late nineteenth century fiction are not quite so clear cut. Lawrence is not only more regionalist than the others, perhaps necessarily so given his more circumscribed upbringing in working class Eastwood, but had, by the mid-nineteen-twenties already shown himself less interested in modernist technique in the Joycean or Woolfian mode than the agon of the natural self within modernity. Such a quest has been tied to Lawrence's depictions of the spaces of human interaction with the cosmos, for instance by David Parker, for whom '[n]obody, not even Tolstoy, has matched the power of Lawrence's realization of what it means to be "innocently" at one with the great continuum of the natural universe' (1994: 124). This interest in the individual

²⁰¹ Empson is here writing in relation to "Kew Gardens", and appears to recognize the "gauche" exoticity through which the gardens are drawn into the scenario as a destabilizing atmosphere.

as standing out from the ‘smaller enclosed spaces’ (136) of familial or societal constriction provides Lawrence with a means of countering the dehumanizing and thus crippling pressures of traditional social structures, along with the disruptive aspects of military and industrial mechanization. Indeed, in his English and European novels alone, Lawrence is no less driven to use abyssal forms than we will see of Forster, who likewise remained something of a traditionalist in his view of the metropolitan countryside.²⁰² What this section shows, therefore, is a more temporally extended set of durational encounters with exotic space than seen of Woolf, along with a more intellectually conscious orchestration of the aesthetic processes by which the abyss comes to frame the ambient conditionality of place. So too, by exploring tropes of platial nothingness as having a mediatory role in the human encounter with the still colonial otherness of the Australian environment, Lawrence stops short of diverting such depictions towards the limitless tunnel of the personal sublime.²⁰³ So rather than composing the encounter with significant space around tropes of light and darkness as with Conrad or Woolf’s tangible darkness in *The Voyage Out*, or, indeed, through an affectively wrought *aural* impetus as we shall see of Forster’s psychosomatic presentation of the climatic scenes at the Marabar Caves, it is the body as a whole Lawrence uses to reify the categories of the sublime. *Kangaroo* thus follows a somewhat different strategy than these other works, one that while yet incorporating the visual and aural phenomena of the New South Wales coast, mounts a more fully phenomenologized entry of Lawrence’s protagonist into the weirdness he posits of that natural sensorium. Here, the physical spaces traversed by Richard Lovatt Somers become an analogue for interior reflection in a fuller sense than is made available in the Woolf or Forster novels, especially where such responses unfold in relation to Lawrence’s proclamations concerning Australia’s natural alterity – if not also ‘the atmosphere of silence’ of its people’ (35).

²⁰² Lawrence’s vitalism has bearing upon his landscape constructions. While intending a dynamic and liberating conception of the flows and energies by which the human is animated, and partially extendable to the subject’s larger social commitments, such matters are difficult to raise in the modernist period outside of Bergson’s largely durational model of *élan vital* (see *Creative Evolution* 1907): ‘What was immobile and frozen in our perception is warmed and set in motion. Everything comes to life around us, everything is revived in us. A great impulse carries beings and things along. We feel ourselves uplifted, carried away, borne along by it’ – in *Henri Bergson: Key Writings* (K. Ansell-Pearson, J. Mullarkey, eds. New York: Continuum, 2002: 265-6). I am indebted to Ralph Sarkonak of the University of British Columbia for reminding me that Bergsonian vitalism shares unhappy features with the French military thinking during the Great War – see, for instance, John Bowditch’s “The Concept of *Élan Vital*: A Rationalization of Weakness” in *Modern France* (E. Earle, ed. Princeton UP, 1951, 32-43).

²⁰³ Such appears to be the case with the liberating greenwood world of the first *Lady Chatterley* text (c. 1925) through which setting the gamekeeper, Mellors, releases ‘another flowing life, flowing its own stream’ (2002: 22).

Thus my interest in *Kangaroo* extends past how that novel transforms the topographical actuality of its landscapes into an interior topology wherein the ‘stillness’, ‘nothingness’, and ‘silence’ of the land operate as a series of productive modernist negations: ‘nothingness’ as event; ‘nothingness’ as the arena of the authentic; ‘nothingness’ as both geographic and human real – or as Lawrence sometimes puts it, the ‘nonhuman’ real (178, 341). My aim is to show how Somers’s interactions with the coastal uplands and shores of New South Wales do not simply vivify what might otherwise remain merely located or even genuinely ‘empty’ Australian narrative spaces, but offer a performative arena for the self that is even more authentically dislocated than the novel’s surroundings. Further, I argue that the “natural” settings in *Kangaroo* offer something other than Lawrence’s knowing portrait of Somers’s failure to amalgamate physical and notional spaces, but allow the novelist to situate a series of reflections on place and consciousness that are still, finally, of the body. Nonetheless, while Somers’s engagements with the landscape remain cognizant of the ecological otherness he finds there, he is never seen fully immersed in it. Instead, Lawrence vitalizes the novel’s natural scene through the very terms by which its not very “imperial” landscapes are understood to resist assimilation. By setting in motion a performative reading of the embodiments of place, Lawrence provides a means of engaging with alterity while allowing his protagonist to remain seemingly truer to his sense of identity than appears the case in the other novels under examination. In what follows, I will lay out the terms by which this more “positive” negative or ‘nonhuman’ argument can be sustained through setting tropes.

Lawrence’s transition from humanistic to nonhuman modernist readings of place has a recent critical heritage. For Paul Sheehan, Lawrence was able (as Joseph Conrad was not) to find recourse for the squandering of the life force through ‘the flux of being, accessed through nature, offering glimpses of a beyond’ (2002: 183).²⁰⁴ Sheehan is not the only critic to raise a poststructural vocabulary in this regard. Stefania Michelucci’s *Space and Place in the Works of D. H. Lawrence* (2002) is elegant on the tensions she sees in that author’s settings, having Lawrence discover authenticity through turning ‘the polarity known/unknown on its head, finding the positive pole in the unknown, which he increasingly identified with the

²⁰⁴ While I do not wish to rehearse “antihumanist” understandings of Lawrence, it is worth glancing at what critics have had to say about Lawrence’s environmentally focused posthumanism. Sheehan’s *Modernism, Narrative, and Humanism* (2002) seeks to ground the end of humanism by dramatizing the ‘beyond’ through the narrative means of modernist fiction and thought: ‘Theory accomplishes what Conrad, Lawrence, and Woolf (but not Beckett) were unable to do: reworking narrative logic in order to expedite cultural renewal’, a project which ultimately involved the fact that ‘French theoreticians grasped the inhuman underside of narrative’ (190).

chronologically, spatially, and culturally remote' (5). Michelucci observes that there is a partly self-willed failure of accommodation between man and environment in both of Lawrence's Antipodean novels:

as the relationship with society fails, so too does the relationship with nature in Australia, where the peculiarities of the bush, that environment so attractively different, where man cannot understand its system of communication and thus loses himself, extends a powerful challenge to both protagonists (109)

If passages of topographical dismay abound in both of Lawrence's Australian texts, *Kangaroo* is yet more positive, showing Somers able to broker a more successful retreat from the deprecations of place than may be seen of Lawrence's rewriting of Mollie Skinner's manuscript into what would become *The Boy in the Bush* (1924).²⁰⁵ Despite the sometime malevolence of the natural scene in *Kangaroo*, Somers is still strong enough to comprehend his predicament: 'I don't want to give in to the place. It's too strong. It would lure me quite away from myself' (348). His eventual flight is therefore not simply a move away from the inadequacy of the human dramas occupying the now neo-colonial fringe – the direct matter of the scenario – but a necessary narrative departure from the heart of what Lawrence identifies as the 'torpid semi-consciousness of the world' (178). In fact, the move Lawrence carries out is, in its most simplistic terms, that of fleeing the destructive nowhere-ness of place in order to reconstitute a version of abyssal productivity in the individual.

A like set of contestations is observable in Carol Leon's two-chapter engagement with *Kangaroo* in her *Movement and Belonging: Lines, Places and Spaces of Travel* (2009). Here we find the 'bush in the hinterland, evoking a strange Otherness that cannot be erased', one evincing a 'powerful centrifugal force which Somers keeps coming back to in his search for self and which, at the same time, pushes him beyond his self-made frame' (139). In positing a vacillation at the core of the novel, Leon refers us to Lawrence's essay, "Morality and the Novel" (1925), in which, as with that critic's views of space and place in *Kangaroo*, morality entails the 'forever trembling and changing balance between me and my circumambient universe' (172). Where such comments might be aligned to Lawrence's belief in life, for instance through the 'achieving of a pure relationship between ourselves and the living universe about us' (ibid), we learn that

²⁰⁵ In *The Boy in the Bush* the 'changeless bush' is both 'open' and veiled: 'Nothing was hidden. It was all open and fair. And yet it was haunted with a malevolent mystery. You felt yourself so small, so tiny, so absolutely insignificant [...] And this again is the malevolence of the bush, that it reduces you to your own absolute insignificance, go where you will' (2002: 286).

such a relation carries with it the burden of responsibility to authenticity. In this regard it is worth recalling how Lawrence had already described a similar dynamic through his comments upon Thomas Hardy a decade earlier, the latter ‘putting aside his metaphysic’ along with his ‘theory of being’, and thereafter ‘turn[ed] to the earth, to landscape’ as the mode of being in which he could be ‘true to himself’ as a *sensuous* being (2002: 93).²⁰⁶

In each of these readings, spatial occasionings between the human and the natural compose sites of stasis in which the cultural aporias of the individual in the face of wilderness line up against physical space as the environmentally nuanced medium of potential rapprochement. Yet this is precisely where my durational argument differs: by acceding to an antithetically authentic setting for the novel, I am able to reflect upon how colonial topographies are made temporally present in the mind without raising the dialectical oppositions of traditional metaphysical discourse. This move requires elaboration. While the distinctions I find between the dynamics and continuities of interiority and place construction in *Kangaroo* can be brought to light in conversation with investigative platforms ranging from language-based studies to the aesthetics of place, we should yet resist always seeing the novel’s natural settings as analogues for the interior states of its narrative centre, as appears the case with the cyclone following the death of Benjamin Cooley (349-52). Likewise, the places in the novel do not need to *reveal* but only hint at suppressed thematic content. As I make evident below, the natural scene rather forms the performative arena wherein Lawrence’s alienated alter ego opens himself to a more fruitful alterity. This is a problematic notion in a text offering so many passages of geographical alienation, and goes against the grain of scholarly views to the effect that, with regard to the novel’s landscapes, ‘impersonal presence cannot be assimilated to the human’ (Bell 161).²⁰⁷ By what terms, then, can I defend a more satisfying dynamics of engagement between the topographies of the bush in the novel and the narrative patterns by which the embodied mind makes literal sense of them?²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ Both quotations, and their respective essays (“Morality and the Novel”, and “Study of Thomas Hardy” (1914)) are found in *Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays* (2002).

²⁰⁷ Speaking of Somers’s turn from the social to the finally resistant land, Bell says: ‘It is not possible to leave the world of politics behind. But such moments preserve their significance as the nearest glimpses we have of the radically “new life form” (96) Somers is seeking. Unfortunately for him, the Australian landscape constantly acts as a window through which to glimpse another possibility rather than as a door by which we can enter it. [...] Somers/Lawrence recognizes an important significance in the landscape but cannot assimilate the knowledge; cannot do anything with it in his own “world”’ (161).

²⁰⁸ Anxiety has been noted of Somers’s attempts to acclimatize himself. In his essay on ecocritical possibilities in Nietzsche and Lawrence, Greg Garrard finds the latter prone to ‘nihilistic – often apocalyptic – despair at the thought that the profound significance he found in nature might be merely

Lawrence's text does not obviously support such rapprochement. Instead we find Somers succumbing to the drama of topographical alterity in spite of asymmetries between humans and their landscapes; that is to say, he responds to an albeit hidden essence incorporating both the affectively charged self and the insouciance of place noted by his author, and which may be seen in 'the heaven bluer than blue above, the hills dark and fascinating, and the land so remote seeming. Everything so clear, so very distinct, and yet so marvelously aloof' (275). Elsewhere, Lawrence makes this point more cogently, noting the 'strange falling-away of everything' as seen in the mind, the unrecorded and yet oddly agentive newness of everything (332), or as he puts it so well in *The Boy in the Bush*, the 'strange dusky, gum-smelling depth of potency that had never been tapped by experience' (228). Again, it is the 'potency' of the bush setting I want to align with the performative, and which has, moreover, its continuous aspect. Coming to Lawrence's much cited 1919 preface to the American version of his *New Poems* (1920) after reading *Kangaroo* gives one the sense that here one has a set of attitude towards time that his Australian experience was to contest, not least for its conspicuous detemporalizations of vision. Here is a passage from that earlier text:

Don't give me the infinite or the eternal: nothing of infinity, nothing of eternity. Give me the still, white seething, the incandescence and the coldness of the incarnate moment: the moment, the quick of all change and haste and opposition: the moment, the immediate present, the Now. [...] Ask for the whiteness which is the seethe of mud, ask for that incipient putrescence which is the skies falling, ask for the never-pausing, never-ceasing life itself. There must be mutation, swifter than iridescence, haste, not rest, come-and-go, not fixity, inconclusiveness, immediacy, the quality of life itself, without dénouement or close. There must be the rapid momentaneous association of things which meet and pass on the forever incalculable journey of creation: everything left in its own rapid, fluid relationship with the rest of things. (1994: 616-17)

The 'incarnate moment' of the present Lawrence writes of with regard to poetic authenticity can be productively set against the purview of *Kangaroo*'s timeless landscape. In a crucial passage from the first pages of the "Diggers" chapter, Somers flees the house at Mullumbimby following a period of argument with his wife Harriett. Somers's 'walking off into the country' is to be a means of escape and emotional restoration, yet his typical response is to find himself disconcerted by the 'massed foliage' of tree-ferns and creepers, by an ecological dynamic wherein '[s]trange' birds continue to make 'weird, metallic noises', and gum trees are by turns 'handsome' or inert with 'stark, dead limbs thrown up', that is to say, as potentially frozen

anthropomorphic projection' (2005: 13). For Garrard, a divide separates cognitive projections from the essential landscape, the human from the natural.

as the singing of the birds is not. Here the landscape offers a number of sometimes contradictory potential meanings, a polysemic setting that is both atemporal and mortal, exotic and closed off, where ‘densely wooded’ escarpment slopes are ‘jungle, impenetrable’, a place of silence, loneliness, and unapproachability (177):

What was the good of trying to be an alert conscious man here? You couldn’t. Drift, drift into a sort of obscurity, backwards into a nameless past, hoary as the country is hoary. Strange old feelings wake in the soul: old non-human feelings. And an old, old indifference, like a torpor, invades the spirit [...] would the land put them to sleep, drift them back into the torpid semi-consciousness of the world of the twilight. (178)

In such passages Somers feels a locational drift ‘coming over him’, the ‘old influence of the fern world’, or the ‘dark world before conscious responsibility was born’ (*ibid.*), expressions in which the missing copula emphasizes the lack of narrativity to the place, and, along with this immobility, a lack of process entirely at odds with the ‘incarnate moment’ and the ‘rapid, fluid relationship’ with things we saw of the temporal effusions of his poetic preface. This notation of narrative stasis is not unique, of course. We find C. E. W. Bean wrestling with a like inaction in his oft-cited introduction to the Australian interior, *On the Wool Track* (1910). In this work, published in the recent aftermath of Australia’s achieving dominion status – and therefore being both independent and lodged within the British imperial system – it is only the low sheep enclosures across the wilderness that stop one ‘wander[ing] away to nowhere in that country’ (5). Despite the park-like gentleness of the landscape indicated by Bean, its lack of drama or vindictiveness, the bush yet retains a gently murderous performative aspect. For some travellers the place had ‘actually done them to death’ as a durational non-event:

Nothing appalling or horrible rushed upon these men. Only there happened – nothing... They lay down, with the birds hopping from branch to branch above them and the bright sky peeping down at them. No one came. Nothing happened. That was all. (2)

In the face of such abyssal potency for the now not quite colonial outback, how might we see Lawrence’s desire to find the ‘rapid momentaneous association of things which meet and pass’ in relation to the performative nothing of Bean’s insight? In fact, I note a process of readjustment for Lawrence via the void-like quality he describes in *Kangaroo*, one internalizing Bean’s threatening stasis as an unnarratable ‘nothing’ or ‘non-human [...] torpor’ (178) that is nonetheless a kind of negative occasioning, the agentive aspect of the setting that we will later

see enveloping Somers in ‘the reality of timelessness and nowhere’ (333) that is yet, as described in the preface to *New Poems*, ‘without dénouement or close’.

Such nothingness is another key designation in the novel, especially where the aporetic aspect of that presumed void is aligned with “meaning”, that ‘most meaningless of illusions’ (ibid.). Crucially, Lawrence draws the landscape into this dynamic. In the course of his opening chapter (i.e. 13-14), place is seen to evince a ‘lost, weary aloofness’ that ‘didn’t seem to be real’, and the topography itself to comprise ‘a vast, uninhabited, land’ that ‘frightened him’ for being ‘so hoary and lost, so unapproachable’, a ‘grey, charged bush’ that is ‘phantomlike’ and ‘ghostly’, with ‘dead trees, like corpses [...] charred by bush fires’. Moreover, the terrain is ‘deathly still’, ‘swamped in silence’, ‘hoarily waiting’, ‘lifeless’, the scene of a terrifying ‘nothing’ – a non-place generating ‘the icy sensation of terror’ from which Somers continues to recoil nearly to the novel’s close. But such unreality and silence are actually upheld from both sides, as qualities of the landscape and of the human response to it. If, as Lawrence states near the end of the novel, ‘[i]t is said that man is the chief environment of man’, Somers finds no evidence in Australia: man ‘was there, but unnoticeable [...] The vast continent is really void of speech’ (345). Accordingly, some other principle of engagement must be found in order to experience the ‘call and the answer without intermediary’, a quandary immediately solved via the still aporetic realm of ‘[n]on-human Gods, non-human human being’ (341). Thus given the tropes by which this conveniently depopulated natural scene is described, and allowing for their alignment with the larger discourses of modernist anomie around the ‘non-human’, the question of how we are to see Somers as being somehow physically grounded through this now overtly colonializing dialogue of self and place becomes acute.

The solution is twofold. While we do need to re-consider Somers’s embodied encounters with the natural landscape through the terms of Lawrence’s antihumanism, the best place to launch a renewed engagement with *Kangaroo*’s settings is made apparent through combining a more environmentally hued approach to place with attention to the fictional poetics by which such representations become affectively and thematically charged. If this strategy allows us to mine Leon’s theory inflected notification of the ‘[o]therness that cannot be erased’ as a textual construction, this search for narrative surety in fact guides us towards a reading that is more profitably, immersively, ‘unconscious’. And while this particular nexus of terms can be oppositional – connection with place as a conjunctive literary figure as opposed to some pre-existing concrete unity in the world – in Lawrence’s use, the opposition may be needed in order to keep Somers from ‘giv[ing] in to the place’. This is where my two approaches come into play,

for just as language-based frames of analysis address the manner in which language constructs the interlacing of world, interiority, and embodied experience, the synaesthetic discourse of landscape in a work like *Kangaroo* attempts to overcome the notion of a prior separateness of discourse from sense.

To put this another way, where the cognitivist might be seen to engage Lawrence's landscape depictions via tropes of framing, blending, and so on, I propose a performative analysis such that where the former seeks objective analyses for the mind-body problematic, the latter enables us to posit a fully located identity. The advantage of this reading is that while it offers a means of excising the *inter-* from a word like *interlacing* such that there is no "between" in need of closing up between man and landscape but only the shared dynamics of felt 'presence' (14), we are still able to frame the process through literary attention to Lawrence's tropes, and especially with regard to Somers's challenge of assimilating himself to the 'formless beauty' of the Australian environment (77). To put this last point more basically still, where we might turn to David Herman's broadly narratological argument that 'both language generally and narrative specifically can be viewed as tool-systems for building mental models of the world' (2000), these alone cannot answer for the embodied aspects of platial encounters. Nonetheless, we can hardly dismiss the template-making capacity Herman assigns to cognitive and narratological frames of investigation, any more than downplay the extent to which 'mental models' provide a possible linking system between the factive and the fictive, the actual and the intentional – between, that is, self and landscape.²⁰⁹ Remaining mindful of how the environmentally constructive capacity of language allows us to track, with Lawrence, both the collapsing of the world as the home for the human, and the embodied mind's struggles to maintain perspective on the now objectified world, it becomes possible to see where aesthetics might offer apparently mute forms through which otherness could be communicated, while providing terms for the restoration of the self in the midst of nullity. Somers can therefore be understood as wrestling with the particularities of his concrete environment while simultaneously trying to reach past the

²⁰⁹ The environmental philosopher, Simon James, tends not to see nature as being approachable through synthesizing codes or 'models'. Nature is 'not something that we perceive; it is at work in our perception. It is not something we can capture in understanding, but something into which we are always already, and for the most part unknowingly, taken up' (2009: 156). Accordingly, where theorists of the linguistic and narratological membranes linking mind and world offer a system of connections based on embodied mental processes, ecocriticism reaches beyond the subject to embrace the common phenomenological environment, thus moving the centre of focus from topological models of mind and nature to the seamless locus of the humanworld. A linguistic version of this frame exists as well, for instance as the *Umwelt*, or semiotic model of environment. See: Jakob von Uexküll, *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans with A Theory of Meaning*, translated by Joseph D. O'Neil (Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 2010).

workings of own mental and sensory limitations in order to achieve the more profound “potency”, or ‘presence’ he posits within nature and himself.²¹⁰

It is observable, then, that Somers’s locational challenge involves not just engaging with the bush landscape as a physical actuality, but rendering the Australian topographical *other* in negative terms. By being described aporetically, the landscapes of the novel are transformed into an abyssal ecology wherein ‘the reality of timelessness and nowhere’ (333) is made manifest. Moreover, such transformation allows Somers’s southern ‘nowhere’ to remain both concrete geographical actuality (the ‘empty’ Australia) and the performative platform for an embodied environmental authenticity capable of revealing ‘this glisten of paradise, this silvery freedom like protoplasm of life’ (351) – though here Lawrence is not above gesturing towards the *feminized* if still disembodied non-place Somers wants and fears in equal measures (‘like wanting a woman [...] like giving in to a woman’ 348).²¹¹ In any case, Lawrence’s final recourse to ‘a stillness, and a manlessness, and an elation’ (355) appears to describe a state of alterity in which neither nature nor the human is assigned a fixed value, but which still manages to offer a durational vantage from which to link them.

Before seeing Somers’s engagements with place as animated less by modernist oppositions between humans and their places, than what that troubled embrace enacts, I want to stop a moment longer with the idea of alterity as a geographical fact. In an obvious sense, the ‘beyond’ Somers experiences also appears in the novel as the result of a plainer form of dislocation, one in which even the sky is ‘tilted uncomfortably [...] leaning heavily to the south, so that you feel all on one side if you look at it’. If one necessarily emerges ‘lonely’ and ‘alien’ from this disorienting encounter (15), imperialistic recourse to the natural sublime yet offers its stock response to the negative effects Lawrence notes between the indifference of the bush country and Australia as a more pointed land of malevolent presence (76-7):

²¹⁰ Something of this nexus had been broached in rudimentary form last chapter, there with Conrad’s Schopenhauer-like interrogation of nothingness as a kind of wisdom.

²¹¹ The angle on the feminine Lawrence rehearses on pages 350ff requires a more specific treatment than space allows here. The note of interest is the exultation of Harriett, ‘[w]oman that she was’, and the particular liberating affects and atmospheres she experiences in Australia (‘freedom, for her, the woman’) as against the ‘murdering’ repulsiveness of its darker potential that ‘struck her [...] in her deepest female self, almost in her womb’. Against such tensions Lawrence places the male controlling capacity and its accompanying pronouncements: ‘All you white females, raging for further freedom’. Thereafter Lawrence retreats into a more essentializing outlook in which Harriett morphs into a ‘sulky tiger’ (351) or ‘sick tigress in a flood’ (352). One also finds an accompanying move towards the feminization of the bush and shorelands, with even the night ‘heaving like a woman with unspeakable desire, but no woman, no thighs or breast, no body’ (341). Here the landscape and its surrounding cosmos become a *feminized* if disembodied non-place, the bushlands Somers wants and fears in equal measures: ‘like wanting a woman [...] like giving in to a woman’ (348).

It was virgin bush, and as if unvisited, lost, sombre, with plenty of space, yet spreading grey for miles and miles, in a hollow towards the west. Far in the west, [...] they saw the magical range of the Blue Mountains. And all this hoary space of bush between.²¹²

Lawrence's follow-on to this confluence of the 'space of bush' with 'the magical' is worth appending, especially for its suppression of a mediatory apparatus whereby the surrounding terrain might be assimilated as either an inviolable wilderness, a space of the sublime, or an accessible sweep of 'spreading... virgin bush' (ibid.):

The strange, as it were invisible beauty of Australia, which is undeniably there, but which seems to lurk just beyond the range of our white vision. You feel you can't see – as if your eyes hadn't the vision in them to correspond with the outside landscape. For the landscape is so unimpressive [...] Somers always felt he looked at it through a cleft in the atmosphere; as one looks [...] across gulfs of unbridged centuries. And yet, when you don't have the feeling of ugliness or monotony in landscape [...] you get a sense of subtle, remote, formless beauty more poignant than anything ever experienced before.

"Your wonderful Australia!" (77)

Notwithstanding the excised racializing undertones to this passage,²¹³ we glimpse, with Somers, the possibility that the impenetrable underside of the bush landscape, its significance potential as nothingness, has a less terrifying, less 'horrid' side in which the physical and human environments are not raised in opposition. Despite the 'invisibility' and aloofness of the scene, Lawrence's usages suggest an originary phenomenological unity underscoring the poignancy of one's encounters with the natural environment. If as Lawrence's text indicated, the landscape continues to buffer the attempts of Somers to naturalize his desire to be at home in it, neither does his setting need to be claimable within the terms of the naturalized picturesque or sublime

²¹² It is from this conjunction that Lawrence concocts Somers's conventionally 'magical' response to the here unthreatening 'virgin' expanse, one that is 'unvisited' and (a troubling potential homonym) 'hoary'.

²¹³ The lines in question fill out the three excisions marked by ellipsis as follows: the first reads 'For the landscape is so unimpressive *like a face with little or no features, a dark face. It is so aboriginal, out of our ken, and it hangs back so aloof*'; the second reads 'as one looks *at one of the ugly faced, distorted aborigines with his wonderful dark eyes that have such an incomprehensible dark shine to them,*'; and the third 'monotony in landscape *or in nigger*, you get a sense of remote, formless beauty' (77 italics showing suppressed passages). Here and elsewhere in *Kangaroo*, the aboriginal inhabitants, when viewed in the non-European natural habitat, appear to take on the burden of the consciousness of place as a unity ('in landscape or in nigger'), or are treated as analogues for the aloofness and impenetrability of that environment. It might also be noted that the distortion and ugliness and incomprehensibility cited by Lawrence are applied equally to the landscape throughout the novel. This hardly excuses the remarks Lawrence makes here, however removable from their historical context, but the presence of the aboriginal subject should at least be linked to his or her ecological belatedness. See Garrard's comment on Lawrence's 'casual racial stereotyping' (2005: 21).

in order to be experienced as a unity. A problem therefore arises as to the modes by which such unity is to be accessed. The fact that the human remains ungrounded does not keep Lawrence from lampooning, as with the “Bits” chapter, physical entry into something more authentic. There, Lawrence outlines the force rescuing the ultimately foolish individual from the ‘gulf’ that ‘surrounds each solitary soul’ (282): ‘Man [...] is a thought-adventurer, an emotion-adventurer, and a discoverer of himself and of the outer universe. A discoverer. [Only] every time he climbed a new mountain range and looked over, he saw, not only a new world, but a big anticipatory fool on this side of it, namely, himself’ (279). This sort of self-seeking, common to more explicitly colonial texts, and here addressed via one’s location has a generic quality, one traced by Virginia Hyde for whom Lawrence’s globalizing quest is more ideological than place specific: hence, ‘[t]he “thought-adventure” does not necessarily transport the readers to a new geographical location; rather, it moves them into a new perception of reality’ (2009: 7).²¹⁴

The issue therefore hinges upon what we make of the “otherness” of Somers’s Australian surroundings as a kind of ‘reality’ in itself, especially since by declining the possibility of rapprochement between the known and the exotic, Lawrence risks the usual bisection of that continent into an ‘empty’ centre and a tamed and Europeanized periphery no longer open to the terms of sublime alterity. Yet, this is not Lawrence’s way, either. His intuition is to read the urban core as being just as illusory as the bush, hence Sydney is found ‘lying mysteriously within the Australian underdark, that peculiar lost, weary aloofness of Australia... it didn’t seem to be real, it seemed to be sprinkled on the surface of a darkness into which it never penetrated’ (13). By equating the nonhuman darkness with that of the landscape, Lawrence is indicating how the subject may rather be located in the joint arena of darkness and depth.²¹⁵ We find this move effected at the Somers’s departure from Sydney at the close of the text, where the self-effacing interior of the continent subsumes even the novel’s narrative voice: ‘[t]he darkness that

²¹⁴ As Hyde has it, where Lawrence’s postwar departure from Europe is ‘one of the major catalysts in his own thinking and works’, the changed geographical circumstances must be understood as offering Lawrence a chance to reshape his place in the world, a harbinger of the ‘thought-adventures’ he ironizes through Somers in *Kangaroo* (Ingersoll & Hyde 2009: 7). Compare Lawrence’s essay “Books” wherein he adds to the notion of the ‘thought-adventurer’ that ‘Man is a great venture in consciousness’; moreover, since the ‘strong daylight’ made it ‘difficult to lie’ in public acts of writing, ‘he took his venture into caves and secret holes and temples, where he could create his own environment and tell lies to himself’ (1988: 197). The interest of *Kangaroo* is that the environment refuses man’s entry in the usual sense of acculturation, and so the external landscape likewise retains its moral, if non-human status.

²¹⁵ For Sheehan, the crisis of humanism is ‘replayed in modernist fiction through narrative, hence finding space for the ‘inhuman’ (antinarrative) within the ostensibly ‘human’ (narrative)’ (14). Likewise, he sees Conrad’s novels having a narrative ‘centre composed of negative space, hollowed out by the accrual of surrounding events’ (129), and with Beckett, narrative movement taking ‘place in the space where human gives way to inhuman’ (184).

comes over the heart at the moment of departure darkens the eyes too, and the last scene is remote, remote, detached inside a darkness' (357).

All the same, it appears Lawrence wants things both ways in *Kangaroo*, for place to be the portal to an 'undeniably there' Australian presence that will never reveal itself, and for place to be nonexistent, an absence or 'darkness' that is yet dynamic enough, as here, to take on the role of the actant in sentence constructions ('darkens the eyes'). Once more, my contention is that this voidal scene animates the necessarily effaced contents of Somers's anti-humanist insights without risking their precise elucidation (how else are they to remain "insights" but by leaving them unspoken?). By asking what emptiness and darkness do in the text as opposed to what they are, the novel's aporetic treatment of place inaugurates a self-effacing field of the actual, an environment not simply 'void of speech' or silently, 'waiting', but one transforming timelessness and nothingness into parameters of an invisible 'formless' beauty'.

The dynamic aspects I assign to Lawrence's Australian landscapes are hardly neutral, yet as the social anthropologist Tim Ingold notes, place is neither an inert setting nor a localized instance of larger spatial flows and exchanges, but a mode of existence. For Ingold, the issue of landscape ontology resolves itself as a kind of poesis, a 'movement of incorporation rather than inscription, not a transcribing of form onto material but a movement wherein the forms themselves are generated' (1993, p. 157). While reflective of the phenomenological turn in geographical models of landscape through the 1990s, Ingold's thesis is valuable for the manner in which it mirrors the dynamics by which the moral performativity of landscape representations construes the very forms of that discourse. By reinscribing Australian places as no-where zones, Lawrence does more than posit a structure of meaning for which there is no accompanying hermeneutics, he creates its generative capacity. Thus it is the performative potential staged by the aporetic encounter with place that comes to play itself out in *Kangaroo*, one in which the sensory and topological potential of nowhere – its abstractable attributes of distance, temporal flatness, physical stasis, and so on – comes to constitute 'presence'. By the same token, it is the coming together of ideation and the particularities of this nonetheless imperial environment I consider ecological, a space of thinking, or being, offering Lawrence a poetic mode by which to surpass Europe's 'ancient encumbrance' (351) by "colonizing" a newer one.

But there is more to this schematization than Somers's escaping to the Australian wilderness in order to posit, *avant la lettre*, a greener version of the becoming seen of poststructural citations of authentic "space". Somers yet hopes to ground his human existence in that physical surroundings, to find 'a new country' to replace those of the metropolitan core

which were ‘done for, played out, finished’ (13). The impediment is that his prospective and ageless new milieu is endlessly ungraspable, not perhaps meaningless, but inaccessible in its rhythms: ‘Waiting, waiting – the bush seemed to be hoarily waiting. And he could not penetrate into its secret. He couldn’t get at it. Nobody could get at it. What was it waiting for?’ (14). The curious thing about Lawrence’s presentation is that for all its lack of an emplaced natural narrative, of something rather than nothing happening, the bush remains the place of ‘[s]omething big and aware and hidden’:

There was a presence. He looked at the weird, white dead trees, and into the hollow distances of the bush. Nothing! Nothing at all! (ibid)

Several Australian critics have read comments such as this as foundational to national consciousness. In Meaghan Morris’s 1998 essay, “White Panic or Mad Max and the Sublime” Lawrence is seen to express ‘the canonical literary account’ of the panic produced through encounters with a geographic sublime that refuses colonial appropriation, especially where he, as Morris puts it, ascribes ‘the horrid thing in the bush!’ to “‘the spirit of the place’” (249).²¹⁶ But Lawrence is onto something more subtle in *Kangaroo*, for another term he uses with regard to the landscape is waiting, that interlude of tension without affective release for which ‘waiting’ supposes an eventual end, that is to say, for which waiting anticipates the incursion of the event. As we have seen, however, what Bean and Lawrence share is the raising of the aporetic aspects of that interlude to the status of an event: the ‘nothing at all’ that is a happening in its own right (Bean’s ‘there happened – nothing’). But we can go a stage further than a phenomenologically alert narrating of Lawrence’s arena of nothingness, for there is absolution as well. To quote:

All the old world of self and care [...] shed like a dead body. The landscape – he cared not a thing for the landscape [...] to be alone, mindless and memoryless between the sea, under the sombre wall-front of Australia. To be alone with a long, wide shore and land, heartless, soulless [...] Absolved from it all. The soft, blue, humanless sky of Australia, the pale, white, unwritten atmosphere of Australia. Tabula rasa. The world a new leaf. And on the new leaf, nothing. The white clarity of the Australian, fragile atmosphere. Without a mark, without a record. (331-2)

Such is the promise of Lawrence’s seemingly non-human environment, the durational ‘nowhere’ that offers a temporary aesthetic state wherein ‘[w]ho dares to be soulless find the new

²¹⁶ This particular collection of terms is nicely mocked in another milieu by Stella Gibbons in *Cold Comfort Farm* (1932: 221), where ‘something nasty in the woodshed’ underscores the potentially sublime lugubriousness of modernist taciturnity.

dimension of life' (333). We should again note the quashing of linkages between subject and predicate, as though it were the missing copula itself that Lawrence wished to present. Such usages point to the hidden "within" of the landscape, one freed from any intervening framework. With a phrase such as 'Without a mark, without a record', it is the absence marked by 'without' that provides the actual target of focalization. Thus the missing dimension Lawrence senses in the bush or along the coast is made redeemable through figures of nullity, spaces of virtuality retrieved as 'the reality of timelessness and nowhere'. As Lawrence explains, it is

Only in this pause that one finds the meaninglessness of meanings, and the other dimension, the reality of timelessness and nowhere. Home to tea! Do you hear the clock tick? And yet there is timelessness and nowhere. And the clock means nothing with its ticking. And nothing is so meaningless as meaning. (333-4)

While this 'fallacy of home' continues to dog Somers in Australia, as do the hints of a new actuality lurking somewhere beneath it all, Lawrence's text is not ultimately one of exhaustion before the spaces of its settings.

With the Somers's visit to the stream in the bush near the end of the novel, we at last find positive allusions to an older symbolic order supplanting the (post)human drama of exhaustion and renewal that forms the central argument of the novel: 'In this place already the Christmas bells were blooming... a corner of paradise' (355). Here the strenuously won 'elation' of the environment rescues the Somers from the presumed meaninglessness of place to experience 'the bush flowering at the gates of heaven', and Harriett emerging with 'arm-fulls of bloom'. But this blissful place is also the scene of waters tumbling fatally and endlessly into the folds of the surrounding country, a 'dark cup in the bush' signalling the almost sexual provenance of this brief escape from meaninglessness. Here at last is an event that can be celebrated outside the lassitudes of 'torpor'; for in watching the Somers having bodily 'splashed' across a stream and then 'plunged into the wild grasses', in their having 'clambered' and 'scrambled' to the heart of their literally blossoming epiphany in the midst of the same empty surroundings, we arrive at the point at which that river 'dived into the ground' (ibid.) as though fleeing Eden for some Antipodean Avernus. In spite of the threatening aspects of Lawrence's depiction, these late scenes mount a moral vision of the landscape, one anchoring a more fully embodied traditional embracing of place that yet remains outside of its less liberating colonial basis. And if this anchoring is conveyed at the point of a seemingly endless vanishing, we must yet see how Lawrence's 'forever trembling and changing balance between' oneself and the 'universe' (1925: 172) is here made reliant upon an authenticity of place that is itself sustained by an impossibility,

the physical entry into the placelessness of the bush – an environment that even in Lawrence’s shorthand rendition is seen to absorb all human strivings as ‘Revolutions – nothingnesses’ (356).

But it is not the retrograde allusions we need note, but their poetic occasioning. The ‘wonderful’ reprieve Lawrence creates at the end of *Kangaroo* is enlivened not only through sensory jouissance (‘the perfume in all the air that might be heaven’ 355), but the flowering of this heavenly nothingness as a temporary performative space, a poiesis actualized for us through having the waters feeding this sudden blossoming endlessly disappearing into the earth. Indeed, this same dynamic of frozen, rushing tension is immediately carried forward to the novel’s conclusion amidst the ‘unwinding rolls’ of streamers attending the Somers’s departure by sea, with each coloured umbilicus (‘the last tie’ 357) slowly breaking into the sea, and Somers waving an ‘orange silk handkerchief in the blue air’ (358) as if weaving some new solar intervention across the breadth of his one hundred day stop in unreality.²¹⁷ All the same, this spring-like rebirth they had just celebrated has its dark other, the devils Somers admits ‘one can fall a prey to’ in escaping ‘the dark hand of the Lord’, here the dubious fate of those who do not simply ‘love Australia and its freedom’, but love it too well. Against the European need for social and cultural freedom is therefore set the inchoate freedom of natural Australia with its ‘reptile-hostility’ and ‘malevolence’ (350). But if it is the newness of vision that makes one feel free and alive on that ‘undominated continent’ (ibid.), the nowhere-ness Lawrence animates through his tropes has the effect of offering a non-human mediatory space for the individual, one authenticated through Somers’s knowingly wanting to draw civilization ‘on into deeper, darker places’ (349), at any rate, ‘into the nowhere’ (354).

By treating the now “empty” Australian landscape as a locus of nothingness in which cognitive categories and physical spaces perform a fittingly negative theatricalization of ‘nonhuman’ identity, Lawrence looks ahead to the subject as an empty, if at last authentically embodied marker of life. As one recent theatrical theorist puts it, where the self is tracked moving through space, we are given a means of ‘connecting successive moments and in this way producing subjectivity as something that surpasses these individual instances while at the same time allowing for a radical discontinuous notion of what subjectivity is’ (Bleeker 177). Through a performative understanding of the aporetic environment in *Kangaroo*, the novel’s human, and cultural assimilations remain – save at that stream in the bush – productively unassimilable to the European outlook. In this estimation, Lawrence’s Australian novel, for all its cyclical patternings of natural growth and decay, and despite the deprecations of its author, offers a

²¹⁷ May 4th to August 11th, 1922.

paradoxical and still colonial ecology that incorporates natural flow while remaining welcoming of a humanity that has yet to arrive, and as such, provides a less ambivalent endorsement of abyssal tropes than are elsewhere evident in this study.

Aural Atmospheres in *A Passage to India*

Below them a radiance had suddenly appeared. It belonged neither to water nor moonlight, but stood like a luminous sheaf upon the fields of darkness. He told them that it was where the new sand-bank was forming, and that the dark ravelled bit at the top was the sand, and that the dead bodies floated down that way from Benares [...] The radiance was already altering, whether through shifting of the moon or of the sand; soon the bright sheaf would be gone, and a circlet, itself to alter, be burnished upon the streaming void. (A Passage to India 32)

Foster and the radiance upon the void? Foster and the moment of ‘streaming’? Forster as *modernist*? The passage just cited presents us with the Ganges at night, not apparently a holy stretch of that river (9), though as the novel later informs us, ‘nothing in India is identifiable, the mere asking of a question causes it to disappear or to merge in something else’ (83-4). Such is the process Forster puts to work, the radiance ‘already altering’ itself, no longer even that uncanny reflection, Indian or imperial, lying upon ‘the fields of darkness’ and belonging ‘neither to water nor moonlight’, but the sensory experience of that ‘shifting’. The imperfective verbs and gerunds employed here merely emphasize the extent to which the temporal categories through which events become locatable are rarely allowed to settle: ‘forming... altering... shifting... streaming’, and so on through the subtle gradations of his narrative. We find this pattern borne out a few pages later, as well, where the novel’s apparently untenable central romance enters yet another difficult patch:

When the darkness began, it seemed to well out of the meagre vegetation, entirely covering the fields each side of them before it brimmed over the road. [...] and a spurious unity descended on them, as local and temporary as the gleam that inhabits a firefly. It would vanish in a moment, perhaps to reappear, but the darkness is alone durable. And the night that encircled them, absolute as it seemed, was itself only a spurious unity, being modified by the gleams of day that leaked up round the edges of the earth, and by the stars. (85-6)

There is a wilfulness to such tropes to which the reader is expected to accede, not just the fictive motion figures where darkness will surge (‘well out’) from the foliage and *brim* over the road,

but the soon to vanish ‘unity’ that night-time offers to the about to be reprieved lovers and which carries with it the affective warmth they lack. Only look at that ‘durable’ darkness: this at least should last, but it, too, is given as ready ‘to disappear or to merge in something else’ (84). It would seem, then, that everything about the scene is equally ‘spurious’, with even the absolute ‘night that encircled them’ being subject to alteration (‘modified by the gleams of day’). Such durability does not carry much significance, and, indeed, one lesson of *A Passage to India*’s contested if not yet “national” settings is that profundity and shamming are coexistent along with their scenographic effects: ‘Never tranquil, never perfectly dark, the night wore itself away’ – not *wore on* in time but ‘wore... away’ (96-7). Here we are no longer with Woolf or Lawrence now, for such darkness is not ‘the great black world’ of *The Voyage Out* any more than it is a South Asian version of Lawrence’s Australia ‘sprinkled on the surface of a darkness into which it never penetrated’ (*K* 13). In Forster’s book, at least, the imperial abyss rather muddles along.

Perhaps this is expected, for Forster is customarily read as something of an Edwardian for his self-professed ‘humanism’ and attention to social issues, for that fustian weight of tradition for which Paul Peppis underlines Forster’s ‘complicity’ (in Bradshaw 49), as well as for his general avoidance of the more trenchant themes and techniques of the literary avant-garde. For these apparently stolid characteristics, Virginia Woolf would call him a ‘Georgian’ while pointing out the new directions he appeared willing to embrace without quite departing from the more traditional realism. If Forster himself was pleased to place the older realism behind him in his Clarke lectures of 1927 – published that same year under the suitably restrained title of *Aspects of the Novel* – he was nonetheless ready to communicate sly awareness of being both modern and traditional in a manner that would later be questioned for its shielding capacity: ‘Yes – oh dear yes – the novel tells a story’ (53) – or, at any rate, it rehearses *aspects* of it from his point of view just outside the more threatening modernist conceptions of interiority.

But the presumed collusion of Forster with tradition, if not Britain’s imperial reach, seems to have several sides. Stephen da Silva also writes of ‘complicity’, though not now in relation to the humanist tradition but the fictional practice of ‘developmental narrative’, a point raised in relation to Forster’s need to mask his sexual proclivities through a more timeless (and safer) belief in aestheticism (1998). Raising a like vocabulary, Ian Baucom questions Forster’s ‘complicity with an Orientalist discourse intent on manufacturing the East as the West’s impossible opposite’ (1999: 131).²¹⁸ But Baucom’s study on being *Out of Place* in the British

²¹⁸ Baucom goes on to reject the unnecessary divisiveness of Said’s insight that ‘Orientalist discourse [...] succeeds in that moment when a connection, of the Wordsworthian sort of which Forster was always

imperial world is also interesting for the manner in which *A Passage to India*'s more trenchant thematic perplexities are cast back onto its topographical settings. We see this of the crucial characters left standing at the end, for neither the college principal at Chandrapore, Cyril Fielding, or the falsely accused Dr. Aziz, find intimacy in a 'workable present' divorceable from its still colonial context: 'This is the sad knowledge to which Forster returns at the close of his text, and which, unable to speak himself, he has the Indian landscape speak for him' (134). Here Baucom goes on to draw attention to the final words of the novel where as much as the 'imperial construction of time' negates real friendship across the lines of racial and cultural power and mores, 'all the visible features of the subcontinental landscape, echo the mournful cadences of the text's famous "not yet" with an equally dour "not there"'. In this sense, Forster has his 'map of India mouth the rhetoric of disappointment', thus committing himself to 'a hyperbolically antipicturesque and frustrating cartography' (*ibid.*). These testimonies to the obscuring character of Forster's prose (along with a presumably more liberating interest in the communicative potential of place) seem straightforward enough, yet there is a factor I want to add to the 'imperial construction of time' analyzed by Baucom, and this is the temporal condition of *A Passage to India*'s aural realm. To this end I will first approach Forster's conception of time from a broad introductory perspective, hardening up my observations when I come to his account of the spatial and auditory aspects of the crucial events at the Marabar Caves.

To back up a little, while Forster's place in modernism may be as unsettled if hardly as energetically contentious as Lawrence's, it is no less clear that Forster's position as being retrospectively modernist does not quite excuse him from being thought of as a writer of temporality in the manner being developed here. After all, even *Aspects of the Novel* contains some not very surprising adjustments to the temporalizing complexity of the era. This is Randall Stevenson's point. His essay gathers some of Forster's pronouncements on novelistic temporality, especially where the latter claims to want to 'exorcise that demon of chronology' in lieu of that 'something else in life besides time [...] something which is measured not by minutes or hours, but by intensity' (*AN* 15; in Stevenson 215). This is broadly Woolfian, and leads Stevenson to wonder how early in Forster's career such "moments" became the gathering points of significant experience.²¹⁹ For all that, Stevenson is less prepared to run such significance

dreaming, fails to occur. In failure, and failure's announcement of a limit *that cannot be crossed*, lies the Orientalist success' (131 my emphasis).

²¹⁹ Significant time plays its part in the lightly satirized Italian epiphanies of his short story "The Eternal Moment" (published 1905; collected 1928), where one character's first novel 'was written around the idea that an evening gone may become like a thousand years in the courts of heaven' (2001: 170).

simultaneously through time and space, and glosses the Indian natural scene as one of chaotic alterity rather than poetic capacity:

If not actively hostile, the Indian landscape is presented throughout the novel as at least so ineffably indifferent – so immeasurably vast and formless – that it disrupts not only cohesive human relations, but coherence itself, overwhelming possibilities of order, morality, or understanding. (216)

Here there is no mention of time, only of the epistemological confusions of immeasurable space, but the point suggests the sort of teleological prevarication we saw da Silva noting of Forster's adherence to 'developmental narrative' and thus of the inconvenient truths that might safely be set aside. Here a picture emerges through which the figural and descriptive habits Forster engages in his Indian novel might be roped to tropes of postcolonial or queer theory, and by being so incorporated, maintain Forster as a soft modernist, at any rate, one who offers (as Stevenson fluently notes) 'descriptions of detailed declarative clarity' without quite 'matching modernism's formal and structural innovation' (217).

If I am not prompted to argue with Stevenson's larger observation on Forster's accomplishments, we might yet view Forster's traditionalism as ironic given his anti-historicist leanings. David Medalie has done some of this work where he points out Forster's habit of raising of synchrony over diachrony in his fictions. Here we might look to the latter's presumed temporal openness as enabled via his epigrammatic injunction from *Howards End* (1910), 'only connect...'. The ellipsis is helpful, an acknowledgement of what Medalie sets down as the Forsterian 'imperative to engage with fragmented and inchoate reality' (2002: 104ff). All the same, it is no less evident that while Forster was ready to try on subtle variations from the modernist style book, he remained and remains one of its more peripheral voices as a formalist. For this reason my reading of him here is focused entirely upon his monumental work, *A Passage to India* (1924), in which not only do we find Forster's fictional Indian town, Chandrapore, described in such unassuming if not mediocre terms that it becomes a kind of colonial non-place in its own right, but one that we yet find overshadowed by the otherworldly encounter with the caves at the heart of the novel's drama.²²⁰ Certainly *connecting* takes on a more threatening cast here than it does in Forster's earlier works, climactic scenes providing

²²⁰ It is of course nicely ironic that the fictional town of Chandrapore has for its apparent prototype, the township of Bankipore in the State of Bihar, first visited in 1912, and even then a suburb of the city of Patna, whose name echoes, with incongruous exactitude, that of the fateful pilgrim ship in *Lord Jim*. One need not follow up on accidental biographical symmetries to see how voidal descriptives referencing darkness, emptiness, or the infinite operate in both novels.

phenomenal settings (at any rate, sensorially reified inner landscapes) for the finally devastating epiphanic encounters with alterity by two of the novel's central characters. Further, such encounters, uncomfortably racialized, come to compose durational moments through which the more inconvenient contents of Adela Quested's and Mrs. Moore's consciousnesses rise powerfully to the fore. As we are about to see through the sensorial notifications of the novel's text, while the incidents in the caves no less suggest deep-seated undercurrents in the relations between Westerners and Indians, as Douglas Kerr outlines (in an essay aptly entitled "Hinterland"), the 'crucial' something occurring in the cave is itself effaced. In the case of Adela it remains entirely 'unnamed', while Mrs. Moore is rather seen to re-emerge 'into a world which will henceforth seem banal and indifferent' (op. cit. 19): and thus we are led to impute some quality in and of the caves themselves, what I will show as the soundscape of the void. This aural register can be read in more ways than I can hope to pursue here. For example, Michael Roeschlein has suggested, rather as Yael Levin does with Conrad's 'absent presences', that sound as echoing presence is hardly the only interpretative route on offer since Forster no less suggests 'silence as both another aural equivalent of deconstructive *différance* as well as the voice of the transcendent ineffable' (2004: 85).²²¹ Silent or echoing, the dynamism Roeschlein sees Forster's text embracing nonetheless leaves us with a locational marker for, among other possibilities, ecstatic, disruptive, exoticized or exoticizing effectiveness. Dislocation is part of this process, no more so than where the distressing aspect of the echoes suggests the uncannier end of the sublime encounter, let alone the 'boum' which Forster has accompanying it at key phases of his narrative.²²²

Before turning to the cave scenes (roughly 142-159), we should recall the exoticizing romanticism of Forster's opening description of the town of Chandrapore. Working from an initially workmanlike focus on the town's aspect, Forster's phrasing soon erupts into an effusiveness in which 'glory' and 'benediction' are laid over what began as a riverside settlement 'scarcely distinguishable from the rubbish [the river Ganges] distributes so freely' (9). While the feminized 'prostrate earth' (10) supporting this agglomeration is largely flat and dull, the sky promises emancipation: at night, stars 'hang like lamps from the immense vaults', a grandeur 'as nothing to the distance behind them [the stars], and that farther distance, though beyond colour, has freed itself from blue' (10). We have met some of these flourishes before, though in writers

²²¹ As he implies, the 'sense of suspension evoked by [Forster's] technique' is more than 'deconstructive deferral' but a literary effort to render 'the dynamism' of mysticism in religious thought (2004: 69).

²²² This sound-word appears on pages 145, 147, 148, 203.

more obviously interested in unsettling received notions of platial concreteness. Forster, here, can appear carping. The town ‘trails’ its fronting river and round about ‘the earth lies flat, heaves a little, is flat again’ (10-11); more simply, the place is ‘[s]o abased, so monotonous’ (9). In combining closeness with great distance, Forster does appear attuned to those critical observations in which more personal involvements might be masked, but there are other effects worth noting. For one, the shifting of perspectives tends to render the sublime as a merely tasteful embellishment to the search for meaning seen of Forster’s female protagonists, one in which the accepted tones of literary profundity are pushed aside by the more intimate and here unspeakable crises enacted within the Marabar Caves. Thus if the distancing and effacing of India’s physical actuality are closely tied to the presentation of his characters as interior beings at odds with their own social or imperial demeanours, or indeed, of more individual needs and desires, the booming of the real effected within the caves does more than collapse the personal into the aporetic, but takes down Forster’s own perspectival strategies. The caves may be abysses of disorientation, but they seem equally poised to be the false consciousness of their author.

Let me at once try to raise together the selves and landscapes at the crux of the novel. Both Adela’s and Mrs. Moore’s encounter with the enclosed and ultimately sexualized alterity of the cave scenes are set out as mental spaces wherein possibility and actuality map over each other. Forster was later to describe the mysterious banality at the heart of his scenario as concerning ‘either a man, or the supernatural, or an illusion’, usages explicitly intended to ‘remain a blur, and to be uncertain’ (1983: 23).²²³ Since the incidents occurring at the caves, like the abyss into which Jim leaps from the *Patna*, are conceived to be both actual and elided (if not *constituted* by empty categories), critics have relied upon tropes of absence in discussing the novel. Such readings include Brenda Silver’s evocative identification of the caves as narrative ‘gaps’ (1991 [1988]: 86-105), Brian McHale’s more general postmodern insistence on the internalization and ‘self-erasure’ of narrative in twentieth century literature (i.e. 1987: 99-106), or what Brian Richardson labels on McHale’s behalf, ‘ontological slippages’ (2006; 89). In an obvious sense, Forster’s own descriptions can be made to stand with such theorizations. Given the erasures of Chandrapore’s surrounding landscape, its monotony and flat unreality, it is not very surprising that the surrounding hills should also prove “gappy” in unexpected ways. ‘There is something unspeakable in these outposts. They are like nothing else in the world, and a glimpse of them makes the breath catch’ (123). Likewise, the hills ‘bear no relation to anything

²²³ Quoted in the editor’s introduction to that edition.

dreamt or seen' (*ibid.*), and the caves so unremarkable that the visitor to them is 'uncertain whether he has had an interesting experience or a dull one or any experience at all' (124). It is the absence of 'any experience at all' from which Silver appears to be working, the narratorially slippery excess of Adela's encounter with someone or nothing in the cave, and the psychological, linguistic, and hermeneutic 'gaps' thus implied. Working both from Genette's notification of the space between signifier and meaning, and the Greek term *periphrasis* – the etymology of which suggests an apophatic 'refusal to name its subject that emphasizes the fact of its elision' – Silver's thesis accords with the performative richness of colonial modernism's abyssal stream.

The story Silver tells, however, is more pointed than postmodernity's interest in linguistic spaces of non-essentialistic poesis: instead she cites Forster's working drafts for the novel in which Adela is sexually assaulted in the cave, pushed violently against its wall, her breasts touched, a defence properly made (Silver 116; citing Forster 1978: 242-3). Apart from the vagueness of the non-assault Forster finally presents us with, Adela is already constrained in the novel. As Silver phrases it, Adela 'increasingly figures in the narrative as an absence, a gap, created in part by the intrusion of her consciousness of her socially constructed status as a woman: a thing and a nothing', and so her 'entrance into the cave affirms a crisis of identity that is both ontological and political' (129): in short, we have a gap meeting a gap. In Silver's reading, too, in refusing to detail her encounter in the cave, Adela

generates a counter discourse, one that opens up gaps that those in power cannot control or afford, in part by determining their claim to knowledge and truth. She generates as well the space between the material and the representational, between referentiality and textuality, where ideology and power are located (133)

So how material are these caves in which so many *gaps* can be given meaning: is a cave its space, or the walls defining its limits – is a cave a manner of looking, an opening or an enclosure? Such questions do not escape Forster's text. Near the beginning of the novel's second part, attention is paid to the indeterminacy and nothingness of the Marabar Caves as constitutive of place. Forster himself upheld this reading late into his life, telling an interviewer in 1952 that the 'Marabar Caves represented an area in which concentration can take place. A cavity'.²²⁴ There is of course a conflation here of symbolic potential and the literary means by which such potential is reified within the reader's experience of reading the novel. The hills into

²²⁴ *The Paris Review: The Art of Fiction 1*. 2004: 3. Interview between Forster and P. N. Furbank & F. J. H. Haskell, at King's College, Cambridge, June 20, 1952. Available at <http://www.theparisreview.org/media/5219_FORSTER4.pdf>.

which the caves are described to burrow are themselves 'sinking' as part of vast geological processes: 'The main mass [of hills] is untouched, but at the edge their outposts have been cut off and stand knee-deep, throat-deep, in the advancing soil' (123). Thus we find hills of hollows sinking in the colonial sun like so many lumps of Emmental. The site is set up as a place of intense interest, but boredom is no less apparent since that same visitor 'finds it difficult to discuss the caves, or to keep them apart in his mind, for the pattern never varies', nor are their features by which one 'distinguishes one from another'. In brief: 'Nothing, nothing attaches to them' since the caves are 'dark', hence whether they are visited or empty, there is 'little to see, and no eye to see it'; and even after one does visit, and has lit a match to regard its reflections, the cave 'is dark again, like all the caves' (124-5). What significance one finds in these caves is therefore the short-lived significance one brings to them, save, perhaps, the particularities of their aural quality. But even here the mystery of the caves is more akin to a sounding board than the result of some unknown agency, a mystery effect, an echo of the stream of experience thrumming between "'bou-oum", or "ou-boum", – utterly dull'. But dull is not quite the word either: 'Hope, politeness, the blowing of a nose, the squeak of a boot, all produce "boum"' (145). One must look elsewhere for the enigmatic content of the novel, though Forster appears to do this for us, albeit with his tongue in his cheek:

'I do so hate mysteries,' Adela announced.
 'We English do.'
 'I dislike them not because I'm English, but from my own personal point of view,' she corrected.
 'I like mysteries but I rather dislike muddles, said Mrs. Moore.
 'A mystery is a muddle.'
 'Oh, do you think so, Mr. Fielding?'
 'A mystery is only a high-sounding term for a muddle. No advantage in stirring it up, in either case. Aziz and I know well that India's a muddle.' (68)

There is little like this exchange in all of Conrad, and of the texts looked at to this point, only Woolf's plays as complexly on social types, while none go so far to debunk the nebulousness of the colonial attraction to mysteriousness. To some degree, however, all come to devalue the colonial backdrop as a possible compensatory forum for more serious statements: the imperial project may make trade rise, but the personal price appears rather higher. Forster is very good at defusing the scene. When all is 'muddle', there is no aura and less tragedy; and what ambience the landscapes and its moods might lend will not survive the satiric discourse a writer such as Forster imagines for them. We see something of this candour concerning '[w]e

English' where Forster has Adela's weakly conventional fiancé, Ronnie Heaslop, announce that since 'the Marabar caves were notoriously like one another [...] in the future they were to be numbered in sequence with white paint' (195). Such is the artifice of platonic relations in *A Passage to India*. The setting may be full of potential symbolic and figurative avenues but the textual actuality is finally dismissive of their aptness, a feature ranging from the 'nothing extraordinary' of the book's opening line to Mrs. Moore's departure from India during which, with a touch of free indirect abruptness, she 'woke in the middle of the night with a start, for the train was falling over the western cliff'. While this lovely burlesque both of Mrs. Moore's impending death and Western stumblings on the subcontinent takes us far from Chandrapore, her subsequent claim that she had 'not seen the right places' (204) can be extended across the narrative as a whole. Knowing the 'right places', like the proper time for them, connects not to some unitary conception of alterity, but to the greater number of lesser ones Forster parades before us, for instance the missed "realities" that gaze back at Mrs. Moore as her ship departs:

presently the boat sailed and thousands of coconut palms appeared all round the anchorage and climbed the hills to wave her farewell. "So you thought an echo was India; you took the Marabar caves as final?" they laughed. "What have we in common with them [...]?" (205)

From this awareness, from the steamer going off and an Indian shore that 'melted into the haze of a tropic sea' (205), the text abjures abyssal settings for the postcard views of the Mau region with which the novel ends, even where these remain, despite their 'park-like' aspect, somewhat 'queer' (313). Indeed, as Forster goes on to show us, for Aziz, too, the Indian scene has to be unlatched from its symbolic and personal oddness in order to become real enough to be 'queer'. And so it is only at this point of the novel, and with Aziz's letter of forgiveness to Adela, that the artifice of landscape can be defused along with the cycle of social and personal confusions assailing its cast. The text is clear on this point: with the end of recrimination 'the mirror of the scenery was shattered', and Aziz, returned now from 'the whole semi-mystic, semi-sensuous overturn, so characteristic of his spiritual life' now finds himself more prosaically 'riding in the jungle with his dear Cyril' (315). Forster's denaturalized caves aside, whatever abyssal quality the novel uncovers in its settings dissolves into the nothingness of an at last unprimed colonial landscape, leaving only the 'rocks' poking through the earth around which the novel's remaining cast members find themselves separately swerving (317).

Something of this process can be noted of critical views underlining India as a symbolic or impressionistic or virtual construct wherever such outlooks embrace the novel as a whole. We

have already had Baucom and Stevenson's views on Forster's temporal geography as a kind of communicative "moment" worked up from tropes of landscape, but in order to make the novel's places stony again, we must turn to Brian May's, "Romancing the Stump: Modernism and Colonialism in Forster's *A Passage to India*" (in Begam & Moses 2007). In his essay, May sets aside the Said-inflected view of Sara Suleri's *The Rhetoric of English India*, in which Forster's India is an Orientalist construction, and that, consequently, as Suleri puts it, its landscape signifies existential lack in being a 'hollow symbolic space' (144, cited at May 136).²²⁵ Not only does May hope to resuscitate Forster as a proper modernist (using early twentieth century formalism as a means of mounting a critique of British imperial order), but he is keen to show Forster subverting colonial modes of scenic representation by foregrounding what May calls 'the "bathetic mode," being that which follows upon the disappointment of symbolist and impressionist expectations' (137). Accordingly, May observes Forster pulling back from a more elemental presentation of India's physical actuality. But in staging the evacuation of aesthetic meaning from landscape, Forster should not be read as making possible the imposition of an exoticist or Orientalizing vision into the vacuum so created (as Suleri argues), but as freeing up space by which a critique of Orientalist meaning might instead be insinuated, and thus Forster's 'frequent depiction of India as "hollow" rescues it from that insidious imperialist idealism' as from a more celebratory exoticism (*ibid.*).²²⁶ Although he does not use my vocabulary, May is here coming close to an abyssal reading of *A Passage to India*, one in which the denaturalization of the landscape offers Forster a means of promoting his humanist critique.

Nevertheless, May must still account for the novel's open-ended figurations as glossed by Benita Parry's observation concerning the text's 'polysemous symbolic resonances' (1998: 177). Here May underlines Forster's attention to the physical scene as 'a sensitive register of circumambient vicissitudes', one that does not require the novel to read as 'a grand symbolic monad to be apprehended momentarily; rather, it is a finite, humdrum series, a train of places that are discrete' (May 138). One of the core trajectories of May's article concerns Forster's impressionism, sometimes aligned with the more obviously delineated chromatic schemes of its postimpressionist inheritance. Ranging over the novel's impressionist attention to the sensory actuality of India, and taking into account the equivocation Forster expresses through it, May

²²⁵ May glosses Suleri's argument by latching onto her key words where these show that 'the Indian landscape or its "topography" or "geography" in *Passage* is entirely "symbolic," failing to "suggest [the] 'natural'" (136; citing Suleri 1992: 146, 145, 145, 144).

²²⁶ May is rightly alert to the discursive potential opened up by allusions to the solidity of India, its "elementalism" versus the spatial and ideological dynamics of colonial power.

indicates how that aesthetic mode can yet ‘indicate an authentic desire to connect with the other, even the colonial other’, while acknowledging how ‘the mere impression, the surface apprehension’, can imply the extension of touristic superficiality to the imperial project as an all too shallow zone of transfers and mediations (144). As May shows, however, given Forster’s many denials of symbolic figuration, along with desire to offer a humdrum or anti-romantic India, the text rehearses views outside colonial normativity, hence, in ‘[l]eading instructively to disappointment, to bathos, impressionism also leads to an apprehension of epistemological, even cultural, limitation’ (146). Bathetic as this India can be, and despite the weak reflexivity aesthetic forms can also denote, ‘modernism as represented by Forsterian impressionism – emerges not an epistemological and ethical dead-end, a blind alley of ethnocentrism, but as a possible avenue of imperial self-critique’ (*ibid.*).

Despite May’s reading of Forster’s dialogical treatment of the Indian scene as both physical actuality and weak aesthetic structure, we still need to ask what an ambient reading of the novel might offer. Indeed, even in the aftermath of her traumatic ordeal in the caves, Adela is wrought by a possibly false but no less sad echo that seems to have little to do with whatever *sounds* the caves had hitherto produced, this aural contents being not just, as Forster carefully points out, ‘entirely devoid of distinction’ (145). In the aftermath, however, this aural content comes to be actualized through ellipsis, here as a ‘breaking string’ filling Adela’s consciousness from within. Crucially, then, the aporetic encounter in the cave has now become an ‘atmosphere’, an impressionistic echo meant to be the epiphanic revelation of unspeakable racial and personal significance, but is now a merely aural duration:

the echo flourished, raging up and down like a nerve in the faculty of her hearing, and the noise in the cave, so unimportant intellectually, was prolonged over the surface of her life. She had struck the polished wall—for no reason—and before the comment had died away, he followed her, and the climax was the falling of her field-glasses. The sound had spouted after her when she escaped, and was going on still like a river that gradually floods the plain. [...] Evil was loose ... she could even hear it entering the lives of others... And Adela spent days in this atmosphere of grief and depression (190)²²⁷

²²⁷ There is a Chekhovian aspect to this late echo within the novel, one incorporating a slightly comedic quality of sadness and disabused dreams. For instance, Julius West’s 1917 translation of the closing stage direction of *The Cherry Orchard* records that text’s bittersweet denouement through the sound of axes thwacking at illusion: ‘The distant sound is heard, as if from the sky, of a breaking string, dying away sadly. Silence follows it, and only the sound is heard, some way away in the orchard, of the axe falling on the trees’ (1904: 64).

Forster is here doing no more than formalizing what the reader already knows, that the echo is both a sensory and psychosomatic event, one perhaps representative of a seemingly abyssal agency – were its author willing to push in that direction rather than retreat with Mrs. Moore into the realm of the inexpressible: ‘The crush and the smells she could forget, but the echo began in some indescribable way to undermine her hold on life’ (147). What is more, this kind of duality presents us with the sort of perspectival puzzle seen of *Lord Jim*, a human comedy or debased tragedy which as Forster has the district colonial chief or Collector, Turton, explicate, ‘is impossible to regard [...] from two points of view’ (162), yet which in either novel is spread across its several vantages. It is fitting, therefore, that Forster’s presentation of the caves is no less given to perspectival challenges. Among these are the caves described as having no entrances, and which have thus never been ‘unsealed since the arrival of the gods’.

Local report declares that these [sealed caves] exceed in number those that can be visited, as the dead exceed the living – four hundred of them, four thousand or million. Nothing is inside them [...]; if mankind grew curious and excavated, nothing, nothing, would be added to the sum of good or evil. (125)²²⁸

Caves aside, the landscape of the Marabar Hills is already bound up with a number of such indeterminacies: mounds which may or may not be graves, the appearance of a snake which is finally no more than a twisted palm stump, the radiating heat ‘which increased the confusion’ (139). None of this is actually indeterminate, but such detail still lends a film of exoticist unknowingness to the ‘horrid, stuffy place’ (140), let alone one in which aporetic qualities are in constant attendance – ‘Nothing was explained, and yet there was no romance [...] nothing was to be seen on either side’ (ibid.). Indeed, the word “nothing” appears some ninety times in the text

²²⁸ Indeed, one cave is ‘rumoured’ to have ‘neither ceiling nor floor, and mirrors its own darkness in every direction infinitely’ (125). Witness how easily the terms of Forster’s description accord with Deleuze’s rethinking of the enfolding and unfolding of the Leibnizean monad at the turn of the eighteenth century, which Deleuze described in terms of ‘a cavern within a cavern’ (LB 6) for its having ‘the autonomy of the interior, an interior without exterior’ (Fold article 233). This sort of language, especially where Leibniz sets out the paradoxical notion of the monad having no access or egress, no inside or outside, simply underlines the uncapturable psychological aspect of Mrs. Moore’s and then Adela’s encounter with a sensorially overloaded vacuity. More specifically, of the hermetic aspect of the sealed caves, Leibniz himself imagined monadic forms having ‘no windows by which something might enter or leave them’, hence ‘neither holes nor doors’: as such, monads are the reality of complete and so self-contained conceptions unfolding according to their various natures (respectively: *Monadology* §7; “Letter to Princess Sophie”, June 1700, in *Philosophischen Schriften*, Vol. I, 554). Moreover, monads are both the past and present of that reality, its potential actuality, or, as Leibniz describes it, the monad bears the future and is weighted with the past. Indeed, as a soul or mind, the monad is partially dynamized by our ‘petite perceptions’ (e.g. *Discourse on Metaphysics* 1686) into what we might think of as the “unconscious”.

without being replaced by a more fulsome notion of textual presence, an iteration greatly outweighing Forster's comments concerning the 'real India'.²²⁹ All the same, the "India" of the novel remains an interpretive field capable of being read both ways, and so incorporating illusion alongside the concreteness of place, and so gesturing towards an unrealized and perhaps unrealizable nexus of significance and actuality. But where Forster's sentence appears to promise something close to a sublime awareness indicative of a 'new quality' or way of being, 'a spiritual silence which invaded more senses than the ear', the ball is immediately dropped:

Life went on as usual, but had no consequences, that is to say, sounds did not echo or thoughts develop. Everything seemed cut off at its root, and therefore infected with illusion. (139)

Such let-downs have their own kind of purpose: as May intimates, instead of Forster's using the sublime to bridge over the spatial or cultural dislocatedness of the visitors to the caves along with their effusive host, we find them for a time equally "lost" as either imperial subjects or selves, and this dual occasioning with its endless ironies and reversals is only more concentrated at the caves than elsewhere.²³⁰ Such displacement is of course exacerbated by the sensory exacerbations of the caverns themselves. In her first and only entry into one, Mrs. Moore found the cave overwhelming and 'had nearly fainted' from the close proximity of the accompanying colonial crowd of locals and attendants, the smells and bodily encroachments: 'She lost Aziz in the dark, didn't know who touched her, couldn't breathe, and some vile naked thing struck her face and settled onto her mouth like a pad [...] For an instant she went mad, hitting and gasping like a fanatic' (145). The sensual tones of the situation are rather obvious: the breathless old woman is 'touched' in the dark and some 'vile naked thing' presses upon her mouth. Thereafter panic sets in just as it will for Adela, though with a less obviously pointed sexual energy. Yet already with this first visit the echoes are encountered in their uncanny and subjectless form. As compared to other echoing places in India, Forster describes the Marabar version as lacking content, that is, of echoing not one's words but the awareness of (and likely the repression of) nothingness. In Forster's own revealing descriptions the echoes compose the 'little worm coiling' or 'small snakes, which writhe independently' in a manner Mrs. Moore

²²⁹ This phrase appears four times in the novel, of which only the last lacks irony, this concerning the small-hold farmers or *ryot* 'whom some call the real India' (284).

²³⁰ Adela's conversation with Aziz near the entrance to the caves highlights the difficulties of maintaining any larger perspective on the country. As Aziz says, 'Nothing embraces the whole of India, nothing, nothing'. Indeed, his dreams of 'universal brotherhood' seem always to meet barriers, and so 'become untrue' as soon as they are 'put into prose' (143).

finds upsetting (145), and which carefully sets the stage for Aziz and Adela later being helplessly sluiced into the caves as though caught in their own spiralling logic of desire and self-suppression ('sucked in like water down a drain' (144).

But, again, where Mrs. Moore's incident appears to invite Freudian explication, the explanation later provided by Adela speaks more prosaically of the echo set in motion by her scratching upon the rock face of the cave, as of the less easily unpacked shadow 'bottling me up' (189), this last possibly a reference to the fears she holds for her upcoming marriage (e.g. 151, 207). If after her crisis in the cave, these factors set her 'vibrating between hard common sense and hysteria' rather than some overt sexual disgust (189), Forster is only continuing with a pattern already set. That is, he is more comfortable with strong explicitness in its quasi-symbolic form, at least where an elderly and entirely respectable widow is concerned, less so with an unmarried young woman who at no stage of the narrative (not so in David Lean's film version) appears particularly given to unspoken longings of so intimate a nature. In either case, it is important to consider how the dislocations of these characters are presented aurally at the point of crisis; and hence that the nothingness rehearsed in the spectral conditions of the ill-fated venture to the Marabar caves is not resolved through sensuality any more than the scene's *concrete* environment, but the more disturbing ambient qualities of its echoes. On this note, it is fitting that Forster admits to understanding how the episode in the caves released him from having to conceive of some more blunt experience for the English women at Chandrapore; as he himself states in the same interview in which the caves are the locus for the 'concentration' of significance, the 'scene in the Marabar Caves is a good substitute for violence' (op. cit. 6).

Violence, yes, but in the published version of the novel, and when transported to Adela's fateful moment in the cave, the issue of violence lacks its transitive aspect. The beautiful thing about the reader's difficulty of focalizing the actual scene is how closely the visual aspects of the cave give way to the deictic challenges presented by its echoes. Indeed, the nothingness abetted by such sounds can be understood as a complication of the separateness of figure and ground. This is not replicated in the darkness of the caves, for there the entrance provides a landmark, the top of the bottle Adela speaks of as being closed off. The cave itself may be black but Adela is perfectly aware, so to speak, of which way is up. This accords with Ronald Langacker's classic formulation of figure and ground relations, though by now we should know to be aware of the familiar term with which he launches his discussion:

Impressionistically, the figure within a scene is a substructure perceived as “standing out” from the remainder (the ground) and accorded special prominence as the pivotal entity around which the scene is organized and for which it provides a setting’ (I: 120).

Langacker’s qualification is necessary. A darkened room ‘eliminates the potentiality for figure/ground alignment’; at the same time ‘the centre of [a] visual field nevertheless defines the focus of visual attention’ – that is to say: the visual centre is defined by the direction in which [one’s] eyes point such that if a lamp at once appears, it ‘stands out as the figure against the otherwise dark field even though (by definition) it is not at the centre of [...] visual attention’. Shifting one’s gaze to the lamp brings the figure ‘into the focus of visual attention, but the need for this shift indicates that figure and focus of attention do not inherently coincide’ (op. cit. 122). If such are the conditions of alignment in a darkened space, what figure emerges to arrange one’s focal position in the threatening darkness of the Marabar caves, what *locating* echo? Regardless of what is said ‘the same monotonous noise replies, and quivers up and down the walls until it is absorbed into the roof’, just as at other times ‘echoes generate echoes’ such that reflection – mental or sensory – is differently given each time. Such is the perplexing effect Forster wishes to produce, and which, while rescuing him from the work of a more deliberate laying out of Adela’s crisis, offers both a space and a trope for a more profound, if still promiscuous set of possibilities.

We are ready then, to make a more general comment upon what Forster accomplishes through this sort of atmospheric occasioning. In the first place, by destabilizing the sensory cohesiveness of the scenes within the caves, he is able to facilitate a range of meanings and repercussions not elsewhere describable. I want to stand back from this process just long enough to restate the poetics I see at work there through the framework of art criticism. In her work on the shared communicative aspects of poetry and painting, Betty Buchsbaum writes of what she calls ‘subliminal or unconscious perception’ (op. cit. 309), a mode of understanding I see being encoded into *A Passage to India*, where the comprehensions of Forster’s cast can appear to emerge from processes that can only with difficulty be assigned wholly to cognition, embodied or otherwise. It is in this sense that we can turn, as Buchsbaum does, to the psychoanalytic aesthetics of Anton Ehrenzweig for whom (he is discussing the Swiss artist Paul Klee) one finds a similar elucidation of “content” through aesthetic form. Of Klee’s work, Ehrenzweig notes ‘a fusion of inside and outside space that defies rational comprehension’. Such fusion results in a ‘multidimensional picture where inside and outside areas interpenetrate like the voices of musical polyphony’. While this aural metaphor may be enticing when read against Forster’s

overlapping echoes, we are surely on firmer ground where Ehrenzweig's 'fusion of inside and outside', serves to set out the aesthetic richness such thinking makes possible by allowing one to '[shape] inside and outside areas simultaneously' (1962: 301; cited by Buchsbaum at 309). Indeed, what we have been looking at in this section is the temporary transformation of platial atmospheres through spatial and temporal dislocatedness. '[T]he whole thing can't have lasted thirty seconds really' Adela says, having already told herself that '[i]n space things touch, in time things part' (189) – and she is much too early in time (if not too prudish) to raise, as Merleau-Ponty was to, the body as their linking medium. Yet the tranformations of the two cave incidents frame arenas for the working out of the sexual and cultural tensions Forster sees at work in his scenario, and which he effects through an explicitly subjectless sonority, the white noise at the intersection of consciousness and world: the 'instant' in which Mrs. Moore 'went mad [...] like a fanatic' (143), or Adela's aural atmosphere.

With regard to the novel's already suspect exotica, the penultimate chapter of *A Passage to India* ends upon a more farcical kind of flattening. This strange section of Forster's book attempts to wrap up the tortuous and now weakly self-conscious social drama of the important members of its cast, now intruded upon by siblings rather than potential soulmates, a scenario now including an impromptu baptism in the never quite described waters of the 'great Mau tank' (301) or the merely picturesque attractiveness of the surrounding landscape: 'The scenery, according to their standards, was delightful...' (293). In the midst of the already riotous festival of Krishna's birth, the *Gokul Ashtami*, we are given not only thunder 'unaccompanied by lightning' (310), cacophony without enlightenment, but an author mocking profundity via a rain that apart from extinguishing torches and ruining fireworks, 'settled in steadily to its job of wetting everybody and everything through'. Forster is wry here, announcing '[t]hat was the climax, as far as India admits of one', before allowing the chapter to fizzle out across an Uttar Pradesh version of Woodstock:

ragged edges of religion... unsatisfactory and undramatic tangles... 'God is love.' Looking back over the great blur of the last twenty-four hours, no man could say where was the emotional centre of it, any more than he could locate the heart of a cloud. (311)

Where we had seen Forster's book quite literally sounding the abyss at its moment of mystery, we now have one of Conrad's clouds. This is not, perhaps, the 'overcast sky' at the close of "Heart of Darkness" that 'seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness', but one that, as with *Lord Jim*, seems more akin to bootless symbolization. But neither is Forster's

moment open to sudden illumination that ‘admits the eye for an instant into the secret convolutions of a cloud’ (*LJ* 130); rather, it fades into nothing in the same way as Marlow’s attempt to fathom Jewel’s needs, which for him remain ‘the simplest impossibility in the world [...] the exact description of the form of a cloud’ (269). Yet Forster’s cloud trope is hardly innocent – he is still turning weather into figures of unreachable if patently *atmospheric* meaning. Indeed, his opening and closing pages are overt in their attention to the sky, from ‘The sky too has its changes’ (10) of the opening chapter, to the ‘No, not there’ spoken by the sky in the novel’s very last words (317) – though these are of course references to the text’s offer of multicultural concord.²³¹

Where, then, are we left at the end of *A Passage to India*? As we have seen, the sorts of abyssal figures I have been following in these pages, while prevalent in that work, are never quite at home in Forster’s colonial text. At any rate, the author seems not to believe in them even where the landscapes of the novel are collectively imagined to turn their back on the human fuss (‘the earth didn’t want it’) leaving some other kind of “truth” to deny the possible friendship of equals, dramatized here through Fielding and Aziz, ‘as they issued from the gap’ (317). But at this point, of course, we can recognize just how productive that trope can and has been.

Colonial Modernism and Performing Difference: A Summation

In theorizing how the modernist colonial landscape comes to perform affective and thematic contents unbroachable or unavailable to fictional individuals, this study has addressed the use made of tropes of contradiction, emptiness, and silence as a framework for the engagements of the fictional ‘subject’ with imperial settings. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the study, I want to raise a pair of linked observations concerning its means – what the breadth of disciplinary coverage has allowed in comparison to a more constrained research frame, as well as how my focus on the poetics of place depiction might be seen to respond to the abyssal

²³¹ Forster begins his novel by noting the ‘vault’ of the sky from which benediction falls, and ends with a form of touristic self-mockery concerning the English intruders’ stop at an Indian festival – a chaos in which ‘worshippers howled with wrath or joy, as they drifted forward helplessly’ unto the squelching epiphany of a ‘climax’ in which ‘whatever had happened had happened’ (310). So there is no disorientation, no fearsome encounter with alterity, no inner “boum” announcing the advent of profundity: there is only the lack of a suitable ‘meeting-place’ for cultural exchanges, a ‘hovering between’ potential meanings rather than a shared solution (314).

contents associable with the current burgeoning of ethical approaches to the literature of the epoch.²³²

I have made use of discursive realms from literary critical and language-based studies of fiction and its modes, cognitive research, aesthetic philosophy, performance theory, film theory, and human geography. My choice of research topic has made this catholicity of interest necessary for the simple reason that the perspective given onto the colonial modernist landscape from any one investigational platform very quickly results in that particular discourse becoming as much of an impediment as the often explicitly inexpressible modalities underlying the disorientations of alterity. While my interest in the performativity of platial representations would appear to wriggle free of such constraints, the attempt to birth a new critical contents solely from performative durations would be as solipsistic as arguing that Woolf's interesting use of prepositions in her first novel opens the lock to the synaesthetic expressionism of her figures: all valuable, all a bit thin. If I have remained a literary critic in all this, it is because my multidisciplinary model can thrive there even where, individually, my investigative concerns are not always congruent. To give one example, the central role Leonard Talmy's cognitive linguistic analysis of motion figures plays in my reading of *Lord Jim* is based on the ideas of someone who has never written criticism on modernism, literary poetics, ethical space, or the aesthetic practices of imperial cultures – who is, indeed, not a critic in the (usual) humanist sense. Thus it is the nexus of applicable viewpoints that is essential here, not the congruency of the various manned borders of academic study. As with Adela Quested in *A Passage to India*, the most fundamental issues begin for her the moment her field-glasses go missing; and if a potentially cruel analogy might be mistakenly drawn from this telescoping of experience, I really mean no more than the *view* from the abyss that loss presents, or in Lawrence's very uneven *Kangaroo*, what that new ambience allows vis-à-vis its vivifying encounters with "natural" space.

In regard to the ethical dynamics of fictional landscapes, my route has been to align the representation of colonial topographies with the poetic strategies by which centres of consciousness are brought to life in particular spaces. I will not now re-engage the stylistic traits by which I see this alignment being effected in a more obviously moral sense (the space of cross-

²³² See, for instance, David Ellison, *Ethics and Aesthetics in European Modernist Literature: From the Sublime to the Uncanny* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge UP, 2001); Steven Pinker, *The Blank Slate: The Denial of Human Nature* (New York: Viking, 2002); Paul Sheehan, *Becoming Human: New Perspectives on the Inhuman Condition* (Westport CN: Praeger, 2003); and Lee Oser, *The Ethics of Modernism: Moral Ideas in Yeats, Eliot, Joyce, Woolf, and Beckett* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007).

cultural ethical engagement in Conrad's "The Lagoon" is key here), but immediately ask how the tropes of aporia I have been pursuing through the colonial modernist novel can be brought into the purview of more socially minded approaches to fiction. Indeed, it is from this vantage that Raymond Williams identified the apolitical aesthetics and "ineffable" language of the literary vanguard, one in which modernist experimentation lags behind the incipient social critique of cultural works engaging more directly with history and the theory and practice of 'specific social formations' (1989: 77).²³³ But Conrad's investment in, and subversion of, the adventure story tradition suggests a more complex engagement between "high" and "low" cultural productions than Williams is pleased to accord (admittedly, the latter is not spotlighting the colonial topos). If Conrad manages to combine his questioning of 'social formations' through the presumably unselfconscious and often lowbrow conventions of popular imperial fiction, he is yet powerfully commenting upon an 'ineffable' poetics that is, as we saw Moses suggesting with his *disorientalism* thesis or Armstrong through 'bewilderment', as much a part of the existing colonial fabric as abyssal figures were for the metropolitan avant-garde. And if such figures, along with the literary tropes by which they communicate themselves in texts, are not only the purview of modernist fiction's habit of fetishizing its internal forms in the name of aesthetics, as *moral* statements they yet remain differentiated from the historical record by being no longer attached to citations of some higher necessity. Moreover, similar to Schelling's scenographic evocation of what representation makes possible – at least within the rarefied world of Jena romanticism – and remembering the performative aspect of the poetics of nothingness as laid out above, we are positioned to see how the fictional settings of the West's global imperium came to provide the forum by which poesis encompassed the occasioning of consciousness as an ecology of place and self.

Further, as foreseen by Schelling and later dramatized by Conrad, it is through 'the invisible curtain that separates the real from the ideal world' by which such openings into the ineffable are produced, and in which 'the characters and places of the world of fantasy, which shimmers only imperfectly through the real world, fully comes upon the stage' (1978: 228). Before drawing this study to its close, we might pause a moment to raise Schelling's 'stage' as one more of the moral arenas tracked in this study, so like the house rostrum of "The Lagoon" or *An Outcast of the Islands*, it is the colonial *scene* of encounter that constitutes the fugitive

²³³ Compare, for instance, the presentation of experience in Henry Green's avant-garde 'social' novel *Living* (1929) to that of Walter Greenwood's overtly working class *Love on the Dole* (1933). The former poetically presents a scion of the proprietorial class amidst the working classes; the latter eschews the exploratory techniques of modernism for social realism.

moment of morality, and not, perhaps, the words and actions produced there. Such, too, is the lesson of Marlow's encounter with Stein in *Lord Jim*, a text in which the dismantling of the narrative conceits by which fictions had hitherto articulated themselves is accompanied by strong, even obsessive attention to the moral conditions of the individual in modernity, let alone of the appropriateness of the lenses through which such individuals are to be conceived and traced as aesthetic presentations, or of their temporal fallouts.

Here we might move to the heart of the issue I want to emphasize at this late juncture, a task accomplished through Vincent Pecora's *Self and Form in Modern Narration* (1989). In this text, Pecora asks whether 'the literary work's tendency to dismantle the conditions of its own coherence' might 'be understood to transcend, or rather to be subsumed by, its social situation?' (ix).²³⁴ Here Pecora is underlining how so much of the work of criticism, like that of fictional composition, operates on the belief that there is always a further discursive paradigm available by which to map cultural productions, 'a realm in which language will be allowed the freedom and openness of relation to itself', that is to say, a relation not already 'subverted by critical theory's own self-denials' (264). This further 'realm', literature's *other*, has a ghostly presence within the colonial modernist tropes under examination here, and may be related both to the effacement of the individual and to recent post-theory efforts to posit a location for the human that avoids essentialistic definition. If the sensory lineaments of this other realm tend to be elided in Pecora's view, it is not because meaning cannot be projected into the void, or 'read back' from it, but because the power of literary works lies in their provision of openings to insight that are yet resistant to itemization. Ultimately, theorists may argue as to whether such knowledge is determined by language, some inherent 'human' essence, or the social structuration of the subject as understood, say, by Anthony Giddens (1984), but the fact remains that from the modernist period through to our own stage of late modernity, literature has relied on poetic framings of the arena by which the individual is made available for theorization. We saw something of this in Nancy's and Lacoue-Labarthe's attention to the *mise en scène* of individual becoming (1992), just as the present study has sought to locate that open-ended milieu in an often emphatically bewildering colonial setting. In so doing, I am proposing a problematic

²³⁴ Pecora's deconstruction of Conradian narration in "*Heart of Darkness*" exerts a pressure upon positive readings of the abyss. By 'directing his critique at the illusory coherence and communicability of human experience', Pecora finds that 'the abyss that Marlow faces in his vain attempt to convey the "essence" of his experience will ultimately swallow Conrad's own voice – along with the social and political sublation his literary form presumes' (150). For Pecora, modernist narrative is located between a literature that effaces the individual and one that destroys (or deconstructs) the means of staging such a critique in the first place.

colonial modernist field, viewable not simply *after* Theory, that is, at the culmination of the long development out of romanticism's response to instrumental reason as Charles Taylor has attempted to argue (e.g. Taylor 1989), but more explicitly, as a hermeneutic of emptiness deep within modernism's nineteenth century roots. As René Wellek so long ago phrased, in the wake of romanticism we are still part of an ongoing abyssal project, 'the great endeavour to overcome the split between subject and object, the self and the world, the conscious and the unconscious' (1963: 220).

If the fiction of the larger period of modernity appears, in the wake of modernism's flourishing, to make possible a way of focalizing such "emptiness", it simultaneously renders the achieving of that goal impossible by relativizing the descriptive categories by which that view is to be upheld. Indeed, that the 'event' in modernist fiction offers itself through the seemingly aporetic terms of abyssal tropes furnishes the impetus behind my argument: to comprehend the poetics by which the becoming of the subject is 'located' in the modernist "landscape" let alone other representational structures (time, space, the image, the vortex). But here we still need to foreground the figural mechanics of the literary work of art as a structure of significance; so just as I have sought to locate the modernist human as being most symptomatically *found* in the midst of a colonial nowhere, we might borrow from Peter Bürger's response to Foucault's *The Order of Things* in order to set the stage for what is less easily seen. As Bürger notes in the wake of modernism's late flourishings, rather than merely listening to the artists, critics have had to hazard the 'identification of a centre' in the midst of radically 'decentred thought' (1992 [1987]: 54). To this end, I have sought to uncover the literary mechanisms by which 'outmoded' conceptions of *being* are trumped by a performative dynamic powerfully inflected by considerations of equally 'decentred' locations. It is to this end that my argument here has been to explore the endlessly self-rejuvenating platial forms by which authors have interrogated the western individual through the scenographic realms of colonial alterity.

It is here, then, that the dynamics of the performative have proven so useful. Again I will take the example of cinematic practice, which, like fiction, accords the image both independence and an ongoing intermediary status, and which, moreover, turns consciousness into a landscape. These views are not recent, but strongly reflect the trope of the cinema's simultaneous engagement with mind and sense in the period around the apogee of high modernism, and which we find (re)captured in Deleuze's now canonical description of the time-image. Such is the view, too, of the modernist film theorist Jean Epstein, who sought in his critical and cinematic productions to situate the 'thought' produced through the unfolding of aesthetic processes with

that of the spectator's own cognitive and sensory processes. In making these comments, Epstein was comparing the fully-fledged cinema of montage, with its earlier phase in which the lens simply recorded, without break or editorial conceit, whatever it was aimed at. More broadly, Epstein saw that there was a profound moral implication to the evolution in cinematic practice – one relevant to the fictional modalities I have been commenting on. Just as the literature of the modernist period drew what it needed from its realist forebears, the later and more left-minded mid-century critic, Edgar Morin saw Epstein to be evoking a dynamics for film that is no less moral than that which Morin himself wanted to see: one able 'to reintegrate [...] the imaginary in the reality of man' (218). In Morin's reading, too, while film as an art form is 'as much lying as truthful, as mythomaniacal as lucid', he yet recognizes that 'the great open eye' of cinema before it became an art of montage, was, as Epstein saw, 'without prejudices, without morals, free from influence [since] images alone are nothing, only montage converts them into truth or falsehood' (Epstein 1925: 11, cited at Morin 202). Such is the dynamic I have accorded the abyssal landscape in the time-charged poetics of colonial modernist fiction, one that constantly threatens to morph into the nostalgia of Morin's mid-century view that reality is constituted from the collaboration – shall we call it the montage – of the world with the human spirit: 'je parle de la collaboration du monde extérieur et de notre esprit pour construire la réalité' (2008).²³⁵ Morin is contemplating film, yet the landscapes of the real formed from the collusion of world and interiority do not thereby reflect the 'great open eye' of realist "scenery" any more than they do a merely inert natural backdrop to human action; and so in these pages I have been trying to invest the landscapes of a writer like Conrad with the tensions of the modernist imaginary in order to draw them into tropes of disorientation and loss not as their forum of "unravelling", but as places in which such dissolution is simultaneously of the subject and his or her environment: not scenery, then, but "the scene". Like the performative spaces of cinema, the open-ended capacity I see of fictional scenographies is still embroiled in a moral process even where no "message" is forthcoming. As in Conrad at the height of his vision, the universe might be absurd and the human place in it illusionistic, it may even be a debased forum for tragedy, yet the abyssal realm provides the moral occasioning I call performative for the manner in which, devastating as it can be in the unveiling of colonial alterity, it is still able to provide a kind of arena for moral reflection *outside* the gaze of imperial strictures.

It has of course been fashionable to stage such arguments through claims of a spatial turn, often through the thousand academic ships launched in the face of Foucault's 1967 essay, "Of

²³⁵ No page numbers are available for this online resource.

Other Spaces". As one of his more astute literary critical offspring puts it, 'Space is our limit and our emancipatory horizon. It has taken over the role occupied by time in modernity, and is now the cultural dominant of the postmodern West'. Space, however, need not be friendly, for as this same critic, Con Coroneos goes on in her excellent introduction to her *Space, Conrad and Modernity*, it can seem to lead back towards alterity. As she says there, to 'go deeply into space is to risk vertigo, an aboriginal horror of void' (2002: 5), and it is from there, and from that fear, by which one is led towards a presumably Kurtzian effort to 'regain control' of 'the agency of space' (5-6). This performative notification is, alas, not followed up in Coroneos's text. Rather, the reader is nudged towards a more familiar comprehension in which, as with Foucault, one finds 'a great hunger and a great hunger for infinitude', or as abstractly, 'an open space embedded within a closed one'. If this description seems akin to the sealed caves Forster parodies in *A Passage to India*, Coroneos concludes through a different, equally familiar text, to the effect that where 'the heart is in darkness' we are all the better placed to find the symbolic means of our redemption 'brilliantly illuminated at the rim' (174). Foucault, likewise, had written of the need 'to speak the truth in the space of a wild exteriority' (1986 [1967]: 61), and so, a century or so after Conrad's "Heart of Darkness", we are still, like Coroneos, looking for meaning in the atmospheric and often exotic periphery with its glow, as Conrad famously put it, 'outside, enveloping the tale' (*HoD* 8).

Furthermore, in trying to work around such figures, I have pointed to the period between the nineteenth century acceleration of imperial aggrandizement and its closing down around the years of the Second World War as the era in which the fictional *landscape* comes to represent the mind/world ecology as being ethically fraught. But the poetics have a longer reign than this. Even allowing for uncollapsible disparities between particular topographies and the scene or space of the moral subject, including the racial, social, and political variances of the colonial situation, it is still apposite to find the socialist cultural critic Raymond Williams attending to the 'formation' of cultural products ahead of their 'politics', especially when the literary poetics by which that avant-garde addresses its concerns locates its unspoken (some would say unspeakable) essentialist content in 'silence'. As noted by Williams in his "Afterword to *Modern Tragedy*" (1979), such concerns operate *between* the 'actual forms of our history and the tragic forms within which these are perceived, articulated, and reshaped' (op. cit. p.95-6). In opposition to the contrasting social functions thus separated, Williams yet describes an arena of meaning in which 'deliberately dissolving language' can 'hint at anything or everything, imply, become complicit' (102). In short, Williams appears no less ready to appropriate, as here, an

ambivalent abyssal poetics as a means of representing something of the hollow interiorities of modernism via its more ambient exterior.

In each of the texts looked at in my last two chapters especially, certain features of the literary landscape tend to reproduce themselves, and I have foregrounded those in which I see a continuation of either or both Conrad's development of the poetics of nowhere spaces in the waning years of the nineteenth century, or of the more general investment of modernist authors in tropes of absence and aporia. But neither does modernism's supposed high point somewhere around the *annus mirabilis* of 1922 spell the end of the abyssal landscape as an important trope of fictional discourse. More contemporary writers have from the mid-century utilized a voidal poetics in setting depictions. Indeed, there is a clear line of development leading out of the high modernist era, and which embraces 'sublime' landscapes traversed in English and French colonial fiction and non-fiction alike.²³⁶ But there are also works in which abyssal landscapes appear, yet are immediately brought into the fold of established meanings. We see one such work with the American expatriate, Paul Bowles. In his 1949 novel, *The Sheltering Sky* (1949), one finds indescribable transcendence, but this is a significance that, despite the epistemological absence offered through its initial presentation, is finally present only to the degree that it can be apostrophized. Describing the apparently undifferentiated desert terrain of Algeria, the narrator might state how 'there was no question of going anywhere since they were nowhere' (282), thus locating in the desert, something more obviously voidal than the projected space of that character's own existential emptiness, yet the 'sheltering sky' of the title is no less the site not merely of the intersection (the 'supreme moment') between mundane existence and the sublime, but an idealized destination, a transitional '[p]oint of darkness and gateway to repose' (245). These usages are abyssal only in their means, and so are easily organized around an expected, if not particularly comfortable late-modernist citation of meaning.²³⁷

²³⁶ For instance: T. E. Lawrence's *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1922/6), Henri Fauconnier's *Malaisie* (1930), Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *Terre des Hommes* (1939), H. E. Bates' *The Purple Plain* (1947), Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* (1950), Albert Camus' *L'exil et le royaume* (1957), Lawrence Durrell's *The Alexandria Quartet* (1957-60), Patrick White's *Voss* (1957) and *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976), Marguerite Duras' *Le Vice-Consul* (1966) and *L'Amant* (1984), and, to include the important South African tradition of effaced landscapes, J. M. Coetzee's *Dusklands* (1974), *In the Heart of the Country* (1977), *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), Andre Brink's *An Instant in the Wind* (1976), Wilma Stockenström's *The Expedition to the Baobab Tree* (1983), and Damon Galgut's *The Quarry* (1995).

²³⁷ Some colonial literatures do not have obvious modernist roots or inclinations. To this generic category we might append, to stick only to works of the Dutch East Indies, novels in which abyssal landscape terms, as with Bowles's texts, tend to prompt traditional recourse to nostalgic scenery: Madelon Lulofs' *Rubber* (1931), Beb Vuyk's *Het laatste huis van de wereld* (1939) [*The Last House in the World*], Maria Dermoût's *De tienduizend dingen* (1955) [*The Ten Thousand Things*].

On the other hand, there is an earlier history to usages such as Bowles's, which I have left to the side, most discernible in the French context, and, more specifically, in their nineteenth century phase of colonial appropriation in the North African *Maghreb* (e.g. Algeria 1830, Tunisia 1881). It is apposite, then, that the figural tendencies, and retreating spaces of the French adventurer and literary star, Pierre Loti, should frame their Near Eastern promises almost entirely through his landscapes – what Loti the pilgrim lacks in his person, the space performs.²³⁸ But a similar dynamic is no less present in the visual artists of the period, as they necessarily deal with the sorts of heightened spatial and luminary experiences we have seen of literary works. Indeed, as the topos of 'the south' as an alternate realm of authenticity came to prominence in the *Belle Époque*, the relationship between literary writing and the production of canvases could be direct. A full two years before his first visit to the French Mediterranean at Collioure near the Spanish frontier, Paul Signac's desire for more exotic surroundings had underwritten his 1885 canvas, "Still life, Book, Oranges", a tableau portraying a book upon a table surrounded by oranges and an empty glass. The volume is clearly marked as Guy de Maupassant's *Au soleil*, a travelogue of French North Africa published the previous year, and which includes passages on the French Midi where Signac would soon install himself. As its opening pages indicate, the south of *Au soleil* is equally idealistic, an entry to what Paul Carter set out as an interiorizing psychological other,²³⁹ but which in its French setting tends towards a greater presence: 'Le voyage est une espèce de porte par où l'on sort de la réalité connue pour pénétrer dans une réalité inexplorée qui semble un rêve' [Travel is a kind of door where one leaves known reality in order to penetrate an

²³⁸ Such is the suggestion of Abdul Karim Abu Khashan's "Pierre Loti's Journey Across Sinai to Jerusalem, 1894" (*Jerusalem Quarterly*. Autumn 2010, No. 43).

²³⁹ A long note is required here, for as Paul Carter suggests in his influential survey of Australian settlement, the individual subject's encounters with landscapes in their natural state do not have to be beset by sensory challenges to prove disorienting or to warrant "rescuing" by the mind. In *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History* (1987), Carter indicates how faced with the undifferentiated or at times chaotic regularity of the natural scene – stretching plains, endlessly repeated hills or meandering watercourses – the land was seen to be 'indescribable [...] in that it displayed no clear differentiation, no sense of direction' (53). Carter remains alert to 'the impossibility of distinguishing the language of feeling from the language of description' (1987: 44). In his view, space is a text 'to be written' since language, 'like travelling, gives space its meaning' (41, 175). In responding to Carter's influential model, postcolonialists underline the cultural 'construction of place' such that 'place is language', and, ultimately, an analogue of the self: 'Place, therefore, the 'place' of the 'subject', throws light upon subjectivity itself, because whereas we might conceive subjectivity as a process, as Lacan has done, so the discourse of place is a process of a continual dialectic between subject and object... it is precisely within the parameters of place and its separateness that the process of subjectivity can be conducted' (Ashcroft et al 2006: 347-8).

unexplored, dream-like reality.].²⁴⁰ So in what, then, lies Signac's citation of this book in his work? Is it simply the lure of space and light as no less visual signifiers of the ineffable, of the exotic as a new reality, as a striving after the affective potential of that real as forming its own kind of otherness safe from the contradictions of Western yearning in the colonies – strivings which, in a tough minded author such as the early Conrad, seem rather to extend to death.

Obviously there is a limit to what sorts of thematic material can be drawn from the poetics of setting depictions; nonetheless, as the fictional works read in this chapter indicate, a range of anxieties can be carried through the ambient qualities spaces of alterity make possible in concert with the divided selves of modernity.²⁴¹ As poetic structures there is a long trajectory to what more recent thinkers might call the 'ontologically indeterminate' (i.e. Massumi 86-7). A large part of my effort has therefore been to clarify the fictional modes by which such indeterminacy takes the form of, yet fails to complete, the symbolic intention that might otherwise have been revealed prior to its suspension within the protracted moment. Furthermore, in linking poetic form, aporia, and the presence of subjectivity, we have become better placed to see how the vocabularies and grammars of literary composition become essential frames for the analysis of a family of tropes in which form and content, subject-positions and interiority, location and identity, utilize the same hollowed out forms as the long-standing "significances" thus intended, but which only came to full expression with the effacements of the modernist era. Such effacements may not always be negative. As David Parker argues of the modernist novel: 'Authors, narrators, centres of consciousness often *insist* on attenuated [or suppressed] readings of the presented world precisely because they sense obscurely that some vital perspective is being occluded' (1994: 191) – a perspective I have animated by recourse to the 'occluded' tenors of the abyssal landscape.

²⁴⁰ *Au soleil* is available at <[http://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Au_soleil_\(Au_soleil\)](http://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Au_soleil_(Au_soleil))>. In the "Province d'Oran" section we discover how '[d]e place en place la ligne des monts s'abaisse, s'entrouvre comme pour mieux montrer l'affreuse misère du sol dévoré par le soleil. Un espace démesuré s'étale, tout plat, borné, là-bas, par la ligne presque invisible des hauteurs perdues dans une vapeur'. Such romanticism remains a feature of French writing well into the next century. Indeed, while de Maupassant was known as an ironic naturalist in the wake of Flaubertian realism, his African travels unveil a more obviously romanticist tendency, that of gushing over the symbolic potential of exotic space. The arrival at Algiers, for instance, is fantastic – 'Féerie inespérée et qui ravit l'esprit!'

²⁴¹ With regard to the divided self, Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness* is an expected name, especially where such divisions come to be dramatized through death. We might also include Kafka's tropical penal colony officers in "*In der Strafkolonie*" (written 1914), Camus's priest in "*Le Renégat* (ou *Un esprit confus*)" (from *Exile et le royaume* 1957), or in a comic setting, Evelyn Waugh's confused protagonist *A Handful of Dust* (1934).

Time is of course essential here. Durational framings have been a crucial component of my argument where they bear upon the discrete contents made possible via scenographic treatments of fictional settings. To this extent, too, moral issues arise in concert with both temporality and the things of the world. As Merleau-Ponty laid out in the “Temporality” section of *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945; 1962 in English), a relational foundation for human time is found to be ‘not a real process, not an actual succession that I am content to record. It arises from my relation to things’ (478). Without this involvement with things and processes outside of ourselves, Merleau-Ponty returns us to the meaninglessness of unanchored events since we ‘shall never manage to understand how a thinking or constituting subject is able to posit or become aware of itself in time’ (494) – from which standpoint we might be put in mind of the literary or even linguistic structures by which such relationality is aesthetically communicated as open-ended stagings of the colonial scene.

In the wake of the above chapters, and in order to steer this conclusion nearer to the literary forms of platial disorientation with which it began, I want to pause over one exception to the dearth of material on language-based studies of fictional landscapes. Here, Reuven Tsur’s 2003 study on the cognitive poetics of ecstatic or ‘mystical’ verse, *On the Shores of Nothingness*, returns us to the multidisciplinary I wrote of at the beginning of this section. Tsur is of course primarily concerned with form, citing, as an epigram to his book, some words of Mallarmé’s reported by Valéry (1960 [1936]: 1208) concerning how one signals understanding of the structures by which the numinous is formed out of specific textual operations: ‘Ce n’est point avec les idées, mon cher Degas, que l’on fait les vers, c’est avec des mots’ [It is not with ideas, my dear Degas, that one makes verses, it is with words]. Tsur’s intention thus shares a similar theme to that explored by the present study, that of accounting for the language uses by which abyssal forms, there called the poetics of the ‘ineffable’, are given value within literary aesthetics. There are differences however. As already seen, where Tsur seeks to indicate ‘how religious ideas are turned into verbal imitations of religious experience by poetic structure’ (7), we are brought up against the problem of analyzing how landscapes are to be understood as synaesthetically primed spaces simultaneously evocative of metaphysical or ethical categories. By replacing the devotional verse of Tsur’s study with a more general notation of the surplus contents of poetic figures of profundity, his insights guide us to what fictional landscape tropes can be seen to produce. Indeed, where abyssal settings are evoked in modernist fiction, it is less the experience of ineffable meaning we need attend than its opposite, the awareness, as expressed in fictional discourse, of being faced not with an ordering immanence, but

suppositions of an equally expressive lack of sense – the aporias of modernity. Thus where Tsur writes of the romantic landscape as ‘subsum[ing] the concrete images in a particular coherent landscape’, I rather look to the productive incongruity of topographical and topological features.²⁴² Tsur’s goal, of course, is to make terms available not just for the ‘non-conceptual’ by which the ineffable can be communicated, but its presentational strategies. What I bring to Tsur’s model, then, is the decidedly non-devotional awareness that, for instance, the non-places Conrad raises in his work are not merely open to numinous descriptors in the manner Tsur proposes, but activated by performative means; and so Tsur’s leading question, ‘How does conceptual and sequential language communicate nonconceptual experiences?’ feeds into my dynamic of scenographic poesis. The formula may be similar, but the ends are not. Tsur will describe how the ‘orientation mechanism evoked by the landscape renders the compact abstractions diffuse’ (language itself being ‘compact and linear by nature’ 102) such that diffuseness comes to be ‘perceived as an intense, supersensuous presence’ (13), but *contra* Yael Levin’s argument concerning the ‘otherwise present’ (see the end of my Chapter Three), it is not *presence* we see of Conrad’s most profound “landscapes” so much as a radical nothingness, the real of the abyss. In fact, Tsur finds something similar in his reading of romantic poetry, for there the perceiver of the scene does not remove his or herself from the landscape in order to attain symbiosis with its potentially profound aspect, but ‘uses his orientation mechanisms to *relate* himself to the surrounding scenery’. More so, it is the very ‘application of orientation mechanisms to clear-cut concepts [that] may render them as diffuse, supersensuous, emotionally loaded qualities perceived in a landscape’ (121; original emphasis). Precisely, except that in the modernist view the topology thus created can also be read back by the perceiver as a new sensorium, and it is this new space that makes possible not the finding of some pre-existing profundity, but the autopoietic arena in which alterity is met on its own terms. It does not take much imagination to see how those terms, even in their destructive aspect, might pose a moral problem.

With this distinction in mind, I want for a moment to follow Tsur where he extends his thinking on the numinous towards the visual realm. While he has relatively little to say about the synaesthetic transformations by which the numinous as a literary effect is given sensory heft through the metaphors by which it is suggested, Tsur’s comments have repercussions for my reading of the visual theatrics of passages dealt with above, for instance in the Stein chapter or

²⁴² Tsur writes of relinquishing the orientational facility such that a non-conceptual mediation with place can occur (12).

with Woolf's shipboard lovers. In his investigation, Tsur does more than draw upon the 'mystic, and meditative qualities [that] can be conveyed in poetry by interference with the smooth functioning of cognitive and psychodynamic processes', he extends the range of the numinous into the 'demonic and the infernal' (16). We do not have to borrow the devotional source material from Tsur's framework to see the correspondences between the abyssal poetic forms I have been following and the negative capacity of sublime forms in cultural production.

Hell can be rendered awful not only through threat of some painful punishment, but also by suspending the sense of intelligibility, control, comfort and security afforded by ordinary consciousness, that is, by suspending the clear-cut boundaries of objects, thought categories, and blurring the divisions into which the world is marked off. This, in the final resort, may evoke a response of "exasperated helplessness", and "emotional disorientation" (ibid.)

More crucially, in writing of the human response to indeterminacy, Tsur is hardly out to create terms for a durational reading of the numinous in any programmatic way, but near the beginning of his study makes a opening into this possibility through the time taken for an atmospheric occasioning:

a poem, as an aesthetic object, is not meant to arouse a mystic or meditative (or any other emotional) experience in the reader. Rather, it should allow the reader to perceive a mystic or meditative (or some other emotional) quality in it, (just as in music one is capable of perceiving, say, some sad quality, without becoming sad). Such a perception may take place even in the absence of the duration so essential for entering into a mystic or meditative state. (28)

Here Tsur refers us to Aristotle's comments (i.e. 1932: 36) on the spatio-temporal 'magnitude' required of objects and events by which they may be 'easily embraced in one view' and for long enough to be 'easily embraced by the memory' (29), concluding that the mystic works he has been treating 'need not be long enough for undergoing the mystic or meditative experience, only for discerning the parts required for the perception of a mystic or meditative quality in it'. At the same time such encounters 'must be short enough to be perceived as an integrated whole' (29), a whole that later in his study is able to transport the fixed attributes of place towards some more mobile conception. It is here, too, that temporality makes its entry, for when the abstract or 'thing-free quality' of the phenomena recorded by language 'is presented as filling some coherent landscape or time-description, the "permanence" feature of the adjective disappears, and an elusive quality is generated or intensified', one enhancing that which is now 'intuitively perceived in the scenery' (130-31).

Tsur's example aside, language based researchers are not generally known for their explorations of theory's interests in excess meanings which can be supposed but not mastered within the mainstream analysis of poetic usages. All the same, such appears to be the direction David Herman would appear to be moving in where he investigates the organizational schema by which readers 'chart the spatial trajectories along which the narrated events unfold' (279). So, too, Herman's work on mapping spatial domains in fiction reflects basic orientational processes connected to space building across multiple levels, and incorporates the importance of paths which not only 'imply motion from one place to another', but simultaneously enable 'dynamic or emergent spatial properties'. Herman's interest is seen to reside ultimately in precisely those milieus in which his analytic devices hold no grip or prove resistant to the task of narrative orientation, hence his attention to texts involving abyssal notifications such as 'fuzzy temporality' (esp. 212-14), 'space that refuses to be spatialized' (289), or hypothetical focalizations in which one remains unsure about 'what might be or might have been seen or perceived' (303ff). Against this sort of curiosity for what literature can make possible in a colonial setting, for what it performs in a writer such as Conrad, we might easily place Hüppauf's poetics of the *fuzzy* or Gottfried Boehm's raising of the indeterminate as aesthetic principle, framings that like the performative atmospheres I have investigated here, offer glimpses of a more obviously grounded narrative field for reading the moral issues thus activated.

So let me therefore finish with that author who seems to stand at the heart of an apophatic poetic tradition, and for whom modernity, and more specifically, its colonial correlatives, seem so central to the loss of the subject in Anglo-European civilization. Loss is of course a loaded word, and so I have taken up such radical displacements of consciousness through the more explanatory term, disorientation, referring to the models provided by Michael Valdez Moses and Christopher GoGwilt. But I have interpreted it more broadly, allowing the process it names to identify the condition in which the world outside the hinterlands of the West might be seen as bereft of a proper ground for Western moral notions. It is from this general pattern that I came to append, as a poetic trait, the modernist exploration of the extent to which the contradictions of the imperial polity might be seen to have taught itself to swallow whole, the abyssal real its own poetically nuanced modes of encounter were so busy producing at the colonial fringe.

Faced with the epistemological crisis of the self in modernity, and most plangently, perhaps, before its own imperial investments, the landscapes of the exotic were very quickly taken up by the West as precise analogues for the dislocations of the subject. Where the subject

is, so to speak, nowhere to be found in themselves, might we not more authentically locate them in the various ‘empty quarters’ of the imperial wilderness? But performative here is meant in the theatrical sense, as the scenographic murmurings of that nowhere wherein, to recall Olive Schreiner’s telling line, “‘ourselves beat back upon ourselves” (1999 [1883]: 128), and so makes itself known by having consciousness emerge as the consciousness of emptiness. If I may for a moment take Schreiner’s trope at face value, the sensory occasioning of that beating was found to construct its own kind of ambient environment through the list of analogues already investigated: the *Patna*’s ‘tin-pot’ clankings, Lawrence’s booming Australian shorelands, Forster’s echoes, and so on. These examples remind us, too, that the aporetic qualities of the landscape authors noted of the colonial scene could not easily constitute a new home for the embodied self. To remain with my most foundational author, the division of the individual from his or her located ground of being is often devastating. At the same time, however, Conrad’s cross-sensory spatial constructions *perform* ethical content in relation to the individual, hence my focus on Conrad’s narrative strategies as enabling the embodied sensory realm whereby otherwise unrepresentable moral significance communicates itself. Further, in reading place as constitutive of temporary moral value, for instance as a scene of self-interrogation, it is important to acknowledge where the dynamic so inaugurated might be resistant to corrosion where explicit statements and traditional forums of legal or social discourse are not.

In sum, despite the non-human or even inhuman environments colonial modernity embraced, by fusing performative, theatrical, and narratological analyses, this study has illustrated how, among other authors, Conrad’s scenic tropes made up the often fragile arena in which human value attained poiesis in his works. The fact that such “value” was tied to an impressionistic atmospheric occasioning rather than, say, the mores in place in the colonial world, does not mean that thematic importance is made impossible, or that the poetics by which such ambient nowheres were seen to operate might not escape categorization within the sublime – the sublime was that ambience all along, only now the mind no longer stages its heroic rescue. As David Parker rightly points out, writers did have an obscure ‘sense’ that ‘some vital perspective is being occluded’ (1994: 191) in their poetic forms. What I have done with that sense is give it a form. So where we have been following the division between ethical substance and existential vacuity in Conrad’s oeuvre up to and through *Lord Jim*, it is no less apparent that the moral foundations of the colonial modernist period were, in fact, what the beleaguered individuals of its fictions needed rescuing from. Thus the effort to ‘dismantle the conditions of its own coherence’ (ix) Pecora writes of, might, in relation to Parker, be seen as powerful

attempts to discover some tangibly new process of comprehension. When applied to landscapes, *process* and *form* may be empty signifiers in a way that *sense* or *solidarity* are not, but lack of interest in how landscapes are structured as representational tropes only leads our understanding into the sorts of admittedly fertile disconnections that bedevil scholarship; or, and the supposition is pointed, the critic comes to gaze at *Lord Jim*'s title-hero as the only 'spot' in the ocean that has meaning for him, at which point even the consolations of meaningful action appear wan. Such is the case Conrad presents near the end of his novel, *Nostromo*, that merging of the inner self with the 'forces and forms of nature'. With allowance for some introductory context, it is with the larger textual setting that I wish to round off.

Championed by F. R. Leavis (1948) as the basis of Conrad's claims to a central position within 'the great tradition' in English letters, and then singled out by Walter Allen as possibly 'the greatest novel in the English language' (1954: 370), *Nostromo* has lately been treated with a touch more circumspection. Edward Said has made the now classic insight that the subject of the novel remains tied to its starting point in aesthetic production, 'the fictional, illusory assumption of reality', and thus presents 'no more than a record of novelistic self-reflection' (1975: 137). This flatness is also the basis of John Xiros Cooper's assertion that *Nostromo* 'is a book without depth. It reveals a complex, but discontinuous, display of frescos and portraits, a tapestry art of colour and surface'. As a socio-political document this reading seems fair, just as the novel 'is not principally about the alienated fates of individual consciousnesses', and so 'achieves complexity [...] not by the illusion of psychological depth, but by the overlapping of different historical frames, contrasting temporalities, incongruent points of view, and incompatible logics' (1999: 152). I would want to add to Cooper's comprehension of temporal and focal intricacy by suggesting that psychological depth is not always flattened by the 'cubist' arrangement of surfaces he notes (and which are often more impressionistic than occasions for montage), but shifted onto the novel's environments as correlatives of interiority – and so the novel's locational treatments come to offer the depth missing from the scenario's invented historical record, as of its fictional cast. It is a move that has not gone unnoticed: Cedric Watts has written both of the novel's 'bewildering mobility' of point of view and its focal range between 'epic scope and a solipsistic undertow' (1982: 145), that is to say, of surface and depth together – and what I would rather call, in the face of its *mélange* of impressionistic and epiphanic modes, its atmospheric modulations. Consider the lonely fate of Martin Decoud abandoned to a small island, whose mental state shows up the ironies of standing out, and so coming face to face with the illusionism of self-consciousness, from which position of wounded 'egotism' (surely a poisoned example of

the romantic dream-existence proclaimed by Stein in *Lord Jim*) he is ‘swallowed up in the immense indifference of things’ (New York: Doubleday, 1925: 501). In a celebrated passage, Conrad expands upon this theme, not merely with respect to the ‘things’ of human experience within the world, but their topographical maritime actuality as a finally moral space (or at least in relation to the now shorthand impressionism of Conrad’s ‘world of cloud and water’ (497). If these words concerning the nature of human actions and beliefs lead directly to the natural setting of Conrad’s South American colony and its ecologies of ineffable space, we are brought there in company with the equally unwriteable consciousness of yet another Conradian “one of us”. And here, in the face of the absurdity of endless reflection in its endless natural mirror, the self at last ceases to beat back upon itself. While this phrasing might appear to rehearse notions of postmodern reflexivity, instead we find the would be intellectual, Decoud, *performing* a version of nothingness while remaining entirely enmeshed with the present-time atmospheric occasioning of his surroundings – no machine aesthetic, no right wing posturing, no imperial post-mortem, only the durational moment of abyssal self-representation as staged through the landscape:

Solitude from mere outward condition of existence becomes very swiftly a state of soul in which the affectations of irony and scepticism have no place. It takes possession of the mind, and drives forth the thought into the exile of utter unbelief. After three days of waiting for the sight of some human face, Decoud caught himself entertaining a doubt of his own individuality. It had merged into the world of cloud and water, of natural forces and forms of nature. In our activity alone do we find the sustaining illusion of an independent existence as against the whole scheme of things of which we form a helpless part. Decoud lost all belief in the reality of his action past and to come. [...] Both his intelligence and his passion were swallowed up easily in this great unbroken solitude of waiting without faith. (497)

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