

Towards an Understanding of Worldliness: Readings in Proust and Musil

by

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Certified that the Thesis entitled

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Much of the research work was forced to take place in isolation during the Covid pandemic. The devastations that reigned all over the globe are known to us all. This work would, to a certain extent, hopefully remain as a testament that life still goes on, even in the darkest hours. Someone once purportedly took a jibe at James Joyce, asking him, 'What did you do during the Great War, Mr. Joyce?'. Joyce replied, 'I wrote *Ulysses*. And you?' To claim that this thesis is a work comparable to the stature of the aforementioned novel would certainly be preposterous, but there is no denying that my wanderings in the course of my research has not been altogether dissimilar from the arduous, winding routes Odysseus had to undertake in his

journey towards home. In this case, this search is still ongoing, and must go on, for new questions emerge as long as one lives, curiosity and wonder being in my opinion the very substance of life. But nothing of this all would have been possible without the constant companionship and silent, but ever-present support of the person, who for me stands as the sole meaning of home, my mother.

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Section I

Chapter 1

Theorizing the Thesis

(A) BEGINNINGS

“Gesang, wie du ihn lehrst, ist nicht Begehr,
nicht Werbung um ein endlich noch Erreichtes;
Gesang ist Dasein. Für den Gott ein Leichtes”¹

(Rilke, “Gedichte, Die Sonnets an Orpheus, Erster Teil, III”, 482)

To begin is to go back. More often than not, the beginning dwells at a distant location from where we must already have come a long way. Such is the sort of impression we have, when we are asked or when we ask ourselves about the beginning of something, whatever might that be. A framework based on cause and effect might overcome the quandary by positing the ongoing as a consequence of the already precedent. In such a framework, the possibility of a linear chain of self-explanatory events is assumed. However, such a deterministic outlook too shall not be exempted from doubt if we begin to question the tenacity of its claim, or for that matter, explore alterity in perspective with regard to its subject matter. This limitation becomes clear, among other umpteenth cases, in the criticism against Marxism for being reductive in its choice of categories, or against Freudian psychoanalysis for its tendency to

explain everything under the sun along libidinal dimensions. For the moment, it suffices to point out that the very act of determination is by and large based on certain pre-decided axiomatic references, which themselves are a consequence of human choice.

Unlike the Aristotelian tenet for a successful tragedy as prescribed in his *Poetics*, where the Beginning must stand for that, preceding which nothing should necessarily seem to have occurred and after which there must necessarily occur something, beginnings in life, like life itself, lie elsewhere². We need only turn back to those famous lines from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* where the bard calls life "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing" ("Macbeth", Act V Scene 5, 25-27). The beginning, and the end, of the tale of life and the tales which constitute it are thus not as neatly outlined as in a play. Or to put it in another way, it is not directly given to us. It eludes us. So, we must create them, if at all we are to find them.

The very absence of a singular, unique, well cut-out beginning paves the way for the possibility of its plural being. Since the beginning can be envisaged differently, its identity is not a fixed one. It becomes, therefore, a matter of choice.

The continuum of time, in which we are, makes it difficult for us to locate the beginnings of anything as one can, say for example, on a map which geographically persists unchanged or has a significantly higher degree of self-preservation. Since we ourselves are always in motion with respect to the things and people and memories that are the stuff of human life, the choice of settling upon a beginning baffles us. The elusive nature of time makes itself felt in this quandary. We recede as much as our imagination and intention permit us, in order to create a beginning, an origin from where we came. The cause-and-effect paradigm fails here, since it leads to an infinite regression. Human beings, being historically finite beings, are not cognitively equipped to deal with the idea of the infinite. And it is in

response to this insurmountable void, that the poetry of myth and later, religion evolves by transforming the impossible to be imagined to possibilities of human imagination. *Matsya Purana* and the story of *Genesis*, and even the scientifically-considered correct Big Bang versions, are human attempts to locate an origin by truncating the infinite. And this act of truncation is informed by and in turn dialectically informs the present. For a Beckett, every possible regret and grief could be traced back to the sin of being born as human. For a Seneca, we don't live lives but life is perpetuated through us. The former is a reception of the Biblical notion of carnal sin and the fall of man colored by the absolute impossibility of redemption, the overall truncation rooted in a strong predisposition towards the individual ego. For the latter, the thesis stands on a substance ontology like in Descartes, where the individual is merely a particular carrier of something generalizable. Both are poetry, but not free play of human subjectivity or fantasy, rather formulations which explain or try to intend an explanation for the present by adopting a standpoint against time and its passing, and the human figure amidst these changes.

The problem of Beginning(s) is revealed in its full clarity in the domains of art and philosophy. Both art and philosophy are human expressions, and in that they but share the conditions that being-human consists of. However, art and philosophy, considered in the sense of being presented in the form of a book, have certainly boundary conditions to fulfill in order to exist, the primary among which is the fulfillment of a beginning. Whether or not the beginning itself must seem to be necessarily followed by action can be a matter of debate, but it goes without saying that a book must begin somewhere. We can go a step further, and say that the beginning of a book must also lie in the book itself. On one hand, there is an element of choice which apparently seems to be free. On the other hand, the beginning is not entirely arbitrary since it must serve as a beginning of something, and hence 'should' be conceivable as beginning as one looks back at it.

As a comparatist, one is inevitably drawn to exceptions. I mention this here, for not all art and philosophy must bear the obligation of furnishing a beginning. Lessing's discussion on the modality of different artforms tells us that all verbal art is based on what he calls the principle of *nacheinander* or one after the other, whereas all visual art is based on *nebeneinander* or one beside the other. James Joyce in the Protean episode of his novel *Ulysses* harps on this distinction, and with his characteristic penchant for intertextual constellations, arrives at the heart of the matter in enunciating "the ineluctable modality of the visible" to be ontologically distinct from the "ineluctable modality of the audible" (45). Hence, visual art such as paintings or sculptures are exempted from a beginning or end (in the event of the viewer confronting them), for they are spatial configurations by nature, and come-to-be in visual impression or seeing. Verbal art, that is art that involves a voice for its execution, is on the contrary temporal. And any experience in time, must have a beginning. But here too, there are exceptions that need to be highlighted in order to arrive closer to the field with which we shall forthwith occupy ourselves. Verbal art, in the form of orature or oral performances, does not have a fixed beginning since the very fluidity and contingency of its social conditioning, or to put it more succinctly, its generic features allow, even demand flexibility and changes. Similarly, philosophy that pre-dates the invention of the book, was disseminated in the form of dialogues, legends, aphorisms, or even biography by word of mouth. Here too, the sense of a fixed beginning is not pertinent. It is only when we step into the fixed contours of a book that is used as an existential template of human expression, that the problem of beginning acquires relevance. Therefore, we shall now concern ourselves solely with those fields of human expression whose existence and experience are made possible by and in the form of book, the novel and philosophy. Short stories, novellas, poems and other possible genres are made part of the reduction since their being doesn't inevitably rely on the book of which they are or can be made parts. Music too is eliminated since it is

not printed although temporal. The Beginning as occurring in the first few pages of a book that we are engaged with, has a special significance for the novel, for it is the only verbal art genre that inevitably and unconditionally relies on the form of the book for its event of reading. It is undeniably a fact that music as well as stories have beginnings; they begin somewhere, which however does not need to be exclusively inscribed in the materiality of a book. Beginning of a novel has a double significance in that both the novel's 'tale' and the book's plot begin as experience and interact between one another.

This very ontological imperative of having to have a beginning from where the journey of a novel must begin marks its poetic advent. It not only ushers us into a story that follows from that point, but bears the first mark of an attitude towards time and human finitude. At a point where the realist novel focused its attention in representing the life story of a character from birth until death, the beginning traced an earlier generation, which fulfills the function of forming a social backdrop against which the emergence of the hero is staged. Bibhutibhushan Bandhopadhyay's *Pather Panchali*, a novel that like its name is a song of the road that the child Apu takes, begins by going back to the last days of the life of the old and helpless distant relative of the family Indir Thakuran. These passages introduce us to the household where our hero would be heard crying like a little cat lying beside his sleeping mother Sarbojaya by his elder sister Durga, as well as to the agrarian, patriarchal society through and in which his coming days would be played out. This attitude of ushering in the male hero in a world of three women from three different generations can be compared with Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, where the beginning must side with the history of the Bovary family and not Emma herself who is the central figure, for her centrality is slightly displaced for having to bear the surname of her future husband. We get to read about Charles and his father in the novel which would have a lady coming into the family, this time by marriage and not birth. We can see that the beginning in both the novels, imitate a move of going back

in time with respect to the protagonist. But this going back is not merely arbitrary. It undercuts the ethos of the novel that is to originate from it, at the same time transforming the arbitrariness of the imperative into the first strokes of a signature.

While reading novels which seem to have in focus the life journey of an individual against a socio-historical backdrop implies a certain reliance on the certitude of representing reality that lies outside the perimeters of the book in the constructed architecture of the same, there also exist novels where the certitude of representation is replaced by doubt, cynicism and incapacity. We generally refer the first set by the category of Realist novels and the latter under the head of Modernism. This categorization is puerile as well as redundant, for what is at stake here are not categories but attitudes of being in the world and expressing one's being. We shall see how the Realist and Romantic tendencies, far from being outright castigated, are in turn implicated in Modernist works. All novels tend to express a sense of reality, even where there is an apparent lack of one. On the other hand, each great novel is aware of its limitations and boundaries, for it becomes a novel in the first place by situating itself within the crossroads of these conditions. However, this doesn't tantamount to saying that all novels are essentially the same, but exactly the contrary. Each novel is essentially different because it makes appear a unique standpoint with regard to the conditions that shapes it and that it in turn shapes in its becoming. The categorization, therefore, if at all is to be done, must be carried out according to the standpoint of the novels or what I have called attitude, and 'not merely' on the basis of its date of publication and which literary period this date circumstantially belongs to.

Having said that, we observe that the former class of novels mostly tend to be what is called the *Bildungsroman* in the German-speaking world. It implies, that the journey of the individual is a process of his education, in the truest and most pristine sense of the word. He learns about the world and where he stands in it. Flaubert is an interesting candidate in the

transition of the novel from its realist aesthetic towards the modernist aesthetic, which is ironically an effort to undermine a well-defined aesthetic itself. In *Madame Bovary*, Emma fails to learn, or we can say borrowing the title of another of Flaubert's novels, her education has been of a sentimental type which ultimately leads to her demise. Whereas the *Bildung* in Pather Panchali is shared almost equally on a balance between the education of the child and the building [*sich bilden*] of the novel, there is a marked imbalance between these two growths in the clime of Flaubert's novel. This imbalance shifts the temperament and construction of the novel towards an anxiety, wherein the lack of the character's *Bildung* seems to jeopardize the making of the novel itself. Thus, the novel begins to lose its dense, contiguous, organic nature and gradually becomes more inorganically synthetic, fragmented, cut through and through its viscera by doubt and despair. This does not imply, as it might superficially seem, that the novel underwent its fall from glory, for as already mentioned, each novel has its own typical attitude. Instead, what happened was that the novel became more pre-occupied with itself, its own condition of becoming a novel, than being a self-certain and complacent non-reacting easel on which the scenes of a provincial life could be painted. It is not without coincidence that almost all great Modernists have an artist-figure at the center of their novels, be it Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, Proust's narrator Marcel, Musil's Ulrich or Svevo's Emelio. The novel of discovery becomes a matter of past. The novel of disenchantment becomes not a tale of education but mostly disappointment, which in turn becomes the basis, possibility or futility of art. The novel becomes the story of its own becoming, refracted in the unresolved struggle of the central figure in becoming an artist or *Künstler*. *Künstlerroman*, in contrast to *Bildungsroman*, represents the paradigm shift from being to becoming. What builds itself here [*sich bilden*] is the novel itself, its persistent intransigence against a completed form being embodied in the laying out of its becoming. It

is in this sense that we can approach what we often in a very offhand fashion refer to as the self-reflexivity of the modern work of art.

We shall take a moment to turn to the beginnings of the novels that are in focus in this thesis. Proust's *À la Recherche du temps perdu* opens with a sentence as famous as notorious for its untranslatability. *Longtemps, je me suis couché de bonne heure*. Its temporal adverb, *longtemps*, or for a long time, is vague and not located precisely at a given point in time. On the other hand, Proust uses the *passé composé* tense that is associated with a definite action that happened or has happened. It is a going back to a place that is diffused and elusive, like the novel itself which would grow out of it. "May we conclude that Proust wanted to keep this opening sentence free of any exact location in time and to begin in a temporal free zone? In part this is surely the effect, whether deliberate or not. *À la Recherche* begins outside of time, or hovering above it, and it will end by climbing back to this altitude" (Shattuck 81). We see that the beginning is not definitive in its usual sense and forecasts an atmosphere where knowledge would eventually be clouded. And yet it is definitive as far as the architecture or in the words of Wittgenstein, the 'form of life' of the novel is concerned. Roger Shattuck makes the following observation in his book *Proust's Binoculars*;

The syntax of Proust's opening sentence (with its two words for time) subsumes the movement of the entire novel in another way. Neither transitive, bringing its actions to bear on another part of the universe, nor intransitive, arresting any direct effect in mid-flight, the verb is reflexive. The subject turns softly around to discover itself in a new guise: the "accusative"! ... What the full novel unfolds is the experience and the *oubli* that comes to separate the *je* from the *me* before they reunite- what lodges between I and me. (82)

The impossibility of going back beyond what is available to us via the discursive network of scientific knowledge is embodied in a moment of caricature in the beginning of Robert Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*. The *Erster Teil* or the first part of the work itself is titled *Eine Art Einleitung*, 'A Sort of Introduction', which reveals that it could have been otherwise, and that that the novelist has just chanced upon this introduction and not some other is a matter of chance. Instead of the dense homogeneity of the *Bildungsroman* where the novelist impersonates a bird's eye view of things, Musil's constructivist work shows what it is right at its beginning, a construction. Parodically imitating a weather report, the opening paragraph tells the reader of the absolutely normal and predicted air temperature and the usual orbit-abiding motion of the sun, planets and stars. The very convention of the Beginning is satirically stretched to cosmic dimensions, the universe being the largest and most holistic possible backdrop. The paragraph ends with the sentence: *Mit einem Wort, das das Tatsächliche recht gut bezeichnet, wenn es auch etwas altmodisch ist: Es was ein schöner Augusttag des Jahres 1913*³. We note, that the beginning not only casts a relation to the forthcoming events of the novel but also to the foregone era of Realist novels where the action began with sentences such as those in order to lead the reader [*Einleitung* comes from *einleiten*, which means to usher someone into something, and has a sense of movement and transition] as smoothly and imperceptibly as possible to the series of adventures that to occur to the character. Musil makes this transition perceptible by over-simplifying it to such a degree that it loses its conventional 'natural' essence. Or, Musil denudes the natural of its automatized being to show the natural is merely the naturalized which our atrophied senses no longer distinguish as a construction. The title of the first chapter of his work is '*Woraus bemerkenswerter Weise nichts hervorgeht*' ['From which, remarkably enough, nothing develops']. The beginning is no more a fecund origin rich with possibilities, but a futile ground which is barren in producing anything at all.

The discussion hints that the beginning in the novel is a going back that is enacted as the opening of the novel itself. The beginning reaches out to the echoes of other works preceding it, but this gesture belongs to the being of the novel and does not precede it. Also, this beginning might make a definite claim with regard to space and time, or behave vaguely, but must in all cases be unique and singular. The materiality of the beginning is the same as that of the novel of whose beginning it is, both composed of the same medium, in this case, language. By language I do not mean to denote merely French or English or German, but the language of the novel. Each novel has its own language is another way of saying what has already been mentioned, that each novel has its own standpoint. How language of a novel can be a synonym for its attitude would be discussed in much detail at a later stage in this chapter when we have developed the necessary ground on which to pursue this discussion. For the moment, it can be elucidated by differentiating between Introduction [*Einleitung*] and Beginning [*Anfang, Beginn*]. An introduction to a novel is not part of the novel, not just because it is not written by the novelist, but due to the fact that it is written in a language different from the language of the novel (notwithstanding whether both the novel and the introduction written on it are in English, say for example). It can happen that a novel begins with an introduction to it, like in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* where the opening chapter "The Custom House", 'introduces' us to the novel. But, in this case, the mode of beginning is an introduction, not to be confused with an introduction written on a novel. There exists an ontological distinction between the two that merits clarification. A beginning is, in the sense of the verb *anfangen* a holding on to something, an attachment of one's self to something and to persist on this attachment during what comes later. The completed thing, of which it proposes to be a beginning, does not yet exist. Its existence begins from the moment of the beginning. In a novel, the beginning is indeed literal for things begin there. In an introduction, the intention is to usher someone into the field of something that is already there

before one's gaze. The prefix *ein* in *Einleitung* or *Einführung* gains validity by embodying an inward movement into something that is at our disposal. Therefore, the introduction is not part of that to which it introduces. More than one introduction can exist for a novel, as is the case with classics made available by different publishing houses.

Among other factors which necessitate a place for philosophy in matters pertaining to the novel which shall be discussed gradually in this chapter, the one which stands out most obviously is that which is shared by both these domains of expressions, which is to say, the medium of expression, that is, language itself. Before we enter into the problem of Beginning peculiar to philosophy, it is necessary to spend a few moments reflecting the difference with which this shared medium finds itself expressed in art and philosophy. The difference lies in the function to which language is put to use.

In a novel or a poem, language has no other role other than to posit itself. Whatever affectations and perceptions are born in the process of reading are results of human engagement with the language of the work, and are inseparable from the language itself. There is no gap or ontological difference between the idea which we conceive after reading a passage from the passage itself. Ideas, if they are found in verbal art, are 'aesthetic ideas' or 'embodied meanings' as Arthur C. Danto mentions in *What Art is*. Aesthetic ideas are not ideas about or on aesthetics, but an idea that has to be aesthetically perceived and not rationally conceived. Meaning is not conceptual in the realm of art, but embodied in the material of language. The mind-matter distinction collapses in the total sign of art where the signified and the signifier has no ontological difference. Language thus has no function other than self-expression. Everything thus that can be said about a work of art adds nothing to the work-being of the work. By work-being we mean that which makes the work a work. In this sense, the work is closed and alone, which Blanchot puts it as 'the eternal solitude of the work' in *The Space of Literature* (17). And the work as a whole has or can have no other

function than to posit itself when read. Thus, all that can be said about the work with certainty is that 'it is' and that its being consists in self-positing. The work works, as Heidegger said ("Poetry Language Thought" 70).

The role of language in philosophy is as contested as it has been in art. While Realists claimed to have had used language as merely a vehicle of portraying reality and Romantics their feelings and emotions, the modern work of art surrenders to the autonomous thingness of language in a work. In a similar fashion, the history of philosophy reveals varying attitudes to language. While in *Gorgias*, we find Socrates admonishing rhetoric as merely a play of words, we find in Descartes a shift from the classical Latin to the vernacular French which made a significant long-term impact in philosophy. However, this impact has mostly been interpreted in sociological terms of secularization and anthropomorphic shift from theological worldview, and rightly so. Even Husserl believed in the ideality of language, where any expression is supposed to be presupposed by its intended meaning. We shall discuss this matter in much detail later in the chapter where we devote attention to phenomenology as a field, but for now, we shall draw some inferences which shall help us to move forward. Firstly, meaning and expression is held as distinct and different ontological entities. The expression is material, made of language. Meaning is abstract, hence conceptual. Secondly, meaning is given ontological priority, which means I can convey the same meaning in different ways. We can notice a certain internal paradox that looms in the first volume of Husserl's *Logical Investigations* regarding this matter: "But where a whole range of objects [expressions] corresponds to a single meaning [sense/*Sinn*], this meaning's own essence must be indeterminate: it must permit a sphere of possible fulfillment" (199). Later in Heidegger we find an increased acknowledgement of language's role in the formulation of concepts. In *Essence of Truth*, Heidegger says that truth cannot be described but only obliquely indicated through a *Sinn-Bild*, or the picture of a sense. We must take cognizance of the fact, that

ontological distinction is still maintained in such a notion for the *Bild* or image is material and its sense or *Sinn* is conceptual. Heidegger, although departing from Husserl's belief in the ideality of language, adheres to his former teacher in positing that truth is not a sense, but a sense of something. Husserl says, "each expression not merely says something, but it says of something: it not only has a meaning, but refers to certain objects" (197). This is in fact a continuity of Brentano's notion of intentionality where expressions have a directed-ness about them involving a pointing-beyond-itself [*über-sich-hinweisen*]. Even in such a radical thinker as Deleuze, we find the distinction drawn between art and philosophy in his book *What is Philosophy?* based on the fact that the former deals with affects and percepts, and the latter belongs to the domain of concepts.

Our extremely condensed synopsis makes it amply clear, that the work of philosophy, in contrast to a work of art is not a closed one. Different philosophers have consciously or unconsciously regulated language and admitted its importance in their writings, but language has never been an end in itself in philosophy. Philosophy has as its goal to arrive at understanding through and in language, and this understanding is part of its project, perhaps the most important one. Unlike art, philosophy does not present unique, singular ideas that can be experienced only in their embodiment in language. Rather, "philosophy is concerned with the space between language and the world" (Danto, "Transfiguration" 79).

Since the work of philosophy is not a closed architecture like a plot, it has no obligation to provide a beginning within its own body. Philosophy begins with wonder, Heidegger said. Surely that wonder is not part of the actual work a philosopher writes. Shock, disillusionment, reflection, boredom could be beginnings of philosophy too. One might argue, why can't these emotions be beginnings of a work of art? Well, for the reason, that emotions do not and cannot make up a novel. If at all these emotions be beginnings, they need first exist as embodied meanings or aesthetic ideas in language. Then, they no longer

remain anything distinct from the medium of the novel, and lose the autonomy of being something other than the work. This is the implication of the fact already highlighted before, that the work of art is closed by nature.

The beginning of philosophy can thus lie outside the work of philosophy in the sense that wonder and shock are not made up of language as the work itself is. They can even be invoked as Descartes did in his *Meditations* as recollections without losing their ontological autonomy. The beginnings of philosophy inspire its movements and topography. They serve themselves as a temporal horizon against which the act of philosophy is enacted. While the horizon of the Beginning in art is relative to the attitude the novel would come to adopt, the plane in philosophy “is the horizon of events, the reservoir or reserve of purely conceptual events: not the relative horizon that functions as a limit, which changes with an observer, which makes the event as concept independent of a visible state of affairs in which it is brought about” (Deleuze, “What is Philosophy?” 36). The standpoint philosophy takes with respect to the things outside it is an act of adopting a specific attitude that defines it. Its ethics is defined by this relation. The role of ethics in art is not an imperative one, for a macabre, perverse and disturbing artwork could also be worthy of praise. The criteria in those domains are not relevant in the same sense.

Even if philosophy does not bear the mark of its beginnings in the sense a novel does, it must nevertheless articulate them in its body. How is philosophy to reserve a place within it for the plane from which it departs? The topology of this plane would certainly have a different contour than the philosophy which follows from it, since it functions as a plane of departure which sets up the movement of thought. It would have to be laid out as a presupposition. It is in this sense that the beginning is said to lie outside philosophy, for it does not constitute the philosophy while at the same time perpetually fueling its movement. To provide an analogy, this Outside has to be understood not in sense that the oven lies

outside the bread which is baked in it (which is certainly self-evident) but the heat of the oven that sustains the act of baking. In this the heat comes from without, but has perceptible conservable existence only within the bread that it creates. The beginnings in philosophy have the character of axioms that pertain as the beginnings of science and mathematics. This is what Deleuze alludes to in the previous quoted passage, that the horizon is not relative, but has a singularly absolute structure with respect to that which is constructed over its basis. This discussion pertaining to the beginnings of philosophy lying outside philosophy while inspiring it has been beautifully described by Deleuze;

If philosophy begins with the creation of concepts, then the plane of immanence must be regarded as prephilosophical. It is presupposed not in the way that one concept may refer to others but in the way that concepts themselves refer to a non-conceptual understanding. Once again, the intuitive understanding varies according to the way in which the plane is laid out. In Descartes it is a matter of subjective understanding implicitly presupposed by the “I think” as first concept; in Plato it is the virtual image of the already-thought that doubles every actual concept. Heidegger invokes a “pre-ontological understanding of Being”, a “preconceptual” understanding that seems to imply the grasp of a substance of being in relationship with a predisposition of thought... Prephilosophical does not mean something preexistent but rather something that does not exist outside philosophy, although philosophy presupposes it. These are its internal conditions. (40-41)

But why have we begun the thesis with a moderately elaborate discussion on the Beginnings of the novel and philosophy? This could only be illuminated by going a step back and asking ourselves the question of relevance along ontological terms. How is the being of a thesis related to the being of art and philosophy?

The being of thesis cannot be described as we might describe an object external to us. Firstly, because we are at the moment situation in the making of a thesis. Attempting to describe it is not a privilege given to us since we are and shall be always within its domain. Secondly, even had we been attempting to talk about theses in general, it would, for reasons that shall become clear as we proceed in our discussion, not be possible to describe it in already-available categories, like the way in which we might be describing the Moon in a book of physics. To again take recourse to an analogy, the task of describing it would be as difficult as describing a painting by Monet or Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Each of the mentioned examples, and for that matter, any work of art and philosophy cannot be described but only lived through. Any attempt at description is, so to speak a denial of their way of being.

So, it appears that the thesis, the novel and a work of philosophy, despite being different from one another in many ways, share something in common as far as their existence is concerned. They are constructed, or to put it a bit crudely, human productions. At the point, one may say a hammer or a wooden box is also something produced by the human hand. Then we should go a step further and clarify that the thesis, the novel and philosophy are works, whereas the hammer or the box is an equipment. We shall enter into a detailed discussion regarding this matter in the subchapter dedicated to Things, where we shall see how Heidegger elucidates the aforementioned ontological difference.

While we have already shown that art is a closed domain which does not seek or cannot by dint of its being seek anything outside of itself although at the same time generating a range of responses from its recipient, philosophy is directed towards an objective in the sense that the object of philosophy is understanding and/or knowledge. As soon as we say this, we realize that it must be the understanding and/or knowledge of something towards which the movement of philosophy dedicates itself. Thus, there must exist a foresight, an

intention before philosophy can begin. However, this foresight or intention exists in a conceptual form and consists of pure categories. For example, philosophy can seek to understand the problem of human perception and its limitations, but not focusing on a particular group of individuals in whom the problem of perception is embodied. This tendency in philosophy brings it in a sense closer to science in its claim to universality. We shall talk about this 'affinity' between philosophy and science in our sub-chapter on Method. For now, we shall be satisfied to say that philosophy is driven by an objective.

The thesis, too has an objective like philosophy. It seeks to understand something and cannot be justified as being an end in itself. It's work-being, unlike art, is not exhausted in being a work shaped in language. Rather, it's being is conserved in how it refers to something lying outside of it. However, it does not work, at least in the context of this present thesis, with pure categories. Rather it focusses on a problem as it is embodied in some specific cases. The engagement with particular embodiment is a modality it shares with art.

We have tried, delicately as it is, to touch upon the ontology of the thesis, as one circles around the circumferential fringes of a circle inside which one is. But it is not with the ambition of laying out the objectives of this thesis that we have undertaken this journey. The task of explaining the objectives of this present thesis cannot be undertaken at this stage due to two factors. Firstly, we have not yet developed the necessary vocabulary and ground which could host the explanation. That means, a number of things must still be discussed before the objectives could mean something. This shows, that the objectives themselves are not entirely external to the thesis, or else they could have been neatly described. This is a paradox akin to a novel when you cannot have any and every event occurring in the plot in order to convey its destined sense. Secondly, the objectives, since they are particular embodiments, are to be found in their clarity only after reaching them, which is to say, the objectives are not like checkpoints but share the character of discovery. To claim that the objectives are known

before the thesis undertakes its journey would be to allow it to be subsumed by the method of science. In a thesis of science or technology, the goals are known beforehand, the thesis tries to create a traversable, practically-implementable road towards this goal. Humanities cannot borrow such a method of *a priori* intelligence without jeopardizing its own nature to go on vacation. We shall have more to say on this matter in our discussions on Gadamer and Method. For the moment, it should be clarified that the impossibility of describing objectives does not mean there exists none. It means that the objectives can only be laid down in their own terms, and not through a universal language that science or mathematics use.

The writing of a thesis is inclined more towards the mode of philosophizing in that it is driven by objectives it must attempt to uncover in their own terms, that it talks about things which exist prior to it (in the ontic sense, to be discussed), and that it does not seek to be an experience in itself. On the other hand, it has a margin of liberty in arranging things in a specific order to enact its attitude towards the things it refers to, like a plot. I say philosophy lies closer to the thesis, since our entire discussion so far proves, that we have already begun talking about that which are presupposed by the thesis as being relevant to it, the ontology of art and philosophy as approached by their Beginnings. This style, not enacted merely by the calls of subjective whims but as a necessity contingent to the movement the thesis would trace, is that of philosophy, like the passage from Deleuze tells us. Just like philosophy has its necessary internal conditions expressed as nonphilosophical presuppositions, the thesis has tried to lay bare art and philosophy against whose horizon it would function (and interact).

Now that the shell of the mystery behind the laboriously winding opening discussion has been cracked open, I would, in being true of the 'particular' nature of the thesis, try to reserve a place for certain particular, embodied beginnings in a manner typical of a novel. Our discussion on art and philosophy as the pre-thesis horizon have been, in a manner similar to the beginning of philosophy, cast in conceptual terms. This was necessary to perform, to

demonstrate the philosophical character of my enterprise. I would elucidate the philosophical character of the thesis in due time. But presently, I shall enact, in a fashion similar to a novel but not the same, certain beginnings. I say enact, for the act of selecting these beginnings is to be with them, to participate in the bygone experiences of them, to surrender to them as far as they allow me a plane to depart from in the further movement. These are recollections, for not random ones, that I presuppose to have germinated in me the seeds of enquiry which led me eventually to this pursuit of understanding. And it is from this point onwards, that the singular character of this thesis shall be expected to dawn, for till now we have spoken chiefly in general terms. These and the fragments of discussion so far are the beginnings of this work, and not an introduction. For reasons already explained before, an introduction in this case is ontologically invalid. The beginning must speak in a language of its own, and given the precariously located position of the thesis, it has borrowed the language of philosophy, and now shall imitate a gesture often embodied in a novel. While in a novel, recollections are not true but created for effect, the ones I shall go reach back to have been actual occurrences that I presuppose to have shaped the road of misunderstandings and dilemma towards a gradual and ongoing unpacking of them, like a bird must depart from some place in order to free its wings in flight.

At the time when I was in class 9 or 10 in school, Literature as a course of study, be in English or Bangla, consisted in devising equations of a kind. We read passages from a prose or a poem, and immediately made ourselves busy in trying to unlock its 'real meaning'. All our efforts were directed in creating a sort of map of meanings with the quest of fixing to the text its originally intended meaning. I remember reading Oscar Wilde's "The Nightingale and the Rose" and then having had to read up a summary of its meaning, which bore no resemblance to the story itself other than making an allegory out of it. On one occasion, I had in exasperation remarked, why can't these writers just say what they have to

say? Why do they have to wind up language in a way that in fact makes it difficult to convey their underlying meaning?

This phase of my education reveals that the understanding of literature at that time used to be a codification of meaning. The meaning would have to be found outside the text by some analysis or the other, and also this meaning would invariably have the claim of being the original, authentic one. My exasperation lay in Literature's way of saying things, in that it didn't conform to the other conventional modes of expression that say what it wants to say without twisting and turning words. On one hand, a text could be penetrated to excavate its meaning. On the other hand, the text had something about it that was unusual in comparison to other encounters with language, and that held a certain impenetrability at the outset, the unique temperament of which had to be burst open by our indomitable meaning-fixating pursuit. This pursuit would often reveal a certain contradiction in confronting with texts that did not rely significantly on symbolism, allegory and metaphor. For example, "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" was a brilliant story we had in syllabus, which was least discussed in class, for it would not yield any meaning other than what it lay out in its plot.

A couple of years later, I first encountered a novel within the framework of academic life, Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*. By then, I have had read a significant number of novels, mostly in Bengali and some in English. I was thus already initiated into the experience of the novel, but had not have had to write answers to questions set on it. This novel was taught by the Principal of our school, whom we held in great fear due to his strict ways, a fact which meant we had to come prepared to class every time to avoid punishment on failing to answer questions volleyed at us. Now, the technique the Principal adopted to approach teaching this rather long novel was something like this: In every meeting, we had to come to class after having read three chapters. Once the class began, each one of us had to quip a point as what to what took place in these chapters. These points would then be

scribbled on the board and we would invariably and diligently copy them in our notebooks. Since we only had to compress the chapters into points, many of us bought a chapter-wise synopsis of the novel available in the market compiled by a certain Ramji Lal. Instead of reading the novel, we came to class reading the synopses of the chapters, since that's what mattered at the end of the day. At the end of the course, a couple of classes were dedicated to profiling the important characters like those of Pip and Miss Havisham, which in a similar fashion, involved the drawing up of a table of adjectives.

Thus, my first formal engagement of the novel tried to impress upon me the fact that a novel can be drawn up as a list of events that happens in it. Such an encyclopedic approach evinced its attitude towards a novel as that of a natural scientist, whose task is to describe the functioning of nature as per categories. In both the above cases, the text was treated as an inventory of meanings without any autonomy invested to it.

The last set of recollections dates back to a relatively much recent time. Meanwhile my understanding and approach towards reading a novel has developed and departed far from the tendencies acquired in schooldays. I have been exposed to literatures from many distant parts of the globe from different eras, and have cultivated the habit of surrendering to the alterity of a book. It was around such a time that I gifted a Bengali translation of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* to my mother. It is thanks to her reading that I had access to many books in my growing days. In fact, I owe the little proficiency I have in the Bengali language to her. Now since her reading was limited to Bengali novels alone, I wanted her to have a taste of the kind of literatures which I was reading at that time. But she left the book after a few pages and had told me in dismay that reading such novels might turn a person into a depressive pessimist. My response had been quite stupid in a way, for I said the darkness in Marquez is nothing comparable to the one in Kafka, as if it was a matter of competition. Why did the reaction of my mother to this novel had been so? Was it

only due to the fact that the novel came from an outside too distant from the climes of the novels she is habituated in appreciating? Possibly not. What is important here is to infer the acknowledgement she makes, and which we all make when we say books can change us, regarding the potential of the novel to transform us. It is not we alone who impress upon the novel our intentions, but as if the novel too has a life of its own which it impresses on us. We shall have much to say on the matter regarding the subject of action when a book is said to alter our perspective in our discussion on Hermeneutics. But now I come to the next instance to round off the recollections. Recently, I had given her my copy of Akhtarujjaman Elias' *Khwabnama*, to share the experience of such a monumental novel. Now, this was no translated work since its written in Bangla. However, this time too, she could not proceed with the novel too far, complaining about the strangeness of the language. The problem thus lay neither exclusively in the ethos nor in the language (in the lexical sense, Bangla or Spanish), but in the encounter with something new.

My mother's experience of reading writers like Sunil Gangopadhyay, Bani Basu, Ashapura Debi, Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay, Buddhadeb Guha have in common that each of them had approached the craft of novel from the point of view of storytelling without giving up one's own language. To put it in another way, the search for the language of the novel, a language of its own have by and large been absent in the history of Bangla literature, barring exceptions. The novels have had as their dominant voice a rationalist, middle class urban Calcuttan language and whenever they wished to foreground the distance of the subjects, in geographical or historical sense, they took refuge under the idea of dialects and putting them in the dialogues like it happens in a document or a testimonial⁴. The critique of the Bangla novel is not our concern here, other than to point out that naturalization with novels is a hampering phenomenon as far as engaging with a novel which has a language of its own is concerned. Every Bangla novel that has attempted to create a Bangla of its own, be it writings

of Mahasweta Devi or Satinath Bhadhuri or Kamalkumar Majumdar would exasperate the common reader, not because she or he doesn't have sufficient knowledge of Bangla to be able to master the work, but because it is not a matter of knowledge but understanding that is involved in such a phenomenon which makes no admission for the attitude of mastery. Our knowledge of Bangla would be necessary but not sufficient to participate in the forthcoming of a new Bangla.

But wherefrom comes this 'language of its own'? If a novel can be interpreted like a symbol or a metaphor then it must have an original singular meaning. Or, if it could be, like our School Principal did, rounded up like convicts into a table of events explicable in our own daily language, then there is the matter done or dusted. But experience shows, that the novel indeed has a sort of autonomy of its own. It sets its own rules and refuses to yield to our penetrating intention. Or to put in from the standpoint of the reader, the novel reveals itself for what it is only when we allow it to do so. Instead of hankering for meaning, if we let our prejudices take a backfoot, the language of the novel appears before us like something never seen before, yet made of chunks of words and phrases not unbeknown to us. The novel thus is not an object to which an investigation can devote his microscope towards. Rather, it has the nature of a thing. By thing, I don't mean an equipment made my man, but rather a thing like a tree or a landscape which seems to stand by itself. But we do know, that while waterfalls and landscapes are not human creations, a novel certainly is one. Thus, it is from here that we shall move to understanding the novel as a work, and comparatively understand its ontology.

To briefly sum up what we have tried to achieve in this subchapter: We have tried to talk about the ontology of the novel and of philosophy along the dimension of their Beginnings. This discussion has been made to function as a presupposition of the thesis, whose ontology has been hinted to be philosophical in character, while differing both from

art and philosophy per se. Thereafter, I have gone back to certain recollections from my life experience to justify the embodied and particular nature of a thesis, as well as to embody the particularity of this thesis with beginnings particular to its own concern.

(B) THING

Since it has been made apparent in our discussion so far that the work of art is by nature a thing, our next step would be to decide an approach towards its thingly reality. Instead of setting on a road to reach our goal directly, a circuitous path would be undertaken. The circumlocution would derive its justification from two factors. Firstly, a brief tour along the history of European thought would simultaneously reveal and conceal perspectives, which would later inform our own approach towards the artwork as thing. Secondly, these would be relevant in the discussion of the novels in this thesis insofar as they would enter the field or ethos of their landscape.

This approach towards the artwork as thing is undercut by what Terry Eagleton in his book *The Event of Literature* calls a contention between the Realist and Nominalist camps. The former holds the opinion that any particular thing is a manifestation of an essence. Such an understanding can be traced back to Plato's notion of ideal forms. All that we experience are only manifested or real appearances of an ideal essence. The real is here subordinated to the metaphysical. Another corollary that develops out of this is the ontological distinction between the realm of ideal and real, which would re-surface in Descartes as the subject-object binary, and continue its presence until much later in Western thought.

For Descartes, this subject or 'I' is a transcendental thinking substance. Also referred to as the soul, Descartes' 'I' is not to be confused with an individuated ego. In *Discourse on the Method*, Descartes defines the 'I' as a thinking substance whose entire essence or nature is to think, and that it would not cease to exist if the body ceases to be. This immortality of the soul is re-affirmed by the justification that the nature of soul is completely different from the perishability of the body. It is in this sense that the Cartesian subject has to be understood already antecedent with respect to its encounter with the object of cognition, hence mentioned before as transcendental. The 'I' in Cartesian philosophy is pre-given.

We shall now try to uncover a number of internal inconsistencies in Descartes's formulations, which might propel us to move forward in our approach. The Cartesian subject is defined by its function of cogitation, and existence itself is a result of this act, as the saying goes, *cogito ergo sum*. Cogitation precedes existence, or rather existence becomes validated only as a result of contemplating it. But rational intellection must always be of something. Hence, though the subject and object are held to belong to different natures, the object is a necessary pre-requisite for the subject to become conscious of. What can the subject be conscious of? Particular manifestations or 'Formal Reality' is the category ascribed to sensations. According to Descartes, formal reality is misleading since senses are not above doubt. Pitched against this is 'Objective Reality' which is the domain of rational ideas. However, if such objects are ideas, the ontological distinction between the subject and object is ruptured since both now becomes bodyless, rational and abstract. How then is the subject to maintain and preserve its cogito as distinct from what is cogitated? This contradiction is played out in the "Fourth Meditation" where Descartes holds the will to be the chief basis of understanding. But is not will opposed to determination or nature or divine will? Descartes negotiates this conflict by saying that the will in understanding must attune itself to the object or idea it wishes to understand. The object thus exists prior to understanding it, true to the

metaphysical spirit of his philosophy. The subject's task is to match up his will to fit this idea. The confusion makes itself felt when he says that the error due to the wrongful application of will on things which he does not yet understand properly amounts to privation, in the sense that the process of understanding stems in and from me, but not in the faculty given to me by God (85). Thus, the idea so conceived is not entirely free of the subject and his will, which again goes on to smudge the earlier assumption of mind-body distinction.

An artwork according to this logic must be a formal representation of an essence that is itself not given to senses but must be cogitated. Given the extent and range of artworks, not to forget how the categorization of art itself is a historical function, can we identify thus any essence that can be held common to all artworks? At the best, such definition can work in a certain epoch, like Aristotle's understanding of tragedy as imitation of men in action or Wordsworth's romantic framing of poetry as spontaneous emotion recollected in tranquility. What becomes clear so far is this, that if a thing is to be termed as an artwork, it must fulfill a definition by dint of which it can be realized as a manifestation of an essence. However, then this essence must be a priori to the work itself, which cannot be since as the above-mentioned contradiction in Descartes points out, understanding is a matter of will and hence cannot bear an already determined nature, but a nature that itself comes to be determined by the subject. The anteriority of the object's essence must therefore be relegated. No metaphysical, transhistorical definition can lead us to the thingly character of the work.

If Rationalism lays emphasis on the mind in understanding a thing, it is Empiricism that places sensation as the defining category. Instead of holding the opinion that the essence is primary, individual particular experiences become the site of analysis. David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* begins with the reflection that we are not only beings that reason, but also one of the objects, concerning which we reason. The ontological coincidence of the subject and object is repeated anew, but in contrast to what we pointed out in Descartes, leans

towards perceptible, sensible matter. A thing according to this model would be entirely that which is experienced without any metaphysically essential precursor. As Berkeley mentioned, all general ideas are particular ideas, which means, that the essence itself is a constructed, assumed product related to experience and not an idea beyond sensation.

How can we then understand a particular thing as an artwork, if no general ideas are allowed to exist? Hume says that there is nothing in the object which can afford us a reason for drawing a conclusion beyond it. Every experience is unique, and repetition of similar phenomena should not prompt us to generalize, for it can be proven wrong by a deviating instance. Observation of frequent or constant conjunction is no reason to draw any inference concerning any object beyond those which we had experienced. Where then does the conjunction occur? Hume says that imagination and memory are but weaker versions of impressions, where fantasy has the liberty to play a role. Just like the body got implicated in Descartes' cogito in the question of will, Hume's treatise too falters with the subject-object binary when he says that causality is a necessity that is produced as the internal impression of the mind. Thus, the mind or body alone fails to provide adequate justification of the process of understanding.

This contradiction is reverberated where Hume says, "an idea assented to feels different from a fictitious idea" (162). Feeling and idea, that is, reason and sensation, or in more simpler terms, mind and body cannot therefore maintain that strict boundary which was presupposed. Moreover, the element of will in understanding echoes anew when he would go on to say that different modes of interpreting a text result from varying degrees of assent. Not sensation or reason alone, but a mediating will seems to be integral here. "We transfer determination of thought to external objects, suppose real intelligible connection between them" (272)

Thus, anything and everything could be regarded as an artwork according to this model, for if Descartes reified the will subordinating it to a pre-existent idea, Hume's extreme subjectivism renders will an undefined freedom. We are still unsatisfied in our approach to the artwork as thing, for we reject the notion that art is an arbitrarily drawn conjunction between sensed matter as well as the notion that it is manifestation of any universal essence.

The next station in our approach shall, as can be guessed by now, would be Kant. The philosophy in Kant is imperative to be invoked here not because we attempt a rapprochement between Rationalism and Empiricism, as Kant is often credited for. But rather, the fact that Kant begins from the very internal contradictions that came up in Descartes and Hume is significant as far as the development of the trajectory is concerned. Another fact, that makes Kant relevant would be made clear in our subsequent discussion on aesthetics, to which Kant had contributed more than a fair deal. And lastly, the concepts which would in fact come to govern later phenomenology finds its roots in certain aspects of Kantian perspective, thus Kant would serve as an *Ausgangspunkt* or a point of departure in our later discussion concerning phenomenological approach to art.

Kant's adoption of the model of Copernican Revolution is an admission of limit of perception. That a phenomenon can appear differently from different vantage points refutes the centrality of Cartesian metaphysics as well as the self-sure subject who trusts his experiences. An experience therefore is not singularly objective or arbitrarily subjective, but inter-subjective in character with a field relevant for hosting the possibilities of its occurrence.

The field is laid out in the categorization of noumenal and phenomenal. Noumenal is that which exists for itself, and therefore outside the scope of human perception. The noumenal cannot be known, for it exists only for itself. Phenomenal is that which exists for

something or someone else other than itself, and thus is given to appearance. Knowledge is possible within this field of things. The scope of philosophy is no longer universal.

Kant's penchant for categories in his writings is a matter to be remarked at, for he divides up the problem of understanding according to the fields in which they are valid. Pure reason concerns with problems like God, freedom and immortality. In this regard he says in *Critique of Pure Reason* that "Metaphysics is dogmatic because it confidently takes on the execution of this task without antecedent examination of the capacity or incapacity of reason for such a great undertaking" (Kant, "Critique of Pure Reason" 139). For Kant, reason concerns with matters of logic and mathematics and are true a priori of experience, whereas Understanding is concerned with direct experience of something.

According to Kant, our perception is but a representation of something by a faculty which he calls the aesthetic faculty. Every perception is represented in space and time, and is explicable to our understanding through these transcendental dimensions. These dimensions are transcendental in so far as they can never be experience for what they themselves are, but our aesthetic faculty should nonetheless be equipped to deal with them in concretization of perception along their extension. Unlike Descartes and Hume, Kant does not posit a subject-object binary for the perception is neither entirely rational cognition nor empirical sensation, but a synthesis. This synthesis or combination (of the manifold) is not given in the object but a self-activity, where the synthetic unity presupposes analytic unity, that is that the different sensations assembled together around a thing makes up the thing as a whole.

The tussle between the universal and the particular was prominent in the problem of will in Descartes and assent in Hume. Kant says, "if one speaks of different experiences, they are only so many perceptions insofar as they belong to one and the same universal experience" (234). What then causes a universal experience to be particularized differently?

Kant's answer to this is a creation of a category in between Reason and Understanding, that of Judgement. Since everything is a representation, the representation itself must be representation to the perceiving subject to illumine understanding in him. In the section of "Transcendental Analytic", Kant says that Judgement mediate cognition of an object- it is the representation of a representation of it. Kant posits Judgement as the clue to grapple with the difficulty as to how subjective conditions of thinking can have objective validity. "Causality cannot be internally deduced; necessary effect does not merely come with the cause but is posited through and follows from it" (223). Thus, whether a thing is an artwork or not is not a matter of essence or conjunction, but rather a positing. We shall return to the theme of causality when we uncover the etymology of the word 'thing', and the theme of 'positing' in our later discussion concerning Heidegger and comportment. I would to only point out that even in Kant, the human subject holds the center for it the subject's judgement that determines understanding just like in Descartes it is the subject's cogito and in Hume it is sensation that plays the crucial role. Every different empirical consciousness is connected to single self-consciousness, apperception is transcendental faculty. Or in other words, the subject is conserved throughout the course as subject.

An analytic judgement is one where the predicate is contained in subject and is a matter of identity or clarification [*Erläuterung*]. Hence, judgement plays no role since we are in the realm of logic. Analytical judgments are true a priori to their formulation. In a synthetic judgement, the predicate lies in connection and amplification; they involve experience [*Erweiterungsurteil*]. A synthetic judgement of a thing as an artwork is thus not a correspondence to a fixed essence nor a matter of subjectivity, but rather a process involving an act of extension. Here, the faculty of desire too has a role to play by means of whose representation the actuality of the objects of representation is derived. In his *Critique of Judgement*, Kant explains judgement as the faculty of thinking the particular as contained

under the universal. In an analytic judgement, the representation deals exclusively with the objective aspect of logical validity. Here, the universal is given, and judgement is of a ‘determining’ kind. In a synthetic judgement, sensual aesthesis being involved, the subjective aspect has a role to play for the judgement constitutes a reference to the subject in the form of pleasure or displeasure. In this case, the universal is not given. Our experience of art does not have a fixed universal essential category of art, but the experience itself involves ‘naming’ the thing as artwork. As Kant says, when the particular is given, judgement is reflective. Thus, whether a thing is an artwork is a matter of reflection and not definition.

The German word for Judgement is *Urteil*, which literally means Primal Division. The act of judgment [*beurteilen*] is looking at something as belonging to a whole as a part of it. A word that recurs repeatedly in Kant’s Third Critique alongside *Urteil* is *Zweckmäßigkeit*, or purposiveness. The role of judgement as primal division as judgement is to uncover the purpose of a thing in relation to its universal concept. Now, since the universal is not given in reflective judgement, the purposiveness is not singular. This is why Kant says that the principle of judgement is purposiveness of nature in its multiplicity, where nature is represented as if an understanding contained the ground of the unity of the manifold of its empirical laws. This means, that every time we encounter a thing, we name it as something, which is more general than its individual presence. Language itself is built up of universals which we arrange to give shape to the particular. “The transcendental concept of purposiveness of nature is neither a concept of nature nor of freedom, adds nothing to either. It is the unique mode in which we must proceed in our reflection upon the objects of nature with a view to getting a thoroughly interconnected whole of experience, so is a subjective principle, i.e maxim of judgment” (Kant, “Judgement” 19). Thus, art or the novel in our context is not merely given to us as a novel, but a thing, in the experience of which we extrapolate it to the available (but not given) category of novel.

It is this position that Eagleton, to return to from where we began, calls Nominalism, since the thing becomes something by being named so after a reflective judgement. The individual thing never fits a pre-given muster but is assembled under a rubric. Eagleton discusses how Aquinas, a thorough realist, understands the origin of everything as god's will. For him, *phronesis* or the non-intellectual knowledge of the concrete particular cannot get to the essence of it. On the other hand, Duns Scotus' notion of *haeccitas* or 'this-ness' emphasizes on the excess of the thing over its concept or common nature.

This contention between the Realist and Nominalist position figures as the point of departure in Martin Heidegger's seminal essay "The Origin of the Work of Art", to which we shall turn to understand what it is that is thingly about an artwork. Is our understanding of an artwork based on an understanding of what art is, or whether our encounter with particular artworks form our idea of art? One enters a circle of argument, which is basically a hermeneutic circle of a kind, more of which we shall discuss later in our entry to hermeneutics as being phenomenological. Heidegger says that one is compelled to follow the circle, to keep by its side always. Thereafter, he embarks on three models of the thing, namely Rational, Empirical-Nominal and Pragmatic. We shall follow this itinerary for we have already laid the ground in our discussion of Descartes, Hume and Kant, and it shall be relevant as far as keeping close to the circle is concerned. But before that, we shall direct our attention to early Greek thought, for the trajectory we shall take would have a bearing from the region of thought from which it deviated in the course of time.

For the Greeks, the core of the thing is *hupokeimenon*, that around which properties assemble. The thing is not a stable compound made up of distinct elements, but a place which is characterized by the gathering of characteristics. This dynamic concept of a thing as an assembling or gathering travels to Roman thought with the loss of its meaning, namely the verbal (as in from verb, an action, a happening). The inauthentic translation of Greek

hupokeimenon into Roman *subiectum* marks, accordingly to Heidegger the rootlessness of Western thought. According to this understanding, the thing is a subject wherein characteristics are already gathered. Such an ontology is to be seen in parallel with the development of syntax, where the subject and predicate model sustains a propositional outlook of truth. We shall return to this point in our discussion on the philosophy of event later.

In keeping with this model, the thing is assumed to be a bearer or subject of characteristics. This tells us that the thing is a discrete summation of some elements which are assumed to constitute it. We ask, can the thingly character of the novel be explained as a collection of chapters, sentences, words? Most certainly not. Such a perspective implies an assault over the thing by rational attitude. Moreover, a purely rational perspective overlooks the role of mood and feelings, which are more open to Being than the cold, impersonal and objective intellect. We thus must refute the Realist or Rationalist thesis of the thing.

The second approach could be to understand the thing as a manifold of what is given in the senses. This takes us back to Hume and Kant, where the thing is understood to be synthesis, an object of aesthetic intuition. This too cannot hold true for a novel, or any artwork for that matter, for the novel as a thing is not just the reading or listening of it, just like painting and music is not just seeing patches of color or hearing fragments of sound waves. We must also then refute the empiricist thesis of the thing.

While the first thesis puts the thing at too far a distance, the latter places it too close. We thus realize that it is necessary for a thing and the perception to be located at some distance, that in turn reveals the thing for what it is. As already discussed, the philosophy from Descartes to Kant is fundamentally concerned in preserving the autonomy and centrality of the human subject who perceives. This is not too difficult to understand historically since

this development was taking place and in turn informing the ethos of anthropocentric humanism. The thing, in whichever way it was conceived, was conceived in terms of the human subject. I call human subject and not human for reasons that shall be justified in due course.

The third thesis, which I have classified as Pragmatic, frames the thing as formed matter, and marks the apotheosis of the humanist trend in its most ironical sense. Whereas humanism began with a set of objective ideals which were to be adhered to for a better world, its objectivity gradually transformed into a subjective principle where things would be arranged and harnessed for personal accumulation of wealth, well-being and power. Max Horkheimer in this book *Eclipse of Reason* calls this shift as the ‘subjectivization and instrumentalization of reason’. This shift is also very much apparent in our above discussion. While in Descartes reason was focused on uncovering objective ideas, the movement traced in Hume and Kant makes reason prone to subjectivity, where it could be put to use as the subject wills. The centrality of the human subject is metamorphosed as an extreme form of solipsism in say the philosophy of Fichte where the world exists because we humans are in it, or let’s say in Schopenhauer where the world is said to a representation of will and ideas (of the human subject).

If the thing is formed matter, then the choice of its form is governed by the use to which it shall be put to. The ontology of the things therefore becomes a derivation from its function. A hammer or a spade is a specific arrangement and choice of material depending on the means through which they would operate. The thing is relegated to the class of tool, whose existence rests on its reliability. When is a tool reliable? When it does not offer any resistance while in operation, when it becomes as if as natural as an extra hand of ours, that Heidegger frames as ‘ready-to-hand’. The thingly character of the thing according to this model would be antithetic, for the thing as a tool becomes so only when it can disappear itself

into its function while in use. This thesis completely ignores the thing as thing by treating it in terms of means alone.

The phenomenological turn in the history of Western philosophy entails primarily a shift from epistemology towards ontology. If earlier the question of knowledge and that which was known was held in focus, the shift directs an attention towards existence of the being of things known and perceiver. We shall delve deeper into the existential side of the phenomenology a bit later. For now, it suffices to acknowledge the fact that the centrality of the human subject as the accumulator and user of knowledge was displaced by the phenomenological turn. This too, can be historically compared with the distrust against humanist principles that were gradually abused by a movement towards individualization, whether in the form of personal or national power. Phenomenology is heralded by that prophetic statement of Edmund Husserl, “Wir wollen auf die Sachen selbst zurückgehen”⁵ (Husserl, “Logical Investigations, Vol 1” 168). In contrast to the humanist dogma of progress and development that were a façade for the growth of capitalism, phenomenology was a ‘regressive inquiry’, whose task (as in Husserlian phenomenology) was to clarify the nature of logic by tracing their origins in intuitions, while attending to the nature of things as given in essential seeing [*Wesensschau*].

Thus, for the first time since the beginning of modern Western philosophy, the thing began to be granted a sense of autonomy. This is the same attitude that informs the Modernist work of art, where instead of a being a product of human feeling or objective representation, the artwork is increasingly seen as a thing in its own right. The human being no longer holds the centerstage, but is just a constituent of the world among other things. Whereas till then, the human presence held an indisputable centrality, the modernist work is tinged with the fear of human non-existence, “plagued as it is by a sickening or delightful sense of its own

contingency’’ (Eagleton, “Event of Literature” 4). We shall return to this aspect towards the end of this sub-chapter.

Heidegger’s and our refutation of the above three theses derive their inspiration from the above-mentioned shift in attitude towards the thing. As highlighted in the first subchapter “Beginnings”, the work in my school years was seen as a manifold of meaning, or a categorizable archive of components. But as the example of my mother’s experience with Elias and Marquez’s novels show, novels themselves have a thingly nature that cannot be reified by the instruments of reasons or feeling. We can now understand the significance of that which Heidegger says, “The thing must be allowed to remain in its self-containment. It must be accepted in its own constancy’’ (Heidegger, “Poetry Language Thought” 26). This should not be confused that the thing is an objective idea as in Descartes or a noumenon as in Kant, for we must remember that an object distinct from a subject can exist only when this binary itself can be sustained. The thing is not an object cogitated by the subject. “The unpretentious thing evades thought most stubbornly’’ (31).

But this is not a mode of existence which we are familiar with. Going back to Kant in *Critique of Pure Reason*, we learn that things are knowable only to the extent that they allow annihilating themselves, as much as they are compelled to renounce their being, individuality, substantiality, standing-in-themselves, and transcendental beyond-humanness. Thus, the thingly character of a thing lies in a domain that is beyond our reach. Yet it is not the Kantian noumenal for the thing does appear to us, but to ‘annihilate’ it through reason or senses would be a sacrifice of its autonomy. Things constitute the only real transcendence beyond human being in the shape of thingly phenomena, and not a metaphysical one.

Arvydas Sliogeris in his book *The Thing and Art: Two Essays on the Ontotopy of the Work of Art* comments on the transcendental nature of the thing, “the greatest miracle is that

we see that it is, that it compels us to recognize its independent, persistent, egoistically obstinate, closed-in-itself, beyond-human, and so radically transcendent being. First, we notice that the work has being-in-itself” (3). The artwork as thing thus has no need of a human intervention to survive as a thing. The thingly character of an artwork implies its persistence and self-conservation in the passage of time. However, the question remains, where do they survive? Well, certainly in a world where we human beings are. However, that does not compromise the thingly nature of the artwork, for it is, as mentioned beyond-human.

How then is the beyond-human thing present in a human world? Is the existence of the thing based purely on its thingly nature or is derived from another ‘ontotopical’ region⁶? If the work of art itself could speak, it would have said, “I am, and this much is enough for me, maybe someone needs me, maybe indeed I arouse catharsis, but all this does not depend on me and I do not give a damn, I am a thing. I simply am” (2-3). But art is mute, it cannot speak of its own, until it is invested with speech. “Unfortunately, the work is incapable of speaking, it stays silent, therefore others speak for it” (3).

The thingly feature of the thing thus cannot be sought in the thing as thing itself, for it beyond the reach of knowledge and appearance. Since things, despite being transcendental, are also real, they must have originated somewhere. The origin of things is their coming-to-being, and hints at something dynamic, whether we call it process, experience or happening. We must imitate the Heideggerian gesture of returning to early Greek thought in order to disentangle ourselves from the subject-object based propositional logic, for its epistemology is based on a model of correspondence which fails to address the problem of how is the appearance of a thing made possible, without ‘annihilating’ the thing as like an object and making us function as subjects.

The artwork as thing exists insofar as it comes to be. This coming-to-being or becoming of the artwork lies not in its being as thing, but in that it is worked. The setting up of the work as itself constitutes its thing-being. "The thingly feature in the work should not be denied; but it belongs admittedly in the work-being of the work, it must be conceived by way of the work's workly nature. If this is so, then the road towards the determination of thingly reality of the work leads not from thing to work but from work to thing" (Heidegger, "Poetry Language Thought" 38).

How do we approach the work-being of the work? "The work, in its work-being demands the setting up of itself" (38). Or as Nelson Goodman says, the work is self-positing or self-expression (58-59). The work-being of the work dwells in its self-becoming. It cannot be conceived as an idea or manifold of senses or formed matter, for then it would be made subservient to something else. It is not a correspondence to truth existing outside itself, but as Heidegger says, "The nature of art would then be this: the truth of beings setting itself to work" (Heidegger, "Poetry Language Thought" 35). Giving the example of a jug, whose work being dwells not in its form but in the void where water can be preserved, he tells us that the work is in fact that void, or that *hupokeimenon* core around which things gather. We shall return to the element of truth in the work-ing of the work in our discussion of the event.

The question now is, where do human beings fit in the becoming of the work? If the work preserves a structure, how does that owe to the fact that it is fashioned by a human hand? Is it the same kind of preservation that we associate with say food items, by means of a preservative?

If art preserves it does not do so like industry, by adding a substance to make the thing last. The thing became independent of its "model" from the start, but it is also independent of other possible personae who are themselves artists-

things, personae of painting breathing this air of painting. And it is no less independent of the viewer or hearer, who only experience it after, if they have the strength for it. What about the creator? It is independent of the creator through the self-positing of the created, which is preserved in itself” (Deleuze, “What is Philosophy”. 163-64)

This is what is meant by the self-positing of the work. But a work, unlike nature, is created. How then is it possible for a human product to be self-sufficient? As Deleuze rightly points out the paradox, “The artists greatest difficulty is to make it stand up on its own” (164). This marks the Modernist paradox as mentioned earlier, where the work attempts to be, first and foremost a thing existing in its own right. But it must stem from somewhere. The origin of the work of art can therefore no longer be talent or subjectivity, elements considered to have been the driving force in Romanticism, neither can it originate from the proclivity of representation of something else than itself. This entails a loss, a sacrifice of the artist’s authority. The artist becomes, or must become only a passageway for the work to come to being. “The work is to be released by him (the artist) to its pure self-subsistence. It is precisely in great art that the artist remains inconsequential as compared with the work, almost like a passageway that destroys itself in the creative process for the work to emerge” (Heidegger, “Poetry Language Thought” 38). The being of the artist in the artwork is a sacrifice, a surrender of subjectivity, and not an exercise of it. Only by giving up one’s subjective being can the work emerge as a self-positing, and not a positing of something by someone. One is reminded here of a beautiful saying by Foucault says writing is the continual creation of a space of one’s self-erasure (104). This is the almost impossible cost at which the work as thing can be set to stand by itself.

The being of man being divorced from the work, the being of the latter is a solitary one. It is a solitude that never can be trampled upon or penetrated into by the human gaze. In

his essay “The Solitude of the Work”, Maurice Blanchot writes, “The work is without any proof, just as it is without any use. It can’t be verified. Truth can appropriate it, renown draws attention to it, the existence it thus acquires doesn’t concern it. This demonstrability renders it neither certain nor real- does not make it manifest” (Blanchot, “Space of Literature” 21). We now have attempted to clarify what Sliogeris meant by the real transcendental thing in terms of solitude. If an artwork had any definite function to perform or something particular to say, it would simply survive in time. It is because the work has no-thing in it, that it is never possible to reify it to a set of fixed meaning. As Jakobson says, if art is to be conceived as a code, then it is one without a message (Hawkes 76). Thus, although a thing, it is not made up of anything. In a sense, the work is elementary, because its thing-being cannot be explained by anything other than its becoming (Sliogeris, 18).

“The percept is the landscape before man, in the absence of man. But why do we say this, since in all these cases the landscape is not independent of the supposed perceptions of the characters and, through them, of the author’s perceptions and memories? How could the town exist without or before man, or the mirror without the old woman it reflects, even if she does not look at herself in it? This is Cézanne’s enigma, which has often been commented upon: “Man absent from but entirely within the landscape.” Characters can only exist, and the author can only create them, because they do not perceive but have passed into the landscape and are themselves part of the compound of sensations. Ahab really does have perceptions of the sea, but only because he has entered into a relationship with Moby Dick that makes him a becoming-whale and forms a compound of sensations that no longer needs anyone: ocean. It is Mrs. Dalloway who perceives the town- but because she has passed into the town like “a knife through everything” and becomes imperceptible herself. Affects are precisely

these nonhuman becomings of man, just as percepts- including the town- are nonhuman landscapes of natures. “Not a minute of the world passes,” says Cézanne, “that we will preserve if we do not “become that minute.” (Deleuze, “What is Philosophy” 169)

We quote this passage in full for it sums up our discussion so far very succinctly and beautifully. Deleuze’s emphasis on the nonhuman aspect of the artwork re-attests its nature of self-positing. The work sustains itself steadily by being what it is, by holding itself together. “The thrust that the work as this work is, and the uninterruptedness of this plain thrust, constitute the steadfastness of the work’s self-subsistence. Precisely where the artist and the process and the circumstances of the genesis of the work remain unknown, this thrust, this ‘that is’ of createdness, emerges into view most purely from the work” (Heidegger, “Poetry Language Thought” 63). And this preserving thrust whereby the work continues to be what it is, can take place only when, as Cézanne and Heidegger mention, the artist becomes the work itself by giving himself over to it as a passageway.

How then does the work exist for us? Our understanding of a work dwells in an engagement. But if the work is closed and transcendental as a thing, what is it that we engage with? Even if we forsake a direct accusative object of engagement to rid ourselves of a domineering subjecthood, the engagement must nonetheless happen somewhere. And there should be expectedly something that appears or develops in and out of this engagement. Returning back to the example of my mother’s encounter with Marquez and Elias’ novels, what was it precisely that did not suit her literary tastes? Certainly, the problem of her grappling with the work had to do not with the language itself as lexical units, but what language in those novels signify. Thus, it is not the work itself, for the work itself is always solitary and beyond human, but what appears in a work that was the cause of her dismay. What then is made to stand by itself in the work, or exists as a possibility?

“The work exists as thing that contains certain meanings and senses, bridges that link the work of art with what we call content, with the totality called the world” (Sliogeris, 1). This should not come as a surprise to us, since we are always talking of artworks in terms of world. Like for example, we might say that the world of Van Gogh is replete with colors, or that the world of Bibhutibhushan brings us closer to nature and memories of childhood and so on. Our discussion has still not reached the stage where we can sufficiently address the question of the being of the world. But that does not restrict us from acknowledging the association of a work with a world peculiar to it. Works of art differentiate from one another because they are portals to different worlds. The works of two writers writing at the same period and from a similar cultural location would maintain their distinct standing-by-itself posture because in each, the world appears differently. The thrust of the work which Heidegger mentions is implicated exactly when he says, “The work opens up a world and keeps it abidingly in force” (Heidegger, “Poetry Language Thought” 43).

We had begun with a tautological circularity, and now it is time to retrace it in light of the discussion so far. We have seen that the thingness of the artwork takes us to its work-being. The work in turn can be said to bring about a world into appearance. We would now inquire into the interaction between the concepts of thing and world and see where it takes us.

Hannah Arendt begins her book *The Human Condition* with the musing that our existence is a conditioned one. Any perspective on human existence, no matter which standpoint it represents, have to acknowledge the historical particularity of being. If it doesn't do so, the theory would be a metaphysical transhistorical account. Being cannot be understood until and unless we address the question ‘Being where?’, which entails the question ‘Being in relation to what?’ It is this attitude to examine being as it dwells somewhere that Heidegger coins the word *Dasein* instead of using the substantive of only *Sein* [*Dasein* literally means Being-there].

The adjective ‘conditioned’ in German, the language in which both Arendt and Heidegger wrote and hence not something that can be overlooked in how its etymology molds philosophical thought, is ‘*bedingt*’, or in rough literal translation to English, ‘involving things’. The contrast of it is ‘*unbedingt*’ or absolutely, unconditionally. Conditioned existence then boils down to existence among things, or even better, thingly existence. Existence is inconceivable without things. “The horizon of ours, of humans as finite beings, is thingly. Thus man, as a being thrown into a finite horizon, always and everywhere is thingly and is sensibly conditioned. Man cannot escape things” (Sliogeris, 9).

Being is not only thingly, but also Being in the world. The world is where we are, where being is situated, in whichever way we understand the world to exist. We thus uncover the circularity between thing-work-world where the world itself is thingly. Since the existence of the self has a meaning only in relation to the world, the self as well as the world must share the ontotopy of thingness. Things are integral to the Being to the world as much as to the being of the self since the self and the world exist in relation to one another.

“What is this world of things, or simply the world, in which man lives and from which he cannot escape anywhere and ever, even while sleeping? The world is a certain marginal concept, an infinite entirety of possible events and things, an entity that has neither beginning nor end, neither center nor periphery” (Sliogeris, 8). Thus, the totality of the world cannot be understood as a collection of things, for that would defy its infinite and centerless character. Kant said world is a noumenal thing which conditions all conditions that make up particulars. Hence, the world itself cannot be sought by knowledge for the knowledge regarding what the world is would itself have to belong to the world, which would then be paradoxical. The paradox arises in Kant precisely due to the fact that has already been mentioned, namely that perception is made as an attribute of the subject that requires an object to know. If we are always in the world, we shall be unable to know it for then the

subject itself is contained and a part of the object of analysis. We shall show a modern-day manifestation of this paradox in the philosophical trend of New Realism in our discussion of Markus Gabriel in the last section of the first chapter. For now, we shall turn to Heidegger once more, and try to move along the circle without falling back to Kantian subjectivity which would only bump into tautology as far the question of the world is concerned.

Heidegger says that the world is neither a collection of things nor an imagined representation. Both these models negated by Heidegger hold object positions, the former an empiricist stand and the latter a Rationalist one. If the world is to be an object, then it can be made available to the perceiver as subject. However, we have already shown that this binary is not tenable. At this point, we must remark that not only does the world is conditioned by things, but the world itself is a thing. If man can't escape from things, and neither from the world, a plain syllogistic logic points the thingly nature of the world itself. However, Kant is right in saying that the world is a noumenal thing. It does not appear as a thing, but things exist for themselves as Real transcendentals.

The clue to the problem has already been encountered and we would re-enact it. If the thing can be known only as far it is worked to being, the capacity to understand the world would have to located where the world comes to be. The world worlds, just like a thing things, for the world is too thingly. The nature of the world cannot be dealt with a subject-predicate logic, but its ever non-objective character can only be approached as an opening. The world dwells in the overtness of beings.

In his essay "The Thing", Heidegger elucidates the etymology of 'thing'. It stems from the Roman *res*, which means whatever that concerns somebody, an affair, a law case. The phrase *in media res* often attributed in academia to exposition in theatre literally means in the middle of things. Case or *causa* is that which comes to pass, that happens. We can turn

to Wittgenstein to understand this sense in his saying, The World is everything that is the case. In Romance languages, the *causa* shifts to *la cosa*, trickling further in French as *la chose*. While the present-day usage of *chose* refers to things, the usage previously, as in with *res*, involved a sense of being engaged with the thing and not the bare-naked object alone. When we say, He knows his things, we mean he knows that which concerns him. Unlike the formal purposiveness in Kant, the thing is not something indifferent and purely formal representation but has care or concern in sense of being involved with it. We shall expand on the dichotomy between Kantian disinterest and Heideggerian *Interesse* in our next subchapter while discussing aesthetics.

The world as a thing too reveals its true thingly nature when not used as a tool, rather when one takes a standpoint against it which involves him in a relation. Rilke calls this ‘*reiner Bezug*’, pure relation. Since our relation with the world is transcendental to all relations that take place in it, this relation itself cannot be reified to any function, but must feature always, as a horizon. Like Heidegger calling the world as an opening or a dwelling in the overtness of being, Rilke calls this ‘The Open’ or *Das Offene*. The great tragedy and tension of human existence of the counterposition of man and thing is hinted here by Rilke, “Dieses heist Schicksal: gegenüber sein/ und nichts als das und immer gegenüber”⁷ (Rilke, “Gedichte, Duineser Elegien, Die achte Elegie” 467). We can only face the world, like we face the thing, for the two are ontologically same. And this facing is taking a stand with respect to it. The world like the thing is not given readymade to us. The world is becoming entailed in a dynamic process.

Thus, the world that appear to us in novels are not objects, but becomings. To approach worldliness as a concept in the context of the novel, we will first have to relegate all views of the artwork as an object, and turn our humble attention towards the coming-to-be of the world in its reading. It is clear by now that the world cannot be approached as itself, since

it is noumenal. It can be approached as we can approach a thing, in its thing-ing. It is for this reason that the understanding of worldliness cannot be undertaken without a thing where its work-being hosts the becoming of the world, or worlding as we shall call. To proceed towards an understanding of worldliness thus necessitates a thing, which in our case are the two Modernist novels by Marcel Proust and Robert Musil. They are the things where we shall eventually be taking a stand towards the world that shall appear in the becoming of the work. We shall reserve the justification of the choice of these two works for the very end of the first chapter of this thesis, for the ground is not yet ripe to do so. What we can say for now, the understanding of Proust and Musil's world as in their novels, is understanding of worldliness itself. And the understanding of worldliness too must be undertaken in a thing, the choice of which are these two novels here.

We must thus look for a dynamic model to accommodate the becoming of the world or worlding. Our first attempt would be to seek this enterprise in trying to approach the artwork from the point of view of experience.

(C) EXPERIENCE

If the artwork is made approachable only in the premises of an experience, we shall try to uncover the nature of such an experience and aspects pertaining to it that allows the coming-into-being of the work. How would such an experience be articulated? In his *Critique of Judgement*, Kant distinguishes between two modes for arranging one's thoughts for utterance. One of them, *modus logicus*, follows the path of method. As the name suggests, such an experience is supposed to abide certain definite principles laid beforehand. Natural phenomena like evaporation of water and social phenomena considered from a deterministic

framework would be analyzable according to the method they evidently demonstrate. The other route, *modus aestheticus*, is one pertaining to manner. Here, there is no standard to which the particular occurrence is assumed to show adherence. Rather, such an understanding would aim at participating in the singularity of the occurrence. The experience of art, in the sense that art is neither formulaic nor methodical, (though such instances are not uncommon in the history of 'art'. If one considers daily soaps or myth construction through artworks, one sees that the work is 'used' for a purpose that lies outside of it) is therefore an aesthetic one. Every encounter with an artwork is meant to be unique, and is inarticulable logically.

Aesthetic judgement does not rely on available concepts nor provides one. Reason therefore has no role, or at least no primary role to play in aesthetic experience. The form of the object itself becomes the ground of this experience that is characterized by pleasure. According to Kant, aesthetic pleasure is combined with the representation of the object of experience undertaken by the imagination of the perceiver. Imagination, and not reason, holds the key to experience the pleasure in art. This feeling of pleasure can't be intuited a priori, it has to be found.

We shall now attempt a critical reading of Kant where certain positions appear smudged. Firstly, Kant says that the representation of the aesthetic object by the imagination as something Beautiful is not a matter of subjectivity. That is to say, that which is Beautiful is not relativized among people, rather is ought to be found beautiful by all and alike, universally. The ground of aesthetic pleasure is determined by its virtue of being universal. Kant names the faculty of judgement that can appreciate Beauty as Taste.

However, things become confusing once we come to the section devote to "Analytic of the Beautiful", where he says that the judgement of taste in ascertaining the Beautiful has complete indifference to the existence of the thing. Everything turns on what I make of this

representation within myself. Thus, whether a thing would be aesthetically pleasing does not hinge on its own make-up but what the subject makes of it in representing it in his or her imagination. However, Kant tempers this fervent Romantic subjectivist freedom immediately by pointing out that taste is not an individual feature, but a cultural one. The other aspect which complicates the question of subjectivity here is Kant's view of our engagement with artworks being entirely 'disinterested'. By this, he implies that the artwork does not exist for any use or utility, thereby steering art away from the dominant Enlightenment ideals of progress and scientific fervor. He understands the artwork to rely on no interest, but it nevertheless produces one. We shall return to this statement later in our discussion on 'interest' and its multiple implications in the experience of art.

The problem of talking about art rationally is hinted by Kant where he says that the feeling and sensation, that are referred solely to the subject in imagination, are not available for cognition, not even for that by which the subject cognizes itself (Kant "Judgement", 38). This is an experience familiar to us when we try talking about a poem or a novel. The very act of articulation 'about' something requires us to distance ourselves from it, for cognition necessitates a subject-object binary to operate. However, in the experience of reading a book, there is a submergence in which we are compelled to take part in a consciousness that is not our own (Poulet, 55-56). The moment we start talking 'about' art, we are to as if step outside its realm, and face this paradox.

An aesthetic experience requires the subject to overstep and go beyond his usual attitude with things of the world, and it requires the object to conform to the universal standard which cultivated taste might find to be beautiful. The tension between the subject and object positions in aesthetic experience is re-iterated anew when Kant says, "Susceptibility of pleasure arising from reflection betokens not only a purposiveness of objects in relation to their reflective judgement in the subject, but conversely, a purposiveness

on the part of the subject, answering to the concept of freedom, in respect of the form, or even formlessness of objects” (Kant, “Judgement” 26-27). The purposiveness of art is non-purposive, for it does not have one, but produces one. Adorno emphasizes on this point in one of his lectures on Aesthetics. If the reality principle is based on the principle of self-preservation, in the sense that everything is subsumed to the cause of the well-being of the human subject, art is fundamentally a negation of this principle. The liberating effect, what Kant called ‘answering the concept of freedom’, of art is attributed to its very existence, an area one cannot get something out of (Adorno, “Aesthetics” 48). One therefore cannot approach art to glean pleasure out it, but must be truly free in not expecting anything out it, for aesthetic pleasure is not individualistic by nature. “Only by what one does heedless of enjoyment, in complete freedom and independently of what nature could passively procure for him, does he give to his life, as the existence of a person, an absolute worth. Happiness, with all its plethora of pleasures, is far from being an unconditional good” (Kant, “Judgement” 40).

If aesthetic delight is independent of interest, then it should be applicable for all. It seems here, that Kant underplays the ‘making’ the object beautiful by one’s imagination. However, the universality spoken about here cannot spring from a concept. Beautiful is subjective, and yet universal. Kant resolves this paradox by coining ‘subjective universality’ as the basis of the Beautiful. The subjective portion prevents forming any rule for the Beautiful, while the latter part lays claim not by concept but by concurrence of everyone. Judgement of taste doesn’t postulate but impute universal agreement (47).

The act of representation of the Beautiful requires imagination in bringing together the manifold and understanding as far as the unity of the manifold is concerned. Kant calls the state of mind where imagination and understanding are in an indeterminate accord or harmony as ‘subjective universal communicability’. Everyone ‘ought’ to find something

Beautiful, for the Beautiful is communicated universally among subjects. According to Kant, just like *sensus communis* refers to concepts in the domain of common understanding, *common sense* pronounced conditionally refers to feelings associated with aesthetic pleasure.

However, the presupposition of common sense associated with aesthetic pleasure, even if is said to be pronounced conditionally, shift the balance towards the objective end. This is crucial for both Kant and Hegel as they would attempt to understand the ontology of art as a transition from material sensation to reflection. “The universal communicability of a pleasure involves in its very concept that the pleasure is not one of enjoyment arising out of mere sensation, but must be one of reflection. Hence, aesthetic art, as art which is beautiful, is one having for its standard the reflective judgement and not bodily sensation” (135). We again encounter a paradox, for aesthesis in Kant is associated with the representation of sensual things, whereas now we find that it is the representation, which is a reflective judgement, that is of primary importance in art. Beauty therefore has no essence immanent in it. It coincides with the being of the thing. The thing is senseless, and has no internal structure. It is not made up of anything. It is elementary (Sliogeris 18). Being manifests through beauty and Beauty through being. “In the phenomenon of beauty, all the ‘depth’ of being passes into the surface and becomes what it is- a thingly surface. Beauty, as well as being, is superficial, for namely the surface is an ontotopical region of being and beauty” (28).

This idea is close to Hegel’s *Lecture on Aesthetics* where taste is understood to be directed “only to the external surface on which feelings play. So called ‘good taste’ takes fright at all the deeper effects of art and is silent when externalities and incidentals vanish” (Hegel 34). The external surface of sensations is only a point of departure towards reflection where the incidentals have less relevance. Kant’s cultural sensitivity made him realize the limitation of Enlightenment principles in understanding art based on judgement and to

acknowledge the Romantic ideal of genius spirit and lack of rules. However, Kant's genius cannot simply be understood in terms of Romantic subjectivity due to factors already discussed. For Kant, the spirit is the animating principle of the mind, the faculty of presenting 'aesthetic ideas.' Thus, art for Kant is not an end in itself, but has the possibility of meaning something. However, as the paradoxical coinage 'aesthetic ideas' points at, such ideas are not conceptual but can only be grasped and presented in an embodied form. It is necessary that these ideas be sensually foregrounded in order for them to exist.

For Hegel, art "namely by displaying even the highest reality sensuously, bringing it thereby nearer to the senses, to feeling and to nature's mode of appearance...generates out of itself the first reconciling middle term between nature and finite reality and the infinite freedom of conceptual thinking" (120). Art relies on sensual medium only to go beyond it. Hegel believed that the end of art would eventually be brought about by its internal connection to that incurable dependence upon the senses.

Before we enter into listing the problems inherent in the outlook of Kant and Hegel with regards to art, we shall see what they have to say about the thingness of the artwork. We have seen that according to them, art is purposive to the extent that it has no purpose. We have also discussed the etymological connection between thing and cause. Kant says that the aesthetic object has an 'inherent causality' which preserves a continuance of the state of representation itself ("Judgement" 54). This brings us closer to the self-sufficiency of the artwork in standing on its own without requiring a cause outside of itself. This feature makes art closer to nature, which too exists as something determined without cause. "In all free arts something of a compulsory character is still required, without which the spirit, which in art must be free, would be bodyless and evanescent" (125). Thus, art has the countenance of being necessary, as if it couldn't be anything else, but this necessity is an inherent one and

cannot be imposed from without. “The purposiveness in the product of fine art, intentional though it may be, must not have the appearance of being intentional” (136).

We find that the theory of aesthetics is hinged on representation, and in a certain sense, is a distant echo of Aristotelian mimesis. We get two senses of representation if we turn to Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy*, which are in fact implicated in the evolution of Greek tragedy. First, representation can be understood as a re-presentation, that is, presentation of the object itself that is supposed to be represented. In earlier Bacchic rites, as in other cultures from Africa and India where masked personages were held to be the real incarnated hero as long as the performance continues, Dionysus was himself believed to be present at the center of the festivities. With time, this function acquired a shift in significance where the tragic hero stands in the place of something else. This was representation in the sense that the elected representatives of the Parliament (are supposed to) represent the (interests of) people. One does not have the represented in the representation itself, and thus there is distance opened up between the representing and the represented in the representation. Or to put it in more academic terms, signification became gradually a matter of semiotics in being involved with a signifier and signified belonging to different material realms.

Sophocles’s anthropomorphic treatment followed by the changes introduced by Euripides in Greek drama led to a gradual fictionalization of myths. The self-sufficient mythification in the world of religion and epic underwent a defamiliarization when gods were replaced by petty human beings in the plays, and the cosmic proportions reduced ostensibly to problems pertaining to daily lives. Euripides eliminates the chorus, cuts down the cosmic proportions of heroes, and mysteriousness is expunged in the interests of rationality, a phenomenon denounced by Nietzsche for whom mystery is an essential element in art, which he supposed was reintroduced by Wagner through the mythic content of his opera. He was of

the opinion that something can become art only when it defies rational explanation, so that its meaning somehow escapes us (Danto, "Transfiguration" 25).

Thomas Pavel in his book *Fictional Worlds* uses this example to show that fictionality is a historically variable property (80). According to his thesis, the modern concept of rigid boundaries developed after the Napoleonic wars. Thus, the question as to whether art would have a separate domain of itself and that this domain would be maintained by a strict, unchanging boundary is itself a construct that is implicated by history, and not a universal phenomenon. Aesthetics could therefore not lay its claim as a theory for a culture whose understanding and interaction with art is of a different nature than that of the culture where aesthetics itself developed. "The strict delimitation of boundaries between fictional and non-fictional territories is not a universal phenomenon" (76).

The problem with the aesthetic theory insofar as it relies on representation is the dogmatic continuity of the human subject at the heart of things. The associated notions of talent and taste evince this same attitude. Pavel remarks that the notion of the speaker as unique originator and master of own utterances is but a modern offshoot of the Cartesian subject. Heidegger has highlighted the problem behind such an assumption in the face of a culture, where each of one behave almost similarly, where our sense of being individuals itself is generalized by mass production and consumption. We shall return to this point in our discussion of Heidegger's critique of Cartesian representation.

The subject-object binary is reflected in aesthetics as a sharp distinction drawn between the artwork and its consumer. That art has nothing to do with reality and has no purpose other than formal purposiveness renders a certain kind of ideality to it. Such an ideality evinces a logocentric attitude culminating into segregationism. The modern-day speech-act theory is also neo-Kantian in attitude in taking for granted the existence and

stability of linguistic conventions and their allocated functions. Formalism, too, which supposed language and forms to be automatized in order to build up the theory of art as defamiliarization of the automatized, overlooks like Speech Act theory the dynamism of their establishment and inherent fluidity. Only then can these theories consider art as being marginal in relation to some culturally determined ossified forms.

Since the world too is a representation in Cartesian philosophy and a constructed version produced by the subject's imagination in Kant, it evidently leads subjectivization of aesthetics, resulting in a preponderance of the role ascribed to the human subject in aesthetic theory. No doubt the pleasure to be derived from an artwork is not one of utility. In that sense, it is indeed disinterested by nature. However, we shall return to what Kant said, namely, that the work of art is devoid of interest but produces one. *Interesse*, as Heidegger says, means not a pragmatic orientation to a thing to derive benefit out of it. Rather, it signifies an engagement of ours with the thing insofar as we do not regard its thingness with indifference. "Interest, *Interesse*, means to be among and in the midst of things, or to be at the center of a thing and stay with it" (Falke, 104). Aesthetics makes it seem that the worlds in artworks are merely configurations of formal beauty which are to be perceived for their own sake. In the words of Cassandra Falke,

perhaps the most pervasive of traditions, the category that most often prevents texts from giving themselves to us fully, is the aesthetic disposition itself, which leads readers to evaluate literature, post-Kant, from a position of disinterest. Disinterested reader, as a categorical form of attention to a text, has preserved its position of privilege, not because it is always rigorous, but because of its lingering association with class privilege. (113)

The process that Horkheimer calls ‘subjectivization of reason’ has its roots in Kantian philosophy, or rather in the reception of it. Aestheticians believe in a ‘psychic distance’. The difference between art and philosophy becomes a matter of attitude from the part of the subject. What we relate to becomes ignored in the light of how we relate to it. The outcome of this attitude is a neutralization of content. It undermines the interest that the engagement with art implies in being involved with it. “Texts are not just referential paths leading to worlds: to read a text or to look at a painting means already to inhabit their worlds” (Pavel, 74).

We must situate Kantian philosophy in the historical mesh in which it develops. The spirit of Enlightenment was grounded hand in hand in Rationalism and Empiricism and symbolized the apotheosis of subjectivity. The German word for humanities, or *Geisteswissenschaft*, originated to convey ‘moral sciences’ in the translation of John Stuart Mill’s *Logic* (Gadamer, “Truth and Method” xviii). The quest was to apply inductive logic, which is the generalization of the particular to a universal, to moral sciences. *Geisteswissenschaft*, literally translated, comes to human science. Kant’s project was to put philosophy on a scientific footing, where appearances and concepts find validity. Inductive logic only establishes regularities, but implies no assumption about the kind of connection whose regularity makes prediction possible. Such a tendency is not without its influence in Kant’s formulation on art, where he seeks to define its perimeter associating aesthetics with a transcendental ‘subjective universality’.

Arthur Danto is correct in pointing out the impossibility of the givenness of any perceptual criterion with regards to art. “We are better able to see what might be expected of a definition of art: it cannot be expected to give us a touchstone for recognizing artworks” (“Transfiguration” 61). This negates the possibility of the reflective judgement Kant spoke about. Drawing an analogy to the rhetoric of Wittgenstein, Danto goes on to say, just like a

definition of game doesn't help us to identify a game, the definition of art, if possible, would not fulfill a function of categorization. "Imitation in general acquires finally the status of a possible art when it does not merely resemble something, like a mirror image, but is about what it resembles, like an impersonation' (68). The a priori claim to universality makes the content of taste irrelevant to its transcendental function.

The word Kant uses for Experience is *Erlebnis*, which comes from the verb *erleben*. *Erleben* means to be alive when something happens. "It points to the immediacy that precedes all interpretation" (Gadamer, "Truth and Method" 53). The word *Erlebnis* occurs many times in the works of Goethe and is close in its temperament to the Romantic spirit. Poetry acquires intelligibility from what is experienced, 'what is directly given, the ultimate material for all imaginative creation'. *Erlebnis* refers to both the experience and the result out of it, and the concept of the given [*Gegebenheiten*] is dominant in its empiricist attitude towards the world.

Both the psychological attitude in taste and the representational mode makes the artwork a tool without any moral imperative associated in our engagement with it. "Art becomes understood as appearance in contrast to reality, nature no longer is the framework. Art becomes a standpoint of its own" (71). The concept of *Erlebnis* and Aesthetics culminates what Gadamer calls into 'aesthetic differentiation'. The work of art becomes a special kind of object which has no responsibility of its own other than to elicit a certain kind of pleasure. The work now belongs to the aesthetic consciousness alone and is abstracted from the world. Horkheimer critiques the universal claim of this consciousness, seeing it as a counterpart to the rise of the bourgeoisie who only afford the distance, leisure and 'aesthetic education' required to perceive artworks. It is thus not entirely a coincidence that museums start evolving around this time, and commissioned work begins to lose their significance to

works created for their own sake alone, which is to say, for the sake of collectors and connoisseurs.

Aesthetics brings with it a whole range of vocabulary, a trend that is still very pertinent, especially in the academic world. Beauty, Truth, Genius, Civilization, Form, Taste— one approaches the work from such perspectives. “Many of these assumptions no longer accord with the world as it is. The world-as-it-is is more than pure objective fact, it includes consciousness. Out of tune with the present, they mystify rather than clarify” (Berger, 11). Berger’s statement must be seen in light of Nietzsche’s praise for the mysterious, a defining Romantic spirit, for it considers as Gadamer also mentions, the shift from the allegorical mode to the indeterminateness of meaning of symbol was a victory coinciding with the devaluation of rationalist philosophy to aesthetic of genius (“Truth and Method” 65).

Gadamer’s quotation from Lukacs’s “The Subject-Object Relation in Aesthetics” sums up the lack of integrity of the work that aesthetics fails to accord it. “The work of art is only an empty form, a mere nodal point in the possible variety of aesthetic experiences, and the aesthetic object exists in these experiences alone. Absolute discontinuity, disintegration of unity of work in multiplicity of experiences, is the necessary consequence of an aesthetics of *Erlebnis*” (82). The examples enumerated from my school life now shall be understood more clearly in light of the discussion so far. On one hand, I was exasperated at the ‘special’ yet convoluted use of language in poetry, but my teacher defended art in saying that it was intended to be ‘different’ from the world we know. On the other hand, aesthetic experience retains the objectivity of the work, which is to say the work can be manipulated to yield different meanings for its thingness is ignored.

A critical re-shaping of Kantian aesthetics seems to be necessary in order to approach the coming-to-being of the work. While the writings of Kant and Hegel suffer from the

priority accorded to subjectivity, we shall try to modernize it while retaining the observations, which indeed hold true. Instead of focusing on the subject's imagination or the object's pure form, our task would be to understand the distance between us and the works, and locate the ontology of the work and the world in this distance. We shall return to the Romantic aesthetic spirit once more in our discussion on the evolution of Hermeneutics and how it has negotiated with Historicism.

All experiences are located somewhere, they do not occur in vacuum. The significance of an experience is related to the horizon in which it finds itself, and this horizon is a particular hence historical one. Since experiences change us, it changes our horizon. Thus, we as subjects, do not remain the same. Neither can our attitude towards art be disinterested if it leads to our transformation. In keeping with such an understanding, Gadamer proposes a hermeneutic understanding of experience as *Erfahrung* in place of *Erlebnis*. If *Erlebnis* is something that we have, *Erfahrung* is something that we undergo. Our focus therefore, must shift from the result to the participation, from ego to dialogue, from differentiated object towards conversation.

The philosophy of Hermeneutics calls for a completely new understanding of existence, which shifts the focus from epistemology to ontology. Before we enter into Gadamer's *Erfahrung*, we shall briefly try to look at the development of ontology, how it is by nature hermeneutic and vice-versa, and most importantly, how does the perspective on work and world emerge out of it.

(D) PHENOMENOLOGY, HERMENEUTICS, *ERFAHRUNG*

We shall now try to develop an approach which might help us to understand worldliness in relation to literary phenomena. In doing so, our task would be to arrive at a new way of formulating existence, for we have seen that the polarized inclination towards either an objective or a subjective position led to internal contradictions which could not accommodate the thingness of the artwork. As mentioned, phenomenology introduced a paradigm shift in philosophy's ways of seeing things by problematizing the question of knowledge in relation to the question of existence, leading to the decentering of epistemology by concerns ontological in character. Our task would be to trace this movement critically and see how it takes us to a fresh understanding of the 'happening' that is at work in art. In this endeavor, our discussion so far is by no means to be relegated as something redundant, for the inspiration of our task is not to be oriented towards a particular well-defined goal, but to trace out a journey. We shall avoid involving the notion of finality in this task, for that would be contradictory to the enquiry itself. In speaking of the importance of the plot of thought and its movements in a philosophical essay, Sliogeris remembers Hegel who "was right in saying that the result (in this case truth or what is pretending to be truth) is a corpse with the tendency lagging behind, i.e., having left behind what is most important" (3). This attitude would be shown to be pertinent to the very understanding, or its possibility, of worldliness, which must always begin from somewhere only to take leap and keep moving without any *telos*, for there is none.

It is in the philosophy of Edmund Husserl where phenomenology begins. Just like Kant ushered in a new path to thinking by departing from Rationalism and Empiricism,

Husserl attempted a shift from Psychologism and Analytical Philosophy. We shall first try to see how Kant and Descartes gets implicated here, for that would be the key to set the movement in motion.

Kantian aesthetic, as already discussed, is psychological in nature for it is governed by an attitude towards objects rather than the objects themselves. This, as mentioned, leads to a formalization of the expressed and neutralization of its content. If the artwork is a thing, its status as a concrete object must be acknowledged. Psychologism threatened the very possibility of objective knowledge.

On the other hand, logic or analytical philosophy approaches objectivity in a sense that it has to be valid as something true a priori to experience. This model also neutralizes content like Kantian aesthetics. Logic fails to appreciate or handle the logical unity of the thought content [*Denkinhalt*]. If we are to understand the work as an appearance of world, we must value what things themselves are above and beyond the representation of them in our psyche or logic. It with a similar predilection that Husserl calls for an epistemological grounding [*Erkenntniskritik*] of logic. According to him, the problems in Descartes is twofold. Firstly, it seeks certainty only of mathematical and/or deductive nature. Secondly, it is ignored how ideas are related to the world outside mind.

Nonetheless, Descartes is the starting point for Husserl. Husserl's inquiry is the same as ours; the phenomenon. To get closer to the thingness of the artwork as a dynamic occurrence, we shall critically examine Husserl's perspective on it. To understand a phenomenon, as in that which happens or appears, it is for Husserl important to perform what he calls phenomenological reduction [*epoché*]. This means focusing on the phenomenon by abstracting it out of presupposed knowledge, or putting whatever is known in bracket. Such a bracketing takes us back to the Cartesian method, and indeed Husserl invokes Descartes in

his book *Cartesian Meditations* by enacting his attitude, “I have thereby chosen to begin in absolute poverty, with an absolute lack in knowledge” (2). For Husserl, it is the style of Descartes that is fundamental to a search for meaning, which he considers to be the “prototype for any beginning philosopher’s necessary meditations, the meditations out of which alone a philosophy can grow originally” (2).

Mary Warnock is right in pointing out that Husserl’s attitude towards philosophy as being that towards science, which makes abstraction necessary in the process. This is similar to Kant’s attitude towards philosophy as well, as already discussed. Like science, Husserl was pre-occupied with the essence of things as they could be conceived subjectively. His imitation of Kantian psychologism does not merely remain content with construction, but inquires in to the possibility of meaning. Just as a scientific attitude aims to even out the particular divergences of a phenomenon, Husserl says that “by our intentional act we create an object for ourselves which would otherwise have been mere chaotic, non-recurring indescribable data” (Warnock, 28). This is what Husserl calls *Wesenschau* or grasping of essences, where *Wesen* means nature or essence of something, and *schauen* means to look. Without *Wesenschau*, objects would be meaningless if *eidōs* or general essence is not attributed to them. Here, intentionality can be seen to be not just a description of relation between subject and object, but a more constructive role.

What is it that is thus constructed in the phenomenon of art? For Kant, it is the form of it which is the key to its beauty. Husserl’s phenomenology does not distinguish between the act of producing the object and the object itself. In other words, the object, in our case, the work has meaningful existence only in the sense of being produced. However, this does not imply in the sense of Kant an exercise in subjectivity, for the work is produced along with the consciousness in which it dwells. For Husserl therefore, *cogito* and *cogitatum* are both manifestations which must be described (27). Meaning is an outcome of an act, and does not

and cannot exist prior to it. *Sinnverleihende Akte* or sense-giving acts not only construct meaning of an object, but constitutes the perceiver of the meaning, for *Sinn* not only means meaning in German, but also connotes to perception or consciousness.

It is in the Descriptive Psychology of Brentano where the concept of Intentionality first makes its appearance in European thought, and is taken up by Husserl in his works. Our consciousness is always consciousness of something. It has no existence other than the 'directedness' that informs its operation. This is a radical shift not only from Cartesian philosophy but also Kantianism, for no immanence is granted according to this thesis either to the mind or to the objects it is conscious of. Rather, the mind too evinces a being of always going beyond itself in pointing at something. Objects of consciousness, too lets us go beyond them in order to understand their meaning [*über-sich-hinweisen*]. This is evident in our understanding of a word, a sentence, or a work of art, where we go beyond the words themselves to arrive at meaning. So, the process of meaning-making must be accompanied by an indication as to where we should look for meaning. This indication is provided neither exclusively by the object or work, nor by our subjectivity.

Husserl sounds very much like Hume on Internal Impression when he expounds of this aspect. The "notion of indication has its origin in the 'association of ideas'. When A summons B in consciousness, we feel their connection forcing itself upon us" ("Logical Investigations Vol 1" 187). Our 'feeling' of this connection transforms mere co-existence into mutual pertinence, empirical unity into phenomenal unity. The meaning we make out of an expression is an act that is neither entirely subjective or objective, but phenomenal in character where an expressed unity comes into being.

The relevance of Meaning must now be seen in relation to Expression. How are we oriented towards expressions, whatever they might be? In the first volume of his seminal

work *Logical Investigations*, Husserl notes, “each expression not merely says something, but it says of something: it not only has a meaning, but refers to certain objects” (197). A distinction is thus made between the ‘what’ of the presentation and the presentation itself. Frege in his acclaimed essay “On Sense and Reference” elaborates on this distinction. Sense or *Sinn* is the mode of presentation, how something is presented. Reference or *Bedeutung* is that which is presented through a mode. The conception of the referent is the sense of it. Husserl admits the possibility of presenting, intending or perceiving the same thing in different ways in the Sixth Investigation. He calls this phenomenon *Convergence*, or that which makes this convergence possible as the intentional essence. We do not realize at this point that meaning or content is given a priority and a relative independence over form. This can be understood with the aid of Frege’s comments on why we look for meaning beyond what is expressed;

The fact that we concern ourselves at all about a reference of a part of the sentence indicates that we generally recognize and expect a referent for the sentence itself...we are therefore justified in not being satisfied with the sense of the sentence, and in inquiring also as to its referent. But why do we want every proper name to have not only a sense, but also a referent? Why is the thought not enough for us? Because, and to the extent that, we are concerned with its truth value (we are interested only in the sense while hearing an epic poem). The question of truth would cause us to abandon aesthetic delight for an attitude of scientific investigation. It is the striving for truth that drives us always to advance from the sense to the referent’. (Frege, 215-16)

What we can gather from the proceeding passage is that truth of an expression is understood as corresponding to something outside it, or in other words, that truth has a different nature than expression. Since expression always involves a medium, truth must, according to this

view conceptual in nature. Also, truth is held to be relevant for science also. This is obvious, for truth is understood by Frege as being a matter of correspondence which requires de facto a referent to correspond to. And art is seen to be an existential domain where there is no relevance of truth, and thus the sense is sufficient for the perceiver. We can note a resonance of Kantian aesthetics here where aesthetic delight is based on suspension of disbelief and differentiation from the world as an end in itself.

Meaning is produced in expression and not transmitted by it. The latter would have to presuppose the a priori existence of meaning, which is ruled out by Husserl. A work of art, therefore is not a shaping of a meaning already known to the creator, but the creation of the work is concomitant with its meaning. This is what he means when he says that we perceive the meanings to be existent whereas the acts which render these meanings are themselves perceived by us at the moment of utterance.

Meaning is phenomenally different from expression, but “we do not arbitrarily attribute it to our assertions, but discover it in them” (“Logical Investigations Vol 1” 196). There must thus be an ideal unity between sense and expression. A work means that which it can alone mean. The coming to being of the work is a quest of discovery of what it, and it alone, can mean. This unity must therefore be explicable as the unity of language, namely language discloses its meaning uniquely. Where intended acts are present, expression comes to coincidence with what it has to express. The acts [*sinnverleihende Akte*] in which things appear are mediating acts, since they bring about the mediation of meaning and expression. These acts are, thus literally, acts of interpretation [*Auffassung*] since they are carried out in an in-between space. We shall discuss in detail the relevance of the in-between space in interpretation when we reach Hermeneutics. For now, we recognize that meaning is associated with an action, which is interpretive in character. For Husserl, acts of recognition [*Erkennen*] brings these acts in unity. This can be a static unity between an expressed thought

and an expressed intuition [*das Erkennen*]. Or it can also be, as it mostly is, a dynamic unity where intentional essence of intuition gets more or less perfectly fitted into the semantic essence of the act of expression (“Logical Investigations Vol 2” 206). The dynamic unity does not hint at limitation of language in expressing thought but to the fact that certain meanings are to be understood as something being grasped. Our thoughts tried to grasp the matter [*begreifen*], and the concept is that which is grasped [*Begriff*].

Husserl excludes the possibility of meaningless expressions. Every expression, and works of art included, must have meaning for expression is the positing of meaning. But we do realize at this point that the ideality of meaning in meaning-fulfilling acts [*Sinnerfüllende Akte*] might not hold true, since our interpretation of the same work might vary. Since the fragments of a work are themselves re-enacted in our reading, the same mode of presentation as present in the text would offer difference in interpretation or grasp. Husserl admits this possibility, “But where a whole range of objects [expressions] corresponds to a single meaning [sense], this meaning’s own essence must be indeterminate: it must permit a sphere of possible fulfillment” (“Logical Investigations Vol 1”199). Thus, a simple statement like ‘I am happy’ has no doubt coincidence between the saying and the meaning of it, but its essence would vary between individuals. This is the aspect which opens on to Intersubjectivity, that our understanding and engagement with language is not subjective but depends on the relations in which language-use finds itself. A criticism often made against phenomenology for being ahistorical is certainly not true, but the admission of intersubjectivity in the quest to understanding existence and grounding is historical in nature, and this is precisely what Husserl referred as epistemological grounding or *Erkenntniskritik*, that it cannot be explained by a solipsistic ego only. Husserl’s later works turn out to be anthropological, where his idea of *Lebenswelt* says that the experience of the world is governed by presuppositions of the group of which we are members. This marks a shift within the world of phenomenology from

transcendental subjectivism to relational ontology, a transition we shall see in full motion in Heidegger.

We find a shift in the attitude towards truth as well, in that it is realized to be different in nature with respect to a concept. “Whenever a new concept is formed, we see how a meaning becomes realized that was previously unrealized” (233). Concepts do hold true prior to their expression. But is it the same with meaning, and here we include the meaning of concepts as well? “There are countless meanings which in the common, relational sense, are merely possible ones, since they are never expressed, and since they can, owing to the limits of man’s cognitive powers, never be expressed” (233). Man’s knowledge is based on his existence which is conditioned by limitations. Thus, any question of knowing something, in our case, worldliness, must necessarily begin with existence that makes knowledge possible.

We shall briefly go over the problems that Husserl’s phenomenology offers us while letting us draw closer into the circle of worldliness. According to Husserl, the concept as opposed to meaning (as that which is expressed in order to be) belongs to the realm of the objective and a priori. However, a concept is also represented. This representation though intuitive, is symbolic. There is an element of understanding, but the intuitively-represented aspect is limited solely to its symbolization. The intuition aims not at an image, but at logical propositions which can only hold or represent the ‘game’ of which the concept is a part.

The objective, over and above the connotation that it denotes the same for many subjects, is that which stands-for-itself. The subjective is that which is possible, the objective is that which is real or necessarily true. Does then the objective only pertain to logic? Can the ‘previously unrealized’ seek to be realized, that is made real, only in the realm of propositional truth that is representative of only propositional correspondence and analytic truth?

In order to envisage an alternate mode of coming-to-being of the previously unrealized, we would first need to imagine a different mode of the positing of truth itself which could also have propositional correspondence as one of its possible manifestations. Since truth, even according to the inference of realization of concepts in Husserl's philosophy is a disclosure (since meaning is the appearance and revelation of itself in expression), its essence lies in bringing itself about to being.

Logical concepts have fixed meaning or rather there is total fused unity [*Geltungseinheit*] between what they imply and how they are expressed. However, art can be said a process where a reality is made possible. Thus, art does begin equipped with a sense of reality around it, but its primary task is to create a new sense of reality. Therefore, the question of such correspondence is irrelevant to art since it creates the world which it speaks of. Unlike logic, art is open to semantic interpretation because its mode of presentation is not one of symbolic or propositional correspondence, but rather a 'truer', more original return to the things, for which no pre-existing corresponding symbol exists. Truth thus no longer remains the monopoly of science, but becomes the mode through which art operates, in disclosing things to being. We shall now turn to Heidegger and try to understand the essence of truth as disclosure and how the phenomenon of art and world-disclosure could be understood in the light of it. But before we do that, we must prepare the philosophical ground necessary for this undertaking, and it is with this view that we shall turn to Heidegger's *Being and Time*, where a new development awaits us in our journey.

Heidegger names that which shows itself, or puts itself to light to manifest itself as the *phenomenon*. However, he says that the phenomenon is different from seeming [*scheinen*] although that too stems or is made possible by a reason of a showing-itself of something. A phenomenon involves a structural form of synthesis, letting something be seen together [*Beisammen*] with something. Discourse is of paramount importance as far as the

phenomenon is concerned, for what is said is drawn from what the talk is about, rather than being a passive description of a whole entity.

The attempt to ‘talk about’ the experience of reading a novel and the world disclosed therein belongs thus rightfully to the ambit of phenomenology, for what is encountered is the phenomenolization of a thing, which is to say, the thing becoming and disclosing itself as phenomenon. Heidegger defines phenomenology as “to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself” (“Being and Time” 58). Here, description is not of the nature of a procedure that can exhaustively define a thing, but instead behaves as a prohibition. Husserl too had hinted at this limitation that description involves in providing us with certain profiles of the thing [*Abschattung*] and not a complete inventory of its features. Description prohibits us from interpreting anything other than what lies in the description, allows only itself as throwing light on something. This is exactly what the discourse concerning an artwork relates to, that the significance of it is revealed as far as the choice of descriptive route makes it possible. This does not however point at free play of subjectivism, for as Heidegger notes, the “character of description itself can be established in terms of thinghood [*Sachheit*] of what it is to be described” (59).

Phenomenology signifies primarily a methodological conception; it conceives something not as an object of analysis but as revealed in method. We have seen so far that a subject-object binary is not conducive in talking about artworks, for several internal contradictions and limitations crop up that point at the inadequacy of such a framework. This is especially so, for the matter indeed should involve ‘talking about’ and being of the phenomenon of art has to essentially determined by the potentiality of discourse.

In his essay “The Age of World Picture”, Heidegger identifies the essential phenomenon of the modern period as art’s moving into the purview of aesthetics. Art

becomes the object of mere subjective experience, and that consequently art is considered to be an expression of human life (“Question concerning Technology” 116). This is a direct offshoot of the Enlightenment focus on epistemology whereby the human subject is made center of the universe and relates to everything else as being differentiated from it. If art indeed is an expression of human life, then the question, what it is to be human, certainly takes a back-seat. The deterioration of ontology in tradition reduced [*verfallen*] the question of existence to something self-evident and requiring no investigation. The absolute being-certain [*Gewisssein*] of Cartesian philosophy with regards to the cogito exempted the question of Being from being raised, and as a result, art, like every other field, could be taken de facto as a human expression.

Heidegger emphasizes on the need for the right phenomenal point of departure [*Ausgang*] for access [*Zugang*] to Being. Since we have already laid before the development of aesthetics in Kant and its relation to Descartes, we shall imitate the movement Heidegger undertakes and see where it takes us in our quest to find a truly dynamic approach to understanding the artwork and worldliness. Now for Descartes, the *cogito* is the base for existence. Intellection precedes and grounds for him the possibility of existence. However, Being for Heidegger is not a matter of transcendental subjectivism as it had been till Husserl, but a matter of relational ontology. This means, that our being cannot be talked about by abstracting ourselves from the world where we are, but rather Being is always Being-in, which is why Heidegger substitutes *Sein* with *Dasein*, which literally means being-there. We shall come back to this point in detail. Regarding the *Ausgangspunkt*, Heidegger says that if the *cogito sum* is to serve as the point of departure for the existential analytic of *Dasein*, then it needs to be turned around, and furthermore its content needs new ontologico-phenomenal confirmation. The ‘sum’ is then asserted first and indeed in the sense that ‘I am in a world’ (“Being and Time” 255).

In talking about the Greek essence of man, Heidegger writes,

Man is the one who is looked upon by what is, he is the one who is gathered towards presencing, by that which opens itself. To be beheld by what is, to be included and maintained within its openness and in that way to be borne along by it, to be driven about its oppositions and marked by its discord- that is the essence of man in the great age of the Greeks. (“Question concerning Technology” 131)

Do we not note any resonance of this human essence with the experience of reading a book or standing before a painting? Do we not experience a wonder in being looked upon by something that opens to us that which seems to be explicable as world? Aesthetics would have termed the worlds so evoked to belong to the artworks, for that would affirm the Kantian thesis of world being constructed versions as well as the Cartesian belief of objects identifiable through attributes. But that would directly lead to that which Gadamer calls *Aesthetic Differentiation*, as in differentiating the work of art from the fundamental existence of the human self. The separation of *ego cogita* from *res corporea* that had brought about the Nature-Spirit dichotomy would be re-iterated then.

In Cartesian ontology, the real entity in any corporeal thing is what is suited for thus remaining constant [*ständigen Verbleib*], indeed this is how the substantiality of a substance gets characterized. The being of a substance is characterized as not needing anything, a thing in human terms of analysis. In this idea, Being is equated with constant present-at-hand. It reduces the thing to the level of equipments always at human disposal. This is what prompts Heidegger to infer that Cartesian ontology is ontical, since it is based on Things of Nature [*Naturdinglichkeit*]. The road to see the founded character [*Zeichenstiftung*] of all sensory

and intellectual awareness and to understand these as possibilities of Being-in-the-world is obstructed.

Thus everything, including the world and the artwork, becomes immediate to the self-sure cogito [*vorhanden*]. Since the world too becomes an object, an ontic entity, it is accorded the status of something standing before us, which is the etymological meaning of the German word for objects, *Gegenstand* [that which stands in the neighborhood, or the *Gegend*]. To be object-like [*gegenständlich*], it could be imagined or made to stand before ourselves [*vorstellen*]. Or in other words, the cogito could present the world to itself as something near at hand. The world becomes in the age of Reason a representation [*Weltbild*], for cogito operates through representing to itself its objects of intellection. By the act of representation [*vorstellen*] to set out before oneself and set forth in relation, objects receive the seal of Being.

What is the consequence of such an ontology, that still circulates heavily to this day? The world changes into a doctrine of man and becomes anthropological. “Humanism, in the more-strict historiographical sense, is nothing but a moral-aesthetic anthropology” (133). Everything, the world included, risks in culminating as an instrument for man, and the Greek sense of man being present in the openness of things undergoes a radical upturning in things being present closed to an insatiable, all-subsuming cogito. It designates that philosophical interpretation of man which explains and evaluates whatever is, in its entirety, from the standpoint of man and in relation to man (131). No wonder that the heavily loaded word that comes up in Hegel as *Weltanschauung* imagines the world as something to be seeable [*anschauen*]. But what is seen is merely an appearance produced by certain attitude towards it, with the result that this dialectic is overlooked.

We shall take a moment here to ask ourselves as to how it is that the worldliness in the experience of reading a novel comes through to us? If the novel offers us a field of things presented as signs, we undertake the journey through its plot by interpreting these entities. But where are these entities located, what is it that hosts these entities and hold them together in the first place? We name this thing, which is not a thing at all in the sense we understand thing as a concept, to which all interpretations are related to, as the world. In interpreting entities within the world, we presuppose the world. This corresponds to the pre-ontological understanding of the world.

There is thus a sense of totality involved in worldliness, even when we are unaware of what exactly is this totality comprised in. Adorno says that ‘‘every work of art, even the most wretched, even one produced for the most pitiful profit, always seems to be something like the whole, the absolute, the totality, the absolute fulfilment’’ (Adorno, ‘‘Aesthetics’’ 46). If that is so, could we possibly have a special theory for text-worlds? Would not that tantamount on one hand to a re-affirmation of aesthetic differentiation and at the same time, undermining this totality we are engulfed with in our engagement with art? Moreover, the very concept of a text-world also presupposes that the world is contained in the text like an attribute belongs to an object. However, we have already reached a point in our discussion where we can at least be sure of the fact that the world appears as a phenomenon and demands discourse for its interpretation, not that a world appears which is different from the world outside the book. Indeed, there can be a thesis where the empirical world and the text-world could exist as separate entities, only when the world is conceived after an epistemological fashion which would conserve the cogitating self in the realms of the both. This thesis has its validity in showing that the facts of a novel do not correspond to the world outside and hence they must be different. The fulcrum of this thesis is the assumption that truth is based on correspondence, which we have already shown to be limited and not fundamental. However,

since the world is an ontological category, as we shall soon explain how, such a division between the inner (to the book) and outer world cannot be made. Quoting Schopenhauer, Adorno writes that every work of art is, in a certain sense, “the world once again” (46).

The understanding of worldliness cannot be undertaken in the sense of an epistemic quest, but an ontological one. It reverts us back to understand who and what we are. If something like the world is disclosed in reading, then our task would be to start from the world itself, that is pre-ontologically assumed in the engagement with art. The close connection between existence and world is also revealed by both being, as Hegel had put it, the indeterminate immediate. As a fact, both existence and the world are ontically closest to us. And yet as something understood, they are ontologically farthest. Is it not the same relation that is played out in our reading of a book? As an object containing a structure, it is closest to the reader. And yet, to understand what it holds is infinitely far separated from its factual existence. This space between the ontic closeness and ontological farness is the space of where understanding as interpretation dwells. We now get a glimpse of the inter-connectivity between Phenomenology and Hermeneutics.

Being, in not having the character of an entity, is not given to definitions. The indefinability of Being demands that we look the question in the face. The question of Being is not given, but need be formulated. This questioning should be transparent [*Durchsichtigkeit*] for we are not trying to be complacent with appearances but wish to discover that light that makes the phenomenon possible. Our approach should not be a positivistic collection of results, for we are not trying to collate the novels under survey to a pre-established rubric. Rather, the task is to lay the ground of the enquiry itself [*Grundverfassung*] for no available ground can be present in an ontological questioning. Our understanding of worldliness must begin with questioning the possibility of premise, which we have undertaken laboriously so far. The world “serves here as a name for what is, in its

entirety. The name is not limited to the cosmos, to nature. History also belongs to the world. Yet even nature and history do not exhaust the world. In this designation, the ground of the world is meant also, no matter how its relation to the world is thought” (“Question concerning Technology” 129).

Do we not arrive at a paradox here? How are we to understand the world if our understanding has to lay the ground for itself as well? Indeed, this is the very essence of hermeneutic enquiry, the forward and reverse movement [*Vor und Rückbezogenheit*] that constitute it. Whereas an ontic epistemic quest preserves the self in trying to grapple with an object, here the comporting and the comported-to coincide. The world is never presented to us as a representation but our very existence is implicated in the world that we seek to understand. We are thus, not in position to scientifically address ourselves to the disclosure of the world and propositional truth would not be valid as it is in science. We will pause a moment to hear what Deleuze has to say on this problem,

If philosophy is paradoxical by nature, this is not because it sides with the least plausible opinion or maintains contradictory opinions but rather because it uses sentences of a standard language to express something that does not belong to the order of opinion or even of the proposition. The concept is indeed a solution, but the problem to which it corresponds lies in its intentional conditions of consistency and not, as in science, in the conditions of reference of extensional propositions... A solution has no meaning independently of a problem to be determined in its conditions and unknowns; but these conditions and unknowns have no meaning independently of solutions determinable as concepts. (“What is Philosophy” 80-81)

The problem of worldliness must thus be entered into from the side of existence. This would not be circumlocution, and neither is our discussion a deliberate deferral, for all of it is meant to constitute the problem itself for which we do not have any extenstional vocabulary.

“Bergson, who contributed so much to the comprehension of the nature of philosophical problems, said that a well-posed problem was a problem solved” (81). When the world discloses itself, it does so to us. The world is made possible by us belonging to it. To *Dasein*, being in a world is something that belongs essentially. Thus, *Dasein*’s understanding of Being pertains with equal primordially both to an understanding of something like a world (“Being and Time” 33). We are reversing the Heideggerian dialectic, in turning towards existence to understand the world. In understanding its own being, it has a tendency to do so in terms of that entity towards which it comports itself proximally and in a way which is essentially constant- in terms of the world (33).

The world is something constitutive for *Dasein*, hence understanding the basic structure of what it means to be-there is the key to understanding the world-phenomenon adequately. The worldliness in novels is not a manifestation made by a book, but a phenomenon in which we and the world mutually constitute one another.

So, if indeed the experience of reading a novel is worldly, then we must ourselves be indistinguishably involved in the world that becomes there. For the world exists only as that which constitutes *Dasein*. This also implies that our awareness of the world in reading makes us aware of our own existence in it. Here, the preposition in is not meant in the sense that a cat is in a box, but the con-figuration of existence itself, as in the ‘where’ of *Dasein*. Being-in is the formal existential expression for the Being of *Dasein*, which has Being-in-the-world as its essential state. This Being alongside or Being absorbed is not be explained ontologically by ontic characterization. The priority of epistemology in the history of philosophy has ‘represented’ this Being-in as knowing the world. However, Subject and Object do not

coincide with *Dasein* and the World (87). Knowing here, in the sense of *episteme* as opposed to *doxa* as elucidated before in our discussion on Sliogeris' book, has the phenomenal character of Being which is in and towards the world. To know the contents of a novel is not, as imitated by my past experiences of reading *Great Expectations* as mentioned, forming an archive of information where I remain a rational being not involved in the facts. Rather, "one addresses oneself to something and discusses it, does more than 'think' about them- in knowing, *Dasein* achieves a new status of Being [*Seinstand*]" ("Being and Time" 90). The knowledge that we come in contact with in the reading of a book is not in the form of information about the book, or ourselves, or the world which could be stated propositionally. "The inside rooted knowledge that literature promotes enables a specific privileged relation to the world rather than conveying a collection of facts about it. It is thus knowledge we inhabit more than acquire" (Falke, 53). Thus, the knowledge, if at all, in literature is not to be collated with epistemology as we conventionally associated knowing with.

Art makes us aware that we are by involving us in a scheme of things that wrenches us out from the average [*durchschnittlich*] and everyday [*alltäglich*] dissolved state of non-being. If being is ontological and not merely factually being-present, then it must involve understanding. Since our automatized existence in the modern world necessitates us to lead a machined existence, our everyday lives hardly carry with it the realization of truly existing in the world. All our transactions have become based in 'equipmentality', where each thing is 'used' for specific functions. Readiness-to-hand [*Zuhandenheit*] defines this very epoch, the smart-phone being an apothetic embodiment of it. We live under the impression that everything is at our back and call, and only a click on our phone screen away. In this manner of survival, that which is closest is lost from sight, that is the world and the relations that constitute it. Ironically, the world becomes *Unvorhanden* or un-ready-to-hand. If art indeed is able to provide an experience of the world, then it must deviate from the automatized

conventions of everyday life. This is exactly the point the Formalists were making, that defamiliarization is necessary for art to be, for else it would be but another instrument based on reliability.

“The un-ready-to-hand can be encountered not only in the sense of that which is unsayable or simply missing, but as something un-ready-to-hand which is not missing at all and not unusable, but which stands in our way of concern. That to which our concern refuses to turn, that for which it has ‘no time’...that which has not as yet been attended to” (“Being and Time 103”). The world is ever present as an unknown reality that is possible. It is art that renders this reality as possible by lighting up the hitherto neutralized content of equipment, “not as something never seen before, but as a totality constantly slighted beforehand in circumspection. With this totality, however, the world announces itself” (105).

A notion that is often circulated, and that which is based on propositional correspondence as model of truth, opines that the world where we are is the true one and artworlds are fantastical versions of the same. What such a view fails to take into cognizance, and very suitable so for its own purpose, is the fact that we hardly are in the world until we confront something extraordinary. The monotonous machined existence allows us to exercise only a factual being-there, whereas to be means to be somewhere and to understand where one is and oneself in terms of that ‘where’. We are thus alienated from the world or nature, whichever name one chooses to begin with. A discovery of the world, is in this sense, a movement of return. As Proust so poetically says, the only paradises we have are the ones we have lost. Thus, the Romantic belief as espoused by Schiller in *Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*, which we shall show to be a continuation of the same ethos of Enlightenment which it sought to contend, that the former belonged to the epical times and the latter ponders on the alienated self divorced from nature, has two historical consequences. On one hand, it does affirm man’s loss of harmony to nature as a result of industrialization. However, in treating the

artwork now as an autonomous thing that is indifferent to the world from where it stems, it specializes art and makes the aesthetic differentiation as something concrete. In doing so, it accepts the industrial world as the base from which it should deviate. No doubt it was a historical necessity for Romanticism peculiar to its motives, but the reception and continuation of this trend has eventually established the mechanical world as the true one and art as the fantastic, thereby equating truth with that which is merely ready-at-hand.

“The world is therefore something ‘wherein’ *Dasein* already was, and if in any manner it explicitly comes away from anything, it can never do more than come back to the world” (105). A phenomenological approach towards art, therefore, sees art as a movement of return to the nature, that has been lost. Obviously, this does not imply a restoration of a configuration that existed in the past, but a reclamation of the ground on which one stands by assuming a standpoint different in nature than any pragmatic consideration. It is in this vein that Adorno remarks art to be more loyal to nature, “because it dispenses with the semblance of the immediate, the merely natural, at least in the guise we find today” (Adorno, “Aesthetics” 47).

Material is dissolved in use in being accessed as instrument or tool. What is then the role of material in the work of art? We come back to Heidegger’s “The Origin of the Work of Art” from which we began our journey. “The work sets forth the earth in setting up a world. The work lets the earth be an earth” (45). By earth, Heidegger means the material reality that otherwise disappears in the usefulness of equipment. Thus, the coming-to-be of the world is not ideational in character, but a thingly, in the sense that it reveals the material or medium to be as it is, that from which it had been alienated all along in its equipmental manifestations, hence, instigating a return. The world grounds itself on the earth and the earth juts through world. The world tries to surmount the earth, and the earth pulls it and keeps it in itself. In one of his most remarkable passages, Heidegger says that the opposition of world-earth is a

striving that raises both into the self-assertion of their natures. “The work is an instigation of this striving” (48).

The work, in its quest for a thingly world, asserts the world of things which are otherwise hidden from our gaze. All material becomes expressive. “It is the affect that is metallic, crystalline, stony, and so on; and the sensation is not colored but, as Cézanne said, coloring...giving back “the water of painting” to nature” (Deleuze, “What is philosophy?” 167). In his characteristic lexicon, Deleuze calls the artist a seer, a becomer, for things become for the first time through his technique. Towards what is this technique devoted? “It is always a question of freeing life whenever it is imprisoned, or of tempting it into uncertain combat” (167). The word technique, as we understand today, is a scientific approach to make some positive result possible. No wonder its original sense, in the manner in which it pertains to art, is lost in the wake of technology and industry. In Greek, *techne* meant art and craft and *technites* corresponded to artists and craftsmen. But *techne* was associated with a mode of knowing, and not action. Technical knowledge is that which brings forth things out of concealedness. It is in this sense Deleuze’s artist is a becomer for it is through his *techne* that things become and the world appears as a movement of return. An artist arrives at this ‘origin’ through a *complication* or bringing together, that bears for us a configuration of things from which we could have evolved but that which is not given to us (“Proust and Signs” 30).

Worldliness reverts back to Being-in-the-world which is an act or action of understanding. Heidegger makes understanding as the key to being and to his relational ontology. ‘To Dasein’s Being an understanding of Being belongs. Any understanding [*Verständnis*] has its Being in an act of understanding [*Verstehen*] ...to understand Being-in-the-world belongs to the essential content of its understanding of Being” (“Being and Time” 118). Our existence, according to this insight, is by default a dynamic process of constantly

negotiating with the world in acts of understanding rather than being a metaphysical given. Action becomes a very important attribute in Heideggerian philosophy, in that he attributes adjectives to things in their playing out as verb. The world worlds, the thing things, and so on. Similarly, a phenomenological conception of worldliness in reading would focus as central to it the understanding of this world, for the world and being exist only in this act. “The where-in of an act of understanding which assigns or refers itself is that for which one lets entities be encountered in the kind of Being that belongs to involvements; and this ‘wherein’ is the phenomenon of the world. And the structure of that-to-which [*worauf hin*] *Dasein* assigns itself is what makes up the worldhood of the world” (119). The world as encountered in an artwork is thus not given as something concrete but as that to which the understanding of it refers to as a horizon or a shelter. It is not constituted as formalization, mathematical or otherwise, but is involved in system of relations in which concerned circumspection dwells (122).

The world is held together [*halten*] by this concern. It is interesting how Heidegger points out the common etymological root of *halten* and *hüten*, which means care. This care can be negatively defined as the absence of indifference. Our engagement with art brings us in relation to things which we don’t encounter otherwise, or even when we do, they are submerged in use and prejudices. Art seems to us like a world because we enter into concerned relationships with that which happens in the phenomenon of perception. The solution as to why the experience of reading is worldly is therefore to be sought not in the artwork as thing itself but in the distance that develops between us and the work in which the understanding, existence, and the world dwells.

Circumspection [*Umsicht*] involves in seeing something as being located somewhere. It is the admission and appreciation for the context that renders meaning to something present amidst its configuration. In the case of literary criticism, we often begin with the idea that the

work, as Heidegger pointed out in his denunciation of aesthetics, is a human expression corresponding to experiences [*Erleben*]. Such an epistemological outlook makes the critic anxious to discover ‘references’ to place the work in the crossroads of knowledge already made available by other disciplines. In this process, they tend to forget that ‘reference is not an ontical characteristic of something ready-to-hand, when it is rather that by-which the readiness-to-hand itself is constituted’ (114). Signs are not formal indicators of correspondence but indicate where one lives, where one’s concerns dwells. If we already begin with the presupposition that we know the state of being [*Seinstand*], then only can we claim signs as markers. That approach however, would not only be far from being phenomenological but would be against the very grain of humanities in not trying to participate in the otherness of the work of art.

The tendency of the critic to look at art as reflection or a coded reality already pre-existent prior to the phenomenon of art is also an offshoot of Cartesian outlook that begins with the presupposition of spatiality. Accordingly, space is given a priority with respect to the things that are located in it. Thus, it makes us believe that we can locate anything in a pre-given space and form correspondences. Heidegger refutes the pre-giveness of space while he thinks, our notion of space is firstly not abstract but evolved from concrete experiences, and secondly, that space isn’t exclusively geometric/formal but significant/existential. “All ‘wheres’ are discovered and circumspectively interpreted as we go our ways in everyday dealings; they are not ascertained and catalogued by the observational measurement of space” (137). Instead of Cartesian primordially or Kantian transcendentality, the character of space according to Heidegger has to do with de-severance [*Ent-fernung*] and directionality [*Ausrichtung*]. Placing the entities at a distance leads to a discovery of their closeness. The ‘where’ of the world that appears in reading a novel cannot be located according to parameters of history and geography, for the space where it dwells is created for the first time

as a primal leap [*Ursprung*] towards an origin, and is thus truly original in nature [*ursprünglich*]. And more importantly, the ‘where’ of this world cannot be conceived independent of us like we can conceive latitudes and longitudes or a time frame in the past as it occurs in history. We are implicated in the world. “Dasein understands its ‘here’ in terms of environmental ‘yonder’. The ‘here’ does not mean the ‘where’ of something present-at-hand, but rather the ‘where-at’ [*wobei*] of a deseverant Being-alongside, together with this deseverance” (142). Any meaningful relation can exist only in the distance separating the participants. Unlike Pragmatism that purportedly tries to reduce the distance of all things and makes them human tools, phenomenology understands Dasein as persisting in distance and separation [*Entfernung*] that it can never cross over. The experience of resistance, discovery of what is resistant to our endeavors, is possible ontologically only by reason of the disclosedness of the world (253). We may return over and over to an artwork, but we need to adopt distances to its thingness for the world to be disclosed, and with, our new selves.

This space is not in the subject, nor is the world in space. Space is rather ‘in’ the world so far as space has been disclosed by that Being-in-the-world which is constitutive for *Dasein*. *Dasein*, understood ontologically, is spatial. The space of literature, as Blanchot says, is unique for in it nothing happens other than the happening of this space itself. If space is considered to be the base over which events occur, then the environmental regions get neutralized to pure dimension. The homogenous space of nature is deprived of worldhood (147).

When we are in the process of reading a novel, we seem to undergo an apparently contradictory ‘striving’. On one hand, we find ourselves [*sich befinden*] thrown to the world. We have no choice but to abide by the faculty of delivered over to it [*Geworfenheit*]. On the other hand, we also project ourselves to that to which we find ourselves thrown [*Entwurf*]. Our being in the world, and here no distinction can be made between outside and artworld for

no such distinction exist in the world as totality, involves a projection of our thrown selves. From this projection, being and the world emerge as possibilities. Understanding as projection towards a possibility of Being does not grasp the projected possibility thematically, but it throws itself into it as a possibility (385-86). The world of a novel is not an archived array of events, but a ground where our comportment to it makes the world come into being. The totality of the world does not therefore imply a wholeness, rather plurality, since the world is but a possible comportment of Being towards it.

The act of understanding as a projection that dwells in being carried on over at a distance makes its modality that of interpretation. Paul Ricœur in his essay *Heidegger and the Question of Subject* remarks this feature by saying, Dasein is not given [*gegeben*], but given over to, as a projection [*aufgegeben*]. Phenomenology is hermeneutic (Ricœur, “Conflict” 227). Through what do Understanding and Interpretation occur? This question takes us to another area of fundamental importance that has been ignored both by Descartes and Kant, that is, language. In another essay titled “Existence and Hermeneutics”, Ricœur asks, “is it not once again within language itself that we must seek the indication that understanding is a mode of being?” (10). Descartes’ subject treats language as merely a tool and not something constitutive for itself. And according to Ricœur, it is precisely why the subject in Descartes has neither been able to arrive at ego or being human. “*Subjectum* does not mean ego, but according to the Greek *hypokeimenon* and the Latin *substratum*, it is that which gathers everything to itself to become a basis. The *subjectum* is not yet man and not at all the ‘I’” (224).

The task of phenomenology would be in a sense the retrieval of this cogito that has been lost in the so-called philosophy of consciousness. The self [*le moi*] must be lost in order to find the ‘I’ [*le je*] (19). This search for existence must take place in language, through understanding, as art too offers us this scope in its various manifestations. The to-and-fro

movement we referred before as *Vor-und Rückbezogenheit* and *Geworfenheit-Entwurf* is recasted in the phenomenology of Ricœur as the *arché-telos* dichotomy. In understanding, Dasein is confronted with all that has been, the archeology of the subject. Our understanding of a work is first and foremost made possible by the horizon that we already have before us which makes the signs intelligible. We tend to associate incidents by similar ones encountered by us in the past. However, understanding in language also remains entangled in the movement of deciphering to which it gives rise, which is to say, that the world and along with the 'I' that develop out of the process is always directed to a future as projection, as something still not complete. This is demonstrated by the strange feeling of discovering something new which hadn't struck us before while we try explaining the experience of reading a novel later to a friend, or when we encounter something in the world that revokes the experience of the novel and widens it in some sense. Ricœur's recovery of the cogito through the documents of life is an echo of Heidegger's 'return' and Deleuze's 'origin'. And this quest involves a remarkable relatedness backward or forward that can be mistaken for circularity, as we did at the beginning of our thesis.

Heidegger's replacement of the cogito with 'I am' and Language pushes the problem of ontology into hermeneutics. We shall later point out how this is significant to the European Modernist novel in the last sub-chapter of the first part of the thesis. The book as something shaped in language and myself as someone with language creates a distance where the 'I am' 'becomes the theme of a hermeneutics and not simply of intuitive description. Therefore, a retrieval of cogito is possible only as a regressive movement beginning with the whole phenomenon of being-in-the-world and turned towards the question of who of that being-in-the-world' (226). Thus, the experience of art is not an experience of the self, but on the contrary the very possibility of the formation of a new 'I'. This 'I' is not an individual ego as we understand it, but the content of a formal structure. Kant's notion of the 'I' as a logical

subject does not mean that it is a concept obtained by logic, rather a subject of logical behavior. 'I think' is not something represented but the very structure that makes representation possible ("Being and Time" 370).

We cannot claim to elaborate on the worldliness of a novel by dissecting it with tools and locating it somewhere, rather we allow ourselves to be located in the space that opens up in our understanding. Understanding cannot be described, but description itself is a projection in which understanding is implicit. We can at the most try to enact an attitude in understanding the world, but the very nature of the world as disclosure of Dasein makes it impossible to be described as something already-there. With this, we have now laid the ground ready to enter into Gadamer's idea of *Erfahrung* as experience and the ontology of the text.

Since Being-in-the-world is typically an act of comportment towards understanding, and that this understanding has the character of event, as in something that occurs, then, this event needs a place to take place. What is it that provides the event of worldliness the opportunity to occur in the phenomenon of reading? Quite evidently, this place is not to be understood in the usual sense, but as something that allows both the reader and the work to reside together. It is language, that is the *Mitte* or the common ground, where any kind of conveying [*Vermittlung*] can take place. To understand worldliness would involve first and foremost an acknowledgement of language as that which makes it possible.

Gadamer's understanding of language is analogous to Heidegger's understanding of space in that both deny any transcendental primordially to the two. Just like the notion of space for us is always conditional and is generated out of experience, language has no independent life apart from the world that comes to language within it. This implies, that while approaching a novel, we are not to look at it as a shaped matter as we understand an

equipment. Language is not a neutral lexical source which resides in the dictionary, but the language peculiar to a novel is only revealed by the world that appears in it. Language has its real being only in the fact that the world is presented in it. It is not language that is primordial in context of a novel or being at large, but rather, man's being-in-the-world in primarily linguistic.

In this sense, language is not to be regarded as Spanish or Bangla and so on, but as that through and in which the world discloses itself in an event. We have already seen in Heidegger how discourse is supposed to be that which hosts and explicates worldliness. Language is therefore not that which explains being, but that in which 'we are', ontologically and not merely ontically as factual existence. If discourse is the articulation of understanding, then it is necessary to situate discourse in the structure of being and not the reverse (Ricœur, "Hermeneutics" 58).

What is the implication of this in reading? If there is something worldly that appears in the phenomenon of reading then it is language that hosts this event. Also, the occurrence of the world suggests that we ourselves emerge ontologically, which is to say, that we are in the world that appears. What is the nature of this Being-there in the world that appears in reading? Being-there [*Dabeisein*] does not mean to simply exist, but to participate. Being outside oneself or self-forgetfulness in participation is not a privative condition, but the positive possibility of being wholly with something else (Gadamer, "Truth and Method" 120).

A book, just like a person, offers us the possibility of engaging with the Other than we ourselves are not. And it is only in such an engagement that the world has the possibility of disclosing itself. The language of a novel or that which comes to pass between a human being and another is therefore not an object exclusively possessed by either. "Language is not mere

means of conversation, its true being resides in dialogue, coming to understanding in which the life of a community is played out” (443). This is the essence of Heideggerian ontology that is relative and not psychological in character.

Thus, any engagement with the Other reverts back to the question and possibility of worldliness. Worldliness, according to phenomenology, is not a matter of contemplation but entering into relation. ‘The question of the world takes the place of the question of the other. In thereby making understanding worldly, Heidegger de-psychologizes it’ (Ricœur, “Hermeneutics” 56). Therefore, worldliness in the phenomenon of reading of a novel is not an aspect to be discussed about, but the very ontological figuration of that phenomenon. The world appears, among other engagements, in the act of reading. It is not part of an assemblage, but everything takes place ‘in’ it.

Our reading of a novel, is hosting the world which is but understanding, enriches us with something that was not yet there is us. This enrichment is not accumulated in a subjectivity, but in *Erfahrung* or experience, subjectivity itself is overcome in its encounter and understanding of the other and drawn into an event of meaning. This experience forms and builds us, so to speak. It becomes a part of our education or formation [*Bildung*].

Gadamer shows the gradual de-psychologization of this notion in its evolution in German thought. While earlier it pertained to external appearances [*Gebirgsbildung*] or in Kant as the cultivation of talent, in Hegel it acquires a reflexive connotation as *sich bilden*, or building oneself up. In its stress on the ever-ongoing process of formation, it resembles the Greek *physis*. Everything that is received is absorbed but not as means for other ends. According to Herder, *Bildung* amounts to rising up to humanity through culture.

We have always associated reading with expanding one’s horizons and outlooks, and if there’s anything that recurs on and on as what is known through reading, it would be the

world. In a witty yet profound dialogue from the eponymous film adapted from Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*, Ashok tells his co-passenger in a train when asked whether he wishes to travel to England, 'My grandfather says that's what books are for. To travel, without moving an inch.' The experience of reading, by allowing us glimpses of the other, the world makes us go beyond ourselves to arrive at a being which is more expanded and open in comparison to the previous. In the larger sense, Hegel opines this is true for *Geisteswissenschaften* or Human Sciences, which has *Bildung* as the condition of its existence. By rising above particularity or subjectivity, *Bildung* involves an alienation from oneself in constituting the universal intellectual being. Acquiring language, customs, knowledge of antiquity forms the 'we' that acquire it. Thus, we are on one hand alienated, as well as formed [*sich bilden*] in our interaction with the other. This is the movement of return for which the other is indispensable, for our true being is impaired from coming-into-being in the everydayness and averageness in which we are dissolved as an impersonal 'they' [*man*], as Heidegger already pointed out. "To recognize one's own in the alien, to become at home in it, is the basic movement of spirit, whose being consists only in returning to itself from what is other" (Gadamer, "Truth and Method" 15).

What is preserved here is not subjectivity or self, but *Bildung* or formation itself. The world, unlike in the philosophy of Fichte, does not exist for us human beings, but our existence requires the world as the 'in'. Art is no longer a specialized, differentiated object that exists for its own sake but that through and in which we come closer to understanding ourselves and the world.

"Our experience of the aesthetic too is a mode of self-understanding. Self-understanding always occurs through understanding something other than the self and includes the unity and integrity of the other. Since we meet the artwork in the world and encounter a world in the individual artwork, the work of art is not some alien universe into

which we are magically transported for a time. Rather, we learn to understand ourselves in and through it, and this means that we sublimate [*aufheben*] the discontinuity and atomism of isolated experiences into the continuity of our own existence” (Gadamer, “Truth and Method” 83).

In his book *I and Thou*, Martin Buber classifies all human relationships into two classes. The first set of relations is designated according to its mode as I-It. In this, our relation with someone or something else is for the sake of use or function. The aesthetic attitude towards art would also fall under this rubric, for the radical alterity of the artwork is not accorded any independent status, rather it is subsumed in the ego of the ‘I’. Buber says that all our relations follow, more or less, this mode. However, there are occasions when we go beyond our prejudices and pragmatic selves and surrender ourselves to a relation where we are, in a sense, born anew. In the light of the I-Thou relation neither I nor the Thou retains any autonomy. However, Buber says that the I-Thou relation is not given nor can it be sustained; it can only be comported towards, and never achieved completely. The I-Thou mode of being thus lies in the attempt of participation, or to be a part of something greater than oneself [*teilnehmen*]. The attempt and the relation are indistinguishable from one another.

To have the world means to have an orientation [*Verhalten*] towards it. Only an attitude creates a relationship [*Verhältnis*] to the world, without which the world has no ontological meaning. If the other is essential in the phenomenon of worldliness, what can we say about the nature of this relationship? What sort of an approach can at all allow this phenomenon to occur when we start reading a book? Both Hegel and Buber point in going beyond oneself, not only from the side of ‘I’, but from both ends. “Transposing ourselves consists neither in the empathy of one individual for another nor in subordinating another person to our own standards; rather, it always involves rising to a higher individuality that

overcomes not only our particularity but also that of the other” (Gadamer, “Truth and Method” 304). Granting dignity to the thingness of the artwork is to let it play out in the event of its occurrence, and not allow it to be entrapped in either ‘I’ of the reader and ‘it’ of the book. ‘We must keep the dignity of the thing and the referentiality of language free from the prejudice originating in the ontology of the present-at-hand as well as in the concept of objectivity (452).

Gadamer says, ‘all encounter with the language of art is an encounter with an unfinished event and is itself part of this event’ (85). This is to say, that worldliness in the phenomenon of reading is not a theme of analytical enquiry, but a part of the very engagement, or participation or interaction with an artwork. It cannot be premeditated, nor recounted. It happens. ‘Being of art cannot be defined as an object of aesthetic consciousness- the aesthetic attitude is a part of the event of being that occurs in presentation, and belongs essentially to play as play’ (115). Gadamer weans out the work from the aesthetic differentiation of Schiller and formal purposiveness of Kant, and restores its being to that of a self-presenting event or occurrence.

The implicated state of the aesthetic attitude in the emergence of the world also reveals something fundamental to it, that is, its totality. We have already hinted that the totality of the world is not in an agglomerative sense of a collection of all things, but that of a horizon in which everything is. The world, as it appears in reading, is absolutely non-differentiable from the act of reading itself. Hence, worldliness is not a theme, it is an exigency of the mediation between the reader and the work itself. The non-differentiation of the mediation [*Vermittlung*] from the work itself is the actual experience of the work. The mediation, that communicates the work is, in principle total. Literature is a ‘total sign’ because it does not refer to something in particular by correspondence, but in the reading of it, the whole of life is played out. This does not in any way imply that all this is to be found

and known is present in such an experience, for as we already mentioned, the totality of the world is not an agglomerative one. But the return of oneself to being through the other in which the mediation is total and inseparable from experience, therein lies the clue to the world's totality. "In the experience of art is present a fullness of meaning that belongs not only to this particular content or object but rather stands for the meaningful whole of life" (61). Just like concepts, which according to Deleuze unlike propositions do not have a finite relevance based on references, the significance of art is infinite, which lets itself be explicated in the metaphor of worldliness in our discourse.

As Heidegger mentioned, being is explicated in the sense of self-presentation through the event of its coming-into-being only through discourse. Discourse here is to be understood as dialogue of conversation with the other. According to Aristotle, meaningful discourse is *hermeneia* that interprets reality, precisely to the degree that it says something of something. Moreover, discourse is *hermeneia* because a discursive statement is a grasp of the real by meaningful expression, not a selection of so-called impressions coming from the things themselves (Ricœur, "Conflict" 4). The very act of engaging with a novel and the world appearing in it is a process of interpretation. And this is precisely why, each novel leaves different impressions on people. For it is not one particular world contained in the artwork that is revealed, but the revelation of the world in interpretation itself that discloses both the reader and the work to one another. Wolfgang Iser in this book *The Range of Interpretation* calls the space between the reader and the work as liminal, for it leads to changes in the being so far, and evolves being in a new light. 'There is a difference to be coped with- this difference is a liminal space, because it demarcates both the subject matter and the register from one another, as it does not belong to either but is opened up by interpretation itself' (6). Interpretation narrows down the space it itself creates.

The world of the novel is created in my reading of it. It might appear that it is the product of my imagination. However, that is certainly not true for such an outlook would undermine the autonomous thingness of the artwork. The world as it appears as an understanding as interpretation is distanced from the viewer in its coming-into-being. Without this distance, the world not be perceptible at all. It is this distance that holds it in place, gives it an identity. Another way of saying this would be that the distance is necessary for the attitude of the ephebe to play itself out.

“What appears paradoxical-namely, that the subject matter is simultaneously shaped by the register and yet taken for something independent of it- is due to the liminal space that is opened up by interpretation itself” (60). For Gadamer, this space is not one which need be overcome, rather that which needs positive assertion of the part of the reader. Hermeneutics, as it had evolved in the Romantic period aimed to overcome this distance to arrive at truths of the past. For Schleiermacher, the task of interpretation was to understand the text better than the author himself. Dilthey too relied on experimental knowledge in a bid to put *Geisteswissenschaften* at par with natural sciences. Both Dilthey and Weber maintain that the fundamental phenomenon of interconnection between the past and the present is possible by the ideal-type formation. In this, they relied on the Husserlian notion of intentionality based on the univocality of language where the mind itself cannot be known but the identical co-relates it intends are open to access (Ricoeur, “Hermeneutics” 50). Dilthey’s *Lebensphilosophie* understood life as dynamism that were embedded in expressed structures, an idea, we can remark, to be similar to the objective spirit of Hegel. Evidently, the task of Hermeneutics at this stage of its development shifts from the text to the author, from sense and reference to lived experience or historicism.

For Gadamer, this temporal distance that separates us from the work and culture we seek to understand is not a gulf that is to be bridged. The naivety of historicism lay in trying

to overcome distance for historical objectivity. Distance is a positive and productive condition enabling understanding (Gadamer, "Truth and Method" 297). The very fact that the world as and how it appears in a novel is so distinct and different from the way we have been accustomed to look at things creates a distance between it and us where understanding can dwell, where we can seek to undertake an attitude to the things surrounding us. The world is so much lifted out of the ongoing course of the ordinary world and so much enclosed in its autonomous circle of meaning that no one is prompted to seek some other future or reality behind it- the spectator is set at an absolute distance- aesthetic distance since it signifies the distance necessary for seeing" (124). If worldliness is indeed, as Heidegger says, a coming-into-being of the other, then the distance between what a text offers us and what we ourselves bring to the reading of it if not be seen as a gulf that needs be covered, but a space that shapes the action.

That which takes place in the liminal distance so opened up by the engagement with the artwork is called 'play' by Gadamer. Just like players abide by certain constraints and yet give rise to ever new configurations in a game, the subject of play is the work itself and not the players, who are present only to perpetuate and bring the game into being. In the play as self-presentation, everything takes place in an 'in-between' space. "The world of the work of art, in which play expresses itself fully in the unity of its course, is in fact a wholly transformed world. In and through it everyone recognizes that that is how things are" (112).

Of course, the significance of this distance is generic in character and any interpretation is marked by how its liminal space is negotiated with. We have already touched upon this point in our discussion of aesthetics, where we have seen different conceptions of reality socially conditioning their equivalent understanding of art. The work of art cannot be isolated from the contingency of the chance conditions in which it appears (115).

We do arrive at an important question from this. If the work is historically separated from us, then it might as well appear differently as it had appeared previously. Our understanding of the *Mahabharata* is certainly not how it had appeared throughout the ages. A work thus may have changing aspects of itself depending on the time and space. But we must again realize, that just like the artwork presents a new aesthetic distance in the event of its occurrence, it also has a temporality of its own. This temporality, like its spatiality, is not to be collated with Cartesian notions of geographical space and historical time. The work does not disintegrate in the changing versions of itself since they are all contemporaneous with it [*gleichzeitig*].

Since the work is not given but something that happens, it 'is' only when it is brought to existence, when it 'becomes'. It is always contemporary, for it comes to existence at the time when it is read or seen. Contemporaneity and present-ness of aesthetic is its timelessness. Contemporaneity means that in its presentation this particular thing that presents itself achieves full presence; however, remote its origin may be (123). This is the reason by Amiya Deb tells us that the time in Literary History has to be understood as something distinct from chronological time, for the work of art is 'temporally syncretic', which is to say, created at the time when it is read or spoken about⁸ (Dev 320).

The task of presenting the world as something is an act of mimesis. Mimesis means the appearance of what is presented. "Without being imitated in the work, the world does not exist as it exists in the work. It is not there as it is there in the work, and without being reproduced, the work is not there" (Gadamer, "Truth and Method" 133). Imitation, as Danto mentioned in his book *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* is presenting something as something, hence ontologically, an act of interpretation. And this interpretation is fundamentally an act, a performance, a gesture. Iser notes that interpretation is a performative act, and not an explanatory one. "For an explanation to be valid, one must presuppose a

frame of reference, whereas performance has to bring out its own criteria” (Iser, “Range of Interpretation” 7). The essence of the world as picture lies between pure representation or reference [*Verweisung*], as in presenting the thing itself, and pure substitution [*Vertreten*]. “Every performance is an event- but not one in any way separate from the work- the work itself is what ‘takes place’ in the event of performance” (Gadamer, “Truth and Method” 141).

The understanding of worldliness, therefore, is not understanding something specific in a work of art, but understanding in itself, for the world and being-in-the-world are categories of understanding. This understanding, according to phenomenology that looks upon the work as an event of its coming-to-be, is an act or performance and is not to be separated from it. Theory, here does mean a framework that can be applied to a physical situation, rather it takes about a certain way of seeing the very engagement itself. Before we conclude the first chapter by a discussion on theory and thesis, and justifying the choice of texts considered, we shall briefly give an overview of the development of the phenomenological approach towards literature and see what relevance it might have in this very thesis.

(E) PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACHES TOWARDS LITERATURE

Someone following our discussion so far might object the weightage and space accorded to matters pertaining to philosophy, given that our enquiry is eventually centered on reading two novels. Objections can be raised in this vein against digression from the moot point, assuming there exists any. However, at this point when we are in the transition phase of the thesis, moving over from theoretical considerations towards enacting engagement with the novels

themselves, we are compelled to justify the course of our movement, and by doing so, briefly comment on the relevance of philosophy in a thesis concerning literature.

It might appear, just as natural sciences came to subsume humanities under their fold during Enlightenment as discussed previously, that literature here is allowed to be subsumed under philosophy. It might also appear, as if a rapprochement is attempted to connect literature and philosophy in this thesis, like building a bridge. Both such claims, if they arise, would be untrue, for in order to have some validity, literature and philosophy must firstly be understood as two domains of human expressions which do not overlap. But do they?

We can retrace our steps back to Plato's *Republic* where we see a discourse taking shape between philosophers and poets. According to Plato, philosophers are concerned with drawing our attention to a higher reality that cannot be tangibly perceived in the everyday world. Their goal is to uncover the ideal realm of forms, whose impure or imperfect imitations make up the objects of the reality where we dwell. Poets, on the other hand, work with the sensual aspect of media, be it stone in sculpture, or colors for painters, sound for music, the body for dance or language for poetry. As a result, we have Plato's famous dictate on art being twice removed from reality, since it imitates that which is already an imitation of the ideal. Whether or not we abide by Platonic idealism, the grain of truth in Plato's antithetical positing of art and philosophy inheres a truth that is relevant to this day despite exceptions.

This ontological distinction is drawn in Deleuze's *What is Philosophy?* in that he accords concepts to the realm of philosophy and affects/percepts to that of art. Although both philosophy and art require a medium to posit itself, the function of the medium in each of them follow different modalities. A consequence of this is that philosophy tells us something

in a conclusive sense which has universal relevance, whereas art through a particular affect or percept embodies human finitude.

Moreover, the aesthetic attitude, which also persists and would continue to persist in some shade given how heavily it is sedimented in tradition and our customs of approaching an artwork, makes it imperative for us to make a difference between reality and the artworld when we come in contact with an artwork. The art lover's pleasure is based on this difference that he is logically required to be able to mark. On the other hand, the path to philosophy, if we take Plato's cave allegory as the model, begins with his inability to mark any difference between reality and appearance. Philosophy attempts to illumine this difference in its course, whereas art requires this difference as a field of its own playing-out.

Does that imply that philosophy and art never overlap? We certainly find art to be philosophically dense at times, and philosophy to be artfully expressed. But in such cases, we are dealing with the question of style, or to exemplify, the kind of co-habitation that form seems to share with the content it embodies. The space, or the region, where they meet must be sought elsewhere.

“Philosophy of art not only intersects the plane of human interest in art at right angles, philosophical writings on art encourages, and encourages when it is best and most exemplary, the view that the philosophy of art is deeply irrelevant to the life of art” (Danto, “Transfiguration” 55-56). Danto goes on to say that art and philosophy touch at a single point. If two planes intersect one another orthogonally, we do not get a space of overlapping with an area, but only a thin line of intersection. Interestingly, Sliogeris in talking about the interaction between art and philosophy uses the metaphor of a razor's edge which coincides with the image of orthogonal intersection in Danto. “Rilke was not just a scribbler of poems but lived in the realm of the very principle of poetry, consequently, lived on a razor's edge-

where poetry and philosophy converge’’ (Sliogeris 5). So, there must be something common to both art and philosophy which in fact merits the inclusion of long philosophical passages in our thesis on art, but this commonality cannot be sought in something discreet and definable that is part of both, for the same object would have different functions in each domain and would eventually not be same apart from in name.

‘‘The artist is a seer, a becomer’’ (Deleuze, ‘‘What is Philosophy?’’ 171). He devotes his life to the quest of becoming. A philosopher too shares the same vocation, even if he has an end in mind. Deleuze calls this vocation, this being ‘an athleticism of becoming’.

It is not an organic or muscular athleticism but its inorganic double, an ‘‘affective athleticism’’, an athleticism of becoming that reveals only forces that are not its own- ‘‘plastic specter’’. In this respect artists are like philosophers. What little health they possess is often too fragile, not because of their illnesses or neuroses but because they have seen something in life that is too much for anyone, too much for themselves, and that has put on them the quiet mark of death. But this something is also the source or breath that supports them through the illnesses of the lived (what Nietzsche called health) (172).

One may recall what the great poet Binoy Mazumdar, who suffered from mental illness and had to be kept under medical care in institutions from the tender age of 28, had once written on his taking up of poetry in the vein of a becoming which had captivated him, so much so, as to leaving him ill, as Deleuze mentions in the same context. We shall return much later to the association of ill-health and art in our discussion of Musil’s novel. For now, we can briefly quote Binoy,

On reaching the age of twenty-five, I realized that the fundamentals [*mulguli*] and clues [*sutraguli*] of creation in all inanimate matter, plants and human

beings are alike. Inanimate means clay bricks, the soil of the earth. Plants refer to *supuri* trees, mango tress, *madhabilata*. Humans are we- creatures decked in clothes...and other creatures – the keys [*sutra*] to creation in each of them is the same. On realizing this, I left my job and started writing poetry...When I realized this truth, there was nothing left for me to do other than to write poetry.

(19)

Thus, although we agree with Hegel that “an artist has no need of philosophy, and if he thinks philosophically, he performs work just contrary to the nature of art as regards the form of knowing” (qtd in Sliogeris 5), we realize that the razor’s edge hinted above is not an epistemological one that has to do with knowing and an ontological concern, a way of being devoted exclusively to becoming. Our area of enquiry in this thesis is not strictly speaking philosophical, but ontological. We have already understood so far that ontology involves understanding as interpretation in an event of becoming. In the space that we are trying to approach lies the origin, in the sense as Heidegger explains origin and not in the conventional geographical-historical sense, of both philosophy and art. Not only is worldliness a philosophical concept that involves ‘seeing’, but the very mode of appearance of the world in art is the same through which philosophy too evolves, be it for other ends. Art cannot be simply explicated in the language of art itself, for the language of art is that which does not give itself over to explication but only self-expression. This is why we adopt perspectives, like racial, feminist, psychological, colonial and so on, as interpretive lens in our study of literature. However, every such perceptual criterion is an imposition on the text. ‘And perhaps the dilemma is going to be forever inescapable so long as we attempt to define art in terms of features that either compare or contrast with the features of the real world. But then, it might be said, it must be fatally inescapable since what else comparative or contrastive features can there be upon which to erect a theory of art?’ (Danto, “What Art is” 40). It is

because we are looking towards understanding worldliness itself, which is a theme for philosophy, but not as a theme but instead as a projection which is shared by the pursuit of both art and philosophy, the latter becomes fundamental to our quest.

Danto makes an observation that philosophy evolved in the ancient world only in India and in Greece. Art, as something that contrasts with reality, arose together with philosophy (77). This, obviously, would be a historically, if not flawed but at least prejudiced statement to make. However, Danto tries to underwrite a rift of man with reality which conditioned theoretical contemplation. Such a conflict or dissatisfaction may have equally occurred in other civilizations. Having said that, we would follow Danto's line of argument in how he understands this rift. Since these two cultures had things which marked a difference with what is real, Danto contests both philosophy and art could develop in such a situation. Unlike science, which is a discourse on things which exists, the becoming of philosophy and art comprises in the simultaneous becoming of their objects, since both are hermeneutic in character. This makes art a natural philosophical subject, indeed a historical one. Art, like philosophy, is concerned with the space between language and the world (79). Both talk in language, of the world, and hovers in the liminal space opened between the two. "That (artworks) stand at the same philosophical distance from reality as words do, that they accordingly locate those who relate to them as artworks at a comparable sort of distance- and as this distance spans the space philosophers have always worked with- it is to be expected that art should have a philosophical pertinence" (82). On one hand we find it difficult to define both philosophy and art on their own terms for they relate to the world, and simultaneously there is this problem of maintaining their autonomy as domains of expressions. Thus, no strict demarcation can be made in an epistemological sense to highlight art or philosophy as being something defined. "Our best philosophers of philosophy- and of art- have wished to insist that the definition of art cannot be given, that it is a mistake to

attempt to give it, not because there is not a boundary but because the boundary cannot be drawn in ordinary ways” (57). This is the reason why Sliogeris frames the title of his book in terms of ‘ontotopy’, as in space of being, and not space occupied by something which can exist independent of that space. Our point is not to define art at all, but to show that discourse concerning the world-becoming in art is indeed a philosophical matter, not because it is conceptual (which it is not), but that it is philosophical in its mode of coming-into-being.

“The philosophical value of art lies in the historical fact that it helped bring that concept to consciousness along with itself. None of this is so much to have advanced a philosophical definition of art as it is to have shown why the definition of art is a philosophical matter” (83). If then, philosophy and art coincide at the edge of their individual ontotopical regions, then they must share certain temporalities in common, for being is how time unfolds as Heidegger has shown. Unlike the empty chronological time of mathematics, concrete time is saturated [*erfüllte*] with what transpires, occurs or persists [*verharrt*] in it. The mode of being determines the temporality, and accordingly we have different modes through which things and time are disclosed to us. We shall begin with the aspect we have already discussed in some detail, and that is the modality of event.

In his book *Controversy over the Existence of the World*, Roman Ingarden approaches event as an occurrence of coming-into-being [*ins-Sein-treten*] which has no duration. The event ceases to exist at the point of coming into being. Deleuze has highlighted this notion in saying that concepts come to being with infinite speeds, and we have seen in our discussion of Gadamer that contemporaneity makes the event of art temporally syncretic, hence it has no duration. However, events are endowed with a peculiar non-self-sufficiency for their occurrence is not possible with antecedents and consequences. The lack of duration of events does not shift them to some transcendental domain, but is an indication of the actuality [*Aktualität*] of the present which brings them into occurrence. However, even if existential

autonomy is an indispensable condition for actuality, it is not sufficient for the world is indispensable if events are to occur. "The world outlasts events, but they belong to its history" (Ingarden, "Controversy" 232). This history cannot be regarded as an object of epistemology, for we ourselves are in it. The significance of event rests on the mediation which brings it to birth, and should not be described point-like [*punktuell*] for that would imply an a priori spatial-geometric-linear time and undermine the element of its actuality.

To become is a concept that, according to Deleuze dwells between the event and historical facts. "Event does not denote what has factually happened, but points at the virtual region in which a constant immanent flow of becoming affects the historical present. The flow is real enough to make history happen, yet it never reduces itself to a concrete place and time" (Rowner 141). The event in-forms its own spatio-temporality every time it occurs, and does not fit into a pre-given space-time. This is as much true for historical events as the event of literature if one understands history from the vantage point of a historically affected consciousness as Gadamer said [*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein*]. The becoming of the event cannot be made subservient to any other categories. We shall try to demonstrate the primacy of the event over space-time in our discussion on Proust, in how he creates the tradition in the projection of his narrative trying to acquire it.

The description of the temporality of art and philosophy is not exhausted by the mode of event alone. Just like we have seen Hegel laying emphasis on the movement of thoughts rather than the end point which is but a carcass, the reading of a novel too is a process and takes place for a finite duration. Both a novel and a work of philosophy is in this sense a process-object [*Vorgangsgegenstand*] comprising of phases evolving in time. The phases are characterized by their continuous passing away [*vorübergehen*], a perpetual transformation of the being-active into the no-longer present [*vorgangenes*]. To be a process requires the efficaciousness [*Wirksamkeit*] of the past extending beyond activeness.

At the same time, the artwork just like a concept in philosophy is a thing that subsists in time. In this sense, they are 'objects' according to the terminology of Ingarden. Gadamer mentioned that an artwork like a concept in philosophy does not become dated in the sense a scientific theory may become irrelevant or obsolete. Since the findings of science foreshadows the axioms on which the theory stand, truth becomes a matter of correspondence [*Richtigkeit*] with facts. Heidegger tells us that the understanding of truth as *commensuratio*, measuring up or measuring against something, developed in the Middle ages, deviating from the Greek notion of truth as *aletheia*. Thus, art as a thing that discloses truth in the event of its becoming cannot be treated as an object of science. Heidegger in *Essence of Truth* mentions that "truth as correctness is grounded in truth as un-hiddenness" (Heidegger, "Essence" 26). For a correspondence to exist, things must already be unhidden which we take for granted since they have become ready-to-hand or 'natural' to us. Correctness of assertion is a derivative concept of truth.

The event cannot be proved but only authenticated. "A work of literature is like a cry. It is a cry because it cannot be a statement. Literature enables a new vision but not a determination" (Falke 39). Any engagement with art, or being in general, is as mentioned before, comporting towards it in an attitude. We are enmeshed in the factual world of the ready-to-hand, to become free would in fact mean to project oneself into a relation with the other. "Becoming free for beings means to enact the projection of being [*Seinsentwurf*]" (Heidegger, "Essence" 45). Art and philosophy maintain their relevance because they create their own temporalities or being and not base their identities on correspondence. The value or truth or 'essence' of art is not the expression of any lived experience [*Erlebnis*] and does not consist in the artist expressing his soul-life such that, as Spengler thinks, later ages have to inquire about how art reflects the cultural soul of a historical period" (46).

Since aesthetics talks of only a manifold of things which are themselves already available for perception, Heidegger advises us to stay away from that attitude that ignored the very truth of art in making beings come into existence for the first time as in a primal leap [*Ursprung*]. Poetry makes beings more beingful by deconcealment [*Entbergung*]. This disclosure happens in man, that is in the history of man as an occurrence or event [*Ereignis*], and allows beings to be revealed. This truth is not something normative, lying outside man, nor is it subjectivist. Man comes to being in truth, the occurrence co-creates man.

The appearance of the world in the reading of the novel discloses us to ourselves, and this is the humanization of the essence of truth. Truth is not an abstract knowledge lying outside of ourselves, but forms in us and we inhere in it. This disclosure or truth can occur only when we give ourselves over to the work actively. Unhiddenness is not arbitrary, but brought about by projection.

Primordial unhiddenness is projective deconcealment as an occurrence happening in man, i.e., in his history. Truth is neither somewhere over man (as validity in itself) nor is it in man as a psychical subject, but man is 'in' the truth. Truth is something greater than man. The latter is in the truth only if, and only in so far as, he masters his nature, holds himself within the unhiddenness of beings, and comports himself to this unhiddenness. (55)

Roman Ingarden, one of the pioneers who first attempted a phenomenological approach towards reading, was instructed in the Husserlian tradition and we can see key Husserlian ideas of univocality of language and intersubjectivity in his formulations. Ingarden's notion of *Satzdenken* or Sentence-thought conceives sentences as intentional correlatives in language. Extrapolated, the work itself is regarded as a 'purely intentional correlative of a complex of sentences. If this complex finally forms a literary work, I call the whole sum of

sequent intentional sentence correlates the ‘world presented’ in the work’’ (Ingarden, “Cognition” 29). Although he conceives the world’s totality in an additive sense, he lays emphasis on the reader’s role in actively comporting himself to the work. The intentional correlates do not offer intuition unless one projects to the work. ‘’The reader must productively experience intuitive aspects in the material of vivid representation and thereby bring the portrayed objects to intuitive presence, to representational appearance’’ (57). This leads to a quasi-direct intercourse with objects in the phenomenon of reading. However, one must keep in mind that the work as an intentional object is intersubjective in character, which is to say that it comes to be in reading between the work as thing and the reader as one comporting to it, and not a transcendent psychological object. Ingarden was focused in uncovering the value of the work itself, and stressed on the heterogeneity of the work in relation to both the reader and the writer.

In speaking of the structure of the literary work, Ingarden hinted at the formal hermeneutics that shape our experience in reading. According to him, the polyphonic character of the work is involved in visibility of the unique character of each individual stratum within a whole, at the same time bringing something particular into the overall character of the whole without impairing its phenomenal unity (“Literary Work” 30). This concretization of this hermeneutic circle is where the work lies at the convergence between the reader and the writer, thereby revealing its virtuality or virtual reality. Iser in *The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach* invokes Sterne whose conception of the literary text was that of an arena where the author and reader participate in a game of imagination. Boredom and overstrain form the two extreme possibilities of reading.

As John Dewey re-iterates in *Art as Experience*, without an act of recreation an object is not perceived as a work of art. This constructive act of creating the work in the engagement is not a neutral process. Every original constructive process is inspired by and reveals pre-

intentions, according to Husserl. Heidegger had named this phenomenon as *Vorsicht*. Thus, at every stage of the process of reading, we anticipate the oncoming with an expectation that is born out of that which is already behind us. In a work of art, these expectations are rarely fulfilled in the manner we conceive them. Iser argues that this is why the reading process reflects the very process through which we gain experience, where preconceptions recede to the past, and the text becomes the present. Our horizon of expectations [*Erwartungshorizont*] undergoes a perpetual widening or extension in the engagement with the work [*Horizontenerweiterung*].

This perpetual non-adherence makes the work differ from being formulaic and renders its totality an openness. According to Merleau-Ponty, the inexhaustibility- that which makes the work relevant throughout ages- of the artwork lets us have the experience of the world, not understood as a system of relations which wholly determine each event, but as an open totality that cannot be synthesized. This openness precludes the world to be described scientifically and leaves it ever possible to interpret it anew. In his book *Fictional Worlds*, Thomas Pavel touches upon this totality as Nelson Goodman did in his work *Ways of Worldmaking*, where the world is amounted to whatever is seen, and the question whether there are many worlds or one is made to seem redundant. ‘‘The structure of the world appears thus to possess an irreducible plasticity, such that there is no privileged vantage point from which to direct the organization of knowledge definitively’’ (Pavel 52).

The entanglement of the reader in the world in reading is a strange one for he remains unsure what his participation in that world actually entails. On one hand, one has to leave behind the familiar world of one’s own experience to participate in the adventure the literary text offers him. In thus foraying into an unknown world, one is called upon to bear one’s own disposition towards this alien reality. Indeed, it is this disposition that renders the ‘imaginary objects’ in the ‘no-man’s land of fiction’ their place, as coined by Gilbert Ryle in

context of the space of fiction. Pavel says “an internal approach should not avoid exploring Ryle’s no-man’s-land and providing adequate housing for the entities wandering in it” (16).

Georges Poulet in his essay “Phenomenology of Reading” hints at the dynamics of this internal approach called forth by Pavel. He begins by re-iterating the classic paradox of the thing in not letting the perceiver into it, as well as inviting into its openness at the event of its becoming. While reading a book, we are inside it and it is inside us. There is no longer any inside or outside, that is to say, subject and object.

For the book, like the vase, or like the statue, was an object among others, residing in the external world: the world which objects ordinarily inhabit exclusively in their own society or each on its own, in no need of being thought by my thought; whereas in this interior world where, like fish in an aquarium, words, images and ideas disport themselves, these mental entities, in order to exist, need the shelter I provide; they are dependent on my consciousness. (54-55)

Rilke designated this space as the Open [*das Offene*] where art dwells. It is a space that resembles an abyss [*Abgrund*] lacking basis. In reading, one intends the objects that have been subjects of a consciousness of the other. The intersubjectivity of the process lies in the paradox that the objects I constitute in reading are the thoughts of another, and yet it is through my imagination through which they come to be. Thus, in so intending, a part of me hitherto undisclosed comes up to the surface as a subject that is the other. “Whenever I read, I mentally pronounce an *I*, and yet the *I* which I pronounce is not myself” (56). One can look at this paradox in two ways. Like Deleuze, one can totally dismiss the ‘I’ in the phenomenon where only an impersonal ‘it’ like the German ‘*es*’ or the French ‘*il*’ exists. This implies that there is no scope for subjectivity and subject to be in the phenomenon. Another way of

interpreting it would be to go back to Gadamer's *Erfahrung* which involved a formation of the 'I' in the event. In identifying with a thinking subject that is not myself, I become the other, as Rimbaud said 'Je est un autre' ['I is an Other'].

We shall take up an important passage in Poulet to continue our discussion further. "A work of literature becomes (at the expense of the reader whose own life it suspends) a sort of human being, that it is a mind conscious of itself and constituting itself in me as the subject of its own objects" (59). In thus inhabiting a consciousness that is not my own and yet returning to being the I as I was but as someone changed, the artwork more often than not appears to us like a person with whom we share a relationship. Just like our identity is formed and transformed in and through relationships, each individual artwork offers us a possibility of a relationship. However, unlike relations of our involvement with real people who can intend us as much as we can intend them, artworks cannot intend us back. Literature, and art in general is mute. We are to render speech in it by our engagement, which makes our love affair with art a strange one, a topic to which Cassandra Falke has dedicated her book *The Phenomenology of Love and Reading*.

The moment of entering into the text and becoming a part of the world disclosed in reading is, in the words of Jean-Luc Marion, the lover's advance. "Because we cannot anticipate the way we will be changed by an event of reading, we commit ourselves first to the act of surrender itself and through that surrender of our own intentionality, find ourselves remade" (Falke 3). Jen-Luc Marion's notion of the erotic reduction suggests that we become ourselves through the loves and hates we undergo. Like a lover, a book offers us the other, through which we come to discover a part of us not known to us hitherto. Like Hegel said, discovery of self is only possible in and through an engagement with the other. Gadamer writes beautifully on this strange 'intimacy' we come to share with the unknown, that in fact gives us the world for the first time.

It is precisely in interpersonal relations that people open themselves up to the kind of intimacy that does not allow me to experience the other as another, as a limit to my own being-with-myself, but rather as an intensification, extension, and restoration to my own particular being, or even as breaking my self-willed obstinacy, and so helping me learn to recognize what is real. What is this intimacy?" (Gadamer, "Theory" 29)

However, unlike a real person, an artwork cannot reciprocate our advance. It gives us the possibility to be and to understand, but leaves this possibility open by refusing any closure or reciprocation. "Lacking the ability to deny our advance, lacking flesh, lacking the uniqueness of an embodied person, a book cannot help us complete the erotic reduction that it helped us begin" (Falke 6). Literature provides us with a necessary emplacement necessary for selfhood to emergence, but the absence of body prohibits the ego from a complete emergence.

How are we to speak about or on literature then? We are on one hand faced with an inexhaustible overwhelming thing that bedazzles us, but being a thing, the artwork forever eludes us as well. "A profound recognition of otherness acknowledges that we cannot get to the elsewhere from which a text originates" (10). We can recall from our discussion of Buber that the I-Thou relation is ever incomplete; it can only begin anew without ever reaching an end. Gadamer too had mentioned, "we understand in a different way, if we understand at all" (Gadamer, "Truth" 296) which suggests that we can never understand something the way we seek to understand it, or that understanding itself reveals that this something could have been understood differently. This tension between the becoming of being in art as Hegel and Heidegger opines, and also the eternal inaccessibility to the core of it informs the two major trends in the philosophy and understanding of the literary event.

The language of phenomenology is itself fascinating, for it no other way can it attempt to illumine the fascination it seeks to describe that intransigently defies categories and blatantly exposes its insufficiency at the same time. There is a need to be conscious of this fact, for if we “confine our language to language that, in its abstraction, misses the texture of our fecund and multifarious life, then it is our fault. The language of the pages we pore over offers more, as does the life we lead” (Falke 41). At the same time, we have to realize that literature cannot speak of its own, and when we speak for it, we run the risk of depriving it of its thingness. “Without us, it (literature) would not exist, but flicker out into the meaningless babble of the world. But with us, it exists only at the cost of vindicating our values, and not its own” (Murphet 105).

We have witnessed countless instances in the history of the human civilization where this very phenomenon has led to commodification and mythification of literature. Infused with significance that is not its own, and then used as a vehicle for mass support, political ploys and attempts of cultural image-making, the total sign of literature has been reified and tampered to fit into a secondary signification, where the total sign is reduced to a signifier itself serving a signified lying entirely unrelated to itself, as Barthes has schematized the semiotic structure of myth (Barthes, “Mythologies” 113). But the very being of literature as a thing is antithetical to it being put to any use. “Any prolonged and systematic study of literature must confront the scandal, not only that it has no agreed object, nor even that we share no consensus about how to do what we do, but also that “literature” (in those moments that it risks existence and speaks itself) consistently proclaims its subtraction from any standard of equivalence” (Murphet 107).

What then would be the task or rather, responsibility of the critic? Would he lay down an artwork as a surgeon does his patient, and dissect it till he finds what he seeks in it? If he so does, there would be none to stop him from doing so, especially from the end of the

artwork itself. No wonder that artists have held critics in a skeptical light for their tendency to use art to fit meanings. Gustav Flaubert has once purportedly drawn the analogy that an artist becomes a critic in the same way a foot-soldier becomes a messenger. One can compare this analogy with the one in Jibanananda Das's poem *Samaruro*⁹, where he too draws a sharp distinction between the vocation of the two. If we go back to what Georges Poulet had mentioned about the reader having to 'give shelter' to that he encounters in reading, we are confronted with the question concerning what is it that requires shelter. Once we have an idea of that, we might be able to form an idea of a shelter suited to it. And this is where the problem dwells. In the very first letter to Franz Xaver Kappus, Rilke warns him of criticism,

Nothing touches a work of art so little as words of criticism: they always result in more or less fortunate misunderstandings. Things aren't so tangible and sayable as people would usually have us believe; most experiences are unsayable, they happen in a space that no word has ever entered, and more unsayable than all other things are works of art, those mysterious existences, whose life endures beside our own small, transitory life. (Rilke, "Letters" 17)

What is it that literature contains? In the sense that a box may contain a lozenge inside it or yet another box, literature contains nothing. It is what Deleuze calls a surface phenomenon or topography. There is nothing immanent in literature, literature is immanent by itself, hence a plane of immanence. When Rilke opines that literature says the unsayable, he means that the language of art is devoid of any message that usual language [*Sprache*] functions it. With the oncoming of poetry, Heidegger, therefore, sees a return to the primordial speech [*Sage*]. In his typical allegoric mode of explication, Heidegger compares art as a clearing in a forest [*Waldlichtung*] formed as a result of a coming together of a number of trees to leave a space in between them. This bringing together, or in the language of Deleuze this complication, thus creates a void, albeit a shaped one. This is precisely what makes art non-teleological for

it does not say anything but expresses a void by saying what it says. Ingarden in *Controversy over the Existence of the World* had thus said that the world is indispensable for the event to occur, but is not sufficient to describe it. The space, the nothing that art creates comes into being alongside it, and is not a part of the world of natural science existing beforehand. The critic's task would be to shelter this nothing of literature, to keep it alive. "Literature's performative relationship to its own genesis in nothing depends upon the difficult preservation of its own void within itself- a preservation that is our first role as readers. We must keep the void empty, not fill it in, despite being constantly inveigled to do so" (Murphet 114). The critic must resist the impulses from within and without that prompt the cavities of the text to be filled in by the world outside it. Or to return to Poulet where he points out that there is no inside and outside in engagement with literature, the critic should first and foremost be a reader who surrenders himself to be born in the event of reading anew, even if this birth is forever in its gestation.

The event stamps itself on the literary work as an entity of fascination or anxiety. A happening that remains nameless forces itself on the work through those passions. The work of literature, as both writing and reading, becomes then the making of the event itself; the more one engages with the event's unprecedented order, surrendering to unheard ambiguous language and sensations, the more the work becomes the "offspring of the event", to borrow Deleuze's beautiful expression. (Rowner 2)

While the etymology of event as *Ereignis* reveal the appropriation of being or identity, the same exercise in French discloses a problem that in fact becomes the cornerstone in French philosophy, especially in Blanchot and Derrida. The word *événement* is derived from two Latin verbs, *evenire* (to come out) and *advenire* (to arrive). The first refers to an accomplished result, whereas the latter suggests a rupture in the time sequence pointing

towards an unaccomplished future. While the philosophy of Heidegger focuses on the first aspect mentioned above, the post-structuralist positions evinced by Blanchot keeps the second aspect at the heart of discourse, the fact that the event of literature in writing or reading always seems to be short of taking place completely. This feature is revealed in Heidegger's 'clearing' [*Lichtung*] as well, however, the inquiry in Blanchot is centered around the non-place of the taking place, that face of the event that does not reveal itself exactly in the happening. One reason why the reading of a novel is always incomplete or inexhaustible is that the event itself never happens, or that whatever happens point at the non-happening that is held back by the thingness of the work. Rowner expresses the same opinion in saying, "I would like to argue that the event is the "non-place" of the work, or the "non-act" of the plot. It is the non-act that cannot be reduced to the series of acts of the *muthos* and, at the same time, that which cannot be felt without the composition of the acts itself" (22). Reading or writing are acts which have no definite ends in themselves and reveal in their occurrence their asymptotic character of never being able to arrive their destined home. This is but an ontological condition itself, for language in literature is not driven by use. Literature becomes then a perpetual approach without a goal. Blanchot puts the matter in the following way, "the nature of narrative is in no way foretold, when one sees in it the true account of an exceptional event, which took place and which one could try to report. Narrative is not the relating of an event but this event itself, the approach of this event, the place where it is called on to unfold, an event still to come, by the magnetic power of which the narrative itself can hope to come true" (Blanchot, "Book" 6).

As already mentioned, art occurs to us as an event because it does violence to the averaged out, naturalized existence and perspective of ours. Instead of giving something new to us which could be explicated in terms of pre-existent things as the aesthetics would have it, the event of literature is one in which the world becomes. The arrival of this world is ever

incomplete, because it is not there. What is of importance is that the event makes us participate in this being of becoming and come out of the Hegelian notion of becoming of being. This is precisely why the title of the thesis says 'Towards an understanding' for worldliness is constituted by the constant movement of arriving at the world to come. Drawing inspiration from Nietzsche, Barthes writes in *The Pleasure of the Text*, 'we are not subtle enough to perceive that probable absolute flow of becoming; the permanent exists only thanks to our coarse organs which reduce and lead things to shared premises of vulgarity, whereas nothing exists in this form. A tree is a new thing at every instant; we affirm the form because we do not seize the subtlety of an absolute movement'' (60-61).

As highlighted above, the philosophy of event in Heidegger is associated with dwelling or belonging of man to the world, whereas Blanchot and Derrida stresses on the impossibility of the phenomenon, and with Deleuze we find an affirmation of becoming. Our task in this thesis is not to side with any one of them and relegate the others. It must be kept in mind that these standpoints are not entirely mutually exclusive and contradictory, rather different hermeneutic standpoints. Since the philosophies of Blanchot and Derrida in a way embodies the very dizzying homelessness peculiar to European Modernist novels two of which we shall examine, they shall to a considerable degree be implicated in our understanding. However, the modernist project was first and foremost constructive in nature and merits import from Heidegger and Deleuze too. It is my argument, that the novels in the anxiety of their self-reflexivity and in the gradual fulfillment of their self-becoming would partake the worldviews espoused by both the sets of theorists mentioned above. We shall briefly glance at these two camps to prepare the ground for our later discussion.

We have seen that the event in Heidegger is understood as the becoming of *what is there* through a changing relationship of differences. However, this appropriation of being is not given over to description and the concept persists with an impasse. 'Appropriation must

after all be something. However, appropriation neither is, nor is appropriation there'' (Heidegger, "On Time and Being", 23-24). This paradox has already been referred to before, where Heidegger asks us to look the question at its face than to avoid the circularity. His task remains to critically elucidate the motion of the circle. Instead of trying to overcome the circle, the attempt must be to leap into it, "asking how to reach an unprecedented gaze from which the arrival to where we are appears as if we were there for the first time'' (Rowner 63). We shall see how the entire movement in Proust's novel is in a way similar to the quest of Heidegger, trying to arrive at somewhere for the first time from where the journey had itself begun at a time that has been irrevocable lost.

However, this does not mean that the act of appropriation [*Aneignung*] in literature is one of possessive individualism. The subject, in this case the writer or the reader, does not own the appropriated object, or in other words, the world. The appropriation restores the subject back to the world, making him an active participant from a passive spectator. As Gerard Bruns explains in his book *Heidegger's Estrangements*, the event of appropriation now does not feature "as a subjective act of appropriation, but as an event in which we are caught up-appropriated, if you like, or say expropriated: no longer self-determining but taken out of ourselves and put into play'' (166).

Maurice Blanchot attempts to skirt the circle of impasse peculiar to the problem of defining the becoming or appropriation by taking resort to negative definitions. He claims that this has the further advantage of doing away with any sort of teleological conceptions. A work is not personal, but impersonal. A work is not finished, but always unfinished. The work, in its event, presences absence. Blanchot's ploy is aimed to highlight the unspoken and unspeakable aspect of art in an affirmative sense.

In his book *The Space of Literature*, Blanchot says that the space where literature occurs is not a space at all, in fact it negates the very idea of an empty space transcendent to what takes place in it. The nothing of literature, if it needs be sheltered, must therefore be restored to its rightful no-place, lest it be infiltrated by predilections and prejudices and made to become another commodity having exchange value in the academic as well as socio-political world. Julian Murphet in his essay "To Shelter the Nothing That Happens" seems to focus on the same issue at hand,

Literature offers maps of the inexistent, of the nothing that happens when language speaks only itself. It hazards itself on this localized inhabitation, where nothing will have taken place but the place, continuously sacrificing its own energies to conjure without hope at the void of the brazen world- so that, perhaps, a constellation might emerge once this exhaustive cartography of the inexistent is complete. (111)

The sacrifice Murphet mentions is the leap out of reflective thinking and positive knowledge that informs the about-nothing-ness of the work. The truthful essence of art lies in being empty and insignificant, if material and significance can be understood in the sense of everydayness. If art has to create its own meaning, it then must return to insignificance over and over again, 'the non-serious and the non-true, as if perhaps thence sprang the source of all authenticity' (Rowner 76).

The happening of the unhappening is the very spirit of Modernist European novels, especially the two novels we are going to discuss at length. It was already germinated in Flaubert, who is often considered to be the novelist per excellence and the forerunner of the modernists in his temperament and attitude to art. We all know Flaubert's wish to write a '*livre sur rien*', a novel about nothing. And how can one not look side by side Flaubert's half-

witty statement ‘*Madame Bovary, c’est moi*’ and ‘Emma waiting for something to happen’ in the entire course of the novel. The world seems to be arrested, it simply does not yield itself to the subject in the novels of Proust and Musil as well, which indicates that there are certain historical contingencies at play which makes the comportment towards the world problematic. This ambiguity is ‘used’ by the modernists to enact the very realization of the literary work, whose ontology is based on the happening of that which never comes to happen.

In Derrida, as in Blanchot, the stress is on the non-happening and dispersal of differences. He identifies the core of the event as the Thing or *la Chose* in his book *Parages*. Things come about, but *la Chose*, in its determination as *hupokeimenon* or *res*, that is the core which we mentioned in discussing Heidegger’s view of Greek ontology, that to which accidents happen and predicates attach, itself cannot be the predicate or accident of something else. A novel is not exhausted by the words and sentences that make it. As a thing, its core remains untouchable. Derrida says, “*La Chose n’arrive pas à autre chose*”. The thing as thing does not happen, does not come about, is not given over to other things as an arrival.

The world as it is disclosed in the event of reading according to Derrida’s outlook is one that is impossible before it occurs. The event by definition is something of absolute surprise and unprecedented. This is yet another way of pointing out at the redundancy of treating worldliness as a theme or an explicable aspect. Now, whereas Heidegger sees appropriation as the subject itself being appropriated, for Derrida, the differences in the constellation of things can come together must be accorded primary significance for the event itself is always inappropriable. The very fact that a novel enchants me or leaves me speechless is that it ex-appropriates [*Enteignis*] things out of their natural orbits. We can see that Derrida project of de-construction itself urges him towards a rhetoric where he lays

maximum emphasis on the 'de' of the Formalist's defamiliarization and making the aporia itself the center of discussion.

Deleuze approaches the problem, like Heidegger, not from a negative standpoint as seen in Blanchot and Derrida. He first categorizes all things into two series- corporeal and incorporeal. The first consists of that which has a body and hence is tangible, whereas language belongs to the second class. Now, if we consider a novel, to which series does it belong to? Of course, a novel as a work that occurs is not only an incorporeal array of words, neither is there any concrete corporeal reference pointed at save our imagination construction it. This is what Deleuze calls the event of 'disjunctive synthesis'. We receive sense from reading and yet there is nothing sensual given to us. What is this sense a sense of?

Sense is both the expressible or the expressed of the proposition, and the attribute of the state of affairs. It turns one side towards things and one side towards propositions. But it does not merge with the proposition which expresses it any more than with the state of affairs or the quality which the proposition denotes... It is in this sense that it is an 'event': on the condition that the event is not confused with its spatio-temporal realization in a state of affairs. We will not ask therefore what is the sense of the event: the event is sense itself. (Deleuze, "Logic of Sense" 22)

No doubt the event is constituted by language and language says something of something. But as Ingarden had pointed out, the world, here meant as language is not a necessary and nor sufficient condition for the event to take place. For the world to disclose itself in reading, the reader comports himself to the work, and there a projection begins to occur between languages and the things it talks about. It is in this space that the world appears as a sense, and this appearance as sense, according to Deleuze is the event itself. The event does not

mean or refer to anything outside it like language and things do, but stands for itself as meaning between language and things.

In contrast to Blanchot and Derrida, Deleuze looks at the productive singularity of event in becoming sense. Every reading of a novel produces a world, irrespective whether it remains in a state of non-arrival as Derrida thinks or if it makes absence present. Deleuze does not seek to describe the nature of the world, but acknowledges the neutral and absolute circulation that leads to the emission of the singularities or sense. Rowner remarks Deleuze's conception to be "much more corporeal and concrete; it is not an abstract unaccomplished event, but a composition of tangible forces, contiguously concentrated in the unstable boundary or limit that passes between and through the two series" (131).

One of the major contributions of Deleuze in the philosophy of event is to restore the element of will that had already found its place in the Heideggerian notion of projective binding [*Entwurf*], and then gradually had culminated to desuetude in sync with the temperament of post-structuralism and deconstruction, schools which remained impassionate like the school of Structuralism it sought to undo. The event is not a state of affairs but only actualized in a state of affairs. The nothing of a novel that eludes us is not given to us in the plot but hinted at by it. So, it is our task, irrespective whether we would be able to arrive at it since it doesn't exist in the first place, to extricate the 'virtuality' from the actuality presented to us. Both Kant and Hegel had mentioned that aesthetic pleasure eventually leads to a Beauty that is non-sensate and absent. Deleuze says, in this context, that the event is not simply an ontological matter, but pertains to ethical ambition. The becoming in the event is not only a production of sense, but a mode of life too, of resistance and vitality. Deleuze captures the located-ness of this sense in human life by the phrase 'willing the event'.

Going back to Marion, we find “what to be means is rather the process of becoming not what you are but what you are not...there must be a *willingness* for new truths to change us” (Falke 153). In comporting oneself to the space between language and things and projectively binding oneself to the possibility of becoming the other, what one evinces is primarily a will, a will to go beyond the superficialities of mundane daily life and affirm the faces of human conditions yet unknown to us. In reading, one need to go beyond the printed word and what it conventionally means to linger in that space in between, and to become with the world that comes to be. “One must extricate the event from the factual state of affairs in which it takes place, extricate the becoming of any present happening in order for the subject itself to become the “offspring of the event”” (Deleuze, “Proust and Signs” 97).

(F) THESIS-THEORY

What is it that comes to our mind when we think of the word thesis? What are the associations that form the nexus of its relevance today? We inevitably associate the thesis as a work undertaken with the goal of research. It is that which a doctoral or post-doctoral scholar prepares and submits in the course of her or his research. So, firstly thesis is a thing which validates, preserves and authenticates research.

Now what is it expected to comprise of? A thesis, we know, is based on some topic, some area of research. This topic and area exist prior to the thesis. What the thesis seeks to do, is to illuminate aspects pertaining to this theme which have hitherto been undisclosed. The task of the thesis is to bring this area closer to us so that we may be able to grapple with

its peculiarity better, document and archive it. The thesis would then be used for specific functions later, say for the application of the knowledge it imparts in the field of some topic to yield some result, and so on. A thesis, in short, is meant to enrich our knowledge-system. Its existence and relevance are made to function in an exclusively epistemological manner, to compound knowledge and make things more accessible to human beings.

But is or should the meaning of thesis be just this? Is thesis really to be equated with research? We shall try look into the historical turn where thesis as that producing knowledge became synonymous with research, in the scientific sense that we understand today. For research to take place, there are at least two pre-conditions that need be fulfilled. Firstly, research should have an object before itself. The object of research must exist prior to the research itself. Secondly, the manner in which the activity of research would engage with this pre-given object, the way in which it would modulate, modify, and mold its object would require a method. Only with the availability of object and method can research compound available knowledge and itself become a part of the knowledge-system.

Gadamer in his insightful book *Praise of Theory* locates the above-hinted historical moment at the reception of Galileo and Newton in the era of Enlightenment. The neutralization of knowledge in which it came to be abstracted from human values is an offshoot of Humanism itself, which as discussed previously, was an anthropomorphic centralization which treated knowledge as documented evidence and paved the way for pragmatism, where everything becomes subjected to human use. The consequence of this is the evolution of a certain idea of method, which is transcendental to its objects and can be applied in different fields to yield positive results. Inductive logic that is employed in experimental science is based on this very principle. Gadamer writes,

In the seventeenth century after Galileo, the mathematical construction of idealized relationships of motion was elevated into the method of knowing reality. It succeeded in constructing classical mechanics, which in the end, thanks to Newton's combining it with celestial mechanics, ushered in a new sense of the world that also changed the ideal of the theoretical life: knowledge became research. (23)

This new epoch of knowledge, in which the idea of science gradually came to be subordinated to the self-understanding of modern natural science, was characterized by the concept of method and its primacy over the subject matter. The demand of verification of objects so that they could fit into the encyclopedic vision of Enlightenment resulted in the objects of science being defined by the conditions of methodological knowability. However, we know from our discussion of Kant, Hegel and Husserl, that history, philosophy and art too aimed to align themselves to the model of natural sciences at that point of time, which is apparent from the collective coinage that serves as an umbrella term for these fields, *Geisteswissenschaften*.

It must also be clear by now from our long discussion of aesthetics and historicism that the Romantic period, which purportedly tried to defy the logic of Enlightenment, did in fact contribute to territorializing the human sciences by the logic of natural sciences, by introducing the notion of 'distance' between man and art, and man and past, and neutralizing this distance as that which had to be maintained in art and crossed over in history. The result of such an import was indeed a rendering, that now in the fashion of natural sciences, employed method as a tool in the understanding of the arts, and also assumed the artwork as a pre-given object. Art too became an area of research in the sense of, say Physics and Chemistry. While previously science was named natural philosophy, the paradigm-shift now compelled philosophy itself to look for a scientific footing and call itself human science.

This gradual fortification of epistemology first witnessed a resistance in Heidegger, whose hermeneutic ontology revealed the fundamental flaws of imitating science's method to a field where axiomatic approach is invalid. Science addresses itself to the universal, and that necessitates a certain impersonal character for it. Scientific research always overshadows the base of its own methods by extrapolating it as the governing laws of its objects. Humanities, however, deal with the concrete and the particular, and has a responsibility of preserving the uniqueness of the human condition in its unending diversity. What distinguishes the human sciences from natural sciences is the fact that the objects of the former do not exist by themselves prior to engagement with them. It is the engagement that co-forms the object. "The theme and object of research are actually constituted by the motivation of the enquiry. The subject matter acquires its life only in the light in which it is presented to us" (Gadamer, "Truth" 285).

Unfortunately, Humanities still continues to undermine this very fundamental feature that sets it apart from science. The influence of data-collection and the attitude of appropriating the other violate the very foundation of the engagement as conversation without subsuming the other into one's own way of looking at the world. Research in literature conceives novels and plays as finished artifacts to dissect its body with the various methodological tools available at hand; post-structuralism, deconstruction theory, feminist criticism, post-colonialism and so on. Phenomenology too could end up being a method-tool if the thesis understands itself as research to penetrate into the entrails of a pre-given carcass lying before it.

The task of this thesis would lie in humbly attempting to give birth to what it talks about by the discursive movement of its progression. That would also be true to the nature of the very question it seeks to understand, for we have seen that the world is not given, but can only be arrived at without actually arriving in an event. One can recall Gadamer in this

context where he says, “Understanding is to be thought less as a subjective act than as participating in an event of tradition” (291).

The first section of this thesis and the next two sections are therefore not to be segregated as theory and application. The idea of theory, in this thesis, does not correspond to the idea of a neutral method that is applied for the purpose of demonstration of verification. The first chapter is merely a thematization of the theory of the thesis, and is therefore obviously incomplete, or rather, to put it more accurately, insubstantial. Theory is not abstract, so if it is thematized, it is bounded to remain incomplete in not yet fulfilled by the substance that makes it.

Thesis, as its etymology suggests, is a setting-up of something. Heidegger had elucidated on this meaning of thesis where he emphasizes on the becoming of being; the thing things, the world worlds and so on. Each of these phenomena is a thesis, a setting-up or coming-forward [*Vorkommen*] of something in the site of its event. This thesis is similarly, a setting-up of itself in and through the movements that constitute its life.

We have seen that the event involves us in a projective binding to reveal a possibility of existence. And according to Derrida, the event cannot be anticipated. Therefore, theory is not antecedent to thesis, but is an exigency that results in and out of it. What are we doing in this thesis? Are we representing a possible coming-into-being of the world? Certainly not, for to re-present requires either an ontic priority of the world or a certain certitude that we have spoken about in Heidegger’s critique of Descartes. Moreover, the world is a temporal being whereas representation assumes a spatial fixity as image [*Bild*]. So, the role of theory cannot be demonstrated here. Rather, theory would be concerned with seeing the world [*ansehen*]. The thesis would aim to arrive at a vision and not a reproduction of something already there.

In this sense, theory and thesis are symptomatic and syncretic for the setting-up of something is the same as able to see something for the first time.

The Latin equivalent of *theoria, contemplatio*- the *vita contemplativa*- came to be defined as opposed to the *vita activa* during the spread of Christianity. Contemplation here means to look on to something. The world comes to be described as god's creation through contemplation, and the human soul in contemplation thus became a mirror, a speculum of God. The attitude of contemplation diverted man's attention from the world of things to the world of God, at the same time, fueled his thirst of knowledge for the unknown and filled him with curiosity [*curiositas*]. Although denigrated by Augustine due to the element of greed [the German word for curiosity is *Neugier*, which literally means greed for the novel] and desire associated in it, the original Latin sense is in no way negative, derived as it is from *cura*, which means concern or care. Theoretical contemplation is not a disinterested, indifferent looking-on at something, but involves the onlooker in the thing and holds [*halten*, which also derives from *hüten* or care] him and the thing in the seeing-together.

The original Greek sense of theory, *theoria*, means observing (constellations, for example), being an onlooker at games or play, or a delegate taking part in a festival. Here too, contemplation doesn't pertain to an object but a region. Theory as 'seeing what it is' does not amount to determining what is present. Factuality here is a hermeneutic concept which does not abide by the principle of method, which is based on the primacy of self-consciousness over its object.

Theoria is not so much the momentary individual act as a way of comporting oneself, a position and condition. It is "being present" in the lovely double sense that means that the person is not only present but completely present. Participants in a ritual or ceremony are present in this way when they are

engrossed in their participation as such, and this always includes their participating equally with others or possible other. (Gadamer, "Theory" 31)

I shall now thematize worldliness in the phenomenon of reading from some of my theoretical findings which would embody my attitude of reading of the novels in the next two sections to come. The reason I have not begun the thesis with these findings is to lay the ground for the discussion, apart from enacting the movement my understanding had passed through in the course of my inquiry. After having shown the nuances pertaining to this inquiry, it would be shown how and why the problem of the world becomes central to the novels of European Modernist phase, followed by a justification of the choice of novels considered, which would be the concluding part of this first chapter.

The world is not given. It comes to be in the event of its becoming. The phenomenon of reading can host this event by proving an 'other', and a liminal space between language and things, or in Heidegger's terms between ontic and ontological, where the world can occur. Now, to understand the world as it appears in reading as a particular representation of the world that already exists is also a possible making-the-world-come-to-be. However, in such an attitude, the world that appears is deprived of its totality for it is interpreted as a derivative of some pre-given world where it takes place. The experience is reduced to *Erlebenis*, for there is no fresh understanding that extends our horizon. However, since the coming of the world is always *Erfahrung* involving a widening of horizon, the phenomenon of the world in reading is and must always be new. A book read many times by one or by many leads to different experiences, because interpretation in each case is different, leading to the world to occur differently. This is why I avoided the phrase 'text-world' for it makes seem that a certain kind of world is to be found in a text, which is antithetical again to the totality of the world as given over to mediation. We are not trying to uncover the world 'in' the novels of Proust and Musil as something already there, but through participation, we are

attempting to be a part of the world at the site of reading these novels. The German preposition '*bei*' describes the localization perfectly in this case, which is undoubtedly why Heidegger had used the same in formulating '*Dabeisein*' or being-there-at. The condition of occurrence of the world tells us that this occurrence is for the first time, for we ourselves are to be formed in the act of seeing it.

We shall now briefly discuss the nature of relation that is a conditional figuration of the world-event. We shall explicate this from the point of view of the writer, which would be maintained the same for a reader as well in this case. We shall consider two extreme situations; writing for the sake of writing or the Romantic attitude, and writing for a purpose, which is reflected by the Realist school. We know, that for the world to exist, there must exist a relation between the self and the world. Moreover, this relation, according to Heidegger and Gadamer, is based on care or concern.

When one writes solely for the sake of writing, the act of writing itself becomes the primary and exclusive concern of the writer. Does a relation exist in such a situation between the writer and the world? It seems it does, for a generality can be envisaged in all such situations, namely that which makes such a mode of writing possible- the relation of indifference or unconcern. This mode of writing is then self-conservative, and is based on the conservation principle of pragmatism that uses all things for its own self-sustenance. The writing is complacent already with the 'act-ual' aspect of it. It has no aspiration other than the fulfillment of the act itself. Writing in such a scenario, is an exercise, a routine, an act standing in its physical bareness.

On the other hand, one might as well approach writing with a fixed, well-defined objective in mind, let's say accurate portrayal of reality. The first scenario is also an example of this mode, only that its objective is self-contained, hence solipsistic in nature. Its nature is

apparently contradictory to that of the objective for it objectifies or is the process of objectification of the self as an enclosed complete-by-itself entity. From an ontological point of view, the world does not yet exist for the writer not only because he chooses to be indifferent to the things surrounding him but that the condition of having a world is based on a presence of concern for the things which constitute it. Writing motivated by a goal becomes too a self-realization, a road towards attaining something, a teleological process. We are again confronted by the same question, does a relation exist between the writer and the world that lets the latter to come-to-be?

Although, an objective is fulfilled that seems to lie 'outside' the individual, like forwarding propaganda, or entertaining a pool of target-readers, is there at all a possibility for the opening of the world if the only consciously surrendered opening or clearing that is offered is like a pre-defined precise contour of a container which does allow water to be sheltered in it, but necessarily according to its shape? Language is not allowed to talk for itself, it is reified by the purpose it is called upon to serve. Is not the mode of approach towards such a disclosure in fact self-defeating since it merely lays out a ground for the possibilities of the world to be channeled, reified and presented as a shaped body, a product? The governing principle of such a process is that of enclosing, which is contradictory to the nature of appearance of the world, which like all appearances appeal to the seeing individual and informs that opening or unconcealment in the sense of a discovery. Before asking why such an appearance must be accorded the status of a discovery, we must pause to reflect that writing that is undertaken with the intention of the fulfillment of any goal known prior to the execution or fulfillment of writing itself, runs contrary to the modality that pertains to worldliness. A question then looms, is not a preoccupation with an objective, here in common understanding as something outside and exclusive to the self, not concern? Or, whether the concern the co-forms its object as 'world' needs be a specific kind of concern?

Perhaps the question posed above is a paradoxical one, and yet at the same time, self-answering. We tend to overlook the prefix of the word concern [con] which hints at simultaneity and togetherness [like the prefix com- contemplation, company, contemporary, comrade]. The object of true concern is hermeneutic in character. It appears in all its appealing truth at the moment of the concern itself. We come to understand the impact of our concern upon ourselves, not when we are instructed from without, but when we find ourselves in the middle of something that demands our holding-ourselves [*halten*] with it. Therefore, we can now posit that the concern that appears to have brought about the world towards which it is directed, and not followed and fulfilled merely a course of events so as to be able to master one's goal, speaks for its necessary nature. But we still retain a vestige of the individual and his habit of mastering his surrounding field or environment [*Umfeld*] in using the preposition 'towards' in our previous sentence. As if, the concern may exist independent of the world which it needs for its object. This goes against the grain of compassion, a word which like concern, points by dint of its prefix at a participation or a simultaneity instead of a projectile governed exclusively from the end of the individual. Thus, we should amend what we have said and rephrase; concern that appears to have brought about a world 'in' which it finds itself expressed, speaks for its truth. Concern and the world do not and cannot exist independently and a priori to one another. Both mutually condition one another to being; they are the substrates of a single phenomenon. This vestige of duality is extremely difficult, perhaps impossible to completely let go off, for philosophy itself as seeing requires observer and observed, notwithstanding the fact that the being of both these elements are a product of explanation (as Sartre said, consciousness is negation, and thus requires an Other to be conscious of it) or interpretation (again requires two poles of 'I' and 'not I' to accommodate the liminal space of 'inter').

Since the nature of concern of the writer with her or his surrounding [*Umfeld* or *Umgebung* or *Habitas*] in an objective act of writing is not only contrary to opening-up or clearing but also imposes a priori on its objects, no possibility is allowed for the world and hence, together with it, genuine concern to evolve. There is thus no relation between the writer and the world for he or she is yet to find himself or herself in the world. Does that mean that the writer as self is present and the world is yet-to-be? Yes, if we understand the self to be only a subject, which is here the case. The writer is merely an instrument of purpose who accumulates and orders data. To exist as self is to be in relation to the world. At best, we can frame the relation in such a situation- which is no relation at all and hence a paradox- as hindrance for the world to occur or come out or self-hindrance that disallows the self to emerge. Self behaves merely as a subject; it is yet to acquire 'being'.

We have now illustrated how the question is self-answering for it reveals the discrepancy of teleological intent with the fundamental ontology of concern. The question, we also mentioned, is a paradox, for if there exists a specific kind of relationship that can host the event of the world's opening or becoming, then are we in a position to presume it? If we pre-sume, we shall be backsliding to the realm of a teleological projection and defy the ontology of concern again. The relation between the self and the world in the scope of writing (and otherwise too, I suppose) cannot be typified, unlike the previous two instances, under a banner, except for the fact that it is a relation of co-existence, compassion and concern. We come to a full circle if we remark the nature of concern is that it belongs to concern.

It seems that the problem lies at a more fundamental level and in fact, in the nature of concern as a mode of being itself. How can relations be presupposed if they are exactly what is unconcealed? The event, of the disclosure of a vision, and thus of the self and the world and concern holding [*halten*] them together, is the relation. The relation is not and cannot be a further general abstraction. It is to be found out in the event. The self becomes by finding

itself in the world. This does not mean the world exists prior to the self. Both come into being mutually, con-temporally. Thus, the relation between the writer as self and the world, if the world and thus the writer as self is to be at all disclosed/opened/unconcealed, must not be indifferent towards its being nor anticipate fulfillment. In contrast to these two attitudes, we cannot predict the relation, for it runs contrary to the premise. So, we are to approach it the other way, not as a priori intelligence¹⁰. We can only say that the world (and thus the self, which we shall discard in order to avoid repeated pleonasm of the obvious as well as an exercise of exorcising our cartesian self-entitlement of individual ego) appears when no such relation can be premediated or ignored. The world hosts the relation, and is not the product or outcome of a pre-conceived relation (objective or affirmative) or unwariness (negative relation or negative).

The relation which evolves in the act of writing and the reading of it is what we refer to as style. No matter how much we try, we are unable to describe style, precisely due to the fact that it is the world-constituting relation itself and that the world in mediation is total. When we say the world of Proust, do we imply a particular style after which the world is disclosed in this work? If we understand the disclosure as particular style of representing things, then the peculiarity of Proust would pertain to a unique formalization of universal givens. Style would correspond to way of expressing.

However, the world that comes to be in expression results from that which is expressed. The world therefore is already stylized and can be identified as Proust's world by dint of its style of appearance. Style corresponds here to what is expressed.

Description of style would not correspond to the Saussurean diacriticality of the linguistic sign. Firstly, no distinction can ontologically separate signifier and signified, as preceding analysis has already exposed the tautological consequence of imagining such a

binary. Secondly, the how and what are not fused arbitrarily, rather they mutually justify each other's existence since they are phenomenological reductions of the perception of the world itself. Thirdly, description of the style cannot be undertaken as a negation to all other possible styles which renders its uniqueness. Rather, the style locates itself [*sich befinden*] as a particular projection, springing into a direction revealed for the first time as a primal leap [*Ursprung*]. It is this primal leap, this opening, that can at all dare to describe style. Description of style amounts to preservation. And preservation necessitates desisting from characterizing style, by sheltering the void, the nothing it gives shape to, as we have discussed in the previous sub-chapter. Style is not factual; it doesn't bear properties.

Understanding by interpretation as the mode of being of the self-world is sustained by dialogue and conversation, which cannot be reproduced as a transcript in the thesis. The thesis can be a playing out of the self-world relation where it shall not be an interpretation that can be repeated and given further. The thesis is not an interpretation, but interpretation by nature, the actual act of it.

So, the world of Proust is the world at the site of reading Proust's novel and appears in our conversation with it. It is a process of communication we shall attempt (being together in a commune). And this shall not decrease the value of the work, on the contrary lead to an 'increase of being' as Gadamer holds true for all hermeneutic experiences. "The German word for sharing is *Mitteilung* which means literally 'sharing with'. What a beautiful word! It involves the idea that we share something with one another that does not become less as a result, and perhaps even becomes more" (Gadamer, "Theory" 6).

If this sharing reveals the world differently to different people of different occasions of reading, does it only imply, apparently at least, a paradox for the totality of the world? If the world is total, how can it vary? We have answered this question already in describing the

world's totality in terms of mediation as well as when we pointed out that the world must always be new (for the first time, or primal) in its occurrence. We note with a quaint smile to ourselves, that self-realization that occurs in this phenomenon must also always be primal in nature, or original for the need of a better word. Thus, making the world appear is making oneself appear; giving oneself birth. As Gabriel Garcia Marquez had put it beautifully, "Human beings are not born once and for all on the day their mother gives birth to them, but that life obliges them over and over again to give birth to themselves" (108).

The condition for the world to come to being seems then to be pre-conditioned by the subject's acceptance of his plurality to emerge into a being-self. Only then can one project to a possibility of being. If one is fettered by one's anxieties and disbelief, if one is unable to extend his subjectivity towards self-formation, the world itself would seem to be absent to such a person. We shall approach the problem of European Modernism from this philosophical vantage for it is undercut by the anxiety over the existence of the world, the other side of this coin being man's self-alienation, being cut off from his environment. As an apotheosis of the anxiety concerning the existence of the world in the epistemological and analytical tradition that was symptomatic in the milieu of European Modernism, we shall discuss Markus Gabriel's conception of the world as espoused in his book *Why the World does not exist?* so as to be able to philosophically lay the ground for worldliness as an ontological problem as well as an artistic concern pertinent to the novels of our choice.

The assumptions that undercut Gabriel's conception is closer to the empiricism of Hume and also Gestalt theory, for reasons we shall see. Existence for Gabriel is the act of developing [*Entstehen*], where something sticks out [*heraustreten*] or stands out [*herausstehen*] against a backdrop. Thus, existence is conceived as difference here as well. Gabriel says that we group objects into object domains for the sake of clarification, and that the world as a super-object is that object domain that contains all other object domains. Now

obviously, the very idea of an object domain is inbuilt with exclusion, that is, there must be objects which necessarily cannot belong to one particular object domain. Also, if the world is to consist of everything, as Gabriel understands the world as an accumulative super-object, then our theorization of the world must also belong to it. But it becomes clear when we start thinking about the world that “the world about which we think is not identical with the world in which we think” (12).

The problem appears especially since we are already in the world in an ontic sense, whereas understanding the world is an ontological phenomenon. Since Gabriel, like Kant, treats the world as a noumenal thing, this internal contradiction stems forth which makes seem the world to be a thing-in-itself which cannot exist. We find the same problem encountered by Austin in his *Philosophical Papers* as well, quoted by Danto in his book. “There is no reason why the world should not include the words, in every sense except the sense of the actual sentence itself which on any particular occasion is being made about the world” (“Transfiguration” 81).

By definition the world as super-object cannot exist as a fact, since existence as standing out with difference would require a background, whereas every background would have to be part of the super-object itself. Habermas says that the world is a formal-pragmatic presupposition that makes reality of a language intelligible. But does that imply as Gabriel says, “for everything exists only because the world cannot exist” (80). Referring back to Frege’s *On Sense and Reference*, Gabriel understands existence as standing out involving a field of sense. Every field of sense must refer to the object it presents. The world, as a field of sense that contains all field of sense, must be paradoxical for the field of sense of the world must then point to something that is not contained in it.

The internal contradictions that show up in Gabriel's New Realism reveal the inconsistencies themselves. The world cannot exist in this conceptualization because its totality, in the very spirit of Realism, is assumed to be an accumulative one. Thus, the world is understood to be one single thing containing all things. Gabriel concedes, "although the world doesn't exist, there do exist infinitely many worlds" (65). On one hand, he realizes that the world as possibility is inherently pluralistic by nature, yet the ontic conceptualization of the world resists that thought. It is precisely this predilection with factual, ontic nature that makes Gabriel reach another paradox in saying "the world is not found in the world" (74). This is true, for the world to be found is not an object but a willful projection, resulting from a configuration of things in which we already are thrown in.

The Enlightenment ideal of knowledge as accumulating as many facts about something, someone or some culture in order to reify it in a system reaches its apotheosis in the aesthetics of European Realism. I deliberately use the world aesthetics in connection to realism for it treats the world as an object that has to be successfully mirrored and reflected in the novel. The artist's gaze tries to distance itself from the things so that the representation of them be objective, which is to say, with minimal infusion of the mood and subjectivity of the viewer. This effort is however self-defeating, for subjectivity in such an endeavor is in full operation in assembling and accumulating the things over a datum, as our previous discussion of *subjectum* has already made clear. Realism tries to neutralize the distance between the viewer and the things like the claim of a newspaper article. It understands the world from the perspective of a bird's eye view, a view from nowhere, a view that tries to efface the standpoint and location of the perceiving subject.

Modernism begins by disclosing the futility and falsity of such a confused ideal after which we strive to remove our personal interest when it comes to matters of truth. A worldview is possible only in the sense of representing an object, but that is not possible for

we cannot stand outside the world to be able to depict it. In order to talk of reality, one always has to enter into a discourse as Heidegger's ontology has made clear. And this makes it clear, that the world is an interpretation between the self and what appears, and no universal, metaphysical truths can sustain.

Marx, Freud and Nietzsche in their writings reveal life as an interpretation where no universal truths can have any relevance. Modernism begins by ushering in a shift from the claims of Realism of cumulative totality and wholeness, saying that life is what appears to us from an assumed standpoint. Just like philosophy in the writings of Heidegger embraces the hermeneutic aspect of thought, in art too, the impersonal neutrality of idea is demolished from the dawn of realization that the value of idea lies in the modality of the mind that receives it. Like Heidegger emphasized that mood has to be taken into consideration as the point of departure of discourse, the very idea of aesthetic form in Modernism comes to be infused by what Wittgenstein calls the 'forms of life'.

While the Realist novel often tried to undermine its very being as a constructed work of art in a bid to appear impersonal, novels from the phase of European Modernism often adopt strategies to make explicit the condition of it being an interpretation. One such ploy is the particularization of the universal, a prime example of which is the localization of Homeric myth of Odysseus in the city of Dublin by Joyce in *Ulysses*. In general, we find that the perimeter of the world in the modern novel shrinks; there is a transition towards smaller universes. There are many aspects to this phenomenon, which we cannot discuss all at once. If the realist novel, like the Enlightenment ideal of knowledge, believed in making its world expand in an accumulative sense, the modern novel looks for dimensions that are more oblique. For example, the dimension of time in a realist novel is more often than not linear, where the plot spans many years. In contrast, the modern novel often explores a different temporality and is much shorter in duration if considered from the calendrical point of view.

Ulysses, for example, talks of a single day in Dublin. The sense of movement in the novel in Modernism is along a dimension that belongs to the artwork alone and cannot be collated with the geographical sense of space and the historical sense of time. We shall return to the question of time again.

Art can host the event of world appearance because unlike the presentation of objects in a field of sense in other modes of human expressions and presentations, art does not have a message or a core in the form of an outside reference. For Gabriel, the presentation or coming forward [*Vorkommen*] of the world is problematic because it would have to be the existence of existence itself, not existence of something against a backdrop. Our discussion of Heidegger's clearing and the no-place spoken of by Blanchot makes it clear, that art does offer us the possibility of the world to occur since the phenomenon is not centered on reference but itself. When we generally confront objects, the field of sense is subsumed by the reference. We do not see our seeing. Faced with a painting, we are confronted with the sense itself, not just with 'what' is seen. Gabriel goes to the heart of the matter and echoes Deleuze's statement concerning the event being sense itself in saying "The meaning of art is that it makes us confront sense" (185).

Contrasting the phenomenon of the modern world where man is at the center looking at things from the point of view of their functionality, Heidegger had given the example of the Greek culture where man stood in the midst of things, being looked by them. The modern work of art, in making the artform stand for itself like a thing, tried to re-imitate this ethos, when man is left to stand looking at something that does not hide its vacuity. So, the modern work of art is focused at making its viewer look not at something, but rather to make the seeing the very theme of the engagement itself. In *Afterimage*, a film directed by Andrzej Wajda based on the life of Polish avant-garde artist Wladyslaw Strzeminski, the artist explains his student demonstrating a Van Gogh painting that it makes un understand how we

see, and not what we are seeing. The modern novel is by its very attitude phenomenological, focusing on the how instead of the what.

That the world did not favor humans paved the way for understanding the ultimate groundlessness of humanism. This rupture introduces a break where tradition is no longer looked upon without criticism. The artist always has to situate himself in a present that is not given to him as a smooth continuation of the settled past. The ideal of time as a dimension of human progress remains no longer self-evident or valid. Language, too no longer remains transparent and an exclusive human tool as it was treated in Realism; and instead of reflecting the world, it now seemed to form it, in its own terms. The artwork too no longer represents a human product, but becomes a thing among things.

We can infer from Heidegger an important, fundamental linkage between time and being given the fact that both pertain to understanding. The temporality of the modern novel is, in other words, a description of the worldliness. As already apparent, the notion of a blank, mathematical, neutral, chronological time that is a dimension of human progress is replaced by some models where time no longer remains a transcendental, linear progression. While the modernity of industrialization always is future-oriented, European Modernism as in art constantly engages with the past to define its present. “Modernism is the epoch most conscious of history precisely because it is so conscious of itself as present soon to become past...forever passing inevitably creates conditions favorable to anxiety and nostalgia, and generates the need for constant self-definition vis-à-vis the past” (Spiroloulou 18).

Since history by and large also went by the logic of human progress along time, philosophers and artists critical of accepting this paradigm often went out to create a new sense of history that was symptomatic of a new sense of conceptualizing time. In his essay titled “The Metaphysics of Modernism”, Michael Bell illustrates this phenomenon by a

number of examples like Nietzsche and Walter Benjamin. The idea of ‘superhistorical spirit’ in Nietzsche understands historical meaning as projection, not a withdrawal of time into transcendental domain but a recognition of intrinsic and foundational values (15). Benjamin, on the other hand, critiques the norm of progress by understanding history as a series of failed expectations, a history which could have been different.

Modernism is always faced with the task to recapitulate the break brought about with the past as a continuous renewal. It wouldn’t borrow criteria to orient itself, rather it has to create its normativity out of itself. The lack of given history as base makes Modernism sensitive of self-understanding and evinces the perpetual dynamism of pinning itself down. (Habermas 6). While the psychic play of language, popularly known as stream of consciousness becomes one of the modes through which an ‘internal time’ is brought forward Woolf, writers like Proust carve out temporalities of Bergsonian duration of being¹¹. Myth becomes a significant import in Modernism in this context. On one hand, it traces the movement of creating one’s own historical norm. As Eliot writes in “Tradition and Individual Talent”, tradition for the Modernists was not something given or handed over, but had to be acquired at great efforts (49). This was so, as the Modernists were skeptical of a neutral image of history as discussed. A further role played by myth is that it ushered in a new sense of mythic time which could subvert the chronological time of progress. We see the application of this feature in Joyce, Kafka and Mann.

Such a paradigm shift overturns conventions in the sense that usual values no longer maintain their valency. The value of value itself undergoes a critique itself. Baudelaire’s vision of the modern artist being a ragpicker echoes in Woolf’s dictate that the artist must work with the most insignificant representations and scrap. Nothing is not conducive to art, for art now is no longer an aesthetic template for showcasing ‘beautiful’ things for the sake of artistic pleasure. The proliferation of the most cacophonous things in Ulysses till Musil’s *Der*

Mann ohne Eigenschaften to long, ‘irrelevant’ discourses in Mann’s *Der Zauberberg* demonstrate the attitude of Modernism towards things, in that it made no distinction based on any standard outside of art. In this way, Modernism enacts a strong critique of aestheticism, that deemed only certain objects to be ‘proper’ for artistic representation. And moreover, since Modernism does not lay claim to an immanent richness other than its surface topography, it has to do without significance as understood in the conventional sense. We can recall in this context Blanchot saying that art’s significance lies in being insignificant, is arriving at the region from whence signification itself began its journey.

I shall now, in concluding this section, attempt to justify the choice to work with the novels of Proust and Musil in this thesis. I shall not enumerate the justifications point by point, but try to trace it in a movement of complexity, as they should be expressed for the individual points do not occur in isolation but in relation to one another. The thesis, which aims to understand worldliness as an event of reading, can, in theory work with any novels from any culture and time whatsoever, for each novel has the possibility of making the world appear. Why then is the choice of working with two novels from European Modernism committed?

We have established that the world can appear only as a novel experience. Modernism, in its radical transfiguration of existing paradigm, highlights this feature in its attitude towards language and the world. Ezra Pound had summed up the spirit of Modernism with ‘Making it new’. If Modernism has to craft a new turn in the history, then it must be radically new. By this, I do not mean differing wholly from the past, rather a conscious and critical re-evaluation of the past in its becoming-present. The Modernist is a part of the cult of *nouveauté* or novelty as Baudelaire has long since announced. And this is symptomatic of the world’s appearance as well.

In the novels of this period, the very possibility of trying to arrive at the world becomes the very *tour de force*. Since nothing is taken for granted, and language itself no longer remains a self-certain medium, art becomes extremely conscious of itself as a projection and interpretation. The aim of the artist no longer remains objective or in the Romantic fashion subjective, but open to reveal the groundlessness of the human condition. We have already shown in a long discussion that the world can only be brought about in a relation that is open and concerned without being pre-mediated. In this sense, Modernist novels provide a ground teeming with such an effort of projecting oneself towards the possibility of the world's disclosure.

It is therefore no wonder, that the novels of Proust and Musil also thematize the problem of world and worldliness. This is an ironic movement, for we have seen, and so must have both these novelists realized at their craft, that the appearance of the world is not akin to thematizing it at all. I call this ironic, for both Marcel and Ulrich in Proust and Musil's novels respectively struggle to arrive at a worldview and it is this struggle that constitute their advance towards realizing the futility of their endeavor as well as the movement constitute the becoming of the novel itself. Both these novels in their brilliant theorization of the world and worldliness bring about the limitation of that task with respect to what it seeks.

Thus, even if any novel from any culture gives us the ground to conduct this journey towards understanding worldliness, our philosophical purpose is served best by novels from European Modernism since the problem becomes historicized, thematized and more importantly, enters into the ontology of the work itself. Since both these novels, as well as other novels from this period, stress on the journey instead of a telos, that too reflects the ontology of the world as an indefinite approach.

Having justified so, it would be unwise to conceal a personal attachment with these writers and their novels that had gone in substantially in the choice of novels for this thesis. Since the problem of the world is a problem of understanding, my choice has been made surer by the fact that I share in the ethos and existential conditions peculiar to these works, and wish to undertake a journey to help myself understand them, the world, and in turn myself better. Instead of making the thesis as research on an object, which it is not, I have found it prudent to make it base on that which truly 'concerns' me.

Lastly, being a student of Comparative Literature has made me realize over the years the importance of the Other in the making of our selves. The methodological framework of Comparative Literature, endowed as it is with an inherent empathy for the beyond-oneself, offers me the possibility of working with novels that are dear to me but at the same time written in languages that are foreign and distant. This thesis has been a journey for me for I have had to acquire working knowledge of French and German to engage better with the nuances of these novels, and this journey itself, I would say, is a significant step in venturing towards an understanding of worldliness. Since the world itself is that which is not yet, my travels in distant, unknown languages and literatures have helped me realized the aspect of participation that informs theoretical participation.

As we have already mentioned more than once, the world is not a collection of facts. So, our task in engaging with Proust and Musil would not comprise in giving a holistic view of their novels, something which many research theses and books might already have accomplished. Our attempt would instead align its interest in traveling in that oblique space between what the text says and what the text does. As said before, the theorization and thematization of the world in these novels become the irony that sustains them. In the novel of Proust, we shall see how Marcel's interactions with artists living in the realm of this novel like himself- Vintueil, Bergotte and Elstir- shape his vocation as an artist. In this, we shall

also try to see how Proust inter-textually shapes his own novel in the tradition of European art by making his narrator engage with a plethora of artworks. The sedimentation of tradition as something acquired would be a matter of our discussion here. And finally, we shall try to see how the world appears at the reading of Proust's novel when we try to examine the elusive and ever-incomplete coming-into-being of the novel we are reading in the guise of the novel the narrator Marcel seeks to write. Thus, the investigation of the movement where tradition and artistic inspiration informs the novel would at the same time be focusing on the coming-into-being of the 'I' of the novel as an artist and that of the narrative as the work before us. In Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, we shall engage with Ulrich's notion of reality as possibility and how that is ontologically played out by the incomplete and erratic becoming of the novel. Here, we shall move in the oblique passage between the ludicrous efforts to create a 'significant' event that is about to happen in the novel as a commemoration of the emperor's reign and the attempts of the novel itself to become an event. We shall focus on the role of metaphor in both Ulrich's philosophy and the philosophy of the novel of which he is a part.

The thesis shall be hermeneutic in spirit not in the usual sense of the interactions between the part and the whole or between the present and the past. The hermeneutic, as must be apparent now, would lie in art's attempt in being a philosophical vision played out by the characters and their aspirations and the philosophy of art evinced in the becoming of the artwork. The former is not a sense of something, but creation of sense that is the work as event in its becoming. Everything that a novel says makes it be. It is the liminal space of becoming between the said and the done that we seek to inhabit here. This is how I attempt to enact the to-and-fro [*Vor und Rückbezogenheit*] movement of Dasein as we discussed before, which makes the human condition, art and the world an endless dialogue, a conversation, where we finally, if at all, become song.

Viel hat von Morgen an,

Seit ein Gespräch wir sind und hören voneinander,

Erfahren der Mensch; bald sind wir aber Gesang.

Und das Zeitbild, das der große Geist entfaltet,

Ein Zeichen liegts vor uns, daß zwischen ihm und andern

Ein Bündnis zwischen ihm und andern Mächten ist¹². (Hölderlin, "Friedensfeier" 33-38).

Section II

Chapter 2

Encountering the Abyss

A. POSITING THE SELF

The world appears in the work of art. How then, are we to approach the coming-into-being of the world in engaging with the novel? Surely, the appearance sets itself in relation with the fact that the text involved here is a novel. The phenomenon of world-appearance shares a peculiar relationship with the genre concerned. Genre, as we know, is a template of expression, a way of projecting oneself to the horizon of existence. We have already shown in the preceding chapter that for the phenomenon of worldliness, the field of vision is not to be detached from the seeing itself. Thus, we shall begin our voyage into the world of Proust by first considering the means through which this world at all has the possibility to become.

Henry James tells us that all we get to experience in reading a novel is communicated to us by a vision that a center of consciousness offers us. However, this consciousness is a fabricated one, in so far as it is an artifice shaped by the novelist. This fact re-echoes our own situation in the world, since the world exceeds beyond our consciousness as a fact, and at the same time, it is but what we come to be conscious of. This disjunction, between the self and the world, given that the latter is and is not at the same time the former's creation is embodied by the form of the novel. What we confront in the work is an "imperfect reflecting

consciousness of the character, who is not the creator of that world, in much the same way as the reader sees life as it is reflected through his particular view” (Bersani, “Fiction” 94).

Right from the very inception of the novel, we see this conflict taking the centerstage of action. Put differently, this conflict provides the novel the very force of its movement. The world of Don Quixote the character has knights and all the associated aura of chivalric romance. The world of *Don Quixote* the novel however, does not comply with its protagonist’s vision. The relentless projection of the character towards the world of the novel, and this world resisting till the end a unification with the character’s vision; this has been the persistent ontological problem embodied by the novel, at least the European novel that takes its birth in Cervantes. By wresting the character away from the backdrop surrounding him, the novel creates the individuality peculiar to it. And the consequence of this is that the world of the novel is always a conflicted one. Emma regards the world as she has come to know through sentimental novels, but the world of *Madame Bovary* disappoints her. We mention Cervantes and Flaubert not entirely arbitrarily here, for the dissonance in the world of their problems points furthermore to another problem. In both these cases, engagement with art has led the characters to envisage the world in a certain way, which the artform they are part of does not coincide with. This paradox is not merely an epistemological one, that of confusing fiction with reality. Rather, the unfulfillment of the condition of being promised by art fulfills the novel’s becoming. In this sense, the novel strives a certain redemption by attempting to successfully shape itself based on a failure. *À la Recherche du temps perdu*¹³ culminates to an apogee of this paradox, as the last chapter of this part would attempt to elucidate on.

If the adventure in the epics co-forms its world and is one with it, the novel works on a certain depth that maintains the aforementioned difference. In *The Theory of the Novel*, Lukács calls the novel an “adventure of interiority” with the hero as the luminous center around which the unfolded totality of the world revolves (39). This center is the most

immobile point of the world's rhythmic movement. Although both Marcel and Ulrich change or that their efforts to change themselves are thwarted, we nevertheless witness the 'action' of the novel through them, and this fact remains unaltered.

Thus, the shaping of Marcel¹⁴ shapes the world of the *Recherche*. Perhaps this is what Lukács has in mind when he observes that the form-determining intention is objectivized in heroes as seekers (26). But how 'objective' is this objectivization? Our task here is not to attempt a critique of Marxist reading practices, but we must stress the point that although the different worlds Marcel seeks throughout the novel creates the latter, it is not simply a sum total of them. This means, although the desire and aspirations of Marcel are the content of the novel, the novel's world does not tally with them. How is this brought to effect is a discussion reserved for the next two chapters. But at this point, we can assume that the construction of desire must be ironical in nature, showing the object and the impossibility of attaining it, or the make-believe self-fictions involved in craving it or even the disappointments when it actually is within close range. We shall see in the latter part of the chapter in particular details how Proust takes recourse to these 'ironical modes' of representation, whereby the form-giving intention actually 'parodies' instead of reflecting the seeking of the characters. Lukács' use of the word objectivized could only be accepted with this reservation, that the embodiment of seeking in the work is not direct, but oblique, thereby rising to the irony about which he very aptly remarks in noting, "This interaction of two ethical complexes, their duality as to form and their unity in being given form, is the content of irony, which is the normative mentality of the novel" (37).

If the becoming of the world has its beginnings rooted in the character, it is imperative to locate the beginnings of the character himself. As discussed in the opening passages of the theses, the beginning of the novel and that of the character may not always coincide. We have already discussed how in *Pather Panchali* and in *Madame Bovary*, an impersonal backdrop is

first created to usher in the character against it. The Modernist novel however evinces the habit of beginning the hero's tale without any such 'introduction of sorts', emulating the 'thrownness' [*Geworfenheit*] that characterizes human existence. If we consider the opening 'babble of child's speech' in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* or K waking up to find himself arrested in Kafka's *Der Proceß*, a lack of division between world and hero underlines the fact that the world is as it appears to and in the hero. Proust, as we shall see in greater detail in the next chapter, does not ostensibly defy the traits of the Realist mode of narration but 'modernizes' them to suit the necessities of his novel. Thus, we see that the beginnings of Marcel are concomitantly with and without a background.

The *Recherche* begins in a semi-darkness where Marcel shifts alternately between sleep and awakening, a haze in which he can attach to himself no personality. Gradually, he begins to recollect the town of Combray and the country house where he had spent his vacations, but is unable to proceed much, given that all his recollections return to him memories of a certain period of the day, the hour of going to sleep without getting his mother's kiss, busy as she is downstairs entertaining the guest of the hour, Charles Swann. The novel does not proceed for it cannot 'recollect' anything else. We have here the suddenness of Modernist openings, as well as a certain irony involved in it. However, one can explicate experience only by analogy, as the Proustian method dictates. And here, at the very onset of the novel, the agony of having to return to bed alone gains significance later only by a comparison Marcel himself casts with Swann returning home alone without Odette (I: 357).

The 'Realist' strain in Proust is apparent in the very structure of the novel, whose story 'begins' not at the first page but after the section of Combray titled "Swann in Love", where the world and its manifold motifs are sown for the first time. Not only does this section create a backdrop for the subsequent travails of Marcel to gain significance from, but more

importantly it liberates the narrative from the stasis it creates in the first section to commence its movement. There is however another dimension to this artifice which we must mention right away before proceeding to delve into the life of Swann. Proust writes in one of the meta-reflective moments of the *Recherche*, “like certain novelists, he had distributed his personality between two characters” (I: 457). Swann is not just a precursor for Marcel, but as the discussion on Repetitions involved in the novel’s style would reveal, serves as a constant locus almost throughout the work. For now, we would briefly talk about the two realms of experience, where Swann somewhat heralds and foreshadows Marcel, until the latter comes out of this fold.

Why love and art? Are they our themes of enquiry? Yes, in so far as they shall serve as points of departure in the study. However, the undoing of these points as it would surface would negate their thematic identity. Love in Proust serves as the field of the self’s struggle for asserting itself, the terrain of the ego. Art, following the Romantic temperament of dissatisfaction with immediate reality provides the perpetual other, a promise of transcendence. If love is an expression of desire, art symbolizes a beyond, where death reigns. We shall see in the course of this chapter how these two realms, far from being contradictory, are in fact complementary. Furthermore, it would be love that would provide through suffering Marcel the first tastes of death, functioning subsequently as a passage towards art that is seen as a becoming of true self. The reversal of the self-desire-love and other-death-art binaries exonerate art and love from being mere themes.

Other than the ‘*moments bienheureuse*’ brought on by involuntary memory, it is love’s suffering and art’s enchantment that, as we shall show, host the encounters with the abyss. These encounters are fundamental in that they are of crucial significance to Marcel’s vocation as an artist, and the novel’s own becoming. One can also observe, that the two ‘ways’, the Meseglise way, also known as Swann’s Way, and the Guermantes Way, the two

roads on which Marcel as a child took walks with his parents and those that marked like the hand of fate his future, are not just symbols of love and art in the novel. It is true, that Marcel first sees Gilberte on the former, and aspires to be an artist for the first time on the latter. But more importantly, as we know, the first and third volumes of the *Recherche* too take their names from these paths. The last volume, *Time Regained*, would involve a complication of these two paths. Hence, love and art pertain to the very architecture of the novel in a very fundamental way.

For Swann, love and art overlap to such a degree that the latter is subsumed to ego and its workings. Although known for being a sensitive man with ‘tastes in art’, Swann reifies the impressions he receives from art in his daily life, even before meeting Odette. “He had always found a peculiar fascination in tracing in the paintings of old masters... the general characteristics of the people” (I: 267). He sees in his coachman Remi the bust of Doge Loredan by Antonio Rizzi, in the coloring of Ghirilando the nose of M. de Palancy, in the eyelids of Dr. du Boulbon the portraiture of Tintoretto. The work’s autonomy has little or no significance in his perception, since he interprets and domesticates art by the images of habit. Instead of opening to him the world, Swann’s engagement with art only serves to foster his own ego. He experiences pleasure in the ‘topical savor’ of a work when its ‘individual, historical’ features blend into that of a general, modern personality- a pleasure destined to have a lasting effect on him “now that it suggests not so much the actual work as that false and banal conception of it which has of late acquired common currency” (I: 268). There are two inferences to be drawn from it which would have their valency even in Marcel’s life. Firstly, Swann wishes a stable image from art, which betrays his fear for time and the effects of changes that it implies. Swann’s desire for this stability is not just for art, for an expression of a dormant uneasiness that our being is subjected to. Secondly, Swann’s propensity for

cliches and commonplaces too highlight the superficiality of his existence, a point to which we shall return.

Swann falls in love with Odette not because he finds her charming, but the fact that he hears Vinteuil's sonata in her presence at the Verdurins and is enthralled by that 'petty phrase'. He associates the charm of the phrase with the lack of charm Odette possesses. Instead of allowing the music to open new territories to him, Swann closes its potential and holds it captive in Odette. The music has for him an alienness, a void, and Swann 'uses' Odette to fill it. Christian Jany compares this attitude towards art that is based on the inspiring passionate desire with Novalis' *Gemütherregungskunst* (210). Here, art has no worth of its own. It is slave to the self.

Such an attitude is not only disdainful towards life and celebratory towards love, but this outlook on art envelops the overall *Weltanschauung* of this individual. The purely 'aesthetic pleasure' which the 'presence' of Odette offers Swann created in him a need of her. This pleasure thus is in reality disinterested, almost as artistic as perverse. Reification of the otherness of art to the self in turn entails dehumanization of Odette. Both Vinteuil's sonata as well as Odette are mere 'aesthetic objects' and the paradox therein lies in the fact that there is no true aesthesis taking place at all, for that would have made Swann sensitive to the individual charm of them both.

The reduction of art to object involves the reduction of the beloved as object. Here, the ego is the supreme center of the universe, making no exceptions. Swann is unable to possess the music of Vinteuil, hence he embarks on possessing Odette herself. The work becomes for him Odette's double, hence explicable in terms of his desire. He contemplates the work with 'the pride, the selfishness, the sensual thrill of a collector'. The "vague feeling of sympathy which attracts one to a work of art" became, in the case of Swann, desire (I:

270). Not just Odette, but his disposition as a collector extends to his predilection for people who had been Liszt's mistress, or one's grandmother to whom Balzac had dedicated a novel, purchasing a drawing if Chateaubriand had written about it (II: 107). At the Saint-Euverte matinee at the end of the first volume, Swann's love is rekindled by the sonata, although he knows that he is indifferent to Odette. Is it indeed his love that gets a lease of life, or the thought, the illusion of it? Swann's desire is not for the person, but of an intellectual kind that is placated on being able to make these connections. Such remembrances through 'fetishes' are for Swann an act of "intellectual animism" (Beckett 23).

This contraption has a double movement built into it. The sonata supplements the love when Odette's affection was abrupt or disappointing (I: 285). In his brilliant study *Proust and Signs*, Deleuze identifies this as a subjective compensation of an objective disappointment (40). However, if art can come to the rescue when love is failing, so can love or the idea of it, compensate the lack of stability characterized by the ungraspable, elusive nature of art. "Unable to find happiness in art, he had mistakenly assimilated it to the pleasures of love" (VI: 231). This reciprocation of compensations closes Swann's being even more to the world, and he is enmeshed in a limbo of selfhood. While Odette's expression of downcast eyes and sorrowful countenance is described by means of Botticelli's *Primavera*, Swann 'paints' Odette as Botticelli's *Life of Moses* (I: 324, I:284). Proust hints at the peril of reciprocal metaphor if the self ends up functioning as one of the poles. Swann's admiration of Botticelli's painting grew as a result of his discovery of its similarity with Odette. Likewise, Odette herself now becomes desirable and ennobled by dint of her resemblance to the Florentine masterpiece (I: 269).

Swann's application of an esthetic veneer to sexual passion in turn reduces art to an instrumental value (Acquisto 59,62), Art, which ideally, forces us out of habit, is used to strengthen it. Swann becomes, as a result, aesthetically blind. What he recalls of the sonata

when Odette is taken away from him by the Verdurins is none of its music, but the nocturnal foliage associated in his perception as the undifferentiated locales where on evenings he heard the sonata being played (II: 123). Swann thus makes Vinteuil's sonata a supplement, a vehicle, an anesthetic (Acquisto 58). This absolute lack of correlation between sign and meaning is categorized by Deleuze as the world of worldly signs ("Proust" 5). These are vacuous and they merely relate to some activity of habit. Society people's opinion of art is almost always shown in this light by Proust, a section to which we shall come later, but one which is already introduced by Swann's attitude towards artworks. This is also a risk that subsists in the modern work's apparent insignificance to meaning, "having the overdetermination of being whatever we like" (145). Perhaps, this is Proust's word of caution alongside the hermeneutic nature of art he later expatiates on, calling it an optical instrument through which the reader would read his own life. In the final volume, Proust says readers of his novel would "not be 'my' readers but the readers of their own selves", "reading what lay inside themselves" (VI: 432). Of course, artworks allow us a better understanding of our own selves, but only by rupturing habit and not preserving it, by turning us towards introspection. Thus, says Deleuze, the modern work "has no problem of meaning, it has only a problem of use" ("Proust" 146).

In a bid to preserve the self as it is, Swann tries to hold on to the original significance the sonata had for him even in subsequent hearings. But the 'other life' of the artwork has no clue and is incapable of caring about such a propensity. As a result, Swann is forced to admit the presence of the sonata over and beyond his desire of 'using' it, when at the third occurrence of the piece, he discerns a certain disenchantment in it, as if the sonata had "a hollow happiness" inside it, and it disturbs him to realize "it had a meaning of its own" (I: 262). Swann fails to realize, or perhaps purposely abstains from introspecting that his love, and as a result he himself, has changed over the course of time, and that the sonata as the

“protective goddess/ confidante of his love” had had to succumb to the “evil deity” of jealousy (I: 419,439). Swann had yearned for a stable and total image of Odette to be eternalized in artworks of Vinteuil and Botticelli. But artworks are only sites where the event of becoming takes place, and that, as we have shown before, is not timeless. Swann wishes to have a ‘panoramic’ view of all of Odette’s life, and not just the Odette his lover. He denies or overlooks the spectral, profiled view of life to which we are destined. On the other hand, his craving for stability defies the ‘continuous death’ that the passing of time and our being in it implies. We shall return to both these points in the third section of this chapter in relation to Marcel. For now, we can safely infer that Swann’s self is in Bergsonian terms entirely submerged in superficiality [*le moi superficiel*]. Although art could be a passage for the emergence of the profound self [*le moi profonde*], Swann’s collation of art with love does not allow that to come to pass. We shall at a later stage also critically question this Bergsonian division and its credibility in light of the Romantic tendencies the novel appropriates as well as relinquishes in turn.

Marcel’s introduction to the world of art and love has been heralded by Swann, and we wish to briefly go through them before plunging into the throes of Marcel’s ego. It is Swann who extolls the genius of the actress Berma, which prompts Marcel to go watch her performance in *Phèdre* at the theatre. Likewise, Swann’s praise of Bergotte along with those of his friend Bloch makes Marcel interested not just in his writings but the writer himself. Knowing that Bergotte is friends with Swann’s daughter Gilberte, Marcel desires to befriend her only in order to be able to be acquainted with the artist. Although it is Legrandin who first mentions the pre-historic charm of the Normandy coast at Balbec, it is Swann’s praise of the almost Persian Gothic church there which urges Marcel to take the journey, which would come to have enormous significance for him. It is in Balbec that he comes across the painter Elstir, whose vision and conversation is a step more in Marcel’s vocation as an artist.

Furthermore, Marcel encounters Albertine in Balbec, the greatest love of his life which would also bring with itself torment, and finally a move towards art as we shall see. Lastly, the final apotheosis of Marcel's association of art would be the experience of listening to both Vinteuil's sonata and septet. Although, here Swann himself is no longer present to lead things to this encounter, the repetition is unmistakable in the various complexities it involves. We shall devote a thorough discussion on the same both in the section dedicated to repetition in the next chapter and that on music and its purportedly redemptive potential in the chapter next to that.

In the people whom we love, there is, immanent, a certain dream which we cannot always clearly discern but which we pursue. It was my belief in Bergotte and in Swann which had made me love Gilberte, my belief in Gilberte the Bad which had made me love Mme de Guermantes. And what a vast expanse of sea had been hidden away by my love for Albertine. (VI: 183)

The love for a person or a thing is not for what they by themselves are, but that they are key to other associations. The mediated structure of desire that we already encountered in Swann is spelt out in greater complexity in Marcel, for his desire is mediated both internally and externally. By external mediation, René Girard cites instances from Cervantes, Stendhal and Flaubert. Don Quixote embarks on a knightly quest because he wishes to emulate the chivalric romances he has been fascinated by. Charles Sorel aspires to be Napoleon, and Emma the heroine of the sentimental novels. In each of these cases, desire is borrowed from the other in a movement which is so fundamental and punitive that they completely confuse it with the will to be one-self (4). Someone or something outside of oneself inspires an aspiration, and whatever is pursued is not for the sake of what it is, but in a bid to fulfill this aspiration. In Stendhal, this is called vanity [*vanité*], and such a vain person [*vaniteux*] cannot

draw his desires from his own resources; he must borrow them from others (6). In each of these cases, the hero is dissatisfied and his desire is mediated by an ideal source which is lacking in the real world. Proust's novel is also not an exception in emulating this gesture. The supplantation of the real with the ideal, the need to cope with the romantic wounds of the material world prompts Marcel to turn away from the material to the immaterial, as a means of satisfying his idealizing desire (Brown 24). This explains his fascination for gothic churches, Turner-esque Normandy, Ruskin and Racine's neo-classicist evocation of Greek drama.

Marcel admits that he is "incapable of seeing anything for which a desire had not already been roused in me by something I had read" (VI: 35). Ironically, his relishing his own thoughts reflected by the pages of Bergotte's writings is compared to a cook's delight in not having to cook (I: 113). His fascination for Berma is not for her skills as an actress, but that she is meant to convey the truth of Greek antiquity, as expounded by Bergotte on his study on Racine, a text that spurs Marcel to the theatre among other aforementioned factors. What does he wish to experience from Berma? Not her acting, neither the drama as a whole, "but, accustomed from [my] childhood to apply, even to the voiceless, the language of the classics", his desire only survives in this mediation (IV: 76). External mediation now borders on internal mediation, since Marcel not only compares things to a reference, but 'adds' elements to things to make them desirable.

Internal mediation in Marcel's desire is a step in his deviation from Swann's worldview and gradually though painfully arrive at his own desires, which are not always 'borrowed'. Martin Hägglund calls this process of adding some of oneself to the object 'investment' which stems from the impossibility of being indifferent to it (13). Marcel's artistic temperament reveals itself for the first time in his fascination for Albertine which is not, unlike in Swann, supplanted by any other desire other than what he contributes to her

character by his imagination. True that the point of departure of this fascination is, as a previous citation mentions, based on the expanse of the sea against whose backdrop she first appears in the strand, but it a departure nonetheless. The person or object of desire “becomes something interesting when we contribute to it; it only acquires value inasmuch as it can shore up our imagination” (Beistegui 11). It is interesting to note at this stage that the object is no longer reified to the self, but the involvement of imagination in investing or contributing charm implicates a certain openness towards the world, as well as absolves desire from the need of possession. The thing is accorded a life of its own, for it is not made to coincide with ego. Beckett makes the following observation in his short yet profound study on Proust, “The observer infects the observed with his mobility. Moreover, when it is a case of human intercourse, we are faced by the problem of an object whose mobility is not merely a function of the subjects, but independent and personal...two separate and immanent dynamics related by no system of synchronization” (6-7).

The association of imagination in desire stipulates a distance that must persist for the object to fascinate Marcel. It must belong to the realm of the unknown and must not give over to one’s grasp. Although the desire to possess still lingers as a residual of the ego, the object of desire for Marcel must be mobile. “The beloved model does not stay still; and our mental photographs of it are always blurred” (II: 71). It is by dint of its otherness that something comes to enchant. “Women who are to some extent resistant, whom one cannot possess at once, of whom one does not indeed know at first whether one will ever possess them, alone are interesting” (III: 418). Women in brothels are of no interest to Marcel because they are already ready to please and offer a stable image. Whereas Swann binds his desire to habit, we thus see the artistic end of Marcel’s desire for that which lies outside of habit, and is instable. However, Marcel is as much, perhaps even more egotistic even in this attitude towards otherness, for he does not really participate in the event of becoming different, but is only

eager to stretch the limits of his ego, with “the life of girls offering possible multiplication of myself, which is happiness” (II: 433).

There is a gradual build-up of this tendency from Marcel’s acquaintance with Gilberte to that with Albertine. Gilberte’s letter to him does not delight him for its contents but that her signature points at “an existence altogether different [from the one I knew], in direct contradiction to it, but itself the real one” (II: 83). Likewise, when Marcel visits Robert at Doncières, the town seen from the window at early morning seems to impress on him that the “life led by the inhabitants of this unknown world...to be a thing of wonder” (III: 103). Proust extends this tendency, following of method of distributing personality among more than one character, to Robert as well. We know that Robert’s beloved is a ‘two pence whore’ whom Marcel had had assignments with in the past, a fact of which Robert has no clue. How then, does an aristocrat of refined tastes find such a person intriguing, extolling her as his goddess? Marcel’s clue, “if one had begun by imagining her as a mysterious being, interesting to know, difficult to seize and to hold” (III: 177-78).

Marcel’s taste for “fugitive beings” [*être de fuite*] has a twofold function in the novel (Bersani, “Fiction” 60). On one hand, it leads him inevitably towards disappointment in love for his loves are conditioned by inaccessibility. Secondly, this guides him to the pursuit of art where this fascination with the unknown is dematerialized. This “inexorable yearning for the radically different” is thus in a sense, a romantic feature the novel both borrows, only to depart from it (Landy 38). There is a need to penetrate into the other, or to assimilate oneself in it. Both these desires conserve the centrality of the self, hence the Other, despite gaining in significance, is made to function as a mere facilitator. What delights Marcel must thus necessarily disappoint him. Perceiving the group of Albertine and her friends at Balbec, Marcel ponders, “Never...had I seen anything so beautiful, impregnated with so much that was unknown, so inestimably precious, so apparently inaccessible (II: 436). One is reminded

here, of Kundera's distinction between epic and lyrical lovers (66). The former kind seeks variety in women and is satisfied easily, also loves on from disappointment without much fuss. The lyrical lover looks for his own ideal in women, and is bound to be disappointed forever, even more so since this ideal in Marcel is not yet formed or known to himself. Until he takes an effort to project himself actively onto the forces of becoming, his love is fated to be a paradoxical kind, perverse and by default unsated. Marcel's fascination does not bridge gaps, but maintains distance, confronted with the "glance from the center of that inhuman world which enclosed the life of this little tube, an inaccessible unknown world wherein the idea of what I was could certainly never penetrate nor find a place" (II: 432). His subjectivity deters him from a communion, and the self must persist as an "empty receptacle" desiring to "merge with outside" (Bersani, "Fiction" 32). He "yearns for the radically different" without himself changing or attempting to transform his being (Landy 38). This is exaggerated in his doubts concerning Albertine's lesbianism. Here is a field of being which is most exotic to Marcel that he 'needs' to sustain his 'love of suffering', a hyperbole where the unknown coincides with curiosity and torment.

"Love is space and time made perceptible to the heart" (V: 440). Desire participates in an exercise, whereby the ego seeks expansion beyond its contingent boundaries. If for Swann, the 'function' of love is to preserve the present against the vicissitudes of time, Marcel's ego seeks the unknown so as to proliferate the grounds on which the ego can graze. Marcel keeps returning to the lure of the sea's expanse in his interaction with Albertine, contemplating that his desire for her "was itself a lazy, cowardly and incomplete form of possessing Balbec" (III: 405). Such an attitude shapes the overall worldview of a person, as we already mentioned in the passages concerning Swann. This is corroborated by the fact that the particular charm of individuals is substituted by a general essence of the unknown. We see the repetition of the pattern in his interest in Oriane, the Duchess de Guermantes, whose mind he regards as "a

formation so anterior to my own, was for me the equivalent of what had been offered me by the gait and the bearing of the girls of the little band along the sea” (III: 581). He exoticizes the immediate to transplant himself to a difference in which he is not really prepared to fully sacrifice his habit. “But she was incapable of understanding what I had looked for in her- the charm of her historic name... and the tiny quantity of it that I found in her, a rustic survival from Guermentes” (ibid). Like Swann who had rendered Odette as his aesthetic object, Marcel too furnishes for himself an aesthetic pleasure from the women in his life, with the difference that for him, a certain possibility of real displacement persists. “I could see, imprisoned in the perpetual afternoon of her eyes, a sky of the Ile-de-France or of Champagne spread itself” (V: 572).

In the first few volumes of the *Recherche*, we often find Marcel longing to see art in their natural settings. This extends to the charm of women too, for he searches for a peasant girl along the Meseglise way, or a fisherwoman in Balbec. While one can interpret this tendency as a move against aesthetic differentiation where an artwork is divorced from its natural settings, modern art, and here I mean the idea of art as institutionalized and naturalized from the Romantic period onwards with the setting up of the professional theatre and museums, inevitable relies and demands a space for itself that cannot be collated with the geographical space. Marcel’s association of Albertine with Balbec or Oriane with an antique epoch are thus not counter to aesthetic differentiation, but on the contrary an exoticization that uproots the particularity of experience and subtends it in a generality, which is but a new mode of aesthetic differentiation itself. Like Swann, he does not participate in perception as much as he is interested in categorizing experiences in rubrics. In his book *The Proustian Quest*, Willian C. Carter draws an analogy of this problem with the discontent that part and parcel of the Modernist ethos, based as it is on a paradoxical counterpoint. In orienting himself with a ‘woman-landscape’ [*femme paysage*], “he imagines sexual contentment as a

voyage, but like Baudelaire's voyager, the protagonist never finds what he seeks" (32).

Internal mediation extrapolates a changing individual to a fixed time and place, upon which possession could imagine gaining control. But since this belief is based on a false axiom, it is bound to lead to disappointment. The Proustian flux of love generates its movement from enchantment to disenchantment, with the lack of resolution ridiculing the promise of *telos*. "The naïve narrator envisages the beloved as a terrain to be conquered by the metaphorical planting of a flagpole or the actual insertion of a penis. But it is the nature of desire to remain unabated, and only a fool would think of such conquests as definitive" (38). We shall return to the full complexity of this element in the third section of this chapter.

We know that much of the novel is dedicated to long developments of parties at the Verdurin salon, at Madame de Villeparisis' quarters, and the matinées at the Guermantes, together taking up almost half of the novel's volume. Here too, we can notice Marcel's desire involved in extracting an intellectual pleasure from conversation. "Without being conscious of it themselves, they procured for me this pleasure as might a couple of farmers or sailors speaking of the soil or of the tides, realities too little detached from their own lives for them to be capable of enjoying the beauty which personally I undertook to extract from them" (III: 620). Proust incorporates a certain doubleness, which we would discuss in much greater detail in the third section, by involving two perspectives. The character Marcel is 'enchanted' by "the mysterious life of the Faubourg Saint-Germain" forming a realm of signs that along with the signs of love proceed eventually to the making of art (628). This making is twofold. In the story, Marcel is led to realize that his days at the society and in love though futile are the resources to transform in creation. On the other hand, the novel does the same thing, by adding "depth and relief to whatever has been said", implicitly making a point that art could indeed stem from that which is deemed to be superficial (634). "The name of Guermantes

itself received from all the beautiful names... a new and purely poetic sense and pleasure” (627-28).

Thus, although Proust had been accused of being a dilettante dandy having devoted thousands of pages in describing commonplaces, one must keep in mind the double-perspective on which the novel works. Returning to from where we began initially, Vincent Descombes reminds us in this context that the gap between world and worldview is at the heart of more than one novelistic masterpiece, and Proust is certainly, borrowing the title of Malcolm Bowie’s book, ‘among the stars’. The *Recherche* is not a society novel, nor a confessional novel, but a “perspectivist novel” which should be read as ‘a double work’ (208). Descombes broadly classifies these two categories as the self and society. From the latter viewpoint, Marcel is most certainly a snob, just like Proust himself had been for a large part of his life. Snobbery in England refers to a commoner’s attempt to imitate a noble, a feature one identifies in the characters of Legrandin and Bloch in the last volume. However, Marcel notes that he himself too is a snob if seen not from outside but from within, for he emulates the French meaning of *snobisme* in his “stupid admiration for anything fashionable” (Fowlie 63). But is Proust exactly the same as Balzac when it comes to this feature? Rastignac in *Père Goriot* is ‘sincere’ in his striving to become a society person, and his disappointment is an outcome that is reserved till the very end of the novel. Marcel, however, finds no pleasure in the company of the aristocrats, until he, through internal mediation, ‘adds’ to them a charm. “My historical curiosity was faint in comparison with my aesthetic pleasure. The names cited had the effect of disembodied the Duchess’ guests whose masks of flesh and unintelligence or vulgar intelligence had transformed them into ordinary mortals” (III: 627-28).

Marcel dehumanizes and de-historicizes people, and this is a ‘necessary’ step, almost a prelude by dint of which he can be redeemed from an inane snobbery. Society in Proust’s

novel does not serve as a goal to strive for, and hence it is parodied by overdevelopment. We are exasperated at times, reading of a party for three hundred pages, and it is this boredom that the Proustian method seeks to evoke. By verging on the extremes of realism, the *Recherche* borders on pure unreality (Genette, "Narrative" 185). Here, we have arrived at Descombes' self-perspective, Marcel as observer, extracting and adding pleasure, embodied parodically by the novel by pushing details to the limit of stylistic objectivization, where "the Proustian character finds this highly symbolic form of death; doing away with himself in his own speech" (ibid). We have, in a subterranean movement, now unearthed how desire informs concomitantly the worldview of Marcel and the world of the *Recherche* and an equivocality involved in the relation. Unlike Zola and Balzac in whose works too details arch great spaces, overdevelopment in Proust leads to a caricature of Realism, a point Fowlie compares with the aesthetic temperament in the paintings of Goya and Breughel (267). If, according to Girard's argument, desire is implicated in the very structure of the novel and how it 'works', the foregrounding of Marcel's ego and its displacement from that of Swann enacts a certain shift when compared to Proust's predecessors. Girard sums it up followingly, "Proustian snobbism could be defined as a caricature of Stendhalian vanity; it could also be defined as an exaggeration of Flaubertian bovarysm" (24).

How is the longing for a panoramic, stable view articulated in Marcel? He desires to have a holistic vision, of seeing things that cannot be seen together for they belong to different experiences, based on different spaces and times. Marcel's discomfort at not being able to picture the two ways leading to Meseglise and Guermantes together, as if they have been sealed off from one another by two different compartments in his brain storing memories of different walks, is a critique of the Realist novel's bird-eye vision and faith in omnipresence. Similarly, we see Marcel shifting from one window to the other opposite to it while undertaking his first trip to Balbec, wishing to take it all in, being in two places at the

same time. Likewise, the reflections on the glass-panes in his hotel room at Balbec is sought as an amalgamation of the sea in every weather. At a later stage in the work, he is perplexed at not being able to control the movements of Albertine completely. He had prohibited Albertine from going to the Verdurin party where Mlle Vintueuil's lesbian friend is supposed to be present, only to know that she is purportedly in touch with Lea, another 'notorious' influence in Marcel's estimation at the Trocadero. "I suffered... because of the inability of the mind to picture too many scenes at one time" (V: 407).

As long as Marcel would seek multiplication of his self and thus perspectives without allowing his ego to be sublated, this desire for a panorama is bound to disappoint him. Poulet is right in mentioning that the "[Proustian] totality and continuity is achieved not by simplification, but multiplication of aspects" (80). Travel and memory juxtapose distinct objects and sites to one another, but unless transformed to art which is one of the ways in which displacement of the self to becoming happens, would continue serving the ego and fail to achieve its purpose. Here we have an ironical moment in the novel, where Marcel has been taking a ride on an automobile, and he ponders whether the hitherto unimaginable distances that can now be covered could have an effect on the narrative's point of view. "Art is modified by it also, since a village which seemed to be in a different world from some other village becomes its neighbor in a landscape whose dimensions are altered" (IV: 457). Technology offers a super-human view, given that it can render the inconceivable real, whereby places like "prisoners hitherto as hermeneutically confined in the cells of distinct days as long ago were Meseglise and Guermentes, upon which the same eyes could not gaze in the course of a single afternoon, delivered now by the giant with the seven-league boots" (458). Proust's choice of the metaphor of a giant is significant here, for it connotes a becoming of a beyond-human, repeated at the very last sentence of the novel where human beings are compared as "giants plunged into the years...[touching] distant epochs in time"

(VI: 451). The source of this beyond-ness must not lie in technology, but in the very condition of human life in time, which Marcel would realize in the last volume of the work. Proust does not share the Futurists' fetish for the machine, interested as he is only in the new perspectives opened by innovations (Carter 22). Hence the narrator says, "But the motor respects no mystery, prevents one from thinking of the actual site as the individual mark, the irreplaceable essence of irremovable beauties" (IV: 467). On one hand, this contradicts Marcel's derealization and hence embodies the irony Lukács and Descombes mention between world and worldview. On the other hand, this is an additional departure from the ethos of the 19th century, the age of conquest of darkness. Although we shall devote attention to this departure in the second section, we shall but quote Levinas from this essay "Reality and its Shadow" here briefly to corroborate the Modernist disillusionment with progress and episteme, "Art does not know a particular type of reality; it contrasts with knowledge. It is the very event of obscuring, a descent of the night, an invasion of shadow" (132).

Before delving into how art plays a role in Marcel's self-becoming, it is necessary to look at two other realms of influences, that are engaged with also with the novel's own becoming and style. One of these is the role of morality and the 'stable' point of view it offers an individual, the lack or redundancy of which in the Modernist novel implicate a loss of a stable perspective, an anxiety of being that always seeks to become anew, and where evil is not simply outcast, given that none of its protagonists are morally 'good' individuals. The second area that merits attention would be society people's opinions on art, and how that serves Proust an opportunity to both ridicule their misunderstanding as well as highlight possible, at times mutually contradictory approaches, to art, art history and Modernist art in particular.

Marcel's grandmother gifts him four novels by George Sand on his birthday. Her choice is predicated by her belief that virtue consists in the nobility of the soul (V: 7). It is

this quality that is upheld by her daughter, Marcel's mother, who on reading out to him *François le Champi* aloud, skips the passages dealing with amorous scenes. The narrator adds proleptically that he would one day be able to tell his mother that one should not place moral distinction over other qualities in literature, for it might choke the powerful stream of language, however that point of time is far (I: 48). The idealism of his grandmother is re-enacted in her gifting paintings of places instead of photographs, or of wishing the garden to be a little more natural by being a little imperfect. We see here an abhorrence for the Realist sensibility that presents things too clearly to the self, and thereby making them captive to the perceiver's gaze. It is no wonder that the two books that find repeated mention in the Combray section of the novel are Saint-Simon's memoirs and Pascal's *Pensées*. We can take a moment to compare this primacy of morality with Proust's long-standing affiliation (not to forget his translations) with Ruskin, for whom truth was antecedent to beauty. But does this Victorian morality at all subsist? If Venice for Ruskin was the archetype of solidity of cultural memory, we see in the sixth volume how Marcel loses his sense of self and the place he is in, where the stones of Venice become for him a mere rubble, a ruin without name, an observation that Robert Fraser very aptly makes in his book *Proust and the Victorians* (65).

Proust, like Musil, devotes a substantial portion of his novel to 'trivial' opinions, perhaps not just in a bid to reject them, but to place the novel in the constellation of ideas which form its contemporaneous environment. Julia Kristeva remarks,

Since the First World War, and even more clearly since the Second, the pleasure principle has abandoned its romantic site in *natura naturans* and has acquired the dangerous form of a will to power in society over opinion. Taking on political, sociological and philosophical hues, literature has in its turn tried to make and unmake the social bond. Can it really get away from it? It thinks so. (97-98)

Proust does not want to try get away from such opinions, however, neither does he subscribe to them. In the *Recherche*, opinions on literature and art abound, for almost every character has something to say on matters concerning them. Are these opinions of ‘value’? Do they contribute in a better understanding of art? “What artists call intelligence seems pure presumption to the fashionable world which, incapable of adopting the angle of vision from which they, the artists judge things, incapable of understanding the particular attraction to which they yield when they choose an expression or draw a parallel” (III: 209). Why then does he allot so much attention on these commonplaces? We must understand that Proust is not an aesthete but a novelist, and his ‘ideas’ on aesthetics too must be therefore presented in the novelistic form. We shall study the intricate tensions between philosophy of fiction and fiction of philosophy in the third chapter. For the moment, we can briefly comment on two functions that these illustrations seek to fulfill. On one hand, it is an implicit reminder to us readers and his own writing persona concerning what his novel is not. On the other hand, these opinions also reflect how art, art history and Modernist art in particular is perceived by all and sundry, and hence they serve as a zone for art criticism, although performed obliquely, in fiction.

If the perfunctory signs of society find transformation in art, this movement is reciprocated ironically in the plot where art is ridiculously encapsulated in the hollowness of society. For Odette, art, poetry and antique are elements of ‘style’ and have a wardrobe function. “What appealed to her imagination was not the practice of disinterestedness, but its vocabulary” (I: 295). And the narrator’s comment on that, “There was no need actually to have those tastes, as long as one proclaimed them” (ibid). Mme de Villeparisis, who herself would go on to write a set of popular memoirs in the novel, criticizes Balzac, Hugo, Chateaubriand, Vigny for their lack of moderation, of judgement and simplicity, denounces Stendhal as vulgar (II: 334). She is far more comfortable in singing the praise of Chopin and

Liszt who played at the country house, Lamartine who recited poetry there, and Titian since her ancestor's portrait was painted by him. Her interest has nothing to do with the artwork but its material associations.

Proust often subtly introduces these opinions across generations to portray how the estimation of art itself has been transformed by the passage of time. M. de Marsantes, Saint-Loup's father, scorned Wagner and raved over Offenbach. In contrast to such Romantic tendencies, the son is inclined to reading Proudhon and Nietzsche, in their 'abstract tendencies' and 'higher thoughts'. Marcel is critical however, and his comment is key to understanding the juxtapositions of variegated and contradictory aesthetic principles in one work, when he says that Saint-Loup was not intelligent enough to understand that intellectual worth has nothing to do with adhesion to one aesthetic formula (III: 361).

Love and care could also be a determining factor on one's predilection for art. When Marcel quotes Chateaubriand, Vigny and Hugo to Mme de Villeparisis and she in turn paints negative images of them, Marcel's grandmother praises her out of love for her grandson, and not because she thinks her friend to be in the right, for she does not want to see him suffering like Baudelaire, Poe, Vigny and Verlaine (354).

The hypocrisy is foregrounded in Mme de Cambremer's detestation for everything 'not modern enough'. She calls Poussin the 'deadliest bore' for she feels, "Monet, Degas, Manet, yes these are painters if you like!" (IV: 243). She openly ridicules her mother-in-law for playing Chopin, and "stood up for Debussy as she would have stood up for a woman friend whose conduct has been criticized" (244). But how modern is she indeed, apart from rendering Modern art as a fad. Here is Proust in his iciest best,

A philosopher who was not modern enough for her, Leibniz, has said that the way is long from the intellect to the heart. It was a journey that Mme de

Cambremer had been no more capable of making than her brother. Abandoning the study of John Stuart Mill only for that of Lachelier, the less she believed in the reality of the external world, the more desperately she sought to establish herself in a good position in it before she died. (372)

Like a focused expatriation of Swann, these sporadic idiosyncrasies portray how the superficial self has completely taken over the self with no profundity in sight.

Auden writes in *The Dyer's Hand*, "our judgement of an established author is never simply an aesthetic judgement. In addition to any literary merit it may have, a new book by him has a historic interest for us as like the act of a person in whom we have long been interested. He is not only a poet or a novelist; he is also a character in our biography" (4). Such an attitude towards art is exemplified in its most parodic shades in Legrandin and Oriane, who are the apotheosis of snobbery amongst the middle-class and the falling aristocracy in the *Recherche*. In a chanced meeting with Marcel in the street, he says his own writings are "too frank, too honest", that he makes "the mistake of putting his heart into what I write". Bergotte, the literary icon Marcel admires in his youth is reprimanded for being 'fin de siècle', 'deliquescent', 'gamy stuff for the jaded palettes of refined voluptuaries' (III: 172). We can also here look at the diplomat Norpois' evaluation of Bergotte's style as having 'no action', 'no structure', nothing but 'otiose and byzantine discussions of the merits of pure form' and the 'nonsense of stringing together fine-sounding words and only afterwards troubling about what they mean' (II: 52-53). Likewise, Oriane ironically sighs, "nowadays it is considered a weakness to care for ideas in poetry, poetry with some thought in it" (III: 574). No doubt these are the criticisms which Symbolist and Modernist art had to face at the end of the century, and Proust himself too, by the workings of his novel, subscribe to some of these criticisms. We shall study the negotiations of the *Recherche* with Symbolic 'nothingness' and Romantic sensibility in the next chapter on style in far greater detail. For

the moment, it suffices to say that Proust's attitude towards these comments is ambivalent since the novel does not really relegate nor accept any of them in its own becoming and workings.

That the notion of beauty in art is associated with certain 'refined' things which are not without morality infused within them could be discerned in Marcel's primary considerations. As a child, he compares the delicacy and charm of courtesans in welcoming everything rough and uncouth and transforming them into a jewel like an artist, art being "the fashioning of a fine and precious setting for the rough, ill-polished lives of men" (I: 91). We can easily see here the Ruskinian Romanticism embodied as the influence of the family in Marcel's views. While his precocious friend Bloch considers poetry to be finer "if it actually meant nothing", Marcel expected "nothing less than the revelation of truth itself in poetry" (107). We are reminded of Schiller and his notion of aesthetic education, where art was called upon to play a re-constitutive role as the vehicle for disseminating truth. In this stage of Romanticism, morality was inextricably associated with art, and form served the purpose of communicating a content which other decadent forms of representation could not fulfill. Another Romantic notion that percolates to Marcel is that of talent and genius. Since artists are essentially 'different' from the rest according to this worldview, it extolls the 'gifts' [*Begabung*] of this special individual and maintains this isolation, for the Romantic poet must, by definition, be estranged from the common din of history. This is a complex under which Marcel suffers, embroiled as he is on one hand to please women whom he finds charming through his writing and neglecting writing only to feel morose and guilty. He dreams of Oriane asking him about the poems he wishes to compose, which in turn makes him ask himself what sort of a writer he would become. This askance is met with a 'block' and 'nullity', and he experiences a complete lack of faith and confidence in being capable of writing and of possessing talent (207-08).

The triangular structure of mediated desire reveals itself in Marcel's fascination for a place through artworks, just like women as discussed previously. The only long journey undertaken in the novel is to Venice, which Marcel associates with the home of Titian and the school of Giorgione (I: 474). He is adamant to see a Carpaccio in Venice, Berma in no drama other than *Phèdre* (II: 13). Although the Romantic sensibility dictates that art must be for art's sake alone, the egocentric outlook and desire for self-expansion forms an ambivalent relation to art's individuality. Even his own aspirations of becoming an artist are tinged with other considerations. He wants to pursue literature so that he can continue staying in Paris near Gilberte. Ironically, Norpois' assurance that an artist merits attention influences Marcel's father 'to make his son pursue the vocation of the artist' (10-11).

The structure of stasis we had found in Swann's reciprocal metaphor cast between Botticelli and Odette is repeated in Marcel's love for Albertine imagined through the prism of Vinteuil's sonata in the fifth volume. Although this stasis would undergo rupture in the next hearing of Vinteuil's septet as we shall later analyze, the parallel is none the less striking, for it shows Marcel following the same perilous path as his 'novelistic predecessor'. Marcel muses, "I would cast them [dreams inspired by Albertine] into the composer's phrase or the painter's image as into a crucible, or use them to enrich the book I was reading" (V: 56). In a reverse movement, Albertine is herself 'enriched' by the impressions that his imaginations lead to her. "She had at that moment the appearance of a work by Elstir or Bergotte, I felt a momentary ardor for her, seeing her in the perspective of art and imagination" (ibid). Proust, however, would go on to employ this reciprocation not metaphorically but metonymically, generating narrative movement, as we shall see in our chapter on style. For example, the Fortuny dresses Marcel buys for Albertine inspire in him dreams of Venice. And when he indeed reaches Venice, the city disappoints him and he mournfully is reminded of Albertine, who is already dead.

Speaking of the role of hysteria and its strong ties with imitating the other in the heteroglossic¹⁵ fabric of the *Recherche*, Michael Finn mentions that the abundance of sociolects and language zones betray more than a penchant for pastiche. As Marcel's initiation into art is infused with imitating the gestures and sensibilities of those handed over to him by family or acquired through social acquaintances, the novel likewise very deftly characterizes an "artistic aboulia", an indecision as to what indeed should be the style of the work (44). Art can never be pure despite the Romantic aspirations for it, grounded as it always is in human relations which are 'form-ed' and historical. Proust dedicates his craft to this indispensability, but at the same time embarks on a parody of hysteria where clichés are imitated as well, which is a dig at Sainte-Beuve's *Lundi* column pieces which Proust admired for their observation of social life as well as ill-rated due to their slavishness in directly transferring idioms and 'wit'. Hence, despite Marcel's different modes of imitation involved in his engagement of art finds space in the novel, the novel as a whole does not take recourse to any particular register. It relinquishes 'stylish writing' to claim a style of its own.

The turn in Marcel's 'career' or *apprentissage* in the words of Gilles Deleuze comes with the involvement of truth in the structure of desire. We have seen how Marcel's engagement with art has desire implicated in it. He exalts art to meaning something more than reality, pointing to a realm beyond the quandaries of habit. His "education inculcates in him the notion of a categorical difference between ordinary objects and objects having aesthetic merit or aesthetic form" (Descombes 110). Art here is still an object, but infused with truth, a romantic sedimentation we hardly find unusual in a disappointed youth. Desire also gets implicated in Marcel's notion of truth, for he wants to possess it like an object as well. It is only by the dint of the interaction between art-desire and truth-desire tensions that desire gets sublimated in favor of an art-truth tension that evolves out of the struggle.

Marcel's first visit to the theatre raises his hopes to find and possess for once and all certain supreme truths from the experience. Here, truth is envisaged as a transcendent object, with no transcendence of the subject himself. Marcel demands from the performance like from his visit to Balbec "verities pertaining to a world more real than that in which I lived, which once acquired, could never be taken from me" (II: 15). We see here played out the antagonistic relation between nature and culture that was wont to Romantic thought. Man seeks escape from reality to enter into a higher, 'truer' reality. Art is sought as an escape route, but Marcel is not prepared to give his being over totally to it. During the performance, he identifies in himself the "anxiety of the seeker after truth" and strains towards Berma's eyes "so as not to let one morsel escape" him, wants "to arrest, to immobilize for a time before my eyes every inflexion of the artist's voice, every expression of her features" (19, 22).

Marcel is Swann repeated, but repeated with difference. Both wish to 'collect' the aesthetic 'object', yet Marcel maintains this object to belong to a different realm whereas Swann blends it with his habit. This distance at first allows the necessary exoticization to invest the object with charm, and eventually becomes the condition of the Marcel and the novel's becoming when this distance is no longer perceived as something to be conquered or celebrated.

Schopenhauer's notion of *Einfühlung* seeks a unification of the subject with the object in the experience of art. All our activities involve representation of objects according to our will. Art, by impinging on us with its internal, dynamic, non-representable form, occasions a sublation of this will. The Idea, in Schopenhauerian terms, is the moment where subject and object are indivisibly united in the phenomenon of Essence. Marcel's seeks such a truth, but his fear of sacrificing selfhood still makes art persist as an object. He is exasperated at the ephemerality of Berma's performance that hardly allows him to retain a stable impression.

“But how short their duration was!” (23). In other words, Marcel wants to spatialize, represent to himself as a steady image, the temporal form of the drama. It is no wonder that Marcel’s second visit to the theatre is followed along this trail by his introduction to the most non-representative form of art, namely music, where Schopenhauerian empathy is finally shown as a possibility, but not a final one, as we shall see.

The earlier Proust, like the Romantics, believed that the eyes of lovers could pierce all media. It is perhaps a certain indifference that Romantic subjectivity involves in relation to the world that is responsible for Marcel’s nonchalance towards the situational totality of a work. He is not concerned with the drama where Berma acts, but only in her movements. Likewise, his fascination of Bergotte lies only in his usage of certain archaic phrases and adjectives and not how they are located in the overall design of the work. It is this differentiation of art to suit personal needs that are responsible for Marcel’s earlier theories of art, which even though contradictorily alternates between the outside and the inside, point at the selfsame problem of self-gratification and self-transcendence involved in a paradoxical knot.

If Marcel, like Swann had begun with the quest of possessing women and art, there is gradual divestment of this influence in his realization that happiness as well as the charm of painting lies not in the objects themselves, but is a mental thing, *cosa mentale*, in the words of Leonardo da Vinci as the narrator says (II: 84). This marks the shift of Marcel towards imagination where the dehumanization and delocalization of art is balanced by an understanding of desire as something essentially constructed. Whereas earlier Marcel associated art with their places of origin, he later derides the habit of presenting artworks surrounded by furniture and assortments of that age as an artificial simulation detrimental to the pleasure in contrast to museums “which symbolize far better, by its bareness and by its absence of all irritating detail, those innermost spaces into which the artist withdrew to create

it” (256). We see Marcel’s desire already in the throes of a continuous death that makes him change in time, a change he is yet to understand. Instead, at this juncture, he creates, in the words of Jacques Bouvresse a ‘myth of interiority’. Since the mystery surrounding love and art cannot belong in Marcel’s opinion to the world of appearances, he displaces them to an intrinsically unconscious mental zone, whose activities, ironically are explainable only “from a point of view that fundamentally belongs to that of consciousness” (Bouvresse 25). Marcel is not yet at the stage to understand that the *cosa mentale* exists only so far as a projection or an ‘exteriorization of the inner self’ occurs through the language of art and desire, but is certainly one step closer to the revelation in coming to terms with the ‘artificiality’ of his enterprises;

It is the terrible deception of art that it begins by engaging us in play not with a woman of the outside world but with a doll inside our brain- the only woman moreover that we have always at our disposal, the only one we shall ever possess- whom the arbitrary power of memory, almost as absolute as that of the imagination, may have made as different from the real woman as the Balbec of my dreams had been from the real Balbec; an artificial creation which by degrees, and to our own hurt, we shall force the real woman to resemble. (III: 427)

The disappointment with ‘outside reality’ not corresponding with the desired image makes Marcel regard the latter as a product of interiority. This division is but yet another segregation of the self from the world. Such a distinction is also to be found in the Romantic tendency of transcendence, a designation of an outside beyond where the subject wishes to journey to, but which is shadowed in the mystery of the unknown. Here, the internal image of *cosa mentale* is substituted by the external metaphor of *terra incognita*, an unknown land. This is how Proust obliquely describes the metaphor in the context of Lady Israel being the only person to

know Swann's real life which is a "zone of shadow, a terra incognita, which is clearly visible in its minutest details to all those who inhabit it but is darkest night, pure nothingness, to those who do not penetrate it but touch its fringe without the least suspicion of its existence in their midst" (II: 104). The Romantic identification of art with nature that is lost and beyond the realm of material culture will resurface in the novel, as we shall see in the next section.

Truth turns out to be elusive for Marcel because he renders it as an object and at the same time as something unknown. Bouvresse quotes from David Archard's *Consciousness and the Unconscious*, "The coherent use of the adjective 'unconscious' does not necessitate the introduction of the noun, which in itself raises serious and perhaps insoluble philosophical problems" (32). What takes place in Marcel's worldview is a dematerialization of truth, which is to say, that truth is accorded a realm which is over and beyond life as we know it. This Romantic tendency is on one hand projected to the invisible interiority of the Self, and on the other hand on an unreachable and unknown Beyond. In the first instance it symbolizes the centrality of subjectivity, and in the second a dream of salvation. Both are solipsistic in character, for the self is the sole dictator of the universe. Truth, which as we have discussed in the section on phenomenological hermeneutics, is an event of disclosure of being. In Marcel's solipsistic world, truth becomes hermetic and hence, an asymptotic impossibility, a paraphernalia to dream of only to be disappointed; a perfect masochistic device.

Girard terms this Romantic ideal as reflected in matters of aesthetics as the "parthenogenesis of imagination" (18). The solipsist self, even in conceptualizing the Beyond, does entirely in relation to the indisputable receptacle it considers its self to be. "Forever in love with autonomy, he refuses to bow before his own gods. The series of solipsistic theories of poetry produced during the past century and a half are an expression of this refusal" (ibid). Such a self refuses to admit the presence of others in his experiences. For example, when Marcel goes to the theatre for the first time, he is amazed to find that all the

spectators are facing the same stage. He had earlier assumed that each would be provided with a distinct stage of action, and the sharedness of theatrical experience unsettles his expectations. Similarly, we see Marcel, as well as Swann, paying very little heed to the woman as a person who inspires their fancy. Love ‘needs’ women only as pretext, for it is an end in itself for Marcel. “One wants to be understood because one wants to be loved, and one wants to be loved because one loves. The understanding of others is a matter of indifference to us and their love importunate” (V: 568).

Descombes traces the solipsism in Marcel right from the tradition he inherits. Metaphysical solipsism could be understood in two senses, the Classical and the Romantic (51). The former sees the self as something that has to be suppressed in favor of ‘greater’ principles of God, religion and morality. This attitude can be discerned in what Horkheimer had called Objective Reason in his book *The Eclipse of Reason*, as discussed previously. The subject sees himself in terms of a larger object, which is held in awe and veneration. Marcel’s grandmother and her sisters exemplify this attitude. Romantic solipsism reverses the focus and considers the self to be condition of all existence. Here, reason is subjectivized and Kant, Fichte and Schopenhauer’s notion of the world as a construction by the subject is the philosophical expression of this attitude. Desire not only plays a central role in this system, but its narcissism is doomed to meet with torment for it is set in defiance with time, a paradox we can examine in the third section. In his book *The Gardens of Desire*, Stephen Gilbert Brown makes the following observation which is relevant to our discussion here,

Possessive desire defeats its own purpose- perhaps because its hidden agenda is not possession of the Other, but of the self; its real objective is not communion with the Other, but to either convert the Other into a function of the self, or to use the Other’s rejection of the self as a further impetus to self-assertion through a deeper engagement of the self with the self. (28)

We shall conclude this section of the positing of the self with the first budding impressions Marcel has, which points at both the necessity and fallacy of his solipsism as a base from which he must eventually take departure to become the ‘hero’ of the novel, refracting what it had taken for the novel to become what it is. After the disappointment met with in Balbec, where his imaginations of gothic Normandy had confronted with a bourgeois seaside filled with modern-day diversions. Imagining the landscape of Balbec, Marcel says that only those things fascinated him which were not originally created for his pleasure but like a work of art or landscape is necessary and unalterable, “most diametrically opposed to the mechanical inventions of mankind” (I: 462). This is an expression stemming from the classical version of metaphysical solipsism, as discussed before. He compares his disappointment of Balbec with that of the first performance of Berma he witnesses, drawing an analogy between his fascination for the actress with his doctor’s encouragement of finding pleasure in Balbec. He has learnt from both experiences that whatever one loves can never be attained, “save at the end of a long and painful pursuit where pleasure has to be sacrificed to that supreme good instead of seeking it therein” (II: 258).

Levinas says that the Other is that “strangeness that mocks knowledge” (163). Instead of seeking truth as an epistemic object, Marcel realizes that a journey must be undertaken, through which one can co-habit truth. The resolution of desire-art and desire-truth binaries to that of art-truth occurs finally in the intimation that the only love that doesn’t disappoint is the love of truth, for this love is bereft of desire and solipsism, it faces and submits the self to the beyond of becoming. Escaping boredom through art is a false escape because it makes art disconnected to life, a point Miguel de Beistegui makes in *Proust as Philosopher*. Passion leads the pathway to knowledge, only as far as eros leads to *aletheia* and *sophia* (17). Knowledge here is no object, but the disclosure of that strangeness.

The question now is, how can this strangeness be disclosed? Wouldn't that be the end of it as strangeness and its annexation to the territory of familiar habit? Not if the event is sought in its difference, and not identity. Truth as essence is not what Marcel seeks at a particular moment, neither it is divorced from life and its materiality. Rather the truth exists as a potential which is revealed for the first time with not an escape but on the contrary a return to life. Habit makes our perception blunt, and this anesthesia estranges us from what is real. It is art, which by its radical incongruity with the calcified structures of habit, exposes us to a qualitative difference in which the world as vision is mired. Taking cue from Leibniz' notion of monad, Deleuze says essence is a point of view. It does not exist as a perspective outside the subject which could be worn like a pair of spectacles. But it is the point of view itself that reveals the subject along with the world it reveals. Essence constitutes subjectivity. It is not just individual; it individualizes ("Proust" 43).

On the second visit to the theatre in the third volume, Marcel does not place the actors and action in a different exotic plane of reality, his attempt at 'aesthetic differentiation' having receded thanks to his previous disappointment. Now the totality of the essence appears to him in how the point of view of the entire drama forms a vision, with nothing to separate or differentiate one from the other. The voices of actor present "a complex of acoustic and social phenomena which the sentiment contained in the lines they were declaiming were powerless to alter" (III: 45). The actress Berma could be realized only in the role she plays, for this role individualizes her acting. Hence, Marcel's realization of his previous misreading, "But this talent which I sought to discover outside the part itself was indissolubly one with it" (46). We shall highlight a similar 'correction' of Marcel's misreading of Bergotte from individual phrases to his style in the second chapter, for that is relevant to the elements and mode of style employed by Proust himself in the *Recherche*.

The long journey that Marcel undertakes in search of his self opens his horizon to a simple yet profound truth which would constitute a foundational step in his vocation. This is exacerbated by the famous ‘moments’ of the novel, a sudden opening that flashes now and then and tempts Marcel to a swoon. The second chapter shall focus on these moments, and how they constitute both Marcel’s passage to a truly temporal self, and at the same time their role in the architecture of the novel. For now, the shell of solipsism is ruptured and the realization shines even if dimly, like the faint promise of good weather in the sky of dawn, that “there is no self-identity without dialogue with others. Here, identity is never selfsame but always relational and permeable to alterity” (Haustein 38).

(B) MOMENTS OF RAPTURE/RUPTURE

One might well nurture the belief that our habits are merely arbitrary. Our true being lies over and beyond habits. We undergo habits because we ‘have to’, but they don’t define us.

But is that indeed true? Is our habit only a group of certain repetitive actions? The French verb *habiter* signifies where one ‘is’, geographically. But seen otherwise, habits provide *ontotopy*, the space where being is ‘played-out’. Our habits, in the sense of *habitus*, constitute our being. We are what our habits are, and what they allow us to be. We can only seek to change by changing our habits, or the ‘place’ where our being resides. And that cannot simply be doing this thing instead of that, but a fundamental transformation that alters our interaction with the things that surround us and our attitude towards them.

Marcel seeks profundity, yet his being is submerged in the superficiality of society. Unlike Swann, he has a realization of this fact, even if it is an inkling and not a clear perception. Proust uses the metaphor of color to hint at this problem, a metaphor that would

acquire impressionistic dimensions pertaining to the novel's style as we shall see later. The particularity and distinctness of things are overshadowed by the veil of habit and the anesthetic effect it comes to infuse our vision with. Although "names come to acquire different tints throughout the course of years", "in the dizzy whirl of daily life, names lose their colors and like a prismatic top that spins too quickly, appear grey" (III: 5). This does not only pertain to the present moment, but the consideration of the past by intellect and the anticipation of future constructed by will subtends this utter 'lack of variety' for an individual. Since we tend to regard the past and the future based on the vagaries of the present, the predicament and boredom of the here and now are infused to the entire horizon of our being, or we think. Since memory is a product of will, it too becomes an expression of the ego and solipsistic self, and hence does not 'let' the world to come to being in its uniqueness, reduced as it to the representation of an isolated subject. Voluntary memory presents the past in monochrome (Beckett 19).

We see here the intimation of a reversal. Until now, Marcel has considered his life to be boring and full of suffering, and art to a realm beyond life which could have certain final truths to share. But it seems habits themselves can lead to an alienation from life. Just as Heidegger mentioned that ontic or the world of facts is not yet being, similarly the anesthetic influence of habit on us makes us lose contact with things themselves, converting the world into a series of ready-to-hand equipment and tools, emotions and their expressions included, exemplified by clichés as discussed in the previous section. If everything is made to function according to the needs of our desire, and this desire in turn fabricated by a herd mentality without any considerations of true individuality of the human being, habits divorce us from life. The fault therefore lies not with life itself, since life, and the world at large, are not givens, but an envisaging, a visioning, a certain point of view that we muster up towards the horizon we face. We judge life despairingly because "we form our judgement, ordinarily, on

the evidence not of life itself but of those quite different images which preserve nothing of life” (III: 220).

The “predicament of insular subjectivity” is two-fold (Landy 38). Firstly, it wrests us out of life and encumbers us in a routine which is close to the point of being inorganic in its lifelessness. Secondly, it absolves the possibility of a connection between things, so that they surround us in an inchoate scatteredness. Since the self is based on will and intellect, which are, following our discussions of Rationalism, associated with attempts at creating cross-sectional non-temporal stable images of cognitive representations, there is an utter lack of a medium which could see the connectedness of things. In fact, this medium does not exist. Artists strive to create it ‘artificially’. The connecting thread could be real only so far it is ‘created’. Until we create the fictions which could lead us ‘back’ to life,

the slightest word, the most insignificant action [would be] surrounded by, and colored by the reflection of things which logically had no connection with it and which later have been separated from it by our intellect which could make nothing of them for its own rational purposes, things, however in the midst of which...the simplest act or gesture remains immured as within a thousand sealed vessels. (III: 221)

The solipsistic self does not allow any provision for an inspiration to transpire. As long as the world is reduced to representation by intellect and will, the Other is doomed to remain invisible. Proust says that signs are like hieroglyphic characters, in that they require ‘translation’. Here, translation refers to a movement between two realms. However, intelligence and will flatten everything to render them into the two-dimensional requirements of spatial cognitive images. Proust considers the truths of intellect to be “less profound, less

necessary than those that like communicates to us against our will in an impression which is material because it enters us through the senses and yet has a spiritual meaning” (VI: 232).

The moments of inspiration, if at all they are to figure in the novel, must come from ‘outside’ of Marcel’s vision in order to reconstitute it. This has a great significance in the novel, given that Vinteuil’s septet would be the final impression that would give Marcel the utmost conviction of setting himself to work. Music, and not literature and visual arts, is accorded this function precisely because it embodies the ‘outsideness’ to the maximal degree. We are free to choose what to see and how to interpret it. The ‘invasive’ quality of music together with its ‘pure form’ are the qualities that govern Proust’s choice, which we shall look at great detail in the first section of the third chapter. At the moment, we are in a position to anticipate the oncoming of an event, primarily from outside. In this phenomenon, the self comes to realize that it alone is not the world, but that the latter contains it as a point of view. “But in exchange of what our imagination leads us to expect and we give ourselves so much futile trouble trying to find, life gives us something which we were very far from imagining” (V: 576).

In a far trivial passage where Marcel wishes to divert himself from the suffering Albertine has caused him by bringing a little girl to his house and giving her five hundred francs for nothing, he is arrested subsequently on charges of child lifting. The fact that events spring to us from beyond and that the world exceeds our vision makes Marcel more receptive to the Other. As is wont in Proust’s novel, he ennoble the trivial in the garb of philosophical wisdom,

There are moments in life when a sort of beauty is born of the multiplicity of the troubles that assail us, intertwined like Wagnerian leitmotifs, and also from the notion, which then emerges, that events are not situated in the sum of the

reflections portrayed in the wretched little mirror that the mind holds in front of it and which it calls the future, that they are somewhere outside and spring up as suddenly as a person who comes to catch us in the act. (506)

Art necessitates therefore a rupture not from life and reality, but from the vanity and illusion of them so as to be able to draw to somewhere where life at all could be revealed as event. Art, understood in this sense, is not an expression of human subjectivity. On the very contrary, as Deleuze's notion of becoming as well as our discussions of event in the first chapter have elucidated, art is an opening up to things where the subject itself could be restored to the being it has lost in the process of making a fetish out of ego, intellect and will. In the words of Alain de Botton, "Our vanity, our passions, our spirit of imitation, our abstract intelligence, our habits have long been at work, and it is the task of art to undo this work of theirs, making us travel back in the direction from which we have come to the depths where what has really existed lies unknown within us" (111).

Yet the self is couched in familiarity, and cannot all at once come to terms with a reality that is entirely unknown to it. Moreover, it has so far been engaged in a certain spirit of possession which the appearance of novelty does not comply with. Marcel compares these moments in his life as those of inspiration received from "goddesses who deign at time to make themselves visible to a solitary mortal...but as soon as a companion joins him, they vanish" (III: 460). Perhaps this explains why Swann had been unable to understand the full significance of Vinteuil's sonata as a possibility of engaging with the Other and taking up his abandoned essay on Vermeer, because he had relegated the unfamiliarity of the experience immediately to the familiarity of habit. Inspiration requires time to be recognized, for they beseech us in a language which is unknown to us, which we must patiently learn. The recognition of inspiration does not precede the movement of being it inspires; they can only happen together, hand in hand. Susanne Langer collates this phenomenon with the problem of

identifying genius, a point Proust too would take up his discussing Beethoven's final Quarters and the posterity their form demanded as we shall see;

But a form, a harmony, even a timbre, that is entirely unfamiliar is 'meaningless', naturally enough: for we must grasp a Gestalt quite definitely before we can perceive an implicit meaning in it; and such definitive grasp requires a certain familiarity. Therefore, the most original contemporary music in any period troubles people's ears. (214)

The moments that enchant us out of the suffering of the self are thus not complete by themselves. This is especially important to consider in the context of Proust's novel. Many critics, in their naivety, have confused the novel Marcel wants to write with Proust's novel, the one we read. The complexity of this problem would be dealt in detail in the third part of the third chapter in this section. Proust most certainly had not created his novel out of these moments, but from hard, taxing works that spanned for years until his death. Moreover, Marcel, though fascinated by these much famous 'privileged moments', does not actually compose a single word of his future work that we get to read. Other than the fact that the work of a character of a novel cannot be read, for all we read in a novel belongs essentially to it as a work by the novelist, the English translation of the French '*moments bienheureuse*' as 'privileged moments' is precariously misleading. The moments are privileged, in so far, as they spur an initiative. By themselves, they have nothing to offer that could be called art. The impression in the Proustian universe is half-sheathed in the object, half in the perceiver, existing by itself totally in neither one of the two. What these moments of rapture involves is a rupturing of the self in drawing it beyond its insulated territory to try "draw forth from the shadow... the spiritual equivalent of these material sensations" (VI: 232). This is the clue to the work in how one is led to creating it. "And this method, which seemed to me the sole method, what was it but the creation of a work of art?" (ibid).

Marcel's first encounter with 'art' in the novel is the magic lantern in his room at Combray that reflects scenes from a Merovingian past on the walls, creating an aura of unease, a sense of being invaded by something strange. The lantern's projections are felt as an "intrusion of mystery" that disturbs the "anesthetic effect of habit" which had made the room till then habitable for Marcel (I: 9). The experience is eerie because it contests the complacency that is accompanied by habit.

At the Saint-Euverte party where Swann comes across the sonata being performed by professionals for the third time, the work seems to him to be human and yet belonging to a realm of supernatural beings. Swann has the intimation of the sonata being the "beginning of the world", but he does not probe into the "world of the sonata" for that would entail a sacrifice of his own self, which he is not prepared, perhaps not capable, given the novel's structure in using him as a 'failed artist', to undertake (422,423). The problem also lies in apperception of something entirely new, as the quoted passage from Langer's *Philosophy in a New Key* suggests. In the first hearing of a piece of music, it is memory rather than comprehensibility that counts to create an impression. Since, there are no memories to come to our aid, the music remains 'invisible' to us. Proust says that "melancholy is inseparable from one's knowledge of such works; as of everything that takes place in time... never possessed in its entirety: it was like life itself" (II: 119).

Music, being a truly temporal art based on difference and evanescence does not let itself be represented to a stable image comparable to past impressions. It necessitates the engagement of the listener with its happening, and not its being, for music never 'is' but must 'become' every time it is played or performed. To 'participate' in the event of this unknown occurrence, one has to but let go of one's prerogatives and predilections, in short, everything one thinks one's self is composed of. The otherness of art demands that we give ourselves up to it to be formed anew. It is the mark of "the other life... where one has to die to oneself

since things there are no longer the same” (271). It is much later, in the fifth volume, when Marcel realizes the variety music can offer him would be accessible only by creating a variation of his own self. Only an effort to break free of habit could make music help him “descending into myself, to discover new things, the variety that I had sought in vain in life, in travel” (V: 175).

Giving oneself over to the phenomenon of art is not however a sublation of self of the kind certain religion and mysticism advocate. As the method consists in ‘drawing’ from the material the spiritual equivalent for Marcel, and for Proust the writer the materialization of spiritual ideas, artful projection to the world as well as the concrete creation of art requires a transformation of self towards becoming. Such a transformation is far from being passive. Hence, ‘active submission’ must be the key in such a transformative process. There is no passive reception of gifts in those moments; the poet’s role is as important as the inspiration that comes from without. Auden compares the relationship with the Muse like that in a wrestling match, where expressions are to wrested out from the abyss, the equivalent of Proust’s own analogy of ‘drawing forth from shadow’. In this regard, literary composition has not changed much since its inception, “nearly everything has still to be done by hand” (17).

Listening to Vinteuil’s septet in La Raspelière, Marcel has the feeling of being in a ‘strange land’, a ‘unknown world’, a ‘unknown universe’ (281,282). The *terra incognita* is here and now, and everything seems to be transformed in a new light. If art accords us a new way to be by individualizing in us a new vision, the monochrome of habit gives way to unforeseen colorations. We return to Proust’s analogy of color, the *chromophilia* that according to Prendergast he shares with Goethe (133). The “paradoxical and deceptive quality of permanent novelty” that blooms forth in Marcel’s listening of the sonata makes it seem to him that “each tone was identified by a color which all the rules in the world could

not have taught the most learned composer to imitate” (V: 287). The ‘hysteria of imitation’ and pastiche of appropriate ready-made models of expressions as in clichés can never be art, for art must always be that excess which would not be mapped in any other zone other than the space it creates for itself in becoming what it is. Thus, the novelty of art must always be described by negative adjectives that denote its unprecedentedness and unpredictability. Vinteuil’s music offers “the unknown, incalculable colorings of an unsuspected world, fragmented by the gaps between the different occasions of hearing his work performed” (288).

Art is only the only phenomenon that enralls and ruptures the solipsistic self from without. Experiences which unsettle us are those which are not of our choosing. Generalizing them into joyful and disturbing categories, the former when unaccompanied by disturbance simply cushions the ego into a deeper state of repose. Moments which cause us pain force us to question the order of things, our fate, our attitude and dealings with the world. “Art is not alone in imparting charm and mystery to the most insignificant things; pain is endowed with the same power to bring them into intimate relation with ourselves” (V: 564)

We have seen how Marcel enchants himself by aid of an object or a person by investing a special charm in it, which itself is derived from general ideas of myth or history. The “tyranny of the particular” disappointments his expectations once this aesthetic object is at close range. Desire is meant to be unsated for it is a product of a particular instant of time in our existence that cannot correspond to the future. In the words of Max Scheler, Proust deliberately leads Marcel to a continuous *ressentiment* so as to create the double movement of his novel alternating between enchantment and disenchantment thereby creating the flux of the narrative. Marcel thus lingers in a confused state, passing from one disappointment to the other, until he comes to understand the true significance of suffering.

Perhaps there is none to the necessity of which we are more completely subjected than that which, by virtue of a climbing power held in check during the act itself, brings back a memory until then levelled down with all the rest by the oppressive force of bemusement and makes it spring to the surface because unknown to us it contained more than any of the others a charm of which we do not become aware until the following day. (II: 465)

Suffering, like art, introduce a 'semiotic violence' in the horizon of our being. When we are disconcerted, our faith in the order of things gives way to suspicion, and we begin to discover our environment anew. This phenomenon is embodied by our reading of Proust as well, since totally in contradistinction to narratives where resolutions abound, the *Recherche* is fundamentally open. It is not the quest for something, but the quest; it does not seek an understanding of this or that, but engages with the very structures of understanding. Our disappointment or boredom in reading Proust must be seen therefore in light of Marcel's suffering, for unfulfillment of readerly expectations purport us to admit, like Marcel, our being enmeshed within things which have a life of their own apart from fulfilling our fancies, like the indifference of nature towards human sufferings. "Only when we are suffering that we see certain things which at other times are hidden from us" (VI: 255).

The revelatory moments are neither only joyous nor tormenting, but both, for it must be so; violence of order and the formation of a new footing where the earlier disappointment is rendered harmless given the world now gets perceived from an entirely different point of view. Julia Kristeva's comparison of the moments as an equivalent of *epiphany* is much stretched, for the Christian metaphor hardly address the painful nature of tearing through the womb of darkness towards the possibility of light. "We may have revolved every idea in our minds, and yet the truth has never occurred to us, and it is from without, when we are least expecting it, that it gives us its cruel stab and wounds us forever" (IV: 576).

The wound is where the light enters us, wrote Rumi. Times change, and we keep on adjusting with this change like adjusting the parallax of a measuring instrument before taking readings. Suffering represents the “omission of the duty of adjustment” (Beckett 16). It opens a window on the real and is the main condition of artistic experience. Schopenhauer’s pessimism tells us that life alternates between wide stretches of boredom interspersed with moments of suffering. The latter are relief features over flat stretches of time of which we retain very little vivid memories. Beckett condemns boredom to be the most durable of human evils, and we experience that in the *Recherche*, by the deliberate boredom the narrative suspends as well as Marcel’s own insipid state that comprises the bulk of the novel.

Yet suffering has more than pain in store for us, only if we try not to overcome it, but live it fully. Proust’s formula for suffering is no formula at all, or perhaps the most austere one possible: we are healed of suffering only by experiencing it in the full. We are reminded of Rilke’s advice to the young poet on experiencing everything till the last, and in one of his letters to Clara Rilke, the poet writes, “works of art spring from those who have faced the danger, gone to the very end of an experience, to the point beyond which no human being can go” (qtd in Bachelard 220). Poetry is seen as the echo of a heartache. By suffering fully, one is absolved of that point of view which had caused it in the first place. And this departure is marked by a joy, which is not simply merry delight but a profound sense of discovery to find oneself transformed. “And the most terrible reality brings us, at the same time as suffering, the joy of a great discovery, because it merely gives a new and a clear form to what we have long been ruminating without suspecting it” (IV: 598). This joy is not immediate like the one of felicity which the moments springing up involuntarily offers, as we shall see soon. It is only after a long time has passed, that this joy, which could also be called a grief without despair, reveals itself to us. Proust’s character suffers incessantly through thousands of pages. Only at the end of the work, when we realize the necessity of these painful moments in

making him who he is and making him resolve what he wants to be, does suffering receive this ennobling joy. It is here that the arch of Proustian architecture completes its span, beginning with enchantment towards disenchantment and finally re-enchantment. Marcel is appeased not with the world he is in, but at the end of a journey when in coming to regard the world in a new light, or put otherwise in a new world when he himself is no more the solipsistic self he had been. The paradoxical nature of art and artistic experience in juxtaposing rapture and rapture is expressed by Jibanananda Das¹⁶ in regarding poetry as “the most fruitful suffering, the most difficult of joys” [*saphalatama bedana, kathinotama ananda*] (Das, “Kabitar Katha” 27).

We now come the last category of these moments, those spurred by involuntary memory. Although the will has some part to play in both the perception of art and sensation of suffering, these moments, as the word ‘involuntary’ suggests, are truly those of surprise in Marcel’s life. We shall not elaborate on a glossary and detail of these moments, for Roger Shattuck has undertaken a detailed survey of them in his book *Proust’s Binoculars* (70-74). Two aspects of these moments that need be focused on are the creativity it beseeches from Marcel and the unpredictability with which they occur, both leading to a change in his disposition and outlook towards the world.

It is often a fallacious, and ridiculous, assumption on the part of many to assume the *Recherche* to have grown out of the madeleine. We shall show the irony in this assumption in our discussion of Proustian metonymy in the next chapter. The novel is verbal, composed of language whereas taste and smell are material sensations of another order. We shall take a moment now to consider the episode in the first volume where Marcel is traveling in Dr. Percepied’s carriage and see the shifting geometry of the three steeples of the Martinville church. He experiences one of those moments, where an unexplained encounter causes him to sense a strange joy. But what is this joy precisely? To describe this joy would be in a sense to

compose it in words. Marcel feels that the world and understanding are of a verbal nature, a point we had touched on in our discussion of Gadamer in the first chapter. “What lay hidden behind the steeples of Martinville must be something analogous to a petty phrase” (I: 217). Marcel tries to put down his impression in the form of a prose-poem while on the carriage, borrowing a piece of paper and a pencil. In doing so, he creates. Does he merely reproduce the impression in language? Certainly not. He ‘uses’ the impression as a point of departure to express. Although the subject matter of the expression are the steeples, the piece of writing is the mark of a creative act, over and beyond the materiality of them, and fittingly, the first piece of writing that Marcel undertakes in the course of the novel.

Marcel comes across a similar sight from the carriage of Mme de Villeparisis in Balbec in the road to Hudimesnil. This time, Marcel relies less on the spectacle for he by now knows that the object of pleasure has to be created. This creation however, differs from the ‘adding’ we had observed in our discussions of Proustian desire. The steeples at Martinville and the trees along Hudimesnil are ‘things’ which Marcel seeks to unravel by arriving at their heart. This arrival is neither penetration of his ego in them, nor assimilation of himself in them, rather a creation of a distance in language where his understanding could find expression. This shall be his method, or rather that of Proust, of “attaching myself to the reality of that pleasure alone could I at length begin to lead a true life” (III: 343). One of the reasons Marcel considers friendship of little value is that friends offer very little of the mystery, and hence less fodder for becoming-other. One behaves in such a way with friends so as to comply with the well-being of others. Hence, the opening oneself up to the vast frontier of the Other is shrunk considerably in such experiences which are doomed to remain in the superficial realm. Marcel thinks he has to bring to light something hidden in inner darkness (364). This is not to be understood exclusively as Proust’s own worldview. Had it been so, Proust would not have introduced the character of Bloch or Saint-Loup with such

precise details. What must be gleaned is the double tension of the work in what it says through Marcel and what it does through the narration. Marcel's individuality is stressed through these 'thoughts', so that he doesn't end up as another Swann, so that Proust's novel isn't misunderstood as a pastiche of society columns.

No matter how hard Marcel strives to attain these truths, they are not of his choosing. A damp smell at the Champs-Élysées inspires a strange unexplainable joy in him. He must wait, and not give up the quest of understanding the "underlying reality that it had not disclosed to me" (II: 77). This is the novelistic function of these moments, to set up a doubt that appearances and reality do not coincide, that there is a scope of profundity lurking amidst the superficial, and for that one doesn't have to visit exotic locales or seek them in mystic practices. The moments are indeed dazzling and a mark of what Christopher Prendergast calls *éblouissement* (84-104). But they are beyond logic and intellect, come as they do of their own. Proust describes this in a poignant analogy in the final volume,

But it is sometimes just at the moment when we think that everything is lost that the intimation arrives which may save us; one has knocked at all the doors which lead nowhere, and then one stumbles without knowing it on the only door through which one can enter- which one might have sought in vain for a hundred years- and it opens on its own accord. (VI: 216)

It is no wonder that art, and these moments as their precursors have been treated as redeemers. There is most certainly a grain of truth in it, but it would be a mistake to think that to be Proust's philosophy. To understand how a novel can be philosophical without being a work of philosophy, and also how Marcel's redemption in the story is not the same as the novel espousing such a theory for itself, one shall have to wait for the last section of the final

chapter of this part of the thesis, where the problem of redemption would be spelt out in all its historical and stylistic complexity.

Proust casts Marcel's being in terms of an escape from the drudgeries of superficial life, and thus the language he chooses to describe these unforeseen moments reflect a sense of movement and liberation. "This being had only to come to me, only manifested itself outside of activity and immediate enjoyment, on those rare occasions when the miracle of analogy had made me escape from the present" (VI: 223). This escape from the superficial, however, is a return to the profound realm, where things lose their clichéd meanings and appear vibrant and vivacious. Jean-Yves Tadié thus rightly calls the moments '*instants profondes*' (qtd in Bersani 242). The "habitually concealed essence of things are liberated" and "our true self is...awakened and reanimated as it receives the celestial nourishment that is brought to it" (224). Marcel imagines these moments to be outside time, and truly so for him. But again, these moments are placed in the narrative time and they shape a temporal experience. This is yet one of the ways in which the irony of the novel is played out which makes us believe in it as well be skeptical in light of the field in which these moments are presented. Proust is not as much a Romantic as Impressionistic, and the role of time as a theme and as a stylistic adjustor plays out the tension of the novelist with these two traditions. We shall discuss the 'timelessness' of Proustian 'epiphany' in our chapter on style as well as in the section devoted to redemption and music at the end.

Do we not sense an analogy of attitude towards truth between the first chapter on theorization and our discussion of Proust so far? Just like Rationalism, Empiricism and Pragmaticism tended to make truth an object, the cultural influence of such attitudes in Marcel and in Swann makes truth at times a product of interiority, at times of transcendence, all the while ignoring the structure of Dasein to be that of time and understanding, as Heidegger showed. Deleuze very rightly says that truth in the Proustian universe is always

“betrayed...it compromises us” (“Proust” 20). Just like truth in phenomenology is a hermeneutic process where subject and object rupture towards event and relation, we shall now try to see how the ‘temporal self’ comes to be understood in the *Recherche*, as Marcel moves towards becoming (an artist), although never really succeeding given the internal constraints of the novel. This incapability of Marcel is a mirror image of the feat of the narration, which embodies instead of explicitly proclaiming a belief in time and how we are in it. What Marcel says, the novel has already done it, albeit in an oblique way. Before focusing on the obliqueness, let us first look at the new conceptualizations, or break from concepts towards a new sense of comporting to the world, that would inform the *Recherche* and how it works. The self has been posited, then ruptured, and led to face the open, the abyss, where the only law is that of becoming. As Bachelard says, “When we really live in a poetic image, we learn to know, in one of its tiny fibers, a becoming of being that is an awareness of the being’s inner disturbance. Here being is so sensitive that it is upset by a word” (220).

(C) LE TEMPS RETROUVÉ

In the first volume, Françoise is described as a person who feels no pity for the sufferings of those around her, until she comes across the mention of similar states of suffering while reading a book. The act of reading, unlike direct experience of things, involves imagination, in us placing ourselves in the situation described in the text. The production of image, says Proust, allows us to participate in the event of other’s suffering that otherwise, ironically, remains vicarious in ‘direct experiences’ (I: 150). Aesthesis requires distance which creates the vision, as we had discussed in context of Gadamer’s formulations in the first chapter.

Distance, instead of a deterrent, is a conditioning element in perception, “since it is only with the passions of others that we are ever really familiar, and what we come to discover about our own can only be learned from them” (154).

The necessity of distance in imparting personality is enacted elsewhere in Proust along the analogies of charm and love. Marcel finds the unknown and inaccessible fascinating, for the distance separating him from his aesthetic object is able to render this aura in the first place. This aura however, must not reciprocate the lover’s gaze, for that would upset the disposition of the Proustian narrative and boil it down to a romantic temperament. Love in Proust must be unrequited to serve the narrative function where it is embodied. Thus, “hidden in the heart of the name, the fairy is transformed to suit the life of our imagination”, “but if we remain in the person’s presence the fairy ultimately dies and with her, her name” (III: 3).

Similarly, Saint-Loup finds Rachel fascinating only because a distance separates him from knowing her past. Likewise, Saint-Loup is amazed to discover Marcel is so taken up with a girl such as Albertine, unable as he is to perceive Albertine not just from Marcel’s point of view but from the distance which subtends between Marcel and Albertine. Marcel understands Saint-Loup’s interest in Rachel when she plays a character in a skit performed at one of the parties. Here, Rachel is no longer herself. She is immersed in role ‘different’ from the one Marcel is wont to associate her with. And it is the introduction of this aesthetic distance which makes Marcel realize the possibility through which ordinary phenomena could appear remarkable. Aesthetic distance thus restores the charm of a thing which it has lost, or never been granted by our habit. Speaking of Rachel, Marcel thinks, “She had one of those faces to which distance, and not necessarily that between stalls and the stage, the world being merely a large theatre- gives form and outline and which, seen from close to, crumble to dust” (196).

In *Proustian Space*, Georges Poulet identifies this distance separating Marcel and things which enchant him as a void, as a space without force, without efficacy, without power of fullness of co-ordination and unification (42). The world of science in regarding the constellation of things begins with a presupposition of homogeneity. Space and time are merely parameters that lead to quantitative enumeration. Heidegger too touches upon this point in *Being and Time*, where he says that our dealings with things are esteemed to take place in time and space which are however considered to be given (137). In dismissing the primordially of space and time, as we have discussed in the first chapter, experiences become the originator of these sensations. Indeed, space and time no longer remain 'transcendental' and 'neutral' dimensions, but art, among other encounters which challenge habit' lead to a certain 'sense of time', and 'space' in visual arts. Distance is indeed 'negative' as Poulet characterizes it to be, only so far as it doesn't obey the Cartesian pre-giveness of a plane of action. However, the distance formed and intimated by art cannot entirely be described in negative terms.

Distance is negative in not being the distance spelt by maps and satellites. The space opened up by this distance in art could also be called neutral, following Blanchot's stress on the impersonal in art [*le neutre*]. Impersonality is indeed the essence of artistic phenomena, for will or ego does not function in the usual way in the process of the artist's becoming into art. We shall discuss the complexity of this phenomenon later. For the moment, it would be one of the theses' contentions that this distance be perceived, not in positive terms, but in the sense of being 'original'. Since the very sense of things is endowed or co-formed with the emergence of distance, distance is a conditioning factor of perception, an exigency of which is charm. Paul Klee said, art 'makes visible'. How does it do that? Not by reducing the distance we already seem to be aware of thanks to the corpus of knowledge we are equipped with, but by defamiliarization, art introduces a novel distance, a separation which in fact is

the sole conditioning of seeing things which otherwise are too close to habit to allow themselves to be taken in by our perception.

Art extracted from the most familiar reality does indeed exist and its domain is perhaps the largest of any. But it is none the less true that considerable interest, not to say beauty, may be found in actions inspired by a cast of mind so remote from anything we feel, from anything we believe, that they remain incomprehensible to us, displaying themselves before our eyes like a spectacle without rhyme or reason. (V: 45)

We are now in a position to better understand the positing of the desiring self and an unsated desire in the context of the subterranean artistic problems that the *Recherche* implicitly grapples with. Charm is formed by distance and it exists as long as the distance persists. It must remain unknown if it is not to be subsumed in habit. “Love is no more than the association of the image of a girl with the heartbeats inseparable from an endless wait in vain and her failure to turn up at the end of it” (68). Whereas the distance separating Marcel’s ego from attaining his aesthetic object could be seen as a persistent masochism in the novel, it is at the same time the *tour de force* that gives the narrative its movement or flux; a phenomenon that we, for example, see set in motion by Italo Svevo’s novel *Senilità*, also published under the name *Emilio’s Carnival*. With the development of the time of narrative, this distance changes, not in quantity but quality, but never vanishes until love for the object is no longer recognizable through the long series of changes brought about time. It is only the relationship of indifference that finally marks the death of one love for the sake of another, and to stall the advance of this nonchalance, mystery or unattainability is indispensable. Hence Marcel ruminates, “my love could not be lasting unless it remained unhappy, for by definition it did not satisfy the need for mystery” (78).

Imagination, as we have seen, is integral to experience in the world of Proust. Marcel's thoughts mirror that of Blanchot who says the realm of the image is that of fascination ("Space of Literature" 31). However, this image is not to be sought outside in the sense of a picture in space. Its nature is to remain tremulous, beseeching us to take part in creating it, but is forever bound to be incomplete. The very possibility of the image achieving finality would mark an end to fascination, which in the *Recherche*, is allegorized by Marcel's disappointment in actually coming close to the aesthetic object. The aesthetic object is an object only in a misplaced sense, it is more like a call from the beyond Marcel responds to and then tries investing in some concrete sign. The call and the response, moreover are temporal phenomena, a fact that absolves desire from any object, as we shall soon be discussing. The elder Marcel notes, "Love is a demand for a whole. It is born, and it survives, only if some part remains in it to conquer" (114). Obviously, the word conquest here is a stress of personality Proust takes resort to in order to anesthetize his idea. As a writer, this conquest is inane, for the very moment of writing, always without end, involve a 'going-out' of oneself towards possibilities, "At this time, everything becomes image, and the essence of the image is to be entirely outside, without intimacy, and yet more inaccessible and more mysterious than the innermost thought; without signification but summoning the profundity of every possible meaning; unrevealed and yet manifest" (Blanchot, "Book" 14).

If this detachment is not in the space of physics, could it be not that this separation tells us about time and how our being is dispersed in it? Proust often spatializes time and temporalizes space, the significance of which we shall discuss under our chapter on style. Here is one such example from the text, which throws some light on the temporal nature of distance. To really see something requires according to it its own particularity and removing one's self from its vicinity so as not to encroach on the thing. "We can appreciate in the calm detachment of solitude and dusk, the towering splendor of a cathedral, unique, enduring and

pure” (V: 565). This is in fact a synesthetic variation of a metaphor involving church bells and understanding that transpires in time that Proust introduced in the first volume. Instances of such ‘long returns’ are not rare in Proust, a factor that have made many to consider the *Recherche* as a musical play of leitmotifs. Here is the passage in its full poignancy;

Never again will such moments be possible for me. But of late I have been increasingly able to catch, if I listen attentively, the sound of the sobs which I had the strength to control in my father’s presence, and which broke out only when I found myself alone with Mamma. In reality their echo has never ceased; and it is only because life is now growing more and more quiet round me that I hear them anew, like those convent bells which are so effectively drowned during the day by the noises of the street that one would suppose them to have stopped, until they ring out again through the silent evening air. (I: 42)

The presenting of phenomena thus involves an absence of our self from it. Proustian impressions are not based on structures of thought, but as we have seen, on ‘aesthetic ideas’, to quote Danto from the first chapter. The dimensions of these impressions do not exist neutrally before their occurrence but are co-formed in the event. Thus, Proust says that “every impression is double and the one half which is sheathed in the object is prolonged in ourselves by another half which we alone can know” (VI: 248). The idea of an impression, according to Mauro Carbone, “should not be conceived as an abstract substitute for what is perceived, as though it were its imprints, and as such, separable and therefore graspable...should be understood in terms of an absence” (21). Marcel must, like the novelist Proust, make this absence present. It is at this point when Marcel has to stop believing that truth itself would emerge from without. The intimations in the form of impressions drive him now to explore why they at all enchant him, and it is in posing this question that the structure of introspection executes a movement from interiority towards temporality.

At this stage of the *Recherche*, Marcel finds himself in a peculiarly paradoxical situation that blurs the distinctions between inside and outside, between the self and the world, or that between the subject and the object. He has already realized that truth must come from without, and at the same time he understands that it shall not be received in the objects or impressions themselves. He ‘collects’ these moments, wishing to probe ‘into’ them, thus transplanting the structure of interiority and therewith immanence to the field of objects.

But I retained them [moments] in my memory, promising myself that I would not forget to learn the truth of them, because they alone obsessed me, and also because the very accident that had chosen them out of the surrounding reality gave me a guarantee that it was indeed in them that I should come in contact with a trace of the reality, of the true and coveted life. (V: 587)

To draw forth the reality of the impressions, Marcel realizes the need to introspect, but this introspection is not the same as the interiority that had him in its grip as we have discussed. Each person and each thing have a ‘mind’ of its own, which is to say, something that is not merely the appearance as projected by a Realist aesthetic. But the mind, wherever it dwells, within or in the without of social relations, cannot be seen and described. Although, psychology deems the mind as an image and attempts to describe its topology as if it is a cross-section, Proust’s dismissal of such a false stability opens up the way for the *Recherche*’s minute and sincere engagement with time. Marcel defines an artist as someone “who knows how to become a mirror and, in this way, can reflect his life, commonplace though it may be, who becomes a Bergotte” (VI: 36). But does that statement not resemble the mimetic mode of imitation as espoused by Realism? Does Proust indeed trust the mirror? Or does he have he in mind the becoming-mirror of the artist when he praises Bergotte to transform the insignificant frugality of his life to the richness of his art? In the preface to his

translation of Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies*, Proust warns against the 'optics of mind', in that it prevents knowledge of others (qtd in Shattuck 11). The analogy between the mind and the mirror is not a new one, and dates back from Leibniz. Each individual is like a mirror that reflects the world in a particular way, thereby forming a monad. However, does that not overlook the dimension of time in how it forms, deforms and reforms the contours of this reflecting mirror that we are? Proust himself hints at this at a later stage of the novel. "Each individual was... a measure of duration for me" (VI: 429). All people and things subsist in time "which is the dimension in which life is lived" (430). This is the vantage point from which Proust dismisses the notion of a stable point of view since the relation to the world is what forms our perspectives, and that is always in flux.

A psychology of time or temporal psychology can no longer work with the model of an interior mind present within our body. There is now a shift from the 'optics of mind' to 'optics of time', since our psychology and who we are, are in time. But time is invisible, so how can an optics of it at all exist? Time is spatialized, which is to say, embodied in living. Every moment of time pertains to a moment in space, not just in a physical sense though. It can also correspond to a state of being which can be expressed in media including language. In doing so, time is rendered a sense, a concretion. To understand oneself in time, one realizes for the first time the Otherness of the self. The one who tries to understand, to be conscious of himself, faces a division with that which is understood. Consciousness is based on this *negation*, as Sartre had pointed out. And the nature of this negation is temporal. The probing self finds itself in a continuous present, and the one who is probed is always absent at that moment, given that our understanding of the present self we are is based on the selves we had been in the time past or we anticipate to be in the incumbent future. As Rimbaud said, '*Je est un autre*' [I is an other]. An artist, in fact we all, are strangers to ourselves once we begin to try understanding ourselves. The variety that Marcel seeks from an exotic unknown is to be

found in his own life, for he himself is the most perennial Other than his 'introspective' gaze can ever seek to discover.

The other life, the true life is our own lives transformed in the sphere of art, here literature. It does not exist prior to it being created, for in creation it comes into being from the womb of habit into the light of a new vision. Memory in Proust is always an act of creation, for there is a temporal separation between who remembers and the one whose life is remembered. There is no interiority in Proust other than its parody, consciousness is in the *Recherche* like Rodin's sculptures; poetry of surfaces. The artificiality of the true life is hinted by Proust in the very first Madeleine episode. Many consider the Madeleine to be something magical in reviving the vast architecture of the work. It is however, not so. An architecture is not a dream, it is constructed, with pain and labor. Here is Marcel, unable to picture the past after mouthfuls of Madeleine and tea,

I put down the cup and examine my own mind. It alone can discover the truth. But how? What an abyss of uncertainty, whenever the mind feels overtaken by itself; when it, the seeker, is at the same time the dark region through which it must go seeking and where all its equipment will avail it nothing. Seek? More than that: create. It is face to face with something that does not yet exist, which it alone can make actual, which it alone can bring into the light of day. (I: 52)

The *Recherche*, seen in this light, is not a quest for retrieving time that has been lost, but rather a journey towards understanding our being in the fabric of time. 'Time regained' is not getting back time, but returning to time as the arena of being. With this move, Proust not only displaces himself from the whole gamut of Romanticists who believed in talent and genius, from Realists who had faith in objective representation and omniscient narration as well as his contemporaries like Joyce, Woolf and Eliot who indeed harped significantly on the

‘internal structures of the mind’ and ‘myth-making’ without addressing the paradox that the mind as something internal is itself a myth that has long been cultivated in the European tradition. Proust doesn’t wish to shy from the responsibility of projection to becoming by according creation to an author who works at its own will, involuntarily, namely the mind. Although Marcel says that will and intelligence are less important than necessity as far as creation is considered, the *Recherche* is after all, like all novels a construction that involves will and intelligence, perhaps not to the same end as it is involved in daily life, but nevertheless present. Interiority is a trope Proust creates for Marcel to show him emerging out to reclaim the sense of being in time. Bouvresse sums up the problems of interiority with respect to renting responsibility to the so-called unconscious,

In our idea of the unconscious, we are verging on the mythological with the notion of a hidden agent which has its own desires, wishes, motives, intentions, purposes, ruses and strategies, and is incapable of achieving its ends with an intelligence, skill and assurance often quite superior to those of the person himself; and while in principle such an agent is entirely unaware of logic and its rules, it reveals itself nonetheless capable of conducting highly subtle arguments. The principle of mythologization lies in our need to find someone or something responsible for everything that happens; so, when an action is performed ‘unconsciously’ and therefore cannot be attributed to the conscious subject, we are tempted to look for another author, which it is difficult not to conceive as a conscious agent perfectly aware of what it is doing, though the person concerned is not. (34)

Our life, right when we begin to articulate it, lies elsewhere. Our attempt to understand ourselves reveal an inescapable rift, a gorge that cannot be traversed. Marcel’s vocation and Proust’s novel live up to the sacrifice that becoming something entails. Marcel gradually

realizes that he must give up that which constitutes his superficial self in order to become a writer, to become the writing that would define him as a writer. Writing then, in the Proustian world, is not an expression of the self. On the contrary, creation involves the giving up of the self to become the Other, and in doing so effects the break from habit and lead the road towards the work. The work is often called the true life in the *Recherche*, and we have discussed this in the first chapter with regards to Deleuze's notion of becoming the work. Truth thus can never be attained, for the passage towards truth continuously erases the one who has desired the attainment. It is this passage that in sublating the self also sublates the identity of truth as a transcendent object, until the passage, that is living, comes to coincide with truth. Art, in the *Recherche*, cannot be arrived at; one of the reasons why Marcel has never been shown as actually writing his novel, for then he would no longer remain the Marcel we have read about for three and half thousand pages. Marcel is only on the verge of writing as the *Recherche* comes to the close; it must too part ways when the resolution is set and made. It might be somewhat facile but not entirely untrue to regard the *Recherche* as a continuous erasure of Proust the society person to become Marcel, and the journey of Marcel towards resembling someone like Proust. Writing then, is the "abolition of all that we have set most store by, all that in our solitude, in our feverish projects of letters and schemes, has been the substance of our passionate dialogue with ourselves" (IV: 248).

But Proust is no philosopher, despite the fact that the *Recherche* is loaded with philosophical reflections of Marcel throughout. These passages are not philosophy that Proust endorses, rather a fictionalized character-building, which obviously tinge the novel with a certain philosophical standpoint. But does the philosophy of the novel, in how it formulates understanding as such, fully coincide with the philosophy of Marcel? Marcel has no one philosophy to begin with; his reflections are often contradictory and not developed in a teleological fashion but spurred by the moments of the novel. The philosophy of the novel

must be sought in the tension it implicated between the philosophy of fiction (how fiction shapes ways of understanding) and the fiction of philosophy (how the philosophical fragments shape the body of the novel). We shall explore this tension in detail in the first part of the last chapter in this section.

The problem of the self and the understanding of being in the world as a temporal entity are embodied by Proust in his characters and style. We shall talk of style in the next chapter. For now, our focus would be how a 'temporal self' is shown as a paradox in the novel. Since the self, by definition should be like an empty receptacle unchanged in time, Proust's character developments deprive the personages in the novel of a stability, so that there are always in motion. We shall look at this embodiment in two categories; the 'fractal' and the diachronicity of continuous death.

Being is always revealed to us in fractions. Since we are in time, our being is occasioned by a projection or relation with things. With a change of this projection, being too alters. If being, following Heidegger, amounts to attitude, then at one single moment, our existence comprises of an indefinite set of such possibilities. The fractal has to be shown in a single instant, as a cross section in time where these different threads reveal themselves simultaneously. The consequence of the fractal being is a loss of personality. One can imagine oneself to possess one true personality that is revealed only in a particular relation, or perhaps which exist as a possibility but never receives from reality an opportunity to disclose itself. However, we must understand that this is only a claim we salvage for ourselves, and in this claim, yet another portrait of ours gets made amidst the gallery that make up our fragmented being.

Here is Marcel speaking in the guise of the narrator, "I concluded that it is as difficult to present a fixed image of a character as of societies and passions" (V: 373). Proust takes

recourse to a super-human metaphor of geology (a point we shall return to in the next chapter) to denote the impossibility of finding a stable image. “In so many people there are different strata which are not alike... But next day, the order of their superimposition is reversed” (VI: 2). We recognize the acceptance of that ontological problem which Swann had perceived as a solvable epistemic matter, namely, knowing all about Odette, even when he was absent from her vicinity.

The fractal identity of Albertine attests to Proust’s dictum of lack of stable personality, which could also be interpreted as an excess of personality. On one hand, this keeps Marcel’s love alive in providing opportunities of his self-multiplication, of his love remaining unfulfilled and hence sustaining charm; themes which we have already discussed in the previous sub-section. On the other hand, it implicitly reflects Marcel’s ‘education’ or *Bildung* in contrast to Swann, who has not learnt the secret of love’s torment in his lifetime. The scene in the third volume when Marcel kisses Albertine at this apartment, he sees at close range a ‘hundred different aspects’ of which he had considered to be one thing, and compares her to a “many-headed goddess” (III: 421). The unfixity or plurality of personality keeps the beloved elusive, and generates the flux of the narrative. Albertine is described elsewhere as possessing the “plenitude of someone filled to the brim by the superimposition of same persons” (V: 99). This superimposition of personality is rendered novelistic by juxtaposition, placing side by side, in a single moment, different aspects of the ‘same’ person. Identity of Albertine is realizable only so far as these differences present themselves. Instead of character, we have “a series of Albertines, separate from one another, incomplete, collection of profiles or snapshots” (163).

Proust problematizes the fractal being also in juxtaposition of the morally good and the evil in characters such a Morel, Charlus, the Verdurins and Mlle Vinteuil and her friend. Mlle Vinteuil and her lesbian friend have been described as ‘artists in evil’ in the first

volume, when they engage in amorous play and spit on the late composer's photograph. However, in the fifth volume, the indecipherable musical notations of Vinteuil's septet are said to be retrieved and deciphered for years by this duo, so that this composition sees the light of day and eventually inspire Marcel heavily to move away from society life and start focusing on this work. Marcel is bewildered when confronted with this complexity, "I thought with curiosity of this combination in a single person of a physical blemish and a spiritual gift" (IV: 407). Likewise, Morel, who is undoubtedly the most sinister character in the entire *Recherche*, also is not entirely bereft of good qualities. He is described as a "mass of contradictions, capable of certain days of genuine kindness...resembled an old book of the Middle ages, full of mistakes, of absurd traditions, of obscenities...extraordinarily composite" (IV: 499) We ourselves find no logic to corroborate the actions of these characters because their behavior indeed cannot be stringed in a set of personalities, but these personalities themselves emerge as temporal expressions, generating and being generated with situations, not extractible from the plot into a list of features as the practice of jotting down traits of Shakespearean characters prevails in school, perhaps also in some colleges. We shall talk more about 'dramatization' of personality in the section about Repetition in the next chapter, to see how this finds relevance in what Paul Ricoeur calls *emplotment*.

"The heart is richer...has many other aspects which will recur in the same person" (V: 372). It is this richness and not mere 'post-modernist' scatteredness that Proust devotes himself to in the novel. This not only pertains to people, but to commonplace objects like the tinkle of a bell or a diablo, where Proust extracts as much as he can by adding on indefinitely, until the thing merges with the fabric and is no longer recognizable as a separate entity distinguishable from the text as a woven weft. It also attests to Proust's openness in embracing all things good and bad, being indifferent to these polarities in favor of enriching his work. We shall see how ethics and morality are aestheticized in the novel in the third

chapter of this section. Neither good nor evil is what they are deemed to be, nor are they mutually exclusive. These ‘fictions’ of Proust must indeed be accessed as ‘form-ation’, and not statements which could be divorced from where and how they occur in the narrative. Their philosophical significance, in other words, is novelistic. Marcel comments on Mlle Vinteuil and her friend, “there exists in the sadist- however kind he may be, in fact all the more kind he is- a thirst for evil which wicked men, doing what they do not because it is wicked but from other motives, are unable to assuage” (VI: 168). Such a complication is also an embodiment of the Proustian metaphor of ‘social kaleidoscope’. Morality, like discussed previously, is an adherence to a point of view. The *Recherche* however, is adamant not to favor any particular perspective, keen as it is to show the contingency of human life and its unpredictability into frameworks. So says Marcel, “none of us is single...each of us contains many persons who do not all have the same moral value” (V: 605).

Bataille talks about the unmitigated tensions between good and evil in his *Literature and Evil*, where his chapter on Proust observes the unresolved complexities of the Proustian characters as something fundamental human. If Humanism was based on principles of progress and Rights of Men and the like, Modernist art in its suspicion against any such logocentrism and its restraining control shows a propensity towards evil. Stephen Dedalus of Joyce, Musil’s Ulrich, Kafka’s K, Mann’s Hans Castorp or Aschenbach are all imbued with features which are condemnable. They are ‘failed characters’ and not paragons of virtue. For so is life, a relentless alternation between two poles. Good and bad don’t exist outside the constructed polar extremities where they are forced to inhabit, the locations of which change with history via revolutions, social reforms, liberation. However, life is always played out in the middle zone, in that grey diffused light between the *éblouissement* of epiphany and the darkness of hell. Polarities are necessities to regulate human conduct, but an overdependence on them would have similar consequences as like following a habit too long without being

aware of what one is doing, or how the world indeed runs. Bataille, in the spirit of the Modernist liberation of self from principles and things from objects, comments, “A series of rebounding oppositions lies at the basis of an instinct composed alternately of fidelity and revolt, which is the essence of man. Outside this series we are stifled by the logic of laws” (59). In short, there is no essence in man other than the absence of it. We are not only what we are, but also what we are not. The Other is not outside us, but exists as shadow subtended behind an object that is itself cannot perceive. In his essay “The Other in Proust”, Levinas addresses the matter in the following insightful words, referring to the “soul as the universe of fulfillable legacies and fulfilled choices...perpetually turned into an outlaw, a compossibility of contradictory elements, and a nullification of every choice” (162).

At a more fundamental level, the problem of the fractal being makes itself felt in the very act of writing. A writer continuously siphons himself into another identity, an identity of difference, that we come to refer to as the narrator. Is not the tussle between the writer as a person and the narrator as a voice yet another arena where fractal being plays out? Proust has made this problem intensely difficult by writing a first-person narrative, where the Marcel exists as character as well as narrator. We shall not delve into the full complexity of this matter, for it is beyond the scope and objectives of this thesis, although we shall discuss certain nuances of it in the third part of the last chapter. How can Proust play out this joke within the novel? One technique, or cunning one can say, is to create a moment where Marcel refers to himself in the third person, an element which the previously quoted line ‘*Je est un autre*’ of Rimbaud also shows signs of. The fact that Marcel and the narrator can never coincide despite being indistinguishable from one another in the vacuous yet replete pronoun ‘I’ is highlighted by the following passage, “And yet, my dear Charles Swann, whom I used to know when I was still so young and you were nearing your grave, it is because he whom you must have regarded as a young idiot has made you the hero of one of his novels that

people are beginning to speak of you again and your name will perhaps live” (V: 223). The Swann of this purported novel ‘differs’ from the one these words are addressed to, like the ‘I’ and the ‘he’ ‘differs’. This is Proust at his best ridiculing the narrator position of a Realist aesthetic without disturbing the narrative of his work, but making the parody an element of it.

There is yet another dramatic moment in the work unforgettable due to its burlesque starkness where Marcel is at a restaurant with Robert and Rachel and sees himself reflected many times over in the mirror. While the artifice is probably designed by the establishment for the merriment of its guests, it greatly exasperates Marcel looking at a stranger figure of his own self. We have noted before how Marcel had sought multiplication of his self through love, and later through art. Also, keeping in mind Proust’s suspicion towards the mirror at highlighting reality, this passage complicates the fallacious ‘optics of mind’ with desire for self-multiplication culminating to self-estrangement and fractal being of one’s own revealed in a single moment. Here too, Proust splits the person Marcel is into ‘I’ and ‘he’;

Being then myself at this moment the said drinker, suddenly, looking for him in the glass, I caught sight of him, a hideous stranger, staring at me. The joy of intoxication was stronger than my disgust; from gaiety or bravado, I gave him a smile which he returned. And I felt myself so much under the ephemeral and potent sway of the minute in which our sensations are so strong, that I am not sure whether my sole regret was not at the thought that the hideous self whom I had just caught sight in the glass was perhaps on his last legs, and that I should never meet that stranger again for the rest of life. (III-192-93)

We can sum up the discussion on fractal being in relation to this element of critiquing tradition from within the novel. This tendency would be far more clearly illustrated in the discussion on style. As far as characters are concerned, Proust fools his readers just like

Swann and partly Marcel is fooled in believing that ‘fugitive beings’ could be held prisoners. Bersani observes correctly that our pleasure of reading the works of novelists like Fielding, Balzac and Flaubert comprises partly in “the relaxing illusion of having captured a mind, of holding it still while looking at it” (“Fictions” 90). If Joyce and Woolf problematize this by the development of the so-called ‘stream of consciousness’ technique, Proust’s method is far more classicist yet more sly. The first-person narrator as a changing being in a changing world does not allow any omniscience to thrive. Our relationship to characters, in novels written from impersonal, ‘objective’ vantage points, fulfills “our desire of ideal possession”, and could be contended to be an expression of the age of progress of the 19th century that Modernism as an outlook challenged vehemently. Proust’s Marcel is only a voice and has no personality other than the habit of saying I. Personality emerge, and then is displaced by evanescence, which is the experience of time and that of Proust’s novel. Acquisto’s comparison therefore of the *Recherche* with a musical work like Beethoven’s Quartets is apt in that both have no theme to offer, but the feeling of themes running over one another and disappearing, that the core of personality is but a myth where nothing resides.

Unlike the fractal nature of being, the diachronous ‘continuous death’ that constitutes the unfurling of our lives is truly a temporal phenomenon, and cannot as such be represented. To represent, a subject requires an object. But, in this realm, we are both the subject and object without being one and the same. Death, that is continuous and inbuilt into the very condition of our being rooted in time, is already experience once it has already taken place. We retrospect and find our past selves ‘different’ from the present one, and it is this unmitigable separation that confers to us the taste of dying. The consequence of this death is that there is no continuum available to our being to claim that it is one self that lives life from birth to physical death, other than the habit of saying ‘I’.

If the fractal could be 'represented' by Proust by cutting a cross section in time where different relational profiles intersected, the diachronicity of death makes it imperative to select two moments separated in time to hint at this phenomenon; to give the non-representable death a novelistic embodiment. There are two ways in which Proust attempts this task.

The first 'method' corresponds to the construction of involuntary memory. Bergson had already dealt with this queer phenomenon prior to Proust in claiming that duration, although, non-representable, is continuously stored up in a virtual plane, to which we gain a momentary access when 'identical' material sensations return separated in time. We shall see, how Proust's novel criticizes in its style the very foundation of this belief in identity in the next two chapters. To claim that the identical self, in Marcel's word, essence, returns after a gap is to construct an analogy between two moments contingent in time. Involuntary memory is another way for Proust to establish the structure of metaphor as something timeless, since time is abolished in these moments, and Marcel thinks he is beyond death, in the realm of pure time. Involuntary memory, thus, is not a temporal phenomenon at all, seen separately as a moment, for it negates time's evanescence and passing. However, does involuntary memory indeed return the self as identity or a difference that is already wrought in time? Beckett refers to this habit of claiming the return of the selfsame being in memory as "the plagiarism of oneself", to claim someone else as oneself (20). Ironically thus, Marcel never succeeds in becoming a novelist as long as he thinks these moments to be of supreme importance, for the novel is a temporal artifice and demands time for its construction.

Yet, Proust's novel is significant for these timeless, metaphorical abstractions not merely as instants of poetic rapture, but how the narrative employs them in developing associations. Each of these moments depend on a material sensation, which for Marcel is not as important as the exhilarating joy. It is just the opposite for the narrative that develops an

associative network from these commonplace things to generate its movement. In his essay “Metonymie chez Proust”, Genette calls this a metonymic development of metaphor and regards metonymy as the rhetoric of desire in that it is always mediated with shifting associations as Girard mentioned, whereas Landy uses the word ‘metonyphor’ to describe this stylistic process (“Figures III” 58; 73-74).

The embodiment of continuous death must not be sought in this or that image in the *Recherche*, but in the very movement of the narrative. It is only highlighted from time to time when Marcel reflects of a past moment or state-of-thing. But otherwise, it keeps on perpetuating, continually. This “fragmentary and continuous death insinuates itself throughout the whole course of life... fear of death is the fear of indifference towards things of value now” (II: 288). And what is worse is that this death, being continuous like time which is its other face, cannot be known when it happens, but only discovered amidst the ruins that remain and are discovered only after long. “Death of oneself is neither impossible nor extraordinary, it is effected without our knowledge, even against our will, every day of our lives” (V: 554). Neither will nor knowledge functions before the abyss, and desire is the very antithesis of death. Our relation to the world appears changed, because the world and we ourselves are continually changing, giving ourselves over to time in order to be born anew every moment, although habit tries to undo or rather suppress this realization to surface in conserving the basic practices and functions of daily lives. “It is not because other people are dead that our affection for them fades; it is because we ourselves are dying” (V: 682).

Death, being continuous and without respite, deprives us of a continuum over which we can base our selfhood. However, seen from another point of view, it is death that bestows to life the only true continuity. Marcel has for long sought experiences and a being that would absolve him from time and its changes, and it is only with the experience of death as realized in recollection of an alienated past in a changed present, does he ‘return’ to the throes of life.

Death and life are not elements of a contradiction, but together constitute the condition of being in the world. If Marcel's desire for an otherworldliness had portrayed the remnants of Romanticism in the modern dissident man, it is passages like the following one that truly showcases the Modernist temperament in its understanding of being as a flux inflected with involuntary displacements;

But we do not pause to reflect that, even without waiting for that other life, in this life, after a few years, we are unfaithful to what we once were, to what we wished to remain immortally. Even without supposing that death was to alter us more completely than the changes that occur in the course of our lives, if in that other life we were to encounter the self that we have been, we should turn away from ourselves as from those people with those people with whom we were once on friendly terms but whom we have not seen for years. (IV: 297)

The experience of death makes the earlier desire of possessing Albertine or the sea through Albertine seem puerile to Marcel. If the self is itself not there, who is it that is going to reap the pleasure of possessing? The identification of the subject and object in the field of desire is not possible, as we shall soon be discussing. Death plays thus an additional 'role' in the *Recherche* in moving Marcel from society to art, where this problem does not exist as it does in the realm of the superficial self, for profundity, as would be shown in the next chapter, is based on a blending or dissolving of the self into impersonality. Beckett writes, "We are disappointed at the nullity of what we are pleased to call attainment. But what is attainment? The identification of the subject with the object of his desire. The subject has died- and perhaps many times- on the way" (3). As a child, Marcel could believe in the fantasies of desire, for death still had not made itself felt. As a person grows up, the past is available to him as a field of actions that have been irremediably completed, and distanced from the one he is there and then. Death is not an alien experience waiting for us at the 'end', but the most

faithful companion of our lives that makes us unfaithful to our previous selves in the sense that the values with which we associate the world and people are infidels. Hence says Marcel, “it was myself, that had changed, and thus gave me that impression that the mysteries of life, of love, of death- which in their optimism children believe they have no share in, are not set apart, but one perceives with sorrowful pride that they have formed an integral part of one’s own life through the course of the years” (V: 619-20).

Martin Hägglund refers to an important paradox that the constitution of art by the Romantic sentiment implicates in relation to philosophy. Earlier, poetry was associated with ephemerality and mortality, since it depended exclusively on performance and form-rendering with no essential content which could exist independent of the event of its occurrence. Philosophy, however, strived for transtemporal truths which could remain intact throughout the vicissitudes of time. Defenders of poetry have overlooked this investment in mortality in collating desire with the timeless (2). Since the Romantics, including Wagner and Nietzsche, were continually trying to arrive outside the throes of history, poetry was to keep the promise of eternity and redemption. We have discussed such an attitude been enacted by the earlier Marcel as well.

Such a desire for the atemporal is a fallacy, because desires are constituted by a lack that is contingent by nature. With time, our footing in life changes, so does the arrangement of things that make up our lives, and thus our desires too now seek new things which are not readily available. Hägglund terms desire thus as *chronolibido* characterized by temporal finitude. Philosophers, in envisaging the self as a continuum, had attempted to overcome this finitude through different means. Plato eliminates chronophilia by welcoming death which would bring with it, eternal being; a rather stoic position. Epicurus, on the other end of the spectrum contends chronophobia by disregarding death. Both overlook the fact that death is a

condition of being; that it is thanks to the continuous death that one comes to care about life in the first place.

In the fifth volume, Marcel has a feeling prompted by a letter sent by Gilbert where her signature appears like that of Albertine, that the latter is still alive. And yet, this thought offers him no joy, and it is shattering for Marcel to realize that “the man that I was, the fair-haired young man, no longer exists, I am another person” (V: 737). If the mirror scene at the restaurant had revealed to Marcel as a stranger to himself in a particular moment, here it is in retrospect that he has an aftertaste of a former self that has died on the way.

And the reason one is not distressed is the same, namely the self which has been eclipsed is not there to deplore the other...the forgetful self does not grieve about his forgetfulness precisely because he has forgotten...I should have been incapable of resuscitating Albertine because I was incapable of resuscitating the self of those days. (ibid)

Death is the only experience which is accorded to all in equal measure, for it is boundless. Desire, on the contrary, is the index for the particular. The world appears as a representation through the lens of desire and many, like Marcel, take this image as a stable and sincere reflection of our being. But time, in effacing desire through death, always bring to us the world in excess to all our machinations. In a sense, this is the profound dynamics between Marcel the character and Marcel the narrator. The latter is already in decrepitude, having suffered and lived for years and full of realizations that go hand in hand with desire and its disappointments. The former is projected by the latter as an agent who desires without being aware of the impossibility of attainment. This impossibility gains body in the narrative, generating evanescence of the plot as a succession not just of events but of worldviews in juxtaposition with the worldviews of other characters. “Desire in Proust works to reduce the

world to a reflection of the desiring subject; death, however would seem to be the condition for an escape from the self-repetitions initiated by desire and a restoring to the world of those differences that promoted anxious desire in the first place” (Bersani, “Redemption” 9).

If, for Stendhal, happiness was the promise of love, this happiness is never kept in the universe of Proust. Love is such a significant theme in Proust, precisely because it embodies absence, the asymptotic and elusive goal of desire. “And indeed, when we meet again after many years women whom we longer love, is there not the abyss of death between them and us, quite as much as if they were no longer of this world” (VI: 5). Proust’s novel, as well as that of Joyce and Musil, may seem to be failures for they lack a center that can co-ordinate the action of the plot. Such a reading is historically false, for it transplants the aesthetics of Realism to works that contests it from within. If heteroglossia can be judged as an embodiment of hysteria, the ‘scatteredness’ of the *Recherche* could be perceived as that of neurasthenia (Finn 54). In the first instance, the narrator imitates others without end till mimesis becomes caricature. In the latter case, anxiety and irritating involve the voice always in a flux of digressions until the point arrives, where a definite transition is made clear through a reflection like this, “For in this world of ours where everything withers, everything perishes, there is a thing that decays, that crumbles into dust even more completely, leaving behind still fewer traces of itself than beauty: namely grief” (VI: 6). Marcel’s sentimentalism is a counterpoint to Proust’s sincerity towards death, where grief, love and desire are but only means to experience the hollowness through which they arrive and depart.

If art engages continually with this death in creating the particular and the mortal in the fabric of time’s evanescence, the moment of creation is at the same time a moment of death given over to experience. The construction that takes place in art and the negation that makes the clock tick makes the phenomenon a strange one, where something appearing for the first time also appears as something lost. This loss is not to be understood as that when

things are taken away from us which we once possessed, but the very impossibility of possession of an image in wresting it out of the abyss. Proust often writes that the only true paradises are those which we have lost, which does not only literally refer to the lost realm of childhood. Writing, being non-conceptual [*unbegrifflich*] cannot have a grip or grasp [*Griff*] on anything. Nostalgia here is felt 'in advance'. Fraser articulates this proleptic nostalgia in the following fashion, "Pain therefore nostos-algos, or the ache to return, is not something superadded to an experience, subsequently to endorse, relish or frame it. It is the very pith of existence which makes it what it is. All literature, therefore, is a process of retrieval of something lost before it began, relinquished in advance of- and as precondition for- its occurrence" (244).

If the loss of desire through continuous death becomes the condition of the world to open or event itself [*sich ereignen*], so must Proust the person continually 'die' in becoming Proust the novelist. This ethos in Literary Modernism which is a departure from Romantic genius and Realist observer is an effort of restoring the world outside the limited, erroneous scope of subjectivity. Proust keeps Marcel ponder on death and love to suit a double function. Firstly, it 'explains' the novel's movement by explaining the nuances of the narrator's 'life'. Secondly, the narrative embarks on an oblique voice to embody the condition of writing, which in a sense absolves Proust from being a follower of whatever Marcel says. "If the self that is my work is the work of a self that is not my work, then the self willed by me remains the work of a non-me. The self as a work must be produced by a self other than the person who is a finished product of a species. This other self is the self of the infinite refusal to be identified with a being who is not of my making" (Descombes 279).

Proleptic nostalgia, thus is not merely a feeling Marcel inhabits, but the very condition inhabiting art-making. The *Recherche* seeks by creating, hence every brick in its edifice is a longing for another place, an unknown unheard-of place that this brick seems to

evoke. Descombes is correct in evaluating the standpoints of Barthes and Blanchot as Romantic in nature, as they are still obsessed, unlike the Wittgenstein-ian attitude of the former, with the 'elsewhere'. Whether Proust himself too had a remnant of this Romanticism is a matter of contention. But unlike Romanticism, that begins positing the self with respect to an estranged other, here in writing, the estrangement is an exigency born from the phenomenon where the self is given over to continuously towards becoming into the work.

So, says Blanchot,

the opening of this infinite movement that is the encounter itself, an encounter that is always apart from the place and the moment in which it is spoken for it is this very apparatus, this imaginary distance, in which absence is realized and only at the end of which the event begins to take place, a point where the real truth of the encounter occurs, from which, in any case, the language that utters it wants to take birth. ("Book" 9-10).

We have arrived at the last leg of this chapter with the transformation of self as death of habit occasioning the emergence of art. Does the matured Marcel see death only as disappointment as loss? The continuous death that marks our lives is the condition of creation, as we have discussed. It is not something negative; on the contrary is the condition of activity. Marcel says, "Death is not in vain. They act upon us even more than the living because, true reality being discoverable only through the mind, being the object of a mental process, we acquire a true knowledge only of things that we are obliged to recreate by thought, things that are hidden from us in everyday life" (IV: 196). Obviously, an artist does not work with thoughts in a mental process, but transformation of thought into material of art. The disappointment with contingent reality is a romantic reception that is essential for Marcel's character if he is to become an artist, who is by nature "more open to the world of potentiality than to the world of contingent reality" (V: 18) Reality, as we know it, is a compound of facts rendered

into habit. Artists who “live in the world of the possible” bring forth the world as a particular vision in the work (708). We have debated in the first chapter that the ontological structure of Dasein and the world, time and understanding are inter-related in that they all pertain to a projection which is always ongoing. The world, and our being, can only be ‘possible’, without actually culminating in a telos, which would be against the grain of being in time. Art effects the ‘return’ to true life which is encumbered by our seeing weakened by the structures of habit. But this return, is not to be understood as a romantic return to ancient Greece like in Keats’ *Ode to Grecian Urn* or Nietzsche’s advocacy of pre-Euripidean tragedy. It is an original return that is sought, a point we shall explain in detail in relation to Deleuze and his emphasis on Difference in the third chapter of the section. “Art is ‘re-creating one’s true life’ not in the sense of ‘happening again’, but happening for the first time as an original difference otherwise un-cognized (VI: 255).

The *Recherche* is no *Bildungsroman* in the usual sense of the term, for there is no final image [*Bild*] that encompasses Marcel’s journey. Moreover, Proust’s strong emphasis on evanescence make such a spatial analogy improbable. There is no idol [*Vorbild*] available to Marcel. Everything and everyone he had deemed significant only end up disappointing him so that he can embark on the journey to discover the truth for himself;

We do not receive wisdom, we must discover it for ourselves, after a journey through the wilderness which no one else can make for us, which no one can spare us, for our wisdom is the point of view from which we come at last to regard the world. The lives that you admire, the attitudes that seem noble to you, have not been shaped by a paterfamilias or a schoolmaster, they have sprung from very different beginnings, having been influenced by evil or commonplace that prevailed round them. They represent a struggle and a victory. (III: 60)

A Bildungsroman consists in the protagonist becoming someone, but the *Recherche* ends with the resolution that Marcel would no longer remain that series of portraits we have observed throughout the novel but an artist, where he must dwell on that abyss of non-self and creation. Marcel wishes to have a narrator to tell him about his love life in 'objective' terms, something analogous to the omniscient narrator in a Realist novel. Yet, that is but impossible, as a meta-textual joke aptly illustrates, "How gladly would we, when we are in love, that is to say when another person's existence seems to us mysterious, find some such well-informed narrator! And undoubtedly, he exists... but we never come across him" (V: 629-30). We never come across him because he is yet to exist. Marcel must become the narrator of his life, but when that happens, he shall no longer remain the one who wishes such an encounter. Proust's *Recherche* is a *Künstlerroman*, where an artist comes to be. He vows to recreate his life, which would be the "retrospective transformation of the meaning of life as *Bildungsroman* passes over into *Künstlerroman*" (Prendergast 41). However, we must emphasize that Proust's novel is 'incomplete' in essence, for Marcel never really becomes an artist, but is on the verge of becoming one. Our discussion on totality and unity of the *Recherche* would further discourse on this 'incompleteness'.

"We strive all the time to give our life its form, but we do so by copying willy-nilly, like a drawing, the features of the person that we are and not of the person we should like to be" (III: 235). In order to 'become', the artist must overcome the constraints constituting his being. Marcel is unable to create all throughout the *Recherche* because he remains a 'character', not just one among many in the novel, but he sees himself as a creator before creating, and therewith, becoming one with the unprecedentedness of the created. Modernist art has always dealt intensively with this non-anthropomorphic nature of art and artist as pure force of becoming; the realm of the impersonal 'it' as Deleuze puts it where the artist becomes the 'offspring of the event'. Proust the novelist is born and exists only in the realm

of the *Recherche*. Proust the person has no need or scope to exist in the work, as Marcel's botanical metaphor here hints, "like a seed, I should be able to die once the plant had developed" (VI: 258). We shall quote here a passage from *Tonio Kröger* in full for the sheer brilliance and accuracy with which Mann speaks of this matter;

He worked, not like a man who works that he may live; but as one who is bent on doing nothing but work; having no regard for himself as a human being but only as a creator; moving about grey and unobtrusive among his fellows like an actor without his make-up, who counts for nothing as soon as he stops representing something else. He worked withdrawn out of sight and sound of the small fry, for whom he felt nothing but contempt, because to them a talent was a social asset like another; who, whether they were poor or not, went about ostensible shabby or else flaunted startling cravats, all the time taking jolly good care to amuse themselves, to be artistic and charming without the smallest notion of the fact that good work only comes out under pressure of a bad life; that he who lives does not work; that one must die to life in order to be utterly a creator. (211)

It is our contention that other than focusing on the ontology of creation, it also serves Proust to mount an attack on the society people's reification of art as a pet product as well as to a trend of criticism where author's psychology is held to be of paramount importance in 'deciphering' the meaning of the work. Proust's book *Contre Sainte-Beuve* attacks this tendency of making out of art an object of knowledge where the transformation of a human into a thing and the possible transformation of readers into the vision of the world are simply ignored, or not understood. Readers are disappointed to find in an author's work elements which are not 'present' in his own life. "We do not see our bodies, though others do, and we follow our thoughts, the object that is in front of us, invisible to others, made visible at times,

to a work of art, whence the frequent disillusionment of its admirers when there are admitted into the presence of the artist, whose inner beauty is so imperfectly reflected on his face” (V: 393). Alain de Botton presses on this point in his book on Proust, where he warns us not to imitate the attitude of Sainte-Beuve in fitting Proust’s world to our vision, but rather to follow Proust’s own wishes of regarding his novel as an ‘optical instrument’ to look into our own immediate reality. Botton writes, “a genuine homage to Proust would be to look at our world through his eyes, not look at his world with our eyes” (213).

In imagining that art shall reflect the artist as we know him from facts is to relegate the potentiality of art in making a reality possible, instead of making a possibility real. Musil engaged very deeply with this paradox, as we shall see in the section devoted to his work. Art refashions our sense of reality by making it possible [*ermöglichen*]. The world ‘becomes’ in the work of art due to this ‘real-ization’, and thus the world, when it appears, must always appear new. Here novelty is not an external feature, but the condition in which the world is revealed. “Through art alone are we able to emerge from ourselves, to know what another person sees of a universe which is not the same as our own... Thanks to art, instead of seeing one world only, our own, we see that world multiply itself and we have at our disposal as many worlds as there are original artists” (VI: 254).

The authentic proof of genius lies not in the content of the work, but the uniqueness of vision that “no other [composer] had ever revealed” (V: 428). An artist must not know what his work eventually will come to resemble, intelligence working in art in a retroactive fashion as we had mentioned in the first chapter [*intelligence a posteriori*]. If it is already known, what art is and what art should be like, there is no real voyage undertaken, only during the course of which truth can be revealed. We have also discussed in detail in the first chapter how style can be defined but only be made, for else there would be no scope for the ‘opening’ of the world. Blanchot says, “to be an artist is not to know that art already exists, or that the

world already is there” (“Book” 201). The work is always ‘different’ from the one intended, and must be so. Only in difference can being return to the realm of creation. Proust says that art always differs from what was planned, for we ourselves become during the course of it being created, with a displacement from that self that could intend and desire.

We fancied for a moment that we could set down in permanent form our need of a great love, but it did not occur to me that sometimes, if the sketch is not too old, it may happen that we return to it and make of it a wholly different work, and one that is possibly more important than what we had originally planned. (III: 450).

We shall have a look at how the ‘novels’ young Marcel wishes to write and the *Recherche* ‘differs’ in the third part of the third chapter of this section on Proust dealing exclusively with such ‘meta-narrative’ moments. At this point, we can briefly note the significance of Marcel’s obsession with military tactics and tales he gets to hear from Robert in light of an ‘aesthetic’ aspect that he discovers in maneuvers, skirmishes and wars. “War does not escape the laws of our own friend Hegel. It is in a state of perpetual becoming” (VI: 76). He goes on to compare a general with a writer “who sets out to write a certain play, a certain book, and then the book itself, with the unexpected potentialities that it reveals here, the impassable obstacles which it presents there, makes him deviate to an enormous degree from his preconceived plan” (86). Proust uses the metaphor not as much of a comparison between art and war, but more of an understanding of the latter in the ‘field’ offered by the latter. War “could be told like the story of a novel” (366). What Proust is here doing is the reverse, telling the novel in terms of a war account, in so far as the latter embody ‘difference’ and unpredictability.

We have now reached a stage where we can at last understand the dual function that Albertine serves, in being Marcel's elusive love and the "generating center of an immense structure" (V: 500). One can always argue that such an attitude borders on dehumanization. Our contention would that it is a part of the shift from the anthropomorphic towards thingness, and can be called re-humanization for the sake of defining the human anew through the novelty of the world of the novel. Albertine is referred to as the "mighty goddess of time" to whom an author could say "This book is yours!" (V: 441, 517). This is no more hyperbole but true if one comes to regard the architectonic of the *Recherche*. Proust had initially planned two volumes for his work, the first and the last volumes. The *Recherche* indeed grew 'from the middle', a point to be taken up later, and Albertine could undisputedly be regarded as the fulcrum of the mammoth construction.

Charlus, who likes Swann, could have been an artist had he not succumbed to desire, tells Marcel that things exist "only in virtue of a creation which is perpetually renewed. The creation of the world did not take place once and for all... it takes place every day" (VI: 132). The world exists only in renewal and returning, and our next chapter on style would try to understand how Proust achieves this in the construction of the novel. Would that which Proust 'does' with the novel and that which Marcel in the novel 'says' coincide? Can they at all ever coincide? We long for the world, and we do create it. But this creation is inbuilt with the sense of imperfection, fragmented-ness and loss. These are not qualities but conditions despite of which the world can appear, and we against it. Proust is at his elegant best when he describes the world in the final volume as the "immense scenic background against which we ourselves are so significant, both we and the body we long to approach" (VI: 176).

It is probably a boon the alterity of the Other is both empty, and hence inexhaustible (Levinas 163). Had a conclusive relation been conceivable between the self and Other, becoming too would be reduced to a stable configuration. It is a point to be noted that the 'I'

in the *Recherche* seldom speaks in direct speech, it only thinks or writes, or perhaps takes is a “species of gymnastics which fortifies us against unhappiness by making us neglect its particular cause in order to gain a more profound understanding of the essence” (VI: 265). This ‘athleticism of becoming’ in Deleuze’s words keeps on persisting in generalizing the particular, is this generalization in the scope of the novel is a particularization of general emotions, beliefs and philosophy in the uniqueness of Marcel and his story. The ‘I’ remains ‘same’ throughout the work only by continually changing in relation to what surrounds it. This incessant “particularization of the universal” that inheres in the attitude of Modernist writings set in contrast to the epic “universalization of the particular” bespeaks the empathy for the Other in a very concrete and not simply moralistic fashion (**Add**). Levinas is right in saying that the profound lesson in Proust, if any, is that of “situating reality in relation with something which forever remains Other, with the Other as absence and mystery, in rediscovering this relation in the very intimacy of the I” (165).

We have thus seen how the self is posited, then disturbed finally to regain a sense of being in time, and how this process, which is not really linear in the work, informs the temperament of the center of consciousness of the work. We shall now delve into the style of the novel and question the relation of it with respect to the character’s worldview, only to understand historically and phenomenologically the interaction between world-making and world. As mentioned at the opening of the chapter, novels could be of various kinds, but they return to this conflict where they are born. Our intention so far had been, and continue to be in this thesis, to align with this fundamental feature of poetry, which could also be called its charm as well as the sadness peculiar to it. We conclude this chapter with Auden’s simple yet profound words, “Poetry can do a hundred things but there is only one thing that all poetry must do; it can praise all it can for being and for happening” (60).

Chapter 3

Le monde à la Proust

(A) THINGS, THINGNESS AND THINGING IN THE *RECHERCHE*

Recalling the second sub-chapter in the first part of the thesis, we can underline the fact that the world is thingly in character; it is made up of things, and it too is a noumenal thing that things to host its event of self-becoming. This sub-chapter would devote itself to understanding what sorts of things does one encounter in the *Recherche*, what is the attitude towards things implicated in this choice, and finally what Proust makes out of or with these things.

The ethos of the European Modernist novel is undercut by an absolute lack of inspiration. The people of the ‘outside world’ appear bereft of charm, and are impotent in charging the poet with an impetus to create, a condition we have already spelt out in detail in the previous chapter. Unlike the Romantics, the Modernist writer is dispossessed even of the dream of returning to or re-uniting with nature. Although the alienation with the basic elements of the world has been heralded by that modernity where and when Romanticism took birth, and still continues to persist till this day, the naiveness of seeking a return to this primordial togetherness was already apparent as long back as in the days of Schiller. Schiller makes the distinction between naïve and sentimental poetry in his eponymous book, saying

that for the alienated modern man, nature can only function as a dream, a certain outwardly plane, or in the jargon of poetry, a source of images of absence.

Such a romantic strain in modern sensibility is inevitable, and neither Proust the novelist nor Marcel the character are exceptions to this. We have observed how Marcel's ego and longing have been thoroughly shaped to the point where influence paralyzes his individuality from evolving. Proust's relationship with Romantic temperament is ambivalent, both as novelist and as a person. Although he shares the dissatisfaction with modern industrial life, but he does not seek escape from it towards some uncontaminated nature. Marcel keeps on seeking something 'different' from life although the *Recherche* in vain, finally realizing that his life itself could suffice as the subject matter for art. Things don't have to be different; they are always in 'difference'. And it is 'seeing' them that brings out the differential that sets them apart.

Proust could rightly be placed in the legacy of the great Realists like Balzac and Flaubert in that he attests to life instead of relinquishing it. Not a Naturalist who focusses chiefly on traumatic effects to bring out conflicts between determinism and will, the Proustian attitude is far more 'open' in embracing the things of daily life thought to possess the tiniest of significance. Yet, the monotony of life is not monotonous in the *Recherche*, but polychromatic. Unlike Romantics and Naturalists, whose choice of things for the literary work depends on the shades that are already agreed upon by convention, Proust's impressionistic touch lends things the colors they lack in 'ordinary' life.

Proust is close to Flaubert when it comes to select the *Stoff* of fiction. According to Flaubert, there is no such thing as beautiful subject for art. Yvetot and Constantinople has no difference between themselves, as far as their suitability for a novel's backdrop is concerned (qtd in Fowlie 249). The regular valency of things is ought to be transformed by the seeing of

an artist. Hence, if he accepts something as beautiful or moral, and simply represent them as such in the work, he would be committing the same errors as the Realists in confusing habit with true reality. The task of the Proustian artist would be to make things beautiful. Such a method can work with anything at all, and such a beauty is a re-definition of beauty that can well defy the standard norms and responses surrounding it. Thus, although Proust adopts the monotony of life as the *Schauplatz* of this work, his ambivalent attitude towards Realism becomes clear from his rejection of mirror-like representation where values of life and conserved in the realm of fiction, a factor which had prompted Terry Eagleton to castigate Realist aesthetic as being a conservative one; “Classical narrative of the realist kind is on the whole a 'conservative' form, which slides our anxiety at absence under the comforting sign of presence” (“Literary Theory” 161).

The volta of the *Recherche* consists in the turn towards life in the last volume. Marcel realizes, “human beings may yet inspire in me what nature can no longer say...the observation of humanity might possibly come to take the place of an unattainable inspiration” (VI: 202). Inspiration does not come from without in Proust, it must come from within, a space that is not interior as understood in the usual sense, but scattered. The very frontiers of the inside and outside are smudged in Proust’s ‘Romanticism of the City’ where the interiorization/aestheticization of the doldrums of superficial social life and the exteriorization/trivialization of the thoughts, reflections and ideas occur in tandem, a point we shall take up in detail in the next chapter. Marcel had complained of life lacking significance, and here suddenly, he is overwhelmed by the proliferation of meaning. What has brought about this change that is but the condition of Proust’s working with ‘ordinary’ subject matter? Not an event from outside, but introspection spurred by the moment of involuntary memory. These ‘dazzlingly blue’ moments are to be best understood as grace that indeed comes unexpectedly for Marcel, and yet for Proust the novelist, these are mere cornerstones for his

massive architecture to be set up. In Marcel's story, this change of attitude toward things suddenly transforms a pitiful life to one replete with meaning. What has changed in fact is only the way he now 'sees' the world, and that has made all the 'difference'.

In his book on Proust, Alain de Botton mentions the art and craft of the painter John-Baptiste Chardin in transforming this very frugality of life to beauty. We can also note here, that Proust had worked on an essay on Chardin analogous to Swann in the novel, whose piece on Vermeer of Delft remains unfinished. Chardin's paintings, like those of Cézanne and Carl Schuch, are based on ordinary objects to be found in the household; kitchen utensils, knives, apples, greased tablecloths. And yet, these paintings make us aware of the beauty in these things, aware of the fact that they are not equipment but things with a 'life of their own'. In this regard, Botton says, "they [artists] are the ones by whom our eyes are opened, opened, that is, on the world" (149). For the impressionists, as for Flaubert, style is everything. This does not mean a disregard for things in overvaluing the manner in which they are perceived. Rather, it is only first with the manner, the mode of seeing, that lights them up. Kristeva calls Proust an "artist of immediacy" and his world "not essentially different from the flood of light which inundates Chardin's unsophisticated objects" (66).

Life seems to us unartistic because we are not artists enough to see it. Seeing has long been associated in the Cartesian tradition as a representation of the mind. The supremacy of the visual in the present-day 'society of the spectacle' derives its roots from the subject-object binary that the conventional understanding and undertaking of seeing involves. It allows us to watch what we like, and turn away from it if we don't. Moreover, it demands little from us other than our will to identify or distinguish from the spectacle, for it claims to represent all that there is. Seeing life as an artist is not this passive frontal positioning [*vorstellen*], but like Heidegger meant, an act of 'complying with' or comportment. Mauro Carbone mentions in this context the concept of *voyance* from Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whereby the 'listening eye'

unveils the 'invisible'. The invisible remains so, until seeing adopts the openness of the ear to submit to the impulses of the without, of the radically 'different' Other (17). Unveiling the *voyance* is a responsibility felt by Modernist art whose ambivalent outlook transforms the frugality of everyday life to the prolific. Rilke said as an advice to the young poet, "If your everyday life seems poor, don't blame it: blame yourself; admit to yourself that you are not enough of a poet to call forth its riches; because for the creator there is not poverty and no poor, indifferent place" (10). The artist has no need of richness, because his task is that of enriching whatever is there. In the remarkable film *Babette's Feast* directed by Gabriel Axel, a French woman from Paris flees to a little Danish countryside village, her family lost in the war reigning there. Once a cook of the renowned 'Café Anglaise', she begins to work for two elderly ladies as a household help. Years go by, her life too goes on in the astuteness of daily routine with nothing whatsoever to stand out as an event. Some years later, a letter arrives from a friend of hers, whom she had asked to buy lottery tickets for her on every Christmas. She has won 1000 francs. She announces to her mistresses that she wishes to host a feast, which is understood by all as a farewell gesture of goodwill. It is a lavish feast, a replica of a 'Café Anglaise' dinner, and strangely constitutes all the 'action' the film has to offer. Is not the film then poor in its plot? Yet, every frame of it is brimming with unforeseen richness. The elderly ladies ask Babette the following morning, how much money had been spent in the preparations. She answers, 1000 francs. And in dismay, the mistresses, who had thought Babette would leave the frugality of this dreary life and return to Paris now that the war is over, exclaim that she is now poor all over again! Babette says, "An artist is never poor".

Baudelaire, who along with Flaubert, is often seen as the forerunner of European Literary Modernism, mentioned in the epilogue to *Les Fleurs du mal* that poetry could be the transmutation of detritus or the conversion of muck into gold, where dross and waste becomes the occasion of revelation and epiphany (qtd in Prendergast 94). In the same spirit,

Proust has made a host of 'petty' things the subject matter for his novel. What at all of 'significance' can one find in the *Recherche*? It is just vistas of experience of an unhappy child who hardly speaks, idiosyncratic characters, pretense of society people, jealousy inspired by love and homosexuality. But is that indeed so, once these elements enter into the field of the novel? Their significance, in other words, persists only and in the novel. Outside of it, they are indeed ordinary things. Like Baudelaire and Flaubert, Proust works with trifling things that Fernando Pessoa calls 'asides of life' in *The Book of Disquiet* (49). Objects that are relegated by us in our habit are reclaimed by art and restored as things. In the words of Yeats, the poet's world of things is a 'rag and bone shop' (qtd in Auden 43). But that implies neither the poverty of the artist, nor his predilection for the grotesque as sometimes misunderstood, but primarily, it points to his vision in transforming the absence or 'misdirection' of inspiration towards a world of excess. Which are the 'novels' Marcel wishes to write? His idea of the novel as received from the genres of Romance and sentimental novels makes him want to make his amorous adventures the matter of his book. We shall discuss the contention between what Marcel wishes to write and what Proust writes in its ambivalence in the next chapter. For the moment, we shall remark that Proust rejects all such 'novelistic' topics and things in the *Recherche*. Mediated desire often masquerades as inspiration, and Proust is careful not to develop his plot along those lines.

This reversal of values and a critical outlook towards everything conventionally agreed upon is the spirit of European Modernist writings. It is dangerous to associate this attitude with the negativity peculiar to Nihilism, for these artists reject the conventional not in theory; instead, they don't simply reject the convention. Regarding spleen or ennui beautiful is not merely a formal exercise of overturning the hierarchies, but this reversal enacts or embodies the fundamental empathy towards thingness of the thing that had been lost through the centuries of modernity. Modernists are concerned with the becoming of being, and hence

it is wont to Joyce, Musil and Proust to underestimate the very notions which stipulated at their time what a novel should be, in order to create their own works. Their non-acceptance of conventions subsists in their affirmation of a new, particular vision. For all their constructivist preoccupations, it would be but puerile to brand such a tendency as escapist, for it is the very opposite of that.

In his book *The Mirror of Art*, Baudelaire mentions that in contrast to traditionalist and classicist artists, modern poets favor 'private subjects' (129). Whereas Shakespeare and Racine had used public figures, who already were familiar to the mass and hence set up a conventional horizon as backdrop to their deeds in the drama, the element of the comic infused with irony in the turn-of-the-century productions found more convenient and more importantly, imperative to fashion 'homely' objects in their unprecedented appearances. Thus, although Proust makes Marcel's Romantic longing to ally with Racine's tragedies, the manner in which these neo-classicist tragedies interact and function in the *Recherche* does not allow their erstwhile aura to subsist. Unlike love in Racine, Proustian love is neither passionate nor fatalistic. It begins on the contrary with indifference and is by default unattainable, as discussed. Love in Racine could behave as an area of dramatizing passion; in Proust it is used to dramatize the plot itself and by being intellectual pleasure, pave the road towards art in Marcel's life. Bersani notes that the lovers are direct in Racine, whereas in Proust a Pascalian *divertissement* is always in motion. In the former, exasperating irrationality and irresistible force of passion lend the world awe and supernatural mystery. In Proust, love is a prosaic matter. Albertine and Rachel are not charming; their charm is invented by the seekers, leading to a "clinical reduction of Racinian love to a certain imbalance between the self and the world, to a kind of pathological mistake on the part of the lover" ("Fiction" 100).

Although we are always in confrontation with things, they exceed us in their ownness or other-ness. Things are beyond human. They remind us, that we live among them, that we too are things among things, and that the world is not a collection of manipulable objects with the human being having the undisputed control in manipulating them. Since, Modernist art, which was more or less contemporaneous to phenomenology in history and in temperament, posits itself against the Romantic fetishism of subjectivity and the Realist claim for objectivity, literary style during this phase in European culture shared a special kinship with the thingness of the thing, and thinging of things to make them appear without rendering them as objects of intellect. It is no wonder that botany and geology are the two fields, other than warfare as discussed, which Proust chooses as the dual sources of metaphors that describe the non-anthropomorphism of Modernist art. The shift from anthropomorphism should not be understood as de-humanization. We have already, in the first chapter, developed the discussion how phenomenology overcame subjectivity in trying to engage with the world beyond the confines of what is traditionally understood and proscribed to be human. Non-anthropomorphic would then mean being human in a new way, or being human as a thing, but most certainly not what Ortega Y Gasset understands as dehumanization of modern art as portrayed by the lack of ‘human subjects’ in their composition. We shall return to this problem in our section on redemption in the next chapter.

Plants constitutes a strange organic realm which is however beyond the ‘human’ field of will, intelligence and selfhood. Watching Albertine asleep brings to Marcel’s mind a vegetal metaphor; “she had become a plant... long blossoming stem” (V: 71). As long as she is a person, she can respond back to his doubts concerning her infidelity; but asleep, he can ‘possess’, but whom? Albertine is a human being only as long as she cannot be possessed. Possession has no valency in the realm of things, for Proustian possession must be

unsuccessful, as we have discussed in the previous chapter. The thingness of Albertine is not of Marcel's design but exceeds all his machinations of making Albertine an object.

Literary production must be careful in according the work its own thingness, although it is a product of one's making. That a work is made by someone doesn't make it an output of that person's subjectivity. Since art individualizes, the artist is co-constituted by the artwork as thing in process of becoming. It is not the whims of the novelists that decide what shall happen where in the narrative, but the happening itself has a necessity of its own which demands from the novelist its dues. Proust engaged in a very significant 'narrative pun' towards the end of the third volume, where he says he had seen Jupien and Charlus at the courtyard while keeping an eye out to see if the Guermantes had returned. However, he does not expand on this discovery until much later in the opening pages of the fourth volume. Although, the event occurred before, it is narrated later, to suit the architectural demand of the work. This logic, or defiance of narrative logic, is 'explained' by the phenomenon of cross pollination when Marcel observes insects and butterflies transporting the pollens from the stamens to the style. The flowering, therefore, is not a willed act, but happens among things. So is the literary phenomenon too. It is not preceded by will always; it must be let to happen. Marcel ponders faced with this phenomenon, "My reflections have followed a course that I shall describe in due course, and I had already drawn from the visible stratagems of the flowers a conclusion that bore upon a whole unconscious element of literary production" (IV: 3). The association of a snobbish irascible aristocrat like Charlus with a tailor Jupien is unseemly, and Proust's later volumes would keep on making these 'marriages', a point we shall return to shortly in another context. "The coupling of contrary elements is the law of life, the principle of fertilization" (V: 115). Like a plant, the *Recherche* grows, develops beyond logic, expectation and intellect.

Vegetal metaphors return in Proust's comments on character development and the contradictory elements people evince. Complexity among people cannot be explained through logic. They present themselves to us often as shock or recognition. "In the flowering of the human species, the interplay of different psychological laws operates always in such a way so as to compensate for any process that might otherwise... bring about the annihilation of the race" (VI: 113). The Proustian obsession with physiognomy is made into a novelistic trope in Marcel identifying places and epochs in personalities; ancient France in the blue of Oriane's eyes, Israel in the mannerisms of Bloch, provincial countryside in the rustic speech of Françoise, and so on. Moreover, just like a tree's personality is spatial, so do human beings inherit their race, receive certain features which are not their own but belong to the things of which they are a part, an extension, personality being cut "from one person and grafted on to the heart of another" across generations (V: 599). What Proust seeks here is to describe that individuality and tradition and not contradictory to one another, but both co-form one another as Eliot had observed in his essay "Tradition and Individual Talent". People, just as texts are a modified expression of what forms them, and this modification throws new light on what has existed. The past is altered by present as latter directed by former (52). Obliquely, Proust comments here on the transactions that a Modernist poet enters into with the past modes of expressivity, a tendency we have been following with respect to Romanticism and Realism.

Finally, metaphor itself is explained metaphorically with the aid of a plant analogy. If art involves a transformation of reality, art could be understood as a metaphor, one that is 'same yet different'. Proust's problem with Realism is that it copies willy-nilly from the scenes of habitual life, and hence misses out on profound truths which can only be disclosed by metaphorical transposition. When Morel in the last volume makes caricatures of Bergotte, his pieces sell like hotcakes. But from a literary point of view, these pieces are rather impotent for Morel "imitates the spoken language of Bergotte but not transposing first into

written Bergotte”, an act Marcel calls “oral fertilization” that only produces “sterile forms” (VI: 96). We shall study in the next section, that it is this transposition or metaphor-making that makes Bergotte who he is; an arduous task Morel certainly lacks the heart of undertaking, being yet another star among the constellation of failed artists in the *Recherche*.

The field of geology offers to Proust the realm that is most distant from what is human, and yet the study of which is based on growth, on pressure and time, things which go on to make mammoth works like the *Recherche*. Most geological metaphors of Proust hint at differentiation or variegation, emphasizing that the totality of the work, like that of the earth is only a product of multilayered and multitudinous elements. There is no single uniform voice of the narrator in the novel, for ideally in a *Künstlerroman*, the narrator develops into being one with the plot. Shortly before the segment ‘Swann in Love’, Marcel says that Swann’s story has been gathered by him from multiple sources, and if these have fused together into the making of the story, their different origins could be traced like those of rocks.

All these memories, superimposed upon one another, now formed a single mass, but had not so far coalesced that I could not discern between them... if not real fissures, real geological faults, at least that veining, that variegation of coloring, which in certain rocks, in certain blocks of marble, points to differences of origin, age, and formation. (I: 223)

Time itself is imperceptible, but its traces could be discovered in embodiments. Proust capsizes on rocks’ potential to embody vast stretches of time and different eras therein along the individual as well as social planes. He describes the “ego as superimposition of successive states... not unalterable like stratification of mountains... Incessant upheavals raise to the surface ancient deposits”, a point that recalls our discussion of the fractal

personality (V: 622). Likewise, changes brought about in a large scale alters the topography of society; in the last volume the difference between pre-war and war days is regarded as if separated by a duration, “a geological period” (VI: 45). All events in Proust cannot be narrated from same vantage point; the lush lucidity of Combray eons apart from the clammy winding passages of *Sodom and Gomorrah*. Distinctness of different events “would require succession of different materials” leading to the novel’s structure as stratified, which had earlier appeared to us scattered (222).

In the last part of this section, we shall ask ourselves the question, how do objects become things in the *Recherche*? Certainly, any object has an ontotopy, a space where it dwells. By space, it is not meant where physically an object is to be found, but that zone it occupies in our dealings with it, in short, in habit. The object must therefore be made unfamiliar, and the road to doing that involves altering its ontotopy. We often complain of the long complicated, convoluted sentences of the *Recherche* for they unsettle us. We are unable to ‘grasp’ the objects the sentence is spewed with. The effect or impression comes to a point, where the object no longer can be seen by us as an object, but is ‘blended’ in the light in which it is held up. We shall discuss this blending or *fondue* in the section on metaphor. For the moment, we can underline the fact, concurring with Gaetan Picon that things can be not only themselves, but all the rest (qtd in Landy 97). Digression becomes the very movement that uproots the familiarity of objects to displace them into the new, transposed realm of fiction. Circumlocution contests the Realist attitude of ‘possession’ by being elusive, like reality itself.

Blanchot makes the remark that “art reverses the ordinary values that we attach to the words ‘to make’ [*faire*] and ‘to be’ [*être*]” (“Book” 197). While we generally take our being for granted and understand human beings as agents capable of making things by dint of the fact that they already are, art makes things to constitute being. Being as understanding

ourselves in a cluster of things has to be projected towards to arrive at, as we have discussed in the first chapter on Heidegger. Things are not there; they are submerged in habit as objects. The 'act' of wresting them from mundane familiarity 'makes' them. Speaking of the referential function in art, Paul Ricœur echoes what we have discussed about Frege and Gabriel Markus, in that the reference is not towards something already there, but that the act of pointing makes the thing come to being for the first time. For Marcel, his life is uneventful, and that is true, for the events taken singularly are extremely commonplace in the *Recherche*. But the arrangement, in Ricœur's words 'emplotment', makes these common things appear in a light where they become pregnant with meaning, a typical example being the intricate complicated construction of Albertine's death. In this sense, the referential function as thinging,

serves as an index for that dimension of reality that does not receive due account in the simple description of that thing over there. To present men as acting and all things as 'in act' - such could well be the ontological function of metaphorical discourse, in which every dormant potentiality of existence appears 'as' blossoming forth, every latent capacity for action as actualized. ("Metaphor" 48)

Fraser draws an analogy of the Proustian architecture and European Modernist novels at large with Frazer's triad of magic, religion and science in *The Golden Bough*. These are the three stages through which humans have reached their present civilization, contends Frazer. Fraser's triad speaks of the trinity of names, words and things. Names enchant Marcel, evokes in dreams of distant locales and the past. He comes into contact with words next, which represent the concrete experiences that are particular in nature and disenchant the general structure of Marcel's wishes. In contrast to Frazer's science as the third category, Fraser's things are way more significant, for it attaches importance to the fact that reality

never comes to an end when it is discovered in disillusionment, but that it awaits a re-discovery, a task that art, according to Proust, should undertake. The Proustian sentence is “divergent like life... decentered” and Proust renders a certain mobility to the object of disappointment in the temporal flux of the narrative, acting as if like “the Euclid of Time” (Fraser 268). Making objects leave their familiar settings to dissolve in the narrative temporality inverts the *contenant-contenu* [container-contained] structure of absorption. The “name opens itself and released its content to the outside” (Ellison 141-42). This ‘outside’ is the space of literature where things finally become, leaving behind the shells of names and words. We shall see how the literary space is outside in the last part of this chapter in our discussion with respect to Proustian transformations of space into time and time into space.

The problem can now finally be casted in its full complexity. Proust makes objects appear the same with difference, and this is the metaphorical dimension of artistic transformation. On the other hand, metaphor is by itself timeless as we have shown. Thus, it must give way to a metonymic development to result in the novel’s flux. Kristeva identifies in Proust a complementarity of two styles; the substantial style of Chardin and Flaubert where things appear in the divine equality of the light that beautifies them, a style characterized by placing one thing next to the other in metonymy to make each resonate with one another, and the metaphorical style of an artist like Rembrandt where imaginative connections abound in metaphorical fashion. Proust is neither the poet of the abstract nor the Realist of the concrete, but metonymical development of metaphorical transpositions makes the two axes, in Jakobson’s words the syntagmatic-metonymical and the paradigmatic-metaphorical fuse, an opinion also shared by Genette (Kristeva 67; Genette “Figures III” 60). Things become by selecting the commonplace objects, associating them with an unfamiliar connection, and using this association in a narrative movement. The outcome of these processes is a liberation of things from words, of impressions from concepts, of reality from habit. Douglas Berggren

puts it rather simply and succinctly in this book *The Use and Abuse of Metaphor*, “It is only by the use of textual metaphor that the poetic feeling-of-things can in a sense be liberated from prosaic things-of-feeling, or be properly discussed” (qtd in Ricœur, “Metaphor” 301).

Where is the Proustian style directed? Has it got an ontological aspiration? It certainly has. Style is not ornamentation in Proust. It is that which makes vision possible. And even if this vision has no goal to arrive at, it brings with its event life itself, that life which was there all along but in an invisible state. “Style, in order to spiritualize substance and render it adequate to essence, reproduces the unstable opposition, the original complication, the struggle and exchange of the primordial elements... continuous and refracted birth, that birth regained in substances” (Deleuze, “Proust” 48). Metaphor as refraction, metonymy as continuity- this is the Proustian style in a nutshell. Such an ontological attempt must forsake the knowledge of the world of as it is known and pragmatically ‘used’ to come close to the vision where the world can become the thing, the horizon, the expanse where we get a new lease of life within the very objects that makes our surrounding, now transformed. Speaking of the role of metaphor in Elstir’s paintings, Marcel reflects on the epistemological sacrifice that world-becoming entails, much like the words of Buddha, that we must lose everything first, that true knowledge is impossible without sacrifice, in that the “desire to return to the very root of the impression to represent one thing by that other... surfaces and volumes are in reality independent of the names of objects which our memory imposes on them after we have recognized them. Elstir sought to wrest from what he had just felt what he already knew” (III: 484).

It is with a wry smile that we can observe this paradox central to the novel. Marcel wishes to escape life through art, and the ‘unsuccessful’ story of this dream constitutes the success of Proust’s novel in returning to life through art. The world returns to us only when we give up the world. Just as in this statement, the first one and the second world differs yet

being the world, the former being a regained vision and the latter an acceptance of the conventional version, life too, when relegated in favor of an escape is meant as a realm of boredom and ennui, whereas it is transformed when one returns to it through and in art. It is not the same life as before, and yet it is life, disclosed as truth. If art is redemption in Proust, it must be an ambivalent one. In the words of Leo Bersani, who engages with this problem amongst Modernist writers in his book *The Culture of Redemption*,

The move to art in *La Recherche* is not only an annihilating and redemptive replication of experience, but it also makes possible a kind of posthumous responsiveness to surfaces, a redefining exactment of Marcel's interest in the world. From this perspective, art would be our 'real life' not in the sense of an essentializing version of experience, but rather as a first or original (but ordinarily missed) contact with phenomena. (35)

Redemption then, becomes significant only in light of the framework one chooses to look at life.

(B) THE ART OF METAPHORICAL CONTIGUITY

Life is elsewhere. We have often heard these words. Although there is a romantic tinge imbued in the thought, in Proust this 'elsewhere' is the task of art to reveal. It is not a voyage to an exotic locale that can give us the joy of discovery, but creating life as a unique vision from what is given to us is but the task of the artist. Displacement thus is at the core of such an undertaking. An overall displacement from the arena of habit to the event of world-becoming must happen through minuscule displacements happenings at all levels in the composition. One must, thus begin with displacement of the things that make up this world, or to say more phenomenologically, it is displacement that reveals the things in the difference

it generates, and therewith takes us a step closer towards the vision of the world as it appears in the work of art.

“The thing is revealed for what it is in its deviation from and difference with itself, then; its essence is disclosed in its own displacement or transposition, and the revealing of this truth presupposes a creative gesture” (Besitegui 119). Since the thing is ‘originally’ revealed in this displacement, the act of displacement is co-incident with what gets created. Recalling Blanchot’s words on act and being and Auden’s statement that everything has to be made by hand in art, we must now proceed to understand the nuances of this phenomenon in general, and in association with the *Recherche*. Metaphor as this displacement, is thus not a figure of speech whose significance could be understood in the conventional ornamental terms couched in cosmetic and culinary interpretations [*alankara, byanjana*]. Such a tendency is an outcome of long centuries of practice and has not only led to an ignorance of the true function of metaphor, but a devaluation of rhetoric as mere provocation with no truth content. We witness such a derogatory outlook towards rhetoric as early as in Plato’s *Theaetetus*. The assumption then, is that truth exists beyond and independently of verbal and bodily gestures, and these could only tamper with its purity. Such a logocentric attitude renders truth and philosophy trans-linguistic and absolves aesthetics from playing any role in the expression of truth, a very problematic point we shall return to in the next chapter. Ricœur opines, “Rhetoric died when the penchant for classifying figures of speech completely supplanted the philosophical sensitivity that animated the vast empire of rhetoric” (“Metaphor” 9).

Beistegui is right in pointing that Proust’s use of metaphor is beyond Aristotelian transport, dislocation and disorientation. Although it does all these things, these ‘acts’ are motivated by a yearning to become different, and hence the source is not ornamental but ontological (88,91). Reality in Proust is not the ontic collection of givens, and a discovery of

an 'elsewhere' is symptomatic with the displacement that creates it, much like Heidegger's metaphor of event as *Waldlichtung* that we discussed in the first chapter. "What we call 'real' is an ontological lack that's only filled out through a process of transposition" (ibid).

Proust's ambivalence is not just indecision and failure to adhere to one and refute the other, but to generate a prolixity of significance from novelistic situations. On one hand, the figures of Berma, Bergotte, Elstir and Vinteuil contribute to the 'aesthetic education' as well as disappointments and doubts concerning art in Marcel. However, they also allow Proust as oblique centers from which he expresses aesthetic concerns central to the novel which Marcel as a character cannot discourse with. In fact, this is the ambivalence central to his choice of the first-person 'I', which wavers between character and narrator. Certain comments on Bergotte's style in the second volume offer important insights into the understanding of metaphor in Proust.

If metaphor is indeed a trope, it could be simply 'used' and yield the same 'result' irrespective who employs it and how. We have already quoted Morel's failure in imitating Bergotte's style through 'sterile oral fertilization' of his mannerisms. Similarly, essayists imitating Bergotte 'perpetrated' the things with his style, whereas the original style in Bergotte consisted in 'extracting' the things. Style lies in "extraction, rather than perpetration... of the element of truth hidden in the heart of each thing" (II: 143). Any sort of ornamentation has a certain standard of beauty as its point of departure, however "the beauty of sentences [are] unforeseeable like a woman whom we have never seen" (144).

That Proust does not regard the metaphor as a particular operation performed on the noun is clear in the fact that Bergotte's style could not be pointed at, but exists all over his words, indistinguishable from them in how they appear in reading. Metaphor is often ignored at the level of discourse, being limited only in the realm of nouns (Ricœur, "Metaphor" 14).

The 'stress' in Bergotte is 'entirely natural', "not marked on the printed page, there is nothing to indicate it, and yet it imposes itself on its accord" (II: 147). Metaphor, another word for stress or accentuation in this context, creates personality; creates Bergotte as a writer, and not the other way round where Bergotte tames language by employing rhetorical tools.

Metaphor, seen in this light, is the event of becoming. This pertains on the nominal level and the discursive level of which the nominal is a part. Metaphor is something that 'happens' to the noun, and this happening is defined in terms of a movement. Seen etymologically, *epiphora* means a displacement from somewhere to somewhere else, and metaphor creates this transition in their happening (Ricoeur, "Metaphor" 17). This has an immense significance as far as the volta in the sixth volume of the *Recherche* is concerned. As discussed, Marcel's life as seen by him so far is full of boredom. But seen artistically, it could be for Marcel a story of his vocation as an artist. And moreover, is it not this displacement that permeates every page of Proust's novel, in that he continually displaces the 'insignificant' into 'novelistic' by transposing it into a new field? Proust once mentioned that we are unable to read the name of a land printed all across a map, since we're focused with this or that detail. If there indeed exists something which spans the entire length of his novel, it is this metaphorical attitude of transformation and rendering the transformation mobility through developing contiguity. Beistigui is one of the few Proust critics to identify the metaphorical phenomenon at the heart of the novel, made into a sparkling jewel in the reversal towards life in the sixth volume;

What's at stake here when we (re)cognize the beauty of something in something else is more than just an aesthetic law and more, too, than the very definition of metaphor. What's at stake is the possibility of inverting the nihilistic course that constitutes the deepest tendency of the novel. The reason why Marcel's so disappointed with reality, the reason why it seems infinitely less inspiring than

the reality invoked by his imagination and the power of his desire has to do with the fact that he's too attached to life as it's immediately given. (120)

Metaphor, by happening, makes differences apprehensible. "It is the sensible figure of difference, its poetic schema" (99). Identity or sameness loses its valency as long as being can be made to appear only by displacement. Such an ontology admittedly has its own historicity, where the conservatism of reality by faith in mythical structures of religion or steady belief in constant progress of science and humanity no longer works. Style, must, in the modern world, be a deviation, a fault, but a voluntary fault at that (Ricoeur, "Metaphor" 160). Proust's deviation from his predecessors and contemporaries is essential, for these models are but the clichés of habit, and adopting their style would have made him like the unsuccessful copyists in the *Recherche*. Ortega Y Gasset is quite to the point in saying,

Analyzing the new style, one finds in it certain loosely connected tendencies; it tends towards the dehumanization of art; to an avoidance of living form; to ensuring that a work of work should be nothing but a work of art; to considering art simply as play and nothing else; to an essential irony; to an avoidance of all falsehood; and finally, towards an art which makes no spiritual or transcendental claims whatsoever. (70)

The moot point is not to subscribe to any set pattern since rupture of habit and 'returning' to a vision of life is the *raison d'être* of the Modernist, if at all a generalization such as that could be made. Truth is not obsolete or impossible here, but it can never 'be' there, but must 'become', and in becoming achieve the necessary difference that sets it apart from any standardized, hence suspicious, agents of truth. "There's truth only so far as truth returns and it always returns differently" (Beistegui 121).

We are now in a better position to understand the ontological significance of scatteredness and fragmentariness of the *Recherche*. It is not simply to be understood as a mirror reflection of a fragmented time and human self, for that would be a self-defeating exercise. Discordant life does not simply make the artform discordant; the attempt to probe deeper into the discordance and seek out the melody that exists as possibility therein is itself discordant in comparison to the norms and values that are in circulation, and thus the embodiment or event of this attempt in the overall structure of the work appears to lack a center, seems ‘faulty’, out of place, a feature we shall devote greater attention in the fifth section of this chapter. As Gasset rightly says, there is no transcendental prosthetic available for support, other than the paradoxically heterogeneous continuum unfurled by our continuous death in time. In the modernist work,

every object, everything, must see its own identity swallowed up in difference, each being no more than a difference between differences. Differences must be shown differing. We know that modern art tends to realize these conditions: in the sense it becomes a veritable theatre of metamorphoses and permutations. A theatre where nothing is fixed, a labyrinth without a thread. The work of art leaves the domain of representation in order to become ‘experience’, transcendental empiricism or science of the sensible. (Deleuze, “Difference” 56)

While on one hand, Deleuze offers a corrective for Gasset’s ‘dehumanization’ by calling it experience, he lures on to a dangerous territory by associating the transcendental in conjunction with the empirical. Although, Deleuze’s transcendental empiricism refers to the event of returning which provides becoming only by concealing that which becomes, so as not to be subsumed into the identity matrices of conceptual thought, Beistegui’s reception of it in relation to reading Proust is somewhat problematic. We shall delve into Deleuze’s

repetition in full detail only in the next chapter on redemption, but take the opportunity here to spell out the problem at hand. For Deleuze, like for Merleau-Ponty's notion of *voyance* discussed before, a material sensation does not end in the senses, neither is it a manifestation of a generality. We have discussed in the first chapter how Deleuze sees the event of meaning-making as sense. Any experience thus involves, akin to Proust's notion of impressions half sheathed in objects, a sensual datum and a projection of meaning therefrom. However, there is no scope for any 'true' meaning to exist outside of this event of projection, and hence the event conceals itself in the act of showing itself. We understand this wonderfully in Proust's own ideas and creation of 'narrative events' where meaning is always imagined and reveals its 'true face' much later. This subsequent meaning too is 'contingent' and not the 'truest one'. Event as repetition of forces 'returning' to the realm of appearances and sense, is "truly that which disguises itself in constituting itself, that which constitutes itself only by disguising itself; There is therefore nothing repeated which may be isolated or abstracted from the repetition in which it was formed, but in which it is also hidden" (Deleuze, "Difference" 17).

The influence of Deleuze in Miguel de Beistegui is understandable for the latter has been a devoted Deleuze scholar and writes regularly on his philosophy. Deleuze says in *Proust and Signs* that communication of essences is made possible by incarnating it in substances, as a result of which substances, in this case, metaphors and language of the novel at large, behave as spiritualized substances (47). What Deleuze seeks to convey is a de-realization of substances, or in other words, extracting substances from the pool of 'real' significations which are nothing but deterrents towards unveiling the 'virtuality' or 'ideal reality' of art. A misplaced reception of this 'spirituality' and aforementioned 'transcendentality' makes Beistegui compare the Proustian method of metaphor as a 'transubstantiation of the self' (35). It is a sort of dream young Marcel could harbor, but

never Proust, who is far from being a ‘devout’ Romantic to aim for a transcendental realm. Proust’s Romanticism, if at all, does not shy away from what David Ellison calls ‘Romantic irony’. Given that Romantics sought truth in poetry, and poetry being an aesthetically-formed matter, truth no longer could hold any kind of trans-linguistic self-certitude. Life became hermeneutic, one knew from what one created. Moralists like Kant and Hegel weren’t too comfortable with art being the source of aesthetic education and favored the realm of nature, for the realm of fiction had for them a hovering quality [*das Schwebende*] and was not bound to external reality (Ellison 32). Kierkegaard had tried to bypass this irony where truth could not be divorced from representation through the same metaphor of transubstantiation. He refuted the transfiguration of Christ in visual and material forms, and advocated creating Christ in one’s own mind in spirit, so that the perils, and with that the problematic freedom of will, of representation could be avoided. Such a spiritualization is far from Proust’s technique in the *Recherche*. Metaphor and contiguity seek to return to the ‘stuff’ of life, and it is only with this intention, that objects are displaced from their usual values. Transubstantiation occurs here only to the extent that Deleuze says elsewhere in *What is Philosophy?* in the sense of the writer becoming-tree, becoming-animal, becoming-landscape, in short becoming-art and hence becoming-novelist. It is not a transcendence from material to the spiritual, but from facts to understanding, from plethora of objects to a world of things, from blindness to vision. And so, the novelist must create light.

Speaking of Monet’s paintings of the Rouen cathedral between 1862 and 1894, Robert Fraser comments that “history [is] reduced to light” (70). If at one stage of human civilization, memory was equivalent to being molecular in that it was based on concrete objects that lived on till the present, the Romantics tended towards Ruskinian cultural memory or that of *Zeitgeist* and social-cultural structures being manifestations of the Universal spirit as deemed by Hegel. Both these models have a supposition to begin with,

whereas Modernist art, be it visual or verbal, stands on a groundless region [*Abgrund*]. There is no available lens to look at the world with. The fashioning of the world must be concomitant with the fashioning of the looking glass; a point Proust implicitly remarks in the *Recherche* as his work being an ‘optical instrument’. Monet’s cathedrals or Braque’s Normandy seascapes are such paintings which create light as the *prima materia*, in which these worlds could seek to be disclosed. The primal luminosity is the final solvent that allows the spontaneous formation of elements, and it must be brought forth by the artist (70).

In his essay “Crisis of Verse”, Mallarmé addresses this duality in which the artist, in musical analogy, creates music not from an instrument available to him, but by himself ‘becoming’ the instrument in the act of bringing forth his work;

for the first time in the literary history of any people, concurrently with the grand, general and historic organs, where, according to a latent scale, orthodoxy exults, anyone with his individual game and ear can compose an instrument as soon as he breathes, touches or taps scientifically; he can play it on the side and also dedicate it to the Language. (204-05)

What Fraser means is that Monet has been able to create a distinct light in which the world could appear as it does in his paintings. Naturally, he has had to displace himself, metaphorize his art from convention to disclose an unprecedented vision. Proust’s work too, not in any particular metaphor, but in the overall metaphorical movement it undertakes from the traditions as embodied obliquely in Marcel’s development and resolution to abolish the self, tries to discover a true life only by disclosing it. Here, metaphor makes seeing possible. It is not detachable from the vision; in other words, metaphor here is the name of the field-of-vision, a field which ordinary language, color and instruments cannot lend. So writes Ricœur, “But if metaphor is a statement, it is possible that this statement would be untranslatable, not

only as regards its connotation, but as regards its very meaning, thus as regards its denotation. It teaches something, so it contributes to the opening up and the discovery of a field of reality other than that which ordinary language lays bare” (“Metaphor” 174). Here, state-of-knowledge [*Wissenstand*] is indistinguishable from state-of-being [*Seinstand*].

What does art at all have to give us? Knowledge? Or Understanding of a certain way to be among things? We shall devote a later section to see how Elstir contributes to Marcel’s seeing in a way that allows Proust the novelist to demonstrate the relationship of art with the observer as a repetition of the relationship of the artist with his vision. Elstir is said to transpose the qualities of sea to land and vice-versa, so that one often is bewildered at first to find things ‘not in their usual places’. At a later passage of the novel, we see Marcel himself perceiving his surroundings in a fashion similar to that of Elstir. The vision of Elstir is now implicated in Marcel’s seeing of “the proximity of different crops, the rough, yellow, almost muddy irregularities of the marine surface...[and] the sea as varied, as solid, as undulating, as populous, as civilized as the earth with its carriage roads” (IV: 212). Elstir the painter is nowhere mentioned in the scene, but he is like Flaubert’s narrator, present everywhere in his absence. We can quote Ricœur here, “if metaphor adds nothing to the description of the world, at least it adds to the ways in which we perceive and this is the poetic function of metaphor...extends the power of double meanings from the cognitive realm to the affective” (“Metaphor” 224).

The move from Realist fiction occurs at the very apothecic culmination of Realism, that is, in the vision of Flaubert. To be entirely objective is not very far from being entirely subjective, and Flaubert, like Kafka, who incidentally revered Flaubert greatly as an artist, embodies this paradox. He avoids metaphors, and yet his entire craft is a metaphorical movement from action to impression. Proust and Flaubert both lay great emphasis on style over content, on the ‘how’ over ‘what’;

Because of their mistrust of language, and because for both of them language is the sign of their potential for alienation, Proust and Flaubert lodge their ideal of style elsewhere than within language itself. Style has nothing to do with the surface features of text, it is, for Proust a question of vision, as though he had in mind the famous phrase of Flaubert, ‘style is, in and by itself, an absolute way of seeing things. (Finn 20)

Hegel was of the opinion that the age of prose belonged to a disenchanted world. Flaubert, in effacing the centrality of action and plot over to vision, perhaps tried to, like Proust himself in his own day, focus on seeing the world beyond the conventional filters of both science and the disillusionment and disappointment that followed it. Prose must not necessarily be regarded as decadent in its expression of the decadent, and this movement that maintains an impersonal distance with characters and their bodies herald the free indirect speech of narration, where the narrator is able to extract impressions without being one with the squalor of the earth. In this context, Prendergast says, “as he [Flaubert] charts the prosaically disenfranchised character of the modern world, [he] also seeks to extricate the novel from its entanglement in the sub-literary and raise it to the status of the aesthetic by the sheer force of style” (93).

Perhaps it is the similar concern working in Elstir too, who by these substitutions of sea and land, is not creating an effect as much as to hint at a reality that has been lost due to cognitive outlooks in which our perceptions have been straitjacketed for long. Heidegger’s association of poetry with *Rede* and *Gelassenheit* too aims to point at art’s potential for revealing truth which ordinary language based on subject-object duality cannot. This points to, in a sense, the limits of philosophy, explicates as it does by considering language as a means and not medium. It does explain Heidegger’s later inclination of regarding poetry as the event of disclosure of truth for it “breaks through to a pre-scientific anti-predicative level,

where the very notions of fact, object, reality, and truth, as delimited by epistemology, are called into question by this very means of the vacillation of literal reference” (Ricoeur, “Metaphor” 300).

Flaubert differs from his contemporary and previous Realists in his opposition to the faith of reality being external. Neither does he, like the Romantics, consider the world to be an internal image. In Flaubert, everything is transformed and absorbed into a ‘miroitement monotone’, and action becomes impression. The plot is no longer described by an omniscient narrator, but someone involved yet detached enough to tell the tale. The world becomes a matter of projection, an arena of comportment. Flaubert evinces in his style an “an unprecedented absorption on the part of the novelist in the quality and texture of individual responses to the world” (Bersani, “Fiction” 241). And indeed prematurely, for there is strangely very little action in *Madame Bovary*, as action was then understood. The narrative itself tends to become the event to realize Flaubert’s dream of writing a book about nothing. We shall take up this ‘nothingness’ that paves way to Symbolist preoccupations in the last part of this chapter. Flaubert weakens event-based narrative to create a different sense of event based on impressions and not actions (Prendergast 132).

It is paradoxical to note Flaubert’s derision against action in light of the fact that he insisted all thoughts and feelings must be represented as action. We return to the same paradoxical circularity which we encountered in discussions concerning seeing, truth and the world. What these structures have in common is their beginning in the distrust for a term, and refashioning it to render it its true meaning. Flaubert’s “rule of systematic extroversion” is just the same as in Proust, and it consists in not declaring events but to make men and events visibly appear (Descombes 62). This ‘extroversion’ is not aimed towards a canvas or mirror associated with mimetic Realism, but the ‘outside’ of narrative space that gets created in expressing [pressing-out]. In Proust too, the narrator hardly tells us he is sad or happy for

these words are superficial and don't convey the particularity of the moment. Emotions and thoughts in the *Recherche* are images of emotions and thoughts; images constructed by extension of the moment that makes it appear instead of being translated in ready-made registers. It is from this vantage that Deleuze names one of the chapters of his book on Proust as 'The Image of Thought'. Intelligence is transformed, become part and parcel of the physical sense (Beistegui 110).

It is this shift from the superficiality of common registers and to move towards a profounder image of reality, *approfondissement* in the words of Jean-Yves Tadié, that the impressionist style of both Proust and Flaubert lies. The former avoids describing thoughts by transposing them to the physical realm of the novel's world; the latter overdoes subjective introspection to the limit where it appears to be dramatized, not a diegesis from memory, but as Genette points out, its mimesis, "a decisive transgression, a rejection pure and simple of the millennial opposition between diegesis and mimesis" ("Narrative Discourse" 168). This making-profound is achieved by 'blending' where everything appears to be 'blended' [*fondue*] into the texture of the narrative. In other words, just as in Monet and Braque, the vision and the light are inseparable, here to narrative events and narrations fuse. Narrative itself becomes the event.

"Proust and Flaubert's ability to 'melt' into matter becomes their ability to create art" (Finn 21). The entire work is a metaphor in the sense of a happening of displacement, or transformation where things lose their isolated and insulated locations to take place in the knotted fabric of the narrative. The narrator must disappear to emulate and make possible the effacement of the superficial self in the profound luminosity where the ego, if at all to be present, becomes a blended thing. "This transformation of energy in which the thinker disappears and things are laid out in front of us must surely be seen as the writer's first move in achieving a style" (Kristeva 56).

We have observed in the first chapter that the world comes to being in comportment as active seeing, and that this comportment creates the light and makes the world transparent [*durchsichtlich*]. We have also arrived at the realization at the very end of the first chapter that the world is stylized, where style is how it comes to being as well as what comes to be. Now that we have probed into how Proust's *fondue* like that of Flaubert creates the varnish in which things come to stand on their own, our next task would be to look at how this seeing is made a temporal matter, for the novel is not in space but moves in time.

The tinkle of the bell when Swann pays a visit in Combray is referred to by 'oval, tin sound of the bell'. At first glance, the usage seems to be metaphorical, where visual and material dimensions enter into an aural field, and fuse together in the analogy. A synthesis of different perceptual elements, synesthesia, resembles the gathering of plurality into a symbolic unity. Baudelaire's use of synesthesia tries "to sense the correspondence between the fallen world and the higher world... pointing beyond the visible to divine... a recurrent Platonic but also gnostic feature of Romanticism and Symbolism" (Roberts 80). Proust, however, brings these differences close to one another without unifying them. Things are isolated and they must remain so if they are to retain their thingness. The determination of metaphor in the *Recherche*, thus is metonymical, in the sense that it does not emulate the Baudelairean correspondence among senses. Metaphors are chosen with respect to proximity, which could be spatial, temporal or psychological. As a result, there is no conceptual unity that ties the differences in a thread, but a placing of things adjacent to one another, where they mutually condition one another. It is this shift from the verticality or timelessness of metaphor to the horizontality of adjacency that makes the metaphor mobile, and blend [*fondue*] it to create the text as fabric.

Metaphors thus do not pertain to an imaginative realm of the poet, but are bound to the necessity of the plot. "Proximity commands or endorses resemblance, in all these

examples... the metaphor finds its support and its motivation in a metonymy” (Genette, “Figures III” 45). Do we not sense a similarity here with Flaubert, who had transformed all thoughts into action and all actions into impressions? Dedicating the metaphor to contiguity effaces the narrator’s ‘intellect’ from shining forth in the text. As a result, the text appears to stand on its own, like the world, where all characters and actions are blended into the light in which it appears rather than appear as a set of voluntarily created artifices strung together. The contiguous application, or ‘metonymization’ of metaphor is a fundamental move in sacrificing subjectivity for the sake of thingness and the world.

The scene at the opening of the fourth volume already discussed further plays on the interaction between the metaphorical and metonymic axes. Jupien and Charlus meet together accidentally, and yet ‘necessarily’ for their acquaintance is imperative for how the *Recherche* unfolds. At the same time, Marcel observes a strange, unusual pollination brought about by the wafting wind, leading to an assemblage that was not foreseen. These two events occur side by side in the passage, and yet each mirrors the other as an analogy. Here, metonymy becomes metaphor.

Thus, instead of accumulation of plurality, we witness in Proust’s narrative juxtaposes contiguous moments. In the last sentence of the first volume, fugitive spaces are deemed as “a thin slice, held between the contiguous impressions that composed our life at that time” (I: 513). Our lives are heterogenous, fragmented where each element has its own peculiarity that cannot be collated with the other without sacrificing the uniqueness that belong to it. But is then the *Recherche* only an arbitrary medley of such things? Is our life merely a collection of objects? Perhaps it is, but a re-creation of life through art and/or introspection seeks to place these things side by side in such a manner so that they tell a story without simplifying the complexity of these things. We shall discuss how juxtaposition and not superimposition renders the *Recherche* its own kind of totality in the last part of this chapter. It is

juxtaposition that makes differences communicate with one another. Deleuze says that the point of views peculiar to each part is incommunicable to the other, for this perspective corresponds to the monad's world. Emulating the notion of 'compossibility' of different worlds in Leibniz, Deleuze's calls this contiguous juxtaposition of the dissimilar in Proust transversality ("Proust" 168). Different perspectives remain themselves, yet interact with one another in the collage in which they are placed adjacent to one another. Marcel muses on the transversals opened up in his realization in the final volume, which allow him to look at the fragmented events of his life in the connections they have already been established by the novel's plot. Everything is connected, but not to a point. Robert and Gilberte's daughter seem to him as a culmination of the two ways, and yet she is not a convergent point. "The two great 'ways' themselves, both led to her...And between these two high roads a network of transversals was set up (VI: 427). This connection can only be made by us in juxtaposing heterogeneity in a pattern. "Life possessed only a limited number of threads for the execution of the most different patterns...and yet today all these threads had been woven together to form the fabric" (353).

Places are like garments; they disguise as well as characterize. In *Proustian Space*, Georges Poulet says, "Without places, beings would be only abstractions" (26). A place is associated with a character, and a character with a space. The spaces are distinct, recognizable like a Wagnerian leitmotiv in that certain phrases are imbued with a particular personality. "Appearances [of characters] are tied to a local environment that frames them and serves them, so to speak, like a jewel box" (25). If that is so, does not Proust fall in the same trap as that of Marcel who fails to see the particularity of Oriane and Albertine in associating them with Guermantes and Balbec? We must be careful to make a distinction here. Marcel follows the same mode of 'reciprocal metaphor' as Swann in fusing two distinct elements according to an analogy and persisting in the faith of regarding this fusion as a

timeless bond. Swann has never been an artist, and Marcel only aspires to be one. Proust, however, does what Marcel in the novel cannot bring himself up to do. Proust associates Oriane, like Marcel, with Guermantes and the charm of antiquity, but keeps altering the interplay between the character and myth surrounding her to bring out the vicissitudes of time that changes people and the world. Marcel is disillusioned between his imagined timeless structures repeatedly faltering in conserving themselves. Proust, in constructing the enchantment-disenchantment and possibility of re-enchantment through art, mobilizes the connection between space and personality. Marcel's 'reciprocal metaphors' are narrativized as 'metonymic reciprocity' in the *Recherche*. Ellison lays a finger on this point in commenting, "the role of narration is to demystify the poetic charm of metaphorical play, to reveal the irresponsibility of the freely circulating signifier and its associative constructions" (140).

In the third volume, Marcel goes to the theatre for the second time to watch Berma in *Phèdre*. The seats in the auditorium are called *baignoire*, the same word for a bathtub, in that the seats resemble a cusp. It is this polysemy that makes Marcel visualize the entire scene in aquatic and submarine terms. All the actors on the stage, and audience are 'seen' by Marcel (or Proust) as inhabiting an underwater kingdom, for almost as long as six pages. What is happening here? Language itself is made to speak; we hear what Barthes framed as the 'rustle of language'. Polysemy determines the metaphor, which is developed metonymically in narrative time. It is not possible, and we would say not even desired, for Proust to hover his imagination beyond the space opened up by language. Space must be understood not geographically anymore, but as that zone opened up by language for being to become, to happen. *Ontotopy* is the fundament on which the connection between spatiality and personality rests, and Landy's understanding of this as 'local inescapability' should be rather understood as 'local grounding' (104). If time has its own texture in the sensibilities that

circulate in it [*Zeitgeist*], so is space imbued with sense [*Raumgeist*], to be taken in Deleuze's understanding of sense as event or meaning. Since Proust's effort is to 'return' to life from boredom and habit, de-mythification and demystification of metaphor by bringing it down to the place where it is born is but an imperative that the novel must respond to, and it most certainly does.

Metaphors represent a cross-section; a flat plane formed by an analogy. However, as we have already discussed in the previous chapter, Proust is focused in unraveling a four-dimensional psychology where temporality or the evanescence of continuous death must have the central role to play. It is like watching a landscape through the window of a moving train; a landscape in motion, with the movement based in time.

Genette's dismantling of the Proustian metaphor as a palimpsest and his extrapolations of its metonymic, diegetic character helps us to explain by what means Proust's writing eventually succeeds in endowing the flat, isolated, photographic fragments with temporal depth and in establishing the necessary links between them to construct a sequential narrative. (Haustein 32)

The metonymic 'enlargement' of metaphor could well be demonstrated by the famous Madeleine episode. The structure of involuntary memory is that of metaphor; two distinct moments conjoined by analogy. Ironically, as long as Marcel is obsessed with repetition of the identical, he can only visualize to himself a certain part of Combray at a certain time, namely the miserable drama of going to bed when Swann arrived as guest in the evening. It is only when this metaphor is 'liberated' in time, that the whole of Combray unfurls. This is not the realm of metaphor. The moment of involuntary memory has been 'expended' in favor of a 'story', a diegesis. The temporalization of metaphor allows narrative development, an 'enlargement' of Combray. This is not the Combray that Marcel remembers, but the Combray

that he had never actually experienced as a whole. This Combray belongs to the pure past, for it was never a present for Marcel not a memory willed by him. He ‘belonged’ to this Combray, and narration creates this belonging to the world.

Returning back to the impressionistic aspect of Proustian construction, words in the *Recherche* “become matter like paint, to be mixed and blended [*fondue*]” (Prendergast 133). Just as in visual art, Impressionism seeks to uphold the thickness of paint, or in the Fauvism of Matisse the use of primary pigments seeks to foreground the materiality of color and not color as a means to an end, words in the labyrinthine Proustian sentence does not seek to convey a reality outside themselves. “The paste-like thickness of words, that can be folded back, snake-like on itself in superimposed formations or art into slices and layered as a *feuilleté*” becomes a defining feature of Proustian constructions, what Ross Chambers calls ‘flaky poesis’ (133-34). In this regard, Fraser accounts for Proust’s fascination for the intricacies of Gothic style that was based on an accumulation of endless details. A passage in the *Recherche* compares the novel with a gothic cathedral, where the topmost reliefs far away from the scrutinous eye too are constructed with immaculate detailing. Prendergast’s *feuilleté* resonates with the leaf-formations of high Gothic which gradually gave way to foliation in Baroque, and hints Proust’s impressionistic affinity for creating material density.

But if the text folds back on itself, does it not compromise on its ability to ‘flow’, to generate temporal movement? Diane R. Leonard in “Proust in the Fourth Dimension” is of the opinion that such ‘repetitive’ folding impedes the forward momentum of the text, “folding the text back upon itself in layers- a process that works against the forward or horizontal thrust of the narrative, creating a vertical axis that is augmented with every new folding” (172). But we must remember our discussion on Flaubert to understand that this folding is itself the narrative event, and in repetitions the *Recherche* finds its forward momentum (Finn 156). Folding is not to be understood in spatial terms, for if Proust is an Impressionistic artist, his is an

impressionism over time. Sentences do not converge to a point but diverges continuously from the center. Fraser comments, “Prose is convergent, life divergent. The Proustian sentence is a condition of flight caused by this recognition, a condition that results in meaning spinning off in several different directions, always threatening to undermine the center, which never quite gives” (82).

What is the implication of contiguity on interiority? Modernists like Joyce and Woolf are often associated with developing the ‘language of the mind’. This zone of language sets itself apart from ‘social language’ and claims to be absolutely individual. Poulet, in his essay “Phenomenology of Reading” quotes Diderot who says ‘*Mes pensées sont mes cetins*’ [my language are my whores], they are mine and yet they sleep with everybody. Auden likewise quotes Karl Kraus who says “My language is a universal whore whom I have to make into a virgin”. What is pointed at here is the impossibility of a purely private language. Our thoughts, if they are to be transformed into expressible impressions, must be perceived in the immediacy of things they involve, and how these things contiguously shape expressions. Genette therefore says that ‘interior monologue’ should better be regarded as ‘immediate speech’ (“Narrative” 173). Proust, as well as Flaubert, fuses thoughts in the action that the narrative itself is. Thought becomes an image, a “free indirect speech, but the same time this speech, ‘oblique’ and deceitful like all the others, is genuinely unfaithful to the ‘felt’ truth which no inner monologue can reveal and which the novelist must ultimately show glimpses of through the concealments of bad faith, which are ‘consciousness’ itself” (176).

Descombes opines that the *Recherche* involves an interplay between two perspectives, of the self and society (209). The ideas and thoughts of the self are made contiguous with the spectacle of the society. Genette’s ‘bad faith’ is the same as Girard’s ‘borrowed desire’, through which the ‘thoughts’ of Marcel are sought to be disclosed, always obliquely. Likewise, society

is filtered through the parodic gaze of Marcel culminating into caricature. We shall delve deeper into this interplay of exteriorization and interiorization in the next chapter.

Proust writes in the first volume that the art of the novelists lies in “substituting opaque sections of personality with immaterial sections, things, images which could be assimilated by the soul... the change of heart is not perceptible by itself; through reading and imagination it can be sensed since by itself it is too slow” (I: 99-100). We return to our discussion of the previous chapter that there is no interiority in the *Recherche*. Everything is expressed, narrative being the act of making things occupy an ‘outside’. In such a poetry of surfaces which is distrustful of immanence, “nothing is more foreign to Proustian psychology than the utopia of an authentic interior monologue whose inchoateness supposedly guarantees transparency and faithfulness to the deepest eddies of the stream of consciousness- or of unconsciousness” (Genette, “Narrative” 180).

With this, we come to an end of the Proustian style and its implications on time and interiority. Since style is aimed to make things visible, our next section would try to understand the kind of ‘seeing’ one learns while reading the *Recherche*. Here, seeing of course is not in space for the novel is based on another dimension. How does the impressionism over time render a vision in time? And what implications does it have on the event of world-becoming? These are the questions we shall engage ourselves with in ‘seeing’ the *Recherche*.

(C) THE ART OF 'SEEING'

With the advent of the photograph, the correlation between seeing and reality reached a new height. The quest to establish an 'objective' reality that could not be disputed and could be distributed without 'subjective' infusions arrived at a junction, where the mechanical eye of the camera froze time in a moment. The steady need for the Rational man to establish a stable image of the world that could preserve itself from the evanescence of time was fulfilled simultaneously with the desire to establish a standard which could be deemed to be the benchmark of reality without any sort of deliberation.

Visual art has long since been trying to imitate the world 'as it is', since the days of the Renaissance when shadows and perspectives entered into the concerns of the painters. With the entry of the photograph in culture, portrait-makers too now found it difficult to match up to the 'instrumental precision' of the camera. With the photograph serving as the 'most accurate' version of reality, Realism as an aesthetic now began to base itself on such objective representations. Literature that tried to emulate the Realist style has as its dominant model the newspaper, which claimed to present facts without interpretation. It was obviously a matter of time that the interpretation or attitude involved in such a claim would be challenged in the new ways the world would open up in the works of later painters and writers.

Although Proust is far from being an advocate of photographic realism, photography serves an important 'field of sense' both for the stock of metaphors he falls back on to talk of seeing, as well as, the mode in which the narrative makes a certain kind of seeing

possible. We have already quoted William C. Carter on Proust's relationship with technology, in that he actively engaged with new innovations to open up novel possibilities of language-use, thereby extract sensibilities and affects through technology as a metaphorical device. Much has been written on Proust and how he makes technology function, and our thesis shall not attempt another such exposition of this matter. However, we shall briefly examine how photography plays a role in the shaping of Proustian seeing, both in the realm of plot and style.

It is remarkable to note how the vocabulary in the *Recherche* is spewed with photographic terms like *milieu*, *propage*, *refraction*, *image*, *épreuve*, *photographie*, *radiographie*, *tirées* [print-out], *instantané* [snapshot], *cliché* [negative] and so on (Shattuck 13). These are not always employed when the theme of narration pertains to photography, but appear as verbs in completely different contexts. Proust 'internalizes' or couches these technological terms as metaphors and uses them as different figures of speech accordingly.

Proust does not believe in the flatness of the photograph however, just as he is suspicious of the cross-sectional planar nature of metaphors. Besides, his task is an exposition of psychology in time, and the photograph is hardly a tool, since it lacks any kind of 'temporal depth'. If Proust harnesses time out of metaphors by blending them in contiguity of the narrative, the meaning of photographic moments too must be based on time, and not the space it envelops in the frame.

Marcel comes across a photograph of a 'Lady in Pink' in his Uncle Adolphe's room in the first volume. It is only after thousands of pages that he comes to realize that the woman in the photograph is none other than Odette, the same woman who featured in Elstir's painting of Miss Sacripant. Likewise, the discovery that his grandmother was

already sick at the time of clicking a photograph of them together at Balbec comes to Marcel much later, when she has already died and there are no more possibilities to ask for her forgiveness for the rude remarks that he had made to her on that event. Proust puns further, obliquely, on the deceptions involved in 'photographic reality' in associating Marcel's discovery of Robert's homosexuality. It was Robert who had arranged for the photographer in Balbec, and it was not out of generosity for Marcel, but primarily with the intention of spending hours with the photographer in the dark room where he developed the negatives.

Proust is at his cunning best in transforming the spatial flatness of photography into a metaphor of temporal duration associated with developing the negative. All impressions that we accumulate in life, are revealed much later in the true meanings. This pertains to the architecture of the *Recherche*, in that the scenes that are offered to us as readers are often laden with details to such a degree that even a photograph could not possibly hold up in its frame. And yet, the precision of these scenes is muddled where unforeseen significances concerning them emerge. And this emergence occurs in time. The past is not a medley of finished moments that could be believed to be captured once and for all. It is continually developing in relation to the present, where the observer is. Proust compares the past of most men to be "like a photographic dark room encumbered with innumerable negatives which remain useless because the intellect has not developed them" (VI: 254).

Freud's contemporary photo-chemist Joseph Marie-Eder referred to photographs as *latent Bilder* or latent images (Bergstein 40). Photographs become 'visible' and mature on their 'clarity' only with time; Proust extracts this technological phenomenon to critique an uncritical faith on what one sees in 'outside reality' and photographs. Proustian seeing is temporal because significance is not symptomatic with appearances,

but must evolve in relation to a development. We become aware and conscious of ourselves only so far as we introspect the fragments of ourselves scattered in the past through the perspective offered by our present situation. "One feels, yes, but what one feels is like a negative which shows no blackness until one has placed it near a special lamp and which must also be looked at in reverse... only, when the intellect has shed light upon them... does one distinguish the lineaments of what one has felt" (VI: 255).

At one of the parties, Oriane advises Marcel that he must see the paintings of Hals in Harlem, even if he be from a moving train. Being a snob as she is, the Duchess the Guermantes understands seeing art in literal terms. Here, seeing represents only the bareness of sensual perception with no understanding or comportment towards what lies within one's field of vision. Marcel compares this attitude towards the world with the aesthetic of Realism that is based on the exclusivity of appearances; "This remark shocked me as indicating a misconception of the way in which artistic impressions are formed in our mind, and because it seemed to imply that our eye is in that case simply a recording machine which takes snapshots" (III: 606). By converting the world into an object by relegating the poetry of looking into the instrument of the camera's aperture, Realism has, in the case of Oriane among others, led to a loss of touch with reality itself. It is here that Marcel makes the comparison with the social novelists like the Goncourt brothers whom he'd parody in the last volume and people who passively accept the givenness of facts and objects as being reality itself; "Mme de Guermantes was in this respect no more in error than the social novelists who analyze mercilessly from the outside the actions of a snob or supposed snob, but never place themselves inside their skin" (IV: 173). Realism, in this regard, becomes paradoxical for what it presents is antithetical to reality, since reality, according to Proust, as we have discussed, must

always be recreated. The “falseness of so-called Realist art” lies in its “habit of giving to what we feel a form of expression which differs so much from... reality itself” (VI: 235).

The relationship of Modernist art with surfaces too is, like most of its relationships, ambivalent or conflicted. On one hand, Proust rejects the notion of interiority on grounds of immanence. Everything must be outside; in so far as they have been projected to the ‘outside’ by expression, and not simply ontic givens existing in the realm outside of our bodies. Like the sculpture of Rodin, the novelist becomes a poet of surfaces, of ‘plateaus’ to borrow Deleuze’s metaphor. On the other hand, there is a dissatisfaction with surface appearances because they are, to return to the previous point, merely factual givenness. One has to probe objects in order to know them as things, and this probing is not a microscopic dissection, and an association of one’s being with it in the dimension of time. Proustian introspection, as we have shown in the previous chapter, is not spatial-microscopic but temporal-telescope, based on distention rather than dissection; “not microscope but telescope that I had used to observe things which were indeed very small to the naked eye, but only because they were situated at a great distance, and which each one of them itself a world” (VI: 446).

Among the myriad ‘tips’ in the final volume of the *Recherche* that Marcel has for the future novelist he’d like to become, is the following; “The reality that he [the novelist] has to express resides... not in the superficial appearance of his subject but at a depth at the which the appearance matters little” (237) This depth, although seems spatial in Marcel’s words, has been ‘shown’ in the temporality of the novel already by the time we read these final passages. “Things in themselves are without significance until it has been extracted from them” (253). The depth of extraction is the time of creation; creation that is the re-creation from what is accepted as life to a reality that could be accepted by

Marcel. Objects have “no depth because no depths have had to be traversed in order to reach them, because they have not been re-created” (257).

We can at this point well understand Proust’s derision of the cinematograph as narrative device. Other than newspapers that tried emulating the ‘objectivity’ of photographs, the moving film in the early cinematographs greatly influenced the mode of narrative structure, with the reader placed in a stable spot to observe a succession of events occurring before him. Since the novel is a temporal genre, where the reader reads in order to progress, the ‘perspective’ in reading can never be maintained uniform like that of a television placed in front of us sitting on a sofa. We shall examine the dynamism of Proustian perspective in a later part of this very section, where the rejection of cinematographic technique shall be seen to be substituted by kaleidoscopic ones.

Proust however, is not an ‘abstract’ artist, nor a symbolic one. Both Realist and Symbolist ways of looking at the world are there in the *Recherche*’s composition, but altered, suited to its own necessities and aesthetic concerns. This could well be observed in the passages concerning the prints of the Vices and Virtues of Padua that Swann gifts Marcel. The images look virtuous and vicious only because they don’t resemble the symbols of vices and virtues that one is familiar with. Romanticism stressed on the individuality of the symbol over the conventionality of allegorical modes, but with time, Symbolism itself became clichéd and obvious, in other words, like the very conventionality it tried to defy in its early days. The symbols still function, but not as symbols. Their codes gather meaning only when the obviousness of connotation is challenged by a certain alienation. This alienation whereby the symbol is distanced from the meaning is a counterpart of Proust’s Realism. He wishes to get closer to the things by distancing their ‘object-ive’ avatars. As symbols themselves have become habitual, they

are to be used in un-usual configurations for the process of active meaning-making to be activated which is the clue to Proust's discovery of the real.

Marcel's first encounter with artforms that strike a resonance with him is the set of seascapes by Elstir he comes across at Balbec. These paintings 'open' a new vista in Marcel's horizon and mark a change in his association with art. So far nurtured by Realist forms, Marcel's own attitude towards artworks was to make them 'correspond' with what he took as reality, but was nothing else than habit. Such a conservative outlook is first challenged by the visual metaphors of Elstir, in whose paintings an "unusual image of a familiar object, an image different from those we are accustomed to see, unusual and yet true to nature...takes us out of our cocoon of habit, and at the same time brings us back to ourselves by recalling to us an earlier impression" (II: 483).

The conservatism of Realist art consists in its preservation of the conventional relationships between the signifier and the signified. In Elstir's seascapes, the sea appears as the land, and the land as the sea. Fraser traces the influences behind the 'fictional' compositions of Elstir back to the Normandy seascapes of Braque, where "cerulean and marine become metaphor of one another" (4). Things appear only when they are wrested out of words; in the very metaphorical act of wresting or movement. Marcel discerns in the seascapes,

a sort of metamorphosis of objects represented, analogous to what in poetry we call metaphor, and that, if God the father had created things by naming them, it was by taking away their names or giving them other names that Elstir created them anew. The names which designate things correspond invariably to an intellectual notion, alien to our true impressions, and compelling us to eliminate from them everything that is not in keeping with that notion. (II: 479)

We must take note of the fact that we, as readers, never really come across the works of Elstir, since they are visual in nature and are fictive works which exist only in the 'descriptions' of them from Marcel's point of view. Moreover Marcel, harboring the dream of becoming a literary artist, cannot directly 'duplicate' Elstir's techniques, and even if he did, would he have been an artist at all since art consists not in replicating but re-creating? The characters of Elstir, Bergotte and Vinteuil serve to mold the attitude of Marcel towards the world, and not simply a source of aesthetic inspiration. Aesthesis is 'seeing as'; it "is the sensible aspect of poetic language. Half-thought, half-experience, 'seeing-as' in its intuitive relationship that holds sense and image together" (Ricoeur, "Metaphor" 252). Not accepting what is available to the eye at face value, seeing-as is the comportment that interprets sensual phenomena towards meaning. Faced before the Elstirs, Marcel feels he is confronted by "the fragments of that world of new and strange colors which was no more than the projection of that great painter's peculiar vision, which his speech in no way expressed" (III: 484).

Seeing not only creates metaphors, but as an act, is metaphorical. It begins with sacrificing all the prejudices and familiarities that imbued the comfortable shell of our habit. "As Elstir had found with Chardin, you can make a new version of what you love only by first renouncing it" (VI: 466). The departure from adhering to what is common invites the criticism which is but misunderstanding from the masses, that an artist has gone 'mad'. And ironically, without this 'madness', this intransigent denial of complacency, no genuine art can ever stem. The beginnings of art appear to us illusory because it presents to us an unprecedented vision; the world becomes before us anew. Reversing the order of the real and apparent, the artist starts from illusions and beliefs which gradually emerge as a new face of reality, which is how the reality in art could ever seek to achieve, especially in the Modernist context, novelty of being. The reversals are not only on the level of form, but they pertain to

what Wittgenstein understands as the ‘form of life’; metaphor is not strategic but pathological (VI: 366). Art exposes perspectives which could at first sight appear dreamlike, and this is the very reason one should persist with them, until reality appears in an unprecedented fullness. Like Proust’s prescription of suffering till the end, dreaming too must be taken seriously and not as a weakness by artist. Marcel fails to find his life interesting because he is not open enough to look at it through the perspectives such as a dream might have to offer; “If a little day-dreaming is dangerous, the cure for it is not to dream less but to dream more, to dream all the time” (II: 488).

How does Proust enact a vision in the *Recherche*? If the novel is an optical instrument, Proust’s focus as a novelist would be to develop certain ‘structures of experiences’ through which the life of Marcel would appear to us, according to how we grapple with those structures. Seeing in the time of narrative is, as discussed, rendering contiguity to metaphor, where seeing itself becomes a metaphorical act in always associating with passages that precede or those that follow. Displacing objects from their positions is a miniature model of this narrative technique, where events too are displaced from the place where they occur, so that they receive meaning only ‘elsewhere’. We shall now discuss two techniques how Proust creates ‘events’ as ‘impressions in time’; through the employment of ‘latency’ and through the use of ‘dynamic perspective’. Both these approaches liberate, like the metaphor liberates objects from conventional associations and metonymy liberates metaphor from verticality, the purported stability of an image and render it fluid, so that it becomes ‘an image in time’.

The ‘present-ness’ of the scene in all its completed objectivity in Realist art embodies the worth that is invested in the present moment of time. Like things appear only in displacement, Proustian time is always directed elsewhere, in dreams to fulfill desire or disappointment with respect to a promise the past has unfulfilled in the present. One has “to

develop the negative to see the truth”, and as a consequence, the important events of our emotional life occur without us being aware of that at the moment.

Love has meaning in Proust only so far as it triggers jealousy and therewith a desire to know the unknown. We have seen how the love for truth ultimately subsumes desire out of the equation and paves the path towards art. The significance of love in leading to art is understood by Marcel in retrospect. Understanding events take time. Even feelings like grief, are not felt in the Proustian universe at the moment, not experienced “until long after the event because in order to feel it we need first to ‘understand’ the event” (IV: 194).

On the level of the novel, its totality too is a retrospective one, as we shall discuss in the later section of the chapter. Whereas a Realist novel could be conceived to be based on a totality that precedes it, the Modernist work in the scatteredness and anxiousness of becoming can only hope for a unity that ‘comes after’. This has a significance as far as the philosophy of fiction being non-logocentric in nature, or possessing no nature at all, a point which we can address only in the first part of the next chapter. The novelist and as well as characters envisage the future based on the present moment, but the fact that the present itself is to be understood in its displacement from the ‘here and now’ renders such an estimation often false. Charlus has never expected Morel to be introduced to the Queen of Naples by anyone other than him, and yet the concatenation of events had led Mme Verdurin of all people to share that honor. Who would have expected Theodore, the boy working at the chemist’s store at Combray, to have indulged in sexual adventures with Gilberte, at a time when Marcel anxiously waited for a peasant girl to appear along the Meseglise way? We don’t expect what would come to surprise us, because these surprises are sparks of understanding that can only be formed in relation to a particular trajectory of our development in time. “We picture the future as a reflection of the present projected into an empty space, whereas it is the result, often almost immediate, of causes which for the most part escape our notice” (V: 365).

Interestingly, for Proust the first or ‘primal image’ is the most significant of all aspects that generate out of it. But the ‘complication’ of meaning is not possessed by the primal image at the time when it occurs. As a result, intelligence can’t grasp [*begreifen*] the image as a concept [*Begriff*]; the object ‘comes to’ acquire meaning in the process of becoming a thing. Primal vision, for example Albertine at the backdrop of the sea, serves as one of the “foci of aesthetic irradiation” (Genette, “Figures III” 50). It keeps on producing impressions that change with the temporal distance that regulates it with respect to narrative flux. The diverse forms of Albertine revealed by the disclosures in time are “many different aspects in succession, as a town alters the disposition of its buildings one after the other as we approach it, to the point of crushing, obliterating the principal monument which alone we could see from a distance” (V: 698). Similarly, when Marcel surreptitiously observes the love making between Mlle Vinteuil and her lesbian girlfriend, he is far from understanding that this scene would be the cornerstone [*la pierre angulaire*] of the novel he would come to occupy (Fowlie 61). Just as Marcel comes to understand late, the novel, in such a movement, fashions its unity in a similar retrospective fashion. ‘In looking back one learns to see’, as the title of Mary Bergstein’s book on Proust goes.

From the point of view of narration, it is representation that poses the problem. Since the mode of Realism is based on a certitude that the self remains conserved through time and that one can represent past actions as objects, the condition of ‘continuous death’ remained suppressed. If there is no stable self but only a succession of being in relation to altering surroundings, it is difficult to feel one with one’s past being which no longer holds true in the present moment. Marcel undergoes the difficulty in entering “into a state of duality and to present to oneself the lifelike spectacle of a feeling one has to possess” (I: 455). He wishes to hold on to the Realist vision despite the ‘deaths’ he has undergone in time. Proust’s impressionism in time is however based on the very admission of the loss of self, which in

turn becomes the point of departure of looking back at experiences. The novelist must 'disown' what he writes, since he is not the 'I' who is written about.

In *Proust's Binoculars*, Roger Shattuck points at three narrative techniques of embodying time. The first is the 'cinematographic' principle that is based on continuity of moving images. This is the sort of 'seeing' that a Realist novel based on succession of 'external events' is based on. It employs a linearity of time and spreads incidents in a single chain. There is only unilinear movement in such a vision. What is Proust's opinion on this? "Nothing is further from what we have really perceived than the vision that the cinematograph presents" (VI: 237).

The second principle of 'montage' involves juxtaposition of still images which have no direct continuity between them. Just like a collage involves juxtapositions of non-continuous fragments in space, a montage works on a stitching of pictures which could hint at a theme interconnected between them. Joyce's *Ulysses* is largely based on such a technique where a proliferation of unrelated images enters into a relation.

Surely it is a belief that reality must also involve something more than appears in flat visual representations of it that prompts Proust to think otherwise. How often does a party scene in the *Recherche* run off to other associations from the past, and then return once more to join the conversation but not in a continuous line, always missing out something of this continuity in the digression it undertakes. Also, Proust's use of dialogue clusters is interesting in this regard. A is talking to B, C with D; Proust overlaps the dialogues so that the 'transcript' we read in the novel is a jumbled polylogue in which no one seems to listen to one another; a perfect device to 'represent' the inanity of society talk as well as the conceit of the snobbish self that has not learnt the empathy of hearing. Even if the Proustian narrative

fabric is not as haphazard as Joycean, there is no cinematographic continuity to be found in the hours that compose it;

An hour is not an hour, and what we call reality is a certain vase full of scents and sounds and projects and connections between these immediate sensations and the memories which envelop us simultaneously with them- a connection that is suppressed in a simple cinematographic vision... a unique connection that the writer has to rediscover in order to link forever in his phrase the two sets of phenomena which reality joins together. (VI: 246)

The third principle of 'stereoscopic vision' is a combination of continuity and disjunction. It is based on the same principle as that of the metaphor, "similarity with a difference" (Shattuck 58). Stereoscopic vision is based on intervals between continuity. The very division of the times enveloped by the seven volumes attest to this style. Between each of the volumes, there is a gap in time about which we know nothing. However, these blank spaces are significant in the changes that are to be seen in our familiar characters grown unfamiliar. The largest of these gaps occur right before the final volume begins, when we come to know that Marcel has spent almost twenty years on and off in different sanatoriums undergoing treatment. It is ironic that the bulk of Marcel's adult life is actually missing in the *Recherche*; we mostly read about his adolescence and when he is already grown, if not old, at least middle-aged.

The words 'stereoscopic' and 'kaleidoscopic' occur mostly in relation to Proust's projection of society. Not only does society change, with a steady downfall of the aristocracy and royalty to an increase in the prestige of the bourgeoisie, Proust's grafting of the Dreyfus affair and the war in the *Recherche* act as important threads through which these changes find form. While during the middle part of the *Recherche*, Dreyfusards are castigated from

society, the latter years are marked by a fashion of proclaiming oneself a supporter of Dreyfus. Society is not exempt from the ‘continuous death’ that is time, “but, like a kaleidoscope which is every now and then given a turn, society arranges successively in different order elements which one would have supposed immutable, and composes a new pattern” (II: 203).

It is interesting in this context to note Proust’s fascination with stop-motion photography in his days where movements were captured in intervals upon a single frame in the chronophotographs of Etienne-Jules Marie. Carter argues that the *Recherche* takes its inspiration from these ‘photographs in time’ and the art of frieze, where movement is slowed down, almost to the point when it seems to be under hold. “In life things move and evolve and this is the impression he wants to create in art; arrested motion; that it be like the same and changing, that it be frozen and yet endowed with the potentiality of movement” (Carter 46).

We can take a moment to ground this attitude in the overall historicity of Modernism. On one hand, there is a need to impede the time of scientific progress which has already shown its ugly face in the First World War amongst the myriad events that have cut off man from nature and one another. And to escape the diachronicity of linear history, there is felt a need to return to a mythic image of the past; eternity as a substitute for continuity. “The intolerable time of sheer chronicity creates a problem that humanity has had to cope with since the beginnings of its time; and humanity has done so either in the myths of its religious, or when such supreme fiction no longer inspire faith, in the secular fictions of art and literature” (Frank 89). Baudelaire, already long back in comparison to Proust, had mentioned that beauty in poetry should be a complementarity between an eternal, invariable element and a relative, circumstantial element. Modernism’s ambivalence, this time towards time, expresses itself in its heydays in the following remark by Baudelaire in *The Painter of*

Modern Life, 'modernity is the transient, the fleeting, the contingent; it is one half of art, the other being the eternal and the immovable (18).

Carter focusses on the description of the Hubert Robert's fountain in the fourth volume as an analogy of this phenomenon. We read of Marcel, but of Marcel changing, shown in profiles, separated in time. Things are relentlessly changing in the *Recherche*, and yet this change itself is still in its constancy. Unlike a Realist novel which could work on a steady progression from beginning to end, the Proustian architecture resembles what Deleuze calls rhizome, growing out from the middle, expanding without denouement. Wresting objects from the linearity of their order arrests them in the gallery of the things the *Recherche* is made of; things are still when compared from the order in which they occurred in Marcel's life, and moving when considered from their contiguous spread in the narrative. "The task of the Proustian artist, then, is to immobilize yet at the same time create the impression of movement, life and evolution in order to combine stasis and kinesis" (Carter 73). Fowlie deems this temporal ambivalence as "the philosophical base of the novel", a point we shall take up in the next chapter (152).

What is 'seen' is not what the camera captures. Unlike the steady camera resting on its stand, the human eye is located in a body that is in time. There is no steady frame of reference, for time changes our perspectives. Proust further exaggerates this condition by making Marcel occupy a dynamic perspective on the occasion when he first sets something on paper in the novel. Marcel's impression of the steeples of Martinville is 'as seen' from a moving carriage and does not correspond to the camera's vision of them. The swirling shapes inspire him because they offer his vision an alternative to the flat reality that otherwise bores him. In this scene, his seeing is symptomatic with the style which Proust is employing in the *Recherche* (Landy 81). It is an Einsteinian world of relativity, where "there are too many coordinate systems to arrive at any solid, fixed identity" (Jordan 159). The observer is moving

in time when the stereoscopic vision is in play, and this scene symbolizes the motion of observer by actually displacing him in space as well, traveling as he is in the speeding carriage.

The great painter of ships and shipwrecks, Turner, was once rebuked by a naval officer. He complained that his painted ships have no portholes. Turner replied that he paints what he sees, and from the cliffs from where he had seen the ships and rendered them into the mighty perspective of his dramatic compositions, there were no portholes to be seen (Fraser 85-86). Realism in Proust is applicable to this extent, the narration sees as much as things could be seen from the dynamic contingency in which things are placed. Stendhal could visualize Sorel on a cliff under the clouds, but Proustian perspective is, at least on such grounds, far more 'humble' and 'grounded'.

One of the consequences of Proustian temporality is the duality of destruction and preservation (Fowlie 72). Things change, giving themselves over to other things. And yet the arrested motion based on a complementarity of stasis and kinesis strive to preserve their constancy. Swann's exaltation in hearing the Vinteuil sonata or Marcel's memory of Albertine on arriving at Venice are examples of such moments when a time already left behind continues to linger in the present. Every moment in the *Recherche* stretches out; it has a significance in future and recalls something of the past (81). It is this same trenchancy of perspective in time that makes society appear like an "old-fashioned peep show... a peepshow of the years, the vision not of a moment but of a person situated in the distorting perspective of time" (VI: 292). There is a constant jutting forward and behind, analogous to the double movement of the Dasein in its hermeneutic relation to the world [*Vor-und Rückbezogenheit*]. Proustian ambivalence in narrative temporality and the vision it offers is a doubleness based on prospective and retrospective movements (de Man 57).

Proust's fascination with Dostoyevsky in the *Recherche*, re-iterated many times, in thus not unusual, given that the succession of events in the *Recherche* reminds one of the spasmodic, insane inward necessity developed with a fine Dostoyevskian contempt for plausible concatenation (Beckett 62). Very few readers would not be disconcerted in the two major decisions in the lives of Swann and Marcel, the decision to marry Odette and Albertine respectively. These decisions appear so abruptly and 'illogically' in connection to the plot that one might think Proust to be almost 'mistaken' in placing them there. And yet, the 'illogical' order is where Marcel draws the analogy between the styles of Dostoyevsky, Elstir and Mme de Sevigné; "Mme de Sevigné, like Elstir, like Dostoyevsky, instead of presenting things in their logical sequence, that is to say beginning with the cause, shows us first of all the effect, the illusion that strikes us" (V: 432). Proust deliberately ruptures the logocentric presentation of events, and thereby unsettles the reader educated in Realist narratives.

Proust reminds one of Heidegger's approaches to space and time, as we have discussed in the first chapter. Instead of beginning with the conventional notion of the givenness of space, Heidegger says that it is our experiences of direction and distance that creates space for the first time. Likewise, the past, the present and the future do not follow one another, but each of them are based on the present-ness of recollection, momentariness and anticipation respectively. Modernist art resonates such a phenomenological attitude in dismissing the agreed-upon linearity of time, which is itself a metaphor to begin with and not something there on its own. The *Recherche*, as Beistegui observes is not an endless, river-like flowing novel [*roman fleuvre*] (126). On the contrary, it always expresses the anxiety of its own death, whether it shall be at all able to end in time, refracted however in the image that Marcel has for the work he is about to write. Proust's novel is more of a swamp or a delta [*roman marais*]; it impedes movement although generating flux, it keeps repeating things,

and returning to moments which we exasperated readers feel are already done with till we learn better (126).

We already mentioned how the *Recherche* actually developed between the initially planned first and last volumes during the war years. In this process, the art of novel-making clearly defies the arche-telos logic. It, like a rhizome, develops from the middle, just like its long-winding sentences that imitate the very superstructure of which they are part. Language does not flow like a river, just as events jut forward and backward. It destroys the complacency of reading and ‘returns’ us to our own very lives in that we alternate between different beings which we have inhabited or shall come to inhabit at different space and time zones. Deleuze names this phenomenon as ‘creative stuttering’ that “makes language grow from the middle, like grass; it is what makes language a rhizome instead of a tree, what puts language in perpetual disequilibrium” (“Essays Critical and Clinical” 111). This very temporal, or one should better say ontological, gesture is embodied even in the development of characters, who placed in such a churning temporality, do not develop from a start to finish line, but rather like a ball of strings wound on continuously, through envelopment [*emboîtement*] (Beistegui 126-27). To describe this with an analogy would be to imagine the blossoming of a flower in reverse, where petals close in one after the other, creating a *Gestalt*.

Joseph Frank’s opinions in *The Idea of Spatial Form* must thus be regarded with some exceptions. Frank says that Modernist novels, especially the *Recherche*, abolish time to give us a spatial cross-section formed out of different moments. We shall discuss the problems evinced by such an outlook in the last part of this chapter dedicated to narrative space. For the moment, we can agree with Frank in so far as Proust does away with linearity of time. But that does not imply time is subsumed to space in the *Recherche*. Firstly, Proust’s work is in time, being a novel as it is. Secondly, our contention, and we have already made some

progress in establishing that thesis, is that Proust creates a temporality peculiar to his own work which is most certainly not spatial in the usual sense of the term.

Frank however, is in the right to point out an analogy between the Proustian method and the anecdotal method espoused by Pound, which is based on “disrupting the linear time of reading and forcing cross-references... [bringing out] the internal conflict between the time-logic of language and the space-logic implicit in the modern conception of the nature of poetry” (14). Transversality that evolves out of such an experience is something that can never be experienced in a single moment like facing a painting. Instead, it disturbs us in not letting a totality made available to us in one go.

We conclude our discourse on Proustian ‘seeing’ with the observation that to see means to develop one’s own eyes, and not to rely on instrumentality of the camera or convention. Mallarmé had already said that one must become the instrument in order to express music. It is a similar concern in Proust who wishes his novel to be ‘a vehicle of vision, as well as the concrete experience of that vision’; music and instrument, both. It seems that a certain kind of repetition is mandatory for to reach such a state-of-being. It is not a repetition which could completely be described and understood as one thing following another, rather a repetition that can create the lens along with the vision. Our next part shall see how repetitions in the *Recherche* pertains to both style and structure, and offers Proust a ground to marry practical literary criticism with the novel’s vision.

“Each soul is a melody that needs to be renewed; and for that, each becomes his own flute or viola” (Mallarmé 205). Our task at hand now is to see how Proust enacts this doubleness through the art of repetition.

(D) THE ART OF REPETITION

It is a remarkable thing to note that almost all of the *Recherche* is pitched in the *imparfait* or imperfect mode of past tense. The equivalent on what in German is called *Präteritum*, the imperfect refers to a ‘habitual action’ in the past; an activity that cannot be pointed to a particular moment, but one that took place ‘more than once’ in the time left behind. Proust’s fascination with this mode of narration is recorded in *Pastiches et mélanges*; the imperfect imperative “presents life to us as something at the same time cruel and passive, which at the very time of retracing our actions, turns them into illusion, buries them in the past without leaving us like the perfect tense the consolation of activity” (qtd in Shattuck 79). Since the *Recherche*, like Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*, is not an ‘event-based’ narrative, it dissolves the sharpness of an activity in the fabric of time into the evenness of a regular activity. Moreover, it makes the narrated world more elusive and suited to the evanescence that is the temperament of time and the *Recherche*. Fraser traces the import of the preterimperfect tense or past tense of continuity from Ruskin’s *Praeterita*. One must however be careful to realize that the mention of these ‘habitual’ actions are singular in the narrative; their usualness of occurrence is the mode in which incidents are presented, and it is ironical that the narrative mentions this usualness in every unique instance of bringing them to light. Such a deliberate dissolution of particularity in generalness is thus an artifice that creates an effect of stasis in the kinesis of time, an aspect we discussed in the last section, and hence rightly regarded as ‘pseudo-iterative’ by Genette.

It is no wonder that a novel which looks at time in such a fashion would involve in its architecture a vast repertoire of repetitions. But we must be wary of the fact, that repetition in

the *Recherche* is not merely structural, but a way of seeing, that in turn reverts to a way of being. Repetition is here ontological. We have already analyzed in the first chapter of the previous chapter how Swann and Marcel are ‘repetitions of one another’. Proust’s understanding of metaphor as ‘similarity with difference’ is rendered novelistic by making ‘differentiated contiguity’ an integral component, or frame, of the novel’s vision. Things recur, but changed. The ubiquity of such phenomena ‘makes visible’ the ‘continuous death’ of time in ‘arrested motion’.

The sonata of Vinteuil in Swann’s life ‘is’ what the septet is to Marcel. But just as these two works belong to the ‘same’ composer and are yet ‘different’, the nature of responses that they evoke in Swann and Marcel too are similar in ‘being significant’ and distinct in being ‘individual’. There are a number of repetitions of the sonata phrases in the septet, but the resemblances are “same and yet something else, as things recur in life” (V: 293). Swann renders the sonata as a fetish for his ego; it becomes the ‘anthem’ of his love for Odette. On the contrary, the septet along with Elstir’s seascapes offer Marcel a field of being where Albertine has no role to play. “It was not altogether the same association of ideas that the little phrase had aroused in me as in Swann” (V: 640). On a larger scale, although Marcel’s love life resembles Swann’s, the former does resolve to be an artist whereas the latter relinquishes art. Proust creates a model for Marcel, only to develop his individuality better. We get a glimpse of the ontology of repetition in the condition here, that it is not a recurrence of the identical but of difference. “For nothing ever repeats exactly, and the most analogous lines which, thanks to kinship of character and similarity of circumstances, we may select in order to represent them as symmetrical, remain in many respects opposed” (V: 570).

The metaphor as ‘differentiated continuity’ is made metonymic in the repetition of the Vinteuil sonata as many as four times in the novel. On successive hearing, impressions alter,

and yet Swann blinded by his desire is unable to understand this repetition in terms of difference. Only an artist is considerate towards differences, for as discussed, truth can only 'return differently'. The identity of recurrence is but a generality that does not offer the event of disclosure to take place, since it is submerged in the anesthetic realm of habit and *doxa*. Truth, and art, goes beyond 'opinions' [*doxa*], and this paradoxical character of repetition is realized by Marcel which overturns the boredom of this life into proliferate profundity.

Works of art like the music of Vinteuil are like,

obscure larvae turned into dazzling architectural structures...some of them became friends, that I had scarcely distinguished, that at best had appeared to me to be ugly, so that I could never have supposed that they were like those people, whom we discover to be what they really are only after we have come to know them well. Between the two stages, there was a real transmutation. (V: 426)

We have now reached a stage to understand how repetition is the metonymic face of the metaphor of 'seeing'. If seeing has to be in time, things must be repeated, to create temporal depth. And yet things must change too, not just outwardly, but the very relationship in which they are placed in the world. Metaphor in Proust is not rhetorical but an ontological feature, present overall in substituting one thing for another in association which sets metonymy in motion. Likewise, repetition is inexhaustible in the *Recherche*, for it is not structural but a way of seeing/being that is infused throughout the entire breath of the novel. We shall now try to highlight this attitude in how it is embodied not just in Swann-Marcel binary but in myriad other clusters in the novel.

Jean-Jacques Natiez in his book *Proust as Musician* compares the semantic flexibility of Vinteuil's phrase with a leitmotiv. The word leitmotiv literally means that which shows

itself as a sign [*Motif*] in being led or by leading [*leiten*]. Music and the novel share the condition of being artforms in time, and both employ leitmotifs to signify the mysterious complementarity shared between change and continuity, or ‘differentiated continuity’. Natiez ascribes the variable significance of the phrase for Swann as “a language certainly, but a fickle one” (15). We have already discussed how Proustian sentences and language in the *Recherche* always run off from a center, generating meanings more than one. This polysemantic nature rests on time, since our perspective of looking at things changes with our self dying many times on the way, as Beckett said. In this regard, the very first portion of the first volume titled Combray, serves as a constant locus for everything that follows. In a letter to Lucien Daudet, Proust had compared the first Volume to an overture filled with leitmotifs (qtd in Janjy 199). The two ways, Bergotte, Vinteuil, the Guermantes charm at Dr. Percepied’s daughter’s wedding, Charlus’ gaze at Tansonville, the Verdurin salon; all of these are already in *Swann’s Way*, as a cocoon webbed. These elements are however not yet leitmotifs until they are repeated in the dramatization of the plot. We shall say more on dramatization as the mode of repetition and how it pertains to the ‘philosophy’ of/in the *Recherche* in the next chapter.

Paris is already contained in Combray, just as Venice. Marcel had long sought Venice as a unique place which would exalt his senses, and yet on the occasion of actually visiting the city, he is hardly enchanted, rather surprised to find Combray all over again; “I received there, impressions analogous to those which I had felt so often in the past as Combray, but transposed into a wholly different and far richer key” (VI: 193). The musical metaphor is significant here, for Combray and Venice evince the dramatization of a verbal leitmotiv whose “relative indeterminacy and initial lack of connotation then allow in turn for even more flexibility in absorbing diegetic contexts” (Janjy 208). Venice gains significance from Combray, and Combray from Venice; a reciprocal metaphor in time. The apparent triviality

of life is enriched by art in looking at reality not in the givenness of objects, but ‘involving’ the past and present in a mutually conditioning relationship where an unforeseen ‘connection’ surfaces up. Jany compares such an event with Wagner’s Prelude to *Das Rheingold* which “carves no less than 136 bars out of the shapeless nebula of the one and the same E flat major chord” (209). By itself, the chord is ‘nothing’. Artistic seeing, however, comes to discover an excess in this nothingness. If an object is regarded with a fixed value of use, it can never yield anything beyond its own perimeter. As discussed in the first chapter on Thing and Thingness, art is sympathetic to the nothing at the core of things, for it has the potential of infinite development in being unconfined to any concrete but limited dimension.

Proust’s application of repetitions extends to characters as well. Repetition always involves internals, and in presenting an altered image of the familiar, presents to us the ‘stereoscopic vision’ discussed in the last part on the art of seeing. While a “continuous association gives a vague average between an infinity of imperceptibly different images”, “seeing Robert against diverse backgrounds had the effect of giving pictures more striking and more sharply defined” (VI: 193). Glimpses caught at Balbec, at Doncierres, at the Paris salons and the brothel, such a ‘collage in time’ is how Proust presents to us his characters. It is not always that a same character is presented in different backdrops, but different characters also constitute a similar backdrop in the *Recherche*. This phenomenon is highlighted by the series of ‘loves’ Marcel feels for Gilbrete, Odette, Oriane and Albertine. Each of these individuals are distinct, but in the novelization, Marcel regards them all with the same gaze of encountering the unknown, as discussed in the previous chapter. In of the many meta-novelistic moments of the *Recherche*, Proust lays out the method the repetition in love; “So a novelist might in relating the life of his hero, describe his successive love affairs in almost exactly similar terms, and thereby give the impression not that he was repeating

himself but that he was creating, since an artificial novelty is never so effective as a repetition that manages to suggest a fresh truth (II: 548).

If the fecundity of events in a Realist aesthetic is countered in Proust by merging action into impressions and using the imperfect tense, the element of ‘progress’ and ‘development’ is stalled or at least impeded by such variations. At first glance, it might seem that the plot hardly progresses unlike a Realist plot, but that would be a false reading. The Realist plot progress is based on ‘cinematographic continuity’, a moving stream of images witnessed by an observer who is adamant to maintain this position steady throughout by overlooking the ‘continuous death’ implicated by time. Proustian ‘differentiated continuity’ does not believe in the superficial changes where the self apparently remains the same in defiance of its ontology based in time. Suggesting a fresh truth in sameness is the refracted condition of our being liberated in time. The same no longer appears same, because we have changed in relation to it. Instead of a fixed self observing transient phenomena on screen, Proustian repetition enacts the becoming of our being in time and instigates the paradigmatic shift from Visual Realism to Musical Becoming or in Proust’s own words, Impressionism over time.

Proust’s cunning play with the same character with different names is yet another variation of this technique. The lady in pink, Miss Sacripant, Mme de Crecy, Odette, Mme Swann, Mme de Forcheville- these are the names Odette comes to inhabit in the course of her life. Each of these names is like a garment, which is superficial as well as personal at the same time. Is it the same character that remains identical throughout, or a medley of difference that only our habit of saying ‘I’ in the entire course of our lives persists to claim identical? “People never cease to change place in relation to ourselves. In the imperceptible and eternal march of the world, we regard them as motionless, in a moment of vision too brief for us to perceive the motion that is sweeping them on” (IV: 486).

Mme Verdurin who is scorned by Charlus as a complete pretentious idiot and holds only a meagre place in the aristocratic hierarchy returns in the final volume with her salon placed at the very topmost rung of the social ladder. Oriane, on the other hand, has descended in prestige with the steady devaluation of the aristocracy. Elstir, who had appeared as a punitive figure in the first volume as Monsieur Biche, becomes a great painter; but more importantly, a changed man. It is the art in the *Recherche* that transforms the mundane to something capable of generating profound changes, irrespective of them being good or bad. It won't be an exaggeration to remark that Proust at times acknowledge his feat within his work and praises himself in the disguise of philosophic statements like the following one; "the world around us appears to us entirely different from the old world, but perfectly clear...Such is the new and perishable universe which has just been created. It will last until the next geological catastrophe is precipitated by a new painter or writer of original talent" (III: 376).

Marcel receives a letter of congratulations from some Sanillon whom he has never heard of, after his article in the *Figaro* come out. It is only later, that this Sanillon turns out to be the very same Theodore, who worked at the chemist's shop at Combray and supplied Eulalie with information about the new arrivals in the town. Marcel also learns even later that he had had sexual relations with Gilberte at the time when he had considered Swann's daughter to be an embodiment of chastity. What Proust does with such juxtapositions is to make realize a shift in the very perspective in which the world appears. The world becomes only in a new way, but yet we call it the world. Proustian difference attempts to foreground not changes in a world, but changes of the world. And how? "But we have only to select in our memory two pictures taken of them at different moments, close enough together however for them not to have altered in themselves- perceptibly, that is to say, - and the difference between the two pictures is a measure of the displacement that they have undergone in relation to us" (IV: 486).

The first-person narrative also brings with itself a structure of repetition. Marcel as character has undergone experiences not in the same order and arrangement in which Marcel as narrator presents them to us as the *Recherche*. We often find, as the similarity of different passages quoted so far would suggest, repetition of the same belief over vast stretches of the narrative. One can criticize Proust if these repetitions are regarded as tautological, but Proust himself was against such use of repetitive devices in say, the works of Charles Peguy (qtd in Finn 143). Perhaps the repetitions of these ‘philosophical fragments’ are far from being a dogmatic assertion presented many times over, and even further from rendering the narrative a cyclical, non-developing pattern. The recurrence of these fragments could be alternatively perceived as an expression of a doubt in their truthfulness, and thus they need be asserted many times to show the relativity of their valency. The “discursive machine of *Le Temps Retrouvé* is itself working overtime to shore up a belief that defies rationality... like Nietzsche’s life-protecting fictions” (Prendergast 15). The Proustian endings are overdetermined in the overabundance of involuntary memory in the final volume. Instead of signifying a plethora of inspiration, perhaps it could be regarded as Marcel’s own doubts in the inspirational quality of these moments, which is reflected by a series of them occurring in tandem rather than one definitive one.

In writing a narrative, Marcel repeats his life differently. Events and things appear contiguous to one another, no longer in the monotone of boredom but in polychromatic splendor. Thus, the repetition of the character as narrator is not at all the return to the past, but a projection of oneself towards the future where the past is discovered anew, in a form that was never perceived when it took place, for the form is rendered by novelization itself and nothing prior to it. “Future is discovered as a chance to invent the past, to recognize the self at the same time that he creates it, exposes it” (Bersani, “Fictions” 11). The word remembrance in the original English translation is thus very misleading, for it fixes to the

Recherche a retrospective function. Of course, retrospection is crucial for Marcel as character, but as narrator, the past can unfold only in the futurity of writing, from one page to the next in time. Proust's method lies in the making present of that which is no longer there, where the "art of remembering as presentification is not directed towards the past but towards the future" (Haustein 24).

Society scenes are repeated in every volume of the work, beginning from Swann's entry into the Verdurin salon to Marcel's first appearance at Mme de Villeparisis', then at Oriane's, and finally at the reception of the Prince de Guermantes once in the fourth and again in the seventh volume. These scenes themselves are a long elaboration of chattering people, and a study of mannerisms. By themselves they have little to offer, had they not been preceded or followed by similar parties. What is significant is how the changes makes themselves felt through the repetitions. Rachel, once scorned at Oriane's house, become a jewel in the later parties. Bloch and Legrandin enter into the social scene towards the end volumes, something that was unthinkable in the first volume. Charlus associates himself with humbugs in La Raspeliere. Each of these phenomena become significant because they represent an unforeseen change that has been wrought in the Proustian universe. And the characters, in the changed settings too behave, metaphorically, same in their names with altered personality, or their names changed yet maintaining the grace and peculiarities of former times.

Bersani's take on repetition of the same in different settings as not dogmatism but deprivation of confidence in factuality. A phenomenon doesn't get completed in the moment it occurs, it must be developed in time, and this returns as the developed image. The narrator therefore "seeks to repeat his experiences in a way that will deprive it of any existential authority. The transcendence of phenomena depends on a certain discrediting of phenomena at the very moment of their representation" ("Redemption" 11). Each section is a mistaken

understanding taken in factual immediacy but a possible illumination in retrospect. Marcel learns, but like us all, learns late. It is the only way that the event of truth could happen, appearing as a trace of something that is already beyond and gone. Not generalization, but “displaced repetition of the particular” is how Bersani sums up Proustian *aletheia*. Repetition becomes the structural counterpart of an ontology that is dissatisfied with the understanding of reality as mere appearances. Since the appearance at a moment is a reflection of one’s subjectivity, artful seeing must undo the myopia of desire to return objects to things. Repetitions of the phenomenal, far from substituting truth for appearances, continuously represents appearances in order to test modes of interpretation freed from the constraints of anxious desire (15).

We must pause for a moment to reflect on the question: what is repeated? Although we can at times, point at the visage of a structure, that which is repeated has in fact no name, for it is repetition that brings with itself an effect which has no distinct name or concept outside that phenomenon. This is what distinguishes repetition from representation; “the repeated cannot be represented: rather it must always be signified, masked by what signifies it, itself masking what it signifies” (Deleuze, “Difference” 18).

Marcel the narrator is not a subject who represents Marcel the character as object. The narrator is ‘formed’ by the future movement in which Marcel the character appears as repetition. Unlike the subject-object binary of a representation that can be imagined in a Realist framework, Proustian first-person narrative problematizes the act of fiction. Only the act of narrativization novelized in the *Recherche* as Marcel writing about his past and his vocation as an aspiring artist shows what it there, and in this showing, it also conceals all that it fails to say. Art, according to Heidegger, discloses truth. At the same time, as Levinas says, art obscures; trails a shadow of infinitude alongside the finite form it presents. Deleuze addresses this duality of repetition which according to him is the nature of event of difference

[*Enteignis*], saying that “repetition is truly that which distinguishes itself in constituting itself, that which constitutes itself only by disguising itself- There is therefore nothing repeated which may be isolated or abstracted from the repetition in which it was formed, but in which it is also hidden” (17).

Proust’s obsession with repetitions exceeds the boundaries of the *Recherche*. Several philosophical passages and theoretical snippets from the introduction to his translation of Ruskin’s *Sesame and Lilies* and his own work *Contre Sainte-Beuve* ‘re-figure’ in the novel. Likewise, several motifs of *Jean Santeuil* are ‘transplanted’ in the ‘new’ settings of Marcel. These repetitions serve a template for Proust’s self-development, and allows him to ‘correct’ and ‘improve’ the inadequacy of these passages in making them ‘move’ or metaphorizing them from the realm of non-fiction to fiction. Repetition as the ‘same yet different’ is according to Proust the structure of desire in time, which “though unique as a chord, nevertheless includes the fundamental notes on which the whole of life is based” (V: 719). The passages and ideas do not remain the ‘same’, but are revealed in the differences which ground them anew in the *Recherche*. Self-quotation could be evaluated as a pre-occupation with oneself; yet our contention would be to perceive such a *glissement* as devoting to ‘the work’ [*oeuvre*] the possibilities of life’s becoming. Where is this work situated? Michael R. Finn’s extensive work on Proustian intertextuality in *Proust, the Body and the Literary Form* focusses on that ‘text’ of Proust which is extended across all kinds of works he had created, from newspaper columns to letters, and traces the subterraneous resonance between each of them that mutely aspire to be one work, that is however nowhere to be found concretely. They point to “a larger structure, beyond the novel’s text which supersedes the novel’s aleatory form” (166). Repetition becomes then a perpetual effort to arrive somewhere which is revealed only as a result of this attempt, for it is yet to exist in the maps of the world and of our imagination. All ‘literary activities’ become then a game, different each time yet constant

in its playfulness, a game comprised of inchoate fragments, as Deleuze puts it [*un jeu de pieces détachées*] (“Proust” 176).

We have traced a different evocation of inter-textuality where artworks are invoked in the *Recherche*. Naturally, the question that would crop up here would be to ask the function of such an invocation. Although at first these imports seem to serve a metaphorical function, it is more than the role of analogy that they are ‘play’ in the *Recherche*. Such examples are countless in the novel; we shall speak of some to illustrate our point. Towards the end of the first volume, Marcel ‘sees’ Mme Swann’s carriage ‘as’ the ones painted by Constantin Guys. Here, ‘seeing-as’ forms a metaphorical reciprocity for Marcel; both images mutually hint at one another, the carriage like the painting, the painting like the carriage. However, we as readers are only in a position to see the painting; the carriage of Odette is fictive. There is no metaphorical comparison possible for the reader; for him the mention of Constantin Guys works along the horizontal plane of the novel’s movement, and is thus metonymic in character.

Similarly, Elstir is a fictive artist. His works cannot be viewed by us save the metonymic associations in which they are placed. Marcel’s metaphorical comparison of Elstir’s style with ‘real painters’ allows us to imagine Elstir’s paintings. Here, repetition of Whistler’s *Harmonies in Blue and Silver* in the Balbec seascapes of Elstir is a recurrence that is but original in presenting Elstir as an artist in the *Recherche* (III: 25).

There are at least two other phenomena that Proust seek to embody by repeating real works of art as metonymic metaphors to pitch the fictive artworks in the *Recherche*. Firstly, in invoking artworks, Proust does not expand on what is ‘contained’ in the work but allays the present moment or action of the narrative with an aspect of the imported work. The work’s totality is not foregrounded in the ‘wholeness’ of what it is made of, but suspends in

the contingency of the moment where it enters into the fold of the *Recherche*. This elemental singularity of the work is no doubt formed by Marcel's perception of the work, but it is not 'given' in the work; it is 'exposed' in the narrative by the invocation. The invocation 'enriches' the work invoked and Proust's novel is, in this sense, not a defiance but an unprecedented 'enrichment' of tradition, just as it 'enriches' things and events by displacing them from the shackles that hold them prisoners in a false garb of factuality.

Repetition of artworks in the novel is another embodiment of the ontology of 'differentiated continuity'. Modernists have often been either extolled or derided for coming up with expressions entirely novel in their incomparability to all that preceded before. This is a gross misunderstanding, and is a result of a certain residue of Romantic imagination in perceiving Modernist works. We have established already the fact that unlike the Romantic spirit of escape or redemption, Modernist works seeks to ground the work in reality; the only problem being that this reality is not given, but evolves as an understanding together with the work. Elstir's admiration for Chardin and Perronneau is not unusual; their works appear to be anticipatory fragments of works of his own (III:484). An artist must evolve, and this evolution is part of art history. This history, unlike history understood generally, is not based on progress of events along time. Art, as Gadamer mentioned in *Truth and Method*, is always contemporary, for it is formed at the moment in which it is engaged with; and this temporal syncretism in the words of Amiya Deb, makes art history appear close to 'differentiated continuity'. It is still the human being and the world that has featured in arts of all times, expressed in unforeseeable difference.

Thus, this cluster of 'influences' allow Proust to indulge in a bit of art history criticism in the *Recherche* by serving as an illustration of a theory; although a theory only in name, for it is spelt out in the generic framework of a novel. Ironically, that makes the standpoint even firmer since 'pure theory', as in a book of non-fiction, would invariable have

fallen prey to that same epistemological lure, which might have brought the considerations closer to a history of progress and thereby deviated more from what is actually at play. Elstir admires Chardin and Ingres, models himself as Manet, and his paintings appear like those of Whistler (III: 577, 605). Oriane, like Mme de Cambremer and Robert, fails to discern the presence of these masters in Elstir's work. Moreover, she views art like technology; a new innovation outdating the previous one. She derides Manet's Olympia saying "It just looks like an Ingres now!" (III: 605). Since her, and others too fall in this group, attitude towards artworks is merely a functional one that involves little understanding of the phenomena they host, she views works like fashion, one replacing the next in a steady line. And yet art barely 'progresses' in such a way; "And I was led to wonder whether there was any truth in the distinction which we are always making between art, which is no more advanced than in Homer's day, and science with its continuous progress" (377).

Repetition thus serves to enrich the *Recherche* in enriching past works by repeating them 'newly', and also hint at the contemporaneity of the past in the present; stasis in kinesis, the eternal in the moving. Interestingly, the variegated responses that repetitions are wont to evince could be tersely discussed in the invocation of Balzac. Marcel tells Saint-Loup that he is interested in Oriane from 'Balzacian point of view' (III: 108); just as Bloch confides to Marcel that he wishes to know of Robert's wealth from a 'Balzacian point of view' (248). What is this point of view that is repeated here? Is it the same thing that is repeated in Marcel and Bloch's words, or is Balzac explicated originally in the differences? Rastignac in *Père Goriot* seeks to penetrate into the aristocracy. Marcel seeks to do the same, but with a 'different' intention; he does not want to establish himself there as much as he wishes to extract a charm of antiquity from the royal set. Bloch, on the other hand, has the intention of establishing himself on the literary scene through the influence of the aristocrats, gain a membership at the Jockey Club, or if not anything else, shed his Jewish roots in the wake of a

budding French Nationalism. Another example of repetitions generating differences could be observed at the scene where Marcel and his mother are returning from Venice and they get to know the news of Jupien's niece marrying young Cambremer, a match that was never imagined by either one of them. Marcel's mother compares this with the last chapters of George Sand's novel; whose sentimentality and moral uprightness has been inherited by her from her mother. Marcel regards the marriage differently, as a wage of vice, like a marriage from the end of a Balzac novel (V: 757).

Artworks persists in time in our acts of understanding our own lives through the perspectives they offer us. And since these relationships individualize us in difference, repetition never quite accords with generality. Artforms appear at first glance outrageously different from what preceded- Impressionism, Cubism, Futurism, the pursuit of dissonance- because we regard everything past as "a whole forgetting that a long process of assimilation has converted it into a substance that is varied of course but taken as a whole, homogenous" (II: 121). Mme de Cambremer, whose 'fetish for modern works' we already touched upon previously, thinks Debussy to be supremely superior to Wagner. Just as the steam engine is superior in power to the horse carriage, such an outlook seen art in exactly the same terms as other objects in day-to-day life, culminating into a misconception of modernity.

She maintained not merely that music progressed, but it progressed along a single, straight line, and that Debussy was in a sense a super-Wagner, slightly more advanced again than Wagner. She did not realize that if Debussy was not as independent of Wagner... he nevertheless sought, when people were beginning to feel surfeited with works that were too complete, in which everything was expressed, to satisfy an opposite need. (IV: 247)

Thus, when Marcel sits at the pianola and plays some fragments from Vinteuil's sonata, the music of Wagner makes itself felt in the event. Although "the fancy expressed [is] wholly foreign to Wagner", yet he murmurs *Tristian* while playing, like discovering the trace of an old family friend. Repetition does not repeat the artwork as we know it, but reveals an unrecognized totality about it through an aspect generated by the *Recherche*. The sound of the German aircrafts during the war recalls to Marcel Wagner's *Valkyrie* (VI:108).

'Obviously' there is no 'similarity' between the two; it is the repetition that 'creates' the difference in which both come in relation, and this relation, like everything about the *Recherche* and art at large, is or could be anything but 'obvious. And tradition, in such a process, reveals itself in the act of reaching out towards it. Tradition cannot be inherited, but has to be acquired with great labor, said Eliot (48). Proustian repetition of artworks in the *Recherche* enriches the tradition and itself in the gesture with which it reaches out to extract and reveal the faces of past works that could not have seen the light of day had not they been co-related with the trials and tribulations of Marcel's life.

As discussed in the first chapter, the realm of art is the realm of sensible ideas. These ideas could be conceptually grasped but only dramatized in repetitions. There is no conceptual centrality hidden within these phenomena; they have no immanence. The nothing at the core of the thing generates difference. Repetition allows imagination in sensations, says Marcel, "made it possible for my being to secure, to isolate, to immobilize... a fragment of time in the pure state" (VI: 224). The salon of Mme Verdurin is 'repeated' at three different locales during the course of the *Recherche*, at Rue Montalivet, at La Raspeliere and finally at Quai Conti. Each of these settings form a different 'geological stratum' of the work, and yet these differences point to an absent something which couldn't have appeared if these proliferations did not take place. Proust often calls the pure presence of this absent nothing as the 'velvet patina of time', "the prolongation, the aspect which has detached itself from the

outer world to take refuge in our soul, to which it gives as it gives as it were a surplus value, in which it is absorbed into its habitual substance, transforming itself' (V: 321).

As the title of Mauro Carbone's book on Proust suggests, repetitions are 'unprecedented deformations'; they don't deform a substance that is there already, but deformation allows us to perceive that which is deformed in the very event of deformation. All repetitions we have discussed so far aim to unfold that which cannot be named but is sheltered by the scatteredness of fragments that form its absence. "Dimensions open up simultaneously with our encounter with its samples" (20). The velvet patina of time "should not be conceived as an abstract substitute for what is perceived, as though it were its imprints, and as such, separable and therefore graspable... should be understood in terms of an absence" (21).

Could this serve as a cue to enter into the discussion concerning the totality and unity of the *Recherche*? These do not act as concepts in the *Recherche*, whose development is the work. But just like our finest ideas "come back to us although we have never heard them", totality and unity appear as traces, in the ruins that remain, in the 'errors' and 'incompleteness' that pervade the work. Our next section shall attempt to look at the style of 'imperfection' that gives the *Recherche* its 'own sense' of being a work, despite all botches that contest such a unification.

(E) THE ART OF IMPERFECTION

In a letter addressed to Jacques Riviere dated February, 1914, Proust wrote, "I did not want to analyze this evolution of a belief system abstractly, but rather to recreate it, to bring it to life. I am therefore obliged to depict errors, without feeling compelled to say that I consider them to be errors; too bad for me if the reader believes I take them for the truth" (qtd in Landy 16). The 'deployment' of truth in the *Recherche* is through dramatization. As we have seen so far, these truths are 'aesthetic ideas', and hence cannot be 'disseminated' in a logocentric, abstract fashion. Just as Marcel 'learns' only after going through that which we read as the plot of the novel, does truth appear to him. Such an appearance is not a positive one, based on conceptuality. Marcel cannot point his finger at the truth he comes to realize; rather, it is received as an absence which is brought to being by the presence of phenomena.

If direct experiences do not correspond to truth in the schema of the *Recherche*, they are, in the usual coinage, errors. Here, error, like metaphor, does not pertain to any particular mistakes. If reality differs from what is directly experienced, if events require time to develop from actual incidents, then the life hosted by habit is error incarnate: "This perpetual error, which is precisely life" (V: 656). It is not as if the substitution of 'mental optics' by 'optics of time' is a foolproof corrective. What I understand of events that took place five years back are also conditioned by the present situation, and this contingency can be the source of another error which would be revealed five years hence, and so on. "There are optical errors in time as there as in space" (680). The ubiquity and inexhaustibility of error in the *Recherche* derives from the infinitude of meaning-generation by displacement; or looked

from the other end, the generation of error in time is indispensable for the forward movement of the plot.

Error is thus to be seen not only as a thematic element in Marcel's life, but the mistakes and disillusionments of Marcel are novelizations of a certain mode of philosophy, a point we shall return to in the next chapter. Proust himself admits within the *Recherche* of having committed 'errors'. These errors not only pertain to those of the character but of the narrator as well. Dead characters like Cottard and Bergotte return in their flesh at parties and dinner tables later in the plot. He married Gilberte to the Duke de Guermantes in the fifth volume, and in the sixth she is said to be married to Robert. There are several 'mistranslations' from dramatic pieces throughout the work. And most importantly, a point already touched upon, is not the repetition of same ideas over and over again a sign of 'erroneous' craft on the part of the novelist?

The standard values of things in reality are transformed in the realm of art. Morality, good, evil, error, perfection attain new significations in the novel. Indeed, Proust is in error if all these 'problems' are considered from a point of view different from the one where the world of the *Recherche* appears. But once novelized, these errors, along with all the 'horrible' details of sadomasochism, pessimism and cruelty, become 'necessary'. "Many errors, it is true, there are, as the reader will have seen", admits the narrator (VI:447). But what sort of a novelist admits errors in his work? The one, who has 'committed' them knowingly perhaps?

A novel that appears to be perfectly shaped in giving us a view of reality is far from being real, for our being in the world is full of imperfections. To be truly 'realistic' would therefore involve not just a depiction of errors like say Balzac, but to 'make' this very depiction 'erroneous'. Instead of a flourish where the fallen world appears in the well-crafted product of genius, the squalor in the Modernist work at once creates a 'new' understanding of

‘beauty’, as well as inter-act on the primness of style, making it allay with the imperfection of the subjects portrayed. And it is with such a new orientation towards writing, that the novel is given a new foundation, a foundation that is anti-foundational in nature. The Modernist work looks at that life which is there but invisible, and thus forays into those zones of experiences to which we ‘generally’ accord no value, for they remain ‘unknown’ to us. We consider the past to be dead and the present rich in organicity, and is this not an attitude that is embodied by Realist as well as Romantic art, where reflection of the past as well as recollection of past feelings only go on to cement the importance of the present. The Proustian art of incompleteness, among other aspects, renders experiences as incomplete for they only become by revisiting, and yet become nothing final. Such a method “subverts the aesthetic of art as a lifeless if instructive museum where we enter, in the “pauses” of experiences, to replenish ourselves with the dead significance of safely immutable trophies of life” (Bersani, “Incompletion” 121).

Many great novels have to some extent enacted this double movement of rejection of style and adoption of a new style, the latter being no more than style-lessness when compared in the perspective of the former. But the singular examples of Cervantes and Flaubert becomes an epochal phenomenon in Proust, Joyce, Musil, Svevo and Mann leading to a positing of dismay stemming from the astonishment of art not fulfilling what it had done till then, which also contains the clue to the grounding of art to life, which is unimaginable without scruples. Shattuck asks this question that is the springboard for this Modernistic ‘return’ to life; “Why present us with so magnificent a construction of the erroneous universe from which the true time dimension is missing? The answer delves toward the very foundation of the novel as a form of art, the novel, which is always to some degree- though usually less massively than *À la Recherche*- a tissue of errors” (97).

Proust overturns the binaries like good-evil, memory-forgetting and error-truth not merely as an exercise of dismissing whatever is accepted conventionally, but to ‘re-create’ things in a new valuation; and this is the novelization of Marcel’s realization that he has to recreate that which is given in order to return to life, this recreation being the construction of art. For example, forgetting is essential to make memory perceptual; “forgetting is not merely an absence and a lack but, as Nietzsche in particular pointed out, a condition of the life of mind. Only by forgetting does the mind have the possibility of total renewal, the capacity to see everything with fresh eyes, so that what is long familiar fuses with the new into a many leveled” (Gadamer, “Truth and Method” 14). Likewise, we have observed in our discussion of *chronolibido* that finitude of desire makes us care for the transience that life is. Errors, for Marcel, is the complementary condition for truth, and not an antithesis; just as for Proust, they do not point to this artistic inferiority but to a new vision which can but be formed by harnessing imperfection as a device to refract a certain way of being in the world. Truth is not a telos, but the force of movement-towards; becoming without goal. Leo Bersani touches on this aspect in his brilliant essay “Proust and the Art of Incompletion”; “Any statement felt or recognized as a lie evokes the possibly truthful statements to which it could be compared. But the lover cannot fix on any one house or action or person as the reality behind the lie, the lie itself can never be eliminated from the attempt to know the truth” (127).

The ‘incomplete’ body of the *Recherche*, as well as the novel of Musil as we shall see, is not merely a structural incompleteness that prompts one to categorize a literary work as ‘unfinished’. Since the very temperament which the novel embodies is in congruence with a relentless onward march from one point to the other, that shows the emptiness of the times left behind in relation to our faith that they were meaningful, incompleteness is an inherent feature of the literary work. “How many great cathedrals remain unfinished!” (VI: 431). The comparison of the novel with a cathedral is immediately followed with that of a dress;

“construct my book simply like a dress” (432). The metaphor that could encapsulate the work is in itself non-definitive, evinced in the dissatisfaction to sticking to one or the other. The cathedral or the dress is not a model for the work; the work is similar to the ‘work’ that it takes to construct a cathedral or a dress, an activity that does not proceed from a beginning to an end, but like a host of simultaneous and divergent vectors, represents the activity of becoming. Incompletion is not a negative denotation here; in its intransigence against stability, incompletion becomes essential to live and to write. In his chapter on Style, Deleuze associates the art of incompletion as a right of the artist to bring to light the worldview of this work; “When Proust compares his work to a cathedral or to a gown, it is not to identify himself with a Logos of splendid totality, but on the contrary, to emphasize his right to incompletion, to seams and patches. Time is not a whole, for the simple reason that it is itself the instance that prevents the whole” (“Proust” 161).

Incompletion is the product of repetitions that, as Bersani mentions in *The Culture of Redemption* as already discussed, keep on testing the apparent incontestability of reality through the continually changing perspectives made available to us by time and our position in relation to other people and things. The Modernist distrust with epistemology resonates with phenomenology’s turn away from knowledge in favor of how the problem of knowledge occurs as phenomenon. Truth, in Modernist art as in the ‘doctrines’ of a ‘non-systematic’ form of philosophy as Phenomenology, is not a correspondence but an event. “If, like other processes in life, it [art] can never be thought of as completed, it no longer stands as a kind of epistemological monument in relation to the rest of our experience” (Bersani, “Incompletion” 120).

If seeking art as an escape from reality amounts to misreading of the factual realm of appearances and opinions as the true life, the movement away from the given is an infinite one where ‘the true life’ no longer now remains as an object to be possessed, but giving

oneself over to the ‘continuous death’ of time where no absolutism can have any valency whatsoever. When Proust says that the true life is the life of literature, he is not ‘equating’ truth with art, as the Romantics did. Rather, it is the radical transformation of the idea of truth and therewith being, that is in play here. The difference of the Other in how it contests the preservation of the identity of the Same or self, both at the level of Marcel and the level of the narrative that presents Marcel’s vocation. The relentless dissipation into otherness is not to be regarded as an alienation from the self, it could be perceived as a liberation from the constrictive shackles of a straitjacketed self towards endless possibilities of being in the world. Substitution of the self with becoming-other is, as Gerald Bruns says, a phenomenon of “anarchic liberation” (5). That which is unfinished is still in motion; alive, and this is the ontology lurking in the ‘unfinished’ works of the Modernists, be it the *Recherche* or *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*. Analogous to the definition of poetry by Valéry as the dance that travels nowhere (224), “the inconclusiveness of ‘knowledge’ allows for the theoretically limitless use of the world as a testing-ground for fictions” (Bersani, “Incompletion” 138).

Does such an approach leave any possibility for concepts like totality and unity of the artwork to subsist? Perhaps yes, but then this unity shall have to be understood in the form of an ‘aesthetic idea’ like our discussions of Danto and Carbone made clear. Not conceptual, unity perhaps could be discerned as a trace in the very absence of it amidst the shapes and figures that feature in the work. The “quality of being” of such a work is,

always incomplete, which is characteristic of all the great works of the 19th century, that century whose greatest writers somehow botched their books, but watching themselves work as though they were at once workman and judge, derived from this self-contemplation a new form of beauty, exterior and superior to the work itself, imposing on it a retroactive unity, a grandeur which it did not possess. (V: 176)

Marcel's theorizations are always a little displaced from the 'truth' of the novel he is in, in how the latter events itself [*sich ereignen*]. The unity is retroactive because it becomes active in retrospect; it is not foreseen; the artist does not begin with this unity in mind. Thus, the unity is not 'imposed' as much by the artist, as it rather 'evolves'. Unity of the *Recherche* appears to us, just as it perhaps had occurred for Proust, not experimentally, but like an intelligence that reveals its face 'afterwards'. The 'fundamental chord' of our changing desires, mentioned before, is discovered only after the variations are played out. Even if life's activities are dispersed in different works, looking back one might be able to discern a pattern, which is all the truer than a preconceived unity because it is not mediated by will or intelligence, and is more thing-like. "The great men of letters have never created more than a single work...[that] refracts through various media an identical beauty" (428). This unity or singularity appears only from a created configuration, and does not precede the design.

Poulet correctly remarks that "unity and multiplicity is achieved not by simplification, but multiplication of aspects" ("Proustian Space" 80). Unity of a work, as understood in relation to novels antecedent to the *Recherche*, was that common thread which combined all the different elements of the plot. However, Proust is skeptical about the presence of any such binding agent. Even Bergsonian duration [*la durée*] that claims that all the time that is elapsed is stored continuously somewhere in a virtual plane normally unavailable to our senses, is opposed by Proustian time, the reason for which would pertain to the strangeness of the space of literature as we shall see shortly in the next section (115).

The problem therefore is one of communication. If life, and the work, involves a succession of worldviews that do not form a continuous progression other than the continuous change that alters them, how do we conceive a homogenous self or artistic unity which could shelter disjunction under a common roof? It is the Modernist disenchantment with epistemology as the supreme religion of mankind, that again resurfaces in the Modernist

work's disavowal for any illusion that masquerades as a unifier. The self is dismissed; and with that the subsumption of the Other in a self. Communication, if at all to occur, must take place by maintaining the differences that constitutes the human universe. Like other conventional values, communication is displaced from fusion towards multiplicity. In his essay "The Other in Proust", Levinas associates the erstwhile notion of communication as a deterrent in understanding the Proustian unity, for each of them represents a different outlook towards alterity and respecting alterity;

But if communication bears the mark of failure or inauthenticity [in a Modernist work like the *Recherche*] in this way, it is because it is sought as a fusion. One begins with the idea that duality must be transformed into unity, and that social relations must culminate in communion. This is the last vestige of a conception that identifies being with knowledge, that is, with the event through which the multiplicity of reality ends up referring to a single being and where, through a miracle of clarity, everything that encounters me exists as coming from me. It is the last vestige of idealism. (164)

Poulet's comparison with Piranesi's dungeons full of 'unrelated' objects makes us better 'visualize' Proust's method of eliminating duration by a juxtaposition of isolated, contiguous images ("Proustian Space" 99). This is the secret of the totality of the *Recherche*; and to understand it, we must first be prepared to let go of the baggage of what we understand by this concept, for its presence is not based on conceptuality here, but dramatization. The work is 'united' and 'total' in not fusing one thing in another, and yet blending [*fondue*] all superficialities in the profound space that is opened up by the narrative. Every portion of the *Recherche* 'belongs' to it, for it maintains its own peculiarity in giving itself over to the work's fabric. In the first chapter we realized that the totality of the world is neither conceptual not an accumulative one based on aggregation. The world appears as totality

because the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of appearance are indistinguishable from one another; total because cannot be abstracted. It is exactly such a phenomenological approach towards worldliness that gets embodied in Proust where style does not remain an operation on everything, but becomes everything; the *Recherche* fulfills in a sense Flaubert’s wish for a ‘novel about nothing’ because nothing could be extracted from the work without forsaking the style in which it appears as vision. Commenting on the merology of the *Recherche*, Deleuze aptly remarks that the different parts do not constitute an organic whole; “each part refers to different whole, to no whole at all, or to no other whole than that of style” (“Proust” 115).

Coming towards the end of our discourse of style in the *Recherche*, we are confronted with the final question; is the work then insubstantial? Does not such an attitude towards truth also betray a certain form of indifference? Or is it in fact something else? We have continuously witnessed the re-formulation of notions in the narrative space of Proust, but what is this space all about? Is this space at all spatial? If truth is not the truth of correspondence but another way of truth’s happening as an event of which the former is a part, does the narrative space of the *Recherche* also pertain to something more fundamental which our erstwhile experiences of fiction has not been able to bring to light? These are the concerns with which we shall devote the next and final section of our chapter on Proustian style.

(F) FROM SYMBOLIST NOTHINGNESS TOWARDS NARRATIVE SPACE

The tussle between generalizing the particular and particularizing the general is a significant one in Proust, and points to his ambivalent relationship with the aesthetic of

Literary Symbolism. The Symbolist “aspiration to generality, which is at par with immateriality” is evinced on numerous occasions when Marcel subsumes the particularity of people and place to group them in the general ideas of distinct locales and times, a point we discussed in detail in the previous chapter (Descombes 18). In *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, he expresses the need to realize the universal or eternal, but only in individuals. His ideas, as we have seen, are aesthetic ideas and exists only in materiality. This raises the risk of undermining materiality or the very phenomenal condition of these ideas if too much focus is emphasized on abstracting the latter from the former. Proust knows the risk that such abstraction would make the work lack life and depth, and it would end up being lifeless allegories. The novel is on the side of the commonplace, the contingent, the ephemeral. Descombes mentions Balzac’s *Search for the Absolute* and Flaubert’s *Sentimental Education* as benchmarks of such works. These titles could be applicable for ‘any’ work, ‘regardless’ of their content, for what the titles mean is present in every work, obviously differently in each. The Symbolist aspiration for truth can thus no longer be a search for the absolute, but a search for the absolute in the Balzacian sense (20).

If the particular serves only as a peculiar means to extract something which could in its own right be relevant for all works, such an attitude is bound to undermine the content in its predilection for formal abstraction. Proust often highlights at this ignorance through the figure of Marcel, whose Romantic sensibility and Symbolist abstraction often (mis)lead him in his perception of art. Although Marcel overcomes his Romanticism gradually as was discussed in the previous chapter, a certain residue for abstraction continues to linger in him.

Just as a geometer, stripping things of their sensible qualities, sees only the linear substratum beneath them, so the stories that people told escaped me, for what interested me was not what they were trying to say but the manner in which

they said it and the way in which this manner revealed their character or their foibles. (VI: 34)

The consequence of disregarding the concreteness of human existence for the sake of exposing something beyond the contingent through contiguity is a gradual development of de-humanization. Flaubert could be accused of initiating this trend in the art of the novel in his fascination for the novel about nothing. His architecture is so ‘proper’, that it verges on the point of resembling a thing of nature, like a waterfall or a landscape; the work stands on its own as a thing. Style indeed becomes everything so that “between the perfect and perfectly self-contained sentences and paragraphs, there is... nothing but the creative void in which the novelist’s work (his novel and his struggle) has simply ceased to exist” (Bersani, “Incompletion” 119-120).

It would however be unwise to associate dehumanization with Proust’s novel for reasons we have already discussed before in relation to Gasset’s usage of this term. Although he shares Flaubert’s disappointment with life, the attitude is not of relinquishing in the usual sense. Although Bersani is a bit too harsh in the following passage in evaluating Flaubert’s relationship with life having ‘ruined’ his relationship to art, this is nevertheless an important cue for distinguishing him from the Proustian attitude towards life and art. While Flaubert continuously makes the language of this novel approach a stratum which maintains a distance from the things it describes, Proust’s grounding of language is from clichés towards a ‘earthlier’ life.

He [Flaubert] is indifferent to the commitments which a use of language creates, and because he thus isolates language from the activities it inspires and accompanies, words naturally appear to have a frighteningly impersonal life of their own. In one sense, Flaubert’s disgust with life could be explained by his

never having reached life in his epistemological investigations. And his choice of art as an alternative to life is, as the progress of his fiction from *Madame Bovary* to *Bouvard et Pecuchét* suggests, just as much a rejection of art as much of life. His activity in both is paralyzed by his reluctance to examine the consequence of different uses of language and his obsession with its supposed essence. (122)

“I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defense the only arms I allow myself to use -- silence, exile, and cunning”, said Joyce’s narrator Stephen in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (208). It is Proust’s cunning use of the first-person narrative that allows him to play out the ambivalence between narrator and character. Marcel the character is very much taken up the spirit of Flaubert when he harbors such an attitude as, “I had been able to assimilate a single phrase or look although as individual human beings I had no recollection of them; a book is a huge cemetery in which on the majority of the tombs the names are effaced and can no longer be read” (VI: 264). Like Flaubert, particularity is given over to impressions; the writer wishes to uncover speech as impersonal, the (in)famous *écriture degree zero*. However, Proust does not write analogously to what Marcel thinks of writing. In the *Recherche*, personalities are indeed effaced in favor of impression, but this impression is far from being impersonal. Every character other than Marcel serves as a center for a heteroglossic zone which maintain its peculiarity. These different speech forms are juxtaposed against one another, without blending to a uniformity which one might observe in *Madame Bovary*. Each character is depersonalized and made into a symbol; but they do not ‘combine’ to culminate into making the *Recherche* as a unified symbol.

Foucault and Blanchot represent a Symbolist reception in understanding Modernist art as an expression about nothing. For them, writing is only about itself, and does not point to

anything beyond language. Such a position however seems problematic from the point of view of intentionality posited by Brentano which somehow has lingered all along phenomenological thought right from Husserl to Heidegger, and beyond in the attitude of Ricœur and Gadamer towards language and the world. On the opposite end, Foucault 'claims' a 'radical intransitivity' for writing where "manifestation of a language that has no other law than that of affirming- in opposition to all other forms of discourse- its own precipitous existence; and so, there is nothing for it to do but to curve back in a perpetual return upon itself, as if its discourse could have no other content than the expression of its own form" ("Order of Things" 327).

Is there not a hint of solipsism acting behind such a thought? The artwork indeed points, but it points at itself, forming a circularity that is incapable of letting the world open. Even in Blanchot, we find a resonance of this self-absorption of art when he says, "art owes its presence to itself alone, since its presence does not point to the presence of anything else. Art is self-position" (qtd in Descombes 92). Given the problem that the notion of self posits for any kind of becoming, Blanchot and Foucault seems to be talking about the kind of art which Marcel would like to write. Such a work is always meant to be a failure, and is it not that precise risk that Proust's novel seems to underwrite in making Marcel incapable of producing any concrete writing till the very end? At best, Marcel comes close to a strong resolution to write; but resolutions realize nothing. Art is realized by work; and work involves the artist becoming his work, a transition that is initiated and sustained by a continuous unbecoming of the self.

Although Blanchot, and much before him Mallarmé had conceded that this perfect work about nothing is not-realizable in practice, they both maintain that it is the task of all works to aspire to this intransitivity. "To write without 'writing', to bring literature to the point of absence where it disappears, where we no longer have to dread its secrets, which are

lies, that is the ‘degree zero of writing’, the neutrality that every writer seeks, deliberately or without realizing it, and which leads some of them to silence” (“Book” 207). Our discussion of Symbolist Romanticism and its fascination with silence and nothingness as a historical phenomenon in the next chapter would make this above extrapolation of a historically particular aesthetic to something essential in all artworks seem all the more preposterous. Descombes very aptly castigates Blanchot and Foucault to be the face of a new Romanticism, where the negation of history and life has reached such an apotheosis that commits the ‘eidetic reduction’ of all works as ‘intransitive writing’ (88). Reducing literature to philosophy is a process which begins from Schiller’s time, as we shall shortly discuss; Blanchot radicalizes this notion by eliminating all form-giving intentions or aesthesis from the work to make it appear as a trans-linguistic, trans-aesthetic phenomenon.

Immediately after generalizing the pleasure in seeing the milk girl during the train ride to Balbec as an inspiration from happiness, Marcel realizes, or Proust makes him realize, the fatality of such abstractions; “abstract images and lifeless and insipid because they lack precisely that element of novelty, different from anything that we have known, that element which is peculiar to happiness and beauty” (II: 269). Happiness, life, writing all occur in life. To abstract them from the very grounds where they appear is to deny them; this is exactly the point Bersani was trying to make regarding Flaubert ending up denying art by denying life. To create a degree zero of writing would necessitate a degree zero rhetoric. Since life is always form-ed, based on Gestalt, art too must be so, given that it springs from human existence. “What, then, is this other language, unmarked from the rhetorical point of view? One must first admit that it cannot be found” (Ricoeur 161).

This pure language can be found only in materiality of language. Just as writing in the ‘modern’ conception seeks to make sense beyond signification, music seeks to achieve the sonorous “as its own dilation or its own amplification and its own putting into resonance”

(Acquisto 34). According to Karl Köstlin, the absolute music of Beethoven's String Quartets "lead us out of the din of life and into the still, shadowy realm of the ideal" (132). Acquisto compares the *Recherche* as a literary form of the same phenomenon (134). However, we must keep in mind that this aspiration for nothingness or pureness is however realizable only in the 'impurity' of local accents. Only then would this nothingness be able to be regarded as an emptiness within a thing, or the clearing in a event [*Lichtung*], and not confused with some transcendental non-being [*Nichtsein*]. Nothing is no more an essence, but a condition inhabiting all things in how they are complications without immanence.

Descombes' reading of Mallarmé places him in a different position from that of Blanchot and Foucault. Although a Symbolist, he had constantly preoccupied himself with the linguistic grounding of expression rather than beginning with intransitivity as a goal. Intransitivity in writing, like absolute music in Beethoven, could be achieved for real, only by beginning with a concern with the material. Mallarmé's understanding of essence is that of a druggist, and not the metaphysical kind; it exists as material. Speaking of Manet's *Bal masque à l'Opéra*, he observes that there is "nothing like an urge to escape the canvas- but on the contrary, a noble attempt to contain within it" (104). Self-reflexivity here does not seek to negate the particular form to ascend towards a beyond-form essence. Mallarmé once told Degas that a sonnet is written with words, not ideas. If that is so, intransitivity could only be sought as an effect but certainly not as a goal for art.

Proust often used to add his 'paperies' to revise his galley proofs, and called these bits of papers as 'ideas'. Ideas here are language-formations, steeped in materiality. They are neither concepts nor intellectual non-material entities, but exist in the very concreteness of form. Likewise, Marcel's understanding of the violinist's sounds as not a physical peculiarity but a superiority of soul and Berma's arms as lines of verse themselves show embodiment as the very and only possibility of signifying beyond the facticity of matter. Embodiment is "not

an opaque screen but a purified, spiritualized garment...envelopes instead of concealing showed up in greater splendor the soul that has assimilated them” (III: 47-48). Language indeed here does not point to something already outside in the world, but creates meaning in the event of its expression. However, this does not amount to intransitivity. Language still speaks ‘of’ something, and it creates the something in speaking, rather than pointing towards pre-existent entities.

We shall sum up our discussion on Symbolist Nothingness by re-visiting Proustian temporality. For Bergson, duration is pure and continuous, and hence can grow indefinitely where it is stored virtually like a snow ball accumulating snow. But would that not imply a superimposition of time over itself? It is crucial to underline the metaphor of juxtaposition and transversality that Poulet and Deleuze use in the context of Proustian time. Time is abstract, and cannot be represented. Abstract time has no meaning for us, because meaning, as Deleuze says is the sense the event brings with itself. Thus, experience of time is always in its embodied state. We shall see what the implications of time’s embodiment are for narrative space shortly. But for the moment, we shall take a moment to note the fallacy in Bergson’s notion of pure accumulation if embodiments of time as disjunctive, as it should be, given that us or our self as that embodiment is undergoing ‘continuous death’ by dint of temporal evanescence. Bergson’s metaphor of time as a pure melody is criticized by Hägglund from this vantage. Pureness of a melody would demand that this melody is bereft of changes; ironically a melody can be purely continuous only in the absence of sound. Bergson’s notion therefore strongly resembles that of Blanchot and Foucault mentioned before in its faith in the degree zero of intransitivity and beyond-formal existence. “A melody without sounds would not be a melody in all, however, just as a time that were absolutely continuous would not be temporal at all” (37). Marcel’s discovery of being as embodied time leads to a parody of Bergson’s notion of stable preservation of duration in the disconcerting metaphor of stilts; in

old age, the accumulation of time brings us to such a height as people walking with stilts, and a slight displacement is enough to topple all of it (40).

Given that literature is marked by the absence of any tangible body, where else but in language could time seek to be embodied? In the reality we inhabit, time inheres in the geographical spaces we inhabit; and in our thoughts and imaginations which also occur not independently of the body we occupy in this space. The embodiment of time through writing in language has no such space to occupy; it is fated to what Blanchot calls the 'eternal solitude'. The space of literature does not exist; it becomes as long as the narrative unfolds. And where does this 'unfolding' take place? On the successive pages of a book? In our minds? Both these 'exist' prior to the unfolding. If the literary space can only become by unfolding, it is but 'beyond', the yonder, that keeps on appearing as we read. Realist narratives, especially those that are 'motivated' ostensibly with socio-political concerns, often seek to 'place' the work in a cultural space, or create this space in view of creating a new space within/alternative to existing culture. On the other extreme, 'psychological' or 'sentimental' fiction claims to take place in the psyche or feelings. Modernist works like the *Recherche*, in their quest towards a 'material purity'- which means not a pure material but material or form-ed nature of purity- are concerned to render the movement of language pressing outward in expression to create an original space that is always 'outside'. This 'outside' is not predicated by an inside, it is very movement of creation, of 'making appear'. As Blanchot puts it,

Pure time, without events, moving vacancy, agitated distance, interior space in the process of becoming, where the ecstasies of time spread out in fascinating simultaneity- what is all that then? It is the very time of narrative, the time that is not outside time [*hors*], but that is experienced as actually outside [*dehors*] in

space, that imaginary space where art finds and arranges its resources...transformation of time into an imaginary space. ("Book" 13-14)

In other words, fiction could be understood as a re-creation of time through a new construction. If for Marcel, art should be the re-creation of life as it is given, and if life subsists in time, it follows syllogistically that the novel involves a re-fashioning of our understanding of time. This understanding, as discussed, must be embodied and not abstract. There are two corollaries to be drawn from the above two conditions. Given that our being in time is intermittent- Proust had initially planned 'Intermittencies of the Heart' to be the title of his novel, when he eventually reserved as the name for one of the sections-, marked by the discontinuity effected by the 'continuous death' we are part of, the novel as a dress or a gown is bound to a 'patchwork', an assemblage of disparate, heterogenous parts (Beistegui 130). In Italian as in Latin from which it derives its corpus, text [*testo*] and fabric [*tessuto*] relate to one another etymologically. If the *Recherche* is to be understood as a weaving, it is but an unstitched, unsewn weft [*déconsu*].

The re-creation of our being in time by ex-pressing it in the 'outside' creates the narrative space. However, this space becomes only as it can unfold in the time of reading. Thus, narrative space is a temporal space. It becomes through the spatialization (novel-ization) of time (of habit) and the temporalization (unfolding) of space (narrative space). The narrative appears as a spatial trace of an enacted movement of being, whose spatiality is itself temporal (Hägglund 18-19). However, one must be careful to note, that the temporal nature of narrative space does not refer to time as we know it outside the experience of the literary work, but that this temporality is the very 'original' experience that the event of the novel's becoming entails.

We have now arrived at that point where the ontological import of metonymy could be understood. Metonymy is that which forces the vertical transcendence of metaphor to horizontal deployment. Through contiguity, metonymy ‘enlarges’ the narrative space, making expression always seek a beyond and move on in this inertia. ‘Self-enlargement’ of the narrator has to be recognized here as creation of being through speech, and this creation no longer adds or can add to what is known as the self, since the narrative space is the incommensurable other, an ‘outside’ that cannot be mitigated but only given birth to. “The significance of each passage is limited by the amount of novelistic space which the narrator will have the time to fill in the process of self-enlargement which is his literary vocation” (Bersani, “Incompletion” 142).

What claim does Proust have on the space opened up the *Recherche*? Perhaps it is only by stopping being the biographical Marcel Proust, does this space at all had the possibility of opening up in the first place. If the existence of a person continues to dwell in the details with which we map him in the configurations of time and space already available to us through the knowledge systems such as history, sociology, psychology and so on, the writer can never evolve. One ‘is’ never a writer, one ‘becomes’ so in writing. The projection of one’s self to a space that is ‘outside’ and original is the condition of being born ‘again’; but this repetition is based on the difference and not the identity of replicating a new clone of one’s self. The writer creates the space only by himself not being in it; else this space would be mappable in the matrices of spaces available. Creating ‘space’ and ‘time’ as distinct senses require the writer to descend into an exile; for Proust, it was those long years spent alone in a cork-lined room, working on the *Recherche*. Proust, obviously is a hyperbolic demonstration of such an exile; but every artist, especially those for whom the Modernist ethos of writing’s material purity has a role to play above all values that exist prior to the novel, inhabits such a condition of not being-there in the work. “The space of literature and the world that it reveals

grows out of this uncanniness, this exile, this displacement that'll prove to be the very meaning of the everyday world... taken out of her surroundings [*se dépayser*]" (Beistegui 93-94).

An offspring comes to 'belong' to the mother only when it is divorced from her body. As long as it is sheltered in her womb, its face 'exists' only as a possibility for the future. To look at it, hold it, remember its face, nature inflicts a sacrifice, a separation which is the moment of creation. To belong, one must be beyond the other. Proust is most certainly 'present' in his work; but it is not the Proust we 'know' or can ever know for sure. Just as the mother is present in the child by 'becoming' the child, in the sense that she passes on to the child something that is not discoverable directly in her, the literary work bears the trace of its maker as something original, not discoverable before it happens. Proust 'becomes' the *Recherche*, and is there in the work just as Cézanne is present in his apples, Beethoven in his Quartets. It is not an existence in flesh and bones, but in the material of the work, to the extent in which the self has 'dramatized' itself in becoming the Other, here casted in words.

What might be called the creative space between the narrator and the world he describes- the actual work of self-dramatization which Balzac and Stendhal hide by suggesting that the decisions of writing are decisions of point of view towards a world already there- becomes a principal object of our attention in *À la Recherche du temps perdu*. The novel provokes the drama of our own unsettled feelings about the exact sense in which these people and events belong to Marcel's past. And they seem to 'belong' to him only in an allegorical sense. The narrator thus seems to be illustrating, more or less transparently and in spite of his explicit claims that he is reporting on the real world of his past, the processes by which a novelist invents a world of fiction, and more specifically,

the degree of differentiation possible within a group of self-projective images.
(Bersani, "Incompletion 136)

Both art and philosophy are concerned with 'becoming', the former in a material sense, and the latter through concepts. Yet there are overlaps between these two zones, where art imitates the philosophical from Romanticism onwards, and philosophy admits its own constructed nature and the indispensability of that from Heidegger onwards. Our next chapter would focus on a number of ambivalences in the *Recherche*, beginning with this problematic relation between art and philosophy, and how does this problem feature in this work. If the world is a stylized vision, is not philosophy too stylized just as art is philosophical? What are the ambivalences of art and philosophy in relation to life? Do they seek to escape to return to it? Can we at all segregate escape from return completely? Before we delve into these questions, we should however once again emphasize Proust's attitude to life, for it is the fulcrum where all the ambivalences take their departure. Proust 'philosophizes' about art throughout his work; does this make the *Recherche* a work of philosophy? It is perhaps not so facile an inter-action that is set to play for the *Recherche* is "certainly a novel about art, but it not as *Madame Bovary* is, a novel about the impossible distance between art and life, it is rather an inventory of techniques which make for a highly artful life" (142).

Chapter 4

Ambivalences

(A) PHILOSOPHY OF FICTION, FICTION OF PHILOSOPHY

The richness of ‘thoughts’ and ‘ideas’ in the *Recherche* provides the reader with an almost irresistible temptation to cast the novel into the category of the ‘philosophical novel’. And it wouldn’t be altogether a mistake in yielding to that temptation. However, what do we actually wish to convey by ‘philosophical novel’? Is it a novel that contain philosophical statements? Or philosophy in the form of novel? Our task shall not be to define and inscribe fiction and philosophy in bounded perimeters of their own. Rather, we shall begin with the existing understanding of these two ‘genres’ of human expression, and see whether they interact with one another in our reading of the *Recherche*, and if so, how. Lastly, we shall try to examine this interaction as an ambivalence that has resulted historically, and in turn conditions the historicity in which Modernist artworks such as the *Recherche* are located.

Although we shall examine in detail how art came to be associated with a form of ‘knowledge’ from the Romantics onwards in the last part of this chapter, this reversal, where in contrast to Plato and Socrates who considered art to be delusional because of its contingent and represented nature, of the value of art shall be our point of departure. We think art has to offer us wisdom; it gives us ‘ideas’ and ‘concepts’ which philosophy also does in ‘equal

measure'. And it is in the uncritical naiveness on our part in regarding art on an 'equal' footing with philosophy that the problems begin.

Both art and philosophy are formed in language. But is the language of art the same as the language of philosophy, considered from the viewpoint of the evolution of these two genres in the West? Art can be 'made up' of words, sounds, paint, clay, stone or any other 'material'. Materiality is the condition of art's becoming and appearance. One can argue it is just the same for philosophy as well. However, can philosophy function without words, taking recourse to materials which non-verbal art is based on? The contention then is reduced to between verbal art, or poetry in the Aristotelian sense, and philosophy. Both do 'use' language; they share the same 'means'. Even the 'manner' or 'mode' of philosophy and fiction could be the same; let's say, using the diegetic form, or the mimetic form in case of the Dialogues. The split then lies in the third category of the *Poetics*, namely the 'object'. The 'object' is that which is represented in or by expression, and poetry does take recourse to them, according to its need. However, philosophy does not have any object of representation, for it claims to arrive at truth 'through' and not 'in' language. This assumption of knowledge being 'trans-linguistic' in turn lends philosophy its universal character; truth does not rely on who says it or how. It is all the more derided if the rhetoric come to play a role in philosophizing, as we can observe in *Gorgias*, for then expression would gravitate towards representation and be increasingly individualistic in nature as per the devices and articulations the orator brings along in its investigation or dissemination.

While persisting in the claim that language is just a means to an end in philosophy results in overlooking the 'constructed' nature of truth, regarding an artwork as a source of philosophical wisdom involves the same blindness towards the phenomenon in which these 'thoughts' and 'ideas' appear. The Romantic epoch, preceded or initiated by Kant, does somewhat absolve the universality of philosophical truth. The universe becomes a

construction of man, though beauty in leading us towards truth, follow now a new universality of a subjective kind, a point we underscored in the first chapter. At the same time, the Romantic distrust towards form and representation ranging from Hegel till Wagner collates the two genres of philosophy and art towards a hazy zone of overlap. On one hand, Kant partially admits that truth is conditioned aesthesis, and hence has a generic character. Genre, understood here as a 'template' of expression, breaks out the traditional distinction between form and content. Form and content appear in one another in a generic framework which is itself only relatively stable, as Bakhtin points out (60). Should we not then particularize the 'truth' we receive from art in the genre in which they occur, instead of bypassing them into a trans-medial space, which Platonism blatantly and Kantianism subtly believes in?

Vincent Descombes raises this concern right at the beginning of his eponymously titled book on Proust, that the 'philosophy of the novel' should be understood through the philosophy of the genre itself (14). Philosophy of the genre implies the 'kind of seeing' that is peculiar to a genre. If truth indeed be understood as a vision, then it is 'made visible' by the template in which it comes to be as an event [*sich ereignen*]. Even if we use another sensual analogy to describe the work, let's presume 'hearing', the *Recherche* would 'demand' a certain way of undertaking this apperceptive act. Seeing or hearing in the conventional sense would not be enough, for art makes visible only through the process where we learn how to see or hear. Seeing and hearing are transitive actions; they are existentially valid only in relation to something else. While habit involves a homogeneity of these senses so that objects appear 'usual' and monochromatic/monotonic, art makes us aware that we are seeing or hearing when we become open to its thingness as something singular that merits a unique attention. Thus, that which we learn from art is not a general knowledge which we can apply to anything we like (although we are free to do so). Instead, engagement with us nurtures in

us an empathy for the Other, in that we don't subsume the work in a larger, more general framework, and turn towards it in a gesture that had been unknown to us for all this long. Joseph Acquisto considers the *Recherche* to be musical, in that, the novel like a piece of music demands 'listening' instead of just hearing. The *Recherche* is musical because one must 'listen' to it like a piece of music that, at the time of its occurrence, also teaches us how to listen to it. "Proust's novel needs to be listened to, to be encountered as perpetually strange, rather than heard as something totally familiar, understood, and accounted for" (143).

If then, truth as it appears in art, is so constructed so as to merit a construction from the part of the perceiver in order to become, these two complementary processes wrest knowledge from being absolute and universal, a claim, even if not voiced, remains implicated in the genre of philosophy. Thus, the presencing of truth in fiction is provisional to the extent that this truth is fictive. Art, being the realm of aesthetic ideas can only provide access to 'aesthetic truths'; that is, truth 'as' it appears in configuration. In doing so, does not art also expose the genre of philosophy too to be a realm of constructions? If truth has to occur in language, it must always be a result of a form-giving intention. And if this intention attempts to erase itself in the making of truth, does it not historicize a relation of negation or denial that philosophy shares with its 'form'? Joshua Landy sums up mutual tension between making fiction and making philosophy from the standpoint of self-becoming;

If then, readers of the *Recherche* can rightly say that there is philosophy in the fiction, they should be careful to add, that there is, in addition, fiction in the philosophy. Indeed, it is because it realizes the crucial importance of fantasy in the process of self-fashioning, while at the same time tackling traditional philosophical questions with traditional philosophical arguments, that the *Recherche* constitutes such a paradigm case of a literary philosophy-not just a

philosophy in literature but a philosophy of literature, a painstaking presentation of the role fiction has to play in the formation of a successful human life. (26)

The moralization of the aesthetic in the worldviews of Kant, Kierkegaard and Hegel tends to consciously undermine the formalist aspect of truth to suit their own historical needs, as we shall be discussing. Instead of coming face to face with the constructed nature of expression and that of truth, art is made to serve a moral function say, in Schiller. Morality, as we know 'represents' a standpoint, whereas art 'creates' a standpoint. In reifying the unbridled potential of aesthesis, art is constrained to fulfill a standpoint, which could function as morally edifying.

We have already witnessed how Modernist art, the *Recherche* in particular, grapples with this problem of form. In abstaining from the transcendent and the absolute, Proust's novel embodies these very tendencies as something concrete and located in ephemerality. For Ruskin, truth and formalism are opposites. Truth is antecedent to art, and the purpose of form is to be in service to this truth. In Proust however, truth and formalism are "terms in a paradox" (Fraser 74). Marcel's 'ideas' about truths are themselves not transcendent to his being; they exist in taking form in the language in which they are articulated. They are ideas as long as they belong to Marcel, but for us readers, we get to know through them not through the character Marcel but the narrator who recollects his past. The mode of recollection lets him 'form' his ideas, in words; and it is this double tension between language and reality that is played out throughout the course of the novel.

It is our contention that the dual perspective of the novel as mentioned by Descombes, is a novelization of this paradox, other than serving those roles which we have mentioned in the last two chapters. The self tries to arrive at understanding itself; but it can do so only in language which is but public. A purely private language does not exist, which is a refraction

of the fact that philosophy, morality and truth all are formations in language, even if they seek to point at a reality beyond the medium in which they are casted. Fraser identifies a number of ‘torsions’ in Proust’s work where this duality is played out; the channelization of social content in one’s own form, to negotiate one’s own choices with the compulsions that come from without, the tussle between what one imagines and what one remembers, or that between originality and reading. These are not binaries, for the second terms project on to the first. Marcel wants something unique for himself, and realizes at the end of the book that this uniqueness is to be found in his own life, in the people and events that have comprised it. His task, as that of any artist, would be to shape this material not so that he could escape the realm of objects in this material realm, but on the contrary, to reveal their true face that subsists in their thingness, in according to them the matter they are made up of and the empathetic perception of this matter instead of transcending them in a bid to escape towards some abstract truth. A redemptive aesthetic is one that seeks to escape the historical particular in favor of some state of unity with the divine or a state of communality [*Gemeinschaft*] between fellow humans which has been purportedly lost due to technological modernization. Proust shows Marcel to be under the spell of such an aesthetic that asks us to consider art as a corrective of life, and misreads art as philosophy. Marcel finds his life uninspiring as long as he persists in this attitude, for “a redemptive aesthetic based on the negation of life must also negate art” (Bersani, “Redemption” 2). Only when he ‘truly’ becomes open to the materiality of his life, does life seem to him overabundant with things which he could write about. And this true vision comprises in participating in the uniqueness of things, in gazing something adjacent not merely as an object that has to be transcended. Marcel’s resolution to be an artist is when he relinquishes the baggage of his romantic sensibility, and features in the novel as the point from which the art of Proust takes leap; that is, in fully embracing its condition of being, first and foremost, and till the last, a work of fiction.

Thus, the essence of art according to Deleuze in being the individual and individualizing, is the “thing to be translated and the translation itself, the sign and the meaning. They are involved in the sign in order to force us to think; they develop in the meaning in order to be necessarily conceived” (“Proust” 101-102). The works of the ‘great triumvirate’ of Marx, Freud and Nietzsche shows a fundamental tendency that is at work at the Romantic break in Modernism. Each, and there are surely others in the list, ‘begins’ from a standpoint and thereafter creates a system or a limitation of a system based on this standpoint. If, until then, the axioms of philosophical thought largely remained unconfessed to exacerbate its universal nature, Modernism makes philosophizing a historical act based on certain decisions. One can argue that Modernism, in this regard, fulfills to a large extent the Copernican Revolution of Kant, which he himself perhaps had not been able to give due emphasis. Kant’s notion of the phenomenon being a product of the perspective and the location of the observer remains by and large a theoretical point. His attempt to place philosophy on a scientific footing did not ‘allow’ him to address this condition in the very act of philosophizing by enacting the same. However, given that Modernism was based on an altogether different relationship to science that then was symptomatic with industrial progress hand in hand with nation-building, it begins its philosophizing exactly by dismissing any claims to universality, turning life into “a fundamentally hermeneutic activity” (Bell 9). Although this bore the risk of us ending up in a post-structural world where language would be deemed to point at nothing but at itself, the hermeneutic turn most certainly transformed the erstwhile supremacy of the *Logos*. It is thus with this reservation that we quote Deleuze on this matter; “The language of signs begins to speak for itself, reduced to the resources of disaster and deception; it no longer is supported on a subsisting *Logos*” (“Proust” 113). We have already discussed the perils of such post-structuralist ideas ending up being a new form of Romantic solipsism in the last chapter. It is true, that the *Logos* is dismissed of its claim of

primordially, of its essence before existence. But it still lingers, if at all we are to make meaning out of life, and of art. Logos is transformed from primordial essence to sense of event. The hermeneutic between expression and language does not represent a vicious circle. If one deems language to be a prison in which our thoughts and ideas are forever bound to be constrained, then such a person, like Marcel is still under the influence of a ‘myth of interiority’. He thinks there are things beyond material and language, not admitting that this very idea exists on material foundations and is uttered in language. The *Recherche* is an extraordinary presentation of an ordinary tale; and so, if the story of the *Recherche* has to be narrated to someone, one can do that best only by reading aloud the novel from start to end. The story of the *Recherche* is the presentation, the plot; but that does not mean the presentation is bereft of meaning or subject matter. It is only that the subject matter, extracted from the novel into a synopsis, might seem dreadfully dull. The philosophy of the *Recherche*, understood in the sense of vision, could only be sought in how the novel unfurls in its plot, in the very form-ed nature of it, and not in an abstraction of ‘content’. The ‘achievement’ of Modernist art, if any, is thus not only instigating a ‘return’ to life as we have discussed in detail before, but a return to literature, where the novel is not the means to an end. Literature then “can only be the description of literary experience. The text comes first, experience second” (Descombes 224). Art would not ‘explicate’ experiences, but complicate language and things to create experience which cannot be experienced otherwise.

Both philosophy and art are dedicated to ‘things’ which are close to us, which accompany the trials and tribulations of everyday life, and yet remain unknown to us. These things constitute the home [*das Heim*] where our being is sheltered; but ontology is ‘hidden’ [*heimlich*] for we lack the vision to come to terms with it. This does make poetry and philosophy both strange [*unheimlich*], something that is not encountered very usually, until a work of poetry or philosophy, or maybe experiences we confront, displace us from the ontic

realm. Such a displacement from the ontic is the projection towards an outside where being emerges as being-in-the-world. Freud was faced with the paradox of this event, given that the uncanny [*das Unheimliche*] not only contains the homely or familiar [*heimlich*] in a disguised form, but that it shows itself as a strange kind of hermeneutic space where form and content no longer retain their exclusiveness; “a ghostly place or a non-place in which the aesthetic and the ethical cross into each other’s territories and disrupt the boundaries separating the one sphere from the other” (Ellison 133).

We have already observed the overlap between the act of poesy and philosophizing in the first chapter while discussing Sliogeris’ notions concerning thingness. Although Sliogeris maintains a generic distinction between these two modes of expression, he, as well as Deleuze, points that these two realms cut each other orthogonally in a ‘razor’s edge’, a thin line which stands for ‘becoming’. Descombes hints at the same sharedness between the two modes given that both are concerned with making truth appear, the difference being that truth is understood differently in each: propositional, conceptual, analytic, discursive, logical, dialogic in one, and to put it simply, ‘materialistic’ or ‘aesthetic’ in the other. They share a common goal, “the art of bringing into the broad light of day what had remained unformulated, obscure, implicit, misapprehended” (77).

If that is so, would not there be overlap between the mode of functioning of both, which is to say, do art and philosophy ‘happen’ in entirely different fashion, or is there something fundamental they are share in their ‘working themselves up’ other than the common goal? According to Ricœur, the philosopher as well as the poet is engaged in a metaphorical activity. Both try to bring to light something which cannot be seen until it is made visible. Making the thing visible is not thus bringing the thing and placing it before us [*vorstellen*], for the thing comes to being only in the act of bringing. That or those things which are therefore brought together are in a sense, parts of a metaphor. The thing is

revealed, or can be revealed, never in the identity of what is presented, but always in the difference that this metaphor generates. It is in such an activity that a thin line, like the shared goal, of overlap appears between the mode of poetry and philosophy; “to apprehend or perceive, to contemplate, to see similarity- such is metaphor’s genius stroke which marks the poet, naturally enough, but also the philosopher” (30).

It is the ontic realm of equipment and opinions that has instilled in us a penchant for the immediate and the graspable. The culture of mass producing the identical million times over has lent us a sense of security; we are assured by the duplicity that reproduces sameness. Since art, and philosophy, talk of those things which cannot be ‘produced’ in such a fashion, the poet and philosopher need not place things directly before us. Obliquity or metaphor can be the only method for both; metaphor not as rhetoric but as the mode of comportment towards things. Proust says, “An artist has no need to express his thought directly in his work for the latter to reflect its quality; it has been ever said that the highest praise of God consists in the denial of him by the atheist who finds creation so perfect that it can dispense with a creator” (III: 479). It is no surprise that Proust takes recourse to a metaphor here to point at the absent ‘presence’ of the artist in the artwork. It reminds one of a similar metaphor from Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, where Stephen says that, ““The artist, like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails” (181). The Modernist artwork wants to be like a thing, bereft of authoritarian ownership and message of the creator. The creator, as Flaubert had remarked, must be like God dwells in this creation, ‘present everywhere, but not seen anywhere’.

It is this exact mode of existence as ‘absent presence’ that Mallarmé advocates for philosophy in art. The philosophical in the realm of poetry can exist only by being transformed. We have observed repeatedly in Proust’s vision of art, that all things and values

exist in the artwork as transformed, and transformation being the metaphorical movement that in-forms the work. Philosophy too could find a place within the *Recherche*, but not as philosophy anymore, but one of things that goes into the making of the novel. Moreover, art being the realm of aesthetic ideas, philosophy no longer could be itself since it denies representation and looks at language only as a means towards a definitive end of disclosing knowledge. The mode of truth in art is that of disclosure or *aletheia*, as we discussed in the first chapter. Here, truth is not an ‘end’, but the event of disclosure itself. The novel discloses truth not as an epistemic fact but as far as it demands a new way of ‘understanding’. “The philosophy of the novelist is to be sought in what has required the greatest effort on his part. His task is not to explicate philosophical themes, but to compose a narrative” (Descombes 35).

The ‘absence’ of thought that Mallarmé speaks of is not a negative definition. Perhaps his followers like Blanchot and Foucault over-emphasize this absence so that art in the post-structuralist definition becomes merely dispersion without a center. Art should not be ‘overtly’ philosophical, for then it would become a negation of itself and the life it ideally seeks to return to. Despite the plethora of philosophical statements that Proust invests Marcel with, they do not form a system. Rather, they are utterings contingent to the character’s situation and widely contradict one another throughout the course of the work, as we have seen in the chapter on the Self. Philosophizing is novelized in being a distorted mirror for Marcel’s changing self to project on to. Marcel becomes ‘visible’ in the ‘thoughts’ he utters; these thoughts are the metaphors which render this visibility possible. Thus, the *Recherche* is not a work of philosophy neither a philosophical work, but involves a philosophy of seeing and understanding that is “present in the literary work, but present in its very absence, or present through the very thing that blocks its appearance” (33).

“The Modern work of art develops its permutating series and its circular structures, it indicates to philosophy a path leading to the abandonment of representation... divergence of series, decentering of circles, monstrosity” (Deleuze, “Difference” 69). Deleuze is of the opinion that the philosophy of Proust is based on anti-Logos, a rejection of the primordially of reason and logic. We have already experienced the novelization of such an ontological attitude in our discussion of fractal, continuous death, scatteredness and retroactive unity of the *Recherche*. For the character Marcel, art must be a product of necessity, and not will or intelligence. The latter affects always constrain our vision in following the trails of the ego; it is only from without that truth can be betrayed. Although the novel does not embody such a belief exactly, for it did involve will and intelligence in its making, it does make clear that the ‘exposition’ of the work does not pertain to a principle, but in its denial of a pre-given order, is more concerned in discovering unity as a trace after the work has been accomplished. Unity or totality is not altogether banished; their a priori nature is doubted. Thus, although Marcel often betrays his Platonism and ends up failing to contain the diversity of life under one single rubric of a logocentric framework, Proust’s novel overturns Platonism in “denying the primacy of original over copy, of model over image; glorifying the reign of simulacra and reflections” (66). The differences that are spewed all over the work and not fragments that could be tied to a single point. They do not emerge from a conceptual center; rather they evince a lack of one. To show [*veranschaulichen*] the philosophical is to resort to metaphor, whose structure is that of repetition of the same yet different; repetition as “difference without concept” (13).

We shall now turn our attention towards the role intelligence plays in the *Recherche*. In the territory of philosophy, the thinker as the subject looks at the world as an object of regard [*Anschauungsobjekt*]. Prior to phenomenology, such a subject-object binary had been the mode of philosophy, for the self was yet to be dismissed and the inquiry substituted to the

realm of relational ontology. Obviously, there were exceptions, like Heraclitus, but we are referring to the trajectory of philosophical currents we traced in the first chapter. Given that phenomenology and Modernist art seek to do away with subjectivity in favor of thingness and event of meaning, does intelligence at all have any role to play in the *Recherche*?

The problem with intelligence begins in the wake of responses that emerge as a result of secularization of society and the gradual instrumentalization of reason. No longer having the divine as the objective realm, an increasingly subjective 'application' of intelligence led to an ever-increasing individualism. An outcome of this phenomenon was the loss of community feeling along with an almost irrevocable divorce from nature. Since religion was no longer available as a cementing agent to bring people close to one another, Rousseau, in his condemnation of the separation of the theological from the political, says that the social contract must be completed by civil religion. He shares a similar distaste for representation, where the intelligence of the subject could exercise its unbridled individuality. The search was one towards commonality, and the Romantic irony which was dreaded all the same by Kant and Hegel had to be somehow controlled. Civil religion could not be thus represented, it must come to presence in communions. Rousseau's aversion towards the theatre where individuality could flourish without a care for communality backfires in the very move towards 'designing' festivals. Although the assumption that community dispenses with representation is true, the very 'mode' in which the communion is brought about requires representation, like 'how' the festival is going to be celebrated. The early Romantic unease with aesthesis and representation of form thus arrives at a self-contradiction in which these festivals restore the very theatricality and spectacle it wished to battle against (Roberts 18).

Marcel's choice of Vinteuil as the most significant cornerstone to inspire him towards art is not arbitrary. It is music that is most 'pure' as an artform in involving form without

representation. The Romantic inclination towards music as the most supreme art has a close relationship with the culture of redemption that starts developing from this time onwards.

The perceived inadequacy of language to aesthetic ideas makes other thinkers, particularly the early Romantics and Schopenhauer, look for a 'language' which is adequate to such ideas. The language in question is, however, the conceptless language of music, to which some thinkers will even grant a higher philosophical status than to conceptual language. Although music is manifested in sensuous material, it does not necessarily represent anything and may in consequence be understood metaphorically as articulating or evoking what cannot be represented in the subject, namely the super-sensuous basis of subjectivity which concepts cannot describe, where necessity and freedom are reconciled. (Bowie 34)

To redeem oneself from history and culture would involve negating that which is the fulcrum of the process that have led human civilization to this point. Intelligence is held to be the culprit, in individualizing man to no end, and supersaturating science which had some centuries ago been a liberating force from the tyrannies, atrocities and deception of the church. We shall devote the last section of this chapter to the role music plays in the *Recherche* in relation to the ambivalent attitude towards redemption. For the moment, we shall note how the exaltation Marcel feels on listening to Vinteuil's septet is compared to an angelic realm beyond the machinations of intelligence. Although Marcel has realized the displacement intelligence has been subjected to in Elstir's seascapes, it is music that marks the apotheosis of such a metaphorical movement, so much so that Vinteuil's art is expressed in 'spiritual' and 'transcendent' terms over and over again; the music is described as "as free from analytical forms of reasoning as if carried out in the world of angels" (V: 289).

The relationship of Modernist art in its reception of Romantic temperament is one of ambivalence as Brad Bucknell puts in *Literary Modernism and Musical Aesthetics*; it sought “both to abolish and preserve its Romantic past at one and the same time” (qtd in Acquisto 169). We have seen how Marcel’s Romanticism is countered by the *Recherche*’s problems concerning what comes out of such an attitude. If the method of the *Recherche* consists in showing the past to be in error in relation to a different perspective which has come to inform the present, then it provides Proust an opportunity to novelize intelligence as an erroneous beginning. Marcel begins by regarding Oriane as a great woman; he represents Oriane in his imagination as the perfect embodiment of French aristocracy. And yet this conceptualization ends in a soup when he gradually acquires real knowledge of the woman at close range. Likewise, little Marcel wants to write a great philosophical novel in his childhood, only to realize at the end of the book that the ‘mundane’ is far more fascinating. Since intelligence, based as it is on the conventionality of the subject representing to its self an object, in a sense represents the realm of habit and selfhood, Proust makes Marcel begin from such ‘visualizations’ so that he can understand the truth of the vision he comes to acquire, and the altered understanding of intelligence that evolves through his apprenticeship [*apprentissage*];

the fact that our intelligence is not the subtlest, most powerful, most appropriate instrument for grasping the truth is only one reason the more for beginning with the intelligence, and not with an unconscious intuition. It is life, that little by little, case by case, enables us to observe that what is most important to our hearts or to our minds is taught us not by reasoning but by other powers. (V: 482)

In his characteristic fashion of beginning with a concept to expose its falsity, and then giving a fresh touch to that notion, like we have seen in relation to truth, self and totality, intelligence too in the *Recherche* has at least two faces. Such a method of decentering and

relocating a notion has to be understood in the greater context of decentering of the sign that Modernism is often associated with. And decentering and relocating form the Janus-face of the Proustian method; the ambivalence played out between character and narrator, between language and meaning. The intelligence which Marcel begins with is the intelligence that is decentered. And this decentering, in turn, produces a new intelligence, which is not the same as the one originally displaced. Intelligence pertains in the craft of fiction as envisaging a logically united structure for the plot and character. The *Recherche* does not follow such a method so that it can embody continuous death and our changing existence in time; the Proustian monad is a temporally conditioned one. But, as we have remarked in our discussion of retroactive unity, intelligence is discovered as a trace once the work is completed. "The impression is for the writer what experiment is for the scientist, with the difference that in the scientist the work of the intelligence precedes the experiment and, in the writer, it comes after the impression" (VI: 234). Logos and intelligence, in appearing afterwards, is thus shifted away from will and ego. Since one was unaware of being intelligent, intelligence as that which 'betrays' itself once the work nears its end, does not 'belong' to the writer as a proof of his genius, but could be said to be the face of the thing that the artwork becomes. Intelligence or cogito, far from being like in Descartes the precondition of human existence, becomes the thing's own attribute. We shall later discuss how Nietzsche's notion of the 'will to power' being non-anthropocentric is the philosophical analogy to how Proust absolves the element of will from intelligence. Intelligence is retained, but its representative capacity arising from individual will is abolished; yet another ambivalent Romanticism that we can note in comparing the *Recherche* with Rousseau and Kant's rather unequivocal positions on the same matter.

The rift between art and reality/life appears gradually through the investment of a redemptive function of art during the period following the Enlightenment. In fact, it could be

traced back to the rise of the man as a rational individual, who by dint of his talent and genius presents to the mass something that his imagination and skill alone could have fashioned.

However, earlier, art and reality did not share such a relationship, for the former was yet to exist as an aesthetically differentiated sovereign realm of its own. The Romantic 'redeemers' like Wagner and Nietzsche would thus try to effect a return to these times of the past, where art could make the journey from being an expression of an isolated individual to a *Gesamtkunstwerk* or total work of art in which the lost community and communion could be sought to be re-discovered.

The rise of art as art thus introduces the metaphorical movement of art's becoming in a unidirectional sense; art is transformation of the materials of life. Such a negative attitude towards life was perhaps responsible for a misunderstanding concerning what life truly is. Proust's equivocality here is crucial to be recognized. Marcel, being the Romantic, first struggles with the isolating solipsism and desires that come with it. Thereafter, he realizes gradually that facts, objects and opinions could be transformed into artful things. The apotheosis of this movement however, ends in a volta, which, as a volta should do, turns the unidirectional metaphorical movement on its back, so that now, Marcel finds his life itself to be artful. This is a sly ploy of Proust the novelist, who after having composed a mammoth novel out of commonplaces, has reached the point where he can proclaim the commonplaces themselves to be artful. The rediscovery of life reverses the movement of the metaphor; it is through art that Proust 'returns' to his life, shunning society to carve out the monster of a novel for more than a decade. And this return, as we have seen, is novelized in Marcel as an affirmation of life in contrast to Flaubertian rejection. By making the metaphorical movement ambivalent, Proust not only shatters the Romantic abnegation towards life, but also the 'rhetorical' artificiality with which metaphors and art have long been associated with. Life too is metaphorical; it is habit that prevents us from seeing the web reality has spun around

us. Ricœur writes, “If metaphor belongs to a heuristic of thought, could we not imagine that the process that disturbs and displaces a certain logical order, a certain conceptual hierarchy, a certain classification scheme, is the same as that from which all classifications proceed?” (24). Like Gadamer, Ricœur seems to be pointing at the metaphorical origins of logical thought, which, extrapolated to the contentious relation between art and reality, would be likewise valid for life as we know it. Metaphor renders art beautiful and redeems us from the drudgeries of life, though Marcel Proust’s project is to challenge this escapism by re-creating life and restoring its own metaphorically constellated charm that, without art, continues to dwell in our blindness towards it.

We shall now turn our focus on how the ambivalence between art and philosophy embodies the very hermeneutic of Dasein, and how this phenomenon is embodied by the *Recherche*. We have already seen a glimpse of this equivocality in our discussion of hermeneutics in the first chapter, where we had quoted Deleuze who had opined that the posing of the question in philosophy amounts to the problem half-solved. Susanne Langer in *Philosophy in a New Key* goes back to Whitehead in how he relativizes the universal in philosophy by treating the formulation of the problem as its ‘scaffolding and limit’.

“The way a question is asked limits and disposes the ways in which any answer to it- right or wrong- may be given” (1). The rise of relativity in science was to be observed in the world of philosophy and art as well. Relativity was not just a theory which was to be applied to the world and its phenomena. It came to belong to the very empathy of the Modernist soul towards the particular and the contingent. The universal and the absolute were valid as long as the gesture of talking about them was relegated to function only as a means. But the hermeneutic turn made phenomena appear in the event of its being relative and fragmented; a turn that had been simmering since Kant but overlooked.

Let us consider for a while the case of Kierkegaard. His fundamental quest is to marry aesthetic to the moral; the former could be dangerous in fostering individualism and uprooting the religious basis, yet the latter could only be expressed through the former. 'Claiming' that man has just as great a claim upon the poetic as the moral has a claim upon him, Kierkegaard asks whether a morally grounded poetic life is possible? Poetry grounded in morality would be symptomatic of the festivals of civil religion of dispensing with theatricality, a paradox we touched on shortly before. Kierkegaard deems the transfiguration of Christ in representations to be an irony that must be transformed into the 'authentic irony' of Christianity. With this in mind, he substitutes the formal verticality of transfiguration with that of the 'inward infinity' of transubstantiation (Ellison 32). Christ would then come to live 'within' the body of man, and the irony of representation can be done away with.

And yet, is not Kierkegaard's metaphor of transubstantiation just another representation? No matter how vehemently the aesthetic process of form-rendering is suppressed, the suppression of it falls back on aesthesis to express itself. Following Kant and anticipating Ruskin, Kierkegaard harbors an indignation against the seductions of figuration and its foregrounding of exterior ornament to the detriment of ethical content. But the linguistic heterology that is evinced in the 'figurations' of Kierkegaard's language in his use of the constative/discursive when talking of irony, aesthetic in relation to irony, and paradoxical concerning God, shows a fundamental relationship that exists between form and content (50). A content is 'bestowed' its own value only by the form in which it is expressed. Just as ethics encroaches in aesthetic considerations, aesthetic is evitable in ethics as far as the latter is 'form-ulated'.

In the *Recherche*, Marcel the narrator discovers what Marcel the character had been thinking of at some time of life only by means of expressing the thoughts. Language is not a transparent medium of conveying the thoughts of one's mind, but an opaque substance whose

figurations could often confuse the person himself to discover his thoughts once expressed in language. The hermeneutic ambivalence between Marcel the philosopher-character and Marcel the artist-narrator is brought out by Proust in the following passage, not without a certain tinge of irony and pun;

My words, therefore, did not in the least reflect my feelings. If the reader has no more than a faint impression of these, that is because, as narrator, I expose my feelings to him at the same time as I repeat my words. But if I concealed the former and he were acquainted only with the latter, my actions, so little in keeping with them, would so often give him the impression of strange reversals that he would think me more or less mad. A procedure, which would not for that matter, be much more false than the one I adopted, for the images that prompted me to action, so opposed to those which were portrayed in my words, were at that moment extremely obscure; I was but imperfectly aware of the nature which guided my actions; today I have a clear conception of its subjective truth. (V: 396)

Ricœur rightly points out that semantic innovation is the event, where meaning happens as sense. We have long since believed that philosophy deals with the content of concepts whereas art deals in forms and representations. The Proustian ambivalence of Marcel as narrator-character and the narrative being not thoughts expressed but expressed thoughts takes us to the root of the problem. Just as philosophy realizes its aesthetic character from the development of phenomenology onwards, art becomes philosophical, not by functioning as a vehicle of thoughts but a generator of them. We at last recognize the metaphorical movement in both philosophy and the novel in which the hermeneutics of becoming is played out. Here, metaphor is “a semantic event that takes place at the point where several semantic fields intersect. It is because of this construction that all the words, taken together, make sense.

Then, and only then, the metaphorical twist is at once an event and a meaning, an event that means or signifies, an emergent meaning created by meaning” (“Metaphor” 114).

We come closer to knowledge like Marcel, not by indulging ourselves in the habit of believing philosophizing to be abstract. Neither truth nor philosophy is abstract; they dwell in materiality. Abstract art is probably the farthest from being abstract, for in it, it is the sheer presence of material that is foregrounded to castigate every trace of ‘familiar’ forms. Malevich’s Black Square is abstract because it does not point to any reference beyond itself; and yet it presents to the beholder the most concrete material existence of a black square by precisely being these two things and nothing else, that is a square and black. We seek to shape our life according to our will, like Marcel. But everything that happens in the course of our lives reveal to us a meaning. This meaning dwells in the ‘intelligence of the thing’ and not in us; we only have to look at its trace to discover its sense. Marcel remarks;

every event is like a mold of a particular shape, and, whatever it may be, it imposes, upon the series of incidents which it has interrupted and seems to conclude, a pattern which we believe to be the only possible one, because we do not know the other which might have been substituted for it. (V: 582)

Perhaps we should be placing imagination and understanding as the basic tenets of human existence upon which the logical and rational structures of intelligence and knowledge are based. While philosophy tend to gravitate towards a mode of expression which place imagination at the service of intelligence, art returns all that it has to say to that zone from where all things take form. If the sea was the place from where life emerged, imagination too would be inconceivable before or without language. Language does not convey; it gives ‘us’ to who we are. The poetic image becomes “a new being in our language, expressing us by making us what it expresses; in other words, it is at once a becoming of expression, and a

becoming of our being. Here expression creates being...one would not be able to mediate in a zone that preceded language” (Bachelard xxiii).

We have observed that the metaphysical solipsism of the classical kind where the standpoint of morality is accorded precedence with respect to living one’s life poses a problem as far as writing is concerned. Marcel’s mother omits those passages of George Sand while reading aloud to her son, that she thinks to be amoral for their amorous nature. Morality, like ethics, is based on a standpoint, but turns a blind eye to the constructed nature of this standpoint. Since art consists in ‘making perspectives’ while ‘making visible’, such a ‘reading’ that Marcel’s mother undertakes runs the risk of being self-defeating for art, since it overlooks the act of creating to focus on some trans-linguistic moral content;

And so, when she read aloud the prose of George Sand, prose which is everywhere redolent of that generosity and moral distinction which Mamma had learned from my grandmother to place above all other qualities in life, and which I was not to teach her until much later to refrain from placing above all other qualities in literature too, taking pains to banish from her voice any pettiness or affectation which might have choked that powerful stream of language. (I: 48)

Morality, like all other aspects, could be present in art only in its absence. The moral and ethical as a faith in pure content cannot dwell in a realm which is engaged with giving form to material. Thus, if at all the moral realm is to exist in the *Recherche*, it must exist as transformed, in the material in which the novel is written. It is not as if the talent of the artist is excused of morality. Proust’s disagreement with the figure of the Romantic genius makes him ground talent in the very actions of life. Morality does not remain a precept along which one must conduct one’s life; rather, like the trace of an idea found first in what has been

expressed, morality is to be sought in the very activities of one's life, and discovered in the form those activities assume. Talent, then, according to Proust, "is not a separate appendage which can be artificially attached to those qualities which make for social success... it is the living product of a certain moral confirmation" (III: 210).

We have already observed in our discussion of fractal personality how the morally good and evil co-exist in the Proustian characters. Morality is not the product of a single standpoint, for the *Recherche* purposely lacks such a stable vantage point to look at the world. It is the movement of the novel that generate a multiplicity of moralistic standpoints, and since this generation occurs in language, the mediumistic aspect is not to be seen separately from the content that such standpoints hint at. "Quality of language, however, is something the critical theorists think that they can do without, and those who admire them are easily persuaded that it is no proof of intellectual merit, for this is a thing which they cannot infer from the beauty of an image but can recognize only when they see it directly expressed" (VI: 236). Just as intelligence or Logos would have to be sought in the very utterance, morality too is not accorded any conceptual space; it is novelized as actions of the characters, which in turn are constructions in language. Such a 'intellectual decomposition' of breaking down successive states of mind into their components has been criticized by Sartre. Stephen Ullman in *The Image in the Modern French Novel* however points out that Proust could be considered in the wrong had he been working in the genre of philosophy. If the *Recherche* discards clarity in its exposition, it is not because it fails to be clear in its message. The literary work, being a 'code without a message' is concerned to create a new way to understand the world, and must for this very reason part ways with the philosophical way of clarifying things (90). "Sartre seems to forget that what is a serious fault in a philosophical treatise may be perfectly permissible in a work of art. The picturing of abstract phenomena in concrete terms, and their assimilation to animal beings, are perennial forms of metaphor"

(Ullman 138). Like Acquisto, Christian Jany feels that every harmony is discordant. Just as reality as we know it is too a metaphor which has been naturalized, habitual discordance has rendered themselves as harmonies to our eyes. Proust's ambivalences could be compared with the interaction of mutually contradicting motifs in Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*. The *Leidensmotiv* and the *Sehnsuchtsmotiv* embodying pain and longing are dissonances that no longer remain in binary opposition; they give rise to a complementarity where the opposing streams are inextricable and indistinguishable from one another (Jany 205). Proust's application of the fractal could, in this sense, be understood as an application, or rather embodiment of 'literary counterpoint'.

Ambivalences in Proust often scatter themselves beyond their bipolarity and give rise to polyvalent constructions. While one could criticize Proust for being fickle-minded and irresponsible in not holding onto one standpoint when it comes to life, it could equally be argued that this scattering projects the very unfixity of our existence in time. Moreover, it endorses a plurality that goes beyond the binary logic of good-bad or moral-evil. Proust's attitude towards homosexuality in the novel demonstrates this plurality. At one point, Marcel says inversion is curable (IV: 29); so, it is seen as a sort of condition that is an aberration. At another stage of the novel, reference is made to the time of Socrates when it had been a norm (IV: 19, 408). Strangely, watching Charlus at close makes Marcel judge homosexuality to be a 'vice' (IV: 45). Such an admonishing attitude is even more strongly expressed when it comes to female homosexuality in the work; although it seems vicious to Marcel not only because he thinks lesbianism to be morally wrong, but that his imagination cannot picture the scenes of amorous adventures that Albertine is possibly indulging in with her girlfriends. And yet, there are points in the *Recherche* where Marcel considers himself to be 'morally indifferent' to homosexuality (V: 791).

In the concluding passages of this section, we shall revisit the to-and-fro movement of each point in the narrative towards its past and future that we already have discussed in the last chapter. The inconstancy of a moment has to do with the understanding of an event happening late and in retrospect, and never where it has actually occurred. While such a technique is an embodiment of the temporality of the *Recherche*, “the synthesis of survival and extinction...[as] the most congenial formula for the condition of time” could also be understood as the ambivalence concerning time in the work (Hägglund 34). Kristeva calls the work a “two-faced being”, a world of present and historical self, sensibility and thought (54). We can trace such an ambivalence between the eternal and the ephemeral from Proust’s reception of Baudelaire, a point we mentioned before. In the words of the novelist himself, “It seems that events are larger than the moment in which they occur and cannot be entirely contained in it. Certainly, they overflow into the future through the memory that we retain of them, but they demand a place also in the time that precedes them” (V: 458).

The ambivalent attitude played out between philosophy and fiction, in thematic expositions of morality and homosexuality, and in narrative temporality shows Proust’s concern as a novelist towards grounding his work in literature as well as in life; and thereby point out the interrelatedness of these two realms. An outlook that is pluralistic and not dogmatic emphasizes a need for an openness; an openness that Marcel lacks for the most part of the novel. Our next task shall be to look at how this ambivalence is played out between the acts of interiorization and exteriorization, and whether this binary at all subsists intact in how these processes are undertaken in the construction of the *Recherche*.

(B) BETWEEN INSIDE AND OUTSIDE

The problem of duality between the inside and the outside results out of a circumference. A circle has an inside and an outside, with respect to that which makes it a circle in the first place. An enclosure is the pre-condition for any notions of interiority and exteriority to subsist. As we have observed in the first chapter on Proust, the 'myth of interiority' as well as the desire for a 'transcendent beyond' both arise from the enclosure of one's being, which is to say, the self.

In Proust, these realms occur naturally enough in Marcel's experience, taken up as he is by a rootedness in ego and desire; an individuality that maintains continuously a distinction with the world. However, for Proust the novelist, these realms do not possess any independent sovereignty of their own. Marcel too experiences the ambivalence of the inside and the outside without being able to perceive till a long time after, that each exists by dint of the other, and that every step taken in our life brings out the paradox lying underneath such a segregation where the two realms begin to interact and merge into one another.

An artist dwells in the possibility of a thin line between the inside and the outside, the self and the world, language and meaning; that razor's edge of becoming. As a result, he is always caught up in the ambivalent tension of interiorizing the external and exteriorizing the internal. Since the stability of the internal and external realm would conserve the fallacious enclosure of the self, both Marcel's experiences and realizations as a character and the narrator's techniques and 'philosophizing about art' cut through the circumference of the self in rendering one realm into the other. This is yet another novelization of 'becoming',

achieved by the disruption of the equilibrium of self-world binary by metaphorization of the one in the another.

Marcel is initially disappointed in finding the person Bergotte 'ordinary' in contrast to his writing which has enchanted him. If Bergotte's life as person isn't remarkable, how could his writing be so? The work as a reflection of the self where the selfhood is conserved is a puerile notion that Marcel outgrows gradually, and comes to understand that "genius lies in the faculty of transforming and transposing... to cease to live only for oneself, transforming personality into a sort of mirror" (II: 148). The metaphor of mirror is retained by Proust, but 'differently'. No longer the tool of objective mimesis of Realism, the artist's 'reflecting power' is but to become a mirror, which could 'show' a unique face of the world. One problem inherent in the notion of art being the mirror reflection of the world is to overlook the fact that this mirror is 'originally' constituted by art; it is not the kind of mirror which we avail at our homes. The mirror that art becomes cannot be a mass-produced homogenous entity.

Much later in the *Recherche*, Proust compares each artist to be the native of an unknown country, which he himself has forgotten, and which is different from that whence another great artist; setting sail for the earth, will eventually emerge (V: 290). It is not the 'same world' that each artist makes visible differently, but a different land and sky that 'return' to the world in the artwork. Since for Proust the model comes only later through the image, artists come to learn about their own origin-ality 'only after', in the expression of art which they arrive at. "Composers do not remember this lost fatherland, but each of them remains all his life unconsciously attuned to it...delirious with joy when he sings in harmony with his native land" (290-91). The artist comes to 'know' from where he came not by looking into himself, but only by drawing himself apart from it to arrive at the world of signs, wherefrom the 'lost fatherland' could be seen as a trace. What is immanent is only discovered

in the act of exteriorization. It was Maupassant's remark on Flaubert that he never declares events; that all men and events should visually appear. This 'rule of systematic extroversion' is followed diligently by Proust (Descombes 62). Marcel is never declared to be happy or sad; his happiness or sadness is developed as a complex, contiguous succession of images, which eventually wrest the identity of the concept of happiness or sadness. He is happy or sad, only differently from what could be imagined by us in the monotonic garb of these words.

Extroversion enriches by coloration. Marcel the narrator exteriorizes the emotions of himself as character, and it is this act where his interiority at all has any scope to exist concretely. The ambivalence here, of the interior being able to exist only in the outside, is touched upon by the narrator when he says that every artist

exteriorizes in the colors of the spectrum the intimate composition of those worlds which we call individuals, and which but for art, we should never know... The only true voyage would not be to visit strange lands but to possess other eyes, to see the universe through the eyes of another, of a hundred others.
(291)

In resonance with Mallarmé's notion of the Book [*le livre*], Marcel believes that to read "the inner book of symbols...is an act of creation" (VI: 233). The book is discovered, Proust says. It exists within us as a possibility, to realize which one has to make that dormant possibility visible, beyond the confines of the self in a world of outside. "The essential, the only true book...does not have to be invented...for it exists already in each one of us...has to be translated" (247). Translation here means movement; the movement that is the ontology of the metaphor. By repeating the inner book differently by ex-pressing it does it first gets created, and shows itself in retrospect as having been a possibility. Just as the 'original native land' of the artist is revealed only first in the exteriorization that occurs in creating art, the

metaphor of the inner book similarly dispenses the isolating shell of self in making it imperative for feelings to be disclosed originally in words.

If it is on one hand necessary for the artist to ex-press to know his thoughts, it is concomitantly important for him to ‘extract’ impressions from the outside. Any act of extraction would be to ‘import’ a distinct impression from a reality deemed external to oneself. Not being a Realist entails a distrust with surface appearances, hence a probing into depths become inevitable in order to see what is hidden by the object one encounters. “What once covered the earth is no longer above, but beneath it; a mere excursion does not suffice for a visit to the dead city; excavation is necessary also” (III: 98). At La Raspeliere, Mme Verdurin boasts to Marcel that it was she who had provided the roses for Elstir’s rose studies. Marcel remarks that placing a rose before one’s eyes is not enough for an artwork out of it to happen. One has to ‘see’ it, and ‘seeing’ would involve a metaphorical displacement from regarding it just as a pretty, fragrant object. Here Proust uses transplantation as the metaphor of ‘metaphorical displacement’, like he often has used ‘translation’ in the passage quoted last, or ‘transvertebration’ with regard to the magic lantern’s images of Golo running on the walls of his room at Combray. “Elstir was unable to look at a flower without first transplanting it to that inner garden in which we are always obliged to remain” (IV: 395).

Internalization of the external is the ‘spiritualization’ of matter necessary for art (Genette, “Figures III’ 46). Here spiritualization does not mean de-materialization of an object into a realm of abstractions. The attempt to ‘see’ an object as a thing in its own right necessitates the perceiver to divorce it from the value and gaze the habitual reality has imposed on it, holding it prisoner in a shell where facts, opinions and cliches reign. Spiritual essence of a work, as our discussions of Deleuze has already pointed out, makes the object an individual and individualizing thing. The perceiver ‘becomes’ someone who he has never been; and in this act the thing undergoes a de-realization from its current reality value. Thus,

when Marcel the narrator gets to meet a plethora of behaviorism at parties, as narrator, he is more concerned with the lines he traces from their mannerisms to form a collection of psychological laws. This is the reason why we had mentioned in the chapter on Proustian positing of self that such a de-humanization is a necessary step for Marcel, and surely for all novelists to some degree, to displace a person from the factual existence he is otherwise endowed by our notions of him, only in order to be able to see him for what he actually is. To see a person for what he is actually involves placing him in a structure that is beyond his immediate appearance, and it is this extraction of psychology from manners that Proust undertakes for functions more than one; to make the texture of the work heteroglossic, enact in the fashion of Molière a comedy of manners, show the kaleidoscope that society is, and much more which we have traced out in the last two chapters.

“Things, as soon as we have perceived them are transformed within us into something immaterial, something of the same nature as all our preoccupations and sensations of that particular time, with which, indissolubly, they blend” (VI: 240). But if time itself could be visualized as an ever-changing embodiment of things and people, interiorization and exteriorization do not correspond to solipsism and sublation respectively. The appearance of event could only take leap from a falsity, in this case, the enclosure of the self. And that does make a notion of self important for truth to appear differently from what was believed. Truth as disclosure, neither lies entirely outside or somewhere inside; it, as we have seen in our discussion so far, dwells in an in-between space. This is the liminal space of hermeneutic becoming previously referred to by us in the first chapter. Interiorization and exteriorization are not meant for one realm to be subsumed under the other; these are they very hermeneutic modes through which the event can take place.

Proust had long deliberated about the form of what was going to be his life’s work. He had been hovering between the choices of a realist novel and an essay is subjective

psychology, until the form of the novel as an ever-ongoing interaction between these two fields provided to him the field where to construct the *Recherche*. From the lover's point of view, Albertine appears alluring to Marcel's subjectivity. He interiorizes the commonplace girl and makes an attractive image out of it. Jealousy is a product of this gaze; others don't feel jealous because they are not 'in' love; "And if in the course of this work I have had and shall have many occasions to show how jealousy intensifies love, it is from the lover's point of view that I write" (V: 213). And yet, when he sees Albertine by placing his gaze 'outside' of him, like an impersonal narrator of an ideal Realist novel would do, he is met with a phenomenon entirely different; "the excessive simple light in which I regarded my adventure with Albertine, now that I saw it only from outside" (VI: 20). Both the Realist and Subjectivist perspectives are involved in the *Recherche*, but always in tandem, cutting into one another, which makes it a perspectivist work as Descombes had put it.

The ambivalence thus becomes a condition for creation. "Intrinsically material objects have in themselves no power, it is our practice to bestow power upon them" (VI: 206). The act of bestowing is close to Heidegger's notion of *Sorge* being the condition of existence. We exist in the world only by not being indifferent to it: or to do away with a negative definition, our being in the world implies our comportment towards it. 'To bestow' is an act where the circumferential enclosure of the self and the Other is smudged. We give something of ourselves to another; we part with ourselves in being received by the Other. It is when creation becomes 'total'; we are created in relation to what we create. It is this doubleness of the event that Bachelard wonderfully puts it; "By means of poetic language, waves of newness flow over the surface of being. And language bears within itself the dialectics of open and closed. Through meaning it encloses, while through poetic expression it opens up (222).

(C) POLYVALENT SELF-REFLEXIVITY

It is far from strange that a work like the *Recherche* that deals with a character so intensely taken up by the anxieties of his own self and becoming the Other, would also in turn refract this anxiety in its narrative structure. Narratives that refer to themselves in the process of weaving their plot are known by 'self-reflexive' narratives; one that reflects on one's self. It is not a phenomenon that could be observed only in 'post-modernist' works, as if often mistakenly believed by turning such an ontological feature embodied in a work to be a thematic aspect. Even Cervantes had taken resort to such 'meta-critical' moments, if we recall how the second volume of *Don Quixote* opens by making reference to the first. That metanarrative is not bound to a distinct epoch of literary history could be challenged by umpteen works like Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* or the *The Decameron* for that matter.

But in Proust, self-reflexivity is not such a 'simple' matter, for neither Marcel nor the work has one self to which such references could be made. If 'self-reflexivity' could be a trope to ground the oneness of the writing with the work, the narrative with the novel, in the *Recherche*, these references open up the anxiety and instability of the narrative in being contained within the premises of an undisputed identity. Self-reflexivity does not proceed here from the givenness or a faith in the givenness of the self of the narrative, but the dispersed search for multiple identities is revealed by such invocations.

There is however, no doubt, that such meta-critical moments do help Proust to cement the scattered chaos of the *Recherche* in a sort of continuity. Noticing carefully, one would be able to discern a proliferation of these moments particularly at the beginning of the volumes that succeed the first one. It is as if Proust wishes to emphasize obliquely that what we are

reading, despite them being scattered and different, belong to the narrative which is that of the *Recherche*. For example, the second volume opens with the implicit suggestion of it being a continuation of the first: “inasmuch as some of us, no doubt remember a Cottard...and a Swann” (II: 1). That these same characters would be repeated, though differently, is an important confession to make seem two different volumes making up a ‘differentiated continuity’, which lies at the heart of the Proustian as we have already discussed. “As for Professor Cottard, we shall meet him again, at length, much later, with the ‘Mistress’, Mme Verdurin, in her country house La Raspeliere” (3). Apart from the claim for a continuity, another function that these statements serve is to ground the mode of the narrative as a narrative. What we are reading is not a memoir, or something reported by a narrator without him being present in the action. The action of the *Recherche* is fundamentally that of writing it.

Following our discussion in the last section concerning the double face of time in being turned towards the past and the future, self-reflexivity in the *Recherche* becomes a handy tool of maneuvering the plot in a forward and reverse movement. Marcel the narrator resorts to talking about the past of the narrative, as in, what has already been written by him and read by us. Likewise, he anticipates what he would come to write, or has written which we shall come to read. These techniques of prolepsis and analepsis abound mostly in the middle section of the novel, other than the opening passages of the volumes. The middle volumes offer themselves as a maximum of a curve, where the sum of the amount of text we have read and the amount still left to read reaches a peak. This explains the proliferation of the narrative’s self-pondering which is unlikely to be encountered in such duality in the opening and the last volume of the work. And yet, this paradox has a special meaning in the *Recherche*.

When a novel begins, so does the character alongside it. Just as there are no memories of the characters that we as readers know of, the narrative too is in its infancy and has no space to fall back on. In *Swanns Way*, Marcel despite the unavailability of such a space, wants to begin from his childhood; a childhood which does not exist in a ‘novelistic’ manner yet. The novel begins therefore with an ‘impractical’ leap, to unleash that which precedes it. It does bring to light this space, not as it had existed, for it could not have existed prior to the novel, but by ‘creating’ the past by the forward movement of the work.

A similar paradox is encountered towards the end of the work. When a novel ends, there is nothing more left to it. It can look back, but not forward. And yet the ambivalence of Proust becomes active in ending the *Recherche* with anticipating the book that Marcel will set himself to write. The self of the narrative is thus not symptomatic totally with what we read in the *Recherche*, by what possibly lies outside it. On one hand, there is the ‘novel’ that Marcel might come to write, and on the other, the pieces of writings which we learn he has already written and published one in the *Figaro*, fragments which we can collectively call his ‘memoirs’. We shall look into these two ‘absent’ spaces within the narrative shortly after observing how self-reflexivity allows Proust, in addition to embodying the polyvalence of time, a certain narratorial address.

If a narrative admits that it is a narrative, it admits at the same time the condition of it being read, or heard as the addresses in an orature performance implicates. There is, however, unlike an orature, no reader at the site of the narrative. The reader exists only as a possibility; a possibility which at the moment of the construction, the writer Proust himself embodies. Marcel the narrator poses as the Marcel the reader to form a hermeneutic knot for the architecture of the work to be made clear at times. It also helps him to fill up the blanks he had left earlier, to rectify or ‘touch-up’ his work. The third volume opens with Marcel’s family having shifted to L’Hôtel Guermantes, but there has been nothing till the end of the

second volume to indicate this change. To ‘justify’, Proust brings in the trope of an implied reader in order to add on a necessary layer to the text; “it is high time now that the reader should be told [the reason for this shifting]” (III:2). Likewise, the fourth volume begins from a point which is not the end of the third volume but occurs somewhere earlier. To begin stitching from that point, and yet to maintain the continuous flow of the text, it is the reader who gets invoked again; “The reader will remember that...the visit I have just described...I have until now, until the moment I could give it the prominence and treat it with the fullness that it demanded, postponed giving an account of it” (IV: 1). The ‘reader-function’ is a ploy of the *Recherche* to corroborate to itself even more than to us its architecture palpable.

In ‘posing’ as the reader, the narrator gets a fresh lease of life, and is absolved from referring to himself as ‘I’ in these moments of reflection. It is a strange irony, that Marcel the character who does not and cannot practically get out of the shelf of his selfhood, and thus persists in referring to himself as ‘I’ throughout the work, behaves [*verhalten*] differently as narrator. Since writing is already a comportment [*Verhältnis*] towards the ‘outside’, the narrator never ever refers to himself as ‘I’ but always in the oblique disguise of a reader, or adopting a ‘we’. This second person plural is not merely a bond created by the narrator and us readers, but a pluralistic space where the Protean narrator can find a shape from where to direct his expressions outwards. Almost self-reflexive moments in Proust refer not to ‘a self’, but to an indistinct zone where the self is pluralized and dissolved in differences. For example, this prolepsis from the fourth volume: “as we shall see in the course of this book, for a reason which will be disclosed only at the end of it [that homosexuals are far too many than too few]” (IV: 36). Interestingly, even where the ‘first-person’ narrator does begin these passages by referring to the one who writes as ‘I’, the pronoun is immediately dissolved in the plural form; “But here I must first of all record a trifling incident, which will enable us to understand something that was presently to occur” (40).

To take these self-reflexive moments seriously would thus ironically involve us not according too much seriousness to the enclosure we call the self. Apart from breaking down the very structure of selfhood which serves as point of departure for these statements, the ‘freedom’ from I-ness [*Ichheit*] offers Proust to play with the conventions of reader-writer binaries. The narrator is Marcel and yet not Marcel the character; the metaphorical act of displacement that is writing does not allow the conservation of self in the movement towards the ‘outside’ of writing, as we have discussed in relation to Blanchot’s notions. Who is the narrator then? What is his name? In a rare moment of the narrative where Albertine calls the character-narrator by his name, Proust deliberately makes things confusing by clouding the words of his lover; “If we give the narrator the same name as the author of the book... would be ‘My Marcel’, or ‘My darling Marcel’” (V: 77).

In a passage from the party at the Prince de Guermantes in the fourth volume, the narrator ‘forgets’ the name of Mme d’Arpajon. Proust engages in a playful ‘fictive’ dialogue with the reader at the point, where a series of rather funny exchanges takes place. Takes place between whom? It is futile to ask this question. Like all other dialogues between characters of the novel, this too is fictive. In fact, the fictionality of this dialogue tends to point at the fictionality of the entire work. The exchanges don’t occur between people or agents, they occur as a construction just as the entire breadth of the *Recherche*.

‘All this’, the reader will remark, ‘tells us nothing as to the lady’s failure to oblige; but since you have made so long a digression, allow me, dear author, to waste another moment of your time by telling you it is a pity, young as you were (or as your hero was, if he isn’t you), you had already so feeble a memory that you could not remember the name of a lady whom you knew quite well’. It is indeed a pity, dear reader...’Well, did Mme’d’Arpajon introduce you to the Prince?’ No, but be quiet and let me go on with my story. (IV: 59-60)

There is ontologically no scope to cling on to the identity of one's own self, since the writing, or rhythm of art as Levinas puts it in this context, as metaphorical displacement begins when the "subject is caught up and carried away by it...[in] a sort of passage from oneself to anonymity" (132-133). Instead of making the self-reflexive moments to endorse a fulfillment of the self, Proust's muddling up of the pronouns in passage like the previous one could be read as a parody of the self. Although there are uses of such moments in an 'apparent' bid to 'clarify' things, they take leap from a zone that is not illumined, but one that belongs to shadows where the concrete individuality of self merges, becoming indistinct. To write is to give oneself over to this zone; one remains, like how philosophy appears in fiction as Mallarmé said, in absence. Blanchot's breakdown of the Proustian 'I' as fundamental to writing resonates this point;

it is no longer the real Proust or the writer Proust who has the ability to speak, but their metamorphosis into that shadow that is the narrator turned into a character of the book, the one who is in the story writes a story that is the work itself, and produces in his turn other metamorphoses of himself that are the different 'I's whose experiences he recounts. ("Book" 15)

Unlike a Realist framework that uses the narrator-address to corroborate the factuality of the narrative, self-reflexivity in the *Recherche* shamelessly, yet sincerely, admits its constructed, fictive. And yet, these confessions of falsity, aren't entirely 'true'. The masterstroke of these moments lies in their utter dismissal of that notion of truth as correspondence with reality. Since Proust creates a reality as 'original' in his work, there is no obligation of it to subscribe to a pattern that exists prior to it. This does not tantamount to claim that Proust's work is not preceded by other works or men, but since the world according to the Proustian belief is but vision that the work fashions for the first time, the world of the *Recherche* as a transformed

realm cannot be expected to correspond to that which has not received its birth in the light of this work.

The 'lies' that a fiction takes resort to are lies when they are evaluated in light of that which exists independent of it. Once transformed into the work, this lie becomes a part of the event of disclosure, which could be regarded as truth in so far as it makes something visible for the first time. Marcel the narrator admits to be a 'liar', only when these lies are regarded as facts.

If we were not obliged, in the interests of narrative tidiness, to confine ourselves to frivolous reasons, how many more serious reasons would enable us to demonstrate the mendacious flimsiness of the opening pages of this volume in which, from my bed, I hear the world awake; now to one sort of weather, now to another. Yes, I have been forced to whittle down the facts, and to be a liar.
(V: 212)

Truth is ambivalent in that it has two kinds of relevance. It can exist as correspondence in the world of facts, and disclosure in the world of art. The former involves closure, the latter, opening. Proust sets both these notions into a conflict in a passage where he talks of one of Françoise's cousins hailing from the Larivière family, who had left their estate at the countryside to come help a recently widowed relative in Paris, at whose café they worked every day for three years without charging a penny; "In this book there is not a single incident which is not fictitious, not a single character who is a real person in disguise, in which everything has been invented by me in accordance with the requirements of my theme", only these cousins are the 'real personages' (VI: 191). One should not get carried away by the solemnity of the declaration, for it is not 'true' factually. If Françoise herself is a fictional character of the book, how can her cousins be real? They could be real only if they

are understood to be the transformed images of people Proust had known in his life. And if that is so, would not all characters of his novel be equally true and real, since they too are, whether or not consciously fashioned out of acquaintances, images?

We shall now talk of the ambivalences of the Proustian narrative in reaching out towards 'other writings', the 'novel' and the 'memoir'. Perhaps there is no other novel of such a length as that of the *Recherche* whose most persistent complaint is the inability to write. Marcel as a character does not write the 'novel' he wants to compose; hasn't even a clue of how it is going to turn out to be till the end of the *Recherche*. Ironically, the narrator never refers to the narrative as a 'novel', but always as narrative or work, even book. Proust's novel becomes one only by not pretending to be a novel; a point we had mentioned in relation to Blanchot's observation that art becomes art only by beginning and continuing as anything but art. Had it not been so, the vision of the work would no more be pastiche; it should not have been able to really furnish a new way of understanding things.

There are two sets of connotations that the word 'novel' carries in the *Recherche*, and neither of them points to the text which we are reading. One meaning of the 'novel' is the book Marcel seeks to write, but is ever short of even beginning it. Just as the narrative of the *Recherche* seeks to be a novel only by becoming one, the lack of a standardized definition of what a novel should be is novelized as failure of the character to become a novelist. He fails because, other than lack of sincerity and perseverance, he harbors an idea of what a novel is. The first face of this ambivalent 'pre-understanding' of the 'novel' is that of the Ultimate Book of Mallarmé, a book ideal, because it is based on nothing, abolishing the chance of the contingent. Such a book, is by definition, unrealizable; it represents failure as the very destiny of the artist. It is no wonder that such a work could only present to itself to Marcel as a possibility;

Thus, the empty spaces of my memory were covered by degrees with names which in arranging, composing themselves in relation to one another, in linking themselves to one another by increasingly numerous connections, resembled those finished works of art in which there is not one touch that is isolated, in which every part in turn receives from the rest a justification which it confers on them in turn. (III: 622)

Although Proust's work has been hailed as being holographic, where each part could lead one to the totality of the whole, the writer himself lets such a claim dwell only in the 'memory' of the character. It is not a perfect work, that which is sought. Just as the art of imperfection is, as we have discussed in the last chapter, essential to the Proustian style, the asymptotic unreachability associated with perfection is embodied here through Marcel.

The paradox of 'writing about not being able to write' undercuts the whole of the *Recherche*, and it is our contention, that it points to a more fundamental paradox of 'being alive without living'. The writer seeks without knowing what is sought; he is a pilgrim on an eternal peregrination without a shrine in view. He cannot just write; he must describe, judge, reflect, prophesize and so on; every utterance, if it has to have meaning, must give up its longing for pure intransitivity. This condition is refracted in an inversion in the character Marcel, who does everything but does not write. "If only I had been able to start writing... what always emerged in the end of all my efforts was a virgin page, undefiled by any writing" (III: 166). Marcel's failure as an artist is not that of the *Recherche*; it is the complementary ambivalence of Proust's 'success', in the sense of being capable of having produced a work. The production of a work is not only fulfillment, but also disappointment. It is puerile to ask what this disappointment consists of; our discussions concerning Bataille on morality and Levinas' shadow should be used as a cue to understand the indispensable complementarity that accompanies everything in life, and especially so in the *Recherche*,

which could, among other things, be described as a long meditation on such ambivalences; that things are in that they are not; that “memory of a particular image is but regret for a particular moment” (I: 513). All activities of our life eventually strive to be something else; every ‘achievement’ thus is tinged with loss. The entirety of the *Recherche* is a presencing of this condition; Marcel the character appears to us through Marcel the narrator; Marcel the novelist remains elusive. The work shows itself as a failure not because it fails, but in being capable to set it up it must face the Symbolist quandary of the Absolute work. All works are copies; but only those are great that embrace this condition and works despite of it to bring themselves to splendor. Nabokov in *Lectures on Literature* hails this ‘failure’ as greatness; “The narrator of the work is one of its characters, who is called Marcel. In other words, there is Marcel the eavesdropper and there is Proust the author. Within the novel, the narrator Marcel contemplates, in the last volume, the ideal novel he will write. Proust’s novel is only a copy of that ideal novel- but what a copy!” (210-211).

The other connotation that is associated by the mention of the word novel stems from Marcel’s belief, that love affairs and women could be the subject matter of the work he wishes to write. Indeed, the *Recherche* has them as subject matter, but transformed into its fabric as impressions. “No doubt the love of a normal man may also, when the lover through the successive fabrications of his desires, regrets, disappointments, plans, constructs a whole novel about a woman whom he does not know” (III: 454). Here, Marcel is still under the spell that love that be the utmost inspiration. His understanding of the novel is hardly a work that takes toil; he regards it as a romantic throe of a moment; “Life had obligingly revealed to me in its whole extent the novel of this little girl’s life” (417). He wishes to impersonate characters of a novel by going out with a woman, and yet the company of Rachel offers him no great pleasure (V: 182).

What Proust tries to show here is the set of notions Marcel harbors about the novel as an artform. In turn, it helps the narrator not to fall prey to these notions in creating his narrative; for not only do these ‘conceptualizations’ do not correspond to his ontological concerns in the writing of the work, moreover, the novel cannot be ‘conceptual’ in the Proustian field of art as we have seen in discussion of the anti-Logos. The Romantic notion of the novel as bordering on the extraordinary, implausible, the fairy tale, a surprising adventure, usually erotic is carefully refrained from being developed by Proust while working on the *Recherche* (Descombes 56). The *Recherche* becomes a novel only by not imitating one.

Learning that Albertine had gone to a three-week trip with Lea, Marcel imagines “a tongue of flame seize and devour in an instant the novel which I had spent millions of minutes in writing” (V: 399). It is almost comical to realize that the novel becomes only a blank metaphor for Marcel, just like writing. He wishes to be an artist by avoiding the toil of writing. The novel for him is anything but a written text. And understandably so, because “the story of Albertine [is] the only story that interested” him (703). Proust transforms the motor-rides with his chauffeur and lover Agostenelli in Cabourg as Marcel driving with Albertine in Balbec. But Marcel is interested only to hold on to what are mere facts, not yet transformed to impressions. In contrast to Proust’s transformation, the ‘golden foliage of the drive with Albertine’s memory’ “interested me, touched me, like those purely descriptive pages into which an artist, to make them more complete, introduces a fiction, a whole romance” (641).

Marcel indeed thinks too much, instead of doing things. “Instead of setting myself at last to work, I preferred to relate aloud, to excogitate in a lively ecstatic manner...a whole novel crammed with adventure” (III: 70). And yet, even if he fails to begin the novel he seeks, Marcel does write fragments which could be together termed as his ‘memoirs’. A

proleptic moment in the first volume mentions these writings in passing; “And in later years when I began to write a book of my own” (I: 113). A ‘book of his own’ is not the book we are reading; it is the last vestige of narrative ambivalence that Proust has embedded his character with. Marcel looks for the columns of the *Figaro*, searching for the article he has sent (V: 5). The article indeed gets published and there are talks about his talent at the Guermantes mansion. Towards the end of the *Recherche*, Marcel is a known figure, but he brushes off this ‘fame’ for his novel has not yet been started; “I was a good deal talked about now, though on the strength of some very slight articles” (VI: 344).

Landy sums up the web of polyvalence between the *Recherche*, the novel and the memoirs aptly, observing that the *Recherche* is not what Marcel would write (the Book) not what he has been writing (the memoirs); it is the story as novelization of Marcel writing a memoir and arriving at the threshold of writing a novel (62). In a sense, this embodies our perpetual becoming, situated between the perforated shell of the self and the Other than lies beyond. It is by placing these poles at two ends, one of the achieved and the other that is sought, that seeking becomes the very fluid foundation of the human condition. The *Recherche* is what Deleuze calls an apprenticeship [*apprentissage*], just as life is a long preparation for a drama that would not play. Marcel receives inspiration from the artists who surround him, but he must go through the toil of creating his own work. His detour is a result of a mistake, but a necessary one at that; “I felt on hearing them [notes of Vinteuil’s work] an enthusiasm which might have borne fruit had I remained alone and would thus have saved me the detour of many wasted years through which I was yet to pass before the invisible vocation of which this book is the history declared itself” (III: 459).

(D) REDEMPTION AS ART, ART AS REDEMPTION

It is not by accident that music is reserved as the very last topic of discussion in our section concerning the *Recherche*. Here, its location is to be understood in a sense of finality that it carries in the work. Just as the novel grants a certain supremacy to music among other art forms, we too have waited until the very end, not simply however to confirm to any such hierarchy, but to show instead that the special status is itself conflicted, and embodies as such Marcel's and the novel's preoccupation with the dream of redemption.

We shall first examine how music features in Marcel's story and how his responses to musical impressions ground a Romantic desire for redemption from history. We shall then thematize this desire historically in the development of 'aesthetic education', the *Gesamtkunstwerk* and finally a Symbolist reception of artistic purity as nothingness. Thereafter, our task would be to examine the doubleness of this purity, finally leading to a concluding discussion concerning the ambivalence of value.

Most of Marcel's impressions centered on music echo the Schopenhauerian notion of music being the purest of all arts. Since all artforms involve representations, they are manifestations of a particular, individual impetus. Thus, the event of disclosure in our engagement with art can take place only by dint of this particularity of its distinct form. However, as we have already observed, the Romantic aspiration towards truth saw the figuration skeptically, and as a hindrance towards achieving truth as transcendent of all form-giving intentions. The goal, and as such shared by Marcel, was to reach a realm where a pure content would be made available. Since Romanticism regards purity as an escape from

materiality, form and representation, it sees any artistic experience as being partial. A work tells us something; the desire is to transcend the particularity of something towards a universality of everything, from the partiality of the work towards a ‘total work of art’ [*Gesamtkunstwerk*].

If Elstir’s metaphorical seascapes did provide Marcel a departure from routinized reality, Vinteuil’s music, being ‘non-representational’ offers him a more ‘nascent’ form of experience. The ‘world’ of music appears to him to be totally different from the world he inhabits, for there is nothing in which he hears that could be mapped to recognizable forms. Marcel feels, on hearing Vinteuil, “perhaps there are other worlds more real than the waking world...transformed by each new revolution in the arts” (V: 132). It cements his belief in an otherworldly realm for there is apparently in these experiences a break from materiality, or so Marcel thinks. The ‘mystical impressions’ in the *Recherche*, other than being produced involuntarily, are almost always associated with musical impressions that are by nature “non extensive...sine materia” (Beckett 71-72).

Schopenhauer allots a special place to music since in it, spatial representation and hence, individuality inherent in a subject representing an object by rendering form, are eliminated. What he wishes to point out, is that in music there is no separating distance between language and meaning. All other artforms make an idea present ‘through’ a concomitant phenomenon. In music, according to Schopenhauer, there is no such phenomena. Music thus is able to withhold the Idea purely, without the aid of representing language. Unaware of the world of phenomena, music exists ideally outside the universe, and is untouched by the teleological hypothesis (71).

Jean-Jacques Natiez’s reading of the role of music in the *Recherche* is closely aligned to this Schopenhauerian notion. Analogous to the Romantic fascination of a past epoch not

yet differentiated into individuality, he equates the *Recherche* as a quest for redemption (30-32). We have earlier remarked how Schopenhauer's notion of being one with the other [*Einfühlung*] is novelized in the development of Marcel's self. To unite with the Other as synthesis, however would be an idealistic fallacy of subsuming differences in identity, as Levinas has demonstrated. Music marks a culmination of this aspiration, although with time, Marcel does realize that such a transcendence is not possible in reality. Schopenhauer thinks that the subject and object fuse in the Idea, and music offers such an experiential field where the form-giving intention and the form combine to create a pure formless phenomenon. This is obviously an assumption that Schopenhauer could make since he understands form purely in spatial terms. He wishes to undo the spatial imagination of Rationalism in effecting a break from teleological reality. But if music, among other experiences, constitutes phenomena, then form would be indispensable to it. We shall continue with this paradox shortly. For now, we can observe how the lure of the transcendent no longer remains 'pure' for Marcel in the wake of his understanding that the world is always a world containing forms, and as a result, the charm of music is adulterated with doubt of attaining that divine, spiritual realm that rings out as a promise in musical phrases. He undergoes a 'superterrestrial joy' on another occasion listening to Vinteuil, but asks himself; "But would it be ever attainable to me?" (V: 294).

Kristeva reads Schopenhauer's 'celebrated pessimism' as a "response to a dislocated world, cutting right across the previous century's blithe confidence in progress" (88). Art must be then something radically different from what is lived as everyday life, just as 'aesthetic education' through art too shall be likewise directed away from the contemporaneous spirit of times, turning towards the past and nature. Marcel comes close to perceiving the fact that Vinteuil's music points towards a world of differences. As he envisages this world as a fact, like a real place where he could transport his self, he fails to understand the true significance of difference at this point. And yet, the radicality of the

music in not corresponding to familiar forms sets in him a doubt which is the starting point of realizing that truth cannot be sought as a transcendent object, but demands transformation of one's self towards being differently in the world. "But does it [world of differences] exist anywhere? Vinteuil's septet had seemed to tell me that it did. But where?" (V: 312) Instead of seeking it as a real place, the dynamics of introspection and exteriorization in turn reveals reality itself as different as we have discussed in the last two chapters, so that each of these notions are retained differently; art is a world of differences for it allows us to become by being different rather than escape history. Here, Schopenhauer's "apologia for the work of art as a form of consolation, a provisional form of comfort [*Quietiv*]" no longer holds true, for art does not become a diversion from life, but a return to it (Kristeva 89).

Natiez tells us that both Proust and Schopenhauer regard the essence to be present outside phenomena, which is a gross misunderstanding of Proust's reception of Schopenhauer. We have observed how the reception of Romanticism in Proust is ambivalent, and that applies in this context as well. No doubt there exists a desire for the beyond, but that is novelized in the character Marcel, with this very same desire refuted by the writing of the *Recherche* in embracing the cacophony of life. Truth as singularity of the event, as aesthetic idea, requires form to present itself [*sich ereignen*]. To overlook this fundamental aspect would be to land at self-contradictory quandaries as the following one would demonstrate. Marcel is 'made to commit' the same fallacies as Romantic thinkers when he undergoes intense experiences. The displacements caused by impressions from art are understood by Marcel as a shift from time, hence from history to a region outside time; the analogous to Romantic penchant for timeless myths. In such experiences, Marcel has the feeling that "death loses meaning because [they] are situated outside time" (225). But is that not a contradiction? The very experience of music is based on temporality on musical notes intersperses with silence, and yet Marcel relegates such an 'experience of time' to a timeless

realm. Just as the relegation of aesthetic in favor of the ethical, Romantic disregard for the concrete leads to a devaluation of form. Bersani tells us in his eponymously titled book that the culture of redemption might be thought of as a creation of what Nietzsche called the theoretical man, who Nietzsche claimed first appeared in the West in the person of Socrates, a man who attributes to thought the power to correct existence (2). Art seen as a corrective of life tantamount to understanding art as philosophy, and such “a redemptive aesthetic based on the negation of life must also negate art” (ibid). What Proust seeks to project is the antithesis of that which Marcel ‘philosophizes about art’. Quite in contrast to being timeless, it is art in the form of the novel and music that lends us an original sense of time. Our experience of the beautiful, in contrast to giving us a whiff of immortality, makes us realize the continuous presence of death more acutely than ever. The joy that art brings along with it is ephemeral, and embodies the nature of joy as such. Unlike Marcel, the sharpness of a joyful moment gives one a feel of the fleeting transience of human life; that our being too, in every moment of our lives, just as life taken as whole, is rather short-lived.

Natiez suspects the placing of different art forms along the length of the *Recherche* to be a manifestation of a series, where every stage progressively leads towards purer forms of expression. He opines that such a progression is similar to the order in which Schopenhauer places the artforms in an ascending order of supremacy. The series begins with architecture, based as it is in the most directly solid materials of the earth. Human will in representation becomes absolutely outward in the structures man builds with clay and stone. Natiez places Marcel’s fascination with the Balbec church or the steeples of Martinville at this material stage of perception. The second stage is that of the pastoral, analogous to Schopenhauer’s treatment of gardening, and this shift from the representational to natural is novelized according to Natiez in the impression of the Martinville steeples embodied in the second volume of the work in the three trees of Hudimesnil. Painting holds an intermediate position

in the ladder where representation does not necessarily stem from an idea, but co-forms it, and it explains, according to this logic, Elstir's presence concentrated in the middle portion of the work. Finally, the series culminates in the apotheosis of the musical form, where there are no traces of visual forms, a fact that Schopenhauer and Natiez both associate with the presence of idea without representation. "Therefore, in the composer, more than in any other artist, the man is entirely separate and distinct from the artist" (Natiez 83). Vinteuil's septet is placed towards the end of the work to create the ascending progression of Marcel from the problem of form towards liberation from form, leading him to a redemption from the world of forms. Marcel himself values music more than literature, as far as 'collection of inspiration' is concerned; "this music seemed to me truer than all known books" (V: 427). This must be regarded with irony for Marcel seeks to be writer to discover truths, whereas his romantic disposition towards purity of those truths force him to admit the form of music to be closer to that goal than writing.

We know that Vinteuil's music occurs many times in the book, and not just towards the end. Natiez, however, interprets this fact in such a fashion so as to cement his theory even more strongly. At first hearing, the expression is purely impressionistic. Marcel, like Swann, hardly 'understands' the music for it is entirely unfamiliar to him. On subsequent hearings, the sonata and the septet become 'descriptive'. Marcel is able to express what he feels on hearing the music, and the piece of music too in metaphorical terms. This 'series' eventually lead him to a point where the music stands for pure sound. It neither asks for description by transcribing the experience in human language, nor felt confusedly, but paves the path for transcendence from language and forms. We shall provide an alternative explanation of this series based on divergence; for the moment, we draw the inference that Natiez's interpretation of the different experiences of hearing music tends to subsume the differences to a logic of convergence where the listener is gradually led from one stage to another in a

teleological fashion. Ironically, Schopenhauer had favored music for it lacked a telos.

Natiez's reading based on Schopenhauer maps the role of music in the *Recherche* teleologically.

Our next task shall be to locate this longing for purity historically and to trace its implication in the making of art. With technology and industrialization, Europe had slid into a secularization where values of religion no longer played a role in forming an agent of cohesion among people. Human activities were becoming increasingly based on personal motives and capitalistic gains without any personality-building framework to channel individuality within a larger structure. Thus, Europe felt a need to re-structure itself, one of its consequences being the growth of Romanticism with Oriental imports coming in through colonial enterprises. History being the realm of the particular was seen as a tyrannical fiend, and the desire to redeem oneself from this tyranny was embodied in theorizations of history and theories on art alike.

Saint-Simon conceived history to be a succession of organic and critical epochs. The present time was seen embedded in the latter; hence, the only movement possible according to this model had to be towards a 'return' to organicity. We can note the similarity of such a model with Schiller's understanding of naïve and sentimental poetry. The former is an organic product, one with nature. The latter is the expression of human alienation from nature and community.

Both Wagner and Nietzsche share the commonality of looking towards a pre-logocentric past as a model for the spiritual re-generation of Europe, even if their interpretation of this past epoch was to be varying. Wagner regards the post-Socratic period as the advent of Europe's decline where art and religion came to be usurped by philosophy, namely rationality, which gradually, in the wake of Renaissance, led to individualism and

alienation of man from his roots. Resonating with Nietzsche, Wagner felt that communal artworks decayed from the days of Euripides and Aristophanes. Nietzsche too makes this binary distinction between Athenian/tragic culture and Alexandrian/theoretical culture, where the preponderance over form in the latter entailed a loss of a natural chaos and disorder, in short, the 'magic' of human life. The downfall of tragedy and the rise of Socratic enlightenment is judged by him as a dissolution of organic culture through secularization [*Verweltlichung*]. Both Wagner and Nietzsche's outlook, along with that of Saint-Simon, is structurally similar to that of Hegel's philosophy of history based on the triad of unity, unity lost, unity regained (Roberts 72).

Wagner's response to such a historical problem is the total work of art or *Gesamtkunstwerk*, cast in the 'form' of the opera. The objective is to make art as holistic as possible, in that it takes in all possible modes of expressions within its corpus. This amalgamation of co-habiting forms is a metaphor for unity, where the particularity and partial capability of each are complicated in a fused state of being. It shall implore all senses of perceiver, thereby invoking a 'total' experience, and bringing all people together at the amphitheater at Bayreuth being an echo of unification sought by the city festivals envisaged by Rousseau, discussed earlier. Like Hegel, Wagner sees art as decadent if it fosters individuality. However, art is individual and individualizing as we have many times stressed in the course of the thesis. The only recourse left out of this dilemma would be to posit art in such a way that it begins to negate its individual character. In Wagner, this is attempted by approaching such an extreme, holistic composition, that the constructed nature of the artifice would be undermined by its 'richness'. The *Gesamtkunstwerk* is holistic to the point of self-negation, of disapproving its existence as an artwork.

At the other extreme stands the Absolute Work of Mallarmé. Here too, the intention is to create a work that would be total; a transhistorical phenomenon. How could the

phenomenality of a phenomenon be undermined? Mallarmé's response is frugality in contrast to Wagnerian profusion. The work shall be so minimalistic so as to tend towards its self-negation. Here, minimalism is not to be understood thematically like in Beckett's plays, but in contradistinction to Wagner's approach. Wagner wishes to fuse art and reality by bringing the whole of the latter into the other. The constitutive impulse of the total work of art functions as the abolition of the boundary between art and reality that manifests itself as a potentiation of illusion (29). Mallarmé, on the other hand, uses material in such a way so that they deny their materiality, and in doing so, overcome their contingency. A point of difference to be noted between the purity of Wagner and Mallarmé is that the former is emphatic in arriving at it, whereas for the latter it is an unreachable ideal which is the condition of each work.

Both these tendencies are inherent in Marcel and in the *Recherche* as such. Proust's universe is huge, not just in length but in the variegations of themes it involves. It novelizes almost all artforms, from architecture to puppetry, music to painting, drama to opera. And yet there is a vacuity at the heart of the *Recherche*. The totality of the work as we have discussed does not lie in a unification of all these fragments. Wagner is the most quoted artist in the *Recherche*, and influences Marcel's theories significantly. But the *Recherche* as a novel does not align with a similar orientation as that of the composer of the *Ring tetralogy*. On the other hand, we have seen how the fascination of writing about nothing is ambivalently embodied in the *Recherche* as a reception of Flaubert and Mallarmé's aesthetics, but that this nothingness seeks to ground itself as presence by accepting the materiality of the work rather than abstracting to a lifeless murmur of language. Perhaps the ambivalence of Proust towards the Total Work and the Absolute Work could be better understood by the unresolved paradoxes that lurk in both of these aesthetic frameworks. To probe into that would be to retrace our focus back to the point where theorizations and problems concerning aesthetics first appear in

the European horizon, that is, in the conflicts that undercut Kant's approach towards the Beautiful and the Sublime.

The aesthetic phenomenon is accorded a peculiar position by Kant as being a means towards an end. Sensual perception that creates pleasure in us by dint of symmetry of forms is a gateway that points to a supersensible domain of the ethical (Ellison 7). To perceive something as beautiful is not one's subjective interpretation of that thing's beauty. Beauty is the realm of subjective universality; it is a universality not given, but arrived at through sensual pleasure of the beautiful. This makes beauty an ennobling phenomenon [*Erhebung*]; to be able to perceive something as beautiful is to enter a trans-personal realm of humanity. Beauty is moral in that it grounds the perceiver in this commonness of experience.

In Schiller, this phenomenon is granted centrality. True art would not be an emblem of irony, but by fostering universality through its beauty, shall inspire all to come into a common fold of togetherness. That which moral wisdom in the form of philosophy or religion through its figurations and allegories are unable to achieve, art is called upon to fulfill exactly that. 'Moral beauty' is the cornerstone of Schiller's 'aesthetic education' for it holds the potentiality to restore the totality that has been lost due to division of labor and analytical thinking. He follows Kant in regarding representational art as deceptive and advocates a higher art where beauty shall function as an index of moral freedom.

Comparing our notes on Rousseau, we observe that both French revolutionary republicanism and German aesthetic taste makes art a redemptive dream of social regeneration. And it is exactly in such a tendency that the solipsism of modern man, instead of being overcome, strengthens its root. By investing art with a function, it is turned into yet another tool of the modern era of science. Moreover, the aspiration to place art and philosophy at par with the universality of science is a further disregard of historical

particularity. Aesthetics, being endowed with a supersensible telos, becomes then an indirect discourse where symbols are an inevitable burden. Kant sees symbolism as a threat for the symbol in art is the mode through which individuality could be exercised, exactly in contrast to science where symbols aid in universalizing the discipline into formulae. Ellison traces Kant's pietistic upbringing as being the determining factor behind his aversion to forms of iconic figurations, a phenomenon we have already encountered in Kierkegaard. Kant is not comfortable in the domain of the Beautiful, because it is close to the sensual; it is in constant need of ennoblement and elevation of disciplinary supervision (12).

The Sublime finds more resonance with Kant's temperament than does the Beautiful for obvious reasons. While beauty is 'created' by the involvement of senses in the phenomenon, the sublime is a phenomenon where phenomenality is set in a relation of self-negation. The sublime is that which cannot be imagined and projected by our senses; it only conveys this impossibility in the phenomenon. The dimensions of nature and God astound and terrorize us by their infiniteness. Infinity is not perceived as a sense; it is cognized intellectually. The sublime points at our inability to imagine something enormously great, and thus helps Kant indirectly by serving itself as a tool to subjugate the individualistic ego of modern man; "even though imagination can attach itself to nothing beyond the realm of the sensible, feels the exhilaration of its own boundlessness" (14). That man is not bound to the contingent, but has the potential of conceiving itself despite individuality as part of a larger structure: this then is the re-formulation of Descartes's 'Objective Reason' as our minds being a thinking substance which is capable of thinking of God from whence it came.

We are continuing on the trail which we began in the ambivalence between art and philosophy, this time backwards to unveil its origins. On one hand, art is granted a sort of sovereignty, where the *Kunstkörper* of Rome no longer holds, with museums now function as an 'autonomous space' for artworks. But on the other hand, art is hardly granted its thingness

in being regarded as an instrument for redemption and regeneration. Representation is castigated by Kant, Hegel and Rousseau; and yet art is to be that springboard which can project man to land where all formal distinctions are merged in one pure 'spiritual' gaze. The fetish for redemption is founded on such a paradoxical unfirm ground, where whatever is externalized as art must be a tool for looking inward; a paradox that we have been tracing all along in the last two chapters whose historical origins we have now attempted to uncover.

It is to undo such an approach towards reading the *Recherche* that Joseph Acquisto posits the mode of 'listening' as a substitute to both 'seeing' and 'hearing'. Seeing or visual form has always been regarded as ironical in that it glaringly bears a testament to a subject-object binary, which is but a reflection of the ego's undisputed centrality. Acquisto also involves seeing with passivity of looking; sights don't invade our senses since it is possible to turn away or close one's eyes when such a need arises. Quoting Gerald Bruns, he points out "the opposition between the putative perfectly rational world of the visual and the more porous and complex world of the audible" (2). We know how to fit the visual forms in a perspective, being thus in a position to reify the unknown within an order. On the contrary, the metaphor of listening is involved with the unprecedented and always keeps us on the brink of suspense being a temporal phenomenon; sound is invasive that "transforms the 'I' of the cognition and representation into the 'me' whose existence is exposed and vulnerable" (3). Listening is different from hearing, for the former is a refusal of definite conclusions. Such an open interchange does not allow us to describe what we are listening to, not because listening is an intransitive act. Listening is truly transitive for that which is listened to does not have any other name other than the succession of sound that follows.

To read the *Recherche*, or any work for that matter, would be to open oneself up to this surprise in which our being could be drastically transformed and carried away by an unprecedented gust of the unknown. To conceive a work in visual terms is what Kant,

Wagner, Hegel and Nietzsche did; which in turn led them to regard art in terms of subjective representation. Shifting the paradigm of perceiving art as a perpetual listening, experience gets grounded in phenomenality. There is then no longer a need to seek for a transcendent realm, for it is in the material of sound and tonality that the event at all takes place. We can now infer that Schopenhauer was mistaken to assume music as an escape from phenomenality since he equated form exclusively as visual. Music is pure art only by being purely material, purely phenomenal, and not as Schopenhauer and Nietzsche claims in being Idea or Will.

Myth is pure content; music is pure form. While the Romantic fascination with an ethical, redeeming content as well as the need to escape history make mythologization an important tool in art as we witness in Wagner's use of Christian myths and Nietzsche's advocacy of the Dionysian, on the other end of the spectrum, a musical understanding of a work as being listened to is a sensitivity towards its particular form. Schopenhauer's interpretation of music exactly coincides with listening, only if we subtract the Will-Idea equation and include time as an equally relevant dimension where form-rendering can take place as in space. We shall now revisit the 'mystical impressions' of the *Recherche* in light of the exposition we have carried out meanwhile, and find out whether Marcel's doubtful valuation of their purity at all sticks or gives way to fresh ambivalences.

To return to Nietzsche's characterization of the stages of Vinteuil's sonata in how they appear in the *Recherche*, the transition from 'impressionistic' to 'descriptive' and then towards 'pure sound' could be alternatively envisaged as a steady generation of differences that culminate in an understanding of phenomenality. Nietzsche regards pure sound in the sense that Schopenhauer regards music without visual representation as the purest artform. However, our contention is that music is indeed the purest form because phenomenality had no conceptual counterpart in it. Music is not the Idea incarnate; it is sound incarnate with no

space left for any conceptual aspect to linger. Had these musical impressions indeed left Marcel synthesized with the world, they would not have instilled doubt in him nor made his longing for creating art acute. And thus, these musical impressions must be seen in the light of the ambivalence in which Proust shrouds them. These experiences begin with Romantic notions of truth and redemption, but their doubleness instigates a re-valuation of these notions. “While Proust’s poetics seeks to maintain the Romantic ideal of a total mediation and correspondence between self and world, self and other, his narrative increasingly deprives this ideal of its core” (Haustein 67).

Natiez notes that the presentation of the sonata in the *Recherche* too follows a distinct pattern. Both Swann and Marcel come across the work selectively; they are not given the whole of the work but they listen and internalize fragments out of it. Secondly, the experience is discontinuous, for other events creep in the internal that separates the successive hearings of Vinteuil’s works. Lastly, the impressions are changeable, so far as their meaning or significance alters with time. Here too, Natiez interprets the differences in a convergent series to suit the purpose of setting the divergences to a common goal of salvaging the self; “each time he [Proust] describes the sonata he can suggest, and in a manner that is stronger with each description, this transcendent dimension towards which Swann could direct his energies, but which he will never understand” (43).

Even Marcel is not as convinced as Natiez is, as far as the divergences of the experiences are concerned, and how they increasingly reveal the constructed nature of the work. Natiez’s reading of the sonata denies the work the status of being a composition; like Kant, his Romantic treatment of Vinteuil’s music deprives the work its artistic merit and pushes it to a supersensible domain of self-redemption. Marcel, on being able to identify the skill and hard work of the composer behind the music, feels it is less charming in being a product of labor. Such a de-valuation is a result of a belief that art is created in a moment of

inspiration and wonder, whereas in reality, things are far from being so. Marcel compares the skill of Balzac and Vinteuil with the artisan god Vulcan and feels art is not after all that powerful a tool for escaping reality as he had envisaged it so far; “Art was not something that was worth a sacrifice, something above and beyond life, that did not share its fatuity and futility: the appearance of genuine individuality...illusion produced by technical skill” (220). We can draw two observations from such a remark. Firstly, Marcel’s Romanticism makes him deem art as something totally different from life. He understands life as disappointing because it offers partial glimpses of the world. Secondly, he regards technical skill as technique, whereas for the artist, *techne* is a way of knowing and revealing truth, just as we discussed in the first chapter while dealing with Heidegger’s notions about the origin of the work.

‘Pureness’ is most certainly a longing that the *Recherche* evinces, but in trying to fashion a novel about nothing, Proust does not extricate language from mankind like Flaubert, but directs it towards making a new vision of what was considered to be real. Art, being a realm of aesthetic ideas, can only ‘show’ the nothingness it seeks, instead of conceptualizing it abstractedly. Thus, Proustian purity, like that of Music, is material, phenomenal purity. We feel the void and inanity of life only by opening ourselves to the world. Futility is a feeling that happens ‘after’ we have gone through a chain and network of events. Similarly, the vacuous core of the *Recherche* appears only in the material of what composes it; it is not thought of, but made. We shall have the scope of thematizing the ‘shaped void’ in our chapters of Musil, where too, emptiness is a contingent and concrete phenomenon. Unlike Romantic fancy of supersensible nothing by denying thingness of the world, Modernist nothing is a constructive one.

Proust novelizes the seeking for an empty time by constructing the past of Marcel as it had never existed in a present that has been outlived or in a present that has been thought of

in memory; the *Recherche*'s vacuity lies in its construction of a past that has never existed prior to its creation. The search in the *Recherche* is an ever-ongoing act of creation, of returning again and again to language and to expatiate knowing well that the impermanent moment of utterance is going to recede according to the fate of time; a search for, in Deleuze's words "a little time in its pure state refers first to the pure past... but more profoundly to the pure and empty form of time, the ultimate synthesis, that of the death instinct which leads to the eternity of the return in time" ("Nietzsche and Philosophy" 122). Purity is not an escape, but return, which is the mode of creation as we shall shortly be discussing. Marcel has to relinquish his dream for a panoramic vision for that not only exceeds the limits of human perception but also extricates the viewer from what is viewed. The response to the failure of panoramic vision is the narrative of juxtapositions; the former craves to possess and supervise everything in a homogenous gaze, the latter accepts diversity and scatters vision among the plethora of fields of action.

Marcel maintains throughout the novel that will and intelligence are not as crucial as necessity when it comes to creating art. Consequently, he waits for a sign from the outside that could inspire him to produce the work in a flash. The *Recherche*'s ambivalence lies in parodying obliquely such a naïve belief. For Schopenhauer, there is a neutralization and suspension of will through art; and it is indeed true as far as art has no 'function' to play unlike an equipment in reality, though this suspension itself is endowed with the functionality of providing redemption, as we have observed. However, form is, unlike Kant thought, not a precursor to the abstract. It resides in material and refers to beyond itself towards meaning. When different things combine in a work, the event of this complication carries a sense which is far from suspension or neutralization of meaning. Therefore, form-giving intention of the artist is not mystical process of doing away with meaning, but the very act of meaning-making by the formation so created. Unlike the will that aims to achieve a material purpose in

the real world, or the Schopenhauerian Will as appearing incarnate in the non-representational non-phenomenal music, the artist's expressive agency, in the words of Deleuze, is involved in 'willing the event' (148-53). Thus, we encounter yet another ambivalence, this time of will. Desire has to be excused from art as long as it seeks something to adduce to the self; will is necessary as long as it seeks to sublimate the self towards the 'outside' of expression, it wishes to give instead of collecting. Beistegui's observation that the Proustian solution isn't that of Schopenhauerian *Einführung*, for "art coincides with the actualization of will with truth [of disclosure, event, expression]" (24).

Proust novelizes the ambivalent doubleness of purity associated with music by rendering the phenomena where musical impressions appear and play out in the *Recherche* in conjunction with that which is held contradictory to pure, that is eroticism and sexuality. Natiez sees the shift from Swann's association with the sonata to Marcel's with the septet as a "redemption of sexuality through a work of art" (57). Such a valuation is partially correct. Natiez estimates the septet as a metaphor for the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and in the vein of Schopenhauer and Wagner, imagines the work to be Marcel's savior; "Any musician will observe that with the exception of percussion, all the instrumental families (woodwind- flute, oboe; brass; bowed strings- violin, cello; plucked strings- harp; strings that are struck- piano; and one cannot but see in this another symbol of completeness" (71). But does the septet indeed redeem Marcel? Does it transform his life or only points to him a possible transformation which, he alone, in the act of creating art over years as his creator Proust had undertaken, would have to go through? The septet seems to him like

strange summons which I should henceforth never cease to hear, as the promise and proof that there existed something other, realizable no doubt through art, than the nullity that I had formed in all my pleasures and in love itself, and that

if my life seemed to me so futile, at least it had not yet accomplished everything.

(V:297)

But how do these moments conspire to take place in the *Recherche*? The very first occurrence where Vinteuil becomes significant for Marcel is not through his music, but through the scene of lesbianism between the composer's daughter and her friend he gets a sneak at Montjouvain. Likewise, music as we have seen in Swann's life, is inextricably linked to amorous pleasures. And finally, it is from these 'artists of evil', Mlle Vinteuil and her friend, that the septet sees the light of the day, as already pointed out in the last chapter. Noting these 'placings' of music in rather 'impure' settings going by Romantic standards, Kristeva concurs with Beistegui's notion of actualization of will. She rightly remarks that aesthetic enthusiasm in Schiller, Schlegel and Schelling, far from providing a diversion from the truth which in the Socratic tradition could be attained only through philosophy, is on the contrary the means of linking human consciousness to the natural world (89). And yet, the ambivalence of making art pose as philosophy entails an import of the latter's morality. By making his hero harbor such Romantic sentiments and by placing such sentiments in the clammy materiality of the world of passion, Proust "counteracts, if he does not entirely shatter, the romantic tendency to place music in an ideal, separate realm, and roots it in the dramas of eroticism" (92). As observed before, Proust is ambivalent towards the Romantic temperament. It is impossible to come out of the fold of redemption given that the artist inevitably seeks a new order; even in art devoted to religion, expression challenges orthodoxy and makes god/God 'appear' in figurations. What then distinguishes Proust from his Romantic predecessors is how this redemption is re-valued in light of his own ontological concerns, which leads him to "saturate [his] Romantic appropriation in the inanity and intensity of sexual drama" (93).

We have now reached a point in our discussion where we are in a position to understand the previously analyzed complementarity between ethics and evil as components

of a fractal self as a novelization of the ambivalence that is played out between the moral and the aesthetic. The segregation of art from life is a mirroring of the distinction made between the morally good and bad, between the scope of redemption and the abnegation towards decadence. This distinction itself is an aesthetic act which is suppressed in the making of the myth of redemption. What Proust's novel does in juxtaposing the good against evil is to challenge the foundation of such a myth and expose the temporal character of any such conceptions. Lesbianism is regarded by Marcel to be amoral, and this outlook is a creative act of committing a judgement. Art, on the other hand, is invested with spirituality and divinity, which is equally a fiction. By making the lesbian couple the originator of the septet and turning the artistically brilliant Morel into a sadist, Proust novelizes phenomenality. The phenomenon has no claim to purity; it makes no distinction between the good and evil because its task is to make things appear, irrespective of fixed moral standpoints. It would be wrong to call Proust decadent or an anarchist, for in the *Recherche*, space is reserved for the spiritually exalting as well as to cruelty. Stephen Gilberts Brown's comment on this ambivalence points out the moral indifference of the artist in de-constructing fixed perspectives of moral precepts in the act of complicating differences, and in the embracing acceptance of the fictionality that governs all such complications, including those which claim themselves to be moral knowledge or education; "Throughout the *Recherche*, genius is inseparable from vice; it is vice that humanizes genius, and genius that redeems vice" (22-23). The contention between the purity of art and the associated idea of genius with vice as representative of history and culture of degradation offers Proust a ground to novelize the aesthetic foundations of philosophy and the philosophical foundations of aesthetics.

Looking back at Wagner, we can notice how a denial of aesthesis in myth-making can sprout self-contradictions. Like Hegel, Wagner thinks the Renaissance and the Reformation through secularization led to the decline of arts, except music. In *Parsifal*, Wagner unfolds a

myth of a movement from the profane to the sacred, another binary that is a product of Romanticism. It is at this point that Wagner departs from Nietzsche in discrediting the Greek ideal and shifting towards a pro-Christian thrust (Roberts 104). For Wagner, music has no antecedent before Christian civilization. The revival of visual symmetry is no more possible; moreover, the visual realm is loaded with representation that has to be avoided. Sharing the distrust against the church which Hegel also bore, Wagner feels only art could be an expression of the religious, which in turns leads him to incorporate the myth of the Holy Grail in *Parsifal*. But his claim of art being divine content in pure form backfires due to the excessively representative pomp that surrounds his operatic pieces. This explains Nietzsche's changed perception of Wagner in which he accuses the *Gesamtkunstwerk* as decadent and self-defeating in its purpose; loss of sense of the whole, disintegration of style, anarchy of parts (90).

Such a contradiction is also present in the Absolute work posited by Mallarmé. The 'Book to come' is not an unrealized project; it is an exemplification of the impossibility of the virtual Book in the possibility of 'lesser' fictions. Representation prohibits one from attaining the purity of the Book. Hence, the ideal of the Symbolist work gets based on 'dematerialization, abstraction and generalization'. Although the maxim admits the impossibility of attainment, the foregrounding of language as pure sound without meaning is a contradiction of language. The difference between language and sound resides in the condition of the former referring to things and bearing sense as meaningful. If Wagnerian art becomes representational despite claiming non-representational purity, Symbolist art is bound to be meaningful despite seeking to attain non-meaningful purity.

Redemption involves two sets of ambivalent structures. Firstly, redemption is analogous to metaphor in that it too involves a displacement from one realm to another realm. It distinguishes itself from metaphor in that the subject who is redeemed wishes to remain as

a subject even in the subsequent realm; self is conserved in the Romantic framework of the redemptive dream. Metaphorical displacement, however, as we have discussed, involves a cessation of self and a movement towards becoming. The second ambivalent tension in redemption is that between the means and the end. Art, for example, is to function in Wagner as the means of redemption. But for redemption to be successful, this means should obliterate itself. Just as Kant demanded a retraction of symbolism in beauty paving the way towards the supersensible, that which redeems me should itself efface itself in the act.

These are the tensions that are embodied in the *Recherche* being a home to two warring voices; the celebratory and the skeptical (Prendergast 27). The most exhilarating moments of Marcel makes him feel above death, immediately followed by an increased awareness of time's passing and doubts whether he would be able to create his work while there is still time left to do so. Even Vinteuil's music which had sounded so enchanting to Swann, had a hollow center; beauty, Swann dimly discerned, almost cried out with the pain and loneliness the artist might have withstood in his lifetime. Marcel reflects that Vinteuil himself might be sad and timid, but had been capable of an audacity, and in the full sense of the word a felicity (V: 287).

Although aesthesis begins with the form-giving intention of the artist, it is not a reflection of his ego. Things in language and color have a life of their own, and brims over the circumferential enclosure of the artist's biographical self to subsist in time as impersonal entities. It is only because Kant and Hegel still persist with the subject-object model that symbolism and representation pose themselves as problems for them. Language being expression, the aesthetic realm is an indifferent territory, like nature. Just as nature is indifferent to the activities, happiness and suffering of man, art can speak to us across time only because they are not exhaustible messages meant to fulfill a specific purpose. Ellison

thus compares the pre-ethical aesthetic zone with Blanchot's *le neutre* that neither reveals nor hides anything. It only opens within language an Other [*un pouvoir autre*] (35).

If the aesthesis precedes the ethical in the sense that language 'forms' morals, the element of redemption in a creative work of art is bound to be posited as something problematic. Redemption becomes relevant as long as one believes one's life to be given and seeks an escape from it. Art, however, is engaged in creating reality, and thus cannot practically seek redemption for it is unable to invest a faith in an already-given stratum. Malcolm Bowie observes that the "redemptive power and vanity of art [is] revealed in a single gaze with no resolution" (318). Marcel is enthralled by Vinteuil's pieces but it does nothing to alter his own being. Art cannot change us, until we comport with the world metaphorically like art, displacing ourselves to become human differently. There is, in the *Recherche*, an aesthetic solution to the problem of living reflected as a trace of Romanticism in Marcel, and a struggle with the solution as a problem in its own right embodied as the novel's own becoming in language rather than escaping it towards a supersensible domain (Prendergast 30).

This ambivalence has been interpreted differently by Proust scholars. Martin Hägglund sees such moments as the inevitable doubleness that accompanies every phenomenon. We must not seek to resolve the ambivalence, for to do that would be to deny its existence, and lead ourselves to complacent but self-defeating consequences. Every event involves a production of meaning, but the human subject cannot claim a total role in this production. In fact, meaning shall be produced as sense only when our being ceases to envisage itself as a subject and try involving in relations with things. Marcel's quest for clarity and redemption is futile as long as his subjective ego is at the driver's seat. Redemption becomes equivocal only when he begins to comport to what he regarded as mundane for so long; his dream of redemption becomes yet another thing in the network of

things, not entirely 'his' anymore. Hägglund's view is close to Deleuze's understanding of event as impersonal, as a willing that does not produce from the identity of self but seeks to find difference in the 'outside'. That which is truth, could at the same time be non-truth without mutually contradicting one another, as the prison chaplain tells K in the cathedral in *Der Proceß*; "The right perception of any matter and a misunderstanding of the same matter do not wholly exclude each other" (238). This is not merely an absurdist way of viewing the world. Logic no doubt would not allow such contradiction since truth in logic is based on identity and correspondence. But events do not proceed from the exclusivity of a subjectivist analytical thinking. They extend beyond the frontiers of the logical self: a realization Kafka puts in on behalf on his confused and obstinate hero K at the end of his novel; "Logic is doubtless unshakable, but it cannot withstand the man who wants to go on living [as a logical subject]" (250). The ambivalence of redemption is a cue to the very conflicted nature of event, where a part is actualized, and another part cannot realize its accomplishment which are like actualization and counter-actualization. The world has us in it and more than us; phenomena include as well as exclude as simultaneously; "Every event is like death, double and impersonal in its double" ("Logic of Sense" 152).

Beistegui feels, like Hegel and Kierkegaard, that transubstantiation or spiritualization of the material could be a remedy for the disappointment of life. We have already pointed out the perils of such a notion as far as creating art is concerned. Beistegui's formula is relevant as long as material values are substituted and transformed by art. De-realization then occurs for the sake of realizing the artwork in the substance that is used to make it, which in turn casts a fresh light on substantiality itself; like for example, the Fauvism of Matisse or the thickness of the color black in the paintings of Pierre Soulages.

Leo Bersani's treatment of the problem of redemption is very significant in that he inverts the very structure of the sought-after displacement. The usual structure of redemption

has as its point of departure the assumption that the present environment of facts and decadence and disappointments constitute life, culture and history. Armed with this assumption, redemption seeks antitheses in the form of spirituality, myth and the past. But Proust has repeatedly stressed that literature is true life, true reality. Had Proust too believed the present to be life as it is given, would he have used the same terms like life and reality which nowhere feature in the constructions of redemptive goal in Romanticism? The *Recherche* as “the story of a life whose meaning is fully realized only when that life is transformed into literature necessarily illustrates a progress from what is given in life to what is imagined and invented in art” (Bersani, “Fictions” 5). The present is absent in Proust; the plethora of circulating opinions, facts and clichés constitute the superficial realm from where a movement towards profundity is sought. In this hankering for profundity, Proust is outrightly Romantic. Yet, it is not from life that redemption is sought. Life itself is the goal towards which the redemptive movement shall have to be undertaken. Art is not an escape from life, but a return to it. “For the work of art does not reflect an already existing self; in a sense, it creates the man whose existence it reveals and contains” (17).

We observe that ‘returning’ is common to both the Romantic and the Proustian positing of redemption. The former kind wishes to return to a past and re-establish an identity with the foregone. To regain unity is to be the same as one was before that unity was lost. Proustian returning to life is on the other hand becoming different than the self one is presently. This returning is based on difference, and as such embodies creation. Creation occurs when forces return to the realm of appearances in an original movement; it is repetition as difference, not identity. We shall trace Nietzsche’s notion of ‘eternal return’ and its reception in Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* to understand the ontology of Proustian returning to life as a novelistic embodiment of the repetitive returning that informs the artistic process as such.

Whereto is the return of 'eternal return' directed? Pre-Socratic philosophy looked at eternal return as the subjugation of becoming to pre-determination by fate. In such an outlook, fate or destiny is accorded primacy. Everything is preordained. When events occur, they return to fulfilling this destiny. Here, returning is based on repetition of the identical.

Nietzsche's approach towards eternal return is not directed to the past to fulfill the claims of fate, nor in each event being a repetition of events preceding. Every event does correspond to all events, not just ones which have taken place but also those to come, and this correspondence is based on an ontological structure. All events are similar in that they 'occur', and it is in such an ever-recurring similitude that eternal return becomes relevant. Nietzsche sees every moment as the being of becoming; every moment as event becomes, involves a return of forces to the realm of becoming.

Every being becomes in order to be. But wherein lies the being of becoming itself? "What is the being of that which becomes, of that which neither starts nor finishes becoming? Returning is the being of that which becomes" (Deleuze, "Nietzsche and Philosophy" 48). Becoming must return indefinitely to appearance and form. All ethical and aesthetic theories are fundamentally, processes where a content is disclosed by form, and this form confers an individuality to the expressions and individualize that agency who is involved in its utterance. Theories themselves don't return to appearance; it is the inevitable returning to form that constitutes them. "It is not being that returns but rather the returning itself that constitutes being insofar as it is affirmed of becoming [thought of eternal return related to a single moment] and of that which passes [the singularity resulting out of the internal difference of creation being repeated]" (48)

The past to which the Romantic dream is directed had too, at its time, been a creation as far as it involved the return of form to the realm of appearance. Form becomes form in

returning. To seek to repeat the present in the imitation of the past would ideally be a recurrence of an event two times over. There are two contradictions inherent in this desire. Firstly, events don't recur; they occur. And this occurrence is ontologically repetitive. Events are identical in that they become, not in that they resemble one another. The Romantic aspiration is for a superficial returning where the actual becoming in the present is straitjacketed to fit a relation of identity. "Identity in the eternal return does not describe the nature of that which returns but, on the contrary, the fact of returning for that which differs" (ibid).

The second contradiction lies in claiming total control of becoming; becoming is anthropomorphized. Giambattista Vico felt that man makes his own history. But does it not reflect an extreme solipsism to regard the world existing for the sake of the human subject alone, as the likes of Fichte proposed? The unpacking of Romanticism by Gadamer shifts such a model towards a dialectic, whether history and man constitute one another. Our consciousness is historically affected, which in turn historicizes reality, as we have discussed in the first chapter. Nietzsche, too, in his own way, tries to divorce events from an exclusively anthropomorphic logic, for events constitute us as much as we seek to bring them to appearance. The principle of eternal return is called 'will to power'. It is "the one that wills, it does not let itself be delegated or alienated to another subject, even to force" (49). Here, will is not human desire that is represented in phenomena like Schopenhauer interpreted, neither the Will that appears purely in the musical work. Nietzschean will dwells on the plane of creation in which the creator and the created are exigencies. Unlike Kant, for whom consciousness was synthetic, Nietzschean will is non-anthropomorphic, it makes man, and not the other way round.

The analogy of force is interesting in this context, for as we know from science, nature and its forces are not products of human will. Why then associate the concept of will at

all in the field of these forces? Forces are pure, in that they represent a potential of bringing about a displacement or change. But since the event itself is distinct, based as it is on a generation of differences, there must be an element inherent in the forces which particularize their displacement as distinct form. The concept of force needs a complement, and an internal one at that. This complement is an element contained in the forces which render them direction and a path to exercise themselves. “The will to power is added to the force, but as the differential and genetic element, as the internal element of its production [that which singularizes force]. It is in no way anthropocentric” (51). One ‘wills the event’, as Deleuze said; here will does not proceed from the subject, but is the governing element of creative forces themselves where one’s being becomes.

Repetition in the *Recherche* is involved in the making of ‘differentiated continuity’ as observed by us in the previous chapter. We cannot say what is repeated exactly in terms of an identity that conjoins two moments. Events return to the realm of appearance to disclose themselves, and Proustian returning novelizes this return by repeating the same differently; Swann in Marcel, the sonata in the septet, Gilberte in Albertine and so on. The repetitions do not stand for or represent any particular theme; at the most they hint the exile from a theme by the scattered differences that are generated. Gilberte repeated as Albertine is not a particular manifestation of a general theme of love, but they together show the attempt to forge love by Marcel. Every act of return is an act of re-constitution, a new difference. And art can never be unequivocally redemptive, for being itself site of its event, it is occupied with differences instead of re-iterating identities;

Returning is being, but only the being of becoming. The eternal return does not bring back the same, but returning constitutes the only same of that which becomes. Returning is the being identical of becoming itself [return of becoming to the realm of being]. Returning is thus the only identity, but identity

as a secondary power; the identity of difference, the identical which belongs to the different, or turn around the different. Such an identity, produced by difference, is determined as repetition. (Deleuze, “Difference” 41)

Deleuze already mentions in the Anti-Logos chapter of *Proust and Signs* discussed by us on more than occasion that philosophizing in art is non-logocentric. It does not begin from a concept or a given problem; the problem is constituted by the very movement that inheres in the literary work. Deleuze calls this process ‘dramatization’, and finds it lacking in Hegel and Leibniz whose works hinge on conceptual frameworks without addressing the hermeneutic tension that originates from it. While for Hegel it is the universal infinite, for Leibniz the unit of analysis is the infinitesimal monad. Since the overall edifice of their philosophical systems derive their credence from returning back identically to their respective fundamental concept, difference in returning is overlooked. Deleuze’s estimation of the modern work, especially the *Recherche*, in that it deliberately lacks one particular fundament, is favorable for the work always remain in flux and is never eschatological, thereby embodying the very mode by which being becomes. The fact the Modernist novel shares a disdain towards subjectivity and self corroborates the ontology of things in not containing it within a framework;

Only the extreme, the excessive returns: that which passes into something else and becomes identical [as itself]. That is why the eternal return is said only of the theatrical world of the metamorphoses and masks of will to power, of the pure intensities of that will which are like mobile individuating factors unwilling to allow themselves to be contained within the factitious limits of this or that individual, this or that self. (41)

There is no ‘reality’ which Realism seeks to mirror; Realist art ‘first’ forms the notion of a reality as objective and representable. Romanticism creates the ‘spirit’ and passions it speaks

of; it does not reflect or express them as pre-existing entities. The ‘values’ of Medieval Romance are not upheld but made anew by the chivalric tales. Modernist art abstains from the claim of upholding any such thing, and shows in turn the constructed nature of each aesthetic practice, where the exigency of expression is retroactively extrapolated to make seem as an ideal from which art proceeds. Eternal return of every moment as being created means that everything exists only in returning, in receiving form; copy of an infinity of copies which allows neither original nor origin to subsist (67).

Having said that, we can now concur that redemption is not really a sought-after movement to repeat the past identically, but that this desire as expressed in language of art and philosophy forms an image of the past in the first place. It is an attitude formed in concrete material that invests the otherwise shapeless past with a definite meaning, and this meaning-rendering now makes redemption relevant by giving it a place to journey towards. Similarly, the artist has neither exclusive control nor a goal as far as his relation to the work is concerned. He might proceed from a will to do so, but aesthesis in the sense of form-giving implicates himself in a hermeneutic, where his will no longer remains the origin of expression, and part of the contingency that informs the work. This can be felt when one tries to write down one’s feelings on a piece of paper. Soon one realizes that it is impossible to do so, for giving form to our feelings create them instead of mirroring them. This is the pure phenomenality of any form-giving activity, in that formation as returning of forces to appearance reveals its non-anthropomorphic face. How can then art be a ‘tool’ for redemption if it does not and cannot ‘serve’ the interests of its maker, “which does not want to answer to anything but itself and which makes art present only there where it hides itself and disappears” (Blanchot “Book” 201).

Does then art at all possess a value of its own? Or is it just trivial as life? We have repeatedly observed how art, and the *Recherche* in particular, is involved in re-evaluation of

values. Does the value of 'value' too undergo a re-understanding in the course of the work? Marcel is disappointed when he realizes art involves skill. He had been under the impression that genius and talent is much above what is disregarded as craftsmanship. He associates technique with cleverness and craftiness which are indispensable in society, and fails to see the special function of craft in form-giving without utilitarian purpose in making truth appear. For Marcel, art, in not being too different from life in that it involves materiality and reworking of material, is bound to be disappointing, and not so valuable as he had earlier estimated it to be; "If art was indeed a prolongation of life, was it worthwhile to sacrifice anything to it? Was it not as unreal as life itself? The more I listened to this septet, the less I could believe this to be so" (V: 288). The experience of art forces him, as we can observe in the trailing comments, to re-evaluate the very parameters of his estimation. His understanding of life and reality must itself undergo a change if he is to confront art for what it is, instead of using it as a tool for personal salvation.

Even before his final resolution is made in the last volume, Marcel feels that he might as well devote his days to society for art does not really have anything in it to ennoble his life. But at this stage, he is at least close to realizing the ambivalence of this problem. The lack of value could either lie with art or with his perspective in evaluating art wrongly;

now that I possessed the proof that I was useless and that literature could no longer give me any joy whatever, whether this was my fault, through my not having enough talent, or the fault of literature itself, if it were true that literature was less charged with reality than I had once supposed? (VI: 216)

Joshua Landy's observation that the *Recherche* involves a shift from Kantian transcendentalism towards a more Nietzschean perspective dictated by individual needs and values or the lack thereof is relevant in this context (86). We find Marcel to be in soup

because he sticks to general notions of art being redeeming and the artist being a genius. These notions do not correspond to his concrete experiences resulting into conflicts which he shall be unable to perceive for what they truly are till the point when he, as an individual, faces up to the task of being an artist, of creating values instead of subscribing to conventional ones. Literature and art form perspectives, and when Marcel realizes that, he is closer to appreciate art for what it is, and not be disappointed in how art diverges from his expectations that have sprung from general, commonplace beliefs; “reading teaches us to take a more exalted view of the value of life, a value at the time we did not know how to appreciate and of whose magnitude we have only become aware through the book” (VI: 36).

Everything that happens, happens in life. Every event is the becoming of the world. When we naturalize ourselves in the belief that a different reality exists which has nothing to do with the one we inhabit, we let our disappointment make ourselves blind to the possibilities of discovering the world anew. Both the Romantics and Marcel dream of art to be the savior by extricating us from where we are, whereas Proust advocates that we first learn to see where we dwell by attaining a vision and perspective of our own, which art might help in receiving only if we cease to see it as a medicative agent. To see is to comport, to submit ourselves actively, so that the things are revealed. Art then, finally, is realized to be an expression of life, the life it discovers, and not a refutation of the life in which are plagued with disappointments; “life disappoints us so often that in the end we come to believe that literature bears no relation to it and we are therefore astounded when we see the precious ideas that literature has revealed to us display themselves, without fear of getting spoiled, gratuitously, naturally, in the midst of daily life” (107).

Art makes visible, Paul Klee said. It lets us see things, and our erstwhile values are transformed. The ambivalence of redemption not only plays out in Proust in the re-evaluation of purity, phenomenon and returning; the novel revalues that which contain each of these

aspects, namely life. In the first chapter, we have observed that the world appears as an event only differently, for to appear would be to return, and returning is difference. Life as it occurs as an event in the work is a new way of looking at life that throws light on places which were so long there but in darkness, analogous to the exposition of all the hours of Combray through creation, apart from the hour of going to sleep, that meagre morsel which involuntary memory offered Marcel; “this life that we live in half-darkness can be illumined, this life that at every moment we distort can be restored to its true pristine shape, that a life, in short, can be realized within the confines of a book” (431).

Marcel is always unhappy because he is unable to have a good grip on life and its moments. Things, people, moments of joy, slip away. Re-valuation of life must take into account a re-valuation of loss. What is valuable, that which persists unchanged? If life and the world is based in time which in turn exists by denying itself every moment by becoming the past and branching to the future, that which is permanent is in fact lifeless. Only that is alive that goes through and is open to loss. At the end of the *Recherche*, Marcel looks at the greatly transformed figures around him and realizes through them how he too must have changed; how his own previous selves have been lost to him. On one hand, this inspires a terror of impending death, which makes him resolute to not waste time in superficialities but finally set himself to work. Marcel learns the value of time only by confronting the loss that time brings with itself. And more importantly, his work would be based on the fleetingly elusive life that he, just like every one of us, has lived so far; loss becomes the stuff of his work, not some transcendental truth. Far from devaluing time, the dimension of loss is precisely what makes it emerge as valuable, as Hägglund aptly remarks (32).

Our lives are carried ahead shrouded in a tragic contradiction. Life is impermanent, yet man seeks permanence. We live in time, yet we wish the moment to subtend; we hold on, persist, even knowing it to be futile. Dissatisfaction and suffering are structural, not

circumstantial, as Beistegui puts it, they inhere in our relation to the world (8). And life attains its relevance only in light of this discomfort it lends to those who are in it; suffering is the basic fabric of existence, as Buddha says. Here, suffering is not to be understood as pain caused by something specific. It is a transcendental condition of discomfort without which all activities would come to a standstill. Lack or deficiency defines the very meaning of experience, that is, the meaning of the sensible (9). Literature lays no claim on anything, for it understands claiming to be itself constructive and an illusion of want, an exercise of value-making. At the heart of art as of things, there is nothing. The only immanence things and art as thing possess is ironically, time, which could be seen as an invitation to participate in loss, in giving oneself over, and the strange enrichment that such an act brings with it. Life, things become richer, colorful when they are not held on to, but when we, alongside them, voyage in the time in which we become and unbecome. This is not a culminating resolution of ambivalence but its celebration; and we are all, artist or not, a part of it, provided we see this conflict between permanence and erasure as the governing condition of becoming by unbecoming; "Real life, life at last laid bare and illuminated- the only life in consequence which can be said to be really lived is literature, and life thus defined is in a sense all the time immanent in ordinary men no less than in the artist" (VI: 253).

Section III

Chapter 5

Undoing the Narrative of Progress

(A) THE BURDENS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

In keeping with the temperament of the previous two sections of the thesis, our point of departure for this last section too shall question its own location and its relevance. While it was possible to locate the seeds of my theoretical enquiries within the fabric of my own experiences as a reader, and the *Recherche* offered a point of entry by partaking of the coming-to-age structure of the *Bildungsroman* and offering us a childhood of Marcel and Swann as precursor to trace the movement of the character and his worldviews, Musil's novel *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*¹⁷ poses a peculiar problem in this regard. Neither aligning with the progressive model of the character's growth of a conventional Realist framework nor a transfixing of the temporal dimension like in Joyce's *Ulysses* where the actions spread over a span of a day, here we have a diffused scattering of time over a period which is hard to quantify. The protagonist, Ulrich, we are told, is thirty years old, and the 'story', if we may use that word, revolves in an elusive present which nevertheless does chug along ahead, without however yielding any sequential plot for the benefit of the reader's equanimity. In fact, as we shall see, the dismissal of any possible *Ausgangspunkt* is part of the novel's

poetics (and politics, since in Musil as in the craft of others, they are not mutually exclusive to one another), so that it challenges our perspective by depriving us of a framework to judge the actions. Milan Kundera aptly points out this symptom while commenting that Musil analyzes situations not part of some system- everything becomes theme- like a Cubist painting, no background. There is nothing but foreground, and that this “abolition of the background” is to be seen as part of a “structural revolution” (Testament 113).

Having said that, we do require a passage to enter into a relationship with the work, and the thesis being a narrative in its own right, must seek some form of beginning to foray into the work’s world. What is crucial here to understand, is that our beginning is not a system neither a context in which we will ‘place’ the work. Rather, we shall try to extricate from the work itself an ethos in which its world is hoisted and hosted, and shall try to shape this ethos in keeping with the text. This chapter shall try to examine and participate thus in such a field of being [*Seinfeld*] where the polar opposite characters Ulrich and Arnheim make their appearances, and see how the world appears in a hermeneutic relation set over this field.

What had set apart Enlightenment as a phase of modernity in the history of Europe was not merely technological advancements and what is neatly formulated in academic circles as the shift from a theocentric to anthropocentric worldview. What the shift implicates is rather a troublesome phenomenon. Until then, it had been the Church and religion that had undertaken the task of reflection for the human subject. With the incumbent redundancy of these precepts, it becomes now the task of the human subject to bring her or his own vision on to the world. Whether or not Enlightenment at all succeeded in making each individual the sovereign creator of her or his individual worldview could be a matter of debate. But this is exactly what Kant posits in the opening paragraph of his short yet seminal text “What is Enlightenment?”

Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another. This immaturity is self-imposed when its cause lies not in the lack of understanding, but in lack of resolve and courage to use it without guidance from another. *Sapere Aude!* "Have courage to use your own understanding"- that is the motto of enlightenment. (1)

The light of reason is thus meant to liberate the individual from the folds of tyranny of knowledge systems which had hitherto guided his destiny. The crux lies in ushering in an epoch of self-accountability and self-responsibility for one's actions. However, the unfolding of the 'fate of reason' had not really followed such a course. As discussed already in the first section, the gradual development of subjective reason, where rational thinking, instead of being directed towards any objective ideal, became progressively aligned with individual instance of fulfilling personal ends, not only instrumentalized reason, but the one 'using' it as well. The rise of the analytical method in Galileo and Newton, put to technological use, ushered in a culture where production and consumption of goods alone stood for the principal mode of existence. As a result, man becomes obsessed with the idea that the world exists for his own sake, and not that he is part of something that exceeds over him. If the shift from theocentric world initially meant one's responsibility in creating one's own worldview, the unbridled expansion of technology and mastery over nature made an anthropocentric worldview synonymous with one where everything was tailored to suit human needs. Necessity thus becomes that which is necessary for such a culture to subsist. And such a shift in looking at the world from a purely pragmatic perspective marks an irony where a new form of slavery gets introduced in a bid to dismantle the previous, religious one. In a moment of embitterment, Nietzsche castigates industrial civilization in housing the "meanest mode of existence" where only "the law of necessity" operates ("Gay Science" 49).

It is this divorce of necessity from truth and its marriage with use that forms the governing force of turning this mode of existence into an all-encompassing one. The transformation of a monotheistic worldview into a monocultural existence based on pragmatism, production and consumption restricts any alternative way of living in the world. Kafka, more than any other artist, had relentlessly striven to unmask this paradox where human freedom is but an illusion at the hands of impersonal forces of power governed by distinct individuals in controlling positions. Our discussion of the totalitarian character of this mode of control in the next sub-chapter could be well prefigured here by a passage from Kafka's *Der Proceß*. In the parable of the door, K encounters this totalitarian nature of power in that it administers a view and nullifies the possibilities of all other views, so that the only way to live would be in total co-optation, with or without a delusion of individual liberty;

‘I don't agree with that point of view’, said K shaking his head, ‘for if one accepts it, one must accept as true everything the doorkeeper says. But you yourself have sufficiently proved how impossible it is to do that’. ‘No’, said the priest, ‘it is not necessary to accept everything as true, once must only accept it as necessary.’ ‘A melancholy conclusion’, said K. ‘It turns lying into a universal principle’. (243)

The scope of exploitation that lurks underneath such a propensity in reifying differences within the authoritative framework of one single governing principle exists not only as a potential but more often than not reveals its ugly face in being implicated in human actions. Musil traces the signs of such hegemony in almost all fields of human actions in his novel. For now, we shall concentrate on how history comes to be regarded by such a reifying perspective, for that would at the same time be a cue to our search for the novel's beginning.

Arnheim, an industrial magnate, occupies the centerstage of the Parallel Action campaign which seeks to come up with an ingenious idea for the celebration of the Emperor Frank Joseph's seventy-year reign. The meetings turn out to be a gala comedy in the ideas that the different factions come up with, and the superficiality that these ideas embody. It a cacophonous medley of people which reveals a total incomprehensibility of what is significant, and yet Arnheim feels "the very fact of its convocation proved its profound necessity, because nothing in world happened without a rational cause" (354).

Here, significance of history is subjugated to human reason, which in turn subjugates the human being under the framework he adheres to by limiting the scope of his understanding. This dialectic of reason is poised between the anxiety of man to have a self-sure ground beneath his feet while at the same time harboring a faith in the falsity concerning the stability of this ground. He merely correlates every phenomenon in terms of data so as to be able to fit them systematically within a framework which gives him or from which he hopes to acquire some sense of stability. Musil adds, "For the kind of people who take everything that happen seriously would feel nauseated if they could assume that not every event has a good cause; on the other hand, they would also rather bite their tongues, as we know, than take anything too seriously, even significance itself" (355).

On one hand, there is thus a desire to acquire complacency in face of the utterly chaotic plurality of the world through being capable of determination. On the other hand, there is a derision and indifference toward significance and content of one's own formulations and views. As long as the views subscribed to yield the 'necessary' output, there is no need felt in investigating their premise and credibility. This abstraction of rational thought from content is what Horkheimer had referred to as the 'formalization of reason' where it serves only as means to fulfill ends. Arnheim's notion of history is a tool to serve cementing his place even more securely in the present with no scope of empathy or

engagement with that which had taken place before and continues to impact lives till this day. He generalizes history, which always has a particular character, and in doing so, evinces an attitude of insensibility towards not just times past, but the contemporary as well.

It is thus comforting for such a subject to entrust faith in a narrative of history that moves in a straight line based on the parameter of progress. Such a model has for its base a certain dimension which yields itself to be quantitatively measured. This dimension would automatically have to disregard any creativity in fashioning of what it means to be human. Instead, it relies solely on capital and production to be able to be reflected as a glorious and uninterrupted ascension. The utter lack of a unifying principle to serve as a datum to assess the human condition exacerbated by the stress laid on accumulation of particular material interests and its universalized extrapolation as progress forms the ethos of irony where things don't really mean what they are supposed to imply or the claims that accompanies them in general opinion. "Every advance is a gain in particular and a separation in general; it is an increase in power leading only to a progressive increase in impotence, but there is no way to quit" (Musil 163).

The lack of a benchmark thus makes progress tantamount to mere quantitative accretions without a sense of development. The forms of human conflicts and atrocities have hardly changed; they have merely adopted new visages. With the experiences of the First World War behind him, artists like Musil were skeptical of such a notion of history that were gross simplifications of a complicated state of affairs. Thus, "every step forward is also a step backward. Progress always exists in only one particular sense. And since there's no sense in our life as a whole, neither is there such a thing as progress as a whole" (528).

Faith in progress is possible only with a faith or co-optation with the power which is responsible for fabricating such a narrative of progress. And such a siding with these powers

always comes at a cost; at turning a blind eye towards acts of violence on others, acts of violence and repression on one's consciousness and conscience and the ubiquitous stupidity that is the rule of the day. Technological reason instrumentalizes nature and human alike, and making it the flagbearer of historical progress might actually be the very opposite of any concrete development or growth of the human race as a whole. If the Middle Ages, according to this narrative, had been a regressive era by disallowing human freedom, the age of capitalism is no different for it leaves our potential for thinking and acting alternatively always in an atrophied state. One of the staunchest opponents of such a culture which operates more like an 'industry' than an organism, Adorno and Horkheimer, point at the antinomy of progress in their critical work *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: "Adaptation to the power of progress furthers the progress of power, constantly renewing the degenerations which prove successful progress, not failed progress to be its own antithesis. The curse of irresistible progress is irresistible regression" (28).

Like Kant who had stressed on the world-making potential of the human subject, Vico too had advocated a faith in the poetic wisdom [*sapienza poetica*] of man. This leads to the formulation of *verum factum*, which implies "that which man recognizes as true [*verum*] and that which he has himself made [*factum*] are one and the same" (Hawkes 3). This original impulse of the project of Enlightenment laid emphasis on a widening of perspectives, but an antinomy contained in its very heart made truth not a matter of poetic comportment anymore, rather more of a tool or device which could be arbitrarily assigned to elements that are viable to be exchanged, produced, sold and accumulated. It generates an inertia that instead of widening man's horizon is more focused in lifting skyscrapers. This inertia no longer allows determination of the self, but instead determines man as a mere statistical figure in a pool of numbers; "mankind was like a man driven along by some inexplicable wanderlust, a man

who could neither go back, nor arrive anywhere, and this was quite a remarkable condition” (Musil 252).

To be human is always to seek a becoming and a wresting away of what can be considered as one’s self. A lion or a caterpillar does not have to become one. To be human in this world is unique because there is a demand, almost a calling, to become who one comes to be, and merely being is not enough. If the project of Renaissance Humanism was to investigate and explore more perspectives at looking at the world, the culmination of historical forces eventually leads to a failure of this project. Every activity now seeks not to allow a passage to becoming anew, but contain possibilities within the narrow field that serves as a fulcrum of activities of human exchange. Looking at the world no longer empathizes with the outside but domesticates the unknown in known and practiced rubrics of comfort and security.

The coupling of a ‘philosophy’ with activities that can absorb only a very small part of it, such as politics; the general obsession with turning every viewpoint into a standpoint and regarding every standpoint as a viewpoint; the need of every kind of fanatic to keep reiterating the one idea that has ever come his way, like an image multiplied to infinity in a hall of mirrors; all these widespread phenomena, far from signifying a movement towards humanism, as they wish to do, in fact represent its failure. All in all, it seems that what needs to be excised from human relations is the soul that finds itself misplaced in them. (648)

In what kind of a state of being [*Seinstand*] does then man find himself in such a culture?

Society has branched off increasingly since the advent of technology, with the proliferation of the different kind of activities that are there to be fulfilled. The added complexity has

increased the division of labor without interruption, so much so, that the anatomy of the society has become so complicated that it is no longer possible to envision its center or the mutual co-ordination among its different parts. A person might spend his entire life fastening screws on a specific hole of an industry-made product, with no access to the feeling of actually being one of the creators of the product.

There are two consequences of such a degree of division of labor. Firstly, work becomes more and more mechanical with no organic contact between the producing individual and the product. Secondly, the lack of contact between the whole of the work and the part of the effort is reflected in the relationship that one's work or profession comes to bear on one's existence as a whole. With the instrumentalization of professional life, work too, like reason, becomes formalized; it boils down to an investment of time, effort and energy and receiving money in return for the same. Human beings cease to be conscious subjects in such processes and operate only as functional elements in a long chain of production. Musil shows how even so-called intellectuals have been molded by this culture of functionalism where "writing and thinking, activities as natural to man as swimming is to dueling, was something they practiced as a profession" (324). And yet there is no sense that comes in play in these fields of professional activities. One thinks or writes as if it his or her task to do so, and gets remunerated or appreciated in return. It eventually turns out to be a mindless series of production with "no evident meaning or purpose, ancestors or progeny", like a "carpet weaver's needles in a carpet extending without seams or edges all around them in every direction...But is this the proper use of oneself, to set such a little patch on eternity?" (ibid).

What had once been the dominant tendency in industrial areas of work has already spread its effects over on to all professions. Even the work of the professor, whose duty among other things is to apparently set an example of dedication where one's being and one's

work relate to each other, have fallen prey to such a trend of professional functionalism. The university professor is “the humble servant of truth and progress” who “otherwise knew nothing of anything” might sound too cynical from Musil, but what is to be noted here, and in our contemporary reality alike, is a lack of commitment in the deeper sense. One adheres to certain formulae and phrase-makings that established one’s identity within certain rubrics expected out of his profession. But whether these actually apply to his make-up as a human being, whether they contribute in making himself relate to the world in a specific way, are questions that have in the course of time become either redundant or less significant. Teaching too, like thinking, has become an activity payable in terms of the number of manhours, and nothing more: “And our professors, well, it’s their job, there doesn’t have to be any more to it than that” (451).

We have seen in the first section of the thesis how life and reading both involve a hermeneutic which demands a certain degree of interpretation or comportment from the part of the individual. Interpretation here carries the sense of living something out in one’s own life through concrete acts, like the interpretation of a certain music composition by a pianist. What is alarming in the contemporary culture of Musil and ours alike is the lack of application of one’s professional life on one’s existence. Perhaps the very development of leisure as a period where one can shut oneself from the world helps to totalize man’s inertness. At work, he is shut off from the content or goal or purpose of his actions. After work, there are modes of entertainment to keep the senses still further atrophied. Every idea gains its valency based on its applicability to a particular problem, and it absolved from having any kind of role in being applied to one’s own life.: “But any suggestion that they might apply their daring ideas to themselves instead of to their machines would have taken them aback, much as if they had been asked to use a hammer for the unnatural purpose of killing a man” (35).

It is necessary for the perpetuation of such a society based on functionalism to try to reduce critical reflection as much as possible. Any questioning of the system would fail to keep the system working, and hence if at all there has to be challengers to the practice, they too would have to be roped in by the general mood of practices. We can very well assess this phenomenon by looking at the kind of valency the word 'spiritual' has acquired in the recent times. It has been relegated to a different genre, be it in bookstores, music categorizations or in travel brochures that promise healing experiences. The moot point of this abstraction of the spiritual and the moral to another category of their own is to wean their fundamental importance to every human life, and to make them 'function' only as cheerful diversions. Hence Ulrich reflects, "it would be a useful experiment to try to cut down to the minimum the moral expenditure that accompanies all our actions, to satisfy ourselves with being moral only in those exceptional cases where it really counts" (265).

If questions concerning right or wrong could be bracketed in specific zones, they no longer pertain to our overall constitution. On one hand this keeps our immoral activities going without any pangs of conscience as deterrents. On the other hand, this hinders the understanding of our constitution as a whole and keeps us not only functioning as cogs of a gigantic machine but as well as being like machines ourselves, just an assemblage of functions. What sort of a man does result from this? "This man, given to taking everything seriously and without bias, is biased to the point of abhorrence against the idea of taking himself seriously" (266).

It is ironical that such a culture also offers solutions to the problems of disillusionment and alienation that it itself results in. These solutions follow the same existential framework as the problems to which they are to be applied. This results in the conservation of the framework by deluding its adherents that there are capable professionals who can show them the way out of this chaos, only to be in turn better adherents of it. We are

living in urban spaces which we are continuously seeking to escape. One visits a resort which has all urban amenities, or joins a Yoga program which is based on the same mode of exchange as outside the meditation center. The conflicts which result from such professional climate is dealt with the selfsame “division of labor, assigning to certain intellectuals, the confessors of their period, dealers in absolution and indulgences, literary Savaranolas and evangelists, whose presence is the most reassuring to those not personally in a position to live up to their precepts, the task of recording all such premonitions and inward lamentations” (555).

Arnheim epitomizes such a specimen in Musil’s novel. On one hand an industrial magnate, he dabbles effortlessly in talks of poetry and culture and spearheads the Parallel Action campaign. He unabashedly talks of human values in terms of exchange values of the industry, but is ‘careful’ to coat his words in such a way, that he appears to all as the very model of a ‘whole man’. There are no contradictions in him for the simple reason that he is immune to the complexities and paradoxes of life, “the romantically expectant state of mind whispering to him that he belonged not only to the world of bustling activity but to yet another world, suspended inside it, as if holding its breath” (418). Obviously, Arnheim is a whole man because he has wholeheartedly adopted professional functionalism in all aspects of his personality, so that “the unity of all things now formed the nucleus of his conviction that culture and all human interests formed a harmonious whole” (422).

Arnheim as a whole man reflects the tendency of historical narratives already mentioned in that the sum total is always a discrete accumulation. In the lack of a governing ideal or principle, an admirable personality is one who has quantitatively more to boast about, without any questions being raised as far as the credibility of the values concerned. Ulrich sees in Arnheim the “fundamental talent of a politician” which consists in a “perpetually self-

renewing equilibrium” (207). He, as a so-called ‘harmonious entity’ does not bring anything original with his personality or actions, but merely conserves that which is the norm.

A sense of autonomy must exist in the individuals to be bonded to the system. As long as individuals consider themselves to be free, there can be no risk of resistance against the forces which conserve their captivity. In order to effectuate that, freedom itself must circulate as a variety of choices, like the different colors and versions a product circulates in market, or different brands of similar products, and so on. The “either-or mode of thinking” of capitalism renders the consumer the belief in his sovereignty of choices within the larger totalitarian framework that compels him to buy products to subscribe to opinions. The choices of leisure as well as the cutting out of leisure only helps to maintain the limbo alive, where all choices are pre-determined from outside. A familiar sight during the evening when the transition from professional to personal life takes place is people “on their way home from definite occupations or setting out towards definite entertainments” (389). When freedom becomes merely a matter of choices that do not emanate from one’s own consciousness, it is but a fake one that masquerades as a possible escape in the whims and fancies of people. Adorno rightly points out that the “essence of enlightenment is the choice between alternatives and the inescapability of this choice is that of power” (“Dialectic” 25).

Just as technological reason maintains its totalitarian character by effecting a chasm between actions and content, it is repeated in the relation that comes to form between ideas and life. Ideas are acceptable as long as they conform to the overall temperament of the culture industry, and if they seek to dismantle the workings of the society as a whole, they are shown to be inadequate in being applied to life. The abuse of Cartesian mind-body duality in ideas being treated impractical and practicality being made synonymous with use and value hinders the application of one’s own vision to one’s life: “But should anyone presume to use such an approach outside the limits of specific professional problems, he would quietly be

given to understand that the needs of life are different from the requirements of thought” (330).

In such a world, the ones to come off as ‘successful’ would be the ones who would most easily adapt themselves to the requirements of the system. Independent thinking and creativity would in fact be detrimental to one’s ‘career’ where careers are no longer made but only pursued along the trajectories already established. Thinking of his now successful but average classmates, Ulrich reflects,

There is no chain of thought that they cannot fix in their minds by using half a dozen such laid-out studs, and there is no denying that the results do them credit and stand up to something. This takes them to the head of the class without their being perceived as prigs by their classmates, while people like Ulrich, who may be far more gifted but are given to overdoing a bit here and falling a bit down there, get eventually left behind in some imperceptibly fated way...They haven’t a trace of soul...and they’re good-natured fellows. (738)

Each individual becomes merely a specimen embodying a different combination of set aspects. A culture which stipulates the curve along which a person has to traverse and predetermines and controls all his choices result in creating a herd. This had been described by Heidegger as the averaged-out neutral personality [*das Man*]. Every action gain validity only in specific fields and is quantitatively evaluated. Musil designates this lacking center as the soul [*der Geist*]. A person is no longer defined on the basis on his or her soul, but solely on circumstances and functions.

But today’s responsibility’s center of gravity is not in people but in circumstances. Have we not noticed that experiences have made themselves independent of people? They have gone on the stage, into books, into the reports

of research institutes and explorers, into ideological and religious communities, which fosters certain kinds of experiences at the expense of others as if they are conducting a kind of social experiment, and insofar as experiences are not actually being developed, they are simply left dangling in the air...A world of qualities without a man has arisen, of experiences without the person who experiences them. (158)

There is thus a proliferation of details without a center to hold the details together. Qualities without man signifies precisely a kind of culture where there is no individuality; only general features circulate in haphazard combinations. Ulrich as a character of the novel finds himself in this strange situation where people surrounding him are not characters yet but mere functions, mouthpieces of general ideas. Musil, like Adorno who gives this phenomenon the name of 'pseudo-individuality' in the following passage, relentlessly critiques the culture that mass-produces not only products but human beings, in that the latter, like machine-produced objects, are bereft of any soul or spirit [*der Geist*] of their own:

Pseudo-individuality is a precondition for apprehending and detoxifying tragedy: only because individuals are none but mere intersections of universal tendencies is it possible to reabsorb them smoothly into the universe. Mass culture thereby reveals the fictitious quality which has characterized the individual throughout the bourgeois era and is wrong only in priding itself on this murky harmony between the universal and particular. The principle of individuality was contradictory from the outset. First, no individuation was ever really achieved...mere species being. ("Dialectic" 125).

The lack of awareness of one's self goes hand in hand with the lack of self-awareness of science. All knowledge systems of a scientific nature are axiomatic in nature, in that they

erect their structure based on certain presuppositions. These presuppositions themselves are immune to enquiry or alteration as long the structure can be maintained intact and new data could be added on to its anatomy. In short, systematization is based on conformity with a single principle (63).

From this point of view science becomes a tool. The Enlightenment project as envisioned by Kant by keeping science as the standard even for research centered on the human subject thus sets a limit on itself. "In confirming the scientific system as the embodiment of truth- the result arrived at by Kant- thought sets the seal on its own insignificance, because science is a technical operation, as far removed from reflection on its own objectives as is any other form of labor under the pressure of the system" (66). This is central to understanding the notion of progress as accumulation without development or growth in an organic sense.

Musil takes up this point in relation to the missing piece of the puzzle, namely the soul. The "soul functions nicely even without us making sense of it" (Musil 232). The senseless cacophony of ideas and actions surrounding Ulrich all attain some relevance according to the use or purpose they intend, without however leading to anything substantial to which one can imagine oneself to belong to. In this regard, the relationship of knowledge to its object is embodied in the relationship, or the lack thereof, between the (pseudo)individual and his soul/personality. What this culminates to is the reversal of sovereignty. It is not we who are sovereign with respect to what we come to know, but rather our versions of truth keep us enslaved from truly coming to terms with ourselves: "Knowledge is a mode of conduct, a passion. At bottom, an impermissible mode of conduct: like dipsomania, sex mania, homicidal mania, the compulsion to know forms its own character that is off-balance. It is simply not so that the researcher pursues the truth; it pursues him. He suffers it" (231). Adorno highlights the same phenomenon where the attitude

that one adopts towards the world ends up being the ethos in which one is compelled to live. Man sought mastery over nature through science, only to be mastered with time by the tool he had invented, namely, reason. “Any attempt to break the compulsion of nature by breaking nature only succumbs more deeply to that compulsion. That has been the trajectory of the human civilization. Abstraction, the instrument of enlightenment, stands in the same relationship to its objects as fate, whose concept it eradicates; as liquidation” (“Dialectic” 9).

The human had invented machines to cut his work short and achieve things which he his own physical and mental capabilities would not permit. And in conjunction to living in a machine-oriented world, he too has sided with the mode of operations of machines. Husserl seems to be making the same point concerning this paradox; “Are science and its method not like a machine, reliable in accomplishing obviously very useful things, a machine everyone can learn to operate correctly without in the least understanding the inner possibility and necessity of this sort of accomplishment” (qtd in Blumenberg, “Metaphorology” 92).

It is necessary at the point to probe into the ontology of ‘possession’, which governs both the operations of natural and human sciences. The relationship between human understanding and nature of things is patriarchal, mentions Adorno, “the mind, conquering superstition, is to rule over disenchanting nature” (“Dialectic” 2). We have seen in the first chapter how the formulation of concept [*Begriff*] had an element of control or gripping [*greifen*] associated in it. This explains the rise of statistics and quantitative analysis which enables one to have a better overview of things to maneuver them accordingly to requirements. “Mathematics has taken possession, like a demon, of every aspect of our lives...soul has been destroyed by mathematics” (Musil 36).

It is no wonder that Freud’s understanding of the consciousness undergoing a perpetual object-libido, the primary narcissism of the mind, also occurs at roughly the same

stage of European civilization. It is the primary tendency of the mind to affix itself on what it perceives, and this cathexis [*Besetzung*] forms the overall climate of perception in society (Freud xxv). Derived from the Latin roots of *potis* and *sedere*, leading to pos-sess [*Sessel* – armchair], possession literally means to sit upon, be-set. Possession being the fundamental attitude leads a rather insensitive atmosphere where the diversity of relationships is merely cooped into a rather meaningless but ego-satisfying exercise. Musil sees in this context a possibility of the encroachment of such an attitude even among intellectuals: “But this clumsy ploy of a heavy animal subduing its prey with the full weight of its own body is still, and rightly, the basic and favorable term of capitalism, showing the connections between the possessors of the social world and the possessors of knowledge and skills, which is what it makes of its thinkers and artists” (610).

Possession, or more importantly, the faith in the spirit it invokes, is possible by maintaining disparities within order. Unlike Arnheim, Ulrich is sensitive to the fact that history is chaotic mess of events. And yet, one has to be amazed at how narratives of history by and large even out such discrepancies, as if to make the past more easily graspable and negotiable to one’s purposes. “But looking back, everything, as if by a miracle, has become order and purpose...we experience at every moment the mystery of a miraculous guidance” (182). Such a systemization is at the root of creating a controllable medium, and lurks behind Arnheim’s claim, “nothing negative happens in world history” (211).

That capitalism tries to generate identical structures is not a fact unknown to us. The global market run by multinationals launches products across widely different consumer bases, which introduces a sort of fake homogeneity. Every person apparently has the same rights and privileges as long as he is using the internet or a smartphone, but this unity is not a true one, for it merely serves as a pretext to rope in more users and generate a larger financial output. This proclivity for creating identical patterns is far from being egalitarian in spirit.

Instead, it maintains the undulations of the society by giving people a fake promise to believe that discrepancies don't exist. A taking into account of differences is problematic for the capitalism framework, and it is with view that it offers an "idealism that had nothing to do with realities, because reality always involves working at something, which means getting your hands dirty...harmonious, because it detested everything unbalanced and saw the task of education as reconciling all the crude antagonisms sadly so prevalent in the world" (358).

The very fact that there is one science that circulates as absolute knowledge holds the key to the culture of sameness of capitalism and totalitarianism. "Enlightenment is totalitarian", because the system it gave rise to does not permit any alternatives (Adorno, "Dialectic" 3). The '*una scientia universalis*' of Bacon or the '*mathesis universalis*' of Leibniz evinces science's hostility to discontinuity. "The multiplicity of forms is reduced to position and arrangement, history to fact, things to matter" (4). Arnheim's credibility as a politician and leader thus naturally lies in "keeping the world in order" (Musil 422). His all-embracing character is actually lauded, for it brings along the "gift for bringing disparate things together by seeing through their superficial differences- the personality of a born leader" (512). And where does such a leader guide the populace to? Nowhere. The point is to conserve the status quo, and in such a situation, a leader must represent the governing spirit- which admits no actual spirit or soul in the individual- of the times.

The trick is to extricate a detail from a chaos of factors and to consider this particular element as the whole. Like a surveyor, the capitalist must analyze certain elements extracted from a complex formation, in order to successfully eradicate difference. Rationalism as a tool for abstraction proves exceptionally useful in such a context which can extend "a man's power a thousandfold and how, even if from the point of view of any given detail it diluted him tenfold, as a whole it expanded him a hundredfold, and there could be no question of turning the wheel backward" (708). Abstraction allows one to arrive at calculable results so

that statistics and quantitative evaluation could reign. It is thus no wonder that “anything that does not conform to the standard of calculability and utility must be viewed with suspicion” (Adorno, “Dialectic” 2).

It is important at this point to once again stress on the specific strain of reason that is at work here. Technological reason is based on the rationality of domination, and this domination applies to things and fellow people alike (95). Technology here is far estranged from the Greek sense of *techne*, which was not a way of doing, but a way of knowing things. Here however, it serves to “produce neither concepts nor images, nor the joy of understanding, but method, exploitation of others, capital” (2).

To distinguish such an advocacy of method from its precursor in the Greek times, Gadamer creates a distinction between what he calls the first and second enlightenment. In the former, the myth of Homer and Hesiod are dissolved, and science is bound intricately with the idea of the beautiful. Beauty [*kalon*] is that which does not require anything else to be itself, that is, beautiful. Beauty is self-sufficient and appreciated for the very lack of its usability. Appreciation in the second enlightenment is however based on values that are moldable, that is, exchangeable. While Protagoras and Gorgias advocated a form of pragmatic relativism that encouraged skepticism and doubt about science, the age of technological reason dogmatizes science (Theory 73). With Galileo comes the advent of the analytic method, and a propensity for expressing nature in formal, symbolic terms, a kind of domination. The Greek concept of method took the criterion of its appropriateness from the individual character of the subject under consideration, whereas the Cartesian method assumed its own universality whereas method is made neutral with respect to the subject as well as totalized into a universal principle. If Vico had maintained the poetic spirit of man to be crucial in making the world, this constructiveness gradually gave way to arbitrariness of choice of selection of parameters to assess and evaluate a person or a thing’s worth. The

metaphorical thrust in heart of every truth comes to be relegated to a free exercise of subjectivity, where truth as scientific truth and values those that of capitalism are on one hand universalized and on the other hand picked by men in power or large corporations. The shift from the first to the second enlightenment thus not only leads to a change in what truth signifies, but also how this signification itself is altered as the process of creating that which is true. Hans Blumenberg sees in this phenomenon a radical transformation of what he calls absolute metaphor; a metaphor that is not rhetorical but holds the key to the worldview of a culture;

truth no longer has a power; rather we theoretically legitimate as true whatever has power over us...covert teleological implication...as the power over us that we interpret as truth, nature reveals itself to be an agency that has our own best interests at heart, one whose practical care we 'theoretically' reconceptualize under the heading of truth. The metaphor has here ceased to be a metaphor, it has been taken at its word, naturalized, and become indistinguishable from a physical proposition. ("Metaphorology" 16)

Nietzsche makes the observation that the "exactest humanizing of things" leads to the loss of what is to be human in us ("Gay Science" 97). The soul too has become just another object in a world of objects, a commodity, so that it becomes possible to talk about it in the same language as with which one discourses of airplanes and the stock market. Emptied of the significance it once carried, it circulates merely as a perfunctory element. "It is indistinctly an older person's word, and this can only be understood by assuming in the course of life people become more and more aware of something for which they urgently need a name they cannot find until they finally resort, reluctantly, to the name they had originally despised" (196).

The totalitarian power of capital and reason does not make an exemption in thus entering into the fields of morality. This “supercilious kind of spiritual capitalism” constructs a morality that is exclusively based on achievement. “The state, for its own supra-personal person, quite openly countenances the principle that one may rob, steal and murder if it will provide power, civilization and glory...The moral argumentation is just one more means to an end, a weapon used in much the same way as lies” (336, 803, 804). Since morality, or what is right or wrong, is now stipulated by universal capitalistic concerns quite extraneous to particular circumstances, it leaves only one conclusion possible, “Science is immoral” (1040).

Heidegger’s understanding of being in the world based on care [*Sorge*] meets a blind end in such a culture. If care means to be empathetic to the peculiarity of the person or thing facing me, this monotheistic culture where money substitutes god partakes of technological reason, “an organ of calculation, of planning; it is neutral with regard to ends; its element is coordination” (Adorno, “Dialectic” 69).

The trivialization of the soul, the poetic wisdom and the creativity of mankind encourages a culture that cannot take anything seriously. Superficiality becomes the order of the day. “Causes dearest to our hearts...sprout on their backs the cheapest flora of the mind—the more significant the subject, the more inanely it may be discussed” (433). The quality of a feeling becomes redundant in such a climate, and so does the earnestness with which it is meant. “Quantity of effect, effect of quantity is the new, self-evident object of veneration” (ibid). Arnheim symbolizes the epitome of such a syndrome, who uses words without ‘caring’ what they mean or supposed to mean; language for Arnheim is just a tool for achieving personal interests like everything else. Ulrich indignation at such an insensitive and shrewd person betrays itself when he tells Diotima that Arnheim is a “monster of vanity. How can I make you see the full extent of it? I mean vanity in the biblical sense; all symbols and sounding brass to hide a vacuum” (509). It is indeed a very strange time for a person like

Ulrich to live in where people “give all their time, willy-nilly, to promoting the latest inventions and fervently believe in rationalizing everything in their domain...these people nevertheless abandon qualities of beauty, justice, love, and faith- that is, all the questions of humanity” (267).

One of the ways in which the interrelatedness of things in a complex network could be avoided is by cultivating and practicing a certain understanding of time which looks at the present abstracted from other places and times. That which is immediately before us is used to generate a spectacle, such that we don't question its background or context. Factuality becomes the sole definition of reality. They turn out to be conducive as far as an ‘objective sameness’ could be dished out to many, and they allow statistical manipulation to be performed over them at ease. Ulrich rightly identifies the intentions of possession and control that is at play here in such a positivist appraisal of facticity;

And in truth, before intellectuals discovered their pleasure in ‘facts’, facts were the sole preserves of soldiers, hunters and traders- people by nature full of violence and cunning. The struggle for existence makes no allowance for sentimental considerations; it knows only the desire to kill one's opponents in the quickest, most factual way; here everyone is a positivist...nothing in life can be relied on unless it is firmly nailed down- is a basic feeling embedded in society of science; and though we are too respectable to call it the Devil, a whiff of burnt horsehair still clings to it. (327)

We have mentioned in passing in the first section how the Cartesian and positivist understanding of event is by and large based on the axiom of factuality. Every event is considered describable according to a plane of space and time already universally established. That an event might sediment a fresh understanding of these transcendental categories is

eliminated, with the result being that the “transcendence inherent in the very taking place of things” is reduced merely to a fact, a practice that is no less, concurs Agamben like Musil, than evil (“Community” 22).

For the masses, this positivist framework for experiencing things is the newspaper. Here, all possible events are allotted a specific framework of presentation and interpretation. This offers a framework of abstracting the particularity of incidents and life situations within a generalized pattern. “The probability of experiencing something unusual through the newspaper is much greater than that of experiencing it in person; in other words, the more important things take place today in the abstract, and the more trivial ones in real life” (Musil 68-69).

Is it not unusual that we indeed turn to the newspaper to inform ourselves about the world without in the least asking ourselves every day that we read in it are reports and not mere transcripts in language of real incidents? The naturalization of our faith in the words of news and our dependency on the same to form opinions of our own is a perfect reflection of the success of the news industry in turning us consumers of their products. Hardly any article challenges our existing views on the world; each merely add on to what we already know without reshaping knowledge as such. The following passage quoted from Susan Langer’s observations of such a *Konsumgesellschaft* shows how like progress, knowledge too is based on the logic of accumulation and surrender to totalitarian forces, in this case, those involved in manufacturing opinions;

Hoping to find something without looking for it, expecting to obtain final answers to life's riddle by resolutely refusing to ask questions—it was surely the most romantic species of realism yet invented, the oddest attempt ever made to get something for nothing!" But it does sum up the attitude of that mighty and

rather terrible person, the Modern Man, toward the world: the complete submission to what he conceives as "hard, cold fact." To exchange fictions, faiths, and "constructed systems" for facts is his supreme value; hence his periodic outbursts of "debunking" traditions, religious or legendary; his satisfaction with stark realism in literature, his suspicion and impatience of poetry; and perhaps, on the naive uncritical level of the average mentality, the passion for news—news of any sort, if only it purports to be so; which, paradoxically enough, makes us peculiarly easy victims to propaganda. Where a former age would have judged persuasive oratory largely on its origins in God or Devil, i.e. in the right or the wrong camp, we profess to judge it on the merit of alleged facts, and fall to the party that can muster the most spectacular cases.

(224)

The creative potential in Vico's *verum factum* turns into a myth, where the present is celebrated each moment as the only reality with the effect that being, which is a function of time, is atrophied to an artificial state of continuous attention. This also negates the potential to envision reality in a different way from what is visible as well as the reality of the minds of citizens, of their dreams and disappointments. "The mythical scientific respect of peoples for the given reality, which they themselves constantly create, finally becomes itself a positive fact, a fortress before which even the revolutionary imagination feels shamed as utopianism, and degenerates to a compliant trust in the objective tendency of history" (Adorno, "Dialectic" 33).

An uninterrupted focus on the immediate diminishes the possibility of actually taking the present into one's perception. One is trained to look at things only in a certain fashion, and thus the event, which carries the element of surprise, is exiled from becoming. The culture of factuality in turn hinders the possibility of actually feeling oneself in the world, for

it is a closed system and on the contrary, the world, if at all it becomes, must involve an opening-up. Musil points his finger at this paradox in the climate of the Parallel Action where a significant event is sought by converting the present into a massive spectacle which could then enter the books of history as an unforgettable fact: “We wildly overestimate the present, the sense of the present, the here and now...wed been put in a bucket and the lid of the present had fallen on it...What moves (us) is displaced by so much here and now, so much present... that it can’t become the present in its turn” (312). On the contrary, for a capitalist like Arnheim who is always seeking a spectacle to cement the ground beneath his feet even more firmly, the thing of utmost value is newsworthiness [*Gegenwartswert*] or the value of the immediate present (353).

Towards the end of this sub-chapter, we shall ask ourselves the question whether reason as intelligence and not pragmatic ploys have totally been effaced from this culture, or does it still dwell at some corner in fallen glory? The totalitarian capitalist that he is, Arnheim ‘uses’ intelligence too, only in a negative fashion to promote his brand of technological reason even further. People like Arnheim claim to be spiritually minded and to advertise this dope, they need a scapegoat. Hence Arnheim is seem to be haranguing, “Reason alone is not enough for a moral or political life. Reason has its limits; what really matters always takes place above and beyond it!” (350).

It is to be noted in relation to our previous chapter on Proust that only positivists denigrate intelligence, for it would see through its cunning. Moreover, an open outcry against reason committed in the vein of the selfsame temperament that procreates the culture of technological reason (read stupidity) is all the more conducive to offer people the delusion that there is scope of liberation through spiritual practices. Neither Proust nor Musil denies the role of intelligence in the making of the novel. If the novel indeed is a refraction of the

worldview of the artist, we must take note that art for Musil and Proust is in opposition to the tone in which people like Arnheim or Legrande speaks of it.

“The idea that the intellect nowadays cannot really accomplish much is, for some reason, more congenial than the person the possibility that the intellect of some colleague might succeed in accomplishing something” (355). Accomplishment of something unprecedented is always sought to counteracted by the achievement and accumulation of new variants of the same pool. And thus, intelligence is esteemed if it “happens to be his profession and source of income...For high-flown thoughts a kind of poultry farm has been set up, called philosophy, theology or literature” (389).

We shall see in the following sub-chapter the mechanism of generating sameness in such a culture to keep these poultry farms running, the alienation that ensues from living in such an environment, and how the notion of genius or greatness is shaped in such times. That shall lead us nearer to approach Ulrich as a character and his worldview that is set apart from the views without worldliness in which he finds himself.

(B) SEIENESGLEICHEN: REPETITION, SAMENESS AND SELF-PRESERVATION

We have discussed in the first section of the thesis how Heidegger’s critique of Cartesian Reason and its reception takes its departure from the aspect of representability. The self, in order to secure its autonomy and confidence, must be established in a position where it would be able to represent the world around it in repeatable terms. Language, among serving other functions, is a primary tool for achieving this repetition. How else could one suppress the singularity of each particular tree encountered other than naming each one ‘tree’? Language,

being not just a tool, but the springboard of comportment towards the world embodies the attitude one brings to bear at the things that constitutes existence.

It exasperates Ulrich to notice how language is used without reflection to convey and describe feelings and sentiments by people around him. Just as a symbol might sufficiently describe natural phenomena infinite times over by means of its formulaic signification, likewise, people adhere to cliches and cultural codes to establish a regularity of their feelings. It is perhaps this representability of emotions through repeated use of stock phrases that maintains a civilization in an inert limbo necessary to conserve the inertia that constitutes its lack of sensitivity, or to use a more positive expression, its stupidity. “Anything that has to be valid and have a name must be repeatable, it must be represented by many specimens, and if you had never seen the moon before, you’d think it was a flashlight” (409). Instead of creatively engaging with language which would have entailed a creative engagement with one’s existence in trying to understand things on their own terms, most people, finds Ulrich, are complacently happy to not notice “that there’s more mechanical or predictable regularity in (their expressions of) sentimental matters than in intellectual ones. For when is a feeling really natural and simple?” (410).

What becomes clear from observing the circulation of language and associated tendencies in a culture, is the involuntary stress on repeatability. For a society that is structured and that must maintain this structure for its effective functioning, its constituent members must at all occasions stick to repeatable sets of actions and expressions. The inanity of present-day civilization is dependent on the insensitivity of the monotony that lies at the root of it. Gadamer regards his attitude of constant conformation to set patterns as a fulfillment of a compulsion; a rational obligation [*rationale Sachzwang*].

Our thoroughly rationalized society suffers from something similar to what psychiatrists call the repetition compulsion. The repeating of actions compulsively seems to be a good simile for the essence of administration. Administration wants us to do as we have done in the past. In order to be administered, our world has to be made uniform, so it is not malice that rejects every innovation; we know in advance what has to be done, and how". ("Theory" 107)

This compulsion extends over and above mere language use and could be observed in the compulsion to consume and the compulsion to believe. There are myriad choices offered to us by the industry and the media, so that we enjoy the prerogative of choosing what to believe or what to buy. But, believe or buy must we, for there is no way left out of this labyrinth. Any deviant attitude out of the box is already nipped in the bud by allowing no available domain for it. All domains serve a central interest. Adorno says, Enlightenment expels difference from theory ("Dialectic" 67). We can go a step further and affirm that the culture promulgated from the Enlightenment does not allow theory to subsist, if theory is to be understood as responsible seeing in empathy with the thing seen, not subsumed by considerations of personal use and accumulation of capital.

The celebration of sameness is equally to be found in the realms where apparently individual creativity was supposed to flourish, namely the arts. Even those who proclaim them to be non-conformists and avant-garde are compelled to use the same platforms and devices, which in turn liquidate their superficial non-conformism only to a state of altered co-optation. Moreover, the very resistance against a totalitarian system in its own terms falls entrapped with the system itself, a reason why Ulrich disdains Diotima and Clarisse's 'irrationalism' as a false mode of escape from the imbroglio of technological reason. Culture, which etymologically and ideally must have an element of cultivation and growth as its basis,

is reduced to artificial cultural techniques like those which are practiced in laboratories, whereby a single strain is multiplied over and over again, and this mere reproduction to produce identical elements stands for the only sense of life atrophied of possibilities. Sameness here masquerades as a false form of democracy where individuals are hindered from attaining the self-consciousness and responsibility to shape their own destinies. And deviant adventurers like Ulrich are outright castigated as unimportant or snobs.

Connoisseurship and expertise are proscribed as the arrogance of those who think themselves superior, whereas culture distributes its privileges democratically to all. Under the ideological truce between them, the conformism of the consumers, like the shamelessness of the producers they sustain, can have a good conscience. Both content themselves with the reproduction of sameness. (“Dialectic” 106)

To reify disparate elements into a manageable cluster one requires to harp on a parameter. This governing factor in capitalism is the principle of equivalence. As the word equivalence suggests, it is the ascription of equal value and relevance to difference things and a simultaneous construction of a measuring device for values. One way to deal with divergences that cut through “the music of machine shops, steam hammers, and factory sirens” is making the “slide-rule” the governing element, in other words, trying to quantify events and making them comparable and amenable to one another (Musil 33). Here, abstraction is the crucial step to render the amputation of the incommensurable. “Bourgeois society is ruled by equivalence. It makes dissimilar things comparable by reducing them to abstract quantities” (Adorno, “Dialectic” 4).

Such a ‘fetish’ of equivalence, seen from the point of view of the human subject, goes hand in hand with the fetish of subjectivity, or more specifically, subjectivity understood

from the vantage of pragmatic behavior. If all the world can be channeled and treated as serving human interests alone, then the plurality of nature can be reduced to the sameness of purpose. All attempts at redemption or to gain an alternative view on things fails in the novel, because everyone except Ulrich is merely 'using' these pretexts to further cement the ground beneath their feet. This forms the irony of the cacophonous collection of people from all walks of life at the salon of the Tuzzi's. Each represents her or his own interests, and it is this confluence to each subscribing to the notion of individual purpose and interest that the apparent discontinuity between their opinions are evened out and they emerge, homogenously, as a herd. Here repetition takes resort to purpose to establish an inertia; "the irreconcilable elements of culture, art and amusement have been subjected equally to the concept of purpose and thus brought under a single false denominator: the totality of the culture industry. Its element is repetition" (108).

Perhaps the most ubiquitous element of equivalence that has left its mark globally in the span of human history is the concept of money. Money as "the unequivocal, the repeatable, and the solid, upon which the success of all thinking and planning depends" is what marries repeatability, sameness, accumulation and productivity together (Musil 533). The 'greatest contribution' of capitalism is the role of capital itself, a mode whereby value becomes exchange value, and worth becomes synonymous with surplus accumulation of money. Ulrich is skeptical of both morality and humanism, in that both are based on the same logic of repeatability and sameness inherent in capitalism, and they reduce all differences as redundant thereby eradicating self-responsibility and poetic comportment towards the world. It is from this perspective that his diatribe "money is the original source of 'moral and rational'" has to be comprehended (ibid). We shall discuss the ties of the culture of repetition with morality in a while, but the failure of humanism is seen by Ulrich as being associated with the failure of actual development. Any form of capitalism merely strives to conserve the

exchange value that lies at the heart of it, and such has been the sorry fate of the human subject who roams listlessly and cluelessly amidst these vistas. “Capitalism, as the organization of egotism based on a hierarchy in which one’s rank depends on one’s capacity for getting money, is simply the greatest and yet the most humane order” (554).

The transformation of every activity into an exchangeable act in terms of money establishes the equivalence necessary to maintain the industrial society, as well as culture, which too functions according to the dominant vogue of the contemporary age. The culture industry in turn attunes human sensibility to exchangeable and quantifiable forms too, so that one can state “all kinds of things from love to pure logic in the language of supply and demand, security and discount” (470). The technologization of intelligence leads here to a commercialization of intellectual productions, “works consequently become the saving banks, as it were, of the national culture economy” (468). Writing no longer seeks to fulfill the demand of the work. Genesse Grill in her study of Musil’s novel identifies this tendency of trivialization of art to a commodity not just in light of capitalism, but a response, or lack thereof, to the fear that lurks in the emptiness surrounding all the chaos. The contemplation of art as frivolous play or with scholarly non-attachment stems “probably out of a fear of facing up to the abyss of the probable error upon which all of our daily requirements and assumptions are based...it would most likely mean changing our lives entirely” (64). We shall see whether this argument at all sticks in light of the stupidity that otherwise forms the dominant mode of existence of the majority. If one is indeed taken up by the ever-proliferating models that seek to establish unequivocal confidence of one’s self in the world, how can such a fear at all make its presence felt; that is a question to which we shall return later. Meanwhile, there are, as Musil bitterly remarks, “war poets or love poets, depending on the nature of the inward gleanings for which they must find a market” (468).

The fittest survives, as the fittest are the ones who can adapt to a culture that breeds the mentality of the herd, or in other words, that seeks to nullify the possibility of development of mind and reflection. With choices being made prior to choosing, with values being set prior to achieving them, all things of this world become “debtors who repay our investments” (575). Our clothes, convictions, prejudices, theories, hope, faith in something or other, ideas are none too original, for that would be an impermissible deviation from the exchange value that gives them their inimitable yet outworn charm. Heidegger’s averaged-out human [*das Man*] remains human only by sticking to a compromise that shelters him from the chaos and uncertainty constituting life in the world. He gleans certainty at the cost of losing touch with the effable reality surrounding him. Ironically then, being-human according to the paradigm of the Enlightenment becomes a self-contradictory exercise by eliminating the possibilities of becoming someone new;

[Things] endowing us with the properties we lend them, serve the aim of presenting the world in a light that emanates from ourselves, and this is basically a task for which everyone has a method of his own. With great and varied skills we create a delusion that enables us to co-exist serenely with the most monstrous things...open chasm of sky above our heads and another, slightly camouflaged chasm of sky beneath our feet...we go on dealing with a middle stratum...impressions received in a middle distance...our most important psychological machinery is, in fact, kept in motion to maintain us in a certain equilibrium...immense but wholly unconscious effort human beings make just to preserve their piece of mind...extremely artificial state of mind that enables a man to walk upright among the circling constellations...surrounded by almost infinite unknown...consequent psychological relief, feel very clever and relieved with themselves. (ibid)

It is from this point of view that Nietzsche, one of the greatest advocates of becoming over being, bitterly remarks of self-preservation being the “marvelous economy of the conservation of the human species” (“Gay Science” 2). To preserve the self is to acquiesce the modes in which it is compartmentalized and defined. This implies a shutting off of other possibilities, and a poverty of the variety of relationships that can constitute human existence. What distinguishes the human from other creatures is precisely the instability of the self. A tiger or a caterpillar does not have to become one; they are born into their species-being and the acquisition of natural functions suffice. However, to be human is something that can never be defined as such. One could only attempt to become human without any prior definition or goal set upon the path. What exasperates Ulrich is the fact that this becoming-human is impaired by the surroundings and the course life is assumed to follow. The lack of certainty of sovereignty and the blurred line between what is creative and what is general exacerbates the anxiety of being morefold. There is

an aching sense of being taken captive; an uneasy feeling that everything I think I am attaining is attaining me, a gnawing surprise that in this world the untrue, uncaring, personally indifferent statements will echo more strongly than the most powerful and authentic ones...The goals, the voices, the reality, all this seductiveness that lures and leads us on, that we pursue and plunge into- is this reality itself or is it no more than a breadth of the real, resting intangibly on the surface of the reality the world offers us? What sharpens our suspicions are all those prefabricated compartments and forms of life, semblances of reality, the molds set by earlier generations, the ready-made language not only of the tongue but also of sensations and feelings. (Musil 135)

Self-preservation thus comes at the cost of sacrificing the possibility of arriving at understanding what one feels or how one is in the world. The characters of the novel who are

most preoccupied with their self, Diotima and Clarisse, both evince this tendency. Diotima enters into a relationship with Arnheim and fills up the lexicon of her love with the lofty vocabulary of German Romanticism. Clarisse, on the other hand, considers irrationality to be the more pristine aspect of personality and harangues often by borrowing superficially from the sayings of occultists, as well as Nietzsche. Both Diotima and Clarisse's lives revolve around these empty phrase-makings, and there is hardly any perceptible development of their personality in the course of the novel. They merely remain as symbols of petrified speech-forms without embodying anything substantial what these words actually intend to signify. Ulrich too, in his interactions with women like Bonadea, resorts ironically to these conventional gestures; "a man and a woman find a ready-made matrix of feelings, acts, and complications waiting to take them in charge" (307). Ulrich, being aware of the ludicrousness and inanity of these usages, therefore continues to be alone and remains distrustful of almost all relationships that occur to in his life, fearing that they ensnare him in commonplaces where neither his heart nor his mind has any creative, hence responsible, role to play. Even when he does encounter something indeed strange, let's say the re-union with his sister Agathe in the third section of the novel, there is a lack of adequate language to communicate the uniqueness of the situation. "The language of the feelings is conservative, even when the feeling is not" (Luft 168).

Proponents of post-subject views like Blanchot thus see the self as a "regulatory concept"; "an abbreviation that one could call canonical, a formula that regulates, and if you like, blesses, in the first person, the pretension of the same to primacy" ("Step not Beyond" 4). The primary mode of being human is the possibility of becoming anew, as we have discussed elaborately in our section on Proust. By investing primacy on a rigid self, freedom gets substituted by self-preservation (Adorno, "Dialectic" 25). Ulrich thus makes the point that it is necessary to view one's experience not in the register of a false individualism but to

identify that which is general in it. On one hand, this absolves one from believing in the make-believe sovereignty of one's subjectivity, which is by and large controlled by other forces circulating in the system of which he is a merely a cog. Moreover, this lets the person realize that equating all experiences in the dimension of subjectivity does injustice to the range and variety of events that take place in our lives. Thus says Ulrich, "we should look upon our experiences less as something personal and real and more as something general and abstract, or with the detachment with which we look at a painting or listen to a song" (396).

A major chunk of Musil's novel, the second part, is named *Seinesgleichen Geschieht*, translated in the English translation as 'Pseudoreality prevails'. The title in German means 'something of that sort happens'; an indication of the events that take place as not being original nor authentic, for they are merely shadows that have been repeated not enough to become formulae empty of meanings. It is from this point of view that the reality in which Ulrich moves about is a fake one; there is nothing real about it. Just as in Proust's *Recherche*, we have seen Marcel moving in and around a superficial domain for the bulk of the novel, Musil's novel too uses the kitsch instead of abandoning it for the sake of lofty sentiments. We shall probe deeper into the ideological thrust of Musil's novel in the second chapter. For now, it suffices to say that the field of being where Ulrich is located is a rather strange one, for being here has been reduced to routine. Culture no longer 'thrives', it has become "a paradoxical commodity. It is so completely subject to the laws of exchange that it is no longer exchanged; it is so blindly equated with use that it can no longer be used. For this reason, it merges with the advertisement" (131).

Adorno sees the divestment of signification not merely as a modern development in language in conjunction with industrial civilization, rather traces the phenomenon right at the origin of language and *logos*. Remarking on the symbolism at work in the Greek tragedy, the Olympian gods are seen to be no longer identical with the elements; they detach themselves

from substances to become their quintessence (“Dialectic” 5). We have seen a re-iteration of the same formalization at work in the rise of the analytic method where reason subsequently became an instrument for wielding control over nature. One of the reasons why Adorno considers *Odyssey* to be representative of the precursive movement towards an organized society based on capital and exchange is this degree of formalization and a breakdown of what Lukacs would call ‘metaphysical assonance’. Mythical fate signifies a realm when the spoken word is one with meaning, expression merged with intention. Odysseus’ famous deception of Polyphemus as identifying himself with Nemo or no-one is symbolic, for the ploy that estranges the hero from who he is, would be the path on which history would proceed in the centuries to come. This would culminate in a culture where language would eventually be associated, by the likes of Mallarmé for example, as signifying pure absence. Concepts which were once one with the metaphors that brought them to speech are congealed with time, signifying like the word God, as Steiner says, “a phantom of grammar, a fossil embedded in the childhood of rational speech” (7).

Before moving over to discuss the effects of the estrangement of meaning from language, we shall examine how morality develops from the selfsame process where language becomes formalized into empty codes. Musil is one of the few novelists of his time who had focused so much on the moral problem. His engagement with questions concerning morality has to be understood from the point of view of his being a literary artist. Just as a writer must create his own language to communicate something original and resist the ideological forces of this system that seeks to enslave being in neatly divided pockets, similarly Ulrich, as an individual is mostly preoccupied with the question of the right way to live, without adhering to moral dictates that hardly carries for him any significant import. Nietzsche remarks in his essay “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense” that the development of language has closely followed the trend of self-preservation; “regularly valid

and obligatory designation of things is invented, and this linguistic legislation also furnishes the first laws of truth; for it is here that the contrast between truth and lie first originate” (44).

The arbitrariness of words designating objects is originally a metaphoric phenomenon, which by repeated use begins to be taken for granted. This is reflected in the development of moral structures as well, where a laudable act is made into a rule without taking into consideration the divergences in contexts. We can note here a parallel between repeatability, morality and language all being enfolded in the development of a capitalist society where equivalences had to be established for better control and negotiation with plurality. “Every word immediately becomes a concept, inasmuch as it is not intended to serve as a reminder of the unique and wholly individualized original experience to which it owes its birth, but must at the same time fit innumerable, more or less similar cases- which means, strictly speaking, never equal- in other words, a lot of unequal cases” (46).

With this we move on to a discussion of the moral problems and how that also relates to the novel’s structure as a whole. We have touched upon this aspect in our chapter on Proust as well, in that moral imperatives offer human beings certain fixed perspectives on life, which artists, and sensible and sensitive people find hard to accept. The main ground for the challenge posed at morality is not necessarily a thirst for some unbridled form of freedom, but this defiance is more importantly posed against the fallacy of taking something originally poetic as universal and absolute. Since art is preoccupied with the responsibility of bringing truth to light in the very event that brings it to existence, it is empathetic and aware of the formation of truth, and the creativity that is at work there. Like the idols have been mistaken for the gods themselves, Nietzsche’s following invective touches the heart of the matter in relation to the question of morality and truth;

What then is truth? A mobile array of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms- in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are: metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power. (46-47)

Musil echoes Nietzsche's derision towards morality in how it turns "a condition into an imperative, a state of grace into a norm, a state of being into a purpose" (811). The sense of what is good and evil that circulates in the sayings of Arnheim, Diotima, Clarisse and even to an extent Agathe does not involve a real involvement with the questions of life, but a fitting in of particular events within general frameworks. One is never entirely in the moment, but abstracts the peculiar pressure of an instant convenient to gain a firmer ground beneath one's feet. With indignation, Ulrich tells himself, "I shall have to make Agathe see that morality is the subordination of every momentary state in our life to an enduring one" (944). The continuous act of self-preservation, once undertaken by the religious doctrines now supplanted to the totalizing new religion of science and pragmatism, is possible only by institutionalizing and making permanent that which is arbitrary. In this sense, morality too is as formalized as language. Bereft of content, moral adages move about like shadows with repetition being the sole mode of sustenance: "if our acts were unrepeatable, then there would be nothing to be expected of us, and a morality that could not tell people what was expected of them would be no fun at all" (553).

In a way, this transformation of the creativity towards structure begins already in Kant with his project of making a science out of philosophy. Although Kant's inclination was to systematize philosophy while at the same time disclosing the internal limits of any constructive system, the formulation of morality as categorical imperatives can be seen as a

germinating factor, which eventually led to morality being reduced to as abstract a system as logic. Just as logical propositions can be applied irrespective of reflection of the context, so are moral questions weaned out of the fear, anxiety, and earnestness that they can be expected to carry. Kafka is another German writer other than Musil who holds up the complete evacuation of feeling from moral quarters. This could be explained by the absolute lack of sentimentality in describing events that are supposed to evoke pity, fear and horror in the observer. While Kafka's narrator imitates the machine to speak about humans who too now behave as machines, Musil's narrative merely looks on impassively at the plethora of big-mouthed enunciations which are dished out without any form of seriousness whatsoever. The missing piece in the existential puzzle, the soul, has been rendered into an inanimate machine: "For morality replaces a soul with logic; once a soul is thoroughly moral, it no longer has any moral problems, only logical ones" (552).

Division of labor applies to morality as well; it is as if the judiciary and to a certain extent the ecclesiastical which serves as the specialized centers where actions can be expected to form moral norms. "Men talk of morality in their working lives, if it happens to be part of their professional jargon; otherwise, the word has been swallowed by the business of living and never manages to retain its freedom" (811). The soul of the civilized, modern person has a whole pool of religion, politics, philosophy and morals stacked in it; and yet these remain too like mere accumulation without development as with capital. What exasperates Ulrich is the lack of involvement of the individual in what he says he believes in. A solid framework of ideas has been won over, and "in this method, which admittedly kills the soul but then, so to speak preserves it for general consumption by canning it in small quantities" (198). Morality becomes, in short, another commodity liable to be exchanged, what indeed becomes the case with all the big talk between Arnheim and Diotima in the meetings of the Parallel Campaign.

Like language, which was in its origin a purely metaphorical moment of utterance which sought to build a relation with the world, the gradual process of congealment of metaphorical constructs concerning what is good and what is evil has led to a loss of that nascent, effulgent state in which they were born. Similar to the automatization of language that Shklovsky talks about in relation to the need to defamiliarize experience being a fundamental trait of all art, “all moral propositions characterize a sort of dream state that has already flown the coop of rules in which we teether it (Musil 828; Shklovsky 75). If rose or tree signifies everything other than roses and trees in the post-structural world, morality too signifies every other aspect other than the one it is supposed to convey, namely asking what could be good or bad in given circumstances, or the complementarity between the two that we shall be discussing in greater detail in the next chapter on style. In a world riddled with tautologies and contradictions, morality is no exempt, leaving people like Ulrich at dire straits in having no fellow travelers to confide in and no signposts to decide the rightful course of their lives. “Everything is moral, but morality itself is not” (1113). We again encounter the same paradox, namely personalities without a person.

Society then comprises not of persons anymore but a group of impersonal functioning elements, like the parts of a machine. When it comes to ideas, poetry and philosophy, they are handled in the same way as other goods, and the sayings neutralized as propositions that one can wear and get rid of as and when required like clothes. We have observed a similar phenomenon in the *Recherche*, where a plethora of characters ‘use’ art for their own purposes, even Marcel himself for a significant part of the novel. “The practical philosophy and poetry of most people, who are neither originators nor on the other hand unsusceptible to ideas, consists of just such shimmering fusions of someone else’s great thoughts with their own private modifications” (663). We shall return to the question of reading and engagement in the next chapter again.

Ulrich feels that accumulation of capital and ideas goes hand in hand with the accumulation of impersonality, which in fact means, the depreciation of individuality. “In truth, of course, more than half of life consists not of actions but of formulas, of opinions we make our own, of on-the-one-hands and on-the-other-hands, and of all the piled-up impersonality of everything one heard and knows” (222). Life becomes increasingly ‘same’ and ‘impersonal, an accretion that is in fact antagonistic to the very possibility of art and artful existence [“*Das Leben wurde immer gleichförmiger und unpersönlicher*”] (Grill 55).

Georg Simmel traces in his essay “The Metropolis and Mental Life” the gradual rise of impersonality in industrial society as an outcome of the depersonalization at work in the human relations of economic production and exchange. Just as the factory worker is alienated from the wholeness of the product in having to occupy himself at only one station of the long chain of production, similarly, the growth of mass products, and in today’s world, internet shopping, has on one hand minimized interaction between the consumer and the producer and also curtailed the uniqueness of the products. There was a time where products were made according to the demands of the buyer and the creativity of the one making it. Now it is the impersonal design that both compels the manufacturing and buying of goods. It is thus no wonder, that cultural productions like TV serials and reality shows would align with the same mentality of mindlessness so that life could be “composed more and more of these impersonal cultural elements and existing goods and values which seek to suppress peculiar personal interests and incomparability” (338).

It is possible to talk of the soul, like of morality, only in paradoxical terms. The soul, which was one supposed to be identified with an individual, now forms a diffused state of artificiality. Like advertisements that are specific yet impersonal reflection of the epoch where they circulate, “tennis players, horsemen, race-car drivers, unclad women” become for Ulrich the “projection of the mass soul...physically, dramatically and ideoplastically” (308).

With the lack of individuation, individual sensibility gets metamorphosed to a collective stupidity. As a person, one often still has certain moral restrictions which gets evened out when a group function bound to one another not by ideals, but the repression that civilization has granted to them as its legacy (Freud 112). Looking at the violence of a mob demonstration, Ulrich reflects this paradox, which Avital Ronell in his book *Stupidity* sums up as “there is a particular propensity in the world for people, wherever they appear in great numbers, to permit themselves collectively everything that would be forbidden them individually” (79).

“The apparatus was set up, and because it was there it had to function...even if no one is at the wheel, it will always take a definite, even a very impressive and remarkable course of its own” (Musil 242). The state, we know, simulates a gigantic machine. The authoritative systems in Kafka’s world do not seem to require any conscious decision-making from its proponents. Similarly, in Musil, the Parallel Campaign chugs along relentlessly in its stupid course once it is initiated, where empty phrase-makings and inane plans keep its life ticking. The setting up of a Joseph Frank Soup Kitchen or the standardization of the Otto shorthand systems are the ‘great’ ideas that hover in the atmosphere, more of which we shall write about in the chapter on Event. The Parallel Campaign serves as a miniature version of the State itself that it seeks to celebrate. Stupidity is not only thus on an individual level in Musil as in the real world where we live in. It forms the very environment that gives us our identities in the form of certain parameters whereas at the same time investing nothing to help us cultivate the person we are or we can become: “The government squanders money on every kind of foolishness but hasn’t a penny to spare for solving the most pressing moral problems. That’s in its nature, since the state is the stupidest and most malicious person there is” (284).

There are uncountable impulses surrounding us without any guiding perspective to actually take these sensations in. What matters to the self-seeking to preserve itself is the uncritical and unresponsive exposure to variety, and at the same time, being inert to taking a standpoint with respect to it. “For the man of today, who has on the whole not much perspective on the meaning of life, the confident sense of his own level is a most desirable second best” (357). Religion, even if it also worked on the same logic of suppressing perspectives or making them serve the interests of the religious authorities, at least provided some kind of cohesive force to society, which got lost as a result of intellectualization and secularization. This, according to Weber, forms the root of disenchantment with the world, who feels that the objective truth of science could not replace the value of religion (Weber 13). Reason tries to familiarize experience by casting them into the framework of causality. This technique of providing meaning to an otherwise chaotic present is not “just an epistemological, but [also a] moral mistake” (Talay-Turner 30). The rationalization of morality creates the co-opting subject, which Nietzsche had equated all of metaphysics with. The religious man is simply a virtuous slave, living in the shackles of ‘slave morality’ with no thinking to do of his own.

It is no wonder that the education system would only be aligned so as to create more machine parts to add on to the larger system of which it too is only a cog. The ‘aesthetic education’ model of Schiller that we discussed in our section on Proust can no longer be in vogue, just the same as how redundant the notion of *Bildung* becomes in such a culture of mass-produced university-goers. Ulrich rightly remarks that “education was merely an initiation into the contemporary and prevalent modes and manners...those who seek to acquire a mind of their own must first of all realize that they have none as yet” (396). The consequence of no possibility being available for self-cultivation turns culture into a barren space of exchange, as highlighted by Adorno. “There’s no longer a whole man confronting a

whole world, only a human something moving about in a general culture-medium” (234). These impersonal elements turn out to be mere example of species, “identical to one another through isolation within the compulsively controlled collectivity” (Adorno, “Dialectic” 29). It was this outcome that was identified by Hegel as herd [*Trupp*] (9).

With the machinery of ‘discipline and punish’ set into place, law-abiding citizens form the nucleus of what Nietzsche calls ‘virtuous stupidity’, which can only engender disgust and new longing in the more ingenious minds. What is the character of this stupidity in relation to the notion of truth that it advocates? “It is not truth and certainly that is the antithesis of the world of the insane, but the universality and all-obligatoriness of a belief, in short, non-voluntariness in forming opinions” (“*Gay Science*” 67). We arrive at the same tautological structure as we had in relation with morality and language. If truth, as explicated in the first chapter, is an event that goes hand in hand with responsible comportment to bring the world to appearance, stupidity that masquerades as truth is set on the opposite pole. Ronell locates in this paradox the very origin of stupidity. Every form of truth is to some degree poetic and involves a judgement. But what distinguishes stupidity from wisdom is the obstinacy with which it universalizes this judgement: “Stupidity involves a judgement that, having arrived at its conclusion, passes itself off stubbornly as truth” (70).

Who or what then is hailed as great in such a culture where significance as a concept has been nailed down to quantifiable attributes? Since the productions of the physical body are more conducive in being measured and statistically compared in contrast to those of the mind, Ulrich finds himself surrounded by ‘geniuses’ who come from domains of boxing, tennis and horse-riding. Even a racehorse is deemed to a genius, based on its performance. The principle of equivalence serves here fruitful to define greatness; “that is why sports and strictly objective criteria have deservedly come to the forefront, displaying such obsolete concepts as genius and human greatness” (Musil 42). Naturally enough, in such a culture, the

productions of the mind are passed over in ignorance since they would either be incomprehensible to the mass that knows to believe in appreciating performances and spectacles or that creativity would subvert the logic of the capitalist apparatus and dismantle the structures that attribute greatness to physical feats alone: “there is an uncertainty of values, passed over and ignored; it is probably less its idea of genius that makes this era attribute genius to a tennis player or a racehorse than its general distrust for the world of the mind of the intellect, to which the term rightly belongs” (494).

The notion of greatness serves an important role in the novel, as we shall see in our discussion of the Event in the third chapter. However, this role is ironical in nature. The members of the Parallel Campaign want to create a great event, which however always quite fails, for they understand great as something which is merely spectacular. Greatness or that which is significant must be at first incomprehensible, for it extends over the significations that already exists in an atrophied limbo. On the contrary, the culture of accumulation lauds that as great which is merely an enlargement:

So, the captain of the industry, disinclined to forego greatness, which serves him as a compass, must resort to the democratic dodge of replacing the immeasurable influence of greatness by the measurable greatness of influence. So now what counts as great is great; but this means that eventually whatever is most loudly hawked as great is also great, and not all of us have the knack of swallowing this innermost truth of our times without gagging a little. (470).

Ulrich says sarcastically at one point, “What quantities of genius there were even in a hairdresser’s window” (947). Another queer genius of the novel is the mystic Meingast, who uses a sort of hypnotism on Walter and Clarisse by his mumbo-jumbo of occultism and irrationalism. Such people are to be found amidst us as well, who live “on our current

confusion of intuition and faith” (852). Greatness, if true, occurs not seldom in an era, for the very emergence of something or someone unprecedented introduces amidst us a new quality which brings the weight of significance alongside it. But like all other things, greatness too has been reduced to a commodity, and admiration is no longer spontaneous but fabricated: “What a curious phenomenon admiration is! In the life of individuals, it occurs only in spasms, but it is firmly institutionalized in collective life” (851). The criteria for genius do not come along with the great person, but similar to all choices, are pre-made. Genius is that person who fits this pre-determined model best; it has become a ‘status of fact’, “applied to a man whose distinction is already an established fact, so that everyone understands that the words can be pinned on him, and it hardly matters where” (353). As we had seen in the discussion of Beethoven’s quartets in the *Recherche* chapters, genius had once been associated with posterity, because it took a culture time to assess greatness. The culture industry however trusts only the present moment and is anxious to invest it with as much significance as possible. It cannot imagine attributing greatness to a piece of work that had not been appreciated immediately when it occurred. It dismisses the posterity that is part of understanding any significant event, for there no events in the strict sense here, only facts. Hence, its affiliation lies with that “whose significance can be readily assessed in its own time. Not so the genius that is not instantly recognized by all and sundry” (1070).

We know from Musil’s biography how embittered and cynical he was towards some of his fellow writers for the laurels of greatness they received, whereas his efforts did not receive the same degree of appreciation. This, we can affirm, is not unnatural, for the genius of Musil necessitated a posterity of its own to be recognized. Nevertheless, what does the cynical Musil have to say about the ‘great author’?

He need not necessarily write the bestseller of the year or the book of the month himself, as long as he doesn’t challenge this sort of an evaluation, because it is

he who sits on all the award committees, signs all the manifestos, writes all the introductions, delivers all the commencement addresses, pronounces on all the important events, and is called in whenever it is necessary to demonstrate what new heights of progress have just been achieved. (467)

Just as accumulation of capital is taken for progress of the human race, similarly the embellishment of a particular aspect is taken to be significant. In a time where man is but a fragmented creature, “a single aspect of greatness is taken for the whole, a distant analogy for a truth, and the flayed hide of a significant word is stuffed with something modish” (498). The really great is actually poor of such paraphernalia to create a furor amongst the masses, for a genius not only is significant but is so due to how he re-shapes the understanding of significance itself. Artists, as Paul Klee mentions, not only shows us things; they make seeing possible. Greatness, if it has to be a public spectacle as in the world of Musil’s novel, must conform to the usual way of seeing things. With that, our tautological journey reaches a full circle beginning with language, morality and truth, here culminating with significance and greatness. Our next sub-chapter will examine the disillusionment and emptiness that results from these contradictions and the general means of escape therefrom envisaged by all and sundry, in a time when “the genuinely great, with its usual material poverty and purity of spirit, is displaced by the mere label of greatness, all sorts of spurious candidates for the label push their way in- quite understandably- and there you also get the kind of greatness that can be conferred by publicity and public acumen” (510).

(C) CIRCLE, VOID, SENSELESSNESS

One of the metaphors to recur in Musil's novel is that of the circle. A circle is constructed from the center, but it is only the circumference of it that belongs to the realm of appearance. For the stability of its form, a center is indispensable. And yet, a circle is a closed figure which is perhaps most vacuous. It is therefore with a view to tap into the emptiness inherent in any circular formation that this metaphor is employed so exhaustively by Musil. Patricia McBride concurs with this view and points at the scene where Clarisse holds up her marriage ring to light (8). On one hand, it symbolizes the bond she shares with Walter. On the other hand, it shows the insubstantiality of the institutionalized relationship which is entirely hollow from inside.

It is to be noted that the house Ulrich lives in has been designed from a whimsical point of view. Each of the floors partakes of an architecture from a different epoch, with the result that the house as a whole, lacks an unifying principle of construction. Such a hotchpotch of a building born from ideas growing "steadily devoid of content" is an embodiment of a larger environment of which it is a part, namely modernity which could be summed up as a plethora of "incoherent ideas spreading outward without a center" (Musil 15). Both microcosm and macrocosm alike share the same problem of lacking a center to fall back on.

Musil's world, one can say, is almost as if diametrically opposed to that envisaged by St. Augustine. Speaking of the nature of God, Augustine compares his presence with "a circle whose center was everywhere and its circumference nowhere" (qtd in Emerson 154). The godlessness in the modern world does not leave behind any cornerstone according to which

one can assuredly shape one's existence and decisions. This lack goes hand in hand also with the inability of any particular principle to hold the chaos of phenomena in order. Such is the problem characterizing Ulrich's life: "there's a whole circle of questions here, which has a large circumference and no center, and all these questions are "How should I live?" (972).

Although man has been able to control nature for his own purposes and needs ever more increasingly in the modern world, this mastery has entailed, as we have seen, a loss of control over oneself. The universal spirit of possession has dispossessed the human being from his humaneness. The self wants to hold on to its stable contours obstinately, which in turn, becomes an obstinate refusal to exist as an entity that becomes anew with time. The continuous preoccupation with technological reasons leads to an antithetical outcome, in man being chained by prejudices that emerge in such a cloistered setting;

In class society, the self's hostility to sacrifice included a sacrifice of the self, since it was paid for by a denial of nature in the human being for the sake of mastery over extra-human nature and over other human beings. This very denial, the core of all civilizing rationality, is the germ cell of proliferating mythical irrationality: with the denial of nature in human beings, not only the telos of the external mastery of nature but also the telos of one's own life becomes confused and opaque. (Adorno, "Dialectic" 42)

The brand of reason in vogue is wont to pin everything down to details and facts so as to balance out its ignorance concerning qualities and differences constituting a rather chaotic world. Diotima, at the helm of the Parallel Committee, comes up with some flowery articulation or inane idea almost every day. But it soon turns out that all her ideas are eventually futile as far as creating something great for the celebrations is concerned. Lost amidst the pool of information and petty details, Diotima realizes for the first time the void

that had hitherto been covered by paltry superficialities. The metaphor of circle and void has their counterpart in Musil's use of the word 'soul' [*Geist*]; an outdated word which hardly carries any meaning anymore, which even more points its lack in the make-up of each human personality. Thus, there is a feeling of being devoid of something and what makes this feeling worse is the inability of defining it: "she had lost something she had previously not really known she had: a soul...It seems successfully to evade every effort to pin it down" (106, 113-114).

Another word that recurs now and again in conjunction with void and circle is mist [*Nebel*]. This is a metaphor Musil uses to signify the haze of confusion in which all activities are enshrouded. The outline of all objects is smudged in this penumbra, and so is the otherwise sharp distinction between background as milieu and foreground as protagonist also made hazy and unclear. Such is the universe of Ulrich, "a heavy world weighing on tongue, hands and eyes, a chilled moon of earth, houses, mores, pictures and books, and inside nothing but an unstable, shifting mist" (137).

The atmosphere of confusion begins in Musil's *œuvre* right from his first novel *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törless* [The Confusions of Young Törless]. Here, as in this work, is the confusion ubiquitous. Although Ulrich as an individual does not adhere to the same set of frameworks as the rest of the milieu, that does not exempt him from feeling confused as well. Musil's world makes epistemology redundant because the self to begin with is not really there to acquire, perceive or apprehended anything there is to be known. What do the 'cultivated sensibilities' of the era stand for?

They no longer knew what their smiles, their signs, their ideas, were for. What exactly was the point of their thought, their smiles? Their opinions were haphazard, their inclinations an old story, the scheme of things seemed to be

hanging in midair, one ran into it as into a net, and there was nothing to do or leave undone with all one's heart, because there was no unifying principle. (576)

The entire town is in a furor over the rape committed by a certain Moosbrugger. Everyone, without exception, castigates the mentally disbalanced 'criminal' and make no effort to hold back the venom which they spew unanimously over someone who hardly is in a position to acquiesce the gravity of the situation and the allegations made against him. Ulrich takes a peculiar curiosity in this case, as we have seen before in certain quoted snippets. But what disturbs him is his own inability to come to a conclusion concerning the deeds of this person. Ulrich goes on to think aloud that whether an act would be deemed heroic or cynical would depend on the chosen point of view, and that there is hardly a possibility of transcendence from this hermeneutic prison. "But this lack of a touchstone within ourselves is more sordid than all the rest". Neither is there a possibility of a retreat from the confusion of urban life to the comfort of the countryside. Musil undoes the idea of a romantic retreat to the countryside in bringing back Ulrich to his hometown after his father's death. Even if the village lacks the cacophony of the city, it is no better in making any sense to Ulrich. The phenomenon of displacement and vacuity had sent in here as well; there is no escape route from confusion and void: "This town had a past, and it even had a face, but the eyes did not go with the mouth, or the chin with the hair; over everything lay the traces of a hectic life that is inwardly empty. They could possibly, under special personal circumstances, foster great originality" (730).

Like his contemporary Kafka, Musil takes resort to the metaphor of a burrowing animal to symbolize human existence. Just as a burrowing animal has no knowledge of what lies above the soil, and that all his roads are those which he himself scoops out, similarly human beings are often ignorant of where they really are and the impact of the choices they

make. We are progressing in time, and yet what have we achieved other than the road that has been left behind, Ulrich ask himself a similar question; the path of human beings

in the end resembles the path of a woodworm; no matter how it corkscrews forward or even backward, it always leaves an empty space behind it. And this horrible feeling of a blind, cutoff space behind the fullness of everything, this half that is always missing even when everything is a whole, this is what eventually makes us perceive what one calls the soul. (196)

The problem of language and signification exacerbates further the stifling atmosphere where nothing makes any sense anymore. Language based on abstraction is already a weakening of the particular sense an object or moment can have for the individual. Using words to describe a landscape or communicating our emotions is the step in moving away from that which is the object. Musil parodies this aspect by pointing out that we do not distinguish between the redness of a red nose although each shade could be accurately described in terms of their wavelengths. On the other hand, big cities resemble one another to a great degree, but we are adamant to give each a particular name. The lack of particular sense associated with cities can be explained by that which controls life and activities in such places; namely supply and demand, exchange, advertisements, in short, the paraphernalia of capitalism. This ‘reduces’ the uniqueness of a place to “one great rhythmic beat as well as the chronic discord and mutual displacement of all its contending rhythms” (4).

This displacement can understandably not be described by the language of factuality, but it has been the latter itself that had led to it in the first place. Musil offers a cluster of metaphors to arrive closer at the heart of the matter:

Something imponderable. An omen. An illusion. As when a magnet releases iron fillings and they fall in confusion again. As when a ball of string comes

undone. As when a tension slackens. As when an orchestra begins to play out of tune...all the relations had shifted a little...There is just something missing in everything, though you can't put your finger on it, as if there had been a change in the blood or in the air; a mysterious disease. (56)

This is why Ulrich can't really look upon Moosbrugger as just a mad person. If the times where one lives in a crazy one, where things have become topsy-turvy and lost their usual meanings, then a deviation from the norms that these times institutionalize is perhaps only a move away from madness. The acts of this fellow seem to Ulrich only "a distortion of our own elements of being- if mankind could dream as a whole, that dream would be Moosbrugger" (76-77). Moosbrugger is only one of the characters in this book who acts irrationally in order to seek a new way of being, and fails. Others in this group are Clarisse, who adopts occultist irrationalism and Diotima, who is more in favor of the idealism of the past. Ulrich himself is also a person trying to reshape reality, however, with a major difference from the rest which we shall thematize in the next subchapter.

The void of meaninglessness recurs in the instances of which more 'sane' characters are a part. Ulrich's mistress Leona is a woman whose beauty does not correspond to what is deemed as beautiful in the world, which is probably one of the reasons why her charm strikes a chord with Ulrich, at least for a while. And yet, this charm hypostatizes to a mummified experience when they make love, and the moments thereafter where life seems "as if given a sleeping pill", "full of inner meaning, sharply outlined, and yet, in sum, making absolutely no sense at all" (20). Likewise, Clarisse's haggardly look when she comes to Ulrich's place and demands him to sleep with her to beget a child marks the same placid lack of sense as that of the evenings with Leona. Clarisse's gaze is compared to "a small rent in the veil of life through which the indifferent void stares out" (849). Events alter, circumstances change, but the void continues to make its presence felt.

Musil's distaste towards fake community formation also leaves an imprint in his opinion about collective stupidity. Even if people count as significant individually, their inclusion or participation in the gala festival of insignificance render their particular views toothless. Speaking of the children of a "nerve-racked age", Ulrich considers "each feeling intelligent enough and yet all of them together feeling somehow barren" (499). Another effect Musil introduces in his characterization of the mist of confusion is a flickering, shimmering glint, as opposed to the effulgent clarifying glow of Enlightenment and Humanism from which the former borrows its name. What one encounters now are "opposing and widely varying battle cries, but uttered in the same breath. An analysis of that epoch might produce some such nonsense as a square circle trying to consist of wooden iron, but in reality, it all blended into shimmering sense" (53). We meet again this flickering presence in the idea that coronates Arnheim as the head of the Parallel Campaign; "what little part of this state of mind could be put into words did not amount to much: a glittering, a flickering, a strange emptiness and a flight of ideas" (357).

This mist is even more relevant for Ulrich than others. Since the rest of the dramatis personae of the novel more or less adheres to the present tune of times, to them this mist only appears in certain moments, and that too for an ephemeral duration, for some other impulse grabs hold of them the next instant. For Ulrich, who cannot accept the world in the way in which it is dished out, and at the same time cannot be entirely nonchalant about the world either, the present doom "casts a feeling of deep, shadowy unease on those who live according to their own lights... all seems at times as stiff as folding screens, as hard as a printer's die stamp, complete- there is no other way of putting it- so complete and finished that one is mere superfluous mist beside it, a small, exhaled breath God has no time for anymore" (136).

Adorno's dialectical model of understanding Enlightenment takes into the account the negative impact of apparently positive terms of the equation. If subjectivity was thought to be the sovereignty through which man could think and live independently, it has backfired and produced a form of madness where freedom and responsibility have been cut off from one another. Subjectivity, in the form in which it is exercised as an unbridled expression of whims, lacks any compartment to the world other than fulfillment of one's desires. The arbitrariness of these wishes and their shaping by the market, and thereafter their fulfillment as like a list of options from a bucket list, is bound sooner or later to produce a barrenness. All the purposes for which human beings keep themselves alive, remarks Adorno, like "social progress, the heightening of material and intellectual forces, indeed, consciousness itself-become void, and the enthronement of the means as the end, which in late capitalism is taking on the character of overt madness is already detectable in the early history of subjectivity" ("Dialectic" 43).

What then is the response of the mass towards this emptiness, which they happen to cognize from time to time? The very feeling of this emptiness is also empty in nature; there is no serious engagement with the void, for such is the totalitarian all-impairing character of this phenomenon which Musil had earlier termed as a 'disease'. The crowd falls back on prophets and messiahs and poets, all of whom have been neatly assigned the task of redeeming a populace gone to the dogs.

But this veneration is not sincere; at its base lies the gaping, generally accepted conviction that there is really not a single person who deserves it, and it is hard to tell whether the mouth opens to acclaim someone or to yawn. To call a man a genius nowadays, with the unspoken gloss that there is really no longer any such thing, smacks of some cult of the dead, something like hysterical love-

making a great to do for no other reason than there is no real feeling present.

(322)

In such a situation, poets are unconcerned with the world and don't take the trouble of actually looking underneath the false, deluding surface of things. The "supply of pure poetry" is same as "compensating for a big hole by setting a hollow dome on top of it...turns its back on all this fuss over responsibility and greatness" (441). Art no longer is associated with the effort to disclose reality. Rather, it merely conforms to it by imitating the dominating modality of supply and demand. Even if artists pronounce romantic sentiments about leaving urban civilization and abandoning the tyranny of reason, these occur within the selfsame network of relations and packaged as products to munch on after a tiring day, only to repeat the same day over again the next morning. The book had a special place in that everything that takes place in it has a necessity and could not be imagined otherwise. "But these happenings in our lives have less life than a book, because they have no coherent meaning", writes Musil. If life was once richer than a book for containing 'real experiences' merely narrated in the latter, now it is the book, or at least the possibility of the book to come as with all Modernist novelists, that contain true traces of life; life no longer is, but can be only arrived at through art, as we have seen in Proust's world as well. Life and reality no longer are compatible terms, and the possibility of life as well as reality must therefore only occur through an artifice like that of a novel. Another of Musil's contemporary in the German novel tradition, Hermann Broch posits thus this incompatibility in his magnum opus *Die Schlafwandler*, "Hat dieses verzerrte Leben noch Wirklichkeit? Hat diese hypertropische Wirklichkeit noch Leben?"¹⁸ (qtd in Dowden 13).

The lack of sense in almost everything in life leads to a culture of nihilism, as it did in the times of European Modernism. If content gets divested from form, then forms circulate like skeletons without flesh, and signification becomes synonymous with irony. The

characters of Musil's world suffer from a strange melancholy in not being able to be a part of some event which they could deem as really significant. The circular structure of the novel owes its style to other factors as well to which we shall dedicate the second chapter of this section. But at this point, the general unease that perpetrates individuals in the face of the absence of an event and meaning could be seen a cue to the rise of nihilism. We speak here of that form of nihilism that fails to ascribe meaning to events, thereby nullifying the possibility of any occurrence. The fact that nothing is happening "had become as disturbing as getting no sleep or seeing no sense in anything" (577). Agamben traces such a phenomenon also in Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* [The Magic Mountain], where a huge collection of instances eventually adds up to nothing, or only to the breakout of war in which Hans Castorp finds himself ("Man without Content" 18). We shall in the final chapter examine this attitude in much detail in relation to the 'Great Idea' of redemption, but it is indisputable- concurring with Heidegger who considered the rise of nihilism to be the fundamental movement of the history of the West- that this nihilism, to borrow the words of Nietzsche, is the 'uncanniest of all guests'.

We shall briefly take an overview of the instances in the novel where Musil embodies this void in concrete occurrences. For Ulrich, the emptiness of life reveals itself most particularly when he is intimate with another person. All of Ulrich's relationships with women in the novel have one point in common- that they lead not to fruition but to vacuity, especially more so after a bout of intimacy has taken place. After such an incident with Bonadea, the wife of a judge who becomes Ulrich's mistress after a chance encounter on the street, "kisses flooded the ensuing vacuum...chitchat gushed back to fill the void" (119). At his early adulthood, Ulrich had joined the military service and befriended a lieutenant's wife, with whom he became eventually involved in a relationship. At that age, where romantic notions and greatness of spiritual bonds still held a relevance for young Ulrich, the idea of

grand passion was “devoid of experienced content, hence as luminously vacuous, as only a really grand concept could be” (129). We see that disappointment as well as enchantment partakes of the void, for both here are insubstantial and lacking content. Like the emptiness of Kafka’s world where gruesome incidents abound in utmost equanimity, Clarisse feels herself to be a “deep space” at the time of being raped by her own father (318). We shall not venture into explaining such responses, but it would probably be attributable to the *blasé* attitude of the nihilist for whom everything seems to be insignificant and that his senses are always numbed by the stream of stimuli feeding onto him every moment.

Another sexual encounter of Ulrich’s, this time with Gerda, daughter of his friend Leo Fischel, seems like “a half-crazy anticipation of something like massacre, a sex murder; or, if there is such a thing, a lustful suicide, inspired by the demons of the void who lurk behind all of life’s images” (678-679). The only substantial relationship of the novel takes place between the siblings Ulrich and Agathe. Here, sexuality takes a backseat with the factor of incestuality serving as a watershed. But even in this companionship, there are moments where Ulrich finds himself lost, and no longer knows what he is seeking: “But in the midst of her laughter or the tumult of some sensual adventure that continued nonetheless, there lived a disenchantment that made every fiber of her body tired and nostalgic for something else, something best described as nothingness” (930).

Unlike Ulrich, Diotima professes to have great faith in love. An idealist by nature, if not only in proclaiming herself to be one, she too is faced with this nothingness when language eludes her lofty feelings, or when the feelings themselves turn out to be pretty trivial in contrast to the lofty expectations that preceded them. She feels being left only with the “empty bottle of her body” after distributing herself in tiny droplets of rarified love (359). In love, she feels the “void typical of the first stage of that transition [from sleeping to waking]” (ibid). There is an inescapable sense of nullity that pervades in all of love’s toiling,

where the soul “behaved like a truant schoolboy boisterously careening around until he is overcome by the sadness of his pointless liberty” (360).

Much of Diotima’s love for Arnheim is lacking in sincerity. On one hand, she wishes to establish herself in social circle of the town and attain the status of a culturally refined dilettante. On the other hand, all that in Arnheim that attracts her are basically those very same traits of the present civilization that leads to boredom and vacuity. There are certain moments like the following in Musil’s novel, where a certain elevation is attained from the ground level of both city and village, and like Stendhal’s heroes ruminating about the smallness of human beings in the humungous landscape of nature, love reveals at the possibility of repose where void is no longer a reason for anxiety. At such an occasion, standing atop a hillock, “all their wishes and vanities that had normally filled their lives now lay far beneath them, like toy houses and farmyards deep in the valley, with all the clucking, barking, and other excitements swallowed up in the stillness, leaving only the sense of silent deep space” (550). It is to be remarked in this passage, that Musil conjoins void with sense, which is otherwise not expected since void is constitutive of only lack of sense or results from it.

Such a state of being is neither subjective nor humane: “There was nothing loftily humane about this feeling, nothing even merely humane. It was a taste of the whole cosmic void of eternity” (557). And yet, Arnheim and Diotima are unable to live up to such moments, because they only seek to preserve their selves even in the most wildly idealist of their adventures. Not finding anything impersonal to talk about, “a vacuum developed that left a bitter exhaustion in its wake” (885). Since the ego cannot be kept out the equation, love too follows the same attitude of possession which we have discussed in the previous subchapter. The reason why love eventually fails to unfold between Arnheim and Diotima, as with surely many others, is due to the fact that they do not participate in the feeling that

beseeches one to open outwardly to another world of possibilities. “The mania to possess another person so entirely that no one else can come anywhere near is a sign of personal loneliness within the human community” (1024).

This does not however imply that the abyss is absolved of its tyrannical presence in the domains of experiences which are not entirely physical in nature. Music, which had in Proust, a great import of significance, fails here in Musil’s world to really bring in some truce with the boredom of everyday life. Wagner here is posed in contradistinction to the *Recherche*. Listening to Walter playing Wagner, Ulrich describes the feeling as the “slippery void of music”. In fact, Clarisse’s inclination for atonal music and abstract art also evinces what Worringer calls abstraction to save oneself from the chaos of naturalism, a negative form of empathizing with the world (30). No wonder that for Walter, a self-proclaimed avant-garde, the “word ‘God’ generates an abashed void around itself” (993). The metaphor of total presence has undergone a metamorphosis to stand for total absence or zero.

The feeling of happiness or felicity which was also once associated with divine presence is infused with nothingness here. For Diotima, whose happy moments correspond with the fulfillment of grand, superficial designs, happiness seems to be “a prickling like the awareness of nothingness when one stands on the summit of the highest mountain peak for miles around...momentarily highest point reached by the pillar of time as it rises out of the void” (245). On the other hand, completing a project that had been pending for a while, Ulrich walks to the center of the town “in order to somehow fill the void left in him by the completion of his paper” (785). In both the above situations, there is a rupture of everyday routine, and the nothingness underneath it gets exposed.

We shall sum up our discussion on the void by highlighting one aspect of it which would be crucial to understand nothingness as a precursor to creative activity in the next

chapter. As we have seen so far, the nothingness is always represented, where a concrete situation comes to stand in place of it to convey its sense. Hence, void or abyss here is not beyond language, nor does it refer to any kind of transcendence. Rather, it is the underlying condition of the hermeneutic tussle we call life, and is revealed from time to time as a shaped phenomenon, couched in distinct forms. Speaking parodically of what constitutes a human being, Ulrich imitates the positivist encyclopedist in listing nine attributes like social, political, cultural, sexual and so on. He then goes on to say that there is a tenth factor, which is a “passive fantasy of spaces yet unfilled”. This emptiness has a distinct form and varies from person to person, because the apprehension and nature of nothingness is not universal but a historical product dependent on an individual’s response to his surroundings;

This interior space- admittedly hard to describe- is of a different shade and shape in Italy from what it is in England, because everything that stands out in relief against it is of a different shade and shape; and yet it is in both places the same: an empty, invisible space, with reality standing inside it like a child’s toytown deserted by the imagination. (30)

What is remarkable is the totalizing effect of the myriad forces that circulate in Musil’s world, which in its turn, lends a kind of stasis to all the action offered to the plot. We have seen how capitalism and technological reason forms the total base of activities, leading to a void-like sensation perpetrating into all spheres of emotional life, and nihilism as a reaction to such a world is also but a ubiquitous phenomenon. However, it is necessary to distinguish between the two forms of nihilism, as we had also done in reading Proust.

There is a functionalism at work in both the worldviews presented in the novel. The dominant worldview of the times, symbolized through Arnheim is one where human beings and activities have been turned into functions. Each of these functions are means for fulfilling

certain ends. The ends are based on accumulation of capital and exchange value, and extends over to cultural production over and above purely material aspects of social life. Everything here is reduced to a tool; it must serve human purpose. Thus, nothing exists by itself in its own right. There is always a context to which it is 'subjected'. It exists 'for' that use; a mode which Musil calls the 'egocentric' attitude.

Ulrich's functionalism is perceptibly different from the one of Arnheim's for it does not reify a context exclusively to human use. Ulrich feels nothing really exists by itself, and that things reveal their faces only in particular associations. In other words, Ulrich is against the conceptualization of things in brackets and is more inclined towards embracing the differences that makes appearance and perception possible.

Arnheim's view on things says 'no' to the uniqueness of the particular and the distinct associations in which they are enmeshed. These differences are crucial for a pragmatist to overlook so as to generate productivity according to some extraneous pattern. Ulrich says no to the 'identity' or 'sameness' with which language and human behavior homogenize disparate phenomena. Arnheim's nihilism is closed in its structure; it seeks to conserve the self and its mastery of the world. Ulrich's nihilism is open; it is aligned with the self's potential to unbecome and constitute new ways of being in the world by being perceptive to the plurality of the latter.

The ways envisaged by someone to escape such nihilistic prisons would be set in relation to the nature of nihilism at work. Diotima, who is a great admirer of Arnheim and his brand of worldview, thus takes resort to empty idealism. Her romantic temperament believes in a unified world which has been lost, and even more importantly, one 'can' arrive at this world through 'action'. We have already discussed how the totalitarian character of reason even premeditates and fits into clusters those domains which it seeks to transcend to. Diotima

feels “the need to recover that unity of mankind that had been lost because the disparity of interests in society had grown so great” (189). What is remarkable is the confidence with which action is treated as capable of coming out of the sphere which it itself is stuck in. Such a romantic brand of realism holds one vision of history as the ultimate one to be aspired for, and fails to see the vision as an embodiment of the problems of the present. Thus, there is a widespread protest to be seen from many in the novel “that pure knowledge tore apart every sublime achievement of mankind without even being able to put it back together, and they demanded a new humane faith, a return to inner primal values, a spiritual revival, and all sorts of things of that kind” (268-69).

We just return again to the either-or sensibilities of urban modernity where all choices and their consequences have already been preordained and one is given the delusion that one is free to choose from all that is on offer. Redemption, according to this model, could be sought out, like some commodity of the market, and it is on offer either in a glorious past or in the future to come. To attain the former, one is recommended to be mystical, spiritual, irrational without really giving up the present comforts of life. And for the latter, which is what the Parallel Campaign stands for, an event of quantitatively huge proportions would be able to bring in something unprecedented, namely salvation. Musil parodies this pair of attitudes as the “No more/ Forward to” mode of being (294).

It is but obvious that such a mode of being is not really sincere when it says no to something, only to choose something else which is offered by the selfsame system. Until and unless there is a serious engagement with life, questions concerning reality and redemption are futile. In fact, comportment with the world would never really seek redemption, for such an attitude is aimed towards ignoring the contingency in which one is in favor of some fake transcendence. Looking around himself, Ulrich feels that this form of nihilism is but a thing of fashion only: “I myself originally thought one had to say no to everything; everyone thinks

so who is between twenty-five and forty-five today; but of course, it was only a kind of fashion” (1040). What interests Ulrich is saying no in order to affirm to something that is nowhere to be found in the given assortment of ideas. Ulrich’s nihilism is not of a reactionary kind based on self-preservation. Instead, he looks forwards to other ways of being in the world by dismissing the version of reality on offer: “Good has become a cliché almost by its very nature; while evil remains criticism. The immoral achieves its divine right by being a drastic critique of the moral! It shows us that life has other possibilities” (1040).

How does then these ‘other possibilities’ emerge in light of the milieu in which Ulrich lives? And how does then that shape his personality? What all at all can be said about the personality of a ‘man without qualities’ living in a time where there are only ‘qualities without man’. This shall be the question with which we are going to voyage in our next and last subchapter of this chapter.

(D) MÖGLICHKEITSMENSCH: A MAN WITHOUT QUALITIES

The world of the novel, as we know by now, comes to be refracted through the character(s) that constitute the perspectives through which it is unraveled. The world of the Modernist novel, as seen in the *Recherche* as well, is a struggle commingling between the milieu and the protagonist's estrangement from it. The spirit of the times [*Zeitgeist*] of Musil's novel have so far been exhaustively expatiated on. What we shall now try to engage with, is how Ulrich as the principal character of the novel relates himself to the times in which he exists.

The kind of attitude that is prevalent among the other characters surrounding Ulrich are symptomatic of the epoch where they reside. They behave exactly as the external forces premeditate their responses, with a staggering emphasis on facts and the present moment, and eventually leading up to minimal serious comportment with the world. Ulrich's relationship to the tides of time is, as expected, of a negative nature. This corresponds to the Modernist novel's relationship to the tradition of existing narratives, since like Ulrich, the novel in refracting his outlook is basically trying to reformulate its existence according to terms which could not be borrowed from elsewhere. Thus, the following sentence would equally apply to the aesthetics of the novel as much as to Ulrich: "This business of serving as "the stuff of history" infuriated Ulrich" (Musil 391).

The individual is looking for a new way of being in the world, where the manner of being and the sensibility cultivated by the existing world are at odds with one another. Thus, there is a conflict that ensues between the self and the world, where the self must defy the

circumference proscribed by the world, and this act of defiance in turn holds the possibility of reconstituting the world in a new way. The first step that is apprehensible in such a defiant person would be his reluctance to accept things as they are, or the configuration and significance ascribed to things in the present: “he was revolted by this lethargic acceptance of changes and conditions, this helpless contemporaneity, this mindlessly submissive, truly demeaning stringing along with the centuries (ibid). We can find resonances here not only with Proust but as well as Joyce whose protagonist says in the Nestor episode in *Ulysses*, “History...is the nightmare from which I am trying to awake” (31).

The turn of the century in Europe had witnessed a radical change as far as man's relation with history came to be forged. The culmination of progress and humanism as eventual failures in light of the void that loomed in the wake of the World war produced doubt and distrust in the sensitive and sensible human being, who would refuse to participate in whatever was taken for granted and all that which was going on in circles without any reflection of sorts. “For the leading intellectuals of the generation of 1905, history seemed no longer to contain the cosmic secret, as the nineteenth had believed. Setting out from the uncertainty of knowledge and the inadequacy of every form of dogmatism, the thinkers of this generation were conscious of the fragility and brevity of human civilization” (Luft 17). Thus, if for Arnheim the motto of the day would be the same as that of progress, at times sprinkled with the anaesthetizing dose of redemption, the problem of someone like Ulrich has to do with the unavailability of any ground to stand upon. Extricating oneself out of the habits of the present amounts to then a loss of habitat, or homelessness. “Our so-called periods of civilization are nothing but a long series of detours, one for every failure of a movement forward; the idea of placing himself out of this series was nothing new for Ulrich” (Musil 690).

Maintaining individuality against the “weight of the historical heritage” was however, a ubiquitous phenomenon (Simmel 324). But as we have reflected previously, that this sense of individualism based exclusively on the ability to choose and accumulate things already presented to one is hollow from within. Ulrich’s aspiration towards individualism is one where the conventionally accepted definition of things is challenged. What is crucial here is the effort, that is otherwise lacking in the majority, towards arriving at some kind of signification without being controlled by those processes which makes meaning to be a redundant aspect of life. Ulrich naturally realizes that he cannot be outside of history, since his existence too is played out after a particular manner in time. However, he distinguishes between the history of the world and the history of ideas, in that the latter relates to reflection of one’s existence which the former has by and large nullified among the masses. Ulrich thus is more focused in “living the history of ideas instead of the history of the world...less to do with what was happening than with the interpretation one gave it, with the purpose it was meant to serve, with the system of which the individual events were a part. The prevailing system was that of reality, and it was just like a bad play” (Musil 395).

Ulrich’s individualism is not based on the self and the confidence with which subjectivity is maintained in pragmatic relations with the world. He shares a derision against certitude that reduces the chaos of the surroundings to suit one’s needs. The following reflection of his makes his abnegation towards the composure of the self clear: “so it is with invisible connections which our mind and feelings unconsciously arrange for us in such a way that we are left to feel we are fully in charge of our affairs. And just this is what I don’t seem to be able to achieve the way I should, he said to himself” (708). Although more preoccupied than the rest with the questions pertaining to how life should be lived, Ulrich does not and cannot contain the inchoate plurality of the universe in the cloisters of his self. This is obvious, since accepting his self as it would be to conform to how selves are being

shaped by history and its forces. Ulrich's dismissal of the culture that celebrates contemporaneity and selfhood thus makes him a rather strange and lonely figure in the crowd: "Which is why Ulrich, in his concern with the questions of whether everything else should be subordinated to the most powerful forms of inner achievement- in other words, whether a goal and a meaning can be found for what is happening, and happened to us- had always, all his life, been quite alone" (266).

We have seen that the positivist outlook of Arnheim and Diotima looks at human activities fulfilling some kind of goal or ideological fulfillment. The premise which makes such an evaluation possible is the reduction of disparate elements into commensurable terms, as well as the certitude of representation that is wont to self-preservation of the human species. Ulrich's outlook towards history is far from coinciding with any pattern; rather he looks at the diversity of events that take place as essentially a scattering or dispersal of meaning instead of convergence towards positive meaning:

Even the so-called succession or progress of the ages seemed to him to be only another term for the fact that none of these experiments ever reach the point where they would all meet and move on together a comprehensive understanding that would at last offer a basis for a coherent development, a lasting enjoyment, and that seriousness of great beauty of which nowadays hardly more than a shadow occasionally drift across our life. (947)

If in general human activities are ascribed meaning by positivists based on their own predilection, Ulrich's disavowal of his self opens his eyes to the compulsion of history that one can never override with any sort of determination while at the same time being perceptive of the chaotic assemblage of events that occur. History by its very nature is incoherent, and Ulrich's search for attaining or creating some form of coherence in his

existence thus lands in a strange situation, for all his efforts would, even if they vocally refute from belonging to history, eventually be a part of that same irreducible complex. “So, in the long run it hardly seems to matter whether one gets excited or to what cause one commits one’s existence. It all arrives at the same goal; everything serves an evolution that is both unfathomable and inescapable” (784).

It is possible for advocates of technological reason such as Arnheim to talk of history in such positivist terms, since reason, in positing itself as a universal method partakes of abstraction. Taking cue from the difference in the functionalism that is at play in Ulrich’s and Arnheim’s worldviews, one can assert that the lack of exclusive faith in reason in arranging the affairs of one’s life leaves Ulrich bereft of that magical cornerstone which could have made life way simpler for him. Instead, he ruminates: “The truth is, we have no proper method of dealing with this unending series. I sometimes regret my entire life” (799).

A person is compelled to generalize if not universalize the diversity of experiences so as to make life manageable. Language as a tool for sustaining these general structures and making transactions and communication possible is no doubt based on the error of taking a unique thing to belong to a class. And since the whole of human evolution reflects such a process where labor is increasingly divided and the world increasingly made smaller, the development of language and our association with it holds the key to understanding progress as a series of mistakes based on generalizations, which one could not avoid:

Every word demands to be taken literally, otherwise it decays into a lie; but one can’t take words literally, or the world would turn into a madhouse! Some kind of grand intoxication rises out of this as a dim memory, and one sometimes wonders whether everything we experience may not be fragmented pieces torn from some ancient entity that was once put together wrong. (813)

Unlike the positivist, the Modernist would ally himself with all these erroneous aspects and try understanding his own location with respect to these fallacies. The precision of science and technological reason is based on the dismissal of the uncut edges of existence, and the prim and proper configuration that it furnishes is by and large artificial since based on abstraction. Unwilling to conform to such principles has its extrapolating influence on the non-conformation with what is deemed to be good. It is no coincidence that Proust, Joyce, Svevo and Musil converge in their distinct styles towards an empathy and participation with the morally inadmissible, for each of them are trying in their own way, to redefine existence outside the scope of congealed metaphors of morality that are simply worn like mass-produced garments.

It is understandable that Nietzsche has had a great influence on Musil's temperament for both are engaged with an unpacking of the conventional and moving towards a new form of responsibility in shaping one's being. Ulrich despises "the faint-headed, the soft-headed who comfort their souls with spiritual nonsense and feed...on religious, metaphysical and fictitious pap, like rolls soaked in milk" (43). And no wonder, that others look on Ulrich as having gone astray, an adventurer whose morals are questionable. While the rest conceive every activity with their own selves as the fulcrum, Ulrich gives himself over to the chaos indifferently without trying to fend for his material interests. How would Arnheim respond to such an 'outlaw', whose behavior clearly violates the norms of the present? He is heard mentioning to Diotima, "But he is a dangerous man, with his infantile moral exoticism and his highly developed intelligence that is always on the lookout for some adventure without knowing what, exactly, is egging him on" (351).

We are reminded of the 'artistic' creatures from Proust's universe like Morel, Charlus and Mlle Vinteuil' friend, not to forget Marcel himself, all of whom could be described as morally flawed characters. But we get to see their worth as well, which are impossible in

characters who could be seen as morally upright. What Musil tries to pitch in his novel is a similar impulse, namely that a sensitive person as Ulrich would most certainly deviate from the normal course of things. In doing so, some of his activities would certainly seem to be in the wrong if measured according to the same parameters from whose domain he seeks escape. What is at stake here is not simply the binary opposition between good and bad, but a reframing of these value judgements not according to fixed formulae, but a constant critical enquiry into events with respect to the conditions and contexts that co-form them. In Ulrich we find

a certain inclination towards the negative... a flexible dialectic of feeling that easily leads him to discover a flaw in something widely approved or, conversely, to defend the forbidden and to refuse responsibilities with a resentment that springs from the desire to create his own responsibilities. (160)

Comparing with the distinction Ulrich makes between the history of the world and the history of ideas, one can say that the latter treats freedom with the sense of responsibility of comportment towards that one projects oneself, and as a result, such people are not easily chained by available and pre-given prejudices concerning what is good or bad. There are no fixtures as far as consciousness is concerned, says Emerson (157). And the moment a critically reflective person appears, the world as a collection of facts and adages crumbles to give way to fresh becoming, that is, as we have discussed in the first chapter, the true mark of worldliness. Hence, Emerson warns: “Beware when the great God lets loose a thinker on this planet. Then all things are at risk. It is as when a conflagration has broken out in a great city, and no man knows what is safe, or where it will end” (158).

How do others look at such a volatile character? Speaking of Ulrich’s ideas, Arnheim thinks him to be “a little boy at play, and playing something slightly improper” (389). When

propriety consists of participating in the gala celebration of supply and demand, Ulrich's playfulness is bound to raise some eyebrows. Likewise, Ulrich's disdain towards the elevated and lofty ideals of humanism likewise earns him the laurel of being 'inhuman' from this friend Walter (66). Unable to contain Ulrich as a person in neatly divided categories makes him a sort of a criminal who does not abide the codes of the society. Since others play out the roles ascribed to them or which they aspire to become with immaculate precision, Ulrich's dissatisfaction with any label and his constant unmaking of his own words and actions make him look to them as a puerile person whose personality has not reached development. Hence, Ulrich's paradox for the sake of paradox strikes Diotima as immature (96). In a culture where repetition and sameness has become symptomatic of holiness, Ulrich's suspicion towards easily-agreed upon notions are bound to evince to the adherent of this culture the marks of an ignoble character, as it does in the estimation of Arnheim (455).

Albrecht Wellmar's proposition that the origin of inherent negativity in European Modernist works of arts has to do with an antithetical relationship to the world could be accepted with the qualification, that it is the world as presented which is refuted, and not worldliness per se. Ulrich cannot stand Arnheim, who is a perfect representative of that world, "simply as a model of existence, on principle. The combination of intellect, business, good living and learning was absolutely insufferable" (188). But this does not mean that Ulrich is not serious about life, which Diotima supposes; "You are always making fun of things instead of devoting yourself to life, always sardonic and negative, always leaping into the impossible and avoiding every real decision" (296). What Diotima fails to understand, and understandably so, is that for Ulrich, the meaning of possible and real have quite different connotations as they do for her. Ulrich is not against the world, which is to say, he is not an outright nihilist who is disinterested as far as the surroundings and events are concerned. On the contrary, his being cannot divorce responsibility from the realm of thought

and action. Ulrich strives to attain a new way of being, which could make emerge the world in an unprecedented manner. Thus, his orientation does not conform the conventionally accepted perimeters of what is possible and what not. Ulrich lacks a reality, or lacks faith in what others deem as real, which is what makes all his actions seem shy of embracing that which the rest conceives as reality.

Echoing Nietzsche, Ulrich asks, “Is there a pessimism of the strong? An intellectual leaning toward what is hard, horrifying evil? A deep instinct against morality?” (473). We often see in the novel Ulrich indulging in weird acts, like deliberately getting involved in a brawl to get beaten up, complying though reluctantly with his sister’s wife to tamper with their deceased father’s will, or making up a lover in his fantasy whose stories he could narrate to his paper dolls in his childhood. We have likewise observed extensively in the *Recherche* how such actions do not contradict the goodness of a person, but instead becomes complementary with the rest of his personality. Speaking of evil and the development of personality, Nietzsche comments, “The poison by which the weaker nature is destroyed is strengthening to the strong individual- and he does not call it poison” (“Gay Science” 36). Here strength pertains to the ability of housing contradictory elements in oneself, and developing one’s personality not by repressing any definite aspect of it. Instead, the development is as holistic as possible, and not along some reduced dimension. Musil, like Nietzsche, is against the practice of formalizing morality into propositions. Just like the formulae of natural science are applicable irrespective of their context, similarly morality has had been universalized in such neutralized statements. Musil concurs with Nietzsche that “evil impulses are just in as high a degree expedient and indispensable for the conservation of species as the good; only their function is different” (25). What is crucial is to be conscious of the ‘particular’ signification an action might acquire in a ‘particular’ setting, and one must therefore be perceptive of “the differences of moral climate” (28).

Just as moral adages of today are congealed versions of metaphors that were once essentially creative ways of being in the world, our subscription to them makes our lives calcified and structured, irrespective of whether we at all find those structures significant for ourselves. Most of modern civilization rests on the foundation and sustenance of permanent habits, which Nietzsche deems as tyrants (149). The tyranny of habit comprises in enslaving our perspectives in narrowing confined avenues till the point when we no longer realize that the world that we encounter is a matter of looking at it in a particular way. Giorgio Agamben feels that our outlook of taking everything as a potential piece of property transform our own being into such. For Agamben, habit is not supposed to be a repetitive set of activities, but that where we dwell and what engenders us. What we thus do, must be in keeping with what we would like to become. This calls for a

free use of the self, a way that does not, however, treat existence as a property, is to think of it as a habitus, an ethos. Being engendered from one's own manner of being is, in effect, the very definition of habit...That manner is ethical that does not befall us and does not find us but engenders us. And this being engendered from one's own manner is the only happiness really possible for humans. (36)

At this point it is necessary to make a distinction between morality and ethics. The former is closer to the genre of commandments and edicts which must be followed by all. Any violation of the same would amount to punishment. Thus, morality, apart from being formalized, is at the same time being enforced by some controlling agency in society, including the weight of tradition and the fear of ostracism therefrom. Ethics, on the other hand, has no essence (51). It is based on potentiality, on how man would shape his being through his actions. Musil often shows us in the novel how characters such as Arnheim and Clarisse hold certain opinions which might be commonplace, but applied to the situations that

are confronted, these attitudes seem rather reprehensible. By suppressing an investigation and participation in those fields which are kept out of bounds, man thinks he leads a rightful life, whereas such a person might be in fact insensitive to what truly evil is for he never judges his actions according to the situations but only the supposedly universal measuring rod of reason and morals. Agamben says that the devil is essentially impotent. "Evil is only our inadequate reaction when faced with this demonic element, our fearful retreat from it in order to exercise- finding ourselves in this flight- some power of being" (39).

A person like Ulrich comes up with the most unexpected responses to situations, which is an embodiment of the worldview of Musil's novel. People find hard to understand Ulrich because although level-headed, these responses of his are eccentric to the foundations of belief and custom. For Nietzsche, it is precisely this sort of a person who deserves the epithet of being noble:

But that the passion which seizes the noble man is a peculiarity, without his knowing it is so: the use of a rare and singular measuring-rod, almost a frenzy, the feeling of heat in things which feel cold to all other persons: a divining of values for which scales have not yet been invented: a sacrificing on altars which are consecrated to an unknown God: a bravery without the desire for honor: a self-sufficiency which has superabundance, and impacts to men and things. ("Gay Science" 57).

It is sort of ludicrous that Arnheim still has to resort to the vocabulary of capitalism to describe a person such as Ulrich who "acted on the absurd contrary idea that life had to adjust itself to suit his mind...capable of sacrificing not only the interest but all the capital of his soul" (Musil 558). The measuring rod that applies to all and sundry is somehow evaded by Ulrich's personality that bespeaks "less of the crude acquisitive instinct for advantage in

life...immunity to the sublime acquisitive instinct for status and recognition” (597). Ulrich is probably the most radical character in Modernist novel, whose eccentricities could not even be translated to being part of an aspiring artist. Rather, Ulrich makes himself the object of his experiments instead of a work of art, more of which we shall discuss in the next chapter. There is a tendency in him to undo what he is deemed to by all and arrive at some kind of being which could truly be sovereign in every sense. He is, as Arnheim notes with indignation, a person of an “indefinable ambiguous charm, which manifested itself in peculiar combinations with elements from the realm of the soulless, the rational, the mechanical- everything that could not be regarded as part of the cultural sphere [as industry] itself” (598).

And yet, Ulrich never gives up or cannot give up this intransigent fixation with the unbecoming of self and becoming of new being. His restless nature is compared to the tip of a magnesium flare and a loaded gun ready to go off. Even with the futility of his project of finding the right way to live, he shows signs of a doggedness which is unmistakably the symbolic embodiment of the artist trying to create coherence in the face of absurdity and meaninglessness: “in the midst of his deep perturbation was the residue of imperturbability possessed by all heroes and criminals...furious tenacity, as hard to drive out as it is to drive life out of a cat even after it has been completely mangled by dogs” (277).

Returning to the theme of evil, a strict adherence to one set of norms might end up marginalizing a section of people for whom these principles have different meanings. If the evil and the immoral reek of sickliness, is it not more humane to give them a place rather than overlooking the possibility of them co-existing with the rest? Only that is evil which lacks a rightful place to dwell, and it is in this displacement of something from its place that is in fact abominable. Nietzsche asks “whether our thirst for knowledge and self-knowledge would not especially need the sickly soul as well as the sound one; in short, whether the mere will to health is not a prejudice, a cowardice, and perhaps an instance of the subtlest barbarism and

unprogressiveness?" ("Gay Science" 101) And indeed people like Marcel and Ulrich know, so does Stephen Dedalus, that "the path to one's own heaven always lead through the voluptuousness of one's own hell" (173).

What makes Ulrich as well as the novel of which he is the character fascinating is the complicatedness which does not exempt even the abnegation towards selfhood from being questioned. Since both Ulrich and Musil's novel would ultimately need to partake of language which is already sedimented with signification, it is almost an imperative for both to reflect critically on what one says and how: hence Ulrich's "strong aversion to the terms he had been using so lavishly, such as 'self', 'feeling', 'goodness', 'alternative goddess', 'evil', for being so subjective and at the same time presumptuous, gauzy abstractions, which really corresponded to the moral ponderings of very much younger people" (946). Ulrich is a through and through ambivalent character, who often finds it hard to believe in what he says. When Agathe asks him whether he believes in God, Ulrich promptly replies "Yes and no" (835).

Genesse Grill identifies two major attitudes among the characters in Musil's world. Most of them evince an egocentric or appetitive behavior, where people live 'for' things as consumers. On the contrary, Ulrich seeks to be 'in' things, involved, being consumed by the fire of their special charm. This mode is termed as allocentric, which is basically a non-appetitive behavior. Ulrich dismisses moral pronouncements and yet he is the only character of the novel who is pressed with moral problems. Ulrich's here imitates the role of an artist. Just as in art, the transcendence of morality is dismissed in favor of the ethos of figuration, Ulrich seeks to be a man of possibility [*Möglichkeit*smensch] rather than a man of reality, which he cannot be. His artful being reminds one of what Nietzsche says regarding art as freedom from the tyranny of morality:

We ought also to be able to stand above morality, and not only stand with the painful stiffness of one who every moment fears to slip and fall, but we should also be able to soar and play above it! How could we dispense with Art for that purpose, how could we dispense with the fool? (“Gay Science” 92)

What sets apart Ulrich from the rest is his peculiarly different attitude towards the concepts of reality and possibility. Ulrich understands that life in general consists of the striving towards making certain possibilities real. In such cases, the notion of reality remains conserved and possibilities arrive at their maturation when they are able to successfully conform to the model of reality. For example, one dreams of buying a house, where both house and the means of acquiring it are laid down already; when one fulfills these criteria can the possibility be considered to become real. Such possibilities go on repeating “until a man comes along who does not value the actuality over the idea. It is he who gives the new possibilities their meaning, their direction, and he awakens them” (Musil 12). A person like Ulrich, who aspires to make a distinct reality possible instead of possibilities real, faces the problem of creating a world. Worldview here is not an adopted or chosen perspective to look at something already there, but is constitutive of the world. Such a sense of ‘possible reality’ “arrives at its goal much more slowly than most people’s sense of their real possibilities” (ibid). Musil resorts to a metaphor to illumine the difference. People in general wish for trees, whereas Ulrich wants a forest, and a forest is hard to define. Here, forest means not a collection of trees, but that which shelters trees and gives them distinct places to dwell at.

Ulrich’s career, like that of Musil, has had a number of detours without really having any sense of culmination. He began a career in the military, to leave it soon after to become a mathematician, and just when he was about to acquire fame for his work in this field, he left it as well for engineering. The novel begins when Ulrich has left behind this last profession as well, enjoying what he calls a ‘vacation of life’.

While his joining the military had to do with Napoleonic vision of grandeur and virility, that soon got outworn with his intellectual development. As a mathematician, Ulrich was following the footsteps of his generation in being occupied with the idea of progress without actually for once understanding the reality which corroborated progress as such. "He had conducted his scientific work in precisely this spirit of improving the record by a victory, an inch or a pound" (42). With time, Ulrich comes to realize the vacuity of these exercises which tend to gather their importance not on their own right but as determined by standards external to them: "Finally, Ulrich realized that even in science he was like a man who has climbed one mountain after another without seeing a goal...the glimpse of the New, so vivid at first, had been lost amidst the ever-proliferating details" (44).

These experiences bring to Ulrich's realization the strangeness of his position with respect to the world and the possibilities of discovering some truth therein. While a philosopher or a scholar is content with facts and concepts, Ulrich feels himself cheated in pursuing such endeavors. He would not 'follow' a method, but rather he would discover a method himself. In evincing such an attitude of siding with the 'how' over and above with the 'what', the phenomenological bent of Ulrich's nature closely mirrors the aesthetic concerns of Modernist like Musil: "nothing is, to him, what it is; everything is subject to change, in flux, part of a whole, of an infinite number of wholes presumably adding up to a super-whole that, however, he knows nothing about...he never cares what something is, only how it is" (64).

But unlike Marcel who is enamored by his own style of description of the steeples of Martinville, Ulrich is not an artist. He is at best an artistic person, treating his existence artfully as something to be shaped by his own choices and responsibility, but without taking resort to actually creating art. Thus, the imagination of the artist has a partial charm for Ulrich, for only soul and no precision would not be suitable for his temperament. "A man

who wants the truth becomes a scholar, a man who wants to give free play to his subjectivity may become a writer, but what should a man do who wants something in between?" (274) Truth then, neither holds up as a fact nor as a subjective experience for Ulrich, but only as a necessity, an imperative. This necessity is neither externally stipulated by the axioms of epistemology nor subjectively chosen by the artist. "The truth has only one appearance and only one path, and is always at a disadvantage" (57). This path, belongs to the realm of the event, where the subjective and objective claims become redundant in light of singularity, more of which we shall discuss in the last chapter of this section. What is however clear, is the fact the Ulrich "could never be the indifferent fulfiller of an imperative demanded of him" (275). Thus, his disregard for established disciplines like mathematics and art implies his inability to adhere to standards without actually having played a part in discovering them. Ulrich's flippancy is in fact a marker of his responsibility.

The shift from subjectivity and the tenets of humanism brings in a register where markers like inhuman, over-human, beyond-human abound. Although we shall elaborate on this in greater detail in the last chapter, at this moment, it suffices to note that Ulrich is not willing to accept life as it is. And as a result of this negative reaction which however contains the germ of constructing something new, he finds people who go ga-ga over the spirit of life without actually being responsible in shaping it incredibly boring. With regards to his friend Walter, Ulrich feels "having more of a life is one of the earliest and subtlest signs of mediocrity" (384). We must note that this does not connote Ulrich's disdain for life and the world, but for 'that' which now circulate as life and world among people. His attitude is being named 'active pessimism' by Musil, something akin to the active nihilism of Nietzsche that says no not for the sake of negation alone but to seek that to which it could say yes. Such a person is like "a prisoner waiting for his chance to break out" (386).

“There was something in him that never wanted to remain anywhere, had groped its way along the walls of the world, thinking: There are still millions of other walls: it was this slowly cooling, absurd drop ‘I’ that refused to give up its fire, its tiny glowing core” (162). Ulrich could have been more successful had we adhered to one field and continued in it. But like Musil, he is impatient to come out of a structure as soon as it starts making his life rigid in its fold. While others might find a sense of security in life covetable, for Ulrich, “the secret of realizing the largest productivity and the greatest enjoyment of existence is to live in danger” (143).

The state controls our bodies by determining how and where it has to spent what amount of time. Our social and personal behavior are by and large influenced by the patterns of entertainment and work in which our lives are enmeshed. The sphere of our bodily actions does not thus require conscious thinking from the part of our mind and ideas, with the result that mind and body remain extricated from one another. Ulrich, as a man of ideas, however must discover some action which is compatible to his worldview. The futility of choosing action according to convention has already been proven by the grand but inane designs of the Parallel Campaign. “But is this the body of our mind, our ideas, intimations, plans, or- the petty ones included- the body of our follies? That Ulrich loved those follies and still to some extent had them did not prevent him from feeling not at home in the body they had created” (308).

Thus, for Ulrich, there is “only one question worth thinking about, the question of the right way to live” (275). It is not details that he is interested in, not particular facts or concepts, but the whole domain in which each acquire their meaning and place, in short, the world. Ulrich’s dismissal of history, science and even art is taken by Diotima among others as a childishness, who rebukes him for such ambitious, impossible plans” “You’d like to recreate the whole world in your own image” (512). Ulrich is much closer to being an artist

than he thinks in striving for a new world, with the difference that in art, the relationship with reality exists as a function of distance, whereas, Ulrich seeks to create reality itself with him in it as the creator. Thus, Diotima continues her comparison of Ulrich's nature with that of Arnheim,

you are always on the point of taking a leap into the impossible. He is all affirmation and perfect balance: you are frankly, asocial. He strives for unity, intent to his fingertips of achieving some clear decision; you oppose him with nothing but your formless outlook. He has a feeling for everything that has taken a long time to become what it is; and you? What about you? You act as though the world were about to begin tomorrow. (513)

Ulrich treats his life as a metaphor, himself being a man of possibility and not a man of reality. He thinks of life as a problem that he has himself posited to his mind. There is in him "an urge to attack life and master it- essayism, sense of possibility, and imaginative in contrast with pedantic precision" (646). Like Nietzsche, Ulrich considers life to be an aesthetic activity. Life must not be doing things which are expected from one to undertake, but to undertake the shaping of life in each of the activities one responsibly does. We shall see in greater detail in the next chapter how Ulrich's essayistic spirit and the generic quality (or the lack thereof) in relation to the essay interact with one another.

That Ulrich's world is stuck in sort of a limbo becomes clear right from the opening pages of the novel. Ulrich seeks to become someone he knows who, while at the same time being utterly incompetent to undertake any action which could have some vestige of significance for him. The lack of event in the Modernist novel is here exacerbated by Ulrich's lack of action, and ironically enough, to do nothing in a milieu where so many trivial incidents are swarming every minute is quite a toiling task: "the effort it takes for a man just

to hold himself upright [would] dwarf the energy needed by Atlas to hold up the world...enormous undertaking it is nowadays merely to be a person who does nothing at all” (7).

Qualities are those aspects of personalities that can be embodied in one’s actions and be recognized by others as such. The sphere of embodiment of qualities happens to the reality in which a person exists. Since Ulrich lacks a sense of reality in which he could invest trust and significance, all that he possesses become nullified. With no arena for Ulrich’s personality to play out, Ulrich’s existence become merely skeletal; a man in only that resembles one. It is out of this paradox that Ulrich and others like Walter regard him as a man without qualities (13).

Ulrich however could still see himself as a man. We have seen how the functional existence in urban metropolis had rendered the majority as mere assemblages of functions without any center to co-ordinate towards. Ulrich has a conscious and responsible orientation towards his being, but all that exists as potential in him cannot find any outlet to materialize themselves. Hence, Ulrich experiences amidst all things “a shadow of impotence and loneliness, an all-encompassing distaste for which he could not find the complimentary inclination. He felt at times as though he had been born with a talent for which there was at present no objective” (58).

Others around Ulrich know or pretend to know who they are, and what they want from life. The listlessness of Ulrich only expresses itself in recurring irony and contempt towards order and that which is deemed as health in society. Walter derides such an attitude bereft of resolve and says that his friend lacks “what Goethe calls personality, what Goethe calls mobile order” (62). The Romantic focus and celebration of selfhood is something from which Ulrich has strayed too far. He can only look at people like Stallburg whose

personalities are well-defined like neatly-cut stones whereas his is as unstable and form-changing as the tip of a magnesium flare. Ulrich's admiration for Stallburg and Leinsdorf is not for who they are, but how their personalities evince something concrete- "it was simply amazingly real" (87).

In a peculiar way, Ulrich is much similar to others than he thinks. Just as for the rest of people, their qualities are merely tools with which they are not ethically involved, similarly Ulrich's own attitude is both passionate and detached at the same time. Lacking the solid ground of selfhood to coalesce all his potentials to a point, "the personal qualities he had achieved in this way had more to do with one another than with him; that every one of them, in fact, looked at closely, was no more intimately bound than with anyone else who also happened to possess them" (157).

What is most difficult for a sensitive person like Ulrich is to be himself. As for as imitating someone else, or aspiring to fulfill certain possibilities are concerned, one has before oneself a ready-made structure and standards to aid these processes. But since we are in no way informed about what in fact constitutes our being, "being oneself (*soi-même*) eludes one's own grasp, as if one were a kind of Eurydice" (Agamben, "Man without Content" 22). Ulrich's functionalism tries to look at the world from perspectives other than that of the slavish self, and as a result knowledge comes at the price of sacrificing one's selfhood, certitude and the comfort one derives from trust one's existence belongs to oneself. "An experience derives its meaning, even its content, only from its position in a chain of logically consistent events- which is apparent when a man sees his experience not only as a personal event but as a challenge to his spiritual powers" (Musil 158).

Ulrich thus reflects himself to be a character without having one; his qualities being indifferent to him (159). If the missing piece of the puzzle that is man is the soul, then Ulrich

as a deviant personality surely possesses one. People like Arnheim talk about the soul in the same tone they adopt in talking about soaps and shirt buttons, and are those who in fact do not possess a center capable of empathy and responsibility with the world. Ulrich, on the other hand, realizes how his soul is not his; it does not belong to him, rather, he is contingent with it. The romantic subjectivity of Arnheim coupled with pragmatism meets its radical counterpart in the impersonal functionalism of Ulrich. Here, impersonal means an awareness of one's individuality as not stemming from a presupposed self, but being engendered by factors which cannot be exhaustively listed and controlled by a person. Hence the impersonal nature of the soul [*Geist*] seems to make it a 'naked noun':

the spirit is so firmly bound up with the accidental form in which it happens to manifest itself...passes right through the person who wants to absorb it, leaving only a small tremor behind...the motes of dust that sink and slowly settle down to rest inside us bear no relation to all that expense, where has it gone, where and what is it? (161)

There is an interplay between these two modes of functionalism in the novel, where we see Ulrich desisting from talks of selfhood and at the same time categorized as a citizen into neatly defined blocks of markers of identity which carry but little sense. In the scene where he is taken to the police station, his identity is sought to be framed by details that are usually to be found on one's citizenship card. For the state and its administration, a person is merely a collection of certain facts and numbers, and Ulrich finds himself ridiculously "sucked into a machine that was dismembering him into impersonal, general components before the questions of his guilt or innocence came up at all. His name, the most intellectually meaningless yet most emotionally charged words in the language for him, meant nothing here" (168).

We can at this point remark on a certain difference between the average(d) out man [*das Man*] of Heidegger and Ulrich as a man without qualities. The former has basically all qualities necessary to master the activities of an average day in society, but lacks individuality. He is in no way perceptibly different from his neighbor, who also possesses the same set of qualities. They are compounds of qualities without being distinct beings; neutral, impersonal elements existing in a mechanical system like parts of a machine. Ulrich lacks qualities which could serve him as tools, but has a distinct individuality that refuses to co-opt with the mechanization all around. To others Ulrich might seem almost insane, but the 'normal' person is probably even more so, but only that his insanity is maintained at a minimum by different pressure-stops and controls effected by the constraints of the system: "the difference between a normal person and an insane one is precisely that the normal person has all the diseases of the mind, while the madman has only one" (1109). Perhaps Ulrich, in not believing in something particular but remaining open to possibilities, is capable of being freer than the rest, despite the doubts and uncertainties that gnaw at his conscience. As Georg Steiner says in the vein of Nietzsche's praise of polytheism over slavish Christian morality, "the polyglot is a freer man" (48).

This makes Ulrich a truly complex person, since he lacks resolution even with respect to his intransigent derision towards the world. He can be seen as a buffoon, a profligate, a hedonist, whereas at the same time being almost ascetic, and renouncing every kind of pleasure and joy in the world. It is as if "Ulrich was a man somehow forced to live against himself, though outwardly he appeared to be indulging his inclinations without constraint" (Musil 160). Others too become perceptive of this ambiguity in the man without qualities. For example, Diotima, only with whom Ulrich has long conversations other than with Agathe, feels that the "surface and depths of his person were not one and the same" (309).

In a way, Ulrich's effort of extricating himself from the long series of mindless events that one calls history is mirrored in this effort to not be that which people expect out of him. He feels his personality to be a burden, like a role he has to fulfill without his having chosen it in the first place. Looking for resemblances with himself on his dead father's face, Ulrich reflects: "Perhaps it was all there: their race, their ties with the past, the impersonal element, the stream of heredity in which the individual is only a ripple, the limitations, disillusionments, the endless repetitiveness of the mind going around in circles, which he hated with his every fiber of his deepest will to live" (754). The figure of the father serves as symbol of history here in the personal sense, with Ulrich seeking to emerge out its cocoon, trying to determine his being without the prosthetic of family.

It is no wonder that the evaluation of the lack of wholeness in Ulrich as anti-social is contradictorily mirrored in Ulrich as a distaste towards wholeness in others. Observing the masses of arms and legs and no whole individual in the demonstration before the palace, Ulrich has the feeling that "being a whole and inviolate strolling human being is positively anti-social and criminal" (785). Ulrich here has in mind the fake wholeness advocated by the likes of Arnheim which is only a collection of qualities without conscience and consciousness guiding them. Ulrich would rather prefer to be the embodiment of the Modernist ethos than a fake resurrection of Romantic selfhood. Like the patchwork nature of the *Recherche* which does not fall back on any plastic unifying principle, Ulrich is the fitting refraction of a fragmented world (but still sincerely admitting and being responsible towards the fragmentariness) whose sister could tell him, "When you talk with me first one way, then another...it is as if I am seeing myself in a splintered mirror. With you one never sees oneself from head to toe" (808).

In this first chapter, we have tried to examine the premise of the milieu and the status of historical development, followed by the mode in which knowledge, truth, morality

circulate leading to a general alienation. Thereafter we had examined the effects and possible responses to the void that stems from such a state of affairs, finally locating Ulrich and his worldview as a refracting prism of the world of the novel. Our task in the next chapter would be to examine the techniques of novelization that are stylized in Ulrich as a character, the interplay of morality and ethics in the matter of writing, and how the essayism of Ulrich as character holds the key towards understanding the essayist impulse of Musil's world.

Chapter 6

Architecture in Unrest

(A) ESSAYISM

In the section of Proust, we have dedicated the first chapter to the characterization of Marcel and how that refracts the world of the novel. Thereafter, we have attempted to understand this ethos with the respect to the aesthesis that informs it, namely style. In a similar vein, we have begun this section with the twofold discussion of the milieu and Ulrich as an alienated figure in it. In this section, our task shall be to understand the style of the narrative and how that comes to create the distinctiveness of the world of the novel.

We shall, in this chapter, first look at how Ulrich as a man of possibility implicates the world of the novel of which he is part, and extend the idea of possibility to that of metaphor. Speaking first of what Ulrich deems of life as a metaphorical activity, we shall attempt to delve deeper into the essayism that constitutes the novel per se, with a discussion on aesthetics being a possible deterrent in realizing art as a hermeneutic activity.

Ulrich is always on the look out to alter not just some particular detail concerning his existence, but the very horizon itself in which all proliferating details are like relief features of a topography. Being a man of possibility, Ulrich's understanding of the world is therefore associated with a kind of malleability. Unlike Arnheim and Diotima, who seek to revolutionize the present without sacrificing in the least the prerogatives and prejudices that

they assume to be their selves, Ulrich's orientation to the world makes the latter as volatile and transformable as his perspective;

The world can be changed in all directions at any moment, or at least in any direction it chooses; it is the world's nature. Wouldn't it be more original to try to live, not as a definite person in a definite world where only a few buttons need adjusting- what we call evolution- but rather to behave from the start as someone born to change, roughly like a drop of water inside a cloud? (Musil 295)

Like we have seen in the first section of the thesis, the world is never given but given over to becoming. Just as the world comes into being in the event of reading a novel, Ulrich seeks to be part of an event where the world as reality can finally emerge from the fold of unreal factuality which has been accepted by all and sundry as the sole truth. Ulrich draws here a parallel with scientific revolutions. Since science became paradigmatic, a certain point of view came to define the world. Every revolution in science involves a shift of the very fulcrum on which the world is hinged, namely a paradigm shift, which in turn alters the entire panorama in accordance with the displacement of its base. In the previous chapter, we have noted how Ulrich had found his pursuit of truth as a mathematician futile, unable to understand what he was doing back then in terms of his own life. Hence, it is not unnatural to hear him reflect that his "love with science [was] not so much on scientific as on human grounds" (37). Since science has in it the possibility of world-transformation, it is this aspect that enchants Ulrich and makes him invest significance on a discipline which otherwise is a mere assemblage of abstract statements to him: "But in science it happens every few years that something till then held to be in error suddenly revolutionizes the field, or that some dim and disdained idea becomes the ruler of a new realm of thought...world always needing a turning around" (37).

It is thus in the nature of the world to be different. Instead of corresponding to what is considered characteristic of it, the world appears only when there is a shift in the horizon, and one understands everything in the displacement they undergo as a result of this shift. That there is a world that shelters everything in it, could thus only be comprehended at the stroke of a homelessness when an event no longer allows things to subsist at their habitual positions. Worldliness is symptomatic with loss (of that which we had been habituated to) and rehabilitation (as possibility of coming to terms with the displacement).

It is at this juncture that Ulrich's deviating attitude from moral norms and the principal attribute of the world form mirror images of one another. Those, who hold facts, opinions and commonplaces to be sacred would actually be aversive to notion that the world is non-existent; that it can only come into being when the paraphernalia of the present takes a backseat. As a result, any deviation is naturally looked upon as blasphemous in trying to overturn the religion (means as way of life) that reigns supreme at the said moment.

Any social structure relies on repeatability as an "invented and arbitrary attempt to socialize and delimit imagination" (Grill 50). Any deviation from the established norms, like semantic variation deemed as heretic in Christian exegesis, amounts to being crime. Grill asks, "Which is the crime: the process of forcing individual entities into the (possibly artificial) constructs of repeatable patterns? Or deviating and breaking out of these structures?" (ibid). Thus, art and worldliness are necessarily associated with evil, for the horizon can only undergo displacement by transgressing the conservative chains that bind it to some constructs of morality and goodness. The world of Musil in lacking worldliness has a fitting refracting medium in Ulrich who lacks the sense of reality and at the same time seeks to attain a new reality.

For the likes of Ulrich, “life forms a surface that acts as if it could not be otherwise, but under its skin things are pounding and pulsing” (Musil 260). The inability to comply with the solidified forms around him, however, does not make Ulrich a disbelieving person. He is a man who has faith, but is without a God to dedicate or direct his faith to. Symbols and myths that surround the divine realm are but patterns of repeatability that seek to elicit unanimous affirmation from a group of people who are otherwise distinct from one another. Ulrich is not a nihilist like the protagonists of Camus and Sartre. He is not dismissive of life. He refuses to accept conventions because he looks forward to the world as a future possibility. Thus, Ulrich’s condition is much complicated than comprising of a universal negation of all things, and this complexity impairs his faith by not allowing it to function as it does in the rest of people, namely through the mode of affirmation of identity of God in a similar manner in which a concept continually generates identity by being repeated many times over in formulaic expressions:

For what he meant by the term ‘faith’ was not so much that stunted desire to know, the credulous ignorance that is what most people take it to be; but rather a knowledgeable intuition, something that is neither knowledge nor fantasy, but is not faith either; it is just that ‘something else’ which eludes all concepts. (898)

One of the reasons that compelled Ulrich to leave the life of a scientist was his problem with the conceptual mode in apprehending reality. Just as moral tenets are congealed metaphors abstracted from the real conditions of life, similarly science, in trying to set itself up as universal, forms concepts which can be applied irrespective of the context of application. Ulrich is not a practical person because he always envisages life in hypothetical terms, of what could be or should be rather than what is. His abnegation towards facts and concepts, as well as towards the unbridled and non-reflective use of fantasy masquerading as poetic imagination, leads him to a middle zone which could be rightly termed as essayistic. The

following passage sums up the genre of Ulrich's being as much as it does of the novel where he moves about:

If he monitors his feelings, he finds nothing he can accept without reservation...The drive of his own nature to keep developing prevents him from believing that anything is final and complete, yet everything he encounters behaves as though it were final and complete. He suspects that the given order of things is not as solid as it pretends to be; no thing, no self, no form, no principle, is safe, everything is undergoing an invisible but ceaseless transformation...the present is nothing but a hypothesis that has not yet been surmounted. What better can he do than hold himself apart from the world...Hence he hesitates in trying to make something of himself; a character, a profession, a fixed mode of being, are for him concepts that already shadow forth the outlines of the skeleton...He seeks to understand himself differently, as someone inclined and open to everything that may enrich him inwardly, even if it should be morally or intellectually taboo...a drop of indescribable incandescence has fallen into the world, with a glow that makes the whole earth look different. (269-270)

How does this attitude affect the temperament of the novel? If the narrative of Musil already assumes itself to belong to the tradition of the novel, does it not imply an adherence to certain norms and regulations that constitute the genre of the novel as such? It is at this point that the essayism of Ulrich the character and of Musil the writer reflect one another. Ulrich associates the word 'essay' with both its meanings; as a verb, it means to try, to attempt. And essay also happens to be a genre of writing that is an embodiment of an attempt to understand a theme. It is a peculiar genre, because its embodiment is never final, for it is the expression of something that it itself in search of a shape and form. The choice of implicating the essayist

dimension or touch to the novel gathers its momentum from the novel, like its character, being in search of its own form without conforming to any established genre, even that of the novel itself. Essay becomes then the challenge to the domain of concepts;

It was more or less in the way an essay, in the sequence of its paragraphs, explores a thing from many sides without wholly encompassing it- for a thing wholly encompassed suddenly loses its scope and melts down to a concept- that he believed he could most rightly survey and handle the world and his own life.
(270)

The turn of understanding the human mind and its products in sync with the conceptual mode of understanding of natural sciences originated in the Enlightenment, more particularly in Kant's attempt to frame particular occurrences as a fulfillment of conditions transcending them. Both the Cartesian and Kantian subjects are universal abstractions, and in being so, are neutral entities like concepts. Ulrich's predisposition towards Nietzsche is explained by the latter's antagonism towards such abstractions that fail to address the problems of particular being. Talay-Turner notes, "as opposed to Kantian moral autonomy which is independent of the psychological truths about human beings, Nietzsche suggests a more modest task: our moral therapy is to be directed at the particular drives and capacities of individuals" (26-27). Ulrich, thus, is not really a phenomenologist who seeks to understand the world in an essentially reductive fashion by boiling down divergences to the transcendental conditions governing them. This becomes clear in his attitude towards the notion of an idea as not being a skeletal structure but flesh that is living and organic, hence not abstract but shaped; "I too, am radical in my own way, and I can put up with any kind of disorder more easily than the intellectual kind. I like to see ideas not only developed but brought together. I want not only the oscillation but also the density of an idea" (534).

Ulrich deems morality to be “a senile form of a system of energies that cannot be confused with what it originally was without losing ethical force” (271). This ethical force is not abstract, but derives its particularity from the action shaping it. Ulrich’s essayism in treating his life as an experiment makes morality no longer a conceptual domain, but an aesthetic one. Since what is good and bad would be determined by the actions and not the other way round, being here functions like poetry, a point to which we shall return in the last sub-chapter.

What is seemingly solid in this system becomes a porous pretext for many possible meanings; the event occurring becomes a symbol of something that perhaps may not be happening but makes itself felt through the symbol; and man as the quintessence of his possibilities, potential man, the unwritten poem of his existence, confronts man as a recorded fact, as reality, as character. (270-271)

Art, especially in the context of European Modernism, has had a strange relationship with evil. We have already seen in our discussion of the *Recherche* and Bataille, that art, in its attempts to re-constitute reality by disrupting the existent order, cannot conform to the codes of good and bad. It is almost a functional move therefore, to empathize with the morally degenerate, a fact that is attested by characters like Marcel, Stephen Dedalus and Ulrich as the refracting prism of the novel’s world. “The virtues of the society are vices of the saint. The terror of reform is the discovery that we must cast away our own virtues, or what we have always esteemed such, into the same pit that has consumed our grosser vices” (163). Art seeks the world, and the world, we have seen, becomes only differently. The semiotic violence inherent in the production of art translates to a violence against those relationships that language reflects. Art itself is not evil nor sides with it, but partakes of that deviation which makes an action regarded as evil by an organized society. On one hand, art ceases to

be indifferent to the things we otherwise take for granted. On the other hand, art is indifferent to the value judgements that circulate in our registers of morality, for art is involved in the act of creating values instead of affirming those that already exist.

In a section, Clarisse wonders: “Does a decent life crave brutality? Does peacefulness need cruelty? Does orderliness long to be torn apart?... But it was also like a metaphor, where the things compared are the same yet on the other hand quite different” (152). Clarisse indulges in ‘irrational’ acts where she rationally wishes to channelize her spirits to action, eventually evincing a behavior that requires psychological help from professionals. She accepts the evil as evil. On the other hand, the good is accepted as good in the ‘benevolent’ attitudes of Arnheim and Diotima, and their speeches on human goodness are living conformation to the established registers of morality. Ulrich, like Nietzsche, is suspicious of such acts of self-preservation. Just as an act of goodwill stems from the belief that it could be redemptive, most such acts hardly empathize with the particular person in front of one. Instead, these acts seek a comfort zone for one’s own self, giving to one’s conscience the assurance, that one has acted well. This is a conceptual mode of behavior, because it accepts the repeatability of good deeds as universal phenomena, without in the least sacrificing self-certitude in participating with the alterity of the predicament of the other. Thus reflect Ulrich, “it seems that goodness disappears from the human being to the same extent that it is embodied in goodwill or good deeds” (795).

To be at all perceptive of the world implies one to be capable of sacrificing that rigidity that prevents the event of world-becoming from taking place. Ulrich’s disavowal of morality and his being a man of possibility is not a negative condition, for without these negations, a man cannot live his life poetically. Man is the “continuous poet of life”, says Nietzsche, implying that reality is that which we create instead of adhere to (“Gay Science” 153). “We ourselves want to be our own experiments, and own subjects of experiments”

(162). Such a mode of essayistic being is hardly to be found in organized society where people, “in doing what is right and proper understandably behave as if they were paying taxes” (Musil 893). What such a conservative framework leads to is an enslavement of our responses to fixed patterns. Art, as a break from such enslavement, is here embodied in Ulrich’s problem with conforming with society. Uninterrupted conformation eventually effaces the possibility of actually understanding what is good and to be individually responsible for one’s actions. Not only is thus Musil’s art an antinomy to history and morality, morality itself becomes antithetical by disallowing the scope of ethical action;

In such a condition, where virtue is decrepit and moral conduct consists chiefly in the restraint of immoral conduct, it can easily happen that immoral conduct appears to be not only more spontaneous and vital than its opposite, but actually more moral, if one may use the term not in the sense of law and justice, but with regard to whatever passion may still be aroused by matters of conscience. (895)

Ulrich seeks to revive the vitality of the moment where metaphors come to being. In such moments, the binary oppositions give way to an unprecedented combination of things. It is a moment where the disparate co-habit and the chaos begins to exude meaning. “The distinction between good and evil loses all meaning when weighed against the pleasure of a pure, deep, spontaneous mode of action, a pleasure that can leap like a spark from permissible as well as from forbidden activities” (894). Ulrich’s life then resembles the movement towards a metaphor, just like the overall discursive formation of a narrative stands like a metaphor. The world, the individual and the novel coincide in their particularly distinctly ways in all being things of possibility, that is, metaphorical.

If aesthetics comes to be regarded by the artist in the Kantian sense as corresponding to a universally appealing beauty, then art faces the same risk as does morality whose

concepts and rules “are only metaphors that have been boiled to death, with the revolting greasy chicken vapors of humanism billowing around the corpses” (648). Just as morality ceases to be good when it reifies actions in compartments of good and bad, art as a metaphorical compartment towards the world would also tend to become formulaic: “Just that the power for good which is somehow present in us eats its way instantly through the walls if it gets locked into solid form, and immediately uses that as a bolt hole to evil” (820). Metaphors, when looked upon only as ornamentation to make words glitterier, more often than not become congealed in the process. Clichéd usage of such stock phrases becomes antithetical to the domain of art by re-enacting the mode of conformation which art seeks to undo. The metaphor of rose as a sign of beauty has been exhausted so thoroughly, that Umberto Eco remarks the rose to mean almost nothing other than its name.

That however does not imply that the art of living and the bringing into being of art could be arbitrary. Once the role of imagination becomes arbitrary in art as in one’s moral life, it becomes merely a celebration of indifference. An artist cannot simply exercise free will without any form to hold on to. Ulrich’s ambivalence to freedom in matters concerning right and wrong are the refraction of Musil’s temperament to the idea of a well-defined plot. Just as Ulrich is unable to find a footing in life, Musil too struggles against his novel acquiring too stable a form, without however banishing the possibility of coherence.

For him morality was neither conformism nor philosophical wisdom, but living the infinite fullness of possibilities. He believed in morality’s capacity for intensification, in stages of moral experience, and not merely, as most people do, in stages of moral understanding, as if it were something cut-and-dried for which people were just not pure enough. He believed in morality without believing in any specific moral system. Morality is generally understood to be a sort of police regulations for keeping life in order, and since life does not obey

these, they come to look as if they were really impossible to live up to and accordingly, in this sorry way, not really an ideal either. But morality must not be reduced to this level. Morality is imagination...And his second point was: Imagination is not arbitrary. Once imagination is left to caprice, there is a price to pay. (1117)

To understand metaphor merely as a negative condition which does not abide by logic would be hence a mistake. Metaphor is certainly a displacement from the structure that exists, but it is a shift for the sake of a new construct. Ulrich's deviation and Musil's departure from the conventional plot are necessary destructive processes that serve as an intermediary phase. As Ricœur rightly points out, to regard metaphor as deviation only would be a 'category mistake'; "the deconstructive intermediary phase between the description and the redescription" ("Rule of Metaphor" 22).

Although Ulrich is not an artist, he ponders a lot about metaphors, which gives us a certain clue as to the overall design of the novel and the role that metaphor as a certain way of configuring time plays here. What interests Musil primarily is neither the rhetorical nor the discursive function of metaphor. Instead, Musil looks at metaphor as the fundamental activity that governs all our perceptions and judgement. As "the image that fuses several meanings in a dream, it is the gliding logic of the soul, corresponding to the way things relate to each other in the intuitions of art and religion" (647). Every moment of our lives is ideally comprised of a combination of things existing for the first time. It is only habit as repetition that rationalizes these metaphorical moments into stable formations. The consequences of rationalizing metaphors are twofold; first, the volatility and novelty of an unprecedented formation are rendered a more solid form and second, this rendering entails a loss of the 'original' nature of the metaphor. Rationalization as abstraction divorces the metaphor from the place which originates with it. One gleans sense from a metaphor only by sacrificing that

which is bound singularly with it alone and which could not be reduced to a description in language, because descriptive use of language relies on repeatability.

A metaphor holds a truth and an untruth, felt as inextricably bound with each other. If one takes it as it is and gives it some sensual form, in the shape of reality, one gets dream and art; but between these two and real, full-scale life there is a glass partition. If one analyzes it for its rational content and separates the unverifiable from the verifiable, one gets truth and knowledge but kills the feeling. (634)

The complexity of both Ulrich's personality and the novel's plot cannot be further reduced or described in terms which are available in language. If Ulrich seeks a new way of being alive, Musil's novel resists its reification into story as well as philosophy. The repeated warnings against controlling metaphor can be read as the problem faced by others to translate Ulrich's idiosyncrasies into identifiable terms, as well as the futility of categorizing the rather 'aimless' narrative into an arche-telos model. Metaphor, like life and art which are but discursive metaphorical events, can only occasion participation, but not any extraction of riches from it;

But once one has distinguished everything in a metaphor that might be true from what is mere froth, one usually has gained a little truth, but at the cost of destroying the whole value of the metaphor. The extraction of truth may have been an inescapable part of our intellectual evolution, but it has had the same effect of boiling down a liquid to thicken it, while the really vital juices and elements escape in a cloud of steam. (648)

We have also discussed in the previous section how the Modernist novel is almost always oblique with regard to meaning. The character is not a reflection of the worldview of the

work, but a refracting prism through which the world can appear as a function of changing distance with the views of the character. The following sentence is pregnant with significance in this context: “God does not really mean the world literally: it is a metaphor, an analogy, a figure of speech that he has to resort to for some reason for some reason or another, and it never satisfied Him, of course” (388). Is not Musil as a novelist trying to posit the relationship he shares with Ulrich, and the novel at large? Ulrich, like Marcel to Proust, is a metaphorical transposition to Musil; same yet different. Ulrich’s views of things do correspond and do not correspond with those of Musil depending on how one sees the matter. This brings us to the discussion on the role of self in aesthesis. If the self is conserved in the process of producing art, then Ulrich and his world could be read as a correspondence with that of Musil. But does this argument at all stick?

Agamben considers Nietzsche’s critique of Kant’s definition of beauty in terms of impersonality and universality crucial in ushering a new point of view with regards to perceiving art. The Kantian outlook had the objective of talking of art in universal terms, which can be explained by Kant’s favoring of the universality of natural sciences as the mode to be adopted for the products of human mind and culture as well. However, the association of art with disinterested pleasure, leads to, as discussed in the first section, a sort of aesthetic differentiation. One can regard art as a means of entertainment divorced from reality, and the apparently autonomous nature of art allows itself to be relegated to the realm of leisure. “Only because art has left the sphere of interest to become merely interesting, do we welcome it so warmly” (Agamben, “Man without Content” 5). Arnheim, Diotima and Clarisse can speak so flippantly on works of art, because for them they are simply objects of recreation. The element of disinterest precludes their participation from the being that is embodied in the works. In a way, to be cultured perhaps implies this ability to disengage oneself, to be not involved in what one is consuming. Although meant with a different purpose, Kant’s

definition of taste as subjective universality is rather “wishful thinking or an empirical observation of the politics of taste in a more or less enlightened, melioristic community” (Steiner 57).

On the other hand, Nietzsche urges one to face the divine terror inherent in art: “To the increasing innocence of the spectator’s experience in front of the beautiful object corresponds the increasing danger inherent in the artist’s experience, for whom art’s *promesse de bonheur* becomes the poison that contaminates and destroys his existence” (Agamben, “Man without Content” 5). Likewise, Ulrich is not a connoisseur of art because life for him is never a completed image that can be perceived from at a distance with nonchalance. In the *Recherche*, we have witnessed a similar phenomenon where the distinction of attitude of Marcel and others towards art was foregrounded. In Musil’s novel, it is life and existence at large that forms the field of discussion, since Ulrich is a poet not in the capacity of being a writer, but in trying to live poetically.

Perhaps the substitution of life in the place of art in Ulrich’s object of aesthesis is the very move in attempting to dismantle aesthetics as something specialized, applicable only to works of art. Nietzsche too maintained that life is an aesthetic activity. Ulrich’s essayism pertains to the whole of his existence. In one way, it makes life more unbearable for him because he has, unlike Marcel, no undertaking like a work of art to devote his form-giving intentions to. But seen in a different light, the lack of any particular undertaking makes his being as such the realm of his essayist spirit. The break from aesthetic differentiation attempts to dismantle the ideas of beauty as contained in a special domain: “The dream of the Terror is to create works that are in the world in the same way as the block of stone or the drop of water” (7). The goal then is to bring back art to the place where it originates, instead of wresting it away to the isolated, neutralized confines of the museum and dilettantish conversations. As Flaubert said, “Masterpieces are stupid: they have placid faces like the very

products of nature, like big animals and mountains” (qtd in Agamben, “Man without Content” 7).

The evolution of the notion of taste and its place in the culture is interesting to note, for that provides a clue as to where exactly aesthetics stands in the context of the Modernist novel. No clear boundary existed between good taste and bad taste in the 16th century, where artists produced paintings and sculptures alongside automatons and mechanisms. Looking at the oeuvre of the likes of Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci would attest to the times, when art was yet to be differentiated into an exclusively separate domain set apart from say science or craftsmanship. With the onset of Romanticism, this differentiation is further sharpened in light of art’s antithetical relationship with respect to industrial life. The artist comes to be assumed as a symbol of imbalance and eccentricity. Flaubert digs an irony in his *Dictionary of Received Ideas* where there is a moment of surprise to realize that artists dress up just like everyone else (11). Molière too parodies these claims of artistic eccentricity in *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, where it is eventually Monsieur Jourdain who seems to be more sensitive and open towards the work of art than the specialists.

The insensitivity of the figure of the artist is reflected likewise in the insensitivity among those who consumes art. Just as the artist like art is divorced from life, similarly there is a rising neutrality to be observed among critics who dissect artworks as if it were a corpse and extract knowledge from these penetrative efforts. According to Agamben, the prototype of the museum could be traced in the cabinet of wonder [*Wunderkammer*], a perfectly self-sufficient collection of the most ‘bizarre’ objects one had at one’s home like a property to show off to guests and friends. This atemporal aesthetic dimension of the *Museum Theatrum* is where “art begins its second life and interminable life”- passing over from the divine terror that inspired it to the neutral space that now houses it (“Man without Content” 21). Such a shift of temperament is to be observed in the domain of receiving artforms too, especially in

the departments dedicated to humanities, which inadvertently make of artworks an object of research. With the import of techniques from the natural sciences, research orients itself on works of art to extract positive truth out of them, and it is this attitude that is the counterpart of self-preservation, for one can look at art as an object of knowledge only to the extent of not involving one's own being, which eventually hinders the work to event itself [*sich ereignen*]. Steiner concurs this phenomenon in saying, "In the humanities and the liberal arts, however, it is not journalism *stricto sensu* which is the dynamo of the secondary. It is the academic and that immensely influential, although complex form, the academic-journalistic. It is the universities, the research institutes, the academic presses, which are our Byzantium" (28).

Good taste as such then leads to a loss of vitality. The vacuum that gradually ensued out of beauty that became after repeated use plastic and clichéd would naturally have sought the opposite of good taste, namely bad taste. It was as though "good taste carried within itself a tendency to pervert itself into its opposite" (Agamben, "Man without Content" 13). The rise of the genre of gothic romance is an indication of the reversal of good taste, where hitherto considered gruesome elements entered into the realm of art's representation. Flaubert, in a letter to Louise Colet, writes, "In order to have bad taste, one must have poetry in one's brain" (qtd in *ibid* 15). Baudelaire too sought out poetry from spleen and whatever was considered discarded and waste. The Modernist work of art is directed against conventions, and its proclivity for evil, apart from its unpacking of morality as a conservative framework, can be explained through a new realization of beauty in contradistinction of the conventionally accepted beautiful as our short journey through the history of art shows.

After having discussed Ulrich's essayism, the role of metaphor in Ulrich's character as well as in the novel, and the unpacking of aesthetics as a counter to the culture of self-preservation, we shall now turn our attention towards the essay as the form, genre and mode, and how each implicate the novel, focusing particularly on Musil. Our point of departure

would be the tussle between the universal and the particular, herein consisting in the relation they subtend to truth.

Right from the inception of modernity in Europe, if one takes that in sync with the onset of Enlightenment, rationalism, universalization and abstraction have had worked in tandem, with the effect that truth came to be recognized as such only when it conformed to these modes of presentation. This means, that the mode of truth coming into being was already fixed, leading to the growth of positivism as a field where knowledge, like capital could be accumulated and branched off into ever more proliferating branches and sub-branches. In his essay “The Essay as Form” Adorno criticizes this outlook of neutralizing truth of its mode:

The academic guild accepts as philosophy only what is clothed in the dignity of the universal and the enduring- It gets involved with particular cultural artifacts only to the extent to which they can be used to exemplify universal categories, or to the extent to which the particular becomes transparent when seen in terms of them. (“Notes to Literature” 3)

Steiner’s comments concerning the academic-journalistic could be better understood in these terms. More often than not, universal categories circulate as indispensable elements in research and the trick consists in subsuming particularities under general rubrics, which often accompanies a sense of complacency in having reduced the alterity of a text and the world it holds as possibility into familiar terms. But the text, like the human being, is not really amenable to such abstractions. Musil writes, “A creature as complicated as man can be seen from many different angles, and whatever one chooses as the axis in the theoretical picture one gets only partial truths, from whose interpretation the level of truth slowly rises higher-or does it?” (1109). Even Musil sounds skeptical concerning the possibility of what Kant had

deemed as deductive judgement. Perhaps there is no more to truth than the singular event that discloses it.

Kundera observes in Musil's craft a 'structural revolution' in the abolition of the background. The setting of all characters and their actions in a flux without the explanatory backdrop is the embodiment in the novel's world of a resistance towards generalization. In the fashion of Italo Svevo in how he constructs the world in *Senilità*, "Musil analyzes situations not part of some system... everything becomes theme, like a cubist painting...there is nothing but foreground" ("Testaments Betrayed" 113).

The binaries of nature-culture and truth-history are casted on the same model of universal-particular. As long as the novel trusts the grand ideas of humanity and morality, it can be indifferent to the figuration of these truths in its plot. However, the Modernist novel does not trust such mass-behavior controlling viewpoints that masquerade as universal truths. It "refuses to be intimidated by the depraved profundity according to which truth and history are incompatible and opposed to one another" (Adorno, "Notes to Literature" 10). Like Baudelaire, who had sought the truth as half contained in the contingent and half in eternity, the Modernist novels of Musil, Joyce and Proust understand truth as appearance more than a correspondence to some principle. These worlds do "not seek the eternal in the transient and distill it out; it tries to render the transient eternal" (11). If philosophy as a genre tries to speak in universal terms, making its statements correspond to the largest imaginable spectrum, the Modernist artist adapts to the "eternal smallness of the most profound work of the intellect in the face of life" (Lukács, "Soul and Form" 7). This condition can be easily discerned in the gradual contraction of the novel's world, and this focalization reaching an apotheosis in Modernism. The novel here is involved in examining an apparently small space from so many perspectives that the smallness eventually turns out to be containing an

unforeseen vastness, thereby pointing out, that smallness and vastness are not pre-given facts but rests on how one looks at the world.

Both Marcel and Ulrich fail to identify with the ideals that others take for granted. Their own intervention into the premises of these truths makes the latter deviate from its solemnity. Marcel believes in the redemptive power of art, but the performances of Berma and Bergotte's writings eventually disappoint him. Ulrich seeks a condition beyond the egocentric realm of actions and reactions, but his seeking is futile because it partakes of the mode of grasping at something or wishing for something to happen to him from outside. What the Modernist novel shows, and not says like a work of philosophy, is the disclosure of truth as an essentially metaphorical event. Sense and event become inextricably bound to one another in singularity, as Grill, like Deleuze, puts it:

...whatever is essential can be approached only obliquely and contingently, only temporarily or extra-temporarily. It has to be expressed through many possible images, through an image of multiplicity itself, through the realization that the world itself is constantly created and re-created by the formation and dissolution of these varied images. (78)

The choice of the essay form "manifest philosophy's awareness of its time-bound, historical character, its recognition, in concrete terms of the contingency of the subject and world upon discourse" (Obaldia 32). The shift from the claims of universality towards an embracing of the contingent has an impact on the reader-function as well. The reader of the Modernist texts ought to be, in keeping with the worldviews of the works, empirical and contingent, and not implied and transcendental (33). The very method, or the lack thereof, that the essay adopts towards its object undo the possibility of transcendental subject. If the method of universalization could be assumed to have its roots in the Cartesian abstraction of truth from

premise, the essayistic impulse sets itself against it. Adorno notes the un-Cartesian nature of the essay in its defiance to treat an object as a collection of discrete elements. Moreover, the essay does not necessarily proceed from the simple to the complex, but begin straightaway with the configuration and the flux informing a situation. This feature is noticeable in the Modernist novel's abolition of background and the thrownness that accompanies the exposition of works, even more discernable in theatrical works. The work, as we have seen in Proust, does not assume for itself a totality, so that self-relativization is inherent in form. Adorno sums up the discussion by pointing out that discontinuity is essential to the essay in contrast to the idea of say space-time continuum that forms the cornerstone of the Cartesian system ("Notes to Literature" 17).

It is not surprising that Ulrich's way of looking at things are seen skeptically by the practitioners of the rational outlook. The essayistic impulse is not bereft of intelligence; it ought not to be confused with mumbo-jumbo or some obscure mysticism. The essay does not follow a logic, but tries to create one in accordance with its attempt to understand something. Instead of conforming to universal guidelines concerning what is right or wrong or logical or illogical, the essayistic spirit in Ulrich seeks to get into the mind of the things themselves, that is, participate in the sense that the event of becoming of things holds up. Hence the conflict: "the rationality of the uninspired will make the teachings of the inspired crumble into dust, contradiction, and nonsense, and yet one has no right to call them frail and unviable unless one would also call an elephant too frail to survive in an airless environment unsuited to his needs" (Musil 274).

"The essay does not let its domain be prescribed for it" (Adorno, "Notes to Literature" 4). If the essay is so radically opposed to generalization, can we at all speak of it in generic terms? Is the essay a genre? Adorno refuses to accept the categorization of essay into philosophy as well as art. Luck and play are essential to the essay, perhaps in a manner

analogous to that of art. Unlike philosophy, it has aesthetic autonomy; its form is unbound by any generic considerations. But Adorno feels that the essay is “distinguished from art by its medium, concepts, and by its claim to a truth devoid of aesthetic semblance” (5). This statement is a bit problematic because truth is admitted over and beyond its aesthetic formulation. It is Adorno’s distaste for the *nouveau roman* and jazz that evinces his leaning towards a supersensual nature of truth, despite having stressed the role of presentation in making truth appear in the first place.

Musil too, betrays like Adorno a concern that the essay could become arbitrary if given too free a form. The essayistic spirit is not the same as subjectivism, and it is this warning against selfhood that returns in the following passage where Ulrich muses on the essay:

The accepted translation of “essay” as “attempt” contains only vaguely the essential allusion to the literary model, for an essay is not the provisional or incidental expression of a conviction capable of being elevated to a truth under more favorable circumstances or of being exposed as an error (the only ones of that kind are those articles or treatises, chips from the scholar’s workbench with which the learned entertain their special public); an essay is rather the unique and unalterable form assumed by a man’s inner life in a decisive thought. Nothing is foreign to it than the irresponsible and half-baked quality of thought known as subjectivism. Terms like true and false, wise and unwise, are equally inapplicable, and yet the essay is subject to laws that are no less strict for appearing to be delicate and ineffable. (273)

In overturning the binaries, the essay could be said to disobey the division of intellectual labor already set in motion by the bifurcation of science from art. Adorno calls this

phenomenon a progressive demythologization where the distance between figuration and reason has increasingly been made wider, so that singularity of experience has been lost to generality of science and the particularity (or provisional nature) of art. Musil stresses the fact that the essay is empathetic to partial truths, but that does not make them provisional in nature. Truth, being metaphorical, can only be partial, and that is the necessary character of it.

If the natural sciences follow an increasing division in being more and more specialized concerning their objects of knowledge, art and the essayistic attitude is attuned to multiplicity. The symbolism of mathematical formulae has universal validity and allow no equivocality in their interpretation. The symbol, in poetry, however, can be employed and interpreted to mean an infinity. Steiner highlights the essence of art as leading to a “maximalization of semantic incommensurability in respect of the formal means of expression” (68). In this realm, things don’t gain meaning by conforming to their conceptual locations, but displacement is the very movement that makes poetry what it is.

The homelessness of meaning with respect to the sign is a reflection of the homelessness of being in a straitjacketed self. Essayism as opening oneself to possibilities of being differently in the world has an ambivalent relationship to the notion of selfhood. Thomas Sebastian in his book concerning the intersection of science and literature in Musil’s style refers to Kant’s *Mutmaßlicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte* as the prototype of the essay type. *Mutmaßung* as essay has the root word *Mut* in it, which refers subjectively to *Gemüt* or state of mind, and *Zumutung*, something that forces our assent. The essay walks on a tightrope where the self is exposed finally as a membrane, functioning at once from volition as well as compulsion. This helps us understand better why Musil thinks that the truth of the essay is no less necessary than the synthetic propositions of science.

Genesse Grill points out in her book a number of common impulses shared by the worlds of Musil and Proust. The novels “share multiple concerns, particularly a theoretical and formal emphasis on the metaphoric, on the tension between universal and particular, and the problem of narrative, time and deferral” (5). We would point out another similarity in the style of these worlds which pertains to modal instead of thematic congruence.

We find both Marcel and Ulrich struggling in a world where people have particular orientations towards art and/or life, which are not agreeable to them. They seek to refashion the world, and for that, language is an indispensable building material. Language, however, is a social phenomenon. Words mean what they are accepted to convey by a milieu. Beyond this lexical aspect, lies the far more intricate discursive aspect of language which is symptomatic of the kind of being that human life evinces in how it comports with the world and others. This style, be that of Madame de Villeparisis or Oriane or the platitudes of Arnheim forms “a system of nonculture to which we might even concede a certain ‘unity of style’ if it made any sense to speak of a stylized barbarism” (Adorno, “Dialectic” 101).

The essay being openly historical must necessarily partake of this particularity from where it takes shape. Both Proust and Musil therefore use the very superficial characters and their worldviews in an excessive fashion in their works with their protagonists however, being at odds with them. There is of course no question of conforming to this nonculture; nor is there any luck in being absolutely dismissive of it, because one must eventually place oneself first in the soup from which one seeks a way out. It is this peculiar ambivalent relation that informs the Modernist ‘ties’ with tradition as well as the contemporary dilettantism:

The promise of the work of art to create truth by impressing the unique contours on the socially transmitted forms is as necessary as it is hypocritical. By

claiming to anticipate fulfillment through their aesthetic derivatives, it posits the real forms of the existing order as absolute. To this extent, the claims of art are always also ideology. (103).

What could be added to this, is that claims of art, if at all one is to speak in these terms, are also always not simply ideology but a move away from them and the modes which make them possible.

There thus remains an ambiguity of literary status as far as the essay is concerned. Whether a genre or a denial of genre, the essay comes to be unrecognized as both knowledge and art, a point crucial for Musil's novel to which we shall return in the last subchapter of this chapter.

The novel shares a strange relationship with the essay based on mode of representation. Since the novel since its very inception is occupied with the question of possibility of a new world(view) and that the novel has progressively leaned towards the particular and empirical in contrast to the universalizing spirit of the epic, it is in temperament closer to the essay than any other genre. Obaldia deems the novel as the "most naturally essayistic genre" for its indeterminate, reflexive and critical outlook towards the world (23).

The question now, is whether the novel, being a compound genre, has the ability of taking over the essay as just one of its constituents. What do we make of the long monologues of Ulrich being a part of Musil's novel? By themselves, these monologues could be seen as aphorisms. But integrated into the texture of the novel, the essay remains neither a genre nor a mode, but becomes a form of expression. Hence says Obaldia: "And yet the novel has another, much more conspicuous way of taking the essay over and making it redundant as a genre; this is by incorporating it as such into its own texture" (21).

But given the fact that Musil's style is opposed to subsume particularities to a general rubric, the integration of Ulrich's thought does not blend with any monolithic view of the narrator. The narratorial voice, in fact, is indistinguishable from Ulrich's thought and yet not at one with it, which makes the narrative jagged in its topography. The essay, thus, serves as a temperament as well as an ingredient to build up discontinuity. Speaking of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, Obaldia sums up the essay-function in the following manner:

What the essayistic novel is seen to foreground above all, is generic mixture or hybridism: since the integration of the essay fragment into its fictional frame is not done by way of a dissolution, the demarcation of the essayistic material results in a confrontation between the cognitive and the aesthetic, theory and practice, potentiality and actualization, fragment and whole, poem and prose...which brings about the disruption of narrative sequence. (21)

The essay pertains to on one hand the attempts of Ulrich to disclose to his being to truth and disclose his being as truth, a complicated process that is much interrupted by the superficial events around him as well as his own doubts and selfhood coming in between. And the novel, in being a refraction of this state of affairs, too gets interrupted now and then, with interruption eventually emerging out as the sole character of the narrative, without any denouement or resolution. Borrowing the words of Nietzsche, this interruption then not only bears an insignia of discontinuity and disruptions of the contemporary times, but rather makes up the very essence-less essence of prose, which as Deleuze says, is comprised entirely of stuttering; in prose, "all dryness and coolness is meant to bring the amiable goddess into an amiable despair; there are often approximations and reconciliations for the moment, and then a sudden recoil and a burst of laughter" ("Gay Science" 79).

(B) CIRCULARITY

The Modernist novel evinces a shift from subjectivity, and we have underlined this point in the novel's paradigmatic shift from *Bildungsroman* to *Künstlerroman*. The former genre is governed by ideals and principles which are at the hero's disposal, and to which he aspires to. As a result, the novel of education or cultivation of one's sensibilities can follow a linear path from inception towards realization, a tendency that is unmistakably to be discerned in the temporality of the Realist novel. With the aforementioned shift however, the protagonist has no longer any telos at hand, and his wanderings are wont to disclose a circuitry that is almost antithetical to the conventional mode of story-telling. Although often deemed to be a subcategory of *Bildungsroman*, the *Künstlerroman* is inherently different in ways more than one. Since to be an artist, one must produce a work of art; and to produce a work of art means in fact to defy all that is regarded as art and come up with a new way of looking at the world altogether, the Modernist novel seems to be 'clueless' in the way it develops, instead of advancing along a smooth path.

Even within the gamut of the European Modernist novel, one could make a distinction between those works in which a strong sense of subjectivity still persists among the character and those where subjectivity is subsumed under a fake individualism and functional existence. Stephen Dedalus and Marcel are examples of the former group. Both these characters seek to be artist, and since they know what they wish to become, even although not knowing how to, there is some degree of linearity that is afforded to the novel by their aspirations. In Musil, Kafka as well as the Mann of *Der Zauberberg*, the characters are neither artists nor do they exclusively always seek to be artistically in the world. Especially in

Kafka and Mann do we encounter truly featureless characters like K and Hans Castorp, who have no individuality, and serve as a symbol of the average man of the day. Kundera, in *The Art of the Novel* very rightly makes this distinction among the Modernist novelists, and the implication that this distinction can carry;

The time was past when man had only the monster of his own soul to grapple with, the peaceful theme of Joyce and Proust. In the novels of Kafka, Hasek, Musil, Broch, the monster comes from outside, and is called History...it is impersonal, uncontrollable, incalculable, incomprehensible- and it is inescapable. (9)

Adorno's use of the word ideology in relation to style has to be recalled at this juncture. If style must partake from the conventional forms and modes of signification, then it runs the risk of complying with the attitude that inheres in them. Musil's characterization of Ulrich as a man of possibility and without quality has a relation to bear with how a person is expected to carry on with his life as well as how a novel is to represent such a person. Musil maintains a mutual autonomy of culture and politics lest "placing culture in the service of one specific political ideology, even one ambiguously poised to fight fascism, would have obliterated the precious space of reflection" (Mcbride 118). This statement applies not just to political ideology but also the ideology of style, a certain way of perceiving and presenting things in the framework of art. In moving away from these parameters, Musil among others liberate art from the very framework which it is expected to conform to, thereby opening up the possibility of the novel and the experiences contained therein.

The gradual development and circulation of aesthetic frameworks behave, analogous to morality, as forces of hegemony to which one inadvertently has to subscribe in order for his work to be recognized as art as such. The configuration of time in the novel has from the

very inception of the genre been aligned to the chronological and calendrical mode of quantifying and subtending temporality in a linear scale. On one hand, this development has been able to make the reader's consciousness to outgrow from the circular temporality of the myth, which had been hegemonic in its own time in dishing out assumingly transtemporal and eternal structures of feelings to the populace and hinder any sort of individual development. But seen from another perspective, the linearity of time hegemonizes a rational outlook towards the world, and makes the clock and calendar as indisputable loci as far as locating and journeying in time are concerned. The Modernist novel, as a reaction to this already-calcified mode of narration, explores time as a subject in itself rather than a Kantian transcendental medium which serves as a blank slate for experiences. In Joyce, we see the contraction of the story to a day's duration and the expansion of this duration in the plot. In Proust, we find vast stretches of time which are simply missing from the novel, the plot being subtended like a fabric between points situated far from one another in time. Fictional time, that is time found in these fictions, is then quite different from time we understand in everyday sense; it is the "metaphoric redescription of cosmological and historical time, explores the resources of phenomenological time, that are left unexploited or are inhibited by historical narrative...treasure trove of imaginative variations applied to the theme of phenomenological time and its aporias" (Ricoeur, "Time and Narrative, Vol 3" 128).

We have seen in the first section of the thesis how the structure of time, existence as being in the world, and understanding relate to one another. What does then the world of Musil distinctly bear in relation to the configuration of narrative time therein? The means in which the world comes to appearance in reading is prefigured by narrative temporality, and this in turn is the cornerstone to the direction in which the world is turned to, or in other words, the attitude that is embodied in worldliness. Musil's narrative is on one hand linear, stretching across what it would seem to be a couple of years. But this dimension, which is

otherwise so crucial in the Realist work, hardly matters here. What is significant is the fact that Ulrich's character hardly shows any development through the course of the novel. The novel begins when Ulrich is thirty years old, and has already formed his doubts against the mechanization of culture and the vacuity of urban existence. These standpoints do not change with the novel's 'progress'. What Musil does instead, is to multiply these standpoints into a number of viewpoints, and look at the situation in which Ulrich finds himself from these vantage points. The accretion of viewpoints doesn't lead to an accumulation but creates a configuration none the less, and it is in this sense that the novel at all has any scope of development. The development does not occur in time; rather it occurs across time through the different cross-sections held up to view.

In a way then, the scope of the work is pretty much restricted. It merely expatiates on Ulrich's disappointments, his disillusionments and his vague aspirations towards a condition that is unlike anything he has experienced so far, and of which he knows nothing at the moment. However, this judgement pertaining to the smallness of the work is valid only if we judge the work according to terms outside of it. Our discussion of the Modernist work has so far made it clear, that the work's refusal to belong to a system makes its judgment imperative according to the terms the work itself brings to appearance. It shall not cater to pre-given yardsticks. Genesse Grill quotes from one of Musil's diary entries that describes the movement of his novel: *die Bewegung hört niemals auf, aber sie schwingt auf engstem Raum*¹⁹; "This intensification without progression' could be a description of his own working method, as the increasingly expanding bulk of his unfinished novel might be understood as an infinite number of such individual circles, chapters, drafts, and sketches that each vibrate in the smallest space" (Grill 19).

This tendency to move deeper is an "aesthetic response to progress" (15). It is however, much more than that. Habit is developed out of a repetition of activities, so that one

feels assured of a familiarity and sets a space for himself in these habits to make his being inhabit. However, feelings are transient, and they exist always in flux, residing as states of mind for an ephemeral duration. Ulrich is well aware of this fact that all human emotions are bound to certain contexts and cannot exist indefinitely once these contexts have been substituted by some other premises. This has been exacerbated even further by our attention and concentration span being shortened by the torrent of sensations that encircle us in the urban spaces of advertisement and mass media. Circularity thus, slows things down, and impedes progress to the point where an exalted state of mind can exist for a longer duration. Is this not the aspiration of Marcel as well, who craves to lengthen the privileged moments of involuntary memory? Of course, Marcel fails, because it is not in our hands to prolong a moment which has happened to us due to factors external to our being and choices. But what if a prolonged moment is sought to be created, from within one's being? The shift from superficial to profound self in Proust happens with the resolution to write a novel. And in Musil, this effort is figured ironically by the narrative's repetition of Ulrich's mindscape and his ideas of utopia. We shall discuss how this happens exactly in the last chapter on Event, but we can for now highlight a paradox that looms in this situation. Ulrich seeks a utopia and wants to inhabit it. His effort is thus not directed at a moment of inspiration, but in prolonging this moment into habit. This, however is set against time, and the novel parodies the evanescence of time by repeating Ulrich's thoughts over and over again, showing that even if one has to move ahead in narrating, one can do so, by moving not along time, but across it, in circles.

Circling then is the grammar; "it must lead us eternally deeper, and not forward, in order to be aesthetically and ethically true to its purposes, even if that means 'failure' in the world of 'squares'" (24). The lack of telos and denouement makes the narrative a perpetual circumlocution, a tale without a tale, where only telling exists as an intransitive action, akin

to the world of Laurence Sterne and Proust. The narrative becomes an exercise of the ‘method of deferral’, “non-didactic lyricism and metaphoric poetic prose, which serves not to explain, analyze or describe, but to make present and palpable that which cannot be communicated any other way” (24). The novel eventually can thus be read from any particular point, a holographic aspect which we have associated in the *Recherche* as well. Burton Pike calls this aspect ‘fractal’, a curve or a surface having the property that any small part of it, enlarged, has the same statistical character as the whole (25).

In the Modernist novel, the worldview of the narrative and that of the character refract one another. Just as Ulrich is unable to take a firm step and accept a thing for what it is, the narrative’s infinite deferral can be seen as a formal enactment of a “resistance to closure, by its ‘crimes’ against linearity, plot structure, and a dependable sense of reality within the fictional world” (51). The anxiety of being makes its presence felt in the circuitous rewritings of the narrative. *Umschreibungen* or rewriting here has a twofold implication; one, it repeats what is once said, and second, it substitutes that it wants to say with something else. Repetition here, as in Proust, does not stand for identity or sameness, but is on the contrary posited against a culture of progress which is in fact a steady generation of conservative forces of sameness. Musil’s intention is to paint “die Welt von sechsten Schöpfungstag; wo Gott und die Welt noch unter sich waren, ohne die Menschen”²⁰ (qtd in Grill 119).

The question of identity crops up when one asks about the center of these circles, and which name can it have. Does the circular movement of the narrative at all have a center or is the movement generated due to a lack of one? Grill suggests one can locate some semblance of an existential impulse around which the novel listlessly moves about, and identifies it with Ulrich’s striving for a moral condition beyond moral adages, the key to the ‘right way to live’:

This circling is the fountaining kind, which supports some sort of fundamental core or source, Nietzsche's 'common root', to which we return, over and over. It is reminiscent of the Nietzschean imperative 'Werde wer du bist'²¹ and also of Ulrich's surprising admission that he had always believed that morality was not made by humans, but discovered, that 'morality itself must have a morality'.

(34)

There is no doubt that Ulrich does not really accomplish this in the scope of the novel, and one could deem the novel itself to be a failure based on this fact. However, the very condition that Ulrich is not shown to have reached a resolution or stability of being can be interpreted otherwise as holding up the world as a yet open arena of experience. People like Arnheim and Diotima, who believe in progress and grandeur of events, do not actually develop in the organic sense despite of the endeavors they undertake. In contrast, Ulrich does almost nothing in the novel other than think, and yet it is he alone who shows signs of actually growing with the advancement of the plot. The refraction of this paradox bears significance on the form of the novel. Since the Modernist work is involved in fashioning a new worldview, success and failure become relative terms. It is the novel's failure to reconcile that bears the mark of its success since "its theoretical bases call the criteria of both duration and so-called reality radically into question" (1). Thus, one can castigate the work for being boring and repetitive by being cooped up into one's own prejudices and prerogatives concerning reality. Or, one might participate in the world the novel makes possible, and come to judge the very same formal aspects in a gesture of welcome and appreciation.

(C) PRECISION AND SOUL

The temperament of the Enlightenment and the epochs that followed in its wake was dominantly influenced by the contemporary outlooks circulating in science. Science, by itself, does not touch the masses and their mind. But the manner in which science occupies a place in society, and by that we mean the advent, circulation and control by and through technology, makes science an important element in the shaping and functioning of the human imagination. Given that the Modernist work of art is skeptical to the paradigm of rationality, it is but obvious that art during this phase would come to bear a critical relation to science and the perspectives at work in its domain. Just as the relationship of Modernism with reason as well as tradition is a peculiarly complex and ambivalent one, similarly, the construction of the novel bears a relation to the world of science which is not as simple as that of outright negation. In our section on Proust, we have seen how optics, changing perspectives offered by trains, the kaleidoscope as well numerous innovations such as X-rays largely contributed to the making of the Recherche. We shall, in this sub-chapter, turn our attention to how the world of Musil partakes from that of science, and what does that imply for the worldliness that appears herein.

We know from Musil's biography that he had a background and quite an impressive character in science and philosophy before turning to writing. A degree in mathematics and engineering, Musil's doctoral work was on empirical psychology, focusing on Mach, undertaken under the supervision of Carl Stumpf. It is then all the more obvious that the world and language of science would have a deep impact in the imagination and creation of Musil the artist.

Like Proust and Joyce, Musil did not advocate art's antagonism to science. He believed that "the open-endedness and attention to experience of scientific reflection could provide a model for an adventurous intellectual journey into new aesthetic and ethical terrain" (Mcbride 56). As discussed, Modernism had challenged the de-mythologization of Enlightenment by dint of which knowledge came to be equated with science and philosophy, whereas art was pushed to the domain of free play of subjectivity alone. Just as intelligence, observation and experimentation are implicated to some degree in the construction of art, similarly figuration also has its role to play in science in the manner in which axioms are formulated and a system is imagined, before one expresses it in concrete terms. Musil however is reluctant to accord to science or art any primary or superior status. This is the reason why he is against the scientific objectivity of naturalism, where natural science was posited as the dominant model to study human behavior and interaction by the likes of say Zola and Strindberg. On the other hand, Musil would deny art any primacy as far as knowledge is concerned. There has been a tendency in European thought to associate art with alternative form of knowledge. This serves to wrest free art from the hegemony of science, although at the same time not completely divorcing it from epistemic claims. Keats, for example, talks of negative capability and Adorno speaks of negative knowledge- both instances of ambivalent co-optation with and subversion from science. Musil extricates the possibility of knowledge from science, but that does not imply art is therefore unimportant. He basically does not wish to estimate the importance of art and science on the basis of the yardstick of knowledge, which would otherwise always make art subservient to a paradigm instead of allowing it to fashion its own paradigm. He was not a proponent of a belief that art provides or constitutes alternative knowledge. The writer, according to him, activates a type of thinking whose senti-mental quality points to a peculiar interplay between intellect and feeling (72).

In his book concerning the impact of science on Musil's style, Thomas Sebastian traces the origins of Musil's outlook in the thoughts and writings of Carl Stumpf. Situated between neo-Kantian positivism and phenomenology, Stumpf advocated an empiricism of the 'precision and soul' kind. This perspective sought to blend experimental observation of reality but not without the role of the imagination and creativity of the viewer in expressing and taking a stand with respect to the world. In other words, the judicious action [*einsichtiges Handeln*] that empirical psychology advocates, consisted of a mutual permeation of feeling and cognition [*Durchdringung von Fühlen und Denken*] (15). Mach, on whose works Musil had worked in his PhD, too held a similar opinion where science and imagination were put on equal footing without any one of them subsuming the other. According to this view, physics and psychology study the same subject from different perspectives (20). It is to be remarked that these outlooks try to bridge the gap between reason and imagination, and address existence in a holistic way where both are implicated according to the perspective chosen for observation.

The commingling of intellect and intuition could be traced as early as in Musil's diary entries made in his adolescence. J.M. Coetzee, in his essay on Musil in *Inner Workings*, states: "In his diaries he developed for himself the artistic persona of 'Monsieur de vivisecteur', one who explored states of consciousness and emotional relations with an intellectual scalpel. He practiced his vivisection skills impartially on himself, his family, and his friends" (32). It is no wonder therefore, that in Hamsun and Zola, he finds an intimation, "a nameless object that is represented for the first time" (Mcbride 59). And yet, naturalism for Musil, was like a promise that has never been kept. In Hamsun's *Hunger* for example, the narrator describes the adject condition of the nameless protagonist more with a view of creating a horrifying spectacle for the reader rather than impersonally dissecting the condition itself. Similarly, in Ibsen and Strindberg, we encounter moments of great agony, but their embedding in the text

of the work is as if thematic, without actually dramatizing the development. Even when a dramatization occurs, it partakes of a language that is overtly spectacular, which owes Naturalism's attempts to underline extreme human experiences as happening beyond the scope of language. Thus, like the naturalists, Musil too incorporates sexuality as an important element in his works, especially his novellas. But he does not treat these intense moments as merely expressions of a psyche that is indescribable and vague. Coetzee, in another essay from his book *Stranger Shores*, makes an important observation which helps us understand the role of science in Musil interacting with his orientation towards naturalism: "where he differs from Lawrence is in not wishing to exclude the intellect from erotic life- indeed, in seeking to eroticize the intellect. As a writer, he is also capable of an unmoralizing brutality of observation that is simply not in Lawrence's repertoire" (111).

In this regard, Musil is a forerunner to Adorno's view that "aesthetic experiences require philosophical illumination" (Wellmer 11). It is not difficult to understand the great esteem in which Adorno deems Musil the writer, for his own project of demystifying art and unmasking the claimed universality of science already began germinating in the writings of Musil. What is interesting to note, is that even till this day, the role of precision in our lives is rather unevenly distributed. Sniper guns and watches, on one hand, live up to the highest degrees of precision, whereas lovers expressing their love for one another could be as unprecise as to resort to the same hackneyed expression in vogue since eternity, or that we deem ourselves to be bored without ever taking the effort to understand this boredom in concrete terms. The following passage from the novel highlights this anomaly, which in turn has been reflected in naturalism's uneven use of precision in speaking of objective description and psychic states: "This is probably the most anachronistic attitude one can have nowadays, when intellectual rigor and the emotional life are at the farthest remove from each

other, but our precision in technology has unfortunately advanced to such a point that it seems to regard the imprecision of life as its proper complement” (534).

Naturalism and Realism had imitated the camera as the modality of observation and had described external appearances in staggering details. The works of Balzac and Zola, for example hold evidence for the same, in trying to break down images in minute forms, and shrouding narration in utmost precision. Musil, on the other hand, does not feel that the precision of external appearances is alone sufficient; for him, it is more important to probe the mind through language, and if need be, create a new language which can make this discovery possible. The Realist emphasis on external narration, its “epic perspectivism is here virtually exploded, wrecked on the consequence of its own precision” (Blumenberg, “The Concept of Reality” 500). The listing of the committees and their ludicrous objectives is a perfect example of how the epic marker of catalogue is ironically employed here.

Hans Blumenberg in his essay “The Concept of Reality and the Possibility of the Novel” cites a similar example from a lecture Thomas Mann had given in 1942 on his book *Joseph und seine Brüder*, mentioning how the application of scientific on the unscientific could lead to a perfect expression of irony. Such examples are to be found also in satirical sketches, say in those by Sukumar Ray and Parashuram, where the mismatch of language and intention create a humorous effect. Another set of people who employ the language of science on the activities and experiences of the mind are mystics. Just as science believe in the univocality of expression, similarly mystics try to frame experiences in structured myths and patterns so as to regulate the behavior and choices of their clients better. The mystic nails symbol to one meaning, whereas the poet knows sensuous facts have multiple meanings, even when the proliferation of meaning would not be a dependable way to understand the world (Grill 57). Musil’s circularity and resistance from closure implies his distance from the claims of science to provide universal explanations without scope for meaning-making.

Musil's ambivalence towards science owes to his favoring the precision of observation and his resistance against univocality. He cannot entirely follow the abstraction inherent in scientific formulations because they disregard the figurative character of expression in trying to understand phenomena. Moreover, abstraction exploits and misunderstands what it takes for being great, a fact we have discussed in detail already in the previous chapter. Abstraction also is not a phenomenological process, but a metaphysical one, since it is more interested in patterns rather than actual configurations and contexts, and eventually end up like a regulative principle similar to morality.

On the other hand, Musil's problem with empiricism owes to the fact that the latter employs what Horkheimer calls instrumental reason, which eventually gets operated according to the logic of profit, with means substituting ends. Empirical observation abides by the linearity of time and the facticity of reality, which Musil like other Modernists refuses to subscribe to. Finally, all empirical observations take place under a horizon that remains conserved in the process, and seem to the likes of Musil as a philosophical child's disease [*philosophische Kinderkrankheit*], of remaining stuck in the same circle of experience [*im Gleichen Erfahrungskreis verbleiben*] (Grill 84).

Musil's disavowal of both Expressionism and Impressionism also owes to the lack of precision like in their worldviews like that in Naturalism. The Expressionist motto of feeling over thinking was in his opinion a circumvention of analytical mental activity (Mcbride 82). Ulrich's disdain towards Clarisse's taste in painting attests to this fact. Clarisse, a self-proclaimed disbeliever in reason and intellect, favors those artforms which have apparently stemmed from feelings and intuitions alone. Being an artist himself, it is but natural for Musil to not take such an opinion much seriously, because it contains the germ of making myth out of art and effacing the individuality of the artist to some obscure mystical agents. Although Expressionism was a dominant art school in his time, he did not believe in the cult of

personality, feeling, intuitionism, and willfulness as the correct response, especially at a time when Fascist powers were exactly employing the same tools to strengthen their hold in Germany (Luft 167).

Likewise, Musil had a problem embracing Impressionism as the mode of his art because it “tended toward an undifferentiated receptivity to experience which left only random feelings and impressions. Its naïve epistemology ignored the fact that there is no report of experience which does not presume a spiritual system with the help of which the report is created out of the facts” (ibid). Impressionism did tend to create light itself, and it was this essentially transcendental character of impressionistic art that was too symbolic for the tastes of Musil’s analytical temperament.

The complexity of Musil’s attitude towards science in art could be summed up by his opinion of psychology, especially the Freudian kind. While Musil insisted precision in describing the torments of the soul, this accuracy of observation had to have a language of its own and not import the language of science. In his essay “Robert Musil’s Stories of Women”, Coetzee cites Musil’s problem with Freud stemming from chiefly two factors. Firstly, Freud had sought to understand the psyche in objective terms, without laying much emphasis on the figuration at work in his interpretation of dreams and behavior. We have already gone through Wittgenstein’s critique of Freud in our chapter on Proust, where the Freudian discourse was disclosed to a hermeneutic and not exact science. Ulrich’s utopia, framed in the novel as *Other Condition*, requires poetry and complication, a bringing together of inchoate terms [*Dichtung*], and not science as knowledge [*Wissenschaft*]. Secondly, Freud seems to carry on the tradition of historicism in trying to create origins to explain present states. Musil however, was not in favor of such exercises of constructing an arche for everything, for that would lead to describing the human mind in exactly the same deterministic terms that circulate in natural sciences (235).

We have now analyzed Musil's responses to the role of science and scientific observation in the ambit of art through Naturalism, Expressionism, Impressionism, Rationalism, Empiricism and Freudian psychology, and the least that we can say of this attitude is that it is complex in nature. Musil ushers a new breath in the novel by situating language in a strange place where it had not been before; scientific without being symbolic, creative without being opulent. Precision and soul interact in all their modalities here, but this interaction eventually owes their presence to an all-embracing but critical attitude of Musil, that Kundera does little exaggeration to praise rightly:

Musil and Broch brought a sovereign and radiant intelligence to bear on the novel. Not to transform the novel into philosophy, but to marshal around the story all the means- rational and irrational, narrative and contemplative- that could illuminate man's being" could make of the novel the supreme intellectual synthesis. Is their achievement the completion of the novel's history, or is it instead the invitation to a long journey? (11)

This shall be our cue to pass over to some of the intricacies concerning ambivalence of the work in the following sub-chapter.

(D) INCOMPLETION, IRONY, INTERRUPTION, LOSS OF SELF

The resistance against conceptualization and closure makes itself felt through the mode of incompleteness, irony, interruption and a loss and/or lack of self in Musil, as in other Modernist writings. Ulrich seeks a utopia that is termed in the novel as the Other Condition [*anderer Zustand*]. *Zustand* in German refers to a state which is stable and has reached a completion to be what it is [*abgeschlossen*]. However, in the novel, Ulrich is never able to attain the Other Condition as such a stable state. Ever elusive, this condition seems to be the metaphor of art and the world at large, both of which are never completed, but always on the brink of possibility, happening indefinitely and infinitely. It is a “condition that can never be carried to its proper conclusion, but there’s no denying that it is wholly the condition of the world in which we live” (Musil 405).

We find Ulrich to be a person for whom realizing a potential has less attraction than the unrealized, and who opines, that magnificent institutions and personalities are bungled drafts of their ideas (297). On one hand it might appear to be a defense Ulrich makes for his own incapability of bringing any plan to completion. But then, Ulrich’s distrust for a stable form makes his opinion acquire a distinct valency. The Other Condition is named so, because it cannot be found in the world that now is. To believe like Arnheim and Diotima that a great idea or event can change the world overnight would be too puerile for Ulrich’s analytical bent of mind to accept. Ulrich certainly seeks a communion with this other condition, but the nature of community is not one where differences are resolved through a unifying parameter. In fact, community, if indeed it is to exist, can only do so in transit, and can never come to conclusion. The moment a community is said to be fulfilled marks the nullification of the

possibility of coming together as an active process. All communities, say for example religious or political seek to erase differences and usher in a monoculture, something against which Ulrich is extremely skeptical, as we have observed in the first chapter of this section. Speaking on community in his book *On Ceasing to be Human*, Gerald Bruns notes that it is neither an entity nor a hypothesis “because this sharing, this passage cannot be completed. Incompletion is its principle...uninterrupted passage through singular ruptures” (10).

Bruns goes on to remark that the notion of community and that of self are at loggerheads with one another. The celebration of centralization of selfhood, initiated from the Enlightenment as an anthropomorphic view of the world with the individual capable of taking responsibility of his worldview, meets a blind alley when the question of community crops up. Community implies being-with, and is already a break from the sovereignty that the self takes upon itself. Here, a person can no longer be just himself, neither is he subsumed under principles, but in constant movement with others. Ulrich’s leaning towards the inhuman or superhuman must be understood in this context, that he wishes to escape the mold in which his existence is stipulated to function by culture. His nearing to the Other Condition makes his figure almost unbearable to the other, phony characters surrounding him, and quite naturally so. In trying to co-habit with a completely different way of the world, Ulrich must cease to be a human. “The true movement of community is directed to the end of humanity, where he can stop being human” (ibid). This signifies a break from anthropomorphism and new becoming, a new way of participating indefinitely with things of the world, which Modernism clearly evinces in its break from the reifying holds of Renaissance Humanism.

Ulrich’s attitude of reluctance at moments when an idea or an event seems to reach its conclusion could be better understood from this vantage point. He says, “I’ve been like a man who steps outside the theatre before the final act for a breath of fresh air, sees the dark void with all those stars, and walks away, abandoning hat, coat and play” (809). This metaphor is

significant here, for the last act of the play signifies a resolution or denouement, an unknotting of the complication of the plot. Ulrich does not seek a fake community where differences are smoothed out; he wishes to travel with those differences, because that is the imperative of life. It is his intransigent refusal for solutions that in turn makes the Other Condition elusive; Ulrich himself, unlike mystics, shy away from the possibility of such a state being infused with reality. Agathe reflects, “everything that he said brought him closer to it, and with greater precision the further he went, but he always stopped at the last step, just as the threshold, every, every time, he gave up the attempt” (811).

Musil sees art as a process of disturbance (Grill 1). History and culture have already set a boundary to what it means to be human. Modernist art ruptures this boundary in order to reveal something essentially incomplete about both the human being and the world. Since human beings are perhaps the only creature who have the additional responsibility and task to become human (a lion, for example, does not have to become a lion; its natural faculties alone are sufficient to fulfill the expectations of its species-being), the human being is always defined with respect to a limit that is transgressed and a new limit formed thereafter. The evolution of the human being in the last five thousand years bears testament to this fact, that our being has changed and will continue to change, due to the fact that we are actively involved in creating our environments in contrast to other animals. If Modernist art lays special emphasis on going beyond constraints and forming new limits as far as perceiving the world is concerned, then it must be accompanied by a world that is always in transit. The world, unlike an object or a concept, is never quite there. This unavailability and incompleteness of the world could be deemed as a failure from the classical point of view, in which men co-created and co-habited the world at the same time, which is what Nietzsche thinks of the Greek way of life. Incompletion is also a shortcoming from the mythic point of view, since the latter consists of metaphysical assonance between the subject and the world,

as Lukács highlights, implying both to exist as in a completed state. The Modernist world also fails to live up to the romantic imagination, especially the Wagnerian kind that seeks a unity with the past. Incompletion is the very ethos of Modernism; any sort of roundedness or completion would tantamount to reduce the historicity of modernism to the worldviews of its predecessors.

Lyotard seeks to understand the inhuman element of Modernism in conjunction with the flux that is advocated for the world in transit. He explains the governing dynamics of the Modernist way of looking at the world by means of the Freudian modality of *Durcharbeitung*, which implies working without end and therefore without will (30). The exemption of both will and end makes the endeavor free from selfhood and telos, and shifts the dynamics from being to becoming. Work without end means that the projection of being is not guided by the concept of end, but is not without finality. Ulrich's orientation to the Other Condition, as well as the open character of Musil's plot efface the possibility of any resolution, such that incompletion can mean that things are still moving about and not quite dead.

Blanchot deems the failure of Musil's novel to be an 'imposing' one: "Here is another immense, unfinished and unfinishable work. Here again is the surprise of a monument admirably in ruins" ("Book" 134). At this point the modality of both Proust and Musil converge, in living up to the "essentially unfinished and unfinishable project" of Modernity (Turner, 115-116). Joyce, Proust, Musil and Broch wrote long novels not because they had lengthy stories to tell, but owing to the fact they had on one hand attempted to transform their human lives into the inhumanly thingly space of art, and that this transformation had no goal other than being continually in motion. Together with these factors, there comes in the 'rehearsal'-like aspect of the work of art; it is a preparation for a play that will not be performed. Blanchot rightly identifies this aspect in relation to the Modernist ethos of

incompletion, and notes how incompletion is a strategy against the completed nature of thoughts and concepts of philosophy: “in a literary work, one can express thoughts as difficult and of an abstract a form as in a philosophical essay, but only on the condition that they are not yet thoughts. This ‘not yet’ is literature itself, a ‘not yet’ that, just as it is, is accomplishment and perfection” (“Book” 148).

We shall round off our discussion on incompletion from a quote by none other than Nietzsche, who was probably the first of the philosophers in post-Enlightenment Europe who had deliberately parted ways from the generic obligations of structure and concept in his writings, choosing a form that is more artful and open, mobile and aphoristic. A poet, in his opinion, has the prerogative of being fugitive and fickle, because that is what sets poetry apart from other branches of human constructs, and lends it its ineffable charm: the “poet exercises a higher charm by his imperfections than by all that is rounded off and takes perfect shape under his hands...his work never expresses altogether what he would really like to express, what he would like to have seen” (“Gay Science” 69).

We shall now turn our attention to a number of ironical moments in the world of Musil and see how these logical anomalies make up the distinctness of the worldview that reveals this world. Irony is constituted when the form-giving intention and form does not coincide, and this cleft between the two becomes the exposed field of being. Musil inserts one of his profound observations in Moosbrugger, who says “No one loves life who really knows it” (227). This reflection applies equally to Ulrich, even when he is the only character in the book who is really involved in life while others are merely living it. Ulrich is skeptical of the fact that everyone has become an expert on the problems of being human, and he recognizes “an unpleasant feeling of dilettantism about it” (231). The irony here is the following: people are experts on life without actually engaging with the questions of life,

whereas Ulrich is deeply affected by these questions and refuses to accept that which circulates in general opinion as life.

Lyotard judges this ironical stance of the Modernist artist towards life and the definitions of being-human as a resistance towards Humanism, “as if at least man were a certain value, which has no need to be interrogated, which even has the authority to suspend, forbid interrogation, suspicion, the thinking that gnaws away at everything” (1). He reification of man’s poetic being in moral dictates is looked at suspiciously by Musil. Lyotard goes on to say that the advocates of Humanism had sheltered humanist prejudice under the authority of Kant, whose viewpoints, if understood correctly are transcendental and not anthropological (ibid). It is this misplaced reception that artists have long sought to undo, choosing a life that is different from what life is constrained to mean. Thus said Apollinaire that artists are men who want to become inhuman. Such a rejection of humanism does not imply inhumanity in the sense of impairing the lives of others. On the contrary, the move away from the straitjacketed vision of life is rather a homage to one’s existence and the possibilities it contains. Ironically, being inhuman then is being more human than being human, a point Adorno had made in the context of believing artists to remain loyal to humankind uniquely through its inhumanity in regard to it (qtd in ibid).

Aesthetic differentiation had, as we have seen, sought to create a boundary between art and life so that the former could alternatively function as entertainment as well as a promise of redemption. Armen Avanessian in his book *Irony and the Logic of Modernity* recalls Schlegel’s use of the phrase *parekbasis* in the context of Greek tragedy. Being dramatic performances, tragedies had to sustain the illusion of an alternative reality distanced from life where the plot unfurled a story. *Parekbasis* is the moment when the chorus steps in and disrupts the story, addressing the public, and raising contemporary concerns in their songs. It breaks the illusion that had been suspended until then by invectives hurled at the

audience and disrupting what we call the fourth wall of drama, an invisible barrier that shields the audience from the fictive reality of performance. According to Avanesian, irony is permanent *parekbasis*, and Modernist art especially follows this modality to constantly rupture divisions that have been conventionalized in society. Since divisions, like in its application in labor, alienates from one having a view of both oneself and the world, it is the task of art not to favor any one compartment but to smudge the boundaries to show how existence is a total phenomenon where entertainment and leisure should not and cannot function as isolated room where one can leave behind one's concerns and anxieties about life:

As permanent *parekbasis*, irony claims not to unambiguously reveal what is illusionary about reality (in the sense of an Enlightenment-type critique of ideology). Nor does it seek to brush aside a profane reality through a more poetic illusion (in the sense of an aestheticizing escapism) ...no clear delineation between art and life. (132)

In a sense then, Modernist art refuses to comply with the notion of art as an isolated phenomenon, and in doing so, constructs itself in unprecedented ways to deviate from those products that were produced under a paradigm which is for it obsolete and outworn. Hegel had identified the fundamental irony inherent in artworks not to conform to any genre, not even the one ascribed to it as art. Art then “annihilates and dissolves every content in its continuous effort to transcend and actualize itself” (Agamben, “Man without Content” 34). If philosophy and science fulfill their individual destinies by adopting universality, “in contemporary art, it is critical judgement that lays bare its own split, thus suppressing and rendering superfluous its own space” (32). We have noticed such an irony already in our discussion of Romantic irony in the section on Proust, where the subject finds himself in a strange position with the signifier and signified not corresponding in unison in the making of the symbol. There is no transcendental truth assured by language but only an endless

sequence of form-giving and truth appearing as a wavering possibility in the appearance of that form. This obviously leads to a kind of formalization where the content loses its primacy as it had in the epic world, and the subject basks in the irony of not being in a position of making univocal sense through language. “Irony meant that art had to become its own object, and no longer finding real seriousness in any context, could from now on only represent the negative potentiality of the poetic ‘I’” (35). Art then, becomes a sincere but perennially misdirected form of projection; it does celebrate a cause, but journeys in the absence of one. The world of Ulrich, as like the salons of Proust and the Dublin of Joyce, are at the end of the day absolutely aimless. They exist neither by the support of some totality hosting them nor in the confidence they have in their own formal architecture, but flicker unflinchingly in the face of contingency and absence of permanence that is one at the same time the despair and the boon of an artist. The “artist is a god that destroys itself. To define this destiny of irony, Hegel uses the expression *ein Nichtiges, ein sich Vernichtendes*, ‘a self-annihilating nothing’. At the extreme limits of art’s destiny, when all the gods fade in the twilight of art’s laughter, art is only a negation that negates itself, a self-annihilating nothing” (ibid).

Agamben however treats this annihilation as if it “points to the alienation of nothing less than man’s original historical space” (63). The association of this irony with alienation is however, problematic. People like Arnheim and Diotima speak of this irony as if it is an alienation that could be overcome. In harboring such a notion, they actually fail to participate in the artfulness inhering in irony. That art cannot identify with its content is itself a historical phenomenon in light of European Modernism. The formulation of ‘original space’ runs the risk of being collated with Wagnerian romantic dreams of a glorious antiquity that has to be retained and recovered. Only considered from the Romantic point of view is irony an alienation. From the Modernism paradigm however, it is irony that keeps becoming still active in the face of life being compartmentalized and institutionalized in every possible way.

The ‘failure’ to open a space where man can ‘identify’ himself with the world embodied in the Modernist work is not literally a failure; it is the nature [what-being] of how man is in the world, and the event-ing of the same must thus necessarily partake of the futility contained therein in order to be historical in the sense of sheltering the particularity of the contemporary times.

Irony is likewise incorporated in the Modernist novel by according elements in it which were earlier considered unseemly to feature in works of art. The import of violence, evil and immoral and indeed empathy with the same further bridges the gap between art and life, and rids of the former from its obligation to look pretty and smell nice. Musil, like Proust and Joyce, had advocated the use of deviatory images in his work to this purpose. In his essay “Das unanständige und Kranke in der Kunst”, he makes an aggressive argument for the moral value of perversity in art (104). Clarisse and Moosbrugger performs this function in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, not to forget the elements of sado-masochism that feature in his very first novel *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törless*.

We can recall how Ulrich had made the remark concerning stupidity to be the most universal and persisting traits among human beings. The evolution of the history of taste has shown us how artists were deemed to be ‘special’, analogous to the special status ascribed to the artworks. Modernism plays with both these ideas in which the poet embraces the fact of being stupid, however with the difference that he knows it for a fact whereas the others claim not be stupid themselves. The man of the world claims to know everything about the world, whereas the courage [*Dichtermut*] of the poet, according to Hölderlin, consists in stupidity [*Blödigkeit*], “the dispossession that entitles as it enfeebles the writer, disengaging and defaulting the knowing subject who enters into contact with the poetic world” (Ronell 7). Men of the world like Arnheim are active in taking part in so many endeavors, whereas artistic beings like Ulrich rather step back and bask in an existence bereft of fervor [*das*

reglose Dasein] and full of passivity [*die völlige Passivität*], which according to Benjamin are the marks of an artist's courage. Flaubert had been deeply impressed with the 'stupid' ending of *Candide*, and regarded writing [*l'écriture*] as a pure act of stupidity [*l'act pur de bêtise*]. The artist does not conform to common sense, and must be stupid in order to look at the world in a new way. He responds where no response is called for, something Kafka explores with relentless precision, the predicament of the one who thinks the call was meant for him (13). Dostoyevsky's saintly characters like Myshkin and Alyosha Karamazov are basically stupid in the eyes of others, because they are non-calculative, non-rational and impractical in their outlooks. In the content of Musil, Ulrich does seem to be a stupid person in the eyes of Diotima and Arnheim, even if they revere his intelligence. And it is this stupidity that lends to Ulrich an unmistakable individuality that sets him apart from the rest who are merely leading functional existences.

Art as permanent *parekbasis* obviously doesn't go well with a neo-Hegelian like Lukács, who feels that the essay has become too formless and problematic, too free and intellectual, and that the novel could be a recovery from this (qtd in Luft 21). It is no wonder that he associates Musil's work with worldlessness (qtd in Grill 4). Hegel's distrust for contemporary Romantic art is the point of departure that eventually leads to the apotheosis of irony in the works of novelists like Musil. Modernity begins with "a gap between the art of transmission and the thing to be transmitted, and the valuing of the latter independently of the former appear only when tradition loses its vital force" (68). The lack of any faith in content leads to figuration between without an aim, and the differentiation of art from life and the onset of Romantic irony had made aesthetics to destroy transmissibility and to recuperate it negatively by making intransmissibility a value in itself (68).

It is in fact the displacement of being from the cloisters of a human self that makes this irony even apparent in the Modernist work. Who is it that speaks in the world of Kafka

and Musil? Certainly not the voice of K and Ulrich themselves, nor is it a voice of a ‘human’ narrator that narrates. It is rather the perpetual unbecoming of human-ness from the voice that makes the plot a scattering of vectors, a crisscrossing of surface intensities where every movement is de-territorialization (Deleuze, “Plateau” 110; “Minor Literature” 5, 13).

The signifier is imbued with meaning as soon as it is understood as an enunciation. This primary semiosis, the making of a sign through the transformation of an inscription into a voice, is effected in an art of reading that prefigures any understanding. Yet the transformation becomes disturbed the moment the reader is confronted with elements in the text that resist being voiced as human speech, that is, when they resist their immediate anthropomorphization. (Sebastian 86)

Adorno locates this shift of narratorial voice as early as in Flaubert, where writing become as impersonal gesture. It is no longer a narration that takes place from the privilege of an omniscient human subject, but emanates from the strangest of places in evincing lack of knowledge and visions which the human eye is unable to fathom. Is not the move of writing away from a ‘human perspective’ the very heart of irony in the novel, where things come to stand on their own feet and in their own right, without an anthropocentric subject meddling with how they look and what they say? According to Adorno, the pre-Flaubertian reflection is moral; it stands for or against characters. In his essay “The Position of the Narrator in the Contemporary Novel”, Adorno mentions,

The new reflection takes a stand against the lie of representation, actually against the narrator himself, who tries, as an extra-alert commentator on events, to correct his unavoidable way of proceeding. The destruction of form is inherent in the very meaning of form...ironic gesture that undoes his own

delivery, the author cast aside the claim that he is creating something real, a claim which, however, no word, not even his words, can escape. (34)

If narration must continually destruct itself, there is no scope for a human continuum to shelter narrative voice. This implies that the only continuity that the narrative could possess would be quite antithetical to the idea of continuity, namely interruption.

The very moment when literature enters into the realm of appearance marks a point of discontinuity, for literatures becomes by disrupting the significations that already exist in the cultural space. Interruption then is not merely a stylistic element to be discerned in a narrative that digresses; it bears a relevance to the space literature comes to occupy independent to the knowledge systems of civilization. Barthes tells us, that significations that acquire a valency in conventions function as myths in a society, acquiring eventually the status of a semiological system (“Mythologies” 113). Here, the relationship between the signifier and the signified comes to be automatized and the sign stands for a secondary signification that is taken for granted with repeated use. The appearance of literature is concomitant with a negation of these myths; moreover, its appearance is able to disclose the mythic status of universal validity that these significations have come to acquire in the human imagination. “Literature does not know what it has interrupted; it only knows that it inaugurates itself with one stroke, one incision and it names ‘myth’ that which it represents to itself as having been present before this stroke” (Nancy 72). In order not to end up exactly as that it overturns, literature must also continually doubt itself, in what it says and its own being categorized under the rubric of art. Myth and literature differ primarily in that the former claims an identity by denying its constructed nature, whereas “literature interrupts itself: this is, essentially what makes it literature and not myth” (ibid). Achebe makes a similar distinction in his essay “The Truth of Fiction” between malignant fiction and benignant fiction, where

the former assumes a mythic status by asserting its universality, whereas the latter never for once forgets what it indeed is, namely fiction (108).

Adorno observes that in Proust, commentary is interwoven with action, a strategy that attacks a fundamental component of his relationship to the reader: aesthetic distance (“Position” 34). The constant alteration of this distance interrupts the equanimity of the reader, and reading becomes an activity no longer smooth but jagged like the topography of the work. The complacency with which one co-opts with ‘self-sufficient’ myths is challenged by this defamiliarization of experience by the discontinuous nature of literature, a point which the Russian formalists like Shklovsky had also made (73-74).

The implication of man’s existence being poetic in nature does not refer to a steady stream of feeling pouring out of a creative source, but a stuttering that one has to go through in life, the path spewed by contradictions and pitfalls. Unlike the heroes of the sentimental novels, Ulrich’s thoughts make him more aware of the inconsistency of his existence in relation to others, as well as in relation to himself when self-contradictions emerge. Thoughts then “are not logical in nature, however much we like to think they are; only the unimaginative resistance of reality alerts us to the paradoxes inherent in the poem called man” (Musil 670).

The paradoxical nature of Modernist art and literature in general is refracted in Ulrich’s ambivalent and complex relationship to the notion of the right and happiness. Musil, unlike a through and through pessimist, does believe in the possibility of both. The only hurdle that lies in his coming to terms with the right way to live and happiness is the fact that the way to these states of being are not and cannot be prescribed by any guidebook. Moreover, the nature of reality that Ulrich is forced to inhabit is not compatible with morality as ethos and happiness as felicity that he envisages. Ulrich remarks, “it is simply very hard to

feel the right thing in this world! Quite contrary to the general preconception, it almost calls for a certain pedantry” (518). Speaking of the right in the terms in which it is spoken would hardly amount to anything, but that does not exclude the possibility of morality.

I think there is no morality, because it cannot be deduced from anything constant: all there are, are rules for uselessly maintaining transitory conditions.

I also assume that there can be no profound happiness without a profound morality; yet my thinking about it strikes me as an unnatural, bloodless state.

(949)

David Luft regards Ulrich to belong to a group of those essayists who are “theologians marooned in the realm of the profane” (20). Ulrich is not an atheist, because he believes in presence; the problem lies in the lack of God, which is but the lack of appearance of things appearing in a universe filled to the brim with mere objects.

Religion as it means in the sayings of Buddha means *dharma*, that which holds and sustains being, in turn guiding the destiny of man by dint of what he does. Ulrich is a man without a religion in this sense: “In some situation I personally don’t very much care whether something is considered right or wrong, but I can’t give you any rules you could go by” (Musil 756). There is a distrust for the things taken for granted in life and deemed as real, and the inherent tendency of Ulrich and the Modernist novel for the destruction of forms can be linked to the Kabbalistic idea of continually repairing the original vessels of creation which burst not being able to contain light emanating from God’s being (Grill 10). Ulrich’s heresy consists in refusing exegetic finality; heretic is the discourser without end” (Steiner 39). His evil nature is not directed like that of an average criminal to gain something out of his act. Rather, whatever is evil in Ulrich is what makes him a responsible person, trying to locate his

being in a world that has no space for it to be sheltered. Thus, Musil adds, “Only serious people could really be evil” (966).

Myth is sustained by sameness. It foretells a destiny that man complies with, and the epic world is already disclosed right from the word go. The novel, on the other hand, especially the Modernist novel is bereft of God, fate and religion in the sense of *dharma* to guide life according to a design. God has been substituted by science and capitalism, which too Ulrich won't subscribe to: “I seem to have been designed as a machine for the relentless devaluation of life! I want to be different for once” (967). The “Modernist failure (or in other words, sincerity) to create a viable myth” and the exposition of myth as duplicity forms the two poles between which irony reveals its hideous face.

Ulrich does have ideas of changing the world and giving a shape to his existence. However, as soon as the ideas acquire shape in language and action, they fail to remain as noble as they had seemed in while being thoughts. The vestige of idealism still inherent in Ulrich's dream of a utopia reveals its paradoxical loopholes when he tries explaining it to others or himself;

An idea is the most paradoxical thing in the world...Bonded to an idea, it (flesh) becomes magical. And yet, ideas can never maintain themselves in the state in which they are most powerful, they're like the kind of substance that, exposed to the air, instantly changes into some other, more lasting, but corrupted, form. Because an idea is what you are: an idea in a particular state...in the art of taking shape it has lost its wings and its mystery. (383)

Although Ulrich understands that all truth is shaped and sensual, there is an inherent drive towards transcendental truth in him, a paradox we are going to examine in greater detail in the next chapter. However, he understands and admits that “a man's nature is not natural; it

wants to change nature, so it sometimes goes to extreme". This implies that all truths that exist for man rests on his relationship with the world, and are not 'natural' in existing independently of his comportment. We have already encountered a similar hermeneutic paradox in the *Recherche*, where the adolescent Marcel waited for some natural illumination to alter his life and the mature Marcel taking upon the vocation of writing as the field where truth could seek figuration.

David Luft's statement that novels are the Socratic dialogues of our time is significant in this context (199). Just as truth in these dialogues are not presented in conceptual, univocal form but appeared enmeshed in a conversation where different points of views collide and interact with one another, the truth of Musil's world does not exclusively pertain to Ulrich's visions alone, but how they interact with his milieu and the worldview prevailing there.

"The Saturn of explication devours what it adopts", says Steiner with regard to the Modernist work in *Real Presences* (34). Whatever the work says, it says at a distance, never quite commingling with the utterance. Reality in the Modernist work is inherently paradoxical due to this gap; the work is "faithful to reality to the extent that it shows reality as unreconciled, antagonistic, divided against itself; antinomy at the heart of aesthetic synthesis" (Wellmer 13). The freedom thus acquired is the same as exile, for the work like its fallen hero is without a home, in the world without having one.

Pop art is that which can be reproduced. It can be generated indefinitely as sameness and belongs to the domain of kitsch. The artists to arrive at the Parallel Campaign fall in this category. Ready-made art is that which can be produced at will, and depends more on calling something art rather than being artful in creating something serious. The behavior of Clarisse and Diotima tends to resemble this patter. Musil's novel is an open work, because it does not have the obligation nor desire to be called art; its interest lies in making art possible. In the

end, the novel as a whole turns out to be a paradoxical project, because it sets itself in a parallel track to what is understood by and expected from a novel: “The rise of the poetics of the open work and of the work-in-progress founded not on an energetic but on a dynamic status of the work of art, signifies precisely the extreme moment of the exile of the work of art from its essence... it consciously takes on its own inability to possess itself in the end” (Agamben, “Man without Content” 44).

(E) NOVEL, NARRATIVE, ART AND NON-ART

We shall begin this last sub-chapter with a short discussion on how ‘non-artistic’ characters of Musil’s world like Arnheim and Tuzzi look upon art as a specialized domain, and how Ulrich orients himself to the possibility of art. Thereafter, we shall see how the novel features in the novel as a metaphor, and the existential problems that the novel and narrative embody in the work. Finally, we shall examine the relationship between that which is categorically deemed as art, and that which is not, and try to understand where the Modernist work at all lies in relation to these two aforementioned domains.

Arnheim quotes poets at board meetings, insisting that the economy would not be separated from other human activities and could be dealt with only within the larger context of all vital problems, national, intellectual, and even spiritual (Musil 205). In other words, Arnheim treats art as exactly as the same way he treats all other things, each handled in turn by the selfsame motives of control and accumulation of wealth. That art could have a possibility of re-thinking the horizons of our existence is something entirely non-existent in Arnheim’s perception. He reifies art, and ‘uses’ it to suit his own ends. Art becomes yet another means for the likes of Arnheim.

It is interesting to note that like Proust had Norpois as a character in the *Recherche*, Musil too introduces a diplomat in the character of Tuzzi, Diotima's husband. Tuzzi considers writing to be a form of chatter (362). Being a diplomat, Tuzzi is a specialist in the art of conversation, something that is entirely antagonist to literature for reasons we have discussed in our section on Proust. Tuzzi feels people write because it is their profession. For him, writing is acceptable only when one is professionally recognized as a writer and gets remuneration for fulfilling the task of writing: "Tuzzi could accept this without reservation...so long as it brought in enough money, or fell into the after all recognized category of poet" (ibid).

We see thus how art is deprived of the autonomy inherent in its expressivity and treated just as another block in the arena of supply and demand. It is not surprising therefore, that Arnheim would have a negative opinion on a work of art such as the one in which he appears, because the Modernist work would not be conducive to his attempts to reify it under neatly-formed categories. He thus feels that modern art is fragmented, that the works of Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert, Dostoyevsky, Strindberg and Freud represent "extremes without connections" (211). As someone adamant to subsume plurality and differences within a unifying dimension to one's advantage, Arnheim's judgement ought not to appear to us too bizarre.

Characters like Diotima and Clarisse are symbolized in the novel as contemporary readers. Diotima is an idealist, and repeats the high-flown fantasies of German romanticism. Clarisse, on the other hand, is a self-proclaimed anarchist who quotes Nietzsche in every possible situation. Both Diotima and Clarisse 'use' what they read to fulfill functions that are already assumed from before. Instead of allowing themselves to open on to the experience of the text, they are content with pre-fabricated ideas and discard whatever is unsuitable for their advantage. In a sense, they are consumers even in the realm of art, picking and choosing what

suits them, and regarding that one is free to do in confrontation with the alterity of art. As a result, their readings are grossly partial and their opinions dogmatic, for they insist on univocality of meaning. Here is Ulrich reflecting on the modern reader;

You leave out whatever doesn't suit you. As the author himself has done without you...By leaving things out, we bring beauty and excitement into the world. We evidently handle our reality by effecting some sort of compromise with it, an in-between state where the emotions prevent each other from reaching their fullest intensity, graying the colors somewhat...stupid people also leave out things, which is why ignorance is bliss. (625)

It is at times difficult to ascertain whether the narrator as well as Ulrich speaks of the novel or compares situations with those of a novel in a serious way, or simply in order to make fun.

This ambivalent attitude of art is important for it challenges the fake solemnity associated with literary works. One such instance is where the narrator compares the meetings of Ulrich and Bonadea to resemble circumstances so like a novel (39). These meetings form part of an extra-marital affair Bonadea indulges in with Ulrich, a stranger she had helped on her carriage after finding him lying unconscious on the pavement. Perhaps stories such as this indicate towards a popular form of literature that is racy and sells fast, the reason why the allusion to the novel is made. However, Musil's novel as a whole is far from resembling such works.

Ulrich's craving for a utopian existence which would have none of the superficialities and disappointments of everyday life is ridiculed by Walter, for he feels his formula corresponds at best as literature. Ulrich says that our existence should wholly compose of literature, and on the other hand, he castigates novels for being artificial in the linear, ordered chronology of their plots. He tells Walter's wife Clarisse, that one must live like the character

of novels. The novel becomes for Ulrich a mobile metaphor; sometimes connoting a banal product of the culture industry that abides by the same mentality in vogue, and at time implying an apotheosis of coherence and necessity that is not derived out of selfhood and greed for power. However, Ulrich, himself not being a novelist, can only speak of the novel not in terms of the work but in relations it can have towards life. As a result, all of Ulrich's invocations end up collating life with art, a point which his friend Walter, who even when not as insensitive as Ulrich had at least been a practitioner of art, uses against his arguments. Walter retorts to Ulrich's claims of making life resemble art that "life-as-art would make philosophy and art quite superfluous; it means one thing only, the end of art" (398).

The relationship between art and life subtends extremely complicated configuration in Modernism, a situation we have confronted already in Proust. As a challenge to Realism, Modernist art does establish itself as an autonomous thing that cannot be collated by life at large. On the other hand, it also challenges the aesthetic differentiation that divorces art as a mode of entertainment from the ground reality of life. Narration in the Modernist novel therefore becomes the principal dimension of grappling with this complexity. Narration is no longer a just a means to communicate a story, or even an end in itself like in the *nouveau roman*. Musil notes in one of his diary entries: "Das Problem: wie komme ich zum Erzählen, ist sowohl mein stilistisches wie das Lebensproblem der Hauptfiguren²²" (qtd in Grill 60). Narration, or style determines the existential stand of the novel as well as the characters, and is neither a means nor an end, but the hermeneutic play of form and content.

Our discussion on the representation of time in history and science and how the Modernist novel deviates from the attitude pertaining to this representation becomes apparent from the following observations made by Ulrich:

the basic law of this life, the law one longs for, is nothing other than that of narrative order, the simple order that enables one to say: 'First this happened and then that happened'. It is the simple sequence of events in which the overwhelmingly manifold nature of things is represented, in a unidimensional order, as a mathematician would say, stringing all that has occurred in space and time on a single thread, which calms us; celebrated 'thread of the story', which is, it seems, the thread of life itself. Lucky the man who can say 'when', 'before' and 'after'! Terrible things may have happened to him, he may have writhed in pain, but as soon as he can tell what happened in chronological order, he feels as contented as if the sun were warming his belly. This is the trick the novel artificially turns to account- foreshortening of the mind's perspective. (693)

For Ulrich, a chronological sequence of events is not simply reprehensible because it simplifies the complexity of life, but also due to the fact that it wallows in a kind of self-certitude that is in fact hollow and superficial. Art must be essentially complicated, bringing together things that our neatly divided lives sustained by division of labor keeps apart, to see life finally at last as an interaction between all elements. Literary works modelled after a linear flow of events go against the very grain of poetry, in that they co-opt with the same modality and attitude that rules over us in industrial society.

They usually have no use for poems, and although the occasional 'because' or 'in order that' gets knotted into the thread of life, they generally detest any brooding that goes beyond that; they love the orderly sequence of facts because it has the look of necessity, and the impression that their life has a 'course' is somehow their refuge from chaos. It now came to Ulrich that he has lost this elementary, narrative mode of thought to which private life still clings, even though everything in public life has already ceased to be narrative and no longer

follows a thread- but instead spreads out as an infinitely interwoven surface.
(709)

In light of the above-quoted passage, we can recall what Kundera had said concerning the specter of history in the worlds of Musil and Broch, in how it replaces the problems of the self with an even greater inescapable whirlpool that does not seem to make sense. Since Ulrich, no matter how isolated he feels himself to be, is still and must be in a society full of other people and occurrences, it is but natural for Musil's novel to embody a web from which a linear pattern would be impossible to extricate.

Ulrich has left all three professions for which he had earlier trained himself; the military service, mathematics and engineering. He calls his present condition as having taken a 'vacation from life'. Here, life refers to fulfilling the duties set by the institutions to which one is affiliated professionally. On the other hand, most people take up a book or visit an art gallery to seek a deviation from their otherwise ordered lives. The artist, on the contrary, is involved in life and its problems and art for him is anything but a diversion from life. The ambivalence of meaning of life, as like in Proust, is exposed in Musil as well. "While the bourgeois may appreciate art on his 'days off', the devotion and commitment necessary for the artist to create is certainly borderline insane" (67). Art does not stand for a mushy, complacent cocoon. Its ground is one of peril.

This does not however imply that the impossibility of redemption or comfort in art makes the engagement with it a futile exercise. If idealists like Hegel had deemed art to be problematic for existence because of the irony inherent in figuration, the Modernist celebration of becoming harps on the same point as a possibility of liberation. Who we shall be, and how we shall live? These are continually impressed upon us by the impersonal forces of regimented civilization. Art, especially because it does not abide by any fixed being or

goal, provides an openness that goes beyond the binaries of joy or melancholy. “The openness they (artists) owe to the genre is not just cause for anxiety; it is also liberating. The irony proper to the novel is never mere melancholy” (Avanessian 120).

Concurring with Gerald Bruns, one ceases to be human from the moment writing happens. In a tone familiar to the views of Blanchot, Bruns mentions that the one who writes is turned inside out, evacuated, becoming something entirely other, without identity- being no one, without properties or attributes, inaccessible to predication (1). Musil novelizes through Ulrich this basic attribute of writing, as having no qualities. The disappearance of the first person is not to be seen as a negative event; rather, it signifies freedom from the logical, from polarities of sameness and difference of the one and the many (ibid).

In *On the Genealogy of Ethics*, Foucault encourages to “create ourselves as works of art” (351). We are back again at the project of Modernism not to represent things but to make things visible as Paul Klee said. The ethical-existential implication of this aesthetic implies that one denies oneself the selfhood that has been attributed by tradition and conventional streamlines ways of looking at the world, and that one tries to create one’s existence by not being oneself. It calls for “the displacement of frameworks of thinking, the changing of received values and all the work that has been done to think otherwise, to do something else, to become something other than what one is” (Bruns, “Human” 50-51). Aesthetic activity would be then tailored not to represent things which are considered to be beautiful, but to wrench beauty out of its domain and re-frame its possibilities. In other words, the ‘inner experience’ of art, according to Bataille, becomes “a voyage to the end of the possible of man” (“Inner Experience” 7). Absolved from all that makes us human, Modernist art is supposed to show the ‘more’ than man is ever capable of. Not to re-iterate, we can keep in mind our discussion of Gasset in this context from the previous section, just to ascertain that

the beyond-human phenomenon of Modernism does not necessarily imply dehumanization as we conventionally expect the word to convey.

Modernist art knows well that its proper subject is to render infinity a specific finitude. Being aligned to becoming without adhering to concepts or selfhood, art signifies the frozenness of movement [*Stillstand der Bewegung*]. Hölderlin was of the opinion that art is the making present and making contingent of that which has no end [*die Vergegenwärtigung des Unendlichen*] (Grill 69). Neither the *Recherche* nor *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* has or is directed to an end; the novel then becomes the concrete figuration of boundlessness. It is from this point of view that the Modernist work is unfinished as well as unfinishable, for its paradigm make the latter condition necessary in its design.

Towards the end of the novel, Musil introduces a ‘minor’ character in the Parallel Campaign, a novelist by the name of Meseritscher. He is described as one who is extraordinarily adept at making lists (possibly a pun on the name, *messen* means to measure) and is a perfect example of an epoch which is self-sure at exhaustively defining and packaging everything under the sky. What exasperates Ulrich however, is the ease with which the disparate things in Meseritscher’s lists are joined to one another by the innocent but powerful conjunction ‘and’: “the helplessly additive ‘and’, which for those of meagre mental capacity replaces more intricate relationships; and it may be said that our world, regardless of all its intellectual riches, is a mental condition akin to idiocy; indeed, there is no avoiding this conclusion if one tries to grasp as a totality what is going on in the world” (Musil 1102). “The sublime presumption of the little word ‘and’”, to quote from Nietzsche, homogenizes the differences and plurality of things and conjoins them in a unity where they must function according to the logic of the one who handles them (“Gay Science” 184).

The lack of faith of the Modernist novel towards linear narration that stitches the chaos of the world in a homogenous chain calls for a new principle of re-ordering that would have destruction of conventional form-rendering attitude at its heart. Metaphor becomes then essential, not merely as a figure of speech, but as a destructive process that disrupts an order to create something new; associations that are yet to be called a new order, but that nevertheless bespeak a new form of coherence. Genesse Grill's study of Musil has this metaphorical discursivity at its center:

In a Modernist novel that has lost that 'elementary, narrative mode', one can see the function of metaphor as the creation of an almost infinite number of expanding thought moments, decentralized, non-repeating nodes, within the infinitely interwoven surface which assert convincing alternatives to the comforting illusion of the thread of the story. (61)

Unlike the Realist paradigm of representing reality, or the Romantic paradigm of representing the mind, the Modernist novel is involved in newly creating reality, the mind, the world, and they may appear to be entirely different from what we had so far imagined them to be.

Musil's diary says, "Das Ritual ist nicht Darstellung, sondern Herstellung des Geschehens...Schrift ist nicht Gedächtnishilfe, sondern Bildzauber"²³ (qtd in Grill 100).

Instead of resorting to the illusion of presenting reality, or the suspension of disbelief, Musil's eloquent metaphor here claims for art the possibility of showing something impossible, and its images are no less in this regard in comparison to magic.

The conflict of being with selfhood or calling itself by the name of 'I' is the existential analogue of the problem of the Modernist work in deeming itself art. The anti-Bildungsroman exempts the possibility of the self, and the essay as a genre, has in its developments had a complex relationship to selfhood as well. While the essay of Montaigne

does bespeak of the strong sense of selfhood, and expectedly so given the era in which it appears, the essays of Benjamin no longer evince a 'I' that speaks for its behalf. Musil had once said that his book should be torn and its pages, if laid side by side, could finally come to resemble what he had in mind while writing the novel: "The defect of this book is being a book" (qtd in Luft 88). Here we have the complexity of Ulrich's individualism mirrored in how the work as an individual work becomes a matter of problem, since it now enters to some degree the realm of objects and can easily be taken over by the system and treated in exchangeable terms.

In this book *Sympathy for the Abyss*, Stephen Dowden notes that lamentation and loss are not merely themes, but enact "the sense of loss formally as the revolt against illusion and representation, as the dissatisfaction of the novel with its tradition and with itself" (2). Just as the loss of selfhood implies an infinity of possibilities of becoming, the loss of the formal structure of the novel makes it amenable to integrate and resemble other genres. The ties between philosophy and the novel get closer since the end of the 19th century, so much so that the novel ironically comes to resemble philosophy though at the same time being radically opposed to the claims of conceptuality and universality that the latter makes (Luft 17). Perhaps the novel owes to the heteroglossia of Dostoyevsky's style in gregariously taking in those sub-literary forms in its corpus, so much so that the novel comes to make the antagonistic polarity between art and non-art inadequate (Agamben, "Content" 31). The long monologues of Ulrich often read like a diary of a person, a cluster of confessions; the ludicrous events at the Parallel Campaign makes us question whether this at all qualifies to be called art. Modernist art essentially tries to achieve this condition, so that its status is questioned, and it disdains to fulfill the demands made from it. *In Posthumous Papers of a Living Author* [*Nachlaß Lebzeiten*], Musil opined that kitsch added on one another becomes less kitsch (ibid). Like we have seen Proust incorporating a plethora of 'asides of life' in the

Recherche, Musil too adds irrelevant, unimportant and trivial elements to his work, in order to overturn the re-form the paradigms that stipulate what is relevant and important.

Musil, even more than Proust, was extremely caustic and bitter towards what went under the façade of culture. Even today, we encounter at every step a celebration of irresponsibility, where showcasing of oneself and blind conformation of impersonal ideals go by the name of art. Art has ceased to occasion any kind of comportment towards the world. It does not open up the space of becoming; instead, banal practices shrink being to even more cloistered loops, even though on the surface exhibiting a sort of variety one is wont to confront in a supermarket. The Modernist ideal is far from being interested in being accepted as ‘cultured’: “Works of art are ascetic and shameless; the culture industry is pornographic and prudish” (Adorno, “Enlightenment” 112).

Culture, and Art as an yet another artificial and institutionalized twig of its plastic tree, impede that which the novel wishes to celebrate, namely figuration and becoming. As a result of the non-compliance of the novel for these standards, it acquires an openness which renders it a peculiar quality. At this stage, the distinction between art and non-art assumes a strange character, and the novel rings out in a demonic laughter of disorder at our futile attempts to categorize it in either of these two little boxes:

The real is no longer the object of art any more than it is the object of any other activity- like making love or playing chess- which simply coexist with all the other activities we call reality. It then naturally becomes much more difficult than ever before to define what is specifically ‘artistic’ about the activity of art, and the attempt to do has, given us in the modern period, works which have become more and more open-ended and purely interrogative. Is art about

anything? Is there a subject 'behind' the work? Do we have to discard an aesthetic of imitation or expressiveness? (Bersani, "Incompletion" 121)

If wrested from both history and culture, 'where' would the phenomenon of art take shelter?

The next section of event in relation to Musil's novel seeks to undertake an enquiry about the same.

Chapter 7

Approaching the Event

(A) PROJECTS WITHOUT PROJECTION: THE ABSENCE OF CARE

One of the typical characteristics that could be observed to be shared by the gamut of the European Modernist novel is the yearning for an event that holds the promise to be significant and which however, never really comes to pass. Unlike the Realist and Naturalist paradigms, where the plot is indeed governed by life-altering events, the Modernist novel is ostensibly poor of such occurrences. Does that then translate to a poverty of significance, or does it point at the redundancy of those parameters and standards by which incidents had won significance for themselves?

In this sub-chapter we shall closely examine how the world comes to be envisaged by characters other than Ulrich in the *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, and these worldviews inform the nature of the wished-for event. Beginning with the Parallel Campaign that is resolved to usher in a significant spectacle, we shall observe how anachronistic paradigms such as Romanticism and Irrationalism have molded the idea of the event. We shall also briefly examine how socialism also is one such domain about which Musil is skeptical. Finally, we shall attempt to map all these movements under the commonality that they evince, namely a lack of responsible comportment, or to borrow Heidegger's word for the cornerstone of being in the world, care.

Diotima wishes the Parallel Campaign to turn out to be an unprecedented and unique spectacle. She is however, clueless about what and how exactly something is to happen so as to be able to fulfill this dream. Here, it is something extraordinary that is wished, and yet that this extraordinary occurrence will conform to the ordinary idea of importance, is already taken for granted from the very start. Greatness or significance is on one hand exoticized, associated with that which is not known. And on the other hand, the strangeness of this unprecedented event is already domesticated in the existing order of values. There is no attempt from the part of Diotima nor others in the campaign to actually try create something, so that this creation might attain some significance in the course of time. The content of their wished-for event is immaterial; there is no relationship whatsoever with that which is to come. “No one who speaks of the greatest and most important thing in the world means anything that really exists” (Musil 95). Musil turns this cluelessness, which is in fact a ubiquitous indifference towards content and meaning, into a parody, where one such suggestion for the event turns out to be the inauguration of Emperor Frank Joseph’s Soup Kitchen to commemorate the emperor’s glorious reign (185).

There is also a lot of talk about existence being fragmented in the modern world and the need to resurrect an unfragmented existence. This Romantic impulse is further given a feminist tinge, when characters like Diotima and Clarisse claims womanhood to be symbolizing a wholeness that is the need of the hour. Diotima describes the women of her age as “they don’t know anything and are unfragmented”, solely necessary for salvation (113,103). Ulrich’s sees in such Romantic tendencies of unification an “enforced sociability...(that) springs basically from the need to simulate a unity that could govern all of humanity’s highly varied activities and that is never there” (104).

These puerile dreams are bound to fail since they pre-determine significance instead of allowing it to emerge out of concrete actions. Totality and wholeness are assumed to

function in conformity to the sameness that governs all daily activities of a metropolis. The reification of differences in the assumption of the significant as something great even before the actual occurrence is yet another trait that the totalitarian culture of pragmatic reason;

Although operating only with effects, it subdues their unruliness and subordinates them to the formula which supplants the work. It crushes equally the whole and the parts. The whole confronts the details in implacable detachment, somewhat like the career of a successful man, in which everything serves to illustrate and demonstrate a success which, in fact, is no more than the sum of those idiotic events. The so-called leading idea is a filling compartment which creates order, not connections. Lacking both contrast and relatedness, the whole and the detail look alike. Their harmony, guaranteed in advance, mocks the painfully achieved harmony of the great bourgeois works of art. (Adorno, "Dialectic" 99)

With the domestication of the event into just another fact among facts, the potential of creating or moving towards significance becomes nullified. Most of Musil's characters keep revolving in fixed orbits, without much development whatsoever. The lack of apparent movement in the plot figures the inability of the populace to 'translate', to make move their ideas into reality. The possibility of the significant event is cancelled out by the fundamental indifference that one has towards it: "the age was full of great ideas. But one would not believe how hard it was to translate the greatest and most important of them into reality, considering that all the conditions for doing so existed except one: knowing which of them was the greatest and most important" (Musil 247). Everyone wants a change to usher in. However, no one is bothered to know or understand what this change is going to be, or from what exactly is this change supposed to liberate the people. Eventually then, most of Musil's

novel spans across a stupid exercise in trying to redress through changing that what is without understanding the same (Grill 121).

For businessmen like Arnheim, such a situation is lucrative enough to cash in the 'spiritual' as a tool for redemption. He voices his romantic imagination naively, saying that "redemption could come only from the heart" (Musil 212). But what if the heart has ceased to be so, operating according to the logic of the hand and feet that move about in obedience to the beckoning of supply and demand? Arnheim's solution to the mess created by urban, industrial civilization is through the "appearance of a new type of man. By an inner vision and a pure will. The intellect has achieved nothing but watering down the great past into liberalism" (ibid). But is not this invocation itself committed in a rather intellectual, or more so cunning fashion? The question persists whether such romantic ideas are at all compatible with the age where one finds oneself. Do we not encounter still today such spiritual mumbo-jumbo which is an industry by itself, fulfilling the same function as religion once did and is but nothing other than advertisement and consumerism with the soul serving as the commodity in such cases?

Blumenberg rightly notes in relation to Goethe's desire for cosmocentricity and the resurrection of it in the attempts of people like Arnheim: "What looks like immediate contact with nature nonetheless implies a protest against an essential factor in the semantic current of the age. In the midst of history there can be no more cosmocentric innocence, not even that of 'common sense'" ("Metaphorology" 30). We have seen in the first chapter how the event is conjoined to projection of one's existence to the world, which is but a form of responsibility. Responsibility [*Verantwortung*] suggests responding [*antworten*] actively to that in which one finds oneself. The romantic plea for redemption is a continuation of the religious model, where the problems peculiar to this life on earth are sidetracked in favor of a holy experience

that shall absolve one of all pains. All of Diotima and Arnheim's 'truths' concerning greatness and/or soul turn out to be mere machinations.

Diotima harbors the wish to "fly away to another kind of reality" (Musil 627). Her temperament is that of a traveler who wishes to undertake a vacation in an exotic locale with all the comfort and habits that accompany everyday life in the familiar cocoon of urban life. Ulrich's response to the above-mentioned aspiration of escape is on the contrary based on grounding oneself better so as to make sense of things: "What I have been saying, on the other hand, is that we must try to recover unreality. Reality no longer makes sense" (ibid). Diotima's exoticism conserves the sense of reality, whereas Ulrich is for a radical transformation of that which is accepted as reality.

General Stumm von Bordwehr is yet another amiable, good-natured yet thoroughly stupid character that Musil brings in to the novel, who is always making an attempt to sound pompous and humble at the same time. Enamored by the charm and high speech of Diotima, Stumm feels that the spiritual is a completely different category that must be set apart from the rest of life and treated with special respect: "He now realized that such words refer not to a simple, natural human occurrence but to something abstract, some general complication or other; to redeem and to yearn for redemption is definitely a spiritual transaction" (566). Brought down to the conventional modality of transaction, redemption thus becomes analogous to a prescription drug that applies equally for all and that one has to swallow (and buy, obviously) and wait for the wonders to happen. Stumm, Diotima and Arnheim thus all share a "desire for a messiah" (567). "Every epoch needs its own Greece, its own Middle Ages and its own Renaissance", as Lukács succinctly describes historiography as resulting for the particular need for shaping the flow of time in a pattern that suits one's purpose best ("Soul and Form" 13). Unlike the overflowing vitality characteristic of the Dionysian domain that is open to differences, the romantic claims for a utopic past based on the wishes of an

elect few not only evinces a reduced vitality, but is also dangerous to the extent that it makes its viewpoint as an obligatory law on others, a point we shall take up again in our discussion on socialism as yet another romanticism. It is out this risk that Nietzsche deems romanticism to be a “peculiar luxury of our culture...a dangerous mode of prodigality” (“Gay Science” 213).

Since the Romantic framework is essentially of a negative nature, utterances occurring within its paradigm are wont to subtend an antagonistic relation to a sphere it wishes to escape from. In this case, it comes to be signified as reason and Rationalism, that serves as the scapegoat for the Romantic outlook to be cemented. Arnheim says, “Man’s greatness is rooted in the irrational. Even we businessmen don’t really operate by calculation” (Musil 622). The pre-determination of the event as inherently irrational is already a rationalization, in that it ratiocinates an experience to a certain pocket even before it comes to pass.

Experiences, one laden with ornate language, are already divested of their peculiar charm. These associations are too rational acts whereby the singularity of the event is reducibly transformed into the generality of language. With the repetition of these high-flown phrases, the event undergoes a reification, and also becomes marketable:

The naked fundamental experience itself, that primal seizure of mystic insight, stripped of all the traditional, terminological husks of faith, freed from ancient religious concepts, perhaps no longer to be regarded as a religious experience at all, has undergone an immense expansion and now forms the soul of that complex irrationalism that haunts our era like a night bird lost in the dawn. (Musil 603)

Ulrich does understand the value of the mystic experience but is suspicious of the artificial aura with which it is laden. Clarisse's irrational behavior seems to him forced, for she 'adopts' an irrational attitude instead of truly being so. Observing her behavior, Ulrich notes "as though shocks were coming through her from a direction that could not be fitted into the three dimensions of space. This influence sometimes bordered on the uncanny" (61). Her association with the spiritual guru Meingast and the absurd inanity that follows with the latter's arrival at their quarters seem to Ulrich unacceptable. These individuals betray in their behavior "the crude metaphysical craving for spooning up, if not God, then at least the spirits, like some food slipping down one's gullet in the dark" (602).

Clarisse, Diotima and Meingast talk of unifying experiences which are of the irrational kind and having the power to redeem the fallen man. Ulrich too hopes for a condition, but he neither associated it with unity or exclusively with irrationality. The moment one comes to bracket an experience in a category already available, the event is always divested of its singularity. "The totalizing claims lay in anachronistic longing for absolute points of reference and unifying accounts of experience" (Mcbride 126). In other words, they are ahistorical solutions to historical problems, and Ulrich, even in his disdain towards history, cannot follow in the footsteps of such sheer nonsense.

Musil is set against the claims of universality, be it that of rationality or irrationality. This explains why he considers two different set of domains where each might come to seem relevant, the ratioid and the non-ratioid spheres of experiences (64). This division is based not on the whim of the subject but on the nature of the phenomena concerned. It is the event that makes an imperative on us to consider it in a way most suitable to it. Musil's ambivalent but open outlook towards reason is summed up here by Patricia Mcbride;

Reason represented for Musil neither modernity's normative framework, as in the Enlightenment model reclaimed by Jürgen Habermas, nor its inescapable fate, as in the bleak vision of a world dominated by instrumental rationality made famous by Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer. This belief in a non-normative, non-fatalistic view of reason bestows upon Musil's account of modernity an open-endedness and an optimism that retained their force even in the face of rising totalitarianism. Its anti-utopianism and anti-apocalyptic quality contain a lesson that is still compelling today. (25)

The circulation of art as entertainment and tool for redemption makes its truly uncanny nature a homely phenomenon. Irrationality cuts off the possibilities of responsibly and analytically perceiving that which an artwork has to offer by converting art to either a fetish of subjectivity or a gateway to paradise. The association of the irrational and the spiritual with art is in fact a thoroughly rational act, since it ratiocinates the experience of a work in known parameters. Art, however, is beyond the binary of reason and irrationality, being like home [*heim-lich*] as well as hidden [*heimlich*];

And art? Doesn't it amount to a creation of images that don't correspond to the realities of life? I'm not talking about bogus idealism, or the paintings of voluptuous nudes in a period where everyone goes around covered up to the eyeballs, he joked again. But think of a real work of art; have you never had the feeling that something about it is reminiscent of the smell of the smell of burning metal you get from a knife you're whetting on a grindstone? It's a cosmic, meteoric, lightning-and-thunder smell, something divinely uncanny. (Musil 1042).

Another totalizing myth that finds place in the world of Musil is that of nationalist socialism. The daughter of Ulrich's friend Leo Fischel, Gerda has joined a group of young people who believe in the supremacy of the Aryan race and are outright antisemitic in their words and actions. Gerda's boyfriend Hans Sepp, the leader of the pack, comes to a confrontation with Ulrich. Through their conversation it becomes more than amply clear that Sepp simply has worn the rhetoric of socialism like a fashionable garment. It is just another tool for self-fashioning. Herder was of the opinion that self-fashioning is a regulative idea (Nancy 3). We notice how Sepp and his group constructs a normative framework of values which they expect and demand others to adhere to. It is from this consideration that Jean-Luc Nancy's remark concerning the basis of communism is important. In this paradigm, human beings are 'defined', and as producers (2). The attribution of a specific aspect of human life is made into a governing principle, so as to be able to generate a unity of people based on the same. Such an attitude betrays, despite the intention of meaning to do well, an "eagerness to circumscribe and stabilize fixed notions of humanness in the idealized visions of community" (Mcbride 86). It looks to cement its domain in a permanent foundation, which is why Musil held Bolshevism to be not much different fundamentally from fascism since both are, at some point, engaged in myth-making.

Adorno is of the opinion that the shift from the world of the myth to the world of epic has a twofold and rather contradictory consequences. On one hand, the human individual is no longer at the mercy of his fate alone. With reason coming to aid, there is a development of ego and along with that, personal property. This leads however, to an estrangement from the world and has as its effect the feeling of homelessness associated with it. All modern myths, be that of Romanticism, Irrationalism or Socialism seek to capitalize on this pathos of homelessness, where the home is pre-fixed according to standards which fit the purpose of each of these myth-formations and regulation of people:

The fact that- despite the fascist lie to the contrary- the concept of homeland is opposed to myth constitutes the innermost paradox of epic...if the fixed order of property implicit in settlement is the source of human alienation, in which all homesickness and longing spring from a lost primal state, at the same time it is towards settlement and fixed property, on which alone the concept of homeland is directed. (Adorno, "Dialectic" 60)

One of the ways in which such totalizing myths generate support from individuals is through a process of submission where one's own capability of reflecting critically and of understanding are sacrificed from the sake of a greater goal. For Sepp, "true originality was not a matter of empty uniqueness but came from opening oneself up, degree by degree, to participation and devotion, perhaps all the way to the ultimate degree of total communion with the world achieved by those dissolved in selflessness" (Musil 608). In this regard, socialism is not much different from religion, which too addresses the transcendent ego instead of the sensual ego. The logic of self-enhancement through self-surrender turns out to be useful to smoothen out divergences in the group of people and bypassing the predicament of the present by a promising future.

What is common in each of the above four mentioned movements is a lack of genuine comportment towards the world. The parallel action campaign, the romanticism and irrationalism hovering as trends, and the incumbent tide of socialism all exempt the individual from taking part actively in these spheres. What is demanded is only a compliance with certain impersonal regulations, and what is in turn promised as salvation is equally impersonal in nature. Diotima sees in the Parallel Campaign a "once in a lifetime chance to bring about everything that she had always held to be most important and supremely great, and she no longer cared particularly that she had no very clear idea what this might be" (355). The evacuation of content, the formalization of reason, the extrapolation and justification of

all actions based on the fulfillment of purpose lead to a total indifference with the world. Heidegger's basis of existence as care is in direct contradistinction to this indifference, which in the age of method has made methodical beings out of human individuals. As for Arnheim, he is a man who "even when giving his soul away, sacrifices only the interest, never the capital" (558). In such a climate, one holds on to all that which hinders one from encountering the world, while at the same time devoting oneself to platitudes of salvation and redemption. The lack of care is highlighted in the novel not only among individuals, but also as a mass phenomenon, which becomes evident at the scene of the demonstration in front of the palace:

Everyone seemed to be in agreement that it was high time something was done, just no one volunteered to tell him just what that should be. As he kept on, he noticed more often on the faces he met something senseless that overflowed and drowned out reason itself, something that told him that no one cared any longer what was happening, wherever they were being drawn to, as long as it was something unusual that would 'take them out of themselves', if only in the attenuated form of a common general excitement, suggesting a remote kinship with long-forgotten states of communal ecstasy and transfiguration, a sort of developing unconscious readiness to leap out of their clothes, and even their skins. (683)

Care can only reveal itself when the human being comes into a relationship with the world of things. If the relationships are already fixed from before, the possibility of an opening or an event is atrophied. Adorno feels that it is precisely this pre-determination where lies the totalitarian character of enlightenment:

Its untruth does not lie in its analytical method, the reduction to elements, the decomposition through reflection, as its romantic enemies had maintained from the first, but in its assumption that the trial is pre-judged. When in mathematics the unknown becomes the unknown quantity in an equation, it is made into something long familiar before any value has been assigned. (“Dialectic” 38)

In a world where “transcendence has been made pragmatic”, is there at all a possibility of the event to occur, where the world can at last appear in a totality that is neither exhaustive nor pre-determined? How would such an event be traced in a novel, given the fact that conventional use of language to describe the uncanny leads to its domestication? These are the questions which we shall be looking at closely in the next chapter in relation to Ulrich and his experiences of the world.

(B) OFFSRPINGS OF THE EVENT

A new understanding of the event, and with it a different orientation towards the world, appears in a series of instances and reflections that befall Ulrich. None of these pretexts corresponds to a pre-determined unity, nor do they seek any totality and fruition. Instead, they show the limitation of conventional language and signification in approaching the significance of the event, and also throw light on certain aspects of existence that remain shadowed as long the event is predicated in advance and sought to serve personal or collective needs.

We have observed that the centrality of the ego restricts the individual from participating in the event. One of the first instances when the world appears to Ulrich is

during his childhood, when the ego is yet to form. The formation of individuality and self is predicated by the negation of the self from the rest of the world. During childhood however, “there was hardly any separation between inside and outside. When I crawled toward something, it came on wings to meet me” (979). The world is yet to become an object represented by the subject; it exists in conjunction with the looking eye: “our personal condition was not yet separated from the worlds- not quite inside ourselves- not yet quite taken away from us” (ibid).

The second instance of the event when the usual division between the self and the world is dissolved or at least challenged is occasioned by love. Every experience is embedded by a sense of incompleteness, whereas love, says Ulrich, is a feeling which more often than not brims over this lack: “in this exceptional case the missing half grows back; the beloved seems to stand where ordinarily something was always missing” (197). It must be however kept in mind, that Ulrich himself does not encounter such a love in the course of the novel. The reasons for that are twofold. From a structural point of view, such a relationship would go against the grain of the narrative being essentially incomplete. Love would have culminated the novel to an apotheosis or resolution, whereas Musil’s aesthetics are radically opposed to such a denouement. Secondly, Ulrich does enter into a similar relationship of total complementarity with his sister Agathe. But here too, due to the incestual twist in the tale, their relationship doesn’t really conform to the utopia of love but circle around it closely.

Musil’s metaphor of the Siamese twins is significant in this context. Twins are identical yet different, and serves as a metaphor to explicate the roles of metaphors themselves. Just as a metaphor brings two different things together, the example of conjoined twins points towards a balance between the ‘not entirely oneself’ and ‘not entirely different’. It signifies a condition where being is not completely egocentric, and yet there is a semblance of self-discovery in the other. We first encounter this metaphor not in Ulrich’s reflections but

in one of the raucous mumblings of Clarisse, where the image of the same-yet-different enigma is hued in the vocabulary of mystical experience:

one feels connected by the air with everything there is, like a Siamese twin. It's an incredible, marvelous feeling; everything turns into music and color and rhythm and I am no longer the citizen Clarisse, as I was baptized, but perhaps a shining splinter pressing into some immense unfathomable happiness. (719)

Musil imports the attitude that reigns in love in the realm of thought. The egocentric individual tries to grab the world in his conceptualizations and that entails a master-slave relationship of domination, as is wont to Rationalism. Musil seems to be advocating a different outlook that one might come to bear on one's ideas, which in turn leads to a different sort of a worldview where the subject is no more the sovereign center. "One should love an idea like a woman- My relationship to the so-called great ideas, and perhaps even to those that really are great, has always been man-to-man: I never felt I was born to submit to them; they always provoked me to overthrow them and put others in their place" (977).

There is a set of opposing tensions at work in relation to the self and the world. On one hand, there is a longing in Ulrich to understand himself. However, the self is not a prison formed of impersonal functionalities imported from contemporary trends, as we have seen. When Ulrich meets his sister at their countryside home, he is alarmed at the physical resemblance. Musil heightens the dramatic quotient of the scene by donning both these characters in similar attires as well. Here, Ulrich at last meets himself, but who is different from who he is. It is in this strangeness confluence between sameness and difference that he identifies the mystery of human longing for love;

It's an ancient longing for a doppelgänger of the opposite sex, for a lover who will be the same as yourself and yet someone else, a magical figure that is

oneself and yet remains magical, with the advantage over something we merely imagine of having the breadth of autonomy and independence. This dream of a quintessential love, unhampered by the body's limitations, coming face-to-face in two identical yet different forms, has been concocted countless times in solitary alchemy in the alembic of human skull...everyone thinks it's his own secret self peering out at him from behind the curtains of a stranger's eyes. (982)

We shall now turn our attention towards understanding how Ulrich's relationship with and reflections on art is a continuation of the possibility of the event that childhood experiences and love hold up as a promise. In a passage, both love and art point towards a certain vague longing that is otherwise not to found in everyday life. Such an experience is offered to Ulrich on "reading a book that moved him or felt touched by a breadth of that great homeless love whose presence in the world he had never been able to understand" (169). While reason is associated with light and clarity, the effulgence of love and poetry is more mysterious in nature. It does not merely illumine but also obscures. "The moment of blindness adheres to the aesthetic phenomenon", because its light is blinding, not anything like the light with which we are already familiar (Wellmer 12).

Unlike Marcel, Ulrich is not interested in becoming a writer. His indifference towards becoming an artist has also to do with a disdain he feels towards a multitude of characters who are downright banal are yet are bent to establish and showcase themselves as artists. In a moment of sarcasm, Ulrich quips, "Why on earth should I feel called upon to write a book? I was born of my mother, after all, not an inkwell" (Musil 535). Ulrich had invested effort in creating literature in his childhood. He had even what he calls a certain flair for writing. But what made him discontinue in the pursuit of poetry was a continuous encounter with a void:

After all, literature has been no concern of his since he had written his last poem, at twenty: still, before that, writing secretly had been a fairly regular habit, which he had given up not because he had grown older or had realized he didn't have enough talent, but for reasons, that now, with his current impressions, he would have liked to define by some kind of word suggesting much effort culminating in a void. (941-42)

In other words, Ulrich is unable to appreciate the nothingness inherent in literature and collates the void of poetry with the void at the heart of other mundane activities. In a way, this phenomenon mirrors Marcel's fixation with the idea that literature is supposed to offer redemption without any effort from the part of the creator. Both Ulrich and Marcel are inclined to believe in a certain magic potential of art, but they locate this magic wrongly.

Another reason that had contributed to Ulrich's moving away from poetry was the lack of precision that his writings embodied. This negative judgement of Ulrich could also be read as a self-appreciation or at least self-awareness of Musil's novel in being particular about what it says and how it says without resorting to the ornate phrases of romanticism. This becomes clearer in the oblique insertion of the romantic and mystic paradigm in the world of the novel, while at the same time parodying these viewpoints. Ulrich's thoughts on writing sets him apart from people like Arnheim and Meseritscher, for whom art is vehicle of feelings and fantasies: "But the older I got, the worse they became; not so much because of lack of talent, I think, as from a growing aversion to the disorderly and bohemian romanticism of that sort of emotional excess" (1042).

Like in the world of Proust, the characters in Musil's novel too asks for their wishes and dreams to be answered by art. Works of art must, according to their expectation, satiate their ego, instead of rupturing it. "What everyone wants from art, to be moved, overwhelmed,

entertained, surprised, to be allowed a sniff of noble ideas; in short to be made to experience something alive, have a living experience” (942). Such a commodification of art, where works serve to fulfill recreational needs, while conserving the status quo of all significations, is not very uncommon to note in today’s world as well. Generated out of the ‘culture industry’, they attend to feelings which are as commonplace and insincere as expected of them. What is at stake here is to reserve the place for the human subject in the role of the consumer at the center, so that he can be assured that he is capable of feeling. There is thus no violence of signification of form which would be appreciated by such an industry, so long as the originality of a work ‘displace’ from the subject from its comfortable habitat. And it is this fake celebration of transforming feelings into garments that exasperates Ulrich and makes him suspecting of art and its intentions;

It seemed to him that it was the same with feelings, which was the only reason commonplace feelings are regarded as the deepest. Putting the ability to feel above the feeling itself- the characteristic of all sensible people- like the wanting to make others feel and be made to feel that is the common impulse behind all our arrangements concerning the emotional life, amounts to downgrading the importance and nature of the feelings compared with their fleeting presence as a subjective state, and so leads to that shallowness, stunted development, and utter irrelevance, for which there is no lack of examples. (942)

Ulrich however, realizes that it is not possible to ‘extract’ benefits from a work of art unlike from that of an equipment. His early encounter with the void of art has made it clear to him, that art can at the best be a field where one’s existence can be played out, or it can offer a springboard from the projection of one’s existence.

We can model our lives on them, but we can't squeeze life out of them, like wine out of grapes. They have given so solid a form to what once moved them that it confronts us as pressed metal even between the lines... Their thoughts and feelings show all the gradations between truth and even error, as can be demonstrated if necessary, and changeable natures that come close to us at will and then elude us when we try to observe them closely. (626)

The ontological structure of art is then that of the metaphor. Truth is perceptible only in figuration, but does not allow to be subsumed by logic and reason. As Deleuze had mentioned, the event is primarily that of sense, and meaning must be compossible with the figuration of this sense.

The problem lies in a certain distance that art persists to maintain with respect to life. The conventional attitude towards art is a diversion from everyday life, like a vacation. Diotima makes this comparison when she says, "but art is supposed to afford us a vacation from reality, so that we can return to it with our energies restored" (ibid). He faces a problem in correlating the figuration in art with shaping one's own everyday life. We had observed a similar problem in Marcel for whom the truth of art and the truth of life were at loggerheads, until Marcel resolves to make the vocation of being a writer his life. For Ulrich, who does not aspire to be a writer, "this failure to achieve integration had lately been apparent to him in what he called the strained relationship between literature and reality, metaphor and truth" (647).

For the creator of Ulrich, Musil, "art-making, far from being an insignificant or escapist indulgence, is raised to a central reality- relevant act of ethical engagement" (Grill 9). Also not leading to anything substantial or concluding, the act of making art becomes the fundamental responsible gesture. Creating art is not responsible in conforming to moral

standards, but so because it involves in a perpetual and infinite process of responding to its own becoming, its formal architecture and the meanings that emerge out of it.

We shall return at this point to the theme of stupidity that we had discussed before. As long as a quality or an objective exists associated with one's actions, stupidity has a connotation with points towards the finitude of human action. That which I do today to gain something might seem stupid the next day when the constellation of facts and conditions have undergone changes. Art, since it is not a pragmatic action, uncovers a different aspect of stupidity. In art as in the innocence of Dostoyevsky's Myshkin or in the life-enjoying spirit of Candide, there is a 'nothing' at work which does not claim any specialized topos. It is here that the premise of stupidity undergoes transformation. Neither system nor quality is present to exert the exigency of 'it could have been otherwise'. Art, on the contrary, evinces a necessity of a strange kind which is unbound to anything, resounding like Beethoven's *es muss sein* [It must be]. This affirmation, not as a figure of something but figuration pure and simple, becomes a celebration of stupidity instead of being its victim.

In one of the portions of the novel, we come to know Ulrich's childhood fascination with stuffed toys of animals. His fantasies would use to infuse these inanimate objects with life, so that they existed as lifeless as well as living creatures, depending on the perspective with which they were regarded. Genesse Grill identifies Musil's use of *Stilleben* [still life] as the metaphor for reality. The paradox of art objects lies in the double lives they live- at once frozen in life and fluid- dead and alive at once (126). They offer us feeling without actual transaction [*Gefühl ohne Handlung*], and in doing so, engage us without whetting our ego. The artwork is not subsumed in the present moment; it continues to linger on. Art is full of movement, and yet still, a description Musil uses to praise Rilke's use of metaphor: *diese edelsteinbare Stille in der niemals anhaltenden Bewegung*²⁴ (qtd in Grill 127).

The temporality of the event is revealed best by art. Our discussion of Ingarden's formulation of the event in the first chapter of the thesis made clear the infinite temporal dimension of the event. The event is not to be located at a specific time and place which could be mapped according to a universal standard, but it repeats differently every time one enters into an engagement with its premise. The duration of art is an exaggerated frozenness in time: *Sein Zustand dauert ein gehobenes Anhalten* (qtd in *ibid*). Art as event keeps differentiating indefinitely, and in doing so, it holds the promise of that which is not yet final: *die Kunst erhält das Noch-nicht-zu-Ende-Gekommene des Menschens*²⁵ (180).

Like Marcel, Ulrich longs for a different way of life which could crease out the predicaments of the present. In many ways, the Other Condition craved for by Ulrich stands for a metaphor of the event. Just as the event is supposed to be truly unprecedented, indeterminable and infinite, Ulrich could envisage this unforeseen condition only according to these conditions that defy description. Unlike Arnheim and Diotima who are sure of what they want from life, "he wished something unforeseen could happen to him, for when he took what he somewhat wryly called his 'holiday from life' he had nothing, in one direction or the other, that gave him peace" (Musil 276). If the mundane sphere is inhabited by actions which seem all alike to one another [*seinesgleichen*] and conserve the horizon in which they are encumbered, Ulrich's dream is for a matchless [*ohnegleichen*], 'real reality', that is comparable to nothing [*wild und mit nichts vergleichbar*] (Sebastian 31).

The event holds up a paradox before Ulrich because of the assumption of its incomparable nature. "He wanted...he didn't know what he wanted; he was willing to see what happened" (Musil 713). In a way, this temperament corresponds to phenomenology, that instead of mapping events and truth according to pre-given standards, tried to understand what made events and truths possible. The lack of faith in a universal standard datum where events could happen is a mirroring of the distrust in God as the origin of human existence.

However, this does not imply an outright atheistic spirit, for if God is not present now or was not present before, it does not cut out the possibility of his coming to being. The only difference that this worldview has in relation to the Romantic belief in a future messiah is the element of responsibility embedded in it. God or a savior would not come on his own; he has to be brought forth, and it is our own actions that could possibly do so. Ulrich reflects, “I don’t believe that God has been here yet, but that He is still to come. But only if we pave the way for Him more than we have done so far” (1109). God, or the event, is not transcendent to the human being, but represents a possibility that has not yet emerged into light. Musil’s thoughts closely echo those that of Rilke in this regard, who too writes to the young poet about the possible arrival of the divine from within the sphere of our actions; “Why don’t you think of him as the one who has been approaching from all eternity, the one who will someday arrive, the ultimate fruit of a tree whose fruits we are?” (“Letters” 38)

Likewise, the event shares a paradoxical relationship with the world and morality as well. It is at the site of the event where the world is supposed to be disclosed, whereas the event itself is as if withdrawn from the world [*weltabgewandt*] (Sebastian 108). Since the event is by nature original, referring to the creation and disclosure of a primal space, its occurrence cannot be subservient to spaces that already exist, that is, the world as we know it here and now. The event is not transcendent, because it instigates a return, and not an escape from the world. But this returning is a strange one, because it constitutes the place of return, that is the world, in the gesture of returning. It is in the paradigmatic shift from the world as known to the world that becomes where the event dwells. Similarly, the contemplative or the artist is continually involved in ethical action, in the sense of letting his existence be engendered by what he does. The contemplative’s continual ethical action is marked by the absence of morality and conscience, for these are anchored in the subject-object partition of

reality, whereas the event belongs to the domain of singularity where no self can exist, and nor pre-given laws concerning what is right and what is not.

The Other Condition, as David Luft aptly observes, is not more emotional or subjective, nor is it more illusory than the normal condition. These definitions and comparisons would be valid only if the given reality is accepted as the standard for evaluation. The significations that exist here and now simply don't vanish in the Other Condition, but become different. In short, Ulrich's Other Condition represents "a different relation to the world" (192),

Does it not then imply that this Other Condition would also involve man to exist differently than supposed? A new relation to the world could only be forged with the shift of human existence to a sphere which was hitherto not associated in humanism. No wonder our relationship with the world has changed over the epochs, but has it not altered the constitution of what it is to be human? Jean-Luc Nancy's metaphor of community for the event is critical, and can be discussed here. Just as a community offers an interactive field that shapes the subject in an unprecedented way, it also marks in some respect an 'end of humanity'. Approaching the community necessitates a cessation of prejudices and structures that had supported me until now, and we gather in the vicinity of a limit. "Is man anything but a limit?", Nancy asks in a ponderous moment (120). What Ulrich aims for is not a commingling with a divine aura as is wont in the beliefs of mystics. He is aware that his selfhood would persist even in the Other Condition, but what is this selfhood now comes to function differently?

We shall round off our discussion of the event by trying to understand its relation with care. We have seen in the previous subchapter how the Parallel Campaign, Romanticism and Irrationalism lacked care in the attitude its proponents harbored with regards to a pre-given

telos. We shall try to see how art relates itself to care and what implication that has for the event.

Looking back at the Kantian definition of art, we can observe that the aesthetic realm is framed in almost negative terms. It is realm that stands for disinterested satisfaction, universality apart from concepts, purposiveness without purpose and normality without norm. The true object of aesthetics then becomes not art but non-art, for it comes to be defined exclusively in terms of that which it is not (Agamben, "Content" 27). However, our actual interaction with artworks is anything but neutral in character. The event of reading always demands care, because it necessitates a comportment towards the world that appears in it. And this comportment cannot occur in the presence of indifference or disinterest which is somehow uncut in the Kantian understanding of art. Agamben elucidates this paradox by means of a metaphor: "Yet, when we actually find ourselves before a work of art, we behave unconsciously like a medical student who has studied anatomy only on corpses, and who, faced with the pulsing organs of the patient, must mentally refer back to his dead anatomical model in order to orient himself" (ibid).

Is the relationship between the literary work and the artist or the reader based on love as people like Diotima and Arnheim claims? Nietzsche holds love as the "most unqualified expression of egoism" ("Gay Science" 34). We can observe in these characters as in the views of Legrandin and Bloch in Proust's world that art is regarded as an object of love or desire, and this automatically entails a subject-object relation. In this attitude, there always lurks the will to render something unfamiliar and new to an assimilable quality. Nietzsche holds friendship to be a much more noble virtue, since it is bereft of the connotation of possessing the other, and reflects an attitude that is more in keeping with the event of art, as we shall discuss further in a short while.

Much portion of Ulrich's life like that of Marcel passes away in inaction. One reason for that is accorded to the suspicion against being a 'man of action' and the kind of attitude towards the world that it entails. "He was waiting, doing nothing that had anything to do with the person he after all signified; deliberately doing nothing" (Musil 276). That which is regarded and appreciated as action, Ulrich cannot undertake due to ethical reasons. At the same time, he does not undertake writing, which could have contributed to a new significance of action.

The event (of art) involves a 'different' relation with the other. In love, just as in dogmatic belief systems, the unknown is subsumed within a structure. In love it is the ego that serves as the center of that structure, whereas in systematic beliefs, it is an ideal that generates a centripetal force, gathering elements towards it. The being-together in art, argues Gerald Bruns, "has no unity or composition" (3). It is contiguous rather than continuous; a 'spacing' or 'a between' rather than a Heideggerian gathering into a holistic community. This is similar to Derrida's critique of Heidegger's event of appropriation [*Er-eignis*] as discussed in the first chapter, and directs towards a post-Heideggerian philosophy which is radically concerned with alterity and becoming. Bruns uses a further metaphor of 'election' from the Jewish canon to explicate his point. One lives in the "prophetic experience of being summoned out of one's place of comfort and security and placed at the disposal of others" (17). We can now understand the perpetual dissatisfaction of Ulrich because he does not submit himself to this opening, and that he is distrustful of such submissions because more often than not, they are fake modes while only soothes one's self-complacency.

This submission towards the other is not a passive one, where one can expect the grace of some transcendent realm to be benevolent and redeeming. In his book *Coming Community*, Agamben clarifies the meaning of *Quolibet ens* as not "being, it does not matter which" but "being, such that it always matters" (9). *Libet* means will, and as Deleuze had

mentioned, the event has to be willed. Neither the egoism of love, nor the passivism of pseudo-mythic experience, art involved an active comportment where one responds not to one's needs but to those questions which co-exist with the figuration of the book. The work itself becomes the divine; the event is the celebration of becoming.

In a world where one is cut off from oneself in one's work, it seems as work is the most perfunctory part of our lives which we do only to earn our bread. But doesn't work define who we are? Our work essentially determines our being. According to Gadamer, work could be seen as the "last worldly god of the polytheistic tradition still to be honored among us" ("Theory" 105). In such a case, work cannot be an index for alienation, but friendship. Gadamer says that friendship or *philia* is the basis of all relations. Friendship with oneself is necessary to embrace one's solitude. This does not mean self-love or egotism, rather the exact opposite of it. Gadamer writes, "I for one think that the consciousness of one's ability is the only form of freedom that can be safely preserved in the face of all the compulsions of our world" (112). The event then comprises of an acceptance of oneself, and this oneself is the other that cohabits in me as isolation, as that which requires something which not yet exists.

Art then is a process of understanding that comprises of "responsible response, answering answerability" (Steiner 73). The work or the journey here gains centrality, or one can say, there is no centrality, but a celebration of evanescence and displacement. Emerson says, "No facts are to me sacred; none are profane. I simply experiment, an endless seeker with no past at my back" (164). The artist is not indifferent towards everything, neither is he conscientious about one particular thing. He is open and accommodating to all, irrespective whether they are deemed as good or bad. Ulrich inhabits this quality, but he remains a man without quality because there is no field available for him where this quality could materialize. He does not write. He is an artist without art.

(C) THE HERMENEUTICS TUSSLE: WEARING THE INSIDE OUT

“For when the animal is alone and free to charge up to all four points of the compass, often a mad shudder will run through its skull and it will go storming off aimlessly, plunging into a terrible freedom as empty in one direction as another” (Musil 187). The tussle between freedom and boundedness opens up the hermeneutic aspect of the event in the world of Musil. The event is not transcendent; it does not belong to a domain beyond forms. Rather it is always a formation, and hence bound to figures.

What people like Diotima and Arnheim fails to see in their dreams for a transcendent reality is the fact that the longed-for realm is transcendent only with respect to something else. Its formless purity is imperceptible in the absence of a formed domain which it negates. We have here the problem of the absolute. Absolute means that which is insoluble, cut off from everything else than what it is not. And yet, being absolutely alone is impossible without being cut-off from people, absolutely pure not possible in the absence of the impure. The logic of the absolute “violates the absolute. It implicates it in a relation that it refuses and precludes by its essence” (Nancy 4). What distinguishes Ulrich’s Other Condition from Arnheim’s Great Idea is that the former takes into account responsible action and the problem of form in its ambit.

This problem is set out in the opening pages of the novel, where Ulrich reflects that “to pass freely through doors, it is necessary to respect the fact that they have solid frames” (Musil 10). Further on, he observes, “For a man’s possibilities, plans and feelings must first be hedged in by prejudices, traditions, obstacles and barriers of all sorts, like a lunatic in his straitjacket, and only then can whatever he is capable of doing, have perhaps some values,

substance, some staying power” (16). We see here how freedom is a complex function where two opposites commingle together. Unlike the Romantics, Musil does not aim for an escape from the forms that circulate in daily life, but accepts their role in the journey that happens from and alongside them.

But that does not mean that Ulrich is not exasperated by this ambiguity at times. The lack of a permanent and persisting solution which could unify the plethora of life’s problems reveals itself every time generalizations evince their particular nature and the particular shows itself to belong to some larger group. “Everything partakes of the universal and also has something special all its own. Everything is both true to type and refuses to conform to type and is in a category all its own, simultaneously” (625). It is this double movement that regulates between the general and particular that constitutes the hermeneutics of the event. It is on one hand contingent, and yet it does point to a beyond. Ulrich compares life to a mathematical problem that does not “admit of a general solution but do allow for particular solutions, which one could combine to come nearer to a general solution” (388).

Blumenberg rightly observes that there is a hermeneutic ambiguity in modern art. On one hand, the artwork tries to establish itself as thing, autonomous like a landscape and non-anthropomorphic. And on the other hand, there emerges nevertheless a perspective out of the work (“Concept” 501). In *Soul and Form*, Lukács engages with this same hermeneutic problem. There is a duality in lived experiences- one lives one’s life, and that life is a life among other lives; a swinging between life as a category and living as experience (6). Ulrich as an essayistic person is always actively involved in the struggle to give his life a form, while at the same time being exasperated with the finitude of forms. Unlike Musil, who, as an artist, dwells in the constant becoming and unbecoming of form, Ulrich finds this insoluble problem a hindrance as well as defining condition of existence. He must accept how things are to be able to wish things to be different: “it is precisely the indivisible and the organic

quality of this mixture of being-accidental and being-necessary which is at the root of that humor and that irony which we find in the writings of every truly great essayist” (11).

Musil’s method of precision and soul fits this description well enough, for his style is well aware of the fact that “the separation of image and signification is itself an abstraction, for the significance is always wrapped in images and the reflection of a glow from beyond the image shines through every image” (7). Neither the general nor the particular is the last word; only their mutual interaction and mutual illumination constitute the hermeneutic activity called life.

Grill identifies a hermeneutic paradox sitting at the heart of Ulrich’s much wished-for Other Condition. He envisages this condition as transtemporal and claims it would last forever. “How then, does the idea of a timeless core, an eternal essence fit in with a competing structure and idea of non-determined infinite possibility?” (34) This tussle inherent in essayism comprises of the recognition of “both the representation in the artifact of a striving for the infinite, and the ultimate failure of reaching that infinite... irony reveals the creative tension of life and of thought in activity rather than in the stasis of a delusive finality” (Obaldia 41). This hermeneutic between the endlessness of figuration leads another insight into the aspect of incompleteness of the work. Since no particular thing is striven for, Musil’s plot continues to simply be, only now and then sparking off something a glimmer of infinity from within its cacophonous assemblage of form.

Obaldia argues that the Bildungsroman is not just another class of the novel but its very archetype. The culmination of the hero is a figuration of the culmination of form for the novel. What happens in Musil is however, the incompleteness or ‘failure’ of this culmination. The novel falls short of its totalizing impulse, leading to the “critical or ironic reflection of a hiatus between various modes of knowledge which are no longer reconcilable” (42). The event in the world of Musil is of a similar kind, where various discursive patterns contend

with one another, with no resolution, due to reasons already enumerated in the previous two chapters.

Finally, the hermeneutic aspect of the modernist work pertains to the interaction between the work and the reader. Like Proust, who considered literature primarily as an individualizing phenomenon, Musil's world demands an engagement with its peculiarity, so that we may come to realize something unknown and hidden within us. The story of Ulrich's life is as mundane as it can get, and yet his thoughts reveal some facets of an existence which is perhaps also there in us but encumbered by habit. As Agamben says,

this duality of principles, according to which the work is determined starting from the creative activity of the artist and from the sensible apprehension of the spectator, traverses the entire history of aesthetics, and it is probably in this duality that one must seek its speculative center and its vital contradiction. (9)

Here we have the re-enactment of the hermeneutic between Ulrich's particular existence and life as a whole in the interaction between Musil's novel as a work addressing general and particular problems of life and us as readers, likewise enmeshed in this dual structure. What this points to is a refusal of transcendent principles that are wont to exist in Romantic and sentimental works, so that meaning is generated always in a field of contention.

Musil's departure from identity, sameness and conceptuality leads him to 'situate' things in relation to one another. What a thing is, is revealed fundamentally by the set of differences that emerges in a network. "Ultimately a thing exists only by virtue of its boundaries, which means by a more or less hostile act against its surroundings" (Musil 22). As an artist, Musil is aware and sensitive to this contradiction lurking at the heart of things, but this does not impress Ulrich. The lack of a cornerstone, a standard which could, if not

unify, at least provide some coherence, exasperates Ulrich and infuses disdain in his attitude towards the world and life:

It is the old story of the contradictions, the inconsistency, the imperfection of life. It makes us smile or sigh. But not Ulrich. He hated this mixture of resignation and infatuation in regard to life that makes most people put up with its inconsistencies and inadequacies as a dotting maiden aunt puts up with a young nephew's boorishness. (23)

The ceaseless presence of contradictions doesn't allow any happening to be incident on Ulrich completely. There is a sense of incompleteness in all of his thoughts and actions because, unlike the novel of which he is part, he always feels that things could have been different or could be so in the next instant. Even in moments which approach with gaiety and felicity, Ulrich is quick to identify something mocking underneath its visage. "But surrounding this clear, shining love is a predilection for disillusionment, compulsiveness, ruthlessness, cold intimidation, and dry rebuke, a spiteful predilection, or at least an involuntary emanation of such a kind" (328). The human subject is filled to its brim with suspicion, so much so that "even faced with an overwhelming phenomenon of beauty, one's response is 'You can't fool me! I'll cut you down to size'" (330). There is no whole in experiences due to "an inadmissible lust at the spectacle of the good being humiliated and too easily destroyed together" (ibid).

As an artist, Musil blends both the specificity of precision with the vagueness of soul in his aesthetic of the novel. This is not really a contradiction but a sort of complementarity that is necessary not to collate every kind of phenomena under the same canopy but to treat each according to its temperament. Ulrich, as a character, is caught in the crossroads of these

two kinds of outlook, which not only conflict with each other but, which is worse, usually co-exist side by side in total noncommunication except to assure

each other that they are both needed, each in its place. The one is satisfied to be precise and stick to the facts, while the other is not, but always looks at the whole picture and derives its insights from so-called great and eternal truths. (268)

We again encounter the interaction of the transient and the eternal in the phenomenon of modernity, as Baudelaire had mentioned, which we had discussed in our section of Proust. Thomas Sebastian traces this thought back to Goethe in the German literary world, who considered the human being to undergo a rhythmic change of contraction and expansion, of becoming oneself [*verselbsten*] and losing oneself [*entselbsten*] (50). This is what the impersonal functionality in Musil shows us in its dual working. One loses individuality by letting one's response to be decided by the system, and one reclaims being by being empathetic to the other that resides as possibility in the horizon.

David Luft identifies in Musil an "enormous tolerance for ambiguity" (61). It is due to Musil's extensive and relentless empathy for the hermeneutic foundation of life that his work 'lacks' a resolution. It is not in favor of one kind of form or experience, but tries to represent the fluid nature of existence which gains its shape with respect to the changing containers which hold it. Thus, we find a dual ordering of experiences [*Erfahrung*] and moments [*Erlebnis*], with novel moving between sobriety and intoxication (199).

Like in Proust, Musil too accords a constructive significance to nothing. Speaking of their novels, a reader might be at a loss to say what they are about, which is not so in the case of novels from different eras. However, this inability to describe the work in a nutshell has its counterpart in the fecundity of things that occur in them, which however could not be summarized. The novel oscillates between a universal indifference and a universal concern, Grill puts this aspect to words in the following way,

On the one hand, no particular thing matters. On the other hand, every particular thing, as metaphoric variation, matters extremely, particularly as an object lesson in the way in which the creative imagination engenders our shifting reality. Nihilism then becomes an imperative of creative responsibility. (22)

On the surface then, we have an imitation of the discordance that is the feature of the present times. And yet, its inscription in the novel marks a touch of transition from the realm of discordance to an ordered narrative. In the Modernist novel, we have, as Adorno had reflected, a lack of concord which works simultaneously in abolishing discordance. (Wellmer 13).

(D) ARTICULATING THE EVENT

In this concluding sub-chapter, we shall have a look at how the event is conveyed or made in language and what anomalies stem out from such attempts. Thereafter, we shall try to understand the elusive nature of the event and the implications that has for subjectivity, or the loss thereof. Finally, we shall trace writing or art as the event, and how that relates to the world of Musil's novel.

The first occasion when Ulrich comes to experience the world in a singularly unique way is during the relationship he shared with a major's wife while serving in the army. This incident is recounted to us readers by Ulrich reflecting on his past affairs. What is remarkable about this experience is the manner in which language is configured to describe it. The singularity of the event can only be attempted to be conveyed by a use of language which is not yet part of language use: "He sank into the landscape, although it was just as much as

inexpressible being borne up by it, and when the world surpassed his eyes, its meaning lapped against him from within in soundless waves...everything went rippling out in circle after ever renewed circle, as when an infinite jet falls on a basin's surface" (Musil 131). Here, we encounter a making-possible of the impossible, which is what is what the unprecedented nature of the event comprises in.

In the history of the world, the event takes place, according to Ulrich, when "someone comes up with a splendid new gesture, an outward or inward- how shall we translate it? – vital pose? A form into which inner meaning streams like helium into a balloon? An expression of impression? A technique of being?" (137). Just as our discussion on the complementarity of interiorization and exteriorization in the section on Proust has shown, here too, we have the familiar notions of immanence and transcendence overlapping and running into one another. The event belongs to the "mysterious space in which self and world, perception and feeling, inside and outside, plunge into one another in the most indefinable way, while the space itself consists entirely of sensation, certainty and precision" (151-152). The event creates its own space, and does not operate according to the universal logic of space and time assumed beforehand for other occurrences and facts. The vital nature of the space thus opened is the mark of the event.

Musil's approach of the Other Condition has a peculiar use of language, where things, which are considered contradictory to one another, seem to co-exist without opposition. The following description of a euphoric state of mind collates binaries so much so that they become a new language indeed;

The impression one gets is as much of intensification as of loss. One feels linked with everything but can't get close to anything. You stand here, and the world stands there, overly subjective and overly objective, but both almost painfully

clear, and what separates and unites these normally fused elements is a blazing darkness, an overflowing and extinction, a swinging in and out. You swim like a fish in water or a bird in air, but there's no riverbank and no branch, only this floating. (816)

The event seems unreal because it is set beyond the 'reality' that is encapsulated by ordinary language. As long as our language is to form the event, it has to unmake itself in the doing. We are in a realm which is accompanied by a "vanishing of thoughts and intentions. A blindness in which they see clearly, a clarity in which they are dead and supernaturally alive. They call it shedding of their being, and yet they claim to be fully alive than ever" (818).

Musil is unable to touch the core of this elusive event, and hence keeps circling closely the paradoxes that inhere in it. It is a domain where "you lose yourself and at the same time suddenly find yourself" (827). Vagueness and clearness co-exist in a strange interaction here; "despite its obscurity...so distinct that its existence is undeniable (828). This condition is not much different from a state of lunacy, which too defies conventional sense and order and signification. As a result, such arrangement of language could also be discerned at times in the words of Clarisse and Moosbrugger, neither of whom are psychologically stable. For Moosbrugger, "the visions came from outside, but a shimmer of observations told him at the same time that they were really something inside himself. The important thing was that it is not at all important whether something is inside or outside; in his condition, it was like clear water on both sides of a transparent sheet of glass" (258).

Indeed, the Other Condition is similar to the condition described or experienced by the mystics, but Musil warns that this correlation can stick only "as long as they stick to the phenomena and their judgement doesn't enter in, which is corrupted by their flattering conviction that they've been singled out by god to have direct experience of Him" (819).

Since the event entails a loss of the ego and subjectivity, there cannot be any rejoicing of the self having God in such a case. This is the reason why Ulrich dismisses the so-called Great Ideas of Arnheim because his formulations are all centered in the rhetoric of self-possession. The event is, in the words of Blanchot, a limit experience which can no longer be framed within the categories of subject and object, same and other, identity and difference. It is an experience of being no-one (“Infinite Conversation” 135). The loss of expenditure of subjectivity is an achievement of sovereignty (Bruns 60). One is then no longer a slave of one’s self, but being is released to freedom from the ethics of control that actually govern the conventional notion of the self.

In the third section of the novel, Musil presents to us the glimpse of the Other Condition through Agathe. Unlike Ulrich’s active pessimism, Agathe’s personality is characterized by a passive activeness and an acceptance of things in the way they are. This is structurally crucial in the context of the event, for the event, as we shall soon be discussing, is ungraspable. Ulrich still tries to hold on to it, and try to salvage some sort of persistence out of its elusive enigma. For Agathe, she “was filled with a clear will, something she had always felt the lack of, but she did not know what she should understand in its clarity, since all that her life had ever held of good and evil was now meaningless” (932). She feared this need to think about the event, which Ulrich was always so glad to indulge (933). If Ulrich is spurred to capture the event in nature, Musil’s opposing tendency plays out in Agathe: “An awesome immensity and emptiness suddenly flooded through her, a shoreless radiance darkened her mind and overwhelmed her heart with fear” (ibid).

Since the event is distinct from a concept as well as a representation, it is not amenable to be grasped. It can only be participated in. Participation generated the event as well as engenders the being involved in it. Diotima’s vision of the Great Idea is compared to a formless, boundless ocean, because she deems the event to be transcendent to formal

reality. And in the shimmering presence of the void that opens up amidst all the plans and designs, she comes face to face with this ungraspable lack-of-essence: “There is no denying that her first reaction to this vision was the sense of the momentary gaping of an illimitable void” (110). We return again to the discussion of the void, but now seen in a new light. We have previously encountered the emptiness as futility and vacuity of pragmatic action. In the presence of the event, the void is constitutive of meaning. However, like a metaphor, this meaning cannot be reified for use by the subject nor could be channeled into more malleable structure amenable for fulfilling other needs:

For what distinguishes a great stirring idea from an ordinary one, possibly even from an incredibly ordinary and mistaken one, is that it exists in a kind of molten state through which the soul enters an infinite expanse and, inversely, the expanse of the universe enters the self, so that it becomes impossible to differentiate between what belongs to the self and what belongs to the infinite. That is why great, stirring ideas consist of a body, which like the human body is compact yet frail, and of an immortal soul, which constitutes its meaning but is not compact; on the contrary, it dissolves into thin air at every attempt to grab hold of it in cold words. (106)

Like the void, the element of impersonality too attains a different meaning in the ambit of the event. If initially, impersonality had stood for the general patterns woven by systems on to human behavior, the loss of subjectivity in the singularity of the event lends a new significance to the impersonal. The event does not belong to me. I cease to be who I am in the event, and become anew in it. Ideas are not conceptual, rather being is individualized by them; “one feels slightly disconcerted because one’s ideas seem to have come of their own accord instead of waiting for their creator...something impersonal, namely the affinity and coherence of the things themselves, meeting inside a head” (ibid).

Adorno echoes this impersonality at work in the essayist: “The thinker does not actually think but rather makes himself into an arena for intellectual experience, without unraveling it” (“Essay” 13). As an essayist person, Ulrich is well attuned to such a sensibility. His very reputation as a man without qualities leads back to a basic ‘lack’ of tenacity of this subjectivity, which could now be read differently as his openness to be shaped by ideas instead of trying to shape them himself. He shares a special relationship with the ‘mysterious language’ of the event:

For he had a special, instinctive understanding of them, which might rather be called a familiarity that leapt over the understanding...fraternal sound, with a gentle, dark inwardness that was the opposite of the hectoring tones of mathematics or scientific language, though other indefinable...remains of a continent that had perished primordial eras ago. (128)

The fact that “events converge on us, making us who we are” has gradually been lost on us through the rise and eventual fetish of subjectivity bequeathed by Enlightenment and the times that followed in its wake (137). Speaking of the objective quality of reason that existed in previous epochs, Blumenberg tells us that for Aristotle, “the motive for (philosophical) inquiry is not sought in the subject; it is as if truth itself were pressing its claims, manifesting itself from the very beginning in turns of phrase that seem to anticipate insight without yet possessing it” (“Metaphorology” 13). There is no doubt that Musil is not a Romantic like Wagner who addresses a return to the past. But Musil’s temperament towards truth and the event shares some resonance with how they were looked at in past eras. This should not be read as a regressive attitude, especially since the progress of Enlightenment is not without its own problems. Like the Greek empathy for presence, the medieval times preceding the Enlightenment too laid emphasis on the role of inspiration coming from outside and

enchancing the subject, holding it captive in its charm; something that Ulrich wishes to happen to him. In medieval art, notes Agamben,

the wonderful was not yet an autonomous sentimental tonality and the particular effect of the work of art but an indistinct presence of the grace, that, in the work, puts man's activity in tune with the divine world of creation, and thus, kept alive the echo of what art had been in its Greek beginnings: the wonderful and uncanny power of making being and the world appear, of producing them in the work ("Content" 22).

The intimations Ulrich receives at time to time reflect the modality described above. It is not completely out of the blue that he receives these intimations of a different way of being, nor can he extricate these realities by voluntary effort. The inside and outside gets redundant as categories in the totality of the event;

But what gave him this insight was no longer thinking, nor was it feeling in the usual incoherent way; it was a 'total insight' and yet again only a message carried to him from far away by the wind, and it seemed to him neither true nor false, neither rational nor irrational; it seized him like a faint, blissful hyperbole dropped into his heart. (Musil 275)

Ulrich, like Marcel, shuns the practical world and whatever circulate in it as truths. They are 'theoretical men', for they attribute a great value to seeing and how being depends on what and how one sees the world. Both evince an "attitude of theoretical resignation that characterized Hellenism as a whole, an attitude that felt itself obliged to place enormous demands on a truth before being prepared to accept it" (Blumenberg, "Metaphorology" 14). This belief in the force and potential of the truth in impressing upon our ways and outlooks gradually waned in the Enlightenment. We can observe in Arnheim, Diotima and Clarisse,

that they are hardly open to be shaped by experiences. Although they spend most of the times articulating a vague event that will change everything, they try their level best to administer this change well beforehand in a way that would suit to satisfy their egos best. Thus notes Blumenberg, that “while the ‘invisible force of truth’ may still play a role in the vocabulary of the Enlightenment, there it is rather a topos of modesty serving to conceal the self-consciousness of a spirit that illuminates with its own light” (16). And too overtly scientific-minded people would deem the self-showing model of truth as the lax attitude of Middle Ages, a tendency that we also discern in Ulrich from time to time (30).

To deem the event as an index or occasion for personal gain or happiness, like some of the characters in the novel show, would be to amputate the event of its greatness. The event, itself is indifferent to personal gains. “Personal happiness (or equilibrium, contentment, whatever we may choose to call the innermost reflex aim of the personality) is self-contained only as a stone is in a wall, or a drop of water in a river, which are permeated by the forces and tensions of the whole” (Musil 571). Personal satisfaction and gratification are valid only as long as one knows where one is and wishes to make the ground beneath his foot even firmer. But the experience of art is supposed to show us first and foremost the world as we had not known it so far. “By opening to man his authentic temporal dimension, the work of art also opens for him the space of his belonging to the world, only within which he can take the original measure of his dwelling on earth and find again his present truth in the unstoppable flow of linear time” (Agamben, “Content” 63). The event can lead to happiness among other things, but it can never be my happiness. I can only come to belong to a feeling that exceeds the miniscule perimeter of my subjecthood- this is how things work in the event.

In one of the most moving and characteristic passages from the novel, the very understanding and perception of time as an event constituting our being is described by

Musil. Is our past indeed ours, or do we belong to it, in the ways that it has led us to be who and what we are today? The chaos and inconsistencies of our lives could hardly be contained under the rubric of a unifying 'I'. Time seems both arbitrary and necessary in how it can spread the alleys through which we have traversed:

One would think that such images are the most transient things in the world, but those are moments when all one's life splits up into such images, solitary relics along the road of life, as though the road led only away from them and back to them again, as though a man's fate were obeying not his ideas and his will but these mysterious, half-meaningless pictures. (Musil 723)

We now approach the last part of this section, namely art as the approach to the event. The first question that comes up, is whether art as a mode to approach the event available for all? Or does it require some admission on the part of the personality? Given that the event of art occurs through opening, a person who is self-contained would not be liable to enter into this sphere of possibility as those who are willing to come out of their homes. Steiner says, "And Narcissus has no need of art. In him, utterance, fascination, the making of an image, come home, fatally to the closed self" (110). Art is also not meant for the person who shuts himself off from the world. Isolation for the artist is always isolation for the sake of something, abiding by something (Gadamer, "Theory" 105). Musil, unlike his character Ulrich, has not renounced the world even if he is at odds with it. This is the reason why David Luft writes that despite isolation, Zarathustra's withdrawal is contradictory to Musil's attitude (166). We have observed a similar tendency at play in Proust's isolation. Staying shut up in his room for years did not imply for Proust being cut off from the world, for he was, as is with Musil, involved in shaping the world in his art.

Art is not a break from action; rather it is continuous action that is half-aware of its product. Being turned away from the world, like Clarisse and Diotima, imply leaving over one's destiny to the hands of fate alone. Art, on the contrary, is an event where fate and will enter into the event in equal measure. Ulrich says, "we really shouldn't demand action from one another; we should create the conditions that make actions possible" (805). In a similar fashion, the writing of the novel is a continuous action that tries to make a certain reality possible.

The truth is not a fact nor a formula, but a development. In the novel, the truth amounts to the novel's self-becoming. Narrative, that exposes the novel for what it is, exposes this truth as itself. Sebastian makes this point in his books when he writes, "The truth is therefore revealed in the form of narrative that describes the development from child to adulthood, from poetry to prose, from the human voice to the scientific text" (56). In Musil's novel, this is problematized even further, because the narrative is by character incomplete and incompletable: "The story of the novel amounts to this, that the story that ought to be told in it is not told" (90). Given that the novel is open, truth and narrative also retain this openness so that it could remain inconclusive, so as to let us readers fill in its emptiness with what we feel with regards to the plot.

Life is a ceaseless journey, wondering from one point to the next. And the pattern that emerges out of these travels are not to be found in any itinerary; they are the traces of time that we have gone through, survived and outlived. We cannot imagine being without discursive openness (Steiner 48). At the bottom of it, there is no single thing to be identified as our *raison d'être*. The unboundedness of discursive potentiality entails the logic of nullity and nihilism (ibid). Proust and Musil have left their novels unfinished so as to point at the very nature of differentiation and development that characterize our wanderings on this planet. In turn, this unfinished character disallows their works to be treated as finished

products, as we are wont to perceive everything in a culture of mass-produced prim and proper objects.

The novel is engaged in the creation of a world through its narrative, whereas the epic partakes of a ready-made world. Unlike the epic or myth, which is in mentality one with its backdrop, the novel continually engages and disengages with the scenario it paints, so that the event it constitutes involves a constant to-and-fro movement. This double movement is the hermeneutic factor of our existence, as we have thoroughly discussed through the examples of general-particular, whole-part, world and self and so on. "Every novel seeks to create a world. This might be its central difference from the epic. The epic singer does not need to create a world. He can think of himself as a transparent medium through which the world is presented" (Avanessian 119). The narrative is the novel, whereas in other genres it could function as a medium to produce other effects. As James Wood succinctly mentions in his book *How Fiction Works*, "the novel teaches us how to read its narrator" (5).

The novel, and especially the Modernist novel, is deeply engaged not just to tell a story but to understand how the story is within the medium and style in which it acquires shape. The novel's chief concern is reality here; not reality as that which is given to us but to question its claim to be real. The world is not available to the novel as an imitable concept; the novel's responsibility is to create the world. In thus so creating the world in its narrative, the novel plays out a possibility. This possibility should not be misconstrued as a particular manifestation of a general idea that is accepted as the world. Rather, the disclosure of the world as a singular event is the making-real [*Verwirklichung*] of a possibility, as Ulrich highlights this difference more than once in the opening section of the novel.

If the question of the possibility of the novel is put as an ontological one, searching out the foundations of the concept of reality, this means that one is

also inquiring into the origins of a new claim to art- its claim, not merely to represent objects of the world, or even to imitate the world, but to actualize a world. A world-nothing less- is the theme and postulate of the novel. (Blumenberg, "Concept" 495)

Blumenberg further stresses the point a few pages further: "Fixing (or causing) a world as a formal, overriding structure is what constitutes the novel" (503). Worldliness is not the theme for the plot of the modernist novel; it is implicated in the very possibility of becoming.

The relationship of the novel with worldliness in relation to its deviation from the epic and myth is likewise mapped by Jean-Luc Nancy in his book *Inoperative Community*. In myth, "everything is" (78). The novel 'unworks' the given reality: "unworking is offered wherever writing does not complete a figure, or a figuration, and consequently does not propose one, or does not impose the content or the exemplary message of the figure" (79). It is critical of what it says, and this criticality is its mode of being. Gerald Bruns cites the metaphor of negation of flesh from Bataille to illustrate the same point of not co-opting with that which is made to function as human. The prohibition of animal functions and the exclusion of the entire ontology of the flesh opens up the possibility to understand the world and human existence in terms which come out of the attempt of understanding itself. Only in this way, could the search be a true discovery.

We thus observe that presencing partakes of a negative movement within it, without attributing any negative judgement in the process. Since, being is always disclosed not in identity but across differences, "truth is revealed only by giving space or giving a place to non-truth- that is, as a taking place of the false, as an exposure of its innermost impropriety" (Agamben, "Community" 20). Agamben understands divinity as this accordance of space for happening. Our moral codes and religious scriptures pre-ordain the unavailability of space to

certain vaguely defined things, and it is this fear or shunning away that breeds evil. The novel, in disclosing things through the mode of paradox and contradiction, offers space for the complication of things to occur, and it is this clearing of space that is one with the figuration of truth in the work. This space is generated in the narrative, which with its movement opens up a passage.

The passage from potentiality to art, from language to the word, from the common to the proper, comes about every time as a shuttling in both directions along a line of sparking alternation on which common nature and singularity, potentiality and act change notes and interpenetrate. The being that is engendered as this line is whatever being, and the manner in which it passes from the common to the proper and from the proper to the common is called usage- or rather, ethos. (27)

Using the terminology of Hans Blumenberg, we can say that Musil primarily makes his narrative oscillate between two ‘absolute metaphors’ – the Great Idea and the Other Condition. Both these metaphors are absolute in nature, because they shape the overall attitude to the world and do not stand for anything specific as such. “By providing a point of orientation, the content of absolute metaphors determines a particular attitude or conduct [*Verhalten*]; they give structure to a world, representing the non-experienceable, non-apprehensible totality of the real” (“Metaphorology” 20). Arnheim’s Great Idea and Ulrich’s Other Condition lay out the binary of egocentric and allocentric attitudes in the novel respectively.

Both these metaphors hint at a world to come. The Great Idea represents this dream in romantic terms, emphatically. As a result, as a metaphor, it is not really open to new phenomenon. On the contrary, Ulrich as a man of possibility always speak in terms of

‘should be’ or ‘could be’. Albrecht Schöne, in his essay concerning the use of the subjunctive case in Musil’s novel, maps in this language use a specific relation to the world:

Der Konjunktiv der Möglichkeit steht zur Indikativ einer neuen, anderen Welt, die Utopie steht zur Wirklichkeit in jenem paradoxen Verhältnis, das sich in einer Bemerkung des Erzählers über seinen Freund Ulrich spiegelt: Die Forderungen, dass man Geschichte erfinden müsste, dass man Ideen statt Weltgeschichte leben sollte, dass man sich dessen, das sich nie verwirklichen lässt, zu bemächtigen und am Ende, so zu leben hätte, als wäre man kein Mensch, sondern bloß eine Gestalt in einem Buch, von der alles Unwesentlich fortgelassen ist²⁶. (190)

Our discussion of two other absolute metaphors, also in our section on Proust, namely that of *terra incognita* and the ‘universe as organism’ bears the same relation mapped out in the above quoted passage. The novel has no reference to correspond to; it must refer and create the reference at the same time, and it is this infinite hermeneutic that is the force that governs the churning out of narrative. Paul Ricœur illustrates this point in his essay “The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality” by drawing a distinction between unreality and absence.

Something that had existed before could be absent. For example, I see a photograph of a person who is absent in the vicinity. In art, the presence of a world is not the negative of a reality; rather the lack of a reference that exists outside of it, makes the reality of art ‘unreal’:

The phenomenology of fiction has its starting point in this lack of symmetry between the nothingness of unreality and the nothingness of absence. The nothingness of absence concerns the mode of givenness of a real thing in absentia, the nothingness of unreality characterizes the referent itself of the fiction. (“Reader” 120)

But this unreality is substantial, perhaps even more so than what we deem as reality.

(E) FECUNDITY OF THE VOID

Although the Parallel Campaign differs completely in its attitude from Ulrich's utopia, both these fields stand for the event and show certain common characteristics. At the beginning of the campaign, Diotima had to encounter a void staring at her face, for she and her proteges were clueless about the content of the great spectacle to be planned. With time, the ideas proliferate. Although, no significance comes out of them, one thing becomes clear; the void the Parallel Campaign had presented to her imagination at the beginning had given way to a copious abundance (Musil 179).

This phenomenon is similar to the one that occurs in Ulrich's case. Although the Other Condition is at its heart empty, it offers Ulrich and Agathe to fill it up infinitely by enacting all possible gestures and expressions. This allocentric sphere, which is characterized by the absence of a center, allows an infinity to be accommodated in its folds. *Allo* in Greek means other or different; Ulrich searches for a center that is strictly speaking no longer a center but a dynamic condition that is de-centering (Sebastian 28).

The Other Condition, by its very nature momentary and fleeting, but also paradoxically infinite and eternal, is the perfect fluid medium with which to fill such a void. This process illustrates the paradoxical connection between transcendentalism and existentialism, as the experience of mystical otherness as ecstatic Dionysian dis-individuation translates into active and conscious ways of being in and creating the shared world with every action and thought. The

void of ethics, in other words, is filled, over and over again: with aesthetics, with aesthetic experience. (Grill 38)

Ulrich calls this 'inner acoustics of emptiness' the 'Baroque of the void', a situation that is governed by a lot of excitement but little sense: "this inner freedom consists of being able to think whatever one likes; it means knowing, in every human situation, why one doesn't need to be bound by it, but never knowing what one wants to be bound by!" (Musil 285).

This overriding sense of absence of principle has a lesson for us. It shows us that all principles are human constructs and are to be perceived as such. The moment one takes them to be self-sufficient truths does one allow oneself to be taken over for exploitation through their manipulation. The misreading of nihilism as denial is pointed out by Grill when she writes,

All too often Nietzsche's epigones seemed to have listened to only the first part of his message, and are so excited by the destruction of values and traditions and the thrill of the imminent abyss that they do not stay long enough to take in the all-important next step after the iconoclastic orgy. After the idols are smashed, Nietzsche encourages us to create more forms that, as long as we constantly remind ourselves that we have created them ourselves, do not become idols but are, nonetheless beautiful and meaningful in their very affirmation of creative energy. (56)

There is thus, in the heart of the event, a drawing out of inwardness. All forms are taken as meaning only in their formal realities. Meaning or truth is no longer accorded a status transcendent to creation. "Those of us who prefer to live with greatness- first and foremost among whom will be found those great souls for whom little things simply don't exist- find their inward life drawn out of them involuntarily and stretched into an extended

superficiality” (Musil 432). Ulrich feels this divestment of ego as a displacement, one that moves him from the space of identity towards a non-space of becoming. Watching the protestors outside the palace gates, Ulrich feels this alienation acutely; here there is not only a negative relation of not belonging to the mass but also an openness towards the unknown and the strange that makes its presence felt: “It was an experience beyond his understanding; he was chiefly aware of the glassiness, emptiness, tranquility of the state in which he found himself. Is it really possible, he wondered, to leave one’s space for some hidden other space? He felt as though chance had led him through a secret door” (689). In his book *The Trouble with Being Born*, Emil Cioran describes such knowledge as ‘posthumous’; “it functions as if the knower were alive and not alive, a being and the memory of a being” (3). The void of the event corresponds to this death and infinite becoming of the subject.

Returning to the image of Ulrich as a child cutting posters of animals and attaching them of wooden objects, we find this duality of divestment and replenishment being played out in the event. The still-lives are examples of lack and excess, just as Ulrich’s own state is before the void opened up in his relations with Agathe:

What happened next could only be compared to drinking that never quenches one’s thirst no matter how long one drinks, for there was no end to it, nor, stretching it for weeks, did it get anywhere; he was constantly being drawn to and into these adored creatures with the unutterable joy of the lonely child who had the feeling every time he looked at them that he owned them, with the same intensity that he felt something ultimate was missing, some unattainable fulfillment the very lack of which gave his yearning the boundless radiance that seemed to flood his own being. (Musil 749)

If writing is the process that stands for the evacuation of subjectivity and becoming impersonal, Musil's hero Ulrich novelizes this very nature of writing. As a man without qualities, he signifies the writing self, or rather that which writes in forfeiture of the self. Ulrich struggles to become, because he does not know where this becoming should lead him to. And the novel, being an embodiment of this becoming, leaves the question answered, as to whether it itself has been able to become a novel, or whether the work remains- like Ulrich nearing the Other Condition but never acquiring it or entering into its domain- in the threshold of the novel.

For Lukács, this void results from the inauspicious developments of rationalization. For Musil, however, the void is a structural feature built into the human condition which has been disguised for centuries and surreptitiously filled by narratives postulating the existence of primordial ethical substance (Mcbride 12). Musil's novel is a commingling of this inherent problem of being human and the contingent reality that gives a singular shape to this universal problem. It is naturally closer to philosophy, since it holds this problem to be an inherent and not exclusively a historical one. On the other hand, it is suspicious of the generalization at work in philosophy and science, and is hence always at work to show the problem *in situ*. Out of this tussle emerges the strange world of Musil, and a novel that more than once makes us question, is this at all a novel I am reading? And yet, Musil's work impresses on our senses and imagination as a novel like no other novel. Like Kafka, who said that a book should be like an axe that shatters the frozen sea within us, we end our long and winding journey through the worlds of Proust and Musil with the quiet yet profound reflection of Nietzsche, which has shown its truth in our meanderings and encounters: "of what account in a book that never carries us away beyond all works?" ("Gay Science" 133). We have indeed been lost in our travels, without which we wouldn't have found ourselves.

Notes

¹. “Song, as you have taught it, is not desire, not wooing any grace that can be achieved; song is to be. Simple, for a god”.

Here, I have altered Stephen Mitchell’s translation of Dasein as reality to ‘to be’.

². Aristotle writes in *Poetics*, “A Beginning is that which is not itself necessarily after anything else, and which has naturally something else after it” (40).

³. “That phrase, that can sum up the facts in a word, although being a bit old-fashioned would be: it was a fine day in August 1913”.

⁴. Here, there is a centralization of language at work. Given the fact that the primary linguistic texture of the majority of novels correspond to the diction and lexica of urban newspaper registers, uses belonging to the same language, in this instance Bangla, is gradually pushed to the peripheral and recognized as ‘other’. As a result, these forms are treated as ‘exotic’ elements and their inclusion within the field of a novel with otherwise ‘bhadroloker’ [upper and middle English-educated class] language as base carries the sense of documentary evidences trying to authenticate the other as other. For example, in popular fiction, a character is made to speak in a language perceptibly different from the narrator’s language, thereby otherizing him/her. In some cases, this otherization is merely formal and does not regard any historical responsibility and/or obligation to actually make an effort to hear the voices of the other. In *Sabuj Dwiper Raja*, a children adventure novel of the Kakababu series by Sunil Gangopadhyay, the writer bestows pure onomatopoeic nonce as the language of the inhabitants of the island. Perhaps is such an endeavor directed in eliciting humor. However, it is undercut with the prejudicial presupposition of the idiocy of those who do not speak my language, in this case, of those who haven’t yet seen ‘the light of civilization’.

⁵. We want to go back to things themselves.

⁶. The word ontotopical signifies the *topos*, that is, the region, where being dwells. In other words, it the ‘there’ [*da*] of being-in-the-world [*Dasein*]

⁷. “That is what fate means: to be opposite, to be opposite and nothing else, forever”. Translation by Stephen Mitchell.

⁸. “One of the most remarkable aspects of literary history is that unlike most of the histories, it is temporally syncretic, that is, the past and the present are simultaneous in it”.

⁹. “Crouched on his throne supported by manuscripts, commentaries, notes, ink and pen, not a poet, but unscathed, immortal professor; has no tooth- mucus in eyes; monthly salary worth thousand rupees- another thousand and a half could be earned poking at the entrails of dead poets; even if those poets had yearned for hunger, love, the warmth of fire- had rolled and tossed in the waves of sharks” (My translation) (Das “Kabyagrantha Vol 2” 10).

¹⁰. Deleuze quotes from Proust in his book *Proust and Signs*, “In Science and in Philosophy, the intelligence always ‘comes before’, but characteristic of the signs is their appeal to intelligence, insofar as it comes after, insofar as it must come after” (63).

¹¹. Although Proust would contend Bergson’s philosophical positions in the fifth volume of his work.

¹². “Man has, from morning on,
 Since we are a conversation and hear from one another,
 Much experience; but soon we are song.
 And the picture of time the great spirit unfolds
 Lays a sign before us, that is an alliance it makes
 Within other powers, between it and others”.

¹³. Henceforth, we shall be referring to Proust’s novel as *Recherche*, or at times as a proper noun meaning search in the sense of quest with the definite article before it, the *Recherche*. In-text citations taken from the work would be specified by a Roman numeral designating the volume, followed by the page number. We shall be referring to the Vintage Classics edition of the text, which Terence Kilmartin’s improved translation of the C.K. Scott Moncrieff text, revised by D.J. Enright. Seven volumes of the novel have been printed in this edition as six volumes with the fifth part containing the original fifth and sixth parts of the work, namely *The Captive* and *The Fugitive*.

¹⁴. We shall be referring to the first-person narrator of Proust’s novel as Marcel. Although the narrator in the novel is not explicitly named, Proust does involve him in a meta-textual moment. “If we give the narrator the same name as the author of the book... would be ‘My Marcel’, or ‘My darling Marcel’” (V, 77). The interface between novelist, narrator and character would in detail in the third chapter of this section.

¹⁵. The term is borrowed from Mikhail Bakhtin, and means the variegated nature of a narrative comprised of different language-zones or speech genres.

¹⁶. Jibananda sees a resonating co-habitation or congruency [*sangati, surasamya, manamaitri*] between suffering [*bedana*] and joy [*ananda*] in the creative act [*srishiti*]. One can look at his poem ‘He Hridoy’ from *Bela, Abela, Kalbela*: Let’s see how the grasses of this world bring forth from the poisoned droplets of creation and the haze of depleted humanity the vast expanse of the blue-sky [*dekha jak prithibir ghash/ srishitir bisher bindu aar/ nishpeshito manushyotar/ aandharer theke aane ki kore je moha neel-akash*] (Das, “Kabyagrantha Vol 2” 97]

¹⁷ We shall henceforth refer to the novel as *Mann* in our in-text citations and from time to time in the thesis text.

¹⁸ Does this contorted life still have any reality (in it)? Does this enlarged reality still have life (in it)?

¹⁹ The movement never ends, but oscillates in the narrowest of spaces.

²⁰ the world of the sixth day of creation, when God and the world was yet in one another, without mankind.

²¹ ‘Become who you are’. The Nietzschean imperative does not accept being for what it is deemed to be, but seeks to become responsibly, that is, by responding to the world and the demands it sets on one.

²² “The Problem: how do I come to narrate, is as much my stylistic problem as it the problem concerning the lives of the principal characters”

²³ The ritual is not one of representation, but rather one of producing the event. Writing is neither communication, nor a memory-aid, but magic of images.

²⁴ This crystal-clear stillness in the never-ending movement. Translation mine.

²⁵ Art consists in that aspect of humans, which has not yet come to an end. Translation mine.

²⁶ The Conjunctive (mode) stands in relation to the Indicative (mode) as a new, different world, the utopia stands likewise with respect to reality in a paradoxical relationship, which is played out in the observation of the narrator concerning his friend Ulrich: the demands, that one must invent history, that one must live by ideals instead in world history, that one must appropriate that which never lets itself materialize, and that in the end, one would have to live as if one is not man but rather a figure in a book from which everything insignificant emanates.

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