

CHAPTER XVI

The Nature and Modes of Narrative Fiction

Literary theory and criticism concerned with the novel are much inferior in both quantity and quality to theory and criticism of poetry. The cause customarily assigned for this would be the antiquity of poetry, the comparative recency of the novel. But the explanation scarcely seems adequate. The novel as an art form is, as one can say in German, a form of *Dichtung*; is, indeed, in its high form, the modern descendant of the epic—with drama, one of the two great forms. The reasons are rather, one thinks, the widespread association of the novel with entertainment, amusement, and escape rather than serious art—the confounding of the great novels, that is, with manufactures made with a narrow aim at the market. The lingering American popular view, disseminated by pedagogues, that the reading of non-fiction was instructive and meritorious, that of fiction, harmful or at best self-indulgent, was not without implicit backing in the attitude toward the novel of representative critics like Lowell and Arnold.

There is an opposite danger, however, of taking the novel seriously in the wrong way, that is, as a document or case history, as—what for its own purposes of illusion it sometimes professes to be—a confession, a true story, a history of a life and its times. Literature must always be interesting; it must always have a structure and an aesthetic purpose, a total coherence and effect. It must, of course, stand in recognizable relation to life, but the relations are very various: the life can be heightened or burlesqued or antithesized; it is in any case a selection, of a specifically purposive sort, from life. We have to have a knowledge independent of literature in order to know what the relation of a specific work to “life” may be.

Aristotle described poetry (that is, epic and drama) as nearer to philosophy than to history. The dictum seems to have per-

manent suggestiveness. There is factual truth, truth in specific detail of time and place—truth of history in the narrow sense. Then there is philosophic truth: conceptual, propositional, general. From the points of view of “history,” so defined, and philosophy, imaginative literature is “fiction,” a lie. The word “fiction” still preserves this old Platonic charge against literature, to which Philip Sidney and Dr. Johnson reply that literature never pretended to be real in that sense; ¹ and still preserving this vestigial remnant of the old charge of deception, it can still irritate the earnest writer of novels, who knows well that fiction is less strange and more representative than truth.

Wilson Follett remarks admirably of Defoe’s narrative of Mrs. Veal and Mrs. Bargrave that “Everything in the story is true except the whole of it. And mark how difficult Defoe makes it to question even that whole. The tale is told by a third woman of exactly the same stamp as the other two, a life-long friend of Mrs. Bargrave. . . .” ²

Marianne Moore speaks of poetry as presenting

for inspection, imaginary gardens with real toads in them.

The reality of a work of fiction—i.e., its illusion of reality, its effect on the reader as a convincing reading of life—is not necessarily or primarily a reality of circumstance or detail or commonplace routine. By all of these standards, writers like Howells or Gottfried Keller put to shame the writers of *Oedipus Rex*, *Hamlet*, and *Moby Dick*. Verisimilitude in detail is a means to illusion, but often used, as in *Gulliver’s Travels*, as a decoy to entice the reader into some improbable or incredible situation which has “truth to reality” in some deeper than a circumstantial sense.

Realism and naturalism, whether in the drama or the novel, are literary or literary-philosophical movements, conventions, styles, like romanticism or surrealism. The distinction is not between reality and illusion, but between differing conceptions of reality, between differing modes of illusion. ³

What is the relation of narrative fiction to life? The classical or Neo-Classical answer would be that it presents the typical, the universal—the typical miser (Molière, Balzac), the typical faith-

less daughters (*Lear*, *Goriot*). But are not such class concepts for sociology? Or it would have been said that art ennobles or heightens or idealizes life. There is such a style of art, of course, but it is a style, not the essence of art; though all art, to be sure, by giving aesthetic distance, by shaping and articulating, makes that pleasant to contemplate which would be painful to experience or even, in life, to witness. Perhaps it might be said that a work of fiction offers a "case history"—an illustration or exemplification of some general pattern or syndrome. There are instances—in short stories like Cather's "Paul's Case" or "The Sculptor's Funeral"—which approach it. But the novelist offers less a case—a character or event—than a world. The great novelists all have such a world—recognizable as overlapping the empirical world but distinct in its self-coherent intelligibility. Sometimes it is a world which can be mapped out in some area of the globe—like Trollope's counties and cathedral towns, Hardy's Wessex; but sometimes—as with Poe—it is not: Poe's horrendous castles are not in Germany or Virginia but in the soul. Dickens' world can be identified with London; Kafka's with old Prague: but both worlds are so "projected," so creative and created and hereafter recognized in the empirical world as Dickens characters and Kafka situations that the identifications seem rather irrelevant.

Meredith, Conrad, Henry James, and Hardy have all, says Desmond McCarthy, "blown great comprehensive iridescent bubbles, in which the human beings they describe, though they have of course a recognizable resemblance to real people, only attain in that world their full reality." Imagine, McCarthy says, "a character moved from one imaginary world to another. If Pecksniff were transplanted into *The Golden Bowl* he would become extinct. . . . The unforgivable artistic fault in a novelist is failure to maintain consistency of tone."⁴

This world or *Kosmos* of a novelist—this pattern or structure or organism, which includes plot, characters, setting, world-view, "tone"—is what we must scrutinize when we attempt to compare a novel with life or to judge, ethically or socially, a novelist's work. The truth to life, or "reality," is no more to be judged by the factual accuracy of this or that detail than the moral judgment is to be passed, as Boston censors pass it, on whether spe-

cific sexual or blasphemous words occur within a novel. The soundly critical appeal is to the whole fictional world in comparison with our own experienced and imagined world, commonly less integrated than that of the novelist. We are content to call a novelist great when his world, though not patterned or scaled like our own, is comprehensive of all the elements which we find necessary to catholic scope or, though narrow in scope, selects for inclusion the deep and central, and when the scale or hierarchy of elements seems to us such as a mature man can entertain.

In using the term "world," one is using a space term. "Had we but world enough and time." But "narrative fiction"—or, better, a term like "story," calls our attention to time, and a sequence in time. "Story" comes from "history": the "Chronicles of Barsetshire." Literature is generally to be classed as a time-art (in distinction from painting and sculpture, space-arts); but in a very active way modern poetry (non-narrative poetry) seeks to escape its destiny—to become a contemplative stasis, a "self-reflexive" pattern; and as Joseph Frank has well shown, the modern art-novel (*Ulysses*, *Nightwood*, *Mrs. Dalloway*) has sought to organize itself poetically, i.e., "self-reflexively."⁵ This calls our attention to an important cultural phenomenon: the old narrative, or story (epic or novel) happened in time—the traditional time-span for the epic was a year. In many great novels, men are born, grow up, and die; characters develop, change; even a whole society may be seen to change (*The Forsyte Saga*, *War and Peace*) or a family's cyclic progress and decline exhibited (*Buddenbrooks*). The novel, traditionally, has to take the time dimension seriously.

In the picaresque novel, the chronological sequence is all there is: this happened and then that. The adventures, each an incident, which might be an independent tale, are connected by the figure of the hero. A more philosophic novel adds to chronology the structure of causation. The novel shows a character deteriorating or improving in consequence of causes operating steadily over a period of time. Or in a closely contrived plot, something has happened in time: the situation at the end is very different from that at the opening.

To tell a story, one has to be concerned about the happening,

not merely the outcome. There is or was a kind of reader who must look ahead to see how a story "comes out"; but one who reads only the "concluding chapter" of a nineteenth-century novel would be somebody incapable of interest in story, which is process—even though process toward an end. There are certainly philosophers and moralists like Emerson who cannot take novels seriously primarily, one thinks, because action—or external action—or action in time—seems to them unreal. They cannot see history as real: history is just an unrolling in time of more of the same; and the novel is fictitious history.

A word should be said about the word "narrative," which, as applied to fiction, should imply the contrast of enacted fiction, i.e., drama. A story, or fable, can be represented by mimes, or it can be narrated by a single teller, who will be the epic teller, or one of his successors. The epic poet uses the first person and can, like Milton, make that a lyric or auctorial first person. The nineteenth-century novelist, even though he did not write in the first person, used the epic privilege of comment and generalization—what we might call the "essayistic" (as distinct from lyric) first person. But the chief pattern of narrative is its inclusiveness: it intersperses scenes in dialogue (which might be acted) with summary accounts of what is happening.⁶

The two chief modes of narrative fiction have, in English, been called the "romance" and the "novel." In 1785, Clara Reeve distinguished them: "The Novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the time in which it is written. The Romance, in lofty and elevated language, describes what never happened nor is likely to happen."⁷ The novel is realistic; the romance is poetic or epic: we should now call it "mythic." Mrs. Radcliffe, Sir Walter Scott, Hawthorne are writers of "romance." Fanny Burney, Jane Austen, Anthony Trollope, George Gissing are novelists. The two types, which are polar, indicate the double descent of prose narrative: the novel develops from the lineage of non-fictitious narrative forms—the letter, the journal, the memoir or biography, the chronicle or history; it develops, so to speak, out of documents; stylistically, it stresses representative detail, "mimesis" in its narrow sense. The romance, on the other hand, the continuator of the epic and the medieval romance, may neglect verisimilitude of detail (the

reproduction of individuated speech in dialogue, for example), addressing itself to a higher reality, a deeper psychology. "When a writer calls his work a Romance," writes Hawthorne, "it need hardly be observed that he wishes to claim a certain latitude both as to its fashion and its material. . . ." If such a romance be laid in past time, it is not in order to picture with minute accuracy that past time, but to secure, in Hawthorne's words elsewhere, "a sort of poetic . . . precinct, where actualities would not be . . . insisted upon. . . ." ⁸

Analytical criticism of the novel has customarily distinguished three constituents, plot, characterization, and setting: the last, so readily symbolic, becomes, in some modern theories, "atmosphere" or "tone." It is needless to observe that each of these elements is determinant of the others. As Henry James asks in his essay, "The Art of Fiction," "What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?"

The narrative structure of play, tale, or novel has traditionally been called the "plot"; and probably the term should be retained. But then it must be taken in a sense wide enough to include Chekhov and Flaubert and Henry James as well as Hardy, Wilkie Collins, and Poe: it must not be restricted to mean a pattern of close intrigue like Godwin's *Caleb Williams*.⁹ We shall speak rather of types of plots, of looser and of more intricate, of "romantic" plots and "realistic." In a time of literary transition, a novelist may feel compelled to provide two kinds, one of them out of an obsolescent mode. Hawthorne's novels after *The Scarlet Letter* offer, clumsily, an old-fashioned mystery plot, while their real plot is of a looser, more "realistic," variety. In his later novels, Dickens devotes much ingenuity to his mystery plots, which may or may not coincide with the novel's real center of interest. The last third of *Huck Finn*, obviously inferior to the rest, seems prompted by a mistaken sense of responsibility to provide some "plot." The real plot, however, has already been in successful progress: it is a mythic plot, the meeting on a raft and journey down a great river of four who have escaped, for various reasons, from conventional society. One of the oldest and most universal plots is that of the Journey, by

land or water: *Huck Finn*, *Moby Dick*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Don Quixote*, *Pickwick Papers*, *The Grapes of Wrath*. It is customary to speak of all plots as involving conflict (man against nature, or man against other men, or man fighting with himself); but then, like plot, the term must be given much latitude. Conflict is "dramatic," suggests some matching of approximately equal forces, suggests action and counteraction. Yet there are plots which it seems more rational to speak of in terms of a single line or direction, as plots of the chase or the pursuit: *Caleb Williams*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Crime and Punishment*, Kafka's *Trial*.

The plot (or narrative structure) is itself composed of smaller narrative structures (episodes, incidents). The larger and more inclusive literary structures (the tragedy, the epic, the novel) have developed, historically, from earlier, rudimentary forms like the joke, the saying, the anecdote, the letter; and the plot of a play or novel is a structure of structures. The Russian formalists, and German form-analysts like Dibelius, give the term "motive" (Fr., *motif*, Germ., *motiv*) to the ultimate plot-elements.¹⁰ "Motive," as thus used by literary historians, is borrowed from the Finnish folklorists, who have analyzed fairy and folk tales into their parts.¹¹ Obvious examples from written literature will be mistaken identities (*The Comedy of Errors*); the marriage of youth and old age ("January and May"); filial ingratitude to a father (*Lear*, *Père Goriot*); the search of a son for his father (*Ulysses*, and *The Odyssey*).¹²

What we call the "composition" of the novel is, by the Germans and Russians, called its "motivation." The term might well be adopted into English as valuable precisely for its double reference to structural or narrative composition and to the inner structure of psychological, social, or philosophical theory of why men behave as they do—some theory of causation, ultimately. Sir Walter Scott asserts early, that "the most marked distinction between a real and a fictitious narrative [is] that the former, in reference to the remote causes of the events it relates, is obscure . . . whereas in the latter case it is a part of the author's duty to . . . account for everything."¹³

Composition or motivation (in the largest sense) will include

narrative method: "scale," "pace"; devices: the proportioning of scenes or drama to picture or straight narrative and of both to narrative summary or digest.

Motifs and devices have their period character. The Gothic romance has its own; the realistic novel, its. Dibelius repeatedly speaks of Dickens' "realism" as of the *Märchen*, not of the naturalistic novel, the devices being utilized to lead into old-fashioned melodramatic motifs: the man supposed dead who comes to life, or the child whose real paternity is finally established, or the mysterious benefactor who turns out to be a convict.¹⁴

In a work of literary art, the "motivation" must increase the "illusion of reality": that is, its aesthetic function. "Realistic" motivation is an artistic device. In art, seeming is even more important than being.

The Russian formalists distinguish the "fable," the temporal-causal sequence which, however it may be told, is the "story" or story-stuff, from the "sujet," which we might translate as "narrative structure." The "fable" is the sum of all the motifs, while the "sujet" is the artistically ordered presentation of the motifs (often quite different). Obvious instances involve temporal displacement: beginning *in medias res*, like the *Odyssey* or *Barnaby Rudge*; backward and forward movements, as in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom*. The "sujet" of Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* involves the story being narrated in turn by the members of a family as they carry the mother's body to a distant graveyard. "Sujet" is plot as mediated through "point of view," "focus of narration." "Fable" is, so to speak, an abstraction from the "raw materials" of fiction (the author's experience, reading, etc.); the "sujet" is an abstraction from the "fable"; or, better, a sharper focusing of narrative vision.¹⁵

Fable-time is the total period spanned by the story. But "narrative" time corresponds to "sujet": it is reading-time, or "experienced time," which is controlled, of course, by the novelist, who passes over years in a few sentences but gives two long chapters to a dance or tea-party.¹⁶

The simplest form of characterization is naming. Each "appellation" is a kind of vivifying, animizing, individuating. The

allegoric or quasi-allegoric name appears in eighteenth-century comedy: Fielding's Allworthy and Thwackum, Witwoud, Mrs. Malaprop, Sir Benjamin Backbite, with their echo of Jonson, Bunyan, Spenser, and *Everyman*. But the subtler practice is a kind of onomatopoeic toning, at which novelists as alien as Dickens and Henry James, Balzac and Gogol, are alike adept: Pecksniff, Pumblechook, Rosa Dartle (dart; startle), Mr. and Miss Murdstone (murder + stony heart). Melville's Ahab and Ishmael show what can be done by literary—in this instance, Biblical—allusion as a form of characterizing economy.¹⁷

Modes of characterization are many. Older novelists like Scott introduce each of their major persons by a paragraph describing in detail the physical appearance and another analyzing the moral and psychological nature. But this form of block characterization may be reduced to an introductory label. Or the label may turn into a device of mimicry or pantomime—some mannerism, gesture, or saying, which, as in Dickens, recurs whenever the character reappears, serving as emblematic accompaniment. Mrs. Gummidge is "always thinking of the old un"; Uriah Heep has a word, "umble," and also a ritual gesture of the hands. Hawthorne sometimes characterizes by a literal emblem: Zenobia's red flower; Westervelt's brilliantly artificial teeth. The later James of *The Golden Bowl* has one character see another in symbolic terms.

There are static characterizations and dynamic or developmental. The latter seems particularly suited to the long novel like *War and Peace*, as it is obviously less suited to drama, with its confined narrative time. Drama (e.g., Ibsen) can gradually disclose how a character has become what it is; the novel can show the change occurring. "Flat" characterization (which commonly overlaps "static") presents a single trait, seen as the dominant or socially most obvious trait. It may be caricature or may be abstractive idealization. Classical drama (e.g., Racine) applies it to major characters. "Round" characterization, like "dynamic," requires space and emphasis; is obviously usable for characters focal for point of view or interest; hence is ordinarily combined with "flat" treatment of background figures—the "chorus."¹⁸

There is obviously some kind of connection between characterization (literary method) and characterology (theories of character, personality types). There are character-typologies, partly literary tradition, partly folk-anthropology, which are used by novelists. In nineteenth-century English and American fiction, one finds brunettes, male and female (Heathcliffe, Mr. Rochester; Becky Sharp; Maggie Tulliver; Zenobia, Miriam; Ligeia) and blondes (female instances—Amelia Sedley; Lucy Dean; Hilda, Priscilla, and Phoebe [Hawthorne]; Lady Rowena [Poe]). The blonde is the home-maker, unexciting but steady and sweet. The brunette—passionate, violent, mysterious, alluring, and untrustworthy—gathers up the characteristics of the Oriental, the Jewish, the Spanish, and the Italian as seen from the point of view of the “Anglo-Saxon.”¹⁹

In the novel, as in the drama, we have something like a repertory company: the hero, the heroine, the villain, the “character actors” (or “humor characters,” or comic relief). There are the juveniles and ingénues and the elderly (the father and mother, the maiden aunt, the duenna, or the nurse). The dramatic art of the Latin tradition (Plautus and Terence, the *commedia dell'arte*, Jonson, Molière) uses a strongly marked and traditional typology of *miles gloriosus*, miserly father, wily servant. But a great novelist like Dickens largely adopts and adapts the types of the eighteenth-century stage and novel; he initiates only two types—the helpless old and young, and the dreamers or fantasists (e.g., Tom Pinch, in *Chuzzlewit*).²⁰

Whatever the ultimate social or anthropological basis for literary character-types such as the blonde heroine and the brunette, the affective patterns can both be made out from the novels without documentary aid, and they have, commonly, literary-historical ancestries and lines—like the *femme fatale* and the dark Satanic hero studied by Mario Praz in *The Romantic Agony*.²¹

Attention to setting—the literary element of description as distinguished from narration—would at first thought seem to differentiate “fiction” from drama; our second thought, however, would rather make it a matter of period. Detailed attention to setting, whether in drama or the novel, is Romantic or

Realistic (i.e., nineteenth-century) rather than universal. In drama, the setting may be given verbally within the play (as in Shakespeare) or indicated by stage directions to scene designers and carpenters. Some "scenes" in Shakespeare are not to be placed, localized, at all.²² But within the novel, also, description of the setting is to a high degree variable. Jane Austen, like Fielding and Smollett, rarely describes either interiors or exteriors. The earlier novels of James, written under the influence of Balzac, are detailed for both houses and landscapes; the later novels substitute for how scenes look some symbolic rendering of how they totally *feel*.

Romantic description aims at establishing and maintaining a mood: plot and characterization are to be dominated by tone, effect—Mrs. Radcliffe and Poe are instances. Naturalistic description is a seeming documentation, offered in the interest of illusion (Defoe, Swift, Zola).

Setting is environment; and environments, especially domestic interiors, may be viewed as metonymic, or metaphoric, expressions of character. A man's house is an extension of himself. Describe it and you have described him. Balzac's detailed specifications for the house of the miser Grandet or the Pension Vauquer are neither irrelevant nor wasteful.²³ These houses express their owners; they affect, as atmosphere, those others who must live in them. The petty-bourgeois horror of the Pension is the immediate provocation of Rastignac's reaction and in another sense Vautrin's, while it measures the degradation of Goriot and affords constant contrast with the grandeurs alternately described.

Setting may be the expression of a human will. It may, if it is a natural setting, be a projection of the will. Says the self-analyst Amiel, "A landscape is a state of mind." Between man and nature there are obvious correlatives, most intensely (but not exclusively) felt by the Romantics. A stormy, tempestuous hero rushes out into the storm. A sunny disposition likes sunlight.

Again, setting may be the massive determinant—environment viewed as physical or social causation, something over which the individual has little individual control. This setting may be

Hardy's Egdon Heath or Lewis' Zenith. The great city (Paris, London, New York) is the most real of the characters in many a modern novel.

A story can be told through letters or journals. Or it can develop from anecdotes. The frame-story enclosing other stories is, historically, a bridge between anecdote and novel. In the *Decameron*, the stories are thematically grouped. In the *Canterbury Tales*, such grouping of themes (e.g., marriage) is brilliantly supplemented by the conception of characterization of teller through tale and of a set of characters with psychological and social tensions between them. The story-of-stories has a Romantic version as well: in Irving's *Tales of a Traveller* and Hoffmann's *Tales of the Serapion Brethren*. The Gothic novel, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, is a strange but undeniably effective group of separate tales united only loosely save by their common tone of horror.

Another device, currently out of practice, is the short story included within a novel (e.g., the "Man on the Hill's Tale" in *Tom Jones*; the "Confessions of a Beautiful Soul," in *Wilhelm Meister*). This can be seen as, on one level, the attempt to fill out the size of a work; on another, as the search for variety. Both ends seem better served in the Victorian three-decker novels, which keep two or three plot-sequences in alternate movement (on their revolving stage) and eventually show how they interlock—a compounding of plots already practiced by the Elizabethans, often brilliantly. Artistically handled, one plot parallels the other (in *Lear*) or serves as "comic relief" or parody and hence underlining of the other.

Telling a story in the first person (the *Ich-Erzählung*) is a method carefully to be weighed against others. Such a narrator must not, of course, be confounded with the author. The purpose and effect of narration in the first person vary. Sometimes the effect is to make the teller less sharp and "real" than other characters (*David Copperfield*). On the other hand, Moll Flanders and Huck Finn are central to their own stories. In "The House of Usher," Poe's first-person narration enables the reader to identify himself with Usher's neutral friend and to withdraw with him at the catastrophic finale; but the neurotic

or psychotic central character tells his own story in "Ligeia," "Berenice," and "The Tell-Tale Heart": the narrator, with whom we cannot identify, is making a confession, characterizing himself by what he reports and how he reports it.

Interesting is the question of how the story purports to exist. Some tales are elaborately introduced (*Castle of Otranto*, *Turn of the Screw*, *Scarlet Letter*): the story proper is given several degrees of detachment from its author or the reader by being represented as told to A by B, or as a manuscript entrusted to A by B, who perhaps wrote down the life-tragedy of C. Poe's first-person narratives are sometimes, ostensibly, dramatic monologues ("Amontillado"), sometimes the written confession of a tormented soul, avowedly unburdening himself ("The Tell-Tale Heart"). Often the assumption is not clear: in "Ligeia," are we to think of the narrator as talking to himself, rehearsing his story to refresh his own sense of horror?

The central problem of narrative method concerns the relation of the author to his work. From a play, the author is absent; he has disappeared behind it. But the epic poet tells a story as a professional story-teller, including his own comments within the poem, and giving the narration proper (as distinct from dialogue) in his own style.

The novelist can similarly tell a story without laying claim to having witnessed or participated in what he narrates. He can write in the third person, as the "omniscient author." This is undoubtedly the traditional and "natural" mode of narration. The author is present, at the side of his work, like the lecturer whose exposition accompanies the lantern slides or the documentary film.

There are two ways of deviating from that mixed mode of epic narration: one, which may be called the romantic-ironic, deliberately magnifies the role of the narrator, delights in violating any possible illusion that this is "life" and not "art," emphasizes the written literary character of the book. The founder of the line is Sterne, especially in *Tristram Shandy*; he is followed by Jean Paul Richter and Tieck in Germany; by Veltman and Gogol in Russia. *Tristram* might be called a novel about novel-writing, as might Gide's *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* and its derivative, *Point Counterpoint*. Thackeray's much-censured

management of *Vanity Fair*—his constant reminder that these characters are puppets he has manufactured—is doubtless a species of this literary irony: literature reminding itself that it is but literature.

The opposite goal for the novel is the “objective” or “dramatic” method, argued for and illustrated by Otto Ludwig in Germany, Flaubert and Maupassant in France, Henry James in England.²⁴ The exponents of this method, critics as well as artists, have sought to represent it as the only artistic method (a dogma which need not be accepted). It has been admirably expounded in Percy Lubbock’s *Craft of Fiction*, a Poetics of the novel based on the practice and the theory of Henry James.

“Objective” is the better term to use, since “dramatic” might mean “dialogue” or “action, behavior” (in contrast to the inner world of thought and feeling); but, quite clearly, it was the drama, the theater, which instigated these movements. Otto Ludwig formed his theories on the basis chiefly of Dickens, whose devices of pantomime and characterization by stock phrase were borrowed from the older eighteenth-century comedy and melodrama. Instead of narrating, Dickens’ impulse is always to *present*, in dialogue and pantomime; instead of telling us *about*, he *shows* us. Later modes of the novel learn from other and subtler theaters, as James did from that of Ibsen.²⁵

The objective method must not be thought of as limited to dialogue and reported behavior (James’ *The Awkward Age*; Hemingway’s “The Killers”). Such limitation would bring it into direct, and unequal, rivalry with the theater. Its triumphs have been in the presentation of that psychic life which the theater can handle but awkwardly. Its essentials are the voluntary absence from the novel of the “omniscient novelist” and, instead, the presence of a controlled “point of view.” James and Lubbock see the novel as giving us, in turn, “picture” and “drama,” by which they mean some character’s consciousness of what is going on (within and without) in distinction from a “scene,” which is partly at least in dialogue and which presents, in some detail, an important episode or encounter.²⁶ The “picture” is as “objective” as the “drama,” only it is the objective rendering of a specific subjectivity—that of one of the characters (Madame Bovary, or Strether), while the “drama” is the

objective rendering of speech and behavior. This theory admits of a shift of "point of view" (e.g., from the Prince to the Princess in the second half of *The Golden Bowl*), provided it be systematic. It also admits the author's use of a character within the novel, not unlike the author, who is either telling the narrative to some friends (Marlow, in Conrad's *Youth*) or the consciousness through which all is seen (Strether, in *The Ambassadors*): the insistence is upon the self-consistent objectivity of the novel. If the author is to be present other than "in solution," it must be by reducing himself or his representative to the same size and status as the other characters.²⁷

Integral to the objective method is presentation in time, the reader's living through the process with the characters. To some extent, "picture" and "drama" must always be supplemented by "summary" (the "five days elapse between Acts I and II" of the theater); but it should be minimal. The Victorian novel used to end with a chapter summarizing the subsequent careers, marriages, and deaths, of the principal characters; James, Howells, and their contemporaries put an end to this practice, which they viewed as an artistic blunder. According to objectivist theory, the author must never anticipate what lies ahead; he must unroll his chart, letting us see only a line at a time. Ramon Fernandez sets up a distinction between the *récit*, the narrative of what has already taken place, and is now being told, according to the laws of exposition and description, and the *roman*, or novel, which represents events taking place in time, according to the order of living production.²⁸

A characteristic technical device of the objective novel is what the Germans call "*erlebte Rede*," and the French "*le style indirect libre*" (Thibaudet) and "*le monologue intérieur*" (Dujardin); and in English, the phrase, "stream of consciousness," which goes back to William James, is the loose, inclusive correspondent.²⁹ Dujardin defines "interior monologue" as a device for the "direct introduction of the reader into the interior life of the character, without any interventions in the way of explanation or commentary on the part of the author . . ." and as "the expression of the most intimate thoughts, those which lie nearest the unconscious . . ." In *The Ambassadors*, says Lubbock, James does not "tell the story of Strether's mind; he

makes it tell itself, he dramatizes it.”³⁰ The history of these devices, and of their adumbrations in all modern literatures, only begins to be studied: the Shakespearean soliloquy is one ancestor; Sterne, applying Locke on the free association of ideas, is another; the “internal analysis,” i.e., the summarizing by the author of a character’s movement of thought and feeling, is a third.³¹

These observations on our third stratum, that of the fictional “world” (plot, characters, setting), have been illustrated chiefly from the novel but should be understood as applicable also to the drama, considered as a literary work. The fourth and last stratum, that of the “metaphysical qualities,” we have viewed as closely related to the “world,” as equivalent to the “attitude towards life” or *tone* implicit in the world; but these qualities will recur for closer attention in our treatment of Evaluation.