

**THE SEDUCTIVE FALLACY:  
WOMEN AND FASCISM IN BRITISH DOMESTIC FICTION**

by

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THE SEDUCTIVE FALLACY:  
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“The Seductive Fallacy” provides a literary focus for feminist critiques of fascist gender and sexuality. It explores two fascist and three anti-fascist novels—Wyndham Lewis’ The Revenge for Love (1937), Olive Hawks’ What Hope for Green Street? (1945), Virginia Woolf’s The Years (1937), Phyllis Bottome’s The Mortal Storm (1938) and The Lifeline (1946)—that illuminate British domestic fiction’s rhetorical range in the prolonged crisis of liberal hegemony after World War I. Across political purposes and a range of readerships and styles, they illuminate the genre’s efficacy to theorize modern women’s social, political, and cultural agency. In particular, the dissertation’s critical readings of these novels explore fascism’s emergence within liberal democracies.

Juxtaposing Lewis and Hawks with literature from the archives of the British Union of Fascists (BUF), the first two chapters stress fascism’s production and consumption of political fantasies prevalent throughout the British novel’s humanist tradition, especially notions of women’s agency inscribed in the traditions of nineteenth- and twentieth-century domestic literature. The last two chapters highlight and evaluate Bottome’s and Woolf’s divergent critical representations of fascist domesticity. The dissertation concludes that Woolf’s anti-humanist feminist domestic fiction better enables readers to perceive the irreducible modernity of fascism.

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## INTRODUCTION

My title refers to a “seductive fallacy” that understands fascism as a primitive and foreign (German or Italian) cultural phenomenon in absolute opposition to British liberal democracy. Cold War geopolitics demanded the perception of radical differences between (benevolent) British racism and empire from continental European forms, and emphasized fascism’s historical tendency to congeal into totalitarianism. Although well-intended, this fallacy is seductive, dangerously engendering intellectual and political complacency. It obscures the presence and persistence of fascist values that permeated politics and culture to facilitate race, gender, and sexual discrimination in Britain.

Cultural critics, as Erin Carlston has noted, have written eloquently about the “numerous manifestations of fascist influence on European political, cultural, and intellectual life between the wars,” and on the various forms of theater, film, and literature that were important in establishing the consent necessary for the evolution of fascist parties into totalitarian dictatorships (10).<sup>1</sup> In making explicit the connections between official fascist doctrine and various literary and artistic movements, they have produced important questions about the “aesthetic” and cultural nature of twentieth-century politics in general.

The overt aestheticization of political forums and processes was fascism’s real “innovation.” Walter Benjamin argued in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical

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<sup>1</sup> See Robert Soucy, Fascism in France: The Case of Maurice Barrès (Berkeley: U of California P, 1972); Robert Soucy, Fascist Intellectual: Drieu La Rochelle (Berkeley: U of California P, 1979); David Carroll, French Literary Fascism (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995); Alice Yaeger Kaplan, Reproductions of Banality: Fascism, Literature, and French Intellectual Life (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986); Walter Adamson, Avant-Garde Florence: From Modernism to Fascism (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993); Walter Adamson, “The Culture of Italian Fascism and the Fascist Crisis of Modernity: The Case of *Il Sevaggio*,” Journal of Contemporary History 30 (1995): 555 – 75; George L. Mosse, The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich (New York: The Universal Library, Grosset & Dunlap, 1964); Jeffrey T. Schnapp, “Border Crossings: Italian/German Peregrinations of the *Theater of Totality*,” Critical Inquiry 21 (Autumn 1994): 80 - 123; Marcia Landy, Fascism in Film: The Italian Commercial Cinema, 1931-1943 (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986); and Mary Ann Frese Witt, “Fascist Discourse and Pirandellian Theater,” South Atlantic Quarterly 91. 2 (Spring 1992): 303 – 31.

Reproduction” that fascism renders politics aesthetic, substituting the masses’ demand for rights with a fulfillment of their desire for expression (241). Alice Kaplan echoes his observation, explaining that “fascism can be characterized formally as an entry of aesthetic criteria into the political and economic realms” (26).

Although keenly emphasizing the aesthetic nature of inter-war politics, studies of British (or expatriate American) writers have tended to focus on the relationships between writers’ political activities (e.g., W.B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis) and fascist regimes outside England. In related projects, writers such as W.H. Auden, Christopher Isherwood, Stephen Spender, and C. Day Lewis, have appeared as the heroic (but also problematic) intellectuals fighting against Franco during the Spanish Civil War.<sup>2</sup> This focus, in eliding fascism’s presence in Britain, tempts us to regard it primarily as a foreign influence.<sup>3</sup>

Some historical and social aspects, however, make it much more difficult to posit the “otherness” of fascism in Britain. Not only the dispossessed, but leading establishment aristocrats comprised a considerable portion of the BUF constituency.<sup>4</sup> In his journal, The Week, Claude Cockburn revealed a group of wealthy powerful Britons who sympathized with Hitler

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<sup>2</sup> Auden wrote in the Foreword to The Orators, “My name on the title-page seems a pseudonym for someone else, someone talented but near the border of sanity, who might well, in a year or two, become a Nazi.” In 1934, Christopher Isherwood praised the new Youth Movements in Germany as “brave and worthy citizens” in “The Youth Movement in the New Germany,” Action, Dec. 10, 1931. On these writers, see Valentine Cunningham, British Writers of the Thirties (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> John Weiss claims that “The lower middle class was too well off and too liberal to supply Mosley with significant votes—no fascist ever sat in Parliament” (81). Colin Cross also explains, “Classically, Fascism grows from a discontented lower middle class. But in the mid-1930s the bulk of the British lower middle classes was in a heyday of prosperity” (130).

<sup>4</sup> Most influential were the newspaper baron Lord Rothermere, the socialite Lady Diana Guinness, née Mitford (later Mosley’s wife), Lucy Houston (Lady Byron), and Oswald Mosley himself. For a fuller discussion of aristocratic influence on the BUF, see Robert Skidelsky, Oswald Mosley.

(the “Cliveden Set”).<sup>5</sup> Oswald Mosley’s retrospective accounts of the British Union’s appeal during the inter-war period also refer to a prevalent middle-class fear of *déclassament*.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, historical research shows that some proto-fascist neo-Romantic youth movements in Germany took their cue from the structure of English public schools—institutions crucial for reproducing an upper middle-class dominated British social order. The program of the Wandervögel, for instance, was developed by Hermann Lietz, a pedagogue who transplanted the English public school emphasis on militarism and physical fitness in a German setting. Lietz substituted Germanic ideology in lieu of English claims to imperial superiority.<sup>7</sup> As World War II accelerated and both nations were rushing to mobilize warfare economies, officials of the Third Reich admired the impact of Britain’s official propaganda on women; the British government imposed compulsory work for women in munitions factories with amazingly little protest.<sup>8</sup> British women even volunteered hard labor in rural areas and para-military apparatuses. The Nazis’ admiration for the British government’s ability to mobilize women for the military state attests to similar patriarchal practices and institutions across nations and political poles.

We can locate the force of the seductive fallacy nonetheless in the British Union of Fascists’ (BUF) eventual demise. In 1932, Oswald Mosley founded the BUF after attempting to establish two earlier proto-fascist incarnations, the New Party and the Action Party. The party never posed a powerful threat to parliamentary politics. Most historians estimate 50,000

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<sup>5</sup> See Janet Montefiore, Men and Women Writers of the 1930s: The Dangerous Flood of History (New York: Routledge, 1996) 37 - 8.

<sup>6</sup> Oswald Mosley writes in My Life, “In the affluent society, a man who has a full plate whisked away from in front of him can be quicker to react than the down-and-out of the pre-war period who was accustomed to protracted conditions of unemployment and poverty. It is the ruined middle class which makes revolutions, and in pre-war terms nearly everyone is middle class now” (278).

<sup>7</sup> The model for Lietz was the public school at Abbotsholme, which emphasized the production of the imperial classes; “Education Equals Empire” was one of its mantras” (Mosse, Nationalism 157 – 60).

<sup>8</sup> See Timothy Mason, “Women in Germany 1925-1940: Family, Welfare and Work. Conclusion.”

members at the peak of the BUF's popularity in 1934, after which memberships began to plummet. By the time the National Government issued Regulation 18B to outlaw the BUF in 1940, the numbers had already dwindled considerably.<sup>9</sup> And although BUF rhetoric was full of chauvinistic imperial sloganeering, many patriots considered official fascism "un-British," in part because the BUF blatantly borrowed designs for icons, uniforms, and banners from the German and Italian regimes. Many historians of British fascism have argued that the BUF's ultimate failure was destined by Britain's overall continuing economic prosperity and imperial domination despite the Depression.

In line with this argument, some political theorists have suggested that fascism requires the peculiar circumstances of a developing economy in which the "industrializing elite cannot eliminate or neutralize the traditional elites" (Gregor 188). The pressure to industrialize quickly and satisfy two sets of elites gave birth historically to "syncretic" or "dual" governments.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the syncretic features of official fascist regimes such as those in Italy and Germany resulted partly from economies struggling to industrialize while appeasing the existent ruling classes. The European fascisms that succeeded in gaining state control were undeniably fueled by their nations' inferior positions in the imperial race.<sup>11</sup> Since dual governments retain the class hierarchy already in place even as they modernize economically, we might describe the process

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Skidelsky in Oswald Mosley has argued that had the BUF not been outlawed by Regulation 18B, it might have experienced an upswing on its pacifist platform.

<sup>10</sup> See A.F.K. Organski on Italian fascism as a syncretic governments that compromised between industrial and agrarian elites in The Stages of Political Development (New York: Knopf, 1965).

<sup>11</sup> Barbara Spackman discusses the cultural climate that increasingly associated national health with imperial "vigor" in Italy in the years just prior to the fascist regime. She cites Pasquale Turiello, who claims that "Italy has suffered from '*muliebrita politica*' since the Risorgimento . . . a womanliness that consists in a languid weakness that has caused the nation to give in too easily to other nations, in particular to France, and to have passed up the opportunity to acquire colonies" (75). See also E. J. Feuchtwanger's Introduction to Upheaval and Continuity: A Century of German History (Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1974) for an account of how racialism contributed to the process of rapid industrialization in Germany in the early twentieth century.

as a “revolution from above.”<sup>12</sup> Britain in contrast was during the 1930s a well-developed, even leading, economy.

In fact, a syncretic government and civil society had already existed in Britain, partly due to its precedence in modern imperialism and the industrial revolution.<sup>13</sup> Tom Nairn claims that England long cultivated a “transitional” state that similarly appeased two sets of elites: “Neither feudal nor modern, it remained obstinately and successfully intermediate” (19). Moreover, the dual industrial and agrarian fronts occasionally combined to guard their common interests against the working classes. Nairn continues, “There is little doubt that this is the key to understanding the class composition of modern English civil society, for the pattern lasted from the 1840s until after the Second World War” (29).

In England’s “rule from above,” parliamentary apparatuses of representation helped create the unusual conservatism of the English working class: “The representative mechanism converted real class inequality into the abstract egalitarianism of citizens, individual egoisms into an impersonal collective will, what would otherwise be chaos into a new state legitimacy” (Nairn 24). These apparatuses also helped maintain middle-class equivocation vis-à-vis democratic practices and imperialism. Daniel Bivona attributes the prevalence of middle-class imperial jingoism in the late nineteenth century to their fear of national decline: “The era of unlimited imperial competition had begun, and with it, the ambivalence of the British middle-class public toward the exercise of government power would be increasingly resolved in a direction

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<sup>12</sup> See Barrington Moore, Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966) for more on this political effect.

<sup>13</sup> Works consulted for British history throughout this introduction include: George Dangerfield, The Strange Death of Liberal England, 1910-1914 (New York: Capricorn, 1961); T. K. Derry, A Short Economic History of Britain (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1965); R. Palme Dutt, The Crisis of Britain and the British Empire (New York: International Publishers, 1953); Eric Hobsbawm, Industry and Empire: The Birth of the Industrial Revolution (New York: Penguin, 1999); R. F. Holland, Britain and the Commonwealth Alliance 1918-1939 (London: Macmillan, 1981); Tom Nairn, The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism (London: NLB, 1977); and David Thomson, England in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Penguin, 1979).

favorable, not only to the ideals of ‘social efficiency’ at home, but to expansionism and the efficient—and deadly—exercise of military force abroad” (Bivona 21).

The period re-exposed glaring signs of political and economic crisis already seriously in effect before World War I. England’s exports—the traditional industries of steel, iron, textiles, and coal—began to experience sharpened competition from the U.S., continental Europe, and Japan. One result of international competition was high unemployment and an eight-fold jump in Labour Party membership from 1910 to 1922. The 1926 General Strike, which occurred more than ten years after its foundations had been laid, put to rest the Liberal Party’s hold on the Left.<sup>14</sup> In common with Germany and Italy, massive unemployment bred resentment and polarized political interests between the classes, and between men and women. In the inter-war era, liberalism’s internal contradictions—its monopoly over definitions of justice and liberty, and its exclusion of women and the working class from exercising them—surfaced more sharply than ever.

In the attempt to specify the conditions of fascism’s emergence in leading but insecure liberal democracies, I juxtapose writing in the BUF archives with both canonical and obscure inter-war literary critiques of liberalism. I focus on their representations of mass politics, crises of gender and sexuality, biopolitical surveillance, economic depression, and the decline of empire. These were central concerns for writers Right and Left, realist and modernist, and pro- and anti-fascist. In the process, I reveal ideological features that liberalism paradoxically shares with the fascism it sought to counter, thereby extending critical lines of inquiry that have shown the instrumental significance of British-led discourses of race, sexuality, and class for both British imperialism and continental fascism. In particular, I attend to British fascism’s “native”

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<sup>14</sup> See George Dangerfield, The Strange Death of Liberal England, 1910-1914 (New York: Capricorn, 1961).

elements by stressing its incorporation of and influence on political fantasies prevalent in British cultural production.

The British cultural and political scenes during this era evince a thick web of intersecting fascist intellectual vectors. British fascism managed to attract some of the era's most influential writers and politicians. When Mosley founded the proto-fascist New Party, the Marxist John Strachey left the Labour Party to help lead, the diplomat Harold Nicolson founded and edited its press organ, the journal Action, and Christopher Isherwood contributed to it, as did Vita Sackville-West, Nicolson's wife and the inspiration for Virginia Woolf's novel Orlando (1928). Later, the British Union Quarterly published Wyndham Lewis.<sup>15</sup> In The Road to Wigan Pier (1937), George Orwell observed that in the throes of the Slump, masses of desperate unemployed and middle-class Britons were becoming dangerously prone to fascist politics. But he also warned that fascism was growing in venues less likely than those of the official fascist party. Literary writers were assembling an "underlying feeling of fascism" more subtly and effectively: "Some such attitude is already quite clearly discernible in writers like Pound, Wyndham Lewis, Roy Campbell, etc. . . in certain popular novelists and even, if one looks below the surface, in superior conservative highbrows like Eliot and his countless followers" (Orwell 213). The interwar literary scene was so interconnected that many writers could not claim anti-fascist "purity" despite subsequent attempts to elucidate positions and opinions. Despite persistent myths of British individualism, doubts about the oppositional nature of brutal fascism and humanist civilization (of which imperialism was one facet) emerge in the 30s Leftist works of Orwell, Auden, Spender, and Woolf.

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<sup>15</sup> I discuss Wyndham Lewis, "'Left Wings' and the C3 Mind," The British Union Quarterly Jan.-Apr. 1937 in Chapter 1.

In light of such ambiguities, my purpose is not to indict individual writers biographically. Instead, I repeatedly draw attention to these intersections to explore how fascism had captured the imagination of many prominent and original cultural producers.

In Britain, fascism appealed much more to men than it did to women. Mosley expressly stated in The Greater Britain that the fascist movement was “a microcosm of a national manhood reborn” (53). Winifred Holtby noted in 1934 that Mosley’s national program showed little departure from what was “characteristic of that Fascist inclination to dream of an eclectic Olympus of he-men . . . separated sharply from all lower forms of being” (Berry 84). I focus, however, on how British fascism also concerned itself with women’s enfranchisement and professionalization in the inter-war era. I foreground the gendered elements of a deep seated, powerful counterrevolutionary tradition of bourgeois hegemony important for British fascist rhetoric.

Women made up 20 – 33% of total BUF membership, showing that fascism could indeed appeal to women in industrialized nations (Durham 25). By studying fascism in the British context, I foreground fascist tactics and strategies addressing “modern” women, i.e., enfranchised women in a powerful imperial liberal democracy. In this context, the following facts are significant. The first Fascist party in Britain, the British Fascisti, was founded in 1923 by Rotha Linton-Olman, who served in the Women’s Reserve Ambulance during World War I and attempted to incorporate military exercises for women (Durham 25). And more than the parties in Germany or Italy, the BUF attempted to appeal to feminist nationalists, such as former Suffragettes who presumably had a stake in “practical citizenship,” playing on the achievement of creative individuality and their part in developing a healthy national population to recruit

women (Durham 44-5).<sup>16</sup> Therefore, in contrast to many political studies that consider gender and fascism together, I consider fascism not as a mode of “phallic warfare,” but as an active interpolation of multiple gendered positions within the nation. Putatively “feminine” concerns were in many ways at the heart of the fascist imagination. Nevertheless, fascists revolted against the liberal authorization of women over domestic space and organization, enacting strategies of containment for their ever increasing political, cultural, and economic demands.

Many factors contributed to a political and literary focus on domestic discourse in inter-war Britain overall. Between the wars, the propaganda campaign that had lured women into wage labor and the war effort was reversed to compel them back into the home. Alison Light argues that during the period, national perception had shifted to a type “at once less imperial and more inward-looking, more domestic and more private—and, in terms of pre-war standards, more ‘feminine’,” partly since by the 1930s, “the memory of the First World War had then begun to erode” (8).<sup>17</sup>

We can nonetheless detect in the inter-war period’s various official and unofficial rhetorics of “home” a massive shift that diverges from earlier incarnations in a socius organized by Victorian private patriarchy. The domestic home became a vexed site of fevered literary

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<sup>16</sup> Julie Gottlieb further suggests that in addition to trench soldiers, militant ex-suffragist women were collectively disillusioned with parliamentary politics in this period. The fascists appealed to both groups by acknowledging their disappointment with parliamentary politics: “The BUF’s ex-suffragettes had all been unsuccessful in their bids to be elected to Parliament, and felt first hand the disappointment that arose from the failure of any suffrage campaigner to benefit from the constitutional right they had fought for so tirelessly. . . they were all members of one of the main political parties before they opted for the abolition of the entire decadent party system and the over-throw of ‘Financial Democracy.’ While none had been active in a feminist organisation during the inter-war period, each identified the fulfillment of her own national service-oriented feminism in fascism” (156). For discussions of “feminist fascism” in Italy and Germany, see Barbara Spackman, Fascist Virilities: Rhetoric, Ideology, and Social Fantasy in Italy (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996); Victoria DeGrazia, How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945 (Berkeley: U of California P) 1992; and Leila G. Rupp, “Mother of the Volk: The Image of Women in Nazi Ideology” Signs. 3:21 (Winter 1977): 362-379.

<sup>17</sup> Light further notes that this “inward” turn in national perception reached its apex in World War II propaganda, where the focus on the home front served to highlight the contrast between a domestic and “decent” England and the brutally imperious dictatorships (9).

debate and mass political contestations due to cataclysmic historical events that changed the British imagination of domestic space. On one hand, skepticism marked the new views of “home” and its gendering functions. The debacles of the Boer War and World War I, and women’s massive entry into wage labor had placed Victorian notions of masculinity and femininity in severe crisis. Paul Fussell notes furthermore returning soldiers’ disillusionment with the “home front” in which peacetime prosperity was regarded as traitorous to the younger generation’s male camaraderie effected by trench warfare.<sup>18</sup> In his autobiographical account Blasting and Bombardiering, Wyndham Lewis also argues that the war had obliterated the notion of home as a private haven to create a chasm between former trench soldiers and the civilians who had been screened from (or actively forgot) the horror of modern war.

The BUF profited from this chasm, arguing repeatedly that the “old women” and “daddies” of Parliament were unable to lead the nation as effectively as would those familiar with the devastation of war.<sup>19</sup> Fascists focused on the nuclear family and home as a space that always potentially degenerates and regresses from national destiny. It appears at times that British fascism attempted to blot out the legacy of the nineteenth-century private patriarchal family altogether, combining calls for a feudal return to guild socialism on one hand, and a futurist emphasis on the equalizing powers of technology and machines on the other. As its ambiguous “other,” the domestic scene acted at times as the paranoid object of fascist scrutiny and judgment.

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<sup>18</sup> See Paul Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory (London: Oxford UP, 1975).

<sup>19</sup> See Chapter 2 for elaboration on the anti-patriarchal dimensions of British fascist propaganda.

Nevertheless, fascism prioritized issues of gender and sexuality in politics, which as Carlston has noted is one of its major legacies for post-World War II politics as a whole.<sup>20</sup> The dissolution of private patriarchy acted as a convenient scapegoat for political and economic crises and traumatic shifts in culture. Various political camps lamented the “disappearance” of the domestic woman and achieved consensus for the belief that women in non-domestic work “emasculated” men. This transformation of the non-domestic woman into a threatening figure was central in inter-war political rhetoric across Europe. Claudia Koonz observes that in inter-war Germany, “Progress for women occurred in the context of trench warfare for soldiers, and starvation, deprivation, social dislocation, and defeat for society as a whole” (26).

In England between the wars, the agitation of “surplus women” accelerated women’s progress in labor and politics. In reaction, fascist rhetoric, in contradiction with some of its other elements, represented domestic space as an integral component of the state and retained bourgeois domestic ideology’s valorization of the gendered home to recreate means to pathologize women while insisting on their authority within a gender division of labor.

In view of this historical and political backdrop, Peter Gay and Alice Kaplan have both pinpointed some prevalent features of German and Italian proto-fascist novels. The narratives feature a young male protagonist who, alienated by his surroundings, rebels against social authority (often represented in paternal figures) and experiences a simultaneous compulsion/repulsion toward feminine figures. Women and the urban settings are specifically associated with the emasculating degeneration of peacetime. Kaplan attributes the often ironic, self-conscious narrative styles to the texts’ compulsion toward more “masculine action” and presence—namely, catastrophe and apocalypse. Marinetti, for instance referred to his proto-

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<sup>20</sup> Gender and sexuality “have emerged as the privileged sites of political discourses both reactionary and progressive” (Carlston 191).

fascist novel *Mafarka* as a willful “incest of genres.” Drieu la Rochelle, the French proto-fascist novelist, referred to contemporary novels as sterile and bourgeois, and endorsed a populist practice of literary language that could revitalize society spiritually and sensually.

In marked contrast, the only two novels included in the largest University-based BUF archives are by women, and inscribe women’s political concerns. The protagonist of The Mill (1965), a semi-autobiographical novel by Nellie Driver is a woman leader in the “Millstone” (Nelson, Lancashire) BUF branch, Nora Hartley, who agitates on behalf of exploited weavers.<sup>21</sup> The other is a domestic novel by Olive Hawks (the BUF’s Chief Woman Organizer), What Hope for Green Street? (1946), the subject of my second chapter.<sup>22</sup> In addition, Wyndham Lewis’ The Revenge for Love (1937), the subject of my first chapter, is an authoritative defense of fascism for modern women readers. I contend that fascism’s emergence in Britain as an established liberal democracy finds a powerful medium in domestic fiction. These novels evince deliberate appeals to women *as* political, economic, and familial subjects rather than glorifying figures of military virility.

These appeals are paradoxical for several reasons. Realist novels in nineteenth-century Britain were a key factor in successfully establishing consent to liberal governance. In particular, the dynamic history of British domestic fiction helped establish bourgeois hegemony and consent to these apparatuses.<sup>23</sup> The domestic novel, according to Vineta Colby, acted primarily as “an alternative to the romantic ideal” and therefore “was an effort, relatively short-lived but vigorous while it lasted” (Colby 38). Certainly, its status as serious fiction peaked in the mid- to late-

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<sup>21</sup> Nellie Driver, The Mill: Fictionalisation of Her Story as Told in From the Shadows of Exile. In the Rawnsley Collection at the University of Bradford, UK.

<sup>22</sup> In the BUF collection at the University of Sheffield, UK, and at the British Library.

<sup>23</sup> See Armstrong’s Introduction to Desire and Domestic Fiction.

nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the inter-war era revived its social relevance as a medium for defenses of and challenges to liberalism. Despite its decreasing prestige in twentieth century literary critical apparatuses, the domestic novel was still a rich site for revisionary explorations of political and economic agency under liberalism.

During the interwar period, literary criticism proliferated outside the university and exclusive journals. For instance, readers could access book reviews and discussions in a new array of magazines and library subscriptions. As a result, women writers had many more opportunities to publish and make an impact on the cultural imagination bypassing traditional critical organs. In view of “middlebrow” and “lowbrow” texts’ growing popularity, writers like Aldous Huxley, Wyndham Lewis, and Q.D. Leavis argued against the cultural and political ills of “democratic” access to art. For Lewis, fascism provided one medium to articulate his antagonism against women’s literary production and the massification of art. Associating these artistic concerns with movements in the political sphere, he endorses fascism as a cultural defense against degenerate feminist and communist influences.

In analyzing Lewis’ aestheticization of politics, I access feminist literary histories that have tapped into the gendered terms under which writers worked during this period, and that have considered how changes in the literary market affected political understanding. Critics like Anthea Trodd, Nicole Beaman, and Maroula Joannou have shown how gendered literary market conditions in the inter-war era inflected modernist writers and their politics. I connect Lewis’ pathologization of Bloomsbury “decadence” in particular to the BUF’s cultural criticism to show how his modernism echoes, spurs, and embeds fascist assumptions about gender, sexuality, and literary production.

Lewis suggests that women's writing along with film and communist aesthetics threaten British imperial supremacy and in turn the working class. Therefore, many critics have interpreted his unexpected valorization of the domestic woman in The Revenge for Love as a self-ironic undermining of a modernism/fascism nexus. On the contrary, I argue that his unusual occupation of domestic fiction is entirely consistent with his anti-feminist view of literary production, and with fascist critiques of the free market's cultural effects.

Phyllis Bottome was a "middlebrow" writer who reenergized domestic fiction for anti-fascist purposes. In line with the genre's focus on sexuality and disciplinary power, her novels The Mortal Storm (1938) and The Lifeline (1945) represent fascism as a sexual perversion that deviates from liberal democracy based on individual rights, reason, and justice. She rhetorically aligns its illegitimate lack of consistency and rationality with "femininity" and homosexuality. Women are implicated as especially prone to charisma in their lower stakes in the Enlightenment discourse of reason. The "otherness" of fascism is also aligned with homosexuality in the belief that it celebrates sublimated homosexual camaraderie and figures of military virility.<sup>24</sup> She shares this rhetoric with some of the most rigorous psychoanalytic anti-fascist critiques such as Theodor Adorno's Minima Moralia and Sigmund Freud's Moses and Monotheism.<sup>25</sup> Her narrative solutions inscribe figures of female doctors to assert liberal "biopolitics" as a strong counter to fascist psychological and economic deviations.

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<sup>24</sup> For instance, Claudia Koonz retains the paradigm of seduction to explain Hitler's employment of mass media and religious discourse to "court" Germany (224-5). About the apparent enthusiasm of German Catholic women after the Concordat was signed by Hitler and the Pope (1933), she writes, "But the courtship between a powerful man and frightened women was bound to end in a mismatch, for the partners were too unequal, and negotiations for the marriage contract broke down" (Koonz 278). Merry Pawlowski also employs the paradigm of seduction when she argues, "Nor was Woolf easily seduced by a dictator's charm" (9).

<sup>25</sup> I discuss these works in Chapter 2. See also Andrew Hewitt, Political Inversions : Homosexuality, Fascism, and the Modernist Imaginary (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996) for an analysis of Adorno's work in these terms.

I incorporate throughout the dissertation the historical work of Jacques Donzelot and Michel Foucault, who describe biopolitics as the ubiquitous practices of conformity and compulsion that police individuals as bodies reflecting the quality of national populations. Their analyses suggest that biopolitics materialized some of its potential effects in the liberal state's prioritization of medical and psychiatric authority, but also in the fascist state's surveillance of families and reproduction. I explore how fascism and liberalism both employ a modern biopolitical paradigm to connect women to modernity.

Hawks calls for domestic women's authority over family, health, medicine, and sexuality as proxies of the racist imperial nation, a move that exposes the fascist coalescence of biopolitics and genocide, foregrounding the utopia of a disciplinary society in common with liberalism.<sup>26</sup> She and Bottome unexpectedly share a political and economic disciplinary logic that articulates the value of women's domestic labor for the imperial nation. I trace that logic in examples of nineteenth-century domestic fiction. Domestic labor in counterrevolutionary texts such as Jane Eyre and North and South is supposed to fulfill women's deepest domestic desires and strengthen the nation simultaneously, prefiguring a direct political route for women through their domestic identity.

That modernists centrally opposed Victorian fiction is a common literary critical given. Lewis and Woolf were no exceptions, deploying modernist irony in their literary criticism and fictional works toward nineteenth-century domestic novels and their heroines. In my analysis, I qualify and differentiate their practices of irony.

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<sup>26</sup> Foucault and Donzelot suggest the contradictory coincidence of idealism, fascism, liberalism, and genocide. In "Sade: Sergeant of Sex," Foucault writes, "The Nazis were charwomen in the bad sense of the term. They worked with brooms and dusters, wanting to purge society of everything they considered unsanitary, dusty, filthy; syphilitics, homosexuals, Jews, those of impure blood, Blacks, the insane. It's the foul petit bourgeois dream of racial hygiene that underlies the Nazi dream." Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley et al. (New York: The New Press, 1998) 226.

Lewis actually enacts the domestic heroine's characteristic sublimation of satirical irony in order to indict the inter-war political scene. The Revenge for Love and Hawks' What Hope for Green Street eventually re-aim their satire to justify women's confinement to domestic labor and to suggest their abnegation of political agency. Despite their ostensible critiques of the private patriarchal family, both writers reveal fascism's patriarchal investment in women's domestic identity.

Woolf's irony toward domestic heroines in The Years is both more consistent and historically analytic. She indicts not only domestic women's capitulation to private patriarchy but also public patriarchal forms of women's domestic labor, especially philanthropy and social reform, that compelled some powerful biopolitical feminist articulations in the inter-war era (including Bottome's). And whereas Lewis and Hawks suggest women's wholesale renunciation of political and cultural agency in their ambivalent and ironic practices of domestic fiction, Woolf renews the genre's focus on domestic space and inter-generational relationships to suggest the creation of wider and different political contexts for the emergence of women's agency.

I imply in this contrast Woolf's place in a wider constellation of feminist revolts against domestic literature. Not only Woolf, but also Elizabeth Bowen, Sylvia Townsend-Warner, and Katharine Mansfield highlight liberalism's patriarchal marginalization of women as a central tenet of capitalist liberal hegemony. In distinguishing Woolf's modernism from Lewis', I rely on feminist work in modernist studies that in the last twenty-five years has emphasized women's challenges to patriarchal language and power as a central modernist concern. Feminist critics like Bonnie Kime Scott, Marianne de Koven, Shari Benstock, and many others usefully distinguish between "masculinist" and "feminist" strains of modernist writing.

## **Materials and Methodology**

My primary materials are domestic novels that expose fascism's claims to speak and act on women's behalf. I specify how each novel works with and against modern theories of the state, biopolitics, empire, economics, and family by selectively echoing and disavowing nineteenth-century domestic fiction's established tropes and narrative processes. Studying 1930s and 40s British cultural production and politics through this genre reveals fascism's syncretic impulses as well as the wide disparity between humanist and anti-humanist critiques of fascism.

Furthermore, I attempt to displace the seductive fallacy's implication that women are susceptible to "irrational" political forms and the fascist leader's "sexual charisma" by showing that in the British context, fascism appropriated prevalent features of the British novel's liberal humanist tradition. Fascism and liberalism intersect in their political and literary deployment of domesticity, and share gendered political fantasies inscribed in the traditions of nineteenth and twentieth-century domestic fiction. In particular, I emphasize the domestic literary enlistment of women for (rather than their exclusion from) modern biopolitics. Invoking a Foucauldian view of liberalism throughout, I show that anti-humanist feminist writing, acknowledging the discursive nature of sexuality, creates far more promising anti-fascist strategies.

## **Chapter One**

Although Lewis has been overlooked by canon formation, his importance in the development of British modernist art, literature, and theory cannot be underestimated. His work gives us the opportunity to detect fascist reverberations in a wider range of British modernist writing. In the first chapter, I concentrate on his most critically acclaimed novel, The Revenge for Love (1937), an explicitly pedagogical project that teaches its audience to read domestic fiction satirically for the political benefit of women. Part of that lesson mobilizes the forms of

irony already perfected in eighteenth and nineteenth-century domestic fiction's satirical representations of patriarchal power (Austen is the exemplar).

This mode of satire, however, incorporates a sentimental appraisal of domestic women that the modernist reader must disavow. A turn in Lewis' narrative redirects the satiric eye toward the domestic protagonist to characterize her sentimentality as a politically degenerate force, and her body as a dehumanized machine. Although he valorizes her political perception, he denies the possibility of political or sexual equality. The Revenge for Love dissolves the idea of the "couple" and the family bounded by the contractual relations inherent to domestic fiction's humanist vision of love, finally to subordinate the domestic woman.

Lewis shares this specific ambiguity of narrative irony with Hawks. Together they comprise a recognizable category of "fascist domestic fiction." Both link Britain's increasingly precarious domination of the international market and "dissolution" of national culture to the incompetence of (patriarchal) liberal domestic ideology, and Jewish and communist influence. Both locate their satirical objects in the liberal capitalist split between private and public spheres, the failure of the private patriarchal leadership of the family, and the communist party's machinations. Finally, both foreground the disorder of the inter-war working-class domestic scene, and shore up women's ethical purity attributed in part to their distance from the public sphere. In my analysis of Lewis' writing, however, I specify an endorsement of fascism that is inextricably tied to modernist and literary theoretical concerns.

## **Chapter Two**

I extend my observations about fascist irony by juxtaposing Olive Hawks' What Hope for Green Street? (1945) with BUF propaganda. In so doing, I call attention to the deployment of satirical critique and domestic personas in fascist political writing. Hawks, and official BUF

rhetoric as a whole, justifies fascism as a satirical critique on behalf of the British women, even as it directs irony against progressive literary representations of women's authority under liberal democracy.

In her satire of the urban working-class domestic scene, moreover, Hawks diverges from Lewis in two important ways and in the process, exposes British fascism's cultural breadth. In creating a reactionary domestic novel, she employs not only the British tradition of "conservative Juvenalian" satire consistent with Lewis', but also that of "radical political" satire to invoke a populist dimension. Second, Hawks, in line with the official British fascist imagination, represents the family as a site for racial fortification, and an incitement to and proof of national health. In ways that would probably have repulsed Lewis, Hawks proposes a greater realm of female authority in the state with a justification of "biopolitics."

In so doing, she incorporates (rather than repels) the language of competing oppositional political movements, socialism and materialist feminism, in her discussion of domestic labor.<sup>27</sup> I show that far from exhibiting nostalgia for the traditional roles of womanhood, her claims take advantage of contemporary feminist debates over the value of domestic labor. This situation requires a fundamental shift in critical conceptions of women and fascism. Namely, rather than victims of hypnotic seduction or overt domination, women had often very complex stakes in fascism and its ability to mobilize discourses across the modern political spectrum.

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<sup>27</sup> Organized groups for anti-fascism were predominantly communist, socialist, or feminist. Seline Cooper, Women Against War and Fascism British delegate to the conference in Paris, 1934 was a correspondent for the Daily Worker and the Daily Herald, reporting on the specific effects of repression in Nazi Germany on women. See Jill Liddington's The Life and Times of a Respectable Rebel: Selina Cooper (1864-1946) (London : Virago, 1984) and Sue Bruley, Leninism, Stalinism, and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1920- 1939 (New York: Garland Pub., 1986). The No More War Movement, launched in 1920, depended on tenets of peace as physical mothers, commitment by virtue of conditioning in caring roles, and positions outside major power hierarchies. See J. Eglin, "Women and Peace" in Campaigns for Peace: British Peace Movements in the Twentieth Century, eds. Richard Taylor and Nigel Young (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987).

In the same era and location, two feminists pulled the domestic novel into overtly anti-fascist directions. Virginia Woolf and Phyllis Bottome explore and assess the cultural anti-fascist potential of British liberal democracy. Woolf's The Years (1937) and Bottome's The Mortal Storm (1936) The Lifeline (1946) represent and oppose fascist domestic ideology in radically different ways. Bottome commits to capitalist modernity as a model of liberation and progress, and "diagnoses" fascism as a psychological disorder, a homosexual rejection of domesticity, and the persistence of feudalism. Woolf on the other hand locates fascist conceptions of mass politics and sexuality in the heart of nineteenth-century bourgeois hegemony and biopolitics in Britain.

### **Chapter Three**

Phyllis Bottome, a bestselling novelist employed by Britain's Ministry of Information, exemplifies the "seductive fallacy." The relation between women and political discourse takes center stage in her novels, The Mortal Storm (1933) and The Lifeline (1946). Bottome represents the British Empire as a gendered but morally sound model of statecraft and culture. Her work suggests that, in contrast, fascism depends in historical terms on the anachronistic persistence of feudalism in modernity, and in psychological terms, homosexuality as a form of madness. In her novels, fascism revolts against the domestic self-sufficiency and surveillance provided by modern heterosexual marriage.

As a counter to these fascist elements, Bottome suggests a "biopolitical feminism," shoring up the figure of the woman doctor as a liberal mediation between competing definitions of feminist agency in the inter-war period. I argue that her analysis necessarily obscures from view fascism's irreducible dependence on modern biopolitical values. Foucault's historical work on the history of madness and Nancy Armstrong's literary criticism enable me to connect Bottome's Brönte-esque endorsement of bourgeois domestication to structures of capital and

biopolitical discipline. Although her liberal feminist project seeks to widen the scope of domestic women's authority, the misrepresentation of fascism's similar inscription of disciplinary power leads to a key critical failure. Tracing surprising similarities to Hawks in their biopolitical articulations of domestic women's agency, I show how her well-intended works are nevertheless inadequate in perceiving the modern and familiar pleasures of fascism for its subjects, and therefore the very conditions of its possibility.

#### **Chapter Four**

Virginia Woolf's The Years (1937), on the other hand, empties the domestic fictional mode from the inside out, systematically directing modernist irony against both liberal and fascist cultural defenses of the British imperial project and their masculinist premises. Woolf locates anti-fascist practices of gender and sexuality not in properly gendered imperial subjects, but directly counter to Bottome, in the liminal positions of non-domestic middle-class women and gay men in the inter-war period. She thereby challenges the prevalent liberal representation of fascism as a feminine or homosexual perversion of humanist agency. Their disenfranchisement by the imperial project and their simultaneous inclusion within institutional power suggests an anti-fascist disavowal of statist identity and capital, and a joyful, anti-patriarchal transformation of sexuality and labor.

Furthermore, I show that The Years illuminates fascist sexuality's textual and literary nature to characterize fascism not as a seduction from, but as a consummation of women's political fantasies of agency implicit in British domestic fiction's humanist tradition. She provides a model of reading that perceives imperial and biopolitical modes of domestic fiction as supports, not counters, to fascist elements of British culture with regard to gender, sexuality, and race.

## **Conclusion**

The danger of unsettling the presumed oppositions between fascism and liberalism is, as Carlston has observed, that “we might end by dismissing it from our theory altogether” (15). In other words, attempts to criticize fascism as a part of modern British culture in the end may only serve to help justify it. I believe we must remain committed to anti-fascist cultural production that problematizes the seductive fallacy. To pinpoint what bourgeois hegemony has contributed to fascism is to continue extricating the progressive elements of modernity from their fascist incarnations. Only in acknowledging the possible familiar attractions of fascism to modern subjects can we hope to ascribe divergent cultural values to the relatively recent mass entry of women into politics.

## CHAPTER ONE

### “ARTIFICIAL, UNREAL, YET PENETRATING”

#### WYNDHAM LEWIS’ DOMESTIC FASCISM

Wyndham Lewis’ experience as a World War I trench soldier and officer was inseparable from his belief that most cultural products in inter-war Britain had become irrelevant. Although registered by very few artists, the landscape and raw violence of Passchendaele, he claimed, had massive implications for methods of representation.<sup>28</sup> Above all, Lewis believed that peace was the true artist’s imperative, and therefore deeply opposed war and violence as means for resolving political conflicts.<sup>29</sup> He explicitly questioned whether any state in a “Machine-Age” could claim a moral purpose for sending soldiers into battle.<sup>30</sup> Along with many other British modernists, then, Lewis actively opposed the growing militarization of inter-war European society. His attempts to invigorate the functions of art and writing in this context remain sharp, unrelenting, and unique in British painting, literature, and politics. Nevertheless, Lewis strengthened the rhetorical defense of war “despite” himself by creating an interface between a devastating critique of liberalism and fascism.

Lewis’ criticism of liberalism differed remarkably from that of the prominent British Marxists of the period. The latter sometimes aligned British imperialism with elements of

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<sup>28</sup> In Blasting and Bombardiering, Lewis writes that weapons and war “transform a smart little modern township, inside an hour, into a romantic ruin” (116). For Lewis, only deep misunderstanding interprets the effects of war in a romantic light.

<sup>29</sup> He writes, “Whichever of the forces confronted upon the political stage to-day may get the upper hand, the Red or the Black, any detached artistic effort, on the grand scale, will be quasi-impossible. There will not be present the will, the psychological incentive, the time, or *the peace*, that are requisite for that” (Blasting and Bombardiering 256).

<sup>30</sup> “[W]hether the machine-age has left any State intact in such a way as to put men under a moral or emotional compulsion to die for it, is a matter I am unable to discuss” (Blasting and Bombardiering 188).

fascism to condemn them as “of a piece.” Stephen Spender warns in Forward from Liberalism (1937), for instance, that British liberal democracy adapted fascist methods in India.<sup>31</sup> C. L. R. James also explicitly called attention to the fascism of the British Empire even in its “democratic” support of Abyssinia *against* Mussolini.<sup>32</sup> Lewis, on the contrary, placed fascism in radical opposition to the corrupt alliance of liberalism with communism. He regarded this alliance as the apex of political deception, believing that through their dual claims to Christian humanism and scientific objectivity, liberals and communists deliberately attempted to rule their subjects with “parliamentary humbug,” “pretences of benefaction,” and freedom (Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled 73). In much of Lewis’ work, fascism was a bracing tonic against such political irresponsibility. Fredric Jameson writes that Lewis’ attacks on “the ideological dishonesty of hegemonic liberalism, are indeed more powerful and damaging than anything formulated by the Marxism of that period” (19). In this chapter, I explore the attractions of fascism for this powerful critic, and further, show how his writing seeks to justify fascism as an advantageous form of politics for “the ruled.”<sup>33</sup> I focus on his concern for readers who are fed “misleading” modern cultural products.

In The Revenge for Love (1937) in particular, Lewis focuses on the effects of modern books and paintings on the lives and minds of domestic women. I contend that here, his fascist commitment to peace (or more accurately, appeasement) considered the repercussions of

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<sup>31</sup> “Many people seem to imagine that English ‘liberty’ is permanent and static; yet the English are using fascist methods of government in India,” writes Spender in Forward from Liberalism (138). He also identifies Lewis as an exponent of the “imperialist press” which advocates positions “extreme right and fascist” (142).

<sup>32</sup> James argued that Britain’s impetus for supporting Abyssinian national independence was comparable to Mussolini’s nakedly aggressive claims to the territory because both sought to defend their own imperial aims in “Abyssinia and the Imperialists” (James 63 – 66).

<sup>33</sup> He claims in Blasting and Bombardiering that his work has comprised inimitable “advice to ‘the ruled’ . . . not to those who do the ruling” (339). In Rude Assignment, he reiterates, “I am—after my fashion—all the time upon the side of the *ruled*. I identify myself with humanity” (206).

international politics on the home first and foremost. This consideration is echoed in his intellectual memoir published in the same year, Blasting and Bombardiering, where he claims to oppose war primarily for its effects on domestic life. Citing World War I as the primary cause of his mother's death, he presents an autobiographical persona whose inter-war politics and aesthetics are devoted to domestic peace: "the Great War . . . had worn her down and killed her: and I swore a vendetta against these abominations" (Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering 211). In The Revenge for Love, this peace depends ultimately on the elimination of women's social agency. I argue that Lewis' conception of the inter-war artistic task suggests women's self-abnegation in modern society, and is allied with German and British fascism in the political sphere.

My reading of Lewis is idiosyncratic; he is read typically as an enemy of women *tout court*. Indeed, he regularly aligned women and femininity with "degenerate" motifs and concepts such as interiority, intuition, subjective "Time," and dolls/puppets, to which he consistently opposed exteriority, vision, objective space, and machines.<sup>34</sup> In his view, writers and artists like Woolf, Sitwell, Joyce, Stein, the surrealists, and the impressionists, uncritically exploited interiority on one hand, and meaningless surfaces on the other, and thereby adhered themselves to commodification, femininity, sexual inversion, and modern war.<sup>35</sup> Whereas they turn away from the imperative inter-war task—to create a peaceful society that obliterates liberal and communist deceptions—Lewis' modernism invested the machine and satire to reinvent the role of art in modernity. (I will address Woolf's own criticism of war and liberal hegemony in

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<sup>34</sup> See especially Lewis' The Art of Being Ruled (1926), Time and Western Man (1927) and Men Without Art (1934).

<sup>35</sup> In Time and Western Man, (1927), he writes, "the *time-mind* would be much the same as the geographic one, fanatically circumscribing this or that territorial unit with a superstitious exclusiveness, an aggressive nationalist romance" (83).

Chapter 4.) Thus, underlying Lewis' sympathy for domestic womanhood is a deep contempt for what he considered to be the effects of "feminization." He cannot in any way be described as a feminist writer. I foreground his ambivalence to highlight what I believe Lewis as a writer regarded as ideological solutions for women in fascism. Without such a view, we are left with a theory of fascism as pure repression that can hardly account for its attractions for modernist intellectuals.

Lewis' notorious polemical non-fiction throughout the inter-war period attests to his sympathy with fascism. In The Art of Being Ruled (1926), he explained, "if anything, I favour some form of fascism rather than communism"(35). Because communism deludes the masses with a promise of equality that would inevitably lead to revolutionary warfare, fascism better embodies the promise of peace by announcing the inevitability of political hierarchy. This work, and his journalistic treatment of Nazism in Hitler (1931) first published as a series of articles in the journal Time and Tide, have often been cited to confirm Lewis' status as a reactionary fascist. I find, however, that this sympathy is heavily qualified throughout his work. Even in this citation, he avows his preference for fascism hesitantly, as the less offensive of two already available alternatives to liberal democracy. Furthermore, as Andrea Freud Loewenstein notes, "Lewis was no joiner. He never actually became a member of Mosley's party, and while he was enthralled in turn by Marinetti, Mussolini, Mosley, and Hitler, each of these violent enthusiasms was followed by a later strong rejection" (Loewenstein 138-9). Any study of Lewis' literary fascism, therefore, must depart from the methods used to explore more programmatic and enthusiastic proto-fascists like Marinetti, Sorel, Péguy, and Maurras, who valorized organized

militancy. Lewis distanced himself and his defense of fascism from these writers.<sup>36</sup> He disavowed Marinetti's hearty celebration of "he-men," or virile "men of action" in particular because he believed that it created a cultural predilection for war. Representing fascism instead as the road to peace in a modern, technologically advanced Europe, Lewis "forgives" men of action, rather than recruiting them.

Some critics have defended Lewis by calling attention to his fundamental misunderstanding of fascism, his inability to detect the real implications of Hitler's anti-Semitism, and his later recantation in The Hitler Cult (1939). Lewis had not yet read Mein Kampf when he wrote Hitler, and was convinced by Nazi pretensions to pacifism: "I believe Hitler himself—once he had obtained power—would show increasing moderation and tolerance" (Lewis, Hitler 48). Others note that Lewis' anti-Semitism and misreading of Nazism merely reflected those of mainstream British culture. D. G. Bridson, for instance, observes, "Even if one finds him sadly awry in his estimate of the dangers inherent in Nazism, the truth remains that he was far from being alone in his wrong judgment" (viii). At moments, however, his cynical endorsement of fascism clearly goes beyond the pale of even the most conservative mainstream commentary. In The Art of Being Ruled, Lewis wrote that under fascism, "no person anywhere will be able to escape assassination if he . . . holds, too loudly, opinions that displease it. As the press will be . . . under the direct control of the central government . . . death, imprisonment, or banishment can be inflicted on anybody, anywhere, without ruffling the surface of opinion" (321).

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<sup>36</sup>In Rude Assignment, he writes, "The veneration for action, and for men of action, is a feature of Twentieth Century thinking . . . Sorel, Péguy, Maurras, Malraux, have exalted the life of action . . . This is in fact *the betrayal*, specifically indicated by Benda" (35).

In view of this passage, John Harrison writes that Lewis certainly understood what fascism would mean for cultural producers: “Lewis later attacked the Nazi regime in Germany, but not because of the cruelties it perpetrated, the complete domination of the individual by the state by means of secret police; he had foreseen these and did not consider them evil” (103). As we know in retrospect, fascism attracted proponents across classes and genders who invested it with a broad range of political visions and fantasies. Many were indeed horrified by its subsequent results. For my purposes, whether or not Lewis “understood” fascism’s genocidal goal is beside the point. I ally myself broadly with critics who have analyzed Lewis as a writer who invested fascism with value for modernist cultural production.<sup>37</sup> Although I believe that his endorsement was not “total,” fascism did temporarily offer him an attractive contrarian model because he sought to annihilate what he considered the all too powerful influences of feminist literature and politics. In his mapping of contemporary cultural production, feminism epitomizes democracy’s absurdly destructive capacity.

Feminist critics of Lewis, however, have tended to align Lewis’ voice with those of his own fictional characters, especially the misogynist title character in Tarr (1918), Cattleman in the war issue of Blast (1915) and the mastermind Pierpont in The Apes of God (1930).<sup>38</sup> Using this reading method, Bonnie Kime Scott has identified Lewis as a typical proponent of “architectonic male modernist designs” based on the scaffold and modern architecture, as opposed to “feminine” modernists such as Woolf, Joyce, and Barnes who instead suggest “web-work,” “polyvalence,” and “polyphony” (Scott xxiv-xxix). He and other male modernists “place the female at the bottom of their conceptual hierarchies, with mud, vegetative material, and

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<sup>37</sup> For examples, see Geoffrey Wagner and Mark Conroy.

<sup>38</sup> See Andrea Freud Loewenstein 110-187.

animals” (Scott 104). But as Kelly Anspaugh has noted, Scott enables an “ad hominem” attack that confuses Lewis’ characters with the writer, and allows no room for his potentially ironic interventions (366).

Both Scott and Loewenstein incorporate Lewis’ biographical details to assess his writing, and therefore tend toward indicting the author’s psychology. In Loewenstein’s analysis, the paranoid outlook of his everyday social interactions accounts partially for his writing’s misogyny and proto-fascism. Whereas these accounts may be valid for a study of fascist psychology, they are not useful for critics of literary fascism because they are too pathologizing (in the medical sense) and particularizing. (Chapter 3 will elaborate my charges against psychological assessments of fascism in more detail.)

Although he incorporated his own experiences in his fiction, notably in Tarr (1918), The Wild Body (1927), Snooty Baronet (1932), The Revenge for Love (1937), and Self-Condemned (1954), he was mercilessly self-ironic. Jameson observes that Lewis “makes himself the impersonal registering apparatus for forces which he means to record, beyond any whitewashing and liberal revisionism, in all their primal ugliness” (21). His misogynist characters are by no means “heroes” in the text. Timothy Materer further observes that in Blast and The Revenge for Love, Lewis highlights “the disparity between the reality of his own characters’ behavior and their own interpretations of it” and thereby “avoids identifying with them” (Materer 98). Lewis as a writer and artist also “performed” personas. SueEllen Campbell and Materer discuss the writerly mask of the uncompromising “Enemy” that influenced Lewis’ contemporaries, Yeats and Eliot, and created a vantage point from which to satirize inter-war culture.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Sue Ellen Campbell focuses exclusively on Lewis’ aesthetic of aggressive partisanship: “Everywhere, and on every level, he thinks in structures of opposition” (xiii). Materer writes, “Lewis felt that the . . . Enemy mask . . . would protect his real identity as an artist. He shared this hope not only with W.B. Yeats, but also with his nearer contemporaries: T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound” (11-12).

I do not therefore read Lewis *as* one of his characters. My presentation of Lewis' writing claims, contrary to the biographical/psychological approach, that it is in his irony, i.e., in the strategic and meaningful distance between the writer, narrator, and characters, that Lewis is most effectively fascist. In this chapter, I am especially interested in how he invokes the domestic fiction tradition and stretches the persona of the satirical enemy to accommodate a "domestic" persona dedicated to a peaceful modern society in an age of dehumanizing war, mass politics, communications, and technology.

### **"Apolitical" Politics**

In his literary critical and polemical writing, Lewis offers two personas of the artist/critic. On one hand, Lewis constantly struggled to articulate an impersonal, objective, and non-committed position. "I am not a partisan, but an independent observer," he writes in The Art of Being Ruled (35). In Rude Assignment, he writes that "*all* government reeks of force" (70). However, he also just as often acknowledged that all modern life is necessarily political. In Blasting and Bombardiering, he recalls, "I began writing about politics, not because I like politics but everything was getting bogged in them and before you could do anything you had to deal with the politics with which it was encrusted" (339). In other words, he writes from an apolitical position, but articulates the need for some kind of government given his reactionary characterization of the masses in modern social relations. "Although the power, the presence of unbridled power, causes (in really bad periods) endless suffering, yet . . . Power is, in its origins . . . to assure us safety and peace" (Lewis, Rude Assignment 180). Thus, he also presents himself as the responsible political intellectual who endorses fascism as the necessary antidote to the worst political effects of an age that endorses mindless and infantile "revolution." He plays the

role of the reluctant interfering spirit, only pulled into political articulation by a concern for his country.<sup>40</sup> In coalescing these personas, Lewis invokes a British tradition of Juvenalian satire.

In his pamphlet Satire and Fiction (1930), Lewis advocates a modernist appropriation of “tragic laughter” embodied by Dryden, Swift, and Pope. Their visual privileging of surfaces, the “eye” in representation, would effectively counter the degenerate valorization of the “inside-method” practiced by modernist writers like Joyce, Stein, and Lawrence. The satirical objective method is based upon intellectual truth rather than “the ‘truth’ of the average romantic sensualism” (45-7).

The satirist’s intellectual truth, however, takes for granted the primacy of language in the creation of “reality,” or the ideological nature of modern life. In Men Without Art, Lewis writes in defense of satire that “Art consists . . . in a *mechanizing* of the natural. It bestows its delightful disciplines upon our aimless emotions: it puts its gentle order in the place of natural chaos: it substitutes for the direct image a picture. And ultimately . . . it substitutes *a thing* for *a person* every time” (128-9). In Time and Western Man, Lewis argues that to be an effective writer, one must in some way create ideological strategies: “There is no department that is exempt from the confusions of this strategy—which consists essentially in removing something necessary to life and putting an ideologic simulacrum where it was able to deceive” (78).

His writerly strategy therefore does not claim, as much other fascist literature, that fascism enables a romantic return to nature. Rather, he employs the satirist’s role of political prophet and outsider to defend a capitulation to fascism. Fascism, in turn, appears to be an ideology that would organize modern society in a blatantly hierarchical race, gender, and class

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<sup>40</sup> “I cannot understand the indifference of people to what happens to the inhabitants of England” (Lewis, Rude Assignment 70).

structure to supersede liberal and communist deception.<sup>41</sup> The corporate state would better distribute material necessities to the masses within a hierarchical capitalist paradigm, pre-empt various revolutionary ideologies of resentment, and thereby create a peaceful social order. Fascism as a form of government appears as *the* objective politics because it unveils necessary operations of power.

This convergence of “objectivity” and fascism leads to assertions that some current political issues should not be considered at all debatable. In Hitler, Lewis condemns feminism for creating a superfluous “sex-war”: “[A] very bad ‘War’ that can be, when some poor uneducated couple are stirred up by newspaper slogans and ‘provocative’ sex-warlike propaganda, and fall upon each other . . . All the normal strife of loving couples is embittered a thousandfold” (71). Lewis defends the official fascist suppression of feminists by defending the ideological necessity of sexual hierarchy.

He also aligns fascism with disinterested politics in a 1937 article written for the British fascist periodical, The British Union Quarterly, in which he claims that ordinary Britons are at the mercy of the Communist Party because of its enormous wealth: “When I see such an immensely one-sided distribution of Opinion as exists at present in Great Britain, I cannot help asking myself how it comes that all the dough has got to one end of the scales” (Lewis, “Left Wings” 22). As an objective spectator of the political world, however, Lewis ably resists the seductive appeal of the wealthy party: “I am the last person to set myself up as a model of what is *objective*. Yet in spite of myself, almost, I am objective, I am detached, if I compare myself with say Trotsky or Baldwin. For I am not a politician . . . the *beaux yeux* of a possessing class play no part at all for me, except to *repel*” (30). Lewis bases his claim to objectivity and

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<sup>41</sup> Paul Edwards explains the tension inherent to these stances: “Lewis’ belief that social reality is ideologically constructed” counteracts his “urge to translate into the verbal medium the ‘outside of things’” (477).

apolitical critique on his status as a “private citizen,” as opposed to the politician’s business of seduction. With relatively no preconceptions or critical attachments, Lewis enumerates the superiority of fascist values. Members of the British Union of Fascists (BUF) have a finer understanding of the “Have-nots,” and stand for justice:

You as a Fascist stand for the small trader versus the chain-store; for the peasant against the usurer; for the nation, great or small, versus the super-state; for personal business against Big Business; for the craftsman versus the Machine; for the creator versus the middleman; for all that prospers by individual effort and creative toil, against all that prospers in the abstract air of High Finance or of the theoretic ballyhoo of Internationalism. (33)

The fascist, in other words, actually *does* defend the poor, the “have-nots,” and the underdogs, while communists merely bluff their sympathy ultimately to serve the world’s magnates. As in much other British fascist journalism, he simultaneously maintains touchstones of anti-capitalist rhetoric (“peasant,” “craftsman”) and capitalist individualism (“individual effort,” “personal business”). This conflation is resolved in capitalist autarky in BUF propaganda, whereas here, Lewis invokes the aesthetic superiority that would emerge (“creator,” “creative toil”).

He endorses a blatantly white supremacist European imperialism as an aesthetically “objective” goal in The Hitler Cult (1939), technically a “retraction” of his previous, misguided defense of Hitler. His newfound critical stance toward Nazism is based on his opinion that it has violated a more traditional form of imperialism by colonizing Eastern Europe, which he considers to be equally inhabited by “Aryans.” In contrast, the British Empire, he claims, was “a healthy—expansion, secured at the expense of no one except dusky beings who were as different from ourselves as if they inhabited another planet” (188). The British Empire, in other words, is

a “risk-free” form of global domination because it is organized by the aesthetic criterion of skin color. This “anti-fascist” tract suggests that Europe could halt Germany’s race-betraying totalitarian takeover of Europe by pooling resources and continuing imperialism without “a lot of unnecessary trouble,” or without war between England and Germany (234). A united Europe no longer needs to carry the crippling liberal pretenses to “universal” humanity and civilization, since imperialism of the British ilk is a form of expansionism grounded in the superior aesthetic ideology of racist hierarchies.

What I find interesting in Lewis’ writing despite his ultimately unoriginal conservative stance (or as Jameson puts it, his basic defense of the “white European male”) is precisely his emphasis on ideology and language. In The Revenge for Love, a fascist logic of gender and sexuality is worked out on the terrain of literature, narrative, and reading. In framing the debates in this way, the novel is a rich source for understanding the place of literary production in the British fascist imagination, and the insertion of British high modernism in the gendering of fascism. Lewis thereby demonstrates why literature and painting matter to fascists and vice versa—the stakes that cultural producers might have in fascism.

In The Art of Being Ruled, Lewis caustically criticized inter-war British communists as “a small privileged class . . . *playing* at revolution, and aping a ‘proletarian’ freedom that the proletariat has not yet reached the conception of” (134-5). They are also the major antagonists in The Revenge for Love. Set immediately before the Spanish Civil War, the novel presents the machinations of “millionaire bohemian” communists in London. Two communists in particular, Abershaw and Sean O’Hara, mastermind a gunrunning scheme to aid the communist effort against Franco in Spain. To carry out the scheme, they trap Victor Stamp, a sincere but failed artist, into participating, and eventually betray him. His wife, Margot Stamp, the novel’s

“apolitical” moral center, cares only for Victor; in the selflessness of her love, she paradoxically articulates the most legitimate sense of political responsibility. Margot, who plays the role of the standard heroine of domestic fiction throughout much of the novel, sees through the communists’ plot, but bumbles her attempt to save Victor. In the tradition of Austen, this domestic heroine is led astray by her reading.<sup>42</sup> Her quasi-feminist aspirations, instilled by feminist literature, leads them to their deaths.

A third protagonist, Percy Hardcaster, in contrast to the other communists, has “genuine” working-class origins. Having lost his leg after being shot by a fascist prison guard in Spain near the beginning of the novel, he dutifully but cynically plays the role of a wounded communist exemplar for the London “parlour pinks.” With serious misgivings about the hypocritical politics he is contributing to, he is the only communist who eventually “sympathizes” with the Stamps against the conspirators. Although he also participates in the gunrunning scheme, he turns himself in to the fascist police in order to save Victor once he learns of the communists’ betrayal. Back in the Spanish prison, he learns that the Stamps have perished in the mountains where they had hidden after accidentally killing a Civil Guard.

Lewis suggests women’s investment in fascism by dramatizing the “woes of women” as consequences of communist and feminist cultural production in the inter-war moment. I suggest that in order to analyze Lewis’ *literary* mode of justifying fascism for British women, we should read it under the rubric of domestic fiction. Lewis mobilizes his powers of narrative and characterization to articulate fascism as the “truth” of politics by invoking a naïve domestic woman. Fascism appears to benefit women politically in the face of mechanical and deceptive

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<sup>42</sup> In *Satire and Fiction*, Lewis privileges Austen’s place in satirical fiction, asking what she and other satirists “would have thought of the frantic and incessant critical pronouncements of our most celebrated critics.” He argues that through this perspective, “we perceive the extent of the degradation, from a high and fastidious standard, that the art of letters has suffered in England” (55).

communists and liberals. At the same time, the narrator's irony rebukes the domestic woman's temptation to feminist articulations of agency. Although I do not consider the novel a disguised political tract, Lewis' polemical and autobiographical writings of the period provide an illuminating commentary on the connections between literature, art, and politics. Thus, I weave many of his non-fictional writings into my analysis.

### **Domestic fiction**

Margot both inherits and trims the role of the heroine in nineteenth-century domestic fiction. Famously, Lewis' Vorticist work in Blast condemned the progressive cultural production of the nineteenth century: "BLAST years 1837 to 1900 . . . WRING THE NECK OF all sick inventions born in that progressive white wake."<sup>43</sup> Valerie Parker observes that "Lewis argues against social and individual harmony, against the family and the integration of the personality for the sake of society, values implicit in nineteenth-century novels" (212). While I would agree that Lewis in no way defends the patriarchal family unit so integral to traditional domestic fiction, I believe that he allies The Revenge for Love with domestic fiction's solemnization of women's domestic identity, and its unprecedented and formidable methods of consensus building. This contradiction is the key factor that coalesces Lewis' work with the polemics of British fascist fiction (which I will elaborate in Chapter 2).

In Desire and Domestic Fiction, Nancy Armstrong argues that late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century "revolutionary" domestic fiction helped the advent of industrial capital by modeling a new form of female "subjectivity," predicated on the transformation of "woman" from a sensual object of exchange into an ahistorical form of spiritual interiority. This subject modeled the bourgeois capacity for self-discipline and self-determination—features of a

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<sup>43</sup> Wyndham Lewis, "Long Live the Vortex," in Blast: Review of the Great English Vortex.

hegemonic discourse that defined the self as the owner of labor-power, and instituted contractual exchange in lieu of the feudal use of force to extract labor. It was therefore on the domestic front, over which the female had apparent “authority,” she claims, “perhaps even more so than in the courts and the marketplace [that] the middle-class struggle for dominance was fought and won” (24). Particularly in its earlier forms (e.g., the novels of Richardson, Burney, and Austen), domestic novels asserted the superiority of egalitarian and democratic institutions, presenting “female desire” as a spiritual interiority “freed” from feudal repression. This revolution in representation masked the fact that the domestic woman’s transcendence relied on the invention of a private sphere, which required her exclusion from the masculine public sphere, and therefore enforced her political and economic disenfranchisement.

A later tradition of “counterrevolutionary” domestic fiction adapted to the changing needs of middle-class hegemony. Armstrong elaborates on the turbulent era between “the Reform Bill of 1832 and the onset of mid-century prosperity,” when growing numbers of the exploited working classes threatened to exercise “universal” liberal humanist values *against* bourgeois domination. In this context, domestic fiction began to shun earlier celebrations of “female desire” and modern subjectivity; instead, this desire came to represent an ominous and even monstrous force.<sup>44</sup> Domestic fiction “no longer provided a fantasy in which one could enjoy watching class lines dissolve within marriage. Instead, it began marking boundaries that it had formerly felt free to cross” (Armstrong 52). The archetypal *Jane Eyre* (1848), for instance, valorized conformity to modern (polar) definitions of sex and gender, and can be aligned with contemporary political writing that indicted working-class acts of “combination” (organized resistance) by classifying them as sexual and moral offenses against “nature.”

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<sup>44</sup> Armstrong cites the sudden appearance of the “deranged” and “monstrous” woman in the domestic fiction of the late 1840s as one indication of this shift (166).

Counterrevolutionary domestic fiction justified capital by articulating a universal form of (quiet) revolution against a sedimented aristocratic social structure, while ideologically banishing any revolution other than its own. By mid-nineteenth century, many domestic novels resonated with counterrevolutionary representations of the masses.

In this section, I show how The Revenge for Love continues the complex tradition of British domestic fiction to coalesce an “apolitical” stance with the viewpoint of the domestic woman. But it by no means “empowers” women, even in the private sphere. The narrator’s irony allows us to judge our domestic heroine, Margot Stamp, as both ethically superior and intellectually inadequate. This use of irony urges women’s retreat from politics. To tie the novel’s vision of the domestic woman to fascism, I clarify how it imagines fascism correcting the deception of liberal and communist politics, and relieving the degradation of women’s positions in liberal modernity and domestic life.

### **Margot Stamp as revolutionary domestic heroine**

The Revenge for Love trains the reader to distinguish between the binary qualities of the living and the dead, solid and liquid, flesh and ghost, substance and shadow, and real and unreal. “False Bottoms” was in fact the original working title for The Revenge for Love.<sup>45</sup> Margot assesses and marks “false” and misleading politics, representations of power, and narrative. Her proximity to “truth” depends on her distance from the scene of (corrupt) political power.

In the first half of the novel, the irony of the narrator is directed primarily at her lack of descriptive ability. As a product of modern culture, she is inarticulate and must to some extent, be spoken for. Parker observes that Lewis “uses her as a powerful force of goodness, loyalty and truth which is opposed to nearly all the other characters” but since Margot “is an ignorant

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<sup>45</sup> “There are a series of actual false bottoms in the novel . . . but these examples are there to help show that the world is pervaded by false bottoms, by things that are not really what they seem” (Dasenbrock, Afterword).

woman,” she “says and thinks things which the narrator cannot” (211). I would add that the narrator says things that Margot cannot.

Margot sees the terrifying emptiness underneath the communists’ apparent good will toward the working classes. She suspects their political shams and conspiracies, and therefore constantly doubts the substance of their statements, and even their physical human appearance. Faced with these products of massification and inauthentic personality, Margot’s perception, trained by domestic detail and inspired by the desire to sustain the home, acts as a form of political intelligence. For instance, Margot immediately perceives the sinister, inhuman qualities of Abershaw, the mastermind behind the elaborate gunrunning scheme that eventually leads to the Stamps’ death. “He smiled and then went back, with a sudden collapse of the countenance, to his watchful owliness, in a manner that positively advertised its automatism, and shouted at you that it was unreal—boasting, as it were, that you could not hurt it, because it was all a guttapercha pretence” (165). His countenance, an artificial device, signals his political duplicity by mutating from one extreme to the other.

Nevertheless, because she remains on the “plane of emotion, where words were all mixed up with images,” the narrator lends Margot the term, “pukka,” meaning “authentic,” to help her articulate a critique of the parlor communists (152). Helped thus by the narrator, Margot sees the communists in their true light—as “wax dolls” who, in their “arrogant futility,” divert attention from the “pukka underdogs” (153).

Throughout his work, Lewis opposed “puppets” or “dolls” to “natures,” based on an original distinction by Goethe: “Today there is an absurd war between the ‘puppets’ and the ‘natures,’ and the pressure on the ‘natures’ increases. We are *all* slipping back into machinery, because we *all* have tried to be free. And what is absurd about this situation is that so few people

even desire to be free in reality (Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled 125). Communists often appear as the puppets *par excellence* because they actively disavow “individuality,” and expedite the “associational” or modern group identity formations.<sup>46</sup> They are the logical result of a nightmarish society that valorizes “revolution” over stability. (Lewis does valorize the machine, however, when it allows consciousness and individuality to flourish—a paradox I will present later in this chapter.)

Margot is appropriately vigilant around them. She even suspects that the home of Sean O’Hara, Abershaw’s co-conspirator, is actually a malevolent trap of “deceptive security,” complete with false walls, trapdoors, and the “masked heads of shafts” (153). Appropriately, at a party thrown there in Percy Hardcaster’s honor, Margot leans against a bookcase to find that it slides inward to a secret room where Abershaw and O’Hara are busy practicing the forgery of Victor’s signature. This space, powerfully reminiscent of the elaborate castles and ruins of Gothic fiction, signals the heroine’s justified paranoia.<sup>47</sup>

Reed Way Dasenbrock argues that Lewis’ valorization of paranoia is also “central to the fascist worldview, to the fascist way of imagining the world, particularly to its Nazi variant” (“Wyndham Lewis’ Fascist Imagination” 93). In fact, Lewis distinguishes between several sources of paranoia. In The Art of Being Ruled, he observes that paranoia is the pathological result of elaborate liberal deceptions, and therefore could be *eliminated* by fascism. Furthermore, in The Revenge for Love, some of the communists are just as paranoid as Margot. Sean O’Hara,

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<sup>46</sup> In The Art of Being Ruled, Lewis writes, “The more classes (of which, in their various functions, he is representative) that you can make him become regularly conscious of, the more you can control him, the more of an automaton he becomes. . .” (109). Furthermore, automatons are paradoxically stronger because they are not truly alive: “the inventive individual is constantly exposed to destruction in a way that the uninventive, mechanical associational man is not” (363).

<sup>47</sup> Tanya Modleski, Loving with a Vengeance: Mass Produced Fantasies for Women (New York: Methuen 1982) discusses the justification of paranoid fantasies in Gothic fiction. Paranoia engenders the need for an identifiable villain, which Gothic fiction typically embodies in patriarchal figures.

like Margot, also sees through “false bottoms,” but only because he constantly creates byzantine conspiratorial plots.<sup>48</sup> The narrator hints that O’Hara had tipped off a communist to the Nazi régime, which led to his execution, and that he had collected funds for the Dublin branch of the Communist Party, only to decamp with them later (133-4). In contrast, Margot enacts paranoia from the position of the “powerless.” The impetus for her paranoia is her compassion for Victor, and her correct perception that he is constantly victimized by those around him. Her paranoia enables her accurate assessment of the power structure, so that “Victor was a pukka underdog she saw quite well” (152).

Through Margot, Lewis defines the apolitical woman as the site of authentic and vigilant politics. Margot’s self-sacrificing love contrasts the sinister world of politics that surrounds it, and enables a clear view of that world. In contrast, the “millionaire bohemian” communists cloak the nature of political hierarchy, by fashionably “slumming” their way into proletariat status. Their narratives also support this mode of political (self) deception. In this way, Lewis asserts the superiority of a reader armed by skeptical paranoid domesticity.

At Sean O’Hara’s party, Percy recounts how he was wounded by a fascist guard. His story, a piece of “atrocious propaganda,” appeals to the audience as a thrilling tale of masculine glory. The communists’ enthusiasm for his story is distinctly marked as feminine and splendidly Victorian: “A red patriarch, Percy Hardcaster reclined, propped by a plethora of red cushions, upon a wide reddish settee, in Red invalid magnificence . . . There were four women beside him upon the settee” (140). Percy assesses their desire for “fun and excitement” and “the romance of revolution,” and obligingly embellishes his own heroism, as well as the fascists’ capacity for evil (195). The resulting narrative is a radically simple and childish

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<sup>48</sup> His wife describes his “paranoid imagination,” saying, “He *was* such a born conspirator” (Lewis, The Revenge for Love 131)!

representation of power that garners a morally indignant reaction from the audience and piques their thirst for blood. The narrator satirically represents the communist narratives as instances of Christian *ressentiment*: “their doctrine was a universal Sicilian Vespers, and which yet treated the real poor, when they were encountered, with such overweening contempt, and even derision” (152). In a Nietzschean vein, the communist narratives’ sensitivity and morality only serves to conceal a violently sadistic will to power.

Percy’s heroic tale is swallowed whole by a wealthy communist named Gillian, the wife of Tristan Phipps who is a successful communist artist and a friend of Victor’s. Later, Percy disabuses her of the “atrocious propaganda,” telling her that the fascist nurses did not *actually* rub salt into his wounds, and that in fact, they were unusually kind. Gillian, humiliated by her own gullibility, unleashes her real contempt for the poor, ordering an admirer to remove Percy forcefully from her flat. She stands by as he kicks Percy’s leg repeatedly in the barely healed site of amputation—truly one of the most graphically sickening episodes in 1930s British modernist fiction.

Gillian’s assault reveals communism as a violent and resentful politics affiliated with feminine sentimentality and vicariousness. In rehashing Nietzsche’s famous connection of *ressentiment* with women, Lewis bypasses Nietzsche’s congruent presentation of the transvaluative potential of feminine “dissimulation” in the critique of humanism.<sup>49</sup> In her

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<sup>49</sup> In *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967) Friedrich Nietzsche similarly describe the “false piety” of women: “*Holiness*—perhaps the last thing the people and women still get to see of higher values, the horizon of the ideal for all who are by nature myopic” (163). On the other hand, in *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche attributes “the most powerful magic of life” to the dissimulating possibilities of “women”: “a veil of beautiful possibilities, sparkling with promise, resistance, bashfulness, mockery, pity, and seduction. Yes, life is a woman” Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974) 271-2. See Jacques Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche’s Styles*, trans. Barbara Harlow (New York: Columbia UP, 1979) 67-9 for an account of Nietzsche’s contradictory readings of “femininity” in modernity. For an account of Nietzsche’s influences on Lewis, see Toby Myrthen, “Wyndham Lewis: Between Nietzsche and Derrida,” *English Studies in Canada* 16 (1990) 339-53, E. W. F. Tomlin, “The Philosophical Influences,” *Wyndham Lewis: A Revaluation*, ed. Jeffrey Meyers (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s UP, 1980) 20-46, and Alistair Davies, “*Tarr*:

representation of the political world, Gillian insists on the melodramatic clarity of good and evil, a dashing masculine hero, and her own moral transcendence. This insistence makes her responsible for revolting violence, and thus places her in the position of what she had mistakenly imagined as that of the “fascist woman.” She wryly contemplates this reversal: “How would she fare, according to the machiavellian rules of communist policy, it flashed through her mind? Would she subsequently be described as splitting her sides with laughter, in the company of Jack—after rubbing vinegar in the wounds inflicted upon a defenceless man” (200)?

Margot, in contrast, had already perceived, even before this episode, that the “women’s class” of “millionaire” communism is quite capable of the statist violence they ostensibly deplore. At the O’Haras’, she observes that their “grand voices,” cultivated by expensive schools, “oppressed one like the helmet of a policeman” (162). This intuition is supported by the narrator’s greater access to knowledge about the war between fascism and communism.

Whereas the communists’ image of fascism is outrageously “sensationalized” throughout the narrative, the “undistorted” glimpses we do get of it through the narrator’s direct observations of fascists are far more complex and conciliatory. In fact, fascism has much more in common with a genuinely working-class communism, a point Lewis had made polemically in The Art of Being Ruled, where he compared “marxian doctrine” to “the fascist ideal.” Though related, he determines that the latter is “the most suitable” form of socialism “for anglo-saxon countries” because “to get some sort of peace to enable us to work, we should naturally seek the most powerful and stable authority that can be devised” (321). As articulated by Percy *sans* his heroic mask, working-class communism is “communism when it’s naked, with the frills off, communism from the working-class angle, not of the Chelsea party, or of the young Foreign

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A Nietzschean Novel,” Wyndham Lewis: A Revaluation, ed. Jeffrey Meyers (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s UP, 1980) 107-19.

Office or Air Ministry clerk . . . the communism of the Barrikadenfodder” (241). Percy’s “real” communism is administrative and disdainful of the “masses”: “It is better,” he explains to his prisonmate Virgilio at the beginning of the novel, “that class should be frankly—starkly—vertical” (55)! He later divulges to Gillian that as an authentic, truly working class communist, “I’d rather see your sort hanging from the nearest lamp-post” (194). At these moments, he aligns himself with fascism, as his interlocutors never fail to point out. Virgilio remarks, “I sometimes believe, Don Percy, that you are really a Fascist” (56). Gillian tells him, “you’d be more at home in a fascist organisation than in ours” (194). Like that of Victor in response to communist machinations, which I will present shortly, Percy’s enactment of *ressentiment* bypasses the vicariousness of sadism, announces its violence forthrightly, and therefore compares favorably to that of the “parlor pinks.”

Percy’s version of communism offers the reader a more complex vision of power, and a sympathetic appreciation of fascists that accords with the narrator’s objectivity. Most important, fascism offers men and women a political medium to express deeply gendered characteristics. The fascist nuns who nurse Percy back to health, for instance, are “tenderly compassionate women.” (54). The narrator reveals Alvaro Morato, the fascist prison guard who shot Percy, as a man of integrity who insists against his communist and petty criminal prisoners that “You are not free to put *expediency* in the place of *law*” (14)! Percy declares, even after he is shot, that “Morato was rather a fine man in his way” (190). Fascism in these passages, though by no means unproblematically endorsed, is closer to true working-class revolution, the true revelation of political power, and the best organization of the sexes.

Significantly, Margot prefers fascism over her acquaintances’ bohemian communism: “That she should plump for a Blackshirt—*that* testified to the fact that, as far as she could feel

anything of that sort strongly, she entertained something approaching aversion for the ‘Red’” (74). Her preference for fascism deepens as she recalls meeting a Blackshirt who resembles Victor: “There was enough . . . to endear him to her, in a reflection from her cult” (74). As I will show later, her momentary departure from the “cult of Victor” triggers disaster. Here, even while acknowledging her “faulty” logic, noting that her propensity toward fascism is tinged by love and not attributable to properly political reasons (“as far as she could feel anything of that sort strongly”), the narrator sympathizes with her reasoning. Her tendency toward fascism results simply from her aversion to its competition, and the resemblance of a Blackshirt to Victor. But the narrator suppresses the satiric impulse vis-à-vis Margot. Her unsullied, naïve, and basically accurate perception counterposes the communists’ treatment of politics as sentimental entertainment and parlor game in which real men get shot. In contrast, Margot’s “political” choices are surprisingly genuine.

By claiming “love” as a legitimate impetus for politics, Margot deflects from the comparatively “abstract” and alienating category of class. Margot’s involvement with politics is determined solely by her desire to protect Victor. Her love in turn directly threatens communism’s mechanical worldview:

It was their reality, that of Victor and herself, that was marked down to be discouraged and abolished, and it was they that the others were trying to turn into phantoms and so to suppress. It was a mad notion, but it was just as if they had engaged in a battle of wills, to decide who should possess most reality—just as men fought each other for money, or fought each other for food. (163)

Love is Margot’s “cause.” When she anxiously confronts Percy about the danger the communists pose to Victor by involving him in their plots, she argues, “I will prevent anything that looks as if

it might make a victim of Victor. Is that plain speech, Percy? Victor is my racket” (296). Her politics and her love determine each other and are “true” because of that intertwining.

### **A fascist disavowal of masculine heroism**

The narrator praises Margot’s total self-sacrifice for Victor, a love that is repeatedly materialized in gifts of food and punctuated by her constant hunger. But for readers to be convinced by this convergence of apolitical and fascist viewpoints, they must believe that “heterosexual love” necessitates female sacrifice. Lewis cashes in on the ahistorical and apolitical status of love here, even as he radically changes the terms of the domestic fiction tradition that helped prop up that status.

Lewis significantly departs from the discourse of progress and humanism that informs domestic fiction in its “revolutionary” mode. The practice of love in revolutionary domestic fiction supposedly provides a basis for abstract spiritual equality in marriage between the sexes despite class standing. The Revenge for Love drastically curbs the domestic heroine’s translation of spiritual love into political power by demoting the domestic novel’s figuration of the social contract. Margot’s love diverges from this model, and disillusiones the female lover of the need or even possibility of contractual equality. Reflecting this critique of marriage as sexual and social contract, the Stamps have never “officially” married although Margot has taken Victor’s name.

Nevertheless, Victor does not live up to the heroic status that Margot wishes him to: “Victor was not a hero in a book . . . They were hemmed in by a chaotic reality, against which ‘heroism’ would be of little avail” (278). In the next two sections, I elaborate on Lewis’ evaluation of fascist masculinity, which I believe is negative in two ways. First, his evaluation marks Lewis’ divergence from Italian fascism whose proto-fascist intellectuals, especially F. T. Marinetti, he had often been compared to in his own lifetime (including by Marinetti himself).

Second, though he vacillated intensely on the cultural production of fascist virility—the “he-men” of Mussolini’s Italy and Hitler’s Germany—Lewis ultimately valorizes its forceful negation of liberal and communist effeminacy. In this way, they act as a sort of bodyguard for the “Western man,” the ideal civilized and non-violent male endorsed in Time and Western Man (1934).

Victor exploits his movie star (Clark Gable) good looks, a habit that makes him regrettably unwary of the plots against him. In addition, Victor is a failed artist, who probably should have stayed a spectator. As such, he embodies the “amateur” who in The Art of Being Ruled, Lewis claims has contributed to the deplorable state of British art.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, as David Ayers notes, Victor’s “recourse to mute violence is only a negative assertion of the self: it is the assertion of the self’s inarticulacy, and its mark is a cancellation and not an affirmation” (180). Indeed, the “man of action” is characteristically mindless and self-destructive in Lewis’ writing. Nevertheless, Lewis repeatedly values his ceaseless and unbridled opposition. Although deeply ambivalent vis-à-vis the effects of masculine “Action” in art throughout his writing, Lewis ultimately valorizes Victor’s identification with fascist Action for its rebellious stance against communist and Jewish influences on European aesthetics.

In The Revenge for Love, the London art world is corruptly occupied by committed, powerful, leading communist intellectuals. Despite their apparent dedication to proletarian artists, Margot correctly sees that they “abominate art” (295). The Jewishness of this world is highlighted by the high status of Peter Wallace, “née Reuben Wallach,” in it. Peter epitomizes communist art criticism as the “genuine article,” or as a “levite Communist” (145). He relishes

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<sup>50</sup> Lewis writes, “the audience . . . becomes professional, or, worse, semi-professional. . . . The merging of the spectator and the performer—for that is the technical definition of amateurism in its widest application—can scarcely be expected in art or social life to have a more satisfactory upshot than the same process applied in politics or industry” (The Art of Being Ruled 125)

the desperate situations of working artists as sources of sadistic aesthetic pleasure, and his doctrinaire attitude reduces art criticism to biographical references to the artist's class origins. Victor assesses this propaganda as the product of "Jewish smart alecks from Paris" (148).

The communists' criticism of the commodification of art and the bourgeois taste for "Old Masters" results only in the extreme corruption of art—forgery. They set up a forgery factory, justifying its latent critique of bourgeois ownership and the market's marginalization of contemporary modern art. As they conflate artistic labor with factory labor, they inoculate and feminize art. This degeneration is again embodied in a Jew, Isaac Wohl, who is the ideal forger—a quietist and a "perfect, reliable machine" who adeptly copies Marie Laurencins (229). Victor, whom the communists pull into the forgery scheme knowing that he is approaching dire poverty, is capable in contrast of forging "masculine" Van-Gogh self-portraits.<sup>51</sup>

Ayers notes that "The Jews occupy the position of manipulator and victim in the Lewisian text. Wohl is the victim-Jew to Peter Wallace's manipulator-Jew" (Ayers 180). Supporting this assertion, Blasting and Bombardiering represents Jewishness as the subordination of the individual to organization (a damning trait in Lewis' system), and the insinuation of foreignness into British society (243, 274). Jewish forces dispose of the artist's individuality and feminize art in their incongruous commodification and proletarianization.

Against these forces, Victor eventually rebels by stamping his foot through his "work in progress." In staging this rebellion, Lewis poses a struggle between the possibility of the artist's political detachment against that of the artist's political leadership.<sup>52</sup> Peter Bürger ties this

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<sup>51</sup> Jeffrey Meyers notes the significance of Victor's identification with Van Gogh: "Van Gogh's great art is prostituted while Victor's earnest efforts are ignored" (228).

<sup>52</sup> In The Art of Being Ruled, Lewis connects this distinction to an older problem of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century: "Our minds are all still haunted by that Abstract Man, that enlightened abstraction of common humanity, which had its greatest advertisement in the eighteenth century. That No Man in a No Man's Land, that phantom of democratic 'enlightenment,' is what has to be disposed for good in order to make way for

problem to a larger debate in modernist art. He refers to modern artists who revolted against the bourgeois separation of art from the “praxis of life” through commodification, and the use of art to justify the “means-end rationality of daily bourgeois existence.” The “avant-garde” produced two paradoxically related responses (Bürger 10-50). In the British context, “autonomy” aestheticists like Pater and Wilde reacted against consumerist and politico-moral conceptions of art production. Related to them through a common concern to “aestheticize life,” politicized artists like Ruskin and Morris sought to lead politics by insisting on the primacy of aesthetics in social existence.

In his non-fiction, Lewis repeatedly sought to synthesize these postures. The true artist creates new modes of human perception, and therefore must be regarded as a leader of the masses. Ideally, however, the artist must be independent of and supersede all political ideology: “As measure is the principle of all true art, and as art is the enemy of all excess, so it is along aesthetic lines that the solution of this problem [of violence] should be sought rather than along moral (or police) lines, or humanitarian ones” (The Art of Being Ruled 64-5).<sup>53</sup> He suggests that this synthesis is impossible in the present circumstances, given the reduction of “detachment” to *art for art’s sake*, and the debasement of political leadership to communist influence.<sup>54</sup> Though

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higher human classifications, which, owing to scientific method, men could now attempt” (375). The modern artistic task is to dismantle the specter of universal reason that underlies democratic conceptions of the human.

<sup>53</sup> See Foshay for a detailed account of Lewis’ avant-garde stance, especially in The Caliph’s Design and his Vorticist work.

<sup>54</sup> Lewis’ conception of the artist as individual recalls Oscar Wilde’s contrast between artistry and “public opinion” in “The Soul of Man under Socialism” (1891). In sharp contradistinction, however, are their divergent evaluations of modern technology. Whereas Wilde calls attention to exploitative conditions under capitalism in observing that “At present machinery competes against man. Under proper conditions machinery will serve man” (269), Lewis repeatedly compares humans to machines in order to advocate dictatorship as a stabilizing force: “In the mass people wish to be *automata*: they wish to be *conventional*: they hate you teaching them or forcing them into ‘freedom’: they wish to be obedient, hard-working machines, as near dead as possible—as near dead (feelingless and thoughtless) as they can get, without actually dying” (Art of Being Ruled 151).

Victor is a failed artist, he is the novel's lone voice against the sacrifice of this avant-garde synthesis as he refuses to capitulate to Jewish/communist corruption:

For better or for worse these broad and hostile shoulders belonged to Nature, with her big impulsive responses, with her violent freedom, with her animal directness: unconservative, illogical, and true to her elemental self. He subscribed therefore to a larger scheme: the smaller, the watertight, the theoretic, the planning of man's logic, he repudiated. . . So Stamp crouched and waited, attending the blow he knew would descend, and which, fatally, he would resist. For self-preservation was still his law. Indeed the lightest rap, and he would have sprung into action. (236)

In Victor, Lewis reverses personification to invest the human with animal qualities that deeply contrast the communist mechanical puppets. He taps into the "natural," "unconservative," and "elemental" capacity of the human. Victor is "big," "violent," and thus evinces an admirable correspondence between his feelings and his expressions that is totally opposed to the communists' careful cultivation of the surface and use of deceptive masks.<sup>55</sup>

The communists compare Victor's revolt to the Nazi revolt against the Treaty of Versailles; both suffer from the feeling of being terribly wronged, and their strength is aroused by unprecedented "crisis": "He feels like a Great Power . . . A rather impoverished, mutilated, but extremely chauvinistic Great Power" (244)! Fascism, embodied here in Victor, is framed as an elemental revolt by a poverty-stricken "underdog" rather than aggressive oppression by the "master races." Although motivated by an "inferiority complex," fascism is understood as a reaction to the injustice of the "Haves." Victor's, revolt, and by implication Germany's,

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<sup>55</sup> "[W]hen he took counsel with himself, the thing was done in public, as it were; and upon his face, as upon a screen, was reflected what was going on within. . . He would have regarded it as improper to possess a *self* that had any secrets, from other selves" (Lewis, The Revenge for Love 234).

legitimately and honestly reacts against the corrupt world of art and politics that suppresses his signature and capitalizes on his hunger.

### **Lewis and continental fascism**

In recent years, criticism of Lewis' tendency toward fascism has benefited from comparisons of his characters to the *Freikorps* in Klaus Theweleit's classic psychoanalytic critique of fascism, *Male Fantasies* (1987-88). In these readings, Lewis' satires similarly precipitate a tough exteriority, an "ossature," or shell to protect oneself against the constant threat of collapse after World War I (*Men Without Art* 99). Many critics have analyzed his comparison of satire and "mechanization" as a fascist fetishization of dehumanized masculine machines.<sup>56</sup> Hal Foster, for instance, analyzes the fascism implicit in Lewis' production of a "machine body" that transforms "stimulus shock into protective shield" (23).

As Jessica Burstein has observed, Lewis' understanding of masculinity was complex, and assumed the ideological nature of gender: "Lewis' politics are bound to an understanding of sexuality that hinges on the wavering boundary between the natural and constructed" (151). I would also argue that Lewis always represents masculinity as a construction, or as he puts it, a "highly unstable and *artificial* mode of life."<sup>57</sup> In *The Art of Being Ruled*, he writes, "Men were only made into 'men' with great difficulty even in primitive society: the male is not naturally 'a man' any more than the woman. He has to be propped up into that position with some ingenuity, and is always likely to collapse" (247). In this context, the "Western Man," a reasonable

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<sup>56</sup> Holloway writes, "Lewis's fiction employs two rather distinct models of the non-human or the sub-human. On the one hand there is that of the engine: active producer of the mechanical. On the other, that of the puppet, mere product of the mechanical" (10). Conroy writes, "Just as the machine, though outwardly cold, embodies the energetic force of nature, so in Lewis' conception of Vorticism the artwork . . . is produced by and embodies, indeed usurps, that power" (22).

<sup>57</sup> "'Mind' is an artificial, pumped-up affair—just as the 'male' is a highly unstable and *artificial* mode of life. All we can say is that certain entelechies . . . are adapted to sustain these sporadic feats of superlative activity, and others are not" (Lewis, *Time and Western Man* 304).

philosopher and artist, or the epitome of civilized “individuality” is nothing more than an ideological creation, but a necessary one for European civilization: “Western Man . . . is of course the completest myth. The only question is whether we should not erect that myth into a reality, define it more . . . and whether, in short, some such generalization would not serve our purposes better than the multiplicity of myths that swarm in our drifting chaos” (Time and Western Man 134).

In contrast for the Italian Futurists, the sexualized conflation of men with machines rather than the philosopher-artist presented a positive masculine model of class relations and technical innovation. In her important study of gender and fascism, Fascist Virilities, Barbara Spackman advances the study of “virility” in the “fantasized economics” of Italian fascist culture and literature (49). Under the aegis of the virile nation, the forceful annexation of colonies and violence against women appear as acts of self-defense. Virility is constructed by an autarchic worldview that melds man to machine. Marinetti, in particular, suggests a “virile” imperial revolt against bourgeois illusions of progress and egalitarianism. Throughout the 1920s, Marinetti’s texts “revolutionized” autarky by incorporating an anti-hierarchal rhetorical element. They were full of enthusiasm for capitalist deterritorialization, impatiently and vehemently disavowing all manner of class (but not sexual or racial) discrimination within the nation. He implies that capital’s coupling of men with machines would eventually flatten out all the sedimented classes, including the nobility, especially as war increasingly dominated production:

One can say of the great french railway strike that the organizers were unable to persuade a single mechanic to sabotage his locomotive. To me this seems entirely natural. How could one of those men have been able to wound or kill his great faithful devoted mistress

with her quick and ardent heart? His beautiful steel machine that had so often glowed with pleasure beneath his ardent caress? (Marinetti 90)

Lewis' imagination departs significantly from Marinetti's celebration of the virile machine/man. In The Art of Being Ruled, he writes that "the physical joining up, as it were, of the futurist" with objects "produces a monster, a hydra, a leviathan, and is a megalomaniac creation" (191). The Western Man, on the other hand, supposedly guides all humanity toward peace against liberal democracy's bitter renunciation of the intellectual artist.

Within Lewis' myth of the Western Man, then, the status of Italian fascism is ambivalent. Fascism worships "Action," and is therefore "apt to set up a climate as unsuitable for artistic pursuits as the most narrow of theocratic régimes" (Blasting and Bombardiering 263). In Time and Western Man, he writes, "The fascists have the word *action* on their lips from morning till night. It is their magic word, recurring in all their speeches or incantations: violence is their god" (201). He therefore tempers the enthusiastic fascist exaggeration of masculinity that provokes war.

Furthermore, Lewis disdained fascism's appropriation of mass politics and its contamination by mass art, especially film. His version of fascism refuses to embrace Marinetti's enthusiasm for the masses.<sup>58</sup> Compared to Marinetti, Lewis' writing exhibits a will to preserve the nation's cultural superiority gained by industrial and imperial precedence. Indeed, Marinetti's veneration of new technology and impulse to destroy what is "passé" seem more historically "modern" as well as adolescent than Lewis' celebration of ships in Blast.<sup>59</sup> Jameson identifies in

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<sup>58</sup> Janet Lyon discusses Marinetti's simultaneous disdain for the masses and "rhetoric of contempt which conceives and reifies as an oppressive cultural center a nonporous, undifferentiated 'public.'" Such rhetoric "may be understood as the flip side of militant alliances forged at other times around the sign of 'the people'" (109).

<sup>59</sup> "The intoxication of great speeds in cars is nothing but the joy of feeling oneself fused with the only divinity. Sportsmen are the first catechumens of this religion. For the coming destruction of houses and cities, to make way for great meeting places for cars and planes" (Marinetti 96).

Lewis' fiction an affection for the "outdated": "there thus comes into being a language beyond language, shot through with the jerry-built shoddiness of modern industrial civilization, brittle and impermanent . . ." (Jameson 86). Lewis claims instead a position beyond Italian futurism, a self-consciously "avant-avant-garde" position, from which he can take pride in England's nonchalance toward technology. He thereby revolts against Marinetti's pretensions to "classlessness" and the political efficacy of progressive technology.

Ayers writes that the technologies of the car and the cinema in particular horrified Lewis because of their association with degenerate forms of modernism: "The car is the archetypal mechanical prophet of the time-philosophy which it enacts . . . like cinema" (Ayers 183). In The Revenge for Love, they are associated with the masses. As the Stamps drive at top speed through the Spanish countryside, the landscape visually assaults Margot:

[T]rees, rocks, and telegraph-poles stood up dizzily before her and crashed down behind. They were held up stiffly in front of her astonished eyes, then snatched savagely out of the picture. Like a card-world clacked cinematographically through its static permutations by the ill-bred fingers of a powerful conjurer, everything stood upon end and then fell flat. (314)

Riding in the speeding automobile is like watching a film. Both experiences disorient the senses and jostle an otherwise stable perspective to reduce space to two dimensions ("a card-world"). Lewis' antipathy for technology and the mechanical reproduction of art invested in the highbrow's discriminatory mechanism, allowing readers to express their distinction from the merely "popular." Any politics that pretended to give the masses political representation was ominous. From Lewis' viewpoint, Mussolini, "the schematic juxtaposition of a series of

disconnected stylizations,” is the lamentable product of filmic montage, and thus his “‘style is the man,’ of a crowd of men, not one man at all” (Time and Western Man 342).

For Lewis, the value of fascist “virility” lies elsewhere, in its capacity to negate and counteract the greater dangers of effeminacy: secular Christian ideals, the open market, the vulgar conflation of art with advertising, the influence of feminism/inversion, and the manufactured liberal/revolutionary myth of individual freedom. He endorses not the “revolutionary” aspects of fascism that converges with the communist rhetoric of “the people,” but rather those that boldly announce its restoration of artistic and political hierarchies. In the political sphere, fascism is virile, harsh, and punitive, but an effective and fair organization of masses, who, if they were honest, would admit their desire to be managed rather than to be free. Thus, from a different perspective, Mussolini also represents not populism, but rather “exteriority, display and make-up,” qualities of the figure of the civilized masculine satirist (Time and Western Man 342).

Lewis preferred continental fascism’s “virility” with all of its problematic imperfections over liberal and communist “femininity,” even as late as 1937: “if instead of the really malefic ‘Bloomsburies’, who with their ambitious and jealous cabal have had such a destructive influence upon the intellectual life of England, something more like these Vienna Café habitués of those days could have been the ones to push themselves into power, a less sordid atmosphere would have prevailed” (Blasting and Bombardiering 273). In The Revenge for Love, Victor’s identification with Nazism is similarly riddled by violence and artistic insecurity, but his revolt against the encroaching chaos of communism and Jews is commended.

We can also detect The Revenge for Love’s capitulation to fascism in its satirical objectification of Margot. As we can see above, Lewis’ preference for fascism was defined by

his animus toward “Bloomsburies,” or what he understood as liberal feminist cultural production. In this section, I will show how Lewis’ rejection of feminism merges with a fascist strain of anti-humanist satire.

### **Margot as counterrevolutionary domestic heroine**

Up to this point, Margot’s naïve domestic perception has proven amazingly accurate, particularly in her suspicion of Gillian, Abershaw, and O’Hara. In Spain, the narrator’s irony deepens in relation to Margot, and the counterrevolutionary face of The Revenge for Love begins to emerge.

A requisite of its counterrevolutionary predecessors is the reflection of surrounding national crisis. In Spain, the Stamps find that they represent a downtrodden, *déclassé* British Empire. Throughout the novel, we have followed the Stamps’ financial spiral downward. The Stamps’ economic disintegration is simultaneous with the revelation that England no longer holds its dominion over Europe and the rest of the world. “The Union Jack had grown to be no better than a red rag to a bull to these bitter Dons . . . To be English was no longer honourable and important” (262). In this context, The Revenge for Love identifies the “powerful” heroine of liberal domestic fiction as a catastrophic element.

Encouraged in Spain by her readings of Ruskin and Woolf, this normally perceptive but passive heroine becomes inspired to assert herself into the play of forces beyond her political ken. As a protagonist, she thereby threatens to move the novel’s critique of communism closer to the territory of exemplary liberal domestic fiction. But in Margot’s eventual demise, Lewis marks the boundaries of “female desire” by indicting her reliance on “feminist” literature both as character and reader. Lewis suppresses the subversive possibilities of domestic women in these authors’ works. He demotes the progressive domestic heroine’s usual self-appointed agency; the

will and ascendancy that domestic fiction characteristically promises to her simply disappears. Margot becomes aware of humanity's essential beastliness and humiliation, and therefore the false hope installed by humanist conceptions of women's political agency, but too late to save herself from the destruction unleashed by her feminist experiment. Although Margot is the only true political (because thoroughly apolitical) visionary in the novel, Lewis clearly marks as illegitimate her desire to bring thought to bear on action.

The Revenge for Love imagines the female heroine as ill served by Ruskin's Sesame and Lilies (1865), which promises women's ascendancy in the private sphere and the fantasy of their "secret of exalted birth" (276). Ruskin soothes women's "inferiority complex" by a "sweeping belittlement of the male" (277). Although Margot rejects this belittlement, she is inspired by Ruskin's exaltation of the amazonian "competent mate," full of womanly "Victorian pugnacity" (279-82). Whereas Ruskin's glorification of domestic women would confine her illusive feeling of superiority to the private sphere, pairing his fantasy with Woolf completes Margot's will to take action on Victor's behalf. Margot repudiates her confinement to the domestic sphere, and enters the world of masculine action. Her determination eventually ruins both her and her husband.

Woolf was a major target of Lewis' own literary criticism—an onus in the world of highbrow literary production (and therefore his competition) and a pernicious embodiment of feminized modernity who leads the masses to their own demise. Lewis resentfully identified a lifelong enemy in "Bloomsbury." His satirical novel, The Apes of God (1930) concentrated his critical animus to lambast the coterie's degeneracy.<sup>60</sup> In Men Without Art (1934), he aligns Woolf's degraded modernism with a neurotic feminist politics informed by the depraved

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<sup>60</sup> The Apes of God (1934) satirizes the Sitwells.

combination of “sexual inversion” and femininity. In fact, he characterizes most British modernist literature, from Oscar Wilde to Virginia Woolf, as a continuous indoctrination of the “pleasure-cult” (140). From his vantage point as a more artistically gifted, but comparatively publicity-starved artist, Woolf’s neurotic literary practices are simultaneously anemic and threatening:

It has been with considerable shaking in my shoes, and a feeling of treading upon a carpet of eggs, that I have taken the cow by the horns in this chapter, and broached the subject of the part that the feminine mind has played . . . in the erection of our present criteria. For fifteen years I have subsisted in this suffocating atmosphere. . . I have defended myself as best I could against the influences of what I felt to be a tyrannical inverted orthodoxy-in-the-making. (140)

Woolf is simultaneously a quivering mass and a suffocating interior, a prudish “old maid” and a vicious tyrant. Other contradictions abound; Woolf is a cow with horns, and her literary criteria are both feminine and erect. Her irreconcilable weakness and viciousness, a combination that only the “invert” can fully unleash, jeopardizes art in this disorderly and ruinous world. As a sane masculine satirist who must continually face Bloomsbury’s power, Lewis himself becomes fearful of the world outside, “shaking in his shoes.”

In this characterization, Lewis echoes sentiments common in the 1930s British fascist press. For the British Union of Fascists, Bloomsbury advocated an “effete” and “anaemic” internationalism. Along with Jews, finance capitalists, feminists, and communists, Bloomsbury modernists sought to destroy Britain’s true virile tradition. Bloomsbury betrays that tradition because as the center of Britain’s cultural and literary reputation, it associates the nation with a decadent femininity.

As in Men Without Art, a leading intellectual in the fascist party associates Bloomsbury with bourgeois interiors, writing that “some dim recess of Bloomsbury . . . trumpeted forth by legions of well-fed bourgeois intelligentsia,” succeeds contrary to all natural conditions of growth, creating deformed and neurotic creatures who resemble the cave-dwellers of Plato’s allegory. Although the cave-dwellers are fantastically international, they are nevertheless feminine and neurotic because they cannot relate to the struggles required by their surroundings. Fascism, on the other hand, “will sweep away that cult of ugliness and distortion in art, music and literature which is the product of neurotic post-war minds, sickened by long incarceration in dim cities” (“Fascism and Culture” 1).

In a claim that recall Lewis’ metaphor of sexual “inversion,” another fascist journalist observes that Bloomsbury intellectuals are feminized “pink pansies,” dreaming and “losing their balance” by spinning impractical dreams (“Pink Pansies” 2). The writer of yet another article describes a meeting of the British Sexological Society where Bloomsbury’s denizens, a hodge-podge of “Jewboys, Old boys, Tomboys and Nice Boys” attack Britain insidiously in the form of homosexuality (“Sex Appeals”). A logical problem arises here. After all, how can neurotic and feckless “pansies” actually harm supposedly tough and virile fascists? One resolution compares Bloomsbury to bacterial disease, a threat that attacks through stealth, and inverts power relations to weaken the naturally strong; the title of this article is “Sex Appeals to Bloomsbury Bacilli.” These metaphoric constellations of sexuality and disease constantly marked British fascist propaganda, as we will see further in Chapter 2. Lewis appropriates those constellations to assess modernist writers and readers.

Margot becomes similarly neurotic and powerful through her reading of Woolf. “Purchased for five shillings at the local Boot’s,” A Room of One’s Own cheaply and

seductively misleads the poor (The Revenge for Love 214). Margot is fed a junk diet of bourgeois escapism and lured by Woolf's fantasy into a "highbrow feminist fairyland" (215). In this world of uncontrollable "free market" literary standards, the escape that Woolf offers is "dope," appropriately available at the local pharmacy along with actual drugs and other escapist literature.<sup>61</sup>

A Room of One's Own induces neurotic nostalgia: "The red rose cries, 'He is near, he is near,' And the white rose weeps, 'He is late'; The larkspur listens, 'I hear, I hear'; And the lily whispers, 'I wait.'" (The Revenge for Love 319). The narrator parodies Woolf's style here to demonstrate her nostalgic withdrawal from the contemporary literary task, but confuses Woolf with her citation of Tennyson. In A Room of One's Own, Woolf quotes Tennyson and Rossetti to comment on the "illusion" of Victorian poetry: "the illusion which inspired Tennyson and Christina Rossetti to sing so passionately about the coming of their loves . . . Why, if it was an illusion, not praise the catastrophe, whatever it was, that destroyed illusion and put truth in its place" (Woolf, A Room 15). Woolf's question problematizes romantic nostalgia much along the lines of other Anglo-American modernists of the inter-war period, Lewis included. Indeed, it is difficult, perhaps even impossible, to perceive such nostalgia in A Room of One's Own.

In that essay in fact, Woolf indicts European modernity's inheritance of a long intertwined history of patriarchy and capital. As a corrective, she demands women's inclusion in the University but on feminist terms. Her version of the "outsider" position, very different from the garden or drugged oblivion that Lewis imagines it to be, actively opposes *and* engages the "masculine" world. But this is precisely the danger she poses for Margot. Woolf's so-called

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<sup>61</sup> In actuality, Woolf's writing would not have sold at Boot's. Nicole Beaman writes that "Class distinction dictated even the type of circulating library to which a woman belonged. Virginia Woolf did not go to Boots but to Day's or Mudie's" (10) Lewis' relegation of Woolf to "the largest circulating library of its kind, with over four hundred branches and half a million subscribers" probably means to associate Woolf with "undiscriminating" middlebrow readers.

“neurotic feminism” is a serious menace to otherwise peaceful gendered relations. Just as in Men Without Art, Woolf is dangerous here because she is so incompetent and unimportant, and because her incompetence results in the transformation of women into agents outside the domestic scene. Woolf, in Lewis’ mind, provokes a false awareness of systematic misogyny, and as she calls for women to take action, turns a neurotic fantasy into political disaster.

As Margot falls prey to Woolf’s corruptions, she increasingly occupies the narrator’s satirical attention. Reading A Room of One’s Own, she follows a “seductive train of images” that induces a drug-like state of forgetting, as if she “had been forcibly liquidated, and had followed her day-dreams into their limbo. For the moment she allowed herself to wonder if in fact she was still there at all, visible and in the flesh” (215). Holloway writes that “Humanity has arrived in this world of ‘violent puppets’ . . . Margaret is clearly a character who enjoys an anastasis from puppetry into humanity” (13). I believe precisely the opposite—that in the second half of the novel, she begins to resemble the hallucinatory puppets that had been associated thus far with communists.

The Spain episodes foreground Margot’s capacity for mechanical “thingness.” In a grotesque scene, Margot and Victor are seated in a city square, masquerading as tourists to deflect suspicion from their gunrunning preparations. When a dwarf, a street performer, playfully pretends to be Margot’s child, she recoils in utter horror at his monstrosity whereas the “backward public” laughs at and enjoys his antics. For Margot, the dwarf represents a human failure, a reduction of the human standard. The dwarf’s inequality should therefore be pitied; instead, he exaggerates and capitalizes on his blatant inequality.

In Men Without Art, Lewis thematizes national differences in humor by highlighting these divergent attitudes to dwarves. To the English, dwarves are “‘things’ which should

‘provoke pity or disgust, instead of laughter.’” The Spanish, on the other hand, “feel perhaps that God has made them a present of these hideous oddities to be their sport.” In Spain, the dwarf accepts this role “and is quite puffed-up with his own importance and proud of his god-sent job,” finding joy in shattering “the illusion of being autonomous and ‘free’” (91-5). Lewis wholeheartedly praises this instance of Spanish humor, which calls attention to the ruses of humanism.

Although Margot never learns to laugh at the dwarf, the episode forces her to acknowledge their complicity. She recognizes that she too, is sub-human—limited and mechanical: “What beasts all human were!! She too—for she would not let herself out. Where Victor was, she would always be found . . . There was no use pretending she did not belong to this system of roaring and spluttering bestial life of flesh and blood” (The Revenge for Love 267-8). Margot realizes here that her love is inexplicably dictated by nature. Sexual love is revealed as an unavoidable weakness for women that obliterates the façade of human self-determination and freedom. She recognizes that humans are fundamentally limited by compulsory natures. The “impersonality” of her love further demands her subservience. After this episode, “It looked as if it regarded it as quite natural to be there as anywhere else. It belonged to Victor, who was its sun and its meridian” (310). She is reduced to an “it” that follows Victor in automatic worship and exaltation.

But because of her reading of Woolf, she confuses this masochistic love for Victor with a necessity to act on his behalf. The doll-like Margot who recognizes her “nothingness” merges with a delusional attempt to be a feminist agent in the plot. When she finally confronts Percy to save Victor, “the two Margots in question had, as it were, coalesced . . . as if the objects of her fancy belonged outside and not inside at all. She sought to impose them upon the objective

reality.” Victor observes that Margot confuses private fantasy with public behavior; “in the full regalia of her private mind,” she was “sitting down at a café table with old Percy and him and insisting upon wearing her nightdress in public” (288). Margot’s mistaken sense of agency, however, only serves to push Victor further into the communist scheme, and she dramatically loses any authority that she’d had as the paranoid domestic heroine.

The narrator notes that in her delusion, “she could respond to the song of the magdalen, brought to her notice by the latter-day wolves, who had suckled her starved intelligence and fed it with Victorian lollypops” (319). Lewis’ satire is unleashed on Margot as a “puppet” and a would-be feminist. At the end of the novel, Percy assesses Margot’s voice as “artificial, unreal, yet penetrating,” attesting to the irony that presents her agency as both valid (when she serves Victor quietly) and invalid (when she takes action on his behalf).

The full scope of this dual threat finally emerges after the Stamps have accidentally killed a Civil Guard and face certain death if caught. Margot realizes her mistake in taking Woolf seriously: “[C]alling to mind how she had been induced to forsake the passive role—and to march up into the village to engage in action, of all hazardous, foolish things—she arched her neck and frowned down at the ground at her feet, removing her eyes from contact with this bleak and senseless bustle of objectless matter” (330). Her translation of reading into action had triggered a chain of tragic consequences.

Had she read Lewis’ The Art of Being Ruled instead, the tragedy probably could have been averted, for he praises the supreme passivity of women: “Quiescence, obedience, and receptivity are required for action, as well as the active factors, just as women and men are required to produce a child . . . to be *receptive* rather than active (to just lie down and *couver* rather than execute) is by no means a humiliating role” (160). Lewis’ injunction to women to

accept the “receptive” role in reproduction in this text nevertheless defies a “return” to the nuclear patriarchal family. In fact, he reservedly endorses the deterritorializing effects of capital on its structure.<sup>62</sup> As I will elaborate in Chapter 2, this dual insistence on women’s subordination in domestic labor and the seemingly incongruous rejection of the private patriarchal family ties him closely to the practice of fascist domestic fiction.

## Conclusion

For many critics, the character of Margot develops in the reader a deadly serious perception of modern politics as a series of irresponsible, bourgeois *trahisons*, perhaps even Lewis’ own. Ayers argues that “Margot’s voice is the voice of simple, secular love which Hardcaster’s communism has abandoned” (185). The Revenge for Love appears as Lewis’ most humane work because it seems to reflect his own misgivings about the vicious satirical reduction of humans to dead mechanisms. Parker writes that “In contrast to the other characters, who express the fixed attitudes of automata, Margot is a detailed portrait of someone in the process of developing a greater understanding of her life” (218). Jameson writes with more ambiguity that “now for the first and last time, it is from the woman’s, from the victim’s, point of view that we are given to witness the deadly onslaught of the aggressive impulse. To be sure, the passive and victimized Margot’s marks no transcendence . . . Still, the portrait of Margot is a kind of tour de force” (145-6).

This novel is thus often taken as the marker of Lewis’ departure, momentary or otherwise, from fascism. Lewis himself presents this reading in Rude Assignment, quoting an

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<sup>62</sup> He writes in The Art of Being Ruled, “The object of the capitalo-socialist promoters of the sex war was dual. One object was the quite temporary one of discrediting authority, and reducing . . . the little father of the family squatting rather miserably . . . But the break-up of this expensive and useless unit, the family, and the releasing of the hordes of idle women, . . . for industrial purposes, was the principal object” (195).

unpublished review that asserts that the Stamps and Percy take “that daring leap from the kingdom of dehumanising necessity to the kingdom of freedom, that creative Promethean act by which a revolutionist, a friend, a woman, an artist attempt to break the cash-nexus.” The title thereby refers to the fact “that creative love the crime of crimes against the system, must be crushed out by torture, must be revenged” (234).

In contrast to these readings, I believe that The Revenge for Love aligns his strain of British modernism with fascism, and out of his entire oeuvre, most (not least) effectively illuminates the attractions of fascism for Lewis and his readers. To claim that he is here renouncing the “political game,” or even “humanizing” Margot, is to ignore the gender and sexual codings in his understanding of fascism, and to mystify the political significance of the domestic novel overall. These claims enable a critical blindness to the fact that Lewis’ vision of “love” rests on a masculinist logic that assumes the priority of racial, gender, and sexual inequality. The novel presents fascism, although problematic, as superior politics for modern, technologically bound humanity because it appears to forge peace and benefit women who only pose a threat to society and themselves when they demand political agency. Instead of “saving” Lewis from the grips of fascist thinking, this vision bound him ever more closely.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE BIOPOLITICS OF FASCIST SATIRE

#### OLIVE HAWKS' WHAT HOPE FOR GREEN STREET?

The subject of this chapter, What Hope for Green Street? (1946), is a domestic novel by Olive Hawks, a prominent member of the British Union of Fascists (BUF). As a BUF parliamentary candidate, “Women’s Canvass Organizer,” and speaker for the “Women’s Peace Campaign,” Hawks wrote prolifically for the British fascist press throughout the 30s.<sup>63</sup> In 1940, she rose to the position of Chief Women’s Organizer. That same year, she was interred under the National Government’s emergency security measure DR 18B, which incarcerated active members of the BUF and citizens of enemy nations residing in Britain.

Green Street exposes the effects of inter-war politics and economy on a fictional working-class family (parents with five grown children), the Smiths of London’s East End. Each chapter focuses on one family member, employing satirical irony on his or her behalf to indict the liberal state for conditions like men’s unemployment, women’s sweated wage labor, and the degradation of domestic labor. In each chapter, the narrator shifts the satirical focus, however, to indict equally each protagonist’s capitulation to bourgeois conceptions of the private patriarchal home. By the novel’s conclusion, only the youngest son Bill, a British Union activist, remains unscathed by the narrator’s satirical treatment. In fact, his perspective accords with the narrator’s as he diagnoses each family member’s stunted aspirations and suggests the corporate state as the most effective cure for their individual and collective ills.

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<sup>63</sup> Hawks wrote What Hope for Green Street while in prison. After the war, she authored three more novels: Time is My Debtor (1947), These Frail Vessels (1948), and A Sparrow for a Farthing (1950). In 1951, Hawks co-wrote an etiquette and guide book for young women, Life Lies Ahead: A Practical Guide to Home-making and the Development of Personality. See Gottlieb, Appendix, for more on Hawks’ biography.

Hawks organizes her narrative as a rhetorical catalogue of criticisms; in terms of plot, nothing much “happens” in *Green Street*. Neither do her characters develop in self-knowledge, awareness, or complexity as is usual in domestic realist fiction. Instead, *Green Street*’s characters are static types or “mental attitudes” that expose modern inter-war society’s damaging effects on the British working class.<sup>64</sup> These narrative qualities resonate with what Ronald Paulson calls “satiric contemplation” or “the slow walk around the object, through which its various facets are exposed—a process which is essentially static and expository” (185). James Kernan also notes a conspicuous absence of plot in his discussion of satirical novels: “Satire never offers that direct, linear progression which is ordinarily taken as plot. Instead, we get collections of loosely related scenes and busyness which curls back on itself . . .” (100). Because *Green Street* so conspicuously incorporates these common satirical features, I present the novel as a satirical “survey or anatomy of a vicious society” (Paulson 241). As an “anatomy” rather than a progressive narrative, *Green Street* “dissects” society’s “diseases,” as Northrop Frye explains of satirical novels. I propose that as a satirical anatomy, the novel creates an ambiguous political commitment; it presents itself as a critical undertaking on working-class domestic women’s behalf, even as it proposes radically retrenching their political rights.

In Britain, the modern satirical tradition was especially polemical. Gary Dyer notes in view of all the modern genres, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century satirists “address[ed] themselves to public opinion with the least mediation” (31). Regarding the genre more broadly, Frye writes that satire “kinetically” translates literature into a “course of action” and that when abused, it degenerates into “emotional propaganda” or “conditioned reflex” (Frye 245, 350). But I do not equate fascist literature with overt polemics, nor do I claim that satire is politically

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<sup>64</sup> Northrop Frye discusses the satire/novel hybrid in which “characters are symbols of social and other ideas, like the proletarian novels of the thirties in this century” (312).

suspect because it is “interested.” Rather, I argue specifically that Hawks’ novel creates a meeting point between domestic labor and fascist imperialism by fusing two seemingly antithetical British satirical modes: “radical political” satire and “conservative Juvenalian” satire.

### **Satire and mass politics**

These two satirical modes arose at the end of the long eighteenth century against the background of modern mass politics—the French Revolution, and later, the turbulent bids for suffrage expansion and fair working conditions within Britain.

Dyer writes that the later form, radical political satire, was marked by “commitment rather than mere relativism” (74). Shelley’s Peter Bell the Third (1819) and Byron’s The Vision of Judgment (1822) as two literary examples intervene in specific political debates and take “a radical stance” on “Catholic emancipation, repeal of the Corn Laws, and liberalization of Britain’s rule over Ireland” (Dyer 59). Marilyn Butler also cites radical journalistic satires by William Cobbett, William Hone, and Richard Carlile that called for parliamentary reform in the midst of “riots, machine-breaking and civil disorders” in the first decades of the nineteenth century (143). Particularly important as an event for radical political satire was the Peterloo Massacre in 1819 in Manchester, where mass demonstrators in favor of reforming suffrage were trampled and fired upon. Following E. P. Thompson, Marcus Wood observes that “Radical reaction ... was massive and prolonged and generated much satire aimed ironically at the military” (213).

The unprecedented popularity and populism of satirical dissent were reinforced by two-penny presses, broadsides, and the liberalization of the press as a whole.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, radical

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<sup>65</sup> Wood describes “the efflorescence of radical publicity” between the years 1815 and 1822 (3), during which there was a “sudden expansion of the print trade, and the rise of the satiric etching in particular, the growth of periodical publication and of the children’s book trade. . . .” All had a “direct impact on the production of social satire and political propaganda” (4). Dyer, however, attributes the dialogism of radical satire to the governmental

political satires valorized the democratization of cultural production, distribution, and consumption as a basic condition of possibility. As a result, they often deployed “multi-voiced discourse” and inhabited the language of the “people” to reject the state’s and ruling elite’s “univocal style and . . . authoritarian values” (Dyer 68).

Given their vulnerability to state prosecution, however, radical political satires often refrained from proposing concrete alternatives; political indeterminacy was therefore characteristic. Wood observes that in their primary mode as “attack,” “ridicule,” and “castigation,” they do not “suggest solutions to the social and economic organization of society” (10). Even the political goals of William Hone, often cited as the most influential nineteenth-century radical satirist, Wood concludes, are “difficult to determine” (Wood 10). Kyle Grimes observes that Hone and the cartoonist Cruikshank used parody against “cultural authority” to “expose, disarm, and ridicule their pretensions to authority.” Yet he agrees with Wood in observing that their parodic satires created not viable alternatives in political terms, but rather a “dialogizing counter-movement to the implicit truth claims of *all* monological discourses” (181-2).

In a radical political vein, Green Street “speaks for” working-class residents of the East End, especially culturally and politically underrepresented working-class domestic women. Hawks invokes an East End vernacular throughout her text, as in the following: “Er? That’s Millie Smiff, old Smiff’s eldest girl, ‘im wot goes dahn to the old ‘Fish and Anchor’” (5). She also creates an eclectic pastiche occupying incompatible “political” registers such as socialism and religion in her satire of liberal domesticity. Her pastiche, however, shuts down a dialogic

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control of the press, citing the Blasphemous and Seditious Libels Act of 1819: “Legal principles . . . encourage satiric subterfuge, since satirists can take advantage of the gaps between the authorities’ need to contain dissent and the conventions of the law by applying those techniques that distance them from their real meanings: allegory, dream visions, interpolated speakers, multi-layered parody” (73).

critique of monolithic political and literary language. In her endorsement of the fascist corporate state, she also employs a satirical mode that favors conservative political metaphors of decadence and illness *against* the people.

Hawks creates a morally concerned and patriotic narrative persona that runs throughout the Juvenalian satirical tradition. Critics have often assumed that conservative satire and domestic fiction were antithetical for several important reasons. Some oft cited oppositions include: audience (men vs. women, culturally and politically initiated vs. uninitiated), critical objects (politics of the state and market vs. morals and personal behavior), persona (patriotic moralist vs. domestic woman), genre (poetry vs. novels), and style (tragedy vs. comedy). But many critics have recently observed that the oppositions do not hold so neatly. Paradigmatic are canonical writers such as Fielding, Peacock, and Austen, but also transitional genres like the satirical novel of manners, and transitional practitioners such as Jane Taylor.<sup>66</sup>

Revealing domestic fiction's sublimation of this politicized genre, Green Street analyzes domestic space by lining up and firing at a range of political objects and attitudes. In transforming the Smiths from the impetus to the objects of satire in each chapter, Hawks indicts working-class authority over domestic space as a hazard to the nation. To dissect contemporary decadence, she incorporates literary conventions established by conservative (anti-populist) Juvenalian satire.

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<sup>66</sup> Stuart Curran's essay describes Jane Taylor's Essays in Rhyme, on Morals and Manners (1816) as a mediation between domestic realism and neoclassical satire. He observes that Taylor's writing focuses on "the domestic establishment as an index of broadly held public values" (Curran 142). In his view, Taylor inhabits a satirical persona to "taxonomize [social] ills through traditional satiric means" even as she sought to "restor[e] interior spirituality" and anticipated "evangelical missionaries" (Curran 150). Dyer also discusses Taylor along with William Combe, John Hamilton Reynolds, and Thomas Hood as writers who prefigured a shift in satirical form after the late eighteenth century cult of Sensibility, and later financial crisis of the late 1820s that compelled publishers to shift the book market from poetry to novels, or from "'imaginative' to 'realistic' media" (143). These writers, Dyer argues, "domesticated" satire to emphasize reform and comedy rather than "moral castigation" (146): "satire conformed to values that were . . . the particular property of the middle class, the Nonconformists or Evangelicals, and women" (146).

Invoking the Roman satirist Juvenal as a “patriotic, ‘masculine’ writer . . . in a corrupt age,” writers like William Gifford (The Baviad, 1791 and The Maeviad, 1795) and Thomas James Mathias (Pursuits of Literature, 1794 – 7) fulminated against the French Revolution and the democratic possibilities of mass politics in general (Dyer 51-2). Also important as satirical objects were the free market and its cultural effects. Both writers attacked the Della Cruscan School of poetry for popularizing women writers and sentimental themes.<sup>67</sup> Gifford revolted against the commodification of poetry, believing that it contributed to mob rule and detracted from national virility. As opposed to “multi-voiced” pastiche, this mode often took the form of “first-person oratory and the formal language of heroic couplet satires” (Dyer 97). British Juvenalian satire is “earnest” as opposed to radical satire, argues Dyer, and employs a “satirist-speaker” who “rails alone or is encouraged by a single sympathetic interlocutor” (68).

Although adhering to prose narrative throughout Green Street, Hawks also satirizes competing contemporary cultural forms that like hers, inscribe themes of male camaraderie and women’s domesticity. Often some song, movie, or magazine accompanies the characters’ misperception of reality or their apolitical escapism. Hollywood movies and popular music in particular deceive women into romantic sentimentality or “softness,” and delude men with simulacra of male loyalty and camaraderie.<sup>68</sup> Green Street provides a model of reading to show that politics is irreducibly grounded in the judgment of ideology and cultural production.

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<sup>67</sup> Dyer notes of the frequent satirical focus on gender and sexuality, (for example, Charles Churchill’s diatribe against homosexuality in *The Times* (1764)), that “each satirist assumes that this behavior, while frequently concealed, is necessarily everyone’s business because he believes it weakens the nation” (102).

<sup>68</sup> Alice delusionally compares her romantic lover to “a hero in a talkie. Every American film had that line, ‘Let’s get outer here’” (14). She is also tempted into dreamy contemplation by popular music: “‘Stars over Green Street,’ she said. ‘Might be a Bing Crosby song.’ She heard the swish of her dress, and looked down, to where it billowed under her coat. Life was marvellous” (14). Hollywood films also bring about delusions of male loyalty. “Charlie had gone to the cinemas with other boys from Green Street, and seen gangster films. So had his pals, who were guys, and their girls, who were dames. Charlie knew all about loyalty, too, from the films” (73).

In fusing these satirical modes, Hawks' strategy resembles Lewis' use of satirical irony in several respects. As we recall, Lewis satirizes the romance, decadence, and deception of contemporary cultural production, foregrounding not only the desperate situation of the inter-war working class, but also how that situation is read. Both writers exploit domestic fiction's satirical potential to posit the real, the material, and the ordinary against romantic pomposity. In this regard, Hawks, like Lewis, represents fascism as a misunderstood revolutionary political "underdog" in competition with the Communist and Labour Parties as a working-class ideology.

Nevertheless, these writers' visions of women's social roles vastly diverge. As we recall, Lewis condemned modern women's accession to political and social authority. Unlike Lewis, Hawks represents fascism as an innovative creation of domestic women's political authority. Her rhetoric reveals an acute awareness of the fact that women had gained the right to vote. In this respect, her advocacy of fascism is much more doctrinaire. In acting as a platform for "official" party slogans, Green Street echoes BUF rhetoric that addressed British women as "nationalized" citizens, and thus their ability to articulate demands from the state as a political mass.<sup>69</sup> The corporate state, Hawks suggests, would provide domestic women unprecedented agency by re-organizing the home, workplace, and socius according to their "true desires."

In line with much nineteenth-century domestic fiction, Hawks identifies those desires with domestic labor, especially reproduction, consumption, and the enculturation of children. British fascism valorizes a gender division of labor that would have intensified women's confinement to domestic labor. While the seductive fallacy tempts us in this regard to compare British fascism with an older Victorian separation of women from political and economic enfranchisement, it actually sought to establish the corporate state in lieu of the private

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<sup>69</sup> Light observes that the inter-war period "mark[ed] for many women their entry into modernity" (10).

patriarchal family as an arbiter of domestic labor's social value.<sup>70</sup> In fact, Hawks proposes fascism's superiority by casting a satirical eye on liberal domestic fiction's subordination of women to a "private sphere" disengaged from practices of what she calls the "social instinct."<sup>71</sup> She dismantles the "private" nature and goals of domestic desires, obliterating the domestic woman's apolitical stance and interior location. The significance of women's physical and social reproduction of the family does not reside in the formation of civilized individuals and functional private patriarchal families. She suggests instead that women's domestic labor is "liberated" only if the state recognizes its social, economic, and political value.

In discussing Hawks, therefore, I reveal a dimension of British fascism that overtly politicizes women's domestic labor, and thus better than Lewis accounts for enfranchised modern women's attraction to fascist party politics.<sup>72</sup> I also highlight Hawks' reliance on the discourse of "biopolitics" to suggest a statist route for domestic women's agency. In calling attention to this difference, I do not imply that Lewis' satire is "less fascist." Alice Yaeger Kaplan illuminates how fascist parties profited from incoherently quoting conflicting political and cultural sources. This incoherence, which she describes as fascism's rhetorical "binding"

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<sup>70</sup> Ann Ferguson, for instance, claims that historical fascism attempted to return to the practices of nineteenth century "husband patriarchy": "Failing a fascist takeover of state capitalism, the New Right will not be able to reconstruct the patriarchal nuclear family of the nineteenth century. Families of choice, viz., social families with alternate egalitarian structures, are here to stay" (175).

<sup>71</sup> Regarding imminent war, Bill contemplates his neighbors' fate: "What shelter, when death should moan from the sky, for the innocent people beneath, crushed together in those few cramped square miles? Only death in the colossal crash of a bomb, to end life in suffering—dying as they had lived, for the self-same economic system, with its inevitable frustration of the social instinct, accepting all about them as an inevitable and inescapable rule of life" (119).

<sup>72</sup> According to Martin Durham, not merely images of motherhood, but "modern" womanly images were deployed to attract women interested in transgressing the boundaries of acceptable feminine behavior (Durham 49). Hawks' pamphlet, Women Fight for Britain and Britain Alone, incorporates women directly under the heading of revolutionary youth: "Young girls, fired with the idealism of youth, have set themselves to share the hardest tasks of a revolutionary Movement" (2). Ex-suffragette Norah Elam urged, "From those days of heroic struggle seems now a far cry. . . Look back those of you who doubt these words, to the day when that fight was at its height: when women of sensitive nature left their sheltered homes to stand beside their working sisters . . ." (Elam 14).

mechanism, made it appear to transcend and conciliate the loaded political and class oppositions that drove other parties.<sup>73</sup> We can see in Lewis' and Hawks' divergent attitudes toward women and politics the breadth of British fascism. This breadth makes visible the fascist reliance on satirical modes of domestic discourse across conflicting intellectual and political investments. More significantly, Hawks' work allows us to perceive British fascism's unexpected roots in a biopolitical discourse that also grounds modern liberalism.

### **Biopolitics and satire**

Jacques Donzelot describes biopolitics as “the proliferation of political technologies that invested the body, health, modes of subsistence and lodging—the entire space of existence in European countries from the eighteenth century onward” and “encompassed all the methods for developing the quality of the population and the strength of the nation” (6). Michel Foucault further defines biopolitics as a form of governance that “tends to treat the ‘population’ as a mass of living and coexisting beings who represent particular biological and pathological traits” (“Birth of Biopolitics” 71).

The bulk of Green Street casts a biopolitical and satirical eye on liberal capitalist distinctions between the public and private spheres. Hawks' novel as a whole inhabits the chronotope of the home, but introduces two departures. First, she effaces the “private” nature of the domestic scene. The home and the nuclear family are always and already integral expressions of larger communities and populations. The East End, London, the nation, and the Empire are constant references for the Smiths' family troubles. Moreover, her representations of home incorporate the rhetoric of health and disease. Accordingly, the novel opens and ends not with a

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<sup>73</sup> Kaplan observes, “fascism works by binding doubles, a process that leads to persistent blindness to the fascist machinery in theories that insist on deciding between two parts of fascism. Is fascism modern or antimodern? Is it revolutionary or conservative, left or right” (24).

family scene, but with vignettes that capture the East End's unsanitary conditions. Here is the novel's first sentence:

Upon the grey East London street rain was falling, not heavy enough to wash pavements and gutters clear of the trodden bits of paper, vegetables, and squashed cardboard box, and to carry the filth to the drains; but lightly upon roof and coster's barrow, upon pedestrians moving at a slow, half-aimless pace, upon the costers themselves, intent on selling their wares before the weather got bad. (5)

Levels of cleanliness or dirt help the reader judge the state of home, urban, and national life. Modern British satire in the Juvenalian tradition had already inscribed these concerns as literary matter, drawing analogies "between moral and physical sickness" (Paulson 195). According to Paulson, Smollett similarly condemned modern urban society signaling "moral corruption" by depicting "garbage in the streets" (192). In his work, "Bodies, houses, cities, and the whole nation are organisms that are sick or conducive to sickness . . ." (Paulson 196). In Green Street, the working-class community is constantly marked by exhaustion and filth. It suggests in line with this representation closer biopolitical attention to the nation's poor.

Michel Foucault describes the central concern of biopolitics as "the problems presented to governmental practice by the phenomena characteristic of a group of living human beings constituted as a population: health, sanitation, birthrate, longevity, race . . ." ("Birth of Biopolitics" 73). A marker of the modern liberal transformation of the socius and political discourse, biopolitics also undergirds fascist modes of "population management," paradoxically mobilized for war and genocide in the name of "survival." Foucault reminds us that fascists enacted genocide not in the name of the sovereign, but rather the "population's" health since

under biopolitics, “power is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of population” (An Introduction 137). He writes,

It is as managers of life and survival, of bodies and the race, that so many regimes have been able to wage so many wars, causing so many men to be killed. And through a turn that closes the circle, as the technology of wars has caused them to tend increasingly toward all-out destruction, the decision that initiates them and the one that terminates them are in fact increasingly informed by the naked question of survival. (An Introduction 137)

Hawks contributes to a genocidal biopolitical rhetoric by actively incorporating domestic women. In so doing, she addresses anxiety around the modern family’s seismic transformations.

In the liberal paradigm of the private patriarchal family, the domestic sphere explicitly gendered authority. Mothering, as Ann Ferguson explains, “was conceptualized . . . as a chosen vocation, one that required specialized skills (moral perception, intuitive and emotional connection)” (Ferguson 168). The father, considered “the head of the household . . . organised male, female, and child labour” (McDonough and Harrison 38). Many feminist critics agree that the private patriarchal family as a “productive unity” reached its peak in the late nineteenth century just before women’s massive entry into the wage labor market. Thereafter, male authority diminished in the family as a result of the eclipse of the family wage. Female authority was likewise effaced in the rapidly changing status and shape of domestic labor.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Tim Mason notes in relation to German fascism that the Nazis advocated the image of the large patriarchal family, but only as a ploy to appease populations in reaction to alienating processes of rapid industrialization and bureaucratization. Meanwhile, the original functions of vestigial family structures virtually disappeared as Nazi welfare and educational institutions overtook them. Provocatively, he further claims, “Whatever the utility to the economic structure of capitalism, the family may be on the way to becoming an anachronism” (“Women in Germany 1925-1940: Family, Welfare and Work. Conclusion” 32).

Jacques Donzelot in The Policing of Families shows us specifically how the long-range biopolitical challenge to parental authority grounded these modern transformations of the patriarchal family.<sup>75</sup> On one hand, the gradual effacement of patriarchal authority highlighted the “family and transformations as a positive form of solution to the problems posed by a liberal definition of the state” (Donzelot 53). One result was domestic women’s greater public authority. Donzelot notes how the figure of the domestic woman intersected with the modern prestige of medical and psychological authorities in the development of biopolitics, an affiliation that eventually helped women win political rights.<sup>76</sup> The biopolitical undermining of the patriarchal family “was not effected without the active participation of women. In working-class and bourgeois strata alike—albeit by quite different means and with different results—women were the main point of support for all the actions that were directed toward a reformulation of family life” (Donzelot xxii).

On the other hand, biopolitical logic also enabled fascist state intervention. Inter-war fascism blended two modern socio-political movements that addressed the crisis of the patriarchal family in particular, revealing their hidden proximity. The “populationists” sought to “restore authority of man,” strengthen the nuclear family, and confine women to “reproductive and domestic activities” (Donzelot 177). The neo-Malthusian movement of the early twentieth century also regarded the crisis of the patriarchal family, but called instead for the supremacy of

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<sup>75</sup> Donzelot writes, “By the terms of the new [family] law, the ancient and monolithic authority of the father gave place to a dual regime, which took the form of a simple alternative: either the system of *tutelage*, or that of the *contract*. The former is for social categories that combine a difficulty in supplying their own needs with resistances to the new medical and educative norms. In essence, *tutelage* means that these families will be stripped of all effective rights and brought into a relation of dependence *vis-à-vis* welfare and educative agents” (xxi).

<sup>76</sup> “This was an alliance profitable to both parties: with the mother’s help, the doctor prevailed against the stubborn hegemony of that popular medicine of the old wives; and on the other hand, owing to the increased importance of maternal functions, he conceded a new power to the bourgeois woman in the domestic sphere. It became evident as early as the end of the eighteenth century that this alliance was capable of shaking paternal authority” (Donzelot 20).

the mother, “greater public control over reproduction,” and brought medicine, hygiene, and public policy into close alliance (Coward 85).<sup>77</sup>

Their propaganda engendered some proto-fascist and fascist justifications of state intervention in the family and reproduction. Rosalind Coward notes that British eugenicists were particularly indebted to neo-Malthusians for theories of “selective limitation” since they directly confronted “urban overcrowding, unemployment and the terrible conditions under which many working-class people lived.” As solutions, they suggested population limits, especially “selective limitation which sought to deny the possibility of reproduction to ‘degenerates’” (Coward 85). Hitler quoted from both groups’ propaganda in Mein Kampf. Consequently, populationists applauded the work for emphasizing children’s well-being, and the neo-Malthusians praised Hitler’s denouncement of venereal diseases and endorsement of new marriage laws. Donzelot observes, “[T]he traditionalist, legalist, and familialist tendency and the innovating, medicalizing, and socialist tendency both implied an interventionist, coercive pole that welded them to one another” (187).

Hawks mobilizes biopolitical discourse in both “feminist” and fascist ways. Although she insists on domestic space as the primary site of women’s agency, Hawks diverges from the model of the private patriarchal family important in liberal domestic fiction as a mediation between women and the state. In Green Street, she suggests women’s instinctual need to perform domestic labor, but challenges the separation between public and private spheres so prized as a feature of liberal domestic fiction. Instead, she proposes domestic labor’s immediate value for the state, nation, and Empire.

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<sup>77</sup> The original Malthusian movement from the 1840s to 80s, Coward notes, had urged the “theme of population” to push European imperialism (85).

The novel launches a satirical critique of the patriarchal family from the very first page. There, Green Street announces its cancellation of domestic fiction's traditional comic resolution in marriage. The wedding of Millie Smith marks not the individual's ideal integration into the community, but rather the reification of social relations. Alice, Millie's sister, hopes that the neighbors are "impressed by the glamour of the occasion" made possible by "three large, glossy, hired cars" and "six motor-cars" (5, 7). The wedding undermines the East End neighborhood's potential class solidarity and abjectly absorbs commodified middle-class values. The critical representation of the wedding and its appearance at the beginning of the novel sets the satirical tone of the entire work. The family under liberal hegemony remains a constant satirical object throughout. As Hawks' "anatomy" progresses, we find that unhealthy individual and collective conflicts arise from the cultural and political valorization of the private patriarchal family.

In the next section, I foreground Hawks' satire of masculinity in this context. Hawks emphasizes men's isolation from each other in their obligation to the nuclear family, and connects that isolation to the poverty of political language. Party politics, rather than paternity, becomes the ultimate guarantor of manhood in a fascist paradigm.

Green Street directs a satirical revolt specifically against Victorian notions of patriarchal supremacy. This "revolutionary" representation also accounts for some modernists' attraction to fascist modes of critique.<sup>78</sup> In later sections, I will show how fascist rhetoric nevertheless re-

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<sup>78</sup> F. T. Marinetti, for instance in his piece "Marriage and the Family" writes, "The family functions badly, being a hell of plots, arguments, betrayals, contempts, basenesses, and a relative desire on everyone's part for escape and revolt. Jealousy at knife point between the mother and her elegant, beautiful daughters; a contest in greed and wastefulness between conservative father and his playboy son" (77). Wyndham Lewis observes that feminism's only positive accomplishment was the acceleration of the patriarchal family's decay: "Since the great masses of the people are not likely to be in a position to prolong the family arrangement based on an individual 'home' (marriage, and the family circle to which the European is accustomed), it will be abolished. That is the economic fact at the bottom of 'feminism.' . . . It is an economic adjustment primarily: after that a great deal of relief from responsibility, and from a too constant conjugal tête-à-tête, is to be laid to its credit" (The Art of Being Ruled 201-2).

constructs the gendered nuclear family according to a patriarchal and biopolitical logic of social relations.

### **A Revolt against/for Fathers**

The BUF's time and energy demands on its male members often clashed with its own advocacy of "family life."<sup>79</sup> A short dialogue in one BUF publication urges fascist women's patience as the Party increasingly devours their husbands' time. One wife complains to another that "Faschy" (the BUF) is the chief rival for her husband's affections. Her friend urges her that they should "not mind being Fascist widows" ("Fascist Widows" 6). Julie Gottlieb, an historian of British fascism, notes, "[T]he prototype for the New Fascist Man would be anathema to family life . . . Certainly it was in the interest of the man to protect the family unit, but his public duties took him far away from the ancestral home, and left him the minimum of time to fulfil fatherly functions" (106-7). Green Street satirizes the patriarchal organization of the domestic scene for sequestering men from politics.

Mr. Smith had once been politically active, agitating his neighbors on the Labour Party's behalf. But disappointed by the Labour MPs' capitulation to moneyed interests, he has ceased those activities. He admits that Labour's entry into "the system" (Parliament) led to their failure to achieve adequate measures for the nation's working class: "Look at the difference between Keir Hardie, telling them off straight and fine, and Ramsay MacDonald. Butter wouldn't melt in 'is mouth today. He was Prime Minister, that was why. National Government. Wonderful name. Fine label to stick on a piece of black treachery" (50). Mr. Smith represents a political generation that has failed the working class, a fact he is well aware of, and to which he nevertheless resigns

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<sup>79</sup> Leila Rupp also notes this tension in Nazism, "[T]he glorification of the *Mannerbund* and male comradeship conflicted with the stated desire to make men into good fathers. The idea of returning the father to the family had no place in a society which taught its boys, as the Labor Service did, to 'die laughing'." She observes that the party's activities, and eventually the Nazi state "took from the family many of its functions and regimented men, women, and children into separate organizations, which demanded a large expenditure of time" (369-70).

himself. Thereafter, he has turned inward to private domestic life: “In the evening, sit by your own fire, smoke your pipe. At the week-end take a walk in the park and see the neighbours; a man beholden to none” (51)!<sup>80</sup> His home functions as a strictly private haven that enables his escape from political responsibility. Working-class men, the novel suggests, diminish their political efficacy and intellectual gifts in the pressure to provide for the family.

Each child wonders what their father “could have been” had they not been born at all.<sup>81</sup> Bill wonders, “Had his father ever realized how narrow and restricted his own life had been? Surrounded all his man’s life by growing children, always a new baby squalling, and only the kitchen and the bedroom to choose from . . .” (125). Deep sympathy drives Bill’s censure of the family’s cramped domestic quarters and his father’s inability to fulfill “a man’s life.” In fact, Bill regards the BUF as a continuation of the Labour Party’s original revolutionary impetus and its liberatory rhetoric of struggle.<sup>82</sup> An ambitious BUF activist, he promises to uphold nationalist working-class interests, and to finish Labour’s mission by redefining “manhood” outside the family context. He explains to his father that the BUF are “looking for the idea of a finer, happier

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<sup>80</sup> At the novel’s conclusion, Bill analyzes the “downfall” of Labour: “They’d been let down, the fight had gone out of the working class when MacDonald formed the first ‘National’ Government. They had never forgotten that betrayal to the very Money Power which the original Labour Party had arisen to confront. Thus was fifty years of work betrayed. What wonder they said cynically they’d trust no one in the future, but live each man to himself and his family” (128).

<sup>81</sup> Alice contemplates her father’s missed opportunities: “Perhaps he felt himself a cut above being a porter at Smithfield, where all day he carried bits of animal carcasses about. What a life! Perhaps when he was young, he had looked higher . . . but had found no way up. If he had education, if he had not had to go out at eleven to support his mother, now long dead, he might have been a different man” (36). Jenny similarly wonders, “[H]e might have got further if he hadn’t had us lot to fend for. Just think of it—twenty-four years old, he marries, and from then on it’s kids all the time . . . How could Dad ever better himself, when he’d always to think of us kids? Couldn’t take no risks, or chuck up his job to go after another at the other end of the country, because he was tied to us—he dared not risk losing his couple of quid a week, or whatever it was then. No wonder Dad’s what he is, worn out. Never had no *real* life, as I see it” (109).

<sup>82</sup> Mr. Smith compares BUF and Labour propaganda himself: “Some of Bill’s books was full o’ long words; queer subjects, too, property, rents, surplus value, the national debt, consumption crisis . . . [S]ome time back, ‘e’d tried to read the like stuff for himself. In the old Labour days, of Keir Hardie and good old George Lansbury, Ben Tillett, and John Burns” (98).

Britain. Just like Keir Hardie did, Dad, and you too, before the cares of the family came upon you.”

The satire shifts dramatically, however, to indict Mr. Smith’s fundamental conservatism, obsolescence, and rigidity when the BUF marches through their neighborhood one Sunday. Mr. Smith’s desire for a quiet afternoon at home deliberately shuts out and even actively misapprehends the struggle in the streets. As the marchers parade through Green Street, victimized and limping with “blood on their faces,” a brick is thrown through the Smiths’ front window (58). Although *anti*-fascist ruffians were responsible for the damage, Mr. Smith misdirects his rage and yells at Bill, “What right have they got to come banging around on a quiet Sunday afternoon, making disturbances? *Provocation*, that’s what it is. Without ‘em, my witherin’ winder wouldn’t be blinkin’ bust, would it? ‘Ow’s that for your eddicated mind, my lad” (59)? Mr. Smith dismisses fascism as an illegitimate political practice, explicitly doubting the BUF’s commitment to “care for poor people” (98). Bill corrects his father “quietly” and reasonably, reminding him that in actuality, not fascists, but communists have shattered the boundaries between politics and home life: “Is that quite fair . . . They didn’t throw it, Dad” (59). Moreover, Bill corrects his father’s implicit association of the BUF with foreign influences by appeasing his patriotic feelings. The BUF are true Englishmen, Bill explains: “The streets are free, Dad. That’s liberty, isn’t it? An Englishman’s free to do what he likes.”

Mr. Smith plays a dual satirical role here. On one hand, he is the impetus for Bill’s satirical anatomy of family life, and on the other, he is an anti-intellectual buffoon who misidentifies the true source of political violence. That duality enables Hawks to attribute Bill with several incompatible qualities: he is moved by sympathy against the patriarchal nuclear

family, *and* he is intellectually superior to his father (“edicated”) in identifying the communists who truly invade family life.

### **A Revolt for/against mothers**

Similar character bifurcations arise in the novel’s much more expansive satire of marriage and motherhood under private patriarchy. Green Street suggests that the nuclear family creates a solid barrier between women and the state, and thereby damages their health and that of their children. Hawks satirizes current political and economic circumstances by revealing their detrimental effects on domestic space and working-class women’s maternal role. In the next several sections, I foreground the novel’s radical political quality. Hawks’ pastiche incorporates feminist socialist and liberal registers to appear directed on women’s behalf. I show how this pastiche ultimately dissolves to invoke the corporate state as a superior mode of domestic organization.

In advice to her daughter, Mrs. Smith regrets having too many children too early: “[B]eing saddled with a lot of kids while you’re still young is poor work for a woman. Take my advice, Alice, and don’t let him spring it on you too often . . . It’s their nature, even the best of ‘em, to want to set a woman” (35). Rather than recounting the joys of motherhood, she emphasizes the difficulty of maintaining a family, being pregnant in poor conditions, and withstanding infant sickness and mortality.

Jenny, the Smiths’ youngest daughter, echoes Bill by similarly condemning the limits of her mother’s life within the private patriarchal family: “I wonder if she thinks it’s worth while to have had seven children—two dead, and the others Millie, Charlie, you, Bill and me. Was we worth it? Was we worth wearing out *all* her life for, Alice? If so, it’s time we all got better ideas. The old ones aren’t good enough” (110). As she explores the possibilities of women’s agency in

the contemporary moment, Jenny expresses her dissatisfaction with women's roles in the prolific family under liberal democracy.<sup>83</sup> In their laments, Hawks calls attention to the failure of parliamentary politics to address the degrading circumstances of domestic labor. In addition, Hawks acknowledges married working-class women's aspirations beyond submitting to their husbands' sexual demands. In both these critiques, Hawks echoes progressive socialist representations of domestic labor under liberalism. The satire eventually turns again, however, to confront Marxism's failure to address *domestic* women. In correcting that failure, the novel suggests a fascist alternative.

Domestic labor was a problematic concern for orthodox Marxism, and often regarded as irrelevant to and distant from the focus on the exploitative production and exchange of commodities.<sup>84</sup> Friedrich Engels' The Origin of the Family, as an exceptional touchstone for feminist revisions of Marxist analysis in this regard, insisted that the domestic mode of production was indispensable for the reproduction of capital, although prior to and distinct from systems of capital. Rather than dwelling on the revolutionary significance of domestic labor, however, Engels advocated women's mass entry into the wage labor market: "[T]he necessity and the manner of accomplishing the real social equality of the two [sexes], will appear in broad daylight only . . . when both of them will enjoy complete legal equality. It will then be seen that the emancipation of women is primarily dependent on the re-introduction of the whole female

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<sup>83</sup> There were different tactics, of course. At times, British fascist propaganda followed the lead of German and Italian fascist regimes in their emphasis on "traditional" motherhood. For instance, Anne Seelig-Thomann, an apologist for Nazism, explained to a BUF readership that Hitler "made German women believe once more that the family is the essential unit of the State, and in it the mother is the living symbol of national survival through her raising of healthy children. Motherhood and womanhood recovered their old meaning and glory" (52).

<sup>84</sup> Mary McIntosh explains that "There has been a considerable debate about the analysis of the part played by this domestic labor in the daily reproduction of the husband's labour power. Much of this has revolved around the question of whether domestic labour is productive or unproductive for capital and the implications for the class location of housewives" (268).

sex into the public industries” (Engels 90). In his critique of the patriarchal family’s subordination of women as domestic laborers, Engels suggests women’s “proletarianization.”

Much more recently, feminist socialists have taken a different tack, explicitly calling attention to the foundational nature of domestic labor to capital. Rosalind Coward for instance suggests that domestic labor is “paradoxically, both the forefront of political and theoretical concerns, and simultaneously, inadequately theorised” (187). Correcting that inadequacy, some have insisted on domestic labor’s productive capacities. On one hand, it appears to produce a use-value for immediate consumption. On the other hand, many have argued that it indirectly reproduces labor power as a commodity, and hence exchange value.<sup>85</sup>

Ann Ferguson for instance elaborates on the concept of “sex/affective production” to explain the value of domestic labor as the “production of children” under capitalist regimes. Her term helps “conceptualize the production and reproduction of *people* in family and kinship networks” as an explicit capitalist demand. She further elucidates its historical and cultural nature by explaining that “each mode of sex/affective production will have its own distinctive logic of exchange of the human services of sexuality, nurturance, and affection” (155). Ferguson’s purpose in exploring domestic labor’s foundational and historical nature is to dismantle the gender division of labor. In Green Street, Hawks also calls attention to the foundational status of domestic labor using socialist and feminist rhetoric, but in order to *justify* the gender division of labor. The narrative addresses the inter-war exploitation of women as wage laborers in a socialist paradigm, but ultimately suggests intensifying their domestic identity.

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<sup>85</sup> Lise Vogel characterizes the orthodox Marxist understanding of domestic labor: “the products and services that result from this work are consumed directly and never reach the marketplace. In Marxist terms, these products and services have use-value but no exchange value” (17). She adds that “housework only appears to be a personal service outside the arena of capitalist production. In reality, it produces not just use-values for direct consumption in the family, but the essential commodity labor power—the capacity of a worker to work” (19-20).

Hawks criticizes the assumption that women's entry into wage labor necessarily "liberates" them in the inter-war period. Alice Smith works in a chain restaurant as a waitress but longs to escape its drudgery. In a conversation during a break at work, her co-worker Mabel Billings discusses the waitresses' typical income and expenditure. Circumstances are desperate and recurring:

I usually manage to knock up thirty-eight bob, with the tips, but look at what it costs to live! Ten bob for me room, another ten for me grub . . . Then you have to buy your uniform dress on the never-never . . . And then there's fares . . . Mine come out three and six a week . . . Then there's unemployment and health insurance—another half-crown. Oh, and I forgot the laundry charges for our caps and aprons. And stockings, because they wear out so with all this rushing about. That's thirty bob easy—probably more. (27-8)

Mabel's account of her earning and spending distinctly recalls George Orwell's accounts of unemployed men's weekly budgets in The Road to Wigan Pier (1937) and Down and Out in London and Paris (1933).<sup>86</sup> Mabel, however, exposes the harsh difficulties of urban working women, an exploited group that Orwell and other prominent socialists of the period tended to ignore and thereby helped to render invisible. In addressing her coworkers, Mabel exposes that failure in socialist thought: "Exploitation will always go on so long as we don't keep together. That's what's wrong with the working class—especially the women. No solidarity . . . We've got

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<sup>86</sup> See Beatrix Campbell's Wigan Pier Revisited: Poverty and Politics in the 80s (London: Virago Press, 1984) for a critique of Orwell's masculinism. Gottlieb also notes that "British fascists were not alone in observing this attack on masculine pride and dignity during the 1930s, and a wide range of social critics—such as J. B. Priestly, George Orwell, E. Wright Bake and the Pilgrim's Trust—recorded this aspect of men's experience of life on the dole. The BUF went beyond merely chronicling this psychological phenomenon of male demoralization, and called for a crusade to rescue British manhood. In this general atmosphere of an onslaught on individual and collective masculine identities, the BUF's cult of masculinity was less an unrestrained bid for male dominance than a stop-gap ideological measure for male survival in the age of the Means Test" (124).

to find the spirit to stick together, even at the cost of going through it” (28). She and the other servers are constantly exploited but remain stranded by dominant political and cultural representations. The BUF press similarly depicted women’s wage labor adapting socialist criteria to expose their exploitation. The BUF’s policy of “Equal Pay for Equal Work” for instance promised to abolish women’s sweated wage labor. The Chief Woman of Propaganda, Anne Brock Griggs, explained that “lower or sweated wages for one section of the community will drag down the standard for others” (Griggs 164).

The fascist solution, however, confronts the dead end of women’s wage labor very differently from socialist feminist critique. Hawks suggests counteracting women’s exploitation in the workplace by leaving it. Marriage would be the ideal reward for the bleak years in the restaurant and mode of escape from wage labor, but it is difficult to achieve in the lean inter-war years and constantly eludes the waitresses’ grasp. The waitresses are thereby forced to consider the ubiquitous possibility of renumeration outside marriage. Sally, another server advises Mabel to “find yourself a boy friend and live in sin.” Mabel quips, “[B]elieve me the sin wouldn’t be counted up against me in Heaven” (28). Alice herself is forced to prolong her engagement because of her fiancé’s meager resources. She laments that his unemployment has squelched her own dreams: “We were going to get married. I was going to work for a while until we’d saved a bit, and then . . .” (37). The chapter that focuses on Alice suggests male economic solvency and the family wage in the context of marriage as the best route for female authority.

At this point, Jenny’s and Mrs. Smith’s critiques of marriage seem to contradict the suggestion that it could counteract Alice’s degradation in wage labor. But Green Street distinguishes marriage under liberal democracy, in which women toil for the nuclear family alone, from marriage as a practice whose value for the state is unmediated by the husband/father.

Although Green Street begins its satire by calling attention to the economic value of women's domestic labor in a socialist register, it quickly recontextualizes that labor by moving it outside an economic paradigm. Hawks (and official British fascist rhetoric as a whole) justifies the confinement of women to unpaid domestic labor by shifting the family into the paradigm of the corporate state and the British race. Aligning women's desire with domesticity, Hawks' satire of private patriarchy retains a reactionary essentialist identification of women's desire with domesticity.

The 1936 propaganda pamphlet Fascism for the Million promised that once the corporate state was established, domestic women would gain political representation for their special interests: "[W]omen not engaged in 'gainful' occupation, but who perform the important work of looking after the home and family, will elect their own representatives, nominated and chosen by themselves" (30). Hawks in her 1939 pamphlet, Women Fight for Britain and Britain Alone, promised furthermore that "from the modern system, womanhood and the nation alike will benefit" (3). Elaborating on domestic issues such as Housing, Social Policy, Health, Religion and Education, and Peace and Progress, Hawks promised not only the corporate state's benefits for the home, but also the reverse—unprecedented political activism for those who had been "falsely protected" from the state by the conceptual and practical boundaries between public and private spheres. Having abolished such boundaries, the fascist state would introduce the domestic woman to the corporate state's expansive duties and rewards. Gottlieb observes, "The very same skills and feminine discernment they applied to making a success of their housekeeping were seen as transferable to state level" (103).

In the chapter that focuses on the Smiths' oldest daughter Millie, Hawks similarly effaces the materialist nature of her satirical analysis by investing domestic labor with national and

imperial value. In its satirical anatomy of the Millie's life, the ideal context for domestic labor is neither private nor economic, but rather biopolitical.

### **Fascist Reproduction**

Millie has escaped a life of wage labor in a laundry by marrying her former supervisor. Her marriage to Herbert encloses her in a world of atomized single households. In her suburban detached home, Millie does not interact with her neighbors or her surrounding community as had been her custom in Green Street: "She was proud of her tidy home, and its garden. She was proud of her husband's regular income—of the security it gave. But the silence struck home to her heart, the blankness and the silence, the quiet in which she was alone" (67). In its failure to provide more than mere economic security, the middle-class home sheds its appealing veneer. Millie "knew in her heart that she wanted more than all that" (61).

Millie perceives that motherhood would cure her loneliness and fulfill her need for a more social and active life. "Surely it was strange that when she let her thoughts stray like this—on the dullness of life, and her stuck-up neighbours, and marriage not being quite all she'd expected, and what would it feel like to have your own baby sleeping there, in her cot" (61)? But since her husband Herbert had contracted gonorrhoea from a prostitute as a young man and subsequently undergone "furtive self-treatment," he is unable to father a child. Her right to reproduce has been unjustly cancelled by a typical middle-class sexual rite of passage. Middle class-marriage appears to atomize women most effectively by fraudulently devaluing their reproductive capabilities.

Medical authority, however, values Millie's physical and social capacities rightly. Only her doctor sympathizes with her loneliness by articulating the value of her body in a biopolitical paradigm of race and nation. He insists that only "selfish modern young women" practice

contraception, and bemoans his patients' usual attitude toward motherhood: "Fine healthy bodies, that ought to have mothered fine children . . . One wonders, when one thinks of the homes of some of my patients, where the garage is full and the cradle is empty! What's going to come of it? Extinction! Race suicide! The fit *won't* bear children, and the unfit breed" (62-3)! Middle-class Englishwomen who practice birth control seek a selfish, degenerate freedom that leads them astray from their sexual authenticity and the nation's reproductive needs.

Foucault describes the modern production of "discourse about sex . . . supported and relayed . . . in the first place, by a 'public interest'" as a paramount feature in the biopolitical transformation of the socius (An Introduction 140). Furthermore, modern "juridical and medical control of perversions, for the sake of the general protection of society and the race," helped the deployment of sexuality "spread through entire social body" (122). The "supervision of health" through the proliferation of sexual discourse went hand-in-hand with "disciplines of the body and regulations of the population" (139).

Hawks' own literary compulsion to sexuality effaces the exaltation of the "couple" in middle-class monogamous marriage. So central in mainstream domestic fiction, the romance plot here perniciously hinders the production of children and the subsequent biopolitical aggrandizement of women in the state. Green Street suggests instead that married women relinquish their primary responsibility to husband and private family. Rather than through her monopoly on "heart and home" as in classic liberal domestic fiction, Hawks' domestic woman demands supremacy in reference to national population and health.<sup>87</sup> Mothering duties intimately entail the "survival" of nation and race. Hawks' domestic rhetoric pre-empts the spiritual and

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<sup>87</sup> Armstrong notes, "By attributing political and emotional authority to the male and female respectively, the figure [of sexual exchange] inscribes the political within the male character and then contains both within heart and home" (51).

moral focus on the mother and replaces it with an overtly sexualized paradigm: “The strong, simple passion of Millie, the desire of her body for children, electrified her and the atmosphere round her. She felt the strength surge from her toward him like a wave. But it was all in vain. Herbert’s denial was rock-like, and on it her womanhood shattered” (68).

Hawks also severs the bonds between motherhood and the private sanctity of marriage by valorizing illegitimate children. The Smiths happily raise their son Charlie’s illegitimate daughter, Poppy, even though Charlie himself is expelled from the family. “The child didn’t seem to know yet what a cloud she stood under. Her wide blue-eyed gaze wasn’t shadowed by a thought that she should be ashamed of herself” (57). While Hawks’ satire certainly condemns the notion of sexual liberation for the modern individual, we can nevertheless place it on a continuum with anti-patriarchal sexual “revolution.”<sup>88</sup>

Millie in the beginning of her chapter is depicted as a victim robbed of her reproductive capacity. The narrator’s satirical irony suddenly shifts direction, however, just as in Mr. Smith’s case, to transform her into a satirical target. As Millie resentfully disengages from maternal desire, she becomes an emblem of a thoroughly commodified middle-class womanhood:

When neighbours invite us to lunch or to tea, I look at their furniture, their carpets, their decorations. I get lots of ideas. I see how they dress. I read all about it in magazines— ‘For the Smart woman,’ ‘Make Up Discreetly.’ When I think of how little I used to know of such things, I can see how well I’ve come on. I’m no fool. I can learn . . . The house is

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<sup>88</sup> Gottlieb discusses the BUF’s toleration of children outside of marriage, noting the distinction between fascism’s sexualized “racial thinking” and “a more antiquated nationalist emblem of the mother as the guardian of morality.” She cites Rosalind Raby, a British fascist propagandist who “[t]aking her cue from Italian provisions for maternal and infant welfare, and the Nazi state’s tolerant attitudes towards illegitimate births in order to spearhead a racial and demographic revival . . . promised that under a British fascist government, ‘the unmarried mother will be given the opportunity to earn an honest living for herself and her child’”(100).

my child—and this garden, my wedding ring, my safety. I'll keep them safe . . . her lips tightly compressed to a firm line. (71-2)

Millie's replaces her desire for children with a desire for commodities. According to the satirical logic here, commodification destroys nation. In this respect, the satirical anatomy of Millie's life echoes conservative satirists, who in the late eighteenth century likewise drew an opposition between responsible government and feminized practices of consumption. Tom Fulford explains that many satirists provided a "reactionary reading of the capitalist culture of consumption, and of the political leaders who profited by that culture" (17).

Yet Hawks and the BUF endorsed consumption where it operated according to a fascist logic of imperial autarky. To endorse a mode of consumption that accords with fascist biopolitics, Hawks bifurcates consumption and Empire employing a binary logic of race and gender. Alice Yaeger Kaplan notes that in addition to binding oppositions, the fascist also "split" the effects of modernity employing racism to "separat[e] what he feared from what he desired by projecting all he didn't understand in modern life onto the Jews, all that he wished to recuperate in modern life onto the fascist state" (24). In Green Street, "masculine" modes of consumption and imperialism strengthen the nation, whereas Jewish consumption and "Oriental" imperialism irrevocably damage it. In the next section, I show how Hawks' satire strategically confounds the predominant logic of consumption in liberal domestic fiction.

### **Fascist Consumption**

BUF plans to transform the British Empire into an autarchic economy centered on the simultaneous stimulation and control of consumption. These plans addressed a growing public concern with cheap Asian labor. The rhetoric represented Asia primarily as a site of productive competition rather than as a space of mystifying cultural "otherness"; the East threatens the West

because Orientals resemble beasts of burden and machines. Although orientalist, British fascist rhetoric tended to “de-exoticize” Asia. Mosley for example claimed that corrupt

Western finance has provided the loans which have equipped the East with equal machinery to the West, and has hired the Western technician to teach the Oriental to perform the simplified tasks of mass production with modern mechanical technique at a third of the wages and for longer hours of monotonous toil than white labour can endure. The result has been a stream of sweated goods undercutting British products on the markets of the world. Their deadly effect can be observed in the cold statistics that show the decline of Lancashire and Yorkshire exports under the attack of rising Japanese exports and the vast increase in Indian sweated products.” (Tomorrow We Live 25-6)

Green Street also invokes the trope of the Oriental to criticize global capital from a perspective of national purity. It thus condemns the imperial project where it creates means for assimilation and internationalism. A British colonist soon departing for Hong Kong is characterized as having “dark slanting eyes” as he flashes a “French postcard” to Jenny Smith (116). Through a kind of reverse osmosis, Hong Kong affects the colonial subject who no longer legitimately claims a British cultural identity. Similarly, James Graham and Thomas Rowlandson, late eighteenth-century conservative satirists criticized the British colonization of India comparing British consumers with the languid Orientals from whom they bought their wares, and claiming that colonial consumption “turned Londoners into pampered buyers, conspicuous consumers of the foreign” (Fulford 17).

On the other hand, British fascist propaganda advocated the consumption of domestic (English) goods in imperial markets. The following is typical of the BUF’s entreaties to consumers:

With but a few shopping days left to Christmas, it is the duty of every British man and woman seriously to consider how important it is that the increased spending which usually attends this Christian festival shall be used to the benefit of our own people . . . Therefore, since our British shopkeepers have ranged against them the power of finance, restrictive legislation and unfair competition, it is the duty of their fellow-countrymen to give them the full benefit of their Christmas spending, taking trade to British traders. (“Buy British’ Crusade” 17)

Moreover, the BUF emphasized British consumerism as a mollifying solution to the heated inter-war antagonism between capital and labor. Alexander Raven Thomson, the author of The Coming Corporate State, explained that each of the fascist state’s twenty-five corporations, to be comprised by major British industries and services, would also represent consumers, who would contribute to major contractual and state decisions and help defuse potential enmity between capitalists and laborers: “There will be represented on the Corporation employers, workers and consumers. Each group will be given equal representation and equal power, and may not be outvoted by the other two. The sane functioning of the nation as a whole can only be attained by collaboration between the various industrial factors, not by their mutual hostility” (Thomson 5). Nevertheless, Thomson pronounces the fascist anxiety around consumption, making sure to note that the nation-state itself would be regarded as the “best fitted to nominate the consumers’ representative” as the “ultimate consumer in the case of most products” (6).

Hawks accordingly distinguishes degenerate forms of consumption from sound nationalist forms. Analogous to the “Orientalized” imperialists of conservative satire, Jewish figures function as the feminized scapegoats for commodity culture’s deterritorializing

international forces.<sup>89</sup> In the BUF press, Hawks herself agitated against Jews in an article entitled “Work for Women: Representation as Buyers”:

This Movement intends to end for ever the menace of price-cutting, introduced, together with other unfair methods of trading by the Jews, and to give the small trader the power to face the bigger man upon his own ground. Chain store extension will be forbidden . . . Through a National Investment Board, capital will be available at a low rate of interest for the extension of business. It will no longer be lent abroad, as countless millions are today. (Hawks, “Work for Women” 8)

In their paranoid understanding of the market, British fascists believed that “Jewish finance” and “financial democracy” encouraged the consumption of foreign goods in “Jewish owned multiple chain stores.”<sup>90</sup> These forces supposedly created a chain of exploitation by lowering English working-class wages and spreading “internationalist” (communist) values.

Shopping thereby acquires world historical importance in the fascist imagination, and is depicted in terms of its biopolitical potential to create or destroy national health. In Green Street, Hawks juxtaposes several consumer types to distinguish between healthy and hazardous consumption. To do so, she employs domestic fiction’s traditional association of surface and materialism with degenerate aristocratic femininity, but substitutes Jewishness for the aristocracy. In the process of defining autarkic modes of conspicuous consumption, she justifies genocide.

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<sup>89</sup> After 1936, the BUF heightened its production of anti-Semitic propaganda, and augmented membership there, home of approximately one-third of the total Jewish population in Britain. Everywhere else in England, however, the issue lost support rather than gaining it “Anti-Semitism was a disaster for Fascism in Britain” writes Andrew Thorpe (55).

<sup>90</sup> In The British Union Quarterly Jan. – Mar. 1938, for instance, an anonymous author writes, “If you believe that a whole race should be punished for the sin of some of its members, I admit that the expulsion of the two million Jews in New York would not be an excessive punishment for the harm done by Jewish finance to the English race in America . . .” (37-8).

## **Domestic Consumption**

Rita Felski argues that the multi-faceted and often contradictory meanings associated with modern consumerism depended largely on the discourse of gender: “the consumer was frequently represented as a woman . . . the category of consumption situated femininity at the heart of the modern in a way that the discourses of production and rationalization examined previously did not” (61). Gendered moral qualities were attributed to the consumer, partly depending on her class position:

On the one hand, consumption was presented as a necessity, indeed as a familial and civic duty for the middle-class woman . . . Such discourses framed women as the passive beneficiaries or victims . . . of a new inexorable imperative of capitalist development. Yet on the other hand, the growth of consumerism was seen as engendering a revolution of morals, unleashing egotistic and envious drives among the lower orders and women, which could in turn affect the stability of existing social hierarchies. (Felski 65)

As a result, the “consuming woman” in much nineteenth-century domestic fiction potentially jeopardized the womanly virtues of “modesty, frugality, and innocence” (72). At the same time, active consumerism could also be linked to national health: “[T]he expansion of commerce was greeted by many as a mark of progress, benefiting the consumer and contributing to the economic health of the nation . . .” (68).

Nancy Armstrong also observes that in eighteenth-century domestic literature, consumption was a major component of womanly duties. Conduct books contrasted middle-class “moral” consumption to the aristocracy’s conspicuous display of the body:

A woman was deficient in female qualities if she, like the aristocratic woman, spent her time in idle amusements . . . [S]uch activities always aimed at putting the body on

display, a carry-over from the Renaissance display of aristocratic power. For a woman to display herself in such a manner was the same as saying that she was supposed to be valued for her body and its adornments, not for the virtues she might possess as a woman and wife. (Armstrong 75)

The intent of middle-class consumerism markedly diverged from aristocratic display “to combat the evils of the aristocratic standard of taste with an alternative standard . . .” (82). Armstrong explains that the figure of the domestic woman “moralized” consumption by establishing “a certain quality of domestic life” (85-6). The domestic woman translates (her husband’s) income into household commodities to comprise “a field of information organized according to the categories of domestic economy” (84). In this world of signs, you could judge “a man’s net worth” and “also his wife on a psychological scale” (87). As we will see in Chapter 3, Bottome follows these guidelines for coding consumption in The Lifeline. There, the aristocracy’s outdated furniture and décor signal decrepit practices of domestic economy and in turn, their cruel political deviations. The Mortal Storm pushes this mode of reading as well, conveying the bourgeois family’s civilized tolerance in a dining table full of “glass and silver” and covered by a “fine and spotless” tablecloth (Bottome, The Mortal Storm 71).

Felski observes that realist novels in the late nineteenth century continued to push the moral model of consumption that required women to express their own regulation of desire through economy, but increasingly focused on the dangerous exhilaration associated with their consumption. For instance, Emile Zola’s The Ladies’ Paradise signals the unleashing of “female desire” by affiliating consumerism with sexual frenzy. Felski observes, “In a condition of sensual delirium, dazzled by the allures of the commodities spread out before them, they abandon

themselves to the pleasure of shopping, a pleasure explicitly depicted as a sublimated expression of sexual passion” (Felski 69).

Hawks’ model of domestic consumption deliberately challenges the terms that undergird these moral depictions. Green Street satirizes the middle-class woman for her *de facto* degenerate consumption. When Millie marries Herbert, as we have seen, her class position shifts and for the first time, she can enjoy an unfamiliar world of abundant commodities. In her case, commodities assert class hierarchy and create distance from her (more authentic) working-class origins. Millie trivializes womanhood’s grave obligations, closing the domestic space off from the community at large. Rather than enriching it, bourgeois women’s consumerism attenuates the domestic scene’s social significance by maintaining an illegitimate class hierarchy within the nation. To distinguish between typical middle-class consumption on one hand, and autarkic consumption on the other, Hawks projects the problematic anti-social qualities associated with consumption onto Jewish women.

Sadie Aaron, Charlie Smith’s Jewish love interest, is marked as an insatiable consumer, an “octopus” and “beautiful sea-devil, a si-reen” more familiar with London’s spaces of conspicuous consumption than any of his East End acquaintances (81).<sup>91</sup> Her personality merges with two commodities in particular, a “low, flash sports car” and silk stockings. In their first encounter, Sadie convinces Charlie to embark on a life of petty crime by crossing “one silk-stockinged leg over the other . . .”; after that, “he’d felt himself nailed” (74). Using commodities to put herself seductively on display, Sadie replaces the “aristocratic” consumer of traditional domestic fiction.

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<sup>91</sup> Note that Hawks associates Sadie with “monstrous” sea creatures, which resonates with a wider fascist imagination of women as “floods.” Klaus Theweleit explains that these images reveal the fascist’s fear of the disintegration of men’s bodily boundaries: “What fascism promised men was the reintegration of their hostile components under tolerable conditions, dominance of the hostile ‘female’ element within themselves. This explains why the word ‘boundaries,’ in fascist parlance, refers primarily to the boundaries of the body . . .” (434).

In Sadie's case, that consumption is not merely immoral, but potentially deadly. "[B]itter and selfish—he saw her again, as at first . . . She was dressed in clothes that screamed their smartness, a cigarette staining her fingers, her dark eyes, with the long lashes, taking him in, weighing him up" (73-4). She treats Charlie as a possible commodity and accordingly threatens to devour him. A defensive strike against her would be perfectly within order. Charlie predicts that she will finally be murdered, strangled with "a couple of silk stockings round her neck" (22). The image is "just" because it would reveal the truth; Sadie is a reified commodity who constantly threatens to transform Charlie and others into the same.

Hawks further disrupts consumption as an established field of information by installing a new ideal of female "exteriority" and introducing a new confounding use of commodities as signs. In a Christmas shopping scene, Mrs. Smith notices a "sickly small girl" who buys a pair of silk stockings. She had obviously "been saving her weekly pence, and now came to buy her Christmas gift for her Mum. Bless 'er little 'eart, thought Mum, hurrying on" (87). Conspicuous self-sacrifice replaces the regulation of desire as consumption's moral end.

Emphasizing the value of compulsive spending toward this end, Mrs. Smith purchases an extravagant gift for her husband. At the beginning of the excursion, she is compared to "a spare fig, thin and bowed, grey with work" (85). But her purchases do not parsimoniously reflect her family's economic status. Mrs. Smith is soon mesmerized by luxurious silk pajamas, and buys two pairs for her husband without hesitation: "At the stall, she said afterwards, 'Something seemed to come all over 'er like.' Then and there she opened her purse and handed the money without hesitation to the man, paying over just what he asked. She walked home in a kind of daze. For the first time in her life she had spent her money rashly. Her pulses beat fast" (88).

Her loss of rationality, in Hawks' terms "rashness," "daze," and a fast pulse, arises from the sense of "equality" bought with consumerism. Mrs. Smith uneconomically exercises the privilege of wealthier women in ignoring the pajamas' cost. Spending "rashly" is thus a "moral" act whose exhilaration should presumably be made available to the working class. Green Street calls attention throughout the narrative to the injustice of displaying tempting commodities to those unable to acquire what they see. "Alice devoured with her eyes the latest fashions, as displayed alike in the great stores beyond her purse, and in the 'guinea shops' which she had once or twice been able to patronize in moments of tremulous luxury" (19). In these scenarios, working-class consumption of luxury goods equalizes the classes by sabotaging hierarchical display. Green Street glorifies pleasure in the commodity and the act of purchasing as politicized revolts against class hierarchy.

Hawks further disrupts bourgeois consumer coding in Mr. Smith's reaction to his wife's gift. Mr. Smith's pleasure in its extravagance is obvious: "He strutted and pranced and behaved in a ridiculous fashion. Yet all so tenderly, letting Mother see that he liked them" (89). This comic show "masculinizes" luxury by overcoming its association with aristocratic femininity. The luxury commodity also loses its association with Jewishness and vulgar "material" concerns by directly stimulating family affect.

Such representations of consumption contribute to fascism's self-representation as the only political party that could meet the British working class' economic needs *and* transcend an "economistic" approach (contra the Communist Party). Green Street's narrator claims fascism's ability to combat economic disparity and feed "human love" at the same time: "One day the sensitive spirit of human love would cease to be frayed by those hard, material conflicts, assaulted by poverty and fear-ridden nerves. Until then, life was a makeshift of hope and

frustration. Until then--human beings would be born; they would suffer; they would die. No more” (124). Better organization, not merely money, is the primary desideratum. The narrator in Green Street insists, “[I]t wasn’t money that was wanted for the poor. Not money, as money, but economic security; a security which could only be built on a new social order, with a new code of education for the body and the mind” (126).

This combination of commitments, far from proposing a mystical escape from politics, addresses an audience disillusioned with the mundane business of parliamentary politics, as well as those unfamiliar with political practices. In this confusion of political naiveté and political acuity, Hawks recalls Lewis, whose naïve domestic figure Margot Stamp possesses an unexpected political visionary quality. Nevertheless, Hawks suggests a kind of “women’s politics” inconceivable to Lewis by intimately connecting women to policy. Fascism suggests in place of the patriarchal private sphere a statist public patriarchal solution to the British individual’s gendered aspirations.

In the next section, I show that Hawks’ re-evaluations of domestic labor eliminate the sexual contract between husband and wife to install a contract between the domestic woman and the state. This substitution requires the father’s removal from domestic organization. The fascist son’s triumph over the father, and his guidance of the mother over her domestic labor emerges in Green Street as the central feature of the fascist domestic scene.

### **Anti-patriarchal Patriarchy**

As we have seen, Hawks’ invocation of biopolitical discourse articulates domestic women’s authority in line with a medical representation of reproduction and an autarkic representation of consumption. In the chapter that features Bill, Hawks suggests that the centrality of domestic labor to the state requires the fascist son’s guidance.

The prominence of the youthful, “anti-patriarchal” male in fascist rhetoric has been well-noted.<sup>92</sup> The theme of missing, tyrannical, politically mislead, and corrupt fathers, often standing in for Parliament or established political parties, emerged repeatedly in BUF publications, which were full of revolutionary fervor against fathers. For instance, we find the following angry tirade in the publication Blackshirt:

[W]e despise you for your values; we laugh at your beliefs; we thank you for the one great truth you have taught us—that you are awful fools. . . . *We wait for you to open up the arsenals, for you have taught us, Daddies, how to use the guns.* All over Europe are rising up the generation of the men who were bred so well in war; with liquid fire for mother’s milk, and bombs for cricket-balls. They know only their own unity, and they have only their own belief in the disciplined insurrection of their generation . . . (“Youth in Flames” 2)

Gottlieb explains that the BUF “prioritized relationships . . . between male comrades, united in a brotherhood” suggesting a militaristic youthful social dynamic in which the “younger male was charged with the mission of insurrection against his elders” (107, 113). In light of this encouragement of a brotherly “revolt” against fathers, she asks, “Can patriarchy exist where fathers have been rendered impotent” (113)? She concludes that the adolescent “gang” mentality of British fascism was male-centered yet anti-patriarchal.

The materialist feminist term “public patriarchy,” however, helps us to see how patriarchal relations of power could strengthen even as the social role of the private patriarchal

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<sup>92</sup> Russell Berman writes: “A brilliant connection links the fascist critique of patriarchy to the matriarchal moment of the oceanic feeling that accompanies the technology of mass media and the rejection of the written culture of the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie” (xxii). Juliet Flower MacCannell also notes in The Regime of the Brother: After the Patriarchy that “The Holocaust is the key historical event that forces a re-vision of the modern symbolic as a post-Oedipal frame. That is the fact of the calculated, planned disruption of the civilizing and protective side of Oedipal order effected by fascism” (14).

family was waning. Carol Brown argues that twentieth-century public patriarchy “does not benefit from individual men’s continuing control . . . Husbands are no longer needed to maintain . . . the continued reproductive labor of women. Husbands may even be a hindrance. . .” (245). Public patriarchy regulates and masters women’s bodies even as the shape of domestic labor radically changes, and as its locus shifts away from the home: “public schools, hospitals, and nursing homes” and “‘mothering’ maintenance work (e.g., sewing, mending, cooking, gardening, nursing children and old people) are now no longer done primarily at home by mothers” (Ferguson 172). In this section, I argue that Hawks’ satirical treatment of Mrs. Smith in particular exposes fascism’s “revolution” as “anti-father” but nonetheless public patriarchal.

Bill’s commitment to fascism is a direct consequence of his observation that liberal democracy renders national health impossible.

William Smith, of Green Street, shop assistant, saw himself as one struggling against all the evils of an obsolescent system of financial democracy, whereby distressed areas, unemployment, desolated agriculture, the slow sapping of British virility, were perpetual and inevitable. And very soon this obsolescent system must either collapse, and civil war break out; or it must go to war to preserve its export markets. (120)

The insurgent son is motivated to revolt in order to liberate the domestic scene from the open market, and the mother from her husband’s tyranny. After Mr. Smith’s death, Bill accedes to his rightful place and proceeds to rectify his father’s corrupt domestic organization as “the man of the household, chief breadwinner, support of Mum and Poppy. . . Outwardly calm, in reality dazed, he took up the job” (121). Unlike his father’s, Bill’s political vision encompasses not only his own family, but also spirals outward to encompass the neighborhood, nation, and Empire.

Bill's role in his father's eventual demise is implied in his mother's prayer after Mr. Smith suffers a heart attack: "Spare my son Bill remorse that 'e'll feel that 'e's killed 'is Dad. Bill's innocent, Gord, I promise you" (98). While the prayer acknowledges Bill's part in his father's illness, his mother's approval also absolves him of guilt. Her complicity in his abrogation of her husband's authority is established as she votes with Bill for a BUF candidate in the council elections: "All these years I've voted like Farver. Now I says to meself, let Bill 'ave 'is turn for a change" (101). Of course, this complicity between mother and son tempts us to read the fascist narrative of state transformation as a regression to pre-Oedipal sociality. But looked at from a richer feminist materialist perspective, the role of patricide here is to expand the reach of patriarchal statist control, not to unite the son with his mother's affection, nor even to "return" the state to an unterritorialized, pre-patriarchal utopia. The son's role henceforth is not to form a new couple with his mother, but to mediate between family and the state.

Bill's party interests are plainly devoted to domesticity. The concrete needs of the family—rent, public health, and conditions of reproduction—motivate his politics, and he would presumably guide the family as a representative of, and liaison with the state.<sup>93</sup> In this way, Hawks' satire of paternal authority appears in a radical political mode, on women's behalf, and on behalf of the urban working class as a whole. Bill attempts to bring women's domestic labor out of the passive, and into the active support of an autarchic imperial economy.

At the same time, the son's role as conduit reveals a double edge that cuts ironically across the mother's naiveté. Mrs. Smith understands Bill's mode of political analysis only on a concrete level, observing that he has "seen families turned out into the street, and it seems to have turned 'is stomach, or something, I dunno. And 'e comes back with tales of the 'ouses with

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<sup>93</sup> Bill attempts to connect his mother to the BUF by asking her, "Then you saw the article I wrote about housing? Then, Mum, if you read it, you do understand, don't you, Mum?" pleaded Bill" (101).

their doors falling off and their windows all done up with cardboard” (65). Mrs. Smith cannot articulate her desires and concerns in traditional political terms, and so doesn’t fully grasp how the BUF’s seizure of political power would benefit her. She sees only that it is her duty to vote for his candidates. Although she is clearly complicit in Bill’s political arrogation of his father, her participation in the political process is indirect, and appropriately, the narrator views her with wary irony. Her comprehension is incomplete and radically inferior to Bill’s: “or something,” she says, “I dunno.” The satirical representation of Mrs. Smith’s intellectual incapacity implies that domestic women cannot deploy the necessary authority over domestic organization.

Accordingly, Bill knows more about food production and distribution than any of the women in his family. “In his party’s weekly paper,” Bill discovers that “white bread was made of flour from which all the goodness had been taken away by the big miller combines and trusts, for the sake of selling the wheat-germ as cattle-food” (105). The nation’s health depends on buying from those producers whose interests are ultimately the “British people.” English consumption is a duty of racial survival, health, and population, not simply of one’s own family. The fascist son’s guardianship over food consumption appears to serve the family’s and the nation’s best interests.

This appearance of the regenerative, rebellious, and reasonable “man of the people” and savior of working-class women’s desires relies on explicitly biopolitical terms. The terms Hawks employs here, lifted straight from the BUF press, are remarkably similar to those the Juvenalian satirist Smollett used to depict “a nightmarish, kaleidoscopic vision” of modern London, where “bread is turned into ‘a deleterious paste’ in order to make it whiter, veal is bleached, greens are colored, soil is produced artificially, and the poultry is more quickly fattened.” According to Paulson, this tradition indicts the “terrible proliferation” of modernity, in which “great aimless

crowds of people” in chaotic movements threaten to “engulf all that remains of value and order” (192).

The novel’s conclusion best illuminates this satiric persona, where the narrator’s voice becomes inextricable from Bill’s. Their satirical irony is profoundly ambivalent toward the working class, both speaking on their behalf and indicting their morbid disavowal of fascism. They echo the pedestrians at the novel’s beginning who have “petrified into part of the streets, pavements, walls of East London” (11), and are half dead from political apathy: “From the double box on which he [Bill] stood and harangued, he looked into grey, lined faces. There was no fight left in them, after years of eating just enough to keep going, but not quite enough to fortify courage and spirit—a mere endurance in apathy, without hope but not hopeless, just—static” (128). As in Lewis’ texts, the deanimated crowd blurs the boundaries between human and inhuman. The people of Green Street become part of the landscape; they too have become society’s detritus.

## **Conclusion**

Rhetorically, Hawks’ writing depends on satirical ambivalence to provoke, and indict, its readership. Satire, in which political critique combines with aesthetic pleasure, renewed itself in inter-war British writing as a whole. We can detect resonances between Hawks’ inorganic crowds and those that appear in high modernist writing. Eliot, Lawrence, and Lewis all invoke the modern crowd’s fundamental lifelessness.

Both Hawks and Lewis incongruently represent fascism in a radical political vein, as the “liberation” of domestic women from the private patriarchal family, by satirizing what they consider to be decadent practices of gender and sexuality. These similarities are remarkable, and warrant a reading of fascism’s broad investment in literary satire. The fusion of satirical modes

may be central to British fascism's revolutionary-counterrevolutionary rhetorical strategies. The combination of these modes allows fascism to appear as a revolutionary critique of the state on behalf of women and "the people," even as it proposes a counterrevolutionary, anti-democratic installation of the corporate state. In retrospect, we can detect how the BUF's claims to "speak for" domestic women would have ultimately silenced them. Hawks' fusion creates the specific political equivocation that characterizes a fascist appropriation of modern mass politics.

In the next chapter, I will discuss Phyllis Bottome who mobilizes liberal feminism to attempt *anti-fascist* biopolitical articulations of women's agency. I argue that she fails to provide a sufficiently critical practice of modern domestic fiction. Virginia Woolf, the subject of Chapter 4, ironizes domestic fiction's biopolitical ends from within its own terms, enabling a feminist analysis of nineteenth-century domestic literature as a prefiguration of twentieth-century British women's immediate investment in imperialism *through* their domestic identity. Moreover, she diverges from satire to problematize any literary political representation of "the people," and suggests instead practices of an anti-fascist "outsiders' society." In this way, Woolf counters not only fascist domesticity, but also the failures of British liberalism.

## CHAPTER THREE

### PHYLLIS BOTTOME

#### LIBERAL ANTI-FASCISM

In this chapter, I explore the liberal characterization of fascism in Phyllis Bottome's domestic novels The Mortal Storm (1938) and The Lifeline (1941). Bottome, a bestselling novelist in the 1930s and 1940s assesses fascism in the media of domestic realism and psychology. Both novels exemplify liberal domestic fiction's ability to resist fascism's investment in the state and women's reproductive sexuality. The patriarchal family in these studies takes center stage—as the seed of fascism's sexual ideology and its paradoxical cure.

Bottome, trained by the psychiatrist Alfred Adler, resonates with other critical explorations of fascist sexuality and gendering, especially psychoanalytic writings that foreground fascism's official insistence on the authoritarian family, most notably those of Sigmund Freud, Herbert Marcuse, Wilhelm Reich, Theodor Adorno, and Max Horkheimer.<sup>94</sup> Her writings also have much in common with later historians and cultural critics in the 1970s who, drawing on this tradition, instigated overtly feminist critiques of fascist sexuality, its relationship to patriarchal families, and its valorization of women's chastity. Writers like Maria Antoinetta Macciochi and Tim Mason launched sharp critiques of official fascist regimes and their basis in European domestic ideologies. This critical line finds valuable extensions in works by Klaus Theweleit, Julia Kristeva, Leila Rupp, Claudia Koonz, Martin Durham, and Julie Gottlieb.

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<sup>94</sup>See Wilhelm Reich, The Mass Psychology of Fascism, trans. Vincent R. Carfagno (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983); Herbert Marcuse, Eros And Civilization; A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966); and works by Adorno and Freud cited later in this chapter.

Fascist misogyny was in fact also a major theme of much inter-war British feminist domestic fiction.<sup>95</sup> Phyllis Lassner writes that, “By the time fascism was taking hold in Europe, with its emphasis on women’s childbearing and caring roles, many British women writers came to fear that its radical conservatism accorded only too well with traditional attitudes at home” (12). Many novelists including Ethel Mannin, Sarah Champion, Sally Carson, Katharine Burdekin, Phyllis Bentley, Sylvia Townsend Warner, Carmel Haden-Guest, Irene Rathbone, and Ruth Adam, like Bottome often worked within the domestic fiction genre, warily foregrounding the reinvigoration of domestic ideology after World War I.<sup>96</sup> They wrote in “the language of caregivers and protectors,” yet critically, for “the safe haven they imagine . . . reflects an idea of home and homeland that does not comply with . . . prevailing domestic ideologies” (Lassner 11). Today, these writers have nearly disappeared from literary memory. Lassner observes that “To be a radical woman writer in subject rather than form, to choose a female for a protagonist, to center the conflict in the family, to examine the effects of the public on the private . . . are not the ways to establish a literary reputation . . .” (240).

Like these other radical women writers, Bottome profited from the new publicity apparatuses that were based increasingly on market responses and journalism as opposed to academic or other highbrow criteria.<sup>97</sup> She was well aware of this position’s advantages and

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<sup>95</sup> Barbara Brothers notes that “numerous . . . women writers in the thirties who depicted in their novels the dangers of fascism and who attempted to communicate to the English-speaking world what was happening in Germany in the 1930s” (260).

<sup>96</sup> Andy Croft writes about the politicization of the romance novel in Ethel Mannin’s anti-fascist Comrade O Comrade (1947). Barbara Brothers mentions the following works: Sarah Champion’s Duet for Female Voices (1936); Sally Carson’s Crooked Cross (1934), The Prisoner (1936), and A Traveller Came By (1938); Katharine Burdekin’s dystopian novel Swastika Night (1934?); Phyllis Bentley’s Freedom, Farewell (1936); Sylvia Townsend Warner’s short story collection A Garland of Straw (1943) and After the Death of Don Juan (1938); Carmel Haden-Guest’s Give Us Conflict (1935); Stevie Smith’s Novel on Yellow Paper (1936); Irene Rathbone’s They Call it Peace (1936); and Ruth Adam’s War on Saturday Week (1937) (260).

<sup>97</sup> Anthea Trodd notes that the proliferation of book clubs, literary journals, and magazines created an “[a]lternative professional world of marketing [that] was much more accessible to women than the world of literary

drawbacks. In her autobiographical memoir, The Goal (1962), she describes the ambiguous evaluation of such writers at that time. When she returned to London after having lived in continental Europe for many years, and having achieved market success in the U.S., she felt alienated from the high modernist British literary scene.<sup>98</sup> Success in the serial market and as a best-selling author did not by any means guarantee acceptance in London's highbrow literary circles.<sup>99</sup>

Indeed, Bottome's style is conspicuously realist, and we can trace her genealogy to the commonplaces of Victorian fiction. Her novels often employ formulaic settings (castles of the European aristocracy, and the country house) or adapt the inter-war period's popular genres including spy and detective fiction.<sup>100</sup> Nevertheless, her practice of domestic fiction assumes its great flexibility and capacity for political articulation, and discredits the belief that the middlebrow necessarily instills political conservatism. Despite her distance from critical success, her career shows us that the "middlebrow" could articulate a type of cosmopolitan political

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committee-rooms, and, as publicity outlets diversified, many women writers relished their emergence from obscurity" (37-8).

<sup>98</sup> Bottome writes, "My publishers I had never seen; and as for my reviewers, I did not even know their names if I was lucky enough for them to know mine" in The Goal (127). In fact, her work caught the attention of writers as politically and artistically diverse as Ezra Pound and Daphne duMaurier. When Bottome met Ezra Pound at a party of Rebecca West's, he seemed willing to take her on as a cause, as he had done with other "unknown" writers. Bottome recalls of Pound: "I think that I might have definitely moved into the circle of my contemporaries, guided by Ezra, except for three deciding factors"—her mother's illness, her best friend's needs as an invalid, and her own struggles with tuberculosis (The Goal 40). A lifelong friendship with Pound ensued, but one purposefully lacking professional rapport. See The Goal 15-40 for an account of the early friendship between Bottome and Pound. For Bottome's literary criticism on Pound as well as an account of his influence on her writing, see the chapter on Pound in Phyllis Bottome, From the Life (London: Faber and Faber, 1944) 70-82. Her collection, Best Stories of Phyllis Bottome (1963), was prefaced by Daphne duMaurier.

<sup>99</sup> "But in America thirty years ago" she continues, "a British author, known through seven years of serials in the Century Magazine, was a celebrity" (Bottome, The Goal 127).

<sup>100</sup> Level Crossing (1936), Danger Signal (1939), Survival (1943), and Under the Skin (1950) are all detective novels informed by psychiatric investigation. The Perfect Wife (1924) and Windlestraws (1929) are set in country houses. Jenny Hartley observes "how much there is in common between the spy novel and domestic fiction. That great tradition of women's fiction, the heroine with the buried life, is on familiar ground in the spy's world of double lives, disguise, surveillance and divided loyalties" (92).

perception important for feminists, and a paradoxical mobility not available to high modernist writers.<sup>101</sup> Taking liberal domestic fiction to its anti-fascist limits, Bottome uncovers systematic violence in the genre's characteristic settings and political foundations.<sup>102</sup> Her feminist articulation of liberal domestic ideology, furthermore, stages the embattled ground of 1930s and 40s European politics.

Bottome revises women's agency inside and outside the home, insisting on its significance for social and political well-being in a cosmopolitan rather than national frame of reference and to reform the liberal split between public and private spheres. She thereby reveals liberalism's generous accommodation, its ability to make room for women as domestic laborers and sex-affective producers in the family, as well as a feminist articulation of women as professionals in the public sphere with explicit authority in social policy. She suggests women's entry into biopolitical positions of power as medical authorities to emphasize fascism as the destruction of humanist conceptions of the individual and family.

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<sup>101</sup> She explains, "Yet I cannot but think myself fortunate never to have become a stereotyped British intellectual. I should have lost my main advantage as a writer: that, throughout a constant change of countries and milieus, I have kept in touch with every profession other than my own and so have never lacked differences of subject and surroundings. I have lived in seven different countries and often shared their immense upheavals and disasters. Classes have no special significance for me; nor have I found that my best friends needed to be intellectuals" (Bottome, The Goal 40).

<sup>102</sup> For instance, Old Wine (1924), a cross-class romance, depicts the decay of Austrian society and its cultivation of anti-Semitism after World War I. Her novels also educate the reader in the relations between English and continental politics, and in at least two cases, in the politics of the Empire's periphery. Under the Skin (1950) recounts the continuation of systematic racist violence and exploitation in the Caribbean after decolonization. See Under the Skin (London: Faber and Faber, 1950) and the short story "The Oblation" in Walls of Glass (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1958), both set in the British West Indies. Windlestraws (1929) is set in an aristocratic country house in southern England, but compares the cultural remnants of feudal chivalry to the modern systematization of rape. In this novel, feudal misogyny appears as fascism's foundation. In it, the English aristocrat Reggie embodies a feudal attitude that sympathizes with continental fascism. The protagonist, Jean, his secretary incredulously asks him whether or not he believes that "force" is progressive. He replies, "Force naturally . . . but I don't want to cure Progress. Force helps it along. Look at Mussolini—fine progressive chap Mussolini -he's getting those dirty Italians as hard as nails. Pity we haven't a Mussolini or two in London. What we want is a man with drive to him—get people on the move" (Windlestraws 43).

Set in Munich, The Mortal Storm depicts the misogynist Nazi subjugation of the half Jewish protagonist Freya Roth. Under the regime, the university halts her promising medical career. Meanwhile, her Nazi half-brothers forbid Freya's flowering relationship with a communist peasant, Hans Breitner, and eventually murder him. When she discovers that she is pregnant with Hans' child after his murder, she must make a decision loaded with feminist significance. As the daughter of a Jewish father, whose medical scientific ability Freya herself possesses, and an "Aryan" mother with roots in the German aristocracy, Freya is given a choice: to escape to England or the U.S. under perilous conditions and pursue her education, or to "pass" as Aryan under the protection of her mother's contacts and her half-brothers. She decides to pursue medicine, leaving her child behind with Hans' family.

The Lifeline's (1946) protagonist, Mark Chalmers, is an Eton schoolmaster in the late 1930s. Because his best friend Reggie works for Britain's Foreign Office, Mark is personally obligated to act as a British intelligence liaison in Nazi-occupied Austria. Working undercover as a manic depressive inmate at an Austrian asylum, Mark learns to identify fascism as a pathological psychological condition. Accordingly, Mark learns that the best way to counter fascism is through equitable marriage and liberal education informed by moral psychology. As part of his new resolve to rid British elite culture (especially the public school) of its fascist elements, he falls in love with the psychiatrist in charge of the asylum, Ida Eichhorn—a strong woman deeply committed to the anti-fascist underground movement.

These novels advocate sound private families and individualism as the best defenses against fascism. Moreover, they suggest women's accession to professions that accord with their domestic authority—health and psychology. My purpose in this chapter is to show that despite

her powerful feminist anti-fascist logic, Bottome's "biopolitical" critique of the fascist state misperceives fascism's own grounding in biopolitical rhetoric.

Michel Foucault has described how the "birth of biopolitics" coincided with the growth of liberalism, which rationalized and "place[d] at the center of its concerns the notion of population and the mechanisms capable of ensuring its regulation" ("Security" 67). This modern nexus often took a radical form throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, distinguishing itself from the "traditional right of sovereignty." Foucault writes, "The 'right' to life, to one's body, to health, to happiness, to the satisfaction of needs, and beyond all the oppressions or 'alienations,' the 'right' to rediscover what one is and all that one can be, this 'right' . . . was the political response to all these new procedures of power" (An Introduction 145). In the twentieth century, of course, liberalism continued to be mobilized against tyrannical dictatorships. Foucault writes that "liberal rationalization starts from the assumption that government . . . cannot be its own end" ("The Birth of Biopolitics" 74).<sup>103</sup> Liberalism thus creates a "polymorphous" tool to criticize "the reality: (1) of a previous governmentality that one tries to shed; (2) of a current governmentality that one attempts to reform and rationalize by stripping it down; (3) of a governmentality that one opposes and whose abuses one tries to limit." As such, liberalism comprises "a sometimes-radical opposition" ("The Birth of Biopolitics" 75).

As we have seen in Chapter 1, feminist literary critics have described British domestic fiction's revolutionary and counterrevolutionary manifestations. As a genre, it spans the "polymorphism" of liberalism in relation to mass politics and the state. *Vis-à-vis* fascism as a

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<sup>103</sup> In the same essay, Foucault urges us "to see in liberalism a form of critical reflection on governmental practice. . . The question of liberalism, understood as a question of 'too much government,' was one of the constant dimensions of that recent European phenomenon, having appeared first in England, it seems--namely, 'political life.' Indeed, it is one of the constituent elements of it, if it is the case that political life exists when governmental practice is limited in its possible excess by the fact that it is the object of public debate as to its 'good or bad,' its 'too much or too little'" (77).

form of governance, Bottome inscribes liberal domesticity's most radical capacity. But I argue that her writing nevertheless obscures fascism's own adherence to modern disciplinary power. Both novels rest on the assumption that the patriarchal family is the origin and basis of civilization, and that fascism insanely deviates from this basis to engender homosexuality at the level of national and imperial administration. I argue that they radically obscure fascism's own reliance on patriarchal relations of power, and more ominously, reduplicates its pathologizing of homosexuality.

### **Anti-fascist capitalism**

In both novels, Bottome understands fascism as a violation of civilized individualism and the nation-state's ability to guarantee individual freedom. The bourgeois family resists by cultivating a progressive sense of individuality and social responsibility. In this section, I show how her novels rehearse a classic bourgeois revolutionary critique. Employing bourgeois domestic fiction's "revolutionary" register, she diagnoses fascism as the residual traces of feudal economy and a regressive feudal deviation from universal humanist values. In this representation, Bottome's works insist on the continued primacy of capitalist development and bourgeois leadership of the nation.

In The Mortal Storm, fascists annihilate the private individual. In its place, they induce a feminized mass and create a machinic masculinity; both forms of perversion escape from the individual's mandate to social responsibility. Freya's Nazi half-brother, Emil von Röhn, for instance declares that "there are no private lives—not even our own. We are simply parts of a machine—and move, or should move, like a smoothly-running piston—any speck of dust or grit has to be ruthlessly cleared away!" The fascist individual loses the human capacity to reason, and thereby "become[s] a gesture," merely a fascist salute (107). Fascists in crowds dramatically

enact this mechanical transformation, standing “solemnly—as if all were pulled by the same invisible string, ten young men and half a dozen girls sprang to their feet, and stood as if God were present . . .” (174). This rhetorical invocation of machines directly counters the literary political ends of Lewis’ invocation and provides us with a by now classic critical reading of fascism’s violation of individualism and consciousness.

Bottome’s truly original critical force, however, lies in her identification of cultural microfascisms that existed long before official fascist regimes—the cultural valorization of militarism and the chivalric suppression of women. In both novels, Bottome compares fascism with aristocratic attitudes toward women. For example, an ineffectual aristocrat in The Mortal Storm relishes the installment of the fascist regime as a return to feudal chivalry: “Soon you could kick the proletarian riff-raff off the pavements with impunity and see women only where they belonged, at the cooking-stove or in your bed! Where was the virtue of *not* thrashing your wife or your groom, if you’d be punished for it—if you did? *Noblesse oblige* was good enough for Ulrich von Maberg” (180). Sophie Maberg, an aristocrat who later capitulates to fascism after marrying a Nazi, epitomizes fascist femininity by lacking the capacity to make individual decisions without the mediation and approval of men and by valorizing security over social responsibility: “She had decided suddenly to throw in her lot with Freya’s, because there hardly seemed any other chance of drawing Olaf’s attention to herself. Instantly Sophie saw that she had acted rightly, for Olaf looked at her with marked approval . . .” (90).

In The Lifeline, the portrait of an Hungarian aristocratic family theorizes affinities between feudalism and fascism in an overtly economic paradigm. The Bezzeghys are “natural Nazis” who believe that concentration camps and “medieval methods” of torture are appropriate

punishments for proponents of the “Red Peril” (214).<sup>104</sup> Nazism comes naturally to them because they cultivated feudal elitism and selfishness for many generations (207). Accustomed to luxury, and having grown morally degenerate and decadent as a result, they are unwilling to reinvigorate their wealth through “healthy” means. This unwillingness to work is most apparent in the state of their possessions:

All the furniture and utensils of the castle had once been the best of their kind and were now long out of date, shabby, chipped or inconvenient, but often of some real intrinsic beauty or value. These sifted layers of bygone tastes and wishes had a haunting quality as if they retained like a secret cipher, passed on from generation to generation, a message only understood by the Bezzeghys themselves. (209)

Revealing more than the Bezzeghys’ mere inability to keep their domestic home up to date, their obsolete “furniture and utensils” signify an economic parasitism that necessitates a tyrannical mode of household organization. Their household is completely disconnected from the community around them and reflects no social interest. Moreover, their anachronistic manners and possessions create a dead language communicable only between family members. Living purely on self-interest, the Bezzeghys enact a type of social neurosis.

In both works, Bottome invests the traditional bourgeois task of “destroying” the aristocracy with an anti-fascist goal. Marx writes in The Eighteenth Brumaire that the task of “setting up modern *bourgeois society*,” required first the destruction of “the feudal basis to pieces” (16). Originally, the bourgeois revolution adapted theatrical guises of heroism to “glorify the new struggles,” and “magnify the given task in imagination” (16). After the bourgeoisie were

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<sup>104</sup> The Gräfin explains to Mark, “[I]f there were not the Nazi system there would be the Red Peril! A thousand times rather Hitler and all his rigours than the rising tide of the Common Man’s Universe—with all its rights.”

established, that is, after the revolutionary moment, the monumental register was abolished, and their triumph normalized to a domestic scale: “When the real aim had been achieved, when the bourgeois transformation of English society had been accomplished, Locke supplanted Habakkuk” (17).

In Bottome’s recapitulation of the bourgeois revolution, however, the domestic register does not re-establish the bourgeoisie’s triumph. Instead, she implies that a pernicious feudal aristocratic influence, namely their inability to adapt to liberal capital, has persisted into the twentieth century as a seed of fascism. The narrator observes in The Mortal Storm that “the feudal system had lasted a good deal too long; and now was retarding growth” (87). In her criticism of the aristocracy, domestic realism—the anti-romantic, everyday characterization of the middle class—lays the necessary groundwork for anti-fascist, anti-feudal heroic revolution.<sup>105</sup> The domestic register therefore does not “reduce” the bourgeois revolutionary task, but rather “elevates” household organization into a heroic one. In turn, anti-fascism becomes an everyday responsibility with monumental importance.

In The Lifeline, the peasants take this task to heart, and act as a foil to the Bezzeghys’ refusal to labor or contribute to the market. Their spiritual and mental health, the fruit of their economic indispensability, also makes their anti-fascist stance as natural as the Bezzeghys’ tendency toward fascism. Father Planer, an Austrian peasant, for example explains to Mark his impetus for being anti-fascist:

[T]he Nazis take my corn to buy themselves guns to fight England and France. No man’s goods belong to him now, nor a man’s sons, nor even his daughters—as for his soul—to

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<sup>105</sup> Vineta Colby describes the terms of domestic realism operating here: “It is bourgeois and anti-romantic . . . glorif[y]ing the solid values of home and family. . . It emphasizes the importance of compromise, cooperation, and common sense both in the individual’s private life and in his public life, as he functions in the social community in which he lives and works” (212).

hear these Nazis talk you would think their souls belonged to Hitler. And who is Hitler? Here in Austria we know who Hitler is. It is a pity that we hatched him—but at least we know what we have hatched. He got no white collar from us!” (63)

Because their economy is attached so closely to the earth and invested in useful goods, the peasants refuse to acknowledge the Nazis’ corrupt translation of corn into guns. Moreover, despite their closeness to the processes of nature, the peasants can be trusted to guard as well the processes of civilization by keeping watch over the middle class (“He got no white collar from us!”).

Here, Bottome’s text severs the traditional bond between the peasantry and aristocracy, who formed a corporate unit under the feudal economy. In lieu of that dyad, she merges the peasantry with the (paternal) bourgeoisie. In the liberal revision of the patriarchal corporate fantasy, the peasants have adapted nicely to modernity, assimilating themselves as laborers within a liberal capitalist economy whereas the aristocracy is wholly anachronistic and therefore superfluous. Although the peasants still labor under a ruling class, they identify with that class more sympathetically. This series of displacements and replacements leads to a specific liberal assertion—that fascism deviates absolutely from socio-economic modernity. In this fantasy, fascism appears eccentric to capitalist systems of production and exchange—a blatant fallacy exposed as such by anti-fascists such as Antonio Gramsci, Walter Benjamin, C. L. R. James, and Stephen Spender, not to mention fascists themselves such as Mosley and Marinetti.

### **Anti-fascist revisions of liberalism**

Nevertheless, Bottome’s critique of fascism cuts both ways. She defines fascism as a deviation from the capitalist rhetoric of the private individual, but also turns her attention to the liberal capitalist exclusion of women. She disarticulates the confinement of women to

domesticity, arguing that the private sphere is a responsibility of both sexes. In this way, Bottome revises classic terms of English liberalism and social contract theory for feminist anti-fascist purposes. Ultimately, however, she retains a defense of the gender division of labor and aligns women's interests with the patriarchal family—a paradox that indicates another liberal misdiagnosis of fascism.

In The Second Treatise of Government (1690), the English touchstone for social contract theory, John Locke theorizes that two kinds of social relations—society based on natural law, as well as authentic political society—both demand the authority of the father.<sup>106</sup> The father in both instances regards the members of his family, including his wife, as extensions of himself, and so cares for them as his own property, i.e., as he would his own body or goods. Since the father's self-interest mingles so intimately with his motivation to rule, paternal legislation is “naturally” benevolent. Political society arose originally, he explains, when grown sons who wanted to cultivate their own property negotiated among themselves and gave consent to the father to arbitrate over disputes (43).

Locke emphasizes consent as a key necessity of political society. The patriarchal ruler acquires consent ultimately because his subjects know that he considers them as extensions of himself. He writes, “young societies could not have subsisted; without such nursing fathers, tender and careful of the public weal, all governments would have sunk under the weakness and infirmities of their infancy, and the prince and the people had soon perished together” (64). He thereby speculates on a peaceful establishment of political sovereignty. In political society and

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<sup>106</sup> The idea that political society arises naturally from family associations is a feature of social contract theory in general. Johannes Althusius in the early seventeenth century, considered the first theorist of social contract theory, writes, “Human society develops from private to public association by the definite steps and progressions of small societies. The public association exists when many private associations are linked together for the purpose of establishing an inclusive political order.” Social Contract Theory, ed. Michael Lessnoff (New York: New York UP, 1990) 33.

its social contract, the individual similarly concedes his “natural rights”—the right to protect his own property, and the right to punish interference. Political society eventually transcends the family as a type of natural society in Locke’s theoretical fiction.

Nevertheless, the family continues to remind developed political societies of natural necessities. Humans demand parental care for an extended period of time, and in turn, parental cooperation for “the continuation of the species” (44). The family as a type of society, and the marriage relation within it takes unequal rights as a given premise: “But the husband and wife . . . will unavoidably sometimes have different wills, too; it therefore being necessary that the last determination—i.e., the rule—should be placed somewhere, it naturally falls to the man’s share, as the abler and the stronger” (46). Locke distinguishes between the public, political society and the private family and thereby accounts for a glaring disparity. While consent of the ruled is necessary to legitimate the sovereign in the public sphere, the husband/father possesses an *a priori*, “natural” sovereignty in the private sphere.

In this account of the institutions of marriage and family, women consent to a limited exercise of rationality and self-interest, as well as an inferior position in political society. Feminist philosopher Diana Coole explains of Locke’s account, “women seem to be excluded from full citizenship, while their tacit consent to political association appears to be both inevitable and irrelevant due to their (subordinate) positioning in the private sphere” (195). Classic liberalism’s sexual politics posit the father’s supreme authority in civil society and the private sphere of the family by holding women’s physical and mental weakness as an unquestionable premise.

The Mortal Storm selectively modifies several key elements in this classical liberal account of civil society. Although Bottome accepts Locke’s basic premise that benevolent

patriarchy cultivates consent, she calls into question several of his conditions. Her modifications confront fascism's reiteration of liberalism's patriarchal insistence on women's "right" to be "protected" in light of their relative weakness. Nevertheless, Bottome retains "paternal benevolence" as a necessary feature of democracy. In so doing, the novel reinforces patriarchal relations of power despite its significant challenges.

In The Mortal Storm, Bottome insists that the home is a microcosm and foundation for political virtue, not its "outside" or a momentary stage in its development or as a reminder of human limits.<sup>107</sup> Although she agrees that women need protection and must defer to male authority, she revises the "tenderness and care" of patriarchal rule of the commonwealth so that they include direct "feminine" participation in the state. In this reversal, Bottome employs an Hegelian criticism of the liberal state's "empiricism." Coole explains its potential "feminist" dimensions: "Hegel . . . would also see the familial moment and its lessons of altruism and community as vital to the state, alongside the egoism contributed by (male) civil society" (197). Like Hegel, Bottome implies that the state should not "merely" exist as an empirical guarantee of universal rights. Unlike Hegel, however, she insists that the family should not be superseded by the rational state; rather, when headed by a benevolent patriarch, it continues to work as an ideal model for political virtue.

The Mortal Storm distinguishes between brutal and benevolent patriarchies to reinforce this point. In the contrast between the dead, abusive patriarch (von Röhn) and the living, benevolent one (Johann Roth), Bottome corrects Locke's assumptions that consent to paternal

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<sup>107</sup> This function is also clear in The Lifeline, where the protagonist Mark Chalmers, as an underground spy who helps transport Jews out of Germany, encounters the domestic image of nations: "He thought of each country not as separate entities any more but as millions of small homes like the one he was in, where families could make happiness out of their personal relationships and spread their knowledge into a unity of human brotherhood" (259). The nation is a conglomeration of families. As such, the family has an explicit political authority to define the limits of conformity as well as of individuality.

benevolence is “natural” in the family.<sup>108</sup> The Roths are actually an amalgamated family. Amélie, Freya’s mother, had been married to an abusive German aristocrat, von Röhn, with whom she’d had two sons, Emil and Olaf. After von Röhn’s ignominious death, she’d married Johann Roth, a Jewish Nobel-decorated medical researcher, and had their children Freya and Rudi. The first patriarch engenders fascism, whereas the latter basing his rule on a consensual model engenders civilized individualism. Before the advent of the Nazi regime, the Roths had led a harmonious family existence despite cross-class and cross-racial dynamics. When Emil and Olaf join the Nazi youth, however, they begin to identify with their dead father’s brutal military legacy, and accordingly rebel against Johann Roth’s benevolent rule.

The Roths challenge the degradation of wives’ and daughters’ positions within the private patriarchal family. Several scenes foreground Amélie’s contradiction of Johann; for instance, she protests his decision to prohibit the communist Hans Breitner from visiting their home: “At least let there be one roof in this land under which a woman has the same rights as a man, and knows herself to be equally valued. If my boys do not already know this—let them learn it now—and if I cannot trust them to be fair to their sister, let me know that upon this point they are not trustworthy” (55). Johann, we are told in turn, “expected his children to be independent of advice and gave his help more in the nature of a stimulating word or glance than by showing any willingness to share a child’s responsibility” (58). The “true” family, not to mention a good political society, relies less on “self-evident” biological ties and more on contractual understandings between spouses, and between children and parents. Bottome extends the father’s need to establish consent in the family, particularly with women and children.

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<sup>108</sup> Amélie reminds Emil and Olaf that, “We have been a happy family, in spite of the fact that we are divided by different strains of blood and race. I want to you to ask yourselves this: ‘Have these differences ever hurt you; until now?’” Bottome challenges the idea of a family that “naturally” binds together because of the same “blood and race” (The Mortal Storm 63).

The Nazi vision of the individual as a “part in a machine,” on the other hand, dissolves “consent” as a legitimate attribute of the state. Fascist degradation and complete subordination of women in the family dramatically contrasts their model. Emil declares that “girls . . . are answerable to their family, and the family is held responsible for them” (113)!

To the Roths, Nazi brutality creates the need for urgent feminist protest. This protest includes promoting women’s agency outside the family. Johann explains fascism’s degradations of women to Freya in the following way:

[S]ince they believe in force rather than persuasion, and women have less force than men, the Nazi regime must be, to that extent, antifeminine. Physical inferiority is always stressed rather than relieved by a militaristic rule; so that it would not surprise me to find that the half of the human race that produces and trains the other half, will be once more degraded! One must not forget that many women will like it better. For one pets what one degrades; and one has to support what one has enfeebled. Many women who have not tasted the joy and rigour of freedom, prefer to be petted and supported; but not those who have ever worked successfully. For such women the Nazi regime will be very unpleasant indeed. (14)

In this explanation, Johann shuttles between incompatible assessments of women regarding their “weaker” status. The liberal critique here sutures irreconcilable definitions of women as political subjects, and bypasses the real need to define the relationship between liberalism and fascism.

First, Johann implies that women naturally need protection, which democratic governments based on consensus would provide. Second, Nazism imposes this weakness onto women as an external force; it is therefore not a natural condition at all. Third, women had been

enfeebled by an outside force *before* the installment of Nazism; those who willingly accept the Nazi regime do so because they already are familiar with its brand of chivalry.

In line with the shifting assessment of women's "weakness" above, the novel represents the liberal bourgeois family as a form of governance that accommodates both the patriarchal insistence on women as the weaker sex, and their capacity to undertake the burdens of political and economic subjectivity. The Roths value girls and women not only for their reproductive capacity, but also as civilized individuals. They recontextualize maternity to fulfill both the paradigm of the patriarchal family and women's social agency outside their reference to the husband. Amélie explains to Freya about her decision to have more children after re-marrying, "Your father, too, had always wanted children, so that I knew I was giving him his heart's desire; that made me happy; but perhaps most of all what makes the pain of childbirth worth while is that a woman feels like an artist when she produces a child" (10-11). Freya and Amélie as mothers both amalgamate families and hybridize races as political, not solely private, acts. Even as a daughter, Freya, already racially and culturally "hybrid" embodies a future Europe whose national boundaries are less important than the sexual. Moreover, the two politicized roles of motherhood in the novel—complicating bloodlines and nurturing Jewish children—imagine the female body as a potential force against the Nazi state. Both acts reverse the Nazi discourse of blood and maternity in which the role of the "Aryan" mother is to keep the nation's blood free from Jewish "contamination," and to proliferate the racially pure nation.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> The Marriage Loan Program of 1933 rewarded "Aryan" women for leaving the workplace, and subsequently for bearing children. From 1934, Nazi youth had to salute women who wore "mother badges" that attested that they had borne five children or more. The Nazis further silenced feminist articulations of maternity by taking over the control of women's reproduction (abortion as well as birth control were outlawed in 1933). See the following on official and unofficial Nazi declarations on maternity: Claudia Koonz, Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics (New York: St. Martin's, 1987); Timothy Mason, "Women and Nazi Germany, Part 1," History Workshop 1:1 (Spring 1976) 74-113; Timothy Mason, "Women in Germany 1925-1940: Family, Welfare and Work. Conclusion," History Workshop 1:2 (Autumn 1976) 5-32; Leila Rupp, "Mother of the

Although Bottome's critique impressively acknowledges both fascism's brutal repressions and deceptive temptations, it fails to acknowledge that the liberal patriarchal definition of agency also requires the subjugation of women precisely under the guise of "protecting" them, and so necessarily obfuscates private patriarchy's basis in women's unpaid domestic labor.

As Patricia Mann argues in her critique of liberalism, *Micropolitics*, "the public agency of the liberal individual presupposes an incorporated male family self" (137). The liberal account of civilization's origin in paternal benevolence masks its ultimate guarantee of paternal control. Bottome therefore does not reconcile so much as contradict the goal of liberal equality for women by retaining the basis of the patriarchal family. By representing fascism as a seduction of women through the promise of security, affecting those who seek to justify their sequestered roles in the family, Bottome cloaks the fascist articulation of women's public agency *through* their domestic identity. As we saw in Chapter 2, the BUF employed similar representations of women's fundamental domestic interests in attempts to advocate the benefits of the corporate state for women. Therefore, Bottome's liberal reconciliation, while it effectively addresses fascism's repressive apparatus, cannot address its real ability to deploy similar articulations of women's agency.

In valorizing patriarchal relations of power, Bottome resonates strongly with a psychoanalytic interpretation of fascism as an anti-patriarchal revolt. In the next section, I compare Bottome's analysis with Freud's in order to foreground its abjection of women.

### **Psychoanalysis and Anti-Semitism**

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Volk: The Image of Women in Nazi Ideology." *Signs* 3:21 (Winter 1977) 362-379; Jill Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Society* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1975).

In Moses and Monotheism (1939), Sigmund Freud links the mass attraction of Hitler to individual psychology, accounting for fascism's success by assuming the individual's persistent desire for the father, and his/her simultaneous revolt against patriarchal reason.<sup>110</sup>

[T]he great majority of people have a strong need for authority which they can admire, to which they can submit, and which dominates and sometimes even ill-treats them. We have learned from the psychology of the individuals whence comes this need of the masses. It is the longing for the father that lives in each of us from his childhood days . . . The decisiveness of thought, the strength of will, the forcefulness of his deeds, belong to the picture of the father; above all other things, however, the self-reliance and independence of the great man, his divine conviction of doing the right thing, which may pass into ruthlessness. He must be admired, he may be trusted, but one cannot help also being afraid of him. (139-40)

In this account, fascist anti-Semitism arises in turn from “the jealousy which the Jews evoked in other peoples by maintaining that they were the first-born, favourite child of God the Father” which “has not yet been overcome by those others . . .” (116). Freud claims that in revolt against Judaism, Nazism enacts a “return of the repressed,” the patricide that undergirds civilization. Civilization, based on “a tremendous father imago,” installed the capacity for reason, deductive thought processes and a “higher level of spirituality” through a “Mosaic prohibition” against graven images of God. Both Nazism and Christianity revolt against patriarchal civilization in their regression to magic, mysticism, and superstition (140).

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<sup>110</sup> In Moses and Monotheism, Freud writes, “If we accept the continued existence of . . . memory traces in our archaic inheritance, then we have bridged the gap between individual and mass psychology and can treat peoples as we do the individual neurotic” (128). This project recalls that of Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (1922) where he asserts that “it may be possible to discover the beginnings of its [the social instinct's] development in a narrower circle, such as that of the family” (5).

Bottome's analysis differs from Freud's in two respects. In her account of patriarchal civilization's beginnings, she relies on a classical liberal theory of political society, which as we recall, insists on the father's survival and establishment of consent rather than patricide. Thus Bottome disavows Freud's emphasis on the father's capacity to instill antagonistic fear and terror in his children as an impetus for their obedience. Moreover, whereas Freud believed that Christianity was a "thin veneer" for a "barbarous polytheism" that valorized maternity rather than paternity, Bottome emphasizes the continuity of Christianity and Judaism (Freud, Moses 117). According to Johann, the "persecution of the Jews by Europeans—is . . . a revenge because one of our sons has given them a religion that they wished to accept—and have failed to practice! It is a very dangerous thing to have an idea that you will not practice. It might well make anyone angry with those from whom the idea came" (167).

Both writers, however, understand fascism as the result of agonized relationships with fathers. Olaf and Emil translate their private resentment against Freya and Rudi as Johann's chosen and favorite children into an admiration for Hitler as a father-substitute. Both critics' analyses, moreover, take for granted the child's belief in the father's omniscience and provision of security. Johann's words and later his memory instill the security that enables Freya to overcome personal and political obstacles throughout the narrative: "She was his flesh and blood child; the blood that raced through her heart and brain was his blood; the eyes that looked at her now with love and wisdom, had created her out of that love and wisdom. If they took her father from her, she would lose the roots of her being" (118).

Finally, Bottome like Freud privileges Judaism for patriarchal civilization. Johann explains that to be Jewish is

to be strong with a strength that has outlived persecutions . . . wise against ignorance, honest against conspiracy, harmless against evil, industrious against idleness, kind against cruelty! It is to belong to a race that has given Europe its religion; its moral law; and much of its science—perhaps even more of its genius—in art, literature, and music . . . . You have no country but the world, and you inherit nothing but wisdom and brotherhood . . . (65)

These strategies conform to narratives of liberation that enact reversals as literary and political tools for the better distribution of power. Nevertheless, they both align civilized modern individuality with the acceptance of patriarchal relations of power. From this perspective, the relegation of women to biological and affective labor cannot be understood as systematic subjugation. In representing fascism as an offense against patriarchy, Bottome’s strategy relies on the transparency of contractual relations, opening itself to the charge that “negotiation” with patriarchal relations already implies the impossibility of articulating outside of its terms.

In Bottome’s and Freud’s accounts, the liberal patriarchal leadership of the family grounded in Judaic roots founded civilization. From this ground, Bottome enacts a discourse of universal (rather than nationalist) brotherhood, love, and humanity to foreground fascist nationalism and deification of the state as subversions of the social contract. Liberal patriarchy thereby acquires a timeless status, finding affinity with the scientific pursuit of Truth.

In the next several sections, I foreground Bottome’s reliance on scientifically sound “bio-power” (that finds a natural affinity with Social Democracy in the political sphere) to endorse bourgeois political leadership as a necessary feature of anti-fascist critique. The Mortal Storm and The Lifeline both conflate the bourgeoisie with medical and psychiatric authority. Nazism, on the other hand, is represented as an offense against medical science. This offense is

particularized in the Nazis' prohibition of Johann's work in medical research. He informs Freya that the Nazis forbid him to "advise the government, as I have done in the past, in the erection and administration of state hospitals," nor can he plan "hygienic improvements for great cities. Also I cannot train any more students through the university . . ." (120). In deep contrast is Amélie's abusive first husband who "died not of wounds heroically acquired in battle, but of a disease that he had merited" (178). Freya is urged "to learn science so that you may practice truth" by her father (160). Civilization's progress is gauged by the effective scientific management of populations. The value of medical authority, conflated with the liberal middle class, effectually moves liberalism to a position seemingly "beyond" politics and is thus rendered impervious to critique.<sup>111</sup>

In the process, Bottome obscures fascism's irreducible modernity, and the complicity of modern science in its development. Moreover, in articulating a "biopolitical feminism," Bottome's mode of advocating women's political agency paradoxically accords with Olive Hawks'. Both of Bottome's fictional protagonists fulfill the roles of wife or mother, but also those of doctor and psychiatrist, professional roles that expand women's sex-affective labor and maternal agency into biopolitical agency. In Freya, Bottome accommodates women's appeal to the explicitly economic and political agency of the modern subject, and their fulfillment of the maternal role. In Ida, she creates an interface between domestic surveillance and women's political agency.

Both authors push a logic of gender that insists on women's nurturing roles, and associates women's domestic labor with medical/psychiatric authority and national health. They

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<sup>111</sup> As Freya notes, such men as Johann, a Nobel prize winner in medical research are "beyond politics" since "All humanity owes him a debt" (82)! Even his dedication to Social Democracy is qualified as he explains, "I am not interested in politics. . . I watch what people do, and if their activities seem to me useful to mankind, I should be glad to associate myself with them—as activities . . ." (121).

articulate the value of that labor not in terms of the private family, but in a biopolitical paradigm, on the level of races, nations, and classes. Domestic women can articulate their value by aligning themselves with medical authority sanctioned by specifically British imperial goals.

### **Biopolitical Feminism**

The inter-war period was for the feminist movement in Britain surprisingly turbulent considering the strides that feminists had made just after World War I. By 1938, the date of publication of The Mortal Storm and the year in which The Lifeline is set, all adult English women were legally enfranchised (1928), the Eligibility of Women Act (1918) had provided women's first entry into parliament, and the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act (1919) had opened the professions to women. In addition, many laws in the 1920s were passed to improve women's control over their place in the family, including "divorce on equal grounds (1923), equal guardianship of children (1925), widow's pensions (1925) and the right to legitimise a child by marriage to the father (1927)" (Beddoe 134).

In spite of these progressive laws, private interests often imposed their own gender boundaries. After having been educated or employed during World War I, women were often forced out by new "unofficial" measures (outside the state's direct influence) that barred married women from working. After 1928, when all adult women were granted the vote, and with the advent of new birth control methods, the feminist movement began to experience the pressure to pinpoint a widespread cause other than suffrage. According to Jane Lewis, the "old" feminists who had rallied around the dual issues of suffrage and the professions (a.k.a. "equalitarian" feminists) clashed with the "new" feminists of the interwar period, who instead emphasized the need for state recognition and compensation of women's maternal services to the state and the

national economy (a.k.a., “difference feminists”) (Jane Lewis 230-1). Deirdre Beddoe, a feminist historian, elucidates these factions:

‘[O]ld feminists’ like Lady Rhondda and Winifred Holtby . . . regarded feminism as being about equal rights and were therefore opposed to any form of special protective legislators for women in the workplace. The ‘new feminists’ such as Eleanor Rathbone, Mary Stocks and Maude Royden concentrated on the special position of women as mothers; their platform was primarily the welfare of women at home and the main aim . . . was to bring about ‘family endowment,’ or family allowances. (136)

No longer able to find consensus due to their divergent emphases on labor and sexuality, the movement splintered starting in the 1920s (Beddoe 136).<sup>112</sup> In The Mortal Storm, Bottome creates possibilities for consensus across feminist factions, reconciling “old” (equalitarian) and “new” (difference) feminism through the figure of woman doctor.

The liberal patriarchal home in The Mortal Storm has the capacity to protect women from sexual vulnerability, but also nurtures women’s labor outside the home. As Freya’s mentor, Johann enthusiastically encourages her economic agency, her education, and the challenge she poses to a gender-exclusive profession.<sup>113</sup> At the same time, Bottome limits the equality implied

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<sup>112</sup> Nevertheless, feminist solidarity in anti-fascism was one unifying concern that “could cross party lines and that were recognizable on a national level” (Beddoe 143). In England, feminists of various political orientations produced journalism, travel narratives, and fiction to warn readers about fascism’s misogyny. Maroula Joannou, ‘Ladies, Please Don’t Smash These Windows’: Women’s Writing, Feminist Consciousness and Social Change 1918-38 (Oxford: Berg, 1995) explores the literary tactics of socialist feminists, who had organized on an international scale against fascism. In fact, most organized groups for anti-fascism were communist or socialist based. Seline Cooper, the British delegate to the 1934 Women Against War and Fascism conference in Paris, was a correspondent for the Daily Worker and the Daily Herald, reporting on the specific effects of repression in Nazi Germany on women. See Jill Liddington’s The Life and Times of a Respectable Rebel: Selina Cooper (1864-1946) (London : Virago, 1984) and Sue Bruley, Leninism, Stalinism, and the Women’s Movement in Britain, 1920- 1939 (New York: Garland Pub., 1986).

<sup>113</sup> Koonz writes that in the late 1920s, there were between two and three thousand women physicians Germany who represented “5.4 percent of the profession” (144) and that “American feminists gazed with admiration at their German sisters” (45). Directly relevant to the narrative of Freya Roth is the fact that many women’s organizations were Nazified in the early 1930s: “In Bavaria, women physicians explained . . . ‘We have always been

by women's accession to economic and political agency by representing medicine as a profession that also attends to women's sexual difference as mothers. Bottome challenges the division of labor in the public sphere and insists on women's contribution, but this agency is based on the nurturing qualities that are their natural forte. As mothers, women are supposedly suited to labor that has a strongly affective dimension, from caring for farm animals, to caring for patients.<sup>114</sup> As a potential doctor, Freya absorbs competing ideas of women's agency in the inter-war era. Medicine, according to Johann, is "a singularly suitable profession for a mother, and being a mother quite an asset for a doctor" (11)!

In the next section, I show how Bottome's biopolitical valorization of women and the family rests on an imperial and homophobic logic that is explicit in The Lifeline. There, Bottome suggests in line with domestic literature the notion of the body as a site of individual surveillance. I argue that it reproduces the discursive means for violence through the deployment of sexuality by entrenching a set of homosocial criteria for anti-fascist thinking. By identifying fascism as a manifestation of homosexuality, Bottome's rhetoric ultimately entrenches a heteronormative defense of the British Empire.

### **Anti-fascist homophobia**

The Lifeline (1946) focuses on the basic conditions and causes of fascism that also flourish ominously in liberal democracies, tracing the economic and sexual causes of fascism

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more rooted and closer to nature, and therefore more instinctively race-conscious than elsewhere in Germany' . . . Married women physicians lost their right to practice; and by 1935, women physicians (like Jewish physicians) could no longer receive payments from the state-sponsored health-insurance system" (144).

<sup>114</sup> Frau Breitner's motherhood contributes to her apt management of her farm, especially in her ability "to rectify the inequalities of nature" (Bottome, The Mortal Storm 144).

further back to an even more fundamental condition—mental illness.<sup>115</sup> Bottome presents fascism as a psychological pathology that flows across national boundaries into the British Empire. In the concomitant “cure,” she submits fascism to modern disciplinary power.

Bottome’s psychological analysis of fascism in The Lifeline taps into the problem of agency in a new world order after World War I, increasingly based on finance capital, growing global competition, and a falling British Empire—events that seemingly determined one’s livelihood across the class spectrum in Britain. In addition, women were pressuring the labor market and the state with new demands, and colonies were increasingly threatening massive revolution, radically changing the limits of liberally defined agency.

The continuing prestige of psychology in the inter-war period assured many of their agency across the political spectrum. On the Left, it allowed an optimistic view of the political and economic efficacy of continual personal improvement and self-control.<sup>116</sup> On the Right, the preoccupation with mental health was linked directly to the drive for profit. Robert Graves and Alan Hodges note in their history of the 1930s that the National Institute of Industrial Psychology (founded in 1921) determined, “what kind of factory conditions would promote healthier and happier minds in workers . . . The aim was to consider the worker, the machine, and the task as one unity not only to discover how to improve the worker’s health and his enjoyment of work, but at the same time to increase his output” (208).

In the literary field, the ongoing exploration of the “psyche” and mental health, undertaken by figures such as I. A. Richards and T. S. Eliot, often struck a “balance” in “the

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<sup>115</sup> In The Goal, Bottome remembers seeing Hitler before his rise to power: “I often thought, even then, that if only Hitler and Mussolini had been brought in time to Seif’s Clinic, history might have rewritten itself. . . We noticed that he never had a friend to share a meal or asked a comrade to sit down at his table with him” (194).

<sup>116</sup> “Amongst the literate classes this was the age much more of Freud than of Marx. . . . Center stage was the individual and it was the question of individual destiny that dominated both modernists and popular writers alike” (Bloom 20).

inner exploration of psychic forces and the denial of outward (social) presence” (Bloom 27). Bottome, in contrast, transforms the literature of psychology into a guarantee of explicitly political agency, suggesting that the Empire needs primarily to redefine imperial “manliness” on the level of the individual as the willingness to extend agency to “reasonable” women in order to survive. Like Lewis, Bottome’s imperial imagination links political agency to masculinity.

As a devoted student of Adlerian psychiatry, Bottome believed that a liberal education that directly posed “social interest” as the ultimate goal of self-interest (instead of vice versa) could revolutionize western civilization (Bottome, Alfred Adler 205). According to Bottome, Adler, who had once been a student of Freud, turned against psychoanalysis, eventually believing that “the Freudian form of psychiatry was without moral safeguards, and must result in antisocial types of human beings” (Alfred Adler 273). He and Bottome agreed that Freud’s concept of the death drive served to justify the Nazi perversion of culture despite Freud’s ostensible opposition to fascism (Alfred Adler 66).<sup>117</sup> Bottome’s understanding of Adlerian practice consequently underplays its affiliation with psychoanalysis and turns to the “conscious” task of re-education, and therefore shares more with the nineteenth-century asylum’s psychiatric practices and methods than with the later discipline.

In her representation, the humanism of Adler’s practice suggests that the fully developed and civilized subject, the “whole human being,” must carry out three main responsibilities—work, love, and social contact. To achieve the ultimate goal, the subject must “bring himself into line with others” (Alfred Adler 301). In part, the treatment demands conformity to a nuclear family; the desire for fatherhood or motherhood proves the individual’s normal development.

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<sup>117</sup> Bottome seems to have in mind Freud’s text Civilization and its Discontents, which repeatedly highlights Europe’s technological drive and its capacity for genocide in the name of civilizational progress: “Men have gained control over the forces of nature to such an extent that with their help they would have no difficulty in exterminating one another to the last man” (104).

The family thus provides the crucial early education and the final destination that defines the (gendered) individual in the context of a larger social and political community.<sup>118</sup> In her work, Bottome specifically employs Adlerian practices to re-master fascism's destruction of individual accountability.

In his history of mental illness in Europe, Madness and Civilization, Foucault discusses the nineteenth-century European asylum's complex understanding of madness. The asylum combined an emerging positivist psychiatric understanding of mental illness—a belief in the “innocent determinism” of physical causes—with a moral judgment of the ill subject's guilt.<sup>119</sup> The asylum and the invention of psychiatry as medicine in the nineteenth century, Foucault further claims, were important components in the development of disciplinary power: “the madman . . . in the interior of that disease of which he is no longer guilty, must feel morally responsible for everything within him that may disturb morality and society, and must hold no one but himself responsible for the punishment he receives” (246). Although not “guilty” of the madness, the mad subject must nonetheless constantly survey him or herself to prevent any outward manifestation of madness. To facilitate that exercise of self-awareness and punishment, the asylum was arranged as a place of self-observation through work: “This movement by which, objectifying himself for the Other, the madman thus returned to his liberty, was to be found as much in Work as in Observation” (247). In this arrangement, the mad subject submits to “a minority status”, or the status of child since the refusal to cooperate and work was regarded as a failure of maturity rather than a deliberate revolt. The mad subject did not have such a “right to

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<sup>118</sup> Bottome describes homosexuality as a “lack of courage” and the “avoidance of greater obligation” (Alfred Adler 160).

<sup>119</sup> “Physical therapeutics tends to become, in the first half of the nineteenth century, a cure devised by an innocent determinism, and moral treatment a cure wrought by a culpable freedom. Psychology, as a means of curing, is henceforth organized around punishment” writes Foucault (Madness and Civilization 182).

autonomy, and can live only grafted onto the world of reason” (252). Reason was projected onto the asylum structure as a parental authority.<sup>120</sup>

In The Lifeline, madness transgresses civilized moral citizenship, and so eludes the community’s demand for individuation. “To be mad was merely a patient’s unfortunate choice; not a doom; and for a moment—a brief, wistful, ecstatic moment—the wind of their freedom to behave like other people swept over each patient’s consciousness” (93). Fascism is a form of madness because it too bypasses this patriarchal education of reason.<sup>121</sup> Fascism appears then as a curious combination of the failure to individuate and to conform. The liberal task vis-à-vis fascism is therefore to educate the subject in the pleasures of conforming to “socially” based reason and to balance these demands of reciprocity with individual freedom. Because this task is primarily pedagogical, consensus, or the voluntary submission to the asylum’s rules of authority, achieves the cure that force cannot. Liberal consensus is necessary to transform the insane because the subjects must be made to want conformity in order for the “cure” to be successful.<sup>122</sup> The sane, as a paradoxical contrast, are willing to be pedagogically re-formed.

As if to emphasize this definition of the human, the novel contains multiple scenes that depict Ida’s Lipizzaner horses that (who?) behave “just like humans” (104). In fact, when the

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<sup>120</sup> In the asylum, “the entire existence of madness . . . was enveloped in what we may call, in anticipation, a ‘parental complex.’ The prestige of patriarchy is revived around madness in the bourgeois family. It is this historical sedimentation which psychoanalysis would later bring to light, according with through a new myth the meaning of a destiny that supposedly marked all of Western culture and perhaps all civilization, whereas it had been slowly deposited by it and only solidified quite recently at the turn of the century, when madness was doubly alienated within the family—by the myth of a disalienation in patriarchal purity, and by a truly alienating situation in an asylum constituted in the family mode” (Foucault, Madness and Civilization 253).

<sup>121</sup> Felix Mannheim, Ida’s assistant, declares that “Nazis are out to destroy individual responsibility, which is sanity—madness is individual irresponsibility—so the Nazis must believe in madness” (Bottome, The Lifeline 126)! This is clear in her non-fictional writing as well. Bottome writes, “Adler saw that the field of responsibility was being restricted by the totalitarian states that he fought most ardently for intellectual liberty” (Alfred Adler 200).

<sup>122</sup> Felix thus describes to Mark the best way to cure Nazi brutality: “[I]n a world where all men were courageous and prepared to accept personal responsibility for the laws they live by—such a brute would know his scope so limited that he would find it an advantage to give up his cruelties” (Bottome, The Lifeline 182).

Nazis finally discover these illegally kept animals, the horses and the humans take turns saving each other. The episodes provide Bottome with the opportunity to expand on why an education based on coercion produces the insane and the inhuman. In contrast to Lewis' appraisal of the human as beast in his "de-personification" of Victor, Bottome extends the qualities of the "human" to the beast. "A hint of coercion, the faintest pressure of an alien will, and Emerald flurried himself into complete confusion" (105). Throughout these assertions, the force necessary to achieve that delicate balance between individuality and conformity, to produce the desired normative individual, to confine the subject, and to make labor compulsory in a capitalist relation is rendered invisible by the overall trajectory of "self-improvement" and self control. The asylum's confinement and implicit threats of punishment, i.e., its own practices of coercion are simultaneously erased.

Self-surveillance achieves the perfect integration of freedom and responsibility, the poles of liberal agency. In Ida's asylum, the patient achieves freedom by accepting the responsibility to behave like "other people," an acceptance that can be measured, tracked, and rewarded. To be free is to conform but without the feeling of compulsion—perhaps even to find ecstasy in conforming. "[T]hough this was a hospital where improvement was expected, it was also a re-training in moral values . . . Each patient had offered him, some for the first time, the chance to acquire habits of decency; and the instinct of contributing towards a community which largely provided for its own needs" (93). The asylum, as a microcosm for civilization, reforms patients so that they can (and must) exercise their own sense of individual responsibility, which is defined as the willingness to repay "debts" to the asylum's self-reproducing economy. To become sane in the eyes of the asylum is automatically to come into an economy of debt, promise, and punishment. The insane are rewarded or punished according to their visible acknowledgment of

this debt. Psychiatric education meets its goal by producing “whole human beings,” that is, by producing paying and laboring bodies according to the economic community’s needs.

Consider the similar moral diagnoses of two very different neurotic conditions. The first describes homicidal mania: “A homicidal maniac is only a man who wishes to wipe out his debt to life, by destroying life itself, instead of by paying his debt” (94). The second describes depressives: “They wanted a universe on the cheap—the expectations of a spoiled child had made them believe that they could always have the smooth with the rough . . . They wouldn’t shave, feed themselves, wash or speak. Theirs was the sit-down strike against living” (95). Reminiscent of the Bezzeghys, both maniacs and neurotics refuse to work, or to conform to expectations of self-care that allow the community to run. The spoiled child and the worker who strikes come under the sign of immaturity in the adult world of economic self-sufficiency. They benefit from the economy in which they reside, the family and the workplace, but irresponsibly refuse to contribute back.

In her rhetoric, Bottome suggests that fascism opposes the nexus of capitalism and modern disciplinary power. Michel Foucault describes a disciplinary “type of power” coincident with and useful for, among other institutions, modern armies, the development of labor-power, the capitalist division of labor, and the discipline of psychology. He describes discipline, furthermore, as “comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of applications, targets; it is a ‘physics’ or an ‘anatomy’ of power, a technology” (Discipline 215).

One of domestic fiction’s tasks in the nineteenth century, of course, was to thematize disciplinary power and the subjection of the individual to constant examination.<sup>123</sup> In Northanger Abbey, for example, Jane Austen ironically calls attention to the permeating and diffuse

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<sup>123</sup> See Nancy Armstrong’s Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel for a Foucauldian reading of nineteenth-century domestic fiction’s thematization of disciplinary power.

surveillance over the private home that makes liberal capital possible. Henry Tilney chastises Catherine Morland for imagining private despotism in the midst of modern domestic surveillance: “Remembering the country and the age in which we live . . . where every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of voluntary spies, and where roads and newspapers lay everything open? Dearest Miss Morland, what ideas have you been admitting” (172)? Whereas Austen poses the real possibility that disciplinary power is no guarantee against older, more traditional forms of patriarchal tyranny, Bottome poses domestic surveillance as a safeguard against tyrannical fascism.

As Bottome adapts this disciplinary nexus of psychology and capital, she aligns liberal economic agency with masculine reason and reciprocity, and fascism with the lack thereof. In his discussion of the disciplines of psychology and capital as mutually supports, Foucault highlights their preoccupation with “excess,” and the lack of regulation and self-governance whose breaches are associated with childhood and femininity. In the fascist character, the madman Michel Salvator, Bottome closely associates fascism with femininity.

Michel Salvator, Ida’s former lover, is an insane feudal aristocrat who believes that he is a werewolf. Ida keeps him locked in a cage in the residential part of her asylum, which had actually once been his castle. Mark’s gothic encounter with Michel allows him to disavow a fascination with (and similarity to) him. Whereas Bottome aligns masculinity with self-discipline, she merges the feudal aristocracy’s economy of force—dependent on the display of sovereignty—with femininity.

Mark first encounters Michel Salvator as a painted portrait in the asylum upon his arrival:  
[H]e found himself looking into the fierce eyes of the handsomest man he had ever seen.  
It was a most speaking and emphatic portrait. The man was very tall, thin and elegant; he

was dressed in a moss-green hunting costume with a fur collar which set off the almost incredible beauty of his features. His eyes were dark, luminous and fierce; they seemed to command the room and everything in it. Even his painted semblance was full of life. It was the same life as that of the wild things in the forest creeping through the long preserved, stuffed animals, into the heart of the Schloss. (76)

Michel's clothes accentuate his beauty and put the male body on display. His eyes are "fierce," a description used twice to imply that Michel's power requires his visible presence. He is also a hunter, intimately connected to nature's brutality and force. This is beauty and power meant for simultaneous display and domination—an economy of power that is eccentric to bourgeois self-surveillance. Foucault describes that economy as the "spectacle" of force, dependent on the display of the sovereign body as well as "medieval methods" of public torture and execution: "Traditionally, power was what was seen, what was shown and what was manifested, and paradoxically, found the principle of its force in the movement by which it deployed that force" (Discipline 187).

Bottome connects Michel's archaic organization of power to fascism by posing their common foundation in deviant sexuality. He had once directly supported Hitler and profited from the association, but his psychological affinity for Hitler runs even deeper (282). Michel's narcissism had also been a direct barrier to his ability to engage in normal heterosexual relations with Ida. She explains to Mark that, "He worshipped himself . . . that is why I learned to despise him" (281). Moreover, he is unable to reproduce a family. Ida continues, "He could not marry me, because he was vowed to celibacy---a convention among the Habsburgs for one of their archdukes in each generation" (280).

Ida explains that Michel and Hitler both desire to “rule omnipotently by getting rid of all moral restraints” (283). This desire is perceivable in their sexuality; Michel and Hitler both “looked upon women as prey” (284). Furthermore, their actual weakness and insecurity gave rise to this desire for omnipotence, and ultimately translated into political sadism. Despite Ida’s protests, Mark suspects that she still loves him, which prevents their union in marriage. She therefore dispels his fear by giving him a glimpse of Michel’s true insanity, the excess that traditional psychiatric discourse attributes to women.

Michel is revealed to be a “great, shaggy, hair-grown figure” (282) locked in a cage and reminiscent of a figure in another domestic novel: the madwoman Bertha Rochester in Charlotte Brönte’s Jane Eyre (1848).<sup>124</sup> “At the further end of the hall there was a gigantic cage and in this cage, Michel Salvator ran to and fro on all fours, very nimbly and tirelessly in spite of his age, as if he were the wolf he now thought he was” (282). Michel is inhuman—a werewolf who preys on human flesh, and is insanely disconnected from human emotion. Just like Bertha, he has gone mad from moral decadence. Here, Bottome invokes Victorian psychiatry and its concerns about “the realm of excess: with the workings of insanity and nervous disease” (Shuttleworth 11). But she transfers “the unstable constitution of female identity” to fascist men (Shuttleworth 11). Michel’s aristocratic displays of force, and his domination of women, she implies, had all covered his actual lack of control and feminine excess.

In Michel, Bottome anticipates Theodor Adorno’s analysis of the fascist man’s sexuality in Minima Moralia. Adorno too diagnoses fascism as a psychological condition. In the fragment entitled, “Tough baby,” he specifically refers to the presence of the damning features of male

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<sup>124</sup> Compare to Brönte’s passage: “The maniac bellowed: she parted her shaggy locks from her visage, and gazed wildly at her visitors” (315).

domination (sadism) and “effeminacy” (masochism) in the totalitarian man, concluding that this combination is produced by the agonizing repression of homosexuality.

At the root of their sadism is a lie, and only as liars do they truly become sadists, agents of repression. This lie, however, is nothing other than the repressed homosexuality presenting itself as the only approved form of heterosexuality . . . In the end the tough guys are the truly effeminate ones, who need the weaklings as their victims in order not to admit that they are like them. Totalitarianism and homosexuality belong together. (45-6)

The sadist exterior veils the masochistic interior to “hide” or “mask” effeminacy. The homosexual ceaselessly organizes this polarity in which he represses and hides the “weakling” in himself. The act of self-repression channels insecurity into sadistic aggression or a “tough mask.”

For Bottome, the key critical task is to counteract this corrupt conflation of gender pathologies in order to bring the fascist male to enlightened self-discipline. The process of yielding this “domestic masculinity” reverses the formation of the “tough baby’s” sadistic masculinity. Whereas the fascist male experiences and subsequently disavows masochism, the domestic liberal male must internalize domestic femininity before he can become a responsible individual or a “secure” man whose debilitating need to “lie” will disappear. Mark must therefore distance himself from Michel’s inhumanity, just as Jane’s domesticity triumphs in its very difference from Bertha’s monstrosity. He must therefore chastise his original admiration for Michel’s beauty, and develop his ability to perceive his “cruel beauty” as a sign of moral and political corruption.

Thus, Mark temporarily poses as the bourgeois heroine, namely Jane Eyre, in his shocked discovery of aristocratic decrepitude and madness. He must first be Jane, the bourgeois heroine, in order to become the true master of the Schloss because the responsible patriarch internalizes the domestic heroine's self-sufficiency, and care/protection of the home. He thereby makes his own literary function surface, which is to bring elite *English* men (as one of their representatives) under the mantle of liberal domestic ideology. Ultimately, the aristocratic male that he must "tame" into domesticity is himself. Mark thereafter transforms his initial fear of women and heterosexual domesticity into love and respect. In the process of disavowing his fascination with Michel, Mark also overcomes his own "inability" to unite in heterosexual marriage with Ida. Marriage, in turn, acquires the status of political resistance as their reciprocal and complementary love carves out a haven of normalcy within the totalitarian state. In representing fascism as a sexual disorder, Bottome places heterosexual marriage in the position of the "repressed" in the face of homosexual culture.

### **Liberal Virility**

Bottome emphasizes the fascist repulsion to middle-class domesticity even more strongly in her characterization of the Nazi, Rennenkampf, a homicidal maniac and Mark's "fellow inmate" at the asylum. Rennenkampf is of a species of "men, who are no longer men," or "men who had lost their way home" (The Lifeline 290-1). He closes himself from re-education, and has no capacity for assimilating to individual and domestic responsibility. Bottome sums up Rennenkampf's domestic ideology in the following:

Austrians were both too romantic and too complicated in their sex affairs, it was all part of their fanciful mildness which had to be cleared up. Mark found that Rennenkampf was really fond of his own mother and sisters; they were his devoted and willing slaves . . .

Some day his sisters, who were both younger than he was, would marry his comrades. He would himself one day marry a comrade's sister, of the same type as his own. (189)

Bottome emphasizes *Rennenkampf's* emotional incapacity, and just as in characterizing Michel, his "primitive" approach to sexuality. He dismisses "romance," "fanciful mildness," "complication," and conventional marriage as solely feminine affairs. In the act of trading sisters, however, the marriage deed is transformed instead into a masculine activity that binds two male comrades together as family. Unable to relate to women outside of his own family, he perverts the exogamous structure of middle-class domesticity.

*Rennenkampf's* character is reminiscent of Klaus Theweleit's account of Nazi homosociality, in which a "sister swap" between fellow military men quarantines women's perceived dual capacity for destruction and contamination. Although through this exchange, heterosexual "love" creates a domestic situation of sorts, it occurs in a controlled environment in which the actual relation occurs between men. The resulting domestic relation combines incest and homoeroticism. Theweleit writes, "Through the identification with a comrade, a legitimate sexual connection to the writer's own sister is created. As for the homoerotic, the brother is loved through the medium of the sister. Both men, brother and husband, are united in her . . ." (Theweleit 124-5). In Theweleit's conclusion, as in Bottome's, this systematic exchange of women creates merely a simulacrum of a family that exchanges women in order to "relate" to men.<sup>125</sup>

Mark's own past sexual history carries traces of this corrupt exchange. The only woman he'd ever been "in love" with before Ida had been his cousin's wife—a situation that had frustrated him and ultimately resulted in his own destructive insecurity. Bottome suggests here

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<sup>125</sup> See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia UP, 1985) for an exploration of this dynamic in nineteenth century British literature.

elements of fascist sexuality in British elite male culture, questioning the sexual practices within a liberal democracy as well as those of official fascist regimes.

With *Rennenkampf*, once again, Mark must undergo a painful disavowal of the fascist male given his similarity to him. At first, noting the “complete fusion between *Rennenkampf*’s thoughts and his acts,” Mark prefers the company of *Rennenkampf* over that of Felix because he considers the first to be a better specimen of manhood.<sup>126</sup> In contrast, Felix admires “women who can say ‘No’ when they do not mean ‘Yes’” and “books that are dangerous.” He is also unable to play games or sports, and manages his favorite horse in a “disturbingly slack” way. Mark initially rejects Felix because he cannot “live up” to either Nazi or Eton standards of manhood (195).

After *Rennenkampf* murders Felix, however, Mark is shocked into the conviction of Felix’s real superiority: “He felt as if he had helped to kill Felix, because he had admired *Rennenkampf*” (200). Mark finally sees his own alliance with fascist sexual deviation when is he forced to pinpoint Felix’s strength: “Why was this sense of guilt and insecurity in some men and not in others? Felix had not had it though he had every reason to feel baffled and insecure” (288). The signs of masculinity shift in Mark’s mind from the display of ferocity to the sense of one’s own value and “security.” In the process, he disavows Nazi inhuman virility and comes to admire the dead Felix, whose own love and respect for Ida had proven his authentic masculinity.

Mark learns that he had judged poorly when he enthusiastically admired the fascist men and rejected Felix’s “lack” of manhood. But rather than ridding himself of such futile exercises in comparative masculinities, he re-invents the habit to conclude that Felix was the “better man” after all. In other words, *Bottome* retains a masculinist paradigm to define political legitimacy. In

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<sup>126</sup> “The image of *Rennenkampf*—naïve—sincere, disciplined—was still strong in his mind. He could not help sometimes comparing him favourably with his easy companion [Felix]” (200).

Bottome's sexual and psychological analysis of fascist and imperial masculinity, the markers of manhood include domestic and formerly considered "feminine" qualities of mind. Some "signs" of homosexuality, such as care and respect for women, and athletic inability become signs of heterosexual masculinity. Nevertheless, she retains the basic homosocial structure of perception in order to launch her critique of European elite education.

In the difficulty of Mark's journey toward an equitable marriage, Bottome suggests that British imperial education dangerously precludes an extremely important skill necessary for imperial rule—a properly "heterosexual" manliness. Eton had taught Mark to deal with crisis of whatever sort adequately, and had armed with an essential military attitude.<sup>127</sup> "Wasn't that, Marked asked himself almost savagely . . . *enough?* Enough to hold England—enough to hold an empire safe? . . . he could tackle every difficulty he had yet met, except one—that of falling in love—adequately" (43) Bottome suggests that Mark's inability to fall in love with and marry a woman, however, had been much more than a personal pathology. It had affected the entire Empire by being deliberately left out of the elites' educational process.<sup>128</sup> Only through

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<sup>127</sup> Bottome actually goes as far as directly comparing the ideology of the English public school and Nazism. As soon as Mark reluctantly accepts his spy assignment, he questions the training that had led to this point: "Hitler airily stated that an English public school was the best training-ground for Nazi doctrines. Certainly the *Herrenvolk* delusion was at the basis of both, though to Mark himself it was more than a delusion. But the direction—the training—hadn't, he told himself, the fantastic Nazi aim. The Nazis wanted a boy that would toe their line—the College wanted a boy that would toe his own. Yet was not the College too special, too privileged to be quite sane" (The Lifeline 41)? See footnote 7.

<sup>128</sup> Bottome troubles the "schoolboy" code of Eton, and defamiliarizes the nationalism created by World War II. The Eton masters are forced to confront the efficacy of their "code" in its sexual and class exclusivity. Although Mark does not understand until much later, the Headmaster at Eton tells him before Mark's spy assignment: "[S]omebody has got to rule an empire. We have got one—and it takes ruling. But I admit there may have to be new ways of ruling. We may have to change what we teach—and even the spirit of our teaching. We may have to open up the school—and have a different kind of boy let in on us. We must be on the lookout for the right kind of stuff, and not suppose that it's all confined to any one class" (Bottome, The Lifeline 48-9). Near the conclusion of his assignment, Mark remembers those words: "He saw green velvety fields with the sun playing on white figures in a rhythmic dance. The chief's face came back to him in the old shining friendly room against a background of books. Suddenly Mark knew that he would find his life work again, and yet that it would be wholly different, because the pattern had been broken up. It was no longer rigid. Beneath it a new stream ran" (Bottome, The Lifeline 309).

equitable marriage does the man achieve the otherwise elusive “security” that inoculates him from homosexuality and the lure of the fascist man. Normative heterosexuality and the security it engenders, on the other hand, are signs of psychological health that prevent personal and political cruelty against women and (feminized) racial others in the imperial arena.

Bottome thereby entrenches the perceived boundaries between homosexual and heterosexual men as an indispensable tool of political analysis.<sup>129</sup> Insofar as Mark can only find true “security” and a sense of his own value by marrying Ida, and insofar as he gains social maturity only by shifting his gaze from men to one woman, Bottome employs the same homophobic discourse as the fascism she criticizes, albeit less violently.

From the liberal viewpoint, fascism appeals to homosexuals and women, whereas liberal politics require Christian heterosexual men. As one anti-fascist activist explains, “A Christian is either a Christian—or he is not real—he is not real as a man! . . . ‘Nor in my opinion can a man be real unless he is a Christian” (115). Reggie, a British foreign policy maker, echoes this sentiment when he remarks of Germany’s transition to fascism: “Why does a big, sound, prosperous people like the Germans go all whoozy over a Viennese house-painter, kept by women—who can’t paint” (39)? Hitler is both a seducer, making his constituents “go whoozy”, and an object of seduction, “kept by women.” Germany, in turn, laid itself open to seduction as a mass of women. In these scenarios, women and men who behave as women are ultimately culpable for the acts of “fascist seduction.” We must presume that reasonable Christian manhood avoids women’s usual passive insanity and political irresponsibility.

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<sup>129</sup> Bottome joins Adorno, Freud, and Theweleit in her variation on a theme: fascism is the failure to individuate. All of these critics also investigate a commonplace association of fascism and homosexuality. See Theodor Adorno, Minima Moralia. Reflections from Damaged Life, (45-6); Sigmund Freud, Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (123); and Klaus Theweleit, Male Fantasies (339).

As Barbara Spackman explains, metaphors of rape and seduction are common to fascist cultural production and many critiques of fascism. By bringing gender to bear on politics in this way, women can only be invoked as the victims of rape, or irresponsible citizens who are “seduced” into a hypnotic, irrational, and potentially fascist politics. There is no way in this paradigm to analyze fascism’s appeal to men who seek to validate their “heterosexual masculinity” in the political arena, nor its appeal to women as political subjects.<sup>130</sup>

Furthermore, in Bottome’s view, those women who resist fascism can do so only because they can become “men”—responsible political agents who elude the trap of “femininity.” Only by accepting qualities already associated with political agency and marked as masculine —“self-control,” “presence of mind,” individualism, self-sufficiency, and reason—do exceptional women become responsible and worthy of reward. In his first encounter with Ida, Mark can only perceive her difference from other women: “She was, Mark saw with disapproval, as she came nearer, exactly the kind of woman he didn’t like. Her thick untidy ginger-coloured hair was cut close to her head . . . she had not painted her lips . . . Her figure was wiry and without curves; she had no allure; no poise” (24). Furthermore, her physical and psychological courage annoys him at first, cutting short his chivalrous desires: “[W]hat the men both minded most, was their complete powerlessness to protect her. It was in fact as if the only weapon any of them had at the moment was Ida’s self-control and presence of mind” (132). Through the course of the novel, Mark reeducates his desire to be attracted to this “new woman.” Even in Bottome’s feminist revision of marriage, however, women as a group are associated with political eccentricity.

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<sup>130</sup> Spackman observes, “Critics often trope the texts they analyze, repeat the structures they claim to demystify, or participate unwittingly in the problems they aim to elucidate. Such is the case with an ideologeme that recurs with disturbing frequency in studies of fascism: the scenario of the rape of the masses. This scenario functions, I would argue, to perpetuate rather than criticize the fascist rhetoric of virility” (24).

Bottome staves off the image of imperial decadence in this attempt to bring the best and most loyal of all classes and the genders together toward a beneficent British rule. She juxtaposes English with Nazi masculinity to defend a new form of elitism and imperial sovereignty in the postwar era. As she awaits the Empire's materialization of its ideal capacity, her liberal critique of Empire insists on the original and morally sound *intentions* of the *ideal* Britain to assure its position of superiority.

In this fantasy, Bottome projects an imaginary geopolitical position for England in the postwar period—a moral, if not economic, leadership over Europe in cooperation and alliance with the US. Lassner observes of her writing,

In full recognition of Britain's history of oppressing women and aliens, Bottome insists that . . . unlike the intractable Nazi polity, Britain is malleable, subject to the liberal pressures of a commonsense decency . . . If this sounds suspiciously like a Whiggish belief in progressivism, Bottome's embrace of Others is far too radical in its insistence on immediate action. (223)

We cannot doubt that Bottome undertakes the liberal critiques of fascism sincerely and in the midst of monumental "crisis," but it is also this gravity that creates the deadly risks of a liberal anti-fascist project. The problem, of course, lies in the indissociability of military, industrial, and financial power on one hand, and the ability to dictate "morality" on the other. Bottome's attempt to transform the Empire into a global moral leader clashes with her attempt to de-emphasize its attachment to a sense of military and economic superiority.<sup>131</sup>

## Conclusion

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<sup>131</sup> Historically speaking, the delusional belief in Britain's moral, economic, and martial global leadership lasted well into the 1970s, during which it withdrew from Western European international power politics by claiming independence as a world power. Therefore, in Bottome's case, the liberal criticism of domestic fascism—in both senses of this term—was already "belated."

During the 1930s, Bottome was alarmed by British attitudes toward Nazism. When she returned to England after living in Nazi-occupied Austria, she noticed the complacency of public attitudes and the Cabinet: “The fate of six million Jews was in the balance. I simply could not believe in the easy nonchalance of London . . . I found myself, except for a few unimportant friends sharing my opinions, a premature anti-Nazi and as such highly unacceptable.”<sup>132</sup> Bottome’s fiction, however, erases the ambivalence of British middle-class liberalism to advocate Britain’s leadership in an “apolitical” definition of Western civilization.

That when the war began, she wrote propaganda for Britain’s Ministry of Information should therefore come as no surprise. Her non-fictional account of the Blitz—Mansion House of Liberty (1941)—provides a moral defense of Britain’s right to Empire: “Liberalism has been—and perhaps still is—the only quality England possesses that has won the acclamation and trust of any other part of the world than the part she has—not always in a liberal spirit—occupied” (230).<sup>133</sup> Although we may detect a note of hesitation in this defense—a moment that acknowledges the British Empire’s ethical failures—Bottome allies “Britain” with humaneness rather than with the bare fact of domination and force. Bottome’s novels elide the Empire’s preservation of “illiberal” force by achieving a monolithic image of fascism. By the 1940s, her work firmly fits a nationalist rubric that strategically prizes British imperial global leadership as the sound alternative to fascist imperialism.

In terms of sheer publicity and rhetorical force, Bottome was more valuable than any “highbrow” critique of fascism, including Virginia Woolf’s. Now largely out of print, her works

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<sup>132</sup> Bottome, The Goal 258.

<sup>133</sup> In The Goal, Bottome writes, “[F]or the last twenty-five years I have held myself in readiness to speak whenever the need for it arose and once, during the 1939 war, I actually carried out the two activities simultaneously, speaking for the Ministry of Information for Britain during the bombing, while I was writing at the same time for America a book on the war called Mansion House of Liberty and in England Formidable to Tyrants” (230).

were consistent bestsellers in the American and British markets during her lifetime. The Mortal Storm was eventually made into a Hollywood film starring James Stewart (1940).<sup>134</sup> Reanimating the “libratory” function of domestic fiction, Bottome’s cosmopolitan myth of consensus facilitates the detection of fascist elements in British liberal democracies. But her works elide fascism’s dependence on the very terms of imperial masculinity that Bottome endorses.

As the patriarchal incorporation of the family begins to disperse after World War I, Bottome’s fiction desperately reasserts its form in order to retain the integrity of liberalism. In the next chapter, I argue that Woolf’s simultaneous critique of fascism and patriarchal liberalism provides a far more thorough and radical analysis of twentieth-century politics.

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<sup>134</sup> Jenny Hartley writes “Bottome’s politicised love story was highly successful, the first novel to appear as a Penguin Special” and reprinted the novel three times in nine months. In 1940, The Mortal Storm was made into a film. Anthea Trodd writes, “The success of Bottome’s combination of topical comment and traditional romance was reconfirmed in 1940, when the film adaptation, directed by Frank Borzage, was among the first Hollywood productions directly addressed to the European situation” (99).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### VIRGINIA WOOLF'S JOYFUL FAILURE

#### THE YEARS AND INTER-WAR POLITICS

Virginia Woolf's longest fictional work, and the most agonizing for her to write, eventually proved to be her best-selling (Peach 168). Set mostly in London, The Years (1937) follows three branches of an upper middle-class family, the Pargiters, from 1880 to the "Present Day." Woolf originally regarded the project as a sequel to A Room of One's Own (1928). Like its predecessor, it was inspired by a speech for women (this time the London and National Society for Women's Service) on the subject of "the obstacles women would encounter as they began to move into all the professions" (Radin 2). The Pargiters, as the project was originally called, was conceived as a "novel-essay" that combined fictional chapters and essay commentaries.<sup>135</sup> It later broke off into two separate pieces—Woolf's anti-fascist tract, Three Guineas (1938) and The Years.<sup>136</sup>

Although The Years has been described as Woolf's most realist work of the 1930s, Pamela Caughie observes that it "arouses suspicion in those critics who try to classify" it as a "family chronicle" (91). Critics have noted the prevalence of repetition: "the series of echoes and re-echoes of words, phrases, and incidents which link one scene to another" (Radin xxii). As a further challenge to the "progressive" nature of domestic narratives, the characters' memories, as much as the "actual" events that trigger them, organize the narrative.

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<sup>135</sup> Woolf writes that The Pargiters would be "an Essay-Novel . . . its to take in everything, sex, education, life &c . . ." (Diary, vol. 4, 129).

<sup>136</sup> In June 1938, upon completing The Years, Woolf wrote the following: "that's the end of six years floundering, striving, much agony, some ecstasy: lumping the Years & 3 Gs together as one book—as indeed they are" (Diary, vol. 4, 148).

In this chapter, I trace two particular repetitions that place under question the “progressive” nature of humanist perception in the development of modern politics. The phrase “justice and liberty” appears regularly in public speeches and foregrounds common liberal and fascist practices of political language. In addition, the games and songs of working-class children throughout the novel thematize the masses’ desire in political representation. These refrains and their changing contexts, I argue, help us analyze the genre’s political implications. That analysis in turn enables us to detect fascism as a feature of liberal democratic life in Britain and a variation of modern capitalist culture, rather than as a dramatic eruption of repressed feudalism limited to continental Europe. Furthermore, they allow us to focus on fascism’s own production of “ideals” and “good intentions” rather than on its obvious differences from capitalist humanism. Woolf thereby problematizes the humanist critique of fascism as a dangerous obfuscation of its own barbarism and complicity, especially its systematic gender division of labor. As a result, The Years challenges liberal humanism as well as fascist departures from it.

My reading challenges some literary critics who have aligned Woolf with the defense of capitalist humanism. Raymond Williams, for instance, assumes that Woolf, as a member of the irreverent “Bloomsbury fraction,” was an apologist for the emerging finance capitalist class. In the midst of turbulent post-war events and social disruption, including the retrenchment of the British Empire, Bloomsbury defended “the unobstructed free expression of the civilized individual,” and thereby safeguarded the Enlightenment project of the bourgeoisie (139-41). In other words, Bloomsbury helped provide the cultural means for the avant-garde of the capitalist class to retain its supremacy. Alex Zwerdling agrees with Williams’ assessment, writing that a “contained rebelliousness” underlies the writing of Roger Fry, E. M. Forster, and Lytton Strachey (57). Their revolt was limited by a fundamental allegiance to “their ‘independent

income' . . . the sources of the wealth that guaranteed their freedom to devote themselves to writing" (59). Bloomsbury's class origins ground both critics' analyses. Jane Marcus summarizes the powerful role that Woolf's own family played in building bourgeois hegemony from the end of the eighteenth century onward.<sup>137</sup>

In the context of fascism, however, Woolf's skepticism regarding "civilized individualism" and her conflicts with other Bloomsbury intellectuals stand out. Her approach to the ideal of the bourgeois public sphere had always been critical, but never more so than in the 1930s.<sup>138</sup> To understand the impetus for Woolf's conflict with such critiques, however, we must observe how The Years and Three Guineas sever middle-class women from the discourse of humanism, whose patriarchal foundations I have examined in Chapter 3.

The representation of Virginia Woolf as a theorist of inter-war fascism has been the latest emergence in a twenty-year old trend in Woolf studies exploring her as a political thinker. Virginia Woolf and Fascism, a volume published in 2001, combines the now longstanding feminist investigation of Woolf's politics with her contribution to anti-fascist thinking. The contributors to this important volume tend to present fascism as broadly aligned with "patriarchy," and potentially countered by "feminine subjectivity," or even "feminine psychology,"<sup>139</sup> continuing an established tendency in Woolf studies to coalesce her revolts

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<sup>137</sup> Woolf's ancestors were celebrated "architects of imperialism" and national historians (Marcus 80).

<sup>138</sup> See Peach on the relationship between Mrs. Dalloway and the public sphere (Peach 106). See also Jeanette McVicker, "Woolf in the Context of Fascism: Ideology, Hegemony and the Public Sphere" in Virginia Woolf: Texts and Contexts: Selected Papers from the Fifth Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf (NY: Pace UP, 1996) on Woolf's critique of the public sphere.

<sup>139</sup> Lisa Low writes that Mrs. Dalloway (1925) thematizes "female consciousness as resistance to fascist seduction" (93). Jessica Berman writes, "[T]he female characters . . . seem less insistent about the teleology of their lives, and therefore susceptible to natural, cyclical rhythms" that oppose the flux invoked by British fascism. (116-7).

against fascism and patriarchy (74).<sup>140</sup> The essays follow readings established earlier by Jane Marcus, who for instance has written that The Years subverts “the patriarchal genealogical imperative of English fiction,” and celebrates the “daughters’ emergence from the tyranny of the father’s voice” (74). I believe that these readings engage a “seductive fallacy” that understands fascism as a manipulation of women with unconscious or subconscious “lures.” Woolf appears as an exemplary “revolutionary,” a reassuring and heroic model for anti-fascist feminism who vigilantly exposes the mechanics of this seduction, and herself models a woman unsexed. “Nor was Woolf easily seduced by a dictator’s charm,” writes Merry Pawlowski in her introduction to the volume (9). In this understanding, women should recover and free themselves from the ruses of patriarchy/fascism to achieve a higher consciousness of their material interests, which are professional above all. Marie-Luise Gätgens characterizes Woolf’s work from this viewpoint: “Anti-fascist politics for women, first of all means a job and her own income” (“*Three Guineas*” 25). Although I agree that Woolf focuses on the unconscious fears and desires appeased and engendered by fascism, her anti-fascism does not rest on women’s capacity to become more conscious and stable subjects, but rather on inventions of pleasure. Furthermore, I believe that Woolf’s critical representation of bourgeois humanism bars the alignment of women’s professional success with progressive politics.

In the late 1930s, Woolf constantly “asked why the woman question was ignored” by humanist anti-fascist organizations (Diary, vol. 4, 273). In her work, humanist anti-fascism misdiagnoses its own patriarchal motives, and therefore remains complicit with fascist gendering. Therefore, rather than a linear narrative that progresses toward women’s sexual and

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<sup>140</sup> She also writes, “[Woolf] makes her radical claim that the origin of fascism is in the patriarchal family” (4-5). Zwerdling asserts that Woolf’s “first and most important target of attack was patriarchal power” (158). Diana Swanson similarly claims, “By the end of The Years the fathers are dead or dying, hollow at the core; there are no new fathers; and brothers are learning from their sisters to envision a new world and to practice the virtues of *Outsiders*” (40).

professional “freedom,” processes of revolt and absorption compel The Years’ narrative. As the Pargiter women escape their status as servants in the private patriarchal home, processes of absorption reproduce the public patriarchal relations of power that undergird the subjugation of all women. In this way, middle-class women and their modern relationship to patriarchal capitalism become central to an analysis of “passive revolution.”<sup>141</sup> The Years reinvents domestic fiction to suggest other alliances for middle-class women.

Throughout the late 1930s, as Caughie has observed, Woolf extensively revised the entire conception of her project.<sup>142</sup> These revisions disavow a repressive hypothesis of sexuality, gender, and writing. As we have seen, Wyndham Lewis and Olive Hawks appropriate the position of the truthful “outsider” as part of the kit of rhetorical strategies for their “restorative” and “revolutionary” fascisms. Both writers claim to “unveil” power and truth on behalf of oppressed women. Rather than reiterating this model of “opposition,” Woolf highlights the possible complicity of oppressed women within modern articulations of agency, conceived through loopholes, rewards, and threats. The Pargiter women indeed revolt against their private patriarchal homes where they were raised, but for the most part, they negotiate with modern public patriarchy to do so. As the years progress, they repeatedly occupy powerful new roles as patriarchal proxies.

A passage in Three Guineas addresses their situation perfectly: “Behind us lies the patriarchal system; the private house, with its nullity, its immorality, its servility. Before us lies

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<sup>141</sup> Gramsci elaborates on “passive revolution” to illuminate capitalism’s tendency to absorb revolt: “The thesis alone in fact develops to the full its potential for struggle, up to the point where it absorbs even the so-called representatives of the antithesis: it is precisely in this that the passive revolution or revolution/restoration consists” (110).

<sup>142</sup> Caughie writes, “What began as a study of sexual repression and social taboos in The Pargiters turns into a testing out of what Woolf calls the ‘layers’ of discourse in The Years. . . Although Woolf writes in ‘Professions for Women’ and The Pargiters as if one could dispose of restraining conventions and release the true self, she also doubts this view and comes more and more to acknowledge the primacy of conventions, as the essays begin to sound more and more like the novel chapters” (98).

the public world, the professional system, with its possessiveness, its jealousy, its pugnacity, its greed . . .” (74). Although middle-class women are poised to enter the professions and political life in mass for the first time in British history, the explicit price for their “freedom” from fatherly domination is accepting the patriarchal relations that have organized these institutions thus far. Woolf foregrounds the patriarchal perceptions and practices that mediate this entry.

Therefore, although her ostensible anti-fascist political goal aligns itself with Bottome's, she diverges from the suggestion that women should align themselves with basically sound modes of liberal politics and patriarchal relations of power. Furthermore, Woolf thwarts Wyndham Lewis’ characterization of the inter-war period as an era of cultural “decline” to suggest that the period is first and foremost an unprecedented opening for women in the crisis of liberal democracy. I propose that Woolf represents the inter-war instead as a threshold between patriarchal spaces for middle-class women. This interregnum creates an opportunity to materialize a shift in the discourse of modern politics.

### **Fascism in The Years**

Chalk marks appear in the streets throughout The Years as traces of children’s games. They first appear in 1880 when Abel Pargiter visits his lover Mira in a rundown Westminster neighborhood: “children screamed and hopped in and out of white chalk-marks on the pavement” (6). In 1891, Eleanor notices that in her sister Delia’s new poverty-stricken surroundings, “Children had chalked the pavement into squares” (115). In 1910, the youngest Pargiter daughter, Rose, sees them outside the impoverished home of her cousins, Sara and Maggie, after their parents’ death: “Children were screaming in the road; they were playing a game with chalk-marks on the pavement” (172).

In the “Present Day,” chalk marks serve fascist territorialization.<sup>143</sup> Driving through the East End, North Pargiter notices: “Somebody had chalked a circle on the wall with a jagged line in it. He looked down the long vista. Door after door, window after window, repeated the same pattern” (310). These chalk lines form BUF icons, lightning flashes inside circles that deliberately echoed Nazi swastikas. Since chalk has consistently been their medium in similar working-class neighborhoods, one might presume that children drew them. In this instance, however, the children are conspicuously absent. Like Olive Hawks’ What Hope for Green Street?, the fascists have spoken for London’s East End and mapped it for their purposes. The “children” are required to accede to political expression and simultaneously to vanish. Here, Woolf suggests that fascism creates the semblance of full participation through mass politics even though the mass itself disappears. She exposes fascism as a “passive revolution,” in which there is an appearance of political revolution, but “no mass participation” (Gramsci 59).

Woolf similarly described fascist masses in her diary, where she notes a mix of playfulness and threat. In her diary, she observed the following scenes during a tour of Germany and Austria in 1935: “People gathering in the sunshine—rather forced like school sports . . . A sense of stupid mass feeling masked by good temper” (Diary, vol. 4, 311). In Austria, she noticed that “every village had a painted sign ‘*Die Juden sind hier unwünscht*’ But this seemed to be put up by authority” (311). In these scenes as in The Years, Woolf attends to the gaps between the “expression” of the mass, and the mass itself. The spectacle requires the presence of the masses, but their expression is more or less imposed—“forced” and “put up by authority.”

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<sup>143</sup> In her diary, Woolf noted the presence of fascist “chalk marks” in London after the League of Nations reconciled itself with Italy’s invasion of Abyssinia, a decision that marked the failure of the Left to articulate a unified anti-fascist front. She noted, “Writings chalked up all over the walls. ‘Don’t fight for foreigners. Briton should mind her own business.’ Then a circle with a symbol in it. Fascist propaganda, L.[Leonard] sd. Mosley again active” (Diary, vol. 4, 337).

My point here is not to “exonerate” the masses from their responsibility for fascism, but to note that the pleasures of fascist participation are manufactured rather than “erupting” in a spontaneous manner from a preconceived desire. The mass displays a cheerful unity as a result of both idealism and threat, created by language and representation. Whereas Bottome represents fascism as an unrepression of feminine and homosexual desire, Woolf foregrounds fascism as a production of language and culture.

In this context, liberal responses tend not to perceive fascism’s erection of divisions through the medium of idealism (“good temper,” “school sports,” and children’s games), or the pleasures that such unity imparts to those who participate. Moreover, they serve primarily to mystify the divisions produced by humanist culture. In this way, the image of fascism as “outside” culture erases its own production of consent through the medium of language. In Three Guineas, the narrator declares that such responses may even impede more effective anti-fascist practices: “your letter tempts us . . . to listen not to the bark of the guns and the bray of the gramophones but to the voices of the poets, answering each other, assuring us of a unity that rubs out divisions as if they were chalk marks only; to discuss with you the capacity of the human spirit to overflow boundaries and make unity out of simplicity” (143). The chalk marks in The Years ultimately produce divisions, but believing in a humanist culture that would counter fascist division without taking into account its own fantastical production of unity, as Woolf goes on to say, “would be to dream.” The Years confronts fascism, not in its strictly “official” terms, but the fears and desires it engenders.

Woolf foregrounds fantasies and fears surrounding modern extra-parliamentary mass movements. National strikes, the Suffrage movement, and Irish nationalism in particular challenged the British parliamentary machine, exposing the social democratic state’s bias in

favor of patriarchal capitalism, and not the “neutral arbiter” it represented itself to be (Simon 53).<sup>144</sup> In The Years, Woolf traces the political and rhetorical circulation of the phrase “justice and liberty” during the demise of social democracy. In her diary, she explicitly doubted the efficacy of the prevalent liberal use of “justice” and “liberty” for anti-fascist rhetoric, describing Hugh Walpole, Storm Jameson, and other members of the anti-fascist organization, the Association of Writers for Intellectual Liberty (AWIL), as “old Prostitutes . . . meeting next week to declare their belief in Liberty. . .” (Diary, vol. 5, 147).

Stephen Spender’s Forward from Liberalism (1937) illuminates Woolf’s troubling citations of “justice” and “liberty” in the context of this unprecedented crisis of liberalism. He writes, “Liberals are blind to the fact that liberal justice, liberal freedom, liberal individualism, rest on the institution of property and the interests of a certain class. As a result of this deliberate blindness a fatal ambiguity has crept into liberal philosophy, so that all liberal concepts, whilst they mean what they say, also mean their exact opposites” (83). Spender is especially concerned by the use of these concepts to defend illiberal practices of Empire, as well as quasi-fascist “emergency tactics” of the National Government, which invoked the threat of economic decline to curtail individual freedom even as it prepared to wage war against a fascist regime (138). For both writers, these terms function increasingly as “management” devices to control masses. Several scenes in The Years foreground the obsolescence of liberalism and these terms, “justice” and “liberty” in the political context. Furthermore, more ominously, the Pargiters mobilize these terms to effect mass obedience in their fantasies.

### **Women and the Fantasy of Mass Politics**

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<sup>144</sup> See George Dangerfield’s The Strange Death of Liberal England: 1910 – 1914 (New York: Capricorn Books, 1935) for a comprehensive account of how these movements challenged liberalism.

The first chapter, “1880,” introduces Delia Pargiter’s recurring fantasy, in which she shares a speaker’s platform with Charles Stewart Parnell. The scenario is a mass political gathering: “There must be a hall; banks of palms; a floor beneath them crowded with people’s heads . . . She was on the platform; there was a huge audience; everybody was shouting, waving handkerchiefs, hissing and whistling. Then she stood up” (23). In her mind, Delia projects herself into the role of the charismatic speaker, substituting Parnell as the leader who mesmerizes the audience.

In this fantasy, Woolf foregrounds women’s desire in mass political participation, but differently from many liberal critics, as well as many subsequent psychoanalytic thinkers in the post-war period. Bottome assumes that women are particularly prone to mass politics because it appeals to an *a priori* uncultivated feminine desire. As we have seen in Chapter 3, Bottome’s psychological assessments of fascism ultimately place the onus of fascism onto “femininity.” Women who align themselves with (masculine) leadership escape this charge by supporting sound liberal qualities of mind.

In Delia’s fantasy, Woolf confronts the failure of the Left to consider “desire” in an assessment of mass politics. At the same time, she challenges subsequent psychoanalytic interpretations of the nexus of women, the unconscious, and mass politics. Woolf allows us to theorize a motive for domestic women’s attraction to mass politics, the pleasures that arise in oppressed women from mass politics, but subverts a psychoanalytic mapping of women and fascism. Rather than suggesting that mass politics fulfills the women’s sexual desires, or the desires of the primitive horde, she theorizes that British imperial literature creates language and desire simultaneously.

Psychoanalysis does indeed contribute to an understanding about “the workings of fascism on the level of the subject” (MacCannell 149) Adorno, for example, writes in “Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda” about “the coherence of masses” and the simultaneous “vicarious gratifications individuals obtain” (Essential 122). His work has been particularly important in extending the significance of Freud’s Group Psychology and Analysis of the Ego to discuss group formation in fascist mass politics, and locates two distinct gendered desires that fascism fulfills. First is the female desire to “surrender”: “Hitler . . . was well aware of the libidinal source of mass formation through surrender when he attributed specifically female, passive features to the participants of his meetings, and thus also hinted at the role of unconscious homosexuality in mass psychology” (122). Second, fascism gratifies the male subject’s desire to project himself: “by making the leader his ideal he loves himself, as it were, but gets rid of the stains of frustration and discontent which mar his picture of his own empirical self.” Thus, the individual in the mass is ambivalent: “The leader image gratifies the follower’s twofold wish to submit to authority and to be the authority himself” (127). Laura Frost, in giving this kind of focus feminist significance, explores an array of thinkers, from Horkheimer, Adorno, and Wilhelm Reich to Adrienne Rich, Sylvia Plath, and Erica Jong, who probe “the nature of fantasy and sexual desire” in fascism (46). Psychoanalysis enables us to perceive fascism “as a gendered sadomasochistic encounter between a male leader and the collectively feminized ‘masses’” (38).

In contrast, Frost claims, Woolf speculates competently on the pleasures of domination, but unable to escape “puritanical assumptions,” she “does not allow that the tyrant . . . may arouse any form of desire in women” (46). Woolf therefore exemplifies a larger refusal within non-psychoanalytic feminism to give voice to “fantasy, politics and desire” (40). Without such

an exploration, she claims, an anti-fascist feminist politics remains stranded, analyzing merely the conscious and official claims of fascism. Juliet Flower MacCannell agrees with Frost's warning, and observes that Hannah Arendt's cogent analysis of fascism in Eichmann in Jerusalem (1963) as the "sacrifice of one's own symbolic mandate" and a "genocidal will to jouissance," nevertheless suffers from its lack of "psychoanalytic insights" (Hysteric's Guide 50). Arendt ultimately fails because "[t]his task can only be shouldered by a politically informed psychoanalysis" (149). Even more dangerous, Frost suggests, "Fascism's position within feminist discourse—the dark side, the limit, the nightmare—is perfectly poised to become the material of fantasy" (65).

In a related analysis that investigates women fascists, Maria-Antonietta Macciocchi argues that fascism intensifies female masochism, originally perfected under the patriarchal "authoritarian family" (74). She argues that fascism gives women more of the same "necrophiliac femininity" in exchange for security (73). She explains that fascism arises from the repression and redirection of libidinal energy as a form of mysticism that works in tandem with the masochistic boundaries and incitements already laid down by Christian ideals of womanhood: "The body of fascist discourse is rigorously chaste, pure, virginal. Its central aim is the death of sexuality. . . It is in the violent crisis of 'nuns who believe they are the brides of Christ . . . who choose other sexual paths, such as masochistic martyrdom' that the two roots of mysticism and the fascist drive can be joined" (75). But in Macciocchi's explanation, the church, the patriarchal family, and fascism are so continuous that it cannot account for how fascist mass politics might attract women in lieu of these already existent institutions.

The Years disarticulates these mappings to reveal women, not masochistically "surrendering" to gratify themselves in mass politics, but on the contrary, projecting themselves

into the role of the orator. Delia as a speaker becomes “permeated with delicious starts of flattering and exciting emotion. . .” (23). Woolf suggests that the domestic woman’s investment in mass politics is profoundly intertwined with language; the mass incites pleasures by giving women political leverage in speech and expression. Delia’s fantasy imagines a woman who, by speaking in public, on a platform, defies the boundaries of middle-class female passivity, especially the requirement to remain cloistered, invisible, and most important, silent. Here, Delia’s womanly virtue is pressed into an injunction to speak the truth about “justice and liberty.” The pleasure of her fantasy is not sexual, but rather incited by language and vice versa, especially by the fantasy of her “mastery” of speech. The fantasy foregrounds a Victorian production of sexuality that posits the textual authority of women and domestic space while banishing actual women from political authority.

Delia’s fantasy is bound up with Victorian myths of middle-class female chastity and moral purity and therefore ultimately connects “justice” and “liberty” to patriarchal conceptions of female virtue: “She rose all in white in the middle of the platform” (23). Her fantasy thereby cancels the explicitly *political* mobilization of the mass and in its place, conjures a mass moved by the spectacle of the domestic woman. The domestic woman as speaker here depends paradoxically on her location in the private sphere, and her apolitical and unsullied access to “justice” and “truth” through her domestic confinement. Her fantasy therefore turns domestic womanhood into a warrant to speak as a charismatic leader to a mass.

This scenario recalls Macciochi’s claim concerning female mysticism and purity in fascism. The audience drawn by Parnell captures Delia’s imagination not because of its anti-colonial resonance, but primarily because of the possibility of charisma and control, connected in Delia’s mind to female chastity. Whereas Macciochi suggests fascist women’s submission to

patriarchal relations of power, Woolf suggests a complex anti-patriarchal dimension in fascist femininity.

In The Years, the incorporation of Parnell suggests an anti-patriarchal impetus, perhaps unconscious, in Delia's pleasure. After Parnell dies, we learn that Abel Pargiter had considered him an "unscrupulous adventurer—that agitator who had done all the mischief . . . Some feeling connected with his own daughter here formed in him; he could not say exactly what, but it made him frown" (116).<sup>145</sup> Woolf's mapping suggests mass politics as a medium for anti-patriarchal revolt. Nevertheless, Delia's vicarious feminine articulation of political agency ultimately adheres to patriarchal and imperial relations of power.

In Three Guineas, Woolf similarly explores vicarious forms of women's revolt, especially the participation of middle-class British women in patriarchal warfare as nurses and drivers in World War I. She foregrounds their desire to revolt against Victorian patriarchal confinement (rather than their sexual desire and repression) and the circuitry of power that shuttles this desire toward the mass politics of war and Empire: "So profound was her unconscious loathing for the education of the private house . . . that she would undertake any task however menial, exercise any fascination however fatal that enabled her to escape. Thus consciously she desired 'our splendid Empire': unconsciously she desired our splendid war" (39). Woolf is thus also historically specific in relation to the complexity of British "feminine mystique" in the nineteenth century. She also reaches beyond the psychoanalytic focus on individual psychology. Delia's odd cobbling of Victorian middle-class womanhood and modern

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<sup>145</sup> The familial desire in focus here is not the daughter's masochistic projection of fatherliness onto a political leader. On the contrary, Abel Pargiter's jealousy reveals his desire for the daughter. As Elizabeth Abel claims about Three Guineas, Woolf uses psychoanalytic terms such as "the infantile complex" (referring to the Oedipal complex) to describe the fathers' "covert erotic motives" toward daughters, which is "screened in particular historical situations, by domestic ideology." Thus, Woolf undermines Freud in order to revise the "'Victorian family romance' while recalling psychoanalysis' preanalytic origins in the seduction theory, which locates desire in the father rather than in the daughter" (Abel 105-6).

politics recalls an older history of political masses and the discourse of domesticity. Nancy Armstrong discusses the dependence of nineteenth-century bourgeois hegemony on the “domestication” of the political mass. Citing the discourse around the Peterloo Massacre of 1819, and the rise of sociology in the 1830s and 40s, she writes, “During the thirty-year period when the figure of combination was politically hot, it was commonly used to represent social disorder as a sexual scandal” (177). This discourse translates the material conditions that gave rise to mass movements into problems of domesticity. “Domestic space” and the figure of domestic womanhood thereby operated as a “form of power that has no privileged locus, that is neither repressive nor dogmatic, and whose efficacy reside in a capacity to distribute, classify, analyze, and provide spatial individuality for any object” (Armstrong 176). Delia’s fantasy continues this process of defusing the mass as it extinguishes its political significance and conjures itself as one obedient to the domestic heroine.

Consider a scene in Elizabeth Gaskell’s North and South (1854-5), where the spectacle of the chaste middle-class domestic woman first arouses and then quells a mob angered by wage reductions: “the retrograde movement towards the gate had begun . . . perhaps, the idea of the approach of the soldiers, and the sight of that pale, upturned face, with closed eyes, still and sad as marble, though the tears welled out of the long entanglement of eyelashes, and dropped down . . . Even the most desperate . . . drew back, faltered away, scowled, and finally went off, muttering curses on the master” (235). Such scenes may appear in novels, but the chastity modeled there simultaneously bars its actual appearance in the political world. Regarding these passages side by side, and reading them through the perverted “psychoanalytic” lens provided by Three Guineas, we are confronted by a desire that is simultaneously textually produced and borne of women’s enforced absence from the political scene.

Like Olive Hawks' writing, the fantasy turns myths of women's virtue and domesticity into opportunities for revolutionary political significance. Indeed, the BUF repeatedly recruited women by promising access to public speaking and street demonstration. The article "Women as Orators, The Woman's Part in British Union," for instance, claims that "It is our aim to build a standard of speaking and oratory among the women of this Movement worthy of the greatest traditions of our history avoiding the excesses and caricatures which democracy produces" (14). Martin Durham has noted the prevalence of such calls for "women speakers" in the BUF press (50-1). Fascism plays on women's perception of the modern development of mass politics as an opportunity to enact the authority over the private sphere promised in the pages of domestic fiction and attach that literary authority to the space of politics. Delia's fantasy enacts a similar "patriarchal anti-patriarchal" revolt, and posits the presence of a nineteenth-century British passive revolutionary tradition within a proto-fascist mobilization of women's "chastity." In these fantasies, domestic women can bring order to the urban masses through language.

Thus, Delia's simultaneous invocation and cancellation of Parnell also suggests her problematic relationship to anti-colonialism. To many Britons, Parnell exemplified the "menace of mass mobilization."<sup>146</sup> He courted extra-parliamentary factions to identify with the Irish National Land League, including "extremist agrarians," the Catholic Church and the Fenians (Jackson 119). In addition, he had a foothold in Parliament as an MP and by 1890, Gladstone had become an ally in the drive for Home Rule. At this historical point, Parnell legitimated the

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<sup>146</sup> Parnell took advantage of the modern expansion of the franchise in order to win by consensus: "In the general election of 1885 Parnell's party not only won four-fifths of the Irish representation, but also completed its transformation into a team of Catholic merchants, shopkeepers, lawyers, and journalists pledged to vote in accordance with party directives" (Foster 181).

possibilities of modern political mass movements as an “organic intellectual, “leading” rather than “dominating” the masses.<sup>147</sup>

That Delia silences Parnell in her fantasy is significant. She speaks while Parnell remains inaudible to the adoring crowd: “‘I am speaking in the cause of Liberty,’ she began, throwing out her hands, ‘in the cause of Justice . . .’ They were standing side by side. He was very pale but his dark eyes glowed. He turned to her and whispered” (23). Delia’s relegation of him to a whisper implies a pre-emptive strike against anti-colonial mass movements, even as she appears to champion them.

### **The humanist fear of mass politics**

“Justice” and “liberty” appear again in the “1914” chapter, which concentrates on the fear their mass appropriation engenders in the middle class. Martin Pargiter identifies with several middle-class professions; once a colonial administrator and army captain, he is now a successful investor. As he walks through Hyde Park, he encounters three speakers addressing passersby. Contrary to Martin’s expectations, one of them is a “jolly good speaker” who manages to attract a sizeable crowd: “‘Fellow citizens!’ he was shouting. They stopped. The crowd of loafers, errand-boys and nursemaids gaped up at him with their mouths falling open and their eyes gazing blankly” (240). Martin playfully mocks the speaker’s cockney accent—“‘Joostice and liberty”—but feels distinctly threatened: “There wouldn’t be much justice or liberty for the likes of him if the fat man had his way—or beauty either” (240-1). Namely, he fears that the speaker’s appropriation of “justice” and “liberty” and the audience of “errand-boys and nursemaids” would eradicate his appreciation of art. In this scenario, Woolf elaborates on the fear that links mass politics with the destruction of traditional culture. But rather than lamenting that loss, she shows

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<sup>147</sup> Organic intellectuals help organize a “cultural and social bloc . . . [to] make coherent principles and problems raised by masses in their practical activity” (Gramsci 330).

how Martin's aesthetic notions are grounded on gender and class exclusivity. Moreover, she shows how they depend on an overlapping of "ritual," "exhibition," and "political" evaluations of art, a superimposition that, as Walter Benjamin shows, is actually a condition of fascism.

Martin experiences the "beauty" that the speaker threatens to eradicate as he approaches St. Paul's Cathedral on his walk through London. Martin is one of many "flâneurs" in Woolf's novels. In Mrs. Dalloway (1925), specters of war in the London streets bring incommunicable experiences of the front to bear on the everyday life of the post-war urban dweller. On his walk, Martin is unable to reconcile his aesthetic need to distance himself from the urban masses, and his constant interaction with individuals who comprise these masses. St. Paul's enables him to rise above these interactions and conditions. Regarding the cathedral from a distance, Martin suddenly feels that "All the weights in his body seemed to shift. He had a curious sense of something moving in his body in harmony with the building; it righted itself: it came to a full stop. It was exciting—this change of proportion" (227). The cathedral reassures in him the transcendent possibilities of humanity that simultaneously enable him to become "more" than himself, and to disavow the specters of the inhuman that surround him.<sup>148</sup>

His contemplation recalls Benjamin's discussion of the ritual value of art in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Most apparent in "ceremonial objects destined to serve in a cult," ritual value depends on the object's singularity (225). That singularity transmits the ritual art object's "aura": "the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced" (221). Modernity necessitates a different kind of value in the process of eradicating its ritual value. Namely, the age of mechanical reproduction necessitates the exhibition value of art, in

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<sup>148</sup> He sees a beggar selling flowers: "She had no nose; her face was seamed with white patches; there were red rims for nostrils" (Woolf, The Years 235).

which the object's singularity ceases to matter: "To pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura, is the mark of a perception whose 'sense of the universal equality of things' has increased to such a degree that it extracts it even from a unique object by means of reproduction" (223).

Benjamin writes that the shift in the perception and valuation of art has repercussions beyond the realm of aesthetics, and is intimately connected with contemporary mass movements. The detachment of tradition, and the "reactivation of the object" in the individual beholder's context made possible by technology, "led to a tremendous shattering of tradition which is the obverse of the contemporary crisis and renewal of mankind" (221). Despite a utopian tone regarding the eclipse of ritual value, Benjamin's real focus is the dangerous overlap of ritual, exhibition, and political value in the fascist context. Fascism profits from this superimposition in the following way: "The logical result of Fascism is the introduction of aesthetics into political life. The violation of the masses . . . has its counterpart in the violation of an apparatus which is pressed into the production of ritual values" (241).

Martin yearns for the ritual value of art and rightly identifies mass politics as a symptom of its degradation. But his own superimposition of the ritual value of art and dependence on the commodity form remains invisible to him. Despite his fear of the mass appropriation of cultural production, he is a dedicated consumer. In the West End, he passes a shop window that contains a "blue pot on a Chinese stand," and contemplates its resemblance to women on the street, who accordingly take on the characteristics of aesthetic commodities: "the lady looking at the pot was also charming" (225). Unlike the singular cathedral, the shop window demands a perception that senses everything as potentially "equal" by positing the supremacy of exchange value. Nevertheless, he reconciles these values. The view of St. Paul's that so entralls Martin with its singularity is also paradoxically made possible by a shop window: "He crossed over and stood

with his back against a shop window looking up at the great dome” (227). Martin’s blissful unawareness suggests the lack of a critical approach to art.

In mapping Martin’s aesthetic perception, Woolf cancels the possibility of locating an anti-fascist view in his desire to extinguish mass politics by invoking the ritual value of art. Benjamin cites Aldous Huxley’s Beyond the Mexique Bay (1934) to put into question Huxley’s similar aversion to the decay of ritual value and the rise of political masses. Huxley writes, “Advances of technology have led . . . to vulgarity” in cultural production (Benjamin 247). His fear of the “massification” of art paradoxically hinders a criticism of fascism. Benjamin observes simply, “This mode of observation is obviously not progressive” (248). As I have attempted to show in Chapter 1 with regard to Wyndham Lewis, this “mode of observation,” although skeptical of fascism’s populist dimension in Italy, is wholly in line with the more overtly elitist form of fascism in Britain. Indeed, Huxley in the early 1930s sympathized with Oswald Mosley’s autarchic national plan for reconstituting the British market. In his essay, “Abroad in England” (1931), Huxley wrote, “So long as there exists a gulf between what is, by the highest human standards, desirable and what is actually desired by a majority or even a minority of human beings, force has got to be used . . . [I]t follows that the application of force may have to be done unconstitutionally” (Huxley 64). Huxley’s attitude is wholly inadequate for anti-fascism, and as we can see here, even lends itself to its defense.

In this context, Woolf’s own political and intellectual relationship to Huxley is illuminating. According to David Bradshaw, Huxley had a “turnaround” in the mid-1930s as a liberal humanist and vehement anti-fascist. After witnessing firsthand the BUF’s notorious Olympia rally in 1934, where hecklers and agitators were beaten with truncheons and other weapons, he denounced Mosley. By 1936, he was President of For Intellectual Liberty (FIL), a

humanist anti-fascist organization of intellectuals that was “dedicated to the defence of civilization” (Bradshaw 65). We might imagine Martin in a similar position given his fear of the masses and concern for traditional culture. For Woolf, Huxley’s anti-fascist strategy was deeply problematic.

Woolf was also involved in humanist anti-fascist organizations during the 1930s, but her connections to them were often vexed (Bradshaw 58). In Three Guineas, she explicitly doubts the efficacy of the copious, self-congratulatory, and humanist anti-fascist manifestoes, pledges, and subscriptions widely circulated among powerful writers: “Private people of no political training were invited to sign appeals asking their own and foreign governments to change their policy; artists were asked to fill up forms stating the proper relations of the artist to the State, to religion, to morality . . . What effect this inquisition has had upon governments it is for the politician to say. . .” (172). She herself quit her role as figurehead for the FIL. Bradshaw notes that “Woolf was no longer prepared to add her name to high-minded general appeals,” although she did lend support to the organization’s more specific initiatives.<sup>149</sup> She also eventually resigned in August 1936 from the International Association of Writers for the Defense of Culture (IAWDC) because they based their opposition on facile notions of “civilized individuality” and “culture.” Woolf’s criticism of these anti-fascist strategies—the defense of traditional culture and Western civilization—was also unmistakably connected to her rejection of neo-classical modernism. In a diary entry, she recalls a conversation with T. S. Eliot and Clive Bell in which they discussed the retrenchment of “Civilization”: “All the gents against me. Said very likely, more likely than not, this war means that the barbarian will gradually freeze out culture. Nor

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<sup>149</sup> Bradshaw notes that Woolf supported “the recommendation of . . . journalist and pacifist Carl von Ossietzky for 1935 Nobel Peace Prize,” signed protests against Royal Albert Hall policies, which favored the BUF and discriminated against CP in its bookings, as well as “specific acts of fascist aggression, like the German occupation of the Rhineland” (45-8).

have we improved. Tom & Saxon said the Greeks were more thoroughly civilised. Clive also pessimised—saw the light going out gradually. So I flung some rather crazy theories into the air” (Diary, vol. 5, 258).

As Three Guineas makes clear, a defense of “Civilization” as such either ignored or wholly defended the subjugation of women. In Chapter 3 of that text, Woolf refers to Christianity’s privileged place in the discourse of civilization, and highlights the misogyny of St. Paul, who institutionalized it by barring women from “gift of prophecy”: “the prophet or prophetess whose message was voluntary and untaught became extinct; and their places were taken by the three orders of bishops, priests and deacons, who are invariably men, and invariably . . . paid men, for when the Church became a profession its professors were paid” (123). Woolf goes on to argue that the church thereby became the archetype of the gender division of labor in all the paid professions. As we recall, Martin’s desire to revive the ritual value of art in the midst of its decay is inspired by a structure dedicated to St. Paul. Both texts’ analyses of civilization suggest that it depends on the confinement of women to domestic labor. Martin reveals this dependence more keenly later when he surmises that the worshippers at St. Paul’s relate to God as his housekeeper Crosby does to him: “I’m Crosby’s God” (The Years 230).

Woolf’s dislocation of “civilization” puts her in profound contrast to another contemporary writer who contemplated the retrenchment of the ritual value of art.<sup>150</sup> In D. H. Lawrence’s The Rainbow (1915), the character Will Brangwen envisions his life work restoring the glory of decaying cathedrals and churches with his wood carvings. But in his milieu, he experiences these aesthetic objects primarily through reproductions, i.e., through books containing images of cathedrals: “He turned to a bookshop and found a book on Bamberg

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<sup>150</sup> This juxtaposition was suggested to me by Paul Bové.

Cathedral . . . He lit up with thrills of bliss as he turned from picture to picture. He had found something at last, in these carvings. His soul had great satisfaction” (Lawrence 164). His “retention” of ritual value is enabled only by the mechanical reproduction that simultaneously erodes it. The biggest obstacle in his quest to revive the primacy of ritual value, however, is his wife’s profane attitude. Anna Brangwen suggests a sacrilegious view of the wood carvings in the Lincoln Cathedral: “These sly little faces . . . knew quite well, these little imps that retorted on man’s illusion, that the cathedral was not absolute. . . She was spoiling his passionate intercourse with the cathedral . . . He was bitterly angry. Strive as he would, he could not keep the cathedral wonderful to him. He was disillusioned” (204-5).

Thus made aware of the profanity of his age and the impossibility of realizing his residual aesthetic needs, Brangwen solves his dilemma by regarding his wife as a cult object. “[Absolute Beauty] was immoral and against mankind. So he had turned to the Gothic form . . . escaping the rolling, absolute beauty of the round arch. But now he had given way, and with infinite sensual violence gave himself to the realization of this supreme, immoral, Absolute Beauty, in the body of woman” (237). Anna Brangwen thereafter becomes the quintessential domestic goddess who pours herself into the role of motherhood. After bearing nine children, Anna “went about, big with child, slovenly, easy, having a certain lax dignity, taking her own time, pleasing herself, always, always doing things for the children, and feeling that she thereby fulfilled the whole of womanhood” (353). Her oldest daughter Ursula comes to question that role in a futile attempt to enter the “man’s world” (one of the novel’s chapter titles). Nevertheless, by worshipping his wife, Will Brangwen successfully staves off the monstrous and corrupt modernity that both he and Ursula reject as false and mechanical. Brangwen preserves the ritual value of art and suspends the effects of an increasingly urbanized England: “the ponderous, massive, ugly

superstructure of a world of man” (193). Whereas Lawrence suggests women’s social fulfillment in this role, Woolf calls attention to the exploitation of women as domestic laborers in the attempt to sustain the ritual value of art.

In the final chapter of The Years, the younger generation of Pargiters expose their disillusionment with the older generation’s capacity for “belief.” Peggy describes her aunt Eleanor and uncle Martin as part of “a wonderful generation . . . believers” (331). She envies their capacity to believe, but also questions their undisturbed faith in civilization, which she regards as an automatic and self-flattering response to fascism, however earnestly intended.<sup>151</sup> As she tries on this mask of earnestness to regard the project of civilization, she admits that in actuality, she despises the working-class masses: “I do not love my kind. Again she saw the ruby-splashed pavement, and faced mobbed at the door of a picture palace; apathetic, passive faces; the faces of people drugged with cheap pleasures; who had not even the courage to be themselves, but must dress up, imitate, pretend” (388).<sup>152</sup> She has inherited the fear of political “masses” that we encountered earlier in Martin, and at the same time, has lost the belief that the middle class carries out a disinterested project of progress, “justice,” and “liberty.” Peggy’s dilemma pinpoints the difficulty of articulating an anti-fascist position that does not resort to a humanist cliché of unity that “treats divisions as mere chalk marks.” But it also advances Martin’s position with its awareness that a fear of masses and technology, and an insistence on traditional cultural production is naively and dangerously escapist.

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<sup>151</sup> When Eleanor proclaims, “We’re happier . . . freer,” Peggy asks herself, “What does she mean by ‘happiness,’ by ‘freedom’?” After all, how she can be happy in the midst of “Death . . . or worse—tyranny; brutality; torture; the fall of civilization; the end of freedom” (Woolf, The Years 386)?

<sup>152</sup> In the galley proofs for The Years, Woolf had originally given very similar lines to Eleanor, who has an epiphany about the inadequacy of her social reform. She realizes in that version: “[T]hat was a lie she said (to herself) the kind of lie she hated most; (the becoming pose)—she who said that she did not pose. The lie that makes one out a lover of one’s kind” (Woolf, The Pargiters 24, quoted in Radin 87).

## Mass Politics as Theater

In the “Present Day” chapter, the phrase “justice” and “liberty” is transplanted into a thoroughly modern political scene that has changed the experience of political participation. North Pargiter observes inter-war British politics as an “outsider”—as a former World War I trench soldier and a British colonist in Africa. Having just sold his sheep farm in Africa and returned to London, he brings along to mass political meetings a desire to cure his dislocation and isolation.

People met . . . in hired halls. And one of them stood on a platform. There was the pump-handle gesture; the wringing wet-clothes gesture; and then the voice, oddly detached from the little figure and tremendously magnified by the loudspeaker, went booming and bawling round the hall: Justice! Liberty! . . . a nice emotional quiver, went over the skin . . .” (404-5)

North observes that the speaker mechanically rehearses a repertoire of predictable gestures, and that the meeting uses technology to amplify the voice. Despite these alienating features, upon hearing the “booming and bawling” of “justice” and “liberty,” North experiences a pleasant physical sensation: “a nice emotional quiver, went over the skin.” Here, “justice” and “liberty” are empty of political content. After the event is over, North reflects on this illusive unity: “next morning . . . there’s not an idea, not a phrase that would feed a sparrow . . . Something’s wrong, he thought; there’s a gap, a dislocation, between the word and the reality” (405). This political mode requires a mass audience that responds by bringing experiences of alienation to be momentarily soothed by the spectacle, but the meetings fail to enclose any “real” political needs, creating a gap between “justice and liberty” and their actual practice. Instead, the terms expedite a physical response; the audience is conditioned to experience pleasure in activist participation.

Woolf implies that these political terms are now experienced “aesthetically,” in particular, as theater.

Fascism’s appropriation of this scenario is clear in a diary entry, in which Woolf describes a Nazi rally that she had heard in a radio broadcast: “Hitler boasted & boomed but shot no solid bolt. Mere violent rant, & then broke off . . . A savage howl like a person excruciated; then howls from the audience; then a more spaced & measured sentence. Then another bark. Cheering ruled by a stick. Frightening to think about the faces. & the voice was frightening” (Diary, vol. 5, 169). Here, she underscores the real presence of threat veiled by the production of unity. Here too, sound amplifying technologies (“boasting and booming”) help produce that threat and unity simultaneously.<sup>153</sup> Despite the fact that the audience must accept political expressions not their own to create this unity, it engages in a mutual display of enthusiastic activism.

Jeffrey T. Schnapp writes that the experience of theater acted as a model for the creation of national totalities, and effected changes in political venues across Europe in the inter-war period. “[T]otality remedies social difference, the fragmentation of experience, human isolation, the dispersal of vital impulses” and restores an imaginary “wholeness of life.” Schnapp investigates “the wartime/postwar generation’s fantasies regarding a *theater* capable of carrying out this task of total integration” (85). “Totaltheater” artists in Weimar Germany, Mussolini’s Italy, and Soviet Russia attempted to accomplish this task by creating designs for theaters that provided “the phantasm of total participation ensured through a technologically enhanced and intensified experience of the real, orchestrated and controlled by a single director/dictator” (97).

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<sup>153</sup> According to Rey Chow, fascism presupposes advances in sound and visual technology: “Hitler and Mussolini clearly understood the coterminous nature of perception and destruction, of cinematic vision and war . . . fascism is possible only in the age of film, the gramophone, and the loudspeaker” (Chow 37-8).

In his opinion, the uses of technology and arena space were crucial for this phantasm. The fascist spectacle 18BL, a Totaltheater project realized in Italy, was originally designed in 1934 “to inaugurate the Fascist youth Olympics.” It was a traveling “theatricalization of Italian public life” that embodied “a mass at once individualized and mass produced” (114).

Woolf similarly focuses on the invocation of “justice” and “liberty” in a new political mode where the audience must actively participate in the production of the spectacle, but nevertheless remains alienated from political articulation. Of course, theatrical elements are interspersed throughout all three mass political “meetings” in The Years, but in this last scene, we have a full blown metaphor: a raised stage in an exhibition hall, a politician as “ham actor,” technological voice amplification, and an experience of politics as an aesthetic spectacle. Significantly, Woolf does not specify which Party the speaker endorses. Schnapp explains that this transformation of politics was a pervasive fantasy across political lines, across “*Fascist, socialist, and even liberal* modes of envisaging a theatrical revolution,” although it was most fully realized in fascist Italy and Stalinist Russia (123).

As a counter to these modern political fantasies and fears, Woolf cuts across political positions to challenge an ethics of speechmaking that relies on an “individual” who “speaks for the people as a whole” (Schnapp 117). She continued this critique in Between the Acts (1941), which investigates most dramatically the politics of theater and vice versa. The Years, however, launches this critique to inquire into the nexus of individual pleasure, attraction, and mass politics across party lines.

### **The suspension of perorations**

In Woolf's work of the late 1930s, several gay characters imply an ethics of difference, and bear directly on my discussion of Woolf's anti-fascism.<sup>154</sup> Steve Barber observes that Woolf inscribes "in her gay characters a mode of joyful experimentation with being" and its "ethical possibilities" (405). He focuses primarily on the characters of William Dodge and Miss LaTrobe in Between the Acts (1941), who articulate "queer difference as ethical/textual productivity," in which "the other must remain strange within the greatest possible proximity" (426, 405).

In this section, I expand on Barber's brief discussion of the figure of Nicholas Pomjalovsky in The Years, who poses the ethical problems of speech and the "ethical possibilities" of difference. As a gay foreigner, Nicholas challenges the ethics of assimilation and heterosexual coupling, the hallmarks of liberal anti-fascism. We first meet him through Eleanor Pargiter's point of view in 1917. At first, she cannot pronounce his name: "it was so long that she could not catch it. A foreign name, she thought. A foreigner. He was clearly not English" (280). Even at the end of the novel, in the "Present Day," he is known to the Pargiters simply as "Brown," attesting to the Pargiters' tendency to assimilate as a gesture of their acceptance. Nevertheless, Nicholas instills a yearning in the Pargiters for the enactment of difference, a tentative solution to the problem that North poses—how to counter the fascist erection of impenetrable divisions without then living in a world without difference altogether: "a world, he thought, that was all one jelly, one mass, would be a rice pudding world, a white counterpane world . . ." (410).

Nicholas suggests that the modern vision of heteronormative domesticity, a world comprised of "each in his own little cubicle; each with his own cross or holy books; each with

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<sup>154</sup> Broadly, critics agree with Jean Kennard that early in her writing career, Woolf equated homosexuality with "anti-feminist, patriarchal" groups such as the Cambridge Apostles (Kennard 67-8). See also Marcus 76 on Woolf and the Cambridge Apostles. Kennard notes that starting in Mrs. Dalloway, however, "Woolf associates homoeroticism with an anti-war position" (72), and that The Years was "the first time she links male homosexuality with both pacifism and empathy for women" (75).

his fire, his wife,” is a vision of “the human race . . . in its infancy” (426). Contrary to Bottome, the idyllic Christian nuclear family here is not a political solution, but the problem that must be transcended. In contrast, he suggests a soul that “wishes to expand, to adventure, to form—new combinations” (296). Although initially repulsed by him, Eleanor finds that he “seemed to have released something in her; she felt not only a new space of time, but new powers, something unknown within her” (297).

Woolf’s investment in Nicholas poses several problems for an anti-fascist domestic narrative. First, the heteronormative domestic site is negated as an anti-fascist possibility, a cancellation whose problems I will expand on later. More importantly here, Nicholas potentially appears as a prophet of a new world, as Eleanor puts it, a “new space of time” that serves as a fantastical unrepressed figure who could “lead the way.” Indeed, the Pargiters tend to consider Nicholas as a prophet. Eleanor impatiently demands of him, “when will this New World come? When shall we be free” (297)? North wants in him “someone, infinitely wise, and good, to think for him, to answer for him” (422).

Woolf problematizes the appearance of this “man of the people” and the politics of speech that this figure implies. Fascism succeeds in part by manipulating these ideological needs and modern fantasies of prophecy. As Olive Hawks has shown, the fascist domestic novel enacts these very tensions and also subverts the Oedipal family. Bakhtin describes the variant of domestic fiction that The Years threatens to become by introducing Nicholas, a variant that prefigures the incarnation of an anti-capitalist hero. The modern domestic idyll invokes a “man of the people” to solve the dilemma of capitalist alienation, a figure who “holds the correct attitude toward life and death, an attitude lost by the ruling classes” and becomes “the representative of eternal productive labor” (Bakhtin 236). Woolf suspends this political

invocation of the “outsider” to solve the crisis of domesticity, and refuses to offer a heroic model of virtue in her domestic novel. Nicholas eludes the role of political prophet, and thereby disrupts the connection of speech to political action.

In her diary, Woolf criticizes the use of the peroration in modern politics, even for ostensibly anti-fascist purposes: “This is a pinch of Hitler in the cottages of Rodmell too . . . Holding the line—heroism—all the usual perorations, in the usual highflown tense voice. Oh for a speaking voice, once in a way . . .” (*Diary*, vol. 5, 290). The peroration as a rhetorical device in a speech is “the conclusion of an oration . . . [that] forcefully or earnestly sums up the content for the hearers,” (OED) and is meant to inspire the audience to action. She associates the peroration with the ideological preparation for war: “The same perorations. Tanks. No. Its the myth making stage of the war we’re in” (*Diary*, vol. 5, 291). Woolf cuts short the Pargiters’ investment in Nicholas as a potential orator/savior to create a wider anti-fascist gesture.

In the final chapter, the Pargiters are gathered for a party in London. Delia believes that a speech could give the party “a fillip . . . a finish,” a desire Kitty echoes and expands to imply a utopian political desire: “a fillip a finish . . . But not the past—not memories. The present; the future—that was what she wanted” (417-8). They both want Nicholas to provide a speech that outlines the future and a new actuality. Given how repetitions and variations of the “speech” throughout the novel have disputed the British middle-class capacity for anti-fascism, his response is ethically loaded.

Nicholas eludes the desire of the audience for a peroration and a leader, not to evade an anti-fascist ethics, but to enact them. Over the course of almost fifteen pages, Nicholas’s “speech,” to be given “in the name of all who have enjoyed themselves tonight” is constantly interrupted and deferred (418). Nicholas finally sits down, saying, “This is not a time for making

speeches” (420).<sup>155</sup> Later, when North asks for a peroration as the sun comes up, Nicholas still insists, “There is going to be no peroration . . . because there was no speech” (431).<sup>156</sup>

Furthermore, the “speech” and the peroration are excised and replaced by laughter. When asked for a speech after Nicholas’ refusal, Maggie simply laughs: “No idols, no idols, no idols, her laughter seemed to chime as if the tree were hung with innumerable bells, and he [North] laughed too” (425). Her laughter, rejecting “idols” and heroism altogether, dissolves North’s desire to be led. Bakhtin refers to an ironic function of laughter in novels that applies here: “a destruction of the familiar and the creation of new matrices, a destruction of linguistic norms for language and thought” (237). Laughter, for Woolf too, implies the creation of different political values.

### **Laughter and Anti-Fascism**

In Three Guineas, laughter indicates and creates values that resist rather than appease domination. Woolf claims that the dominator derives satisfaction from dominating because it soothes his “fear of ridicule,” a fear that arises from the “reflection of other people’s feelings” (181-2). She goes on to claim, “Laughter as an antidote to dominance is perhaps indicated.” Laughter, in Julie Gottlieb’s view as well, is akin to the self-irony necessary for the subversion of fascism: “In public life, Mosley and his Blackshirts were noted for their dearth of humour . . . The fascist mind was defined by its lack of self-irony, which, in turn, encouraged subversion through mockery: perhaps humour was the most effective antidote to fascism” (205).

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<sup>155</sup> This deferral repeats an episode in the “1918” chapter, in which Sara requests a speech of Nicholas in Maggie’s house (322).

<sup>156</sup> Woolf similarly deferred from the peroration. She declared in her diary that “I could reel off patriotic speeches, by the dozen” as a response to fascism abroad (Diary, vol. 5, 288). But she resisted this exploitation of her writing. Three Guineas and The Years were originally inspired by an assignment to write a speech, and both ultimately refuse to suggest an authoritative and transcendent anti-fascism.

In the following, I will illuminate the critical function of laughter that makes fascism unacceptable in The Years. Henri Bergson, Freud, Harold Nicolson, and George Meredith help us explore comedy's social and critical functions in political groups, and vis-à-vis the increasingly pervasive technology of modernity. Especially pertinent to my analysis is how these writers present humor in relation to oratory and public speaking, and their place in the increasing militarization of civilian life. While some suggest comedy as "antidotes" against political domination, others claim that it is a passive mirror of political freedom already achieved. I suggest that Woolf claims comedy as a political "weapon," albeit a non-violent one. In order to claim that function, however, she departs from a didactic relationship between domestic literature and politics.

As we have seen, The Years intervenes in the rise of mass politics at the end of the nineteenth century onward, and contests prevalent notions of public speaking to show the precariousness of political authority. In Three Guineas, she writes, "Find out new ways of approaching 'the public'; single it into separate people instead of massing it into one monster, gross in body, feeble in mind" (98). I propose that the invocation of laughter in The Years suggests a collectivity different from those created by modern mass politics. In particular, Woolf emphasizes the danger of leading "politicians," and the contemporary circulation of the central liberal notions of "justice" and "liberty" for purposes of exclusion. Laughter suggests instead the joyful creation of collectivities, thereby working on the terrain of mass politics, but cancels the politically efficient mechanism of scapegoating.

Bergson and Freud highlight the prevalence of jokes and comedy that degrade the authority of the speaker/orator. According to Bergson, laughter "corrects" the speaker who "reveals his likeness to a thing," especially the speaker who "conveys the impression of pure

mechanism, of automatism” (117). As a mode of correction, however, laughter is especially lazy. Bergson notes a deep seated “movement of *relaxation*” that results from taking “the line of least resistance” (186-7). As a form of revolt, then, it is slight: “Like froth, it sparkles. It is gaiety itself. But the philosopher who gathers a handful to taste may find that the substance is scanty . . .” (190). He suggests that this indolence is the result of the close relationship between laughter and the unconscious; both inhabit a “hidden logic,” and to access it, “the outer crust of carefully stratified judgments and firmly established ideas will be lifted, and we shall behold in the depths of our mind, like a sheet of subterranean water, the flow of an unbroken stream of images which pass from one into another . . .” (87).

Sigmund Freud agrees in Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious that laughter “liberat[es] nonsense” (131). In a political context, jokes revolt against authority, but in a way that eludes “reason” and “critical judgment” (137). Allied with dreamwork, this approach is limited because the “dignity and authority” of speakers are degraded only because attention is diverted to the physical “frailties which they share with all humanity, but in particular the dependence of their mental functions on bodily needs” (202). As in Bergson, comedy in Freud does not adequately counter political and intellectual corruption; rather, it is a childish and temporary sense of release from the constraints of social behavior and “sublime” authority.<sup>157</sup> At best, jokes are an unconscious challenge or an indirect revolt against domination that evade “the difficulties of direct expression” (174). Therefore, as a political tool, the ability to render a speaker laughable only circuitously articulates the illegitimacy of a given authority.

Harold Nicolson discusses comedy on a more collective scale, but he claims that even when this laughter is collectively shared, it has a primitive effect: “when the sense of humour

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<sup>157</sup> “What is ‘sublime’ is something large in the figurative, psychical sense; and I should like to suggest . . . that . . . it is represented by an increased expenditure” (Freud, Jokes 200).

ceases to be a private enjoyment and becomes public or choral it reverts to ‘primal’ laughter and adopts the forms of child-laughter and savage-laughter” (31). Nevertheless, Nicolson insists that the English sense of humor, “sceptical of all extremes of brilliance, logic or dogma,” tames extremes in modern political societies (37). “English humour” is proof of the nation’s social and political stability, and therefore its imperviousness to fascism.<sup>158</sup> He concludes,

A sense of humour cannot prosper either in a totalitarian and classless society or in a society in process of revolution. A special, fortuitous, and therefore transitory, balance between acceptance and revolt, between conformity and nonconformity, between the conventional and the eccentric, is needed before a sense of humour can pervade a whole society. (35)

Humor defends nationalism against fascist radicalism: “I regard the English sense of humour as a charming attribute and one which serves as a valuable lubricant in the machine of society” (38). Perhaps because it is “childish,” humor can never really facilitate disruptions of authority. It is accompanied by “a common and assured pattern of convention.” A sense of humor can thus impair fascism primarily by drawing on the already achieved stability of democratic values.

Nicolson’s description of laughter as “childish” is echoed in Woolf’s 1905 essay, “The Value of Laughter.” But there, laughter as criticism is more than a sign of a stable society or a “healthy” (hierarchical) class structure. Contrary to Nicolson’s account of its “charm,” Woolf suggests that childish humor can be mobilized to see through the affectations of masculinist glory: “Women and children . . . are the chief ministers of the comic spirit” for this reason (60). In The Years, Sir William, a colonial administrator, creates and dominates his audience in Morris Pargiter’s parlor. His habits of speech, formed by his gender, elevated class position, and

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<sup>158</sup> Harold Nicolson, diplomat, Vita Sackville-West’s husband, and Woolf’s longtime acquaintance, started a periodical, Action, to help Mosley found the New Party, a precursor to the British Union of Fascists.

participation in Empire building “seemed too big for the quiet, English dining-room; his voice boomed out. He wanted an audience . . . He was boasting, of course . . . He came back to England after ruling a district ‘about the size of Ireland,’ as they always said” (201-2). Here, the speaker’s desire to dominate, to create himself through the captive obedience of his audience is the result of an automatic characteristic of powerful men most notable in their cliché speeches. Nevertheless, in “The Value of Laughter,” Woolf concedes that such humor is a resistance of the weak. It is possible only because its practitioners, women and children, are relatively distant from the systems of learning and rewarding established to glorify men.

At this point, we are left to doubt the political efficacy of laughter in the context of fascism at all. Nicolson even claims that laughter can dangerously enable escapism when it consciously confronts fascism: “An attempt is made to reduce the menacing to the level of the comic, as when Hitler was represented, not as some daemonic force intent upon our destruction, but as a talkative little man with a moustache” (42). Similarly, Alice Yaeger Kaplan writes in relation to Marinetti’s proto-fascist futurist manifestoes, “futurism is funny, but it is dangerous in its funniness because it has the power to make me stop thinking about its effect” (76). Finally, Adorno in his essay, “Commitment,” warns against any assumption that “laughing” at fascism would aid in dismantling it.

[T]he buffoonery of fascism, evoked by Chaplin as well, was at the same time also its ultimate horror. If this is suppressed, and a few sorry exploiters of greengrocers are mocked, where key positions of economic power are actually at issue, the attack misfires. *The Great Dictator* loses all satirical force, and becomes obscene, when a Jewish girl can bash a line of storm troopers on the head with a pan without being torn to pieces. For the

sake of political commitment, political reality is trivialized: which then reduces the political effect. (Essential Frankfurt 308)

The Years' description of Mussolini as a "fat man gesticulating" (the reduction of the political speaker to an automated body), and, as we've seen, its comparison of fascist territorialization to hopscotch chalk marks, appears to reduce the fascist will to dominate to childish antics. In her diary, Woolf similarly compares the fascist political menace to childish fantasy. She observes of British politicians, "All these grim men appear to me like grown up's staring incredulously at a child's sand castle which for some inexplicable reason has become a real vast castle, needing gunpowder & dynamite to destroy it. Nobody in their sense can believe in it . . ." (Diary, vol. 5, 167). While here, she clearly pronounces the "buffoonery" of fascism, Woolf also calls attention to the particular nature of its violence. The fascists had built a substantial military fortress when it seemed they'd been playing like children. The seemingly childish farce is irreconcilable with the established political comprehension of threat, and this lack of accord comprises part of its danger.<sup>159</sup> In The Years' chalk marks, Woolf enacts a strategy that simultaneously ridicules the idiocy and automatism of the fascists while acknowledging the brutality of their authority. Even more than these important observations about the simultaneous attractions and horror of fascism, The Years suggests the creation of a politics without leaders. The novel shifts the definition of "politics" and cultural production to give laughter a critical function vis-à-vis fascism. As we have seen, Maggie's laughter is not useful as an anti-fascist political "analysis" in terms of representing the "real." Rather, it is effectively anti-fascist in terms of the collective audience it "creates."

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<sup>159</sup> This fascist fantasy intersects with some high modernist projects in Woolf's perception. Of Herbert Read, T.S. Eliot, George Santayana, and H.G. Wells, she writes, "Little boys making sand castles. . . Each is weathertight, & gives shelter to the occupant . . . I am carrying on, while I read, the idea of women discovering, like the 19<sup>th</sup> century rationalists, agnostics, that man is no longer God" (Diary, vol. 5, 340).

Sally Jacobsen observes that the relationship between comedy and literature shifted dramatically in the course of Woolf's career.<sup>160</sup> In "The Value of Laughter," Woolf had described the comic as a way to recognize the grandiose heroism mistakenly ascribed to men, reminding us that "no man is quite a hero or entirely a villain" (59). Here indeed, comedy works to present a more "realistic," and less "romantic" identity of leaders. But laughter in The Years is not directed at uncovering the fallibility of specific speakers. Rather, it poses the possibility of a greater joy in a collectivity without a speaker to "represent" or to lead. Laughter in the novel therefore questions the fundamental limits of liberal politics from a feminist perspective.

In her later works, anti-fascist laughter creates the possibilities of democratic communities by invoking a "chorus." Woolf imagined the last chapter of The Years, especially, as a chorus: "I want a Chorus. A general statement, a song for 4 voices . . . And how to make the transition from the colloquial to the lyrical, from the particular to the general" (Diary, vol. 4, 236)? Bergson and Freud acknowledge that humor and joking form "complicit" communities. Bergson writes, "However spontaneous it seems, laughter always implies a kind of secret freemasonry, or even complicity, with other laughers, real or imaginary" (64). Freud similarly observes, "every joke calls for a public of its own" (Jokes 151). That Woolf sought a formation of a collective voice, a "general statement," is clear. That it should compete with "fascist collectivization" is suggested in the novel's repetitive inquiry into modern group formations. Melba Cuddy-Keane discusses "a distinctive choric voice" in Between the Acts (1941), a novel that is more obviously anti-fascist, and where Woolf revives the "ancient choral band and creates a new comic mode" (276). To create a critical value in laughter, this mode invokes an audience

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<sup>160</sup> "A more mature 'humor of the heights' than in 'The Value of Laughter' marks the fourth stage of Woolf's idea of comedy, from 1935 to 1941. Her earlier desired effect of joviality and magnanimity now becomes 'joy'" (Jacobsen 227).

whose desire to be free from “social constraints” does not result in a projection of a leader *or* an expulsion of “others.” Cuddy-Keane suggests that Woolf derived her revision of comedy from the classicist Jane Harrison, whose work Ancient Art and Ritual (1913) theorized a unifying function of the chorus in the ancient Greek drama of “communal rituals,” which preceded the epic form. She writes, “Harrison associates the epic with a leader-centered construct, but her primary interest is in the earlier genre and the different kind of communal bond that it embodies. This bond is found not in a common loyalty to a person or an ideal but rather in the performance of an integrative action . . . the circumference is the whole community” (274).

Indeed, in The Years, laughter suggests a unity that radically diverges from the fascist production of unity in “a leader-centered construct.” It preserves the longing for “wholeness,” but disavows the vehicles of the “great man” and the veiled threat. Laughter has a “strange effect” on Peggy Pargiter, for instance, who rejects the older Pargiters’ earnest belief in humanist civilization, *and* the emergence of fascism: “It had relaxed her, enlarged her. She felt, or rather she saw, not a place, but a state of being, in which there was real laughter, real happiness, and this fractured world was whole; whole, vast, and free” (390). Her laughter acknowledges subjective dislocation in a fractured modern world that reifies social relations, but it does not ossify into divisive claims of authenticity and identity. Moreover, it accesses the pleasures and attraction of community in an otherwise alienating environment. The “relaxation” effected by laughter, which denotes a lack of critical rigor in Bergson’s and Freud’s theories, is essential here to counter fascism on its own terrain—its corporation of collective “joy” as a cure for political alienation.

In contrast to the fascist mass, this collectivity is marked by its negativity, and its conspicuous absence of leaders or programs. In Three Guineas, Woolf similarly suggests an

“Outsiders Society” that counters fascism by regarding it as an “illuminating example of what we do not wish to be” rather than “positive” spectacles of male and female self-sacrifice (114). This “society” enacts the power of the obscure, “submerged experiments of which there is no public proof” (119). As in Three Guineas, The Years cultivates the “comic spirit” to identify fascists as that which we “do not wish to be.” Cuddy-Keane aptly observes that Woolf inhabits a different definition of politics altogether in her use of comedy: “This handling of genre is thoroughly political in substituting, for the definition of politics as the exercising of power, a model of community as the dynamic inhabiting of mutual space” (284).

Woolf’s ironic understanding of laughter in relation to politics can be traced in the influence of George Meredith. As Margaret Connolly notes, Meredith was a strong early influence on the development of Woolf’s thinking about comedy and gender relations.<sup>161</sup> Meredith allows comedy a stronger critical function than Nicolson’s “reflection,” a function that he nonetheless laments may be obsolete. In an “Essay on Comedy” (1877), he claims that Aristophanes’ comedies effected political justice. By “using laughter for his political weapon; a laughter without scruple,” Aristophanes revolted against Sophist corruption and “the demagogue, ‘the saw-toothed monster’” who “chicaned the mob” (39, 37). Meredith adds that the uses of comedy that Aristophanes had created are no longer possible, in part because the “comic license in the chorus” has been “curtailed”: “He is not to be revived.” Nevertheless, in modernity, he suggests, his methods are still worthy of study, so that “some of the fire in him would come to us, and *we* might be revived” (39).

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<sup>161</sup> Connolly assumes that for both Meredith and Woolf, comedy is a weak weapon vis-à-vis political corruption because it can only “reveal” the illegitimacy of the authority in power, and only “relax” the critical faculty. She writes, “By the time the anti-comedic society of the thirties had burgeoned into the war, it was clear to Woolf that the weapons of comedy were nowhere near powerful enough to fight the combination of egoism and power that was destroying Europe” (Connolly 203).

Meredith suggests that Aristophanes' use of comedy may be more radical than a representation of the "real" suggested by more obviously "committed" cultural producers. Furthermore, like Gottlieb and Nicolson, Meredith notes the lack of comedy in military societies. Although Meredith wrote this essay before the rise of official fascism in Germany, he asserts that comedy is an appropriate antidote to the nation's growing militarization. He writes, "the Comic Spirit is needful" in Germany to temper "the mob, or a marching army." As it is, the German's "irony is a missile of terrific tonnage; sarcasm he emits like a blast from a dragon's mouth . . . He stamps his foe underfoot" (54). Woolf, as she inherits and extends Meredith's defense of comedy, contradicts other modernists in their own invocations of laughter vis-à-vis total war.

Comedy was prevalent among modernist artists and writers who were concerned by the militarization of European societies. As Renato Poggioli has observed following Bergson, the surrealists used irony to show "the way the machine fails man . . . [or] the way man fails the machine" in modernity" (140). Tyrus Miller also notes that in much 1930s European literature, technology was a major object of comedy: "late modernist writers confronted no less an issue than the survival of individual selves in a world of technological culture, mass politics, and shock experience, both in the battlefield and in the cities of the intervening peace" (24). According to Miller, the late modernists called attention to the "disruptive effects of the figural," most notably in hybrid genres like prose poetry, or "wholly reinvented genres" (19). Most notable among the tactics of Gertrude Stein, Wyndham Lewis, Djuna Barnes, Samuel Beckett, and Mina Loy, is the "disruptive, deforming spell of laughter . . . represent[ing] a world in free fall, offering vertiginously deranged commentary as word, body, and thing fly apart with a ridiculous lack of grace" (19). For Lewis especially, Miller claims, laughter helped to "absorb shock experience and to deflect it aggressively outward as self-preserving laughter" (54). As we

have seen, in The Years and Lewis' The Revenge for Love, the resemblance of politicians and public intellectuals to machines renders them absurd.

Although Miller places Woolf in the “‘mainstream’ of European high modernist fiction” that sought to subdue this “chaotic modernity by means of formal techniques” (17), her play with the essay and novel genres, especially from the late 1920s on, also invoke the liberating effects of that “vertiginous fall,” and in that respect, clearly belongs in Miller’s category of late modernism. In contrast to Lewis, however, Woolf’s invocation of laughter in The Years is neither “aggressive” nor exclusive. Lewis’ satirical novels were notable for slashing the field of contemporary literature to leave Lewis’ own approach to art still standing. In Men Without Art, he equated all authentic art with satire, and because “no one will exactly rush to the assistance of the satirist . . . a sort of Cain among craftsmen,” he is compelled to defend it himself (13). His pamphlet Satire and Fiction accompanied his novel The Apes of God (1930). Woolf departs from Lewis’ aggressive satirical attempt to level his enemies.

Drawing on Susan Auty’s The Comic Spirit of Eighteenth Century Novels, Cuddy-Keane claims that satire is much more a tool of the “establishment” since “in such works . . . society draws together around the prevailing norm in order to expel the elements that threaten social stability” (276). Although many modern writers (like Lewis) reverse this relationship so that “the prevailing demand for conformity” becomes the object of satire while the eccentric is privileged, she observes that “the dynamics of the satire are nevertheless the same: a collective perspective emerges that establishes the norm, and the antithetical element is expelled” (Cuddy-Keane 276).

In contrast, Woolf’s comedy has an inclusive thrust. Cuddy-Keane suggests that Woolf revises the comic mode to go beyond satire, so that her “laughter reclaims its object within the human continuum” (276). While Woolf was writing The Years, she wrote in her diary, “The

more complex a vision the less it lends itself to satire: the more it understands the less it is able to sum up & make linear” (Diary, vol. 4, 309). In Three Guineas, a linear and summarizing position that suggests stable social relations and “civilization” to fight fascism undermines itself by retaining patriarchal values. Woolf, in contrast, invokes an ethical community against domination *and* against the moral certainty of the political Left and Right in Britain.

For Meredith, and consequently for Woolf, comic irony negates the politics of the present, but refrains from outlining the prophetic fullness of the future: “Men’s future upon earth does not attract it; their honesty and shapeliness in the present does . . .” (Meredith 48). This stance resembles Kierkegaard’s description of irony in The Concept of Irony: “It is negativity, because it only negates; it is infinite, because it does not negate this or that phenomenon; it is absolute, because that by virtue of which it negates is a higher something that still is not. The irony establishes nothing, because that which is to be established lies behind it” (261). As Kierkegaard further points out, the powers of irony are only “epoch-making” insofar as they negate the “actuality of experience” (29, 124). The ironist in Kierkegaard “ship[s] individuals from reality to ideality,” and to do so, the individuals he takes across must “divest themselves of all the manifold qualifications of concrete life, of titles, honors, purple robes, pompous words, sorrows, anxieties, etc., until only the sheer human being remained” (236). Likewise in Meredith, comedy identifies the absurdity of men when they “run riot in idolatries, drifting into vanities, congregating in absurdities, planning short-sightedly, plotting dementedly . . .” (Meredith 48).

In both passages, irony facilitates the disavowal of honors, rewards, and the values of the present, and thereby implicitly dismantles masculinist hierarchies. Vis-à-vis military values, then, Meredith suggests comedy to bring about the consciousness of the “social equality of the sexes.” Meredith prescribes a shift in gender relations as a counter to militarization, and the use

of comedy to effect gender equality: “when their men . . . consent to talk on equal terms with their women, and to listen to them, their growth will be accelerated and be shapelier. Comedy . . . will . . . enliven and irradiate the social intelligence” (55). In its ironic mode, comedy is a mode of politics rather than simply a reflection of it: “Comedy is an exhibition of [women’s] battle with men, and that of men with them . . . The comic poet dares to show us men and women coming to . . . mutual likeness; he is for saying that when they draw together in social life their minds grow liker” (15).

This passage redefines politics and counters fascism by insisting on the necessity of laughter. In “comic” struggles involving gender, war is an inexpedient political end. Comedy exhibits a “battle,” a revolt against injustice, but without violence since the “other” in this struggle must be ensured survival. As opposed to satire, this comedy acts as a civilizing force in the social relations between men and women because it emphasizes the similarities rather than differences between the “warring” sides. It proposes that men and women become more and more alike throughout history. As such, laughter in The Years is a weapon—a “keen blade,” a “knife that both prunes and trains,” as Woolf had suggested in “The Value of Laughter,” but a weapon that bypasses war (“The Value of Laughter” 60). As a result, “the collectivity of the vision is greater than that of the group unified by its antagonism to the enemy” (Cuddy-Keane 278).

### **Domesticity and Fascism**

Woolf’s laughter is also directed at the humanist valorization of virility. Woolf engenders skepticism of liberal anti-fascism based on the projection of heroic male self-sacrifice. Although deeply allied with them in other ways, she criticized Stephen Spender and the other members of the “Auden generation,” as well as her nephew, Julian Bell, for mobilizing the heroic sentiment

created around World War I for anti-fascist purposes.<sup>162</sup> When Spender declared that the communist party craved his martyrdom in the Spanish Civil War for anti-fascist publicity, she recorded in her diary: “S. [Spender] said the C.P. which he had that day joined, wanted him to be killed, in order that there might be another Byron. He has a child’s vanity about himself. Interesting to me at the moment, as I’m working out the psychology of vanity” (Diary, vol. 5, 57). Similarly, when Julian Bell volunteered for the International Brigade, she lamented his “selfishness” and “raptures” rather than praising his courage: “I often argue with him on my walks; abuse his selfishness in going but mostly feel floored by the complete muddle & waste. Cant share the heroic raptures of the Medical Aid” (Diary, vol. 5, 108).<sup>163</sup> The first chapter of Three Guineas accordingly outlines the political futility of masculine vanity.

Woolf believed that such self-congratulation obscured an accurate diagnosis of fascism, and perhaps even supported the cultural conditions that made it possible. The production of “good conscience” valorizes virility by reinforcing men’s participation in warfare. In The Years, North Pargiter describes vanity, or “posing in the public eye,” as a requirement of fascism, as much a part of its equipment as the use of technology, military conformity, and uniforms: “halls and reverberating megaphones . . . marching in step after leaders, in herds, groups, societies caparisoned . . . black shirts, green shirts, red shirts—always posing in the public eye . . .” (410).

Woolf relentlessly exposes the desire to create the spectacle of one’s own virtue. Rey Chow claims that fascism succeeds by projecting “good intentions shining forth in dazzling

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<sup>162</sup> See Woolf, The Diary of Virginia Woolf, vol. 5, 179. See also Woolf’s diary entry for 3 Oct. 1938, where she describes Auden’s public persona in relation to the Spanish Civil War: “I hope they will no longer pose as the young men to be sacrificed.” For a divergent reading of Woolf’s connection to the younger generation of anti-fascist British writers, see Carlston 176 – 86.

<sup>163</sup> On 28 Apr. 1935, she also wrote in her diary, “Julian’s quite unaware of some of his own motives . . . Alix like a blackshirt, all brown & tie & tailor made. . . What is the use of trying to preach when human nature is so crippled” (Diary, vol. 4, 307) ?

light,” and therefore, “It is therefore not by focusing on the atrocious deeds, the ‘evil’ of fascists, but on their moments of idealism production, their good conscience, that we can understand the effectiveness of fascist aesthetics” (37). In other words, fascism succeeds paradoxically by producing spectacles of self-sacrifice. Chow further argues that “good” liberals conspicuously ignore this aspect of fascism. Woolf delegitimizes spectacles of female self-sacrifice in the domestic site as much as the valorization of male sacrifice through war.

In the following analysis, I am tapping into a longstanding debate on Woolf’s invocation of domestic space as a site of critical possibility vis-à-vis fascist capitalism. Many feminist critics have argued that Woolf championed domestic labor as a metaphor for anti-patriarchal artistry throughout her work.<sup>164</sup> Others conclude that her stance toward domestic labor was much more critical.<sup>165</sup> I believe that as in Three Guineas, The Years shows that the prevalent system of domestic labor has helped valorize virility in men and self-sacrifice in women to create a gendered culture of warfare. More specifically, The Years explores women’s philanthropic and social reform activities as a counterpart to masculine egotism. Woolf is less concerned with the subjugation of women within the patriarchal family (indeed, the narrative shows how the family is reformulated in the twentieth century), and more concerned with the absorption of women into patriarchal biopolitics.

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<sup>164</sup> Genevieve Sanchis-Morgan provides an extended reading of Mrs. Dalloway as a domestic artist: “in figuring the domestic artist Woolf explores her own artistry, one that also depends on domestic fictions” (103). She claims that Woolf valorized domestic labor because it “impl[ies] a female subject-position” (94). Lisa Low also points out that creating a non-fascist culture in Three Guineas entails “the development of the simple and peaceable arts in colleges that focus not on economics and military history, but on cooking, sewing, crafts; and they should practice vows of poverty, humility, chastity, and freedom from unreal loyalties” (99).

<sup>165</sup> Marie-Luise Gätgens in Women Writers and Fascism: Reconstructing History calls attention to Woolf’s criticism of domestic labor, whether private or public, by showing that “through their ‘nurturing’ and reproductive work, women help to stabilize the social order; they make life livable in a society that otherwise is based on competition and exploitation. They thus become complicit with precisely those repressive power structures that their work aims to alleviate” (21). In her view, Woolf considers domestic labor to be an indispensable component of modern warfare and the accumulation of capital.

## **Biopolitics and The Years**

Zwerdling calls attention to the historical connection between social reform and capital: “The previous century had found a way of minimizing social guilt—the tradition of Victorian philanthropy, that special province of middle-class women. It was part of their duty to smooth out class antagonisms by ‘befriending’ the poor, visiting their homes regularly, offering advice, charity, help in crises” (99). Woolf’s generation, he claims, placed these activities into question. Woolf shows that middle-class women’s philanthropy is a crucial tactic to sustain capital, but also acknowledges that it was simultaneously caught up in proto-feminist articulations of women’s sociopolitical agency. Jacques Donzelot discusses the importance of middle-class women’s “alliance with social philanthropy” to undermine private patriarchy and “give her a new access to public life,” and even act as “the springboard she needed for the recognition of her political rights” (xxiii). At the same time, it was also “a deliberately depoliticizing strategy for establishing public services and facilities at a sensitive point midway between private initiative and the state,” that is, a crucial tactic in bourgeois passive revolution (55). Participation in the biopolitical transformation of the socius offered middle-class women political agency but ultimately helped to maintain class and gender hierarchy.<sup>166</sup>

In the “Present Day” chapter, Eleanor, a devoted social reformer, is the only Pargiter who is vocally and defiantly anti-fascist. When she comes across a photograph of Mussolini, the “fat man gesticulating” in the newspaper, she cries “Damned bully!”, passionately deploring the fall

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<sup>166</sup> Victorian philanthropy was closely tied to Christianity. Here, Woolf’s focus is on its secular effects in class politics as in Three Guineas, where Woolf writes, “In the nineteenth century much valuable work was done for the working class by educated men’s daughters in the only way that was open to them. But now that some of them at least have received an expensive education, it is arguable that they can much more effectively by remaining in their own class and using the methods of that class to improve a class which stands much in need of improvement” (177). For more on non-conformist Christianity and social reform, see Marcus 81-90, and Celia Marshik, “Virginia Woolf and Intellectual History: The Case of Josephine Butler and Three Guineas,” Virginia Woolf and Her Influences (New York: Pace UP, 1998).

of liberal progress he represents: “It means the end of everything we cared for . . . freedom and justice” (331-2). Eleanor is confident that the humanist goals of “justice” and “liberty” that her life has represented oppose fascism. Indeed, when we first meet her in the first chapter, Eleanor has the moral qualities associated with heroines in nineteenth-century domestic fiction. Because of Eleanor’s charitable and social reform work in London, her sister Milly idolizes her: “Eleanor always would stick up for the poor. She thought Eleanor the best, the wisest, the most remarkable person she knew” (31). Despite her copious duties at home as the eldest daughter in a family whose mother is gravely ill, Eleanor trudges to the East End on her weekly “Grove Day” to call on the poor. Her good intentions and self-sacrifice for humanist civilization are apparent.

Other motives for her charity, however, are brought to the foreground, motives that shake the association of British middle-class women with anti-fascism. These motives align her interests with a hierarchical class structure. Woolf explores biopolitics as a circuitry of power that simultaneously empowers middle-class women and maintains public patriarchy.

One of Eleanor’s motives is to escape regularly from her father’s home. While she is living under his roof, Eleanor’s activities in the London slums afford her greater mobility, whereas her sisters are confined to their home in Abercorn Terrace for most of the day. In The Pargiters, Woolf explains that feminine charity was one of the few excuses women could employ to appear “legitimately” in public unchaperoned in 1880.<sup>167</sup>

Nevertheless, Eleanor ultimately recreates patriarchal relations of power by occupying the position of a “proxy.” Although reluctantly, she takes up a patriarchal voice to reprimand the shoddy work of her contractor, Duffus: “she adopted the tone of the Colonel’s daughter; the

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<sup>167</sup> Woolf writes, “An exception might be made [to her confinement]. . . when she went to Lisson Grove,” adding that “even she, whose mission was charitable, was expected either to take a cab, or to get one of the girls at the Settlement to see her into the omnibus, if she went to a meeting or concert after dark” (37).

upper middle-class tone that she detested” (100). She also discloses anti-Semitic sentiments toward her clients that although relatively harmless in their immediate context, are nevertheless ominous given The Years’ 1930s context: “‘They do love finery—Jews,’ she added. ‘Yes,’ she said, ‘Shiny’” (31). Woolf invokes the increasingly important political rhetoric of contamination and cleanliness in the inter-war period, as well as the association of Jews with the inauthenticity of commodity culture.

By 1891, Eleanor owns a house in Peter Street under a philanthropic scheme, where she surveys her lodgers’ health and their rooms. Her position as proprietor and social reformer gives her the right to maintain hygiene and surveillance over working-class reproduction: “The door was opened by Mrs. Toms, the downstairs lodger. Oh, dear, thought Eleanor, observing the slant of her apron, another baby coming, after all I told her” (97). In these charitable activities, Eleanor replicates her father’s movement through working-class streets in London. As the novel begins, Abel Pargiter visits his lover, Mira, in a neighborhood he considers “sordid,” “mean,” and “furtive” (7). Like Eleanor, he is preoccupied with its lack of hygiene. He assesses Mira’s cleanliness, saying “what a dreadfully untidy girl you are,” and even checks her dog for signs of eczema (8). Mira transports him from quotidian drudgery by playing an assigned role: “her duty was to distract him” (7). Eleanor too fantasizes through the poor, eroticizing one of her clients’ daughters, in particular, who is, as she explains to Milly, “‘extraordinarily handsome . . . thinking of the red cheeks and the white pearls” (31).

Thus, her work in the East End allows her to identify her interests and perceptions with the patriarchal hierarchies it paradoxically enables her to escape from in intervals. This identification displaces the consciousness of her own servitude—the similarities between her and her servants. Her charitable activities cloak Eleanor’s status as “housekeeper,” the household

manager and secretary of her father's home, roles that intensify after her mother dies. When Eleanor enters her father's study in 1891, he repeats twice, "Here's the housekeeper" (92). Nevertheless, when she returns to Abercorn Terrace after a trip to Peter Street, she identifies not with the maids but with the proprietors: "In every front room she seemed to see a parlourmaid's arm sweep over the table, laying it for luncheon . . . She would be late for her own luncheon, she thought" (102). Even in 1908, her younger brother, Martin, is appeased when he visits Abercorn Terrace and finds Eleanor at her bookkeeping: "Nothing had been changed, he was glad to see" (149).

Eleanor questions her own motives when one of her elderly lodgers, Mrs. Potter, expresses her wish to die to escape her unbearable physical pain, a decision that Eleanor has felt she and the other reformers must pre-empt: "Why do we do it? Why do we force her to live? She asked, looking at the medicine on the table" (100). She momentarily doubts the values of biopolitical discourse that her activities put into motion. Grace Radin observes that in The Pargiters, she is "forced to question her values and her idea of herself, to wonder if all her good deeds have been nothing but a pose and a meaningless pastime" (81). Although Eleanor has no such "epiphany" in The Years, Woolf does trouble Eleanor's belief in biopolitical surveillance when she herself becomes its object in 1913 after her father's death. The family home at Abercorn Terrace is assessed by a lower middle-class house agent who suggests that it needs to be modernized, especially the bathrooms, the kind of treatments that years before, she'd suggested to her contractor at Peter Street. The house agent "went round the house, sniffing and peering, he had indicted their cleanliness, their humanity; and he used absurd long words. He was hauling himself up into the class above him, she supposed, by means of long words" (215).

Eleanor reveals that she also has associated “cleanliness” with “humanity,” and that she had, perhaps unconsciously, regarded her clients as less than human.

Marcus compares “Eleanor’s passionate plumbing” to Woolf’s art, claiming that both make “order out of chaos and the fundamental rhythm of women’s lives. The novel shows us men . . . making a colossal mess—and women cleaning up after them. Only a woman like Virginia Woolf could conceive of the metaphor of the artist as charwoman to the world” (56). She further reads biographical significance into Eleanor’s “chastity and cleanliness” and desire “to be plumber to the masses, provider of cleanliness to the lives of the poor and dirty,” reminding us of Woolf’s “Puritan and Quaker heritage” that instilled in her the belief “that dirt darkened the possibility of full humanity” (68).<sup>168</sup> This reading obscures, however, Woolf’s repeated criticisms of social reformers. In a diary entry, Woolf observes that “these social reformers & philanthropists get so out of hand, & harbour so many discreditable desires under the disguise of loving their kind,” and declares her preference for the artist’s greater subversive potential: “the only honest people are the artists” (*Diary*, vol. 1, 293). This distinction challenges Marcus’ correlation of social reform with the act of writing in Woolf’s imagination.

Another diary entry excoriates social reformers’ will to dominate. She equates one couple who were “particularly concerned with the education of the poor” in Whitechapel, with a regressive Victorian literary tradition: “my literary taste is outraged by the smooth way in which the tale is made to unfold into full blown success, like some profuse peony. But I only scratch the surface of what I feel about these two stout volumes.” The narrative of the reformers’ “success” is reminiscent of progressive domestic fiction—the “profuse” plots of multi-volume Victorian

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<sup>168</sup> Marcus further directly compares Eleanor Pargiter to Caroline Emelia Stephen, Woolf’s aunt, who also built dwellings for the poor, artisans in her case (98).

novels. The plot of Elizabeth Gaskell's North and South, for instance, depends explicitly on the middle-class heroine's access to the poor through charitable surveillance.

Woolf also exposes an underlying class violence and contempt for the poor: "the peculiar repulsiveness of those who dabble their fingers self approvingly in the stuff of others' souls. The Barnetts were at any rate plunged to the elbow; red handed if philanthropists ever were . . . And then the smug vigour of their self-satisfaction" (Diary, vol. 1, 255)! Furthermore, she implies that in some ways philanthropists and social reformers resemble dictators, and posits their potential complicity with political domination:

Never a question as to the right of what they do—always a kind of insensate forging ahead until, naturally, their undertakings are all of colossal size & portentous prosperity. . . . Perhaps the root of it all lies in the adulation of the uneducated & the easy mastery of the will over the poor. And more & more I come to loathe any dominion of one over another; any leadership, any imposition of the will. (Diary, vol. 1, 255)

As this passage makes clear, Woolf suspected the "sympathy" of bourgeois reformers and their methods of social observation. The Years hollows out the domestic woman's plot from the inside out. The domestic site is cancelled as an anti-fascist site, not least because it masks its "mastery" under the appearance of "self-sacrifice." Rather, Woolf valorizes the chronotope of the bridge for women, and their refusal of patriarchal rewards, private or public.<sup>169</sup>

## **Bridges**

Rather than Eleanor, it is Sara Pargiter who challenges the patriarchal organization of urban space. Sara cannot be assimilated by a liberal domestic narrative because she refuses to

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<sup>169</sup> Given that both domestic labor and wage labor are predicated on the production of war, she asks, "Had we not better plunge off the bridge into the river; give up the game; declare that the whole of human life is a mistake and so end it? . . . The question we put to you, lives of the dead, is how can we enter the professions and yet remain civilized human beings; human beings, that is, who wish to prevent war" (Three Guineas 74)?

“heal” and “clean.” Rather than articulating a stable space from which to launch a criticism of modernity, she constantly occupies sites of transition, cutting odd ways through space.

For example, she lingers on a bridge with Rose, who is hurrying to a meeting (186), reappears on a bridge after indicting North for going to war (“Coward; hypocrite, with your switch in your hand”) (322), and runs into Martin in the steps in front of St. Paul’s (228).<sup>170</sup> She is late to the two family gatherings that occur in the novel. When in public, she behaves inappropriately but not self-consciously. In a restaurant in the City of London with Martin, she discusses his sister Rose, an imprisoned Suffragette, “sitting on a three-legged stool having meat crammed down her throat” (232). Sara stays where she is not wanted, does not go where she is wanted, and in the process, interferes with defenses of war, systems of domestic labor, and lastly, “revolutionary” notions of both fascism and anti-fascism. Sara’s association with the bridge rather than the home epitomizes the transitional and unstable position of women who would refuse the rewards of both private and public patriarchies. Radin rightly claims that the “keystone” to Sara is “her repudiation of society’s bribes and rewards” (41). Her anti-fascism is thus seemingly oblique. Moreover, Woolf confronts the deep seated anti-Semitism of the British middle class by foregrounding Sara’s uneasy relationship to her Jewish neighbor. Sara’s dismantling of fascism therefore diverges from a liberal anti-fascism that declares its own good will. I suggest that Sara paradoxically suggests a far more thorough eradication of racism.

By the “Present Day,” Sara lives in an East End slum. When her younger cousin North visits her, she explains that she is disgusted by a fellow tenant, a foreign Jew who leaves “a line of grease” and hair in the shared bath. She recounts that to escape the space that she shares with the Jew, she had once applied for a journalist’s position using her dead father’s professional

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<sup>170</sup> The chronotope of the bridge is also an important one in *Three Guineas* to describe the situation of women who are critical of warfare. See pp. 18, 23, 60, 61, 62, and 74.

connections. But she ultimately rejected it, suspecting that it would make her “servile” to a “conspiracy” (341). The conspiracy clearly refers to the networks of power that her patronym, which she describes as “a talisman, a glowing gem, a lucent emerald,” would enable her to enter (341).

Marcus claims that in this narrative, Sara correlates the oppression of British women with that of the Jews: “Poverty and diaspora of the family have made the condition of women like the condition of the Jews. As outcasts and scapegoats they have ‘joined the conspiracy’ to work toward a better world” (64). Although valiant, her reading erases Sara’s sense of disgust, which resists an easy camaraderie with the Jew, as well as the particularity of their potential victimization by fascism. I suggest that rather than acting as a model of political virtue, Sara enacts the power of the negative. Through this problematic encounter, Woolf acknowledges the scope of anti-Semitism in Britain, and necessitates Sara’s confrontation with a racist legacy deeply embedded in her self, her family, class, and nation.

Tony Kushner describes the pervasiveness of modern anti-Semitic sentiments and state policies in Britain in the first half of the twentieth century, starting with the Aliens Act of 1905, instituted in part to minimize the immigration of East European Jews. Of particular interest in this context is the “racialization of refugees from Nazism in the 1930s” (233). Referring to racist statements by the Home Secretary, he concludes that “the great fear of government officials was not the more assimilated German Jews but the threat of a flood of *Ostjuden* . . . [who] were seen as inferior, backward workers, radicals and spreaders of antisemitism wherever they went” (233). This fear and racism pervaded the British Left as well. Kushner cites a statement by Naomi Mitchison in 1943: “when one reads of what is happening [to the Jews of Europe] one has a tendency to think serve them right before one can catch oneself up.’ She added that such

thoughts were kept within the private domain ‘so that one can get it off one’s chest and not say them in public’” (227). Another Mass-Observer after the war proposed the assimilation of Jews through inter-marriage as a humane method of ridding Europe of the “Jewish problem” (228).<sup>171</sup> Kushner observes that these examples of the “left-liberal *Weltanschauung*” represented a wider “frustration and irritation about Jewish difference and a blaming of the victim” that “could confront neither the horror nor the neatness of the Nazi solution” (228).

In contrast to a liberal disavowal of racism that blocks an awareness of anti-Semitism in the self and nation, Sara enacts a “politics of refusal” that denies the rewards of self-congratulation in benevolent anti-Semitic assimilation. In other words, she refuses a liberal universalism unable to confront its own racist and sexist limits. In the process, she thwarts fascist and liberal forms of anti-Semitism. This “politics of refusal” as Laura Zebuhr has described in relation to the work of J. M. Coetzee, articulates a non-statist form of agency that cannot be sublated as a “practice of resistance, a politicized standpoint that can be taken on by others and applied for specific ends.” Similarly, the “Outsiders Society” in Three Guineas describes practices of “becoming” rather than virtuous positions or identities. Rather than political “opposition,” the outsider assumes the strategic efficacy of liminal figures who are ostensibly located within the bourgeoisie and institutional power. The Years also focuses on the privileged figures of the middle class—the “daughters of educated men” and middle-class gay men—who, although accepted conditionally in circuits of privilege, throw circuit breakers to dismantle the institutions and phantasmatic centers they happen to find themselves in. They do so neither by identifying with the “privileged” nor with the “oppressed.” Such circuit breaking requires instead

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<sup>171</sup> “‘If such a miracle were possible [and] in a few generations, if they dropped their practice about marriage with non-Jews, there would be no Jewish problem. Hitler had another method and I wonder if’ (quoted in Kushner 228)?”

a more fundamental challenge to the definition of politics by finding ethical articulations of justice and liberty outside “political identity.” Both Three Guineas and The Years cultivate a desire to dissimulate and escape identity in order to undermine the violence of the modern state.

Woolf’s ironic invocation of “justice and liberty” prefigures some poststructuralist, anti-fascist thinking. In “The Art of Telling the Truth,” Foucault discusses modern “liberty” as the rewards of becoming subject of/to the state. In contrast, the possibility of freedom necessitates turning away from “an analytics of truth” toward practices that connect aesthetics and self-definition to ethics. The task becomes not to define oneself as “subject,” but rather to invent practices and “exercises” of freedom vis-à-vis and “between” relations of power (Foucault, Philosophy 96). Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari pay homage to Woolf directly in A Thousand Plateaus, citing Woolf’s invocations of liminality as instances of progressive mass politics: “In becoming wolf, the important thing is the position of the mass, and above all the position of the subject itself in relation to the pack or wolf-multiplicity . . . To be fully a part of the crowd and at the same time completely outside it, removed from it: to be on the edge, to take a walk like Virginia Woolf . . .” (29).

At the end of The Years is “The Present Day,” which leaves the future of women wide open, made possible by the indeterminacy of the value of domestic labor in the inter-war era. Woolf articulated this indeterminacy early in the project of writing The Pargiters: “What is a woman? I assure you, I don’t know; I do not believe that you know; I do not believe that anybody can know until she has expressed herself in all the arts and professions open to human skill . . . Her experience is not the same. Her traditions are different. Her values, both in art and in life are [different] <her own>” (The Pargiters xxxiii).<sup>172</sup> By rejecting any positive identity of

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<sup>172</sup> This is part of Woolf’s “Speech before the London National Society for Women’s Service.”

“woman” or anti-fascist, Sara widens the scope of anti-fascism. It is explicitly a pleasure—a joy in writing—that she preserves in her turn away from the professional rewards of anti-Semitism. She thereby implies the preservation of joy rather than self-sacrifice as an anti-fascist impetus.

## **Conclusion**

The Years enacts the anti-fascist logic implied through Nicholas and Sara by releasing itself from the “responsibility” of the domestic narrative, never quite reconciling with the mandates of bourgeois literary and political representation. In the “Present Day,” an indeterminable chronotope repeats and layers women’s lines of flight. Delia throws a party for all the surviving Pargiters, but in the absence of a suitable space for such an occasion (no one lives in a proper London house), they meet in the building where Eleanor and the others had held their political and committee meetings. It is now an office for house agents who continue cutting up Victorian mansions into flats. In this space, the Pargiters create a further anti-patriarchal use: “People were sitting on the floor, on chairs, on office stools. Long office tables, little typewriting tables, had been pressed into use. They were strewn with flowers, frilled with flowers” (397-8). The inter-war period is clearly an unprecedented chance for middle-class women in its dissipation of the private patriarchal home. The Years implies that they could also refuse the public patriarchal bribes that constantly threaten to absorb them. Here, Eleanor begins to desire “another life . . . here and now, in this room, with living people” (427).

The proof of the inter-war as an open interval comes near the very end of the novel, when the working-class children of the building’s caretaker provide a baffling song for the guests. To the Pargiters, “Not a word was recognisable . . . The grown-up people did not know whether to laugh or to cry. Their voices were so harsh; the accent was so hideous . . . Then they stopped. It seemed to be in the middle of a verse. . . shrill, discordant, meaningless . . . contrast between

their faces, and their voices were astonishing” (429-30).<sup>173</sup> Whereas fascists have represented these children’s desire according to their aesthetic and political needs, the Pargiters in this post-patriarchal space finally refrain from rendering the desire of the “mass” in question.

Caughie observes that this “uncertain ending . . . is a structural necessity in a narrative that conceives of history and story as a dynamic complex of relations” (106). In fact, upon completing The Years, Woolf herself wrote in her diary, “I myself know why it’s a failure, & that its failure is deliberate” (Diary, vol. 5, 65). The novel refuses to achieve the requisite “successful” opposition between bourgeois representation and fascism. In fact, it takes apart the premises of this opposition throughout. Both Three Guineas and The Years question the anti-fascist capacity of bourgeois hegemony, and suggest joyful anonymity as a strategy against spectacles of communist, liberal, and fascist self-congratulation. Her anti-fascism is therefore indeed a “failure,” both unrecognizable and uncompromising.

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<sup>173</sup> Abel reads the children’s significance differently, as “[m]arking an absent maternal function.” When similar children appear in Between the Acts, Abel claims that they are “the novel’s reconstruction of the fascist mother, and the sole intact identity amidst the fragments of the present” (183).

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