Jane Austen, Virginia Woolf and Worldly Realism

Morris, Pam

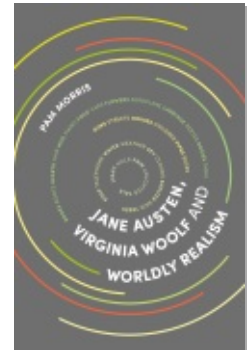Published by Edinburgh University Press

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Worldly Realism

He . . . was driven by intellectual fervour, a burning belief in abstract nouns such as 'sovereignty' and 'freedom'. Those ideas are noble in themselves, of course they are. But not when they are peeled away from the rough texture of the real world. For when doctrine is kept distilled, pure and fervently uncontaminated by reality, it turns into zealotry.

Jonathan Freedland,
The Guardian, 2 July 2016

Jacob Flanders' room in Cambridge contains the works of only one woman writer among all the many male-authored texts scattered about; that writer is Jane Austen. Even so, her presence is there by default, in 'deference, perhaps, to someone else's standard'.[1] It is as if Woolf pays a quietly humorous tribute here, across the space of a hundred years, to her most important literary progenitor. Yet had Jacob availed himself of the pleasure of reading *Northanger Abbey* (1st drafts c.1798–9; pub. 1816), he might well have been struck by the similarities between its narrative, initiating Austen's mature style, and his own, in which Woolf, too, establishes her mature artistic form. In those two works, respectively, *Northanger Abbey* and *Jacob's Room*, both writers find the means and the voice to articulate the sceptical irreverence which constitutes the distinctive force of their artistic sensibilities and vision, a scepticism that is their shared inheritance from the tradition of Scottish Enlightenment.

In these early novels, both writers are consciously challenging the authority of previous representational modes. *Jacob's Room*, appearing in 1922, the same year as *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land*, has, not surprisingly, been largely considered as part of the modernist rejection of traditional literary forms. Yet, Alex Zwerdling is surely right when he suggests that critical commentary on the novel

can only illuminate if it moves beyond a mere inventory of innovative techniques. Also required is consideration of why Woolf felt the need for a new kind of narrative.[2] Slotting writers into their generic pigeon hole can close off wider recognition of their artistic aims and achievements. Discussion of *Northanger Abbey* tends also to focus upon generic convention, especially Austen's debunking of the gothic novel. For some critics, like Alistair Duckworth, the novel ultimately fails because, while it makes fun of gothic form, the narrative remains too indebted to it to achieve its proposed moral vision.[3] By contrast, Claudia Johnson, among others, sees Austen's complex ironies as ultimately reinstating the value of the gothic imagination as a means of illuminating 'the ambiguous distresses, dangers, and betrayals of ordinary life'.[4] As with discussion of *Jacob's Room*, there is perhaps need to read the novel in broader terms than the generic, asking why Austen is challenging popular novelistic forms and what is the social perspective that informs her need to find a new mode of representation.

Despite the hundred odd years that separate them, both novels are centrally concerned to overturn concepts of heroic exceptionalism as portrayed in the protagonists of traditional literature. Both Catherine Morland and Jacob Flanders defy artistic convention in being resolutely ordinary. Despite her romantic response to gothic tales, Catherine lacks sensibility or even complicated interiority. Like most children she had enjoyed physical movement and games more than sentiment. Austen has been criticised for failing to provide convincing and sustained presentation of Catherine's growth in moral self-awareness. Yet, perhaps this is part of a deliberate, sceptical refusal of the heroic, a radical writerly commitment to people and things so normal as to remain beneath aesthetic notice. Jacob Flanders also lacks interiority. As has been recognised, Woolf writes not only against the form of the *Bildungsroman* but also against the traditional conventions of biography.[5] The narrative remains wholly external to Jacob's consciousness and lacks linear coherence. Given Jacob's death in the First World War, Woolf's totally unsentimental treatment sets itself provocatively against the prevailing reverence accorded the heroic dead. Before going up to Cambridge, Jacob accepts a present of Byron's writing and in his study he has the work of Thomas Carlyle (pp. 24, 49). The implication is that young men should be wary of the spurious attraction to heroes and hero-worship.

The title of the essay Jacob is writing, 'Does History Consist of the Biographies of Great Men?', with its obvious reference to

Carlyle's *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*, is darkly ironic given the premature, pointless deaths of so many young men in trench warfare. The title of the essay also forms part of Woolf's pervasive attack upon gender hierarchy throughout the text. Women are treated contemptuously by Jacob and his friends, regarded as lesser beings, lacking spirituality and necessary mainly for sexual pleasure. This presumption of masculine superiority is fostered by the cult of Hellenism that young men of Jacob's generation were immersed in at the public schools and Cambridge as part of a more general enthusiasm, in the early part of the century, for idealist philosophy. The effect was the elevation of the mind (invariably masculine) above the body (usually female). Woolf starkly ironises this idealising of disembodied rationality in her chilling account of death dehumanised by distance: 'Like blocks of tin soldiers the army covers the cornfield, moves up the hillside, stops [. . .] and falls flat, save that, through field glasses, it can be seen that one or two pieces still agitate up and down like fragments of broken match-stick' (p. 216). A hundred years earlier, Henry Tilney would find much common ground with Jacob as to women's lack of rationality and capacity for serious knowledge. Catherine's view of the history of great men as written by great men, however, is as sceptical as Woolf's: women are absent from their accounts and the male heroes all 'good for nothing' (p. 79). Henry Tilney's confidence in his capacity to educate and correct the female mind is ironically demoted by his serious failure of insight into his father's motives and conduct.

It is surprising to recognise how easily Woolf's representation of Betty Flanders, Captain Barfoot, Mr Floyd and most others in that circle of Jacob's childhood could be slipped unnoticed into Austen's village of Fullerton along with Mrs Morland and the Allens. There is a sense, moreover, that these rather complacent but respectable folk all belong to a way of life becoming outmoded and share a perspective that is no longer adequate, and this is so despite the hundred years between the two publications. The sceptical mockery of heroic endeavour, of individualist exceptionalism, and of gender hierarchy along with the ironic rejection of established literary forms are part of a larger agenda that Austen and Woolf share. Both writers are situated, at different historical points, within a continuing struggle of representation that constitutes the realms of art and of politics.

They both sense that a different possible world is struggling for perceptibility, a process engaging a new language and new forms. This is most obviously so for Woolf, writing in the aftermath of the

First World War that had thrown into disarray all the traditional certainties structuring social and political life: class and gender subordination, reverence for religion, national honour and law. It is the crisis of this ordered and authorised hierarchical perception of social reality that Woolf's narrative techniques aim to convey. Similarly, in *Northanger Abbey*, Austen interrogates and finds inadequate the available conventions of language and form. Failures of expression and understanding are characterised by a conflict between gothic and rational perceptions of realities. The occasions, moreover, involve reference to the forces of radical social change characterising the era of the French Revolution. When Catherine speaks enthusiastically of fresh horrors issuing from London, Eleanor Tilney mistakenly takes her to have news of political violence in the capital. Henry Tilney uses the opportunity to mock both women, informing his sister that any rational creature would relate Catherine's words to the circulating library not to 'a mob of three thousand men assembling in St George's Fields [. . .] the streets of London flowing with blood' (p. 82). But the unspoken challenge of the passage is that neither gothic melodrama nor pure rationality is adequate means to represent such actual social horror and turmoil as had indeed been recently experienced in London. Austen is in line, here, with British sceptical Enlightenment: pure rationality cannot fully comprehend the complexity of embodied experience.

The same irresolvable question of representation arises with Henry's lecture to Catherine as to the ungothic, law-abiding, Christian nature of England where atrocity would never be connived at or tolerated. Yet his moral and rational vision of English normality is overturned by the vicious brutality of his own father, General Tilney, whom he had rebuked Catherine for depicting as a gothic villain. Henry's rational picture of England leaves too much unnoticed and unspoken for. Yet to see the General's behaviour as vindication of the gothic mode is equally limiting. The General is not the exceptionalist villain of gothic horror. In his pursuit of greed and petty dictatorship he is all too ordinary; he represents the mundanity of secular evil. His competitive consumerism, his greed and concern with social status, moreover, typifies the powerful emergent force of aggressive individualism in British society and politics from the end of the eighteenth century onwards. As with Woolf, Austen's was a world in which the consensus was fracturing. The scepticism and lack of reverence that typify both writers facilitated a dissensual way of perceiving their changing worlds and forging the representational means adequate to their vision. I am terming that representational

mode worldly realism, as distinct from psychological and social realism. As the words suggest, worldly realism conveys a materialist, non-hierarchical and encompassing perception of existence, a horizontal continuity of self, social world and physical universe.

It may seem surprising to suggest an artistic continuity between Austen, often seen as the originator of the British tradition of realism, and Woolf, who is generally understood to herald its end. Both, however, are the direct literary heirs of the sceptical tradition of British empiricism, and both are writing at moments of public debate as to the conflicting claims of materialism versus idealism. Derek Ryan, one of the few critics to recognise that 'throughout her writing Woolf theorises the materiality of human and non-human life' associates this artistic perspective with her wariness of the 'philosophical, ethical and political pitfalls of individualism'.[6] Austen similarly stresses the materiality of the self and regards with suspicion the consensual consolidation of an ideology of individualism.

In considering the work of both writers as constituted by a shared, dissensual perspective, albeit mediated by their very different worlds, the work of Jacques Rancière offers an insightful conceptual framework. Rancière challenges the poststructuralist orthodoxy, espoused by critics like Roland Barthes, that modernism marks a radical break with the foundational belief of realism that words can provide an account of the world. Modernism, such anti-realists assert, initiates an aesthetic practice of conscious self-referentiality, a disengaging of word from world. In opposing this view, Rancière argues that the radical break occurs around the end of the eighteenth century, when a new dissensual aesthetic regime came into conflict with the existing consensual regime of classical verisimilitude.[7] It is perhaps not coincidental that this is the moment at which Austen inaugurates her experimental novelistic practice, even though the British context of her work is different from that of the continental writers whom Rancière discusses.

The terms 'consensus' and 'dissensus' are central to Rancière's thinking both on art and on politics, which he sees as two facets of the same site of struggle, the struggle of representation. Consensus, for Rancière, is an order regulated by the logic of the proper. It constitutes a naturalised artistic and political hierarchy in which everyone has a proper place which defines the terms and domain of their speech and action. This classical order of representation systematises a facade of verisimilitude into a hierarchical totality comprising 'an affinity between characters, situations and forms of expression' (*Politics of Literature*, p. 153). Within this vertical hierarchy only

certain people's speech is deemed significant and noteworthy and their actions rationally understandable in terms of values like honour, trust, ambition. These classical conventions constitute universal man as 'realistic' in the rational verisimilitude of congruous, meaningful speech, action and interpretation. This congruity of what is said, done and meant is held in place by the implicit guarantee of interiority, of the presence of capacity for mental willing. What is other to this proper realm of the classical regime is rendered unnoticed, unheard, without sense.

Politics and art, Rancière suggests, comprise a struggle over what is deemed deliberative, meaningful speech and what can be dismissed as mere expression of sensation, non-sense: 'Politics, before all else, is an intervention upon the visible and sayable.'[8] The cracking apart of the naturalised facade of the proper requires a writing practice as dissensus. This is the destructive/productive egalitarianism of the new aesthetic regime of representation that arises around the end of the eighteenth century. It produces a redistribution of the perceptible, bringing into visibility and audibility all that had been excluded as unworthy, improper and of no account. As opposed to the static, vertical hierarchy regulating the regime of the proper, the aesthetic regime is driven by the horizontal force of democratic energy. It is the 'tide of beings and things, a tide of superfluous bodies' that surges through the text of *Madame Bovary* (*Politics of Literature*, p. 39).

It is not the separation of the word from the world that typifies the aesthetic regime but its inclusivity. It redistributes 'space and time, place and identity, speech and noise, the visible and the invisible' (*Politics of Literature*, p. 4). Literary language is not a special elevated mode of poetics defining modernist writing, therefore, it is a new horizontal 'way of linking the sayable and the visible, word and things' (*Politics of Literature*, p. 9). It creates an egalitarian representational space in which anyone can say anything in any style of language whatsoever. Rather than textuality, the aesthetic regime replaces the idealism underpinning the classical regime by bringing into perceptibility the material continuity of 'the world-at-large that anyone can grab hold of' (*Politics of Literature*, p. 13). The usefulness of Rancière's concept of the perceptible lies equally in its materialism and its inclusivity. What is perceptible is that which is afforded by impressions gained through both the senses and the intellect but with a reversal of idealist emphasis from mind to what is physically present to ear, eye and hand. All the stuff of the world in which we have existence is thus comprehended within the struggle of representation that constitutes the political and aesthetic regimes.

Rancière sets out three relations of equality operating within the new dissensual regime of the perceptible. The first is that of 'the equality of subjects and the availability of any word and phrase to build the fabric of any life whatever' (*Politics of Literature*, p. 26). The second is the equality of mute things that are more eloquent than the most heroic orator. Finally, there is the 'molecular democracy of the states of things with no rhyme or reason' (*Politics of Literature*, p. 26). To illustrate this third equality he refers to Flaubert's claim that he was less interested in an individual beggar than in the mass of undifferentiated lice that lived off him (*Politics of Literature*, p. 25). Rancière claims that within the new aesthetic regime these three politics of equality are in tension, even conflict. Yet, what needs affirming as positive and productive in his account is the insistence upon things, upon the egalitarian tide of materiality that constitutes physical existence and the concomitant dethroning of human exceptionalism this necessarily entails. In a new regime of the perceptible, subjects and things and molecules are all equally noteworthy. It is this equality and inclusive horizontality that characterises the mode of writing I am terming worldly realism.

The conflict between a classical, vertical regime of the perceptible and the redistribution of what is visible and sayable within a new horizontal, egalitarian regime of representation has significant parallels with the central debate within Enlightenment thinking between the rational universalism of continental idealism and the material particularism of British empiricism. Classical verisimilitude underwrites the timeless values of universal man and erases from notice the embodied existence that renders humanity part of the changing physical world rather than the rational exception to it. British empiricism is sceptical of universal systems of knowledge, divorced from empirical particularity, and recognises the limitations of reason under the impress of habit and desires. It is, indeed, the promise of transcendence from an inconclusive, contingent everyday reality that constitutes the persuasive power of idealism as much as the rationality of its systems of thought.

The Hellenism flourishing among the young men of Jacob's generation in Woolf's text and in her actual world beyond fiction was part of a larger idealist reaction against what was seen as the spiritual aridity of nineteenth-century materialism. The smallness, ignoble detail and conventionalism of this way of thinking is the cause of Jacob's passionate rejection of H. G. Wells whose novels are exemplary, for him, of this narrow, provincial realism. Woolf, too, was critical of the writing of Wells, along with that of Arnold Bennett whom she

accuses of aiming at such factual, empirical particularity that there is a stifling 'air of probability embalming the whole', so that there seems no possible alternative to the familiarity within which we live.[9]

This is the criticism still brought against realism by anti-realist critics from Roland Barthes to, more recently, Gabriel Josipovici. Realism as a genre, anti-realists claim, functions ideologically to consolidate the status quo; the seamless verisimilitude, in form and content, that insists there is no alternative, that this is just, naturally, how things are. In *Whatever Happened to Modernism*, Josipovici makes the same accusation as Woolf arguing that realist novels 'create a world and characters to inhabit that world that do not flout the laws of probability [. . .] Such narratives are easy to read [. . .] the smooth chain of sentences gives us a sense of security, of comfort even.'[10] Novels like this, Josipovici claims, make the world seem smaller and meaner. We could say that their consensual regime of the perceptible constitutes a meticulous facade that regulates too narrowly what and who can be seen and heard. It operates comfortingly rather like Henry Tilney's view of England.

Nevertheless, in a recent review article on J. Hillis Miller in the *London Review of Books*, Rachel Bowlby complains that in this kind of critique, as made by Hillis Miller and Josipovici, among others, 'realism tends to get identified with a demoted, simplified theory of language – a word for everything and everything consistently called by its name'.[11] As this suggests, underlying the attacks upon realism there is frequently a positivist correspondence theory of truth, a belief that words can offer a one-to-one match with things in the world. Anti-realists, like Josipovici and Hillis Miller, disdain such an over-simple view but, they imply, realist writers do not, or, at least, realists sell that reassuring belief to their readers. Realism, according to this view, perpetrates a naive sense of language of which Wittgenstein says, 'a picture held us captive'.[12] This comforting sense of identity between word and world is at odds with the epistemological scepticism that underpins David Hume's empiricism and equally with a view of language as inherently dialogic and communicative.[13] Such a narrowly referential view of representation, valorising accuracy and facts, is more usefully understood as actualist, as distinct from realist.

Georg Lukács makes a very clear distinction between realism and the reassuring consensual convention of actualism. 'But the more closely Balzacian method approaches objective reality,' he argues, 'the more it diverges from the accustomed, the average [. . .] Balzac's method transcends the narrow, habitual, accepted limits of

this immediacy and because it thus runs counter to the comfortable, familiar, usual way of looking at things, it is regarded by many as "exaggerated"'.[14] Balzac's art, Lukács continues, moves completely beyond 'photographic reproduction' (p. 60). What Lukács is describing here seems very similar to what Rancière advocates as writing as dissensus, a shattering of consensual verisimilitude. Lukács' subsequent over-partisan defence of realism and attack upon modernism belongs to the Stalinist era, but the polarised controversies of that time initiated an unproductive, often misleading, binary opposition between realism and modernism that can too easily lead to an over-simplified, even caricatured version of one or the other, of which Josipovici's account of realism is an unfortunate example.

Modernism and realism are, in fact, far from incompatible; both are experimental and both can offer an open sense of the possibilities, as opposed to the factual probabilities, of human life. In his argument with Lukács, Bertold Brecht refuses to accept the polarisation of modernist experimentalism versus realist conventionalism: 'Formalism on the one side – contentism on the other. That is surely too primitive.'[15] Realism cannot be embalmed in any one form or style, he argues,

> Were we to copy the style of these [nineteenth-century] realists, we would no longer be realists. For time flows on [. . .] Methods become exhausted; stimuli no longer work. New problems appear and demand new methods. Reality changes; in order to represent it, modes of representation must also change. Nothing comes from nothing; the new comes from the old, but that is why it is new. (p. 82)

Conventional histories of the novel, such as Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), have certainly associated its development closely with the influence of eighteenth-century empiricism.[16] Yet, anti-realists would be on firmer ground in recognising realist fiction's affiliation with and constitution of idealist conceptions of reality. It is in their underpinning of idealist values that many nineteenth- and twentieth-century realist novels are most open to criticism as serving a conservative consensus. Psychological realism has undoubtedly contributed in no small measure to the ideology of individualism, especially the elitist individualism that privileges interiority, intelligence and sensibility as indexes of moral, even human worth. Within this ideology, the acquirements resulting from cultural capital are taken as naturally endowed spiritual superiority. Literary criticism, too, has tended to prize fictions depicting the sustained and complex inner struggles, the

conflicts of hope, doubt and suffering experienced by intensely individualised characters. Narrative trajectories, frequently tragic, show heroic protagonists crushed by the crass forces of materialism or their own failures of moral sensibility or by some combination of the two.[17] This common narrative pattern works against the democratic impulse that Erich Auerbach, in *Mimesis*, associated with the development of realism as a genre.[18] The main protagonists undeniably come from lower down the social scale than did earlier heroes and heroines, but novelists compensate by endowing them with exceptional inner nobility. The distinctive sensibility of a Dorothea Brooke, for example, elevates her as much above the mass of human kind as wealth and power separated earlier high-born protagonists. It is salutary to note that in all of Austen's fiction there is no Dorothea. Austen is always sceptical of exceptionalism.

Social realism, in addition, with its representations of detailed, particularised social worlds, frequently functions as the powerful, material 'other', against which the privileged interiority or 'soul' of the individual main character is defined. In this respect, it could be argued, realist fiction, in both its social and psychological forms, has frequently been inherently idealist rather than materialist, with plot structures maintaining the absolutism of the mind-matter hierarchical division. Moreover, plot structure, in conjunction with narrative technique, also functions as a model of universal knowledge in which mastery of particularity is brought intellectually into a unified systematised whole. Readers are interpellated into this fictitious position of panoptic omniscience and rewarded by the plenitude of certainty, justice and transcendence at the conclusion of even the most harrowing of stories.

It is not surprising this should be so. The modern novel takes its shape during the Enlightenment era. The struggles of representation that constitute that historical moment inevitably form part of the novel's generic DNA. From Austen through to Woolf and beyond novels play a major role in the ideological conflict between materialism and idealism. The consensual perception that came to dominate by the end of the nineteenth century was idealist, elevating mind over gross matter; bodily life retained visibility largely as the troublesome otherness of labouring people or alien races. A notable exception to this literary regime of the proper is Thomas Hardy's worldly realist fiction which explicitly thematises the continuity of human life with the physical world.

In 1918, just after Hardy gave up novel writing and before Woolf began writing *Jacob's Room*, in which young men aspire to Hellenistic

ideals, scorning the materialism represented by writers such as H. G. Wells, Bertrand Russell published *Mysticism and Logic*. In this work, he argues that the greatest achievements in human creative thinking have been the result of a fusion of two contrary impulses driving a pursuit of knowledge, namely idealism and empiricism. The 'true union' of these, he says, produces the 'highest eminence' possible in the world of thought.[19] This understanding of two, often conflicting, forces shaping the comprehension of reality plays a key role in Woolf's view of the 'highest eminence' in literary art. She sets this out most explicitly in her essay on Ivan Turgenev where she claims the greatest novelistic achievement is to hold in balance the contrary truths of vision and fact, allowing neither to subordinate the other (*Essays*, 6.11). In the political worlds of her novels, however, those pursuing visions are frequently practitioners of a coercive will to dominate. In Austen's fiction, characters have to learn that their vision or wishes need to be subjected to empirical facts.

Russell was writing at a time when idealism was coming to dominate the teaching of philosophy in the universities. He and G. E. Moore, both members of the Bloomsbury group, wrote rigorous refutations of the foundational tenet of idealism that the only reality available was that of the mind.[20] Idealist modes of thought, however, were increasingly influential across wide sections of policy-making on public welfare, education and class legislation. Idealism was also shaping notions of national identity and the role of the state. Russell was highly critical of this political dimension of idealist thinking. For this reason, although he pays tribute, in *Mysticism and Logic*, to the power of the metaphoric mode of language he associates with visionary thinking, he is most severe upon systems of thought that elevate the mental or spiritual at the expense of the empirical. Even the meanest things, such as hair, mud and dirt are part of material existence, he insists, and the tendency to ignore such everyday reality, the thingness of the world, constitutes a failure of perception that renders so much of idealist thought 'thin, lifeless and insubstantial' (p. 14). Russell recognises the imaginative attraction of exorcising all that is mundane and messy in physical existence as unreal and to locate reality, instead, in the coherence and totality of rational systems of belief. But he warns that identification with the self-sufficiency of ideal mental worlds leads ethically and politically to 'absence of indignation or protest' (pp. 16–17).

Idealist philosophy no longer dominates the discipline within universities, in part due to Moore's and Russell's critiques. Nevertheless, idealist modes of thought are arguably more powerful and

pervasive today across the globe than they were in Russell's time. Idealist assumptions underpin the consensus that regulates current regimes of the perceptible. The abstract mental and spiritual totalities of nationalism, religion and free-market neo-liberalism dominate much of human existence with coercive assertions that there is no alternative, rejecting any appeal to evidence and experience beyond the enclosure of system. According to David Harvey, in *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, for instance, neo-liberalism has become a universalistic mode of discourse, increasingly defining 'the common sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world'.[21] In *Critical Realism*, the philosopher of science, Roy Bhaskar, claims that during his training as a mathematician and economist, it was 'totally taboo to talk about the real world' existing beyond the realm of mathematical models and macro systems.[22] In fact, as Katrine Marçal points out, there was remarkably little resistance to idealist economics. The abstract models were 'quite simply too elegant. Sexy [. . .] From Wall Street to university campuses: people wanted to believe in this dream. And so they did.'[23] We live now, it is claimed, in the era of post-factual debate.

At the other end of the spectrum from macro systems and models of reality, idealism equally underpins the ideology of individualism, by holding in place the subject-object hierarchy. This is the mental structure that determines most forms of social inequality. The elevation of reason and spirit above flesh has been, and still is, used to justify the subordination of women, the poor, the non-heterosexual and non-European. In addition, belief in the human capacity to master the object world has brought the planet close to ecological disaster. The persuasive charm of abstract perfection too frequently renders imperceptible its material costs. Human life would be immeasurably impoverished without dreams, aspirations beyond self and pursuit of expansive ideals. Yet, cut adrift from the empirical realities of actual lives, the rhetorical force of abstractions like freedom, sovereignty, civilisation, honour, can seem to promise a desired but dangerous simplicity.

Bertrand Russell's insistence that such 'lowly' physical things as hair and mud cannot be put aside in accounts of reality is, in effect, a call for the redistribution of the perceptible so as to recognise the hidden continuities and dependencies of the mental and the physical. It is a demand, in Rancière's words, for 'a new way of linking the sayable and visible, words and things' (*Politics of Literature*, p. 9). Acknowledging the egalitarian relation of people and things challenges the exceptionalist status of the human over the object world.

It foregrounds the fact that as physical beings we have our existence in a shared material space. The regime of the perceptible is reconfigured when things are recognised as constituting the actual stuff that mediates our lives and interactions with others. As Hannah Arendt points out, in *The Human Condition*, it is objects that 'guarantee a permanence and durability without which a world would not be possible [. . .] they give rise to the familiarity of the world, its customs and habits of intercourse between men and things as well as between men and men'.[24] Recent research into neurology and cognition has further erased the idealist hierarchical separation of mind from the object world, suggesting that the physical environment has to be thought of as part of our 'cognitive architecture'.[25] Andy Clark, in *Supersizing the Mind: Embodiment, Action and Cognitive Extension*, suggests the mind needs to be thought of as 'the productive interface of brain, body and social and material world'.[26]

In *The Social Life of Things*, Arjun Appadurai suggests that the powerful tendency to 'regard the world of things as inert and mute' should be exchanged for a view in which 'it is the things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social context'.[27] He quotes Nancy Munn's observation on an exchange system based upon shells: 'Although men appear to be the agents in defining shell value, in fact, without shells, men cannot define their own value; in this respect, shells and men are reciprocally agents of each other's value definition' (*Social Life*, p. 20). In his work on Actor-Network Theory, Bruno Latour takes this radical equalisation of people and things even further. He vigorously attacks the idealist tradition that elevates the mental and disregards matter. Things, he says, 'are much more interesting, variegated, uncertain, complicated, far-reaching, heterogeneous, risky, historical, local, material and networky than the pathetic version offered for too long by philosophers'.[28] Reversing the traditional notion of human agency as expression of mental willing, Latour claims, of things, 'they too do things, they too *make* you do things'.[29] This is what Jane Bennett, in *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, refers to as 'thing power'.[30]

Latour takes from Heidegger the term 'gathering' to suggest the way meaning is collected in objects, extending the scope of the term well beyond Heidegger's usage. To consider a thing as a 'gathering' is to recognise all it brings together in its very substance: the range of materiality, the networks of people, institutions, social structures, past, future and present events, and so on, in an unclosable, horizontal chain of connection. For example, a camera 'gathers' within its material existence the scientific institutions that produce

knowledge of its technology, industrial plants that bring the technology into being, commercial and advertising networks that promote its consumption; in addition, photography, professional and amateur, has shaped public and private rituals, and has reconfigured notions of aesthetics and realism, truth and identity.

Things, in this sense, can be seen as metonymies, as parts of larger structures, networks and social forces. Within literary criticism, however, things are more usually read as metaphors and symbols, valued especially within post-structuralist discourse as figuration that introduces ambivalence and playfulness into writing. Yet Jacques Derrida, in his essay, 'White Mythology', gives a more negative account, accusing metaphor of complicity with the whole tradition of Western idealist philosophy. Metaphor performs an illusionist trick, conjuring the abstract into the perceptible. Idealism, Derrida argues, deploys metaphor pervasively to elevate the transcendent and downgrade or erase from notice the physical. Concrete terms are imbued with spiritual values and with passage of time that figurative element is forgotten or reliteralised. 'Above all,' Derrida writes, 'the movement of metaphorization (origin and then erasure of the metaphor, transition from proper sensory meaning to the proper spiritual meaning by means of a detour of figures) is nothing other than a movement of idealization.'[31]

A simple example of this movement from concrete to spiritual by way of metaphor would be the use of physical terms like above/below, high/low, inner/outer as literalised metaphors to refer to non-spatial, immaterial relationships imputed to mental realms, like morality, consciousness and social relations.[32] Without such terms it is difficult to see how the metaphysical hierarchy of mind over matter could be thought, let alone articulated. Similarly, objects transformed into symbols like the cross or the national flag function to give figurative tangibility to abstract concepts like sacrifice and nation. In this way metaphor can imbue the non-existent with a powerful sense of referentiality borrowed from the actual non-metaphysical world, providing the visionary and spiritual with perceptibility to be felt upon the pulse.

Woolf's novels are thick with things, but it is perhaps surprising to recognise how few of these function as symbols. Jacob's boots are not metaphors of abstract values. On the contrary, they point poignantly to the embodied life that has been physically destroyed. Things, in Woolf's texts, are frequently metonymic, referring horizontally to larger material structures and forces, as Jacob's room stands for male-dominated cultural institutions and power relations. Woolf is, indeed,

wary of the ideological functioning of symbolism and metaphor to impart a spurious reverence to questionable values, institutions and agendas. As Alex Zwerdling comments in his chapter on *Jacob's Room*, 'she had an instinctive distrust for reverence of any kind, treating it as a fundamentally dishonest mental habit that made symbols out of flesh-and-blood human beings' (*Virginia Woolf and the Real World*, p. 73). Things are, perhaps, less prolific in Jane Austen's fiction. Nevertheless, objects in her novels are far from being 'reality effects' in Roland Barthes' sense of functioning to guarantee verisimilitude. As with Woolf, things in Austen's writing are frequently metonymic, part of wider discursive networks, social processes and change. In this sense, certainly, the writing of both Austen and Woolf challenges the idealist regime of verisimilitude that relegates the material world below the mental. Their worldly realism makes perceptible the meaning systems articulated by mute things.

A representational regime that makes perceptible the egalitarian continuities and force fields linking the human world with the world of things radically challenges the exceptionalist status of the sovereign subject of interiority. Woolf's declaration of the necessity to kill the angel in the house is well-known. What is less recognised is that the whole project of her fiction from *Jacob's Room* onwards is to kill the angel within, the sovereign subject of privatised interiority. Austen, too, looks critically upon the developing individualistic ideology of self and subjects its illusions to ironic deflation. This scepticism towards the autonomous subject, by both writers, draws upon an anti-idealist understanding of self that develops in the eighteenth century.

Liberal individualism is frequently understood, by both detractors and supporters, as deriving unproblematically from Enlightenment thinking. It is important, therefore, to stress that David Hume is a major originator of an inherently social, as opposed to individualist, perception of self. The unity and sovereignty of the individual subject, deriving from Descartes's location of truth solely and innately in the rational mind, is dismissed by David Hume as 'unintelligible'.[33] The self, Hume argues, is nothing more than 'a train of different perceptions' (*Enquiry*, p. 142). Elsewhere, he exclaims, 'But what is man but a heap of contradictions.'[34] The passions, Hume claims, will always overrule reason. Instead of the autonomous, but lonely, individualism of the Cartesian interiority, Hume insists upon the priority of the co-operative process that constitutes social being and a shared world. 'The mutual dependence of men is so great, in all societies, that scarce any action is compleat in itself, or is performed without

some reference to the actions of others' (*Enquiry*, p. 64). Even poetic vision, the *sine qua non* of idealist aesthetics, is regarded by Hume, as essentially a social process: 'it runs along the earth; is caught from one breast to another' (*Essays*, p. 114). The progress of the arts and sciences, he declares, is not due to 'the spirit and genius of the few, but concerns those of the whole people' (*Essays*, p. 114). Inevitably, this brings to mind Woolf's rather enigmatic assertion in *A Sketch of the Past*, 'But there is no Shakespeare, there is no Beethoven; certainly and emphatically there is no God; we are the words; we are the music.'[35]

Adam Smith saw himself as continuing the work of his friend, Hume. So it is not surprising that he, too, stresses the social constitution of the self only possible within a shared world, although this may be an unfamiliar idea to those proclaiming Smith as an original proponent of ruthless individualism. On the contrary, Smith insists that a notion of self is only possible at all through interaction with others. As Roy Porter has observed, for Smith, 'self was a construct of various force-fields of sympathy between individuals'.[36] Smith's notion of sympathy, at the heart of his *Theory of Moral Philosophy*, is based upon an almost novelistic understanding of perspective: the imaginative ability to shift across different viewpoints. For Smith, this is the necessary given of a shared world. He elaborates a concept of an 'impartial observer' – a far more productive idea than that of his one reference to an 'invisible hand' – as the basis of just and humane social relations.[37] When our opinion or interests come into conflict with another's, Smith argues, 'We must view them neither from our own place nor yet from his, neither with our own eyes nor yet with his, but from the place and with the eyes of a third person.'[38] This horizontal process of moving across perspectives offers an egalitarian expansion of the self, helping us to recognise 'that we are but one of the multitude, in no respect better than any other in it' (*TMS*, p. 158). Indeed for Smith there are no bounds to the expansive worldliness of the imagination: it is 'circumscribed by no boundary, but may embrace the immensity of the universe' (*TMS*, p. 276). This statement could well provide a summary of Woolf's aim in writing *The Waves*.

Austen is undoubtedly heir to the Enlightenment understanding of perspective as foundation of a shared world. The ideas of Hume and Smith were pervasive in the public sphere when Austen began to write, both in the form of their own essays and popularised in reviews and discussions in the periodical press. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that Austen developed such complex techniques for

representing perspective. The innovative fluidity of point of view in her fiction constitutes the discursive grammar of a familiar common world which is the experience of reading her work. In her stories, it is those characters capable of achieving an observant impartiality, encompassing the viewpoints of others beyond their own, who embody the possibilities of progressive change. She initiates a transformation of plot structure, abandoning gothic plots and picaresque adventure to centre upon the ramifying social consequences of differing points of view. This experimental exploration of perspective projects focalisation to the heart of subsequent novel development. Opposing regimes of the perceptible become, in effect, the dynamic of narrative. From that transitional moment, at the end of the eighteenth century, the novel came to foreground perspective, the necessary condition of a shared world, in a way no other literary medium does. This defining emphasis upon point of view, within realism as a genre, has sustained a continuously experimental methodology into the present time.

Adam Smith's claim that a shared world of mutual justice depends upon the ability to enter into different viewpoints has considerable common ground with Jürgen Habermas's advocacy of a new 'paradigm of mutual understanding'.[39] A paradigm that he hopes can move philosophy beyond the sterile binarism of 'the transcendental and the empirical modes of dealing with issues'. Perspective is central to this project. Mutual understanding, Habermas claims, is 'structured upon the system of reciprocally interlocked perspectives among speakers, hearers and non-participants who happen to be present at the time' (*Philosophical Discourse*, p. 297). Going further than Smith, Habermas ties perspective to language structures, like, for instance, the ability of all competent speakers to use the grammar of personal pronouns. Anyone who has assimilated this practice has attained the performative capacity 'to take up and to transform into one another the perspectives of the first, second and third persons' (*Philosophical Discourse*, p. 297). One could go further and ask whether language as practice would even be possible in the absence of this intersubjective, shared world and equally whether self identity could be attained at all without the availability of such discursive positions.

An egalitarian understanding of perspective not only constitutes the condition of possibility for a shared social world. It also militates against the coercive imposition of a universalist system of belief. Classical idealism assumes a unitary mental elevation able to comprehend the particular as part of a totalised system of thought. Belief in a divine overview may be replaced by an ideal of science but

the aim remains to impose order and meaning upon heterogeneous material existence by means of abstraction and distance. This is what Michel de Certeau, in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, terms an 'exaltation of a scopic and gnostic drive [. . .] a solar Eye, looking down like a god' that imposes regularity upon the swarming, disordered confusion of mass society.[40] It is the Olympic distance assumed by the narrator in *Jacob's Room* in which living and dying men become only numbers and unreal, twig-like figures. Hannah Arendt warns that 'The end of the common world has come when it is seen only under one aspect and is permitted to present itself in only one perspective.' Against this homogenising perspective, Arendt insists 'the reality of the public realm relies on the simultaneous presence of innumerable perspectives' (*Human Condition*, pp. 58, 57). This constitutes a good description of Woolf's radical use of multiple perspectives as in *Mrs Dalloway*, for example, where the varied passers-by on the street look up at a plane above London. This small episode crystallises the opposition of Olympic distance against an egalitarian horizontal continuity of 'innumerable perspectives'.

Well before twentieth-century experience of totalitarianism, David Hume issued a similar warning against the impulse to impose mental order upon the randomness of the world, 'lest we assign causes which never existed, and reduce what is merely contingent to stable and universal principles' (*Essays*, p. 113). In another essay, he comments, 'But would these reasoners look abroad into the world, they would meet with nothing that, in the least, corresponds to their ideas, or can warrant so refined and philosophical a system' (*Essays*, pp. 469–70). 'System' is a key term in Enlightenment critique of idealism; the imposition of conceptual schemes without due regard for the empirical, of vision at the expense of fact. Adherents of current neo-liberalism find it convenient to ignore Adam Smith's equally firm rejection of universal systems imposed upon human reality. 'Human society,' he writes, 'when we contemplate it in a certain abstract and philosophical light, appears like a great, an immense machine' (*TMS*, p. 372). But, he warns, 'The man of system [. . .] is often so enamoured with the supposed beauty of his own ideal plan of government [. . .] [that] He seems to imagine that he can arrange the different members of a great society with as much ease as the hand arranges pieces upon a chess-board' (*TMS*, p. 275).

Despite Austen's radical restructuring of narrative upon ways of seeing rather than upon action, her characters are very far from being disembodied points of view. Austen's people are always embodied, driven by physical vitality. David Hartley, very influential at the end

of the eighteenth century, foregrounds what is largely absent from Hume's and Smith's accounts of self. To Hume's and Smith's considerations of the nature of human nature, Hartley contributed the notion of the embodied self, a self under the necessity of producing itself from the earliest physical sensations of pleasure and pain. For Hartley, therefore, self is always incomplete, emergent. As a complex of sensations and impressions, self is also, he says, '"factitious", i.e. generated by association; and therefore admit[s] of intervals, augmentations, and dimunitions'.[41] In *David Hartley on Human Nature*, Richard C. Allen explains that for Hartley 'the self, as a complex psychological structure of memories, thoughts, and, especially, dispositions, arises out of a ground of purely physical responses to one's circumstances'.[42] Hartley's materialist psychology foregrounds the long process of transformation from purely physical drives to the most highly cultural forms of self.

The account of self that prioritises social being, put forward by Enlightenment thinkers like Hume, Smith and, more recently, Habermas, can be criticised as overly optimistic. David Hartley is, if anything, yet more optimistic in his view of human nature. Nevertheless, his grounding of the self in the physical body makes perceptible the continuity of human life with that of the physical universe. There is nothing innately exceptionalist about the new-born child. On the contrary, Hartley's emphasis upon the fraught process that constitutes a factitious self from the primary physical sensations of pleasure and pain can lend itself to a darker psychology. For example, Judith Butler's understanding of identity as produced by reiterative practices that coerce the body into a gendered self shares common ground with Hartley's focus upon repetitive processes that constitute the factitious subject.[43]

Hartley's psychology was also developed in a much less optimistic way by Elizabeth Hamilton, Austen's contemporary. Hamilton's work did not and does not have the weight of major thinkers of the time but Austen knew at least some of her writing and spoke appreciatively of it.[44] Some recent studies of Hamilton have situated her on the conservative side of what Marilyn Butler termed the War of Ideas.[45] As I have argued elsewhere, this is surely mistaken. Hamilton's writing contains an acerbic critique of women's subordination to men and sets out in detail the ramifying evils that arise from that inequality.[46] The psychological insights she gains from this consideration of the human desire to dominate lead her to develop a remarkably modern account of a will to power that shapes individual identities, and social and national prejudices. Apart from William Godwin, there

seems nothing comparable to its radicalism in the thinking of her male Enlightenment contemporaries. Although Austen most probably did not know Hamilton's later writing, it demonstrates the kind of insights into human relations that might well come more readily to a woman's perspective. Indeed, Austen's psychology shares significant similarities with Hamilton's.[47]

The basis of Hamilton's thinking is Hartley's embodied psychology. Like him, she accepts that the self is factitious, an identity that emerges from fleshly being. As such, the self is never complete, it has to be perpetually produced and sustained. It is this existential insecurity that engenders what Hamilton terms the 'primary motive' of human existence, prior even to self-love.[48] She calls this primal drive '*a propensity to magnify the idea of self*'. It is, she claims, 'the most active of all the principles inherent in the mind of man' (*Popular Lectures*, 1.279). Self as an 'idea' is a radical notion and Hamilton provides an illustration of what she means from primitive societies. In such a world, bodily strength alone would allow a person so endowed to enlarge their sense of self 'by multiplying into it all the human beings whom he has brought into complete subjection to his authority [. . .] The persons, the wills, nay the very thoughts of the multitudes whom he thus appropriates are considered by him as part of self' (*Popular Lectures*, 1.301). Although the example is from primitive societies, the application to modern social formations is clear and Hamilton points out that currently when women marry the ceremony 'annihilate[s] her legal existence which is at that moment merged in his' (*Popular Lectures*, 1.304).

What happens to the idea of self in all those who are forced into subservience to aggrandise the factitious identity of those with power? Hamilton's answer seems remarkably close to recent theorising of the 'willing' subordination of the subordinate. By identifying with those in authority, Hamilton argues, those without power find a 'species of gratification' by merging self in the greatness of their superiors. In this way 'the yoke is transformed into a badge of honour' and 'the wills of the many become not so properly subjected by, as incorporated with, the will of the individual who dominates' (*Popular Lectures*, 2.10). Hamilton extends this thinking to national identity and politics at a time when glorifications of Englishness and denunciations of the perfidiousness of France resounded in the public sphere. Love of country, Hamilton says, agreeing with Edmund Burke, constitutes one of the earliest benevolent associations. But the result of this in Hamilton's thinking is very different from that of Burke. Because of the strength of early associations there is no object

more likely to be part of the idea of self than the land of one's birth. Where love of country becomes grafted to the propensity to magnify the sense of self, a zealous resistance meets any criticism and a refusal to contemplate change or reform. Where the idea of self depends upon the glorification of national identity, Hamilton warns, 'bigotry begets national hatred of all other countries with which the bigot is not identified' (*Popular Lectures*, 1.412). The primal need to magnify the idea of self can lead to similar intolerance when the idea of self is derived from identification with party or class or religion. For Hamilton the fleshly neediness for a self is the given for any understanding of identity or social relations.

What Hamilton recognises is the complex interrelationship between abstract belief systems and the desires and needs of the embodied self, a materiality that idealism disavows. A dissensual regime of the perceptible brings into visibility this inseparable interdependence of the mental with the physical realm, radically overturning the foundational distinction of idealist ideology. It foregrounds, equally, the constitutive continuity of self with others and with the world of things as the necessary basis of a shared world and language. It replaces the subject-object hierarchy with a relationship of equality between the embodied self and physical universe. This anti-idealist, egalitarian, horizontal regime of representation I am terming worldly realism. It is an order of the perceptible that, I shall argue, underlies the sceptical irreverence of Austen's and Woolf's views of reality and which drives their aesthetic innovations and achievements.

I have organised the book so that chapters on Austen alternate with chapters on Woolf. The idea is to allow for recognition of the similar areas of engagement between them. I would not wish to overemphasise this; they are writing from very different worlds. Placing chapters by Austen and Woolf alongside each other also makes the point that realism and modernism are not incompatible. Both are experimental and both can constitute a regime of the perceptible that is radically at odds with the consensus. If preferred, however, the chapters on Austen may be read first before moving on to those on Woolf. This would allow for greater sense of the chronological development and continuity within each writer's fiction. In *Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma* and *Persuasion*, for example, Austen positions each of her young female protagonists as a prime focus of change. In each case they move from place as location of idealist time-resisting values out into a more mobile, heterogeneous social space. This narrative pattern grows increasingly pronounced and overt from *Sense and Sensibility* onwards, culminating most radically in the

unfinished novel, *Sanditon*. In a similar narrative trajectory, Woolf's main female protagonists move out from the domestic regularity of the private drawing room into the public world.

In *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen registers a transitional moment, in the wake of the French Revolution, when consensual notions of the self begin to shift. Earlier traditions of sociability, of self as primarily social being, come under challenge from emergent individualistic values centred upon an idea of self as superior sensibility, understood as a unique interiority, or upon competitive acquisition of wealth and possessions as aggrandisement of identity. Both of these ideas of self are subject to Austen's irony, as they continue to be throughout her work. Woolf, writing in the period of social upheaval following the First World War, also sets out to dismantle the ideology of individualism. In overturning the idealist belief in human exceptionalism, both writers reconnect an embodied self to the physical world and to the world of things in a relationship of equality. In *Persuasion*, Austen ridicules aristocratic claims of exemption from fleshly vulgarity, emphasising the vulnerability of the physical body. In *The Waves*, Woolf reorders the distribution of the perceptible, evoking the bodily movement of nerves alongside the currents of tides and seasons. In all six novels, material things, like fireplaces and flowers, connect the lives of characters into larger networks of social change.

Alongside this redistribution of the self from a vertical to a horizontal relationship with material existence, both writers warn of the dangers inherent in the disconnection of ideas and beliefs from empirical reality. Elevated mental systems, each writer shows, are often driven by embodied desires for mastery, perfection and from fears of dissolution. Emma Woodhouse's sweeping confidence when she declares 'there can be no doubt' causes pain and harm to individual lives in her community. Woolf shows the devastation wrought by idealised systems of belief nationally and internationally.

In all six novels, narrative perspectives are subject to constant experimentation as determined by each writer's worldly comprehension of social and physical continuities. For both Austen and Woolf, fluidity of point of view is the creative condition of community, of the common life we have as part of physical existence. It is the rigorous refusal of mysticism and deference that allows them to treat what is revered with irreverent comedy and to look sceptically at whatever and whoever claims authority. Considering Austen and Woolf together, in this way, allows for a fuller recognition of just what an impressive, intelligent, artistically ambitious body of work these two women writers achieved. Above all, their writing constitutes

an aesthetic regime that makes perceptible the vision and the fact of human life as primarily that of embodied creatures sharing all the vicissitudes of our material existence in a common physical world. In its ethical and political implications, there can be no greater dissensual challenge to the consensual order of things.

Notes

1. Virginia Woolf, *Jacob's Room*, p. 49.
2. Alex Zwerdling, *Virginia Woolf and the Real World*, p. 64.
3. Alistair Duckworth, *The Improvement of the Estate: A Study of Jane Austen's Novels*, p. 83.
4. Claudia L. Johnson, 'Introduction', Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey, Lady Susan, The Watsons and Sanditon*, p. xxiii.
5. See, for example, Michael H. Whitworth, *Virginia Woolf*, p. 106; Lindon Peach, *Virginia Woolf*, pp. 69, 73.
6. Derek Ryan, *Virginia Woolf and the Materiality of Theory: Sex, Animal, Life*, p. 4.
7. Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Literature*, pp. 10–12; see also, *Aisthesis: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art*, pp. ix–xvi, 1–20; *The Aesthetic Unconscious*, p. 24.
8. Jacques Rancière, 'Ten Theses on Politics', reprinted in *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, p. 37.
9. *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, 4.160.
10. Gabriel Josipovici, *Whatever Happened to Modernism*, p. 164.
11. Rachel Bowlby, 'Waiting for the Dawn to Come', *London Review of Books*, 11 April 2013, vol. 35, pp. 32–4.
12. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 48e.
13. I outline this communicative view of language with reference to Wittgenstein, Jürgen Habermas and Donald Davidson in *Realism*, pp. 142–62.
14. Georg Lukács, *Studies in European Realism*, p. 58.
15. Bertold Brecht, 'Against Georg Lukács', *Aesthetics and Politics*, p. 71.
16. Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*.
17. Jeannette King, *Tragedy in the Victorian Novel*, demonstrates the conscious espousal of classical ideals by nineteenth-century novelists.
18. Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, p. 497.
19. Bertrand Russell, *Mysticism and Logic*, p. 11.
20. G. E. Moore, *Philosophical Studies*, pp. 1–30.
21. David Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, p. 57.

22. Roy Bhaskar, with Mervyn Hartwig, *The Formation of Critical Realism: A Personal Perspective*, p. 36.

23. Katrine Marçal, *Who Cooked Adam Smith's Dinner?: A Story about Women and Economics*, p. 79.

24. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 94.

25. 'Cognitive Architecture' is a term widely used in theories of the structure of the mind, especially in relation to how long-term memory patterns are established.

26. Andy Clark, *Supersizing the Mind: Embodiment, Action and Cognitive Extension*, p. 219.

27. Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, pp. 4, 5.

28. Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*, p. 21.

29. Bruno Latour, 'Why has Critique Run Out of Steam: From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern' in Bill Brown, ed., *Things*, p. 168.

30. Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, p. 6.

31. Jacques Derrida, 'White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy', in *Margins of Philosophy*, p. 226; in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, I. A. Richards makes a similar point, 'As it [philosophy] becomes more abstract we think increasingly by metaphors that we profess *not* to be relying upon', p. 92; for a brilliant and positive discussion of metaphor's dependence upon a universalising function, see Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: The Creation of Meaning in Language*, p. 101.

32. For further discussion of literalised metaphors, see George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*.

33. David Hume, 'An Abstract of a Book lately published; Entitled a *Treatise on Human Nature, Etc*', reprinted in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, p. 142; see also, *A Treatise*, p. 300.

34. David Hume, *Essays, Moral, Political and Literary*, p. 188.

35. Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being*, p. 85.

36. Roy Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason*, p. 336.

37. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, p. 292. Several recent commentators have criticised over-emphasis of Smith's concept of the 'hidden hand': Roy Porter, *Enlightenment*, claims that to understand the term in a purely economic way is 'myopic and shallow', p. 395; James Buchan, *Capital of the Mind: How Edinburgh Changed the World*, notes that the view of Smith as apostle of modern capitalism has been under attack in Scotland for some years, adding that 'by the end of his life [Smith] was expressing the most profound misgivings about the moral complexion of commercial society', pp. 120–1; Nicholas Phillipson, *Adam Smith: An Enlightened Life*, records that, in his later years, Smith declared he had always considered *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* as 'a much superior work' to *Wealth of Nations*, p. 274.

38. Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* p. 157. Further references to this book will be given as *TMS*; Amartya Sen, *The Idea of Justice*, invokes Adam Smith's thinking on the 'impartial spectator', pp. 44–6, 134–8.
39. Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, p. 296.
40. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 92.
41. David Hartley, *Observations on Man, his Frame, his Duty and his Expectations* [1791], 1.3.3.370.
42. Richard C. Allen, *David Hartley on Human Nature*, pp. 265–6.
43. Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*, pp. 93–119.
44. When Austen learned that *Sense and Sensibility* had been attributed to Hamilton, she responded that it was a pleasure to be identified with such a respectable writer, *Jane Austen's Letters*, p. 251.
45. For accounts of Hamilton as conservative, see Kathryn Sutherland, 'Hannah More's Counter-Revolutionary Feminism', in Kelvin Everest, ed., *Revolution in Writing: British Literary Responses to the French Revolution*, p. 42; William Stafford, *English Feminists and their Opponents in the 1790s: Unsex'd and Proper Females*, pp. 32–3.
46. See my Introduction to Hamilton's *Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education* [1801], rpt in *Conduct Literature for Women 1770–1830*, 3.1–18; Gary Kelly, *Women, Writing and the Revolution*, aligns Hamilton's politics with those of Godwin and Wollstonecraft, p. 26.
47. In a letter to her sister Cassandra, Austen expresses a view of the embodied, feeling self as a process of continuous change that shares striking similarities with that of Hartley and even that of Hume: 'But seven years I suppose are enough to change every pore of one's skin, & every feeling of one's mind', *Jane Austen's Letters*, p. 99.
48. Elizabeth Hamilton, *A Series of Popular Lectures* [1813] 2 vols, 1.272.