Dying to Live: British Idealism and the Bildungsroman

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BEGINNING AT THE END

LET me begin with something that most critics and theorists of the bildungsroman actually seem to agree on: the importance of the end. Although the difficulties and disagreements that cling to accounts of this genre are notorious, the majority of critics have nevertheless accepted that whatever a bildungsroman *is*, a novel truly becomes one at its end. For Wilhelm Dilthey, who popularized the term, a bildungsroman tells the story of how a young man "enters life in a happy state of naivete . . . grows to maturity through diverse life experiences, finds himself, and attains certainty about his purpose in the world." For Georg Lukács, the bildungsroman or "novel of education" is distinguished from the "novel of disillusionment" by its ending, in which the hero's final accommodation to the forms of society signifies not "the total collapse and defilement of all his ideals but a recognition of the discrepancy between the interiority and the world."[1] And for Franco Moretti, a bildung is only one if "it can be seen as *concluded*: only if youth passes into maturity, and comes to a stop there."[2] Even critics who chafe against this generic frame have tended to do so by rejecting the tyranny of the end. From a feminist standpoint, for example, Susan Fraiman expresses her ambivalence about the bildungsroman—a genre that has historically excluded women—by reimagining "the way to womanhood not as a single path to a clear destination but as the endless negotiation of a crossroads."[3] More recently, Elisha Cohn, drawing on theories of affect, has attempted to alleviate the "pressures of self-cultivation" by amplifying the moments of lyrical suspension or inaction in nineteenth-century novels that delay the bildung plot's inexorable march toward its developmental goals.[4]

This essay too will concern itself with ends and endings, but from a slightly different angle. My starting point will be the end that comes to us

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all: death. If, as Lukács famously argued, the "outward form of the novel is essentially biographical" (and, among the novel's genres, the bildungs-roman is more biographical than most), what might be the formal signif-icance of biography's inevitable end (77)? If the bildungsroman describes how the young person *enters* life, what could it tell us about how they leave it? To align formal with biographical closure, however, is already to deviate from what critics have seen as the normative struc-ture of the bildungsroman: youth is supposed to *pass into maturity*, not just *pass away*. Can a novel that ends in early death still be rightly classified as a bildungsroman? And if it can, what does this mean for the notion of bildung, which we are accustomed to think of as belonging to—almost a synonym for—*life*? Can bildung continue, in some form, after the death of the individual? Or, more radically still, might individual death be a *necessary* stage in humanity's progress toward its "true end," in (as Wilhelm von Humboldt put it) "the highest and most harmonious devel-opment of [its] powers to a complete and consistent whole"?[5]

    In this essay, I will approach these questions via the bildungsroman's relation to a philosophical movement, British Idealism, that not only played a major role in the refiguring of the notion of "development," which was a major cultural enterprise in Britain in the late nineteenth century, but was also (like all idealisms) at least half in love with easeful death. In the last three decades of that century, in the work of thinkers like Thomas Hill Green, Francis Herbert Bradley, Edward Caird, and Bernard Bosanquet, a distinctive version of Idealism emerged, synthesizing elements of recent Continental thought (Kant, Hegel, Fichte), classical philosophy (Plato, Aristotle), and homegrown intellectual traditions (British empiricism, Scottish Common Sense philosophy). However, British Idealism's influence on and interactions with literature have attracted little attention from critics—owing, perhaps, to the colloquial opposition between idealism and realism, and to realism's status as a cultural dominant for the Victorian period as a whole. Here, I focus on two novels that, emerging from the very heart of the Idealist milieu, refuse this opposition: Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean* (1885), which describes the "sensations and ideas" of a young Roman patrician living under the reign of Marcus Aurelius, and Mary Augusta Ward's *Robert Elsmere* (1888), the story of an Anglican clergyman who exits the church after losing his faith in the literal truth of the Bible. Both routinely classified as bildungsromane, these two novels take the unusual step of interrupting the bildung of their protagonists with early death. In doing so, however, both novels retain the notion of development itself, extending it beyond the limits of the biographical form.

Reading *Marius* and *Robert Elsmere* alongside the British Idealist philosophers is illuminating, in part, because of their shared ties to Oxford—hub of the Idealist movement and longtime home of both Pater and Ward. But the relationship is significant not just because both Pater and Ward read the works of Plato, Kant, and Hegel, knew key British Idealist figures like Green and Benjamin Jowett personally, or had inhaled Idealist models and themes along with the crisp Oxford air. Rather, it shows novelists and philosophers wrestling with the same problem: how to understand and relate to the inevitability of death at a historical moment when Christianity's metaphysical consolations and its representations of death were alike losing their force. As Pat Jalland has noted, nineteenth-century British culture was dominated by the Evangelical ideal of the "good death," which

> ideally should take place at home, with the dying person making explicit farewells to each family member. There should be time, and physical and mental capacity, for the completion of temporal and spiritual business.... The dying person should be conscious and lucid until the end, resigned to God's will, able to beg forgiveness for past sins and to prove his or her worthiness for salvation. Pain and suffering should be borne with fortitude, and even welcomed as a final test of fitness for heaven.[6]

By the 1870s, however, the hold of this ideal over the Victorian imagination had begun to loosen.[7] At the same time, a growing materialism about death (both cause and consequence of the scientific reforms that lowered death rates dramatically after 1870) reinforced long-standing anxieties about the afterlife and prompted new ones about the physical pain of dying.

Amidst the disarray of Victorian *ars moriendi*, British Idealism offered an approach to death that preserved aspects of the Christian "good death" without attempting to deny the epistemological weight of scientific materialism. The conceptual core of this approach was an idea of development inspired by the Hegelian dialectic, which absorbs death—recast as the philosopheme "negation"—into itself as its motive force. The telos of the Idealist notion of development is the life of Spirit, which does not (in Hegel's famous phrase) shrink from death and "devastation" but rather "endures it and maintains itself in it."[8] From this perspective, death looks less like an interruption of the developmental process than its fulfillment: it is, as Green puts it, "the transition by which the highest form of nature, i.e. the highest realisation of spirit ... passes into a perfectly adequate realisation, i.e. a spiritual one."[9] But this

realization—the death of the body—is only the culmination of a longer process of worldly "dying," whereby the material or natural self is rejected ("killed") in favor of the self that is moral and spiritual. The Evangelical emphasis on preparation for and awareness of death thus survives in the British Idealist notion of "dying to live," which imbues the old Christian motto *He that saveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life shall save it* with new meaning and vitality amid the late Victorian crisis of faith.

In the 1880s, as I will demonstrate, the British Idealists' dialectical reclamation of death intersected with what Gregory Castle has described as a "negative" dialectical critique of the bildungsroman taking place within the form itself. Castle dates this critique to the 1890s, when the "modernist" bildungsroman "begins to criticize the very society it was meant to validate and legitimize."[10] In voicing their protests against "the Bildungsroman as the quintessential narrative of the sovereign and autonomous, harmoniously self-identical subject of Bildung," Castle argues, modernist authors invented a practice of writing that anticipates Theodor Adorno's "negative dialectics," reworking the formal conventions of the bildungsroman to make room for *non*identity as such (i.e., an "other" that cannot immediately be integrated into the "same").[11] In doing so, however, these authors retained the core elements (plot trajectory, characterization, thematic emphases) of the genre, thus reinstating "a revalued classical Bildung"—now in principle made available to those (like women and the formerly colonized) whom the classical bildungsroman had marked as *other*—as "the goal of the modernist *Bildungsheld*" (protagonist).[12]

Pater's and Ward's novels, however, suggest that Castle is being overpunctual in assigning the critique of bildungsroman to "modernism," as well as overhasty in his identification of the aesthetic and political dimensions of this critique. At least a decade before Thomas Hardy, D. H. Lawrence, and James Joyce, Pater and Ward explored another and perhaps more intractable threat to the sovereignty and self-identity of the subject of bildung: death. Neither novel, moreover, constitutes a social "critique" in the negative-dialectical sense Castle intends. Instead, following their shared preoccupation with *literal* rather than *social* death, both *Marius* and *Robert Elsmere* prioritize the ethical and spiritual over the social and political dimensions of bildung, positioning "dying to live" in ambivalent but not oppositional relations to the norms of bourgeois socialization. Crucially, both authors figure "dying to live" as a form of companionship—of coming to know and to love one's own death as another person—modeled on the relationship between the Christian

believer and an indwelling God. In a gesture familiar from the archives of Victorian Hellenism, Pater's *Marius* represents this abstract intimacy in terms of intense, erotically charged friendships between men. Ward's novel, however, delivers a pointed critique of this representational strategy, arguing instead that "dying to live" is best represented by, and accomplished within, heterosexual marriage.

THE FICTION OF DEVELOPMENT

Exploring the relationship between British Idealism and the bildungsroman means rewriting a widely accepted narrative of the genre's evolution, according to which the "classical" or "realist" bildungsroman, from its heyday in the first half of the nineteenth century, gradually declines in influence and importance with the approach of the twentieth—its cultural authority whittled away by the proliferation of novels (often described as "anti" or "meta" bildungsromane) that revise or reject its generic conventions. The fate of this genre thus also plays an important role in many accounts (including Castle's) of the transition from the "Victorian" to the "modernist" period in British literary history. Jed Esty's 2012 book *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development*, for example, influentially argues that the classical bildungsroman was organized by a "developmental paradigm": a way of thinking about the emergence of identity in time that was widespread in British culture in the nineteenth century. If the nationalist mythos of the nation-state's foundation was one form this paradigm took, the traditional bildung plot was another, and bildungsromane of the period routinely depicted national and individual identities developing in tandem. In the decades between 1880 and 1920, however—spurred, Esty suggests, by the pressure that empire-building exerted on the national form—this paradigm was subjected to a variety of critiques, the literary version of which produced a host of novels whose protagonists "die young, remain suspended in time, eschew vocational and sexual closure, refuse social adjustment, or establish themselves as evergreen souls."[13]

The novels I consider here, however, demonstrate that early death does not necessarily constitute a critique of the developmental paradigm. Rather, *Marius* and *Robert Elsmere* both *develop development*; the negativity they introduce into the bildung plot drives both the genre and its underlying logic forward. The idealist phase of the bildungsroman, therefore, is at best an awkward fit with the developmental narrative literary historians usually tell about the British novel: here, bildungsroman and

antibildungsroman are not opposed but locked in a dialectical embrace, becoming difficult even to distinguish from each other. For scholars of modernism, this embrace may demand that both the genealogy and political significance of modernist formal negativity be reconsidered; for Victorianists, it prompts the disquieting thought that death has always been central—even canonical—to the bildungsroman genre, from the persistence of the "Beautiful Soul" archetype in Charlotte Brontë's Helen Burns and George Eliot's Mordecai, to the piles of dead bodies over which the protagonists of *David Copperfield* (1850) and *Great Expectations* (1861) must clamber on the way to adulthood.

More broadly still, thinking of death and development dialectically suggests a different approach to long-standing questions about the "life" of the bildungsroman as a generic category: about, for example, its embodiment in any actual novel and its ongoing value as an object of critical desire. In his brilliant and much-cited book, *Phantom Formations: Aesthetic Ideology and the Bildungsroman*, Marc Redfield has argued that the bildungsroman is neither fully living nor fully dead but undead—a ghost. "[A] tension within the procedures of institutionalized literary studies has generated this ghost," he argues, and the haunting of this institution by the bildungsroman reflects the aporiae endemic to the modern concepts of literature, criticism, and the aesthetic.[14] I will return to Redfield's argument in my conclusion, but for now let me say that I think he is right to see the genre as both living and dead, but wrong in his choice of the ghost as the figure for that paradox. Instead, I want to propose that the bildungsroman, in the idealist sense, *dies to live*: it lives on, within the institutions of literature and criticism, through its continual dying.

IRONY, RELIGION, AND THE NOVEL

Among critics of the bildungsroman who emphasize endings, few have been more skeptical of the genre's artistic and ethical pretensions than Hegel. For Hegel, the novel is heir to the knightly and pastoral romances of early modernity. In the novel, however, the knight's quest has been degraded into the young person's "apprenticeship" in the ways of the world. This apprenticeship ends when "the subject sows his wild oats, builds himself with his wishes and opinions into harmony with subsisting relationships and their rationality, enters the concatenation of the world, and acquires for himself an appropriate attitude to it."[15] Although this passage doesn't mention Goethe's Ur-bildungsroman *Wilhelm Meister's*

Apprenticeship (1795–96) by name, the allusion is unmistakable. Hegel's deflationary judgment of the novel stems from his account of the broader artistic epoch to which it belongs—the romantic—which stretches from the end of the classical period to the early nineteenth century, and of which Romantic*ism* represents the highest (and terminal) development. "The true content of romantic art," Hegel writes, is "absolute inwardness, and its corresponding form is spiritual subjectivity with its grasp of its independence and freedom" (519). For Hegel, romantic art is tied to the emergence of Christianity, and the archetype of this "spiritual subjectivity" is Christ, in whom the divine appears amid "the finitude and external contingency of existence" (520). Romantic art represents this identity of human and divine as a process or "task": "Finite man . . . [must] elevat[e] himself to God, detaching himself from the finite . . . and through this killing of his immediate reality becoming what God in his appearance as man has made objective as true reality" (522).

"*Killing* one's immediate reality": death, imagined as liberation from finitude and reconciliation with the Absolute, is essential to romantic art. For the romantic outlook, death becomes "a process through which the spirit, now independent of what negates it externally, must itself go in order truly to live" (523–24). For Hegel, the centrality of this Christianized death to romantic art also signals the death of art itself. The notion of God's presence within individual consciousness produces the introspective tendency of romantic art, but the content of that inner life is, by its nature, impossible to represent adequately in sensuous form. At the same time, God's presence in the human world means the content of that world increasingly falls within art's purview—but this material is prosaic, rather than properly poetic, and in representing it art risks ceasing to be art at all. Although this confrontation between inner and outer is the subject matter of romantic art, the widening gap between them eventually tears romantic art itself apart. Subject and world must look to a field beyond art to be reunited, and, in the progressive structure of Hegel's dialectic, that field is religion (575).

Considered as a mode of religious rather than aesthetic consciousness, Christianity's relationship to death changes. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), Hegel argues that, through the death of the incarnate God, death itself "becomes transfigured from its immediate meaning, viz. the non-being of this *particular* individual, into the *universality* of the Spirit who dwells in His community, dies in it every day, and is daily resurrected."[16] And although, for Hegel, this also means the demise of any traditional notion of an afterlife, self-consciousness claims another

kind of immortality in the dying away of its particularity into the universality realized in the community of the faithful. This relation to community is one crucial way in which the religious consciousness advances beyond the artistic, as Hegel's comments on romantic irony in the *Aesthetics* (1835) demonstrate. The ironist (here Hegel has Friedrich von Schlegel in mind) sets up the ego as "lord and master of everything," making individual subjectivity the sole source of meaning and value and reducing the external world to a mere "show." In a deep sense, then, nothing external really exists for the ironic ego, and in this "abstract freedom and unity" it negates everything outside of itself (64).

In contrast, it is the essence of religion to depict Spirit as possessing an existence independent of individual subjectivity. Unlike philosophy, which speaks in the purely conceptual language of thought, religion remains dependent on what Hegel calls "picture thinking" or representation—on images, narratives, and figures. In generating representations of its god or gods, Spirit *qua* religious consciousness "*pictures* itself to itself," but *as an other*; it recognizes otherness as constitutive of it.[17] To the extent that representations circulate within a community, therefore, they become the media of a profound sense of collective identity. Christianity, or "Revealed Religion," is the most advanced form of religious consciousness because it comes closest to grasping the truth that social relationships in fact proceed from Spirit's own nature, rather than any external force or actor. Hence, perhaps, Hegel's objection to the bildungsroman: the bildungsheld first struggles against, then accommodates himself to, the world of civil society, without ever grasping that he and the world are one.

Notwithstanding his disapproval of *Wilhelm Meister*, Hegel's narrative of the development of Spirit has often been read as a kind of bildungsroman in its own right, and as such underpins much theorizing about the genre and novel form in general. To cite only the most influential case, Lukács's *Theory of the Novel* attempts to historicize aesthetic categories in the vein of Hegel's *Aesthetics* (15–17). But Lukács also claims to *reverse* Hegel's historical thesis, arguing that art becomes problematic not because reality has *ceased* to be so, but because reality is more problematic than ever. The loss of a nonproblematic "rounded totality" drives the novel's struggle to produce, by way of compensation, a rounded totality in its own form (17). In his account of novelistic form, therefore, Lukács turns to Schlegel and the paradigm of Romantic irony. Like Hegel's ironic ego, Lukács's novelist claims an abstract freedom: fusing the disconnected data of experience into organic wholes by negating their heterogeneity and discreteness (84). This abstract subjectivity is confronted, on the

side of objectivity, by a negation equally abstract and indeterminate: the world of social institutions and conventions that Lukács calls "second nature." Second nature is the negation of interiority, the "charnel-house of long-dead interiorities" (64). The death that produces culture and society is not one moment in a larger dialectical process but merely (as the mature Lukács admits) an occasion either for pessimism or "highly naïve" optimism—a millenarian hope that the dead things of culture will one day be restored to life (20).

"The novel is the art-form of virile maturity," Lukács declares—as if, with the novel, literature had finally grown up. "Maturity," here, means adopting the attitude of resignation that Lukács calls irony: renouncing both the possibility of and the desire for knowledge of the world, the novelist contents himself with portraying only "mere fact[s]" but in doing so remains faithful that he will be granted a glimpse of "the ultimate, true substance, the present, non-existent God" (90). The afterimage of that glimpse is novelistic form. In the novels I consider here, however, "virile maturity" is not the end of the story. In their reviews of each other's works, Ward and Pater sketch a different account of the novel's relation to "facts," invoking a conception of religion quite unlike the "negative mysticism" of *Theory of the Novel*.

For Ward, in her review of *Marius*, religion functions as a medium that binds aesthetic and ethical modes of consciousness to the reality—the fact—of social life. Therefore, while the story of Marius's development represents an advance over *The Renaissance* (1873) in recognizing that "[the] worship of beauty, carried far enough, tends to transform itself into a passion moral in essence and in aim," it remains too committed to the aesthetic consciousness and its essential egoism.[18] It is a "degradation" of religion, she writes, "to say to its advocates, Your facts are no facts; our sense of reality is opposed to them; but for the sake of beauty, the charm, the consolation to be got out of the intricate system you have built upon this chimerical basis, we are ready to give up to you all we can."[19] In his review of *Robert Elsmere*, by contrast, Pater argues that Ward's sense of fact is too restrictive and therefore cedes too much ground to the empiricism of the "scientific spirit." Granted, Pater argues, Ward's hero had a philosophical and perhaps a moral duty to recognize his doubts about the literal truth of the "sacred story." But Robert's conviction that the story is *false* is a dereliction of that same duty: "Had he possessed a perfectly philosophic or scientific temper, he would have hesitated."[20] In leaping from doubt to negative certainty, Ward's novel forecloses a sense of "possibility" that is *itself* a "fact"—the "most important

fact in the world." From this sense of possibility flow the "hope" and "love" that constitute the true "nucleus" of the Christian church.[21]

"To trace the influence of religion upon human character," Pater claims, "is one of the legitimate functions of the novel"; in their reviews, he and Ward position themselves in dialectical relation, as the more subjective and more objective poles of this function.[22] For both, however, the "facts" the novelist portrays are not—*pace* Lukács—those of a world abandoned by God but, as in Hegel's account of revealed religion, entirely suffused by His presence. This echo of the *Phenomenology* is not without its own irony, however, since for Hegel himself, such a development within the novel would be impossible. Novels of the *Wilhelm Meister* type embody the terminal phase of Romantic art, and perhaps of art altogether. To make sense of this seeming contradiction, I turn now to British Idealism, which takes the endpoint of the Hegelian system as its starting point.

True Conceptions of Another World

British philosophy, W. J. Mander observes, "has never been drawn strongly to the subject of aesthetics," and the British Idealists were no exception. At the same time, however, one of British Idealism's characteristic qualities was its comprehensiveness: it offered its devotees "a universal scheme capable of application to any sphere upon which the human mind might latch," including the sphere of art.[23] Among the movement's major figures, Bernard Bosanquet, a student of Green's and author of the monumental *History of Aesthetic* (1892), stands out for the consistency and creativity with which he applied the Idealist "scheme" to questions of aesthetics. Crucially, Bosanquet rejects the claim that Hegel's account of the dissolution of romantic art was meant as a death sentence for art itself. In an essay on the Italian idealist Benedetto Croce, for example, he argues that the "death of art" thesis is based on a mistranslation of the term *Auflösung*, which *can* mean death in certain contexts, but in "natural usage" suggests "resolving a contradiction or a dissonance, solving a problem or a difficulty, elucidating by analysis."[24] A contradiction so resolved does not, of course, cease to be experienced, and Bosanquet's aesthetic theory proceeds from the claim that art's "death" is in fact a transcendence and displacement of its internal contradictions, transforming both art itself and its relation to human life as a whole.

For my argument, more relevant than Bosanquet's *History* is the prefatory essay to his 1886 translation of the introduction to Hegel's *Aesthetics.* This introduction, Bosanquet argues, is a "microcosm" of Hegel's whole system.[25] Hegel's achievement, for Bosanquet, was to demonstrate that "the world of mind" is not some ghostly abstraction but "exists as an actual and organized whole," present and concrete rather than floating above the world we experience (xiv–xv). The suprasensuous or spiritual world is better described as "a value, an import, a significance, superadded to the phenomenal world" by thought—just as ideas of organization and unity make the difference between an army and a mob (xx). But if "[t]his world and the 'other' world are continuous and inseparable, and all men must live in some degree for both," in which world do men *die*? What does death mean according to the "true conception"? And what forms of immortality—if any—remain possible absent the idea of a world "peopled by persons who live eternally" (xv)?

For Bosanquet as for Hegel's romantic, death is a process whereby finite humanity elevates itself to God. Beauty thus becomes a privileged instance of life that endures death and maintains itself within it—perhaps *the* privileged instance, since for Idealism beauty is nothing other than "a boundary and transition between sense and thought" (xxxiii). In aesthetic experience we "die to live."[26] One of the most energetic exponents of this doctrine was Edward Caird, professor of moral philosophy at the University of Glasgow and, later, Jowett's successor as master of Balliol. In his *Hegel* (1883), Caird writes that, were he to sum up the Hegelian philosophy in a sentence, it would be "that the words 'die to live' express not only the dialectic of morals, but the universal principle of philosophy."[27] In using this phrase, Caird is careful to distinguish the Hegelian sense from its better-known uses in the tradition of Christian mysticism: to the Idealist, "dying to live" encapsulates the dialectic's overcoming of the grand dualism between subject and object, self and not-self, humanity and world.

For Hegel, the "suicidal" effort to "assert and realise the self as against the not-self" must be replaced with the "higher assertion and realization of the self *in and through* the not-self" (161). The opposition between self and world exists only on the level of natural and material life; on the level of spiritual life, the two form a unity. This unity can be approached through renunciation of that natural self, a process that Caird, like Hegel, describes as a kind of death: "the life of a spiritual being . . . is, in a true sense, a continual dying" (161). By the same token, however, there is for the spiritual self *only* this dying, and no

real or absolute death. The natural self dies; the spiritual self "takes up death into itself as an element, and does not therefore need to fear it as an enemy" (162). But for Caird the phrase's meaning is as much moral and ethical as theological. Self-realization, he argues, is possible "only as we live for other ends and beings than ourselves." The "wider and completer" the good we seek, "the deeper and more thorough must be the negation of self on which it is based" (163–64). The highest and most harmonious development of human powers into a complete and consistent whole—in a word, bildung—is for Caird possible only as death.

City of Tombs: *Marius the Epicurean*

In his conclusion to *The Renaissance*, Walter Pater (1839–1894) warns his readers against acquiescence to any "facile orthodoxy," be it Comte's, Hegel's, or even one's own.[28] Taking this advice to heart, a number of recent scholars have explored how Pater drew (in characteristically unorthodox fashion) on the philosophical theories of Hegel and other idealists.[29] Kit Andrews has even argued that Pater must be regarded as an "Oxford Idealist," writing within a milieu defined by the influence of T. H. Green.[30] In making this case, Andrews's primary exhibit is *Plato and Platonism* (1893).[31] Although this work never mentions Green by name, for Andrews it delivers an implicit Hegelian rejoinder to the Kantianism of Green's philosophical system, in the form of a developmental narrative with Plato himself in the role of bildungsheld.[32] For Pater (as for Hegel), the crucial dialectical moment in Plato's work is the death of Socrates. In the heroism of his death, Socrates becomes for Plato the personification of an ideal, "absolute Righteousness."[33] Anthropomorphism here works both ways: a person becomes an intellectual principle, even as "all true knowledge will [henceforth] be like the knowledge of a person." But Plato only half subscribed to the "Puritan" element of his teacher's philosophy. His other half gave Socrates a permanent companion in the realm of true knowledge: the principle of "absolute Temperance," personified by the beautiful boy, Charmides. Through the trope of personification, then, Platonism effects a dialectical synthesis of ideal morality and materialism. This synthesis defines what for Pater is the "specially Platonic temper" of Plato's philosophy: to carry into the "hollow land" of intellectual abstractions the sensuousness of the lover, "as if now at last the mind were veritably dealing with living people there."[34]

This temper is also that of *Marius the Epicurean*. As Adam Lee has observed, *Marius* anticipates *Plato and Platonism* in "its emphasis on *experience* in education and philosophy," but "experience" here is something quite different from the Heraclitean flux of the conclusion to *The Renaissance*.[35] That conception of experience, and the skepticism it engenders, has become one moment in the narrative of Marius's bildung, the destination of which is now idealist, rather than Heraclitean, Romantic, or even Epicurean. In other words, form and flux no longer strike Pater as opposites; his conception of form has shifted from that of the momentary perfection of hand or face. As this notorious phrasing in fact suggests, the form-seeking eye of the aestheticist or Epicurean involves a kind of dismemberment, whereas the form sought by Pater's Plato takes in the person as a whole—a wholeness, moreover, both individual *and* social.

If Marius's bildung narrative *exemplifies* form in this sense, it also *represents* it, via its hero's reflections on his sensations and ideas: "It was not in an image, or series of images, yet still in a sort of dramatic action, and with the unity of a single appeal to eye and ear, that Marius about this time found all his new impressions set forth, regarding what he had already recognised, intellectually, as for him at least the most beautiful thing in the world."[36] The "most beautiful thing in the world" is Christianity, which Marius has encountered at Cecilia's house—first of all as a relationship to death. What is distinctive about the Christian way of death is that they bury rather than cremate their dead, because burial makes it easier to believe in the possibility of resurrection, and so is "more home-like and hopeful" (230). The formal ideal of the "whole complex man" here becomes the wholeness of the corpse, anticipating the Christian burial of Marius himself at the end of his story.

In choosing imperial Rome as the setting for that story, it is tempting to believe that Pater had in mind Hegel's distaste for Roman art, which anticipates Romanticism in its abstractness and prosiness. In some respects, the Rome evoked by Pater echoes that of Hegel: for example, when his fictionalized Marcus Aurelius meditates on "all that was monumental in that city of tombs, layer upon layer of dead things and people" (147). For Pater, however, this sepulchral atmosphere is also a source of aesthetic interest and pleasure. Marius comes to Rome when poetry and art have reached "a perfection which indicated only too surely the eve of decline" (132). Here, "[t]he various work of many ages [falls] harmoniously together . . . adding the final grace of a rich softness to its complex expression"—as if the entirety of classical art, in its dialectical emergence and dissolution, could be glimpsed in a single moment (132).

This intimacy of death and aesthetic intensity is a pervasive structure in *Marius,* and many critics have explored its connections with Pater's other writings on style, aesthetics, and philosophy. What has less often been remarked is that Marius's being-toward-death is also a kind of being-*with*, a "yearning" not only toward "the shadowy land" but its "inhabitants" as well (125). A driving force in Marius's life is his desire for an ideal kind of companionship, which he comes closest to in intense friendships with other gifted young men. The death scenes of two such companions—one marking the end of Marius's childhood, the other the end of his adult life—show the evolution of this desire. The first death (from plague) is that of Flavian, the talented young poet Marius befriends at school in Pisa. Watching by his friend's bedside, Marius experiences "an absolutely self-forgetful devotion," and a "long[ing] to take his share in the suffering," epitomized by his risking contagion to hold Flavian's hand (100–101). "'Is it a comfort,'" he asks a momentarily lucid Flavian, "'that I shall often come and weep over you?'—'Not unless I be aware, and hear you weeping!'" (101). Perhaps unsurprisingly, Flavian's death strikes Marius as "a final revelation of nothing less than the soul's extinction," leaving not even a shred of doubt that the death of the body is final (105).

What the blunt materialism of this "revelation" actually reveals, however, is the limited conception of companionship that Marius possesses at this stage in his development. As the metaphor of contagion implies, his "feverish" attachment to Flavian remains too bound to the physical: although valuable in penetrating the "dreamy idealism" of his boyhood and effecting "a reconciliation to the world of sense," the relationship makes him "an uneasy slave" (130, 166). In its fluctuating physicality, moreover, the relationship reflects the principles of the philosophical system—the "New Cyrenaicism"—for which it stands. Cyrenaicism (Pater's preferred name for Epicureanism) is solipsistic, skeptical, and hedonistic; "reinforcing the deep original materialism . . . of human nature itself, bound so intimately to the sensuous world," it counsels us to "make the most of what [is] 'here and now'" (117). The beautiful and mercurial Flavian becomes the personification of this stage in Marius's intellectual bildung: he is the Cyrenaic philosophy "in an image or person" (166). As Pater describes it, the movement beyond New Cyrenaicism is the result of a dialectic that can be observed both at the historical level, in the succession of schools and philosophies, and at the individual level, in the process of aging. Cyrenaicism is the "special philosophy . . . of the young" who, as they grow up, become dissatisfied with its "negation" of entire

dimensions of human life, specifically morality and religion (183–84). Moving beyond Cyrenaicism—negating its negations—requires the influence of another philosophical system.

If this first death makes Marius a materialist, the second restores his instinctive idealism. Late in the novel, Marius, having returned to his childhood home, reflects that his life has all along been "something of a *meditatio mortis*, ever facing towards the act of final detachment" (288). This melancholy realization is preceded by his discovery of an urn, side by side with his mother's, containing the ashes of a servant boy who would have been about his own age: "And with that came a blinding rush of kindness, as if two alienated friends had come to understand each other at last. There was weakness in all this; as there is in all care for dead persons, to which nevertheless people will always yield in proportion as they really care for one another" (287). As in *Plato and Platonism*, the "hollow land" becomes accessible via the trope of personification. Once anthropomorphized, the relation between the living and the dead becomes a figure not only (as Stephen Arata suggests) for the "care" that can exist between the fictional inhabitants of a novel and its readers but also between the individual and the anonymous others who populate the community.[37] As an expression of his "care" for his dead forebears, Marius decides to bury the urns, restoring the Lukácsian charnel house to life of a different kind—nourishing the flowers and the mold (287). Lee Behlman has written eloquently of the way Pater's novel opposes a Christian "ethic of exchange" to the "ethic of sacrifice" espoused by Stoics like Marcus Aurelius (and popular with Victorian Neo-Stoics like J. S. Mill). In Christianity, the hope of bodily resurrection and the communal nature of burial rites allow death to be exchanged for life, and individual suffering for shared joy.[38] In contrast to the emptiness of Stoic sacrifice, Christian death is a promissory note for a future exchange, in which "a resurrected whole body replaces the martyr's abused corpse."[39] In burying the urns, however, Marius in fact synthesizes Christian and Roman rituals, extending the "community" backward in time. He is motivated by a reluctance to expose the urns to strangers: he wishes to "claim no sentiment from the indifferent" (287). Among the dead, then, there is a community that lies even deeper than the Christian one described by Behlman, and that is (quite literally) its ground: a community bound not by sentiment but by a relation of remembrance and care that is, paradoxically, both anonymous and intimate.

Marius's final companion, the Christian soldier Cornelius, does not die. Instead, Marius's own life is exchanged for that of his friend.

Returning to Rome together, the two men are arrested in a raid on sus-
pected Christians. Believing that Cornelius and Cecilia are bound to
marry, Marius convinces their captors that his friend is not a Christian
and bribes them to set him free. (The full significance of Marius's renun-
ciation of his own desire for Cecilia will become clear in my discussion of
marriage in *Robert Elsmere* below.) As the remaining prisoners journey
toward Rome, Marius falls fatally ill, and the guards abandon him to
the care of some poor country people. These people, secretly
Christians, believe Marius to be one of their own and tend to him in
his final days. They administer the last rites of their faith and, after
Marius's death, give him a Christian burial. A great deal of critical ink
has been spilled over the degree of irony entailed in Marius's (and, by
implication, Pater's) conversion.[40] But whether his conversion is ironic,
partial, or inauthentic, Marius's death makes him part of a community
in which Christianity is the dialectically progressive tendency, as Pater's
two planned sequels to *Marius* (set in the sixteenth and eighteenth cen-
turies) would have explored.

Marius's death—among strangers in an unfamiliar place—may seem
to signal the failure of his quest for companionship. In fact, it represents
its completion. As Pater informs us, Marius's coming death "brought out
in all their force the merely human sentiments" in the country people; as
for Marius, "the link of general brotherhood, the feeling of human kin-
ship, assert[ed] itself most strongly when it was about to be severed for
ever" (293). More deeply, however, Marius discovers his true companion
inside himself, in a dimension of otherness that is constitutive of his sub-
jectivity. Even as "his eyes were to be shut for ever, the things they had
seen seemed a veritable possession in hand; the persons, the places,
above all, the touching image of Jesus, apprehended dimly through
the expressive faces. . . . And again, as of old, the sense of gratitude
seemed to bring with it the sense also of a living person at his side"
(293). Here, the centrality of Christ's image recalls Hegel's discussion
of revealed religion in the *Phenomenology*: the "fact" of community
(what gives it the solidity of persons and possessions) depends on repre-
sentations of the dead-alive God.

This Hegelian revelation is anticipated in one of the novel's most
famous scenes: Marius's reverie in an olive garden atop the Sabine
Hills. Observing the natural and human activities around him, Marius
passes from the "mere fantasy of a self not himself, beside him in his com-
ing and going" to the concrete thought of "a living and companionable
spirit at work in all things"—a process Pater likens to the passage from

the words and actions of an actual, embodied friend to the consciousness of the "ideal" or "spirit" that individual represents. Moreover, Pater depicts his hero's progress toward this realization as a kind of phenomenology of spirit, passing from "instinctive divinations, to the thoughts which give them logical consistency, formulating at last . . . that reasonable Ideal to which the Old Testament gives the name of Creator, which for the philosophers of Greece is the Eternal Reason, and in the New Testament the Father of Men." The realization itself is described in terms that recall Pater's Plato in their untroubled oscillation between materialism and idealism:

> [H]is very self—was yet determined by a far-reaching system of material forces external to it, a thousand combining currents from earth and sky. Its seemingly active powers of apprehension were, in fact, but susceptibilities to influence. The perfection of its capacity might be said to depend on its passive surrender, as of a leaf on the wind, to the motions of the great stream of physical energy without it. And might not the intellectual frame also . . . be a moment only, an impulse or series of impulses, a single process, in an intellectual or spiritual system external to it, diffused through all time and place —that great stream of spiritual energy, of which his own imperfect thoughts, yesterday or to-day, would be but the remote, and therefore imperfect pulsations? (211)

The self is thus grasped as other to itself in two ways. As a body, it is part of a dynamic system of material forces; as a mind, it belongs to a spiritual and intellectual system that extends far beyond it in space and time. This way of thinking about the self has the effect of vivifying the larger systems within which it is a node or cluster, but with a life that, as Hegel would say, endures death and maintains itself in it. "How often," Marius reflects, "had the thought of their brevity spoiled for him the most natural pleasures of life!" Now, with the revelation of the wider life of system and its potentially "boundless power of memory," Marius can face death with the reinforcing belief that his sensations and ideas will, at least in this sense, live forever.

If that were the end of Marius's reverie, it might seem to juxtapose the Epicurean and Platonist positions without resolving them. But, just as Socrates and Charmides become personified ideas in the mind of Plato, so too do Marius's twin revelations coalesce, dialectically, into a single personate figure: an "unfailing 'assistant' without whose inspiration and concurrence he could not breathe or see, instrumenting his bodily senses, rounding, supporting his imperfect thoughts." Although Marius himself reaches for the Socratic notion of "conscience," the reader

might be more inclined to identify Marius's divine assistant with the voice of the narrator, and the perfection of thought and sense with the power of fiction.

"This Do in Remembrance of Me": *Robert Elsmere*

In *A Writer's Recollections* (1918), Mary Ward (1851–1920) remembers the period of *Robert Elsmere*'s composition as one constantly shadowed by death. The book was written over three years (1884–87) as her mother's long illness was nearing its end, and the hint of some association between her mother's final suffering and the painful, protracted process of writing and rewriting is strengthened by her account of the book's completion: "I actually wrote the last words of the last chapter in March 1887, and came out afterwards . . . shaken with tears, and wondering as I sat alone on the floor, by the fire, in the front room, what life would be like now that the book was done!"[41] The novel is finished, it has become *form*, and form, it seems, must be mourned. The proximate object of Ward's mourning is, of course, Robert himself. Before turning to the hero, however, I want to look first at two of the novel's supporting characters—Henry Grey and Edward Langham—whose deaths form a triptych with Robert's.

Grey, a tutor at the fictional Oxford college of St. Anselm's, is modeled explicitly on Thomas Hill Green.[42] Early in his Oxford career, Elsmere is taken to see Grey lecture on the Pauline notion of "Death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness."[43] As Ward informs us in a prefatory note, the contents of this sermon were borrowed directly from a volume of Green's lay sermons, *The Witness of God, and Faith.* Green's reading of St. Paul anticipates Caird's Christianized Hegelianism, arguing that "[i]f Christ died for all, all died in Him: all were buried in His grave to be all made alive in His resurrection." In other words, Christ's death "constitutes in us a new intellectual consciousness, which transforms the will, and is the source of a new moral life."[44] Christ "died to live," and that death must therefore be reenacted over and over again by humanity, for whom it will bring about a new moral life.[45]

In his review of *Robert Elsmere*, Pater had criticized "the high-pitched Grey" as a representative of "the purely negative action of the scientific spirit."[46] In the character of Edward Langham, however, and the finely molded contours of his Grecian physiognomy, we can trace the lines of Ward's proleptic reply. Officially, Langham was based on the Swiss

philosopher Henri-Frédéric Amiel, whose journals Ward translated and published in the same year as Pater's *Marius*.[47] But the similarities between Langham's fictional biography and Pater's real one were not lost on Ward's contemporaries, and she did nothing to discourage the association. To the extent that Langham can be taken as a representative of Pater's philosophical and artistic position, his role in the text demonstrates how Ward reverses the charge of "negativity," deploying it against Pater's own brand of idealism. For not only is Langham persistently aligned with death, the death that shadows him is that which Hegel famously described as "the coldest and meanest of all deaths, with no more significance than cutting off a head of cabbage."[48]

Langham's story, in brief, is this: born into a middle-class Evangelical family, he went on to a brilliant career at Oxford, taking a double first in Greats, and publishing (in his family's view) dangerously atheistic poems and essays. The publication of an essay on "The Ideals of Modern Culture" caused Langham's family to cut off all financial support and lost him a probable fellowship at his college. A few years later, he stood successfully for a fellowship at St. Anselm's but had by this time lost his taste for controversy, or indeed for action of any kind, having become convinced of "the uselessness of utterance, the futility of enthusiasm, the inaccessibility of the ideal, the practical absurdity of trying to realize any of the mind's inward dreams" (53). Langham encounters Robert as a freshman at Oxford and becomes first a teacher, then a friend. But his narrative significance goes beyond his role in Robert's education. On a visit to the Elsmeres, Langham encounters Robert's sister-in-law Rose, a beautiful and talented violinist, and thenceforth figures prominently in the subplot of Rose and her suitors. In this way, Langham becomes the vehicle for Ward's critique of *Marius*: the subplot's love triangle mirrors, through a glass darkly, Pater's hero's search for companionship, and its disappointing resolution encapsulates Ward's rejection of Pater's social vision.

Like Marius, Langham is a spectator of rather than a participant in the world around him. Also like Marius, the one social relationship he does entertain is an (incipiently queer) attachment to a male friend: Robert, whose "slave" he becomes at Oxford (54). And finally, like Marius again, a heterosexual entanglement briefly holds out the possibility of a deeper engagement with society, but he ultimately renounces it, preferring death to the life of the world. The following passage, from Langham's visit to the Elsmeres, is typical of his consciousness as it is revealed in free indirect discourse:

> Langham . . . gradually ceased to listen, started on other lines of thought by this realization, warm, stimulating, provocative, of [Robert's] happiness. . . . Every now and then his eye travelled vaguely past a cottage garden, gay with the pinks and carmines of the phloxes, into the cool browns and bluish-grays of the raftered room beyond; babies toddled across the road, with stooping mothers in their train; the whole air and scene seemed to be suffused with suggestions of the pathetic expansiveness and helplessness of human existence, which generation after generation, is still so vulnerable, so confiding, so eager. Life after life flowers out from the darkness and sinks back into it again. And in the interval what agony, what disillusion! All the apparatus of a universe that men may know what it is to hope and fail, to win and lose! Happy!—in this world, "where men sit and hear each other groan." (182)

The aesthetic standpoint that draws Langham's attention to the most perfect forms and choicest tones in this rural scene is explicitly connected to his awareness of death. Moreover, the vantage point of death (the "impersonality" for which Ward praises Pater in her review) leads to the ironist's formalistic view of society (i.e., "hear[ing] each other groan") criticized by Hegel. More subtly, Ward suggests (contra the model of homosocial "companionship" we saw in *Marius*) that Langham's relation to Robert and his spectatorial relation to society at large are but two sides of the same coin. Reconciled (to borrow Marius's phrase) to the world of sense by his optimistic friend, Langham's exquisite self-consciousness nevertheless "negates everything that is particular," reimagining what it kills as flowers, that famous figure both for beauty and for figuration itself.

Langham's encounter with Rose, however, confronts this consciousness with its own limitations. Put (awkwardly) in Hegelian terms, Rose promises to negate Langham's negations. During one conversation, she even contemplates the beauty of the flowers before symbolically rejecting it: "'I don't know why you admire them so much. They have no scent, and they are only pretty in the lump,' and she broke off a spike of blossom, studied it a little disdainfully, and threw it away" (214). Moments later, Rose's own beauty will put the phloxes to shame: "What a vision! His artistic sense absorbed it in an instant—the beautiful tremulous lip, the drawn white brow. For a moment he drank in the pity, the emotion of those eyes" (217). Part of Rose's beauty, it seems, is the human sympathy her countenance expresses with greater eloquence than her exhortations to Langham to cease to be a "spectre among the active and the happy" (217). Under the influence of this sympathy, the "cold critical instinct" is temporarily powerless, and Langham tells Rose the story of his life— becoming, for a moment, the hero of his own bildungsroman.

In the novel's fifth book, Rose and Langham confess their love and become engaged for a single night, before Langham breaks it off the next morning. In the interim, he engages in "a long and ghastly argument" with a kind of imaginary double—a "spectral reproduction of himself" that he takes to be "his true self" (449). Intentionally or not, this scene offers a grim parody of Marius's reverie on the Sabine Hills. For Langham, too, "himself—his sensations and ideas," fall precisely into focus in this long night, but he is poorer, not richer, for the experience. With his characteristically aestheticizing habit of mind, Langham sees his marriage with Rose spread out before him as "a whole dismal Hogarthian series, image leading to image, calamity to calamity, till in the last scene of all . . . two gray and withered figures, far apart, gazing at each other with old and sunken eyes across dark rivers of sordid irremediable regret" (450). Recalling the earlier image of a world "where men sit and hear each other groan," this final scene reveals his inability to conceive of himself as part of a social relationship—even of the most intimate kind—otherwise than in formalistic terms.

Grey, on the other hand—like his real-life model, who died of blood poisoning at the age of forty-five—dies young, and when Robert returns to Oxford late in the novel to attend the funeral, Ward's endorsement of Grey and her critique of Langham converge. On his deathbed, Grey embodies the Evangelical ideal: "he was perfectly calm and conscious. . . . He thought for everybody. . . . And all with such extraordinary simplicity and quietness, like one arranging for a journey!" (535–36). This stoicism is sharply contrasted with Langham's cynicism (or is it cowardice?) in avoiding what he thinks of as the *scene* of Grey's end, in a telling echo of Pater's image of death as the fifth act of a drama: "Death [he tells Robert] should be avoided by the living. . . . Do what we will, we cannot rehearse our own parts. And the sight of other men's performances helps us no more than the sight of a great actor gives the dramatic gift. All they do for us is to imperil the little nerve, break through the little calm, we have left" (534). Here, Langham articulates an existential limit to the Paterian brand of negation, which prefers the false "calm" of the aesthete to the genuine calm of the idealist in the face of death's brute reality. Ironically, Ward suggests, Pater's attempt to *aestheticize* death—to draw attention to the importance of negativity in shaping the kind of intense, beautiful experiences that the "epicurean" relies on in his struggle against the ossification of habit—becomes itself the most rigid of habits: a kind of living death. As his specter self scornfully points out, Langham is the "slave . . . of habit, of the character [he has] woven for [himself]—

out of years of deliberate living" (449). In our last glimpse of him in the narrative, he has become "dulled," "coarsened," and "pinched," old before his time (449, 533).[49]

And what of Elsmere—our bildungsheld—himself? What "lofty lessons" has he learned from these twin studies in the art of dying (538)? Relying, like Pater's *Marius*, on an approach to characterization that Carolyn Williams has called "typological," Ward's novel invites us to see Elsmere as a *re*incarnation of Christ in the specific sense British Idealists like Caird and Green understood that notion.[50] Robert himself ventriloquizes this account in an address to a London workingmen's club on "The Claim of Jesus upon Modern Life"—delivered, appropriately enough, at Easter. Having described the historical arguments against the literal truth of the biblical story, he concludes this lecture with an exhortation to take up the "special task" of the age and "*reconceive the Christ!*" The reward of that task is to be a new kind of triumph over death: Christ is resurrected "in a wiser reverence and a more reasonable love; risen in new forms of social help inspired by his memory, called afresh by his name." Die to live, Elsmere insists, and "we too shall have our Easter" (499).

In a posthumously published lecture on the Fourth Gospel, Green argues that the notion of incarnation is "the source of the highest religion" because it blends history and spirituality, "sensuous seeing" and "spiritual cognition," to express "the highest thought about God in language of the imagination." To express thought in the language of imagination is both the essence of religion and the key to its ultimate (i.e., moral) value:

> For religion to exist, we must in some mode imagine God, and the most nearly adequate imagination of him is as a man in whom that which seems to be the end of moral discipline and progress has been fully attained, viz. the union of the will with God, perfect unselfishness, the direction of desire to ends which one rational being can consciously share with all other rational beings.[51]

One way of understanding Ward's project in *Robert Elsmere* is as staking the novel's claim to this kind of moral value (against Green's own disparagement of the form).[52] In support of this claim, Ward points to an imaginative resource that is the exclusive property of fiction: the marriage plot.[53] While Green's lecture—with its talk of union and shared desires and goals—could be said to rely on a nuptial *rhetoric*, Ward capitalizes on this association, making Elsmere's marriage to the Evangelical

Catherine Leyburn (described by Langham as "the Thirty-nine Articles in the flesh") critical to his didactic function (163).

Most readers have assumed that, via the marriage of Catherine and Robert, Ward intended to wed orthodox Anglicanism, with its energy, emotional power, and aesthetic fascination, to the intellectual heft and social liberalism of heterodox Modernism—although with the latter tendency (given Ward's own opinions in the 1880s) decidedly in the dominant role.[54] Operating on this assumption, a number of critics have identified subtle rifts in the nuptial synthesis. In a recent essay, for example, Patrick Fessenbecker argues that Ward's tendency to represent "fundamental disagreements that defy resolution," despite both parties' love for each other and desire for resolution, is an implicit critique of Green's claim that "shared recognition of the common good" is a necessary condition of personal autonomy.[55] The Elsmeres' marriage is a case in point. This critique, Fessenbecker speculates, was probably the result less of conscious disagreements with Green than of the demands of novelistic form and character: "Incarnating . . . social conventions in a particular person crystallizes the difficulty of understanding, incorporating, and subsuming them" in ways that do not appear in the abstract register of philosophical prose.[56]

Although Fessenbecker mentions Robert's death scene as an example of the pressure form exerts upon content (i.e., it shows how Ward is "pulled to the language of obstacles over shared deliberation"), his reading and others like it do not, in my view, fully register the significance of Robert's death to the novel's (ir)resolution. Only after his death, that is, can the Elsmeres' love achieve its most perfect form; only once Robert's Modernism has *ceased* to be incarnate can its dialectical reconciliation with Catherine's old-world Anglicanism truly take place. Indeed, the marriage begins with a death: that of Mary Backhouse, the daughter of a poor Long Whindale family. Mary is seduced by a brutish farmer from the neighboring valley, and, on her walk home, sees the "bogle" of High Fell: the ghost of a "girl who had thrown her baby and herself into the tarn . . . and who had since then walked the lonely road every Midsummer Night with her moaning child upon her arm" (132). If she passes in silence, you are safe; but if she speaks to you, you will die in a year (33–34). When the bogle speaks to her, Mary knows that she has received her death sentence, and although we never learn for sure whether Mary's seduction resulted in pregnancy—nor, if it did, what became of the child—the legend of the bogle is perhaps a clue.

Mary's story, in its "dark poetry," engages many of *Robert Elsmere*'s central themes: the risks of desire and ambition; the nature of

superstition and its hold on the mind; the importance of belief (according to Dr. Baker, it is partly Mary's belief that she *must* die on Midsummer Night that eventually kills her); and, perhaps above all, the problem of testimony (132). In her *Recollections*, Ward describes her own fascination with "*testimony*," or the question of "[t]o what—to whom—did it all go back?—this great story of early civilisation, early religion, which modern men could write and interpret so differently?"[57] This interest finds its way into the novel: as Robert and Langham discuss the former's contemplated historical work, the latter remarks that history "depends on testimony. What is the nature and the value of testimony at given times?" (199). The atheist intellectual Squire Wendover—in whose library this conversation takes place—is writing a *History of Testimony*, and in a letter to a college friend, Robert asserts the superiority of his "Theism" to "Christianity" on the ground that it handles the problem of testimony better. Christian doctrine, he argues, rests on "a special group of facts" and must always remain "a *question of documents and testimony*"; it is therefore vulnerable in a way that Theism (which, like the scientific worldview, is an inference about *facts in general*) can never be (409).

At key moments, however, Ward's novel seems consciously to mark limits to testimony, especially in madness and the supernatural: in the squire's chilling encounter with what might be his father's ghost and, of course, in the story of Mary Backhouse. "What," the narrator wonders, "had she seen? An effect of moonlit mist—a shepherd-boy bent on a practical joke . . . ? What had she heard? The evening greeting of a passer by? distant voices in the farm enclosures beneath her feet? or simply . . . those weird earth-whispers which haunt the lonely places of nature? Who can tell?" (132). No testimony is adequate to Mary's experience, but its horror can be displaced—one form of immortality subsumed by another. In order to quiet Mary's fears on the night of her death, Catherine, accompanied by Robert, walks up to the High Fell, hoping to prove that there is nothing there but "the dear old hills, and the power of God," and it is during this walk that she finally accepts Robert's proposal (139). Returning from the dead to the dying, Catherine's reassurances to Mary mingle with her own elation: "While you thought you were sending me out to face the evil thing, you were really my kind angel—God's messenger—sending me to meet the joy of my whole life!" (144). Not only, then, does Mary's death make her the agent of the Elsmeres' marriage, but the marriage itself is identified, from the beginning, with life after death.

At Robert's deathbed, Catherine herself experiences "a sort of hallu-cination" (or vision—who can tell?) of Christ himself, beckoning her to join him: "'Master!' she cried in agony, 'I cannot leave him! Call me not! My life is here. I have no heart—it beats in his'" (604). In this moment, Catherine rejects, not exactly her beliefs, but the ethical consequences of those beliefs—their power to shape her life and conduct. She turns from one version of the Incarnation to another not because she has been con-vinced on questions of testimony but because her conscience no longer recognizes any contradiction between her life and Robert's. A British Idealist would say, simply, that Catherine dies to live—so it is no surprise that her life after her husband's death is what Caird might call a "contin-ual dying." Taking on the role of the bogle, Catherine haunts not the Westmoreland hills but the London streets:

> Every Sunday morning, with her child beside her, she worshipped in the old ways; every Sunday afternoon saw her black-veiled figure sitting motionless in a corner of the Elgood Street Hall. In the week she gave all her time and money to the various works of charity which he had started. . . . Many were grateful to her; some loved her; none understood her. She lived for one hope only; and the years passed all too slowly. (604)

Like Marius before her, Catherine's self-negation engenders a deeper consciousness of the existence of God in and as the community, although she expresses that consciousness in a more active way than he does. For the rest of her strange, posthumous life, she will help nourish the "har-vest" alluded to in the novel's concluding quotation (from Arthur Hugh Clough's "Come, Poet, Come!"), sown by the dead and gathered by the children of the next generation.

Mary and Us

Among those children will be Robert and Catherine's daughter, Mary, whose birth Robert relives in imagination at the moment of his death. If Robert's death is, to quote Green once again, "the transition by which the highest form of nature . . . passes into a perfectly adequate real-ization," Ward's novelistic rendering of that transition identifies it with the first moment of Mary's life. In bringing this essay to an end, I want to speculate a little on the meaning of this identification, and Mary's sta-tus as a figure not just for the society to come—the future "race" that will carry on the Elsmeres' "struggle"—but for the genre itself. Robert and Catherine's daughter is not the only Mary in the novel. The name

reaches both backward in the text, to the dying woman from Long Whindale, and outward, beyond the text, to its author, Mary Ward. It's even tempting to hear in this proliferating proper name a punning echo of Pater's hero Marius, the promise of resurrection for his body—that "dear sister . . . of his soul"—literally fulfilled (295–96).

What, if anything, is the meaning of these many Marys? We are not told whether, in giving their firstborn that name, the Elsmeres had *intended* to recall Mary Backhouse—to grant her what Pater calls "that secondary sort of life which we can give to the dead, in our intensely realised memory of them"—nor can we know whether Mary Ward meant, in giving her own name to these twinned figures of the past and the future, to claim a measure of that subjective immortality for herself (47). But if "intention" is too strong a word, I would argue that something more than sheer coincidence links these Marys. The internal repetition of the name, for instance, suggests its formal significance: the two Marys—one on the brink of death, the other just beginning to live—are bookends to the novel's seven books; the relationship between them might therefore be revealing of Ward's conception of her novel's unity. In a similar vein, a psychoanalytic critic might discern an *unconscious* intention behind Ward's naming these two characters after herself—perhaps as a way of remembering, repeating, and working through her own psychological conflicts and concerns. The intertextual relations between Marys, too, seem more than just accidental. In the case of Pater's Marius, critics might point to the friendship between Pater and Ward during the period of both novels' composition, the social connections and intellectual interests they shared, and so on.[58] Other Marys, too, seem to anticipate or echo Ward's: think of Margaret Oliphant's 1866 "Madonna Mary," for example, or Mary Olivier, eponymous heroine of Idealist philosopher and novelist May Sinclair's 1919 bildungsroman. To take a still broader view, a critic might point to the quasicausal force of "Mary" as a cultural archetype—as, for example, Hegel himself does, arguing in his *Aesthetics* that the effort to represent divine love in the figure of the Virgin Mary stood behind the aesthetic achievements of early modern painting.[59] The further one follows the ramifications of "Mary," in other words, the more causal connections—of various kinds and degrees of strength—accumulate.

What I want to suggest, in closing, is that the way this proper name gathers together and discloses relationships both internal and external to Ward's novel is a good analogy for the way the bildungsroman functions (or ought to) as a literary-critical category. Of course, as Ian Duncan has recently demonstrated, the term *bildungsroman* has often been

understood to mark an especially close connection between literary and human forms, and novels in this genre (like the two I discuss here) are conventionally titled with the proper names of their protagonists.[60] But the claim I am making here is a slightly stronger one: as the name for a particular type of novel, bildungsroman is *like* the name of a person. Just as a name tells us next to nothing about the individual qualities and characteristics of the persons who share it, the term *bildungsroman* reveals little about the texts it applies to; beyond a relation to the idea of "development" broadly conceived, the bildungsroman (perhaps uniquely among the novel's genres) lacks any specifically *generic* content. And yet, just as the Marys alluded to above possess a kind of unity, making it interesting and rewarding to connect, compare, and contrast them, so too do bildungsromane. When a reader—like a parent naming their child—dubs a novel a bildungsroman, they activate a whole network of associations: to other novels; to theoretical debates about novelistic form; and to the themes of development, socialization, desire, and death.

Understood this way, the bildungsroman names a kind of death. As another Hegelian thinker, Maurice Blanchot, puts it, every name enacts an "ideal negation" of the thing it refers to, revealing that it "can be detached from [itself], removed from [its] existence and [its] presence, and suddenly plunged into a nothingness in which there is no existence or presence."[61] But whereas Blanchot attempts to think of death outside of dialectics, as "nothingness" or sheer absence, the death lurking within the name bildungsroman is more like that of Mary Backhouse. It is not sudden, but abundantly prepared for: just as Mary's belief that she will die on Midsummer Day causes her to bring about her own death almost as an act of will, so too do novels and novelists (displaying a similar faith in the death-defying power of stories) consciously position themselves within a literary tradition of developmental fiction. And in this death, moreover, nonexistence does not equal absence. The name bildungs-roman is to the literary critic as the name Mary is to Ward's reader: a constant presence in the novel, but attached to more than one body. To call the bildungsroman a ghost as Redfield does, I think, is both to *under*esti-mate the extent to which the genre shapes literature, so to speak, from the inside, and *over*estimate the extent to which a name is diminished or "ghosted" in surviving its bearer. Better, then, to say that the bildungsro-man is a kind of "dying to live": an ethico-spiritual practice of self-negation and becoming-generic in which authors and critics alike participate.

In the philosophical and literary traditions that have been the focus of this essay, the analogy between literary genre and proper name is not

wholly arbitrary—nor, perhaps, is it wholly analogy. In the creation of a work of art, Bosanquet writes, "man, as he is when his nature is at one with itself . . . is the needed middle term between content and expression."[62] For the British Idealists, in other words, the human person—a creature of both "disciplined habit" and "overmastering impulse"—plays a crucial mediating role between the ideas expressed in a work of art and the form of its expression, and among those disciplined habits of expression are literary genres.[63] British Idealism therefore has much to offer to theorists not only of the bildungsroman (that most personlike of genres) but of genre more broadly.[64] In particular, as I have begun to suggest here, revisiting the British Idealists' reflections on literature and aesthetics can help us to understand better how genres promise a kind of literary immortality, helping individual works to endure death and maintain themselves within it.

<div align="center">NOTES</div>

1. Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, 136. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.
2. Moretti, *The Way of the World*, 26.
3. Fraiman, *Unbecoming Women*, x.
4. Cohn, *Still Life*, 5.
5. Humboldt, *On the Limits of State Action*, 10.
6. Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, 27.
7. Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, 51–52.
8. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 19.
9. Green, "Fragment on Immortality," 159–60.
10. Castle, *Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman*, 23.
11. Castle, *Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman*, 26–27.
12. Castle, *Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman*, 25.
13. Esty, *Unseasonable Youth*, 3.
14. Redfield, *Phantom Formations*, 43.
15. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 1:593. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.
16. Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 475.
17. Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 412.

18. Ward, "On 'Marius the Epicurean,'" 133.
19. Ward, "On 'Marius the Epicurean,'" 136.
20. Pater, "Robert Elsmere," 73.
21. Pater, "Robert Elsmere," 73.
22. Pater, "Robert Elsmere," 61.
23. Mander, *British Idealism*, 328.
24. Bosanquet, "Croce's Aesthetic," 433.
25. Bosanquet, "On the True Conception," xiv. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.
26. This phrase does not appear in "True Conception" but in a later essay in which Bosanquet explicitly affiliates himself with the doctrine. See Bosanquet, "Plato's Conception of Death," 99.
27. Caird, *Hegel*, 35. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.
28. Pater, *Studies*, 120.
29. See, for example, Friedman, *Before Queer Theory,* especially chapters 1 and 2; Whiteley, *Aestheticism and the Philosophy of Death*; and Lee, *The Platonism of Walter Pater.*
30. Andrews, "Walter Pater as Oxford Hegelian," 439–42.
31. For an account of Plato's significance to British Idealism more generally, see Mander, *British Idealism,* 73–87.
32. Andrews, "Walter Pater as Oxford Hegelian," 448.
33. Andrews, "Walter Pater as Oxford Hegelian," 456; Pater, *Plato and Platonism,* 130.
34. Pater, *Plato and Platonism,* 125.
35. Lee, *The Platonism of Walter Pater,* 117 (emphasis mine).
36. Pater, *Marius the Epicurean,* 245. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.
37. Arata, "Impersonal Intimacy."
38. Behlman, "Burning," 155.
39. Behlman, "Burning," 155.
40. For an astute summary of this literature, see Lecourt, "'To Surrender Himself,'" 234.
41. Ward, *A Writer's Recollections,* 228.
42. Ward, *A Writer's Recollections,* 132.
43. Ward, *Robert Elsmere,* 58–59. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.
44. Green, *The Witness of God, and Faith,* 7–8.
45. Green, *The Witness of God, and Faith,* 8.
46. Pater, "Robert Elsmere," 74.

47. Ward, *A Writer's Recollections*, 196–97.
48. Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 360.
49. I am grateful to Patrick Fessenbecker for this point.
50. Williams, *Transfigured World*, 279–383.
51. Green, "The Incarnation," 218.
52. See Green, "Value and Influence."
53. Compare Green, "Value and Influence," 30.
54. On *Robert Elsmere* and Modernist Christianity, see Perkin, *Theology and the Victorian Novel*, 196–207.
55. Fessenbecker, "Autonomy," 149–50.
56. Fessenbecker, "Autonomy," 162.
57. Ward, *A Writer's Recollections*, 165.
58. The case that Marius can be thought of as a kind of Mary is strengthened by the fact that Pater extensively revised his novel for the third edition of 1892 partly in response to Ward's criticisms. See Ward, "On 'Marius the Epicurean,'" 127.
59. For this argument, see Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 2:824–26; see also Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 1:541–43.
60. Duncan, *Human Forms*, 61–67.
61. Blanchot, "Literature and the Right to Death," 323.
62. Bosanquet, *A History of Aesthetic*, 457.
63. Bosanquet, *A History of Aesthetic*, 457.
64. In a wonderful recent book, Andrew Cole has begun to explore what the British Idealists (whom he calls the "Green Hegelians") might have to offer contemporary genre theory. See Cole, *The Birth of Theory*, 136–47.

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