

The contingency of cheese

On Fredric Jameson's *The Antinomies of Realism*

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Fredric Jameson has been a busy man over the last decade. As well as two massive tomes on science fiction and modernism, combining republished essays with extensive new material, there has been a trilogy of books on Hegel and Marx which have sought to defend dialectical thinking from its discontents both internal and external to the Marxian tradition, amounting to a late burst of productivity that threatens to put if not Stakhanov then at least Slavoj Žižek to shame. For the most part these books have tended to focus on the reiteration of already fairly well established theoretical claims. However, Jameson's latest, *The Antinomies of Realism*, looks like something rather newer.*

The book is, if nothing else, timely, appearing in the context of a resurgence of both practices and discourses of 'realism' across the arts, from the much-celebrated tele-roman *The Wire* (about which Jameson has written elsewhere) to the late Allan Sekula's photographic epics to, say, Lav Diaz's extraordinary four-hour film of Filipino urban life and global capitalism, *Norte, The End of History* – in what I have described previously as a remobilization under changed historical circumstances of the totalizing and 'connecting values of realism'.¹ Jameson makes little explicit allusion to such contemporary instances – for reasons that can no doubt be related to his unwillingness to relinquish that personal albatross which is the concept of postmodernity – and, apart from a final chapter on the historical novel and one brief excursus on Alexander Kluge, *The Antinomies of Realism* sticks pretty resolutely to the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, in terms of a contemporary academic discourse on realism, the book can certainly be read as a contribution to a wider attempt to begin undoing a caricatured 'straw man' version of the form and its association with a simple referential naivety – the transparent window on a stable world marshalled by some Führer-like 'omniscient narrator' – popularized

in literary theory by the likes of Catherine Belsey and Colin MacCabe.²

Of course, if the most famous of Jameson's existing problematics – postmodernism – was explicitly construed as a third, successive term to realism and modernism, then there is an evident logic in the writing of a big book on realism that would follow on from the work on postmodernism of the 1980s and 1990s, and the subsequent rereadings of modernism in the last decade: *A Singular Modernity* (2002) and *The Modernist Papers* (2007). More importantly, precisely as a hitherto 'absent term', it is this first moment that has, I think, often implicitly appeared to provide the principal frame for marking out a story of progressive loss in Jameson's work. Realism, which still imagined (however mythically or precariously) that it could access some 'perspective of totality', and which was marked – as in its Urtext *Don Quixote* – by 'the emergence of the secular referent', is displaced in turn, first, by modernism (which experiences the loss of such totality and concreteness as loss, and hence as tragedy or avant-garde possibility) and then by postmodernism (for which 'the modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good'). Among other things, this tripartite narrative has had the advantage of placing Jameson's own work within an eminent lineage, as the apparently rightful successor to Lukács and Adorno – the great theorists of 'realism' and 'modernism', respectively – while, at the same time, aligning all three with his notorious periodization of the three 'stages' of capitalism adapted from Ernest Mandel's 1972 book *Late Capitalism*. If postmodernism is thus, according to such a schema, the cultural logic of 'late capitalism', realism would equate to a 'classical or market capitalism' – albeit at a fairly late moment – which will, Jameson writes in the *Postmodernism* book, 'probably not involve problems of figuration so acute as those we will confront in the later stages'. Indeed, such problems will 'only become

* Fredric Jameson, *The Antinomies of Realism*, Verso, London and New York, 2013. 326 pp., £20.00 hb., 978 1 78168 133 6. Page references to this edition appear in the main text.

visible in the next stage' of modernism/monopoly capitalism, in what he defines precisely as a 'crisis in realism' generated by the 'gap between individual and phenomenological experience and structural intelligibility' present within an expanding imperial system and metropolitan life.³

Since the 1970s, Jameson has done his best to purge his work of the more straightforwardly humanistic tone that his articulation of these intensifying 'problems of figuration' sometimes had in his early *Marxism and Form*, where the loss of some true 'feeling of concreteness, of filled density of being', and 'our inability to realize the Hegelian vision of totality', is presented as 'a judgement on us and on the moment of history in which we live'.⁴ But the underlying force of the periodizations proposed have remained firmly rooted in Lukács's assertion that whatever 'loss' might be at stake here finds its source not in 'authors' fundamental intentions', but in 'the given historico-philosophical realities with which the authors were confronted'.⁵ So, for instance, the historical novel – to which Jameson returns in the final chapter of *The Antinomies of Realism* – will become a progressively *impossible* genre in the course of the twentieth century by virtue of a growing incapacity to access 'the retrospective dimension indispensable to any vital reorientation of our collective future', but as such will also, in a text like E.L. Doctorow's *Ragtime* (1975), register, in new artistic ways, the more general loss of the historical 'referent' and its dissolution into some 'vast collection of images'.⁶

That a certain 'realism' remains something of a necessary yardstick against which to get the measure of subsequent historical developments is fairly clear here; as it is, for example, in Jameson's influential notion of an 'aesthetic of cognitive mapping', which names the equally 'impossible' attempt to overcome, from within (post)modernity, the profound gap between 'the local positioning of the individual subject' and the totality of economic and class structures in which such a subject is situated.⁷ For, as I have argued elsewhere, although Jameson tends to focus the discussion on architecture or film, its most evident kinship lies with the problem of the novel as impossible 'epic' form as it is set out in Lukács's *The Theory of the Novel*, and to which Lukács's own later work on realism was partly intended as a revisionary response.⁸

The first surprise in *Antinomies of Realism* is, therefore, that this 'epic' conception of realism – tied, as it is, to a commitment to a concept of totality, of which perhaps Jameson has been *the* principal

proponent within anglophone Marxism – should appear to play such a marginal role within the book; at least until its second half, where Jameson turns to the more canonically epic forms of war narrative and the historical novel, and even there often only in oblique fashion. (Indeed, as we shall see, Balzac, commonly thought of, not least by Lukács, as the greatest embodiment of such a novelistic 'will to totality', is largely consigned to a kind of prehistory of those antinomies of realism with which this new text is concerned.) The association of realism with some form of explanatory power or grasp of social truth, dear to much of the Marxist tradition – but now, no doubt, perceived as rather too mired in antiquated political debates – is conspicuous by its absence.

If, then, *The Antinomies of Realism* often reads like an idiosyncratically structuralist book of sorts, as much as a discernibly Marxist one, the specific 'diachronic' analysis offered in the book's first half focuses not on questions of totality, but principally on nineteenth-century realism's self-destructive internal tensions, in such a way as (our second surprise) to reconceive it as closer to a kind of modernism-in-the-making. Far from a moment of stability of meaning against which later developments might be historically judged, realism appears here, instead, as *already* – to borrow a phrase from Jay Bernstein – 'an art bound to its own impossibility'.⁹

The affective turn

The Antinomies of Realism is divided into two parts, with introduction but no conclusion, the second of which is presented as three more or less discrete essays. The central proposition underpinning the critical readings of the first section, which accounts for about two-thirds of the book, is that nineteenth-century realism is best understood as the dialectical production of a precarious and historically specific *tension* between two interwoven forms and modalities of time: on the one hand, 'story' or 'narration' – or, more precisely, 'the French *récit*', which foregrounds 'the telling of the tale as such' (10) – and, on the other, what is defined at various points as the 'descriptive' or 'the scenic', but which most often, and most strikingly, is referred to as *affect*. While the former continues to extend a tradition of narrative form that includes folktales, 'ballads and broadsheets', diaries and letters, and the existing history of the novel itself (8), and that retains a force in the twin 'menaces' of melodrama and the Bildungsroman (fascinatingly tackled in the book's seventh chapter on 'the dissolution of genre'), the latter appears, according to

Jameson, as some historically new (and newly disruptive) element that, foregrounding the affective, introduces a heterogeneous and expanded present that continually breaks apart the chronological temporality in which *récit* is unfolded – an ‘insurrection’, as Jameson puts it, borrowing a phrase from Kluge, ‘of the present against the other temporalities’ (10):

What we call realism will thus come into being in the symbiosis of this pure form of storytelling with impulses of scenic elaboration, description and above all affective investment, which allow it to develop towards a scenic present which in reality, but secretly, abhors the other temporalities which constitute the force of the tale or *récit* in the first place. (11)

It is the ineliminable revolt of these new impulses against the will to meaningful shape found in the *récit* that will thus make realism, for Jameson, an inherently unstable form from its beginning, ‘whose emergence and development at one and the same time constitute its own inevitable undoing’ (6).

Bookended by two initial chapters attempting to theorize the distinct poles of realism’s antinomy, and two chapters which chart its disintegration into the ‘swollen or blank unidentified third person’ (by way of *style indirect libre* or Henry James’s ‘point of view’) (174), the book pursues a series of four case studies, beginning with a chapter on Zola and ‘the codification of affect’, in which it is argued that, by contrast to Balzac or Stendhal, Zola introduces into the novel a new ‘autonomization of the sensory’ (55). Subsequently, Jameson’s dialectic is developed through readings of Tolstoy, where the antinomies of narration and affect are played out in a tension between ‘plot’ and ‘scene’; the Spanish novelist Pérez Galdós, in which this develops into ‘a deterioration of protagonicity’, whereby what might once have been thought the digressions of sub-plots involving ‘minor’ characters’ gradually come to take over the foreground of the novel (96); and, finally, George Eliot, in a rather brilliant reading concerning the ways in which her novels undo the generic constraints of melodrama through the dissolution of its central category of ‘evil’ into affect’s ‘present of consciousness’, which may know ‘bad faith’ but cannot experience itself as being ‘evil’ as such.

As always, Jameson is an immensely impressive close reader. However, it is fair to say that the overriding emphasis on *affect* in theorizing and knitting all of this together appears as something of a surprise. Much of Jameson’s initial reputation derived, in the early 1970s, from his critical mediation of

new European theoretical trends, from Sartre and German Critical Theory to Russian formalism and French structuralism. This was followed by the work on ‘postmodernism’, which sought, in part, to historicize various strands of contemporary French ‘poststructuralist’ theory (Lacan, Deleuze, Lyotard, Baudrillard) as representative of a ‘cultural logic of late capitalism’ still best understood in Hegelian-Marxist terms; that is, through the maintaining of a dialectical conception of totality against which those very same theorists had framed their work. This strategy of incorporating often very different theoretical idioms, not so much through critique as through their ‘translation’ into other, more amenable registers, is one to which Jameson has broadly remained faithful since.¹⁰ Still, Jameson’s recourse to the terminology of affect theory may be his most ambitious attempt at such ‘transcoding’ to date.

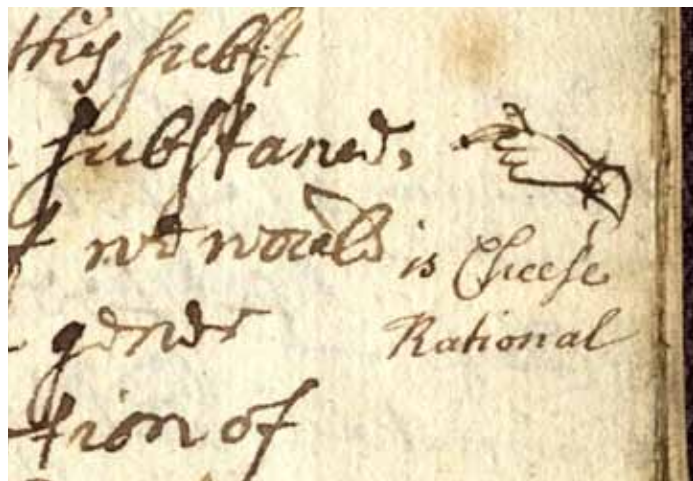
The use to which Jameson puts this in *The Antinomies of Realism* is most clearly unfolded in the Zola chapter, which implicitly draws upon a dominant contemporary association of the ‘affective’ with a turn away from the various linguistic and semiotic paradigms of structuralism and post-structuralism, but which is here historicized in terms of ‘the emergence of nameless bodily states which can be documented in literature around the middle of the nineteenth century’. In this Second Empire or Victorian affective turn, Jameson writes, the body thus comes to be ‘opposed’ not only to allegory or symbol but to language as such (32). While Jameson suggests that Flaubert and Baudelaire ‘can stand as markers for such a transformation of the sensorium’ (32), it is in Zola, and particularly in *La Ventre de Paris* (1873), set in the Parisian market of Les Halles, that an ‘excess of the sensory becomes autonomous; that is to say, it begins to have enough weight of its own to counterbalance the plot’ (50). This is a process which ‘ultimately tends to release its sensory material from any specific viewer or individual human subject, from any specific character to whom the function of observation has been assigned’ (56), in what, I guess, we might understand as a momentary affinity of subject and object. This is exemplified in the celebrated ‘symphony of cheeses’, which, despite its rather half-hearted framing in the novel as some metaphor for the rancid gossip of two female characters, opens up – with its eighteen varieties of cheese described over several pages – onto what Jameson terms a ‘liberation from meaning’ in which affect, freeing itself from any narrative motive, acquires its ‘own temporality’ of a massively extended and ‘impersonal’ present (64).

There is a somewhat obvious, if slightly facile, objection to such propositions – nonetheless tricky to negotiate for all affect *theory* – that, as somehow ‘liberated from meaning’, in its gesture towards some separation from language or the sign, all affect still has to be, at some level, rendered ‘meaningful’ in order to be intelligible at all. Indeed Jameson himself makes something like this point in an earlier reading of the ‘affective content’ of Baudelaire’s ‘Chant d’automne’, in an essay originally published in 1985 and repackaged in 2007’s *The Modernist Papers*, which notes how the poem’s ‘feeling of some kind, strong and articulated, yet necessarily nameless’ in becoming ‘transmuted into a verbal text ... ceases to be ... affective in any sense of the word’: ‘The problem ... is that language never ceases to attempt to reabsorb and recontain contingency ... it always seems to transform that scandalous and irreducible content back into something like meaning.’¹¹ I will come back to this reading in a moment – and to the identification of ‘affect’ and ‘contingency’ that it entails – but it is fair to say that Jameson deals with this dilemma primarily by insisting that, in literature at least, affect can thus precisely only ever be thought *dialectically*. Indeed, this will be a central plank in the book’s larger endeavour to reaffirm the validity of dialectical thought in general.

One way of understanding Jameson’s own privileging of ‘the realm of affect’ is in the context of a certain argument with Lukács’s account of realism, which often appears to be going on, subterraneously, throughout the book without ever coming into focus as such. As is well known, the latter’s strident separation of Balzacian ‘realism’ from Zola’s ‘naturalism’ took much of its inspiration from an 1888 letter by Engels in which he dismisses ‘all the Zolas *passés, présents et à venir*’ when measured against the ‘realistic history of French “society”’ provided by Balzac (cited 270). This is extended by Lukács into a distinction between narration and description, first proposed in an essay published in the 1930s, where Zola’s ‘obsession with monographic detail’ is contrasted with the capacity of Balzac’s novels to make us ‘experience events which are inherently *significant* ... because of the general social significance emerging in the unfolding of the characters’ lives’. As he puts it, in what is in this context an evidently resonant phrase: description ‘*contemporizes* everything’, rendering the world as ‘a series of static pictures’ or ‘still lives’.¹² If the chapter on Zola stands out in *The Antinomies of Realism*, it is in part, then,

because of the evident attempt to redeem him from Lukács critical judgement.

At the same time, in substituting ‘affect’ for ‘description’ as the privileged term – or, more accurately, in effectively running the two together – part, I suspect, of what Jameson is also seeking to do here is to complicate what he, elsewhere in the book, suggests is an almost axiomatically conservative bent in all realisms – ‘a vested interest, an ontological stake, in the solidity of [bourgeois] social reality’ (5) – to which the ‘affective’ might offer some strange resistance. (It is noticeable, if so, how close this comes to effectively *reversing* Lukács’s argument vis-à-vis narration and description.) This would be Jameson’s more socially concrete version of the Barthesian argument regarding the readerly text, or, for example, Lyotard’s claim that, in seeking to ‘stabilize the referent’, realists can only come to be ‘apologists of what exists’.¹³ Jameson’s rewrite of this would then see in realism’s very origins that force which will, in opening up onto a new ‘present of consciousness’, finally escape the control of ‘narrative’, and ultimately result in the torn halves of modernism and mass market fiction.



Such a split is a fairly familiar theme in Jameson’s work. Still, it is not always clear exactly what, in the case of realism, the dialectical opposite of affect actually is. The above would certainly suggest ‘narrative’. But most directly – if most briefly – the ‘bodily feeling’ of affect is also opposed, following Rei Terada, to ‘emotions’, which are on Jameson’s account always ‘named’, and hence semiotically systematized (32). In the 1985 reading of Baudelaire’s poetry, this was the point at which ‘nameless’ feeling ‘becomes lost to the older psychological lexicon (full of names for states of mind we *recognize* in advance)’. The key proposition seems to be then that, *as* named, such feelings are effectively reified. This is one way in which an ‘ontological stake’ in the ‘solidity of social

reality' is manifested (5). Affect becomes an immanent form of dialectical resistance to such reification and, consequently, the indicator of a commitment to the 'new' (experience) as a moment of non-identity or singularity which is, by definition, not-yet-named. The larger *historical* claim underlying this is one set out more explicitly in the essay on Baudelaire where Jameson proposes what he describes as 'an outrageous ... generalization, namely that before Baudelaire and Flaubert there are no physical sensations in literature'. Or, as he puts elsewhere in the same essay, it is *only* in such mid-nineteenth-century writers that we find 'the simultaneous production and effacement of the referent itself ... grasped as what is outside of language, what language or a certain configuration of language seems to designate, and yet, in the very moment of indication, to project beyond its own reach'. Here *the* referent is, in fact, 'simply the body itself ... [or] *sensation*'.¹⁴

The first sign of trouble to note in this historical periodization is that, in the essay from the mid-1980s, this is explicitly designated not as the moment of realism but instead as 'the historical situation ... of nascent high *modernism*'; high modernism presumably constituting something like the cultural logic of so-called 'high capitalism', rather than, as yet, 'monopoly capitalism' (Jameson's second 'stage').¹⁵ The second is that where, in this earlier essay, Jameson thus already rehearses his (anti-Lukácsian Lukácsian) argument concerning Balzac's distance from such 'free-floating bodily perception', it is precisely, if implicitly, because of the latter's identification with a now-already-waning form of 'realism'. In such terms, Balzac is, as Jameson wrote in 1985, representative of an earlier 'historical situation' in which

even where we are confronted with what look like masses of sense data – ... [as in] Balzac, with his elaborate descriptions, that include the very smell of his rooms – those apparently perceptual notations, on closer examination, prove to be so many *signs*. In the older rhetorical apparatus, in other words, 'physical sensation' does not meet the opacity of the body, but is secretly transparent, and always *means* something else – moral qualities, financial or social status, and so forth.¹⁶

In *The Antinomies of Realism*, this argument – heavily indebted to Auerbach¹⁷ – becomes the claim (in a reading of the description of the boarding house in *Le Père Goriot*, 1834), that what 'looks like a physical sensation' is actually 'already a meaning, an allegory': the 'description is not the evocation of an affect, for one good reason: namely that it *means* something' (33).¹⁸

La modernité

My point is not to show that what seems new in *The Antinomies of Realism* in fact reiterates (if deepens considerably) arguments first made by Jameson some thirty years ago. Rather, what is interesting is the slippage surrounding the distinction between realism and modernism, and the relation of both to 'modernity', which this apparent break with Balzac's 'meaning' involves. Immediately following his Auerbachian interpretation of *Le Père Goriot*, Jameson cites Barthes's insistence, in 'The Reality Effect', upon 'the irreconcilable divorce between lived experience and the intelligible which characterizes modernity' (33). 'Experience – and sensory experience in particular – is', Jameson continues, 'in modern times contingent: if such experience has a meaning, we are at once suspicious of its authenticity' (34). (In contrast stands Lukács's rather torturous attempt to find in realism an epic 'elevation' of 'chance to the inevitable'.¹⁹) The larger context for this specifically modern sense of 'contingency' would be Barthes's influential account of the effective codification of novelistic form in what he calls 'the great storytellers of the nineteenth century' through their adoption of the *récit*. This is the basis for Barthes's famous analysis of the *passé simple*, which 'supposes a world which is constructed, elaborated, detached ... not a world which is thrown, displayed, offered [*jeté, étalé, offert*]', and in which actions are 'freed of the trembling of existence', having 'the stability and the pattern of an algebra': 'the world may be filled with pathos, but it is not abandoned, since it is a cluster of coherent relations.' (Or, to paraphrase Nietzsche's overfamiliar quip, realism may have killed God, but it failed to kill grammar.) As Barthes concludes, the *passé simple* 'reassures' us as to the 'possibility of communication': 'The *récit* has a name, it escapes the terror of a speech without limits.'²⁰ Here, then, we perhaps find one explanation for Jameson's focus on the *named* 'emotion'.

If the resistance of affect to narrative propulsion is also the 'resistance of affect to language', as Jameson suggests, it necessarily poses 'new representational tasks ... in the effort somehow to seize its *fleeting* essence' (31; my emphasis). But a slightly crude question would then be: why not simply call this affective revolt of the present 'modernity': *la modernité* – 'the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent'?²¹ In many respects, this would seem to best reflect – better than 'affect' at any rate – a certain, specifically French confusion of the historical coordinates of realism and modernism more generally, given their overlap in the

standard pedagogical periodization of these terms around the late 1840s–1870s, in the era of Baudelaire, Manet, Flaubert, Zola and Lautréamont, and in the ‘disenchanted world’ of Marx’s ‘all that is holy is profaned’ or Baudelaire’s ‘loss of a halo’.²²

In his book *The Modern Epic*, Franco Moretti makes the intriguing suggestion that if what we tend to call ‘modernism is really just a chapter in the far broader history of Western modernity’, what delayed its full flowering was above all the form of the novel ‘as perhaps not exactly a conservative, but certainly a *moderating*, form: as a symbolic brake upon modernity’. Moretti’s own chief example is the Bildungsroman, but the point presumably holds for the mainstream of classic nineteenth-century realism also.²³ This is why eighteenth-century novels like *Tristram Shandy* or *Jacques le fataliste* can often seem more ‘modern(ist)’ than anything written in the century after.²⁴ A similar point is suggested in Gabriel Josipovici’s more recent analysis of the ‘naiveté’ (in the Schillerian sense) of Balzac and Dickens, which finds (too simplistically, I think) the ‘root of their strength’ and ‘magisterial authority’ in their inability or unwillingness to ‘question what it is they are doing’, by contrast to a properly ‘modernist’ doubt about ‘imposing a shape on [the world] and giving it a meaning that it doesn’t have’.²⁵ Realism is, in this sense, as Bernstein says, less ‘a matter of making likenesses of the world’ as it is ‘a complex matter of the *fitness* of the wholly human powers of art in relation to a particular, wholly human and secular social world’. It is the ‘lack of fit that makes modernism necessary’, but also makes it ‘an art of failure’.²⁶

But this would then be itself the substance of Jameson’s point that realism’s only ultimate outcome could be to destroy ‘realism’ itself. In contriving some delicate dialectical balance between narrative coherence and contingency, so as to put in place a new set of precarious conventions for the novel, it can only finally confront the contingent (or arbitrary) nature of these conventions themselves, which thus come to seem necessarily ‘unrealistic’: ‘realism’s ultimate adversary will be the realistic novel itself’ (162). This is why so many familiar ‘modernist’ critiques of realism, from Woolf to Gide to Beckett, turn on the accusation that in giving coherence to a finally ‘incoherent’ reality it is precisely not realistic enough.²⁷

The major rationale, I think, for *The Antinomies of Realism*’s privileging of ‘affect’ is the way it thus precisely *reconnects* realism with modernism, and with a broader question of contingency.²⁸ Oddly enough, in thus placing the likes of Balzac outside the picture,

at some level this repeats Lukács himself, since the latter’s critique of Zola’s and Flaubert’s ‘naturalism’ rests precisely on its continuity with modernism (particularly Joyce and Dos Passos), as opposed to with realism proper. This may be one reason why, as Jameson notes in passing in the *Postmodernism* book, naturalism has ‘always presented peculiar problems for literary history’.²⁹ These are problems, however, that Jameson brackets here by simply reabsorbing them into ‘realism’ itself.

Yet if realism is connected to modernism around a shared problem of contingency, it is hard not to think that ‘affect’ would thus be, at best, most plausibly thought of as one *particular* manifestation, or ‘type’, of such a problem, rather than its master term. It is here that the broader Hegelian-Lukácsian account of the novel as impossible epic of a modern bourgeois or capitalist ‘world of prose’ – a ‘world of finitude and mutability, of entanglement in the relative ... from which the individual is in no position to withdraw’³⁰ – seems most clearly to reassert itself. (The long and difficult section on immanence and transcendence, which begins the second half of the book, appears to be designed, in part, to grapple with this.) If ‘*Episch* is immanent, in the sense that meaning is inherent in all objects and details, all its facts, all its events’ (210–11), then *contingency* marks the loss of such capacity to presume that reality ‘has its meaning, its deeper reason for being, within itself’. This is what the early Lukács termed (negatively) ‘transcendental homelessness’ or (more positively) the ‘productivity of spirit’.³¹ Auerbach’s similar comment on modernist writers, in the final chapter of *Mimesis*, that they ‘hesitate to impose upon life, which is their subject, an order which it does not possess in itself’ is, in this sense, crucially the ‘result’ of tensions internal to realism itself.³² And just as modernism can thus be brought closer to a certain realism, so *Ulysses*, for example, can be at least in part ‘interrogated with the categories and within the limits of realism’ (216).

Problems of history

The disturbance of established periodizations in *The Antinomies of Realism* is not unproductive and, if nothing else, it provides yet another version of the familiar argument for which Flaubert, say, may be understood as realist, modernist and (if we must) postmodernist all at once (178). Going in the opposite direction this would, then, no doubt relate also to Jameson’s previous attempt to identify both a ‘modernist’ and a ‘postmodernist’ Baudelaire in the 1985 essay from which I have already extensively quoted:

'the Baudelaire inaugural poet of high modernism (of a today extinct high modernism, I would add), and the Baudelaire of postmodernism, of our own immediate age, of consumer society, the Baudelaire of the society of the spectacle or the image'.³³ Yet, as Jameson brings realism closer to modernism, so the separation invoked here is a hard one to maintain. Indeed, the obvious problem with it is already identified, in fairly straightforward terms, by Moretti (in his chapter on '*Ulysses and the Twentieth Century*' in *The Modern Epic*), which begins with a series of citations from Zola's *The Ladies' Paradise*: 'All true', as Moretti puts it of Jameson's celebrated analysis of the Bonaventura, 'apart from the novelty of the thing ... in this – as, perhaps, in everything – the postmodern is just one more step along a route traced long ago ... it was already like that in Zola': 'does the mismatch between subject and object really begin with postmodern hyperspace ... [or] Zola's department store?'³⁴

There is little need to run through, yet again, these arguments concerning the 'periodizing hypothesis' of the postmodern, which have long since passed their sell-by date; although we might wonder, as Peter Osborne recently has, if, like modernism or modernity, the era of 'high capitalism' is thus quite so 'extinct' as might be supposed.³⁵ Nonetheless, it is worth noting that, apparently unlike 'postmodernism', realism and modernism can only ever be said, *both* of them, to belong to 'modernity'; something which evidently causes Jameson more than a few dilemmas. Of course, for many of us, the most sensible conclusion is then simply 'to admit that modernity is inescapable and to desist from speculations about [its] end'.³⁶ The point is not a new one. Still, if Jameson's dialectic of realism is indeed some belated acknowledgement that things were, at least in some degree, 'already like that in Zola' – that we are dealing here with forms of intensification and expansion rather than of epochal breaks – this suggests some largely unacknowledged effect of retroactivity in the privileging of the term 'affect', in which it is only 'now' that its centrality to the novel of the second half of the nineteenth century can become historically intelligible. Something like this seems to be tacitly recognized in the book's second chapter, in which Jameson recalls his own association of postmodernism with a 'contemporary or postmodern "perpetual present"' which is, he now suggests, 'better characterized as a "reduction to the body": the "isolated body begins to know more global waves of generalized sensations, and it is these which, for want of a better word, I will here call affect' (28). No doubt this incorporates a point about the rationale

for some contemporary 'affective turn' itself (although it also seems to me to risk reinscribing a rather traditional mind-body dualism). But it simultaneously opens up some odd historical wormhole in Jameson's familiar account of (post)modernity as a world of surfaces, libidinal intensities and the lived experience of a 'perpetual present'. The 'delirious multiplicity' of Zola's 'meaningless' cheeses (62) certainly sounds a lot like the Jamesonian postmodern in this respect.

All of this might help to explain the most striking aporia of all in *The Antinomies of Realism*, which is the lack of any solid account of *why* exactly this historical 'affective turn' takes place when it does. It is, Jameson writes early on in the book, 'towards mid-century, let us say in the 1840s of the bourgeois era, that such linguistic demands begin to become audible and inescapable, at least for the most alert arts that scan the era for the new' (31). But why? Every 'form', Lukács asserts, 'is the resolution of a fundamental dissonance of existence'.³⁷ What, then, is the historically specific dissonance to which these 'antinomies of realism' respond?

Lukács's own canonical answer in 'Narrate or Describe?' revolved around the caesura of 1848: unlike Balzac or Stendhal, Zola and Flaubert 'started their creative work after the June uprising in a firmly established bourgeois society', in a historical situation in which an earlier claim of the bourgeois class to embody a universal emancipation had dissipated.³⁸ But this narrative of a loss of totalizing perspective plays no obvious role here; at least until the issue of collectivity – 'the story of the Many rather than the One' (222) – explicitly returns in the final two chapters on war and the historical novel. Instead, in line with the 'autonomization of the sensory' designated by affect, Jameson focuses on the role of what he designates 'the "bourgeois body" ... as it emerges from the outmoded classifications of the feudal era' (32). This sounds a Foucauldian note, but it remains substantially undeveloped. Moreover, quite why this 'bourgeois body' should emerge specifically around 'let us say ... the 1840s' is far from clear.

One evident omission in this regard – which I have, unfortunately, insufficient space to write about here – is any explicit mention of photography in Jameson's account of the development of realism. *The Antinomies of Realism* does make a convincing link to developments in painting of the period, noting not only the 'painterly eye' deployed in Zola (56) but its correlation to the way in which 'time' is 'famously eternalized in Monet's impressionism' (41). (There is an interesting critical engagement with Michael

Fried's work on nineteenth-century painting, and its ideas of instantaneousness, presence and theatricality, going on at various points.) However, if what is in question in the 1840s and after are 'the most alert arts that scan the era for the new' (31), one might certainly expect this 'new' to include the most radical transformations of the era in modes of 'representation' and image production. Yet, the parallel suggested by Paul Valéry, in a celebrated 1939 talk, between the emergence of photography and the 'descriptive genre' of realism – developed in the recent work of Nancy Armstrong and Jennifer Green-Lewis – is one that Jameson follows Lukács in ignoring.³⁹ The passing comment that 'in contemporary stories objects tend to be far more contingent, resembling Barthes' *punctum* more than they do his *studium*' (23), suggests a different avenue might have been taken here.⁴⁰

To think further about what is at stake in the vaguely identified moment of 'let us say in the 1840s', one might start by considering, alongside Jameson's reading of *The Belly of Paris*, two rather different analyses of Zola. The first would come from Auerbach's reading of *Germinal* (1888). Here Auerbach focuses on Zola's description of a working-class 'ball' at the end of a weekend. (The passage runs over two pages in *Mimesis*.) Like Jameson (and Lukács), Auerbach emphasizes the 'purely sensory aspects' of Zola's 'literary portrait', which 'reveals a decidedly pictorial vein': 'The flowing beer, the haze of sweat, the grinning and wide-open mouths likewise become visual impressions; acoustic and other sensory effects are also produced'. Yet, if there is certainly contingency here – Hegel's 'prose of the world' – as well as a pictorial temporality and 'sensory immediacy', it is not exactly *meaningless* in the sense in which Jameson seems to understand the purely bodily 'affect'. For, as Auerbach asks,

What sort of an orgy is it which reaches its end so early? [The passage begins 'It was ten o'clock before anyone left'.] The coal miners have to be out of bed early on Monday morning, some of them at four o'clock ... And once we have paused, there are many other things that strike us. An orgy, even among the lowest classes, calls for plenty. And plenty there is, but it is poor and frugal – nothing but beer. The whole thing *shows* how desolate and miserable the joys of these people are.

What is being described in this passage may, then, be 'unreservedly translated into sensory terms' by Zola, but it is in the service of showing (rather than strictly 'telling') a 'desolate truth' about, in this instance, proletarian life.⁴¹

The second passage comes from Zola's *The Ladies' Paradise* (1883), this time as cited in Moretti's *The Modern Epic*:

Nothing but white, and never the same white, every shade of white, heaped up on one another, contrasting with and complementing one another, until they merged into the brilliance of light itself. It began with the dull white of the calicos and holands, the flat white of the flannels and bedlinens; then came the velvets, the silks, the satins, in an ascending scale, the whiteness gradually catching fire to form little tongues of flame at the breaks of the folds; and with the transparency of the gauzes the white took flight, to become free radiance with the muslins, the guipures, the laces, and above all the tulles, so light that they were like the farthest, dying note, while the silver of the pieces of oriental silk sank higher than all in the recesses of the vast bay.⁴²

Here, too, then we have the apparent autonomy of 'sense data', the proliferation of the (unnameably?) different whites that take flight, merge 'into the brilliance of light itself', become 'free radiance'. Yet, as Moretti points out, in this case such sensory 'affect' appears, far more directly, in the specific context of *commodity* display, in which, as he puts it, 'a sheet is no longer a thing, but precisely a stimulus: a blinding, luminous ray'.⁴³ As such, its very 'meaninglessness' itself acquires a kind of (social) meaning in its 'aesthetic' functions here. This encourages a rereading of the 'symphony of cheeses' passage, as one in which the very resistance to narrative 'meaning' that Jameson identifies *also* marks something of the sensuously invigorating accumulation of commodity goods, or the abstracting deterritorialization of rural produce sent to the metropolitan market and of a progressive incorporation into a regime of exchangeability.

Realism on the basis of a loss of reality

In developing a more multidimensional and socially grounded account of realism than can be provided by the emergence of 'affect' alone – which risks becoming a loose signifier for all those forms of 'non-narrative' time that occupy one side of Jameson's various dichotomies – one possible direction is provided by a short essay on Balzac by Adorno published at the beginning of the 1960s. In a rephrasing of the opening to Benjamin's 1936 'The Storyteller' essay, Adorno argues that 'It is precisely because in the bourgeois world one can no longer tell stories about the things that are decisive that storytelling is dying out.' By apparent contrast, 'Balzac brought society as totality, something classical political economy and

Hegelian philosophy had formulated in theoretical terms, down from the airy realm of ideas to the sphere of sensory evidence.’ However, in doing so, Adorno continues, he had to (re)produce such a totality ‘by no means only [as] an extensive totality ... the physiology of life as a whole in its various branches’, but also as an ‘intensive totality’ in the form of a ‘functional complex’: ‘A dynamic rages in it: society reproduces itself only as a whole, in and through the system, and to do so it needs every last man as a customer.’ And the principal means of this self-reproduction is, Adorno argues, above all *money*, which, on the one hand, patterns the lives of all the characters in *La Comédie humaine*, and connects them together, but which, on the other, constitutes a ‘veil’ that Balzac is unable to ‘penetrate’. ‘The credit system links the fate of the one to the fate of the other, whether they know it or not.’ Yet how is the ‘credit system’ to be *narrated*? This is what Adorno terms Balzac’s struggle to ‘conjure up in perceptible form’ a society that has, with ‘the irresistible ascendancy of the exchange principle’, itself already ‘become abstract’.⁴⁴

This problem of money is one Jameson himself touches upon in the second half of *The Antinomies of Realism*, in both the chapter on war – where, in Doblin’s *Wallerstein* (1920), money (or ‘wealth’) is, very briefly, presented as that ‘conduit’ of ‘the affect that pulses’ throughout the text (244–5) – and the chapter on ‘providence and realism’, in which the ‘financial essence of “providence”’ is traced in Dickens’s *Bleak House* (1852–53) and, particularly, Eliot’s *Middlemarch* (1871–72):

[What] is certainly central in *Middlemarch* ... is the ‘cash nexus’ and the synchronic role of money in the play of these individual destinies (which bear the name of a collectivity). The novel is a historical one, no doubt (set in 1830), and the intensifying grip of a money economy over the provinces is one ostensible theme the book shares with Balzac. ... [In] *Middlemarch* there is no destiny which is not in one way or another touched by money. (223–4)

But the argument is not taken any further than this. Nor is it related back to the earlier thematics of affect.

Writing in the era in which *Middlemarch* is set, Balzac was working, as Adorno notes, at a moment – before the era in which Zola would make the ‘web of interconnections’ of the financial system both the subject matter and part of the compositional logic of novels like *The Kill* (1871–72) and *Money* (1890–91) – when the ‘norms of *homo economicus* have not yet become standardized modes of human conduct’, and it was still possible to combine an

emergent ‘realism’ with forms of romance (not least in his representation of the financier or entrepreneur). Yet, even here, what Adorno calls Balzac’s own ‘ardour’ for concreteness already runs up against the problem that ‘[i]f the world is to be seen *through*, it can no longer be looked *at*’. The consequence is what Adorno terms a ‘crisis of literary concreteness’ itself: ‘Concreteness is the substitute for the real experience that is not only almost inevitably lacking in the great writers of the industrial age but also incommensurable with the age’s own concept.’ This is, as he puts it, a ‘*realism on the basis of a loss of reality*’, from which ‘later, in works like Zola’s *Ventre de Paris*, a very modern conclusion is drawn ... the dissolution of time and action’.⁴⁵

From this perspective, what Jameson terms *investments* in ‘affect’ – and in such ‘dissolution of time and action’ – appear precisely as an increasingly contradictory attempt to hang on to the concrete (or the sensory) in the face of its dissolution as a secure marker of ‘reality’. As Adorno puts it, in archetypal ‘modernist’ fashion, a certain ‘literary realism became obsolete because, as a representation of reality, it did not capture reality’.⁴⁶ Yet, at the same time, and only seemingly paradoxically, this ‘crisis of literary concreteness’ is also the anxiety of too much infinite (because ‘contingent’) *detail*, and an endless exchangeability of ‘concrete’ particulars: the proliferation of the ‘concrete reality’ of those ‘insignificant gestures, transitory attitudes, insignificant objects, redundant words’ to which Barthes refers in ‘The Reality Effect’, and which appear, as Jameson reminds us, ‘as a resistance to meaning’.⁴⁷ Significantly, this is precisely Lukács’s *critique* of Zola, in whose writing, he argues, the apparently all-too-concrete descriptive (or affective?) prose of naturalism, and what he calls ‘the craze for the fleeting moment’, mask a more fundamental abstraction associated, above all, with the ‘bad infinite’ of the real abstraction of capital itself. The lack of any ‘natural’ or intrinsic limit on what the novel might depict or incorporate here mirrors a parallel lack with regard to what can be concretely exchanged in the universalization of the exchange value form.⁴⁸ One is not required to follow Lukács’s own critical judgements on this – which depend on his late romantic conception of the possibility of a ‘realist’ epic ‘poetry’ in opposition to ‘capitalist prose’ – to observe that a good part of what he is grappling with here is the ways in which capitalist forms come to structure the problem of ‘reality’ as an object of representation. Think, again, of the displays of *The Ladies’ Paradise*, as well as all

those piles of cheese, and, of course, the form of the commodity itself: 'sensuous things which are at the same time suprasensible': *sinnlich übersinnliche*.⁴⁹ It is, perhaps, as such that the 'unsolved antagonisms of reality' return to realism as 'immanent problems of form'.⁵⁰

Notes

1. I take the latter phrase from Christopher Prendergast, *The Triangle of Representation*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2000, p. 132. See David Cunningham, 'Here Comes the New: Deadwood and the Historiography of Capitalism', *Radical Philosophy* 180, July/August 2013, pp. 8–9. For Jameson's reading of *The Wire*, see 'Realism and Utopia in *The Wire*', *Criticism*, vol. 52, no. 3–4, Summer/Fall 2010.
2. See, for example, Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice*, Methuen, London, 1980, and various essays in Colin MacCabe, *Theoretical Essays: Film, Linguistics, Literature*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1985. The key influence here is Barthes's distinction between so-called *lisible* and *scriptable* texts. See Roland Barthes, *S/Z: An Essay*, trans. Richard Miller, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1991.
3. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Verso, London and New York, 1991, pp. 65–6, ix, 410; Fredric Jameson, 'Rimbaud and the Spatial Text', in *The Modernist Papers*, Verso, London and New York, 2007, p. 240.
4. Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1971, pp. 163, 47.
5. Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, trans. Anna Bostock, Merlin, London, 1971, p. 56.
6. Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', *New Left Review* 1/146, July–August 1984, p. 66.
7. Jameson, *Postmodernism*, pp. 415–16. This is also why, to put it more provocatively, the 'fantasy' of cognitive mapping may be said to play here – formally if not exactly politically – something of the role that 'socialist realism' has in Lukács during the 1930s, albeit in a spatialized or 'synchronic' mode.
8. See David Cunningham, 'Capitalist Epics: Abstraction, Totality and the Theory of the Novel', *Radical Philosophy* 163, September/October, 2010, pp. 11–23. In the words of Lukács, summing up and extending Hegel's argument in the *Aesthetics* a century later, the novel is, *impossibly*, 'the epic of an age in which the extensive totality of life is no longer directly given ... yet which still thinks in terms of totality'. *Theory of the Novel*, p. 56.
9. Jay Bernstein, 'Social Signs and Natural Bodies: On T.J. Clark's Farewell to an Idea', *Radical Philosophy* 104, November/December 2000, p. 26. Bernstein is describing 'modernism'.
10. Indeed, the inventiveness of such translations and the intense conceptual problems that they can generate are exemplified in the concept of cognitive mapping itself, which combines Kevin Lynch's phenomenological-humanist account of urban legibility with the Althusserian definition of ideology in order to construct a contemporary articulation of what is an essentially Hegelian-Lukácsian notion. See Jameson, *Postmodernism*, pp. 51–4, 415.
11. Fredric Jameson, 'Baudelaire as Modernist and Postmodernist: The Dissolution of the Referent and the Artificial "Sublime"' (1985), in *The Modernist Papers*, pp. 225, 229.
12. Georg Lukács, 'Narrate or Describe?', in *Writer and Critic, and Other Essays*, trans. Arthur Kahn, Merlin, London, 1975, pp. 113, 116, 144. Similarly, in the famous scene at the agricultural fair in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, what Lukács terms 'the setting' (or Jameson's 'scenic present') acquires, he writes, an 'independent existence', becoming akin to a mere 'painting' or 'tableaux' separated off from 'the subjective importance of the events' (p. 115).
13. Jean-François Lyotard, 'Answer to the Question: What is the Postmodern?', in *The Postmodern Explained to Children*, trans. Julian Pefanis and Morgan Thomas, Turnaround, London, 1992, p. 15.
14. Jameson, 'Baudelaire as Modernist and Postmodernist', pp. 225, 228, 227.
15. *Ibid.*; emphasis added. Here, Jameson reads this far more directly in terms of 'the already tendential privatization and monadization of the isolated individuals who used to make up the traditional publics' that confronted Baudelaire and Flaubert, with the result that 'there can no longer be any confidence in some shared common recognition of the mysterious sense data ... which is the "referent" of the poetic text' ('Baudelaire as Modernist and Postmodernist', p. 230). This conception seems largely absent from the new book.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 228–9.
17. Compare Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard Trask, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1953, pp. 468–73. As Auerbach puts it, in Balzac's 'very detailed description' of the Vaquer house, 'with the physical description the moral atmosphere is suggested' (p. 468).
18. One could compare here Jameson's readings of Balzac and Zola with Moretti's recent discussion of the different treatments of 'things' in *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Robinson Crusoe*. Whereas, in Bunyan, 'things become signs ... because, at bottom, they have never really been things', in Defoe, Moretti observes, things remain 'stubbornly material', reflective of what Peter Burke calls a 'rise of literal-mindedness'. See Franco Moretti, *The Bourgeois: Between History and Literature*, Verso, London and New York, 2013, pp. 60–61. However, here, 'matter of factness' is tied more directly to 'the business of everyday life', in a strong sense. That is to say, in *Crusoe* 'things' are mostly reliable, *useful* things (p. 62). There is much 'realistic' detail, concreteness and prosaic precision here, as there is in the eighteenth-century texts that are the focus of Ian Watt's classic *The Rise of the Novel*, but thus little in the way of what Jameson calls sheer *affect*.
19. Lukács, 'Narrate or Describe?', p. 112.
20. Roland Barthes, *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture*, cited in Gabriel Josipovici, *Whatever Happened to Modernism?*, Yale University Press, New Haven CT and London, 2010, 180–81.
21. Charles Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life', in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. Jonathan Mayne, Phaidon, London, 1964, p. 13.
22. See Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, Verso, London and New York, 1984, pp. 115–20 (on Marx) and pp. 155–64 (on Baudelaire). As George Steiner puts it: 'Frequently, chronology deceives: Tennyson and Rimbaud are contemporaries'. *Real Presences*, Faber & Faber, London, 1989, p. 166.
23. Franco Moretti, *The Modern Epic: The World System from Goethe to Garcia Marquez*, trans. Quintin Hoare, Verso, London and New York, 1996, pp. 194–5. See also Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*, Verso, London and New York, 1987. Something like this idea also seems to be reiterated in the more recent *The Bourgeois*, which argues that instead of the 'turbulence and change' that one might expect to find in a nineteenth-century 'bourgeois literature' of modernity, 'the opposite was the case: *regularity*, not disequilibrium, was the great narrative invention of bourgeois Europe. All that was solid, became more so' (*The Bourgeois*, p. 15).
24. It is at this point that one might raise a number of questions about the story of narrative form *prior* to realism. Jameson's opening example of what he describes as 'the purest form of récit' comes from Boccaccio's *Decameron*, where he

- identifies, in the ninth story of the fifth day, a 'tale that needs no "showing", no scene, no present of narrative at all', and that 'cannot exist in the present, its events must already have happened' (or, in other words, that is restricted to Barthes' *passé simple*) (24). But can this really be extended to narrative forms more generally before the shattering entrance of affect? It would certainly be hard to incorporate the likes of Swift, Sterne, Diderot, or even Defoe, into this picture. And, presuming that Jameson doesn't mean to do so, would it not, in a sense, be more plausible to suggest that if nineteenth-century realism set in motion the forces of dissolution of a certain narrative order, it also effectively *invents* – in Scott, Austen, Stendhal and Balzac – that order in the first place?
25. Josipovici, *Whatever Happened to Modernism?*, pp. 66–7, 72.
 26. J.M. Bernstein, *Against Voluptuous Bodies: Late Modernism and the Meaning of Painting*, Stanford University Press, Stanford CA, 2006, pp. 12–13. Note, however, that Bernstein's principal reference here is seventeenth-century Dutch painting.
 27. See, for example, John Bolin, *Beckett and the Modern Novel*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2013.
 28. In these terms, see, for example, the argument in one essay in *The Modernist Papers* that Mallarmé's dream of The Book 'embodies the longing to overcome contingency (or chance, *le hazard*) – more forcefully expressed in Flaubert's famous letter about a book without content (precisely because any conceivable form of content is also a mark of contingency)'. Fredric Jameson, 'Mallarmé Materialist', in *The Modernist Papers*, p. 316.
 29. Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 181.
 30. G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, 2 vols, trans. T.M. Knox, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1975, pp. 149–50.
 31. Fredric Jameson, 'Modernism and Imperialism', in *The Modernist Papers*, p. 157; Lukács, *Theory of the Novel*, pp. 41, 33.
 32. Auerbach, *Mimesis*, pp. 548, 549.
 33. Jameson, 'Baudelaire', in *The Modernist Papers*, p. 223.
 34. Moretti, *The Modern Epic*, pp. 127, 131 n15.
 35. Peter Osborne, 'The Postconceptual Condition, or, the Cultural Logic of High Capitalism Today', *Radical Philosophy* 184, March/April 2014, pp. 19–27.
 36. Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, 'On Alternative Modernities', in Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, ed., *Alternative Modernities*, Duke University Press, Durham NC and London, 2001, p. 1.
 37. Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, p. 62.
 38. Lukács, 'Narrate or Describe?', p. 118.
 39. Paul Valéry, 'The Centenary of Photography', in Alan Trachtenberg, ed., *Classic Essays on Photography*, Leete's Island Books, New Haven, 1980, pp. 191–98. See François Brunet, *Photography and Literature*, Reaktion, London, 2009, pp. 80–83, 113–14; Jennifer Green-Lewis, *Framing the Victorians: Photography and the Culture of Realism*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 1996; Nancy Armstrong, *Fiction in the Age of Photography: The Legacy of British Realism*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 2002. As Armstrong notes, while Lukács remarks in Zola and Flaubert 'a sudden infusion of "ornamental detail", "immobile background", "pictorialism", and "photographic authenticity"', he pays little actual attention to the 'fact that the novel's turn to pictorialism coincided with the sudden ubiquity of photographic images in the culture at large' (p. 5).
 40. This might be the moment to mention a rather striking conjunction with another contemporary account of realism – that of Jacques Rancière – despite no apparent direct influence either way (but an obviously shared debt to both Auerbach and Lukács). In his essay 'The Pensive Image', Rancière also associates Barthes's *Camera Lucida* with 'an idea of the image as a unique reality resisting art and thought' – what he describes, in relation to Barthes's famous *punctum*, as a 'power of affecting'. Comparing, then, Walker Evans's photograph of a section of a wooden kitchen wall in Alabama with 'a *novelist* whom he admired: Flaubert', Rancière notes the ways in which a 'logic of visibility no longer arrives to supplement action', but to 'suspend it':

Each of the amorous moments that punctuates *Madame Bovary* is in fact marked by a painting, a small visual scene ... It is as if painting had taken the place of the text's narrative sequence. ... what we have is an exchange of roles between description and narration, painting and literature ... the invasion of literary action by pictorial passivity. ... [a] relationship without relationship between two chains of events: the chain of the narrative directed from the beginning towards the end, with intrigue and denouement; and the chain of [sensible] micro-events that does not obey this directed logic, but which is randomly dispersed without beginning or end, without any relationship between cause and effect.
 41. Auerbach, *Mimesis*, pp. 510–11 (emphasis added), 512. Zola's historical importance, for Auerbach, is related both to his progressive 'democratizing' of the novel's subject matter, and break with neo-classical hierarchies, and to his distance from the kind of aestheticizing of 'reality' typical, he argues, of other 'naturalists' like the Goncourts (pp. 505–6).
 42. Moretti, *The Modern Epic*, pp. 125–6.
 43. *Ibid.*, p. 126.
 44. Theodor Adorno, 'Reading Balzac', in *Notes to Literature*, vol. 1, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen, Columbia University Press, New York, 1991, pp. 133, 122, 133, 125, 123–4. I leave aside here the larger argument that I have made previously in *Radical Philosophy* that the 'theory of the novel' might more broadly be re-thought as relating to an epic of capitalism in something like these terms. See Cunningham, 'Capitalist Epics', pp. 11–23.
 45. Adorno, 'Reading Balzac', pp. 126, 128 (emphasis added), 129.
 46. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
 47. Roland Barthes, 'The Reality Effect', in *The Rustle of Language*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1989, p. 146.
 48. Lukács, 'The Intellectual Physiognomy', in *Writer and Critic*, pp. 171. Crucially, it is this that Lukács reads as being continued in Joyce's 'assembling [of] ephemeral thoughts and feelings and evanescent associations in contact with the external world, describing all with minute and meticulous detail' (p. 172).
 49. Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume One*, trans. Ben Fowkes, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1976, p. 165. See David Cunningham, 'Floating on the Same Plane: Metropolis, Money and the Culture of Abstraction', *Journal of Visual Culture*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2013, pp. 38–60.
 50. Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Rolf Tiedemann, Continuum, London and New York, 2004, p. 7.