

PROGRESS AND NOVELISTIC AESTHETICS OF THE EUROPEAN NINETEENTH CENTURY

Anthony Pym

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Abstract: The European aesthetic shift from Romanticism to Modernism is here modeled in terms of responses to the possibilities of social and artistic progress. The capacity of novelistic form to express these responses is investigated for each of the four resulting positions. This analysis suggests that the aesthetic shift accompanied a discontinuity in novelistic development such that the Modernist novel owed much of its heritage to the poetic innovations of the late nineteenth century.

Despite recent revitalization of interest in the theory of literary history, generalized approaches to the definition of major historico-aesthetic categories remain rare and often unconvincing. Research based on specific genre developments within one art, or on isolated and privileged interpreters of individual aesthetic positions, must by definition remain fragmentary in its response to general historical problematics. Reception aesthetics, which does offer a theory potentially adequate to the task, has as yet produced only essayistic studies of particular rhetorical problems or of key historical moments (*Epochenwendungen*) exemplifying rupture but not continuity. The sociology of literature, which has as its maximum category social totality, has not escaped this partiality: its heroes are almost exclusively novelists, for the novel is thought to be the literary form most adequate to sociology's own categories. In this way, the discipline has tended to overlook the specificity of this artificially isolated object of study (as if the novel were always the only social form of art), and now finds itself with no adequate methodology able to tackle the primary historical problem nowadays presented by talk of post-modernist aesthetics: the definition of Modernism, and its distinction from Romanticism¹.

The work of Arnold Hauser stands almost alone in its capacity to at least confront such questions. There is however considerable internal confusion in both the methodology and conclusions of his sociology of art. In one place, he

categorizes the period which concerns us in terms of Naturalism, Impressionism and Symbolism; in another, the divisions are between Naturalism, Impressionism and Romanticism². Close inspection reveals between these series a dialectic jumping across two modes of sociology: the first is concerned with groupings and movements as already sociological facts, whereas the second attempts to regroup these facts in terms of transcendent historico-aesthetic concepts. The real disparity between these two modes makes such labeling at best problematic.

The present approach seeks to reduce this disparity by recognizing historical dialectics as a fact of the object of study, and reserving categorical thought for the mode of study.

This allows an abstractly modeled history of ideas to pose problems to which historical literary forms may be found more or less able to respond. It is assumed that, in cases of extreme inadequacy, the form in question will either be transformed or become unimportant.

It should be stressed that this use of historico-aesthetic categories excludes but assumes investigation of specific artistic milieux. It is ultimately the artist, in his immediate social context, who responds to the categorical problems, changes artistic form to express these responses, and may attempt to reformulate the problems themselves.

1. Progress and the Novel

We are concerned here not with the fact of possible progress, but with progress as a narratively-based ideological construct. This definition suggests a fundamental relation between the ideology and the novel as a narrative form.

Narrative may be defined as a mode of interrelating two or more states which are minimally distinguished by a temporal differential. When differentials are functional or spatial, discourse may be axiomatic, descriptive or injunctive without being strictly narrative.

The notion of progress may then be defined as an evaluative structure applied to narrative discourse in such a way that temporal differentials are linked to large-scale axiological differentials. The modes of this linking are habitually complex. Relative simplicity is only to be found in cases where there is a prior encoding of situations and values in a coherent and accepted ideological system (especially with regard to evaluation of narrative endings such as martyrdom, marriage, restitution of order and dispersion of illusion). Where acceptance of such encoding is limited, as might be expected in a period of major social transformation, narrative discourse must itself negotiate axiological contradictions, usually through extensive use of description (without spatial differentials it is difficult to

say for whom progress might exist), and often challenging rather than attaining ideological coherence.

By virtue of its narrativity, its descriptive capacities and its length, the novel might be expected to be a privileged artistic form for expression of this complexity, both for the affirmation of progress and for questioning of its validity as an ideological cornerstone.

2. From Romanticism to Modernism

Notions of progress —and of its negation, decadence— run through all major spheres of nineteenth-century thought. Whether the source be considered primarily political (the French Revolution), technical (the development of positivist science) or economic (the triumph of the bourgeoisies), the ideologies themselves name the ultimate recipient of progress as social: an innovation in any one domain is assumed to be for the ultimate good of society as a whole. Ideologies of progress thus turn on a moment which we may call a projected *totalization of influence*.

Artistic ideologies often include this same moment: Balzac seeking to do with the pen what Napoleon had done with the sword; Hugo claiming that the poet should light the path of his nation's future; Zola hoping to doctor society; Wilde pretending that Literature had invented Life; and of course Breton in the service of Revolution... all these were hopes for a totalization of influence.

There can however be no suggestion that such totalization was ever effectively realized. Indeed, the very fact that such positions entered the aesthetic domain would suggest that they were in response to a strong counter-force: the general historical tendency towards functional specialization. This of course encompasses much more than the nineteenth century. Lukács has described the long process through which the aesthetic separated from magic, science, philosophy, religion and historiography, finally attaining expression of its specificity in the nineteenth century. Art's relative autonomy nevertheless clearly remained problematic — particularly with respect to religion and historiography—, for it implicitly compromised participation in generalized progress.

For literature, the development of mass reading publics made this problem especially acute. An internal divergence grew between participative forms in touch with this market, and more specialized forms addressed to specifically artistic milieux. Totalization of artistic influence was thus subject to an idiosyncratic interpretation: the non-participative attitude could negate or remain indifferent to general social progress, and yet seek a totalization of influence pertinent to the aesthetic sphere alone.

Our model must thus allow for two levels of desired progress: social and artistic.

Our initial working hypothesis is that the Romantic attitude started from an affirmative response at both levels, whereas the Modernist attitude negated one or both of these affirmations. This gives us a four-stage progression, the first of which is assumed to be Romantic, the others Modernist:

	A	B	C	D
Social Progress	YES	YES	-	
Artistic Progress	YES	-	YES	-

The historical role of the novel will be investigated for each of these positions.

2A. Romantic Progress

French, German and English Romanticisms may generally be considered as a series of positions responding to the impetus of the French Revolution and its Napoleonic consequences. The notion of progress entered the aesthetic domain as an essentially political mode of social totalization. Its problematic categories - corresponding to the problematic fate of the Revolution - were the universal individual and the nation. The category used to block contradictions between these two was an idealized Nature, which could be used both as a universalist basis for the rights of the individual and as a regionalist basis for nationalist ideologies.

Understanding of the role of Nature is crucial for an appreciation of the relatively marginal role played by the Romantic novel.

Both Hegel and the Hegelian Lukács recognize, particularly in Goethe, the problematic development of a subjective interiority unable to realize itself in the external world³. And yet it is peculiarly the hero of the early *Bildungsroman* (Werther, more particularly Wilhelm Meister) who radically confronts the contradiction between interior aspiration and the prosaic economic and moral reality of the ascendant bourgeoisie. Conflict certainly existed in the novel before the Romantic era (both Don Quijote and Tristram Shandy struggle to manifest their individuality), but without any interiority radically independent of social relationships. The ironic hero could constantly displace the prosaic obligations of his social surroundings. Romanticism however demanded a more substantial soul. Political idealism could not be founded on irony: social progress was held to move in the same direction as the liberation of interior capacities, and Goethe strove to present ultimate adequation with the external world. Only the category of Nature could block the irony inherited with the novel form, for here substantial interiority

found its adequate external object. But novelistic form, even for Goethe, was such that social relationships of necessity intrude upon even the longest of idealist rêveries. Other forms were clearly more suited to protecting frustrated heroism: historiography and historical painting could concentrate narrativity into a past of great deeds; lyrical poetry and scenographic painting could suppress the problematic dimension of intersubjective time - social progress was so slow! -; and music could objectify abstract interiority without social mediation. The novel was not well suited to the modernity of Romantic liberation.

Geörgy Lukács and Lucien Goldmann both accepted inadequation of the problematic hero as the basis of the modern novel. They thus apply a Romantic conflict to a much wider development without appreciating the non-novelistic origins of the original conflict. Both were aware that "something had happened" (God had retreated from the world; the market had begun to dominate use-values...), but neither valued Romanticism as an initial acceptance of change. The category of Nature, exemplified in lyric poetry, by no means implied hibernation of the alienated subject; it instead supported the political foundations of social progress. Negativity was not the Romantic mode. It was only after the essentially lyric formulation of a positive interiority that the (realist) novel could attempt to adjust Romantic subjectivity to prosaic realities. Thus, when Lukács observes that the novel had incorporated internal duration as expression of "the greatest discord between idea and reality"⁴, he fails to mention that this potentially negative interiority had been displaced from the originally positive interiority of Romantic lyricism.

One aspect of Romantic modernity in which the novel could fully participate was the creation of national pasts. Opposing Renaissance classicism, the Romantics set about compiling their national oral traditions, raising Shakespeare to greatness, historicizing Homer, erecting Gothic dreams and discovering the darkness of their regional souls. Walter Scott found a Romantic public, but the historical novel was not as yet free to encroach upon Romantic modernity: although national values could be secured in a heroism of the past, too close an inspection was likely to reveal the absence of value in the present. There was always the risk that irony would separate aesthetic from social progress.

The solution to this problem was to be found partly in Balzac, partly in that moment of Romanticism which Jauss sees linking Stendhal, Heine and Hugo⁵. On the one hand, realism was an attempt to embrace social totality as a world rich with possible moments of bourgeois pathos and vitality subject to the social-aesthetic ideal of organic unity. On the other, the artist had to recognize his own subjectivity as only a part of this totality, and thus, from realization of his relative autonomy, sought to open his text to a multiplicity of competing languages. Both positions were participative with respect to social progress, for the spirit of criticism which they espoused was at once an advance in art (against the pure

genres of the aesthetic *ancien régime*) and a search for positive value in the social possibilities of the present.

There is however a real difference between these realist positions: whereas the later Romantics based their hopes for progress on the sincerity of the artist, Balzac portrayed society by sacrificing subjective interiority and, with it, the basis of liberty. In *La peau de chagrin*, duration can be quantified because it is social and not psychological: interiority persists only as the source of will, objectified in a dilettante's text which of necessity remains unseen. Other genres, particularly lyric poetry, resisted intrusion of the economic into the domain of genius. Balzac, in accepting and investigating the exterior basis of bourgeois urban life, and in thus dealing with economic categories which effectively compromised his political royalism, approached reconciliation of novelistic irony with a positive evaluation of the present.

It is significant that in formulating a trans-national paradigm for the other face of Romantic realism, Jauss has brought together positions culled from three different genres: the novel, lyric poetry and drama. Although a common aesthetic may have embraced Stendhal, Heine and Hugo, one doubts that it was expressed equally well by their respective chosen forms. French Romanticism, at least in the public eye, was born and buried on the stage (*Hernani* and *Les Burgraves*). Dramatic form could handle the Romantic conflict by abstracting from internal time and presenting its problematic as external dialectic between individuals. And this mode of dramatic narrativity was not far removed from Balzac: the vast tableau of *La Comédie humaine* rejoices in this same external multiplicity. Indeed, if we may reach a little beyond this disintegration of Romanticism, we find the dramatic approach to reconciling the problematic individual, now neither universal nor alone, underlying the critical realism of Dostoevsky. If we accept mediation by the theater, it seems that the polyphony valued by Bakhtin is not as far from Romantic theories of the novel as is sometimes imagined (it is not widely known that Lukács' *Theorie des Romans* was originally intended to introduce a study precisely on Dostoevsky).

In its necessary openness to the social world, the novel form thus contributed to the breaking up of the Romantic alliance between art and the notion of social progress. From this moment on, two distinct uses of artistic autonomy were possible: either the artist sought to speak critically of society in an attempt to analyze progressive social forces, or he abandoned the category of social totality and, confident only of his own professional subjectivity, sought totalization of influence in a solely aesthetic sphere. Naturalism and Aestheticism thus formed from diverging responses to the Romantic problematic. Their categorical formation was much earlier than the movements themselves were aware, for the differences which were later to separate Zola and Mallarmé were already at work in the 1840s, in the Paris of Comte and Gautier.

2B. Naturalist Society

The Enlightenment study of Nature could support Romantic interiority, but when that study went beyond its humanistic mandate by discovering an independent object, progress no longer had a safe base in the ethics of the free individual.

No matter how right the world may have been in the Newtonian heavens, empiricist science shattered this certainty simply by looking at rocks. Lyell's geology was the first discipline to produce an historical time-scale which could not be related to human experience. The age of the earth was no longer a matter of counting biblical generations; it had become a cold mathematical concept which had no respect for the advent of mankind. Foucault, in *Les Mots et les choses*, astutely incorporates geology as a symbol of the post-Romantic episteme, for Lyell had produced the temporal dimension which made possible the huge materialist categories not only of Darwin (who took Lyell's text with him on the *Beagle*) but also, ultimately, of Marx (who wanted to dedicate *Capital* to the theorist of evolution). The age of the interior soul had given way to a fascination with the laws of the external object. The natural sciences suggested that progress was not a matter of liberating interiority, but of discovering and using these external laws. For Comte, the age of positivist inquiry had replaced metaphysics; for Marx, awareness of the concrete would unveil the illusions of religion; and in Germany, Kantian empiricism would be entrenched in the universities until the end of the century. Everywhere, progress was now the goal of a spirit of unflinching investigation.

The real advances made by positivist science were considerable. The model of biological evolution was of course vulgarly applied to society, but the result was a critical sociology to which the novel was particularly suited to respond. However, the singularly most important advance for the aesthetic domain, functionally continuous with this biological social subject, was the psychological objectification of individual subjectivity. Spencer, Bain and Sully in Britain, Wundt and Heimholtz in Germany, produced the research on perception which was later to inform much of Aestheticism. The impact of positivist science was thus such that it assisted the formation of both positive and indifferent responses to the notion of social progress, providing both Naturalism and Aestheticism with a common spirit of investigation.

In the natural sciences, the investigating subject is not a part of his object of knowledge. Naturalism may be minimally defined as a transference of this principle of exteriority to the aesthetic domain. According to its precepts, the artist's role was to reveal impartially the laws of his object, ostensibly with indifference to ethical or ideological shields. If progress existed, then it was a law of the object before it could become a desire of the artist. In effect, this resulted in

a peculiar extension of the realists' dismantling of classicist ideals. On the one hand, art claimed the right to take as its subject matter any social details it could lay its hands on, preferably those which would shock its bourgeois public. On the other, the novelists who on the level of content most freely gave the notion of progress to the laws of social development, reserved for themselves the elaboration of an extremely literary style which stood to mark their professional position within their society. From Champfleury to the Goncourts to James and Moore, the naturalist artist would never let the reader forget that the author was somehow technically qualified to conduct palatable research.

The naturalist novel was an achievement which many would nowadays like to forget. Literary historians write off Zola in the same way that literary sociologists discount Taine, for the biological notions of heredity and race now seem to us precisely the opposite of progressive. And yet the Naturalist aesthetic provided one of the positions which most allowed for development of novelistic form. Although the impetus came first from that genre painting which broke Romantic scenography (Courbet and the Barbizon School mark the transition from the term "realism"), the aesthetic was for two generations synonymous with what could and should be done with the novel. There was no naturalist poetry to speak of, and Naturalism's possibilities for theater were to wait until the novel had exhausted its positivist energies and was ready to leave the field open.

The difficulties we have with this period are most acute with respect to essentially naturalist novelists who continue to be honored by contemporary appreciation. Scholars attempt to determine whether or not Henry James really did visit a prison to take notes, as if his apparent failure to realize the project would save him from naturalist disgrace. More telling is the case of Flaubert, whom some would have as the owner of an isolated and transcendent aesthetic. No naturalist was more concerned with documentation and historical exactitude, with the construction of characters in terms of heredity and environment, than the author of *L'Education sentimentale*. Even where the reduction of length limits the detail observed —as is the case in the *Trois contes* —, the world of the interior subject is everywhere objectified in terms of property and social relationships. *Un cœur simple* is necessarily the story of a simple subjectivity, for naturalist complexity required the scope of generations, of social transformations, and of successive objectifications. Time was not internal, but extended implacably across the dimensions of an external history.

There is however in Flaubert a second use of the temporal dimension which would seem to contradict his passion for exactitude. The author responded to certain grammatical confusions in his texts with a peculiarly unscientific: "Tant pis pour le sens, le rythme avant tout!" Elsewhere, the ambivalent alliances of literary prose become more explicit: Flaubert claims to seek a style "...rythmé comme le vers, précis comme le langage des sciences..."⁶. The formal ideals of the Parnasse were historically not far away: it should be remembered that the

Naturalist School followed the cold musicians of verse in capturing the impetus of artistic actualité. What enabled the transition, and what enabled it to be a generalized transition —despite Zola's apparent indifference to questions of style—, was the spirit of research which had risen to dominance in both the sciences and in art. Flaubert's ambition, great as it was, was not above his age.

Flaubert was not however a versifier of positivist sociology. His distancing of his social object does attach his narrative to an external history, but he, of all the naturalists, still had enough sense to portray critically something of the way in which that history was going. *L'Education sentimentale* and *Madame Bovary* are of course uncompromising in this respect, and apparently unenthusiastic about the possible value of the future. The Romantic moment of political optimism was now well in the past. The positivist spirit had turned novelistic attention to the values of the modern times, and the writer's eye was not given to sweetening all that it saw. In this way, the same scientism which had provided a new image of total progress proved itself progressive only in its own domain, and was thus able to turn on all others in order to furnish critiques of decadence. Flaubert stands as a moment of sadness in the midst of this transition. Verlaine could turn back on positivism by making decadence his banner, but the novelist was too close to history to dispel his object in this way. As he historically stood aside to allow critique of the present by Renan, Bourget, Taine and, eventually, Nordau, Flaubert was perhaps the last novelist to attempt to grasp social totality in an affirmative sense. Like the Dickens who did not want to satisfy closure of *Great Expectations*, he found himself unable to formulate uncompromising faith in the possibilities of history. In this, he was condemned to failure by the very position from which he started, for positivist investigation, in its extreme attention to empirical detail, must of necessity fail to grasp the lived dimensions of social totality. The naturalist position was from the outset destined to undo the belief in progress on which it was based.

2C. Aesthetic progress

The aestheticist response to positivist science was probably more historically astute than what the naturalists had to offer. Recognizing that the artist's autonomy lost him the right to pretend to any social totalization of influence, this position applied the spirit of investigation to its own domain, closing its doors to the possible values of the external social world, and thereby, implicitly, to any extensive or immediate public.

The line linking Gautier to Valéry was thus able to run parallel to that which traces the development of Naturalism. The two tendencies ran their course with surprisingly little conflict. Representing two moments of the dispersed Romantic problematic, their differences were essentially buried beneath professional

specialization of domain: the aesthete's concern was principally with poetry, whereas the naturalist almost exclusively exploited the novel. Movement from one camp to the other involved little more than changing one's *métier*.

The first aesthetic break with expansive lyric subjectivity was of course "l'Art pour l'Art". In accepting, with the later Romantic lyricists, that the poet could speak from a privileged ivory tower, Gautier's programme turned its attention to the tower, and not to the poet, as objectification of interiority. In name and in philosophy, the new aesthetic valued an object reflecting upon itself. The result was an ultimate suppression of both interior and social subjectivity: historical time was either jumped across to produce the exotic, or conflated into the abstract moment of imaginative perception. In both cases, positivist investigation supported the project: archaeological research emphasized the historical otherness which fed exoticism; psychological investigation of perception would make an object of the subjective moment. As much as Aestheticism may have proclaimed professional autonomy, it was not above appropriating its period's principle ideal: it should be remembered that Gautier made an 1852 official report on "the progress of poetry", and that the French would continue to produce these peculiar documents until the end of the century.

The key formulation of this position was the Parnassian emphasis on technical perfection. Value was no longer a property of what or how much was said, but of the difficulty of the saying. Poetic form was thus significantly shortened; the expansive Romantic lyricist became an artisanal fashioner of language; subjectivity was now an abstract point from which an technical, no longer natural, beauty could be perceived. Parnassianism historically connected Baudelaire and Mallarmé; it was welcomed by the English Pre-Raphaelites; it was the basis of Hispanic Modernismo. Despite its present unpopularity, it was also the necessary foundation of the idealist research evoked by French Symbolism and the movements which followed it. Although the shutters remained firmly closed to the external world, the impact of this aesthetic was such that movement after movement, manifesto after manifesto, would continue its isolation of artistic progress until well into the 1890s.

Impressionism provided a slightly different displacement of the aesthetic. Although Manet had an essentially naturalist approach, the transition through Monet to the divided palate of Seurat marked the direct influence of positivist psychology, notably the research of Heilmholtz and Wundt. In England, Pater's use of the term "impression" had similarly positivist origins in Spencer and Bain. If one side of Aestheticism devoted its energies to the perfection of form, the other sought its advances more directly from science.

In all this, the novel had remarkably little to say. It could perhaps take flight in the exotic (*Salammbô*), or apply poeticized narrative to idealist research (*Saint Antoine*), but escape from the social was always better handled by the short lyric

(*L'Invitation au voyage*) or the drama of abstraction (*Axël*, or *L'Intruse*). In this sector, the novel was condemned to a momentarily parasitic existence.

What the novel could do, however, was to portray the artist as a hero surrounded by his actual or possible art. In this way, the individualist silence to which the aestheticist moment inevitably tended could be perceived as a virtual voice: Mallarmé largely became known through *A Rebours*, the work of a wandering naturalist. In this sense, Saint Antoine might be seen as approaching Des Esseintes, Marius and Dorian Gray..., for the artistic hero was spiritually separated from his milieu, and sought adequation not in nature but in the products of the intellect.

But this use of the novel risked breaking the possibilities of the form. Extreme exclusion of the social world made narrativity a difficult enterprise, and in most of these cases story was sacrificed to philosophical and descriptive excursions into the nature and role of art. Novelistic narrativity was reduced to providing a loose frame for what Huysmans, Pater and Wilde really wanted to do with prose: literary criticism.

Art on art was ultimately the only hope of progress which Aestheticism could salvage from its enterprise. Rejected as decadent by ideologues of social progress, they had successfully turned the charge into a belief in purely aesthetic progress. But when this possible future could only reflect upon itself, something different was required.

2D. Decorist Indifference

Peter Bürger argues, with some justification, that there was a radical break at the turn of the century between Modernism and the Avant-garde⁷. His theory is based on the notion that “reflection on the artist reflecting on his art” eventually produced a problematic awareness of art-as-institution, and thus led to attempts to destroy this sterile autonomy. For Bürger, the Avant-Garde of the new century wanted to return art to “life”.

My only objection to this theory is that the supposedly radical break may also be explained as a working out of the disjunctions already implicit in the separation of Naturalism and Aestheticism. It is clear that the isolated artist was destined to lose faith in his own capacity to advance, but it does not follow that his immediate solution was to destroy a non-progressive institution. There was, at the end of the last century, an important moment in which aesthetics accepted a *vitalist* conception of art and society. Bürger is quite right to emphasize the category of “life”, but he fails to see that this abstract and universalist notion effectively blocked consciousness of the difference between aesthetic and social experience, and thus enabled a generalized indifference to progress. In effect, this category was functionally equivalent to the Romantic ideal of Nature.

The essential problem of Aestheticism was perhaps the conflict between tradition and innovation. Progress constantly required the new, but without tradition, innovation was forced to abandon substance. The only advance could be the "beau livre sur rien". The stylistic solution to this conflict was simple enough: the past was raided for fragments of form, which the present then arranged as a matter of pure taste. Such was the grandeur of the original structuralism, *Art Nouveau*.

It is not immediately obvious how this notion could be applied to the novel. Decorism could produce furniture, ornaments, interiors, arabesques in metal and stone, posters, pornography, a thousand short-stories leading nowhere, bejewelled verse, exquisite paintings of dancers, satirical social theater and parodies of everyone and everything, including itself. But it would appear to have produced relatively few novels.

The search for the decorist novel must begin not from prose narrative, but from the prosodic transformations which were expanding poeticity beyond verse. The sense of composition, of arrangement and appreciation of the diverse, was essentially a breaking of literary constraints in the name of an effusion of experience. Art should beautify Life; Life should be art; and no abstraction about society or progress should be taken too seriously. Parnassian poetic form was now clearly too restrictive in the experiences and objects which it could convey. New hybrids came to the fore: the development of the poem in prose was generalized, and Mallarmé was all but forgotten as the *vers libre* went out in search of a new and more direct relationship to the world. Lyric subjectivity was, of its own accord, turning to prose. Symbolist poets eventually became novelists: the most important, historically, were Gide and Dujardin, and the most interesting intermediate case is perhaps the prose of Claudel. The moment of composition was in principle indifferent to both length and literary uniformity. It allowed new possibilities for the expression of interiority —Joyce's debt to Dujardin was openly acknowledged—, and eventually for the portrayal of the psychoanalytic disjointed subjectivity. The novelists of the twentieth-century avant-gardes would not require the legacy of Naturalism, for the influence of Flaubert no longer needed to be embedded in an investigative search for either social or artistic progress. The problematic of progress had itself been replaced by the category of Life, and the spirit of investigation had become a practice of artistic arrangement.

To summarize our survey: Although the novel form would appear to be privileged in its capacity to respond to problematics of progress, its role in the aesthetic shift from Romanticism to Modernism was not uniformly important for all the positions by which this transition was achieved. Its realist capacities were necessarily responding to the affirmative lyricist mode at the base of Romanticism; its naturalist mode of investigating social reality was historically a development complementing rather than opposing poetic Aestheticism; and, finally, its

twentieth-century avant-garde possibilities were largely an extension into prose of the aesthetic of literary decorum.

NOTES

¹ I originally worked on this problematic, and the general schema which responds to it, as a basis for the study of poetic developments in the nineteenth century. The present study attempts to test the generality of the theory by applying it to a new object, the novel. Although based almost exclusively on French examples, the theoretical schema (p. 5) is considered to have wider validity, if only because Paris was the international literary capital of the time.

² A. Hauser, *Sozialgeschichte der Kunst und Literatur* (Beck, Munich, 1953), and A. Hauser, *Im Gespräch mit Georg Lukács* (Beck, Munich, 1979).

³ G.W.F. Hegel, *Esthétique* (Flammarion, 1979), 1, pp. 335-336; Lukács, *La théorie du roman* (Denoël, 1963), pp. 132-135.

⁴ Lukács, *ibid.*, p. 119.

⁵ H.R. Jauss, "Das Ende der Kunstperiode - Aspekte der literarischen Revolution bei Heine, Hugo und Stendhal", in *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation* (Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, 1970).

⁶ Flaubert, letter to Louise Colet, April 24, 1852, in *Correspondance*, II, *Œuvres complètes* (Conard, Paris, 1926-33).

⁷ P. Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1984).