

Twentieth-Century Fiction I

September 17. Henry James, “The Beast in the Jungle.”

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Office hours

AG today 2:30–4:30 p.m., Murray 031

OG Thursday 1:15–2:30 p.m., Murray 036B

Review

Describing/prescribing what is “modern”

1. Thematic

a. Woolf: “ordinary mind on an ordinary day”

b. Wilson: Symbolism under pressure

2. Structural

a. Bürger: attempt to reintegrate art into life

b. Casanova: up-to-date on international standard

Review

The argument we skipped

1. “I have assumed as axiomatic that a creation, a work of art, is autonomous.” (T.S. Eliot, 1923)
2. “Making the modern world possible for art” (T.S. Eliot, 1923)

What happens?

We must grant the artist his subject, his idea, his *donnée*; our criticism is applied only to what he makes of it.

“Art of Fiction,” 584

What happens?

If a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose...there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street tailors would have it.

Woolf, "Modern Fiction, 150

Style

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“delayed specification of referents” (Ian Watt, 1960)

Style

When they were two
they either mingled their sounds of ecstasy or
melted into silences of even deeper import,
so that there were
aspects of the occasion
that gave it
for Marcher
much the air of the “look round,”
previous to a sale highly advertised,
that excites
or quenches, as may be,
the dream of acquisition.

Discussion

Find another example of the delayed specification of referents (sentence or paragraph-level). Analyze how it creates delay. Then consider the significance of this delay.

Style

As this was his first impression of that, it made a kind of date. (464)

Style

He had had, all along, to-day, the sense of her keeping something back, and he still had it. **As this was his first impression of that, it made a kind of date.** The case was the more marked as she didn't at first answer; which in turn made him go on. "You know something I don't." (464)

“late afternoon of life”

- 1843 born New York in wealthy family
raised Paris, London, Geneva; invalid, doesn't fight in Civil War
goes to law school, doesn't finish
- 1875 in Paris, crucial year
- 1876 moves permanently to London (UK citizen 1915)
- 1878 “Daisy Miller” makes him famous
- 1895 disastrous attempt at drama
- 1900–“Major Phase” (so called by F.O. Matthiessen)
- 1902 writes “The Beast in the Jungle” (pub. 1903)
- 1907–9 deluxe revised “New York Edition” of his work
- 1916 dies

“late afternoon of life”

I have not the least hesitation in saying that I aspire to write in such a way that it would be impossible to an outsider to say whether I am, at a given moment, an American writing about England or an Englishman writing about America...and so far from being ashamed of such an ambiguity I should be exceedingly proud of it, for it would be highly civilized. (HJ to William James, 1888)

centers of consciousness

third-person limited narration

He...caught himself...*really* wondering if the great accident would take form now as nothing more than his being condemned to see this charming woman, this admirable friend, pass away from him. He had never so unreservedly qualified her as while confronted in thought with such a possibility; in spite of which there was small doubt for him that as an answer to his long riddle the mere effacement of even so fine a feature of his situation would be an abject anticlimax. (468–69)

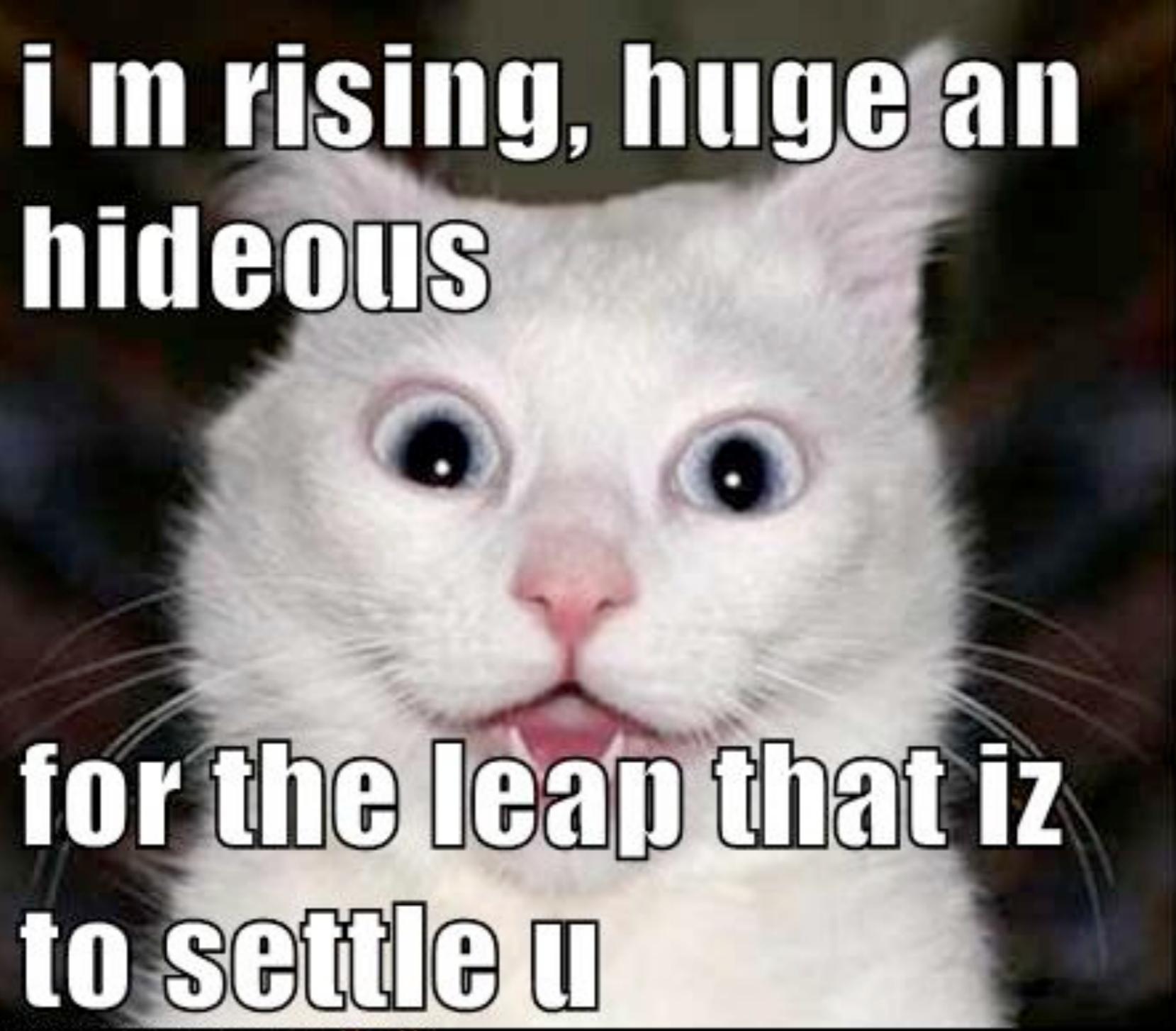
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Discussion

What is Marcher's Beast? What is the crisis that he misses?
Develop **two** plausible answers, supporting each with evidence from the text.



i m rising, huge an
hideous

for the leap that iz
to settle u

Discussion

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Unknowable sexuality

What if Marcher himself had other desires?

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990)

Unknowable sexuality

The rest of the world of course thought him queer, but
she, she only, knew how, and above all why, queer. (459)

Unknowable sexuality

Marcher becomes...not the finally self-knowing man who is capable of heterosexual love, but the irredeemably self-ignorant man who embodies and enforces heterosexual compulsion.

Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*

For next time

We'll wrap up "The Beast," so bring that in.

Read all of *Heart of Darkness*.